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Fire Insurance Prospect.

"It is a long lane that has no turning." The old saying has probably been discredited by fire underwriters for many years, but possibly the record of losses for the first three months of 1894, which is to be found on another page, may convey a gleam of hope that a change for the better has at last set in. That fire business has steadily gone from bad to worse for many years is only too true, but it is evident that there must come a time when retrogression can no farther go. An abnormal condition of things can never become permanent in any business; it carries within itself the seeds of its own destruction, and sooner or later effects its own cure.

It is to be hoped that in public interests as well as those of underwriters that stage has been reached in fire insurance business. That it was ever allowed to attain it we cannot help thinking fire underwriters have themselves to blame in some measure. We learn by our mistakes, and some good may result from the unfortunate experience of late years if the salutary lesson it teaches be taken to heart. The truth it enforces is the unprofitableness of unhealthy competition and the necessity for adherence to sound and prudent methods.

Association.

THE tendency of the age is towards association in political, social and industrial affairs. Associated effort is becoming an increasingly potent factor in modern development. When it takes the shape of a "combine" to do away with healthy competition for purposes of undue gain, it is to be condemned as opposed to public interests; but when it has for its object the minimizing of the evils of excessive competition, it is to be regarded as a powerful agency of reform. There can be no danger of such a force being improperly applied in the busi-

ness of assurance. On the contrary, we think the state of affairs demands combined action on the part of the companies to do away with many of the undesirable practices which have crept in as the result of abnormal rivalry. Laws have been passed for the suppression of some of these evils, but scarcely with the desired success. The truth is, that as in the body physical, so in the commercial, there are certain ills which can be best remedied from within and not from without. Legislation, to be effectual, must be backed by public sentiment, and unfortunately public sentiment is not sufficiently educated as to some of the evils referred to, and not disinterested enough in regard to others to secure a due adherence to any legal enactment on the matter. Companies, and their representatives, too, may deplore the existence of the practices, but until combined steps are taken in their common interests the most sincere advocates of reform may find it difficult in the present keen competition for business to carry out their principles in practice. And therein lies the key to the solution of the whole problem.

The Northern Life Assurance Co. of Canada.

A BILL to incorporate this Company is now before Parliament, and from the text of the draft we note that the Company is to be established for the purpose of carrying on a general life assurance business in all its branches in Canada and elsewhere, with headquarters in London, Ontario. The capital stock is to be one million dollars, in shares of one hundred dollars each, of which three hundred thousand dollars are to be subscribed. Directors, each of whom must hold at least fifty shares, are to be elected at a meeting to be called as soon as ten per cent. of the subscribed capital shall have been paid; but business is not to be commenced until sixty-two thousand five hundred dollars have been paid. We note that no provision seems to have been made for the annual election of directors. The Company is to have power to invest its funds on the security of ground rents as well as in the usual way. The clause referring to the proportion of profits to be distributed to participating policy-holders appears to be very vaguely expressed; and as this is a matter of considerable importance in the interests of the public, we think the section should be recast so as to more clearly define the rights of policy-holders in this respect.