thus combining investment with insurance. If, on the other hand, he wishes to protect his family by life insurance at the lowest cost consistent with absolute security, the less expensive, more equitable and safer renewable term policy would the better meet his wishes and needs.

In deciding upon the company in which to effect his insurance a man should select that institution which can show the smallest outgo on each $1000 insured for death claims and expenses, as these constitute the real cost of insurance; the largest percentage of assets to liabilities, as this shows comparative ability to meet engagements; and generally that institution which shows the healthiest growth.

In each of these important respects the two companies which you criticise occupy very high rank, in fact, the highest rank among American companies.

SHEPPARD HOMANS.

London Letter.

(From our own Correspondent.)

SIR,—A philosopher has remarked that life would not be worth living were it not for its sins. Much may be said for and against this dogma, but it must be admitted that sinfulness has great attractions to many men, and to none less than to contributors to Insurance Journals.

I of course do not mean that the said contributors find any pleasure in their own sins, or, perhaps I ought to say, would find any pleasure in them, if their noble occupation did not preclude the possibility of their indulging in anything of the kind, but they do find pleasure in the sins of others and some profit also, for without the peccadillos of other people their contributions would be even more utterly dull than they are at present.

I have been thrown into this moral vein by the consideration of the case of the Isabelle, which has been before the High Court of Admiralty here. Certain Deal boatmen, the crew of a lugger called the Invicta, brought an action against the owners of the barquentine Isabelle for salvage. According to their story they, the boatmen, found the Isabelle at anchor in the Downs off Deal, but in imminent danger, for a vessel with "sails loose and flapping" was driving down upon the devoted barquentine. They immediately boarded the barquentine, called the captain on deck, called the crew also, but they didn't come, slipped an anchor, set some sails, and saved the Isabelle. For all this, including a new anchor and chain which they supplied in lieu of the one slipped by them, they only claimed the moderate sum of £160.

But the owners of the Isabelle received "some information," and in consequence refused to pay this trifle, and when the case came for trial a sad confession was made. The mate of the Isabelle came on deck when the anchor was being slipped, and on asking why it was being slipped, was told this story of the vessel with the flapping sail. As mates will be on such occasions, he was inquisitive enough to ask where this vessel was, and on being informed that she had been towed away by a tug, even then was not satisfied; and merely because he couldn't see the tug. It was a bright starlight morning and he wouldn't believe in an invisible tug and a vessel with flapping sails possessing the same optical peculiarity, and so the whole pretty tale fell through. The Isabelle had never been in any danger at all. The flap-sailed vessel was a myth, and the whole thing was a "plant." The brave Deal boatmen didn't get any damages or salvage or any other reward for their gallant conduct, and many even have cause to regret that they risked their valuable lives in their endeavor to "save the barquentine." I think I should like to know that mate; I am sure I should like to know what a barquentine is.

At the conclusion of the case the learned judge expressed the opinion that frauds upon underwriters were of frequent occurrence. I think few will dispute the probability of this, but at the same time I would venture to remark that, were it not for "frauds," underwriting would be but a poor business. The people who pay the insurance premiums pay for the frauds, and leave a trifle to the insurers besides.

I have nothing particularly interesting to report to you in our fire business just now. The Colonial Exhibition has not been burned down, and if it had been it is probable that the interesting fact would have been announced to you before this could reach you. In life business we are doing as usual. Those offices who spend freely on advertisements and pay liberal rates of commission get a good deal of life business, and those who insist upon keeping down the rates of expenditure do not get very much. There is the usual battle going on between the advocates of what is called "marching with the times" and the advocates of the old-fashioned ways. Marching with the times means buying business on terms which do not leave much margin of profit. Rates of commission steadily go up, and more and more is spent in advertising.

Some of our best offices hold out firmly against the idea of paying more commission for their business, and the result is, that they do not get as much business as their financial position would fairly warrant them in expecting. Few businesses need to be entered into with more care than the insurance of our life, especially in the cases where the happiness of a family may depend upon the correctness of the estimate formed of the soundness of the office. Yet every day experience shows that there are few things men take less trouble about. They go to office A or to office B just because they know the agent or have a friend who is insured there already, or they happen to pass the office on their way to business, or some other equally valid reason, and so the agent gets more and more powerful in the insurance world, until it almost seems as if some day the agents will be the real managers of the offices. Worse might happen perhaps than that, but unfortunately in this country we have very few men who really devote themselves to insurance agency business, and the bulk of our insurance agents are not men whose opinions in insurance matters bear any special weight. I feel sure there is danger here, and wish I could suggest any way out of it, but the tendency is too strong at present to be successfully resisted, and I suppose the agents must have their day.

TAMESIS.

THE GUARDIAN ASSURANCE COMPANY.

From the annual statement issued by the Guardian for the year 1885 we learn that substantial and satisfactory progress has been made in the fire department of this respectable old-fashioned office.

The fire premiums after deducting reassurances were £437,012, being an increase of £13,573 over 1884, while the losses were £263,855 or £11,360 less. The expenses amounted to 13.3 per cent. and commission to 16.7. The loss ratio was 60.3 per cent. The profit of the trading account for the year being 9.7 per cent. The fire fund, independently of the paid-up capital, now amounts to £516-500.

The Guardian was established sixty-five years ago and has always held the reputation of being a thoroughly sound and conservative company. It has a paid-up capital of one million pounds sterling.

The chief agents for Canada are Messrs. Simms and Denholm with Mr. E. A. Lilly as their able assistant and manager.

Manitoba.—It is estimated that the area sown in wheat this year in Manitoba is 450,000 acres. Four years ago it was 94,000.