

such service is an excellent introduction to every other official career even if the profession of fire insurance be no further followed. The continuous stir, the variety of duties and minor responsibilities, indoor and outdoor experience, with a peep into many business details, some little knowledge of and intimacy with matters and things generally are great helps to a good start in life for any smart intelligent young fellow. Fire insurance is everywhere present; it is a factor, little or big, direct or indirect in every business transaction every day. It is either in, or behind, or beside, every commercial undertaking and is implied in all buying and selling because it represents money values, and ready money under certain contingencies. Put your youngsters then into a Fire Insurance office as a good introduction to his business or professional life.

I have been told that insurance rates are too often influenced by bile. It is of course an irreverent remark, but the meaning of the utterer was evident. He would have us infer that if a majority of the livers of any Fire Rating Committee were out of order, anything like a reasonable consistent decision upon any question of rates could not be expected. Thus it would seem that good digestion and general good health should be enjoyed by all official persons having anything to do with the making of fire rates. How would it do to require a medical certificate of good health before any member could be considered qualified to sit at a Rating Committee meeting? I believe the above remarks and suggestions originated in connection with the recent action of the Canadian Fire Underwriters' Association in issuing certain printed specific tariffs of rates for Ontario towns last year, and now calling these in and replacing them with revised lower ratings. The question is what went wrong, so wrong as to entail all this extra labour and expense.

Yours,

ARIEL.

Toronto, January 28, 1901.

LONDON LETTER.**FINANCE.**

16th January, 1902.

One conspicuous feature and the only one of the first rank in the market is the "Kaffir Boom." I think that is a fair term to use now, for despite the fact that the war has not yet ended the market in South African shares moves ever upwards. The last month has seen marvellous uses all through the section—good, bad and worse though the shares be, all are participating in the upward movement, yet, if all that is authoritatively vouched for be reliable, we are now only just at the beginning of a general rise which will knock the 1894 and 1895 boom into a cocked hat.

Shares in the British South African Company, generally called "Chartered" have gone up from 21-2 to 41-2 within a month. Then they are a score of absolute swindles suddenly sprung from heaven knows where, but which, by being made the text of hundreds of thousands of postal circulars, are being off-loaded all over the country by the quifeful promoters. Were it not for the fact that our Public Prosecutor was born tired, we should soon see a cessation of this scandal of the circularizing of absolutely rotten shares.

Next in importance as a topic of the week comes the examination of Whitaker Wright, before the Winding-up Court in the matter of the London & Globe Finance Corporation. Cool, suave and imperturbable, Mr. Whitaker Wright stands hour after hour in the witness-box. The only points which I need mention are those concerned with the "Press-Calls." These calls or shares were given by the Globe in return for what every one knows to be interested puffing, although Whitaker Wright declares that "paid puffs" of his shares are things he never indulged in. Our great city

dailies have received thousands and thousands of dollars from Whitaker Wright's brokers, and many others have received the Whitaker Wright money in one form or another. This scathing exposure of the rottenness of modern financial journalism comes at the time of the Hooley bankruptcy.

The "Financial News," which has the biggest circulation of our daily financial newspapers, is under the oegis of Harry Marks. Of late years, the "Financial Times" has pulled up to it, and between them they have pretty well run the poor promoters dry.

Turning to another feature of present finance, there is no doubt that Consols are rising gradually once more. After being 114 in 1896, this favourite gilt-edged security receded steadily to 91. The top price arose mainly from Government buying its own securities in that year, partly from a desire to reduce the national debt and partly to obtain means for the investment of Post Office Savings Bank Funds. On all sides, however, Consols are expected to go to par.

INSURANCE.

The most interesting insurance legal case recently has been that of the yacht "Ariadne," and although it took place at the Antipodes, it has been a main topic amongst underwriters this week. This has prevented their attention dwelling too closely upon the inauspicious opening of the new year in the marine underwriting business.

This is the time of the year when members of Lloyd's have calls made upon them by people who went to take out policies covering the risk of a race-meeting being held. One case which came under my notice this week very well illustrates the British practice in this respect. The amount sought to be covered on a total of four days' meeting was \$3,350, and the only risks which Lloyd's would cover against were fog, flood, frost and snow. The premium wanted was 60 per cent. and the agent who placed the matter received a premium of five and ten per cent.—which I may remark in passing is not equal to fifteen per cent. It is five per cent. upon the whole premium and then ten per cent. upon what is left after deducting the five per cent.

After all the Phoenix-Atlas-Pelican amalgamation cannot come off. Legal difficulties stand so prominently in the way that it has been considered the best to allow things to go on in the old way, and so the amalgamation unamalgamates, if I may be allowed the expression.

Against this let me set, however, the proposed amalgamation of the Yorkshire Fire and Life Company and the Lion Fire Insurance Company. The Lion has made a start by re-insuring nearly the whole of its United States business and relinquishing its Continental treaty business. A London Board is to be formed by the companies whose united capital is \$700,000.

Notes and Items.**At Home and Abroad.**

ANOTHER TUNNEL DISASTER AT NEW YORK a few days ago suggests there being too much haste in working the operations in these places. The first disaster was caused by a collision, which with ordinary care would be impossible. The more recent one was caused by an explosion of dynamite that shook the ground above the tunnel and wrecked several buildings. These calamities evidence the greatest recklessness in running trains and handling explosives in tunnels at New York.