

It is to be remembered that much vacant land is embraced in the great stretch, six or seven miles, of this street, which we have examined; the whole street is between seven and eight miles in length. The portion west from Yonge street is, of course, the most thickly built, and likewise the busiest. Nevertheless, in that part of Queen street 16½ per cent. of the shops are unoccupied, while the proportion vacant in Queen street east is 19 per cent. Apparently none of the buildings erected for dwellings on Queen west (31 in number) are vacant, while on the eastern portion of it 19 out of the 156 are unoccupied. If builders and land speculators would find a lesson in these figures relating to shops, they might do a service to themselves and the city.

AMERICAN FIRE UNDERWRITING.

On Thursday of last week the annual meeting of the National Board of Fire Underwriters was held in New York, under the presidency of Mr. Skilton, of Hartford. The address of this gentleman presents some points that merit attention. He begins by saying that underwriters have not always contended that rates of premium were too low; there have in fact been periods of prosperity and profit for insurance men. The present, however, is not one of them; and he proceeds to ask how the existing situation can be improved, bearing in mind two very important points, "a material advance in the average rate, and a radical reduction in expenses." The latter seems to us, in the United States especially, a very important item.

In considering rates Mr. Skilton points out a steady transfer of business from yearly to longer term policies during the last fifteen years. In 1877 the risks having one year or less to run were 70.88 of the whole amount; the long term risks representing only 29.12 per cent. At the close of last year the one year (or less) risks were only 45.27, while the long term business was 54.73 of the whole. Here was a difference in fifteen years of more than one-fourth. Again, the premiums on one year risks in 1877 amounted to 66.18 of the whole received, which percentage had declined by the end of 1892 to 48.87, a decrease of more than 17 per cent., while the increase on long term premiums corresponded. To put it in dollars, the aggregate at risk on one year business went up from 4,189 millions of dollars in 1877 to 7,555 millions in 1892, an increase of \$3,365,000,000, while the long-term business in the same period swelled from 1,721 millions to 9,131 millions, an increase of \$7,410,000,000. Then as to rates, said the speaker: "On the one year or less class the rate in 1877 was .9342; in 1892 it had increased to 1.1387, . . . probably owing to the great transfer of building insurance to the long term classes and the retention in the one year or less classes of the high-rated specials and other high-rated risks."

On the three year class it appears the rate has fallen from 1.0408 in 1887 to .8797 in 1892, a decrease of .1611. On the five year class the rate has fallen from 1.4545 in 1877 to 1.2160 in 1892, a

decrease of .2385. If the companies had collected the same rate on the long term business of 1892 that they did in 1877, their premium income for 1892 would have been increased over \$16,900,000, or say \$17,000,000, or nearly 10 per cent. on the whole amount actually collected, viz., \$176,017,337.

This means, Mr. Skilton reminds us, that "a very large percentage of our business has been transferred to the long term classes, and at a steadily diminishing rate, until we surely have reached a figure below the safety line."

His conclusion is that there must be a change in a salutary direction. "We must," he says, "command the situation by assuming a more complete control of our business. We must aid the different associations in their efforts to secure an adequate average advance in rates of premium, the uniform use of properly drawn policy contracts, and a still further reduction in expenses." State and municipal taxation is becoming onerous to the companies in the States, and its increase must be combatted. Then, he says, expenses must be faced, "a most difficult problem," truly. Is it not true that, there as well as here, the insurance companies, whether fire or life, are too much afraid of their agents, and often too ready to allow them to dictate terms of commission, or to gloze over a shaky risk, or an unfair settlement, rather than take a firm stand that might offend the agent or his customer?

THE TELEGRAPH IN CANADA.

XXXIV.

Sandford Fleming's report as engineer-in-chief of the Canadian Pacific Railway said, on April 5th, 1879, when urging the importance of through communication by wire between Ottawa and British Columbia: "The statute provides that the telegraph shall be constructed along the line of the railway after the location [of the latter] is established. On the eastern section the route is not established. On the western section, although the line by the Rivers Thompson and Fraser was adopted last year, that location has not given entire satisfaction. . . . East of Fort William it would be practicable to connect the Pacific Railway telegraph with the telegraph system of Ontario by submerged cables across Lakes Superior and Huron to Tobermory, or some other suitable point north-westwardly from Owen Sound. The cable would not be continuous, but would probably have intermediate land lines across the peninsula at Sault Ste. Marie and the Manitoulin Islands. . . . The amount available by the non-prosecution of the Georgian Bay Branch Railway [whose discontinuance had been suggested] will admit of a land line of telegraph being constructed precisely in the position where it will be of permanent advantage. The line being located for the railway and cleared, the cost of the telegraph itself would be comparatively small, probably not more than \$120,000, while the cable line might cost from \$400,000 to \$500,000. . . . The telegraph may, without further delay, be taken by the route traced to Yellow Head Pass, and thence to the most convenient point of connection with the British Columbia telegraph system in operation, which is itself owned by the Dominion Government. The arrangements in force for oper-

ating the 1,200 miles constructed are not satisfactory, and frequent complaints have been received with regard to them."

The engineer went on to suggest the modes of rendering the C.P.R. telegraph useful to the public. One was to complete the Eastern and Western sections in the way indicated and operate the whole under Government, as in Great Britain, at a low scale of charges. The other, to invite proposals from existing telegraph companies, or new ones, to buy the 1,200 miles built from Fort William to Edmonton, which we have already described (in March) as built by Richard Fuller, Sifton, Glass & Co., and Oliver, Davidson & Co., the company or companies to complete the line from Ottawa to the Pacific, and work it "at fixed uniform charges, not higher than the present tariff in Ontario and Quebec." If neither of these be deemed practicable, Mr. Fleming suggests that steps be taken to regulate the charges from Fort William to Edmonton, which the railway builders need constantly to use, and which would be of marked public service besides.

In his report of 1880, the Engineer-in-Chief states that it was towards the end of 1874 that the first expenditure was made on construction of the great railway; "contracts were then entered into for the telegraph from Lake Superior to British Columbia along the route of the railway, including the clearing of the forest land to a width of 132 feet." He made at this time the suggestion, alternative to the cables across Lakes Superior and Huron and land lines across Manitoulin Islands, of a land telegraph from the north shore of Lake Superior to Lake Nipissing, "connecting with the extended Canada Central road from Ottawa."

Still another of his proposals for a purely Canadian telegraph system from ocean to ocean was in connection with the projected railway to Sault Ste. Marie, viz., along the line of this road to the eastern end of Lake Superior, "with a submerged line across the lake to the telegraph at Thunder Bay." The ocean-to-ocean connection by wire completed, Mr. Fleming goes on to project a sub-marine extension to Asia, and urges the peculiarly important position which the C.P.R. telegraph would occupy, seeing that Canada is situated midway between the masses of population in Europe and Asia.

It will be instructive to linger for a moment and consider what is implied in the bald statement quoted about the clearing of the forest and the building of the telegraph for the C. P. R. The 1880 Report consists of some 400 pages, with engineers' and surveyors' reports, maps, measurements, estimates, etc., which Mr. Fleming "has the honor to submit" to Sir Charles Tupper, Minister of Railways and Canals. In it are accounts by various engineers, Mr. Marcus Smith, Mr. Cambie, Mr. Horetzky, Mr. MacLeod, Mr. Dawson the geologist, of their explorations, which show in a graphic way what arduous labors this important class of men and their assistants have had to come through. We may conclude that the builders of the wire had not any "softer" time. For instance, Mr. Cambie, who had started in June up the Skeena River, with a party in two canoes manned by five Indians each, says, when they had by August reached Smoky River and Sturgeon Lake: "we had travelled during four days only about forty-one miles. A very large portion of the country is flooded by beaver, and we spent hours picking our way between ponds, wading across swamps, and bridging small streams with muddy banks in order to get our horses over." In the trip to Dunvegan and Lesser Slave Lake, along the