Permission has been given by Insurance Commissioner Cutting of Massachusetts to the Hartford Life Insurance Company to increase its rates of assessment. The increase proposed will be about twenty per cent. It is necessary in order that outstanding demands upon the company may be paid. Three other companies had previously made a similar request for an increase in their rates of assessment, and the permits were granted. These companies were the Mutual Reserve Fund Life Association, the Northwestern Life Assurance Company of Chicago, and the Covenant Mutual Life Association of Galesburg, Ill.

The International Congress of Actuaries will be held in London on the 16th, 17th, 18th, 19th and 20th May, 1898, and the following preliminary programme of proceedings has been issued by the Secretaries to the Organizing Committee, Institute of Actuaries:—

The following five principal questions will be discussed at the forthcoming Congress, but other matters will be brought forward:—(1) Old age pensions; (2) Legislation in relation to life assurance, viz.:—the general principles of the laws which regulate life assurance contracts, and the constitution of assurance companies; (3) The position of friendly societies in various countries; (4) Compensation to workmen for accidents, with special reference to the actuarial and financial principles, and to existing laws; (5) The question of a universal actuarial notation.

"Vanity Fair," commenting on the report of the Grand Trunk Ry. says: "How much of the improvement is due to Sir Rivers-Wilson, and how much to Mr. Hays, the new manager, it is difficult to say. Probably the work has been intermingled in such a manner as to prevent analysis of this kind. It is, however, sufficient for the shareholders to know that they are within sight of a dividend. The Guarantee required in round figures £208,000 for its full interest, and, as we said some time ago, this amount for the current year has already been earned. The First Preference stock requires about £170,000, and it is very likely that a great part of this will be paid in 1898, so that next year the Second Preference should receive more attention than it appears now to be getting. Investors who can afford to lock up both the First and Second Preferences are pretty sure to see them quoted considerably higher when political troubles have been smoothed away."

"The Railway News" points out that the Canadian Pacific Ry. with its controlled lines now forms the largest railroad corporation under one management on the American continent, as its mileage now exceeds a total of 9,000 miles. The only railways nearly approaching this figure are the Pennsylvania with 8,816 miles, and the Chicago and North-Western with 7,966 miles, but should the reported consolidation of the latter road and the Union Pacific with the recently amalgamated Vanderbilt lines east of Chicago take place, the result would be the formation of a railroad with even a greater length of line than the Canadian Pacific railway. Most of the Canadian Pacific railway's mileage is in Canada, although it works or controls nearly 2,000 miles in the States. Further extensions in Canada, aggregating some 500 miles, are under construction, or about to be commenced, so that, along with about 100 miles of running powers already operated, the mileage of this railroad may shortly reach the remarkable figure of 10,000 miles.

Bush Fires in Australasia. The news comes of a renewed spell of hot weather in Tasmania, attended by a renewal of bush fires and much destruction of property.

In Gippsland, Victoria, great damage has been done in the townships of Poowong, Poowong East and Poowong North, which have been surrounded by the flames. At the latter place nothing remains but four tenements. At Neerim South many buildings have been burned, and Walhalla is surrounded by fire and in danger of destruction.

From Wellington, N.Z., news comes that the township of Kaituna was all burned as well as a large tract of grass.

At a meeting of King's County Pharmaceutical Society, of Brooklyn, N. Y., a system of insurance to guard against blackmail and errors in compounding prescriptions was discussed. The president of the Society declared that there had grown up in Brooklyn as elsewhere an elaborate system of blackmail against retail druggists. If a patient for whom a druggist had compounded a prescription failed to get promptly well or showed unfavourable symptoms after taking the medicine no matter from what cause the druggist was charged into having made a mistake in the prescription. The possibilities so opened up for evilly inclined persons were great, and the only safeguard he could see was a system of insurance submitted by a New York corporation which was prepared to insure druggists against all liability of this nature. The corporation in question stand ready to issue policies in the sum of $5,000 at the rate of $10 a year. The scheme was promptly approved of.

State Insurance in Germany. The *Berlin Tageblatt*, of a recent date contains some astonishing figures received from the imperial home office regarding the German system of State insurance of working men. There exists in Germany a system of insurance for all workmen or employees against disablement and old age. Disablement pay was granted in 1897 to 231,000 working men and women, and old age pensions were awarded to 222,000 persons, the amounts together so paid totalling $135,000,000. The contributions to the insurance fund or what may be called, the premiums paid, which are in the proportion of one-third from the employers, one-third from the workmen and one-third from the State, amounted to $125,000,000, the interest on which will eventually permit of a reduction in the amounts to be contributed.

There were 442,000 industrial establishments in the Fatherland at the end of 1897, with 5,750,000 insured persons insured against accident; and there were 4,645,000 agricultural settlements with 11,000,000 persons similarly insured. In addition to all these, the workers in the building trades have to be reckoned, so that the total number of workingmen insured against accidents in Germany in 1897 amounted roundly to 18,000,000. The number of accidents fatal or otherwise was 381,000, and the money compensation paid in lump sums or annually to 515,000 of the insured was $16,000,000!