

In the first place, the danger of bigness referred to is entirely imaginary. It is not true, as sometimes asserted, that either of the big companies referred to is controlled by any one man or any three men, in the sense that the vast assets can be wielded for corrupt purposes. As to ability, the present management represents a bigness quite in keeping with the bigness of their respective companies. What reasons can be urged to support the supposition that the same "power behind the throne" will not be as potent to fill the offices of these companies, when vacated by the present incumbents, as has been potent in all their past history? If it be conceded that the present management is both capable and honest, who or what is in danger from their capable and honest administration? But what if bad or incapable men should succeed to the control? Why, then, in that case, they will be turned out by existing authority, just as bad or incapable men have been turned out before. Within the last twelve months we have all seen how impotent any so-called one-man power is in a great life insurance company when public opinion and the great body of policyholders decree a change, not in this case because of incapacity or dishonesty, but for prudential reasons which seemed sufficient to the "power behind the throne." It ought to be tolerably plain that the bigger a company is the more difficult will it be for any one man to put it in his pocket. There are a good many men who daily look into the affairs of each of the three great companies referred to besides the president. These men control distinct departments, and are men of distinguished ability in their departments. If some of them, highest in control, had the disposition, they would lack the opportunity to engage in corrupt practices on any large scale, and would be checkmated early in the game by others. For these and other reasons we hold that the danger, to guard against which some of our friends would invoke legislation, is largely imaginary.

There is, however, a very grave question behind all this limitation talk which it is important to consider, viz.: the right of the State to interfere with a corporation operating strictly in accordance with the intent of its charter and without violation of the rights of others. Just so long as the Equitable, or the Mutual, or the New York Life, or any other company, continues to do only the legitimate business which it was organized and by the State was empowered to do, in conformity with the spirit and letter of the authority conferred, the State cannot, without usurpation, interfere. The right of the Mutual Life to hold two hundred millions of assets, if it can get them, and to issue three hundred millions of new business if it can get it, is just as clear in the year 1893 as it was in 1863 to own ten millions of assets and to issue eight millions of new business. The company is quite as well managed and the officers quite as capable of taking care of its one hundred and seventy millions now as it was of its ten millions thirty years ago. Suppose somebody should propose a law limiting the number of passengers to be carried and the number and value of cars owned by the New York Central Railway in 1894, or the number of

depositors and amount of deposits allowed to the Chemical National Bank during the same year? And yet, absurd as such a proposition would be, it is a shade less absurd than the proposition to say, by statute, to any life insurance company that it shall quit doing just what it was organized and duly authorized to do, because it has been unusually successful in the doing of it! Whenever the public are of the opinion that either one of the companies under consideration is less desirable to patronize by reason of its bigness than others are, they may be depended upon to solve the question of growth by declining to insure therein. There can be no monopoly in life insurance, as there are and will be plenty of good companies to choose from. Whether certain companies are or are not too big or too little, in our opinion or in the opinion of anybody else, is not a State question, but one which it will be quite safe to leave, as heretofore, to be regulated by the unwritten but potent laws inherent in society.

#### BRANTFORD AND SELF-INSURANCE.

Periodically some genius in a town or small city turns up, laboring under the delusion that he has discovered a brand new plan by which the payment of fire insurance premiums are to be done away with, the people becoming their own insurers at a merely nominal cost. Brantford, Ontario, is the latest candidate for distinction in this line, as appears from the *Brantford Expositor*, from which we learn that Mayor Secord in his inaugural address referred to the possible formation of a local company, which might be able to insure the property of the town and save enough besides to build a board of trade building! An interview is also printed in the *Expositor* with one of "the largest manufacturers," who goes into the plan he has to propose somewhat in detail. The statement is made that the fire loss of 1892 in Brantford was \$2,000 and in 1891 somewhat less, while the fire premiums paid are about \$30,000 annually. This manufacturer goes on to argue that the business men might organize a company with \$100,000 capital, paying in \$10,000, which would take care of all the insurance at an expense of about \$5,000, and \$5,000 more on the average, for losses, saving the other \$20,000 of the \$30,000 premiums each year, etc. This saving of \$30,000 a year—on paper—is one of the easiest things in the world to do. It has been done elsewhere repeatedly, and is old, the only new thing about the Brantford scheme being that the big saving referred to is to blossom out, so to speak, by and by into a new board of trade building for the town. A successful flying-machine has been constructed by a dozen optimistic geniuses—on paper—during the past ten years also. Under the test of practical use these soaring machines have, however, unanimously failed to soar. Even so the numerous self-insurance plans working so admirably on paper have broken down in practice, and though the experimenters have been sadder men after the experiment, they have also been a good deal wiser. It was rather hard on the plan of Brantford's "largest manufacturer" that he quoted in connection with his scheme the losses of sister towns. For