railways, at two cents for first and one cent second class, palace sleeping car fare at one dollar for twelve hours. The example of several States reducing rates to two cents a mile is adduced as a reason for a reduction to one cent a mile, second class, here. The demand for a one cent rate is more likely to operate against any reduction than to secure what is asked. In approaching such a question as this it is fair to consider whether the railway companies are in a position to bear without serious injury any sweeping reduction of fares.

FIRE UNDERWRITING.

The sensible and much needed action of the Canadian Fire Underwriters' Association, in classifying cities, towns and villages for insurance purposes, in accordance with the character of the means provided for extinguishing fires, has been the means of stirring up municipal councils as to the necessity of improving their fire appliances in the interest of their constituents. Several places have of late secured a water-works system, of greater or less efficiency. Places provided with water-works are divided into three grades, A B and C, based on the water supply and attainable pressure, combined with the efficiency of means available for the proper working of the appliances for extinguishing fires. Places in class A are required to have a paid fire brigade, maintained exclusively for fire purposes, an electric system of fire alarm, and horses kept always in readiness to transport firemen and apparatus to fires. The requirements for B and C classifications are correspondingly less exacting.

Places having steam fire engines with proper water supply and the necessary requirements for efficient working are put in class D. Places which have hand engines or chemical engines of standard capacity, the proper water supply and the necessary appliances required for working the same are in class E. Places having no means of fire protection are in F, the lowest of these classes.

A chemical engine has been found an excellent means for extinguishing incipient fires and *with little loss to goods* as compared with what the loss would have been if water were used instead. A chemical engine is an excellent adjunct to other appliances, especially in water-work towns, in which the loss by water is often greater than from fire. For this reason places are raised one letter when they add a chemical engine to their other appliances. We are of opinion that the general use of these machines as a means of preventing large fires is only a matter of time. The chemical engine in this city has disarmed the strong prejudice it at first encountered, by its remarkable success in fighting the fire-fiend in that part of the city to which its operation is confined.

The improvement now being made in special risks, with the view of obtaining lower rates of insurance, under the system of schedule-rating, recently introduced by the Board, together with the improvements made in so many places, in fire preventive and fire extinguishing appliances, must of necessity lessen the ratio of fires.

The frequent fires in woollen mills have in almost every case been caused by the picker not being in a separate building. So much has this been the case, that many of the companies decline to write on a woollen or knitting mill when the picker is in the mill. An extra charge of one per cent. made by the underwriters in such a case has led in many instances to the picker being put into a separate first-class building, thus reducing the fire hazard to the company and the rate to the assured.

The discrimination made in wood working risks—the most hazardous of all specials—in regard to the position of the boiler house, the means of heating and lighting, and the construction and location of dry kilns, have resulted in very many instances in causing improvements in all these particulars. A reduction in the rate of insurance is now made for every improvement effected on a risk with a view of effecting the fire hazard.

We are gratified to hear that risks that had been placed in American Mutuals and underground stock companies when the system of schedule rating was first introduced in Canada, and as yet misunderstood, are now being placed in board companies. A word of caution is necessary against insuring in any company not licensed to do business, in Canada, unless intending assurers are thoroughly satisfied as to the financial standing of such company. A cheap article, so-called, very frequently proves to be a dear one, and in no case is this more apt to be true than that of a cheap insurance company. A company may have ample capacity for accepting premiums that may not always have the will or the ability to pay losses.

RAILWAY MANAGEMENT.

A conference, with an eminently practical object, was held in New York during several days of last month. It was that of some thirty members of the Association of North American Railroad Superintendents. The object of the gathering, and of the association, was to elicit, by conference or correspondence, the views of members as to the best means of enhancing the safety of travel, of economising material, of facilitating transport and of improving train service generally. The Baltimore & Ohio the Lehigh Valley, the Chicago and Rock Island, the Atchison and Topeka, the Charleston and Savannah, the Boston and Lynn and many other roads were represented.

The committee on roadway made recommendations with respect to the extension of lines, the establishment of freight yards and the improvement of road-bed. It was recommended by the committee on machinery that the standards recently adopted by the Master Car Builders' Association be chosen. The committee on frogs recommended that all frogs should be made of rails, and that all frogs for use on main tracks should be made of spring rails. The committee on transportation recommended that in the case of one road being called upon to transport the trains of an adjacent road, by reason of accident or otherwise, a regulated cost for such accommodation should be established; that in the case of freight cars being uncalled for by the consignees after a lapse of forty-eight hours a charge of 50 cents per day for each car should be collected as storage; that a system of train record should be established. For instance, a train leaves New York for New Orleans. The superintendents of the several roads over which such train passes must keep a permanent record of everything that happens to that train. Thus the responsibility of delays or accidents will be definitely fixed.

It is much to be desired that conclusions reached, upon such important questions, after ample discussion by practical men, shall be so formulated as to become the guide for American railways generally. The influence of the larger roads upon their connections may do much to bring about such an understanding. The committee also submitted some twenty-five questions relating to rails, joint fastenings, ties, spikes, ballast, elevation of rails on curves, square and broken joints, track braces, shimming, rail-spreading, guard rails on bridges, road inspection, patrolmen, and section men. These questions are to be printed in circular form and sent to each member of the association with the request that he answer fully. The object is to arrive at some conclusion as to what is most beneficial in railroad service and to adopt a general standard in the matter of all the questions.

KEEPING ACCOUNTS.

An agricultural paper in urging its readers to keep accounts, has the following hit at the customary neglect of farmers to systematize their operations and keep track of expenses: "There are farmers who investigate the details of their business so little that they cannot tell what branches of it bring them a profit and what are carried on at a loss. They know, in a general way, whether they are as well off at the end of the year as they were at the beginning, but they cannot just tell where the loss or gain was made. If a strict account be kept in detail, it can be easily told whether a particular crop costs more than its value in the market, and thus the farmer is enabled to decide intelligently what crops his farm is best adapted for. Lack of business methods causes many a farmer to go from year to year making little or no headway, and claiming that farming does not pay." If it would be an advantage to a farmer to know how much he spent on a particular field and how much return he got from it, is it not equally true that there are many besides farmers who would be vastly the better of having a careful account kept of the income and outgo of particular departments?

Not many stock-raisers can tell what it costs them to raise a horse or steer and prepare it for the market. But manufacturers have perhaps the most need to systematize their affairs in such a way that they can tell the cost of their product. Many of them, we are convinced, underestimate the cost of their out-put, and because of this are disappointed at the results of their yearly balancing. The "little things" may escape their notice;