

SHIPPING OF THE UNITED STATES.

The report of the United States Commissioner of Navigation, Mr. Chamberlain, for the year ended 30th June last, considers the past fiscal year the most prosperous period known to American shipping for some years. Returns for the current fiscal year promise an even more satisfactory record. For the first time since the Civil War, the documented tonnage of the United States exceeds 5,000,000 gross tons. At the close of June, this year, American documented tonnage comprised 23,333 vessels of 5,164,839 gross tons, an increase of 300,000 tons over the previous fiscal year. The maximum tonnage of the States was 5,539,813 tons in 1861; her shipping was then larger than Great Britain's and nearly equalled the British Empire's. British shipping now amounts to 14,261,000 gross tons. American vessels are almost wholly confined to the coasting trade, which employed last year 4,338,145 tons, or more than the total tonnage of Germany and France.

United States tonnage in the foreign trade amounts to only 816,795 tons, and it carried last year only 9% of American exports and imports. A century ago American shipping registered for foreign trade was 669,921 tons, while this tonnage now in the thirteen original States amounts to 482,907 tons. For serious competition with foreign nations in the ocean-carrying trade that nation is practically restricted to ninety-seven registered steamships, over 1,000 tons, aggregating 260,325 tons. Single foreign steamship corporations own greater tonnage. Japan has eighty-three ocean steamships of over 2,000 tons, aggregating 286,000 tons. Besides these steamships the Americans have 125 registered square-rigged sail vessels over 1,000 tons each for the deep-sea trade. More than half of these are over twenty years old, and as such vessels disappear their places are not supplied by new construction.

BOILER EXPLOSIONS IN ENGLAND.

The eighteenth report on the working of the Boiler Explosions Acts has just been issued for the year ending 30th June, 1900. Fifty-nine preliminary enquiries, and thirteen formal investigations have been held during this time, and in the latter case, the owners were blamed on ten occasions. During the twelve months, twenty-four persons were killed, and sixty-five injured by boiler explosions. The period includes one exceptionally serious case, seven persons having been killed, and ten injured by an explosion at Sheffield, in November, 1899. The average numbers killed and injured during the last eighteen years are 29.2 and 61.5, respectively. The loss of life for 1899-1900, therefore, compares favorably with preceding years, but, on the other hand, the number of persons injured exceeds the average for the same period.

INCREASE IN THE COST OF BUILDINGS.

In a circular to policy-holders, the following notification is made by the Alliance Assurance Company, of England: It is estimated that the increase in the cost of building materials and labor during the last ten years has averaged from 15 per cent. in some districts to as much as 40 per cent. in other districts, and it is probable that many buildings are

greatly under-insured at the present time. It is, therefore, important that all policies covering buildings be carefully examined by the insured to see whether, having regard to the fact above referred to, the property is adequately insured. There is reason to believe that in the case of many old insurances, additions have been made to existing buildings without corresponding changes having been effected in the policies themselves, and particular attention is drawn to the matter, in order that, in case of fire, there may be no disappointment on account of incomplete or insufficient insurance. It is also suggested that policies on stock or on furniture should be looked into, to see that the policies represent position and the value of the property.

ELECTRICAL FIRE LOSSES IN THE UNITED STATES.

The last quarterly fire report of the Electrical Bureau of the National Board reports a three months' electrical fire loss of \$519,700, the figures being approximate because in some cases all evidences of the origin of the fire is destroyed, while many fires of electrical origin are probably unreported. The report says:

Numerous reports of burn-outs of fire alarm boxes and telephones continue to emphasize the necessity of placing wires underground. Protection devices, however efficient, cannot be considered equivalent to removal of source of trouble, by burying all wires in subways and underground conduits. Four wires involving losses aggregating \$51,200, are reported as caused by lightning discharges entering buildings over aerial wires, a further evidence of the advisability of burying circuits in the earth.

Reports of fires and deaths from defective transformers continue to be received. Four deaths and a large number of injuries to persons working about electric wires and apparatus, indicate that the trend towards the general use of high tension systems is not without its consequences.

The police department for a large city reports a case of attempted incendiarism, with electricity as its agent. Electric wires were found embedded in cotton batting, liberally saturated with inflammable oil, and connected to a mechanism capable of producing an arc where wires were embedded in the cotton.

The following particulars of two electrical fires are of more than usual interest:

During a severe thunderstorm, the occupant of a costly residence detected an odor of smoke, and descending to the dining-room, found flames issuing from a side bracket. He grasped a rug from the floor and attempted to smother the flames. Not succeeding, he assumed that the fire was electrical, and, as the service switch for the entire equipment was placed in the stable, he hurried out to the same and opened the circuit. While at the stable he remembered that the rug with which he had attempted to smother the flame had cost him \$500. When he re-entered the house he found the bracket on the floor, and gas flames pouring from the opening, whereupon he picked up another rug, costing \$300, and smothered out the gas flame. Loss, \$800 in rugs and two mahogany panels. On inspection, the fixture showed the fixture wires fused together and a hole burned in the brass gas tubing. The gas having ignited inside, the canopy could not, of course, be smothered by the first attempt. The only explanation offered is that the presence of lightning raised the voltage on the house circuit, breaking down the insulation on the fixture wires, the Edison current following the arc,

burning hole in pipe and igniting the escaping gas.

Fire occurred in motor room of organ loft in a large church. The organ motor was connected to grounded circuit of street railway system in violation of the Nation Electrical Code. Fortunately the electricians making the installation were advised of the hazard involved in this practice, and constructed a small brick room in which were placed the motor, the meter, and the fuse block; the service switch and main fuse at service entrance were also enclosed in asbestos-lined box. The use of a grounded circuit inside buildings affording an easy path for lightning discharges, lightning entered the church over the feed wires during a thunderstorm, destroying the fuses and the meter. The precautions taken in enclosing all the electrical apparatus in a brick room probably saved the church from destruction.—Investigator.

THE TARRANT FIRE IN NEW YORK.

The Tarrant fire and explosion losses have not been settled yet, but it has been discovered that there is nothing whatever in the New York Standard policies requiring the assured to conform to any city ordinance or municipal regulation about combustibles or anything else. A contrary opinion has been held for some time even by adjusters, but they failed to read the policies. The demand that the Tarrant Company should have permission to store combustibles in the building is something which concerns themselves and the local police alone—the underwriters are not interested. Nor is there any prohibition in the Tarrant building or stock forms. The real nub of the threatened controversy is in the neighborhood where damage was caused solely by explosion, and upon this there are as many varying opinions as on the day of the explosion. In the interim it is learned that several companies have settled nearly all their small losses upon adjacent blocks, whether caused by explosion or fire or both. These settlements have been made "without prejudice" to the rights of the companies to a valid defence upon the facts, but when the cases (if any are litigated), reach a jury, the settlements will form a dangerous precedent and be taken as evidence that the companies believed they were liable. If otherwise, the canny jurymen will say, "Why did they pay?" If the canny juror fails to ask himself the question, some shrewd lawyer for the claimant will be sure to jog his memory.—Argus.

STOCKS IN MONTREAL.

MONTREAL, Jan. 2nd, 1901.

STOCKS.	Highest.	Lowest.	Total.	Closing Prices		Average, same date 1900.
				Sellers.	Buyers.	
Montreal				260	250	
Ontario				192	194	
Molson	191½	191	146		191½	
Toronto						
J. Cartier	154	154	1	154½	150	168
Merchants	148½	147½	24	145		144
Commerce	116	103	81			
Union				136	131½	
Hochelaga						
Nationale				175	171	173
M. Telegraph		163	911	116½	109½	108
R. & O. Nav. ...	110	273	2583	283½	28	289½
Street Ry.	288	268½	50	27½	275	
do N. Stock	271	913½	23755	216½	216	186½
Gas	219	93½	11200	93½	93	93½
C. P. R.						
Land Gt Bonds						
N. W. Land				175	171	175
Bell Tele. Co.	173	173				
Mont. 4% Stock						