

meet their financial engagements, the address of the chairman of a well-known London society at its annual meeting gives some information. In the experience of this society, the arrears of mortgage held at the close of 1887, short as the crop was, were twenty-two per cent. less than at the close of 1886, which does not look as if farmers around London were 'hard up.' Then with respect to somebody's assertion that the landed property of our farmers is rapidly falling into the hands of the loan companies through foreclosure, this company finds that last year's percentage of value of properties acquired by foreclosure—a larger one than for years past—is not two-thirds of one per cent. of the capital employed. This is a low rate but the highest known ratio of foreclosed properties will not justify such an assertion as the one mentioned.

Attention may well be directed to the remarkable figures exhibited in the report of the Canada Permanent Loan & Savings' Company. This company, now in its thirty-fourth year, has over nine millions of dollars loaned on mortgage security, has \$260,000 in municipal debentures assets and \$205,000 in its office building and in cash. There has been an increase in the assets of the company during 1887 of over \$253,000. Turning to the profit and loss account we learn that the net profits of the year were \$295,000, being almost exactly the same amount as in the previous year. Out of this was paid 12 per cent. dividend on \$2,300,000—the paid capital of the company—and \$4,147 municipal tax on such dividend. The balance at Profit and Loss account, all actual and prospective claims upon it being deducted, was \$13,996, and this sum has been added to the Contingent Fund, which now exceeds \$114,000 while the Rest is \$1,180,000. These are handsome and gratifying results, and imply experienced skill and great care on the part of the management. The company's debenture borrowings continue to increase, even with the lower rate of interest offered, and amount now to \$4,636,000. "The obligations of borrowers, generally, have been fairly met," says the report. We assume this to refer to the borrowers from this company, but it will, we think, apply equally to those from other concerns of the kind. The directors congratulate the country on the passage, by the Ontario Legislature, of a measure applying the Torrens system of land transfer to the outlying districts, comprising more than half the area of the province.

It is only twelve months since the shareholders of the Huron & Erie Loan & Savings Company presented a testimonial to their president, who resigned to serve in another sphere of labor. His successor, Mr. Street, has now resigned because of his elevation to the Bench and he, too, receives a testimonial, deservedly, we have no doubt. Mr. J. W. Little is the new president. The business of the company for the year has been well maintained, the interest earnings and rents (\$232,300) sufficed to pay interest due and accrued \$88,111; expenses and commissions, \$26,251; dividend nine per cent. and put \$20,000 to Reserve. All debenture expenses, we remark, are paid out of the profits of each year. The cash value

of the company's securities shows an increase of \$114,000 on the year and the total is now \$3,417,000, almost all invested in farm mortgages; while the aggregate of foreclosed or other landed properties unsold is plainly stated at \$20,269 and \$1,650 represents the ascertained losses of the year, less recoveries. This may with truth be called a satisfactory showing, especially in view of revelations concerning the Ontario Investment Assoc. which might well have thrown doubt upon loan societies generally. But no such distrust as was forbidden has been created in the minds of either lenders to or borrowers from societies of the age and of the standing of the two first named above. It is a feature in the working of this company that none of its directors or officers are permitted to become borrowers from it.

MONTREAL FIRE APPLIANCES.

The board of fire underwriters in Montreal, after repeated efforts to get the city council to improve the fire appliances of that city, have at last taken most decisive steps to remedy the deplorable state of matters in connection with the fire brigade and fire appliances, which everyone now seems to realize. The great fire on St. James Street "was the last straw that broke the camel's back."

A meeting of the Underwriters was held on the 21st ult., at which attended, by special request, the Chairman of the Fire Committee of the Council, who remained only a few minutes, stating that "the men of the Fire Brigade were utterly worn out, but he was endeavouring to collect a supplementary force, and otherwise improve the state of matters as they existed." A resolution was passed at this meeting authorizing a committee to get a Notarial protest prepared to serve upon the Mayor and Corporation.

Another meeting was held on the 23rd January, and a form of Notarial protest was submitted and approved, and ordered to be served on the Mayor and Corporation of the city. Among other things this protest declared.

1st. The inefficiency of the Fire Brigade.
2nd. That the present chief had persistently stated that the present force and appliances are sufficient for all emergencies.
3rd. That the Salvage appliances are insufficient.

4th. That there is no proper and effective means of expeditiously thawing out and drying the hose.

5th. That practically the city was without fire protection from midnight on Friday until Saturday evening, after the great fire.

6th. That Fire Insurance companies are convinced they cannot look for any better result in their business in Montreal until a chief is appointed who can at least realize the insufficiency of the number of the Fire brigade, who can completely command them, and who has the judgment, decision and knowledge necessary to utilize the apparatus at his command.

The Notarial protest had the desired effect. Within twenty-four hours after it had been served, a vote of \$10,000 was passed by the Council to obtain sufficient

hose and other apparatus that was needed. There is a strong disposition on the part of the insurance companies to increase the rates until their reasonable demands for better fire protection are complied with.

THE PROPOSED FRIENDLY SOCIETIES' BILL.

A proper and necessary step has been taken by the Ontario Government in the recent framing of an act respecting Friendly Societies. These societies are numerous, most of them respectable, many of them important in that their relations with their members partake of the character of life insurance. But there is reason to fear that people may be misled as to the extent or nature of the indemnity furnished by friendly societies which profess (contingently) to "insure life or limb." And the intention of the bill framed by the Ontario Superintendent of Insurance manifestly is to distinguish between respectable concerns of the kind and those which are suspiciously weak or distinctly fraudulent.

It is proposed to register every such society, under government supervision, and to compel the filing, year by year, of a statement and an audited balance-sheet for the information of its members and the public, without exacting any deposit. It is sensibly provided, however, that the government does not therefore guarantee the correctness of the society's plan or its financial soundness. "The government is to interpose," says Mr. Hunter, "only at the point when the transactions of the society are shown to be fraudulent or illegal." There have been, unhappily, instances where families of deceased members in assessment concerns have been deprived of the benefits they had a right to expect. In order, therefore, "to assist the industrial classes to distinguish *bona fide* societies from those which are dubious if not fraudulent, it is proposed to publish annually sworn statements of friendly societies as to their contracts with members and the state of the contract fund." Such societies may and often do, serve a good purpose in assisting to form habits of thrift among wage-earners, and it is very desirable that such worthy economy should be protected against the ravages of wolves in sheep's clothing.

In his explanation of the provisions of the proposed bill, the Inspector says it is sought, without unduly interfering with freedom of contract, to enable the beneficiary to ascertain his rights under the contract and then to place him in a position to enforce them, neither of which things can easily be done in the case of some so-called insurance concerns of which we have heard. "No legitimate society will object because its contract is made intelligible; no honest society can object because its contract is made enforceable." Careful provision is made, however, not to interfere with the purely charitable work of any association; it is only where a contract of indemnity is entered into, that the bill proposes to guard the beneficiary from deception or loss.