INSURANCE

INVESTIGATE FIRES.

Investigation into the cause of fires is as much a public duty as fire extinguishing. Naturally the insurance offices shrink from habitually disputing payment for loss. The elements of prudence and safety have to be considered, and in practice questions are only raised in glaring cases. There is no organized system for dealing with the origin of fires, and the danger of detection of wilful fire raising is so slight that it is only in a limited degree preventative. An isolated enquiry has little influence beyond its own case. Anything short of an investigation into the cause of all fires, without exception, will fail to reduce, in any appreciable degree the percentage of wilful fires. If it were known that every outbreak of fire would be examined into by the coroner, could the deterrent effect be doubted? There is no want of agreement, indeed, that such investigations are a public duty, but public feeling does not seem to be sufficiently strong to give the impulse requisite for legislation. Nor will sympathy be easily aroused, since the immediate sufferers are generally wealthy insurance companies. It is not creditable to the insurance offices that they submit to be defrauded from year to year by dishonest insurers, and it is deplorable that government should allow the crime of arson to be committed almost with impunity, when by a simple process such as an investigation into the origin of every fire, a fairly efficient remedy could be provided.—Scottish Critic.

INSURANCE ITEMS.

W. W. Scrimes, manager at Winnipeg for the Hartford Insurance Co., left recently on a western business trip.

The packers of salmon in British Columbia have been trying to effect a reduction in the rates of insurance on their factories.

The Ancient Order of Foresters has secured the passage of an act of Dominion incorporation. A clause was added in parliament requiring the order to be put up a reserve fund satisfactory to the insurance department.

The fire loss of the United States and Canada during the month of March, shows a total of $7,645,200. This abnormally moderate aggregate brings the figures for the first quarter of 1898 much below those for the same period in 1897, and represents the lightest month since last November.

Some severe rate cutting in the fire field, says Money and Risks, is a result of the efforts made by one or two new companies to get business. While the new companies are somewhat discriminating in the risks they take, and refuse many risks that are not considered a1, they offer big discounts on association scheduled quotations, and pay extraordinary percentages for business brought to them.

Grain and Milling News.

The Manitoba Grain company will shortly commence work on a new elevator at Calgary, Alberta.

Rolled oatmeal advanced 15c per barrel at Montreal on Monday, and is now firmly held at $4.25 per barrel and $2.10 per bag.

A pleasant surprise was afforded the employees of the Ogilvie Milling company, Winnipeg, one day this week, when General Manager F. W. Thompson announced a general advance in wages of about 10 per cent, to go into effect at once. The company evidently proposes to divide up a part of the better profit now being made, with the men.

A few Manitoba farmers who have been holding their wheat have been offered high prices lately. One farmer who has three year's crop on hand, is said to have refused over $1.40 per bushel for it, and asks $1.50. When such splendid prices can be obtained they should be quickly accepted, as it cannot be expected that the present high prices, which mainly depend on speculative influences and unnatural excitement will be long maintained.

The Montreal Gazette of Monday last says: A very strong feeling prevails in the flour market. W. W. Ogilvie marked up the price of Manitoba grades another 25c per barrel on Saturday, making a net rise of $1.35 per barrel from the lowest point, which figures are still $1 per barrel below United States prices for the same grades of flour. The Lake of the Woods Milling company received a cable from London for 500 sacks each of the four different grades of flour they manufacture, making 2,000 sacks which they offered to fill at a marked advance over previous bids and it was accepted by the buyer. A further sale of 5,000 sacks of Manitoba flour for Australia, was reported from Montreal on Monday.

The Lumber Trade.

R. A. Mather, of the Keewatin Lumber Co., was in Winnipeg, this week.

The property known as the Moore & Macdowell mill at Prince Albert, Sask., with large timber limits, is offered for sale.

The Arrowhead Saw and Planing Mills Co. has established a saw and planing mill on the south arm of Arrow Lake, south of Revelstoke, B. C., with a capacity of 20,000 feet per day. A sash and door factory in connection will employ about 30 men. The company has opened yards at Nelson and Revelstoke. The officers of the company are, J. C. DeCew, president: W. M. DeCew, manager: T. H. DeCew, secretary.

The Westminster, B. C. Columbian, says the mills are all working over time. The Royal City mills, it says, are working overtime on orders, from the prairie country chiefly, and three carloads of house and railway lumber are being shipped every day over the C. P. R. The local trade is also brisk, and takes several scowloads daily. The factory at the mill is working full strength, to increase the stock of doors, sashes, etc., while several large cannery orders already received are keeping the box factory busy early and late.

The Minneapolis Lumberman says: It is believed that shingles have struck bottom. There has been a wavering in the market during the past several weeks, and from a possible price of $2.25 per thousand for *A*s, there has been a drop of fifteen cents, so that probably the market quotation is now $2.10, though some sales are made for five cents higher. But the shingle manufacturers of the coast have taken the matter in hand and propose to stop the falling off in prices. They have shut down their mills until the first of June, anyway, and they will remain down for a longer time if it appears necessary in order to keep up the market.

Hides, Wool, etc.

Hides were advanced 1-2c at Toronto on Monday, to 8c for No. 1 green.

A bill has passed its second reading at Ottawa to make the inspection of hides compulsory. The penalty is $1 per hide for evasion of the proposed law. The inspection fee is five cents per hide, or when offered in lots over 100 to be 4 cents per hide. The inspector, of course, will be a government official, who will practically stand between the buyer and the seller. The inspector will be responsible for any errors in grading hides, the same as in inspecting wheat. This law will only apply at points where inspectors have been appointed, and will not prevent country dealers from selling their hides flat at their own places of business. The opinion of dealers is divided as to the advisability of the law.

It is not very easy to get at the accurate value of the new clip, but it may be pointed out that in the United States markets prices are 25c to 30c per lb—say the average price is 28c. The duty on wool in the United States is 12c per lb. This makes 16c for washed wool in Canada, and from this must be taken freight charges for export, and profit to the Canadian dealer for handling the wool, which would make it necessary to buy washed wool at 14c in Canada, if the wool were to be taken for export at a price based on United States market values. The duties are as follows: Unwashed wool 11c to 12c per pound, the lower rate on fine wools, such as merinos and merino crosses; tub washed, 36c; and scoured 36c.

Grocery Trade Notes.

New rice is offering at Montreal, and prices have advanced there 1-4c. Cables are very strong on rice from all markets.

The Montreal Gazette says: "The feature of the molasses market during the past week has been the stronger cable advices received from the island, noting a further advance of 1c per gallon on the first cost to 10c, and even at this figure importers state they find it impossible to get firm offers. There has been an improved demand on spot and a sale of 100 puncheons of Barbadoes is reported at 27c, with 27 1-2c bid for 50 more, but the buyer could not secure they last lot even at the 1-2c advance. Some small lots of old 1896 crop of Antigua have changed hands at 20c. This stock was very dark in quality and would not fetch 18c a few months ago. A later cable quoted a further advance of 2c to 12c first cost, equal to 30c Montreal.

Mr. Richardson's garnishee bill introduced at Ottawa, has been withdrawn for this session.

Superintendent Ford, of the Dominion Express company, will go over the Crow's Nest Pass railway line. Branch offices will be opened along this line if it is considered advisable.