

the Society's influence will develop an amount of business which a purely London board could never accomplish." While we laugh at this attempt of the butlers to mystify the public, let it not be forgotten that their masters have set them the example. Even companies managed by those in whom confidence is reposed, do not escape adverse criticism, and probably deserve it. As an example of this, let me cite the statement made by a correspondent in the *Daily News* of this morning. Referring to the Prudential Assurance, he says that the difficulty is to ascertain when a company is justified in boasting, as that one does, of the great success it has achieved, adding that, according to the report for last year, "its total insurance fund is £241,301 12s. 4d., and that its last year's premium income was £220,978 0s. 10d. This office has been in existence twenty years, and its assurance fund is only £20,323 11s. 6d. in excess of its last year's premium income; yet it boasts of great success. Will its actuary say that a life assurance company of twenty years' standing should only have in hand a little more than one year's premium?" Meantime, Mr. Cave's bill was read a second time last night in the House of Commons. There is a probability of its being amended in committee so as to become a useful and practical measure.

Before quitting this subject, let me furnish a few figures which have recently been compiled with regard to the companies designed to extend the advantages of life assurance to the poorer classes. The expenses of management in these companies is enormous. In one case, where the gross receipts were £94,000, the outlay for management was £36,000. In another it was discovered that £6,000 more were paid away in certain years than the receipts! This is the more to be censured if it be true, as has been stated, that some of the oldest and best companies in London do not expend more than from four to five per cent. in management. Unfortunately, however, the poor are the easy victims of swindlers, for they believe the promises made, and run the risk without counting the cost. Yet the rich or well-to-do cannot be absolved from a recklessness as gross as that of the working man who insures his life in an insolvent company. According to a statement published in the *Pull Mall Gazette* last night, the income of the gaming tables of Germany amount to about half a million sterling, while the total staked in the course of a year is seventeen millions! If to this could be added the sums risked in betting at horse-racing, the "speculative" tendencies of the age would receive an illustration which would startle the believers in progress.

The only recognized gambling here in England is the Stock Exchange. At present there is little business doing there. That section of the public which delights in speculation still keeps aloof from the scene of its losses. The demand for gold at the Bank of England still continues, notwithstanding the advance last week of the rate of discount from 3 to 4 per cent. It is believed that the last of the American eagles have been withdrawn from the cellars of the Bank. At one time it was said that there was a larger stock of American gold coin in the Bullion Office of the Bank of England than in the United States. Patriotic Americans will now rejoice at the thought that their gold has returned home. It is to be hoped that it will remain there, and become before long the currency of the country. However, the trade and currency of England being established on a sound basis, the flow of gold to America does not hinder the accumulation of as much bullion in the cellars of the Bank as can be desired. Australia and the Continent furnish supplies which soon fill up the temporary gap. Against the £92,000 worth taken away for exportation must be set £150,000 which have arrived during the week.

An application has just been made to the investing public on behalf of three companies formed for the purposes of gold mining and quartz

crushing. Two of these companies will conduct their operations in Australia; the third will develop the gold fields of New Zealand. The capital of the two Australian companies exceeds half a million sterling. It is noteworthy that the gold mining companies are seldom formed here with a view to conduct operations in Australia. There is capital enough there for the purpose. Besides, the Australians are too shrewd to allow a good thing to slip through their fingers. Out of the many companies projected here when gold was first discovered in Australia, but one survives. This is the "Port Philip and Colonial Gold Mining Company." It has proved a success. The shares are at nearly 100 per cent. premium. Yet the success of companies formed on the spot has been far greater. Hence there is a reluctance to embark capital in schemes which are not supported in the Colony. It was the same, I should think, in Nova Scotia. The mines which yield returns there are in the hands of persons well acquainted with the locality. A company which was formed here for the purpose of working a Nova Scotian gold mine became popular for a time; its shares were quoted at a large premium, but its shareholders are not to be envied. The company is now wound up, I suppose; at all events, its name has disappeared from the share list. The most successful gold mining companies, having their headquarters in London, are those which carry on operations in Brazil. Some of them have proved most remunerative. In the case of one not many years old, the shares on which 14s. are paid cannot be purchased under £5. The shareholders receive yearly a sum equivalent to their capital in the shape of dividends. It is hardly necessary to add that this company is an exception.

PROVINCIAL INSURANCE COMPANY.

To the Editor of the Monetary Times.

TORONTO, April 28, 1869.

SIR,—Accept the thanks of a large insurer for the plain and masterly manner you have exposed the standing of the Provincial Insurance Company. I trust you will do the same with every suspicious corporation that the public depend upon for security. It cannot be too strongly urged on the attention of the assurer that security is the first desideratum in all insurance transactions, and that his object is not attained unless the event or contingency against which he wishes to guard is provided for from the moment he has paid his premium, under all possible circumstances. It is, therefore, manifest that the capital of an insurance company should be sufficiently large to meet all possible demands, with a proportionate reserve fund, and that its amount should be distinctly stated, or shown how invested, in order that its entire sufficiency to meet all claims may plainly appear. By the Provincial Company's own showing, they are far from being in the desired position as security to the insurance public.

Yours truly,

A CONSTANT READER AND A LARGE INSURER.

—Notices of application from the Erie and Niagara Extension Railway Company and Erie and Niagara Railway Company to the next Dominion Parliament for powers authorizing both or either of these railway companies to construct and operate for a railway or other purposes a bridge over or a tunnel under Niagara River, or near Fort Erie, in the County of Welland, to cooperate in construction and management with any similar corporate powers existing within the State of New York, or to be created by the Congress of the United States; said bridge to have 250 feet span, to rise above high-water mark 20 feet, to be of stone or iron piers, or wrought iron or steel superstructure, and to have a draw of 270 feet for vessels.

THE NEW ENGLISH BANKRUPTCY BILL.

Another attempt is about being made to establish such an equilibrium of opinion as will be equally acceptable to the creditor, the debtor and the public. The task will tax all the energies of the many legislators upon whose shoulders and by whose strength it will be supported. The proposal is to make a clean sweep in the beginning, by turning adrift the highest officials to the lowest and poorest hangers-on, superannuating some, and leaving the touting many to burrow as they can into the new warren. The basis of the new plan proposed is ostensibly for the benefit of the creditors, to whom great concessions are to be made, in the way of prevention rather than of cure; a rather doubtful case, which calls upon the creditors, after losing their money, to lose their time also. The first thing proposed is, when a man is made a bankrupt by his creditors, or when he suffers judgment to go by default, he should be adjudged bankrupt, and then his creditors would be called together to determine upon the right of different creditors to vote; this is to be done under the supervision of the Court, there being then three courses open to them. They might accept a composition and there end the affair, the bankruptcy terminating; they may agree to a deed of arrangement, proceed to elect a trustee from among themselves or other acceptable person, deciding upon his remuneration, whose duties would be to receive proof of debts and determine on them, subject to an appeal to the Court, realise assets, declare dividends, and have power to wind up the estates. As an additional security, an inspector (so termed) may be appointed to watch over the trustee, the accounts to be audited by the accountant in bankruptcy, the whole under the supervision of the Judge, who will also have the power to appoint a receiver, on the application of the creditors, having also the power to supersede the bankruptcy. The third course is, under justifiable circumstances, to bring the debtor into a criminal court. The object of the bankruptcy being for the benefit of the creditors, not for the bankrupt, the latter will not be permitted to make a bankrupt of himself, which provision was accorded to him when imprisonment for debt was exacted. It is also proposed to hold the bankrupt in after-acquired property for six years, unless he has before that time paid a certain amount of dividend, say 10s. in the pound; the property only to be liable on the order of the Court. As a matter of course the creditors can release him from these responsibilities. Acts coming under the denomination of fraud, fraudulent concealment, obtaining goods while in a state of hopeless insolvency, &c., to be tried before the judges of the land, the laws on these heads being made more stringent. It is also proposed that all post-nuptial settlements made by a bankrupt, if between two years of the bankruptcy, unless he can prove that he was solvent at the time, shall be absolutely void.

The commencement of the programme reads well, so far as concerns the real interests of the creditors themselves, it being left to them to take the wisest course, and compromise, or get what they can from the estates and effects of the bankrupts; and in ordinary cases it is all that the creditor can reasonably require: but, in failures to a large amount, the creditors have before them nearly all the machinery, and all the evils and inconveniences, of the present system—fees, receivers appointed by the court to assist, accountants who know so well how to take the cream from the milk; fees of court, and the chance of being called upon to appear as prosecutor or witness at the Old Bailey, or any other criminal court. It is true, Commissioners of Bankruptcy vanish, but a well-paid Judge is to supply their place. Another onerous thing is, that when a man, being called upon to pay a debt, does not come into court, he should be made a bankrupt. This negatives at once the declaration that no man shall make himself a bankrupt, a friend being substituted for himself, a friend not difficult