

WESTERN ASSURANCE COMPANY.

The old-established and highly respected Western Assurance Company, of Toronto, which is under the able and efficient management of Mr. W. B. Meikle, issues for 1913 a report which is on the whole favorable. The marine business, unfortunately, again produced a slight deficit, but the fire department did well, heavy losses during the summer months being succeeded by a fall and winter when losses were below the average, probably, as the report suggests, owing to the climatic conditions being more favorable than usual.

The net premiums in the fire department last year were \$2,202,367, an increase of nearly \$150,000 upon the fire premiums of 1912. Net fire losses were \$1,173,276, compared with \$1,065,495 in 1912, or a ratio to premiums of 53.3 per cent. While this result is not quite so good as in 1912, when a ratio of 51.6 was returned, yet it can be considered as a satisfactory figure. The details of the business show that in all the fields in which the Company operates the results achieved during 1913 were of an average kind. No one field was particularly disappointing, but on the other hand, no one field was exceptionally fortunate. Claims were light in the early months of the year, but severe during the summer, and it was the slackening up of fires in the fall and during the few weeks of winter prior to the close of the year that enabled the department to close with a satisfactory profit.

The Marine Department was distinctly unfortunate, inasmuch as it would have shown a profit had it not been for the severe storms on the great lakes in November. Marine losses have, however, been unusually numerous, and Mr. W. R. Brock, the president, stated at the annual meeting that the increasing cost of material and of wages has made repair bills for damages to vessels much higher than in former years, so that some readjustment in rates seems necessary.

The profits of the year amounted to \$238,366 against \$225,309 in 1912. The total assets of the Company at December 31 last, were \$3,507,346. Unearned premiums and other liabilities at the same date aggregated \$1,669,725, so that there is a surplus to policyholders of \$1,837,621. The losses paid by the Company since its organisation, it is interesting to note, now aggregate over \$57,000,000.

It is particularly satisfactory to record that the aim of the management regarding economy of administration is being gradually realised, the ratio of expenses to premiums having been considerably reduced last year.

INCREASING BRITISH DEMAND FOR ANNUITIES.

Quite a feature of recent insurance history is the greatly increased demand for annuities, as shown by the published statements of life offices. Such of those institutions as do business in the United Kingdom reported during last year that a sum of about four millions sterling had been received by them as consideration for immediate annuities, the amount showing a large advance upon the corresponding figures of any previous year. Some of these institutions are Colonial and American companies, but by far the greater proportion of the total reported undoubtedly referred to annuities on the lives of inhabitants of Great Britain. In addition, there was no

doubt a large amount invested for similar purposes with the National Debt Office or the Post Office. Part of the increase in the amount thus invested is to be attributed to the efforts of the life offices themselves, which have found annuity business more attractive, owing to the increased yield of interest which they have been able to obtain on their funds. But the main cause is (says the *London Standard*) that the demand for such contracts amongst the general public has become greater. There are several causes which have been instrumental in stimulating this desire. Amongst these may be mentioned the fluctuations in prices of securities which have caused uneasiness to investors, making them more disposed to take advantage of fixed contracts. There are an immense number of people of both sexes who find themselves at ages when they have neither the strength nor inclination to take an active part in the quest for remuneration, or who are incapacitated, for one reason or another, from the full measure of their former earning power, and whose resources give an inadequate return in interest for their own maintenance in the position of comfort to which they have been accustomed. And most of these persons do not understand the profitable investment of money, or the intricacies of the stock markets, and have a natural desire to be relieved from anxiety as regards the market prices of securities. They have really to consider their own comfort for the remainder of their days as the main feature in cases where they have no dependants or friends whom they desire to benefit at their death at its expense. Others are in a position that the amounts which they propose to set aside for individuals at death are less than the capital in their possession can supply, and they are therefore disposed to employ a portion of their resources so as to ensure for themselves the enjoyment of a larger income. In an old country like our own the proportion of such people as compared with the total population is always increasing, so that year by year there is greater need of this description of contract. Moreover, annuity rates have in many cases been revised, and are now generally more favourable from the purchaser's point of view than formerly.

COMFORT IN OLD AGE.

Among the large average of men who reach the age of sixty-five, many are not self-supporting, becoming more or less dependent upon assistance from relatives who are younger and sometimes even having to rely upon help from charitable institutions.

These conditions are continually emphasizing the desirability of old age pensions, but when, if ever, they will be established is beyond foreseeing. Thought along these lines, however, suggests that a thoroughly practical arrangement, which will give effective financial care in advancing years, is within the making of every man and woman who is insurable, by the simple expedient of taking a monthly income policy on the endowment plan, which will begin to be paid to the person insured when the age of sixty-five, or any other selected time, is attained.

The great help that would come from the regular receipt of even a small sum in the declining years of life needs no extended mention, and the more common such a practice becomes the greater will be the comfort and happiness of old age.—*Union Mutual.*