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## Mercantile Summary.

McLEAN BROS., Vancouver, have been awarded a contract for the repair and reconstruction of the bridges across the north arm of the Fraser river.

BROCKVILLE's water supply was nearly cut off on the 19th inst., owing to a fire which occurred in a coal shed adjoining the pumping house. The loss is placed at about \$2,500; covered by insurance.

THE surveyors sent out by the British Columbia Government, have found no difficulty in finding a good route for a railway from the head of Kitimaat Arm, to Hazelton, the head-waters of navigation on the Skeena river, and by which route it is proposed to build a railway into the Omineca Country.

WE hear from St. John that the Cushing sulphite pulp mill, at Fairville, owned chiefly by Capt. Partington, of Manchester, Eng., has changed its management, the principal directors now being James Beveridge and Charles Sprenger, of Boston. It is expected to run the mill steadily in future.

A CABLE from Liverpool states that at a special meeting of Ogdens', Limited, manufacturers of tobacco and cigarettes, the directors decided to sell to the American Tobacco Company, as the only alternative to annihilation. The capital of the American company was \$50,000,000, while the capital of Ogdens' was \$500,000.

SALT imports into the United States have been reduced from 39 per cent. to 6 per cent. in the last twenty years. The domestic production has risen in that period from 5,961,000 barrels to 20,869,342 barrels, valued at nearly \$7,000,000. From 1892 to 1897, the United States held second place among the salt-producing countries. In the latter year it took first place, outranking Great Britain by about 5 per cent. Since that time, the United States has continued to increase its lead, until in 1899 it produced nearly 30 per cent. more salt than Great Britain.

THE Windsor Board of Trade is attacking the Government for the present system in vogue of allowing transportation companies to pay customs officers for working overtime. It points out that for many years it has been the usage in connection with the Department of Customs for overtime put in by landing waiters at ferries and the customs officers on trains, to be paid for by the ferry and railway companies. All revenue collected for overtime accrued to the benefit of the Government. This practice, it was claimed, placed the customs officials at the mercy of corporations, and left the Government under obligations to them. The public carriers took advantage of it when seeking renewal of franchises, leases and other concessions. In the case of ferry companies the municipalities were unable to realize anything for valuable franchises when the practice prevailed. The Board thinks that this practice should be stopped, and asks other boards of trade to assist in doing so.

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