WHAT INSURANCE DOES.

So accustomed do men become by familarity with the operation of some of the most potent forces in the natural world, that they are unconscious of their value until startled out of their listless mood by some unusual exhibition of these forces. The never-ceasing, noisless heat of the sun's rays which pervades the universe, working daily a myriad of miracles of creation, and moving the many wheels of nature's complicated machinery, is little noted as the days go smoothly by. But when the sun's alchemy generates the dangerous gases in the pent-up laboratory of the inner earth, and the earthquake shock follows, men are startled into compelled recognition of one of nature's greatest forces. So in the business world some of its most important factors are little noted because of their very commonness. Prominent among these factors is fire insurance, which has become so thoroughly incorporated into the structure of the commercial world that its importance is apt to receive tardy recognition. It is only now and then, when the unusual happens and the world is startled out of its complacent mood by a vast conflagration like that at Hull, that men stop to take an inventory of the value of fire insurance as a regenerative factor. And yet, quietly, effectually and indispensably, every day and month and year this agency restores ruined credit, replaces the walls of mammoth stores and factories, and recreates the vanished home. It places new goods upon the new shelves of the shopkeeper, sets in motion once again the machinery of the manufacturer, and rings out an anthem for rebuilt church and college. It exchanges among all classes the dismal night of calamity for the new, bright day of hopeful opportunity, banishes bankruptcy, and saves communities from financial prostration.

The business of property insurance, either fire or marine, has come to be an essential part of nearly all other kinds of business in the world, and its value as a balance-wheel to all industrial machinery can scarcely be overstated. The merchant of limited resources expands his credit by means of well-placed insurance; the vessel-owner and the shipper alike protect their ventures by calling in the aid of insurance capital; the manufacturer doubles his producing capacity by confiding in insurance; and the frugal builder of a home in need of more money gets it through the recognized security of an insurance policy.

Just what fire insurance does for the commercial world may be more strikingly seen, however, by a broad view of its place as a contributor to the fire waste constantly going on. A reference to the various insurance reports of the recent conflagration at Hull shows that the vast sum of $4,000,000 wil be paid for losses by the fire companies interested. How great the calamity to the business of the community would have been if this amount had been a dead loss to the individuals so happily insured can easily be conjectured, for not only the actual loss by fire would in many cases have been financial ruin, but when one business man fails, he drags others down with him.

It is true fire insurance does not create capital—several million dollars' worth of property burned up is so much value gone from the world's assets; but fire insurance does what, to the individual, is the same thing as creating capital, for it makes good his loss. It is a kind distributor of a fund contributed by the many for the preservation of the few, every contributor well knowing that he may be one of that few, and that if he is, his protection is assured. Thus fire insurance goes on from year to year, standing in the place of banker to that portion of the community who in the stress of fire loss would, but for its open purse, drift into hopeless bankruptcy, dragging scores after them.

The world without insurance to-day would be a world of commercial chaos.

FORMER GREAT FIRES.

For purposes of comparison we give the losses sustained by insurance companies at the great fires in New Brunswick and Newfoundland.

Company.	St. Johns, Nfld. July, 1892.	St. John, N.B. June, 1877
Phœnix, London	$625,000	....
Queen	550,000	$723,683
Royal	475,000	496,271
London & Lancashire	475,000	....
Liverpool & London & Globe	385,000	465,032
Commercial Union	374,000	356,063
Imperial	210,000	565,312
North British	205,000	892,792
Northern	200,000	475,162
Sun Fire	185,000	....
Guardian	175,000	417,106
Atlas	155,000	....
General	142,000	....
London Assurance	130,000	....
Manchester	85,000	....
Norwich Union	47,000	....
Lion Fire	40,000	....
City of London	40,000	....
Phœnix, Hartford	38,000	....
Caledonian of Edinburgh	....	....
Lancashire	36,000	375,508
Citizens	22,500	138,642
Royal Canadian	....	337,052
Ætna of Hartford	....	245,000
Hartford Fire	....	136,478
Phœnix, Brooklyn	....	68,872
Western, Toronto	....	95,954
Stadacona	....	313,425
Central, Fredericton	....	55,000
Canada Fire and Marine	....	51,840
British America	....	37,739
Provincial, Toronto	....	110,000
National, Montreal	....	111,392
Canada Agricultural	....	8,000
Anglo-American of Canada	....	....
American of New York	....	....
Mercantile of Canada	....	....
Insurance Co. of N. America	....	....
	$4,595,000	$6,476,323

One estimate gives the insurance loss at Hull as follows:—In the British companies, $2,000,000; American campanies, $1,00,000; Canadian companies, $1,000,000, aggregating $4,000,000. It will be some days, however, before definite figures can be had.