

# The Chronicle

## Insurance & Finance.

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Proprietor.

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### Underwriters beware!

The Grand Jury, Philadelphia, recently called upon the judge to whom its presentment was made, to prosecute underwriters for raising the rates of fire insurance. This is a new departure in penology, it creates a new criminal offence which may have very widespread consequences. If underwriters are to be prosecuted for advancing rates then grocers will be liable to be indicted for putting up the price of sugar; bakers, the price of bread; butchers, the price of meat, and so on and so forth. The idea is, however, not wholly original, for very old precedents can be found for the prices of food and other commodities being fixed by law. To see a group of underwriters "doing time," under sentence for the crime of charging for insurance enough to cover its cost, would be a novel sight indeed. The land of liberty breeds the wildest notions in regard to freedom of contract.

### Electric Installations.

The Chief of the Electrical Bureau, Philadelphia, urges the passage of a city ordinance requiring thorough inspection of all electric installations. He says in regard to that city what can be said of Canadian cities:

"There is nothing now to prevent a man wiring his business place or home as he sees fit, whether that wiring is done properly or not. In the main, it is not unlikely that due precaution is taken, but anyone may go into the electrical business, and, of course, there is no certainty that an irresponsible firm will do good work. In some business houses in which wiring has been done the fire underwriters will, perhaps, make objections to the manner of wiring. Instead of making the suggested changes the increased rate of insurance is paid, and, of course, the increased fire risk continues. A man who does not carry insurance has nothing whatever to prevent electric installation in his establishment in any

manner he pleases. Besides, an independent power house may supply electricity to other establishments and, by carelessly stringing wires over house-tops, submit a great number of buildings to constant menace from fire."

If fires would only confine themselves to the premises wherein they break out, persons might be allowed to do as they see fit about electric wiring. But fires are no respectors of property, or etiquette, they pass from one house to another without invitation or excuse, so it is only reasonable to have legislation to protect property owners from their neighbours' negligence, and from incompetent or reckless mechanics.

### Dr. Griffen.

At the recent Convocation of Dalhousie University, N.S., the Degree of Doctor of Laws (LL.D.) was conferred, *honoris causa*, upon Mr. Martin J. Griffen, Parliamentary Librarian, Ottawa. Dr. Griffen was educated at St. Mary's College, Halifax, and at one time edited the "Toronto Mail." In 1885 he was appointed Parliamentary Librarian. Dr. Griffen is best known by his weekly review of new books published in the Montreal "Gazette" entitled "At Dodsley's," Dodsley having been one of the earliest and most eminent of English publishers. A number of these papers are well worthy of being re-published in book form. When Editor of the "Mail" Dr. Griffen styled the articles of an occasional contributor to that paper as "literature." The "At Dodsley's" papers show a width of reading, a depth of philosophic thought, an excellence of style that constitute them the highest literature yet written by a Canadian author. Dr. Griffen has well merited the palm of honour he now wears, upon which he has our congratulations.