

this regular force, says Mr. Cassils, the lessees have employed during the past summer and fall a force of about thirty extra men in rebuilding such sections of the lines as were necessary to be rebuilt and in the construction of new lines. "Apart from new lines added to the company's system and the rebuilding of lines on old routes there have been used in ordinary repairs during the year over three thousand poles, also a proportionate quantity of insulators and new wire. I do not hesitate to state that by these means there has been effected a marked improvement in the general condition and value of the company's lines which as a whole were probably never in better working condition than they are at the present time. Some extensions of the lines on new railways, also renewals and improvements on old routes are in contemplation for next year's operations."

FIRE INSURANCE ASSOCIATION.—The directors of this insurance company have had in contemplation for some time an important step, called by a London journal "wise and business like, as well as courageous." After consulting the largest shareholders, says the *Monitor*, it has been decided to recommend a resolution reducing the capital to £900,000, by the cancelling of £100,000 of the paid-up capital. This step, if adopted, will place the accounts of the Company on a thoroughly sound basis; the intention of the directors being to appropriate the capital thus written off, to raising the unearned premium reserve to an adequate amount." The contemplated move was sanctioned, we understand, at the meeting of the 19th ult., and will strengthen the company's position. The London journal named continues: "The Association, although it has been unfortunate in suffering from exceptional losses, in which experience it does not stand alone, has still the greater portion of its reserve of £50,000 intact, which in addition to the £100,000 now to be transferred, will form a reserve fully sufficient to provide for all liabilities, including the unearned premiums on current risks."

—The shipping of St. John, N.B., at the close of 1884 showed a total tonnage of 249,363 tons. This was after deducting 43 vessels of 16,038 tons lost or transferred and adding 33 new craft of 11,433 tons as well as 5 schooners, 279 tons, transferred to her register. The present tonnage is not so great as that of a year ago by over four thousand tons. There being slender encouragement, in these days of iron steam and sail craft, to build new wooden craft to replace those lost or broken up. The rig and dimensions of the new St. John craft are:

No.	Rig.	Tons.
5	Ships	7,438
8	Barquentines.....	1,340
2	Brigantines.....	767
10	Schooners	1,289
11	Woodboats	631
1	Sloop	15
1	Steamer	3
33	Total tonnage.....	11,433

—A table of fish exports from Halifax to the West Indies during the last year is given in the *Morning Chronicle* of the 2nd instant. It includes the names of the following firms as shippers:—James Butler & Co., J. T. & A. W. West, D. Cronan, A. G. Jones & Co., R. I. Hart & Co., Bremner & Hart, John Taylor & Co., G. P. Mitchell & Sons, and Levi Hart & Co. The total shipments were 183,199 quintals of codfish, 18,202 quintals haddock, hake and pollock, 87,658 barrels herring, 9,540 barrels mackerel, 3,909 barrels alewives and 545 barrels salmon.

This does not include shipments per steamer via New York.

—The value of merchandise exported from London Consular District during the year 1884 was \$613,546 as compared with \$542,001 in the year 1883. The last quarter of the year shows by far the largest export—the figures being \$234,788 as compared with \$79,824 in the September quarter; \$153,080 that of June, and \$145,853 March. The list of exports for the three months ended with December is as follows:—

Articles.	Value.
Animals of all kinds.....	\$ 93,559 56
Barley	73,589 52
Eggs	31,048 00
Household goods	10,880 00
Car wheels (old and returned).....	6,491 72
Fertilizers	1,725 21
Flax	1,625 84
Lumber	2,991 79
Manufactured goods.....	543 38
Poultry, (live).....	3,088 00
Petroleum oil.....	767 03
Skins and hides.....	4,175 01
Vegetables	705 50
Miscellaneous.....	98 00
Total	\$234,788 57

—The North-West Commercial Travellers' Association held its annual meeting on Thursday, the 25th ultimo, in the Grand Union Hotel, Winnipeg. The financial report presented was of a very satisfactory character. The election of office bearers for the ensuing year was proceeded with and the following gentlemen elected: Mr. Thomas Johnson, president; Mr. J. J. Fanning, vice-president; Mr. W. R. Langridge, secretary; Mr. W. N. Ronald, treasurer, and Messrs. James Redmond, J. O'Laughlin, Fred. Chilcott, T. G. Lawlor and E. Johnson, directors.

—A writ to set aside the Charter of the Pioneer Beet Root Sugar Company of Coaticook, has been granted by the Attorney General of the Province of Quebec, upon the petition of Messrs. Lewis, Ward, Murray, Garth, and Masson, who claim that their names were used illegally in that enterprise. It would appear that several German machine makers, who have large claims against the company, have interested Prince Bismarck in their case, and that the latter has made the matter a subject of diplomatic communication with the British Government.

—The value of goods entered at Toronto during the calendar year 1884, was \$16,467,459, a decrease of more than a million compared with the \$17,707,318 of 1883. This, of course, includes both free and dutiable goods. Duties collected on imports last year amounted to \$3,186,449 where in the previous year they reached \$3,522,444. Exports from this port also show a decline in value, being \$3,022,223 as compared with \$3,499,714 in the twelve months preceding.

Correspondence.

CO-OPERATIVE LIFE ASSURANCE AND GOVERNMENT SUPERVISION.

To the Editor of the *Monetary Times*:

DEAR SIR,—Permit me space in your valuable journal to make a few remarks on the above question. Sir Leonard Tilley, in moving the Dominion House of Parliament into a Committee or the whole at its last session, stated that it was expedient to amend the Consolidated Insurance Act of 1877 with respect to companies transacting the business of life assurance under the title of Co-operative Life Assurance Companies, Mutual Benefit Associations, and the like. His reason for calling the attention

of the House to the necessity of amending this Act was a cogent one, viz.:—That as these companies or associations purported to transact life assurance, there was no valid reason why they should be exempted from making a deposit with the Finance Minister and a supervision exercised over them by the Insurance Department.

What therefore appeared very strange was the withdrawal of the proposed Bill. It is to be hoped that, at the coming session the matter will be again taken up and a useful, and a necessary enactment, which shall better provide for the security of policy-holders in these associations, be placed on the statute book of the Dominion. The arguments that can be brought forward as a reason for Parliament taking up this question and passing upon it are polyhedral. I will refer to a few.

In the first place it appears a great act of inconsistency and injustice to compel responsible companies, by which are meant those with subscribed and paid up capitals, besides those with large invested interests, to make annual statements to the Insurance Department, place in the hands of the Government hundreds of thousands of dollars, as a guarantee for the fulfilment of their contracts, and yet allow these irresponsible associations to continue to delude and misrepresent to an innocent public. The misrepresentation is in the statement made by the advocates of these associations that their system of insurance is as sound and contains as much of the elements of longevity as that of the regular line companies.

Such a statement is entirely at variance with facts. The number of failures of co-operative associations are very numerous—something over 400 during the past nine years, in the United States alone. In addition to this quite a number of Masonic and Oddfellows' mutual benefit societies have had to drop out of line. The Masonic and General, established in England in 1868, is about to give up the ghost. The order of mutual protection St. Louis (Masonic) after five years' experience gives as its reason for discontinuance, the high rate of assessment, which militated against its prosperity. The Kentucky Masonic Mutual, after 16 years' existence, has had to wind up. The Masonic Relief Association of Brooklyn, struggled along for 17 years, when its light went out, leaving many patrons to mourn in darkness.

Now, with the above illustrations, I think any dispassionate mind will be convinced of the great uncertainty which surrounds the assessment or co-operative system of insurance. If a body like the Free Masons, with all the elements they possess of respectability, cohesion, and fraternity, are unable to make their insurance feature a success, how can it be possible to make a heterogeneous, speculative concern lasting?

Therefore, is it not time that the Government or Parliament of Canada should take the matter up and protect the public from an irresponsible class of institutions? There is not half the need to take our regular line companies under the protecting arm of Government supervision as there is of such institutions as I have referred to.

Insurance Commissioner McGill, of Minnesota says:

"Societies known as Co-operative continue to do a large business throughout the country, and it has been stated again and again in previous reports, that these societies make no compliance with any law of the State, while, on the other hand, the regular Life Companies, known to be solvent and strong, and worthy of public confidence are charged fees and their premium receipts taxed."

The State Auditor of Iowa, says:

"That the co-operative system of insurance is intended to furnish the largest number of dupes in the shortest possible time, and the main object of its inception is to fill the pockets of the schemers with the earnings of their victims."

The North-western Mutual Benefit Association, of Detroit, is just such an institution as is described by the Auditor of Iowa. Its promoter, it is said, is now rich, and its patrons have been fleeced, one man alone losing nearly \$300. Superintendent McCall, of the State of New York, in referring to co-operatives, expresses himself thus:—

"As it stands to-day these organizations are as a rule simply experiments, and judging from the past, the result will be discomfiture to their members." Again he says in another part of his annual report, "All co-operative organizations that promise to pay any definite amount to the member during his life-time or at his death are frauds."