

THE DECLINE OF ASSESSMENTISM.

The *Weekly Statement* has done good service by compiling from the New York official insurance reports for ten years the record of assessment life associations, and thereby clearly showing the decline of business on this pay-as-you-go plan. After stating that while in 1887 there were 171 of these associations reporting to the insurance department, in 1891 there were only 121; and that in the last two years the number of policies annually written had fallen off 31.8 per cent., and the policies in force 55.1 per cent., and that the total income had been reduced 54.1 per cent., our contemporary says:—

In 1882 131 associations paid death claims amounting to \$7,430,857, in a membership of 445,296. This was at the rate of \$16.70 assessed to each policy in force. In 1891, 121 associations reported 503,397 policies in force, and paid during the year the sum of \$13,060,700.45 for death claims, making the average rate of assessment twenty-six dollars to each policy. This indicates that in nine years the death rate cost of assessment insurance has increased nearly 60 per cent. on the basis of the combined record of all the companies doing business. The following is the record made in the last ten years by the co-operative assessment associations:—

YEAR.	No. of Societies.	Total Income.	Death Claims Paid.	Expenses Paid.	Policies Written in the Year.	Policies in Force.
1882	131	Not stated	\$ 7,430,857	Not stated	119,385	445,296
1883	117	\$11,787,152	10,347,380	\$1,310,277	130,617	525,699
1884	118	13,241,042	11,159,303	1,528,821	135,083	591,574
1885	135	16,630,852	13,461,772	2,337,588	181,983	653,086
1886	139	21,293,179	17,352,757	2,728,542	227,922	836,737
1887	171	25,552,986	20,364,327	3,499,786	268,169	935,446
1888	166	28,491,189	22,616,044	4,162,554	291,101	847,992
1889	168	31,127,608	24,015,429	5,004,329	335,918	1,125,046
1890	130	18,225,025	12,311,733	4,665,371	243,107	579,419
1891	121	20,206,074	13,060,700	5,452,405	229,191	503,397

Loss of membership since 1889.....	621,649
Loss of income since 1889.....	\$10,921,534
Loss of new policies written in year.....	106,727
Increase of annual expenses in last five years.....	\$2,723,863

Perhaps the most startling item in the above exhibit is the enormous increase of expenses since 1886. The number of policies written five years ago was about the same as now, 227,922 in 1886 and 229,191 in 1891. The policies in force have fallen off from 836,737 in 1886 to 503,397 in 1891. The business being smaller, the expenses ought to have been correspondingly lower. On the contrary, assessment society expenses have been increased in an inverse ratio to the business done, viz., from \$2,728,541.65, being three dollars and twenty-seven cents per policy in 1886, to \$5,452,405.23, being ten dollars and ninety cents per policy in 1891. It was to be expected that the death rate would increase with the years as shown by the record (twenty dollars and seventy cents per policy in 1886 to twenty-six dollars per policy in 1891), but the remarkable increase in the expense account must be attributed to some other cause than the compensations paid agents whose new business being no greater, they have probably received no more in commission and salaries than they did five years ago.

An analysis of the items composing the expense account of all these co-operative assessment societies would probably show that the bulk of the increase in their annual expense account (which is nearly \$3,000,000 a year more than in 1886) is due to salaries paid officers and other employees, advertising and printing and the miscellaneous expenses incurred in distributing controversial literature against "old line" companies. In two years the assessment societies have lost more than half the number of policies they had in force in 1889.

LA CANADIENNE LIFE.

A friend has sent us a copy of the annual statement for 1891 made to its patrons by La Canadienne Life of this city, which shows a condition of steady decline as compared with 1888, the last year until now that we have been able to get any statement from the company; for it is to be remembered that it reports to no Insurance Department, Provincial or otherwise. The 1891 statement shows that on ordinary life business 140 policies for \$148,000 were issued, as against 755 policies for \$776,750 reported in 1888, and that in 1891 the ordinary assurance in force was only \$284,250, against \$694,750 in 1888. At this rate of decline it is not difficult to see that the end of a year or two more may see also the end of the company on its ordinary life business. We see that last fall it commenced an industrial business, with what ultimate success remains to be seen. Its assets are given at \$43,967.85, of which \$11,990.40 is for commuted commissions on policies in force, whatever that item means, \$7,448.80 for bills receivable, and \$2,172.44 due from agents. How much real value these assets have is only too apparent, especially when the report itself states that the directors have decided to reduce bills receivable by the sum of \$2,000, in view of the fact that these bills though due will probably never be paid! The actual cash assets on hand seem to be only \$20,935, including \$20,000 said to be deposited to the credit of the provincial government. The 1888 report claimed this deposit to be \$25,000. Altogether, we gather from this statement before us that La Canadienne is about on its last legs as a life assurance institution.

THE ST. JOHNS FIRE BRIGADE.

The general inefficiency of the fire brigade at St. Johns, Newfoundland, at the time of the late great fire, is well known; but the reason of the failure to handle the fire at its incipency, which even such a brigade ought to have been able to do, has been stated by a correspondent of the *Montreal Gazette* recently in a way we have nowhere else seen. It seems that at the place where the fire started, the brigade, out for practice the night before, had used up all the water in a large reservoir, and then went away without refilling it! Of course when the fire broke out the abundant supply of water, which it is admitted on all hands St. Johns possessed when properly distributed, was as useless for the time being as though it had been located in Siberia. After stating that more than two-thirds of the city was built of wood, and urging the necessity of eliminating this conflagration element from the new St. Johns to be constructed, the *Gazette* correspondent has the following to say of the fire brigade:—

Such a fatal combination of circumstances as led to our recent calamity may not occur more than once in fifty years; but it is always a possibility, and should be guarded against with the utmost vigilance. It is well to widen streets and secure fire-breaks, but the main dependence must be placed on the fire brigade. No expense should be spared to make it, both in organization and equipment, thoroughly efficient, so that when a fire breaks out there may be always on hand an overwhelming force to pounce upon it and suppress it.