

marks. One is that the main impression left on one's mind is of many absorptions and amalgamations—ten or eleven in all. The other is that assurance shares have had some pretty marked fluctuations between January and December.

#### TORONTO LETTER.

Last Year's Fire Losses in Toronto—A very favourable Showing—Should not Non-Tariff Officials and Employees be Eligible for Membership in our Institutes?

DEAR EDITOR.—The City of Toronto officials generally, and the Toronto Fire Brigade in particular, are congratulating themselves on the tabulated and now published records, showing that in the matter of fire losses during the past year, this city has had an exceptionally satisfactory experience. Credit for such pleasing results is assignable in measure to the general prosperity and well-doing of our citizens, morality, and last, but not least, to the always prompt and usually efficient services of the Fire Brigade. The excellent equipment of this force, with modern appliances for extinguishing fires, the facilities afforded for quick notice of fires by ordinary fire alarm signal and telephone message, have all been valuable aids in attaining the above desirable end. It is satisfactory to learn that no fire of any magnitude occurred in Toronto during 1901. The dreaded conflagration hazard which the wise men in fire insurance ranks tell us is ever present has not even threatened us, so we like to think that we are justified in the belief that such hazard, as regards Toronto, is now at least remote, if existent. Modesty and a natural feeling of reticence will prevent the Toronto Board of Fire Underwriters from claiming, in public, any credit for their undoubted assistance as a factor, in the general improvement of all classes of risks, and as contributory to the attainment of the present desirable status, we have been talking about. It is certain that the steady persistence of the various Board officials in pressing from time to time for improvements in fire appliances and so on, has had its due effect. Naturally, also, the specific rating of various properties, with explanations freely given to owners and occupants, showing how rates are made, and by what means they may, in individual cases, be reduced to a minimum, has tended towards the erection of buildings of better construction and better arrangement from an insurance point of view, than hitherto. Then the regular visitation of a special officer of the Underwriters' having, for his constant and continuous duty, the inspection of and reporting upon, all matters affecting the cleanliness of all mercantile and manufacturing risks, as well as taking notice of neglects of employees and occupants, and generally of exterior or interior dangers from fire, preventable by care and attention; this and kindred duties ably discharged have cost the public nothing, but the benefits are for all alike, though the Underwriters pay for the service. Who can estimate the beneficial effects of these acts, or guess at how many fires have been prevented by the means referred to? Let the public be generous in this matter to the fire insurance people, and bear in mind that they have contributed in no small measure to the improvement of this city as regards the fire hazard. As already intimated I like to say so much for, and on behalf of the Fire Underwriters, they being prevented from saying anything for themselves for reasons already given.

I observe in the letter of your London (Eng.), correspondent a reference to the boycotting, in a way, by insurance Institutes of the clerks of non-tariff offices. It is not stated that they are ineligible for membership in the Institutes, but that they are slighted and ignored in examinations, and are unable to obtain the proper facilities for their studies with the Institutes.

Now, it seems to me that the Insurance Institute, if it believes in its mission and has a proper comprehension of its duties, should welcome all insurance folk to its fold, regardless whether they be attached to non-tariff or tariff offices. I go further, and say that all managers and officials of lesser degree of these non-tariff offices should have welcome and access to membership, being otherwise eligible, without any restraint. Is it not educational work that these Institutes are doing? If they choose to assume that non-tariff people are in a sense misguided, proceeding upon wrong principles, in an ignorant and unlearned way of business life, and unscientific in methods, should it not be esteemed the privilege and duty of the Institute to bring these into the better, the right way, if you will? These may have strayed, or perhaps have never known any other "Alma Mater" than the school of the non-tariff profession in which they were reared. It does seem to me to be a lowering of the standard of excellence, and a narrow thing to make such discrimination. To be a tariff man or a non-tariff man is a matter of personal belief not unfrequently a matter of bread and butter, why then stoop to interfere with differing personal creeds and opinions, or with the bread and butter?

In looking over the Constitution of the Toronto Institute I am glad to say I find no hint of such discrimination as I have referred to. It says: "The objects of the Institute shall be promotion and cultivation of a thorough knowledge of insurance business, etc., etc." You observe a "thorough knowledge of the insurance business" in mentioned. Perhaps with a "thorough knowledge" would disappear the non-tariff habit, to a great extent. Who can say? It is true that with our Council rests the power of election or refusal of any application for membership, but inasmuch as I know that certain of our members are attached to non-tariff offices in Toronto, I conclude that no applicant would be rejected solely because of such connection. There is an air of western freedom, of liberality in tone, a breadth about the Toronto Institute Rules, a sort of come one come all spirit which I like. I may be wrong, but this quality is what will recommend and add strength to the Institute rather than weaken it, in the opinion of the younger men at least. Let the non-boarders come in on equal terms always say I; let them learn what a "rate" is, and why it is, and be taught why some rates are lowered and some raised, and how done. Let them learn for themselves, in the proper section, to acquire such knowledge, what is the rate for something when no rate is given for it in the tables. In the time of self-reliance let them be taught what to do in an emergency, say when all tariffs have been for a time abolished, as has happened once or twice, and everyone has to do the best he can about these same rates. I shall be glad to hear that the sister Institute of Montreal is as liberal-minded as this Toronto Institution seems to be.

Yours,

ARIEL.

Toronto, 14th Jan., 1902.

FIRE CAUSED BY A DEFECTIVE FLUE is suggested by the Baltimore "Underwriter" to be a just cause of punishment by imprisonment of the builder or owner or at least by denial of all right to recover under a policy of insurance. This would be rather too severe to be just, except in the case of the builder of a defective flue who certainly deserves punishment. But who is to ascertain whether a flue is defective when a house or warehouse is finished?