

assets safe from burglars, or from fire. But one half the sum he pays for a safe is wasted if he does not keep in that safe a proper record of his position, from to year, or from month to month. Even a person who sells for cash, and therefore needs to keep no account of credit sales, may well consider the \$100 or \$300 he pays for a good safe as wasted, if that strong box do not contain such a record of his position as to merchandise on hand or current indebtedness, as will suffice, in case of robbery or fire, to satisfy the insurance companies who protect him or the wholesale merchants who supply him.

There is no more essential part of a merchant's duty to himself and his creditors than systematic stock taking at least once every year, but even his stock taking is a waste of time and labour if he neglects to make up a proper balance sheet, and neglects to take proper care to preserve all his stock sheets, stock book and balance sheet. In too many instances where these are needed to refer to, they have either been destroyed as useless, or lost. Another matter made unpleasantly clear by the investigations of an expert after a fire loss, is the often indefinite or mistaken notions of retail dealers as to the rate of profit upon goods sold. In a case in question, the country merchant was asked what rate of gross profit he sold goods at, and replied, from fifteen to twenty-five per cent. on invoice prices, and on some lines thirty three per cent. It was a revelation to him to have it proved that he was not making more than ten per cent.; and that instead of making \$5,000 clear, upon a turn-over of say \$25,500 yearly, he was in fact making less than \$2,500.

How is this? some shopkeepers may ask. The reason is that no allowance was made for the items of freight; depreciation; interest; bad debts; cost of selling; insurance, taxes, and other matters which require to be added to the invoice cost. Wholesale houses estimate that the expense of selling goods through travellers adds from three and a half to seven per cent. to their cost. And the retail merchant must not imagine that because he keeps no travellers the sale of his goods therefore costs him nothing. Clerk-hire costs something; and even if no clerks be kept, but the store is conducted by the shop-keeper and his family, rent, fuel, light, packing, taxes, carriage, expenses to the markets to purchase, and a dozen other seemingly trifling matters, go to swell the cost price beyond that put down in the successive lines of wholesale dealers' invoices.

#### PROVINCIAL INSURANCE COMPANIES.

We acknowledged the receipt, last week, of the preliminary report upon those insurance companies which make annual reports to the Government of the Province of Ontario. This abstract Report contains the assets and liabilities, the income and expenditure, the losses paid and unpaid, and various other important items of information, given in detail by the insurance companies in compliance with the requirements of the Provincial insurance department for the year ending 31st December, 1883. The report gives a tabular statement of the

business of one Life Insurance Company, the London; two Joint Stock Fire Companies, the Mercantile, of Waterloo, and the Queen City, of Toronto; six mixed mutual and cash system companies, the Gore District, Gt.; the Hand-in-Hand, Toronto; the Ontario Mutual, London; the Perth County Mutual, Stratford; the Victoria Mutual, Hamilton; and the Waterloo Mutual, Waterloo. There are, besides those above named, fifty-one purely mutual companies. Nearly all of these companies confine their business to farm property and private dwellings exclusively. The Economical, of Berlin; the Huron and Middlesex, of London, and the Wellington Mutual do a general business. The Canadian Millers' Mutual, we believe, insures no property except flouring and grist mills and oatmeal mills. Of these the Huron and Middlesex, while professing to do business on the purely mutual system, is said to be in some way evading the law by dispensing with the usual undertaking and taking business on the cash system. We understand that complaints have been made to the Inspector of Insurance with reference to this company's mode of doing business. It would appear that the new departure made by this company is in consequence of the recent action of the Stock Companies in agreeing upon uniform, and which are supposed to be equitable, rates of insurance. We know nothing as to the truth or falsity of these charges, but we trust the Inspector of Insurance, whose duty it is, will take the necessary means of finding out, and the proper steps for stopping such an illegal practice, if it exists.

The only Life Company doing business exclusively in this province is the London Life and Accident Company, of London, Ontario. It has now 862 policies in force, insuring \$776,778.

#### CANADIAN LIFE BUSINESS IN 1883.

Further presentation of figures from the advance sheets of Superintendent Cherriman's Life Insurance Report for last year may be of interest. We gave last week the aggregate of premiums, amount of policies, &c., and the total business done by each group of life companies in the Dominion. The net amount of policies in force we find to exceed one hundred and twenty-three millions of dollars, (\$123,477,839) divided as follows:

Canadian companies .....	\$ 59,231,609
American companies .....	41,391,371
British companies .....	22,854,859

Total.....\$123,477,839

In the previous year, the aggregate of insurance policies written was \$115,088,078. The growth of the business in 1883 was thus \$8,389,761 or nearly seven per cent. The division of this business among the groups of home and foreign companies was, roughly, one half to the Canadian, one third to the American, and something over one sixth to the British life societies. The exact proportions are as under:

Home companies.....	47.96 per cent.
Foreign do .....	52.04 "

Of the foreign life offices those of the United States took 33.52 per cent., and

those of Britain 18.52 per cent. About three-fifths of the whole business, say \$71,733,000, was done by the Canada, the Confederation, the Standard, the Aetna, and the Equitable. The table of increase or decrease in amount of risks in force at close of year shows the gain of the different companies to be as under:

	INCREASE.
Canada .....	\$2,720,000
Confederation .....	1,309,000
Ontario Mutual .....	1,040,000
Sun .....	941,000
North American.....	654,000
Citizens.....	236,000
Aetna.....	1,272,000
Equitable .....	1,021,000
Union Mutual.....	500,000
United States.....	331,000
New York .....	26,000
British Empire .....	730,000
London & Lancashire.....	566,000
Standard .....	424,000

—News of activity in the mineral trade of our Maritime Provinces, is always welcome. There, as elsewhere, the mining interests have their dull as well as their active periods. When so-called *bonanzas* are found, the pendulum swings far in the one direction, that of development; to take, however, the return swing when the discoveries do not "pan out" as was expected. Just now, we learn from the *Eastern Chronicle*, operations for iron ore are begun at Bridgeville, East River. One shaft is sunk on the farm of James Fraser, where they are raising a good quality of ore, and prospecting is going on in two other localities. A correspondent of the *Hants Journal* writing from Ellershouse, says: "A gold mine has been discovered here by two men who have been prospecting for some time. They have found a lead between the Little Valley and Big Gut, which they suppose to be an extension of the Mt. Uniacke mines. Three hundred pounds sent to be crushed, gave \$1.50 or about \$10 per ton, very good for surface findings. Reports are that Messrs. Ellershausen and Silver, of Halifax, have taken large claims with the finders and that they intend commencing work at once. Furthermore, a silver mine is reported to have been discovered at St. Nicholas River, in Welford, Kent County, N.B., by a Mr. Brooks. Analyzation of the ore shows an average of 65 per cent. of the precious metal. It is said that two Halifax gentlemen have offered a very large sum to be shown the precise locality of the mine.

#### REPUDIATION.

The latest instance of municipal repudiation on a small scale is that just now come to light in an action against the municipality of Brockton, now incorporated with the City of Toronto. It appears that the accounts of that municipality were not in the first instance properly kept, and got into such a confused condition that neither the treasurer nor the auditors could bring in any statement of the affairs of the municipality, or complete the audit as required by law. As a consequence of this a firm of accountants in this city was retained and spent a considerable length of time in re-writing the books and completing a proper audit. This action appears to have been taken by the desire of four members of the council, the fifth being the Reeve, opposing that system of straightening out the accounts,