

### AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE RATES.

The question of automobile rates for next season is beginning to occupy the attention of underwriters. Agents and brokers, too, are, no doubt, watching the situation with interest in view of the increasing importance of this class of business.

With regard to fire rates two very serious fires in the City of Montreal of recent date has altered the aspect in the Province of Quebec. Prior to this the City of Toronto had shown a large percentage of loss. Considering the large number of garages which have been hurriedly and flimsily constructed throughout the country to meet the growing demand for accommodation, it is surprising that the losses have not been heavier.

The automobile is always surrounded by serious fire risks, and whilst these risks may be reduced by constant care on the part of the owner, and by the installation of adequate chemical extinguishers, yet one careless owner in a public garage will expose the others to loss. Spontaneous combustion is an ever present danger when oily cotton waste is pushed into odd corners. This and other things such as defective wiring are liable to start fires during the night time. The ever increasing number of automobiles, and consequent shortage of storage room, makes it necessary to house cars close together, and in such a way that it is difficult to save them in case of fire. The building may be fireproof but the contents are lost.

Collision rates went up prior to the opening of last season, but it is quite evident that they were not made high enough, because the cost of new parts and repairs generally rose to a much higher level than was anticipated. High prices still rule on material and labour, and there is no indication of relief in the near future. It is possible, however, that underwriters may endeavour to carry on at the present rates for another year, on the assumption that last year's results will not be repeated.

There are indications that liability rates will also move upwards from year to year. It is a well-known fact that the cost of reparation for personal injuries, is on the up-grade, due to an increasing tendency on the part of all law courts to be liberal in the matter of handing out damages to claimants. Premium rates will, of course, require to keep pace with the losses.

Hitherto it might be said that the Automobile Theft cover, has been given away by the companies as an advertisement. It has always appeared to us that the covering for theft should not be included under the Fire Policy. Theft and damage done by thieves are essentially casualty risks, and it would seem more logical that this risk should be provided for in the Collision Policy. If this were done there is little doubt that an increased premium for this covering would be secured. The great number of losses reported would indicate that this condition of affairs cannot continue unless some innovation is introduced to make it very much more difficult for the automobile thief to operate.

However, with sixty odd companies competing for this class of business in Canada, there is not much likelihood of their being able to hold out for adequate rates, until forced to do so by continued losses.

### ABSTAINERS, NON-ABSTAINERS AND INFLUENZA.

In view of the present day tendency in favour of prohibition throughout Canada and other countries, a compilation of reports from life insurance companies in the United States are being assembled regarding the ravages of influenza, causing death claims well over one hundred millions on account of this epidemic. The results of the investigation are both interesting and instructive. The Spectator, New York, says: "The investigation showed that of the claims considered about two-thirds were teetotalers and one-third temperate. These deductions were, of course, made from the statements in the original applications. Whether they indicated that non-alcoholic drinkers were more subject to the disease than those who occasionally or regularly imbibed the investigator did not undertake to say. The fact remains, however, that the deaths were higher among the younger lives, where, as a rule, intemperance is not a fixed habit, and it is recognized that a large proportion of insured persons, as well as of the general population, are total abstainers. The large number of deaths among soldiers in camps, cantonments and also on board ship from this disease should also be borne in mind as those men were, under army regulations, forced to be total abstainers.

Although influenza has been pandemic for a period of about four months medical authorities are still uncertain as to the precise character of the germ which causes it, although it is beginning to be admitted that the real influenza germ is speedily fatal, and that those who recover have only suffered from the old form of grippe. A number of doctors have reported cases of speedy recovery where alcohol has been promptly prescribed in an effort to stop the disease, but they are naturally unable to state whether it was alcohol or the natural powers of resistance of the patient which avoided the fatal result. The outstanding fact remains, however, that the heaviest death rate with both insured persons and the general public has been among adult lives under age 35 (children seem to have been little affected by the disease), whose consumption of alcohol as a beverage is comparatively low, and that an investigation into a specific number of cases showed a higher number of deaths among those reported as total abstainers. This is not put forth as an argument for drinking, moderately or otherwise, but as an indication that in spite of the increase in medical science and the pronounced spread of temperate habits, every once in a while Nature puts on some condition which seriously interferes with or upsets all preconceived notions.