Insurance in the United States.

(Exclusive Correspondence of The Chronicle.)

Life Companies and Health Conservation—Centralisation in Fire Insurance—Chaotic Condition of Burglary Insurance—Personal and Company Notes.

Very great importance attaches to the movement in this country, centreing, of course, in this city, towards the conservation of human life through a more careful inspection of sanitary conditions and the establishment of sanitariums wherever it is possible or necessary. At the recent meeting in Washington large stress was placed upon this subject, and while, at present, only two or three life insurance companies are paying particular attention to it, it is very likely that the movement will spread so that its influence will be felt, not only in the experience of the companies but naturally through the communities generally. As is well known, the Metropolitan Life already has plans for a sanitarium for tuberculosis, well known as the "white plague," and other diseases will receive equal attention. Action of this kind ought to result in a much more favorable mortality experience and in a large reduction in the death rate throughout the country. It is significant that this movement, as well as that for the reduction of the fire waste, has been inaugurated and taken up by insurance companies.

CENTRALISATION OF FIRE INSURANCE.

As time goes on, it is more and more evident that the tendency is towards centralization in fire insurance, that is to say, towards the driving out of the smaller and weaker companies and the combination or consolidation of others so as to make stronger ones. This must be regarded as altogether favorable for the commerce of the country, because it more firmly establishes fire insurance as a foundation of commercial credit by placing the companies still doing business upon a more secure financial footing. Several cases of such consolidation have recently occurred in this city, and as we have often remarked, the large companies are growing still larger and are gradually absorbing the lion's share of the business. It is a condition peculiar to this time, and one which, under the circumstances, should be expected and to which no objection can be raised.

CHAOTIC BURGLARY INSURANCE.

The burglary insurance business in this city, in which there has been great competition, rapidly growing for the past few years, has been up to the present time, in a very chaotic condition. There has been practically no agreement among the companies as to rates, but at a recent meeting of the companies doing this class of business, after prolonged and exciting discussion, it was finally decided to charge a uniform rate and a flat commission rate of 25 p.c., to go into effect November 1. The contrast is strong between the present time and ten years ago, for now, something like twenty-five companies are competing for this business, while then there were only about three in the field and they were "sailing upon uncharted seas." Now, however, the experience has been long and extensive enough so that some sort of foundation can be determined, upon which to base proper rates and conditions.

NOTES.

Manager Charles H. Post, of the Caledonian Insurance Company, will shortly take a long trip through the country, visiting his principal agencies.

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Owing to the fact that President William B. Joyce, of the National Surety Company, has concluded to retire from active business for the present on account of the illness of his wife, it was at first reported that he might leave the company altogether. This report is now refuted and it is expected that Mr. Joyce will continue as the chief manager of the company, taking up his duties again upon his return.

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The arrival in this country is announced of Mr. Arthur Duncker, president of the Nord-Deutsche Insurance Company, of Hamburg.

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Vice-President George T. Dexter, of the Mutual Life Insurance Company, recently attended a meeting of the agents in Chicago.

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One of the important events of the month, from a social point of view, was the celebration by President Elbridge G. Snow, of the Home Insurance Company, of the fiftieth anniversary of his connection with that great company. A banquet was tendered to Mr. and Mrs. Snow on the evening of the 16th, and the gifts upon the occasion were many and costly. Mr. Snow has also recently been elected an honorary member of the executive committee of the National Board of Fire Underwriters.

QUERIST.

New York City, October 9, 1912.

THE AMERICAN HOMICIDE RECORD.

Mr. Frederick L. Hoffman, the well-known statistician of the Prudential of America, contributes to the New York Spectator, a statistical study in homicide, which is of distinct interest to those Canadian life companies operating in the United States field. According to the published mortality statistics of the Bureau of the Census for 1910, the number of deaths from homicide in the registration area, as finally reported for that year, was 3,190, equivalent to a death rate of 5.9 per 100,000 of population. The average rate for the ten-year period ending with 1909 was 4.3, and for more recent years in detail the rates were 5.0 for 1906, 6.3 for 1907, 6.4 for 1908, and 5.6 for 1909. Only two specific methods are returned, it being stated that out of the 3,190 deaths from homicide in the registration area 1,852, or 3.4 per 100,000 of population, were caused by firearms; 452, or 0.8, by cutting or piercing instruments, and 886, or 1.6 per 100,000 of population, by other means.

While to a limited extent, the homicide returns are not trustworthy, and there are reasons for believing that owing to the determined effort which has been made by the Census Office to bring about a more scientific method of death classification, the returns for the present day are not strictly comparable with those of an earlier period, making due allowance for this source of error, says Mr. Hoffman, there would seem to be no escape from the conclusion that the homicide rate in the United States is not only exceedingly high, but that the rate during recent years has materially increased.