

trial, to exist. We cannot better illustrate the significance of thorough building on the European plan than by reference to the experience of one of the largest wholesale merchants in Chicago, who, doing business in the average building of the period, found it impossible to obtain sufficient insurance with reliable companies to cover his enormous business. With rare good sense he proceeded to erect a large building, of moderate height, on the genuine mill construction plan, divided into three compartments, with heavy fire-resisting tile partitions between, and with each opening covered by the best steel vault bank doors and with other features of the construction on similar lines of safety. The result was that the best companies were willing to carry from five to thirty thousand dollars each on the stock, in each compartment, at 55 cents, whereas they reluctantly carried previously from twenty-five hundred to five thousand at \$1.50. And experience has so far demonstrated that the 55 cents rate is more profitable than the former treble rate, while the owner saves in expense for insurance nearly \$10,000 per annum.

The average business man is loud in his complaints against the insurance companies because of high rates of premium, but slow to understand that the character of the risk makes the size of the premium charge, and that the companies are quite as anxious as are the property owners to bring about an era of lower rates. When, as in the above example, building construction and protective appliances become such that the companies can better afford a 55 cent rate than, under present conditions, they can afford a \$1.50 rate, no class of the community will be better pleased than the company managers themselves. This very important fact to the people of the United States and Canada, where last year fire reduced to ashes \$170,000,000 of their property, ought to be more forcibly impressed upon all classes. Slow-burning or comparatively non-burning buildings for stores and factories and warehouses in our cities, where are found the chief insurable values, would speedily reduce the fire waste and the cost of insurance to the people, while at the same time promoting the prosperity of the insurance companies.

Another fruitful cause of the greater fire loss in this country and in Europe is to be found in the greater laxity here on the part of the civil authorities in the making and enforcing of laws applying to fires. As the result of agitation on this subject some very good laws have been passed in many localities providing for fire inquests, and the public mind is gradually becoming informed as to the benefits to be derived from investigation of fires by State officials. The difficulty, at least in the States, lies largely in the perilous indifference with which the majority of the public look upon the strict enforcement of law generally. In some States, notably Massachusetts and Maryland, a comprehensive system of fire investigation, under the direction of a State official made responsible for results, now exists; and as these officials are clothed with authority, not only to make careful inquisition into the causes of fires, but to arrest and procure the punishment of offenders, the outcome will be watched with great interest.

When the *Chronicle Fire Tables* tell us that country stores burned in the United States are believed to show sixty per cent. as being incendiary, that incendiarism had to do with forty-five per cent. of flour mill fires, thirty-two per cent. of hotel fires, and fifteen per cent. of the burned dwelling houses, we begin to get some idea of the relation of criminal intent to the fire loss. Prompt exposure and swift punishment would very soon reduce the number of incendiary fires most materially, and at the same time do much to reduce the proportion of those usually set down to carelessness. It is easy to say that the companies must simply take into the account our faulty building construction, universal carelessness, and prevalent incendiarism, and charge it all up in the premium rate. As easy as that is to say, it is an exceedingly difficult thing to do—as a matter of fact, an impossible thing to do, in a way to stay done. Until the general public become sufficiently aroused to find a way to prevent the annihilation by fire of from a hundred and fifty to a hundred and seventy-five millions of property annually, they must be taught that the hazardous conditions making such a loss possible are to be held responsible for rates which, high as they are, are all too low to afford a fair profit to the business of fire underwriting.

BUSINESS OF BRITISH FIRE OFFICES FOR THE YEAR 1893.

(From the *Review*, London, Eng.).

Name of Company.	Premiums.	Losses.	Expenses and Commission.	Percentage of Losses to Premiums.	Percentage of Exp. to Premium.	Percentage of Losses to Expenses to Premiums.
Royal.....	2,078,193	1,440,300	68,4780	69.5	32.9	102.4
Liverpool & London & Globe.....	1,628,225	1,070,586	486,684	65.7	29.9	95.6
North British & Mercantile	1,447,390	1,050,184	474,711	72.5	32.8	105.3
Com. Union.	1,042,151	720,561	321,955	69.1	30.9	100.
Sun.....	975,375	732,142	324,471	75.1	33.3	108.4
Norwich Union.	879,779	630,391	283,726	71.6	32.1	103.7
London & Lan. cashire.....	868,135	582,891	288,114	67.1	35.2	100.3
Palatine.....	789,422	540,726	223,738	68.5	28.2	96.7
Lancashire.....	741,112	643,901	273,662	86.9	36.9	123.8
Northern.....	716,397	448,950	234,286	62.7	32.7	95.4
Imperial.....	702,420	548,812	245,811	78.1	35.	113.1
Manchester.....	666,145	395,389	201,646	59.4	30.3	89.6
Guradian.....	566,773	377,646	202,649	66.6	35.4	102.
Alliance.....	532,770	348,815	177,080	65.5	33.2	98.7
Caledonian.....	479,394	358,085	167,073	74.7	34.8	109.5
Scottish Union & National.	462,066	278,151	139,711	60.2	30.2	90.4
London.....	413,521	269,949	142,102	65.2	34.4	99.6
Atlas.....	347,452	237,886	113,820	68.5	32.7	101.2
Union.....	301,813	237,080	106,814	78.5	35.4	113.9
National of Ireland.....	272,974	209,601	82,181	76.8	30.1	106.9
County.....	265,166	153,465	82,155	57.8	30.9	88.7
Royal Exchange.....	258,425	141,981	81,235	54.9	31.4	86.7
Lion.....	193,560	147,558	67,776	76.2	35.	111.2
Equitable.....	190,612	122,973	62,267	64.5	32.6	97.1
Patrotic.....	179,982	139,334	59,497	77.4	33.	110.4
Law.....	133,493	60,938	39,792	45.6	29.8	75.4
Other British Offices.....	717,861	431,565	243,783	60.11	33.96	94.07
Totals..	17,850,556	12,319,460	5,810,517	69.01	32.55	101.56