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FIRE INSURANCE IN CANADA—1870.

We have been at a good deal of pains to compile from the official returns recently laid before Parliament, a statement showing the premium receipts and the losses of the Fire Insurance Companies doing business in Canada in 1870. These figures tell a tale of grim disaster, and prove the truth of what was before the general supposition, that 1870 was a *dies iræ* for fire companies, surpassing all its predecessors for a decade at least in wholesale destruction and wide-spread loss.

In the figures representing losses we have taken no account of resisted losses, and of the losses in suspense only the excess over the figures reported under this head last year is included. A comparison of the total business of twenty companies in 1870 with that of 1869, which was not regarded as a favorable year, will show how utterly disappointing and discouraging is the experience of underwriting in the last twelve-month :

Fire premiums in 1870	$1,958,537 82
Fire premiums in 1869	1,840,272 73
Difference	$118,265 09
Fire losses in 1870	$1,747,562 58
Fire losses in 1869	967,938 73
Difference	$780,523 85
Per centage of losses to prem., 1870,	89¼ p.c.
Per centage of losses to prem., 1869,	52½ p.c.
Difference	36¾ p.c.

From the statement given below of the receipts and losses of the individual Companies, it will be seen that a very varying fortune has attended them. The Quebec lost about two dollars for every one received. The Phœnix was relatively the next greatest sufferer, losing 155 per cent. of the year's premiums, or over $1.50 for every dollar received; the Imperial suffered to the extent of 117 per cent. ; the Royal, 114 ; the Ætna, about dollar for dollar ; the Scottish Provincial, on a small Montreal business (to which city its fire business is limited) lost two dollars for every one dollar of premium. Other Companies can, fortunately, tell a more favorable tale, as will be seen from the following :—

	Premiums, 1870.	*Losses Paid,* 1870.
Ætna	$114,121 35	$111,235 26
Agricultural	*113,912 53	64,078 10
British America	114,377 25	82,770 86
Commercial Union.	86,371 67	45,035 90
Guardian	8,780 87	1,300 00
Hartford	75,229 27	42,589 37
Imperial.	82,004 22	96,185 21
Lancashire	34,615 37	28,212 83
Liverpool, L. & G.	273,303 38	251,405 24
London Corporat'n	56,496 68	39,121 84
North British & M	168,500 27	115,967 00
Northern	25,252 70	7,281 55
Phœnix	82,643 78	128,845 19
Provincial	97,633 18	68,006 98
Quebec	72,725 00	152,076 00
Queen	166,616 53	96,170 99
Royal	238,451 50	272,622 21
Scottish Imperial	22,367 64	27,134 39
Scottish Provincial	5,004 08	9,904 77
Western	180,730 53	107,618 89
Total	$1,958,537 82	1,747,562 58

	Premiums, 1869.	*Losses Paid,* 1869.
Ætna	$107,635 56	$82,299 14
Agricultural	109,838 76	42,317 08
British America	113,833 36	49,538 72
Commercial Union.	81,890 52	38,223 81
Guardian	3,156 21	....
Hartford	57,531 90	29,198 86
Imperial	64,522 35	27,587 68
Lancashire	49,487 40	29,368 93
Liverpool, L. & G.	286,398 52	183,579 65
London Corporat'n	55,931 52	66,274 11
North British & M.	141,822 26	47,829 87
Northern	18,115 02	6,609 90
Phœnix	86,081 41	23,819 84
Provincial	99,913 82	81,431 67
Quebec	72,234 00	28,990 00
Queen	94,048 15	31,800 45
Royal	241,683 64	124,328 57
Scottish Imperial	4,873 15	....
Scottish Provincial.	9,489 93	....
Western	154,680 35	73,840 45
Total	$1,840,273 72	$967,038 73

The three Toronto Companies show losses much below the average of all the Companies, being 65 per cent. This arises partly from the circumstance that Montreal was last season a most disastrous point, but other causes may be at work. Let the managers of foreign companies make a note of this. For ourselves, we are not prepared to admit, even in the face of such a record as is given above, that Canada is of necessity an unprofitable field for fire insurance ; but we must admit that so long as the business is conducted as at present we have very little hope of it yielding satisfactory returns. There are radical errors at work which must be eradicated —a reckless cutting of rates is one of these. Closer scrutiny and a more vigilant supervision are required to prevent the operation of that ever-fruitful source of loss and fraud—over-insurance. A thorough and frequent inspection of risks by competent men would be the means of holding agents in check, and would take and keep off the companies' books many a bad risk. Something must be done to prevent the recurrence of such a general holocaust as that which will make 1870 a remarkable year in the annals of Canadian fire insurance.

*Includes $42,000 of Premium Notes.

THE INSURANCE BILL.

A great deal of anxiety has been felt for some time past in reference to the proposed insurance legislation. The Bill introduced by Sir Francis Hincks has not yet been distributed, but we have been able to learn something regarding its leading features. It will provide that the Life Companies are to deposit sufficient securities with the Receiver-General, or at his order, to cover all outstanding risks in Canada. The Companies are to put up their own securities, which must be approved by the Minister of Finance. The deposits are to be for Canadian policy-holders only, and there is no exception made of foreign mutuals in this respect. Provision is made for the distribution of the securities in case of insolvency. An *Inspector will be appointed*, a part of whose duty it will be to see that each Company is possessed of sufficient assets in Canada to cover its Canadian liabilities. It is required that Companies shall in certain cases increase their deposits gradually to $150,000, and every licensed Company is required to make its deposit up to the minimum sum of $50,000 before the 1st August, 1871. New Companies will not be allowed to make the deposit by instalments, as under the old Act, but will be required to put up $50,000 before receiving a license. These are the principal features that are new, so far as we have noted them.

We cannot say that the measure in its present shape meets with our entire approval, but until time has been afforded for a critical examination of its provisions, and, beside, as it is likely to be amended in some particulars, we reserve comment for the present.