Railways.

A NEW NORTHERN RAILWAY.—A public meeting was held in London, Ont., in reference to a project which has been agitated for a short time—to build a railway from that city to some point on Lake Huron, most probably Goderich or Kincardine. The distance to the latter place is stated at 105 miles, and the estimated cost of the road as figured up by some of the speakers at the meeting is $800,000 to $1,000,000. It would pass through or near the townships of London, Biddulph, McGillvray, Hay, Osborne, between Stanley and Tuckersmith through Clinton, Wawanosh, and the village of Lucknow, Ashfield, Bruce, Huron and Kinloss townships to Lake Huron. It is supposed that London would give $75,000 to $100,000, and that the townships along the line would also give bonuses to the amount of $250,000 to $300,000. A strong committee was drafted to secure a charter from the Legislature.

ANOTHER WOODEN RAILWAY.—The directors of the Levis and Kennebec Railway Company have completed a contract with Mr. Hulbert, the contractor of the Quebec and Gosford wooden railway, to build fifty miles of this road at $6,600 a mile, Mr. Hulbert taking $600 per mile in stock in the railway at par, and agreeing to place equal to $2,000 per mile of rolling stock, in addition to making the road and laying the track. This is said to include all the stations except the one at Point Levi. The road to be completed before July, 1872. It is intended to continue the road forty miles further as soon as the first fifty miles are completed.

GOSFORD WOODEN RAILWAY.—This road was opened on Saturday last. It is stated that a speed of 20 miles per hour has been attained in running over it. The cost of the road is $6,000 per mile. The stockholders are entitled to one cord of hardwood, at cost price, for every $10 of paid up stock. The directors have an offer to lease the road at an average rental of 6 per cent. on the cost. The intention is to continue the road to Lake St. John, on the Saguenay.

GREAT WESTERN RAILWAY.—Traffic for week ending, Nov. 11th, 1870.

Passengers	$29,502 55
Freight and Live Stock	50,250 81
Mails and Sundries	2,384 60
Total receipts for week	$82,137 96
Corresponding week, 1869	81,739 50
Increase	$398 46

SOUTHERN RAILWAY.—Hon. Wm. McDougall has been appointed trustee for the Canada Southern municipal bonus bonds. A. McKellar, M.P.P., and Hon. H. Killaly, are the other trustees.

—The Wellington, Grey & Bruce Railway was opened to Alma yesterday the 1st December.

Insurance.

MUTUAL FIRE INSURANCE COMPANIES.

A meeting of the representatives of Mutual Fire Insurance Companies was held on the 22nd inst. in Guelph. It was convened by circular addressed to the Secretary or Manager of each Mutual Fire Insurance Company doing business in Ontario; and the following Companies were represented: the Agricultural, of London; the Gore District, of Galt; the Wellington, of Guelph; the Beaver & Toronto, of Toronto; the Waterloo, of Waterloo; the Hastings of Belleville; the Maple Leaf, of Peterboro'; the Prince Edward, of Picton; the Victoria and the Canada West, of Hamilton; the Guelph Township, of Guelph; and the Perth, of Stratford.

Mr. Wm. Niles, of the Agricultural, of London, having been called to the Chair, and Mr. Robert McLean, of the Gore District Mutual, appointed Secretary:—

It was moved by Mr. McLean, seconded by Mr. John Twigg, of Picton, and carried unanimously—That it is desirable and expedient to consolidate and amend the several Acts relating to Mutual Fire Insurance Companies doing business in Ontario, by obtaining an Act from the Ontario Legislature for the regulation and government of such Companies.

On Motion of Mr. J. H. Peck, Belleville, seconded by John Carnegie, M.P.P., it was decided—That the Bill as submitted to the local Legislature at its last session, be now read clause by clause.

The Secretary of Committee, Mr. Simons, of the Gore Mutual, of Galt, then reported that the Bill about to be read was that which had been approved of by the committee appointed last year, and finally revised most carefully by Mr. Geo. W. Burton, of Hamilton, a barrister of the highest authority in all matters appertaining to insurance.

Each clause was then read and considered separately. R. Christie, M.P.P., and John Carnegie, M.P.P., took great interest in the proceedings, and explained their views on many important points.

After the bill had been disposed of, on motion of Mr. J. H. Peck, of Belleville, seconded by Mr. C. M. Taylor, of Waterloo, it was resolved, that the bill as now amended be submitted to the charge of John Carnegie, M.P.P., and Robt. Christie, M.P.P., at the next session of the Ontario Legislature.

On motion of Mr. Wm. Mowatt, of Stratford, seconded by Mr. Jeremiah Hughes, of Waterloo, it was resolved—

That Messrs. S. Thompson, Thos. M. Simons, and D. C. Macdonald, with the representatives of any other mutual Fire Insurance Company, who may happen to be in Toronto at the time, be a committee to attend to the bill at the next session of the legislature.

Mr. Simons then drew the the attention of the meeting to the importance of an association being formed of the Managers or other leading representatives of the different Mutual Fire Insurance Companies doing business in Ontario, when, after some conversation on the subject, it was moved by Mr. John Carnegie, seconded by Mr. Chas. Davidson, of Guelph, and resolved, That an association be formed of gentlemen connected with the management of the different Mutual Fire Insurance companies doing business in Ontario, to meet annually, for the purpose of promoting the general welfare of such companies, and discussing questions affecting their interests. Further, that Mr. Simons be requested to convene a meeting at Toronto, for the purpose of organizing such an assciation, during the ensuing legislative session.

The Chairman then left the Chair, when it was moved by Mr. Street, of Hamilton, seconded by Mr. C. Davidson, and carried unanimously—That the thanks of this meeting be accorded to Mr. Niles for the able manner in which he has conducted the business of this meeting.

The meeting ended about half-past two of the morning of the 23rd inst.

MUTUAL FIRE INSURANCE AND ITS ABUSES.

Mr. Wyllys King, Insurance Superintendent of Missouri, in his annual report, animadverts sharply on the practices of the officers and agents of Mutual Insurance Companies in that State. He says:—

The necessity of a new insurance law of stringent legal enactment regulating the conduct of insurance companies, and protecting the people against the great wrongs that could be and were practiced by irresponsible and fraudulent companies will be seen when we consider the condition of insurance affairs in this State at the time of the passage of the law of March 10, 1869. There were no police regulations of any kind governing either home or foreign companies: no reports or examinations were made or required, and it was very difficult for any person but an officer of a company to gain any positive or correct information of its condition and transactions. In some companies that come under my examination but few books of any kind were kept, and these were written up in such a slovenly manner, and with so much mystery, that even the officers of the companies could tell nothing about the entries, and it is believed they were not very desirous of giving to them a true interpretation. A wide door was left open for dishonest companies of other States to come and practice their swindling operations amongst our people. Agents of such companies covered the State, wrote risks on specious and novel plans, and have defrauded without fear of penalty. Of such companies those incorporated in this state and organized on the 'mutual plan to do fire insurance, were most productive of mischief and fraud. There was nothing on our statute book to prevent any poverty-stricken adventurers from organizing such companies; and as they offered to directors, officers and agents rare and rich opportunities to put money in their pockets of course many were created. Any five or more persons could procure a license from the Secretary of State and become a corporate body to do insurance upon the mutual plan, merely by filing in the office of the clerk of the county court where the company was to be organized, articles of association 'setting forth the name they assume, the time the association is proposed to be continued, and the number of directors proposed to be elected. Under the law such companies had power to extend their business to all parts of the United States; persons insuring property therein for more than twelve months became members, and, in most cases, without knowledge of the legal fact, gave the company liens upon their property insured while their policies were in force. These were held to meet proportional parts of all losses that might occur, and all assessments that might be made by the company. These members were at the mercy of officers who were self-elected and who had a way of continuing themselves in office. The following brief statement of facts brought out by personal examitions of the affairs of some of these mutual fire companies made by my direction, will show how they were operated. Reports of these examinations are on file in this department.

This statement of facts will apply to nearly all of the companies into the affairs of which special examinations were made. I am glad to say that a few honorable exceptions were found. After procuring certificates of incorporation, the incorporators would first proceed to make themselves members of the new companies by effecting insurance therein for the term of twelve months or more, as required by law. But as the law did not fix a limit to the amount of insurance necessary for such purpose, and as such persons were not possessed of large estates, or had not sufficient confidence in their undertaking, it was a rare case to find one who had insured his own property for a greater amount than from one thousand n fifteen hundred dollars, while many insured in sums ranging from two to five hundred dollars. The property insured in such cases generally being furniture, books, wearing apparel, and such other destructible material. The premium notes given were ten per cent. of the amount insured, and the cash premium paid at the time of taking insurance was ten per cent. of premium notes. Thus upon the payment of cost of policies, and cash assessments of from fifty to fifteen dollars, each of these incorporators would become members, and would afterwards support the dignity of directors. The next step taken by such incorporators and members was to elect as many of themselves as possible directors and officers, and to fix the salaries pertaining to their offices. As this was all in their own hands they allowed themselves sufficient compensation for the work to be done. In each