

we pay the manager issuing the circular or any other manager" and that the offer was made without the company's sanction. The snubbed manager excuses himself, it is said, by saying that similar tactics had been resorted to by the Metropolitan manager of another large company and he proposed to go him one better. We hope that Mr. Alexander's example will prove to be contagious.

What the St. James Street Fire Proved.

THE occurrence of the extensive fire on St. James street in this city on the night of the 3rd inst. fully demonstrated two important things, calling loudly for a speedy remedy. In the first place, it was clearly shown that the water pressure was inadequate to permit of good work by the firemen, who may be said to have done all that the intense cold and the means at their command would allow. The bursting hose in two or three places was another serious matter calling for a better article. The buildings were not exceedingly high, nor, barring the obstructive wires, difficult to reach, and yet streams could not be got on the fire until much delay and then with only a very moderate force. A better and more powerful pumping engine for the water works is not only a necessity but a very pressing one, a fact most emphatically attested by the superintendent of the water works, whose recommendation for a new engine, made last fall, has been so far ignored. For some time past Chief Benoit has also advocated the erection of a water tower for the department, and the St. James street fire proved the wisdom of his recommendation. It is admitted by all competent judges that a good water tower would have prevented the spread of the flames across the street and saved much damage. It is time for the city council to act and to act promptly.

Limitation versus Usurpation.

WE notice that Actuary Harvey of the Missouri Insurance Department has written a letter to the *Baltimore Underwriter*, claiming that the original suggestion for the limitation of the business of life insurance companies came from him in conversation with President Beers of the New York Life in March, 1890, and that Superintendent Ellerbe of the Missouri department embodied the suggestion in his annual report issued soon after. We printed the extract from that report in these columns, and which referred mainly to the rapidly growing magnitude of life insurance in the United States, the reference to limitation coming in incidentally, the suggestion being that "the companies should voluntarily fix a limit to the amount of insurance to be carried by each." Mr. Ellerbe made no reference to compulsory limitation by statute, but to a *voluntary* fixing of a limit by the companies, which is a radically different thing from the enforced limitation now advocated by Mr. Fackler and others. We have not cared to discuss the question as to whether limitation should apply to total amount of insurance in force, the number of lives insured, or the amount of assets held, for we take the

broad ground that there can be no statute limitation on any basis whatever without the assumption of arbitrary authority which no State does or can possess. The limit of powers which can justly be exercised by the State is the main question, gentlemen.

Fire Insurance Matters In Halifax.

WE notice by the Halifax papers that the committee of citizens appointed to investigate and report on the general situation, insurance-wise, in that city has recently done so. The report states that during the last 27 years there have been 1,259 fire alarms, about one-fourth of which were false alarms. During that time only 12 fires involving a loss of over \$20,000 each has been discovered. It is stated that the amount of fire premiums annually paid of late in the city is \$175,000 and the average loss to the companies is computed at \$15,000. The committee, however, is considerate enough to suggest that too much stress must not be placed on this immunity of the city from large fires in the past. The fire department and water supply comes in for a share of attention in the report, in which it is stated that there are 8 hose reels, 2 ladder trucks, 17 ladders, two being Bangor extension ladders, and 11,250 feet of hose; that 20 permanent men belong to the force, having at ready command 14 horses. The number of call men is not stated. A new pipe line at a cost of \$200,000 is about to be laid, and the committee believe the supply of water and pressure will then be ample for the next fifty years. Meantime the committee of the fire underwriters, to whom the matter of rates was referred, recommend an increase of 20 per cent. in the conflagration districts and on individual risks fifteen cents in addition as follows: for deficiency in the equipment and organization of fire department; for deficiency in water supply; and for municipal taxation, five cents each. This amounts to an increase of 30 per cent. for the business portion of the city, instead of 50 per cent for the whole city as directed by the British offices.

ABUSES IN LIFE INSURANCE.

Ever since Adam and Eve abused the gracious privileges which they enjoyed in Paradise and reaped the reward of that abuse, the best men and the best institutions have, under the influence of prosperity, been led into an abuse of their privileges. It is not strange, therefore, that the great and beneficent system of life insurance should in the days of its unbounded prosperity develop abuses, some of which have become positive evils, tending to results of a most serious character. From its watch-tower of observation the insurance press has noted with regret this fact, and as the devoted friend and ardent advocate of insurance would be recreant to its duty and accessory to the growing evils existing, if it kept silence when utterance is the greatest kindness to all concerned. Our own pages bear abundant witness to the fact that we have never trained with the moss-bound conservatives, who affect to see ruin in every innovation on old plans and methods and who live in the sleepy past rather than in the wide-awake present. We believe most fully in life insurance