

bankrupts last year was \$6,351,000, averaging \$192,400, as compared with \$7,500, the average of all the bankruptcies. The report speaks of the failures of public companies as "a rapidly growing feature." The following shows the principal increases and decreases in bankrupt liabilities last year and the classes in which they occurred:

Bankrupts.	Increases.	Bankrupts.	Decreases.
Directors	\$1,905,000	Bankers.....	\$3,110,700
Co. promoters &c..	1,913,000	Solicitors.....	1,481,300
Wool dealers	936,800	Drapers.....	783,360
Liquor "	734,350	Farmers.....	549,700
Cotton "	664,800	Corn dealers.....	513,470

The worst bank failures were caused by taking over collieries to secure a debt, which adds one more to the long list of banking disasters arising from real estate transactions. There were eight bankruptcies in England of "company promoters" and speculators in their stocks, whose aggregate liabilities were \$10,005,000 with nominal assets. Amongst these was the celebrated Mr. Hooley, whose bankruptcy is spoken of as the most remarkable one on record. His career ran only three years. In that time he had started 26 joint stock companies, with a total capital of \$93,050,000, on which he claimed to have made a profit of \$25,140,000, yet he failed for \$2,450,000. It was revealed that he made a business of selling shares in the prospective profits of new companies, one speculator having paid him \$250,000 for a share in certain ventures, out of which the buyer received \$3,050,000 in cash and shares. Yet, after handling such enormous sums, and nominally reaping such prodigious profits, Mr. Hooley came out with a loss, and an experience in the Bankruptcy Court.

The report contains a strong warning against merely ornamental directors. It exposes a new form of fraud which will interest bankers, and caution them. Persons of some standing opened agencies for introducing necessitous traders to each other. Under instructions by the agent they manufactured accommodation bills on each other, and on confederates. They also made out bogus invoices for goods never shipped. The bills were discounted readily as they were shown to be bona-fide by the invoices being exhibited for the amounts drawn for—both bills and invoices being fictitious. Into this remarkable conspiracy three hundred persons were drawn, and bills floated for from ten to fifteen millions of dollars. The operators of the scheme cleared large incomes for a time, but are now serving sentences of eight years and six years in a penitentiary. Last year was an unlucky one for financiers whose ingenuity outran their honesty.

The liabilities of the insolvents who failed in Canada and the United States in the years from 1892 to 1898 were as follows:

Years	In Canada Liabilities.	In U. States Liabilities.	In England Liabilities.
	\$	\$	\$
1892.....	11,560,201	108,595,200	73,610,000
1893.....	14,762,500	402,127,800	75,330,000
1894.....	17,724,600	169,595,400	66,910,000
1895.....	15,803,000	173,196,000	56,985,000
1896.....	17,169,000	225,097,000	51,910,000
1897.....	14,157,000	154,332,000	48,295,000
1898.....	9,821,000	130,663,000	53,195,000

For Canada alone the insolvency returns for the last five years were:

Year.	Liabilities. \$	Assets. \$	p.c. of Assets to Liabilities.
1898.....	9,821,323	7,692,094	79 p.c.
1897.....	14,157,498	10,574,529	74 p.c.
1896.....	17,169,683	12,656,837	73 p.c.
1895.....	15,802,989	11,500,242	72 p.c.
1894.....	17,724,600	13,510,056	76 p.c.

It will be noted that in regard to the proportion of assets to liabilities the returns of insolvent estates in Canada compare very favourably with the bankrupt estates in England. It is, however, much to be regretted that while in England we have the official returns of a public Bankruptcy Court, in this country and the States we have no official returns, but only the statistics compiled by two mercantile agencies, whose work, though no doubt done with care and honesty, does not carry the weight of official authority. The representations made by the Colonial Office to the Government of this country will, we trust, lead to the removal of the injustice to English creditors which has been so much complained of. We trust also, now their attention has been drawn to the need of some insolvency legislation for this Dominion, to bring Canada into line with the Mother Country and other parts of the Empire, and to remove certain difficulties which exist in English creditors dealing with Canadian insolvents, that the Government will give earnest consideration to an Insolvency Act for this Dominion.

TRUTHS FOR FIRE INSURANCE AGENTS.

The annual meeting of the National Association of Local Fire Insurance Agents in the United States was rendered remarkable by some excellent addresses conceived in the right spirit and couched in the language of truth. The following extracts from the address of President Irwin, of the National Board of Underwriters, contain a capital exposition of many of the existing abuses of the fire insurance business and are replete with sound advice to agents of companies. He said:

"You gentlemen occupy a position of responsibility and trust, and it should be one of appreciation and honor. The true and permanent interest and success of companies and agents can not be divorced, and any attempt to alienate or destroy that mutuality must be viewed with suspicion and distrust, for we have the highest authority for saying that a house divided against itself cannot stand.

This being the case, it seems almost unnecessary to emphasize the truth that the prosperity of the agent is dependent upon the prosperity of the company, and vice versa, and that an injustice to one is an injustice to both; yet this is like many other great truths that are so simple that they are ignored and finally forgotten.

The relations that should exist between a company and its agents are those of one united family stretch