

## London Letter.

(From our own Correspondent.)

DEAR SIR,—We Londoners are just now so interested in our Colonial Exhibition that we may be pardoned if by chance we over-estimate the amount of interest taken in it by other people. I, however have not much fear of doing this in writing to a Montreal editor, for some of the most interesting objects in the exhibition come from your part of the world.

The opening was a complete success. The Queen and a great show of notables made a most imposing exhibition in themselves, and we are all trusting that the new policy of Her Majesty in thus coming out will not have to be described in insurance language as a short term policy only. The opening was effected in what may be called a blaze of triumph, and our fire offices are devoutly hoping that the exhibition may not be closed by a blaze of a somewhat different nature.

For the risk of this is by no means small. The buildings and contents are terribly combustible, and once well alight there would probably be little left of the Colonial Exhibition besides ashes and fire claims. Not only is the place very burnable but, from the nature of an exhibition, it would be impossible to attack a fire in it from all sides at once, and, as we all know, this is a most important consideration from the fireman's point of view.

All kinds of rates are being charged, ruling from one and a half per cent to three guineas; and as much above this as can be got in special cases. In fact, our strongest fire offices are treating the issuing of fire policies on goods in the Colonial Exhibition as personal favors granted to their customers. One insurance man I know took so lefty a tone when I discussed the matter with him, and seemed to consider his company doing such a nobly beneficent thing in insuring its customers' goods that I began to think it must be doing it for nothing. I ventured timidly to ask for information as to rates, and my admiration for that man's company fell a little when I found what it was charging. It seemed to me that that company was doing pretty well, and I went away wondering whether I could in any way be noble and beneficent to my fellow-creatures in a similar manner, I haven't discovered how to do it yet, and must content myself for the present with the satisfaction of knowing that virtue is its own reward.

From Montreal we have one exhibit that I think should receive careful attention from all of us who are interested in fire insurance, and that is the model of the Montreal Ice Palace. In this, I mean the Palace not the model, we have, I think, as near an approach to an incombustible structure as we are at present likely to attain to. Practical men may indeed point out that there are difficulties in building in this style which will probably stand in the way of its universal adoption. No doubt there are, but nevertheless an incombustible structure has been desiderated by fire insurance companies for a long time, and as Montreal has discovered this I think it fair that she should get the credit of it.

Next in importance to making buildings so that they cannot catch fire is to find something that will put out the fire which they have caught, or, as it seems to me better to say, the fire which has caught them. There is something new I hear from America in this line, called the Imperial Fire Extinguisher. The usual experiments were tried and the usual success attained: "wooden structures covered with pine-tar and oil when set on fire were extinguished very quickly." Of course they were, they always are; but the extraordinary thing about all these fire extinguishers seems to me to be that, although they can extinguish a fire in a wooden structure soaked in oil or pitch or what not, and indeed according to some of their "introducers" would put out an eruption of Vesuvius in about five minutes yet they

don't seem equal to putting out an ordinary fire produced by the ordinary servant girl with the ordinary paraffin lamp in an ordinary brick built dwelling-house.

I am of course in no way specially describing the Imperial Fire Extinguisher as having this curious trait: my remarks apply equally to the Royal, Princely, Republican, etc. They are all like that. I am only writing you a short letter to day, so will now extinguish myself. If you think my remarks on the Fire Extinguishers are captious you must make some allowance for the natural feeling of envy which I, one of the oldest and most trusted fire extinguishers in the world, am bound to entertain against the new-fangled interlopers. I wonder whether the owners insure them against fire and at what rates. My proprietors will never be put to the expense of insuring me against fire, for it takes a very clever man to set on fire

"TAMES!"

### PROTECTION FOR OUR FIRE COMPANIES.

We must put in an earnest plea on behalf of the regularly licensed fire insurance companies of the Dominion. Our Government has a national policy and protects our manufacturers, and it is surely not asking too much to wish insurance treated at least as liberally. As it stands at present the law allows foreign companies to sell their policies here, and by means of their smaller expenditure, to cut rates to a lower point than the regularly licensed companies, who have to pay Government and other taxes and all the expenses connected with maintaining offices and agents in the country can afford. If the companies are to be taxed for the privilege of doing business in the country they ought at least to be protected in their rights, and not placed at a disadvantage in competing with their untaxed rivals. Since writing the above we are sorry to see that the Insurance bill has become law without any effective remedy having been adopted.

### AUSTRALIAN MUTUAL PROVIDENT SOCIETY.

This company is making wonderful progress. It already surpasses any other company in the British Empire in most features, and will very soon be acknowledged at the head in every way. During 1885 it received 15,497 applications for about \$29,000,000, of which over 11,000 for \$20,000,000 were completed. These figures are more than one-third larger than those of the previous year, and about 80 per cent. in excess of the largest amount obtained in a single year by any other British life company.

There are 69,207 policies in force, assuring about \$125,000,000. The annual income is about \$6,000,000, and the death claims \$1,500,000. The assets increased by about \$3,000,000 and are now about \$30,000,000. The surplus at 4 per cent. was over \$2,100,000. The interest earned was a shade over 6 1/2 per cent. on the assets, and the report says that "there seems little reason to suppose that any difficulty will be experienced for many years to come in maintaining a minimum effective rate of 6 per cent." The society is opening a branch office in Great Britain and will no doubt, do well there.

Canada with a population five times as large as that of California, says the *Coast Review*, yields only a half a million more in fire premiums.