

An extract from the *Spectator* in our last issue, entitled "Avoid the Mutuals," has called forth a response from the manager of the Gore District Mutual Fire Insurance Company, which claims that that Company has proved itself to be an exception to the rule.

We insert the letter, wishing to give Mr. Strong the free advertisement that it contains, knowing that there do exist Mutuals that deserve the name, but which, we regret to say, are but exceptions which prove the rule—as the writer of the letter evidently admits himself in the general exculpatory tenor of his statements.

In return for this we would ask Mr. Strong to kindly favor us, in time for insertion in our next issue, with the methods used by the Gore District to ensure themselves against being wiped out of existence by a town or city conflagration.

As his company now insure on the cash as well as on the Mutual system, and as mercantile risks are written, is a careful record and tabulation kept, by Block Plan system or otherwise? Can the directors tell at a glance how much they hold at stake in congregated risks that can by any possibility be at the mercy of a sweeping fire?

From the testimony of an officer of the "Gore District," that, in one case at least, they were badly hit in a place where, as they freely acknowledged, a more careful record and a better knowledge of the contiguity of their risks, would have proved to be a large pecuniary saving.

A Fire Insurance Company, be it stock or Mutual or both, should offer absolute indemnity against all possible contingencies; does the Gore District do this? Does the management know that they do this in all places, even where their policies are most popular? By what method is this assurance made doubly sure?

Our columns are open for the proof of this matter, which will be for the joint benefit of the Company and for the insured.

AN ACCOUNT OF LLOYD.

(From the *Insurance World*.)

A large number of the great commercial houses and corporations of England, and indeed of all countries, are carried on under names no longer borne by the members. Lloyd's is still more singular in this respect, for there has never been a prominent, certainly not a leading, member of the Association bearing that name. Mr. Lloyd, to whom thousands of letters are addressed annually by shipowners, captains and crews, is a myth. From about 1705 to 1750 there was one Lloyd who kept a shop or coffee house on Lombard street, London, to which many merchants engaged in maritime adventures resorted for meals. But, though his house was the focus of news, Mr. Lloyd seems to have had no direct agency in making it so beyond the preparations of the roast beef and the dispensing of the ale so enticing to all Britishers. He doubtless made a point of listening to and then repeating to new comers the maritime news which he had heard from his customers, so that his place became noted therefor. But he probably never took risks on vessels at sea, as the merchants who dined at his house were accustomed to do. He simply knew how to keep a hotel, and doubtless died without dreaming that the name of his obscure coffee house was to be given to the busiest and most peculiar department of that busy institution, the Royal Exchange, of London, the greatest Bourse of the world. Entering the open court of the Royal Exchange, in which the merchants and brokers meet, the seeker for Lloyd's is referred to a glazed mahogany door which forms the entrance to the place he seeks. On opening this he finds himself at the foot of a high, broad staircase. Passing the statue of Huskinson, the tablet to the *Times*, the red-robed beadle in his box and the numerous officials of the numberless life and fire insurance companies, he reaches the great hall to which the merchants daily resort to picking up seafaring news, and which is known by the name of the old coffee house, Lloyd's.

The first object which attracts the attention of the merchant and which is to be explained to the stranger on entering the hall is the bulletin board. There are, in fact, many bulletin boards; but each is a duplicate of the other, and a number of them is used for the greater convenience of the crowd. These bulletins contain the news of the day, showing the vessels cleared at the Custom House, those which have sailed, those which have arrived at home and at various foreign ports; the latitude and longitude, and the whereabouts of vessels spoken of at sea, giving also the date when seen and the condition of the vessel; the vessels in port at all sorts of places; such events occurring at sea as would affect the rate of insurance, as, for instance, changes in the light houses, signals stations, &c., and everything of the kind interesting to shippers, insurance men, captains and pilots.

On a high desk by itself on one side of the room is the loss book, or, as it is commonly called, the "Black Book." This volume contains all the information not usually registered on the bulletins in regard to losses at sea. In fact, the bulletin board is a register of good news; the "Black Book" is the recorder of bad news. The announcements in each are made in the most laconic style which the practical clerks of Lloyd's can command. They seldom occupy more than a couple of lines, and are, of course, written by hand. In the black book the number of pages thus covered varies with the season. In summer, one or two pages are used daily; in winter, the season of heavy gales, as many as a dozen pages are filled. It is seldom that anything is said in the loss book of the loss of life. Lloyd's takes no cognizance of the doomed beings; it is property, not life, which the underwriters of Lloyd's insure.

The entries on the bulletins and black book, the indications of the meteorological instruments, and reports of the various insurance inspectors on vessels, combine to make up the daily paper published by Lloyd's and known as *Lloyd's List*.

There are other peculiarities of Lloyd's, such as the chart room, where are displayed maps of every sea, ocean, bay and port in the world, each on a roller and arranged with great care; and there is the reading room, where the files of newspapers, maritime gazettes, commercial circulars, &c., are arranged according to nations and continents on two large tables, which may be said to represent the two hemispheres.

The method of collecting ship news by Lloyd's is not materially different from that of the New York associated press, but it is more thorough and perfect, and far more reliable. Lloyd's has its agents in every part of the world—on every habitable rock in the sea, as well as in every open port of every nation. Lloyd's is a signboard to be found in every port that a ship can enter. The agents employed are either England's foreign officials (generally consuls) or English merchants of repute residing in foreign countries, and always men of such official or commercial standing and reputation as enables them to obtain the earliest shipping intelligence. These agents are in constant communication, by letter and telegraph, with the central office in London, and here their reports finally concentrate. At the same time that their information is on its way to London it is circulated at every port touched at by the vessel bearing the communication to Lloyd's, and thus Lloyd's news is disseminated.

From the office the accumulated information goes in bulk and not piecemeal. Besides these agencies of information, the merchants of London who are subscribers to Lloyd's furnish their news, received by letter or otherwise, to the institution, and the captains and crews of vessels often report to Lloyd's before they go to their owners. It costs \$50,000 annually to sustain such an institution and pay for the news. This is not so large a sum as the New York association puts out for news, but it must be remembered that the London institution is confined to one branch of news collecting, while that of New York embraces all kinds of news.