FIRE PREMIUMS AND TAXATION IN MONTREAL, 1915.

THE CHRONICLE publishes this week on page 371 its annual statement showing (1) the amount of fire insurance premiums upon risks in the city received by the fire companies doing business in Montreal in 1915, and (2) the details of the taxation levied upon the fire companies by the City. The total premiums received last year by the fire companies in Montreal were $2,881,955, compared with $3,101,784 in 1914, $2,934,551 in 1913 and $2,645,-684 in 1912. That this sharp decrease of about $220,000 should be recorded last year in Montreal premiums is scarcely surprising in view of the depressed conditions of general business throughout practically the whole year—the light stocks of merchandise, due to disinclination or inability to obtain or carry larger in view of the uncertain outlook, the dislocation in manufacture, and for some time at least, the poor retail trade. Furthermore, building in 1915 was extremely restricted. As regards munition plants, which within the last few months have helped to offset the fall in premium income from commercial risks, it must be borne in mind that many of the plants in the Montreal neighbourhood which are busy in this direction, are not within the limits of the City and accordingly are not included in the present tables.

BASIS OF THE TAXATION.

The basis of the tax upon premiums (fixed by the Legislature in 1911) is a one per cent. straight tax upon the premiums with a minimum tax of $200. As will be in recollection, an attempt was made by the City at the recent session of the Quebec Legislature to double up the tax on premiums to two per cent., but happily the good sense of the Legislative Council prevented this new and gross imposition upon the fire companies. The existing taxation is entirely indefensible on any ground of equity. The companies get nothing in return for it. The only excuse for the tax is that it is easily collectable. What constantly makes the situation in regard to this tax the more galling is that the nondescript array of unlicensed insurance organisations which ridiculous legislation permits to maintain unfair competition with the licensed companies, come boldly into the City, get business here and are not asked for a cent in the shape of taxation. Including the tax towards the upkeep of the Fire Commissioner's office, the City's special taxation upon the fire companies amounted last year to $38,068 compared with $39,465 in 1914.

Seven companies did a business in Montreal last year involving premiums of $100,000 and upwards, compared with eight in the previous year. They were in the order given:—Royal, Guardian, North British, Phoenix of London, Liverpool & London & Globe, Mount Royal and Commercial Union.

CANADIAN FIRE RECORD

Specially compiled by The Chronicle.

FIRE AT TORONTO.

A fire occurred on the 27th instant on the premises of Brown & Staunton, stationers, 77 Bay Street, Toronto. The other occupant of the building was L. J. Babayan, dealer in oriental rugs, on which the insurance is stated to be as follows:—

North Brit. & Mer.	$17,500	Law Union & Rock.	$10,000
Continental	5,000	Phœnix of London.	10,000
Union of Paris	5,000		
			$37,500

Loss about 50 p.c.

BROWN AND STAUNTON

Atlas	$2,500	Irish & Maulsons Co's.	$5,000
Royal	4,000		
Employers	4,000		
			$15,500

Loss, total.

VANCOUVER, B.C.—Two hay sheds on Main Street occupied by Rupert, Ross, Rushford Hay and Grain Company and owned by R. V. Palmer, destroyed with 2,800 bales of hay and 5 carloads of straw, March 17. Loss $10,000 partly insured. Premises of Vancouver Creamery and John Kents. adjoining also destroyed with wagon and buggiey Building not insured.

KINGSTON, ONT.—By the fire which occurred on the 25th instant in the Hotel Frontenac, Kingston, Ont., the following companies are interested:—Northern, $5,000; Norwich Union, $5,000; North America, $2,500; Economical, $2,500. Total, $15,-000. Loss about 50 per cent.

LONDON, ONT.—Halfway Garage owned by Springsteen & Company, destroyed, March 26, with apartments occupied by Dr. Higley, G. W. Muckle and G. Evans. Three automobiles also destroyed. Loss to garage $16,000. Insurance on building $6,000.

MONTREAL, QUE.—Home of M. Therrien, 909 Desjardins Street badly damaged and home of Chas. Cantois, lower flat, damaged by smoke and water. Loss $1,000. Origin, defective electric wiring.

Home of J. R. Marshall at 2236 Hutchison Street and H. Southgate, at 2238, badly damaged, March 22. Origin unknown.

House at 524 St. Catherine Street West damaged to extent of $900, March 25. Origin, smouldering cigarette.

Store of R. Saad at 2882 St. Hubert Street considerably damaged, March 26. Loss, $3,000 covered by insurance.

LEAMINGTON, ONT.—Livery barn of Mr. Heatherington in village of Wheatley, completely destroyed with part of contents, March 22. Loss about $3,500 with $1,500 insurance.

WINNIPEG, MAN.—G.T.P. freight sheds on York Avenue damaged to extent of $2,000, March 23. Origin, spontaneous combustion in unclaimed baggage room.

PARRY SOUND, ONT.—No. 1 shrapnel house of Canadian Explosives at Nobel destroyed March 27. Fire originated from electric motor.

HALIFAX, N.S.—Building on Pleasant street rented by A. Dombalagian as a boarding house, destroyed, March 26. Six foreigners killed.

AYLMER, ONT.—Elgin Club damaged to extent of $1,000, March 24, and offices and plant of the "Tribune" suffered $2,000 damage.