

weighed, and the railway companies are unable to guarantee that the weight stated in the bill of lading is the true one. The railways have the means of weighing only at certain points. Is a change of system possible under which all grain carried by rail will be weighed, at some point, and the ascertained weight be made to take the place of the statement in the bill of lading, when the latter is incorrect? At present the original bill of lading is liable to be contradicted at any European port, by the shipping bill, which contains the result of the weighing, which always takes place when the grain goes on board the vessel. There is no ground for complaining of discrimination against such a system; what is necessary, as the grain men of Montreal now properly admit by their action, is to remove the cause of the evil. Their proposition might have the desired effect, as to Montreal, but it would leave other ports without guarantees of safety.

Following the example of Paris, the city of Montreal is to set up a chemical laboratory to test the purity of things on the market in the form of food and drink. Of the thoroughness with which the Municipal Laboratory of Paris does its work its searching reports afford ample evidence. In cases where serious adulteration is disclosed, prosecutions follow. In Canada this work has hitherto been done by the Federal Government, and it is a question whether it cannot be best done by them. If municipalities are to undertake the work, it may be done in greater detail, but the cost will be greater. The desirability of municipalities undertaking the work we must at present regard as an open question.

The Postmaster-General of Victoria, Australia, gives some particulars of the new cable contract not previously known. The total cost of making and installing the cable will be \$9,728,133, of which Great Britain and Canada are to pay five-ninths, New Zealand one-eighth, and New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria the remainder. The line is to be ready for use by the end of July of next year. The route is from Vancouver, British Columbia, via Fanning or Palmyra Island, lying south of Hawaii, to Fiji, and thence to Norfolk Sound, with branches to Auckland, New Zealand and Queensland.

THE GREAT FIRE IN MONTREAL.

A great fire on Wednesday night last, sweeping from the corner of St. Peter and Lemoine streets eastward and southward, devoured whole squares of the wholesale quarter of Montreal and caused a loss of millions of dollars. The stately Board of Trade building, the spacious rotunda of the Corn Exchange, block after block of the densely-built grey stone warehouses on St. Peter, Lemoine, St. Paul and St. Sacrament streets, all the way to Commissioner street, are in ruins. The blow is a heavy one, and must derange for a time no small section of the wholesale trade of our chief city. Montreal may be sure that the whole of Canada condole with her in view of so sweeping a disaster; and the individual sufferers will have many sympathizers in their sore trial. Insurance companies will be heavy sufferers.

Several prominent features assert themselves in the telegraphic account of this disaster, and it is well that

these should be considered. First, the buildings destroyed were for the most part old, and though they looked massive, being built of grey limestone, were as far as possible to conceive from the fire-proof, or even slow-burning construction regarded as essential in modern buildings. Second, the narrowness of the streets and the tangle of wires—telephone, telegraph, electric light—made it difficult for the fire brigade to work with efficacy. Third, the fire brigade itself, in the illness and absence of its chief, does not appear to have been managed to the best advantage, the fire-tower not being made properly available and the efforts of the men not concentrated upon the points of most strategic value. In the rebuilding of the great area devastated the widening of the too narrow streets and the better construction of the new structures should be heedfully regarded.

BOARDS OF TRADE.

The time of year has arrived when Canadian Boards of Trade are holding their annual meetings. The MONETARY TIMES has for years endeavored to present, as early as possible after each such meeting, a *resumé* of what was done thereat, especially aiming to give a list of newly elected officers. It will continue to do so; but with a view to prompt publication of the proceedings requests that the officers of boards of trades will communicate, at their earliest convenience, particulars, or at least a summary, of the proceedings at their annual meetings. Such communications will assist us, besides in the compilation of our usual list of Canadian boards of trade.

A CANADIAN TRADE COMMISSIONER FOR ENGLAND.

Some business-like suggestions were made before the Canadian Manufacturers' Association the other day by Mr. George H. Hees, of Toronto, who urges the appointment of a Trade Commissioner for Canada in England, resident in London, who shall visit English trade centres at intervals. Although there are many who say that exporting manufacturers should provide their own agents abroad, and build up trade each in his own way, as others have done before them, it is not difficult to see that there is much that might be done for our export trade by competent resident agents. Everything, or almost everything, depends on the men. If we could depend on getting a man who should do for Canadian trade with the United Kingdom what J. S. Larke has done for Canadian trade with Australia, we believe that the business community of the Dominion would most heartily favor the appointment.

It is contended by Mr. Hees, and with force, that the Government should bring back Mr. Larke from Australia, for a time, and post him on present conditions in Canada, as it is six years since he went out to Australia, and he has not had opportunity to take note of the great changes that have taken place in Canadian industry in the interval. That official has shown great modesty, great industry, much intelligence, and unusual discretion in fulfilling the duties of his office. And if he could have a few months with Canadian exporters both they and he might learn much that would be of service to Canadian trade. In our opinion Canada should have more active trade commissioners, and in more countries than one or two; our growing trade needs them. But no mediocrities would be of any use in such positions; no mere political hacks need be sent, and immigration agents alone will not answer.