Victoria, B.C., a vignetting apparatus, a very ingenious device; 56,564, Thomas Kipling, Victoria, B.C., automatic rocking cradle; 56,571, M. G. Forstall, Winnipeg, water closet; 56,594, Louis Barceloux, Stanbridge Station, P.Q., reel or spindle.

The United States Government has this week granted patents to the following Canadian inventors: 586,112, Onesimo C. Beloin, Riverside, L.I., folding table; 586,114, Charles Boyer, Indianapolis, Ind., attachment for mowing machine; 586,157, William P. Boisvert, Point Levis, P.Q., ruler; 586,570, William Fairbairn, Gainbogie, P.Q., envelope opener; 586,186, Douglas Hewitt, Toronto, lead pencil; 586,265, Abraham A. Bourgeois, Long Meadow, Man., mechanical strokes for furnace; 586,341, Albert B. Maquire, Stratford, P.Q., stepladder; 586,361, Gustave Bourquin, Merchantville, N.S., knife sharpener and burnisher; 586,404, Charles E. Fyler, et al., Dempster, P.Q., bristle washing machine; 586,491, Robert A. Hartley, Brantford, P.Q., whip socket.

NORTH BRITISH AND MERCANTILE.

The facts and figures of the North British and Mercantile Insurance Company for the year 1896 have already been mentioned, but it is observed by the London *Insurance Spectator* that the report of the company does not give comparisons or percentages. These the journal named proceeds to supply. In the fire account the report gives the premium income of the year as £1,463,435 net, whilst the corresponding figure for 1895 was £1,478,414. No explanation is offered for this reduction of income, but it is apparent that it is not needed. Profit only is to be considered. The business has been carefully considered and reconsidered, and pruning has been done. Whereas the previous year's business left a profit of £114,233, out of the very slightly smaller income, 1896 shows a profit of £187,130, or say $935,000—very handsome figures.

When the directors were dealing last year with the quinquennial valuation report of the life department, they gave the figures of the fire premiums and losses of that period. The result was to show that the average of losses in the fire department during the five years was 63 5 per cent. of the premium income. For the year 1896 the ratio works out at 54.39 per cent.—a figure lower than that of any single year of the last nine.

The life business of the North British looks well, too, and although the directors are not given to boasting they do allow themselves to say that, both gross and net, it represents the largest ordinary new business ever completed by the company in any one year. Policies to the amount of £1,693,738 were issued at the company's own risk, and the new premiums thereon amounted to £63,830. The income of the life department alone now closely approximates to a million sterling. The claims which arose during the year were again light, and in amount did not equal those of the previous year, the actual figures being £532 671, against £579,169. As a result there has been the considerable addition of two hundred and eighty-eight thousand pounds to the life assurance fund, which now stands at £7,136,311, thirty-five and a-half millions of dollars! The North British very sensibly keeps the accounts of its three departments quite distinct, and also their investments.

PROVIDENT SAVINGS LIFE ASSURANCE SOCIETY.

A little stir was caused in certain New York circles last week over a published statement that the heirs of the late Frank R. Hadley, of New Bedford, Mass., had brought an action against the president of the Provident Savings Life Society and others for an accounting and a change in the management. The complaint was served on the Continental Trust Company, the holder of 1,025 shares of stock of the society, valued at $300,000, collateral for a note of $200,000 made and executed by the other defendants. This note has fallen due. Mr. Scott, the president, says "the charges are absolutely false. The administrators of the estate have set up a claim in equity of the stock which the company does not recognize, notwithstanding proffers of settlement. The action which it is alleged they have now taken is brought, in my opinion, with a view of influencing the company to take cognizance of their alleged claims.

"The late Frank R. Hadley was reputed to be a man of wealth, of the highest standing, socially and financially. It is true he secured a loan of $200,000 from the financial institution referred to. It is also true that the loan was renewed, without question, as I understand, all of which evidences the value of the security and the general standing of this society." The action taken, he adds, will in no wise affect the status of the Provident Savings Life; but in view of their evident intention to injure it, Mr. Scott took occasion some time ago to ask the New York Insurance Department to investigate the affairs of the society. The result of the examination, he is quite confident, will prove the allegations which have been made as unfounded, false and malicious. Advices of yesterday state that the president has bought the stock in question.

FIRE INSURANCE ITEMS.

The city collector of Chicago has collected $40,000 in insurance taxes and expects to get $60,000. If he does this, about $50,000 of the amount collected will be used for the construction of a new steel fire boat.

The annual convention of fire chiefs of the United States and Canada is to be held this year in New Haven, Conn., the sessions opening on August 17th, and closing on the 20th. It is probable that Chief Benoit, of Montreal, as well as Ald. Stevenson, chairman of the Fire Committee of that city, will attend the convention. Chief Graham, of Toronto, has not as yet, we believe, arranged to go.

The *Chronicle Fire Tables* give, in their latest issue, an annual account of increased ignitions and decreased combustion in the United States. For 1896 these tables show a national property fire loss of $118,737,420, attended with an insured loss of $73,903,800. Taking the fire insurance in force in 1896 in the United States as approximately $22,000,000,000, there was a loss in the year of about 33 cents per $100 insured; probably the lowest annual issued loss ratio that has ever taken place in the country.—*American Exchange.*

The Chicago *Inter-Ocean* relates the following story: "A good one is known to a select few concerning a local agent at Milwaukee who holds a notary's commission. One of his customers, a not unworthy descendant of Abraham, had a small loss, which was satisfactorily adjusted and the proof of loss duly signed and sworn to before the local agent, who in the press of work neglected for the time to affix his signature as notary. Later in the day the somewhat airy special agent of the company called, and the matter was explained and he was shown the proof. "This is all right," said the special, "but where's your jurat?" "He's my friend," said the local, crushingly.

LIFE ASSURANCE MATTERS.

An insurance agent wrote last month to his company, on the death of a prominent Indiana newspaper editor, aged 44: "Charles Gwynn, the editor of whose recent death you wrote me, had promised that he would insure soon. He continued in his 'putting off' in spite of my most persistent efforts. It surely is an argument of the strongest sort in favor of wise action TO-DAY."

We speak of hard times, dull times, unfavorable times, and so on, says the *Insurance Age*, but we ourselves make the "times." An illustration is given thus: The man who has just placed a policy for $50,000, and secured the premium, is of the opinion that "things are looking up;" while the agent who sits in his office, waiting for risks to come to him, is constantly exclaiming against the hard times.

The United States Industrial Co. of New Jersey, has been in the field for nearly nine years, and has built up a pretty large business, but finds it hard to realize a sufficient margin between income and expenditure to pay for the use of the capital employed. So the company recently decided to abandon the field and reinsure its business with the Metropolitan. By this arrangement the latter adds largely to its agency force, gets about $14,000,000 of additional insurance, and removes an active competitor from five States.

Another assessment life company in the United States finds the error of its ways. This is the Royal League, concerning which the New York *Evening Post* announces that it has adopted the level-premium system of life insurance, and is intending to create a reserve fund. This association, like others of its kind, did a prosperous business in the beginning, but its fate was predestined. It used to charge members $1.34 eight times year, or $10.72 per year for $4,000, an absurdly low rate. Now the Supreme Council proposes to assess $2.72 *every month* for $3,000, which is $32 64 per annum—a very different story.

In a recent issue of the *British Medical Journal* attention is drawn to the difference in favor of abstaining lives over those of non-abstainers as shown by the yearly returns of the United Kingdom Temperance Insurance Company for a quarter of a century. During last year, in the non-abstaining section, the actual death claims were 356, which was 46 fewer than the expectancy. In the temperance section, the actual death claims were 246, or 118 fewer than the expectancy. In other words, if the death-rate of the abstainers had been the same as of the non-abstainers, instead of two hundred and forty-six there would have been three hundred and twenty deaths, or seventy-four more. While if the death-rate of non-abstainers had been the same as of the abstainers, there would have been eighty-four fewer deaths.

We usually hear of France as a country of melancholy prospects in the matter of future population, because the birth rate is lower than the death rate. But there is equal room to lament over some of the United States, if recent figures submitted by the Chicago *Inter-Ocean* are correct. While, says that journal, "in France the birth-rate is 22, per 1,000, in Nevada it is 16.30 per 1,000; in Maine, 17.99; New Hampshire, 18.4; Vermont, 18.5; California, 19.4; Connecticut, 21.3, and in