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### TORONTO FIRE APPLIANCES.

After reading an account of the investigation, as far as it went begun on Wednesday and to be continued this afternoon, into the action of the Toronto Fire Brigade at the Eby, Blain Company fire of last Friday, one's feeling of uneasiness as to the condition of our fire-fighting appliances and the handling of the brigade is not lessened. The president of the Board of Trade, who wrote to the city authorities requesting an investigation, was not backed up as he should have been by those who had witnessed the fighting of the fire, and had complained of it. Only Mr. John Macdonald had the pluck to face the Fire and Light Committee of the council; and he said in plain court what other observers said among themselves, that the firemen were slow in their operations. Mr. Ellis said, truly enough, at

"There is a feeling that the fire protection is not what it ought to be. The insurance rates have gone up, and a merchant carrying \$100,000 insurance is compelled to pay \$1,000 more in rates. Now, these are facts that are staring us in the face. We do not want these rates to go up any more. The fire department should be well equipped. Merchants are willing to pay for the protection."

As to the controverted point of the too great lapse of time the brigade's getting water to play on the flames, we shall not attempt to decide until the enquiry has gone further. But taken in connection with the admission of the superintendent of the fire alarm system, Mr. Craig, that "the alarm system is out of date for a large city," his testimony and that of Harry Sauters, operator at fire headquarters, as to the non-receipt of an alarm when the Eby, Blain clerk rang one and the possibility of this alarm being cut off by the simultaneous registering of Box 3 (vide Mr. Craig's evidence) are very significant. The strength of a chain is only that of its weakest link;

and if our fire alarm system is a weak one we are wasting money and effort in getting secondary appliances to combat fire. If we are not mistaken, there was a report made months ago to the council upon the unsatisfactory condition of the alarm, and the council lacked either pluck or promptness in dealing with it.

Some features in the handling of this fire by the department stand out prominently. One is that the fire was in the rear portion of the top story. This the chief could have seen, for the Eby, Blain Company's hose was playing on it five or ten minutes before the brigade got to work, and kept it from working to the front of the building. But the brigade kept pouring water in at the front windows, a hundred feet away, where there was no fire. We have, in describing the devastated state of the stock all over the warehouse by reason of volumes of water, expressed our opinion of the disgraceful waste of squirting water where it will do least good. Again, where was the sense of raising the tall ladder on the west side of Scott Street, forty feet away, whence the streams could not reach the fire, instead of on the east side next the building. Years ago, when Scott Street was re-paved—it is 75 to 80 feet wide—the electric wires were removed to the centre of the street, away from the warehouses on either side of it; as if in order to allow ladders to be raised against the buildings. Time was lost here, therefore, in raising the aerial ladder on the wrong side of the rows of wires.

In the opinion of spectators competent to pronounce, poor judgment was shown by the brigade in attaching too many hose to one hydrant, thereby lessening the pressure upon any one stream. It is in such matters as these that good judgment or bad judgment by officers of the brigade makes all the difference between quick fire-fighting and slow. True,