

THE VALUE OF FIRE INSURANCE.

The important place occupied by fire insurance as a primary factor in maintaining the stability and preserving the equilibrium of Canada's business interests is even now imperfectly comprehended by the general public. The records show that during the last 46 years, from 1869 to 1915 inclusive, the fire companies operating in Canada have paid out in losses no less a sum than \$257,127,882, an average of over five and a half million dollars every year. It is difficult to imagine what would be the condition of the Dominion had these funds not been disbursed. In many hundreds of cases, they have been the only means by which mercantile and manufacturing enterprises, crippled by fire, have been rebuilt and made again wealth-producing organizations not only for their owners but indirectly for the community as a whole. Under modern conditions disaster in one line of business disturbs all others and losses by fire unreplaced by means of insurance are to the prejudice of the whole community. It is only by taking into account consequential loss, in a very wide sense of that term, that a true idea can be gained of the character of the service rendered to the community by fire insurance. Conflagrations like those at Toronto, Hull and St. John, N.B., bring these facts into relief. The rebuilding of the devastated areas in these cities and their subsequent capacity as wealth-producing factors was directly due to fire insurance. Had fire insurance funds not been available to meet those losses, recovery from them must necessarily have been an exceedingly slow process and the whole of Canada would have been prejudicially affected in proportion. Similarly in hundreds of other cases, large and small, throughout the Dominion.

It is true that fire insurance does not create capital nor restore that which fire destroys, but it renders an equivalent service, so far as the individual loser and the preservation of the general business equilibrium is concerned. Its mission is to distribute the loss, overwhelming as to the individual, among the many to whom it is but an incident of current expense. It is an universal equaliser, on the principle of the suspension bridge. Planting its solid abutments of assets upon the shore, it throws out its many-stranded cables so effectually and with such accuracy of constructive skill that the heavy trains of commerce pass and repass safely, without undue strain upon any part of the bridge. Without the interposition of fire insurance, the annual fire loss would be a burden so heavy as to break down thousands of valuable enterprises, drive many individuals into bankruptcy and paralyze business. Fire insurance enables the householder to find a new roof over his head when the old one has crumbled to ashes; it rebuilds cities and towns otherwise hopelessly ruined; it sends the car of

transportation once more along the steel rails and drives again the factory wheel, stopped in fire and smoke. If these facts were even casually considered and reflected upon by the great body of the people, there would be less heard of burdensome legislation and taxation upon the insurance companies.

LETTERS OF A BEGINNER IN THE LIFE INSURANCE FIELD.

IV.

Montreal, October 9th, 1916.

Dear Jack,—

Four letters on my desk this morning. Three advertisements and—a business letter! I read "Please call at 128 Fairmount Ave. I wish to effect an insurance." "Short and to the point," I thought—"and looks promising." So off I cantered (only a little way from my "bureau" as I hear it called usually) and readily found No. 128. A very respectable looking house, neat and clean—evidently occupied by well-to-do people. My entrance was hopeful, my stay brief—and my exit almost ignominious. My correspondent wanted—"Fire Insurance." Shall I try "side lines." Never! "Sink or swim, survive or perish," I'm a Life Insurance Agent.

That visit took an hour almost and was a little discouraging—but—Oh! I forgot! I have not told you of my call on Mr. Pourcel.

He is a royal good fellow; seemed to think I had done him a wonderful service; and was eager to help me along! When I left him I had a list of prospects as long as my arm and I have "closed" two already. So I'm feeling fine! This is 2 p.m. and I've half a day in front of me, which I must not waste, so, goodbye, old friend. When I write you next it won't be about "prospects" or "applications" but "premiums" and "commissions"!

I am feeling very much encouraged and when I have my next interview with our President, I hope to show him that his faith in me has not been misplaced. It is wonderful how stimulating in one's work is the feeling that the Home office people are appreciative. Perhaps, I've met an exceptional man in our President, but I hope not. I like to think that big positions are filled by big men who are mentally holding out an encouraging hand to the beginner. Anyway, Mr. ——— is a Prince and some day, perhaps, I'll have the cheek to tell him so.

Ever yours,

JIM.

(NOTE by President of The Indomitable Life):—"The writer of these letters was a young man of great promise. He would have made a successful agent for he possessed both ability and perseverance. Unhappily, two days after the last letter we have quoted was written, while on his way to the Home Office with three completed applications in his pocket, he was run over by an automobile and instantly killed.")