

Correspondence.

We do not hold ourselves responsible for views expressed by Correspondents.

TORONTO LETTER.

Toronto Street Railway Insurance.—An Innocent's query.—The "Norwich" gets a good agent.—A family of insurance men—how did it happen?—The Toronto Board has been called down from its temporal pre-eminence.—Home again.—Another motto.

DEAR EDITOR,—The Toronto Street Railway insurance was lately renewed, with some changes of the companies hitherto carrying the risk. Those who are on and those who are off it, alike, have a grievance. The first, in that so many of them have had to pay a commission, and the others because they have not had a chance to pay one. It is generally felt that this line of business, like the City Insurance, should be divided up amongst the companies, share and share alike, and without paying commission to anyone. Rumor has it that some four individuals have the *plucking* of three fifths of the whole insurance, and the Innocent asks, why?

From what I hear, one of the most satisfactory appointments for his company's interests, made by Manager Dixon of the "Norwich Union" in Toronto, is that of Mr. C. A. Phipps, as one of his city agents. This gentleman, late of the Molson's Bank, and agent of the "White Star" line of steamships, has, outside his direct influence on business, an excellent connection, and his influential friends are standing by him. Very likely the knowledge of these facts has inspired the opposition made to his appointment by certain members of the Board on sentimental rather than on constitutional grounds. Insurance interests do so permeate the mass of our business men and others, that you can hardly jump up in the street without coming down on some insurance man's toes.

Mr. Sam Shaw, Toronto agent for the "Mercantile" and "Waterloo" companies has appointed his son, Mr. Geo. B. Shaw, one of the city agents of the "Mercantile," another evidence that the business of fire insurance nowadays requires one to "get out and hustle." As Mr. Shaw finds his business increasing, he has done well to get assistance to keep it together. Another of Mr. Shaw's sons is agent for the "Wellington" and "Perth" companies. It may be said that the "Mercantile" and "Waterloo" have long been staunch supporters of the Toronto Board—whether to their own interests or not is an open question with some.

It has been remarked with regret that managers and chief officers of companies passing through Toronto and in the city on a Board day seldom favor the Meeting with their presence and, if necessary, counsel.

A pleasant exception to this rule was the visit of Manager Heaton of the "Guardian" on 22nd March. His entry and exit, however, were so modestly made that the Chairman of the day did not happen to see him.

We are indebted to your correspondent "Antediluvian" for bringing to our notice the fact that the "New Brunswick Board of Fire Underwriters" is really the oldest Fire Underwriter Board on this continent, and that our beloved Toronto Board is only next oldest. It seems almost sacrilegious to sweep away suddenly a belief that has been cherished for so long, and that has done duty as a sentiment on so many notable occasions. The "dear gazelle" that was "sure to die" of the poet is not in it for pathos. Antediluvian's letter in your last issue embodies a very sarcastic creed indeed. Altogether this correspondence is interesting, and brings out some points worthy of note in a pleasant way.

Secretary McLean was welcomed home again last week. He has been away in Richmond, Va., for a holiday. For his years, he looks as blooming again as his native heather.

I have received a suggestion from a friend as to a suitable motto for the Toronto Board (which makes the second one); it is—"Everything is fair in love, war, and fire insurance business."

Yours,

ARIEL.

TORONTO, 12th April, 1894.

REPLY TO NONCHALANCE.

To the Editor of the INSURANCE AND FINANCE CHRONICLE.

SIR:—The letter of "Nonchalance" (?) in your issue of the 15th inst. is probably a very fair specimen of smart writing; this style though vicious is not believed to be difficult. The recipe, I am told, for smart writing is to have one or two quotations, relevant or otherwise, per paragraph, but little candor, and a plentiful lack of modesty. These are the essentials; and if the production then seems to be not sufficiently smart to please the concoctor, he may season to taste with a few flippant quotations from Scripture. In order now that "Nonchalance" may learn that some others of us can find at times an apt quotation, I may say here that it seems apparent that I have made "the galled jade wince."

Brokers are not supposed to be entirely without assurance; but the intimation in "Nonchalance's" letter, that he understands the insurance business better than any or all the thirty agents put together, is surprising, even from one of the fraternity whom we have happily succeeded in excluding from St. John.

It is not an occult science to properly describe a property and to have the policies made concurrent; a good clerk could do this work quite as well as the broker, and do a good deal of useful office work besides.

"Nonchalance" rather disingenuously asks, why should an intelligent agent fear to refuse undesirable business from any source? Well, why?

He refers to the fire here of 1877 as a "little unpleasantness." Judging from the despatches (for we have a weekly newspaper, a corner grocery and a telegraph office in St. John), those "little unpleasantnesses" occur with wonderful regularity in Montreal. Let the intelligent man compare the loss ratio of St. John and Montreal for the past sixteen years and he will find therein food for thought. I am sure "insurance circles in London and New York would be gratified" if Montreal could be made to show as good a record as St. John.

Perhaps I ought to allude to the advice contained in the last paragraph of "Nonchalance's" letter; but it is so beclouded by mixed metaphors, that his meaning is somewhat obscure, yet probably a smart writer is bound by no rules and sees no need for perspicuity. It is quite possible that the commission-paid agent is necessarily more obtuse than the broker, which, however, would be the agent's misfortune; be that as it may, I must admit that so far I have failed to understand how a line is to grow healthily or otherwise. When I have solved this "dark counsel," I may be able better to appreciate "Nonchalance's" advice.

He asserts, and I assume believes, that there is room for the honest broker. I think, Mr. Editor, it will be time to discuss that question when such a phenomenon appears.

Yours, etc., X.

ST. JOHN, N.B., 7th April, 1894.

BROKERS AHEAD!

To the Editor of the INSURANCE AND FINANCE CHRONICLE:—

DEAR SIR.—You have been kind enough to submit to me a copy of a letter signed "X," which is, I understand, to be published in your next issue. You have asked whether I would care to reply to this effusion, and perhaps, considering "X's" environment, his utterances merit some short notice.

If John L. Sullivan, suddenly seized with *cacithes scribendi*, were to indite an epistle to an enemy, the result might be as free from personalities, and as elegant in diction, as friend "X's" letter, which seems to convey the sound of a "sand-baggy" thud in every sentence. To learn English composition from a pugilist is at least an indirect way of acquiring knowledge and about equal to learning skirt-dancing from the parish clergyman. "Plentiful lack" is delicious! Shade of Sir Boyle Roche, arise!

I ask for an explanation from "X." Why is what he terms "smart writing" necessarily vicious?