

REPLY TO NONCHALANCE.

Editor INSURANCE AND FINANCE CHRONICLE.

SIR:—I have just read "Nonchalance's" letter in your issue of the 15th instant, and must ask space to reply to this would-be trenchant critic.

Nonchalance, evidently perceiving the weakness of the broker's position, has endeavored to withdraw the attention of your readers from the question of brokerage by what is probably meant to be a very lofty criticism of my letter of the 7th inst., and an exposition of what he considers to be the faults and inelegancies therein.

Before dealing with the last letter (which, though it would certainly have brought chastisement on Macaulay's schoolboy, yet is so severe and almost savage in tone that I cannot consent to let it pass without the reply which it deserves), I shall refer briefly to the main question at issue.

Nonchalance's first letter is written to show the utility and necessity of the broker. Now, I think that if the C.F.U.A. would so amend their rules as to allow commission to any person offering a risk in Montreal, not only would the managers be more free to decline undesirable business, but the broker's occupation would be gone, and his absolute inutility demonstrated to the satisfaction of the companies, of the insuring public, and even of the broker himself.

To turn now to his last letter, I see that the words—"plentiful lack"—perturb what ought to be imperturbable, viz., the spirit of "Nonchalance," and he is worked thereby into quite an ecstasy of criticism.

Now, when one reads letters written after the manner of "Sir Oracle," dogmatizing not only as to one's opinions as to insurance, but critical to the verge of captiousness as to the language one uses, one, I think, naturally assumes that the writer of it has at least a slight and cursory acquaintance with English literature, and does not require every trite extract therefrom to be signposted for him. There are those, however, who cull their quotations, classical and otherwise, from the collections in the backs of spelling-books and the like useful compilations, just as there are others who go to dictionaries for their knowledge of mathematics. For the information of such, I may say that the phrase—"plentiful lack of wit"—is to be found in "Hamlet," a play written by one Shakespeare, a poet of some repute in the days of Elizabeth. Perhaps, now, I ought to be exact and say Queen Elizabeth, as I don't want "Nonchalance" to come down on me in a frenzy, enquiring "Elizabeth who?"

When next "Nonchalance" sees a phrase which seems odd to him, good soul, and it is not set apart, marked and guarded by his familiar friends, the quotation marks, he should hesitate before he rushes into print about it; he ought not to trust too much to his little book of elegant extracts, as it evidently doesn't contain everything, and is likely to lead him into mistakes that even John L. Sullivan wouldn't make.

Why is Sir Boyle Roche invoked? He made bulls, but never such a blunder as this of "Nonchalance's," who I notice is not a bit more bumptious as a broker than as a critic. I dare say it is by no means wonderful that a broker, who thinks he knows more about insurance than thirty agents, should be quite satisfied that he can write better English than Shakespeare, now that he learns that it is Shakespeare's English that he objects to.

Next, as to his trouble over the word *vicious*. When one reads an effusion of a mere quotation monger, smart, shallow and flippant, one not appreciating that style may say "this is vicious," without thereby meaning to impute essential wickedness to the screed or to the writer of it. If any authoress (as ladies are apt to do) overloads her work with flowers of rhetoric, one may say "she is meretricious" without intending to insinuate that she is unchaste.

The rest of this amusing epistle consists of ebullitions of temper which are not rendered the less ludicrous by "the plentiful lack" of humor which permits the writer to subscribe himself "Nonchalance."

In taking leave of "Nonchalance," I hope that he will pardon the suggestion that he take a deeper draught of "the Pierian spring" (inverted commas this time, please, so that he can't go astray again); if his little book is any good at all, it will give him the hackneyed extract from which this is taken, so that he will be at no loss to understand the allusion.

Yours, etc., "N."

St. JOHN, N.B., 23rd April, 1894.

SELECTION OF BUSINESS.

Editor INSURANCE AND FINANCE CHRONICLE:

DEAR SIR:—In your last issue under heading "Selection of business," some severe criticism is indulged in in this respect as to the wisdom displayed by companies, particularly referring to two buildings in this city recently visited by fire.

Your assertion, however, that in the case of Laporte, Martin & Co.'s building, "it turned out to have outside walls little, if any, better than loose rubble, while inside was a mass of match lining and wooden lath partitions," is so far astray that, as one having a personal knowledge of the premises, I must take exception to such statement.

I inspected the risk more than once before the fire occurred, and found the building, contrary to your description, was of solid grey stone and brick, walls at the upper story being 20 inches thick and proportionately increasing on descent. The internal finish was also entirely at variance with your statement, there being little, if any, superfluous wood-work. I find it impossible within my recollection to locate "the mass of match lining and wood lath partitions." Possibly you refer to the bond store, but even this was constructed precisely similar to the majority of bonds throughout this city and elsewhere.

All beams and other heavy wood-work were substantial, and generally your assertion is difficult to reconcile with the facts.

In support of my opinion I would draw your attention to the award of the appraisers—Mr. A. Raza, architect, and Mr. O. Mailloux—placing loss on building at \$49,000 with an intact foundation.

This should, I think, be conclusive testimony to my statement. You will probably agree that a building such as you describe could not by any possible exaggeration reach the above figure. I might also mention that the appraiser for the Companies expressed a high opinion of its construction, and in view of all these circumstances it would certainly seem as though your information is utterly unreliable.

INSPECTOR.

MONTREAL, May 26th, 1894.

[The particulars contained in our article were stated on good authority. The fact remains that the walls collapsed.—Edl. & F. C.]

Notes and Items.

Tontine Insurance is receiving some opposition in Austria.

Her Majesty the Queen, according to the statement made by the President at the Institute of Actuaries' dinner, is assured in every life office in the kingdom.

Life assurance conundrum.—"What is that which is and is not, and which terminates without having any existence?" Answer: "Not taken."

Decrease in Life Assurance Surplus.—In the article on this subject which appeared in our last issue, the net gain and decrease in 1893 were through the dropping of a figure misprinted as \$11,992,873 and \$3,068,362 respectively. The amounts should have been \$1,992,873 and \$13,068,362.