

**Insurance Returns
for 1898.**

We regret inability to publish our usual returns in this issue of THE CHRONICLE. In our next number, we will produce the fire and life tables. We shall be under great obligations to any companies not having yet favoured us with the desired returns, if they will kindly do so at the earliest possible day.

**Winnipeg Water
Works.**

The city of Winnipeg having decided to furnish its own water supply, is determined to have the most efficient and modern service possible. With that object in view, it has disposed of its issue of \$700,000 3 1-2 per cent. Water Works bonds which run for some forty years. They have been purchased by a Montreal broker. We are glad to know that an amicable arrangement with the old water company has been effected, and a satisfactory settlement arrived at by which the company will receive in cash \$237,500.

**Commons and
Senate.
A British
Precedent.**

The Premier's proposal that the House of Commons and the Senate should hold joint Sessions when at variance has excited curiosity as to the source of this idea. It has been traced to Australia, to Brazil, and other countries. The fact is, it is derived from English precedents, some of which are of great historic interest. A conference of the House of Commons and House of Lords was held in 1689 over a Bill settling the succession to the Crown. Neither House would give way, so the Bill was dropped. In 1692 another conference was held which also proved abortive. In 1698 a joint meeting was held over a celebrated boodling charge made against a distinguished official with no better result. In April, 1700, a conference was held over the claim made by the Peers to alter a money Bill. The issue was so momentous that a revolution was feared if the Peers remained obstinate. The House of Commons threatened to stop all supplies if their exclusive power over them was interfered with. The House of Lords backed down, and to the resolute attitude of the House of Commons over that grave question is due the constitutional power of the House of Commons to control the finances of the country. Other cases could be cited, but the above are those of the greatest historic and constitutional importance.

In the days above referred to the management of the two Houses was conducted somewhat differently to the present system. Party lines were less sharply drawn; the members voted more independently as individuals; and the majorities varied very widely. At no time was the House of Commons more jealous of its privileges. Peers who had made themselves obnoxious to the Commons were even threatened with execution on the scaffold. Whatever then may be said of the Premier's proposal as to its practicability, or

desirability, he can justly claim to have the support of British Parliamentary precedents.

**The Senate's
Usefulness.**

But there can be no question of the usefulness of the Senate of the Dominion of Canada, and it is somewhat remarkable that those who periodically clamour for the crippling or destruction of that usefulness, and even advocate the abolition of what is virtually a council to whom is entrusted the onerous duty of reviewing the legislation of the country's direct representatives should fail to remember the many occasions in Provincial and Federal parliaments when "The Lords" of Canada have rendered yeoman service in protecting the reputation and welfare of the Dominion. As the mechanism for stopping or retarding motion by friction, as of a carriage or railway car, by the pressure of rubbers against the wheels, the brake is an admirable contrivance. It is in the retarding of too rapid motion, in the requesting of the sober second-thought of the people that the Senate acts as a brake to sudden impulse, as a check to hasty, ill-considered legislation. For these reasons, and for the recollection of occasions when the Senate of Canada, independent of party considerations, have enabled us to reconsider momentous questions that we hold the senators in our love and honour, and are tender of the fame they well deserve. Can any one of those who try to harm or destroy the good fame or reputation of the Senate and speak evil of its members fail to recall frequent occasions when its usefulness has been made manifest? We recognize the desirability and also the great difficulty of having a Senate free from party influence. But, unfortunately, this same bias, prejudice, and spirit of partisanship creeps into every legislative body, and, while we may regret the presence of such an obstacle to the passage only of wise and useful measures for the good of the commonwealth, it is almost unavoidable. There is this also to be said in favour of an Upper House for Canada, that, if at any time in the past or future a desirable act of parliament has been or should be blocked by the obstinacy or blindness of the Senate, it is always possible to appeal to the people for their opinion of the contemplated measure.

We decline to subscribe to the belief that the Senate is without wisdom and guided only by political feeling. We should be sorry to see our representatives encouraging contempt for men, whose years, in many instances, entitle them to respect, and whose services to their country are beyond question. Of course, our Canadian Peers will not be unnecessarily alarmed at the British precedent we have quoted in favour of the execution of those of that august body who render themselves very obnoxious to the Commons. At the same time, it may be well to realize that the recent proposition of the Premier finds a precedent in the land of our forefathers, and the question of its practicability or desirability can surely be left to our rulers.