

Correspondence.

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TORONTO LETTER.

What is a "conflagration"? No steamfire engine yet. A new competitor in the fire insurance field.—Its prospects, as we find them.—The stamping officer for Hamilton.—Hamilton insurance men and manners.—Change in the representation in Ontario of the Phenix of Brooklyn.—"Merric Xmas."

DEAR EDITOR,

I see you have had a "conflagration" in Montreal involving about half a million dollars of loss, to whom it may concern. I suppose that "conflagration" is the right word to use, because the three large fires in Toronto not long ago were so called by the Insurance Companies. It may be that what is a conflagration up here in our less wealthy city would be called in Montreal a "serious fire." It is stated your brigade was at fault, and your fire-fighting requisites not up to the mark. If so,—and it seems, from all I hear, that the charge of inefficiency somewhere is well grounded,—what are your insurance magnates going to do about it? Will they now call a meeting and resolve to advance rates, or put on a "Conflagration extra" rider to the ordinary rate? If not, why do we have to do such like, distasteful things up here? All the more objectionable, too, because the results of business in Toronto for the past few years, before 1895, were largely profitable. In what is called the "congested district" in Toronto (Simcoe, Agnes, Wilton, George sts., and the water front being the boundaries), a much objected to remainder (15c) of the original conflagration extra (25c) still rankles as a thorn in the flesh of the large insurers who do business in this district. The avowed object of this extra was to cause such pressure, through the rate payers, as would compel the City Council to provide improved fire appliances—notably, sufficient steam fire engines. But things are jogging along just now about as they were last January. The extra steam fire engine to replace the rejected Merryweather and Waterous machines has not yet been secured.

I observe a new fire insurance company is about forming, and will apply next session to Parliament for a Dominion Charter. From its name, "The Methodist Trust Fire Insurance Co.," I conclude it will appeal specially to that large and influential religious body, the Methodists, for support. Presumably it will enter the field untrammelled by tariffs and the various and ever-varying arrangements for the safeguarding of the fire insurance business, as devised and practised in the interests of the large organizations who control rates and generally have their own way with the insuring public. These as competitors and rivals, in possession of the field, will be formidable opponents to wrest business from, and make a profit in the doing of it. Quite apart from this feature, it is still a question whether a new company under the most favorable auspices could make money doing a general business over the country and writing below the present rates of insurance. This I take to be the teaching of the Dominion Government Insurance Reports for the past few years.

Commencing the 1st of January next, companies members of the Hamilton Board will have to submit all business to the stamping officer of the Board, thus following the Toronto Board practice. Mr. George A. Young has received the appointment, and will make an excellent stamping officer. Mr. Young has qualified by resigning his connections as a local insurance agent, so that he will make an impartial administrator of his new duties. While the salary attaching to the dual service is not to say munificent, it is perhaps sufficient to keep Mr. Young from actual want; indeed, there may be, with economy, some excursion fares in it over and above necessities,—say, to the Beach in summer, and Dundas in winter, or even Ancaster among the hills. Henceforth, under the white wings of innocence and

rectitude (as to rates), and without guile, it is to be hoped that the Hamilton agents will cuddle down, and give no more trouble to their principals. This is, of course, the expression of a hope. You will remember that some time ago I drew attention to the nice gentlemanly feeling prevalent among members of this Board, in sending apologies to the meeting when prevented from attending a sitting. I once remarked to a Torontonians, that the tone of the Hamilton Board was rather more Chesterfieldian than that of his Board. He asked what that meant! I thought it was an expression out of Faust! Sic.

It has been known that for some days past the Inspector of the "Phenix of Brooklyn Company" from headquarters has been in Toronto, looking over the affairs of the Ontario General Agency of the Company, under Mr. L. C. Camp. To-day, I learn that the Company has decided to remodel its representation in Ontario, following the present system of the Aetna Fire Company, and has accordingly now placed its agency under the new plan for Toronto, in the hands of Messrs Wood & Kirkpatrick, agents of the "Aetna," who will henceforward also represent the Phenix of Brooklyn. It is understood that for some time past the results of its general underwriting in Ontario have not been profitable to the Phenix, and that some change in its modes of operation was necessary. Messrs Wood & Kirkpatrick are to be congratulated in the acquirement of this agency, which will no doubt meet with success in their experienced hands.

It is as yet almost too early to say to you and yours, Sir, and all readers, especially subscribers, of the CHRONICLE "Merric Xmas," but, alas! when I next hope to have this pleasure it may be far on the other side, so I will just now, and here, record my Xmas wishes, "to those whom we love and those who love us," and still in a wider scope to "one and all."

Yours,

ARIEL.

TORONTO, 12th DECEMBER, 1896.

Notes and Items.

The Royal Victoria Life Insurance Co. will seek an Act of Incorporation next session at Ottawa.

The Canadian Fire Underwriters' Association in future will hold its monthly meeting alternately here and in Toronto.

Mr Leavenworth, of Detroit, is being pointed out as the coming Insurance Commissioner of Michigan, a position which he would well and worthily fill.

Mr. Charles M. Holt, B.A., LL.L., is about to publish a book on Insurance Law, embracing Canadian jurisprudence and legislation. We expect this work to be interesting and valuable.

The Methodist Trust Fire Insurance Co. will apply for an Act of Incorporation next session, to carry on the business of fire insurance in all its branches in all parts of the Dominion. A reference to this will be found in Ariel's letter.

The National Cycle & Motor Car Insurance Company has commenced business, offering insurance for road accidents. For these new vehicles the rate is \$5 per year, for business carts \$7.50, in addition to two per cent. on amount they are insured for. An extra premium of 5 per cent. covers damage to owner's vehicle, assessable on its market value. As horseless carriages are to be put on our roads next year, insurance on them will be called for.