

whose trade was so much larger. The argument has great force, as we pointed out some time ago, when we expressed a belief that any proposal to place a tax on wheat or flour would be most obnoxious to the people of Great Britain. It seems, however, somewhat inconsistent for the people of the old land to show such enthusiastic appreciation of Canada granting them a tariff preference in her markets on goods which will compete with those made in this country, while at the same time they are so obstinately set upon refusing Canada any preferences in exchange. Jug handled reciprocity naturally excites considerable opposition in the Dominion. The whole question bristles with fiscal difficulties for the solution of which some statesman like solution must be ultimately found if Imperial unity is to advance beyond the stage of sentiment. Although doubt has been thrown upon it, there can be no question that Mr. Chamberlain had some Zollverein scheme in his mind when the Colonial Premiers were in London. Of its nature we are not fully informed, as the feelers he then threw out met with a frosty reception by the representative of Canada. The question of Imperial reciprocity is one which has a future, and, as the feeling develops in favor of closer, more practical Imperial union, so will develop the conviction that preferential trade is a vital necessity to more intimate Imperial unity.

**Seven Years' Absence Question.**

The question, "If a man is legally dead after seven years' disappearance, when did he die?" is said by the *Insurance Monitor* to be a puzzle a New Jersey vice-chancellor is called on to decide in a property dispute. "One of the lawyers insists that the court may metaphorically kill him at any time during the seven years. The bearing on life insurance is obvious. A policy is payable at a certain time after death. Thereafter interest runs. If a court can set back the date of death, the actual liability might be increased 25 per cent. It has always been supposed that the victim lived until the law killed him." Is it not obvious that, if by the law of any State a man is legally dead after a seven years' disappearance he must be legally alive up to the end of the seven year period? Here, after a person has disappeared for five years, a legal arrangement can be made for administering his estate by trustees, but the man's legal rights and standing are not forfeited by his prolonged absence.

**Is A British Life Assurance Company a Foreign Corporation?** Some amusement was recently caused by a Canadian Judge taking over a month to consider, and to decide, whether the Standard Life Assurance Company is a "foreign" corporation, or not, on this point hinging the question whether it should be compelled to put up a deposit in Court to cover costs! This is an especially curious question to arise in this Jubilee year when so much has been said, and is yet being said, in regard to the Imperial unity subsisting between Great Britain and its Colonies. It is highly amusing to

find the point raised over the Standard which the Report for 1896 of the Superintendent of Insurance, Ottawa, "Printed by Order of Parliament," states had \$12,348,186 of its Assets in Canada on 31st December last, of which over three millions was held by the Government of Canada. One would think this sum quite enough security for even a law suit. The Standard Life Assurance Company is no more a "foreign" Corporation from the Canadian standpoint than the Law Courts of Canada are "foreign" Courts from the English standpoint, they are both equally under British authority, and both alike owe and own allegiance to Queen Victoria.

**THE FIRE IN LONDON.**

London has a fire record of, we believe, unparalleled blackness. Five times it has been nearly swept out of existence by conflagrations, ranging in time from the close of the 8th century to the latter part of the 17th, the year 1666 being ever memorable as the date of the great fire of London. That disaster devastated 436 acres covered with buildings. The losses have been estimated at \$50,000,000, but it is impossible to give figures which convey a correct idea of the losses in that period as compared with modern values. Macaulay says: "Such a fire had not been known in Europe since the conflagration of Rome under Nero." It was a blessing in disguise, as the late fire will probably be judged to have been in future years. The recent fire broke out on the 10th November in a district, which, though quite near to the streets most familiar to visitors to London, is little known to those who are not drawn there by business or curiosity to see a very old part of the metropolis which has no attractions to the sight-seer, save its associations. The block of 171 warehouses and other buildings recently destroyed is said to have covered two acres. There were 300 firms doing business in the burnt district whose stocks and office records have almost wholly disappeared. The estimates of losses vary from 10 millions to 40 millions of dollars. This divergency shows guess work. The insurance companies estimate their losses at from \$1,500,000 to \$4,000,000. The district was avoided by many underwriters as too dangerous, owing to the congestion of stocks of enormous value in lofty warehouses, which were difficult of approach in case of fire, as some of the roadways were mere narrow lanes. One warehouse is stated to have contained ostrich feathers valued at \$350,000. The conflagration caused a drop in Consols, and India 3 per cents., as the insurance companies were expected to put a quantity of these securities on the market to provide for claims. The shares of the companies fell also considerably and indiscriminately. The origin of the fire is a mystery, but to us its extension so rapidly in spite of the boasted London Fire Brigade, which came out in full force, is more mysterious. The ancient Church of the parish, containing the record of Cromwell's marriage, the deaths by the plague of 1665