

speculation on the Exchanges of Montreal and Toronto. Another insisted on the necessity of a bank for the special accommodation of the oil business. But beyond appointing a committee to report on the subject of setting up a refinery, and passing a resolution against running the wells on Sunday, nothing was done.

The refiners do not appear to be willing to buy at all at present, and if so, they must have a reason for refusing. They may be anxious to still further depress the price of crude oil; but if they could get rid of their refined oil, it is not likely they would refuse to purchase more crude for refining. The refiners seem to have in their organization an advantage over producers, and organization among producers has not apparently been very successful, in the past.

Stocks of oil do not appear to be large, though it seems there are no reliable statistics to show what they are. One speaker said that there were not over 400 bbls. above ground, and this, he added, did not exceed five months' consumption; but whatever the quantity is, there is more crude than producers can conveniently carry; the load has been felt to be heavier since the proposal of the Federal Bank was withdrawn. The producers are inclined to lay the blame of an inactive market on the refiners; but it is more likely to be mainly due to an absence of demand. If there is over-production, the most sensible thing is to wait awhile, till consumption pulls up some of the lee-way. No doubt the stocks carried on the other side of the line are vastly larger, in proportion to population, than those at Petrolea, but it is not the less true that 40,000,000 of barrels is a preposterously large stock to carry, even in the United States. The tone of the producers is that of men who are impatient and to whom two or three weeks of enforced waiting presents a serious inconvenience. The Syndicate of refiners, the producers estimate, will make \$200,000 this year, and some think that if there was a producers' refinery, the Syndicate would at once offer better prices. It seems that, on a previous occasion, when crude oil reached as low as 50 cents a bbl., producers purchased a refinery and soon after 200,000 bbls. of crude fetched \$1.25. But few of the speakers seemed to put any faith in the natural laws of trade; most of them spoke of the effects of combination on one side and proposed measures to meet them on the other.

The absence of reliable statistics of the state of the oil production is a real want, to supply which means should undoubtedly be taken. An Oil Exchange might prevent such complete stagnation as the producers now complain of; but it would almost certainly lead to speculation of the gambling order. Special Exchanges increase activity in dealings in the articles the sale of which they are ostensibly intended to facilitate; but they are responsible for much of the gambling element with which honest trade is apt now-a-days to be vexed. Before any thing is done, the report of the committee on the subject of a producers' refinery will have to be received and considered.

Mr. T. B. Sprague, M.A., of Edinburgh, will be entertained at luncheon in the Windsor Hotel, Montreal, to-day by the representatives of the Life offices doing business in that city.

PROPOSED RECIPROCITY TREATIES.

The United States Government is anxious to form commercial treaties with the States of Central and South America. Preliminary to calling an international convention for the purpose of agreeing upon the basis of a series of reciprocity treaties, a commission has been appointed to visit these countries and report the views of their public men. Secretary Frelinghuysen takes the ground that manufactures, and as far as practicable the products of these countries which come into competition with those of the United States, should not be admitted to the free list. Another object is to obtain for American vessels the free navigation of the coasts, rivers and lakes of these countries, a privilege which, in its own case, the United States has carefully kept to itself. The Secretary is also anxious that these countries should agree with the United States upon a common silver coin equal in value to the American dollar, or some other standard, which should be current in all countries on this continent. The object is, of course, to force the circulation of depreciated United States silver, in other countries, and it is not very likely to be successful. Canada is one of the countries named, and there is no difficulty in negating the proposal, in her name. By agreeing to the reduction of duties on sugar and coffee, the Secretary hopes to gain the control of the markets of those countries for the products of U.S. fields and factories. The commission will first visit Mexico, to see whether the basis of a treaty, in which those other countries should join, cannot be agreed upon. Secretary Frelinghuysen makes it understood that this movement is made "in the spirit of the Monroe doctrine, which in excluding foreign political interference, recognizes the common interest of the States of North and South America."

The rule which the United States Government is anxious to observe, in the formation of Reciprocity Treaties, is not without interest for us. No such treaty with Canada would be possible, if it did not put into the free list articles which come into competition with products or manufactures of the United States. The general rule to which exception must be required, would suit our manufacturers, whose establishments are younger than their American rivals, but it would not suit our farmers. The principal reason which Canada has for desiring a Reciprocity Treaty is that she may get free trade with the United States in raw produce. It is true the Americans, like ourselves, produce most of these articles in excess of their own wants; but it does not follow that a mutually free exchange of what each country produces beyond its power of consumption, is not an advantage. Along a frontier of over three thousand miles, mutual demands will spring up for the same products; at various points; and this trade of convenience cannot be checked without mutual injury. Then the differences in the seasons, the varying periods at which products ripen, give rise to a trade both ways. For example, Canada receives from the States new potatoes some weeks in each year before her own are ripe; and the Maritime Provinces, especially Prince

Edward Island, could send large quantities of potatoes to the States, later in the season. The same interchange, in respect of several kinds of fruit, is possible, and the restraint now put upon it is an injury to both countries. The real difficulty would be with manufactures; and the same objection would be made by Canadian manufacturers that the Secretary of the Treasury makes on behalf of those of the United States. But still, if the disposition to arrange a treaty existed, on both sides, it would not be found impossible to agree upon a schedule. The rule which the Secretary lays down for Central and South America is not to be absolutely enforced, in all cases; its application is to be made as general as possible. That would suit Canada, as to manufactures; in raw produce no restriction would be required.

FIRE INSURANCE MEN IN COUNCIL.

A special general meeting of the Canadian Fire Underwriters' Association was held in the Insurance Exchange Buildings, Montreal, commencing on Wednesday the 24th, and continuing nearly four days. Every company in the association was represented, and it is safe to say that it was the largest and most important, and withal the most harmonious meeting of the kind ever held in Canada. On comparing notes it was found that the tariff of rates which came into operation on the 1st October, a year ago, had worked better than the most sanguine could have expected. We commended, at that time, the wisdom and prudence displayed by insurance men in not making too great a revolution in the matter of raising rates. We heard one manager, who has had an extensive experience in the working of similar associations here and in the United States, say that he knew of no tariff association which worked so satisfactorily as that here, in Canada.

To ensure the best consideration for all the subjects proposed to be treated at the meeting, we learn, from the Montreal papers, that the various subjects were referred to particular committees, to be in turn reported upon to the general meeting, when an opportunity was afforded for full discussion on each point presented. The subjects thus referred to committees, named by the President, Mr. G. F. C. Smith, were as follows:

- Section A—Classification of buildings, towns, etc.
- " B—Average co-insurance and value clauses.
- " C—Underground insurance, postal rates, and municipal taxation.
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- " D—Re-insurances, date of payment of loss, mortgage clause, further insurance.
- " E—Overtime in specials, electric light.
- " F—Additions and amendments to tariff rates.

It will be seen from the above that the programme was a full and important one, and of great interest to the public, as well as to the underwriters. There were previously five classifications of places, based on the facility possessed by each for preventing and extinguishing fires. These were known as classes A, B, C, D, and E, the last class com-