

The Australian Alliance was started in 1862; does fire, marine and accident business, and has had a prosperous career, its premium income being now £60,000. By this acquisition the already strong position of the well-known London and Lancashire office in Australasia will be perceptibly improved. This office, which has a capital of 3 millions, reserve funds aggregating 1¼ millions and has paid since 1905 annual dividends of 32 per cent. is already superintending the business of several other concerns which are carried on separately under guarantee by the London & Lancashire Company.

The terribly disastrous Battersea shop fire affects some half-dozen fire offices, the damage being estimated at about £300,000. It is the present practice of the Tariff offices to inspect all shops having Christmas decorations, but in view of the dangers, now revealed of this practice of decoration, it will now be surprising if the fire offices do not tighten up their regulations and also if there is not a strong public agitation to put drapers' Christmas displays under public control. To the ordinary lay mind the average Christmas "bazaar" in our big shops has long appeared to be little more than a death trap in the case of any accident.

London, 24th December, 1909.

METRO.

EXPORT TRADE OF MONTREAL.

In its invaluable annual compilation on The Export Trade of the Port of Montreal, The Gazette refers to the inauguration of the White-Star Dominion Line service and the placing on the route of their two new steamers, Laurentic and Megantic. The Thomson line, for which the Robert Reford Company are agents, also brought a new steamer, the Tortona, into the harbour, and with her they opened a direct service between Canada and Italy. Next season the Donaldson line will put a new steamer, the Saturnia, on the Glasgow-Montreal service. The Canadian Northern will inaugurate an Atlantic service this year.

General passenger business and import trade were much ahead of last season, but some steamship lines report that exports were unsatisfactory, especially grain. Cheese and apples showed larger shipments than in 1908, but cattle were less, and deal and lumber exports were light. Grain freights ruled low during the early part of the season, but stiffened up considerably for October and November loading.

Revenue received by the Harbour Commissioners from the opening of navigation to December 1, was \$350,883, as compared with \$333,123 in the corresponding months of 1908.

The number of seagoing craft which visited the port of Montreal during the season 1909 was 367, of which 364 were steamships and 3 were sailing vessels, as compared with 386 steamers and no sailing vessels in 1908. The total tonnage of all ocean-going vessels coming to port in 1909 was 1,425,173, as against 1,387,878 in 1908. This gives a decrease of 19 vessels, but an increase in tonnage of 37,295.

In arrivals from the Lower Ports there was, in 1909, a decrease of 55 vessels and 121,649 tons, as compared with the previous season.

Signs of Prosperity.

SOME YEAR-END CANADIAN SHOWINGS.

Statistics and Abstracts of Progress in Agriculture, Trade, Banking, Insurance and other Activities of the Country's Development.

It is probably well below the mark to say that the Dominion's exports of domestic products will last year have reached a value of \$260,000,000, or about \$12,500,000 more than the 1908 total, and \$22,000,000 greater than in 1907. Total imports are likely to have reached \$350,000,000 or over during 1909. While this is an increase of nearly \$58,000,000 over 1908, it is some \$23,000,000 less than the 1907 record. However, autumn imports have practically been up to previous high records, so marked has been general business expansion since crop-moving began.

Canadian Foreign Trade.

	Domestic Exports.	Total Imports.	Duty Collected.
Calendar year, 1905...	\$210,806,459	\$270,386,230	\$43,531,328
" 1906 ..	238,746,322	320,477,200	50,000,903
" 1907 ..	238,015,557	372,825,465	59,624,119
" 1908 ..	247,630,809	292,288,575	47,668,276
(Estimated) do. 1909 ..	260,000,000	350,000,000	56,890,847

Growth in Bank Loans and Deposits.

The year now closing has been one of steady banking expansion for the Dominion. Since the close of February—when current loans in Canada were at their ebb after a year of slackened trade—there has been a growth in this item of well on to one hundred million dollars. At the end of November, 1909 (the latest date for which statements are available) the total of domestic current loans and discounts was over \$590,000,000, as against \$507,000,000 at the close of February. This month-end total was \$75,000,000 greater than at the close of November, 1908, and actually some \$3,000,000 greater than the previous high-mark in Canadian banking history, which was reached at mid-year 1907. At mid-year 1907 deposits by the public (including government) at home and abroad totalled somewhat over \$664,000,000, while loans aggregated about \$717,000,000—loans being \$53,000,000 in excess of deposits. At the close of November deposits aggregated over \$858,000,000, while loans of all classes were \$819,000,000; so that loans were nearly \$40,000,000 less than deposits. A steady influx of outside capital—from investors and immigrants—has added notably to Canada's banking funds.

Crop Record of 1909.

Crops of various classes compare as follows in value with the 1908 yield for the Dominion as a whole, according to the Census Department's estimate:

	1909.	1908.
Wheat, Oats, and Barley.....	\$289,144,000	\$209,070,000
Other Grains and Flax	26,707,000	23,044,000
Hay and Clover.....	132,287,700	121,885,000
Root Crops, etc.	84,852,500	78,535,000
Total.....	\$532,992,100	\$432,534,000

The unrevised December estimate of wheat production (possibly over-liberal) is as follows for the three western provinces: