

Star Life

Assurance Society
OF LONDON - - - England

Assets, 31st Dec., 1898 **\$17,500,000**
Annual Income **2,700,000**
Assurance Force **63,000,000**
Invested in Canada **1,600,000**

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tions in revenue. The receipts from immigration alone have been cut down 70 per cent below the figures for the same period of 1893. The suspension of traffic owing to the paralysis of trade caused by the tariff uncertainties in the States was most disastrous to railway interests. American railways in the last year went into the hands of the receivers wholesale, to an extent without parallel in railway history. Besides these general causes there were the strikes and disturbances in the West that utterly disorganized both freight and passenger traffic.

The Customs returns also show large reductions in imports for some time past, that must have considerably affected freight receipts. Although there was a very fair amount of tourist travel last summer, the generally felt depression, owing mainly to the low prices of farm produce, kept down passenger traffic to a low level, as a very large amount of travelling is done by persons in rural districts when times are good, that is wholly cut off when economy is the order of the day.

We see, then, in the above conditions, ample explanations of the unfavorable returns of the Grand Trunk Railway as shown in the last year's Report. We note that a London paper attacks the Canadian management. It declares that there are "too many trains for the requirements of traffic," that the line is "hampered by an excessive staff," that "the departments are uneconomically controlled," or "the traffic is honeycombed with favoritism."

We like the latter phrase much, it is so delightfully new as to be refreshing amid so much staleness. But what it means we do not presume to understand. We have had much to do with traffic of all kinds; have seen all varieties of it, but "traffic" that is "honeycombed" we have not met with, nor can we conceive by what process traffic can be "honeycombed." But it sounds well as a bit of rhetoric, and the absence of sense is, of course, the only drawback—the phrase is indeed "honeycombed" with nonsense. It is all very fine for a writer sitting in a London editorial office to say that there are "too many trains" on a Canadian railway. But, we venture to say that he knows nothing about what number of trains are being run on the Grand Trunk, nor has he the ghost of an idea as to the requirements of the Canadian people in respect to travelling

accommodation. He most probably belongs to the class in England who fancy the passengers on our railways shoot bears from the back platforms of cars, and travel in hourly peril of being railed by wild Indians.

The criticisms we have lately read in several London papers on Canadian affairs show a striking capacity for making ignorance the basis of editorials, or a readiness to sell their space to speculators, and other mischief makers, bent on decrying Canadian securities in order to put money in their purses at the expense of innocent persons whom they deceive. It is commonly notorious that much of the criticism of the Grand Trunk, and of other Canadian enterprises, which has appeared in English journals for some time past has been "honeycombed" with fraud. There is more danger in London from "bears" than in Canada. No person familiar with even the alphabet of railway management can do otherwise than ridicule the notion that trains must be cancelled proportionately to a temporary falling off in traffic, as English critics of the Grand Trunk affirm should be done.

Facilities for traffic increase it, under normal conditions. Knowing the Grand Trunk system well we challenge its English critics to name the trains that it would be wise to cancel. Any child can say, as they do, "there are too many trains." If they have sufficient knowledge of the line to specify those trains that ought to be cancelled let them point them out. We are satisfied that the managers here would be grateful for such advice, if, on examination, it proved to be worth attention. But when a foreign critic merely "talks through his hat" about our train service, the railway managers and the people of Canada must be excused telling such critics to confine their remarks to matters they know something about.

It is wholly overlooked that the Grand Trunk has now severe competition to contend against; it must either meet this by providing, at least, equal accommodation to its rival, or suffer heavily in all departments of its service. But, probably the very fact of such rivalry is unknown to its English critics. This is a fair inference from their entirely ignoring so serious a factor in their criticisms. As to the line being "hampered by an expensive staff," such a statement sounds absurd to those who are in daily contact with the Grand Trunk. The officials are notoriously overworked, from the General Manager downwards. There is a strain imposed by their routine duties which demonstrates the utter falsity of there being an "excessive staff." As to "favoritism," it would be well to specify cases, we know—every well informed business man in Canada knows—that service in the Grand Trunk is no "soft snap"; it means hard work, very long hours, and very moderate, often indeed, most inadequate pay.

We favor the Grand Trunk line being more directly controlled by a Canadian Board, but, under such conditions as have prevailed for a length of time past in the States, where a large amount of traffic is

drawn, and in this country, no railway can prosper, and no evidence has been published to prove, or to make it probable that, the unfavorable returns of the Grand Trunk have, to any extent, been caused by defective management on this side.

AMENDMENTS TO THE CITY CHARTER.

A string of 20 amendments to the Charter of this city has been recommended by a committee. The effect to secure these changes will require to be closely watched. They are divisible into three heads; those to improve the administrative machinery; those to increase taxation; and those to give the Council greater spending powers. Nos. 1 and 2 deal with the mode and cost of expropriations and system of assessment. These are closely associated. The assessed value of a property ought to be a good basis for fixing the cost of expropriating it, for an assessment should be the market value of the property assessed, with a moderate allowance for the loss and inconvenience arising from being dispossessed.

Expropriations made to facilitate the traffic of the city are fairly chargeable to the city, those made solely for local purposes, made to boom some section or aid some private interests, to improve and open up some properties that have fallen beneath the needs of the day, should be made mainly at the cost of those who own such properties or immediately adjacent ones that will be enhanced in value by the improvements proposed.

What is meant by clause 6, which reads: "To amend the law concerning the expropriation and widening of St. Lawrence street," is not revealed. St. Lawrence needs widening north of Sherbrooke, if, however, it is intended to secure powers to buy up a lot of properties between St. James street and the river, the citizens at large need to look out lest they be made purchasers of what they do not require, but whose money the owners seem bent on getting. No. 5 reads: "To impose further taxes upon certain branches of trade and industry, places and objects of amusement." "Trade and industry" are already overweighted with taxation.

"As to places and objects of amusement," they are fairly taxable as luxuries, though without such attractions a city must suffer far more than the amount of income from them derived from taxes, as they attract visitors, and none will remain in a place where they are not provided. The expenditure of visitors to a city where first-class entertainments are found is very large. In some cities the main support of theatres and concert rooms comes from outsiders, so that those amusements are a source of wealth to the citizens. German and other foreign municipalities that subsidize the local opera houses, understand this, and their policy pays. A City Council made up of level-headed men,