have fared like the Oléron sea laws : they have gathered bulk with increasing years.

The question remains to be answered, How did this col­lection of sea laws acquire the title of the “ Wisby sea laws” outside the Baltic ? for under such title they were received in Scotland in the 16th century, as may be inferred from extracts from them cited in Sir James Balfour’s *System, of the more Ancient Laws of Scotland,* which, although not printed till 1754, was completed before his death in 1583. The text of the Wisby sea laws generally current in Eng­land is an English translation of a French text which Cleirac published in 1641 in his *Us et Coustumes de la Mer,* and is an abbreviated, and in many respects muti­lated, version of the original sea laws. This inquiry, how­ever, would open a new chapter on the subject of the northern sea laws, and the civilizing influence which the merchants of Wisby exercised in the 13th century through their factories at Novgorod, linking thereby the trade of the Baltic to that of the Black Sea.

See Pardessus, *Collection de Lois Maritimes antérieures au X VIII. Siècle* (6 vols., Paris, 1828-45) ; Schlyter, *Wisby Stadslag och Sjörätt,* being vol. viii. of the *Corpus Juris Sueco-Gotοrum Antiqui* (Lund, 1853) ; and *The Black Book of the Admiralty,* ed. by Sir Travers Twiss (4 vols., London, 1871-76). (T. T.)

SEALING WAX. In mediaeval times, when the princi­pal use of sealing wax was for attaching the impression of seals to official documents, the composition used consisted of a mixture of Venice turpentine, beeswax, and colouring matter, usually vermilion. The preparation now employed contains no wax. Fine red stationery sealing wax is com­posed of about seven parts by weight of shellac, four of Venice turpentine, and three to four of vermilion. The resins are melted together in an earthenware pot over a moderate fire, and the colouring matter is added slowly with careful stirring. The mass when taken from the fire is poured into oiled tin moulds the form of the sticks required, and when hard the sticks are polished by passing them rapidly over a charcoal fire, or through a spirit flame, which melts the superficial film. For the brightest quali­ties of sealing wax bleached lac is employed, and a pro­portion of perfuming matter—storax or balsam of Peru— is added. In the commoner qualities considerable admix­tures of chalk, carbonate of magnesia, baryta white, or other earthy matters are employed, and for the various colours appropriate mineral pigments. In inferior waxes ordinary resin takes the place of lac, and the dragon gum of Australia (from *Xanthorrhœa hastilis)* and other resins are similarly substituted. Such waxes, used for bottling, parcelling, and other coarser applications, run thin when heated, and are comparatively brittle, whereas fine wax should soften slowly and is tenacious and adhesive.

SEALKOTE. See Sialkot.

SEALS @@1 (Gr. *σφρaγiς,* Lat. *sigillum).* During the mediaeval period the importance of seals was very great, as they were considered the main proofs of the authenticity of all sorts of documents, both public and private. @@2 That is much less the case now, the written signature being thought a safer guarantee of genuineness. In order to make illicit use or imitation of a seal difficult, the seal itself was usually locked up and guarded with special care, and in the case of royal personages or corporate bodies was often made a very complicated work of art, which it would have been almost impossible to copy exactly. One very curious precaution that was adopted is still in use with the corporate seal of the monasteries of Mount Athos. The circular matrix @@3 is divided into four quarters, each

of which is kept by one of the four *epistatai* or ruling monks ; the four pieces are joined by a key-handle, which remains in the custody of the secretary. Thus it is only when all five guardians of the various parts of the matrix meet together that the complete seal can be stamped on any document. The device on the Mount Athos seal is a half-length figure of the Madonna and Child, and the imprint is made by blackening the matrix in the flame of a lamp and then pressing it on the paper or vellum itself. Mediæval seals were applied in two different ways : in one the stamp was impressed in wax run on the surface of the document (Fr. *plaqué* or *en placard) ;* in the other the wax impression was suspended by cord or strips of parchment (Fr. *pendant).* The latter method was neces­sarily used with metal seals or *bullæ* (see below).

For the sake of greater security in the case of *plaqué* seals, it was a common practice from the 12th century onwards, or even earlier, to make a cross cut in the vellum of the document, the corners of which were then turned back, thus forming a square opening, over which the wax seal was stamped ; the turned-up corners helped to hold the wax in its place, and the aperture allowed a second matrix to be applied at the back. This was usually a smaller private seal called a *secretum.* Thus, for example, an abbot would use on the front of a document the large corporate seal of his community, and on the back would stamp his personal seal as a *secretum.*

Till the 12th century pure white beeswax was generally used, after that wax coloured green or red. The use of shellac or other harder materials, such as modern sealing- wax, is of recent date. Thus it was usual to protect the soft wax seals by some sort of “ fender,” often a wreath of rushes or plaited strips of paper twisted round it ; another method much employed in the 15th century was to cover the seal with leaves of oak, bay, or beech. *Pendant* seals were often encased in boxes of wood or *cuir bouilli,* which in some cases are very richly decorated. From the 13th to the 15th century original royal documents are usually on fine vellum and have green seals hung by many-coloured silk and gold thread, while office copies are on coarser vellum and have white seals hung by parchment strips. In England an important official, called the clerk of the chafe-wax, an office which still exists, was entrusted with the duty of softening the wax for state seals over a chafing-brazier. Two different methods of sealing docu­ments, either closed or open for inspection, are recorded in the legal terms “letters secret” and “letters patent.”

Owing to the enormous number of mediæval seals which still exist, and their frequently great historical and artistic importance, it is necessary to adopt some method of classification, especially for large collections, such as that of the British Museum, which contains about 25,000 specimens, and the very important one of the Society of Antiquaries. @@4 The chief classes are these:—(1) *Ecclesi­astical.—*(*a*) Seals belonging to offices, such as those of popes, bishops, abbots, deans, &c. ; *(b)* common seals of corporate bodies, such as chapters, religious colleges, monas­teries, and the like ; (*c*) official seals without the name of the officer; *(d)* personal seals, with or without a name. (2) *Lay.—*(*a*) Royal seals, including those of queens and royal princes ; (*b*) official seals in the name of the sovereign or a state official ; (*c*) common seals of corporate bodies, such as towns, universities, guilds, schools, hospi­tals, &c. ; (*d*) personal seals (not being royal) with effigies, heraldry, merchants’ marks, or other devices, with or with­out a name, or with name only, or with legend only.

@@@1 For antique seals, see Gems, Jewellery, and Ring.

@@@2 In some cases, in the presence of witnesses, a seal which did not belong to the signer of a document was used when the right matrix was not at hand. This has naturally caused many archæological puzzles.

@@@3 The word “ seal ” is often used to denote both the impression made

and the object that makes the impress. More correctly the latter is called the “matrix,” and only the impression is called the “seal.”

@@@4 This valuable collection has been arranged and catalogued by Dr C. S. Percival, the best modern authority on English seals.