

call loans were reduced by \$3,333,000, while the previous year there was practically no change during the month. The large increase this year is, of course, the complement to the increase in deposits, accompanied as it is by a decrease in current loans in Canada of \$7,100,000, the figures representing the latter having fallen off from \$458,555,000 in December, to \$451,207,000 in January, this being the first month since August in which current loans have not shown a substantial advance. At the end of August they stood at \$437,440,000; four months later, they had grown to \$458,355,000, and have now fallen back to \$451,207,000, being a net increase in the five months of \$13,767,000. During the same five months last year the increase was \$4,661,000. During the twelve months ending 31st January, the increase has been \$48,306,000, compared with \$28,147,000 for the previous year, and \$62,157,000 for the year ending 31st January, 1904. Amongst the more important individual increases during the year are:—

Canadian Bank of Commerce.....	\$10,853,000
Dominion Bank	3,852,000
Bank of Montreal	3,110,000
Traders Bank of Canada	2,653,000

Current loans outside Canada now stand at \$37,283,000. They have increased by \$6,401,000 during the month, and by \$18,959,000 during the year, being now rather more than twice what they were in January, 1905. In the Bank of Montreal figures alone the increase is \$8,454,000, while a growth of \$3,000,000 is shown by the Bank of British North America, \$2,000,000 by the Bank of Toronto, and \$3,500,000 by the Merchants Bank of Canada.

Total assets have increased to \$822,959,000, being a growth of \$7,416,000 during the month, and \$102,083,000 during the year.

The merry work of opening new branches still continues, and this, coupled with the tales we hear about the rates at which some banks are willing to canvass for business, gives color to the supposition that in some quarters Providence is being depended on to supply those profits without which not even a bank can long continue to do business. Many of the banks are admittedly making handsome profits at the moment, but the whole business world is doing the same, and banking profits have certainly not increased in larger proportion than have those of the manufacturers, wholesalers, etc. Those banks which are planting new branches in towns where one bank has hitherto made not more than a comfortable living, or any new banks which think that because old established banks after long years' of experience have been able to return large profits in a time of abnormal prosperity, they can rush into the field, open branches by the wholesale in charge of inexperienced men, and then come comfortably through the next period of depression, are likely to have a rude awakening. The craze for opening new branches, which has been epidemic throughout the Province of Ontario during the last year or two, is now running riot in Toronto, to the amusement of the business community. The pace can hardly be maintained much longer. But with the additional offices to which Canadian banks, old and new, are already committed, we cannot but think that for the next few years we shall have in Toronto, instead of a reasonable number of fairly profitable branches, an unreasonable number of offices, many of which will be a steady drain upon the profits of their respective institutions.

IMPORTANCE TO ONTARIO OF HUDSON BAY.

Pressure upon our columns has compelled us, most unwillingly, to hold over for a week the third article on this subject. It is a lengthy, but our readers will find, an interesting one.

THE INSURANCE COMMISSION.

Announcement was made on Monday last, that the Dominion Government had appointed a commission to investigate the conduct of insurance companies. Next day, the names of its members were made known. They are, Mr. Justice McTavish, Ottawa, senior judge of the County of Carleton; Mr. J. W. Langmuir, of Toronto; Mr. A. L. Kent, of Montreal; with Mr. A. C. Ross, of Bridgewater, Nova Scotia, as secretary. The announcement of the names has been received with general favor. Mr. McTavish has the reputation of being well informed on the legal aspects of insurance, having a good knowledge of the various amendments made to the Insurance Act. Mr. Langmuir is a man who stands deservedly high in business circles of Ontario. His knowledge of the value of securities will prove especially valuable. Mr. Kent made a good record for himself in connection with the winding up of La Banque Ville Marie. He is regarded as a thoroughly honorable man, who has been a success in his special line as an accountant and assignee. While not reputed to possess brilliant actuarial skill, those who know him closely say he is a plodder, who is bound to get at the bottom facts of doubtful dealings, and will persistently delve away till he reaches them. Presumably, the commission will have the advantage of the advice of the Ottawa Insurance Department, which will often be needed in matters involving actuarial skill. The full scope of the commission has not yet been made known; but it ought to have power to command books and papers of companies, and the attendance of persons if necessary to explain anything and everything connected with a company's affairs. The more thorough the enquiry, the more certain will its findings be to set at rest the minds of many who have been rendered uneasy by the results of the New York enquiry. If any such "American" methods have been in vogue in Canada as were there found out, the sooner we know it the better.

FIRE INSURANCE IN CANADA.

It is possible to chronicle an improved condition of affairs among fire insurance companies in the United States and Canada. More encouraging loss ratios, fair underwriting profits, additions to surplus, have been the rule among American companies in 1905. Whether it be from the efforts of the National Board of Underwriters in the United States or from a fresh realization by the people of both countries of the duty of greater care in matters of building, and of fire protection, there is in many districts a distinct lessening in the ratio of fire waste, especially in the United States. The two largest Canadian companies have shared in the betterment which these conditions have effected, and show considerable additions to surplus.

It is very agreeable to learn from the address of the president of the Western Assurance Company that