

The reader may be inclined to say, "Well, the society in which I am insured may possibly collapse some day. But there are no signs of failure as yet, it is doing a prosperous business, and will probably not fail during my lifetime." Do not be too sure of that. An assessment society may exist many years on a false basis. It may exhibit to the casual observer all the outward tokens of strength even while a keen insight can detect the evidences of impending ruin. When the end does come, it comes rapidly. The healthy risks drop out, the impaired lives remain. The death-rate soars far above the normal. Suddenly, without warning, the insecure foundation totters, and all the imposing superstructure melts away like snow.

In almost every instance where an assessment society has failed, the collapse has been marked by a startling suddenness. Take the case of the Select Knights, a prominent assessment order, which was organized in St. Catharines in 1883 and went into liquidation in 1898. The following table gives a synopsis of the society's standing during the last half-dozen years prior to its decease.

Year	Certificates in Force.	Income.	Assets.	Assets per \$1,000 of Insurance in Force.
1892	\$7,162,000	\$ 85,188	\$ 48,647	6.79
1893	8,099,000	99,000	98,636	12.18
1894	8,748,000	118,724	157,039	17.95
1895	9,411,000	134,312	172,840	18.35
1896	9,552,000	159,206	244,371	20.44
1897	1,464,000	69,036	8,912	6.01
1898		In liquidation.		

It will be observed that the society gave no outward signs of approaching collapse until 1897. The insurance in force, the income, the assets increased steadily. The year 1896 was to all appearances the most prosperous year in the history of the society. The very next year came the crash. The certificates in force dropped from \$9,552,000 to \$1,464,000, the assets from \$244,371 to only \$8,912. The next year, the society was in dissolution.

We could, if required, give other illustrations, all pointing to the same conclusion; but we believe that the above example is sufficient to show the uncertainty attaching to the life of assessment societies. Most of them have died young; some have lived 25 or 30 years; in no case, has an assessment organization attained to a good old age.

In conclusion, may we be permitted to offer a word of practical advice. First, to the reader who already belongs to a society. If you are getting up in years, or are in poor health and feel that you would have difficulty in securing insurance elsewhere, we do not advise you to leave the society. The insurance that it furnishes is at least better than none at all. But if you are fairly young in years, and enjoy good health, our counsel is, emphatically, "Secure a policy in a good life company, and then drop your society insurance." It is fair neither to yourself nor to your family that you should continue paying money to an organization which cannot guarantee insurance, which has power to raise your assessments at any time, and which is bound, sooner or later, to cause disappointment to all connected with it. It is true that if you throw up your society insurance, you lose the assessments that you have already paid. But, by continuing, you are liable to lose a larger sum when the society ultimately dissolves.

To the reader who has not already taken out so-

ciety insurance, we would say, "Don't do it." When you require insurance, be sure that you get a policy that really insures, with premiums that cannot be raised, in a company that will not collapse. You would not trust your money in any other investment unless you were sure of getting it back. Why, then, should you invest your money in an assessment society, knowing that the only chance of having the money returned to your estate is for you to die before the society does?

As we stated in the beginning, this paper makes no attempt to deny that there are many things to be said in favor of assessment societies, or that they have been the origin of much good in various ways. What we have tried to do, is to show that the financial basis of these societies is unsound. We have sought to argue the case without unfairness or exaggeration; and simply express the hope that our readers, in their turn, will not refuse to grant our arguments an impartial and unbiased hearing.



THE FIRE WASTE.

There is not much room for congratulation of the fire underwriting companies when we peruse the return of the fire waste in the United States and Canada thus far in 1905, and compare the figures with the corresponding one of previous years. As compiled by the New York Journal of Commerce the losses by fire on this continent in August last amounted to \$11,435,600, while in the same month of 1904 they were \$8,428,350, and in August 1902 they were only \$7,425,550. The difference is clearly in the wrong direction. The return says that 211 fires took place during last month, in each of which the loss reached \$10,000 or more. A noticeable feature of the fire waste of the past month was the numerous fires due to lightning and in some instances these caused heavy losses. Now to compare the losses for the eight months of 1905 thus far elapsed with a like period of former years, from 1st January to 31st August this year the fire loss was \$117,720,750.

January	\$13,166,350	\$21,790,200	\$16,378,100
February	16,090,800	90,051,000	23,591,000
March	9,907,650	11,212,150	14,715,400
April	13,549,000	23,623,000	11,901,350
May	16,366,800	15,221,400	12,736,250
June	14,684,350	10,646,700	11,789,800
July	12,838,600	11,923,200	13,173,250
August	8,428,350	9,715,200	11,435,600
	<u>\$105,021,900</u>	<u>\$194,172,850</u>	<u>\$117,720,750</u>

Compare this with previous years, and the average, conflagrations excluded, is not such as to make underwriters complacent. Of course last year's unusually large aggregates were caused by the conflagrations in Rochester and Toronto. But even allowing for this the total fire waste of 1905 thus far exceeds the average of several recent years.



WORLD'S FAIRS.

It was the exclamation of a travelled American: "World's Fairs will never pay, never can repay their cost. They are spectacles for the most part; educators if you will, but they are always on too grand a scale for profit; the collection of the marvels to be seen in them costs too much." The gentleman was speaking.