

The Office Window

The shriek of the fire siren is always an ominous sound, but never has it been more so than during the past two or three months, because possibly never since the great fire of 1871 has Bradford suffered so severely from flames. The third serious fire of the winter was heralded by the siren a few seconds before one-fifteen last Wednesday afternoon, and this was a fire which marred the face of Holland street north leaving a gaping black hole in Bradford's business section which will only be removed in the replacement by fine new buildings of the old ones which fell prey to Wednesday's flames. . . . Those were old buildings. Long time residents here express the opinion that they were part of the building program following the fire of 1871. Hope Mr. Pratt will write the obituary for those five, formerly six, stores. (The 5¢ to \$1.00 store was two stores, until not so very many years ago). Their story would be interesting. . . . But Bradford today does not spend much time looking back. It has the forward look, and therefore when we made our first call to a fire victim we heard just about what we expected to hear. The first words were of thankfulness that everyone had escaped from the buildings safely. Yes, one was attached to certain household possessions that had gone up in flames, but already the lady was establishing a business across the street and had secured an apartment, which she was going to furnish immediately, and as soon as these temporary arrangements for business and home are in order, the new building, which will rise from the ashes of the old, will be the big interest. No tears. No self pity. This lady is just going to be too busy to do much looking back. She is looking forward to building

a bigger and better business, and in the meantime to getting quickly back into the business of serving Bradford customers. . . . And so it went. Our baker is not nearly so long established as is the lady, but Bradford has been good to him—and he is a good citizen for Bradford. Asked about his plans, the answer was given with certainty, "I'm staying in Bradford. I'll be back in business just as quickly as I can make arrangements." The men's and boys' wear store goes into the Plaza and its owner plans rebuilding. The prospects for a fine new block on Holland street north are excellent, and in the meantime, "business as usual" is the slogan. Within a couple of weeks it is hoped that Bradford shopping services will be back to normal again. . . . News travels fast. The local newspaper usually has a busy line when anything of a sensational nature occurs. Last Wednesday afternoon we were the target. One city radio newsmen evidently forgot the intimacy of a small town. He enquired whether or not we had been to the fire. When told that we were watching it while talking to him, he enquired, "You are quite close to the fire?" "Much too close to feel comfortable," we replied. Then came a series of questions. On one question we disappointed him by not venturing a guess. The question was, "at what would you estimate the loss in the fire?" We insisted that we could not even venture a guess. When we heard a "half million" estimate given over the air, we certainly were thankful we had refused to guess. One knows so little of other peoples' business. Our guess would have been a shabby one on that, and, to really make us ridi-

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ulous, had we ventured, the voice informed that a tape recording had been made of our answers, which, fortunately, were confined to the extent of the fire, the neighbouring fire brigades which had come to assist in the battle, whether or not the water supply was going to hold out, etc. . . . And in reference to sensational stories, that one about five firemen being overcome by smoke was the product of a vivid imagination, according to members of the local fire brigade. A couple of men who did not have their masks properly adjusted had to turn back to inhale some fresh air and adjust their masks, but that was the extent of the "overcome." . . . That service to Bradford's shopping district be not interrupted is the determination of all Bradford business people, and to give that extra service, until normal conditions are restored, Bradford business places will remain open on Wednesdays, which ordinarily are holidays for business people. Wednesday shopping will doubtless be light, because shoppers are not accustomed to them, but it is a nice gesture on the part of the other business people. . . . Had a call from Mr. F. Kilkenny the other day. He tells us that the acetylene gas plant in Bradford, which operated during the latter part of the last century, was started by a Mr. John Burgess, a teacher in the High School. Mr. Scanlon took over the plant when Mr. Purgess left town. The plant which manufactured the gas was where Mrs. Burnside's home now stands. The late Mr. Charles Batchelor looked after the plant and lit the gas lights on the streets. Mr. Kilkenny believes that most of Bradford business places were lighted by this gas, possibly the churches, and a few homes.