

A CURIOUS SMOKE DAMAGE CLAIM.

A curious claim has arisen from the recent disastrous conflagration at Augusta, Ga., says the Insurance Field. One of the livery stables exposed to the conflagration succeeded in getting its horses free from the building in the blinding smoke from the near-by blaze. After caring for the animals it was discovered that nearly all of them were sick with "distemper." The owners have shrewdly assigned as a cause of this complaint the inhalation by the animals of smoke, and have announced their intention to file a claim for "smoke damage," on their horses with the insurance companies covering their interests. This is the most unique claim ever heard of in Southern underwriting. It will require considerable horse sense in an adjuster to satisfy these owners as to a company's not covering such a contingency, and the chances of a satisfactory settlement are about "hoss and hoss."

A NEW "SPECIALTY" FIRE COMPANY.

A press despatch, emanating from the North-Western States, is of the following tenor:

The Retail Merchants' Mutual Fire Insurance Company, of Minneapolis, has been launched by the Retail Grocers' Association, of Minnesota. Retail merchants throughout the State are also interested in the new company.

On this, the New York Chronicle comments caustically, as under:

"It is to be hoped that the Retail Grocers' Association know something about fires in grocery stores in this country. During 1898, when the fire loss was low, compared to what the loss will be this year, 1,873 retail grocery stores burned, caused a loss of \$2,001,345, and an insurance loss of \$1,242,650. During the last fifteen years 15,750 fires are recorded in retail grocery stores, and the loss during that time has been nearly \$29,000,000. The Retail Grocers' Association of Minnesota are taking on a big contract."

A very considerable contract, we should say. The Chronicle ought to know and does know something about fire losses, for it has been compiling them and collating them for years in its "Fire Tables."

OTTAWA VALLEY DEVELOPMENT.

We find references to the mining and other development of the Ottawa Valley in the Citizen of some days ago. Among the stocks in which Ottawa capital is invested, which is making a good showing, says that journal, is the Forty-third Mining Company's claims. The company has installed a great deal of new machinery, and will be in a position to go ahead with the production of gold ore at the beginning of the year. An electrical plant has been installed by which work can be carried on night and day. Mr. E. S. Leatham, of Ottawa, has been elected a director of the British Columbia Mining and Development Company, with a capital of \$500,000. This company owns the Katherine lead and zinc mine at Millbridge, Hastings county.

The outlook for Canadian phosphate is very bright just at present, and a contract has been entered into by a European company with Gatineau valley mine owners for the delivery of 2,000 tons of the mineral at the Cascades station, on the Gatineau Valley railway. The production of mica in Ontario and Quebec for the past year has been the largest in the history of the industry in Canada, and the prospects in that line are very promising.

LOSS ON FARM RISKS.

The agents of New England and New York are having more and more trouble in maintaining their writing power for farm risks, says the Commercial Bulletin. The companies writing this class almost invariably get their fingers burned and experience a loss ratio on such business running from 85 to 200 per cent. The suggestion is now made that prominent companies should form a bureau under some competent man who should handle this class for them and endeavor to put it on a paying basis. The moral hazard of a farm risk may be latent for years, and then be suddenly developed by the desire of the assured to move. Where rates are high the underwriters appear to fail to secure the good risks, as the owner either puts them in a grangers' mutual or goes without insurance. This leaves a collection of dilapidated risks on run-down and over-mortgaged farms. In some cases the buildings alone are insured for more than the farm and buildings together could be sold for. The majority of companies have found that the easiest and safest way to deal with farm business is to prohibit it, and yet there is always the feeling that there must be some way to make it pay.

THE TRAVELLERS' COMPANY. SUED.

Mrs. Anna B. Wasey, of Detroit, widow of the late George E. Wasey, of the firm of Murphy, Wasey & Co., whose body was recovered from the Flint river on the night of November 2nd, 1897, is the complainant in a suit against the Travellers' Insurance Company, in which she seeks to recover \$12,000, in payment for a life insurance policy held by her husband in the company. The company claims that under the agreement in the policy, the complainant is not entitled to the money, as in case of suicide, the policy was to be void. The company claims that Mr. Wasey deliberately committed suicide. This assertion is denied by the complainant. She contends that her husband was mentally affected, and believed that he was a prisoner in the Oak Grove sanitarium, at Flint. He brooded over this matter. When he saw his opportunity he sought to escape by swimming across the river. He was drowned in trying to do this.

—The directors of the Sun Insurance Company have declared a dividend of 4 shillings per share, free of income tax.

—Statistics furnished by G. H. Webber, land commissioner and chief engineer of the Manitoba and Northwestern Railway, of the freight carried, show a substantial increase during the past year over 1898. The nature of the freight handled indicates the development of the part of the Prairie Province through which the road runs. The figures for the two past years are as follows:

	1898.	1899.
Wheat, bushels,	1,503,259	1,897,321
Oats, bushels,	434,214	547,362
Barley, bushels,	3,685	18,340
Flour, sacks,	143,510	186,460
Cattle, hd.	14,983	15,621
Cattle, cars,	725	763
Hogs, head,	3,691	2,181
Hogs, cars,	3034	2072
Butter lbs.,	974,600	1,103,860

The increases in 1899 are thus, of wheat, 394,062 bushels; oats, 113,148 bushels; barley, 14,655 bushels; flour, 42,950 sacks; cattle, 638 head; cattle, 38 cars; butter, 129,260 pounds. There is also reported a large increase in the area of land prepared for next season's crop.

NORTH BRITISH AND MERCANTILE.

Following the appointment of the United States manager, already announced, it is now advised, says the Insurance Press, of London, that Mr. J. Fred. Hastings has been appointed assistant United States manager. Hr. Hastings was general agent at the head office of the National Fire Insurance Co., Hartford, Conn.

THE Hoepfner Oil Refining Company, says the Petrolia Topic, has decided to double its capital stock, and increase the capacity of its Hamilton works four-fold.

MONTREAL MARKETS.

Montreal, 3rd Jan., 1900.

ASHES.—Trading has been dull of late, but a little American enquiry has helped to stiffen values somewhat, and will likely induce freer receipts, which have been very light of late. We quote first pots at about \$4.35 to \$4.40; seconds, about \$4; pearls, nominal, at about \$4.25 per cental.

DAIRY PRODUCE.—The demand for cheese is quiet, but the price is firmly held at about 12c. for fine makes. In butter, also, there is not much activity. Dairy tubs are somewhat scarce. We quote 21 to 22c. for creamery; rolls, 19 to 20c.; dairy, 18 to 19c. per pound.

CEMENTS AND FIREBRICKS.—Business in cements is quiet, though one transaction of several hundred barrels was reported last week. Prices are rather stiffer, and stocks of English and German makes are in small compass; of Belgian cement there is a fair supply. We quote: Belgian, \$2.10 to \$2.20; English, \$2.45 to \$2.60; German, \$2.60 to \$2.80; a fair sale of the last-named kind is said to have been made at \$2.75. Bricks are also firmer, at \$18.50 to \$27, as to brand, with a fair seasonable business doing in small lots.

DRY GOODS.—Travellers are now all getting out on the road again, with full lines of spring samples, and are looking for pretty good orders. Retail business is quiet this week, but the fair proportion of paper falling due to-morrow, is expected to be well met. Notice has been received of a sharp advance in Swiss muslins, and all other lines in which Egyptian cotton is largely used. Linens are also firmer, especially coarser lines, which are advanced from a halfpenny to three farthings per yard. Baldwin's beehive yarn has been advanced two shillings a spindle. Canadian flannels for next fall delivery have also been materially advanced.

MONTREAL STOCKS IN STORE.

	Bushels. Dec. 25.	Bushels. Jan. 2.
Wheat	37,360	48,845
Corn	30,180	25,730
Oats	212,617	217,477
Rye	13,614	13,614
Peas	47,670	47,909
Barley	56,960	47,963

Total grain	398,401	401,538
Oatmeal	353	338
Flour	16,670	20,749
Buckwheat	27,082	25,875

FURS.—Some fair receipts of fox, mink, rats, etc., are now reported, for which it is said pretty full prices are being paid. The London sales begin on the 22nd, and a good-sized collection will be offered. There does not seem to be an expectation of much variation in the prices. We quote prices as revised for this season: Bear \$7.50 to \$15; cubs and yearlings, \$2 to \$7; fisher, \$5 to \$7.50; red fox, \$1.50 to \$3; cross fox, \$5 to \$12; as to color; lynx, \$3 to \$4; marten, \$2 to \$4; mink, \$2 to \$3; rats, 10 to 13c. for winter; 8 to 10c. for fall; otter, \$10 to \$15