

READINGS FROM CURRENT LITERATURE.

A WINTER SUNSET.

A COLD mist, motionless and gray,
Sleeps on the dark moors where the glow
Of the last sunlight of the day
Scarce strikes a sparkle from the snow;
The red sun in the murky west
Sinks to his rest.

The red sun sinks; his ways grow dim:
From earth and heaven, east, south and north,
And from the west that welcomed him,
No voice or murmur stealth forth
To break the sombre calm, and tell
His last farewell.

Nowhere is any life or sound:
Only at times, far off, you hear,
Across the dry and barren ground,
Strange crackings from the ice-blue mere.
The moorland like a dead thing lies
Beneath dead skies.

Yet even here quick Fancy sees
The hidden germs of patient Spring,
Watches amid the flowerless trees
The flashings-out of April's wing,
And hears, in cadence low and long,
An Easter song!

—Sidney A. Alexander, in *Cassell's Family Magazine*.

A LOST COLOUR DISCOVERED.

ARTISTS and scientific men have long wondered about the beautiful "azzurino" found in the ruins of Pompeii. M. Fouque, the mineralogist, with a mixture of silicate of copper and of lime, has now obtained the brilliant crystalline "azure" of Pompeii. It is a tint perfectly unchangeable, and identical with the Alexandrian blue which was known to the Ptolemies, and imported into Italy in the first years of the Christian era.—*Amateur Photographer*.

PROFESSOR TYNDALL ON A GLASS OF STOUT.

PROFESSOR TYNDALL does not share the prejudices of some scientists against the use of alcohol. Lecturing last week at Belfast upon "Our Invisible Friends and Foes," he said that a few years ago, Cohn, a celebrated naturalist in the University of Breslau, wrote a paper which he entitled "The Invisible Enemies of the Air," in which he treated of those microscopic organisms which underlie our world, and which are the now recognized causes of putrefaction and of epidemic disease. His invisible organisms were, therefore, hostile organisms. Only certain classes of them, says Professor Tyndall, are, however, to be thus regarded. "No doubt," he went on to say, "Sir Wilfrid Lawson would throw a wider net, and would include more organisms in his ban than I do in mine. To me the organism which provides us with a tankard of Guinness's stout or Burton ale, with a goblet of that wine which maketh glad the heart of man, or with a glass of whisky toddy of Dunville's wholesome blend on a cold night, cannot be regarded as an enemy, and hence my expansion of Cohn's title to invisible friends as well as invisible foes." From which it will be observed that the Professor's taste is as catholic as the Professor's self.

A GLIMPSE OF GENERAL GORDON'S CHARACTER.

SOME interesting matter on the subject of General Gordon appears in the *Contemporary Review*. The writer of the article, which is headed "A Voyage of General Gordon," has had access to the diary of a skipper who, in 1882, conveyed Gordon in a small trading schooner from Mauritius to the Cape. Gordon was very communicative on the voyage, when he was not prostrated with sea-sickness—which, by the way, he bore no better than Marius—and one evening he told his nautical host why he had resigned. He simply could not endure the manners and customs "of the high social circle in which he was expected to move. 'Dress for dinner, dress for evening parties, dress for balls, dress and decoration, decoration and dress! day after day. I could not,' said Gordon, 'stand the worry of it, and rather than do so I gave up the appointment.'" Gordon was firmly persuaded that the site of the Garden of Eden is one of the islands of the Seychelles, and that the *coco-de-mer* of that region is true Forbidden Tree. His reason for not marrying, as stated on the same occasion, was only less original than his reason for throwing up his appointment in India. "I never yet have met the woman who for my sake, and perhaps at a moment's notice, would be prepared to sacrifice the comforts of home and the sweet society of loved ones, and accompany me whithersoever the demand of duty might lead."

PROPERTY IN WORDS.

THE whole story of civilization is embraced in the record of linguistic fluctuations; and thus in a sense the best histories are the dictionaries. Empires and people have passed away from time to time, but their words have remained to perpetuate their glories and to increase the facilities and progress of education and progress. It goes

without saying that while this work of invention and selection, of trial and adjustment, was going on, there was no monopoly of language, no corner in words. All were at liberty to use the terms which suited their purposes or preferences. Thus in the course of events our own language reached an aggregate of 40,000 words. That was a quarter of a century ago, and it was then commonly supposed that we had all the words we could ever adapt to useful service. But since then the number has been increased to 200,000, in consequence of new demands in various branches of literature, as well as in the realm of ordinary personal intercourse; and the indications point to a continued growth, or did so point until the other day, when Judge Bradley, of the United States circuit court, rendered a decision which may change the aspect of affairs in that relation by shutting off our supply of vocal novelties and conveniences. This decision is to the effect that the coiner of a new word may copyright it and thus make it his private property, and that no other person can legally use such word or an imitation thereof. The particular word in controversy before this learned and upright jurist was "celluloid," which the plaintiff corporation claimed as a noun of its own creation, which it had copyrighted as a trade-mark. On the part of the defence, Webster's and Worcester's dictionaries and Chambers' Encyclopædia were offered as evidence that the word was public property; but the court held that dictionary-makers had no right to include the word in their books, and such unlawful publication could not affect the vested rights of the originator. Assuming this to be good law, it follows that we must be content for the most part with the old familiar words which have descended to us from previous ages, and which cannot be copyrighted for speculative purposes. Our civilization has reached a point, manifestly, where it becomes in one particular the victim of its own law of development; and the new words to represent the new things which it is daily bringing to pass it may be enjoined from using by its own judicial tribunals.—*St. Louis Globe-Democrat (U.S.A.)*.

THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM.

THE Vienna correspondent of the *Daily News* telegraphs:—Astronomical calculations show that we shall witness a most interesting phenomenon in the course of 1890. A sixth star will be added to the five fixed stars forming the constellation of Cassiopeia. If the star appears in 1890 it will have been seen seven times since the beginning of the Christian era. It was discovered last time by Tycho de Brahe in 1572, who described it as a star of extraordinary brightness, which outshone the stars of first magnitude, and could be seen in the light of day. But after three weeks the brightness faded, and after having been visible for seventeen months it disappeared as suddenly as it had come. The star is on record in the annals of 1264 A. D., and 945 A. D., during the Emperor Otho's reign. It has been supposed that this heavenly body is the identical Star of Bethlehem, and it seems to appear once in about 315 years. Now, if it be calculated backwards from 945, that would make its appearance coincident with the date of the birth of Christ, and when the calculation is made from 945 forward, the star was due in 1260, 1575, and 1890. Dr. Palisa, of Vienna Observatory, who has been questioned on the subject, says that there are no proofs that the Tychoonian Star and the star of 945 are identical. There are many stars which return after a lapse of several years, but there is no authority for the certain return of a star not seen since 1572.

WESTERN ASSURANCE COMPANY.

ANNUAL MEETING.

The thirty-ninth annual meeting of the shareholders of the above company was held at its offices in this city on Friday last, the 21st inst. The President, Mr. A. M. Smith, occupied the chair, and Mr. J. J. Kenny, the Managing Director, who was appointed to act as Secretary, read the following

REPORT.

The Directors beg to submit to the Shareholders their Annual Statement of the accounts of the company for the past year, and its Assets and Liabilities on the 31st December last.

It will be seen from the Revenue Account that the total income of the Company was \$1,719,090.80, and after providing for losses and expenses of management, a profit balance remains of \$54,432.69.

Two half-yearly dividends have been declared at the rate of ten per cent per annum on the Capital Stock, and after payment of these there is a balance at the credit of Profit and Loss Account of \$12,286.41. This amount, added to the Reserve Fund of \$825,000, brings the total Surplus Funds of the Company up to \$837,286.41. From this, however, must be deducted the amount necessary to provide for the liability on unexpired risks, which is estimated at \$530,196.69, leaving a net surplus over and above Capital and all liabilities of \$307,089.72.

When it is borne in mind that the past year has been marked by an exceptional number of serious conflagrations (in several of which this Company was involved to a considerable extent, and that the experience of companies engaged in marine business has been generally unfavourable, your Directors feel that there is ample cause for congratulation in the figures presented herewith.

Since the last annual meeting of Shareholders the Directors have shared the deep regret felt by the community at large at the death of the late Mr. William Gooderham, who had been a highly valued member of the Board for upwards of twenty years, and Vice-President of the Company for the past four years. The vacancies caused by Mr. Gooderham's death were filled by the election of Mr. George A. Cox to the Vice-Presidency and Mr. W. R. Brock as a Director.

STATEMENT OF BUSINESS FOR THE YEAR ENDING DECEMBER 31, 1889.

Revenue Account.	
Fire Premium.....	\$1,303,496 81
Marine Premium.....	721,695 77
Less Re-Assurance.....	\$2,025,192 58
	348,484 62
Interest Account.....	\$1,676,709 96
	43,380 84
	\$1,719,090 80
Fire Losses, including an appropriation for all losses reported to December 31, 1889.....	696,887 77
Marine Losses, including an appropriation for all losses reported to December 31, 1889.....	458,032 12
General Expenses, Agents' Commission, and all other charges.....	509,738 22
Balance to Profit and Loss.....	54,432 69
	\$1,719,090 80
Profit and Loss Account.	
Dividend paid July, 1889.....	25,000 00
Dividend payable January, 1890.....	25,000 00
Balance.....	12,286 41
	\$62,286 41
Balance from last year.....	7,853 72
Profit for the year.....	54,432 69
	\$62,286 41
Assets.	
United States Bonds.....	529,590 00
Dominion of Canada Stock.....	211,417 50
Loan Company and Bank Stock.....	129,350 00
Company's Building.....	65,000 00
Municipal Debentures.....	84,668 49
Cash on hand and on deposit.....	130,566 25
Bills Receivable.....	47,913 74
Mortgages.....	12,100 00
Re-Assurance due from other companies.....	41,958 10
Interest due and accrued.....	6,846 73
Agents' Balances and Sundry Accounts.....	196,988 00
	\$1,456,428 87
Liabilities.	
Capital Stock paid up.....	\$500,000 00
Losses under adjustment.....	94,142 46
Dividend payable January, 1890.....	25,000 00
Reserve Fund.....	\$825,000 00
Balance, Profit and Loss.....	12,286 41
	\$37,286 41
	\$1,456,428 87

A. M. SMITH, President.

J. J. KENNY, Managing Director.

Western Assurance Offices, Toronto, February 14, 1890.

AUDITORS' REPORT.

To the President and Directors of the Western Assurance Company:

GENTLEMEN.—We certify to having examined the books, securities, vouchers and bank balances of the Western Assurance Company for the year ending 31st December, 1889, and find them correct and in accordance with the annexed balance sheet and statement.

R. R. CATHRON,
JOHN M. MARTIN, F.C.A., } Auditors.

Toronto, Feb. 14, 1890

The President, in moving the adoption of the report, said:
The report just read and the accompanying account present, I think, so clear a synopsis of the business of the Company for the past year that it is scarcely necessary for me to enlarge upon it to any extent. I may say, however, that it must be gratifying to all the Shareholders to note the position which the Western maintains among the Insurance Companies of this continent, evidence of which is presented in its premium income of nearly a million and three-quarter dollars (after deducting re-insurances) which comes to us from agencies scattered throughout all the provinces of the Dominion, the United States and the British West Indies. And while it is true that the profit realized upon the year's business is not quite so large as might be expected under ordinary circumstances, and is, in fact, smaller than has been shown in our annual balance sheets for some years past, it must be remembered that the year 1889 has been in some respects an exceptional one. It is seldom we experience within the period of a few months four such conflagrations as those toward which we were called to contribute during last year, two on the Pacific Coast (which has hitherto been a very profitable field) and two occurring within a very few days of each other in the State of Massachusetts, at Lynn and Boston. So that when, with the calls upon our treasury which these involved, coupled with the unfavourable experience in the Marine branch during the closing month of the year, we are able to meet our Shareholders with a large enough profit balance to pay their usual dividend of ten per cent, and add something to our surplus, I think you will agree with me that we are presenting ample proof that our affairs are being conducted in such a manner as to command your confidence and reflect credit upon those responsible for the active management and supervision of the Company's business, both at the head office and at the branches and agencies throughout its extensive field of operations.

In regard to the outlook for the future, I need scarcely remind you that our business, being subjected largely to elements beyond human control, is of such a nature that we do not feel safe in attempting to form an estimate in advance of the probable result of any year's transactions. We can only continue to pursue that course which experience and prudence point out as best in the interests of the company, and relying on the outcome being in the future, as it has proved in the past, such as to yield Shareholders a good return upon the capital invested, while affording Policy-holders ample security.

I cannot close without a further reference to that made in the report to the loss we have sustained since we last had the pleasure of meeting the Shareholders in the death of our late Vice-President. His worth and his many virtues are too widely known to require more than passing notice here, but I may say that in the death of Mr. William Gooderham we feel that the Company has lost a faithful officer and Director, and each member of the Board a highly-esteemed friend.

The Vice-President, Mr. George A. Cox, in seconding the adoption of the report, said:

Mr. Chairman, you have very justly alluded to our late respected Vice-President, who had for many years and with so much satisfaction to the Shareholders discharged the duty that now devolves upon me. When I say that I deeply regret the fact that he is not here to discharge that duty to-day, I am sure I but give expression to the feeling of every Shareholder and Director, every officer and employee of the Company.

The experience of the Company for the year under review affords in my judgment more than ordinary cause for congratulation, notwithstanding the fact that the profits are lower than for several years past. The year of 1889 will long be remembered amongst both Fire and Marine Underwriters as one of unusual severity. In addition to the disastrous storms on the Atlantic coast as well as on the lakes, we have been heavily interested in no less than four serious conflagrations, and I repeat that it is certainly a matter for congratulation that the large annual premium income, amounting last year to over \$2,000,000 gross, pouring into the coffers of the Company from nearly every important point on this Continent, was sufficient to meet these exceptionally heavy losses on land and sea as well as the ordinary losses of the Company, and to do that without impairing our capital, without encroaching to the extent of one dollar upon our large reserves, without reducing our usual ten per cent. dividend to our Shareholders; in short, without in any way disturbing the business of the Company in the even tenor of its way. It is particularly satisfactory to feel that our business is now so extended and so well distributed as to give us that average risk and that annual income that will safely carry the Company through such disastrous storms and such serious conflagrations as they have experienced during the past year.

It must also be remembered that in years when we escape these exceptional losses we go on rolling up our reserve funds, and in looking back over the reports of the last five years, including the one just closed, I am gratified to find that we have in that time paid \$232,589.53 to our Shareholders in dividends, have transferred no less than \$205,000 to our reserve fund, and increased the amount standing at credit of profit and loss by \$11,298.30; in other words, the company has earned for you about 20 per cent. per annum on your paid-up capital, about one-half of which has been paid to you in dividends, and with the other half a large reserve fund has been built up to protect your capital in years of unusual disaster. Another very satisfactory feature in this year's report is the fact that our business has been done at a cost of less than 3½ per cent., a rate that compares most favourably with that of any other Company. Before taking my seat, I desire to add that for these satisfactory results you are chiefly indebted to your able and energetic Managing Director and his well-selected staff, who know their business thoroughly and attend to it promptly.

The Managing Director, in reply to an inquiry, explained that the amount calculated to provide for unexpired risks was somewhat less last year than at the close of 1888, owing mainly to the discontinuance of annual ocean hull business. The marine premiums of the past year being chiefly on cargo risks, written for the trip only, were almost entirely earned at the close of the year.

The report was adopted, and a vote of thanks was passed to the Directors for their services.

Messrs. Fred J. Stewart and John K. Niven having been appointed scrutineers, the election of Directors to serve during the coming year was proceeded with, and resulted in the unanimous re-election of the old Board, namely: Messrs. A. M. Smith, Geo. A. Cox, Hon. S. C. Wood, Robert Beatty, A. T. Fulton, George McMurrich, H. N. Baird, W. R. Brock and J. J. Kenny.

At a meeting of the Board held subsequently, Mr. A. M. Smith was re-elected President, and Mr. George A. Cox Vice-President for the ensuing year.