

"SHYSTER" LAWYERS AND LABEL SUITS.

It has long been known, especially among journalists, that there is a class of irresponsible persons who are ever on the lookout for a chance to consider themselves slandered by newspapers, and who make it their business to take out actions of damages against the offending or rather the usually unoffending journalists in the hope of obtaining some judgment for damages, though never with the slightest intention of paying even their own share of the costs it detested, as they usually are. Thus they daily rob respectable and responsible publishers until they succeed in tying the hands of those conscientious journalists who try to serve the public by exposing their frauds, for even a newspaper cannot afford to ruin itself in the public interest. Against this class of individuals *The Chronicle* and many other journals have long waged war, and it was to protect legitimate newspaper men against these sharks that the "Newspaper Label Bill" was some three or four years ago introduced into the Local Legislature, by the Hon. T. Chase Casgrain, but was unfortunately defeated in the Upper House. There is, however, another class of people who make a living by similar means, viz., the "shyster" lawyers, who usually take this class of lawsuits in hand, and who often, indeed, stir up people to undertake vexatious suits, of which they would never otherwise entertain a thought. However, Canada is evidently not the only country in which this genus of leeches flourishes, if we may judge by the following extract from *The Critic*, of London, whose fearless editor rises to remark: "I am at one with Mr. Atherley-Jones when he suggests that solicitors be employed on the principle of 'no verdict, no pay.' Indeed, I go a step further, and beg to move as an amendment that in every case the solicitors of the losing side shall be made to pay the costs of the successful litigant. If Mr. Atherley-Jones would bring his suggestion to fruition, and make it retrospective, I should be able to present a formidable array of bills of costs to certain shady solicitors, who have induced their equally shady clients to bring bogus libel actions against me, with absolutely no means or intention of paying any costs when defeated. The bills of costs are ready for delivery at any moment. By-the-way, how about counsel's fees under such circumstances?" We are afraid that our confrere's amendment is of rather too sweeping a nature for general approval. There are lawyers and lawyers.—*Quebec Chronicle*.

ASSESSMENT AND FRATERNAL.

In an assessment company a policyholder died and upon suit being brought for \$7,000 under the contract, the company held that the member was two years in arrears, not having paid anything during that time. In answer a very fine technical point was set up, that in one instance the association had sent out its notices of assessment with but twenty-nine days in which to make payment, instead of thirty days, as required by the law. The California Court of Appeals sustained this position and ordered judgment for the plaintiff.

Failure to pay a mortuary premium in an assessment company within the time specified, although an expense assessment was paid beyond the date of death, did not hold the policy good.

The Supreme Court of Wisconsin holds that in the assessment or fraternal companies the member is clearly liable for any assessments which may be necessary to pay losses accruing during the life of his certificate, even although these may not have been determined and levied until after he has ceased to be a member.

Where in a society no one was to be admitted to membership above the age of

55, and an applicant gave his age as 54, it was held that if, in fact, he was above 55 the corporation was thereby led into a contract which it otherwise would not have made, and that this was a sufficient bar to recovery.

The provision in a beneficiary association constitution that a member may at any time change the beneficiary, is sustained, and the first beneficiary named acquired thereby no legal rights in the contract, notwithstanding such beneficiary may have paid the assessments.

In an assessment company a mortuary call for payment of a bi-monthly premium is not void for including in its list the death claims of a number that might have been included in the preceding call.

In Illinois in a suit against the Catholic Order of Foresters, it was held that where a member was too poor to pay the dues, the assessments should be paid by the order, and that the member in such circumstances should not be suspended for non-payment.—*Insurance News*, Boston.

THE COURSE OF WHEAT PRICES.

The significance of the estimates of the coming wheat crop given out by the Department of Agriculture can only be appreciated by comparing the figures with former years, and making ample allowance also for chronic underestimation by the correspondents upon whose reports the department makes up its estimates. No estimate of the amount of the crop, it should also be noted, is made by the department until the crop is harvested. The Department manifests great impatience at crop figures attributed to it earlier in the season, and we therefore relieve it of direct responsibility for them; but the Department makes its estimate of acreage and its estimate of condition referred to a normal scale of 100. Of course if you have anything like a reliable estimate of the acreage, together with an estimate of the condition as compared with the condition in a previous year, the production of which is known, you have the materials for estimating the coming crop; but the department disclaims all responsibility for figures of bushels, while giving figures of acres and the figures of relative condition.

The area is admitted by the department to be much larger than it was last year. A few weeks ago the department announced an increased acreage of 7 or 8 per cent., but explained that this was an increase over its own preliminary figures of last year's acreage, and not an increase over its reports last winter of the area actually harvested in 1897; after the harvest the department raised its area figures 5,000,000 acres, and it informed the public that it was upon the original figures the increase was computed. We expressed at the time the opinion that if the estimated increase were reckoned on the original area the result would be to show a lower area this year than last; that the department acknowledged large increases in area in the States that produce largely and that the high prices of the past year must have set every farmer who could do so to sowing more wheat; we ventured the opinion that the increase of 8 per cent. or thereabouts would be found to be an increase over the department's area report of last winter, which, though 5,000,000 more than the estimates earlier in the year, might still be presumed to be lower than the facts. These surmises are confirmed by the department's present estimate that the wheat area is about 43,500,000 acres, or more than 3,500,000 acres in excess of the area actually reaped last year according to the Department's figures published last winter after threshing was completed.

This greater area would call for nearly 50,000,000 bushels of wheat this year more than last. But the condition at the beginning of this month was something phenomenal. Winter wheat was ranked

at 90.8 as against 78.5 last year, and the spring wheat condition was ranked at 100.9 as against 89.6 last year. This is an improvement over last year, when we had the largest crop in our history except one; the gain is nearly 16 per cent. in winter and more than 12 per cent. in spring wheat. The improvement of condition would call for an increase of sixty or seventy million bushels over last year, and when we allow for the greater area, as well as the better condition of the wheat, we find that on the basis of last year's official crop the crop this year would be nearly or quite 640,000,000 bushels. This is twenty-five or thirty millions more than the crop of 1891, the largest we ever gathered.

But the official statement of last year's crop is 530,000,000 bushels. The known statistics of consumption prove that the crop must have been nearly or quite 600,000,000 bushels. The value of the comparative estimates of this year's crop lies in the fact that they point to a wheat crop 20 per cent. greater than that of last year, and such a crop would be not less than 700,000,000, and would probably come close to 720,000,000 bushels. This is much in excess of the largest crop we ever had. The official estimate of the crop of 1891 was 611,000,000 bushels; the trade estimate was 680,000,000. That enormous quantity will be well exceeded this year if the harvest realizes the promise of the condition on the first of this month.

Of course the prospect of so large a crop has had a decided effect on prices. And still the bins of Europe are so empty that there is every prospect of our being able to market this crop at remunerative prices, but not at such prices as those of the past spring when European destitution and the war scare and a huge speculation combined to send them up till they turned men's heads, cash grain bringing nearly \$2, and there being wild predictions of \$1.50 for wheat in July. Leiter's May deal went out with a heavy fall in prices, which the absence of speculation and the fine prospects in this country have continued. At the reduced prices the foreign demand remains good, though much of the enormous shipment now being effected is on old orders. The decline that has been going on lately led to the withholding of foreign orders to some extent, waiting for prices here to reach a settled basis, but prices got down low enough this week to satisfy Europe, and orders for export came in freely.—*N. Y. Journal of Commerce and Commercial Bulletin*.

"A friend of mine," says Robert C. Ogden, who is a partner of John Wanamaker, "called on Gladstone when in England and noticed that he kept American issues of magazines which are also published in England. Upon asking him the reason for this, the Grand Old Man replied: 'Oh, I keep the English editions, too, but they are for Mrs. Gladstone. I like to read the advertisements in the American editions. They are in themselves literature, and I can gauge the prosperity of the country by their very appearance.'"

—Homesteading goes on in a very gratifying way both in Manitoba and the Territories. The Winnipeg Free Press says that the homestead entries for last month were quite numerous at Edmonton, Dauphin and Qu'Appelle. At Edmonton there were 189 entries during May; for the first three weeks of the month there were 75 at Dauphin and during the same period there were 62 in the Qu'Appelle district, principally around Regina. The Winnipeg district recorded 49 entries and Prince Albert 24. The remaining land offices averaged from 20 to 25 entries.

—Municipal hall insurance and debenture by-laws, voted on by the ratepayers of Arthur municipality last Monday, were both defeated.