

Society Notes.

We have already given several hints which, if acted upon, would do something towards making things easier for new arrivals in Halifax—or any other town, for that matter. It is often the best part of a year before a lady gets to know half of her visiting acquaintances personally, and the only satisfactory way to obviate this is for the new-comer to be "at home" every afternoon for a few weeks, and for the older residents to make a point of calling within a stated time—say three weeks. Even this entails a great deal of labor, as, of course, there is an immense amount of unpacking and shopping to do, and it is very difficult to get it all into the mornings.

Perhaps there is no place in the world where the system of "calling" is reduced to such a state of perfection as at the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge. There, as in ordinary society, a senior man uses his discretion entirely as to which "freshmen" he will call upon, usually choosing the hours in the afternoon when they are all pretty sure to be out, and leaving cards on the whole lot in one day. In returning the first call, however, the freshman is bound to find his senior at home, and must not under any circumstances leave a card on him. Of course this often means calling half a dozen times, but the rule is steadily adhered to, and answers the purpose with which it was designed, viz.: that men shall *know* those they want to know.

The leaving of a card in return to the first call is equivalent to a polite note to the effect that, while duly acknowledging the honor done him, by seeking his acquaintance, the new-comer has reasons of his own for not desiring to increase the circle of his acquaintances in the direction indicated.

Even this system, though no doubt revolutionary, would not be at all a bad one in Society, especially in a town where nearly all the residents have an "at home" day, and would be sure to be seen on the first visit. It would have the great advantage of giving people a chance of getting their houses into ship-shape without being *obliged* to be "at home" every afternoon all through the busiest time.

A new thing in the way of a morning "tub" is highly recommended by the *Toronto Mail*. This is the *cold air bath*, and consists simply of standing in front of an open (wide open) window, and rubbing oneself briskly with a towel. The *Mail* says there is not the least fear of catching cold, even with the thermometer below zero, and the shock to the system is not nearly so great as that of a cold water bath. Here's a chance for lazy men! And anyone who is fond of bathing in the open air will understand that there is something strangely exhilarating in the cold air bath, especially on a fresh, windy morning. If the idea takes root at all extensively, however, we would recommend that in narrow streets some arrangement should be made between the sides of the street, for instance, suppose the north side bathed at their back windows, while the south side bathed at the front. Otherwise there might occur some sudden and startling *vis-a-vis*.

We have hitherto kept silent on the fire brigade question, not feeling quite qualified to discuss the internal politics of the corps, which are, to say the least, complicated. To anyone who takes the trouble to think the matter out, however, the question assumes far larger proportions, and the question at issue between Captain London and a minority of his men shrinks into insignificance. The greater question that presents itself is whether a Volunteer Fire Brigade can, under any circumstances, meet the wants of a growing city like Halifax. Like the coasting, and all the many questions that affect the safety of life and limb, this will never be thoroughly investigated till something happens that shall stand for a century as a land mark in the history of the stupidity of corporations. The volunteer system is excellent, no doubt, and in Halifax particularly there is nothing that excites more favorable comment from new arrivals than the promptitude

with which the men respond to the many calls made by the fire-bell, and the energy with which they carry out their work.

But—this is not a subject for argument, but a certain matter of fact—if once a big fire broke out, with a favorable wind, no volunteer force could prevent the city being consumed from the point where the fire originated to the leeward boundary of the city. Ask anyone, who has seen Shaw directing operations at a big fire in London, whether he imagines for a moment that a volunteer brigade could do the same work? Ask the insurance agents, who are a pretty clear-headed race, and have heavy interests at stake? Ask any level-headed member of the brigade itself, whether, at several fires within the last year or two, it was any more than a freak of nature, a happy combination of the elements, that prevented half the city being consumed? Go and look for yourselves next time there is a Globe Hotel in flames, and see how every member of the brigade struggles for the place where the progress of the flames is most conspicuous, and where there seems to be more *knobs* to be gained. Suppose the fire *did* at first evade their efforts, and a good fresh wind sprang up, what captain in the world could persuade nine-tenths of the gallant "volunteers" to play their hose on houses a few hundred yards off, or devote their energies to pulling down a block of houses in the next street, to stay the progress of the fire, without having a look in at the "fun"?

This is a very grave question, and one not likely to be settled by the firemen themselves, though some of the best of them are of our way of thinking. It is too much to expect them, as a body, to renounce the honorable position they have most deservedly acquired, even though their experience had proved to them—one and all—that the city had grown too large for them. After all, it took "the Great Fire of St. John" to convince our neighbour of the same thing, and it is hardly to be expected that Halifax will show itself more enlightened.

It will probably be asked why the same objections should not be urged against the Volunteer Brigade of the army, and, anticipating the question, we would point out that the idea of a Volunteer force taking the field, except under the command of veteran soldiers, has never been entertained by any government, and such a thing would be laughed at by the public if it were even suggested. A Volunteer Fire Brigade in the same relation to the Paid Brigade that the Volunteer Service bears to the Regular Army, would be a most valuable auxiliary, and is what we would like to see established in Halifax. Only, the discipline should be military, when on active service.

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