

of delay in providing a fire inquest law which could be administered by competent men in London, to begin with? One cannot believe this. Therefore the lack of action must be put down to the steady and severely official operation of the machinery of delay, so to speak. It is as if the Home Office travelled by the streets of "By and by," through which, as Cervantes has it, one arrives at the house of "Never."

Have not we in Canada lost enough by fire in the last fifty years to cause us to take some steps towards lessening the fire-waste? Do we not learn, month by month, of cases which indicate incendiarism, which show carelessness, which prove improper construction, as causes of fire? Is it not time that Parliament, or the Legislatures of Provinces took steps, by the appointment of fire-marshals and the authorizing of fire inquests, to follow up cases of burning and find out who is responsible for them. Such means would help to rid us of fire-bugs. It would also tend to cure over-insurance, or the dishonest efforts of merchants to prove that they had more goods burned than was the case. In Ohio, after a fire-marshal was appointed, the number of fires of "unknown" or suspicious origin came down from 292 in 1901, to 190 in 1903, which is very significant, and in 1903 five persons charged with arson fled the state to escape arrest.

DOMINION BANK.

The extensive transactions of this bank resulted last year in large earnings, the net amount of which was \$490,000. The amount of capital of the public employed was \$34,000,000, and that of the shareholders some \$6,500,000 more, making in all in round figures above forty millions of dollars. The distribution among its forty branches of the transactions which this great sum represents doubtless fructified many different businesses, and assisted in the development of the country from Montreal to the Pacific.

Current discounts were five millions larger last year than the year before. Call loans on bonds and stocks were also larger, while the sum held in the shape of public securities, stocks, bonds, and debentures was lessened. Liquid assets, of whatever kind (\$15,026,000), were almost exactly the same in amount as twelve months before, but their relative proposition was slightly less. The bank premises item among assets now stands at \$800,000. We notice the addition to the board of Mr. R. J. Christie, head of the well-known manufacturing firm of Christie, Brown & Co.

THE POST OFFICE IN THE FAR WEST.

One indication of the growth of far-west Canada is the extension of postal facilities, and the use made of them. Certain it is that the largest proportionate increase in the number of post-offices in the Dominion has been in the North-West Territories and provinces and British Columbia. This is shown by a comparison taken from the Blue Book. Twenty years ago there were 7,084 post-offices in Canada. Ten years later there were 8,832, and last year 10,879, an increase between 1885 and 1905 equal to more than fifty per cent. Now to compare the relative number in the far West, or, say west of Lake Superior. In 1888 there were 7,671 post-offices in Canada, and 613 of them west of the Great Lakes. This represents, say eight per cent.

Seventeen years afterward, in 1905, the number of far western offices had grown to 1,751, equal to sixteen per cent. of the whole. The growth is quite noteworthy.

Again, compare the business done in the matter handled at the offices, and it will be evident that it exceeds the ratio of increase in the number of offices. Taking 1888, as before, as a basis of comparison, the number of letters and post-cards handled in the Dominion was estimated at 96,792,000, equal to 309,000 per working day. Of these 6,980,000, or 7.21 per cent. were handled by the offices in the West. Coming down to 1905, the total number of pieces of similar mail matter handled was estimated at 332,792,000 pieces, and the western share was 59,345,000, or say 17.83 per cent. At this rate of increase, in twenty years' time, the proportion of Western business handled by the Post-Office will be one quarter of the whole. But the ratio of increase must be expected to be much greater during the next twenty years than the last twenty.

HALIFAX AFFAIRS.

In the election of officers for the Halifax Board of Trade for the coming year a great deal of interest was manifested. The election was conducted on a new plan, large ballot papers being mailed to every member of the board some days before the election. These ballots contained the names of all the candidates for office, the voter's choice to be marked, the ballot sealed and returned to the secretary. There was keen competition for all the offices, and what is thought to be an exceedingly efficient lot of men has been secured for the management during the coming year. They are as follows: President, A. M. Bell; vice-presidents, Geo. E. Faulkner; W. J. Clayton. Council: G. S. Campbell, J. E. DeWolfe, O. E. Smith, I. C. S. Stewart, J. P. Cox, H. L. Chipman, C. H. Mitchell, L. J. Mylius, Andrew McKinlay. Twenty-seven new members were elected at this meeting. The secretary's report showed great numerical progress made during the year. One hundred and two new members have joined and the membership is now 485. The number of meetings held during the year was as follows: Of the council, 52; general meetings, 9; committee meetings, 36; in addition to numerous meetings of the associations affiliated with the board. All the standing committees of the board were very active. Notwithstanding extraordinarily large expenditure, largely in connection with the furnishing of the new rooms, there is a respectable balance on the right side in the financial statement. The secretary briefly outlined some of the things accomplished or aided by the board during the year. Thirty or more distinct lines of effort, ranging from entertaining press associations to working for the securing of steamship subsidies, and from steel shipbuilding to tourist trade were referred to, and even the members themselves, certainly many of them, were probably surprised that so much had been done. The board is well aware that it can only secure the support of the public by showing its usefulness and the enthusiastic backing it is receiving from every citizen of any importance, is sufficient proof of its having fulfilled all that is expected of it.

A great deal of dissatisfaction is expressed here at the mail service from Great Britain. The Halifax "Echo" pointed out, in a leading article a few days ago, that the passages being made by the mail boats were very little, if any, better in point of speed than those made nearly sixty years ago. It showed that old ships like the "Europa," the "America," and the "Niagara," were making the passage in from 8½ to 11½ days, according to the time of year, as long ago as 1848, and that the "Numidian," "Corinthian," etc., are not doing any better to-day. The average speed of the "Numidian" on her last voyage was less than eight miles an hour. The "Corinthian" left Moville on January 13th and arrived in Halifax January 24th. Her highest run was 311