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THE

## Insurance and Finance Chronicle.

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Life Assurance  
Expenses again.

THE present reckless and extravagant methods of doing business pursued by so many of the so-called progressive life companies appear to be receiving serious attention at the hands of several of the Insurance Departments of the United States. The fact is a significant one, which companies would do well to note in time. For years past the insurance press, this journal amongst the number, has "in season and out of season" preached reform in this matter, but their friendly advice has fallen on deaf ears. Indeed, the state of affairs has gone from bad to worse, and has now reached such a stage as to suggest to the Commissioner for Maine the possibility of having to resort to legislation to restrict the expenditure of life offices and to enforce more conservative management generally. When such a responsible official as Mr. Carr is thus constrained to go outside the strict province of his duties to seriously hint at the adoption of such a drastic measure, it is surely high time for the managers to pause and consider their present position, and whither the business is tending. The interests of policy-holders have too long been made subservient to the costly idea of aggrandizement, and if the managers read "the signs of the times" aright they will see that the warning now officially conveyed is one of the straws indicating the drift of a growing public opinion on the subject. If they are wise they will at once "set their houses in order," and conform their practices to that opinion, and thus avoid the necessity for the extreme step suggested, which would practically mean taking the management in a measure out of the hands of the officials and placing it in that of the State. As stated elsewhere, we purpose dealing fully with this and other subjects in future issues.

Spontaneous Combustion of Wool.

We are continually learning and unlearning more about the origin of fires. The most dearly cherished notions are constantly being exploded and new ones added to the long list. Wool has been generally regarded as one of the least combustible of articles, but the *Economist* of London, in an interesting article on the subject, suggests that under certain conditions the contrary may be the fact. In alluding to the increasing frequency of fires in the holds of ships containing wool, our contemporary states that a suspicion is gaining ground that this product, which has hitherto enjoyed a reputation for immunity, has not only had a good deal to do with the fires, but probably may have been the cause of them. On cutting open some bales which recently arrived in London in a heated condition they were found to contain at the core "lumps of black cinder of a pitchy or resinous appearance," which probably would have resulted in the bales becoming ignited if they had remained in the vessel for a longer time. The conclusion drawn from this and other facts in the history of wool is that it is under certain circumstances liable to spontaneous combustion. Several causes are given in explanation, principal among which are bad or damp packing and an excess of grease in the fleec. These, combined with light pressing, close stowage, a high temperature and inadequate ventilation are supposed to be favorable to combustion. It is well known that in the case of most oils the process of drying increases the temperature, and it may be easily imagined that fire might result under the above conditions.

Actuarial Society  
of America.

THE fifth annual meeting of this Society was held in New York on the 26th and 27th ultimo, at which there was a good attendance. The following Canadian members were present: Mr. T. B. Macaulay of Montreal, Mr. Wm. McCabe and Mr. W. C. Macdonald of Toronto, and Mr. George Wegenast of Waterloo. The members of the Council were re-elected, and on their recommendation two new members were elected, viz., Adolph Davidson, B.S., of the New York Life, and Charles G. Reiter, assistant actuary of the Metropolitan Life. The president, Mr. Howell W. St. John, delivered a short but interesting address, which contained several practical suggestions with reference to the objects of the