

worth mentioning. This case develops other peculiarities not by any means unusual. Mr. Stead found it a troublesome matter to get his cash book to balance; hence for the last couple of years he has discontinued the attempt, and only "some things" are entered. During the same length of time it has not been convenient to take stock, though times were dull, and the subject of our notice found abundant opportunity to serve his "party" as secretary of a political association.

Unfortunately the amendment of 1877 will prevent a discharge again being obtained from a sympathising court. Still, that is an easy matter to arrange. Next in order will be a proposal from Mrs. S. to forego all ranking upon the estate in consideration of the creditors executing a consent to the insolvent's discharge, and of course a ready acceptance of these terms by forgiving creditors. Bless us all! the matter is quite simple. It has been reduced to a science. As Mr. S. is still quite a young man he may live to multiply many times his present modest list of failures—that is to say if he has ordinarily good luck. And the worthy Mrs. S., who, by the way, has been singularly fortunate in her land transactions, will doubtless with each successive failure grow richer and richer, while her husband's creditors become poorer and poorer.

#### COMMUNICATION WITH BRAZIL.

The announcement has been made that direct communication between Canada and Brazil is to be opened, the Canadian Government engaging to give a subsidy to a line of steamers to Rio Janeiro of \$50,000. The Brazilian Legislature is expected to support the undertaking with a subsidy probably equal in amount.

The United States carries on a considerable trade with Brazil, partly in produce which Canada could as easily supply. During the last thirty years the States have sent to Brazil an average of 405,797 barrels of flour, of the value of \$3,123,625. In the last year of the thirty the quantity was about twice as much as in the first. Since the year 1868 the Americans have exported to that country petroleum to the average annual amount of 2,220,336 gallons. Both these articles Canada produces largely in excess of her own wants; and with direct steam communication with Brazil she ought to be able to get a share of this trade.

The exports of the States to Brazil contains a larger list than Canada could supply. Within the last thirty years the States have sent to that country an average of \$425,-

686 worth of cotton goods. In these goods the trade has been fluctuating, but has not largely increased during the lifetime of a generation. It was in 1847 of the value of \$493,560, and last year the figures had only advanced to \$523,322, though in a few odd years this amount had been exceeded, and in 1861 it had been nearly doubled, being \$948,638.

But the United States trade with Brazil, taken as a whole, is small compared with that of England or France with the same country. In 1874 Brazil received from England goods to the value of \$40,230,802, and from France to the value of \$13,558,212, while she received from the United States only to the value of \$7,705,820. By far the greater part of what the United States sent were products of the soil, including wheat flour, \$4,577,126, and provisions, \$410,812, leaving a very small amount of manufactures. These articles Canada could as easily supply. The other countries sent chiefly manufactures. These facts show that the manufactures of the States, in spite of all that may be said to the contrary, are in a comparatively backward state; for last year she had not increased her exports to Brazil, over the value sent in 1874, one million of dollars.

While the trade between England and Brazil is almost literally one of barter, so nearly do the exports balance the imports—in the thirty years ending 1878 the exports were \$651,305,405, and the imports \$642,150,460—the trade between the United States and Brazil has always been largely one-sided. From 1841 to 1859 the United States imports from that country were \$68,301,149, and the exports thither only \$27,780,168; in the next decade the figures were \$169,035,744 imports, and \$44,553,373 exports; from 1861 to 1870 the imports were of the value of \$175,136,644, and exports \$53,726,998; from 1871 to 1878, the disproportion continuing, the imports measured in money were \$317,043,880, and the exports \$58,183,650. Taking the whole period, from 1821 to 1878, the average excess of imports over exports were 254 p.c.

These facts do not warrant us in looking for a large trade between Canada and Brazil. We could compete with the States for the supply of flour, coal oil and provisions. What else they would take from us we scarcely know. Fish might possibly find an increasing market there. But what the United States have actually supplied to Brazil, for many years past, must be a pretty good indication of what we could send there. The old question about the suitability of northern wheat flour for a tropical climate might be renewed; but experience would soon settle it. We shall

be on the right track in seeking out new markets for our produce; though it is desirable that we should not form erroneous estimates of what extent they may be capable of being utilized. Our object will be attained if we have furnished some grounds on which to form a correct opinion in the case of Brazil.

#### FIRE INSURANCE IN CANADA, 1878.

The annual report of the Superintendent of Insurance, which we already noticed from advance sheets, is not the most interesting document to the average reader. But notwithstanding its apparent barrenness of general interest, it deserves attention from those interested in the welfare of the people. Its loss figures are a sort of business gauge falling in prosperous times and rising in adverse ones. We, therefore, propose to notice the salient points of the report.

During the year 1878, Fire Premiums received were less by \$395,575 than those received in 1877, while losses showed a decrease of \$7,150,022 during the same period. The percentage of losses to premiums in the former year was 225.58, in the latter 54.11; the St. John fire, in 1877, being mainly accountable for the disparity. The "rate of losses per cent. of premiums" for the ten years, ended 31st December, 1878, was 86.09, the year 1878 having been the more prosperous. The learned Superintendent remarks that "the final ratio for the whole ten years' business is still very high, and it will require years of prosperity" to reduce it to the level of 60 per cent., which is usually considered the normal rate. We think it will require more than years of prosperity to reduce that ratio to a normal rate. Tariffs have been too low; commissions too high; too much has been entrusted to the agent; management has been lax; and with companies of small capital business has been too extended. These evils remedied, prosperous times would assist in bringing about the desired result, but they would be ineffective otherwise.

The total amount of fire insurances in force in Canada on 31st December, 1878, was \$409,899,701, being \$10,442,980 less than at the corresponding day in 1877. Canadian companies showed a decrease of \$46,314,328, British an increase of \$18,398,425, and American of \$17,472,923. But the Canada Agricultural, the Provincial, and the Stadacona had ceased to do business, thereby accounting for forty-four millions decrease; and we think that a want of confidence occasioned by the failure of these companies might fairly be set down as accounting for much of the remainder.