FINANCIAL GOSSIP

The Department of Labour's index number of wholesale prices stood at 137.0 for May as compared with 136.3 in April, and 136.3 in May, 1912.

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Directors of Montreal Light, Heat & Power placed the common stock on a 10 per cent. dividend basis this week by the declaration of a 2½ per cent. dividend for the current quarter, payable August 15.

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According to the fortnightly crop report of the Winnipeg *Free Press,* crop conditions in the Canadian west, while not actually discouraging, are far from satisfactory. Rain appears to be needed in a good many districts.

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The Government's preliminary estimates place the total area under wheat in Canada at 9,816,300 acres, or 57,900 acres more than in 1912. Spring wheat occupies 8,990,500 acres, an increase of 13,100 acres; oats, 9,608,500 acres, an increase of 391,600 acres; barley, 1,425,200 acres, an increase of 10,000 acres. The estimated acreage in hay and clover is 7,475,600 acres compared with 7,633,000 acres last year.

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The cheque system has developed to such an extent that, out of every $100 deposited (in Canadian banks) approximately $94 consists of cheques, and the balance of bank bills and legal tenders, the specie, excepting in special cases, being negligible. All the cost of the special machinery required for the handling of this vast volume of cheques and drafts, for their transfer from bank to bank in the same city, or in outside cities, is borne by the banks locally without any remuneration, and in the case of outside transactions, at a charge frequently insufficient to cover the actual expenses involved.—*L. S. Patterson.*

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Two paragraphs in this column last week referring to the report of the Dominion Steel Corporation hardly did justice to it. Since they were written some new light has been thrown upon the report, Mr. J. H. Plummer having given out figures which permit of a direct comparison being drawn between the twelve months ended March 31 last, and the previous twelve months. It will be remembered that the report prior to the present was for 21 months, and the figures now published for the twelve of the twenty-one have been calculated by the auditors. The comparison which can now be made shows that the Corporation did somewhat better last year than had been thought at first.

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The new figures show that last year's net earnings of $4,714,058 compare with $3,936,181 in the previous twelve months. This is after deducting all manufacturing, selling and administrative expenses, but before charging provision for sinking funds, depreciation, etc. After deduction for sinking funds, exhaustion of minerals and depreciation and also interest on bonds and loans and proportion of discount on bonds sold, there remains $2,372,667 against $1,835,170. Adding balances brought forward, there is available for dividends $3,157,613 against $2,570,150. Dividends in the year concluded in March last included a payment of $437,500 on preference shares which did not have to be met in the previous year, and the common stock dividend absorbed $50,000 additional, but nevertheless an addition of $98,067 was made to surplus bringing it up to $883,013 against an addition of $40,965 in the previous twelve months. Moreover, this year, larger additions have been made to reserves.

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At the annual meeting on Wednesday, Mr. Plummer spoke hopefully. He stated that the betterments entered upon three years ago were now an accomplished fact, and that in consequence during the present year, the Company would for the first time have the earning capacity of a completed plant to its credit. He did not hesitate to say that net receipts during the present year would exceed those of last year by $800,000.

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Mr. Plummer also referred to the tariff question, and its postponement for another year. "What is to be regretted," he said, "is that people in the business are deterred by tariff conditions from increasing the primary and basic lines of manufacture; that large secondary industries are growing up whose existence may depend on the maintenance of supplies of raw material entering at low duties or even duty free; that these conditions wil make it increasingly difficult to get the primary industries established in Canada. The outcome may be a condition of industrial dependence on foreign makers of pig iron and of steel in its earlier stages of manufacture, except in the case of a few concerns which start with the coal and ore and sell the product in wire, nails, and other finished articles."

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It was announced subsequently to the annual meeting that in future the Company will issue quarterly statements.

CANADIAN FIRE RECORD

(Specially compiled by The Chronicle)

BROWNING, SASK.—Barn burned down, June 5. Origin, lightning.

AYR, ONT.—John Watson Mfg. Co.'s gas plant gutted, June 13. Origin, explosion.

TEMPERANCE VALE, N.B.—James Punder's saw and grist mill destroyed, June 10, Loss, total.

WELLAND, ONT.—Electric transformer at Canadian Forge foundry damaged, June 11. Loss, $150.

ST. THOMAS, ONT.—Albert Miller's barns, Edgeware Road, burned, June 15. Loss, $2,000. Origin, lightning.

KEEWATIN, ONT.—George Hill's house destroyed with contents, June 7. Origin, defective pipe. No insurance.

HAMILTON, ONT.—Residence of W. L. Lundy, 111 Herkomer street, damaged, June 8. Loss, $5,000. covered by insurance; unknown origin.

MEDUCTIC, N.B.—General store of W. Dickinson, his house adjoining and store formerly occupied by G. P. Olts destroyed, June 8. Loss, $8,000.

SYDNEY MINES, N.S.—Bankhead at No. 2 colliery destroyed, June 15. Loss, $15,000, partly covered by insurance.

CAMBRAY, ONT.—Frame residence of Mrs. McIntyre, destroyed, and adjoining residence of W. G. Webster damaged, June 11. Origin, sparks.