Notes and Items.

At Home and Abroad.

The St. Lawrence Route Rates.—Lieutenant-Colonel Bond and Captain Riley, representing the Underwriters' Association, waited on the Government on Monday last, to answer the petition from the Montreal Board of Trade asking for the appointment of a royal commission to inquire into the question of the alleged discriminations in regard to insurance rates upon the St. Lawrence route. Mr. Bond pointed out the difficulty of getting insurance for the St. Lawrence route. He denied that there was any discrimination. He, however, did not want to oppose a commission, but asked that it be instructed to inquire into everything in connection with the shipping port of Montreal and the trade reaching there. The Government will consider the matter.

Chlorate of Potash Hazard.—Since the New York fire, underwriters have been studying with unusual interest the hazards attending the storage of chlorate of potash. Several bad losses are said to have resulted from explosions of the substance when in contact with other chemicals. H. A. Fiske, an expert on questions of fire protection, contributes to the "Standard," of Boston, some interesting details concerning the seriousness of the new hazard:

"There is no question that chlorate of potash stored in bulk is a serious hazard, and is liable to cause a severe fire and explosion. It appears to be customary to store considerable quantities of chlorate of potash in city wholesale-drug risks, and it is also often stored in large bulk, in bleach, dye, and print works. Chlorate of potash comes in crystal or powdered form, and is shipped and stored usually in small wooden kegs of 75 or 100 pounds each. It is an exceedingly powerful oxidizing agent; that is, it readily gives up its oxygen when in combination with other compounds, and it is this feature of giving up or releasing oxygen suddenly which causes large volumes of gas to be liberated, and explosion ensues.

"Pure chlorate of potash is not explosive, and it is this feature which has led to a somewhat general belief that there is no danger in handling or storing it. When impurities, organic matter, other chemicals, etc., even in very small quantities, are present, it is liable to explode, due to friction or concussion, or, in the case of acids being present, it is liable to explode spontaneously. In case of fire it would appear that when a portion of the keg burned away, the charcoal or other substances near by might become mixed with it and explosion would ensue."

A Prominent Fire Underwriter Retiring.—A special cable to "The Journal of Commerce and Commercial Bulletin" from London announces that Mr. George H. Burnett, manager of the Fire Department of the North British and Mercantile Insurance Company, of London and Edinburgh, has decided to retire within a short time, that he has communicated this fact quite freely to many of his friends and that it is no longer a secret. The directors who have informally learned of his intention will recognize his services of many years in a suitable manner. Mr. Burnett was born in London in 1836. His father was the chief partner in the firm of Burnett & Co., prominent navy agents. After a thorough edcuation, he entered the service of the Northern Assurance Company of London, in which, for seven years he received the benefit of a training under Mr. E. H. Mannering, later of the Sun. The Mercantile Insurance Company, then in its early years, was acquiring a choice staff and offered the position of Foreign Clerk to Mr. Burnett. He accepted it, and was soon made Foreign Superintendent.

After the Mercantile Insurance Company and the North British Insurance Company were amalgamated, Mr. Burnett quickly attained a high place in the confidence of the corporation's board. He has frequently taken trips to far distant places in the interests of the North British. In 1870 he visited the United States after the great Chicago fire, in which the company paid out over two million dollars. He became manager in 1872, on the death of Mr. Whyting. Mr. Burnett's last trip to this side of the Atlantic was in the fall of 1899, in connection with the resignation of Mr. H. E. Bowers, and the appointment of his successor, Mr. E. G. Richards. Mr. Burnett's retirement will not occur for several months yet.

The home office staff of the North British and Mercantile is as follows:—President, His Grace the Duke of Sutherland; Vice-president, the Most Hon. the Marquis of Zetland; Chairman of the General Court, Quintin Hogg, Esq.; London Directors—Chairman, Baron Schreder; Deputy-Chairman, Alexander H. Campbell, Esq.; Charles Morrison, Esq.; John Sanderson, Esq.; the Right Hon. Lord Hillingdon, the Hon. Charles N. Lawrence, Alexander D. Kleinwort, Esq.; Charles J. C. Scott, Esq., Hubert F. Barclay, Esq., Vincent R. Hoare, Esq., Herbert R. Arbuthnot, Esq., J. Pierpont Morgan, jun., Esq.; Manager of Fire Department, George Henry Burnett; Sub-managers Fire Department, W. T. Price, J. M. C. Johnston; Sub-manager Foreign Department Philip Winsor; Manager of Life Department and Actuary, Henry Cockburn, F.I.A., F.F.A.; Sub-manager Life Department, Thomas Pringle; Secretary, F. W. Lance.

Correspondence.

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

LONDON LETTER.

Finance.

1st November, 1900.

We have given the boys of the C.I.V. a hearty welcome, and, in fact, some of us have been so enthusiastic over it, that we have sustained fractured limbs in the doing of it. Still it is over, and the town is full of khaki-clothed, bronzed men, who step over the pavement with a springy stride which causes the people who are passing along to pause and look after them. The biggest crowd in Fleet street was drawn by the spectacle of a C.I.V. having his boots blacked. Such is fame. Here I might write luminous paragraphs on finance and insurance till I was black in the face, and nobody would stop to look whilst I was having my boots polished.