

INSURANCE OF REGISTERED LETTERS.—The Post Office Department has decided to institute a system of insurance of inland registered letters. The maximum amount to be insured will not exceed \$25. The insurance fee for \$10 will be three cents; for \$15, four cents; for \$20, five cents, and for \$25, six cents. In addition, of course, the full postage and registered charges must be paid. Coins, articles of gold and silver, precious stones, jewellery and other articles of value must be put in strong boxes in accordance with directions furnished by postmasters or in envelopes, with directions, furnished by the postmasters. Envelopes with black or coloured borders may not be used for registered or insured letters.

ON THE MATTER OF TRAINING FOR COMMERCIAL LIFE.—The "Yale Review" says: "The history and principles of banking as taught by the economist form a body of knowledge very important to the bankers themselves, but important in what sense? Such knowledge gives them a broader grasp of the social significance of their business, and a basis for intelligent public action in the improvement of the banking system for the benefit of the community, but it contributes very indirectly to the increase of bank dividends. 'Practical' knowledge consists in knowing that John Doe's paper is 'good paper,' and that Richard Roe's is not, and that cannot be taught in the classroom."

MANY LLOYDS CANNOT PAY LOSSES.—The National Packing Company, an organization of the smaller packing concerns of the West, is after the eastern Lloyd's with a sharp stick. Many of the constituent concerns had to take surplus lines and place them in Lloyd's, but after they had fires, found that they could collect very few of the latter. Since the consolidation, it has been found that the constituent companies have \$175,000 of unpaid claims against Lloyd's, and strenuous efforts are being made to collect this. Most of the Lloyds disclaim liability on the usual excuse, but some say frankly that they have no money with which to pay, and defy suit on the ground that it will merely roll up added expense.—"The Standard."

MR. AUSTIN CHAMBERLAIN, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, is making inquiries into the conditions under which insurance companies carry on business in India and the Colonies, with a view to finding out whether in each case the same treatment is accorded to companies with local headquarters as to companies which have their head offices in the United Kingdom. The ultimate object of this is to see whether legislation can be effected to grant to income taxpayers in Great Britain, the same exemption on premiums paid to companies with Indian or Colonial companies as they have now on premiums paid to offices with headquarters in the United Kingdom. This is a very proper step to be taken in view of the extension of the business of Canadian insurance companies in the old country.

A **FARMER** of a Fifeshire village had been advised to insure his house against fire. The agent, Sandy McLery, could never get him to sign, and was forced to listen to the familiar argument that "My house would never gang on fire."

The unexpected happened, however, and the neighbours were astonished when the old man, instead of trying to save his goods, ran wildly up and down the village, crying:

"Whaur's that mon Sandy noo? Whaur's that insurance chiel? Ye can never get a body when ye're needin' him."

A NEW SOUTH AFRICAN VENTURE.—We have received No. 1 of "The African Insurance, Banking and Commer-

cial Gazette," which made its debut on 15th December last. A table is given of the "duty paid by imperial and Foreign Insurance Companies to the Treasury of Cape Colony," from which we learn that in 1902, these companies paid \$55,625 to the government. We trust "The African Gazette" will have a successful career. The first number is very promising.

Correspondence.

We do not hold ourselves responsible for views expressed by correspondents.

NEW YORK STOCK LETTER.

New York, March 23, 1904.

Cotton, during the latter part of last week and the first part of this, held the attention, not only of the speculative community, but of the entire world. The dramatic collapse of the Sully boom, while not unexpected, like all such things, produced a shock when it came. Success in one speculation is by no means a guarantee that profits will be harvested in another, and most operators have found that it was advisable to confine their attention to one market and not to meddle with others. This is another instance, where an operator may be right on his facts and wrong on the market. Facts are developing, which tend to show that the late advance in the price of cotton is unfortunately not warranted, although it must be admitted that speculative pressure has forced it somewhat higher than it should have gone just at the present time. The deterioration of the plant, which is claimed by some, from the use of low grade seed; the exhaustion of the ground by continuous crops of cotton; the boll weevil, and lastly, but, by no means least, the scarcity of efficient labour to properly take care of the crops, are not factors which make for lower prices. A knowledge of these facts, some of which cannot be overcome by a new crop, has been the basis of the speculation, but it is to be feared that some of the methods used to further the speculation have not been within the limits of strict business, whether this is so or not will appear when the investigation, which it now seems likely will be made into the affairs of the defunct firm, has been concluded. The first effect of the collapse of the cotton deal was to make the Stock Market sell off, but when it was realized that the lowering of the price of the staple would admit of purchases by milling men and exporters, the market promptly rallied and became strong. Crowding closely upon the cotton sensation came the outburst of buying of the Union Pacific shares. At first, this was shrouded in mystery, but it soon developed that it was on account of the settlement in the matter of the Northern Securities Company. This buying gave an impetus to the market, and to a certain extent frightened some of the shorts into covering; the rest will come in later, for we contend that this interest is much larger than is generally supposed, and some of them will not cover until the market is considerably higher.

In conformity with the decision of the Court, the Northern Pacific and Great Northern Securities will be eliminated from the Northern Securities Company, and the capital of this corporation reduced 99 per cent., leaving only enough stock to represent the assets of the Company, which have no connection with either Northern Pacific or Great Northern, but which, amounting to some \$4,000,000, consist of other securities. Under the plan proposed, each holder of Northern Securities will get \$32.27 par value of Northern Pacific, and \$30.15 par value of Great