

We have selected the above three quotations to show three different phases of meaning in this most elastic word, as it was used at different periods, in none of which, nor in any we ever met with, is there the slightest trace of a mandatory meaning.

The weight of authority is overwhelmingly against the word "may" implying any degree or form of obligation. One authority gives it as a synonym of "can." Skeat's Etymological Dictionary defines the word thus:

"May"—I am able, I am free to act, I am allowed to. It is derived from a Teutonic base, "Mag," to have power.

The word "may" has numerous derivatives, none of which imply any form of necessary action or of obligation to act. Webster gives illustrations of its use, which confirm this view. Occasionally, however, "may" is used in the sense of "must;" but only in sarcasm. If the Wisconsin Commissioner has no other plea on which to demand that the Equitable Life shall distribute its surplus, than that the word "may" really means must, or shall, he would be wise to abstain from litigation, as no sane judge would endorse such an eccentric violation of custom and of philology.

#### CANADIAN FIRE UNDERWRITERS' ASSOCIATION.

At the annual meeting of the above Association held on 25th June last, Mr. Kenny, Chairman of the Committee, appointed at the opening session to present nominations for President and Vice-Presidents, reported that Mr. McGregor absolutely declined re-nomination, on the ground that he believed that the Presidency should only be held for one term, and further that he had been, as the Eastern Vice-President, Chairman of the Montreal Committee for the previous two years. While the Committee regretted this decision, it happily gave members an opportunity to tender the office to Mr. G. F. C. Smith. It was well known this would be the last year they would have Mr. Smith among them, and the Committee felt confident that his nomination to the office of President would not only be heartily endorsed as a mark of esteem in which he was held, but that it was peculiarly fitting that he, its first and for some years President, under whose guidance the Association had passed through its early difficulties, should also be its President the year that it would come of age. The Committee, therefore, nominated Mr. G. F. C. Smith to the Presidency. The nomination was put and carried by acclamation. Mr. G. F. C. Smith said a few suitable words in acceptance of the office, and in appreciation of the compliment paid him.

The Committee then presented the names of Mr. Alf. Wright, of the London and Lancashire, as Vice-president for the Province of Ontario, and Mr. M. C. Henshaw as Vice-President for the Province of Quebec. These nominations were unanimously carried.

#### IMPERIAL CONGRESS OF CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE.

Montreal will be the scene of a gathering unprecedented in Colonial history. Indeed, no city in the Empire has been honoured by such an assemblage except the world's Metropolis of finance, London. The Congress convened to meet in this city next week will be attended by over 400 delegates representing the Chambers of Commerce, Boards of Trade, and a number of similar bodies, of the United Kingdom, the Imperial Colonies and dependencies. Every industry, every financial organization, every mercantile interest in the Empire will be represented. Besides delegates from the principal cities of Great Britain and Ireland, there will be a number from Queensland, Western Australia, N. S. Wales, New Zealand, Tasmania, South Africa, the Transvaal, Jamaica, Trinidad, Ceylon and India. Never before was there an assembly so comprehensively representative of the commercial interests of the Empire. The delegates have been selected from the world's ablest business men. Lord Brassey, President of the London Chamber of Commerce, will preside, and Lord Strathcona will also be present.

The resolutions to be submitted for discussion relate to almost every phase of the commercial relations existing or likely to arise between Great Britain and other parts of the Empire. The question of Imperial preferential arrangements will be the subject we anticipate of a very lively debate, for the thorough discussion of which the four days of the Congress will be much too short, as there will be delegates present capable of keeping up a lively discussion for a fortnight or longer. Several resolutions will be presented by Canadians, affirming generally the desirability of developing Inter-Imperial trade by various forms of fiscal policy.

The defence of the Empire will provoke an earnest debate, which will call out the warmest expressions of loyalty from Colonial delegates, and will demonstrate to cavillers of the tea-party school that British citizens everywhere are ready to say "what we have we'll hold" against all comers. Immigration will be considered; also, commercial treaties and the arrangements in vogue under which British goods enter foreign nations.

One of the most important subjects for discussion will be introduced, probably by a resolution of the Chamber of Commerce, Barnsley, the great centre of linen manufacture, which reads:—"(1) that His Majesty's Government should resolutely maintain and extend our commercial treaty rights; (2), that the consular service should be reorganized and strengthened on lines calculated to make it more effective for the promotion of the trade of the British Empire." The Canadian Manufacturers' Association desire to see the Consular service "supplemented by the establishment of inter-colonial commercial consuls, and that the standing of these should be recog-