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LIGHTNING FIRES YACHT.

Curious Accident in Ontario—Fire Commissioner Lindback on Rods.

A curious fire is reported to the Monetary Times from Belleville, Ont. During a bad storm on Monday, the sailing yacht "Vera," owned by J. W. Murray, local manager of the Dominion Bank, broke loose from its moorings. As it drifted the rigging came in contact with electric wires. The fire communicated with the stem of the boat, doing considerable damage. A man who attempted to extinguish the blaze received a severe electric shock.

Must Protect the Buildings.

Lightning damage is dealt with by Manitoba Fire Commissioner Lindback, in his latest bulletin. The necessity for protecting isolated large buildings against lightning, he says, has become evident this summer. While there have been many severe electrical storms in former years they caused less damage to buildings and cattle than now. This year the setting fire to houses, barns and elevators by lightning has been more frequent than before, partly because of the increased number of electrical storms but also because of the want of protection against lightning.

Nature's lightning-rods are the forest trees, but where there are no tall trees and where the buildings stand out as on our prairies, they are in greater danger of being struck unless properly rodded.

Farmers' Mutuals are Interested.

Those who give most attention to protection against lightning losses are officers of the Farmers Mutual Insurance Companies. In several States these companies carry more than three hundred millions of insurance and in a large number half that amount. Their experience show that the losses by lightning in the States in the Mississippi valley is from two-thirds to three-fourths as great as that from all other causes added together. In Iowa in 1902 the fire losses of farm property from lightning was three times as great as from all other causes combined. At the meeting of the American Association of Mutual Companies at Denver the matter of reducing the assessment where the buildings were rodded was discussed favorably, and this has been done by many companies.

FIRE INSURANCE RATE MAKING BY THE GOVERNMENT.

Since several of the United States have brought forward measures empowering their Insurance Departments to fix fire insurance rates, the other side to the question has been very ably presented by Insurance Commissioner Hardison of Massachusetts in his Annual Report. He asks, "Shall rates

be based on the experiences of the most fortunate companies, those moderately so, or of those that are behind in the race? If the first extreme is to be the case it will mean the elimination of the less fortunate companies while if the other extreme is adopted there will be the same complaint as now of excessive rates; for there is no fact more patent in fire insurance than that some companies will starve in the same field where others wax fat.

Proceeding, he points out that rates made by State Officials might be so low that insurance companies might refuse to write the risks and would doubtless be upheld by the Courts. The men who have made it a life business to study conditions and fix fire premium rates are far from having solved the problem in a manner which is just and equitable to all concerned; how much less would amateurs appointed for political reasons be likely to do so?

It is possible in conclusion that something of value might be accomplished by a law giving State Officials authority instead of making rates generally to act as a Board to hear grievances and make recommendations. This would tend to secure uniform rates for similar risks without taking from the companies the general right to fix their own rates."

QUEBEC FIRE COMPANIES BEING INVESTIGATED.

While no regularly appointed commission of inquiry was established for the investigation of the mutual fire insurance companies in Quebec Province, the Inspector of Insurance, under the direction of the insurance branch of the treasury department, has been and is yet investigating the affairs of those companies that appeared to have needed such inquiries. The result of these investigations will appear in the regular annual report of the Quebec Insurance Branch. As a result of the investigations to date proceedings are now under way for the appointment of a liquidator to wind up the affairs of the Canada Mutual Fire Insurance Company. La Fonciere Mutual Fire Insurance Company is re-insuring its risks with La Provinciale and the affairs of certain other companies are now under consideration.

ST. PAUL FIRE AND MARINE REPORT.

The semi-annual statement of the St. Paul Fire and Marine Insurance Company shows an increase in assets over the statement of December, 1908, of \$399,673. There is also a gain in net surplus of \$148,657, while the increase in unearned premiums is \$202,817. The reserve for unearned premiums, according to the statement of June 30th last is \$3,584,227. The company, which is doing a satisfactory business in Canada, was organized in 1865. Its total assets in 1870 were \$285,543, while last month they were \$5,829,929. Mr. C. F. Codere is the special agent of the company for Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta.