

We refer to the manner in which the electric wires are strung all over the city which doubtless affords the insurance companies just cause for complaint. The tramway wires have little or no protection, and some steps will have to be taken to prevent a general flare up at any time.

The insurance companies in London, Eng., now require answers to the following queries on the subject of electric light in buildings, before issuing any policies on such risks where it is used. It might be instructive to re-produce those questions here for the benefit of our readers:

1. By whom has the installation been fitted up?

2. How is the electricity generated?

3. Are incandescent or arc lights used?

4. Are the conductors insulated with india-rubber?

5. Have all the conductors sufficient sectional area to allow 100 per cent. more electricity being safely sent through them than will be required for the lights they supply?

6. Is there any ground circuit? Are gas or water pipes used as part of any circuit? Is any part of the fittings used as part of any circuit?

7. Are all fittings thoroughly insulated from earth and from gas pipes?

8. Are "cut outs" or "safety fuses" placed close to the source of supply, at the junction of every sub-main or branch with the main or sub-main? If from a high tension supply company on both primary and secondary mains? If primary or secondary batteries are used, has each regulating cell a "cut out" or "fuse"?

9. Are all switches, resistances and cut outs so placed that there is no danger of fire from heating or fusing?

10. If secondary generators, transformers or converters are used, are they placed inside the insured building, or where?

N.B.—The answers to above should be given by the electrical engineers who have fitted up the installation. In all cases the form must be signed by them.

PROVINCIAL MATTERS.

The Provincial Parliament has been formally opened, and soon the representatives of the people will be up to the neck in business. The Speech from the Throne, with which they were set to work, began with a very fitting succession of regrets on account of the death of Sir John A. Macdonald and H. R. H. the Duke of Clarence. Then came an array of congratulations upon the past year of solid prosperity and the encouraging outlook for the future. More than once commercial travelers from the East have spoken to the writer of the solid and substantial appearance of the business prosperity of this province, where they discovered none of that stringency which was apparent almost everywhere else. And why has this been? we may ask. The comparative immunity of our people from business failures may be traced to the solid way in which they have done their trade. Our people do not indulge in that "kitesying" that is so characteristic of those who do business on paper instead of as much cash as possible—and this is much aided by the old-fashioned, though

none the less excellent, system of doing business if not upon cash by current account. "Pay cash at a specified time, and in the meantime as often as you like!"

Moreover, there are few, if any, of those objectionable concerns that are termed "supply houses" in this community, and our retailers are not given to snapping at the baits which are so persistently held out by some Eastern wholesalers to stock up to an unlimited extent upon almost the purchaser's own terms. Our industries are all flourishing, while our coal output was last year almost 50 per cent. greater than the twelve months previous. Then, as to the future, our mineral prospects are of the best. Recent developments of new ledges, both of gold and silver, have been such as to attract general attention to them, the prospect being, as mentioned elsewhere, that they will have an impetus such as they have not previously received by the influx of capital and by improved means of transportation both by water and by rail. Financially, British Columbia has established itself upon the London market on a much more advantageous basis than it ever previously occupied, and for works of real benefit to the country is not likely to be handicapped for lack of resources. The trouble, however, is frequently that too much credit for a country is quite as bad as for the individual. Witness the case of some of the Australasian and other colonies.

The land law is, we are glad to know, to undergo further amendment, in order as much as possible to preserve agricultural lands for actual settlers. Albeit every number of the *Official Gazette* contains additions to the long list of those who are grabbing for the most eligible sections of country that are yet to be disposed of. Definite action is, it would appear, to be taken this session, looking to the actual settlement of the Scottish crofters, about which so much has already been said. It would, however, be well to see that their so-called friends have not too big a hand in the pie; and that it be made impossible for speculative deals to be made out of the departure.

The Speech tells us—what everybody is supposed to concur in—that "there is reason to anticipate an early settlement of the vexed question of our rights in Behring Sea, and we can only hope that the terms may be such as will permit of our important sealing industry being prosecuted without further obstruction." We are none too sanguine as to the outcome, which will be as little to the advantage of British Columbia as the Americans can manage to make it.

LOOSE DISCOUNTING METHODS.

It is a rule with English banks when discounting paper to take into consideration the standing of makers as much as that of endorsers; but in Canada it is claimed that little importance is attached to the former, the chief condition being the endorsement, which renders the paper double named. It is held that the banks should scrutinize the paper presented for discount more closely by enquiring into the standing of makers, instead of relying exclusively upon endorsers, as is too often the case. Some of our leading banks, the

Trade Bulletin is informed, have adopted a more careful scrutiny of the paper brought them for discount, having determined to follow more closely the English system. The present chronic trouble in the leather trade in the east is no doubt due mainly to the loose manner in which tanners' paper has been melted by the banks, whether it was of a legitimate character or not, and it is learned upon the highest authority, says the same paper, that some of the Quebec banks have decided to inaugurate a thorough reform, which will render all future attempts of the black leather syndicate to dove-tail their exchange notes with each other in order to finance at their will, nugatory. It is admitted on all hands that some of the tanning firms that have recently failed, have been sustained solely, through their adroit methods of milking the banks by "kite flying," and we repeat that, if this state of things be not stopped, the consequences to the banks will be of a most serious nature.

EDITORIAL NOTES.

A SCHEME for taking vessels of twenty feet draught through the Canadian canals by means of steel pontoons placed under them is being urged upon the Canadian Government. The expense of the system would be about \$500,000.

The Hoquiam, Wash., Canning Company is said to be doing a rushing business canning clams, this season. More than 1,100 quarts have gone to Tacoma for cold storage since the company opened its works, December 23rd, and the demand is now greater than the supply.

THE Dominion public accounts of the last fiscal year have been issued and show an expenditure of \$30,343,567, with receipts, \$38,579,310, leaving a surplus of \$2,235,000. The rate of interest on the gross debt is 3.35 per cent., .02 less than a year ago. The net rate fell from 2.99 to 2.92.

THE *Insurance and Financial Chronicle* finds that out of 537 wholesale mercantile firms representing \$79,241,000 of capital doing business in Montreal, 99 are French and represent \$5,715,000. This shows that, despite the great increase of the French-Canadian population, the English-speaking business men hold their own. In the city of Montreal, however, retail firms rated at less than \$20,000, are largely in the majority, although it is in number rather than in amount.

IN regard to the beet root sugar industry, which has been many a time pointed out as a department particularly well suited to the conditions of this province, we note a prosperous year after several seasons of suspension and loss for the Farmham, Quebec, beet root sugar works. It is announced that "after a fairly good season better arrangements have been made with the farmers and a large tract of available land purchased by the directors, who intend going largely into the growing of beets. There is a prospect, therefore, that the coming season the output of sugar will exceed any for years."