

without placing their grain in independent control, then we find where the shoe pinches worst. These men and their families make up the bulk of the population. It is they who run accounts with the country merchants. They are among the last to get threshed, the last to be ready to haul to the elevator. The freight congestion, acting upon this large body of medium class farmers, it is that is largely responsible for choking up the banks with paper. The retailer's loans are higher than they should be. The unwonted presence of too much retailers' paper in the lines of the wholesalers in the cities makes those advances bulky and unwieldy. When the grain moves off the conditions will be remedied. In the meantime some of the banks show their loans and discounts at a very high level, and presumably they are earning large profits.



THE PROBLEM OF A BETTER UNDERSTANDING.

An interesting and timely pamphlet on "Fire Insurance and the Public" has as its apt subtitle "The Problem of a Better Understanding." The paper is one that was originally read before the Insurance Institute of Toronto, by Mr. Paul Von Szeliski and we are glad to see that so valuable a contribution to current fire insurance writings is being put in a form for wider circulation. As the opening sentence states "the paper is not of a technical nature, but rather a plain discussion of facts, figures and conditions."

The author's individual enterprise in circulating this pamphlet affords an example that might well be noted by the underwriters in their collective capacity. As urged in THE CHRONICLE two weeks ago, the present is a ripe time for undertaking a more widespread diffusion of fire insurance knowledge among the general public. The conflagration horrors and losses of San Francisco are still vividly enough in the public remembrance to permit of lessons therefrom being driven home. But remembrance is somewhat transitory in these days of 20th century hurry, and it behooves the teachers to be up and doing before the opportune time has passed for self-appointment to an essential duty.

The pamphlet strongly enforces the undoubted fact that San Francisco would have suffered only a fraction of its destruction by fire had fire-proof buildings, protected from outside exposure, constituted the greater portion of San Francisco's buildings. He also reiterates the lesson taught by San Francisco and Baltimore, and by our own conflagrations in Toronto, Ottawa and Hull, that one of the principal measures of precaution called for from municipalities is an increase of the number of their sources of water supply, as well as the number of independent mains, therefrom, so that disabled sections can be cut out without disabling the whole system.

Aside from what is strongly spoken of as the "ever-present menace of the conflagration hazard" the general fire waste on this continent is appalling. Especially is this so when a comparison is made with the losses in European countries as commented upon in our issue of January 4. Mr. Von Szeliski points out in this connection that according to American Consular Reports for 1905, six European countries give an annual average loss per capita of \$0.33, as against \$2.47 for the United States. He supplements this statement by saying that the per capita loss in Canada actually paid by companies (loss by public not included) taking population at five and one-half millions, averages for the last five years \$1.34.

Wisely devised and consistently enforced building laws account largely for the advantage enjoyed by European as compared with American cities. Such a remedy—or any remedy—cannot be effectively applied until citizens themselves are more fully alive than at present to the importance of "loss-prevention methods which produce buildings susceptible of only a minimum of damage from fire."



THE DECEMBER BANK STATEMENT.

The tabular abstract given on page 101 shows in detail the most important items in the banking business of Canada at the close of 1906. The circulation change, which occurred from November to December, was of the sort usual at the end of the year, when the movement of expansion starting in August changed to one of contraction from November until on the present month. The December circulation amounted to \$78,416,780 as compared with \$80,052,357 in November. The contraction was, therefore, proportionately less than during the corresponding period of 1905, as in that year the December circulation was \$60,981,574 and that for November, \$72,592,000.

Deposits in Canada amounted to the grand total of \$500,008,664, an increase over November of \$7,300,758, and exceeding December, 1905, by \$78,680,931. A noteworthy point is that in 1905 the December deposits exceeded those of the month preceding by only \$285,241.

On December 31, the total assets were \$954,192,546 with liabilities of \$782,656,528. The corresponding figures for 1905 were \$815,533,302 and \$662,600,127. The capital paid up increased from \$94,665,447 in November, to \$95,509,015, as compared with \$85,204,210 in December, 1905. Call loans in Canada show an increase of \$1,070,913 over November and an increase of \$16,806,719 as compared with preceding year's showing. Call loans outside Canada, however, show a decrease of \$7,061,179 when compared with November, and a decrease of