

The Ecclesiastics and Scholastics have been a burning and a shining light to Insurance Companies this year. They have taught a lesson that induction should have taught long before, but the eager race for business drowned the voice of logic or common sense. Churches, colleges, convents and schools have proved themselves anything but a paying class of business at the rates now paid. 50c. to 75c. @ \$100 for three years is not an uncommon rate for first-class property of this kind, which, judged by any reasonable rules for rate calculating, is simply a species of legitimate gambling, a sort of bet of 200 to 1 for three years, or 600 to 1 for one year that the premises will not burn, the only difference being that the infinitesimal stake or premium becomes the property of the Insurance Company in any event. Companies that scout the idea of farm property at less than 85c. to \$1 per cent. for three years, where the lines are small and well distributed, snap at these larger plums and swallow them whole, taking risks up into the tens and twenty thousands. There is no science of insurance in this any more than there would be science of banking in the institution that rolled up an immense business by discounting all the worthless paper presented at the wicket. The fault in this kind of business, as well as in all others, is that the lowest rates at which any one risk of the kind, situated in the best locality and protected by the most efficient means of fire extinction, governs the schedule of the class. If a first-class school, convent or church, situated within its own grounds, unendangered by surrounding buildings, and protected by available strong streams of water from municipal hydrants, guided by the practiced hands of experienced firemen, can be done at such and such a rate, why not a similar building standing in the country, where there are no water-works, no steam fire engines, no firemen? Well, why not? This should not need an answer here. Any one can answer the simple question for himself, whether an insurance man or not. And yet it would seem as if it did need an answer; though perhaps not, for those who do not write such risks at a common rate have already answered the question themselves, to their own satisfaction, and those who had not this predisposition for query and reply, have probably been answered by a blaze or two of considerable dimensions.

We can call to our recollection five cases of fires during the past year, where this class of business has rolled up a total loss of about half a million dollars, with a loss to Insurance Companies of about one hundred and fifty thousand dollars. When premiums on twenty or thirty million dollars worth of such property have been earned, without further loss, the parties interested may consider themselves square and on the road to profit.

And so wooden buildings in the centre of the city of Montreal—and quite a cluster of them too—are written at one per cent., and this fact makes a highly respectable gentleman somewhat irate, who was charged \$1.50 on his office furniture in a most substantial, first-class building. However, the rate was lowered to \$1.25, as a compliment to his personal morality, which for a

time mollified his anger, but when he found his neighbour insured for 75 cents, he began to feel *assured* that a small portion of one Company's gigantic assets had been unjustly cajoled out of his slender earnings, or else that the science of fire insurance consists in taking any rate that can be obtained.

Woodstock, New Brunswick, has again suffered from a disastrous fire, evidently the successful result of an incendiary's dastardly crime.

About 12.30 a.m., Nov. 11th, a fire was discovered in the building No. 10, Block 30, Sheet 2 of Insurance Plan, which resulted in the destruction of the Mechanics' Institute, No. 10, and two dwellings, No. 3, and one on Park Street, erected since completion of Plan. This was on the south side of the Meduxnakik River, and this fire seems to have been successfully extinguished.

About 1.15 a.m. a fire started in a barn, No. 53, Block 16, Sheet 4 of Plan, and it was this that led to the disastrous conflagration. The burnt district comprises:

On Sheet 4—Blocks 14, 15 and 16—all buildings to East of line drawn from letter E in Chapel Street, to letter V in Victoria Street; Blocks 17, 18, 19, 20 and 22, all burned.

On Sheet 3—Block 12—Buildings Nos. 32, 34 and 35.

It has been the custom to speak of New Brunswick towns as wooden nests with no appliances for protection against fire, but we wish to record the *facts* here, that underwriters may note, as they readily will with a plan before them, how bravely and successfully the firemen of Woodstock attacked this conflagration.

Evidently, the first fire had just been successfully extinguished, when the second trouble began, and with a strong north west wind, no better building could have been selected by the cowardly incendiary. Under the circumstances, it is plainly seen that Woodstock possesses a gallant, intelligent and persevering Fire Brigade, for none other could have saved the whole business part of the town from destruction.

Doubtless there is too much of a wooden nature in such towns, but this is a matter that has been a necessity, and gradually a better class of buildings are growing up; meanwhile, corporations and citizens, for public and private reasons, will lose nothing, and most likely will save much by maintaining efficient organizations for fire protection.

The town authorities of Woodstock offer \$500 for the apprehension and conviction of the incendiary. An investigation has been commenced, which seems to be likely to bear good results.

The total loss is estimated at \$100,000, of which Insurance Companies incur \$56,000.

We have seen a sample proof sheet of the City of St. John, N. B., Tariff Ratings. The particulars given are in the following order:—"Goad's Plans," Page, —. Block, Street No., Owner, &c., Construction, Rate per \$100, Building, Contents. In the country town rating