Comparison with the fire loss in Australia would be interesting, but no collective figures of the losses in that country are available.

Of the 3,046 fire calls received throughout the year, 637 proved to be false alarms, and of that number no less than 339 are reported as of malicious origin. Every turn-out of a fire brigade is a matter of expense, but, what matters more, they are also a potential danger to life and limb—more so to-day than before in view of the ever-increasing motor traffic. The steady increase in the number of malicious false alarms is a most serious matter, endangering as they do the lives of both civilians and fire-brigademen. Although no fatal accident has occurred to civilians during recent years, two fire-brigade officers have been killed, and quite a number of firemen more or less seriously injured, whilst proceeding in response to *malicious* false alarms. It is a most difficult matter to detect the offenders, and I have to again call attention to the very inadequate penalties that (with three or four exceptions) have been inflicted upon conviction—mostly fines ranging from a few shillings to two or three pounds. A case in point: A young man, a member of a fire brigade too, who pleaded that the particular alarm then in question was accidentally given, but admitted having given a previous false alarm for a joke, was ordered to pay £2 brigade expenses.

Of necessity travelling faster than the ordinary traffic, but only when proceeding in response to a fire call, fire-engines do not travel at the high rate of speed generally attributed to them—an illusion due to the howling of the siren, the shining helmets of the firemen, the rattle and rather dazzling appearance of the engine and its equipment, and perhaps a little to the excitement usual upon such occasions. Giving evidence in a Court case some little time ago, witnesses' estimated the speed at which the engine was travelling at the time varied from forty-five up to sixty miles per hour. Now, although the fire-motor in question, fitted with a powerful engine, was actually, as per specifications, geared down to a maximum speed of thirty-five miles per hour on the level, and perhaps was not even doing that speed.

Appended are brief reports dealing with each fire district [not printed], also the following tables:—

1. Summary of calls attended by each brigade.
2. Fire loss in each district.
3. Annual cost of each brigade.
4. Summary of the causes of fire in each district.
5. Personnel and equipment of each brigade.

I have, &c.,

THOS. T. HUGO,

Inspector of Fire Brigades.

The Hon. the Minister of Internal Affairs.

DISTRICT REPORTS.

AUCKLAND.

Inspections, 19th June, 1928, and 29th January, 1929. The several stations with their equipment were found in proper order, and the turnout in each case was carried out in a smart and efficient manner. The Tamaki Road Board district, being now incorporated in the city, becomes part of the Auckland Fire District; also, the Board has undertaken protection of the One Tree Hill district. The additions to the Remuera district fire-station have been completed, and plans prepared for erection of a fire-station for protection of the Avondale district. Specially prepared slabs are now being let into the footpath-kerbs as fire-hydrant indicators, in place of the present unsightly splashes of whitewash. Plant additions during the year include a new 40–45 horse-power motor fire-engine and a continuous foam-generator outfit for dealing with oil fires.

BALCLUTHA.

Inspection, 6th December, 1928. Two officers and seven firemen were present at the inspection muster. In comparison with my previous inspection there was a very satisfactory improvement in the carrying-out of the required inspection drills, and the station and equipment was in good order. Attendance at the two fire calls averaged 62 per cent. of the total membership. I found quite a number of the street fire-hydrants completely covered with loose road metal and some of the indicators missing, a matter requiring prompt attention; also, the motor-hose tender was not fitted with a siren, as required by the Regulations under the Motor-vehicles Act.

CHRISTCHURCH.

Inspection, 29th October, 1928. The inspection drill at the central station and the turnout at the several substations were carried out in a smart and efficient manner, and the stations and their equipment were found in their usual good order. A continuous foam-generator set has been added to the equipment of the brigade, and five more auto-detector fire-alarm systems have been installed in Christchurch.