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### LIFE ASSURANCE IN CANADA IN 1883.

On another page we give the summary published in advance by the Superintendent of Insurance, showing the business done by the Companies in 1883. His figures are of course subject to correction yet, but the changes to be made will probably be few and unimportant. It will be noticed that we have grouped the results and shown how they compare with the previous year. The statistics of the individual companies are very interesting, but the totals are much more so.

It will be seen that the companies, both home, British and American, have made considerable headway during the year. The Canadian companies still continue, however, to advance most rapidly. Out of a total increase in premium income, of about \$300,000 (including the Star Life figures) they got about \$161,000, and out of a total increase in sums assured of about \$10,000,000, they got nearly \$7,000,000. They now have about half of all the assurances in force in the country. The American Companies showed considerable activity, however, and their new business was over \$2,500,000 more than in 1882.

A larger business has been done in Life Assurance in the Dominion during the past year than ever before, and the companies are to be congratulated on the solid and satisfactory progress they have made. We will probably look into the reports of the individual companies later on.

### LIFE ASSURANCE, THEN AND NOW.

We were forcibly struck lately when looking over the well-known "Annals of Life Assurance" by John Francis, published in 1853, by some reflections on the nature and position of the business at that time. It may be instructive to reproduce a selection here:

"In most other speculative societies, their failure produces very painful results. A railway sees its capital spent, and is obliged to make further calls on its proprietors. An unsuccessful canal company has only the certainty of having fed and demoralised some thousands of stalwart navigators, in exchange for the ruin of its shareholders; while the failure of a mine is the melancholy close of many a bright hope. But it is not so bad with a life assurance company. The insured—except in offices originated with a fraudulent design, such as the West Middlesex—has never yet been deceived by the failure of a policy. To take Scotland as an instance, many of the companies have not been able to maintain their ground; but in no one case has the policy-holder risked his premium or lost his assurance. Thus the Scottish Life, when unable to maintain itself, handed its business over to the Mercantile, which then became responsible. When the Mercantile ceased to be an independent company, it transferred its policies to the 'Life Association'. The "Scottish Masonic" and the "Bon Accord" business was taken up by the Northern. In no instance, therefore, has any legitimate company failed in its engagements. The public has never been scandalized with tales and traditions of wrong and ruin. Nor has the improvident man been strengthened in his improvidence by being able to plead losses which others have sustained."

Would that these remarks were still true! What a contrast they are to the condition of the business now! But is there any good reason why the record in the United States, for instance, should not even now be nearly, if not quite, as clean as that quoted above? None whatever. We believe almost the sole reason for the losses to policyholders there, through the failure of companies, has been the establishing of an artificial legal standard of solvency. The great majority of those institutions whose failure has brought such disgrace on the whole business were, beyond a doubt, never really insolvent at all, although, by the artificial standard, they were so. We have referred fully to this subject in previous issues. (See INSURANCE SOCIETY, May, 1883). We believe the course adopted in England to be both the most reasonable and the most expedient. There is no mortality table set up as a standard of solvency, but new companies have to deposit £20,000, and all have to furnish full sworn statements every year, which are published by the Government. The result has been very satisfactory. Since the passing of the Act, fourteen years ago, there has been but