

THE ANNUAL REPORT of the Registrar-General on vital statistics of England and Wales for 1889 has recently been issued. Assuming the increase in population to be in the ratio shown by the last census, the total for England and Wales for 1889 was 29,015,613, an increase of more than three millions since 1881. The total number of births in 1889 was 885,944, or 30.5 to each 1,000 of population and the lowest during the past fifty years. The number of deaths registered was 518,353, showing a percentage of 17.9 per thousand of the estimated population. This is very nearly identical with the mortality of 1888, when the rate per 1,000 was 17.8. Previous to 1881 the death rate had never been so low as 20 per 1,000, while since that year it has invariably been below that figure. Of the above deaths 266,102 were of males and 252,251 of females, or 18.8 and 16.9 per 1,000 of the corresponding sex, respectively. This shows a considerable decline from the average record of the preceding ten years for both sexes. The interesting question is, will the death rate continue to decrease as general intelligence and scientific discoveries increase?

THE STATE OF Iowa has an organization, with members in nearly all parts of the State among business men, banded together for mutual benefit in credit rating and collections among retailers. It is called the State Business Men's Association. This association proposes to run the business of fire insurance hereafter without the aid of either insurance capital or underwriting brains. The scheme is very nice—all untried schemes are—and the association is to have a general meeting in a few days at the State capital to put the scheme in operation. The plan is for local boards to be formed in the principal towns, who shall pass upon applications and adjust losses, the numerous agents of the association to solicit business gratis in connection with their regular work. Assessments are to be collected and held by the local boards for the payment of losses. The association proposes to give the use of its machinery gratis for the incidental benefit it expects to receive, and so, practically, the expense element will be eliminated. As about one "business man" in a hundred thousand or so knows anything about fire hazard or the proper basis of adjustments, and as men are not prone to work for nothing for the benefit of somebody else, this socialistic insurance scheme is fore-ordained to come to early grief.

OUR SAN FRANCISCO contemporary, the *Coast Review*, is authority for the statement, that a British Columbia agent of a United States fire insurance company has written to the San Francisco general agent of the company, that the land commissioner of the Canadian Pacific Railway Co. has stated that, "as the lines of insurance carried by the clients of the company fall due, they shall be renewed in English or Canadian companies only." The *Coast Review* supposes, correctly perhaps, that the "clients" referred to are the purchasers of land from the railway company, who secure a part of the purchase money by mortgage on the land and insurance on the buildings, etc. Now, all

this reads very strangely, and looks as though our contemporary had been misinformed. We pass over the peculiarity of the alleged action to call attention to the somewhat notorious fact, that the Canadian Pacific has been famous for exactly an opposite course. It has shown so marked a partiality for British and Canadian companies, that it has for some time placed all its insurance in American companies, and some of them not authorized to do business in Canada at all! That certainly does not look as if the managers of the railway were specially solicitous for the welfare of home institutions, or even the sanctity of law, which has been the protector of its vast interests, inasmuch as they are willing to patronize even the law-breakers from over the border. We think our contemporary must have been misinformed.

WALKERTON HEARD FROM.

In our issue for January 1 we took occasion to refer to and briefly comment upon a widely published report of a committee of the Walkerton Board of Trade, which besides being in the nature of an attack on the fire insurance companies for excessive premium charges, proposed a plan for constituting Walkerton in its corporate capacity the insurer of its own property. Our remarks seem to have stirred up the insurance committee of the above named Board of Trade. The result is a lengthy communication from the committee, which we print in another column. Nothing could serve to better illustrate the erroneous ideas and poverty of information possessed by the average enthusiastic "reformer" of the great business of insurance than this communication. Written in a dashing style it is very readable, and also very misleading, as we shall proceed to show.

Stripped of its airy rhetoric and "smart" phrases, the communication may be dealt with under two heads, viz.: misrepresentation and fallacy. In the first place, the writer of the communication undertakes to refute our former statement, viz.: that to the \$56,610,852 paid for fire losses in Canada during the past 21 years must be added 30 per cent. at least of the \$80,002,000 collected in premiums, in order to form a correct conclusion as to profit or otherwise of the business. The method of refutation pursued is not original, but it is highly convenient. It consists in simply denying our statement, and that notwithstanding the writer says: "We have no means at present of ascertaining the exact proportion of general expenses to income for the 21 years." He does, however, quote from the Insurance Superintendent's reports for two years, 1888 and 1889, to prove that the expense percentage was 26.22 in 1888 and 27.30 in 1889. How well qualified our critic is to give us a lesson in insurance statistics will appear when we state that the quotations paraded for both years were from the experience of the Canadian branches of the *British companies* only! Not only this, but on pages immediately following (from XII to XVII), in the 1889 report, the general expenses as well as losses and premiums of both the American and Canadian companies are given, covering a period of 15