tion ours were the most uniformly clean and best arranged.—*Grocery World.*

The prune crop of Southern California will be a failure this year. The recent damp weather has affected the crop so severely that it is all dropping from the trees. On ten acres at Pomona, from which twenty-eight tons were gathered last year, there will not be over 1,000 pounds this season. Throughout Southern California the like is true.

It is stated in a recent official report from Bordeaux that last year's season was one of the most disastrous ever experienced by French sardine packers. Hardly any stocks had remained from the previous year, and the demand was active at the commencement of 1890; but, unfortunately for the packers, the cool summer had a prejudicial effect upon the results of the fishing, and high prices had to be paid for the small quantities of fish which were to be obtained for preserving. France has for some years already lost the monopoly of the sardine-packing industry. And the Portuguese factories last year furnished enough to make up for the deficit in the French output. While the average cost of the fish on the French coasts was about 16s. per thousand, the average price last year on the Portuguese coast was only about 3s. It is thus evident that the French sardine packers were unable to contend at a profit. The sardine syndicate has come to nothing.

In the Western States of the Union, says the New York *Shipping List*, over 1,000,000 acres of land are cultivated for the flax seed only, the stalks being burnt, as they are considered useless for any other purpose. The National Fibre and Chemical Co. has a new process whereby the refuse stalk can be manufactured into a fibre called fibrella, which can be used with cotton or wool or alone in the manufacture of fabrics

THE banana is the most prolific of fruits. One thousand square feet, planted with thirty or forty bananas, will yield as many clusters with 160 to 180 fruits on each, and each cluster weighing from 40 to 80 pounds. It has been calculated that the produce of the banana is to wheat as 133 to 1, and to the potato as 44 to 1.—*Kansas City Grocer.*

The London *Grocer* is responsible for the statement that the luxury which for generations we have been indulging in under the name of preserved ginger in syrup is not really ginger at all. In a recent number of the Kew *Bulletin*, an interesting account is given of the identification of the plant yielding the rhizome or root employed to make this "preserved ginger." The Director of the Botanical Gardens at Hong Kong says it is the Alphinia Galanga.

A visitor to an export shoe factory in the Eastern States was surprised at finding a cooper and all the surroundings of a first-class distillery in the packing room. He learned that the casks he saw were being used to pack boots and shoes for foreign shipment. The goods were going to a market where the casks were wanted for wines, rum, &c., and brought a good price aside from the saving of the cost of the usual package. In another instance some shoes for the South American market were packed in wicker baskets so as to meet a certain demand at the point of destination. The shoes were carefully wrapped in paper, and the baskets well lined with some material salable in the southern ports, the latter of course being used only as a packing, and going in as such. Here, says the Boston *Journal of Commerce*, was economy. It has long been the custom in the wheat trade to ship all grain to South American ports, Portugal and Spain, in bags manufactured from the best quality of drill, and made of such dimensions that the cloth, which thus evades a usually very high duty, becomes available for many uses.

Discussing the question, "What's in a name?" the San Francisco *Grocer* says: It is not an unusual thing for millers to receive larger orders for a certain grade of flour than they can immediately fill, and as none but the brand called for will be accepted, the alternative is often adopted of sending sacks bearing the required stamp to some convenient miller to fill with a similar quality of flour to that desired. Such occurrences are so frequent that there is an understanding among millers that they will accommodate each other in this way in cases of emergency. The prejudice shown in favor of different brands of butter often results in the changing of the stamp to satisfy the whims of purchasers.

PROSPECT FOR DRIED FRUIT.

Times and seasons are very variable in their effect upon grape vines and fruit trees or shrubs. Mediterranean fruits are no exception to this rule, and we have seen how, of late years, untoward weather or other circumstances have affected the crop of raisins and currants. We learn this week, however, that advices by letter from Smyrna, in reference to figs and sultana raisins, are cheering; the growing crops there have been favored with plenty of rain and dry weather at proper times, and the trees and shrubs are full of flowers and buds, so that a large crop and lower prices may be expected during the coming season. At Patras the indications point to one of the largest crops of currants ever grown; the vines are healthy, and the quality of fruit promises to be fine. From Malaga reports are very favorable; the new vineyards planted four or five years ago are now bearing this year, and a good crop of fine fruit is in sight. It will be remembered that the *phylloxera* almost annihilated the vines in that part of Spain four years ago. Prices in this market are not quotably lower, though in some cases lower prices are hinted at.

QUEEN INSURANCE COMPANY.

On Tuesday, 19th May, the annual meeting of this company's shareholders was held in Queen Insurance Buildings, Liverpool, Mr. T. H. Jackson, chairman of the company, presiding. Mr. J. K. Rumford, general manager, having read the notice convening the meeting, the thirty-third annual report was taken as read.

The premiums of the year in the fire branch, less re-insurances, were shown to be £644,506, as compared with £598,617 in 1889; and the losses of the year, paid and outstanding, were £421,848, or 66·45 per cent., as compared with £361,750, or 60·43 per cent. of the previous year.

In the life branch, there were 752 policies issued for £247,235, yielding in new premiums £9,693. There has been added to the life fund in 1890, £54,941, making the fund stand at the close of 1890 at £710,327 11s. 10d.

The balance at credit of profit and loss account is £167,076. After paying 10 per cent. dividend and 10 per cent. bonus, a balance of £131,069 was carried forward. This done, the funds stand as below:—Capital paid up, £180,065; life fund, £710,327 11s. 10d.; annuity fund, £45,139 5s. 10d.; reserve funds, £278,291 13s. 10d.; fire fund, £200,000; balance carried forward, £131,069 14s. 7d.; total, £1,544,863 6s. 1d.

The Act to complete the amalgamation of this company with the Royal Insurance Company has passed the House of Lords. The chairman's address noted the fact that while the life business had been particularly good, the company had suffered to the extent of £22,000 by two heavy fires in Sydney, New South Wales, and Salonica, in European Turkey, together £22,000, "otherwise we should have shown a much better result." The fire business done so far this year," is certainly a very large one. Mr. Jackson went on, "and when the fusion is complete, we shall have a magnificent business, backed by enormous reserves and carrying our prestige throughout the world as one of the largest fire offices in the kingdom." He moved that the report and accounts be received and adopted, which was seconded by Mr. Watson, and carried.

COMMERCIAL UNION ASSURANCE COMPANY (LIMITED).

The gains from the business of this company, according to its twenty-ninth report, were £50,000 from the fire department during 1890, and from the marine department, £25,000. In the life department, "the surplus from the year's transactions amounted to £105,608." These sums represent a very large and a very satisfactory year's business, namely, about 900,000 dollars, all told, clear money. We need scarcely wonder, therefore, that the Commercial Union can pay 25 per cent. dividend. The total income from all departments of this company's business was last year not less than £1,400,000. It paid out in fire losses £580,000; for death claims, surrenders, annuities, &c., £77,000; for marine losses, £181,000. And it has resources represented by the following figures: Share capital, paid, £250,000; Life Fund, £1,315,000; Fire Fund, £826,000; Marine Fund, £250,000. These striking figures are the results of enterprise and care in operations scattered over a great area in different parts of the world. The company has over 29 millions of dollars at risk in the fire business in Canada; its premium income here was last year, $318,696 net, out of which it paid $151,639 for losses, and it has assets in Canada amounting to $296,305.

ONTARIO MUTUAL LIFE.

An attractive list of special features is presented to intending assurants by this company. For example, they offer guaranteed surrender value in cash or paid-up insurance. They give a month's grace for payment of premiums, and place no restriction on residence, travel or occupation. The Ontario policies are indisputable after two years, and lapsed policies may be revived within twelve months of lapse. They pay claims promptly, we believe, and they propose, besides, that their policy-holders shall have dividends yearly after the third year.

The company has reached a handsome financial position when it can boast, as it does in 1890, income of $489,000; assets of $1,711,000; and an aggregate of nearly fourteen millions of assurance in force. The year's business has resulted in an addition of $223,000 to its assets, $39,000 to its surplus and $40,958 to cash income. The reserve for security of policy-holders is increased by a very considerable sum. Now in its twenty