

KNOX, MORGAN & CO.,

Wholesale Dry Goods Importers,

HAMILTON, = = ONTARIO.

We wish all Merchants a prosperous year in 1893, and trust business will be as healthy as this year's has been. See Domestic and Imported Samples for Spring in Travellers' hands.

WHAT IS BI-METALISM?

JUST now the whole financial world is looking to Berlin with considerable interest. There sit the great financial giants from several different countries, and on their discussions and decisions must depend the future currency of the civilized commercial world. Not that they will bind any government but the governments will be guided by the results of the conference—if there are any. Simply, then, What is meant by bi-metallism?

In England to-day gold is the basis of the currency. This means monometallism, or one metal as a base. The value of the silver and bronze coins, such as shillings and pennies, are fixed by law in terms of gold. Twenty silver shillings are not really worth a gold sovereign, but the law of the land gives these small subsidiary coins this fictitious value. It takes gold as its standard, but of course it cannot regulate the price of gold. The sovereign simply exchanges for what it will fetch. Gold is, moreover, legal tender up to any amount. But silver coins are legal tender only up to £2—i.e., in paying any debt no more than £2 can be paid in silver, if the creditor objects. So pennies are legal tender up to one shilling. In Canada our legal tender is one and two dollar Dominion bills, but there is no gold currency distinctly Canadian. Silver is legal tender up to ten dollars.

A bi-metallic system of currency, to be completely effective, must, in the view of those who advocate it, include two essential features (a) an open mint ready to coin any amount of gold or silver which may be brought to it; (b) the right on the part of the debtor

to discharge his liabilities, at his option, in either of the two metals, at a ratio fixed by law. In the countries of Europe called the Latin Union, the ratio fixed by law is 1 gold to 15 1-2 silver by weight. This was established by a treaty in 1865 which included France, Belgium, Switzerland, Italy, Greece and Roumania. But since 1874 the coinage of silver was restricted and practically suspended in these countries except France. The object of the United States, which possesses enormous amounts of silver, and valuable silver mines lying idle, is to restore silver, which has fallen in value, to this normal value as established by the Latin Union, namely, 1 gold to 15 1-2 silver. From 1794 to 1834 no gold was coined in the United States, for the coinage was based on the assumption that gold was only fifteen times as valuable as silver. Thus the people who had gold did not send it to be coined because it was not so valuable in coin as it was in bullion. The law wouldn't allow enough silver for it. In 1834 the Congress resolved to alter the coinage on the assumption that the true proportion was sixteen to one. Then silver ceased to be coined because the law wouldn't give enough gold for it. These instances are sufficient to show the kind of difficulty which besets any attempt to keep two metals circulating at their intrinsic value. The value of each depends on the demand and the supply. When gold was plentiful on the discovery of the Australian and Californian gold mines it depreciated in value and silver appreciated, and thus gold drove the silver out of circulation to a great extent. Now silver is plentiful, and, as it sinks in value for this reason,

just as any other commodity would in like circumstances, gold is being driven out of circulation. When gold is at a high price it takes more goods to buy it, and hence it becomes expensive. Now, the idea of the bi-metallists is to establish some plan whereby both metals can be made to circulate concurrently. This would keep the circulating medium stable and keep prices stable. The use of both gold and silver as standards of value is obviously most important, and it equally cannot be doubted that the misuse of either must lead, as the disuse of silver has recently done, especially in India, to considerable fluctuations in the prices of commodities.

Further particulars of the death on the prairie of C. F. Church, of Winnipeg, traveller for the Sanford Manufacturing Company of Marmitor, are to hand. The Macleod (Alberta) Gazette says that Mr. Church arrived there on November 19, and on the 22nd hired a four-horse team and started off for Pincher Creek, intending to then go to Lee's Creek, and thereafter return to Macleod. On Wednesday he left the dry forks of the Kootenay river for Lee's Creek, but got mixed in his bearings towards nightfall. The kingbolt of the waggon came out, and the vehicle was rendered useless. His teamster proposed to him that they take a horse each and strike out for shelter. Church, being played out, refused, and told the teamster to go for assistance. At 3 o'clock next morning the frozen body of the young man was found by a rescuing party. All night a snow-storm had raged, and the rescuers had to brave an atmosphere 20 degrees below zero.