FIRE INSURANCE IN CANADA FOR YEAR 1902

In accordance with our custom at this season for many years, we publish in this issue the returns of the Fire Insurance Companies transacting business in Canada, showing the result of the past year's operations—1902.

As the returns of the Insurance Department, Ottawa, will not be issued for some time to come, and as it is a matter of importance that the fire officers should know the results of the past year as early as possible, the companies, with their usual courtesy, have sent us their figures from which our tables have been compiled. We regret to say, however, in this connection that we had to estimate those of the Hartford, London Mutual, and Quebec, which did not arrive, but these will not affect the general average. The average ratios for the years 1901, 1900, 1899, 1898, 1897, 1896, are also included.

Fire insurance is a question of averages. While it is satisfactory to contemplate that the loss ratio for last year was the lowest for many years in Canada, yet, if we take the average loss ratio of 68.68 for the three years 1900, 1901 and 1902, and add thereto the average expense ratio of 30 per cent. it brings the aggregate loss and expense ratio for the three years to 98.68, leaving very little, or practically no margin for profit. The figures for the years under notice were:—

		Loss ratios.	Averages.
1900.	Canadian Companies	83 25	
	British "	97.94	
	American "	107.17	
	Average		96.66
1901.	Canadian Companies	68.22	
	British "	74.15	
	American "	66.83	
	Average		70.29
1902.	Canadian Companies	38.18	
	British "	39.02	
	American "	39.14	
	Average		38.79

The average for the three years being, as above stated, when expenses are added, 98.68. During the year the premium income has increased from $9,650,348 to $10,659,291 as compared with 1901. The net premium received by Canadian companies amounted to $2,182,949; British companies, $6,-922,694; American companies, $1,515,753, making the grand total of premiums, $10,621,396; while the losses incurred amounted to $4,142,711.

The Fire Insurance Companies are to be congratulated upon the foregoing results. It is to be hoped that the corner has now been turned and that the fire offices will, like other trading institutions, have the prospect of making a reasonable profit. The fire business in Canada has been anything but profitable, for, in addition to paying the actual losses and expenses incurred in connection with the year's business, it must be borne in mind that the companies have to lay aside a portion of their income for unexpired risks, to say nothing of providing for the conflagration hazard, and conflagrations do occur with singular, periodic regularity.

PROMINENT TOPICS.

The King's health is again causing anxiety. His Majesty took cold at Windsor from exposure when planting a tree, or trees. After such serious attacks of illness as he has suffered from the constitution is permanently reduced in strength, and the liability to suffer from cold increased. This untoward event prevented a royal visit being paid the Duke of Devonshire at Chatsworth House, Derbyshire, one of the most palatial mansions in England, situated in a valley where the natural beauties have been heightened by the art of the landscape gardener. Chatsworth House is, however, not the ideal place for a winter visit, save to the robust, who can set damp at defiance, for the valley, so extremely lovely in spring and summer, is somewhat foggy at this season. King Edward is recovering to the delight of the Empire.

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The Venezuela affair is getting into a tangle, as the affairs of an insolvent always do when the claims of creditors are so various and their power to collect so different. This wretched little republic is up to the the eyes in debt; it owes money, more or less, to almost every State in Europe. France seems to be a "preferred creditor," having been granted certain rights over the customs revenue. Mr. Castro should call a meeting of the creditors, make a formal assignment, and let his estate pass into their hand until enough is collected to clear off the liabilities That would be a good business proposition, incomparably better than provoking Germany to bombard his forts and kill their defenders.

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The probability of war arising out of this scurvy Republic's indisposition to pay its debts may be dismissed as not worth serious consideration. The powers interested have repudiated any desire to take permanent possession of Venezuela, a step which the American's say would do such violence to the Monroe doctrine as to provoke a war with whatever nation seized Venezuela. Were such a war to break out it would involve more than half Europe in a conflict with the United States, and cause every day an expenditure as great as the total of the debts which are causing the disturbances. The game would not be worth the candle; it would pay the United States to advance Venezuela the money to clear off its liabilities, a course that would be the best solution of the difficulty.