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Fire Insurance In accordance with our usual custom, in Canada we have sent out forms to the various in 1899. Companies, asking them to send us their figures for the past year, so that all our readers may know the result at the earliest possible date. We are glad to state that the Managers of the Companies have, without exception, and even at considerable trouble, always furnished these interesting statistics. They will be particularly interesting this year, for, as stated in a letter received this morning from the Manager of one of our old Scottish Offices, "while the business for last year in Great Britain, Canada and Australia is reported to be on the right side, the condition of affairs in the United States is expected to be hopelessly bad."

Where it Begins.

The somewhat wearisome, because useless and nonsensical, discussion, as to when the new century begins, has been relieved by a very interesting contribution to the Ladies' Home Journal, showing where the new century begins. The people of the Friendly Islands in the middle of the Pacific Ocean will be the first to hail the advent of 1901. The writer upon this much discussed subject says:—

"The first moment of the twentieth century, the first second of January 1, 1901, will occur in the midst of the Pacific Ocean, along a line conforming in general to the meridian of 180 degrees east and west longitude from Greenwich. There is here no land of consequence to salute the new century; no human eye, save, perchance, that of the watch on board some tiny ship, will be there to see its entrance, and its only welcome will be, perhaps, the last stroke of the eight bells marking midnight on board some steamship or vessel which, by chance, may cross the meridian at that instant."

In an equally interesting way, some of the curiosities of time are dealt with. While the Friendly Islanders are ushering in the first moments of a new century, all the rest of the world will be enjoying some phase of Monday, the 31st of December next, the last day of the present year. The majority of Montrealers will be eating breakfast.

Enlarging Fire Limits.

A new building code has just gone into effect in the city of New York, whereby a considerable enlargement of the fire limits is provided for. Almost all of Manhattan Island is now within the limits, and will have to conform with a law forbidding the erection of frame buildings, the only exceptions being sheds, and temporary structures. The first and second floors of apartment houses must be of approved fireproof construction, and the height is limited to eighty-five feet. The enforcement of a somewhat similar law in Montreal would add to the security of life and property from fire.

Old Age Pensions.

When the present British Government was returned to power, about half a dozen years ago, a political promise was made that legislation having in view the providing of pensions for the aged poor would be framed. We have frequently commented on the different schemes for this purpose brought to public notice; but the solution of this question has now disappeared below the horizon. The Parliamentary Committee on old age pensions, Mr. Chamberlain, the eminent politicians, and the drafts of bills submitted for consideration, have all been neglected during the great excitement caused by the terrible war in South Africa. Whether the question will receive renewed attention at the next meeting of parliament is somewhat doubtful. The pledges and promises of the past are apt to be forgotten in contemplating the all-absorbing problems of the present, and the proper pensioning of those who are suffering for their Queen and Country will probably engross public attention to the exclusion of this vexed problem of old age pensions. This is certainly one result of the war not likely to be displeasing to Mr. Chamberlain, and other puzzled politicians, who will probably be content to leave the aged poor and the thrifty classes to the care of friendly societies and industrial companies until the bills for the South African campaign are paid.