FIRE AT THE ALASKA FEATHER and DOWN Cos. WORKS, MONTREAL.

We append a list of insurance companies interested in the above fire which occurred on the 5th instant.

	Section No. 1.			Section No. 2.			Section No. 3.		
	Building.	Stock.	Office Furn.	Building.	Machinery.	Stock.	Building.	Machinery.	Stock.
Union	$1,350	$7,500	75	$1,200	$900	$300	$1,050	$1,845	$75
Phœnix	450	4,000	25	400	300	100	350	615	25
Atlas	450	4,000	25	400	300	100	350	615	25
Western	450	1,500	25	400	300	100	350	615	25
British American	450	1,500	25	400	300	100	350	615	25
National of Ireland	450	1,500	25	400	300	100	350	615	25
L. & L. & Globe	450	1,500	25	400	300	100	350	615	25
Ottawa Fire	450	1,500	25	400	300	100	350	615	25
London Mutual	....	2,000	....	....	2,000	....	....	....	....
Traders	....	1,250	....	....	....	....	....	....	....
Canadian	....	1,000	....	....	....	....	....	....	....
Ætna	....	2,500	....	....	....	....	....	....	....
	$4,500	$29,750	$250	4,000	5,000	$1,000	$3,500	$6,150	$250

Section No. 1, Total loss.
" " 2, about 10 per cent. loss.
" " 3, no loss.

Correspondence.

We do not hold ourselves responsible for views expressed by correspondents

TORONTO LETTER.

Are Sprinklers worth the Reduction?—Also the Automatic Fire Alarm?—Toronto Board Rules—A Fascinating Calling—An Insurance Pool.

Dear Editor,—I gather from occasional items in leading insurance journals, and from hearsay, that the much bepraised sprinklers have fallen considerably in the estimation of Fire Underwriters. I am not surprised at this. They have their value, their usefulness in confining the limits of a fire, and abating its fierceness under even the most adverse circumstances, and for this and by so much, should they obtain recognition and consideration in the insuring of premises in which they may be placed, but the slashing reduction in rates hitherto allowed to them has not been justified by the experience of several years, not by a long way. Now, a reaction has set in, the times being opportune and Underwriters in a critical inquiring frame of mind, so we may expect a great diminution of the bonus previously granted (it amounts to that) by the companies to their insured having sprinklered premises. In the case of millinery and other perishable stocks the sprinklers set in operation by some small local blaze too often do great damage to, if not destroying, such fine goods, and the Underwriters make good the loss. It may be that in allowing reductions for sprinklers greater discrimination should be exercised, having in view the nature and class of the goods and properties insured when under the system installed. We may, however, expect to see some large abatement of the allowance. There are not wanting amongst us Underwriters who say that so far as Canada is concerned the number of sprinklered risks being so few it was a mistake of the C. F. U. A. to hold out to proprietors the inducements they have to instal sprinklers on their premises, because it is likely also that for a long time to come they will constitute a very small proportion of the insurable risks. I believe the Automatic Fire Alarm allowance, another generous concession of the C. F. U. A. is likely to undergo some modification, if not total disallowance, in the near future. In the laudable desire to acknowledge and encourage all improvement of risks there has been a danger of giving away too much of the premium, and the companies seem to be considering this feature.

Recent occurrences at the Toronto Board have brought to the notice of members, some of whom seem to have forgotten or overlooked the fact, that their rules not only forbid the giving and receiving of commission as between members of the Board and members of the non-Board companies, but absolutely prohibits all intercourse whatever of an insurance business nature. It seems to me to be a rather harsh rule, and its strict application may be difficult, nevertheless, it is in the Code, and until amended or expunged in full force and power. This means "non-intercourse" to the hilt. In all communities there are found laws on the statue books, which, often in the interest of good fellowship, are suffered to lie dormant without injury to any real interest. It is possible the zeal and party instincts of some framers of the Rules and Regulations now in force in the Toronto Board may have led them to exceed the requirements of the situation and to introduce methods and ways of working things that if not harsh are not a little unreasonable and annoying. It seems to-day as if the interchange of the common civilities of the business men of both camps, if not under interdict, are at least considered open to suspicion. Are these things the product of competition or the teachings, the cult, of a narrow school? Perhaps some day there will come again free trade in fire insurance, the lions of the Board companies lieing down with the lambs of the non-Boarders, and there will be a wide "open door." In that day if my old dog chooses to sun himself and sleep on the doorstep of the non-tariff office next door, his action will not bring me, his owner, under the suspicion of being inside doing business, and so liable to have a Board query fired at me.

To be sure the insurance business is a very interesting one, and ever growing more so. It is full of surprises, of variety, of contrarities, of contradictions, its joys, such as they are, are perennial, and its sorrows easily assuaged, whilst its many phases are keleidescopic. It is so interesting because of a certain fascination about it, which indeed attracts many year by year to join it, and I believe few willingly go out of it. For the many it is not a lucrative calling, but the sweets of the winnings do so largely compensate for their slimness. Every faculty a man possesses is called into play in the work, and, just as in nature, altered surroundings modify, and in time change the conformation and aspect of creatures, so the needs of his work and the circle he moves in often develop in the insurance followed unsuspected qualities and forces, good or bad, which give him the lead amongst his fellows as a business getter and keeper. The insurance community may be likened to a large reservoir or lake, into which trickle many of all trades and professions and callings, and once there they seemingly like to stay there, though all do not get on swimingly as I have said. These may console themselves with the reflection that it is a High Level Reservoir anyway.

Yours,

Toronto, 7th May, 1901. ARIEL.