

He thought it of an electrical origin. Those big belts generate an immense amount of electricity, and according to his theory, this had taken effect at the weakest portion of the wheel, having been carried there by the conductive qualities of the wood. The explanation wasn't satisfactory to me, but as it was the only one worthy of acceptance I fixed the loss and left.

"Weeks afterward, while with a number of adjusters on board a train, the same subject of mysterious fires came up, and I told this story. A man who had been an interested listener to the boys' yarns offered an explanation of it, and he was immediately taken into the fold.

"What was the face of that wheel covered with?" he asked, and I told him of the papier mache, which I had neglected to mention.

"Wasn't it irregular, sort of worn away in places, so that spots in it were higher than others?"

"Yes."

"That's what I supposed. Now, I'm a millwright, and I have built hundreds of these wheels. Sometimes when we run out of plank long enough to reach across a wheel we piece it, placing the pieces so that the ends come together. There was a pieced section in that wheel of yours, and the end of one of the pieces made up a part of a protruding section on the periphery. Every time the belt passed over that protruding point it was like hitting the end of that plank with a heavy hammer. That drove it against the section against which it was placed. After thousands of such blows the adjacent end became worn enough to allow of considerable friction, which finally set up a fire, air enough being supplied through the numerous cracks in the wheel."

"The explanation is, I believe, the true one, and I think you'll admit that this was one of the strangest cases on insurance records. That wheel cost my company \$600, too."—*American Miller.*

ITEMS ABOUT FIRES.

A one hundred thousand dollar fire is reported from St. Louis, Mo., on the 8th inst. The old factory of the Laclede fire-brick manufacturing company was burned.

On Monday night last the dry goods store of F. X. Bedard, Ottawa, was completely gutted. Loss, \$21,000; insurance, \$15,000. On the same day the men's furnishing store of J. Delatisky, St. Lawrence Main street, Montreal, was damaged by fire, etc., to extent of \$1,200.

A fire, on the 11th inst., in Hintonburg, a western suburb of Ottawa, destroyed some \$12,000 worth of property, and rendered seven families homeless. The buildings were partially covered by insurance, the furniture not at all.

Lightning's stroke has set fire to various barns in Ontario the last few weeks, and sometimes even growing fields have been fired. We hear of a case last week, when a thrifty Puslinch farmer, Mr. Capel Reeve, lost his fine barn, with all his wheat and barley, and a number of implements. Loss, \$2,500: partly covered by \$1,400 insurance in the Gore Company.

It is a startling feature of a municipal merry-making to have a serious fire break out in its midst. But this is what happened at Collingwood on Wednesday last. On the civic holiday the old market building took fire; it spread to and gutted the handsome new town hall, which cost \$20,000, and swallowed up a dwelling and some stables. A druggist, a jeweller, and a firm of butchers were burned out. The Orillia and Meaford fire brigades, which were in Collingwood on the excursion, worked well. The town hall is insured in the Liverpool, London & Globe for \$3,000; Imperial, \$3,000; London & Lancashire, \$3,000; Northern, \$3,000.

In the suburbs of Quebec, on Monday, a fire broke out in some sheds near the abattoir, and consumed Stott's dwelling and store, and M. Cox's residence. The former has \$2,000 insurance, the latter \$1,000. Next day Ovide Vallee's brick dwelling, barn and stable were burned, also Alderic Laurandean's stable, with 2,000 bundles of hay. Vallee's insurance, \$1,700; Laurandean's, \$600.

The confectionery store and bakery of T. T. Bailey, Portage la Prairie, was destroyed

by fire on August 8th. Loss, \$7,000 to \$8,000; no insurance.

Mr. Peter Shallow's dwelling was struck by lightning at Craig's road, Quebec, Aug. 7th, and burned. The building was insured in the City of London for \$1,300.

White's steel works, at Fort Wayne, Ind., covering five acres, were burned on Friday last.

H. J. Anderson's new saw mill at St. Cloud, Minn., was struck by lightning on the 7th inst. and burned. Loss, \$80,000.

OUTLOOK FOR REGULAR AND ASSESSMENT LIFE INSURANCE.

The advocates of the assessment theory, shortly after it had obtained a foothold, strenuously argued that the plan was so much better in every respect, and withal so much cheaper than the old plan of the regular life companies, that it was only a question of time—and short time at that—before the assessment plan would eventually supersede the old idea. So far their dream seems as far from realization as ever. In fact it is the assessment ranks which are gradually growing weaker, while their old rivals are constantly gathering strength.

It is evident to those who have carefully watched the course of events for the past decade that the regular life companies have been biding up in membership and business at a most marvelous rate. The day has passed for fatal mistakes in plans, and disaster, if it come at all, can only come from reckless and dishonest management. In spite of all precautions, something must always be left to personal honesty. Insurance companies cannot be secured against this any more than banks, but no one would question the usefulness of banking institutions because of an occasional exhibition of lapse of honesty in its officers.

We have called attention to this possibility because it has been so often used as a stock argument against the business of the regular companies by their assessment rivals. The failures of the early years, when life insurance was largely in its experimental stage, have been held up as an example of what might be looked for in all, probably on the ground that no man or body of men are able to withstand temptation if the amount be only large enough to pay them.

Now, it would be easy enough to retort upon the assessment people by similar examples of failure and dishonesty in their own ranks, but, while that might be permissible, it is scarcely convincing to the thoughtful man as an unanswerable argument. We prefer rather to look at the matter in another light, and judge them in the light of their own predictions.

What the assessment plan can accomplish must still be judged by what it has done in the past. Even the best of its advocates admit that there is much yet to be learned, and scarcely a company starts up as an aspirant for public favor but what bases its claim to recognition on some "improved" plan of assessment insurance. It has made progress in one respect, namely, in extending the average life of such associations for a few years longer than formerly, but the old faults which we criticised at the start as the radical defects of the system still exist. The premium assessed upon the members is still uncertain in quantity, and the amount which the member is to receive at death is equally uncertain. He may get it and he may not. There is no guarantee that he will.

It has been claimed that the regular life insurance must give way in time to assessment insurance, because the latter was so much cheaper. This was not true in fact, for the reason that the entire period covered, the dividends paid and the amount actually received by the beneficiaries were a certainty, and there is no way of comparing certainties with uncertainties. The public, as a rule, are not easily hoodwinked, at least not the class of men who place insurance on their lives. If assessment insurance were cheaper than the insurance furnished by the regular companies and equally reliable, they would not hesitate to take the former in preference to the latter. The records of the past few years, however, show that they do not place much reliance upon the claim of greater cheapness, for notwithstanding

ing the horde of assessment associations which have sprung up all over the country, the business of the regular life companies has increased at an unprecedented rate. More than this, it has drawn into its ranks thousands of men who have found out by practical experience that assessment insurance is anything but cheap in the long run.

It is frequently claimed that some assessment company, held up as an example, has always paid its death claims in full. This, however, is no assurance that it always will, and the contract does not bind the association to do so. Doubtless there are not a few of these associations whose managers are honest enough in their intentions, and believe they will be able to fulfil their promises, but they are still sufficiently lacking in confidence to issue a specific contract. They have hopes based upon new safeguards they are trying to introduce, in the shape of reserve funds, which are designed to protect them in that future time when the burden of increasing age will fall upon them; but in trying to strengthen themselves at this point they have weakened their old claims in another—that of cheapness. As they approach the line of safety in the amount of assessments levied, they come to the figures of the regular life companies, and so the whole foundation upon which assessmentism is built gives way.

We have no fault to find with assessment insurance so long as it confines its claims to the truth. It is simply term insurance from year to year. That kind of insurance can be obtained and always has been obtainable from any of the regular life companies for a quarter of a century past, and at less cost than offered by the assessment companies. The trouble is that it carries with it a constantly increasing premium year by year, and the public, when they find it out, do not want it, hence the constant failures among the assessment companies. From the indications of the present day, the assessment idea or theory is doomed. Its place will be filled by companies doing business on the yearly term principle, but on a different plan from those now in vogue.—*N. Y. Com. Bulletin.*

HE SHOULD BE AN AMERICAN.

A correspondent of a Madras paper, quoted by the *Colonies and India*, describes the case of a native of Mangalore, who for a few years past has been suffering from "a pain about the size of a rupee on the left side of his back; in the elapse of a week it increased all over (confining to the one side only); eventually a feeling of tightness came over the chest," and "general and nervous debility." In his endeavor to conquer these ills he has been a perfect god-send to dealers in patent medicines, having, "through the advice of physicians," as he declares, swallowed:—"18 bottles cod-liver oil, 2 bottles chemical food, 1 bottle hypophosphite of lime, 3 bottles Lalor's phosphodyne, 3 bottles red Jamaica sarsaparilla, 3 bottles Seigle's syrup, 12 boxes Holloway's ointment, 4 bottles B. and S. solution, 3 bottles Easton's syrup, 1 bottle health renewer, 3 bottles Fellow's syrup, 200 bottles of mixture from hospital, 3 boxes Seigle's pills, 12 boxes of pills from hospitals, 2 boxes anti-bilious pills, 3 months' galvanism, 3 months' salt water bath, 40 pills Ignatia amaria, 5,110 eggs taken in the last seven years, also 2,555 lbs. of mutton consumed for soups, &c. Often cupped, and a hogshead of other liniments, 2 electric charm lockets for three years, besides spirits taken, 36 bottles of brandy, 8 B. whisky, 1 bottle gin, 12 dozen B. portwine, 288 B. stout, 3 bottles of beer, 1 pint of curacao." Strange to say, the consumer of all these nostrums survives, and is still seeking other medical attendants whom "he will gladly put himself under, provided nothing is expected of him."

—An American paper wakes up to the following conclusion respecting Canada: "There is something of a surprise in the last report of the Government Bureau of Statistics in regard to the balance of trade between the United States and Canada. This report represents that our exports to Canada have exceeded our imports thence in every year since 1882, the excess ranging from \$3,000,000 to \$11,000,000 per annum. These figures, if correct, show Canada to be a more profitable customer than has been generally supposed."