

**THE CANADIAN FIRE RECORD.**

(Specially compiled by The Chronicle.)

**Fire at Montreal.**—On the 18th instant a fire occurred in Breen's Pharmacy, 216 Queen St. East, Montreal. Damage estimated at \$1,000.

**Fire at Toronto.**—On the 19th instant a fire occurred on the premises of Krausman's Hotel, corner King and Church Streets, Toronto. Damage estimated at \$3,000.

**Fire at Montreal.**—On the 26th instant a fire occurred in an automobile repair shop, 322 West Craig Street, Montreal. Damage estimated at \$1,000.

**Fire at Hamilton, Ont.**—By the fire which occurred on the 23rd instant, on the premises of the Hamilton Cotton Co., Browne Wharf, Hamilton, Ont., the following companies are stated to be interested: Montreal Underwriters, \$25,000; Royal, \$19,000; Hudson Bay, \$23,800. Loss estimated about 40%.

**CONFLAGRATIONS AND BUILDING BY-LAWS.**

An enquiry into existing conditions in Canada shows that no city or town is free from the danger of conflagration. In some, the hazard is severe; in others, it has been modified by recent construction; in all our cities and towns the hazard is bad. The chief of every city fire department, writes Mr. J. Grove Smith, fears the day when he will have to solve for himself the problems that have confronted the organized brigades at Montreal, Toronto, Ottawa and other cities. In a general way, it may be said that the larger cities and towns in Canada consist of compact brick and stone business centres, surrounded by districts constructed almost entirely of wood. Frame buildings, to a greater or lesser degree, constitute the mercantile centres of the smaller towns and villages and whole sections of the residential areas.

In the congested business areas of cities, the more recent buildings are of a good type, but are usually too high for efficient protection by the available water supply under conflagration conditions. The older buildings are of a poor class, ranging from frame to ordinary joist construction. Many have large floor areas that would give an unbroken sweep to fire. Intermingled with the good and bad construction are buildings dilapidated beyond repair, forming a constant menace to adjoining structures. In nearly all buildings the floors are pierced with numerous unprotected openings for stairways, elevators and skylights. The windows of one building are permitted to face exactly opposite similar windows in adjacent buildings without any provision to minimize the exposure hazard. To the exterior of many of the buildings, immense metal-covered wooden cornices, useless domes, mansard roofs and other combustible features have been added, entirely destroying the fire protective value of brick and stone walls.

**The Cheap Construction Zone.**

Outside the business centres of cities and towns, there is, invariably, a zone of cheap construction. Municipal boundaries have been extended from time to time, with the result that the poorest classes of buildings have been brought within the

limits. These endanger all buildings thereafter erected in proximity to them. This outer zone generally includes the main residential sections, which are, in many instances, closely built-up districts of cheap brick veneer and frame buildings. Construction is extremely defective, owing to the speculative features that enter into the ownership of such property.

Beyond the outer area again are hundreds of suburban real estate developments, composed entirely of wooden buildings. Without restrictions, every builder has been a law unto himself. In many cases there is congestion through the efforts of real estate men to sell the maximum number of lots per acre. These sub-divisions are absolutely devoid of fire-retarding features and have little or no protection from public fire departments. They form a problem in themselves and, at the same time, constitute a menace to the cities which they adjoin. A fire, well started in such a locality, with a strong wind blowing, is exceedingly difficult to control. As a matter of fact, such fires seldom are extinguished until they have burned out, or are blocked by some natural barrier, such as a river, park or other open place. In their sweep they annihilate everything combustible and destroy homes which represent the investment of years of toil and saving by those who can least of all afford the loss. The sad experience of scores of small communities justifies and demands legislation that will operate to control all forms of construction outside of municipal fire districts. This is not only of importance to the particular community itself, but vitally affects the future extension of the city or town to which it stands adjacent.

**DANGERS FROM FAULTY CONSTRUCTION.**

With regard to the effect of holes in walls, otherwise fire retardant, and similar faults in construction, the Ontario Fire Marshal makes the following observations:—

In Port Arthur, Mr. Lewis found that a fire had been carried along the joists for more than sixty feet in a block of stores over which were several apartments, simply because the joists were not beam filled.

In a munitions plant fire in Dundas, the steam pipes were run through a hole in a stone wall and the draft through this aperture soon carried the flames to the adjoining building, resulting in an enormous loss that could easily have been prevented by filling the hole with stone and mortar.

The recent serious loss in the Borbridge Block, Ottawa, was caused, to a large extent, by the flames eating their way from one building to another through holes in the walls.

Holes in floors, the Fire Marshal points out, are also a fertile means of spreading fires. Flames quickly follow a current of air, they rush for the free oxygen. As a chain is no stronger than its weakest link, neither is a wall fire retardant so long as it has a single opening.

The Ontario Fire Marshal suggests that returned soldiers would be well suited to the important work of acting as armed guards to grain elevators, etc., at this time.