

FINANCE AND INSURANCE

TWENTY years ago the annual premium income of British life assurance societies was only £14,766,000, representing an annual saving of only 8s 4½d per head of population, or £2 1s 10d per family of five persons. Ten years ago the premium income reached to \$22,283,000, an annual saving of 11s 8½d per head of population, or £2 18s 5d per family; but according to the most recent returns the annual premium income of life companies is now no less than £33,264,000, an annual saving of 15s 10d per head of population, or £3 19s 2d per family. Thus in 20 years the annual sums set aside as a provision for death and old age have increased 125 per cent., and as the growth in population has been only 19 per cent., the annual rate of savings per head of population for this purpose has nearly doubled.

ACCORDING to the New York Journal of Commerce the United States is rapidly becoming afflicted with a multiplicity of small banks of no considerable resources or reliability. Congress in 1900 authorized the establishment in places of not more than 3,000 inhabitants of so-called "national banks," the minimum of capital permitted being \$25,000. Since this action at Washington no less than 1976 new national banks have been created, with an aggregate capital of \$114,591,000. These small institutions have appeared in the largest number in the west and the south, though many have cropped up in the eastern states also.

FINANCIALLY, Canada is at present in a sound condition. In his budget, the Minister of Finance announced a further reduction in the national debt of probably seven and one-half million of dollars. Canada's debt reached its highest point two years ago, when it amounted to nearly \$272,000,000. Last year a reduction of seven million was effected, and this, together with the present reduction, will bring the debt down to about \$257,500,000. The possibility of making these reductions has been due to an excess of revenue over expenditure during the past two fiscal years. In 1903 this excess was \$14,345,166. This year it is estimated at \$10,500,000. A considerable portion of the surplus has in both cases gone towards expenditure on capital account, which accounts for the fact that less than fifty per cent. has been applied to a reduction of the debt.

AS the Summer advances the amount of United States silver circulating in Canada increases, and the tills of our merchants are found on inspection to contain quite a noticeable percentage of foreign coin. The presence of this foreign money is detrimental in more ways than one. It hurts the national pride in things Canadian

and it removes a source of revenue from the Government. The coinage of silver is carried on by the Government at a profit, being the difference between the face value of the coin and the cost of the material and manufacture. So long as the coin is not issued too freely, it maintains its standard value and the Government receives its profit. If, instead of the Government keeping the supply of coins up to the demand, that demand is supplied by foreign coins, the Government loses the profits on a corresponding amount of coin. Under these circumstances, some method should be introduced by means of which the foreign coins could be periodically cleaned out. The banks would naturally appear to be the proper channels through which to accomplish the work, but the banks are not directly interested. The Government is the real sufferer, and the Government should make it worth while for the banks to collect and ship out of the country all foreign coins.

ENDOWMENT life insurance is growing very fast, while insurance for the whole term of life is relatively stationary. In the past fourteen years the sums insured by endowment insurance in Great Britain increased from £31,000,000 to £183,000,000, a growth of £149,000,000. During the same period the growth in insurance for the whole term of life was only £67,000,000.

THE N. B. Board of Fire Underwriters have sent copies of the following circular to the local civic authorities of each town in the province:

The New Brunswick Board of Fire Underwriters have had under consideration the urgent necessity which exists for improvement of building laws and in the fire protection of the various towns in this province.

The numerous conflagrations in Canada and elsewhere have emphasized the necessity for the enactment of stringent regulations to prevent the spread of fires.

The rates fixed by this board are based largely on the construction and situation of the buildings, and the means of fire prevention, and in the future still more attention will be paid to these points.

It is recommended that in all congested framed districts the height of buildings be limited, and shingle roofs entirely prohibited.

The New Brunswick Board of Fire Underwriters trust, that in their efforts to diminish the fire loss in this province, they will meet with the hearty support of the civic corporations and property owners generally of the various towns and that the public will recognize the fact that, independent of the fire insurance companies, they are largely interested in reducing the fire hazard and in the adoption of measures tending to prevent the spread of fires.