

We do not of course mean by this that Life Assurance is so simple that any person can work it, for it is one of the most complicated businesses in existence. What we do mean is that it has been so thoroughly explained in published treatises that it has been found possible, under favorable circumstances, for a person by careful study to very largely make up for the lack of practical experience in it. Can this be said of fire insurance? Would it have been possible for any of the persons just mentioned to have managed a fire company?

Again, if we take the catalogue of the leading insurance publishing firm of Great Britain we find there are many works on matters connected with life assurance and very few on fire. This is a pretty fair test of the proportion existing between the two branches.

What is the reason for this difference? It is true that there is greater variety of risks in the fire than in the life business, and consequently greater difficulty in classifying them. But the companies have, times without number, agreed on classifications for tariff purposes, and it is evident that this difficulty is easily overcome. Why is it that we never see the detailed experience of any company arranged according to classes of business? We know that many of the best companies work this out for their own guidance, but why is it never published? Is it that competition is so keen that when any valuable knowledge is secured by one company it selfishly keeps it for its own guidance only? We believe this to be the principal reason. Probably most managers would say so at once, and at the same time defend the practice. They say, naturally, that it is their own, and therefore to be made use of for the benefit of their own companies. At the first glance this appears very reasonable, but we would ask the few companies who possess statistics, has the plan of withholding it been profitable even to them? We believe the present lowness of rates is largely due to the fact that many companies have come on the field with little knowledge of what the net rates on different classes of risks really are, and rates have accordingly been regulated more by individual fancies than by anything else, one company cutting down this class and another that, and nearly all being willing to follow any prominent company. If some of the large companies would only throw aside their jealousy, and unite to work out, and then make accessible, the actual statistics connected with the business, they would have done much to make it both reasonable and profitable. At present it can hardly be said to be either, for, to an outsider at least, it seems to be based on little more than guess-work and caprice.

EXPERIENCE AND PRACTICAL RESULTS WITH GASOLINE vs. IGNORANCE AND OBSTINATE STUPIDITY.

From "Rough Notes."

There is, perhaps, no subject which comes up, and will not down at the bidding of the fraternity, and of which the average underwriter has so little knowledge, as a result of personal and practical experience and investigation, as gasoline, its use as a fuel and an illuminator. All the old men, and many of the boys in the business, will remember when kerosene was introduced, and how it was opposed, and how, gradually but surely, progress and the demands of a venturesome people for "more light" and better and cheaper light, finally prevailed, and coal oil, or kerosene oil,

became common in use in every household. Did the final introduction of coal oil into general use increase the loss account? Undoubtedly. Then, what should have been done? Why, as the American citizen refused longer to be restricted to the use of a tallow dip, when Providence in His wisdom had provided an article vastly better, it was, to our mind, the plain duty of underwriters to have met the question squarely when in its infancy, fixed a price for the added hazard and restricted the manner of its use, instead of fighting against its introduction, and, finally, when public sentiment, the great autocrat, forced it, accepting and loading on the added hazard without compensation. Old fogysm has stood out manfully against the spirit of the age, for a time, as ingenuity and energy and capital have brought out their fruits; but the old man, in every instance, after a blind resistance, has taken on, little by little, added hazards until we are weighed down; but we got no increase of premium for the added hazards. And yet great underwriters inquire what is the matter of the insurance business of the country?

Gasoline is pressing its way close upon the heels of coal oil, and all the old fogies and Rip Van Winkles are utterly opposed to it. They would rather fight it for a few years, while the progressive companies investigate, fix a price, restrict and control the manner of its use, and then when the same old fogies discover through the investigation of their progressive neighbors that gasoline is a non-explosive but volatile, inflammable and hazardous element, when carelessly used—prove, when used in accordance with such rigid rules as have been made for its control, not only a thing of economy, a comfort to kitchen inhabitants, but (when its use is governed by such rigid rules as the Cleveland board devised and applied, mark well the foregoing) the writing of gasoline risks has proved a source of profit to insurance companies.

In 1881 the Cleveland board members granted 1493 gasoline permits—in all cases attaching the restrictive and cautionary printed slip—and collected for such permits \$2,903.55, and the loss for same period was \$187.32. The results in Cleveland prior, to January, '81, and during the time that board permitted gasoline when paid for, has been equally favorable.

And now some one will say, "These figures prove too much," but it must be borne in mind that without the application of vigorous rules for its control when used we believe it to be one of the most dangerous elements ever introduced into our business. And further, in nine-tenths of all the cases of accidents with gasoline the parties have been found to be using it without any permit, and consequently without any cautionary rule governing its use. There is but one condition under which gasoline proper can be exploded. When confined and subjected to fire heat it will expand and thus burst its confines, and thus liberated it comes in contact with fire and burns, and the newspapers and Rip Van Winkles say it "exploded;" but if "Rip" will put the same quantity of water into like confines and apply the same amount of heat it will burst its confines. Does the water explode?

Gasoline when not confined vaporizes rapidly, the temperature lessening or increasing the rapidity of the giving off of vapor or gas. This vapor when mixed with air becomes the dangerous explosive; and as gasoline gas always settles, it may remain at the cellar bottom, or at the floor of a room unnoticed, until a lighted match, or candle or open lamp comes in contact with it, mixed with air, when an explosion ensues. Hence it follows that insurance companies should prohibit its storage in dwellings, or stores, or warehouses. It is best kept in metal cans in the open air, or where there is full and free circulation of air, that will carry off any vapor which may result from leakage. The filling of lamps, a use of any other than metal lamps, or filling of stove reservoir, or the cleaning of gloves or clothes with gasoline, when any fire or any artificial light is in the room, should be strictly prohibited. Gasoline, a volatile and highly inflammable substance, a lurking foe to life and property, unless