

NORTH BRITISH AND MERCANTILE INSURANCE COMPANY.

The North British and Mercantile held its 91st annual meeting on the 10th inst. The first year of the decade which will bring this company to its centennial was one of much prosperity.

In the Life Department, 2,924 policies were issued, net amount assured \$7,865,170. Net new premiums \$293,614. In the Annuity Branch 370 bonds were issued securing the sum of \$87,086 of immediate annuities, for which the Company received the sum of \$953,209 by single payment.

Exclusive of the Shareholders' Life and Annuity Profits for the quinquennium ended 31st December 1900, the balance at credit of profit and loss at that date amounted to \$2,748,677, out of which the general court recommend the payment of a dividend for the year of £1 per share, being \$550,000, and a bonus of 10s per share being \$275,000. The Shareholders' Life and Annuity Profits for the quinquennium amounted to \$576,200, which sum has been carried to a shareholder's life and annuity profit account. This sum, with accumulated interest thereon, is sufficient to provide an annual payment of \$1.12 per share for each of the next five years. There has therefore been transferred to the profit and loss account an amount sufficient to pay as a further bonus the above mentioned sum of \$1.12 per share, which the General Court recommend accordingly. The total distribution thus amounts to \$8.60 per share—\$948,750—free of income tax, leaving to be carried forward \$1,915,167.

One half of the dividend, along with the bonuses to be paid on 15th May, and the other half of the dividend on 11th November next. The Life Valuation shows a divisible surplus for the quinquennium ended 31st December last of \$14,612,000 yielding to North British & Mercantile participating policies a compound bonus of \$7, with proportionate bonuses to policies issued by the Scottish Provincial and United Kingdom Companies.

The business of the fire department showed marked enlargement over previous years. The gross premiums received were \$10,026,415, from this large sum \$2,292,149 has to be deducted for re-insurances which leaves the net premium income in 1900 as \$7,734,266. In 1899 the net premiums were, \$7,232,605, the amount last year being, \$501,651 in excess of previous year. During quinquennial period, 1896, the net fire premiums amounted to \$36,574,484, and the losses to \$21,803,551, the loss rate being 59.63 per cent. of the premiums. The sum of \$200,664 was added to Premium Reserve by which it was raised to \$3,093,706, and \$50,980 was carried to Profit and Loss Account, making the balance at credit of that account, \$2,748,677. The two re-

serve accounts of the fire department together make a total of \$10,843,705. The combined assets of this great institution amount to \$76,697,964, the increase since 1898 having been over 4 millions of dollars, although the company has had conflagration experiences which, though disagreeable, have only served to demonstrate its strength. The Canadian business for many years has made progress and profits under the management of Mr. Thomas Davidson, who, we regret to record, has had a long and trying illness which has thrown considerable responsibilities upon his son Mr. Randall Davidson and other experienced officers of the company which they have discharged with credit.

PROMINENT TOPICS.

A prominent and disagreeable subject of general interest in this city is the vote given, or rather not given, by the property owners in regard to the proposed expenditure of \$100,000 for improving the fire brigade. The necessity for increasing the efficiency of the fire brigade of this city is universally recognized as being very urgent. The enormous losses, occasioned by defects in the brigade's equipment have compelled the insurance companies to increase their rates. The advanced rates entail a total yearly impost on property owners of, probably, two or three times the amount required to put the brigade in efficient condition. Yet these facts being notorious and recognized as constituting an imperative demand for an enlarged and improved system of fire protection, there were only 315 votes recorded in favor of the necessary expenditure to insure this result. In the district where over three millions worth of property was burnt a short time ago, much of which would have saved had the fire brigade equipment been equal to the occasion, in that district where a huge ruin witnesses daily to the need of an improved fire protection only three persons voted for this protection being secured!

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It is incredible that property owners in this city do not desire more adequate fire protection, incredible also that they regard \$100,000 as too much to spend in securing it. Why then did they allow so important a by-law to be lost by a vote of 969 against and 315 in its favor. The 969 doubtless were all small proprietors who habitually object to every increase of taxes, however unreasonable their action. The owners of larger properties probably thought there would be no opposition to the by-law. They have learnt a lesson as to the utter non-reliability of a municipal tax vote. The City Charter is mainly in fault as it gives equal voting power to the owner