

ence in the United States voiced by the *Shoe & Leather Reporter*. "It is like the shower that purifies the atmosphere; like the frost which checks the pestilence, good comes of it in the end. Such calamities are the inevitable result of overtrading and loose methods of doing business. The evil will cure itself sooner or later, but the remedial process is slow and painful. The saddest feature of it is that there wouldn't be a tenth part as many failures as there are if people were as discriminating in sifting credits as they ought to be." While the journal named does not think that leather products in the States can well go lower than they are now, it sees no indication of a rise, and advises cautious good judgment on all hands. The tanners, it says, "cannot afford to lapse into their chronic infirmity of buying hides at such high figures and in such large quantities as to render it probable that the supplies of leather will be excessive and the prices, consequently, unremunerative. They have surely given a full and exhaustive trial to the bold and dashing policy of buying stock on an extensive scale and in utter disregard of its cost."

Lack of experience, wrong views of the nature and extent of their field of supply, ignorance of the scale of profit necessary—all these causes have operated to bring about disaster to the maker of leather as well as to makers of shoes in late days. In the eagerness of competition many lost sight of the truth that they have a mutual interest with every other person in the same line of business; that, for example, if one sells shoes at less than cost, this very fact affects injuriously every other maker of shoes in Canada.

One of our correspondents mentions a "combine" in connection with the present unsatisfactory situation, and asks if it would bring relief. The sort of combine the trade wants is a resolution on the part of every tanner or leather dealer that no leather shall be sold on credit to people who lack character, experience, and ability to become manufacturers. If a man of good repute is found selling his goods below cost, stop crediting him. One who has to pay hard-earned cash for his stock is not likely to give it away without profit, nor is he likely to sell it to men of straw. Compromises must be stopped, too, if ever the atmosphere of the trade is to be cleared.

THE INSURANCE PARLIAMENT.

At the sixth annual meeting of the Canadian Fire Underwriters' Association, held in Montreal on the 27th, 28th, and 29th ult., every company in the association except two was represented. Mr. J. J. Kenny, general manager of the Western Assurance Co., who has held the position of president of the association for the past two years, made a very satisfactory chairman. He congratulated the members on the large attendance, and reviewed the work of the association for the time he had occupied the presidency. The reports of the Schedule-rating Committee of each branch showed, he said, that the public were beginning to understand this equitable system of rating, by which each risk was

rated on its merits. Quoting from the reports of the Superintendent of Insurance, he showed that the average rate of premium obtained upon the entire business embraced in it was less in 1887, the latest year for which the figures were published, than in 1884, the first year of the working of the association. He further showed, from the same source, that the total fire insurance business of Canada, during the 19 years the Insurance Department had existed, had been done at a loss to the companies. The Government report of the business of 1888 is not yet published, but Mr. Kenny had no doubt it would show a decreased average rate, and that it would also show a decrease in the amount of fire-losses—"due in a very great measure to municipalities, as well as private individuals, having provided themselves with improved fire protection."

From a report of the Fire-appliance and Classification Committee it was learned that in the Province of Ontario alone no fewer than fifteen places had improved their fire appliances, had their classification raised, and as a consequence had the rates of insurance correspondingly reduced. The places referred to are as follows: Belleville and Windsor were raised to class B; Aurora, Merriton, Morrisburg, Newmarket, and Welland to class C; Forest, Milton, and Paisley to class D; Alexandria, Chesley, Hastings, Midland, and Port Arthur to class E. There is no doubt this is the outcome of the provision made by the association in rating places according to the means possessed by each for extinguishing fires, and it is a good showing for one year. Wiarton, Blythe, Lakefield, and other places are moving in the same direction. We understand that the underwriters have agreed to accept a steam fire engine smaller than that heretofore called a standard fire engine, for places of not more than 2,500 inhabitants. This seems to us a proper thing to do. Buildings in such places are as a rule not so high as in towns of larger dimensions, and the price at which such steam fire engines can be bought places them within the reach of any of our villages. The outlay will in all such cases be more than recouped by the reduction effected in rates of insurance.

The Electric Light Inspectors report the cost of inspection of electric light plant now borne by the association; this is found to work better than the old system, by which the persons using the light had to pay the cost of inspection. There are two electric light inspectors, one having charge of all places east of Kingston in Ontario; the other, Kingston and all places west of it. In the east the following places have electric light, namely, Ottawa, Buckingham, Pembroke, Renfrew, Almonte, Carleton Place, Smith's Falls, Perth, Prescott, and Morrisburg. West of Kingston are Aurora, Brantford, Barrie, Brampton, Belleville, Berlin, Bowmanville, Chatham, Cobourg, Campbellford, Dunnville, Galt, Guelph, Hamilton, Mount Forest, Newmarket, Napanee, Orillia, Oshawa, Orangeville, Paris, Peterboro, Simcoe, St. Thomas, St. Catharines, Thorold, Toronto, Long Branch, Hanlan's Island, Uxbridge, Woodstock, Walkerville, Essex Centre, Ridgetown, Aylmer, London, Ingersoll, Goderich, Strat-

ford, Walkerton, Owen Sound, Trenton, Port Hope, and Clinton. In these places there are over 3,000 arc lamps and 4,500 incandescent lights burning nightly. One of the inspectors reports that there is at present unusual activity in the incandescent department of electric lighting. Strong companies are being organized to introduce this light on a large scale in several cities. More than ordinary care is necessary to secure safe insulation of wires and prevent possible disaster, it being generally conceded that more danger of fire exists from incandescent than from arc lighting.

No change in rates was made at the annual meeting. The business was not finished, and an adjournment was agreed to for two months.

MISLEADING ANNOUNCEMENTS.

There ought to be some inexpensive method afforded the public of compelling people who publish misstatements as a means of obtaining business to retract them publicly. The law, as it now stands, permits any aggrieved party to ask damages if he has been induced, by fraudulent representations, to purchase an inferior article. But in the case of small sums collected from a multitude of different persons, no one person cares to make complaint or engage in a lawsuit, especially when the offender is a corporation of some pretensions, and with any amount of money at its command, with which to appeal from court to court. We now allude both to advertisements in the newspapers and fly-sheets and pamphlets, whether giving false descriptions of goods for sale in store, market, or drug shop, or of stocks or bonds of any corporate society, or of farms or houses for sale, or of the assets of any bank or insurance company, or of terms of membership in any benevolent society or mercantile concern.

It is true that we have laws governing banking, and insurance, and brokers' offices, and we have an insurance superintendent at Ottawa, and insurance inspectors or supervisors appointed by some of the provinces. But it seems to be generally understood that these gentlemen must confine themselves pretty much to the routine work of receiving and publishing, quarterly or annually, the sworn statements sent them by the different insurance companies. And a statement is furnished monthly by the banks and duly published. If an unauthorized bank or insurance company open up business contrary to law, and these officials have their attention called to the matter, they will no doubt give some attention to the offender. But it seems no part of even their business to take cognizance of the most open misrepresentations that may be indulged in by the officers or agents or managers of the corporations licensed by them to do business. And this in a country where a good moral character is necessary to obtain a license to run a public-house. No moral character seems necessary to obtain a license to run an insurance company or establish a bank in Canada. It would appear that nothing but the license fee and a certain amount of red tape or legal formality are requisite.