most lame and impotent conclusion." But why continue in condemning such pitiable and childish mismanagement? Rather let us be thankful, under the circumstances, that there was no wind at the time of the fire, otherwise there is no doubt we should have had to record another figure to the loss, and write down two millions of valuable property laid in ashes. It is truly deplorable to notice the manner in which this fire brigade is handled.

We have heard a good deal lately about some insureds complaining of the high rates charged in Montreal, and even that a combination would be formed among certain tradesmen in order to lower the same, but such a course after the experience of past years could not possibly result in anything but failure and defeat. Indeed, so far from a reduction of rates, the companies, if they act upon business principles, have merely one course to pursue, namely, to lay before the public in plain, unvarnished language that, unless a complete reform is inaugurated regarding the fire brigade, and another pumping engine provided, so as to supply twelve instead of six millions of gallons of water daily in the winter, rates for insurance will be materially increased, as it is only by this method that the repetition of a similar disgrace as that we have been discussing can be avoided in Montreal.

A meeting of the Fire Underwriters' Association, at which all companies having agencies at Montreal were represented, was held on 25th January. The members of the association very plainly pointed out to Alderman Hood, who was present, that the Fire Brigade was in every respect both badly managed and equipped, that there was a thorough want of discipline and that the appointment of a new chief was also necessary. The following resolution, which was unanimously carried, was proposed by Mr. James W. Taylor and seconded by Mr. Thomas Davidson.

"That from the experience of the past and particularly from the late fire at Nuns' Building, and from information derived, the meeting is forced to the conclusion that the management of the Fire Brigade is bad, involving a great want of discipline, that the fire appliances are insufficient, and that even those in the possession of the Brigade are largely kept in such order that they cannot be used when wanted, and that the water supply, especially in the commercial part of the town, is such as places Montreal in a very inferior position as regards fire protection. That in the opinion of the Fire Underwriters no effectual and permanent improvement can be expected or hoped for until the Council provide a thoroughly competent Chief of the Fire Brigade, and the Fire Committee realize the necessity of having their orders obeyed."

We are under the impression that the recommendations which were made last Spring by the Fire Underwriters were simply ridiculed and found a place in the waste paper basket. At all events they received no attention

Among the first changes necessary to place the Fire Brigade in a proper state of efficiency are the appointment of:—A new Chairman and a new Chief. To procure the services of a Chief who is thoroughly competent, a salary commensurate with the duties and responsibilities of the position must be paid. Let the Chief have full control over and be held responsible for the working of his department. We think these changes should be made without an hour's unnecessary delay, for it is useless to expect that the present heads of the department, who have proved themselves totally unfitted for such posts, will do anything practicable, but, as the worthy Alderman promised, let matters remain *in statu quo.*

BRITON MEDICAL AND GENERAL LIFE ASSOCIATION.

The public were startled the other day by a cablegram which appeared in the daily press and announced that this company had suspended payment. We know nothing of the details, but hope they will not prove as disastrous as might at first be supposed. The Association has been in difficulties for a long time past and has for ten years done no new business, contenting itself with working off the old risks on its books. In order to facilitate this, the Briton Life Association was started in 1875 to actively engage in the life business and manage the Briton Medical at a fixed percentage on the income. The rate was eight per cent. for the first two years of the agreement (1876 and '77), six per cent. for the next five years, and five per cent. thereafter. The two companies, although nominally distinct, had to a large extent the same directors, shareholders and officers. The Briton Medical was, however, weighted down by a large number of diseased lives which it had taken on its books, either directly or through some of the different offices which it had reassured. The Association as it now stands is really a combination of many companies, among them being the New Equitable; Medical and General (devoted to the insurance of diseased lives), Unity General; Britannia Life, Britannia Mutual and Indisputable Insurance Company of Scotland.

The general opinion of insurance people, however, was that although the assured could not reasonably ever expect any return on their policies in the shape of bonuses or profits, that still the sums assured would be paid when death happened, without trouble. In this, however, they seem to have been mistaken.

The Association was organized in 1854. The following figures will show its history in later years:

TOTAL BUSINESS.

Year.	Income.	D'th claims paid.	Total assets.
1877	£185,645	£140,213	£684,965
1879	164,419	145,817	691,963
1881	163,728	99,204	716,037
1883	131,858	135,893	694,340

It will be seen at once that the business was rapidly falling off, and that the death rate was abnormally high. We venture to predict that when more detailed information arrives it will be found that excessive mortality is the real reason for the suspension. The company has a subscribed capital of £200,000, of which £66,730 is paid up.

When it ceased to transact new business, in 1874, it had on its books policies to the amount of £7,258,000, which by the end of 1883 had been reduced to £3,834,000. Since it began business it has returned to its policy-holders in claims considerably over £3,200,000 stg. The character of the assets may also perhaps have had something to do with the trouble, although this is not so likely. An item of £111,967, "loans on personal security," is not very encouraging, especially when we notice that this item was only £92,000 in 1877. There was therefore an increase in this kind of security during the six years of nearly £20,000, while the increase in the total assets was less than £10,000. It would seem as though the "personal securities" could not be realized on like the other items, but kept creeping up