watches, tea sets, diamond rings, and other things "pleasant to the eye," that we might suggest.

A peculiar coincidence is that the business of this Bank is conducted in the same building as the Dominion Government business. The manager is also Assistant Receiver-General, and the Receiver-General's office is in the basement of the building. These circumstances, which strike us as rather peculiar, lend great prestige to the Savings Bank.

The general public outside seem to be in happy ignorance that any change has occurred. They pay their money over the same counter, meet the same faces in the Bank, see the same names as the custodians of their funds, and are satisfied. As to what is done at stockholders meetings, the condition of the bank's affairs, &c., nothing is known, these things being done in a very small corner.

We should not have thought it necessary to point out these facts so fully but for the circumstance that the Act 36 Vic., Cap. 72, is set at defiance in so far as it requires a monthly return from the Savings Banks to which it relates. It is not to be anticipated that any improper use will be made of the anomalous position in which the gentlemen above named have been placed by act of Parliament; but they should at least sail under their true colors; they should give the poor of Montreal, whose money has done so much to build up the Bank and enrich its managers, a liberal share of its immense profits; and especially they should comply with the just requirements of the law, that the public may always know the true position of affairs. While we congratulate them on their good fortune, we insist that the same rule be applied to them as to the chartered banks, and that they be not longer permitted on any excuse or plea, to withhold from the public eye their monthly statement, in the form elsewhere quoted, which, by the terms of the Act, should appear every month in the *Canada Gazette*.

CRUSHING A QUESTION.

We are reminded by the deliberations of the municipal dignitaries on the assessment problem, of Mr. Punch's conundrum:

> "How to crush a question—get a committee of Parliament to sit on it."

Unless the weighty and experienced conclave of Mayors, Aldermen, Reeves *et hoc* should succeed in making this melancholy disposition of the question in hand, we have little hope of any practical result from their incubations and eloquence. It took the first day and part of the night to arrive at the ponderous conclusion expressed by Mr. Harman in support of the winning resolution that "Every description "of property should be subjected to taxa- "tion." The theoretical soundness of this general principle seems to have been accepted as supporting the resolution, "That this "Convention is of opinion that personal "property should bear its fair burden of "assessment." As a practical rule the doctrine that "Every description of pro- "perty should be subjected to taxation" is little short of nonsense. Great Britain with the most carefully revised system of taxation in existence anywhere raises her whole revenue from a few articles. The rest go scot free. In the United States the terrible pressure of the war caused levies to be made on everything from which a shilling could be obtained; but since then not only has the rate of taxation been reduced but the number of subjects over which it was spread has been greatly lessened. It would be difficult to ennunciate a more fallacious doctrine in practice, than that "every description of property "should be the subject of taxation." It loses sight altogether of the vital questions Who is most benefitted? What species of property in a city is most enhanced in value by civic expenditure? If it be the merchant's goods which come into his warehouse or lie on the wharf or at the railway station, perhaps, for a few days till a customer is found, then on these goods should the burden chiefly fall. If the streets, drains, pavements, and gaslight benefit most the shares or stock of banking institutions, on such property lay the burden of course. Such considerations as these did not seem to disturb the minds of the Convention in reaching the conclusion that "personal "property should bear its fair burden of "assessment," which means that it should pay to the city Treasury at the same rate as real estate. It never occurred to them that if a sewer—and drainage is one of the chief sources of city expenditure—is made past a man's house and lot their value is at once enhanced by a large percentage. The furniture in the occupants house is worth the same as before; so are his shares in the bank; and no amount of civic expenditure can materially enhance the value of these things. Before rushing therefore, to the conclusion "that every description of "property should be taxed," would it not have been more dignified and more common-sense like to have first calmly considered the questions: Who and what are most benefitted?

The tax on bank stock will not bear this test for one moment. It has no better justification than the popular cry "catch "'em and fleece 'em; they can stand it." A monied man is legitimate game with a large class, which we dare say was not insufficiently represented in this Convention. The difficulty is that this silly game cannot be played; capitalists do not usually lie down like sheep to be shorn; they will move to a safe distance where their rights are respected.

But it is unnecessary to criticize further the resolutions of a Convention which recommends the taxation of mortgages with the idea of thereby taxing capitalists. It is quite evident that the leading spirits of the majority of this Convention have given little if any attention to the principles on which taxation should rest, or to the economical effects that are involved in it. It remains to be hoped that the Legislature, if induced to take up the subject at the coming session, will evince a better acquaintance with those matters; and show more regard for the teachings of economic science than to violate its most settled maxims in the precipitate and headlong manner of this Convention.

RECENT FAILURES.

Some recent failures among those chronicled in our columns, are very suggestive of consideration. We drew attention a short time ago to the reason why a great and rich house like Jay Cooke & Co. had been forced to succumb, in spite of a surplus far beyond any which could probably be shown by the richest firm in Canada. No matter how great the surplus is if it cannot be made available in time of need there might as well be no surplus at all. This is the bitter teaching of experience, and the same lesson may be learned from some recent events in our own country. A merchant, for example, may be industrious and attentive, may work early and late, and be a very model of close and economical dealing. By this means he may go on building up a respectable surplus, and be looked on by everybody as a money making man. He may show a statement of assets and liabilities drawn up with apparent frankness, exhibiting an excess of the former over the latter sufficient to make him independent for life. Yet some fine day or other such a man may stop payment and be compelled to call his creditors together to beg for an extension, or be forced to submit to a winding up in insolvency—and the reason is simply that he has allowed his assets to become *depreciated*. His books are filled more and more every year with a mass of debts that cannot be collected; in fact his growing wealth has all along been represented by growing book-debts, or poor bills receivable