

5 per cent. Apart from that, however, present prices for these finer grades are still low when compared with the coarser crossbreds, with which we in this country mainly have to do. Also, stocks of all grades, taking the world's markets all through, are distinctly less than normal, which is particularly noticeable in view of the constantly augmenting demand. The real position of the coarser grades of wool is expected to be much more clearly known after the next London sales, which are to take place in the middle of next month. The following excerpt from the annual report of Helmuth, Schwartze & Co., London, indicates in brief compass the movement of the year in regard to the coarse cross-breds in which the Canadian manufacturer is most interested:—

As regards crossbreds the position has been rather more complicated; and though manufacturers have had a fairly profitable twelvemonth they have had to reckon throughout the whole year with the uncertainty felt in many quarters as to the continued maintenance of values. There can, indeed, be little question that in the steady decrease in the production of merino wool during the previous years crossbred had found its great opportunity and that the rise in the price of fine wool had turned the eyes of many consumers in the direction of coarser kinds. Some doubts were, therefore, felt, perhaps not unnaturally, by many people at the commencement of last year as to the stability of crossbred prices in view of the large increase in the merino clip. But, except for the temporary weakness in the early part of the year when prices, apparently without reason, declined sharply for a time but soon recovered a portion of the fall under the stimulus of renewed American buying, nothing occurred to justify the fears expressed by the pessimists. Partly, no doubt, the continued buying for war purposes helped to strengthen the position of the article; but the renewed fears entertained in many quarters that the conclusion of peace between Russia and Japan would bring with it a decided fall in the value of coarse wools also proved groundless, and prices current in the autumn were fully as high as those ruling during the continuance of the war.

As regards the future it is very difficult to gauge. We have seen that last year's supply barely sufficed for the demand and we have to deal with no appreciable increase in the coming year. This is certainly of hopeful augury. On the other hand, we recognize that the present strong position of crossbred is partly due to its substitution for merino during a period of greatly attenuated supplies of the latter commodity, to which fashion now seems to be turning anew. And further it is possible that the cessation of the exceptional demand for army purposes may even yet have results erroneously anticipated for last autumn. On the whole, therefore, while it seems unlikely that any decided change is impending, we can hardly perhaps expect, at any rate as far as low crossbreds are concerned, to see the present high level prices fully maintained throughout the ensuing year.

#### INJURIOUS DISHONESTY.

Every now and then some illustration presents itself of the way in which men show their disposition to sacrifice the reputation of their country for fair dealing to an immediate, ill-earned gain of a few dollars. People who ship No. 2 apples to England and mark them XXX, come under this class; and there have been more cases of this foolishly injurious sort of thing lately than it is pleasant to contemplate. Last

week at the Western Dairymen's Convention at Ingersoll, Mr. Barr, the Dominion chief dairy instructor, complained of a form of dishonesty which he alleged is growing among the patrons of cheese factories, and that is to add water to their milk, and to skim the cream off before taking the milk to the factories. This is a poor return by the farmers for the vigorous efforts which have been made by the Government to place the dairying industry on a sound and paying basis.

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#### ASCERTAIN THE CAUSES OF FIRES.

Some of our readers may wonder why no citation was made in our article of last week from the experience of Great Britain or other European countries in this matter of fire inquests. We had made enquiry about several of these, and collected some information; but held it over, not wishing to make last week's article too long. A sufficient number of years has not yet passed, it would seem, for the idea of employing fire marshals or holding fire inquests to have commended itself in proper quarters in the United Kingdom. Or perhaps we should rather say there has not been time enough—only some thirty-seven years having passed—to get a measure enacted which shall fill in Great Britain what other countries have felt to be a want. One Parliamentary Committee pronounced the difficulty to be "in adjusting satisfactory machinery for making such inquests."

We may learn, if we will, something of the result of efforts made to ascertain the causes of fires in other countries. In Germany, Denmark, France, and Russia fire inquests have been common, and they are found to have the effect of lessening fires. It is forty years ago nearly since a bill was introduced into the British House of Commons to make provision for enquiries into the origin and circumstances of fires. This was favored by the fire offices, but appears to have been talked out. Again in 1882 a like bill was drafted, sent to the Home Department, which sent it to the Metropolitan Board of Works. Nothing definite came of this. In the next year the Common Council of London resolved to ask for a Royal Commission on this subject, and also consulted the fire office managers about it. No definite step was taken, however, after all this conferring. In 1895 the scheme was re-introduced to public notice by the "Post Magazine," which reprinted a circular on "Fire Inquests and Fire Marshals," compiled in 1886 by Mr. G. W. Bell, secretary of the Law Office in London, England. So far as we know, however, the various authorities, parochial, metropolitan, or governmental, are still working away in London independently, perhaps confusedly, with the objects of preventing, contending with and perhaps finding out the causes of fires, but there is no distinct act appointing fire marshals, whose business it is to find out the causes of fires and punish those responsible for them.

It is probably true, as the Massachusetts marshal, Mr. Whitcomb, has said, that a person to fill all the requirements of a fire marshal adequately needs many and varied qualifications:—He should have the intuition of a detective; experience as lawyer; a judicial mind; ability to weigh evidence; and some knowledge of mechanics and electrical science. In any case he must be "a man of honesty, industry, and perseverance." Is it possible that the difficulty of securing such men in England has had to do with the years

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