

carrying their risks for the purpose of lightening the tax upon the older members." If, however, the younger members are only taxed for the actual cost of carrying their own risks, it follows that the older members must be taxed for the cost of their own risks, which, as age advances, become very and increasingly oppressive. It is poor consolation to an old member whose assessments are so intolerable a burthen as to be driving him out of the Association, and so abandoning his life insurance when near its fruition, to be told that when a younger man he got his life insurance at a cheap rate. Had he, in earlier life, been told plainly how heavy the assessments would be in his later years, he would most probably have avoided this risk by insuring his life on a plan which did not increase his payments in old age. The younger members naturally object to have a share of the cost of carrying insurance on aged members levied upon them. They can understand the plan by which the cost of their individual insurance throughout life is equalized, or averaged, on the level premium system, but they are not prepared to bear the cost of other person's life insurance who cannot reciprocate in any way. Policy-holder A., a young man, objects to having his assessments increased in order to make up a deficiency caused by policy-holder B. having, for some years, paid too little for his insurance. It has been urged in answer to this that, the younger members of friendly societies do pay part of the extra cost of sickness of older members. This is not strictly correct, for, as a matter of fact, the "dues" or periodic contributions to the sick and funeral funds of the great friendly societies are based really upon the "level premium" plan of life insurance companies. Such "dues" or payments are fixed at entrance according to the age of the entrant, and are based upon the expectancy of his coming "on the box" for sick pay so many days in the course of his life. Sickness at any age anyway is only a contingency, and the claims for sick pay attributable to advancing age excite no dissatisfaction amongst the members of friendly societies, as these claims do not involve any increase in the periodic dues or payments. The Commission proposes to suggest a plan for "equitably apportioning the assessments of the policy-holders of the Massachusetts Benefit Life Association, so that both young and old may so share the burden as not to jeopardize the rights of either." We wish them success, but doubt their achieving it. The radical, inherent defect of the assessment system has brought the inevitable result, and the only remedy that will effect a permanent cure, and prevent relapse, will be, re-organization on sound principles.

If we may make a forecast from the Report we should say that, the Massachusetts Benefit Life Association is likely to undergo this transformation. This will, however, we fear, not relieve the older members whose complaints are so bitter, and burdensome assessments so heavy. Their experience should serve as a warning to others.

#### THE MANCHESTER FIRE INSURANCE COMPANY.

The 73rd Annual Report of the Manchester Fire Insurance Company will be found on a later page. The Company had a successful year in 1896, its net premiums having been \$3,657,435, and the losses, including all unsettled claims, were \$2,172,615, which gives a ratio of losses to premiums of 59.4 per cent. The accounts in the Report include six months transactions, arising out of the transfer to the Manchester of the "Times Mutual," "Sprinkler," and Cambridge fire offices, with the assets handed over of \$150,000. The transfers have resulted favorably, and have justified the expectations of the Directors. The Capital Accounts and Reserve Funds now stand at \$3,771,410, showing an increase for the year of \$290,475. The growing financial strength of the Manchester is manifest from the following figures:

At the close of 1890 the Funds in hand were	\$1,837,260
" 1892	2,318,500
" 1892	3,400,265
" 1896	3,771,410

The net cash received for premiums in Canada last year was \$186,969, the net amount at risk at close of 1896 was \$20,112,211, and the net amount of losses incurred during the year \$113,900, the ratio of losses to premiums being 60.99. This old, substantial, and progressive company has a very efficient and popular representative in Mr. James Boomer, in whose hands the reputation of the Manchester is being well maintained.

#### THE CANADIAN PACIFIC ANNUAL MEETING.

The publication of the Report of the C. P. R. some time in advance served to discount the interest of the annual meeting which was held on the 7th inst. A point of some importance in regard to the administration of the line was referred to by the President as showing the economies resulting from improving the permanent way. The improvements which have been made since 1887 in permanent way, and especially in the substitution of the highest type of permanent bridges for the original timber structures, has enabled the Company to largely increase the weight of its locomotives and the size of its trains, and to effect a very large saving in the cost of its train service, in addition to the large saving which has been made in the cost of maintenance of way and in other directions. This must be borne in mind in considering the proposed expenditures in capital account as follows:—Permanent bridges, ballasting and other improvements of permanent way, \$1,165,723; construction and other facilities, etc., \$514,012; rolling stock and equipment, \$378,001; steamers on Arrow and Kootenay Lakes, \$280,000. Total, \$2,337,736. The President expressed confidence in a prosperous time being at hand for the railway and the country generally. The returns to April 1st, show an increase in traffic receipts over those of previous year, and the mining boom in British Columbia is increasing the business of this road.