

slowly, and when extinguished leave less damage to the building, it is claimed, than the same fire as to extent and duration in a "fire-proof" building constructed mainly of stone and iron. Strictly fire-proof buildings are like angels' visits when tested by well-filled inflammable contents and it seems tolerably well demonstrated that for some classes of buildings the best attainable methods of slow-burning construction may find valuable application. Mr. Atkinson himself, writing of the St. Louis fire, says:—

The burning of the Mansur-Tebbetts building may prove to be a very costly method of bringing about a true reform of construction on the slow-burning lines, but perhaps this may not be fully accomplished until the architects are as solicitous to put up a suitable and safe structure as they are to put up one that will make a good picture executed in brick, stone or iron, enclosing a sham. The right union between the architect, the engineer and the underwriter has yet to be brought about, but the architect may not be permitted to move on the right lines until the owners of property, with whom the final responsibility rests, become assured that even the most complete provisions for safe and true slow burning construction are cheaper than the common practice of combustible architecture *** I do not think that we shall reach the true fire-proof construction until we attain a method by which the building is constructed wholly of fire-clay, or brick and tile, without any wooden or iron members in the structure: similar to the method in which the new Boston Public Library was constructed. I think that building comes nearer to being fire-proof than any building that I know; but such construction is, as yet, too expensive in this country to be applied to mills and commercial warehouses. It has, however, been adopted in Spain for textile manufactories, bleacheries and print works.

Undoubtedly human ingenuity and nineteenth century enterprise will devise and properly combine material for the construction of large buildings which shall be really indestructible by fire, but their expense will also presumably be greater than can be afforded either for ordinary business or manufacturing purposes. The fire hazard will continue to be sufficiently real for the next few hundred years to call for extensive insurance protection.

THE QUEEN INSURANCE COMPANY.

As our readers are aware, the Queen Insurance Company of Liverpool no longer exists, the arrangements having been formally ratified by a special Act of Parliament for its amalgamation with the Royal, as arranged by the two boards of directors some months since. The result is a giant institution offering insurance indemnity world wide, backed by long experience and nearly forty millions of dollars of assets. In this country and in the United States, however, the business will be carried on under two distinct organizations as before, the "Queen Insurance Company of America," having for good reasons been duly incorporated to continue the work of the former "Queen," well manned by the same corps of managers and agents. With a cash surplus of a cool million of dollars and half a million of paid-up capital, the new organization takes the field further backed by the Royal's forty millions of assets. The Queen of Liverpool was a strong company, and did a business of which any company might well be proud; but the Queen of America is even stronger, and in a position not only to hold all the ground formerly

occupied but to make a substantial advance all along the line, for it retains the skilled managers and agents who made the old company in this country a success, and will attract to it naturally many others equally skillful. The new Queen is fortunate in being able to retain as its resident manager for Canada Mr. H. J. Mudge of this city, an able underwriter of long experience and successful achievement, whose name carries with it confidence among agents and the insuring public. All hail to the newly crowned "Queen of America!"

RATES AND COMMISSIONS.

The ever troublesome question of fire insurance rates on the one hand and of commissions on the other has seldom pressed harder for a wise solution than at the present time. In the United States, there has been considerable fluctuation in premium rates from year to year for the past dozen or more years, the general tendency being downward, however especially in the Eastern States and in New York, while the steady movement of commissions has been upward. In Canada the premium rate has been tolerably uniform for the five years past, with a higher average than for the preceding five years, but even here the rate for 1890 was lower than for the previous year. What the 1891 rate will prove to have been we shall know later, though, unfortunately, we already know that the loss ratio is on the up grade.

It has of course been well known that in New York and the Eastern States generally rates have been for some time badly demoralized, and now with the heavy losses of the current year the outlook is worse than ever. Lower rates, higher commissions, and increased loss ratios make a combination entirely in the interest of unprofitable fire underwriting. The *Commercial Bulletin* of New York has lately demonstrated, by the figures presented for eighteen years, the constant downward tendency of premium rates on the business in the State of New York; while not long since the *Insurance Age* presented a table showing the increased commission rate of all the stock companies for fifteen years. Combining the latter with the table given by the *Bulletin*, we have the following exhibit:—

Year.	Average rate.	Loss ratio.	Commissions paid per cent.
1873	0.86	30.6
1874	0.81	31.6
1875	0.74	40.4
1876	0.68	51.6	14.9
1877	0.61	47.2	15.2
1878	0.58	42.8	15.4
1879	0.53	72.5	15.5
1880	0.55	55.6	10.2
1881	0.53	60.3	16.7
1882	0.57	62.9	16.6
1883	0.60	54.7	17.3
1884	0.62	55.1	17.6
1885	0.66	57.0	17.9
1886	0.60	49.0	17.5
1887	0.54	67.4	18.0
1888	0.55	68.0	18.5
1889	0.59	65.1	18.6
1890	0.55	59.8	18.9
Average	0.60	55.2	17.0

It will be noticed that there was a gradual lowering of the premium rate from 1873 to 1879, when for three