INTEREST RATES IN THE COLONIES.

At the special meeting of the Australian Mutual Provident Society, held in Sydney, Sir Joseph Abbott, M.I.A., the chairman, mentioned, "inter alia," that the extension of what might be termed the Colonial Government Credit-Foncier system, in New Zealand, South Australia and Victoria, had materially reduced the current rate of interest on freehold mortgage securities in those colonies. In this connection, a paper on "Colonial Governments as Money-lenders," read at the recent British Association meeting, possesses much interest. Its author, the Hon.W. P. Reeves, Agent-General for New South Wales, said that for many years high rates of interest had been almost as much complained of by farmers and graziers in Australia and New Zealand as in the Western States of America. Forty years ago 15 per cent. was commonly paid in the year in interest and commissions by this class of borrowers. By 1893 this had fallen to from 6 to 8 1-2 per cent., but the prices of produce had fallen in proportion. In the years 1894-96, the Governments of four colonies—New Zealand, South Australia, Western Australia and Victoria—established money-lending departments for making advances on mortgage to the smaller class of farmers. In this way over £4,000,000 had already been lent out, and about £450,000 had already been repaid. The rates charged to farmers were—in New Zealand, 5 per cent., and in Australian Colonies, 4 1-2 per cent. The fees charged by all the State lending-offices were very low—lowest of all in South Australia. The management expenses were, however, small also, and the lending would seem at present to have been done prudently. At any rate, balance-sheets to the end of June, 1899, and March, 1900, showed no losses, while of arrears of interest there were none in New Zealand, and but a few hundreds of pounds in Australia. The lending was done by way of first mortgage on freeholds or on leaseholds held from the Crown. The loans were devoted to improving settlers' holdings or to paying off existing mortgages bearing a higher rate of interest. The proportion of loan to security must not exceed 60 per cent. of freehold, or half the selling value in case of a lease. An interesting feature was the system of repayment of loans by instalment. Under this, the borrower paid 6 or 7 per cent. annually, of which 4 1-2 or 5 represented interest, and the remainder went to form a sinking-fund to extinguish the debt. In New Zealand, every loan must thus be repaid by 73 half-yearly instalments. The mortgagor might, however, hasten the process by depositing additional sums or paying off the whole principal whenever he chose. In 1899 the Government of New South Wales followed the example of the neighbour colonies, and passed an Advances to Settlers Act.—The "Insurance Observer," (London, Eng.).

MONTREAL CLEARING HOUSE.

	Clearings. $	Balances $
Total for week ending 11 Oct..............1900,	15,033,740	1,798,426
Corresponding week...1899,	16,440,604	2,212,406
" " .1898,	14,830,652	1,983,940
" " .1897,	14,259,128	2,299,824

THE NORTH AMERICAN LIFE ADMITTED TO NEW YORK STATE.

State Superintendent of Insurance, Francis Hendricks, on Tuesday last, authorized the North American Life Assurance Company of Toronto, Canada, to commence business as an old-time life insurance corporation in New York State. It has on deposit in the Insurance Department securities amounting to $251,000 for the protection of its United States policyholders.

A NEW FIRE OFFICE.

A new fire insurance company, called the Cosmopolitan Fire Insurance Co'y., is being organized at Walkerton, Ont., with an authorized capital of $1,000,000. The following are provisional directors: Messrs Truax, of Walkerton; McMullan, of Petrolia, and Oliver, of Newmarket.

PERSONALS.

Mr. W. P. Clirehugh, general manager of the London and Lancashire Life, sailed for England on Saturday last.

Mr. F. Minden Cole, mining and insurance broker, has removed his office to the Merchants Bank of Canada Building.

False Alarms of Fire.—The mischievous mania for giving false alarms of fire is not peculiar to Montreal. A recent English newspaper thus records the arrest of one of these dangerous nuisances in London:—

"At Worship street, Bartholomew, Foley, 36, labourer, living in Duke street, Spitalfields, was charged with giving a false alarm of fire, and further with smashing the glass, value 3d., of the fire-alarm at High street, Shoreditch. A police constable said that about 1 o'clock on Sunday morning he saw the prisoner from the opposite side of the road break the glass of the fire alarm and pull the handle. Running over, he detained the prisoner until a fire-engine came up, and then the prisoner, who admitted that there was no cause for what he had done, was charged. The officer in charge of the Tabernacle Square fire station said that on receiving the electric call from the stand in question, he turned out a steam engine and fire-escape and 26 men. A false alarm had been given the same night at an earlier hour. The prisoner who said it was all true, and that he had no explanation to offer, was fined the full penalty of £20 or two month's imprisonment.

One hundred dollars or two months! His worship 'ad Barty there; 'orrid, and that's the truth, and nothin' but the truth.