

### THE CASTIGATION OF A COMMITTEE.

When reviewing the address of Mr. T. B. Macaulay, before his fellow-actuaries, we directed attention to the extraordinary table prepared by a special committee of The British Medical Association, in which they showed that those who daily indulge at dinner in half-glasses of sherry, frothy goblets of soulless champagne, and, later, soothe their troubled stomachs with Scotch and soda, enjoy more years of life than the span allowed to the total abstainer. Anxious as we may have been to believe this comforting mortality table of the British Medical Association, we, somewhat reluctantly, had to throw discredit upon their committee. In our wake comes the "Insurance News," published in Philadelphia, with the following castigation of this same committee:

"We once heard the Actuarial Society of America characterized as 'a body of rusty fogies, a clique of fossilized old fellows who revel in the study of abstruse and dry-as-dust subjects which are of no real value.' But then the speaker was a captious critic much given to cynicism, and fond of making scathing remarks about men and things in whom and in which he took little or no interest. While we confess to a sort of disinclination to wade verbatim through all the speeches delivered by these learned men at their yearly gatherings, we freely admit that we occasionally discover something in them which is, to us, more to our taste than algebraic signs and other formula, or metaphysical disquisitions in general. For instance, at the last annual meeting of the above society, President Thomas B. Macaulay completely knocked over some arguments which have lately been advanced by interested and prejudiced persons for the purpose of proving, as they hoped to do, but failed in the attempt, that all who have hitherto cherished the belief that total abstinence conduces to longevity have been the victims of a delusion. That medical men and life insurance companies—not to mention philanthropists, parsons, temperance lecturers, etc.—who have heretofore regarded alcohol (or, at any rate, the excessive use of it) as being baneful and injurious to health, and as tending to shorten life, have all the time been 'living in a fool's paradise!' That is, if certain figures could be believed which Mr. Macaulay set out to refute.

Here is the statement containing the fallacy which that gentleman found no difficulty in expounding: "The British Medical Association appointed a committee to make inquiries in order to ascertain the average age of the different categories of drinkers, that is to say, those who refrain altogether from alcoholic liquors, those who indulge more or less in moderation and those who drink to excess." The report of the aforesaid committee stated that 4,234 deaths had been investigated, and were divided into five classes, with the average age of death in each class, as follows: Moderate habitual drinkers, 63 years; careless ditto, 59 years; free drinkers, 57 years; full-fledged drunkards, 53 years; total abstainers, 51 years! Had we the time and space we should like to give Mr. Macaulay's method of successfully annihilating that astounding piece of mendacity! But it would be a superfluous proceeding; we doubt if one per cent. of the readers of the above statistics placed one iota of credence in them. It is one thing to contend that moderate drinking is not hurtful; it is quite another to come out with the audacious assertion that intemperance will better

help to prolong life than total abstinence. If such were really the actual truth, then drunkards ought to be preferred to total abstainers as life insurance risks. And what a preposterous assumption that would be?

Perhaps, when the British Medical committee declared that the bibulous mortals live longer, they wished us to infer that, from their point of view, the total abstainer's existence is not living.

### LESSONS AND LOSSES OF THE HOBOKEN FIRE.

Under this heading, the New York "Journal of Commerce" in discussing the insurance phase of the disaster says:

"The loss is a hard blow to the insurance companies, both fire and marine, particularly the former. There are several kinds of insurance involved on the piers and this may lead to complications as to which policies attach in certain cases. There is specific fire insurance covering merchandise on designated piers or in specified warehouses, floating fire policies covering on piers and in warehouses in the Metropolitan District, excess fire floaters, marine insurance covering fire risks under the three days' clause, insurance covering through cotton, and insurance of the carriers' legal liability."

Then follows a partial list of the insurance on merchandise, piers, lighters, barges, cars, cargoes, etc., amounting to some two millions of dollars.

What some of the underwriters think of the lesson conveyed by the fire may be gathered from the following extracts from the "Commercial Bulletin," of Tuesday last:

"With the opening of business yesterday morning, there was a disposition on the part of the shipping, insurance and other interests concerned in the Hoboken fire to obtain, as far as possible, a more exact statement of the property loss. And there was, moreover, a decided disposition among underwriters to draw lessons from the fire.

In marine insurance circles the chief interest seemed to centre on the discouragement, which, it is argued, the loss in a few hours of three fine steamers would give to the practice of a number of the large British and German steamship lines of acting as their own underwriters through means of an insurance fund. Underwriters are positive that the hulls and machinery of the steamers "Saale," "Main" and "Bremen" will not be as valuable as the North German Lloyd people claim to think. The plates will, it is claimed, all be warped as a result of the intense heat, and the frame work will be found twisted, and the insurance people claim that they will be much surprised if the labor which would be required to take the rivets out of the plates and save any portion of the hulls would not cost more than the replacing of new material.

Mr. A. A. Raven, president of the Atlantic Mutual Marine Insurance Co., said to a representative of this journal when questioned: 'It seems to me that the chief lesson to be drawn from Saturday's catastrophe is the necessity of building better piers and of establishing and enforcing more rigid rules in respect to protection against fire. So far as I am informed, the cotton, turpentine and other inflammable materials that were responsible for the fire were not on the passenger piers; but with flimsy wooden piers and the high wind which prevailed on Saturday, this difference does not appear to have had much effect. So far as compelling