

to their careful selection of risks by painstaking and intelligent canvassers. He was of opinion, however, that no small part of their success was attributable to good luck. If the business of these mutuals was analyzed, it would be found that not more than one-fourth of their risks would rank as first class ones. The owners of these good risks are beginning, he says, to find out that they have been, during the past year or two, contributing more than their proper shares to the losses of these mutual companies. The president recommended the members of the Association to take advantage of this circumstance by endeavoring to get possession of the special risks of which the mutuals had deprived them.

Dr. J. S. Bloomington of the *Investigator*, Chicago, read a paper under the head of "The Politics of Fire Insurance," showing that in the United States there are 1,600 fire insurance companies doing business, a number far in excess of the requirements of the country. He included in this number the good, bad, and indifferent—the large majority belonging to the two last named classes. Of this total number 350 are stock companies, the remainder mutuals. The United States have 1,300 more fire insurance companies than all the rest of the civilized world. Great Britain has 75 native companies; Germany, 60; France, 27; Austria, 24; Norway and Sweden, 17; Russia, 14; Belgium, 10; Italy, 9; Holland, 8; Switzerland, 5; Roumania, 2; total, 176. The estimated wealth of Great Britain is \$57,000,000,000. The value of buildings and property in France, in 1888, was \$26,000,000,000, and the total taxable property in the United States in 1886 was assessed at \$21,889,000,000.

The wonderful growth of fire insurance in the United States was referred to by Mr. Bloomington. In 1861 there were no less than 600 companies doing fire business, of which he estimated there were only 75 responsible and legitimate companies. The entire amount at risk was then but \$3,000,000,000. Now there are 1,600 companies, insuring \$18,000,000,000, being within \$2,889,000,000 of the whole assessed taxable property of the United States.

The increase of the expense in the last eight years was referred to by Mr. D. J. Devlin of the Glen's Falls Insurance Company. That of American companies, he says, is 2.28 and that of foreign companies 2.18.

A well-known fire insurance inspector, Mr. Robert W. Browne, read before the association a paper on Automatic Sprinklers, which, notwithstanding their failure in recent fires at Des Moines, Petoskey, Winona, La Crosse, Pullman, and Danville, he thought there was still virtue in the sprinkler system when well put in and in the proper place. Careful watching and inspection are required, especially in risks where corrosion is active, such as glucose and sugar refineries, paper mills and the like. Sprinklers should always have two sources of water supply. Without this, failures will inevitably occur.

—The fifty-fifth half-yearly dividend of the Western Canada Loan and Savings Company is at the annual rate of 10 per cent.

## HIDES AND LEATHER.

The leather market continues very quiet according to both Montreal and Toronto accounts, and not much improvement is expected until after the beginning of next year. The serious decline in the prices of hides is causing the boot and shoe manufacturers to hold off laying in supplies just now, although every year at this time the leather market is dull. It is claimed by tanners that the present compass of leather stocks will easily maintain prices, while manufacturers on their part will not in the force of the present reduced quotations of hides, pay present prices for leather until compelled. We hear of no accumulation of stocks, unless in light grades of leather; there may be some, but they are not heavy. Prices are weaker, and we observe a decline in the quotations for some descriptions of sole.

As to hides, the decline in their price began in the States, and it now appears that while prices in Canada were yet untouched, the Americans sent their travellers into Canada, and placed 20,000 green hides in the provinces of Quebec and Ontario away below any price that Canadian dealers could sell at without serious loss. This sudden collapse in prices of hides has placed dealers in a peculiar position, almost beyond foresight of calculation. They must lose on present stocks, it would seem, having bought them at high figures. Prices may again, it is thought, even reach the lowest point, which was 4 cents a pound in January last for green hides.

## DECISIONS IN COMMERCIAL LAW.

WOOD v. STRINGER.—In an action to enforce a mechanic's lien brought by material men against the contractor and the registered owner, the contest was as to whether anything was due to the contractor, and the registered owner was not liable on the contract. The Chancellor holds: 1. That the amount due to the contractor could not be ascertained without the persons liable on the contract being brought before the court. The work in question was the building of a church. The last of the work done was the pews, and as they were being put in, objection was made by the architect to their material and workmanship. 2. That the occupying of the church with the pews objected to in it was not an acceptance of the work. 3. That a reduction of the contract price by an amount equal to the difference in value between the bad stuff and that which should have been used, was not an adequate measure of the set-off to which the proprietors were entitled. The contract provided that no extras were to be allowed unless expressly ordered and payments for the same expressly agreed for in writing by the proprietors or architect. The Chancellor also holds that extras could not be allowed unless a writing was proved.

BICKERTON v. DAKIN.—The new Act to simplify procedure in enforcing mechanic's liens is now being interpreted by the courts. A claim of lien under the Mechanic's Lien Act was registered, and proceedings to enforce it were taken in the name of a firm which had been dissolved, and one of the members of which had died prior to the registration. The materials for which the lien was claimed were, however, all furnished by the firm before the dissolution or death, and it was provided that the dissolution was not to affect this and other elements. S. 16 of R.S.O., c. 126, under which the lien was registered, speaks of the "claimant" of the lien, and s.

19 of the "person entitled to the lien." The Interpretation Act R.S.O., c. i., s. 8 (13), shows what the word "person" shall include, and does not mention a "firm" or "partnership." The Chancellor holds that the lien attached on the land was validly continued; the difficulty as to the word "person" was overcome by the use of the alternative word "claimant," which extended to a partnership using the firm name in the registration of the lien. Under the Act to simplify the procedure for enforcing mechanics' liens, 53 Vict., c. 37, it is competent to join liens so as to give jurisdiction to the High Court, though each apart may be within the competence of an inferior court. The plaintiffs in proceeding under 53 Vict., c. 37, to enforce their lien, filed with a Master as the "Statement of Claim" mentioned in s. 2, a copy of the claim of lien and affidavit registered, verified by an affidavit, and the Master thereupon issued his certificate.

The Chancellor also holds that if the "Statement of Claim" filed was not in proper form inasmuch as it contained all the facts required for compliance with the Act, an amendment *nunc pro tunc* should be allowed.

## MANITOBA TRADE.

The reports to his Government of Mr. James W. Taylor, the United States Consul at Winnipeg, may always be looked for to contain practical information and intelligent comment. That gentleman has lived many years in Manitoba and has kept his eyes open to the current of events. His district extends between longitudes 87° and 110°, and from the international boundary or latitude 49° to the Arctic coast beyond latitude 70°.

A table submitted in his report shows how the imports into the area described (of late years subdivided into the province of Manitoba, and the territories of Alberta, Athabasca, and Saskatchewan, with the district of Keewatin, which district is in the bailiwick of Governor Schultz), beginning with \$1,413,000 in 1872, rose to \$4,637,000 in 1880; to \$7,362,000 in 1881; to \$16,200,000, \$24,300,000, \$12,784,000, and \$10,983,000 during the years 1882, 3, 4, and 5, which were those in which the Canadian Pacific Railway was pushed forward most rapidly, declining to \$7,716,000 in 1888 and rising again to nearly \$8,000,000 in 1889. In these eighteen years the exports show a steady growth, rising from a value of \$295,000 in 1872 to \$871,000 in 1882, when furs were the main exports, and to one, two, four and six millions respectively in different subsequent years, after the influx of farmers had given scope to grain and cattle raising. During the fiscal year 1889, the imports of Manitoba (including Emerson and York Factory), Western Ontario consular agency at Port Arthur and N.W. Territory for the Canadian ports of entry at Fort Walsh and Fort Macleod), comprising the Winnipeg consular district, has been as follows:—

|                | Dutiable.   | Free.     | Total.      |
|----------------|-------------|-----------|-------------|
| Manitoba....   | \$1,796,293 | \$410,021 | \$2,207,314 |
| Port Arthur..  | 321,056     | 85,282    | 406,338     |
| N.W. Territory | 98,555      | 30,200    | 128,755     |

\$2,216,904 \$525,503 \$2,742,407

The Manitoba exports—including only shipments from Winnipeg, Emerson, Gretna and York Factory—have been \$405,333 to the United States, \$375,622 to Great Britain, and \$1,650 to other countries—total \$782,606. To United States, barley (118,582 bushels) \$59,688, books \$2,825, buffaloes (horned cattle) \$12,656, carriages \$2,554, clothing \$17,068, fresh fish \$7,140, fish preserved \$1,682, flax