

abled to pay in full, but disclosures of unsoundness in a few widely known institutions, in the abnormal state of popular feeling after an excited contest on monetary issues, has caused distrust and suspicion where it is frequently undeserved. There has been no monetary pressure to cause trouble, nor have important Western products declined in value. There has evidently been too liberal assistance given by some fiduciary concerns to speculative operations."

### THE GRAIN MARKETS 1896.

At the beginning of the year 1896, the grain markets were not characterized by any special features. Values were steady at about the basis of the closing markets of 1895. Few fluctuations were made during the month of January. In the six grain storage centres of Canada, on February 1st, 1896, there was 7,412,676 bushels of wheat, as compared with 4,254,591 bushels at the same day of 1895. In spite of a comparative surplus of 3,158,085 bushels of wheat in the principal Canadian elevators, there was a strong demand from local millers. Combined with events adding strength to foreign markets, this strong local consumptive demand had the effect of advancing prices from averages in January for Ontario winter wheat, 67.7, and Manitoba hard, 69.1 cents per bushel, to these averages in March. Ontario winter wheat 80.2, and Manitoba hard, 80 cents per bushel. The contribution of local causes to the advancing markets is made evident by the relatively greater advance made in Ontario wheat, which is consumed in Canadian mills, than in Manitoba wheat, the price of which is regulated mainly by the export trade.

In April, the grain markets began to decline, and holders who had been expecting a repetition of the strength shown by the wheat markets in the spring of 1895, were disappointed. In April, 1895, Ontario wheat was quoted at an average price of 66 cents, and in July at 85.7 cents per bushel, while during the same period in 1896 prices of Ontario wheat fell from an average of 76.2 cents to 62.6 cents per bushel. Manitoba hard wheat averaged 80 cents in April, 1895, and had advanced to an average of 97 cents in July; while in 1896, Manitoba hard was quoted at an average of 78.5 cents in April, it had fallen to 62.5 cents in the month of July. History sometimes fails to repeat itself, and in learning this lesson a number of grain operators suffered severe losses last spring.

During the summer months the wheat markets remained very depressed. Reports from abroad indicated immense yields of grain in European wheat-growing countries. The prospects in France were regarded as especially favorable to a large crop of wheat. The reports of the American Government indicated excellent crop conditions in the United States. The fields of Canada gave every indication of a bountiful harvest. September closed with weakness, but October brought strength to the markets. Government reports and private estimates of crop conditions had evidently been at fault. The final official estimate as to the Indian wheat crop placed the yield at 188,000,000 bushels as compared with 286,000,000 bushels in 1895. The crops of India had suffered severely through lack of rain and severe famine, and great distress prevailed in many districts. India left the ranks of exporting countries and became an importer. Australia placed import orders for wheat in the United States. The Russian crop was smaller than usual, while several other countries showed a shortage in the year's harvest returns. The Argentine Republic was the only country south of the equator to which Europe could look for supplies before another crop had been harvested in the northern hemisphere. The growing grain in Argentina had been injured by unfavorable

weather conditions, while serious damage had been done to the plant by locusts. The European markets were in almost a state of panic, and in this condition turned to America. The space in out-going vessels was fully occupied and immense shipments were made from Canada and the United States to Great Britain. Ontario winter wheat selling at an average of 61.2 cents in September, advanced to an average of 81.6 cents in November, and closed the year at an average of 82.7 cents per bushel; Manitoba hard wheat advanced from an average of 65.5 cents in September to 87.5 cents in December.

Strength came to the wheat market of 1895 in the spring, after the grain had left the farmers' hands, and the advantage of the rise in prices was confined to the few. During September, October, November and December, the farmers' marketing months, prices ruled very low. In 1896 the highest monthly averages were made in November and December, the market having shown a pronounced upward tendency before ten per cent. of the crop had been marketed by growers.

AVERAGE MONTHLY PRICES OF GRAIN.  
(Compiled from Toronto Market Reports.)

	Ontario winter wheat.		Manitoba hard wheat.		Barley.		Oats.		Peas.	
	1895.	1896.	1895.	1896.	1895.	1896.	1895.	1896.	1895.	1896.
January ..	57	67.7	75.4	69.1	40	39.3	31	27	23.2	50.5
February ..	57.5	79.7	77	78.5	41.5	39.3	32.7	26.5	53.7	51.5
March ...	60.5	80.2	78.7	80	46.5	39.3	36.7	26.5	56.7	50.5
April ....	66	76.2	80	78.5	47	37.5	37.5	25	57.5	48
May .....	78.2	74.1	86	73.7	47	33.5	36.5	23.3	57.5	48.5
June .....	95.5	66	\$1 02.5	65	49	33.5	41	23.3	60.7	46
July .....	85.7	62.6	97	62.5	49	33.5	37.2	21.7	59	44.5
August ..	71	62.4	84	63.7	45	33.5	32.7	22.2	54	44.5
September	59	61.2	77	65.5	39	29.1	25	18.2	50	42
October ..	63.2	71.6	70	75	38.2	30.2	26	21.2	50	43.5
November.	66.2	81.6	67	85.5	38	30.9	27	22	51.7	43.2
December.	62.7	82.7	67	87.5	38	28.5	26.5	19.7	50.7	41.5

### FIRES IN FACTORIES.

The paper from an expert in chemistry submitted elsewhere in this issue under the heading "Spontaneous Combustion of Sawdust," is of grave moment to underwriters, not less than to manufacturers. Professor Shuttleworth gives reasons why sawdust should not be used as packing between walls of factories and houses, as is often done. Even when mixed with lime, to render it less combustible, he found by experiment that the mixture would nevertheless carry fire, i.e., "that if kindled at one point the fire would creep into the mass until it is entirely consumed." This he finds a grave objection. A circumstance which emphasizes the importance of this subject came to light after an investigation into the recent fire on Stanley street, Montreal, where it was found that the partitions or floors of a building had been stuffed with sawdust, which caused the fire to spread more rapidly.

### FRIENDLY SOCIETIES.

At the recent annual meeting of the Commercial Travellers' Association, the actuary of that body, Mr. William McCabe, explained the system of the mortuary benefits granted by the association. In reply to questions by several members at the meeting, he also called attention to a matter affecting all members of assessment and fraternal organizations. On page C. 208 of the 1896 report, by the Inspector of Insurance for Ontario, appears the finding of that officer regarding the system of one of this class of organizations. That officer has made, as Mr. McCabe said, a clear presentation of the fatal error underlying the organization of all such bodies.

The report points out that "the existing premium rates of the society in question (practically the same as