

Correspondence.

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TORONTO LETTER.

An Evergrowing International Fire Loss List—Is it always to grow?—What is the Remedy?—Rates Advancing along the Whole Line—Increase in Electrical Installations.

DEAR EDITOR.—The combined Fire Loss Statements, Canada and the United States, with which we are familiar as appearing in THE CHRONICLE from month to month, so far as the year has run, have had an unfortunate heavy increase in volume of loss. There is a tedious sameness in reiterating complaints and regrets regarding the aggregate fire loss to the community of millions of dollars, as month by month and year by year it is brought to our notice in the comparative tables referred to. It does seem that some day, if the present pace continues, the whole matter will call for consideration, and some action at the hands of the Government or Governments interested. It should be looked upon as a national calamity and receive such attention and intelligent practical treatment as befits an ever-recurring waste of the fruits of industry and labour of years. Governments give their attention to the suppression of pests in the agricultural world, to the prevention of cattle diseases, and enact sanitary laws, and laws prohibitive of this and that, but what an immense popularity might be reached by a government taking in hand successfully the prevention not of individual fires, for these will occur, but of conflagrations big and little, which eat up so much of wealth in a few hours. There is a remedy, or at least a palliative for every heart, every sore thing and ill that affects our individual bodies and our well-being, so we are told, therefore, I take it as reasonable to ask our rulers to seek out a remedy and corrective of this evil state of affairs, which, for years, has been turning to dust and ashes so much of our combustible properties.

It is quite possible that earnest advocates of some state measures looking towards the control of the fire waste might be met by the remark that for the most part the Insurance Companies paid the losses anyway, and it was rather their affair than that of any government. It is very certain that the greater number of the people we meet and live amongst have just this opinion of the matter referred to, and so long as they insure and receive their loss money from an Insurance Company they do not stop to consider where the company gets the moneys it distributes in losses. In a general way, it seems to be supposed that the Insurance concerns being all rich [as suggested by the long array of figures they publish, subscribed but uncalled capital, authorized capital and the like], they have plenty of funds derived from unknown sources, and as they all pay up when necessary, nothing more is required. What could give the public a better appreciation of where they stand than the selections of a year during which all insurance of property was by law prohibited? Bearing the fire loss themselves, without assistance from companies, would constitute a great object-lesson. It is not unlikely that such a special year would yield so favourable a loss report, owing to the fewness of fires of magnitude as to give colour and support to that not unknown theory held by some eccentric persons, to the effect that if there were fewer insurance companies there would be fewer fires.

By the way, we are not hearing anything said, these fiery days, about our old friend, Municipal Insurance. It seems to be like one of those schemes that the more thoroughly it is looked into and considered, even by its most enthusiastic admirers, the more liable it is to lose ground. It embodies so plausible and taking an idea that naturally it attracts persons having only limited and superficial knowledge of the laws and principles underlying fire insurance.

I should not be surprised, however, if this subject be brought up again ere long, for we are told by the president of the leading non-tariff Company of Canada that "the insuring public are no longer content with the rates fixed by 'the Tariff Offices,' and I think, neither are they likely to be content with the rates fixed by the non-tariff offices either, even for the reason suggested by the same gentleman, because 'it is very doubtful if the rates are yet adequate to the risks 'being carried,' which I construe to mean that the non-tariffs see the necessity of advancing their rates also, and, indeed, we have reason to know that this is even now being done. I, of course, assume that the gentleman whose words I have quoted alluded to the non-tariff rates charged by his own Company, for, of course, it goes without question that the Board Companies' rates are too high, and always were!

I am informed that the Electrical Installations in Toronto during 1901, under the requirements and supervision of the Toronto Board of Underwriters, show an increase of about 20 per cent. over the number in previous year. This estimate includes installations in factories, shops and dwellings, and whether for light or power.

Yours,

ARIEL.

TORONTO, 10th February, 1902.

NEW YORK STOCK LETTER.

Office of Cummings & Co., 20 Broad St., New York City.

New York, February 11, 1902.

The market during the week has shown a tendency to harden and broaden, and within the last day or two there has been more disposition on the part of so-called outsiders to take an active interest in it. This is especially so of some of the western operators. Quite a number of houses with western connections, who were among the most active buyers during the McKinley "Boom," have within a few days come into the market as purchasers on a fairly large scale of a number of the leading Securities, notably St. Paul, Union Pacific, Baltimore and Ohio, Southern Pacific and the Coal Stocks. The improved sentiment in the West being largely due to the recent heavy fall of snow in Kansas, which has materially benefited the wheat.

Among the stock which have been most active during the week, are Southern Pacific, which shows an advance of 2½ per cent.; Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific, 3 per cent.; Reading, 1¾ per cent.; Union Pacific, 1¼ per cent.; Iowa Central 6 per cent. and St. Paul, 2¼ per cent.

In yesterday's market Southern Pacific constituted about one seventh of the entire transactions. It is said that the buying was merely a continuation of the purchases which have lately been a feature, the greater part being credited to a well-known operator, and his friends who are out-spoken bulls on the property. London was a seller of the stock in the early trading, but all the offerings were readily taken. It is reported that some of the London operators are heavily short of this stock. Why any one should go short of this stock to any extent, it is hard to say with present earnings sufficient to pay a good dividend on the stock and with a refunding plan which will add materially to the value of the stock. It is true that the refunding plan may be somewhat delayed, owing to the stand taken by some of the holders of long time bonds, but this is a matter which is capable of adjustment without any very serious danger to the general plan. We have before called attention to this property, believing it to hold a very strong position, and its stock entitled to a handsome advance.

Should the Supreme Court decision in the matter of the Northern Securities Company be favourable to that Corporation, it will undoubtedly be a signal for the promulgation of intentions to organize other corporations of a like character in which the coal roads and properties will play a most important part, Reading, in all probability taking the lead, espe-