

19th January, 1855.—Fire business *discontinued* at New Orleans.

This last was done by myself without waiting the order of the Board. The bad position of the business at Boston was also prohibited, and only the best retained, and the agents at *Quebec*, New York and Philadelphia, were removed. The Glasgow and London agencies in Great Britain were also *closed*.

We have little reason to congratulate ourselves on the result of the last year's business, or on our prospect for the future. Our receipts are less than those of the previous year by nearly £12,000, whilst the salaries for conducting this diminished business are £874 3s. 1d. in excess of the former. True, our Manager informs us in a foot note, that the Surveyor's salary and Mr. Dartnell's allowance for six months, included in this account, are now discontinued, and that since the close of the year the salaries, *exclusive* of Inspector of Agencies, have been reduced to their present amount of \$8,600; but this reduced amount is still £240 in excess of the previous year's salaries. But why exclude the Inspector's salary, and why are the Stockholders not told the amount of said salary? In a circular dated 22nd April, 1858, Mr. Starr quoted for your information from his letter dismissing Mr. Whitmarsh, the former Inspector, as follows:—"The gentleman engaged to succeed you as Inspector, comes highly recommended, and forms part of the office staff; performing, while not away on duty as Inspector, the duties of Surveyor and Clerk in the Marine department of our business, to whom we pay a fixed salary; and we have reason to think this change will work well to all parties in the promotion of the best interests of the Company."

Is it because this gentleman has not answered the expectations formed of his fitness for a Marine Clerk that his salary (£300) is excluded from that of the *office staff* to which he belongs? This had better be looked into at the annual meeting. As the sum of \$8,600 is given as the *present* (and probable future) amount of salaries, add to this \$1200 for the Inspector, and an addition of \$800 to the Manager's salary from December next, (under present arrangement) and you have a total for salaries on a business dwindled down to a fourth of former years, of \$10,600. The diminution of the business is attributed chiefly, if not solely, to the pressure of the