

underwriting in the past few years? Not the 1 per cent. increase in commissions. Not the small increase in expenses and taxes.

What of the average rate of premium? It is more now than for the '70's and '80's. This increase is misleading, however, for it does not take into account the three and four year premiums, included with the annuals in the totals of premiums to amount at risk.

What of the average ratio of losses to amount at risk? The above table shows that it is less than in the '70's and '80's.

The per cent. of term risks was .3264 from 1877 to '80 inclusive. In 1891 it was .5521; in 1894, .5752; in 1898, .5928. Happily, the term business is now declining.

Years ago warnings against the increasing amount of term business were repeated by eminent underwriters. An underwriting loss was predicted. These predictions appear to have been verified by the unfortunate underwriting experience in the United States during the past few years.

May not the underwriting losses be largely due to the increase in term business?

PROMINENT TOPICS.

The Alaskan Award is monopolizing public attention. No Canadian question was ever before so freely discussed by the Press in Great Britain. The general tone towards this country is gratifying. Our English contemporaries, as a rule, sympathize with us in the disappointment of the Award, and give Canadians an amount of fatherly, or neighbourly advice respecting the attitude we ought to assume which, though a little too patronizing, is offered in too friendly a spirit to be criticized. We are told to bear up with "dignity" and "patience." We ought, says one English journal, to say not one word in protest, or disapproval, but, like a cricketer who has been bowled out, we should accept the situation in silence. The comparison of an International Commission to a game of cricket does not display much literary skill, for there is not the slightest analogy between the two things and without points of likeness an analogue is impossible. We thank the British Press for its kindly sympathy, but we would ask that, in future, Canadians be not patronized by advice, which, under like circumstances, would be resented by the people in the United Kingdom.

Critics of the Alaskan Commission should bear in mind what our contemporaries have overlooked, that this Tribunal was the idea of the British Government and was not proposed by Canada. Whatever responsibility attaches therefore to the defective constitution of the Tribunal as regards its fairness to Canada, rests on the Imperial Government.

The use of the franking privilege possessed by members of Parliament for the purpose of distributing political campaign literature by the post office service free of postage has given rise to acrimonious debates in the House of Commons. The Postmaster general was charged with obstructing the distribution of the mail bags filled with the pamphlets issued by the Opposition, which, if correct, would be a serious dereliction of his duty, but the charge seems to have been made rather hastily.

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Using the public service to such an extent for party purposes is open to grave objection, but, as both parties are equally guilty the offence of one side practically cancels the offence of the opposite side. The trouble over this matter only arises when a General Election is anticipated at an early date, about every four years, and then extends only over a few weeks, so there is no ground for serious excitement. It is one of the weak spots in the party system of Government.

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General Menocal has been in New York for the purpose of negotiating a Cuban loan of \$35,000,000, respecting which he is quite sanguine, but details have not been divulged. If this loan goes through a considerable portion of the funds will be drawn from Europe. The loan will probably have an effect in the price of silver which has been advancing under purchases for a new issue of coinage for the Philippines.

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The heavy curtailment of work by the Pennsylvania Railroad, and shortening production by manufacturing firms has had a depressing effect on the market. To some extent these curtailments have resulted from labour troubles, and strike promoters will discover that when capital becomes alarmed by their high-handed proceedings it also can "strike" by throwing men out of work and punishing them heavily by following their own methods.

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The examination into the affairs of the United States Shipbuilding Company, which, on a property and business originally capitalized at seven millions became capitalized at thirty-eight millions, is disclosing some transactions that are highly discreditable. Such proceedings are responsible to a large extent for the withdrawal of confidence from industrial stocks. No wonder the investing public became alarmed when it was realized that water was being pumped wholesale into some United States stocks, until as was the case with the United States Shipbuilding Company, the proportion of water to solid matter was as 5 to 1. The company, according to latest evidence, did not build ships—it seems to have been a mere device for floating shares and bonds.