

Correspondence.

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TORONTO LETTER.

The Hamilton trouble about rates—Newspaper criticism not always just or reasonable—Did you tender for the Toronto School risks?—The "Alliance" gets a plum—New Fire Alarm Boxes for Toronto "easy to use"—Returning to the fold.

DEAR EDITOR,—

Hamilton just now is in a state of mind bordering on "wild," over the recent action of the C. F. U. A. in imposing a 25 cent conflagration extra, applicable to certain districts in the centre and business portion of the city. The *Daily Press*, without going into the matter in a business-like way, and enquiring whether the Underwriters have justification, to show for their action, and are consistent in their practice, take up the popular cry of "extortion," "tyranny," etc., on the part of the fire insurance companies, and call for an instant movement on the part of the City Council in the consideration of Municipal Insurance and recommend the insuring in "American companies," whatever that may mean. Someone should tell these newspaper men, if they care to hear it, that the cities and towns and villages of Ontario are classed and rated from "A" down to "F" according to the efficiency, non-efficiency, or total absence, of all fire-extinguishing appliances. That these standards have been set up by competent and experienced underwriters and experts, and established by the custom and usage of this and other fire-underwriting communities. It follows then, that the application of the standard to any place is neither the result of guesswork nor of caprice, but a rational procedure. Tell them that these ratings, and the methods of making them, are open to all interested, on application to the Secretaries of the C. F. U. A. There is no secrecy about them. Indeed civic bodies are invited to acquaint themselves as to what they must supply, to attain to the highest or "A" point, which involves the lowest rates. When the Inspectors of the Association (practical men) report that the standard of a town has fallen below its present rating, it naturally follows that degrading to a lower letter is in order. In the case of Hamilton many weeks of patient waiting were allowed to pass before any alteration of rates was decided on, and only then when the authorities refused to improve their faulty equipment, though urged thereto even by their own officer, the Fire Chief. As to the issue of this outcry, it is not to my mind doubtful. The solid business men of the town may grumble, but ultimately will either influence the city to comply with the requirements of the Underwriters, or accept the situation and pay the higher rates. Speaking metaphorically, it is but in vain that Hamiltonians smite upon their agitated breasts, and call upon their false gods, and the Mutual companies and the Hogeysman of Municipal Insurance to come to their assistance. There will be no response, save perhaps, that, Witch of Endor like, they may behold the shades of the long perished Hamilton Insurance companies, the Canada Fire & Marine, the Dominion F. & M., the Standard Fire, et al., rise up before them, reproachful of mien, sad, and so slow!

The Toronto Public School Board have lately been sending round circulars to the insurance companies, inviting tenders and rates for the insurance of \$428,150 on the 49 School Buildings in this city. The result has not been quite satisfactory to the School Board, because whilst all companies did not tender those who did all named the same rate excepting one, which was not available because it could only write a small line on each school. Calling for tenders for fire insurance is not usual, or anyway is not of much use when companies are all members of the Association. It is now likely that after the pattern of the general policy of the insurance granted the City of Toronto, his insurance will be scheduled, and divided into shares, one

or more to each Company. The rate for three years will be seventy cents per cent.

It is reported that the "Alliance" of London has captured the Grand Trunk Railway Insurance of \$4,750,000. A nice plum certainly. This line was lately held by the "Home" of New York at .57 per cent. per annum. The "Alliance" it is said has accepted a slightly lower rate. It is a large line of insurance, and it has paid the "Home" to carry it so far. May the "Alliance" have a like good fortune. As the President of the G. T. R., Sir Charles Rivers Wilson, is a Director of the "Alliance," this may account for that Company being the favored one.

Nice new fire alarm boxes have been placed throughout the central district of Toronto. They are novel but very serviceable, as "anyone can spring an alarm without waiting for the key." Already our Fire Brigade has had a run or two "for fun," through the curiosity of some unknown.

The "Keystone" will soon be joined to the Toronto Board of Fire Underwriters. The Union, i. e., the Commercial Union of these two will be consummated early in May. The Western & British America will "give her away;" the former Company acting as Guardian for life. May the Sun of prosperity ever shine on the happy Alliance,—this National event! Mr. M. Gibbs, the Toronto agent, is to be congratulated because that Phoenix like he has risen from the ashes of Citizens & Glasgow of London and still lives; indeed, it looked one time this spring as if he had met a Waterloo. The boys should give Malcolm a Royal reception on his reappearance in the Board room.

Yours,

ARIEL.

TORONTO, 27th April, 1897.

Notes and Items.

The Manufacturers' Life Insurance Company of Canada is applying for admission to the State of New York.

Mr. G. H. Burnett, of the North British & Mercantile, was elected Chairman of the London Salvage Corps, in place of Mr. Mannering retired from ill-health.

Liverpool is said to have the most powerful fire engine known. It throws 1,800 gallons a minute, and a jet 140 feet high. The force is said to be strong enough to kill a man at 50 feet range.

The Insurance Policy Holder's Pocket Index for 1897, published by The Spectator Co., New York, is now on sale at THE CHRONICLE office. This is the 29th year of publication, so its merits are well known.

The town of Hastings will have its insurance rates raised to-day, owing to its defective fire protection. Other towns are likely to enjoy the same experience, for we presume they do enjoy it, for if they do not, if high rates are obnoxious, why do they not adopt such prudent measures as secure low rates?

Every fire insurance company doing business in Kansas is expecting to have its license suspended by the Superintendent of Insurance, who has threatened to take this action because of their having an officer employed to classify risks and fix uniform rates, which he claims constitutes an illegal trust. This objection is somewhat unreasonable and picayune. If the companies think proper to act in concert they will do so in spite of arbitrary and irrational laws.