

ance interests. In the meantime the country is flooded with documents for the most part anonymous, attacking both the Mutual Life and Equitable companies, and where the muss will end it is hard to be able to state at present writing. Never in the previous history of the business in this city has the public been so disgusted with the conduct of companies as they are at present, and it is a matter of deep regret to the friends of the system that the belligerent parties should decide on washing their dirty linen in public to such an extent. The phrase now considered the most applicable under existing circumstances is that "when rogues fall out honest people will come by their own." Not very complimentary.

The New York Board of Fire Underwriters are actively stirring themselves in the matter of Mansard roofs and hotel risks. On the 16th ult. at their meeting it was resolved, "that in view of the peril which the presence of Mansard roofs in large cities creates, that all buildings in the metropolitan district having frame roofs shall after the 1st of January next be subjected to an extra charge of one per cent in addition to the rate of the building." On the subject of hotel risks, the board have recently issued a new tariff and taken a long step towards making hotel life safe for the community. The specifications of the new tariff are so minute as to be impossible of publication in the limits of an ordinary letter, but they comprehend every source of danger and provide for it as nearly as perhaps it is in the hands of man to do. Penalties are attached to non-performance of the requirements and the board has done good service in taking this step. It is to be hoped that other dangerous risks will be as fully taken in hand and New York will be safer as regards human life and property than it is at present.

The underwriters have also determined to stir up the Boston city authorities and make them reorganize their fire department and put it on an efficient basis. An advance in rates has been made of from 50 to 100 per cent to cover the extraordinary hazards of that city and four prominent English companies have received orders from their respective home offices to suspend the taking of new business in that city for one month or longer, until such time as the city authorities reorganize the fire department.

The New York Fire Patrol Committee have made their report recently, by which it is shown that during the year they attended 936 fires and spread 5,381 covers on property exposed to damage from water. The patrol cost for maintenance in the last year \$99,374, and at a former meeting the Board of Underwriters decided on keeping the patrol in force for two years and appropriated the sum of \$190,000 for its support.

We are shortly to have another English fire insurance company amongst us. The Norwich Provident Fire Insurance Co. of Norwich having just appointed Mr. J. J. Berne of the North Missouri Insurance Company its manager for the United States.

Companies of other States are also adding to our lists. And we have a few in course of formation in this city without much chance perhaps, of ever arriving at maturity.

In a former letter I mentioned some circumstances relating to an attempt to wreck the Knickerbocker Life Ins. Co., which was rendered abortive by the courts. The company has now commenced an action against the parties concerned in the attempt, Messrs. Lyman and Anderson, Ex-President and Ex-Director of the company. The demon of anarchy seems to have got among our companies and for the present I must leave them there and hope in my next letter to be able to state that peace has spread her mantle over us and that everything is once more as it ought to be.

COSMO.

THE SHORTEST ROUTE TO EUROPE.

To the Editor of the Monetary Times.

SIR,—My notice has been directed to a letter on the shortest route to Europe, which appeared in your issue of last week, and also to certain editorial comments of your own thereon. I desire in the first place to remove a misapprehension as to the nature of the report made last session by the committee of which I was chairman. That report is expressly and in terms an *interim* report merely, and the committee were careful to state that they had not been able to obtain much information which they thought desirable, and that they had therefore made the above report in accordance with the evidence received, but advised that Government should cause full investigation to be made as to several points, some of them having reference to the matters alluded to by your correspondent. The committee were perfectly aware that it was impossible for them in the short period at their disposal to obtain evidence sufficient to make a complete and substantial report on so important a subject, but they were of opinion that the evidence they did receive, quite warranted a careful examination of the claims of the two ports mentioned, by competent professional parties. Should this examination confirm the statement made to the committee, then, but not till then, were we of opinion that communications should be opened with the Governments of Great Britain and the United States who are quite as much interested in this matter as ourselves.

Touching the two objections to the Louisbourg route advanced by your correspondent, viz: That Louisbourg is blockaded by ice for several weeks in the spring and that the Gut of Canso is impracticable during winter, I can only say that these assertions are in direct conflict with the testimony adduced before the committee, but that in any case their truth or falsity can very easily be ascertained conclusively before the next meeting of Parliament if the suggestion of the committee be acted on. As regards the superior claims of Whitehaven, I may remark, that they were ably represented by one of the committee, who, is himself, I understand, member for the county in which it is situated, and that the reason why that port is not referred to in our interim report is simply this: The object of the committee was chiefly to investigate the new routes proposed by various parties.

Now, Whitehaven stands but a short distance, comparatively speaking, from Halifax, the distance by sea being from eighty to one hundred nautical miles or thereabouts, and as Halifax, per contra, is considerably closer to the main line of the Intercolonial, it is obvious that very little time would be gained by altering the present point of departure, more especially as it appeared probable that if any considerable protrusion of ice occurred from the Gulf of the St. Lawrence or from the south shore of Newfoundland, that protrusion would be apt to extend downwards nearly if not quite as far south as the latitude of Halifax.

Writing, as I am compelled to do, without access to the maps, documents, and other evidence which guided the committee, I am reluctant to speak too positively, but my impression is that it was shown that not more than three or four hours would be gained by the substitution of Whitehaven for Halifax. In any case the assertion of your correspondent that Whitehaven is thirty hours shorter than any other feasible route is either a misprint or a palpable absurdity. It may also be observed that if Louisbourg *i. e.* the Cape Breton route, be set aside, Shippegan on or some point on the Intercolonial in its vicinity will probably be found to have a decided advantage over any port on the mainland of Nova Scotia as a summer route, and that if the advice of the committee as to

the necessity of insisting on a complete separation between mail and freight carrying steamers be adopted, the change from one port to another according to the season would be a matter of much less moment than it is at present.

Finally, I would repeat here what I stated in the House of Commons at the time of presenting the report, that one main reason for so doing was our desire to excite discussion on the subject during the recess and thereby test the evidence which had been submitted to us, as it is hardly necessary to say that no court or committee in the world is or can be perfectly safe against misrepresentations of matters of fact, made by apparently credible and well informed witnesses. There ought to be no difficulty in ascertaining definitely, once and for all, the condition of the Gut of Canso, and also of the harbor of Louisbourg during winter, only this must be done by some competent impartial party as already advised by committee. If the evidence given before us be proved to have been inaccurate, the whole subject must come up for fresh consideration. If, on the other hand, it be confirmed, as we have a fair right to expect, until the contrary be shown, then I think Government ought to lose no time in taking further action.

But I must repel on my own behalf, and that of my colleagues, any imputation that we have been guilty of any kind of negligence in the premises in a report which is avowedly a preliminary one and in which we state in so many words "that we regret that we have been unable to obtain replies to our inquiries on many points of considerable importance. That as respects the best point of departure within the Dominion, the committee are not yet in a position to report authoritatively." That as to the Shippegan and Louisbourg routes, "we did not desire, as yet, to express any positive opinion on either of these routes." And in which we wind up with requesting that Government (among other things) would have an exploratory survey with special instructions to ascertain "how the passage of the Gut of Canso can best be effected, and whether it is likely to be easily crossed by a steam ferry boat during winter."

Practically our choice lay between presenting a report on the evidence before us or losing a year, and I think this very discussion is proof enough that the committee were right in so doing.

I have the honor to be &c.,

RICHARD J. CARTWRIGHT.

Kingston, Sept. 9, 1873.

P. S.—The condition of the Gut of Canso and of the harbor of Louisbourg is clearly a matter for our own authorities, but I take this opportunity for suggesting that if a proper representation was made to the English Government they might probably be induced to order a steamer to cruise along the banks and north of Halifax during the ensuing spring and winter, visiting Louisbourg and other ports from time to time. Possibly the United States Government might do the same. The object is quite as important as any average Arctic expedition, and though the committee have directed special attention to the point, and have addressed inquiries to all the owners and captains of the ocean going steamships respecting the position and extent of the ice line, their replies would hardly give as much information as might be obtained by a few months exploratory cruising over the same ground. Moreover, there is some reason to fear that a project of this sort will not be looked on too favorably by existing interests and that the answers obtained may be more or less affected thereby.

NORFOLK RAILWAY.—At the annual meeting held in Simcoe, the following directors were elected:—Messrs. Wilkes, Watts and Imlach, Brantford; Mr. Law, Tilsonburg; Dr. Carroll, Norwich. Mr. Wilkes was chosen President.