



TORONTO, ONT., JUNE, 1900.

THE TRADER, the official organ of the Jewelry trade of Canada, is published on the 1st of every month at 34 Lombard Street, Toronto, Ont., and has a circulation embracing every solvent Jeweler in the Dominion. Price \$1.00 per annum.

Correspondence is invited on topics of interest to the trade, but we do not hold ourselves in any way responsible for the statements or opinions of those using our columns.

Changes or new advertisements must reach us not later than the 10th of the month previous to date of issue in order to ensure insertion.

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THE TRADER PUBLISHING CO.
OF TORONTO, LIMITED.



THE OTTAWA-HULL FIRE.

THE awful conflagration which last month swept over the Town of Hull and then, crossing the Ottawa River, attacked the Capital City, is without doubt the most disastrous fire in the history of the Dominion of Canada as well as one of the greatest of modern times.

It is said that 8 persons either perished in or by the effect of the flames; 3,000 families were rendered homeless; 5,000 persons thrown out of employment; and the total loss of property is estimated to be close upon \$18,000,000. The insurance upon this immense amount of destroyed property is said to be considerably less than one-half of the loss, and in a great many cases the conflagration will bring absolute ruin to the sufferers whose savings of a life-time were in a few moments swept entirely away.

We are glad to say that the cry of the distressed and homeless people evoked a spontaneous outburst from philanthropic hearts all over the Anglo-Saxon speaking world, and up to the time at which we write no less than \$829,426 has been subscribed to the Ottawa-Hull fire relief fund. In addition to this, immense stores of clothing and other articles of necessity

have been forwarded to the relief committee and distributed amongst those who needed it.

Perhaps the worst feature of this fire from a commercial standpoint was the destruction of the great paper and saw mills, match and other factories which were located in Hull and furnished employment to the bulk of the people whose houses were destroyed. Although the majority of these manufacturers have signified their intention of rebuilding their works as soon as possible, this will nevertheless take a considerable time to accomplish, and in the meantime a great many skilled employees, who are unable to do hard manual labor, will be practically without employment. It may be taken for granted, however, that the employers will do their utmost to make this suffering fall as lightly as possible upon all of the employees whose services they desire to keep.

While the people of Hull and Ottawa have had the hearty sympathy and support of their fellow-countrymen in their great disaster, it is to be hoped they will lay the lesson to heart, and when they are rebuilding see to it that the burned districts are not again covered by wooden fire traps such as they originally were. Personally, we can say that we have always looked for just such a disaster at Hull, for it was essentially a wooden and saw mill town, and once a fire got a fair headway the whole place was bound to go provided the wind was strong and in the proper quarter. This is just what happened. Once the fire got under way, it simply cleaned out everything in its path and nothing could stay it until it had burned itself out. We trust that the people of Ottawa and Hull, with this terrible lesson before their eyes, will take such precautions as will make the repetition of such a conflagration impossible.

Where so many places of business were destroyed, as was to have been expected, there were jewelers amongst the sufferers. At least three of the Hull jewelers lost their all, viz. A. Cature, W. F. Gaul, E. Pommier, and also Miss Seguin, who did quite a business in jewelers' sundries and such like goods. We understand that although these firms were partially insured, still their loss will be heavy, and they are deserving of the sympathy of the trade generally. It may be also said that the sympathy of the Canadian jewelry trade was not confined to words only, for a great many of them contributed small sums to the relief fund raised in their own town or city, while others with perhaps more to spare gave direct and in their own name. However this was done, it only went to show that the sufferings of those homeless ones had touched a tender chord in the people at large, and that they were willing and ready to subscribe all the money that the necessities of the case demanded.

The only pleasant feature of this deplorable calamity was the spontaneous response from the other great colonies; Australia, New Zealand and Cape Colony; not to say anything about the magnificent sum sent from the Mother Country itself, all of which things indicate that mutual dangers and mutual interests are drawing the Empire closer year after year. The share that every part of the Empire is to-day bearing of the war in South Africa has not only drawn in the Mother Country and the colonies more closely together, but has set them all enquiring as to what manner of people these fellow subjects are and how closer acquaintance in trade and every other way