

the president, admitted had been up-hill work. The report discounts the future by anticipating that the number of its members will run into thousands by 1893, by which time (and with the accumulations of cash by that time hoped for) its system will be "ahead of all others," and will "give to those who wish to obtain the largest profits and who have confidence in their ability to continue their certificate payment for a given number of years, good return for their investment." And then the report speaks of "marching on to victory," aided by lapses and light mortality. The sentence we have put in italics strikes the key-note of the whole situation. So and so will happen if they continue to pay—but experience shows that they do not. We cannot deal to-day with the financial showing of this association further than to say that while it certainly looks to be weak, it is creditable to the management that rather than use assessment moneys for working expenses, the directors have loaned to the association, or raised for it upon their own security, some hundreds of dollars towards running expenses, thus leaving "Endowment and Reserve Fund moneys intact." They have also foregone their own fees for attending meetings. But unfortunately for even the best-intentioned devotees of this sort of endowment assessment, the basis is unsound. The promise to pay of several thousand dollars at the end of five, six, or seven years, while only one thousand has been received, is delusive. The very able Commissioner of Insurance for Massachusetts, Mr. Merrill, says: "The beginning of the end is in sight; the speculative tide which was stimulated by the unfortunate statute of two years ago, swept over the Commonwealth in a fantastic flood during the past year, and there have been organized to the present time forty-six corporations, promising, upon the contribution of a comparatively insignificant amount in assessments, the payment, at the end of a term, varying from one to ten years, of a large endowment."

"The experience of two brief years has so abundantly justified the earnest but ineffectual protest of this department, that the door then opened so widely to these concerns is now being closed and barred by legislative enactment, forbidding the organization of more corporations of this character to play upon the credulity of the public."

Another opinion on the subject is that of Mr. Geo. D. Eldridge, who is the editor of the *Guardian*, the leading assessment insurance journal of the United States. It was delivered before the convention of Mutual Life and Accident Underwriters, held recently in New York: "I have stood here to defend the right of an assessment company to do an endowment business. In justice to myself, I must stand here now to denounce an endowment business upon the assessment plan as the veriest humbug ever put upon the earth. It is founded on deception, it is carried on by deception, and it leads ever to ruin of the worst kind, because it is the ruin of people who have sought a laudable end and have been deceived, and led to put their money into a scheme where they have been robbed. Talk about insurance on the assessment plan as proof that what is proposed can be done! Talk of giving \$3 for \$1! Where does the other \$2 come from? Not from interest. It comes from the stealings of the few from the many who are not able to keep up with the rest. You cannot make \$3 out of \$1 in any five or ten years, and you cannot make that an honest business which proposes to accomplish anything of that kind. That

the Iron Hall has paid \$4,000,000, or that it can pay \$10,000,000, proves nothing." Furthermore, the sense of the whole meeting, to which 481 companies reported, was against the proposition that an assessment company can safely transact an endowment business.

INSURANCE PREMIUMS.

Persons giving promissory notes in payment of fire insurance premiums should pay the same when they become due, otherwise the insurance becomes void, provided the policy contains the following or a similar condition, namely:

"But it is expressly agreed that this company shall not be liable for any loss or damage that may occur to the property mentioned, while any promissory note or obligation, or part thereof, given for the premium, remains past due and unpaid."

The Supreme Court of Michigan decided in favor of the defendant company in a recent case in which the promissory note given for a fire premium was not paid when due, a fire subsequently destroying the property insured.

Promissory notes taken by the agents of life companies, when subject to a similar condition endorsed on the policy, render the insurance void, if not paid at maturity. Persons giving such notes should bear this circumstance in mind.

MORE ABOUT ASSESSMENT.

Those who think that *THE MONETARY TIMES* has been unduly hard upon this form of so-called life assurance will do well to read what is said of it below by the *Rand-McNally Bankers' Monthly*, a journal which looks at things from the point of view of a business man:

"Assessment life associations do not always succeed, and are liable to cause much disappointment, under special circumstances, outside the question of honesty altogether. So many cases of collapse have occurred of late years, that it is becoming evident the rates are too low at the start, and that they can not be put high enough, from the mere economy of management, to compete with the great companies whose capital and funds have been largely augmented for a generation or more by big profits on an immense scale. Here is an instance of one of the largest and most hopeful of the assessment societies, with business all over the Union, and of long standing. In one State where heretofore it was popular, 219 new members entered and 478 dropped out. New certificates of insurance, \$417,500; old, forfeited, \$1,478,000. The loss of old business in the Union was \$15,761,000, the new certificates issued being only \$8,198,000. Assessments have increased as follows: Year 1879, 2; 1880, 5; 1881, 11; 1882, 13; 1883, 15; 1884, 15; 1885, 19; 1886, 18; 1887, 21; 1888, 24, and in 1889, 24. Lately an attempt to collect a claim failed, under the rules; the members would not respond to the assessment; yet there are 60,000 families looking to these policies for prompt payment in case of the death of the head of the family. The burden falls on the well-to-do members, who have to foot the bill. It is very doubtful if such associations, whose early death is mostly an absolute certainty, should be allowed to operate without protest. It is the duty of the press to make the danger known. We can not see any improvement in these voluntary sentimental associations over scientific insurance, for healthy men; but, on the contrary,

danger of loss of payments and by liability to a very serious extent, when a society dwindles to its close, and those unable or unwilling to respond turn over the claims on those who have something to be seized, at the end of a suit. The history of these assessment associations in Pennsylvania alone is one of terrible disappointment and loss in most cases."

NATURAL GAS.

Opinions have differed with reference to the duration of the supply of natural gas, which has worked such wonders as an industrial fuel in the United States of late years, and is now a live factor in Essex and Welland counties in Ontario, Canada. A paper on Natural Gas was read the other day before the American Association for the Advancement of Science, at Indianapolis, by Dr. Edward Orton, the State Geologist of Ohio. That gentleman asserts his belief that the natural gas supply in the Indiana and Ohio fields is not only exhaustible, but is rapidly and surely being exhausted. The gas, he declares, is stored in the rocks, where it has been for untold ages; it is not now being generated, and every foot that escapes the surface leaves the quantity remaining for future use just so much smaller. According to Dr. Orton, the pressure of gas in the wells in the Ohio and Indiana fields is steadily diminishing, the decrease already having amounted to 30 or 40 per cent. Upon this statement of facts he based a plea for action on the part of States and cities to restrict the lavish and wasteful use of gas. The strictest regulations, he said, could not prevent the exhaustion of the supply of gas in a few years, but they might delay it.

FRUIT-CANNING IN BRITISH COLUMBIA.

In a country so prolific of admirable fruits as British Columbia, the preserving of these in tins promises to be an extensive industry. There are several fruit canneries already in operation. At New Westminster, we are told, the Bon-Accord cannery is putting up quantities of fruit, especially plums. And at Vancouver the British Columbia Fruit-Canning and Coffee Co., of which Mr. Walter Taylor is manager, has been at work since August 15th, making jam and putting up fruit. The present capacity of these works is 1,500 pounds jam and 2,000 pounds canned fruit per day. Much small fruit, such as black currants and other berries, has gone to waste in the interior districts of the province, Mr. Taylor says, because people who grew them did not know of the existence of such factories as his. He would give five to seven cents a pound for these. Tons of apples, too, have gone to waste. But he bought thirty-seven tons of apples on his last trip to Chilliwack. Apples, plums, and pears are the fruit principally canned, and last week, when our account was written, the factory was busy with plums. The work of this factory, which employs some thirty pairs of hands, is mostly done by girls; machines are used for paring the apples, also for slicing and coring them. The usual processes of canning, boiling, and sealing are then gone through.

In a year like the present, when the crop of many fruits is short in Ontario, more attention than ever is likely to be directed to British Columbia and California fruit. In the golden climate of the Pacific slope horticultural products grow to a great size, and are for the most part of delicious flavor. Those who have