

THE FIRE LOSS OF 1915.

The losses by fire in the United States and Canada during the twelve months ended December 31, 1914, as compiled from the records of the New York *Journal of Commerce*, aggregate the enormous sum of \$235,591,350, or nearly eleven million dollars more than the sum charged against the preceding year. This is the heaviest loss to property by fire during the history of the country, with three exceptions, namely: 1908, the year of the Chelsea, Mass., and three other conflagrations; 1906, the year of the San Francisco conflagration, and 1904, the year of the Baltimore conflagration. The fire losses of 1914 were augmented by the Salem, Mass., conflagration, costing thirteen million dollars, but averaged moderate until the last two months of the year, when the general burning ratio increased phenomenally.

INCREASE OF MORAL HAZARD.

The destruction of property by fire during the year just past was widely distributed throughout the country, all sections contributing their share, and it is notable that the property consumed was to a greater extent than usual fully covered by insurance. This feature has by some been attributed to the economic depression on the theory that such condition has produced an increase in carelessness and a lack of supervision of the fire hazard in industrial plants the operation of which had become less profitable. There were practically no forest fires destroying large values included in this year's record.

38 YEARS' FIGURES.

The magnitude of the fire waste as a drain on the country's resources may be somewhat appreciated when it is considered that during the past thirty-eight years the property destroyed by fire in the United States and Canada has reached the total value of \$5,866,981,025, equal to an average annual loss of \$154,394,237. The following table, giving the losses by years during the past thirty-eight years, discloses the steady enlarging tendency of the fire waste, notwithstanding all the efforts that have thus far been put forth by fire underwriters and engineers to induce better building construction and more real endeavor for fire prevention:

FIRE LOSSES DURING PAST THIRTY-EIGHT YEARS:
AGGREGATE \$5,866,981,025.

1914.....	\$235,591,350	1895.....	\$129,835,700
1913.....	224,728,350	1894.....	128,246,400
1912.....	225,320,900	1893.....	156,445,875
1911.....	234,337,250	1892.....	151,516,000
1910.....	234,470,650	1891.....	143,764,000
1909.....	203,649,200	1890.....	108,993,700
1908.....	238,562,250	1889.....	123,046,800
1907.....	215,671,250	1888.....	110,885,600
1906.....	459,710,000	1887.....	120,283,000
1905.....	175,193,800	1886.....	104,924,700
1904.....	252,554,050	1885.....	102,818,700
1903.....	156,195,700	1884.....	110,008,600
1902.....	149,260,850	1883.....	110,149,000
1901.....	164,347,450	1882.....	84,505,000
1900.....	163,362,250	1881.....	81,280,000
1899.....	136,773,200	1880.....	74,643,400
1898.....	119,650,500	1879.....	77,703,700
1897.....	110,319,650	1878.....	34,315,900
1896.....	115,655,500	1877.....	68,265,800

EFFECT OF CLIMATIC CONDITIONS.

Climatic conditions have an important influence on the fire waste, fully equaling that produced by business depressions, as will be seen from the following table giving the losses by months during the last three

years. It will be noted that during the summer months the losses as a rule run light except in seasons when protracted drouths have resulted in extensive forest fires. The table below gives the losses by months during 1912, 1913 and 1914:

	1912.	1913.	1914.
January	\$35,653,150	\$20,193,250	\$23,204,700
February	28,601,650	22,084,600	21,744,200
March	16,650,850	17,511,000	25,512,750
April	16,340,400	16,738,250	17,700,800
May	21,013,950	17,225,850	15,507,800
June	16,103,450	24,942,700	29,348,000
July	15,219,100	20,660,900	17,539,800
August	14,158,800	21,180,700	11,765,650
September	13,779,300	17,919,300	14,383,050
October	13,651,650	14,932,750	14,004,700
November	16,172,300	15,207,600	21,372,750
December	17,967,000	16,126,450	23,507,150

Total for year \$225,320,600 \$224,723,350 \$235,591,350

PAYING PREMIUMS PROMPTLY.

A few weeks ago THE CHRONICLE editorially impressed upon agents the necessity of prompt payments of fire premiums to the companies, particularly at the present time. It is, therefore, somewhat of a satisfaction to us now to publish the enclosed letters, which recently passed between a firm of agents and their company in Montreal:—

THE AGENTS TO THE COMPANY.

Dear Sirs,—We beg to enclose our cheque for \$143.99 in payment of August and September premiums. We very much regret the delay in forwarding this remittance, which has been occasioned by our giving too much credit on insurance premiums. Competition in this town is particularly keen and unfortunately this system of allowing extended credit, which was started by other agents here, has made it almost impossible to obtain business without carrying the assured for a certain period. In view, however, of the financial stringency we have decided to cancel all policies the premiums of which are not collected within thirty days, and in future we will see that our account is met properly.

THE COMPANY TO THE AGENTS.

Dear Sirs,—We have your favour of the 28th ultimo, and thank you for your cheque for \$143.99 in settlement of August and September premiums. We would at the same time compliment you on coming to the conclusion that you have to cancel all policies on which premiums are not collected within thirty days. We do not think you need fear the results of your decision in the long run. The agents competing with you who give long credit will be sure to get the poorer class of clients and inevitably lose money, which will probably result in further business coming your way as time goes on and then on proper lines.

AN EXAMPLE TO BE FOLLOWED.

The Company hits the nail on the head when it points out that in the long run agents stand to gain by being business-like in their collection and remittance of premiums. It is to be hoped that the example set by these agents will be widely followed.

The Chief Justice of British Columbia has ruled that depositors in the Dominion Trust Company cannot rank with creditors in the liquidation as the Company had no power to receive deposits.