

A FERTILE COUNTRY.

J. B. Tyrrell, of the Dominion Geological Department, who has been engaged in continuing the surveys on the east side of Lake Winnipeg from Dog Head to the Narrows, and into the adjoining portions of Keewatin, says that the indications of minerals met with were not very promising, but he came across extensive tracks of fertile land, the existence of which is known to but few people. "The region is not a wilderness as generally supposed," said Mr. Tyrrell. "There are stretches of rich land stretching back, in some places, fully 10 miles from the lake. It is mixed bush and prairie land, and is equal in fertility to anything to be found between Winnipeg and Edmonton. Peavines, grasses, etc., grow luxuriantly, and we saw no indications of frost until the middle of September. The top soil, a rich vegetable mould, is from two three feet deep on an underlying stratum of clay. The district is part of the bed of the ancient lake, which at one time covered Manitoba, and the earth deposits there are the same as elsewhere in the province. A great fire swept over the country seven or eight years ago, destroying extensive areas of valuable timber; now there are but a few comparatively small patches left."

HANDLING LUMBER.

As the *Chronicle* has frequently pointed out, the mode of handling the lumber trade has completely changed within the last few years, and wood goods of all kinds are now largely transported by rail instead of being brought to market by the lakes and rivers, as in former years, and logs are now cut up into deals and lumber in the interior, instead of being brought to Quebec for sawing. In this way, the stave trade has gone to Baltimore, and Quebec has lost almost the entire deal trade of the Ottawa Valley, or at least Quebec labor has, for the deals continue to be shipped by Quebec merchants, but in Montreal. We have been consoling ourselves with the idea that we can always hold the timber trade, if we have lost the other. But within the last two or three years, square birch has commenced to be shipped by rail to Montreal, and this year, we are informed, large quantities of waney pine timber are being railroaded to Montreal from points on the United States side of Lake Superior, 1,200 miles distant, and put into the water at Point St. Charles. This timber will be floated alongside of steamships in Montreal, which take part cargoes of deals, as required.

This is an alarming state of affairs and requires prompt attention on our part. If we are to lose the little that is left of the timber trade, we had better throw up the sponge at once, and abandon the idea of Quebec being a shipping port at all. Is there a remedy? We think there is. Messrs. Dobell and Sharples, our largest merchants, have repeatedly pointed out that if we want to keep our trade we must employ the same means as other ports, namely, improve our railway communication with the lumber districts. Mr. Dobell has shown that the same thing is going on in the Baltic, and that such ports as Riga, Dantzic and Stettin have, by pushing new railways into the interior, not only held their trade, but have become centres into which an enormous supply of lumber and grain is poured, by these railways from the back country, for summer shipment, for these ports, like our own, are closed in winter. Mr. Dobell recommends us to do the same thing, and to build the Parry Sound Railway so as to get direct communication with the Hawkesbury, Ottawa and Arnprior mills, and with the timber district of Parry Sound, and predicts that we will benefit thereby in the same way as we have done by building the Lake St. John Railway, which now carries half the trade of our port. But there are other people in this community who think they are wiser, and who would prefer that we should sit still and not try to help ourselves, for fear that it might cost us something. On the same principle the man who is about to be frozen to death prefers to gather his cloak about him and lie down, rather than exert himself to reach a place of safety. If the people of Quebec are foolish enough to listen to this *laissez faire* policy they will see repeated on a larger scale the melancholy spectacle of tenantless houses that is to be seen from the Cul-de-Sac to Sillery.—*Quebec Chronicle*.

LIFE INSURANCE IN FRANCE FOR 1895.

The transactions of the French life insurance companies have again felt in 1895, the bad state of business and the reform in commissions. It is evident that many agents, only being able to reckon upon commissions payable in four years, have either abandoned the business altogether or have transferred their *clientele* to the foreign companies.

The figures furnished by the French companies are as follows, the names of companies being given to the number of seventeen:—

	Francs.
Abeille	7,500,000
Aigle	11,500,000
Assurances Generales	37,500,000
Caisse des Familles	9,000,000
Caisse Paternelle	8,000,000
Confiance	16,043,871
Fonciere	14,169,735
France	20,312,413
Monde	6,321,000
Nationale	39,200,000
Nord	5,000,000
Patrimoine	6,750,000
Phenix	35,300,000
Providence	7,093,000
Soleil	10,030,000
Union	15,000,000
Urbaine	41,110,783

It is a very difficult matter to get at the results reached in France by the foreign companies. Many of them evince an impenetrable discretion in this respect. Nevertheless, calculating the proposals which are distributed amongst the offices in Paris, we can indicate approximately the figures realized by them in France during last year:

	Francs.
Assurances Generales Belges	400,000
Baloise	2,300,000
Equitable of the United States	11,000,000
Gresham	8,000,000
Mutual Life	40,000,000
New York	14,000,000
Royal	14,000,000
Mutual Reserve	22,000,000

—*La Gazette des Assurances.*

COMPARATIVE MORTALITY OF THE SEXES.

Although woman has been deprived of so many rights and privileges, she has at least the advantage of man as regards longevity; she suffers less from accidents, injuries, and many forms of disease; she is, in fact, more tenacious than man of the limited enjoyments allowed her. Dr. Brandreth Symonds has collected and studied a large number of statistics to illustrate this interesting fact. The comparative mortality of the sexes at different ages, shows that in the first year of life the mortality of the female is much less than that of the male, being at birth 92.64 per 1,000 as against 112.80, and at the end of the year 31.88 as against 35.08. This difference continues up to the fourth year.

From five to twelve the female mortality is greater than that of the male, being at the latter period 3.56 for males and 4.28 for females. At the age of forty-six the male mortality equals that of the female, the latter having been up to this time slightly in excess. During the years forty-six to fifty-six, the period of the climacteric, the male mortality gains rapidly on the female, the gain being 6.32 per annum for the one and 3.47 for the other. Hence, the climacteric is really a much more serious time for man than for woman. After fifty-six, the female mortality gains on that of the male, but is always slightly below it. Woman has not only a less mortality and greater longevity than man, but there is, according to Dr. Symonds a plurality of female births, though the contrary view is usually held. Nature seems determined to keep up a full supply of women. *New York Medical Record.*

INSURANCE LEGISLATION.

It is refreshing to find now and then an insurance commissioner who has the ability to see and the candor to state the effect of the unjust legislation of his State upon the insurance business. Insurance Commissioner Fricke, of Wisconsin, is a man of this kind. In his report he plainly states that the burden of taxation

levied upon the insurance companies is too great, and that the valued policy law which has for some years been in force has increased the number of fires in Wisconsin and in other States where in operation, resulting in higher rates to the insuring public. He also shows that, notwithstanding the increased rates, the ratio of losses to premiums last year was over 72 per cent., or about five per cent. higher than for the previous year, when the ratio was abnormally high. As everybody knows, the companies as a whole last year, in the entire field, fared tolerably well, the loss ratio on the fire business for the whole country being below 56 per cent., or sixteen per cent. lower than in Wisconsin. The commissioner shows that twenty-two companies which he names, paid in 1895 nearly \$200,000 more for losses—saying nothing about expenses—than they received for premiums, and yet were taxed on these same premiums over \$7,000. He holds justly that the basis of taxation should be changed so that premium receipts above losses instead of gross premiums should be taxable. The last Wisconsin Legislature appointed a commission, on which Commissioner Fricke and Lieutenant-Governor Baensch are included, to suggest a revision of the insurance laws, and the commission has so far shown a desire to look at all sides of the legislative question in order that the proposed revision may do justice to the companies while operating as a protection to the insuring public. Whenever the conditions which favor fires, and whenever the enormous tax burdens are removed or lessened, the companies are only too glad to reduce rates, and this important fact we believe the Wisconsin commissioner recognizes.—*The Argus.*

MERCHANDISE PRICES.

There is an erroneous impression concerning merchandise quotations, which gives excuse for pessimistic sentiment and prevents the growth of confidence. It is seldom that we have to criticize such an authority as *Dun's Review*, but in the last issue of that publication appeared a statement which requires explanation. It was to the effect that the range of prices for all commodities, on April 1st, was the lowest ever known in this country. Such a sweeping assertion was not justified by the facts, and its publication is rather unfortunate at this time, when merchants are grasping at every straw which brings hope of a better future. In a quarterly exhibit of comparative prices of 108 staple articles, *Bradstreet's* shows an advance in 48 over the same date one year ago. In our issue of April 4th we gave a list of comparative prices, and stated that "in the different markets represented by this paper we find that prices for most articles are quoted higher than on Sept. 1st, 1895, and the same date in 1894. The advance is due to natural improvement, and not to speculative spurts."

Thus it will be seen that the range of prices for all commodities on April 1st was not the lowest ever known in this country. The situation is bad enough, without picturing a discouraging condition not warranted by the results. Every ray of hope should be presented to influence a better sentiment, as the operations of the average man of business are restricted or enlarged according to his feelings, which are gauged by daily and weekly developments.—*Shipping and Commercial List, April 18th.*

—The Portage la Prairie *Liberal* says that Mr. Forsyth, agent for the Massey-Harris Co., states that the number of seeders sold this spring by his firm in this district exceeds last year's output by 300 per cent. This extraordinary demand he attributes to the unsatisfactory results obtained in the last three years from broadcast seeding, and also to improvements in the press drills now manufactured.

—The Canadian Pacific Railway began on Saturday last to accept shipments for Georgian Bay, Parry Sound, Lakes Huron and Superior ports; also for Manitoba, the North-West and Pacific Coast. The first Canadian Pacific Railway steamer for Fort William and Port Arthur is expected to leave Owen Sound on Saturday, May 2.

—Navigation is now open on Georgian Bay, and cargoes of grain are on the lakes between Chicago and Midland. Three or four special train crews have been ordered to hold themselves in readiness to transport the grain over the Midland division.