

FIRES IN LARGE TOWNS, 1893.

As the past year is reported by our fire offices to have been generally disastrous—at home as well as abroad—a summary of the results communicated by the chiefs of fire brigades in our principal towns or cities may be interesting and useful. Unfortunately, fire brigade reports are not yet framed on a uniform system, which precludes anyone from using the data to any great extent for purposes of comparison. We have, however, noted the leading facts, and they will be found sufficiently instructive, as bearing on the question of the higher loss ratio experienced in the past year.

LONDON.—The number of fires attended by the Metropolitan Brigade last year was 3,410, an increase of 264 on the number in 1892, and the largest in any year since 1866. Of these fires, 180 (as against 177 in 1892) are returned as serious, or, giving the return in percentages, 5.3 were serious and 94.7 were slight, as compared with 6 per cent. serious and 94 per cent. slight in 1892. If the fires be judged by number, they appear to bear out the general impression as to the unfavorable results of the year; but if by percentages, the experience was quite normal, or rather under the average. The information conveyed by the London Brigade report is, however, very meagre and imperfect, as we have before had occasion to remark, and its deficiencies are more marked when compared with the reports of some other fire brigades, notably of Manchester, Glasgow, and Birmingham.

MANCHESTER.—The number of fires reported by Mr. Lucy Savage, the new superintendent, shows a large increase, viz., 498, or, deducting 13 fires attended in the outside districts, 485, as against 382 in the previous year. Of these fires, 35 were classed as serious; that is, where more than one-sixth of the property within the risk was either damaged or destroyed. (We would note here, as an example of want of uniformity, that while Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham, and some other cities, reckon serious fires as those in which one-sixth of the value of the property is destroyed, Dublin reckons serious fires as those where one-tenth of the property is destroyed, and probably other estimates obtain, London apparently having no fixed estimate at all.) A valuable feature in this report, from the insurance point of view, is the tabular statement showing the amount of property at risk, the extent of damage, and value of property not destroyed for a series of years. The facts hereunder are stated as follows: "The total loss was estimated at £133,292, and £1,713,451 was assessed to have been at risk within the premises on fire. As compared with last year (1892), there has been a total decrease of £199,892 (chiefly stock) in amount at risk; an increase of £78,102 in the amount of loss; and an increase of 95 in the number of fires attended. As compared with the annual average of twenty years, there has been a decrease of £165,638 in the amount at risk, an increase of £48,180 in the amount of loss, and an increase of 156 in the number of fires attended."

LIVERPOOL.—The Liverpool Fire Brigade, as is generally known, is a department of the corporation, and the annual report or statement as respects condition and operations of the brigade, forms part of the "police establishment" report. The tabular statements applicable to the brigade are, we are glad to see, very much amplified on the present occasion, and the information (hitherto merely fragmentary) is now about as precise and comprehensive as could well be desired by insurance officials. Evidently the fire brigade chief has taken advice in the proper quarter, not only as to the efficiency of the brigade, but as to a more approved presentation of the year's operations. The fires which occurred last year show a large increase—the number being 534, as against 317 for the year ending September 30, 1892. Of these thirty-one were classed as serious, and the total loss occasioned by the city fires was estimated at £307,696, the value of the property at risk being £2,908,573. For the first time a detailed tabular statement is given, showing the description of risks on property damaged, the value of property at risk, destroyed, insured, and uninsured. This table is a model one, and we give the totals under the last three heads mentioned:—

Value of property at risk.	Value of property destroyed.	Insurance of property at risk.	
		Value insured.	Value uninsured.
£ 1,626,985	£ 270,518	£ 1,585,408	£ 41,577
B'ld'gs...1,281,588	37,178	1,156,982	124,606
Total 2,908,573	307,696	—	—

BIRMINGHAM.—The fires which occurred in Birmingham show a large increase in number on those of 1892. Mr. Superintendent Tozer, in his report, says: "The total number of alarms of fire which the brigade have attended during the past year, has been 702, an increase of 115 on the previous year. Of these 128 related to chimneys on fire, and eighty-five were false alarms. Of the 489 fires, nine were beyond the city boundary. Of the actual fires attended, 458 were slight, and thirty-one were of a serious nature, more than one-sixth of the property at risk being destroyed. The total loss from fire was estimated at £31,296, and the value of the property at risk at £1,563,167. As compared with 1892, there has been an increase of £12,773 in the estimated loss, and an increase of £541,459 in the amount of property at risk. £725 of estimated loss, and £5,844 of property at risk, relates to fires beyond the city boundary."

GLASGOW.—The chief officer of this brigade reports a decrease of forty-three in the number of fires compared with the previous year; the total being 533, as against 577 before. The total estimated loss was £102,000, as against £120,000 in 1892, and the report says further, "A still more favorable comparison would result were the losses incurred within the recently annexed areas excluded. These losses for 1893 reached over £15,000, and previous to the extension of the city were not included within the table given." The discriminating reader will have noted the striking difference between the results reported of Glasgow and of Liverpool, those two cities possessing several features in common, such as size, population, and extent of commerce and manufacture.

DUBLIN.—The number of fires in this city was greater, viz., 359, as against 335 in 1892, but the estimated amount of property destroyed was considerably less. Of these fires, twenty-two were classed as serious, three resulting in total destruction. The estimated amount of property at risk was £370,074, as against £523,427 in 1892; the estimated amount destroyed was £27,920, as against £89,878, and the amount destroyed but non-insured £2,012, as against £1,589 in 1892.—*Finance Chronicle, London.*

FINANCIAL MATTERS IN THE STATES.

From the weekly circular of Henry Clews & Co., New York, dated Saturday last, we extract the following:

Wall street is still brooding cautiously over a situation beset with uncertainty of one kind or another. The crops, the tariff, the currency, the spectre of financial sectionalism, the significance of the new tramp element in politics, the wide prevalence of strikes, and the new peace element in Europe with its probable effects upon international investments—all these matters, important in themselves and some of them fraught with significant possibilities.

On one point there is a very general agreement—that within two to four months, the principal of these uncertainties will have been settled; and the expectation is very general that the results will contribute to a material recovery of confidence and a large revival of business. The probabilities of the moment point to the enactment of the tariff bill, but in a form more lenient towards manufacturers than was proposed in the measure as it was passed by the House of Representatives. Those ameliorations have a tendency to encourage confidence. The rates of duty, however, are perhaps less important to the major part of our industries than the rates of wages. Upon a wide range of important products, the present duties go beyond the strict requirements of protection, and the new duties will suffice to keep out the foreign goods. This is a rule of wide application; but more than this is most probably needed. There has been a general reduction in the prices of the foreign goods with which our manufactures have to compete; and to meet that

change it may be found necessary that there be a reduction in the rate of wages. That is the one condition upon which a successful resumption of active business is more or less dependent. The general demand in the manufacturing and mining industries for lower wages thus becomes a matter of the first importance to the revival for which all interests are hoping. So far, the trades unions are offering stubborn resistance, upon a broad scale, to this demand; and it does not seem impossible that the struggle may be prolonged. That labor will have to yield in the end, there can be no doubt; for manufacturers are now in no position to continue doing business at a loss and will prefer stopping their works to taking that course. It thus becomes a question whether, following the tariff uncertainties, we are to have a labor conflict. Upon that hangs the further question—when we may hope to see our industries restored to a basis of reasonably active prosperity? Could the doubts on that point be removed, there would be a solid basis of confidence in the revival of trade; for, in all other respects, the country is prepared for an active resumption of trade and for the undertaking of enterprises that would afford free employment for labor and capital. For our part, notwithstanding the present unyielding attitude of labor, we incline to the opinion that a rational public opinion will bring about a second thought among the unions that will bring them to soon accept the inevitable. There is no other possible event that could so greatly conduce to a quick revival of business.

The remarkable bids for the Paris loan, amounting to 100 times the sum of bonds offered, and the offers for the German loan to three times the amount sought, are striking evidences of the extraordinary surplus of funds in Europe seeking employment. This is not without significance to our own investments.

THE SUGAR DUTIES.

In commenting upon the tariff change admitting to Canada all raw sugar not above No. 16 D.S., free of duty, Messrs. Willet & Gray's *Sugar Bulletin* says: "This will give the Canadian refiners full supplies of raw beet sugars, which the American refiners cannot import under the Senate schedule. All the western markets of the United States will be thrown open to Canada because the Senate schedule gives American refiners only .018c. per lb. protection against granulated from beet sugars and .06 per lb. against granulated made from cane sugars. Canada refiners will obtain more than this difference in rates of freight to the west and be constant competitors for the American refined trade to the extent of their surplus production. Canada retains a duty of .64c. per lb. on raw sugars above No. 16 D.S., and on refined sugars of all grades and standards, thus prohibiting any competition on the part of American or other foreign refiners for the Canadian trade. The Canadian Government is evidently not made up of visionary theorists, but practical, patriotic men, looking for the interests of Canada and not seeking to throw into the hands of foreigners a great industry which legitimately belongs to their own countrymen. Our Congressmen would do well to follow the example set by such men. The Canadian outlook alone should be sufficient to kill the Senate sugar schedule when it comes up next week. Free raws and free refined is no more destructive than that schedule is to refiners."

FAMILY RECORD.

"Family history in insurance," says the *New York Medical Examiner*, "is important as showing the tendency to heredity; or to put it in plain language, it shows what kind of stock the applicant comes from. If his family record shows that his relatives have all lived to a good old age, the inference is, other things being equal, that the applicant will also live to an age about equal to their own, and, therefore, in that one particular, he is a good 'risk.' If his family record shows that they have all, or any number of them, died at a comparatively early age, of consumption or of any other hereditary disease, the inference is that the applicant also has a tendency to die comparatively young and of an hereditary disease. In other words, the value of his life is impaired by the weight of influence which these facts may have."