

FIRE INSURANCE EXPENSES.

Discussing the question of expenses of the fire insurance companies, Mr. Frank Lock, United States manager of the Atlas, points out that the companies have, for many years, been put on the defensive with regard to the expense ratio, and much that is unreasonable has been alleged. We might as well make up our minds, remarks Mr. Lock, that the business cannot be transacted at a low ratio of expense, and furthermore as the average rate of premium declines, the average rate of expense may experience a tendency to rise. Nor should this be regarded as contrary to public interest. The companies transact what in fact is a retail business, involving a multiplicity of detail beyond the comprehension of the layman, whose mistaken idea is that there is nothing complex in the conduct of the fire insurance business; the truth is if it is to be conducted and not drift, heavy expense cannot be avoided.

With regard to the fixed charges of salaries, rentals, inspections, stationery, maps, traveling, etc., which show a tendency to constantly increase for well-known causes, for many reasons, thinks Mr. Lock, this is wholesome when it is borne in mind that it carries with it great service to the public, for the great fire preventive force of the country is the fire insurance profession. Inspections of buildings in the country run into the millions annually, effecting reduction of the fire waste through the indication of fire hazards by thousands of trained experts to an extent which can hardly be measured.

STRICTLY PREVENTABLE FIRES.

The elaborate analyses of American fire losses carried out by the actuarial bureau of the National Board of Fire Underwriters show the following 1916 losses from "strictly preventable" causes, and their proportion to the whole loss:—

Defective chimneys and flues	12,724,317	or	6.1%
Fireworks, firecrackers, etc.	775,409	or	0.1%
Gas, natural and artificial	1,815,597	or	0.9%
Hot ashes and coals	1,140,194	or	0.5%
Ignition of hot grease, oil, tar, wax, etc.	552,130	or	0.3%
Hot or molten metal	157,183	or	0.1%
Matches	7,136,181	or	3.4%
Open fires	1,112,953	or	0.5%
Open lights	2,142,958	or	1.0%
Petroleum and its products	5,070,100	or	2.4%
Rubbish and litter	777,559	or	0.4%
Smoking (cigars, cigarettes, pipes)	8,588,375	or	4.1%
Sparks on roofs	7,355,047	or	3.5%
Steam and hot water pipes	413,176	or	0.2%
Stoves, furnaces, boilers and their pipes	11,204,875	or	5.4%
Total	\$60,466,054	or	28.9%

All of the fires in this list are due either to carelessness, or to the presence of conditions which

could have been detected and prevented by proper inspection. There is a total of \$60,000,000, of which every dollar could have been, and should have been saved. With all due allowance for innocence of intention, such fires come close to being a crime against society. The time will surely come when such fires will be recognized as culpable, and calling for punishment.

NORTH-WEST FIRE INSURANCE COMPANY.

The thirty-fourth annual statement of the North-West Fire Insurance Company, of Winnipeg, published on another page, indicates a strong position. Total assets are \$316,197, these including cash on hand and in banks \$58,213, and debentures and mortgages \$236,749. Surplus over all liabilities is \$87,280, an increase of about \$9,000 over 1916, and in addition policyholders have the protection of the \$100,000 paid-up capital. The North West Fire, as is well known, is a subsidiary of the Union Assurance Society of London, England. Besides the Company's own adequate resources, therefore, policyholders of the North-West Fire have the security, afforded by the backing of leading and very wealthy British insurance interests.

With regard to the business of 1917, net premium income was \$134,265, interest receipts of \$15,907, bringing the total revenue up to \$150,172. Losses at \$85,819 were about \$8,500 less than in 1916. Expenses totalled \$45,427, leaving a balance of \$18,927.

Mr. T. L. Morrisey, Canadian manager of the Union Assurance Society and a much-esteemed member of the Montreal insurance fraternity, is general manager of the North West Fire, and Mr. Thomas Bruce, deputy manager.

AETNA LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY.

On the occasion of his completion of fifty years of service with the Company, and in token of their high esteem, the general agents of the Aetna Life Insurance Company recently presented Vice-President Joel L. English with a Colonial desk and armchair, and an engrossed testimonial, with an individual personal letter from each general agent, arranged in a book with full morocco binding. Mr. T. H. Christmas, of Montreal, the senior manager of the Company, who has himself been more than fifty years in the Aetna Life's service, was chairman of the committee having this matter in hand, and recently made the presentation at Hartford on behalf of the general agents. Mr. Christmas has since received a letter from Vice-President English acknowledging the gift in the warmest terms.

AUSTRALIA and NEW ZEALAND

BANK OF NEW SOUTH WALES

(ESTABLISHED 1817)

Paid-up Capital	-	-	-	\$18,526,600.00
Reserve Fund	-	-	-	13,625,000.00
Reserve Liability of Proprietors	-	-	-	18,526,600.00
	-	-	-	\$50,678,200.00
Aggregate Assets 30th September, 1916	-	-	-	\$277,488,871.00

J. RUSSELL FRENCH, General Manager.

338 BRANCHES and AGENCIES in the Australian States, New Zealand, Fiji, Papua (New Guinea), and London.
The Bank transacts every description of Australian Banking Business. Wool and other Produce Credits arranged.

Head Office: **GEORGE STREET, SYDNEY.**
Agents: Bank of Montreal
Royal Bank of Canada
Bank of British North America.

London Office: **29, THREADNEEDLE STREET, E.C.**