The Insurance Chronicle

April 20th, 1907.

Apart from the insurance journals and the opinions and efforts of underwriters little evidence appears that the people of either Canada or the United States are alive to the economic significance of the annual fire loss of these countries. This has amounted for years past to an average of from $150,000,000 to $170,000,000 per year.

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The movement for improving the physical character of insurance risks should commend itself to these mayors as the very likeliest way to reduce fire premiums. For years the underwriters on this continent virtually have been offering prizes for the adoption of modern improvements in buildings by lowering rates in proportion as fire-resisting amendments are made to buildings. And the shrewder ones among our business men have perceived the economy of this. What is needed is a more general arousing of public opinion as to the ever-present danger of fire, and less of the flagrant carelessness that so often leads to conflagrations.

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Realizing that a concerted effort is needed to achieve a general improvement in building construction, the National Board of Fire Underwriters are making efforts in the United States to secure better building laws. The second edition of the new code, an octavo volume of 266 pages, is now in course of distribution to the mayors of all cities of 5,000 or more inhabitants. The question, one writer thinks, is whether any great immediate effect will be produced. The recipients will casually rate the movement a good thing, which really **ought** to be taken up and pushed, but as for doing anything—Query!

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In 1904, when the Baltimore and Toronto conflagrations occurred, the fire waste reached $252,000,000, and in 1906, the year of the San Francisco disaster, it reached the great sum of $459,000,000. These vast amounts, be it remembered, are for ever gone from the coffers of the people. They are not recouped by insurance moneys—which consist in the main of the wealth of the community as a whole paid in insurance premiums—but are absolute waste. To lessen this waste should be the care of prudent people. Nowhere else in the civilized world are the fire losses so great as in the United States and Canada. Conflagrations, coming with such startling suddenness and force of late years, have aroused interest among business men as to fire-resisting buildings, and have, indeed, brought about improvement in factory and warehouse structures in many places.

FIRE AND MARINE NOTES.

Fire destroyed several stores and the Masonic Hall at Carlyle, Sask. The total loss is $16,000.

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At the meeting of the General Accident Fire and Life Assurance Co., London, Eng., the chairman said that business in Canada was progressing in a most satisfactory manner. He confidently anticipated a great increase in the near future.

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The Summerside, P. E. I., "Journal" says: "We dropped into the engine house on Thursday morning and were surprised to see the state that the fire engine was in. It was all covered with verdigris. Whoever should keep it clean woefully neglects his duty."

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It is very evident that a change has come over the State Life of Indiana, for it is now said that this company will abandon all special contracts after April, and will discontinue its method of the sale of stock in agency companies as an inducement to get business.

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The Senate Committee on Banking and Commerce passed bills on Wednesday to incorporate the Protective Association of Canada, to incorporate the Central Canada Manufacturers' Mutual Fire Insurance Company and the Eastern Manufacturers' Mutual Fire Insurance Company, respecting the Standard Life Insurance Company, to incorporate the Prudential Life Insurance Company of Canada.

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The annual examinations of the Actuarial Society of America were held last week in New York, Philadelphia, Hartford, and other American cities, as well as Toronto. There are about twenty candidates writing in Toronto, one of whom, a bright, young Japanese student, is in the employment of a Canadian company doing business with Japan. Mr. F. Sanderson, actuary of the Canada Life, has the Canadian candidates under his supervision.

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Eight miles from Cobalt is the little town of Latchford, not very long in existence. On Wednesday night a fire swept the main street there. No fire engine or fire appliance of any kind was in the town and forty buildings were soon consumed. The Cobalt brigade came over and did much to quell the flames. Families of fire sufferers who cannot get shelter were sent to Cobalt, Haileybury or New Liskeard. The loss will probably reach $100,000; many have no insurance.

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A moral is found in the plan adopted the other day by Spokane to cure a defect which that town shared with Nelson, B. C., and many another place in Canada, namely dirty and dangerous lanes. Without knowing exactly what kinds of dirt digraced these Western lanes, we can fill up the picture from many to be seen at present in the East: Ashes, fruit-cans, fish-cans, brown paper, newspaper, straw, wooden boxes, paste-board boxes, wrecked barrels, dead leaves, old clothes, kindling wood, abound. And if there are any out-buildings abutting on the lanes, the tops of these are heaped with debris. Thinking of the risk of fire this dirt created, and its menace to health, the Spokane community turned out on a given day and with the assistance of large numbers of drays and wagons loaned for the purpose, the streets and lanes were quickly put in such shape as not to offend the eye or nose. Who will next do likewise?

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The city of Spokane, Washington, is deriving marked benefit from the improvement of its water supply. Reductions ranging from 5 to 15 per cent. on business properties, from 20 to 30 per cent. on dwellings, schoolhouses, churches, stables and outhouses, and 50 per cent. on certain special rates, are announced in the new rate card just issued by the State Surveyor's Office. This will mean a saving of from $60,000 to $75,000 a year to insurance policy-holders in Spokane, a re-rating having been given as the result of improvements in the water system. These rates become effective from January 1, 1907, and are separate from the reduction of 25 per cent. made at that time, which reduction restored the old rate in effect before the increase made after the San Francisco fire. Dwellings are given the greater reduction by the re-rating, both on the basis rates and on the exposure rates, being divided into classes B, C, and D, applying respectively to brick and stone structures, partly brick and stone and all-frame houses. By the old cards the basis rates were 50, 55 and 60 cents, respectively, while under the re-rating they are 35, 40 and 50 cents. For churches, schoolhouses, private stables and outbuildings, Class D risks, the old rate was $1.25 and the new is $1.

MONTREAL'S HEAVY FIRE LOSSES.

McGill University again has been visited by a destructive fire, and insurance companies doing business in Montreal have sustained another heavy loss. On Tuesday morning fire broke out in the Medical Building, and although the fire brigade performed its duties excellently, one section of the building was entirely destroyed. A portion of the museum, containing an invaluable collection, was wiped out, and cannot be replaced, in all probability, short of fifty years' work. The library, and another portion of the museum escaped. At the time the Engineering Building of McGill was destroyed last month the insurance on the Medical Department was $150,000 on building and $50,000 on contents, but this was increased a few days before Tuesday's fire, making a total of $250,000 on the building and $100,000 on contents. As the fire destroyed property to the value of about $500,000, the loss to the university is probably $150,000.

The two fires coming so close together has aroused suspicions that an incendiary has been at work, and an investigation is being made into their origin. The insurance was divided as follows. Three hundred and five thousand of it is in British companies. The figures are given on building and contents respectively:—

Ætna, $5,000, $2,000; Alliance, $3,750, $1,500; Atlas, $5,000, $2,000; Caledonian, $17,500, $7,000; Commercial Union, $7,500, $3,000; Guardian, $7,500, $5,000; Hartford,