

Thus we have made free use of the Superintendent's excellent report, and with the foregoing and the tables published in THE BUDGET of May last, our readers who may not have the Superintendent's report, will have a pretty full knowledge of the business of insurance in all its branches, transacted during the year 1892, besides synopsis of periods prior to and inclusive of that year.

IS IT CONSISTENT?

People used to be lectured and hectored on the subject of the large reserves and surplus funds held by the old line life insurance companies. Also on the extravagance, the waste and uselessness, nay, even the wickedness of accumulating such funds. Why, it was urged, not do as the assessment concerns did, leave the money in the pockets of the insured where it naturally belonged? But the assessment people, some of them, long ago learned, and quite a number of them are now learning the lesson that reserve, surplus, or by whatever name they may be known, funds are useful and indeed necessary to life insurance. And assessors themselves are now piling up such things as emergency funds to be called upon in the day of need. And such a day is sure to visit them, a day when the assessments will be insufficient to meet the claims of increasing mortality. Thus have the assessment folk learned to respect and set much store by the idea hitherto scouted by them, of creating reserve funds for the protection of the insured.

A strong objection to such funds being held by insurance companies, was that the officials, the select few, had control of the strong box and its contents, and could help themselves out of it, or take box and all, just as their need or greed might dictate or require. Wonder! was it this idea of possible possession that impressed the magnates of assessment societies and converted them to the faith of emergency funds, and the like! There are officials in assessment institutions who completely "hold the fort" through their control of proxies, and possibly an emergency may arise that would give cause to some of these magnates to remove the funds by—proxy—and thus they would only be putting in practice the harrying act which they fearfully suggested other chief men like themselves, might possibly be guilty of. There may be something in this to account for the change above referred to.

Another lesson the assessment people are learning and are putting into practice, with variations to improve on the lesson and excel their teachers, is that of having office buildings of their own. They used to rail at the old liners for having brass door plates, large extravagantly furnished offices, and extensive palatial buildings of their own; and it was contended that the cost of all these gay things came out of the pockets of the insured in unnecessary premiums extorted from the insured that should never have been charged. But now the assessment bodies themselves are doing all these exceedingly naughty things.

As being in the lead or, so to speak, at the top of the tree of assessmentism, the Mutual Reserve is busy putting up a building of its own, or is it the president's property? in Broadway, the principal thoroughfare of New York, and on one of the most conspicuous corners of that far-famed roadway,—just like the president, it is to be seen, gazed at, and admired. It is to be a remarkable structure every way; for its size, quality of materials, and style of architecture and finish, as the following extracts, descriptive of the building, show. The extracts are

from the *Economist*, the organ of the Mutual Reserve, and by the organ are credited to the *New York World*, the champion puffer of the American press. All know how and whence these paid-for puffs originate. Here are a few of them:—

"The most striking building on Broadway and at the same time the most attractive is the magnificent structure now in process of erection at the corner of Duane Street. Nobody can look at it without being impressed with its rare architectural beauty, its enormous height and its massive proportions. It is a remarkable union of symmetry and strength."

"Strangers in the city stop opposite it to gaze with admiration at its colossal proportions, and residents who pass it day after day on their way to business have watched its growth skyward with unceasing interest. All New York knows that when completed it is to be the permanent home of the Mutual Reserve Fund Life Association, the greatest institution of its kind in the world, whose wonderful increase in business has rendered this palatial building a matter of absolute necessity. Towering above its neighbors, it is easily the loftiest as well as the handsomest structure on Broadway. And when it is realized that it is erected for an association only twelve years old the fact is amazing."

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"In the construction of this great edifice foreign climes have been ransacked for material. Africa and Italy have supplied its marble, England its enamelled bricks and skilled carvers. All artists of renown have been employed with mallet and chisel, hewing out of the solid Indiana limestone figures and patterns of elegant design."

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"The building, which will be about 200 feet high when completed, has an exterior of surpassing beauty. The outside portico is richly carved, and the two main entrances, both on Broadway, as will be seen by a glance at the illustration, are models of the stone-carver's art. A series of circular windows, surmounted by a stone balustrade complete the top story, on which will be erected a flagstaff 60 ft. high."

"The building has fourteen stories above the sidewalk. It has a frontage of 75 feet on Broadway and 122 feet on Duane Street."

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"The second and third stories will be occupied in their magnificent entirety by the Mutual Reserve Fund Life Association. The second floor is 113 feet deep and 70 feet wide. It will have four public elevators, running to the top of the building, and one private elevator running from the cellar to the fourth story floor, for the exclusive use of the Mutual Reserve Fund Life Association. On this floor there will be steel safes built into the wall, toilet rooms, lavatories, lockers, and, in fact, all the conveniences and comforts appertaining to a first-class modern business building."

Now where does all this money come from. The enormous sums needed to erect the "Palatial building"? If the old-liners have to rob people by extortionate premiums to put up fine buildings and all their extravagant belongings, where, we would like to know, does the Mutual Reserve get or find its enormous funds, to put up such a "Palatial" edifice and its lavishly extravagant belongings? a building which is to over-top and out-do all the other "Palatial buildings" of New York City.

According to the doctrine of the Mutual Reserve itself, and that of its fellow assessment concerns, the members get their insurance at cost; there should therefore, be no spare funds to