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Charge Of Enticing Agents.

The Life Underwriter's Association, of Western New York, recently met to pass a resolution condemnatory of a life assurance company enticing away the entire field force of another company, and installing as its manager in a large city a man whose methods are alleged to be "a menace to the welfare of the business." How far a company is open to just censure for engaging the services of the officials of another company is not easy to state so as to leave no opening for objective criticism. On broad, general principles each man is his own master, outside of any express obligations he has entered into. He is free to sell his services in the open market to any bidder, when those services are not already engaged. If this is so for each individual it must necessarily be so for any number of individuals. The company which the Western Life underwriters condemn for engaging the entire field force of another company formed the services of those officials in the market and bought them *en bloc*, which was no more reprehensible than buying the services of one of them, and no censure ever follows this being done. It looks as though there had been a strike of the field force of a certain company in the city in question, which a rival company had taken advantage of. There are, however, circumstances which render the enticing away of an insurance official by a rival company as reprehensible, but the blame is shared equally by the official. An inexperienced officer is engaged who, in a few years, learns the business by the direct instruction of the manager, the other officials and by experience he is allowed the opportunity to acquire. If such an official so acts as to make no return to the company in whose employment he has been enabled to make his services much more remunerative, and requites the benefits he has received by taking an engagement with a rival company, then his conduct is reasonably open to grave reproach. It is certainly lacking in gratitude, and he is deficient in honour who is ungrateful.

"The still small voice of gratitude," is only silent when the conscience is dumb.

The Western Life underwriters may have had good ground for censuring the company in question, but the New York Life Insurance Company stands too high in public confidence to be injured by an abstract resolution.

Warning To Underground Insurance Agents.

A sharp lesson has been given by an American Court to those who handle underground insurance. One, Beirne, an insurance agent, being applied to by a person named Landusky, for a policy for \$1,000, furnished one issued by a Chicago company which had no legal authority to issue such a policy in the State of Illinois. A fire having occurred in the insurer's premises, demand was made for indemnity in due order. As the application was ignored, Landusky sued Beirne, the agent, for the amount claimed. He defended the suit on the plea that he acted as a broker and procured the policy from a firm of brokers in Chicago. The Court decided that, as the defendant, Beirne, had provided the policy of a company bearing no legal status in the State where it was issued, and that as such policy was worthless, he was personally responsible for the loss suffered by the owner of the policy, he was, therefore, ordered to pay the claim and costs.

On this case the "Insurance Monitor" remarks: "The liability of the agent, in our opinion, is not limited to the insolvency of the company. If he furnishes a contract which the insured has good reason to believe represents that of a company in good standing in the State, but which is, in fact, illegal, he is responsible for refusal of the company to respond if liable, or for the expense and trouble on the part of the policyholder to collect his money through a distant court. A policyholder is not bound on the principle of 'caveat emptor' to investigate the legal status of a policy sold to him by its representative. The very fact that the latter is doing an illegal act precludes him from sheltering himself behind that principle." Selling underground fire insurance is akin in principle, or want of principle, to selling gold bricks.