

MONTREAL INSURANCE INSTITUTE

INAUGURAL MEETING.

The inaugural meeting of the Insurance Institute, of Montreal, for Session 1903-4, was held on the night of the 29th ult., in the Ladies' Ordinary, of the Windsor Hotel, in this city. The occasion was one of special interest, owing to the Governing Council having extended invitations to ladies, who availed themselves of this courtesy in large numbers, many of whom have business associations with the insurance offices.

At the Institute meetings the room too often showed "a beggarly array of empty benches"; but, on this occasion, it was crowded to the doors, "standing room only" being the accommodation for a number of masculine "wall flowers."

With commendable, as it was business-like good judgment, the new president, Mr. E. P. Heaton, manager of the Guardian Assurance Company, opened the proceedings at the time announced. His Address was genial, brief and pithy. He stated that the proposal to admit ladies to the Institute meetings had been opposed up to a recent date, but, after a strenuous effort, wiser counsels had prevailed. He pointed with much gratification to the large assembly present, as a demonstration that the more chivalrous course adopted by the Governing Council was fully justified and rewarded. He advised the lady members of the different staffs of the companies to organize an Institute of their own, if they continued to be excluded from the full membership of the present Institute. If they acted upon this suggestion, he felt assured the proceedings of the Ladies' Institute would rival in interest and value those of the one from which they are now excluded. The president announced that the Institute had secured permanent quarters over the City and District Savings Bank offices, in St Catherine Street, to which he invited the members. After a few complimentary allusions to the Rev. Dr. Barclay, and those who had provided so attractive a musical programme for their pleasure, President Heaton extended to the ladies a very cordial welcome.

Dr. Barclay delivered an Address, replete with humour and good counsel, the main theme of which was "Taste." Those of the audience familiar with Alison's elaborate work on this topic, or the treatment of it by Hume, Burke, Ruskin and other writers, naturally expected a dry metaphysical dissertation. Dr. Barclay had the good taste to indulge in a lighter vein. He pointed out that, while an old latin motto deprecated disputes about taste, there is no subject which is more constantly the theme of disputation. As in diet, "one man's meat is another man's poison," so in the mental sphere, what gratifies the taste of some, is to others offensive. After all that has been said, what is "good taste," and what is "bad taste" in literature and in art is a matter of individual taste, there being no

Canon which indisputably differentiates the one from the other. Its ephemeral variations, its tyranny by fashion, its eccentricities and absurdities, Dr. Barclay treated as the famous angler did, who, "skinned an eel as gently as if he loved it." One custom fashionable years ago, he described as "a heterogeneous conglomeration of hideous incongruities"—a phrase worth remembering. From the standpoint of moral conduct, Dr. Barclay declared that if we observed the Golden Rule, by doing to others as we would have others do to us, there would be no breaches of good taste in manners. To give a practical application to his sparkling Address, he gave a highly amusing narrative of a visit paid him by an over-zealous accident insurance canvasser, who rudely persisted in pressing the claims of his Company, in spite of plain hints to stop talking. Dr. Barclay said: "That young man came near to having in his own person an illustration of the benefits of an accident policy!" This case of overzealous soliciting was adduced as an example of bad taste and bad judgment.

The musical selections were excellently rendered. The programme comprised a piano duet, by Mrs. Allan Macduff and Mrs. W. M. McCombe; vocal duet, Mrs. Thos. Ramsay and Mrs. A. T. Williams; songs by Mrs. Ramsay, Mr. A. K. Fisk, Mr. J. C. Barlow, and Mr. Allan Macduff. Messrs. Penman, Saunderson, Ramsay and Warner, were much appreciated in their quartette, and Mr. Arnoldi's violin solos were an artistic treat, as they displayed purity of tone and intelligent expression.

The programme of the other meetings of the season is as follows:—

- Nov. 20—Institute dinner.
- November 26—"The After History of Rejected Lives," Dr. McPhail.
- December 21—"Electricity," illustrated. Prof. Owens.
- January 21—"Canada: Its Fire Insurance Problems." A paper prepared by the president, Mr. E. P. Heaton, at the request of the governing council, and on the invitation of the Federated Institutes of Great Britain and Ireland.
- February 18—The "Clearing House"; Mr. T. P. Knight.
- March 17—Ladies' night. Programme to be arranged.
- March 31—Prize Essays. The selected essays in the prize competition will be read.
- April 21—The Making of Iron and Steel (illustrated). Mr. George E. Drummond, president of the Canada Iron Furnace Company, and of the Canadian Manufacturers' Association.
- May 4—Annual meeting and smoking concert.

The governing council has decided to offer prizes of \$30 and \$20 for the two best essays by associate members, on "Government supervision over insurance companies." 1. Its necessity; 2. its scope; 3. its practical effect; 4. the Canadian system compared with those of other countries."

The essays must be typewritten and in the hands