

started in the summer of 1696, and not in 1692, as a gossipy two-page sheet, issued thrice weekly, and was discontinued in the following February. Thirty years later *Lloyd's List* appeared, but for many years had no special connection with insurance matters. It was a convenient weekly purveyor of news pertaining to the trading world in which the patrons of the coffee-house moved, those interested in shipping interests being probably most numerous. Even the *Lloyd's List* of to-day can scarcely be called an insurance journal, in a broad sense. Insurance journalism proper is old enough to go alone and strong enough to stand on its merits, without claiming for it a spurious and absurd antiquity. For our part, we do not worship mummified specimens of any kind, nor glorify musty mediocrity merely because it is old. The intellectual achievements and material resources of this nineteenth century world are of quite enough importance to command our admiration and to absorb our attention.

THE AMALGAMATION CRAZE.

It is interesting and even sometimes very amusing to note the prominence in the human cranium of that organ which phrenologists call imitateness. It is by no means an abnormal development of childhood, but pertains conspicuously to us grown up mortals. What we call fashion is only the full-blown flower of imitateness, and is not at all confined to the cut of our clothes and the fearfully and wonderfully made bonnets of our wives and daughters, or to the customs of society to which we yield a willing bondage. Commercially, as well as socially, we are a great people for asserting, sheep-like, our independence and originality, by eagerly following the lead of some self-constituted bell wether of the human flock, and scramble nimbly to see who shall get over the fence first after the leader. The insurance world, though inhabited by a set of brainy and tolerably independent good fellows, is no exception to the above remark. Examples of new plans of business or methods of administration are caught up and widely imitated, and opinions freely echoed, not always because they are the best plans or the soundest opinions, but more often because of the prevailing impulse to do a thing because somebody else does it.

We have had a good many fashions in insurance, both fire and life, first and last, but just now the prevailing craze is to suddenly develop bigness. The short cut to this achievement naturally lies in the direction of the amalgamation of two or three or half a dozen companies, which may or may not be a good thing to do. Just now the air is full of rumors of amalgamation designs, founded, for the most part, on no better reason than that there have been two or three conspicuous examples during the past few months sufficiently important to set the fashion. The history of insurance, both in England and in America, has demonstrated quite frequently the wisdom of uniting two or more companies, because greater strength and efficiency was needed than either possessed separately. Where two sound but comparatively weak companies can be so wedded together as to make one safely strong one, there can be no reason why anybody should forbid the

banns, but every reason why the union should be encouraged. The record of insurance in Great Britain during the last fifty years has notably been one of amalgamations, and several of the larger companies of to-day have become such by amalgamations and re-insurances, while a score of less large but thoroughly sound and strong companies have grown more by the absorption of other companies than by the accretions of current business. Of 188 companies, good, bad and indifferent, listed by the *Post Magazine* not long since as existing in 1840, but 87 are now in existence, about 20 of which are exclusively annuity and pension companies, or devoted to limited specialties of some kind. Of the entire list of 188 some 60 went the amalgamation road, and the other non-existents went to the insurance boneyard. Some of these amalgamations and absorptions were wise and some were otherwise, just as some of later date and others in the future have been and will be of the same mixed character.

The friends of all sound underwriting are the earnest advocates of companies sufficiently large to handle a line of business distributed over an extended field, and with sufficient funds to inspire confidence and give prestige while affording ample security. That these requisites may be as effectually found in a company with five to fifteen millions of dollars of sound assets and an ample reserve, as in one of twice or thrice the size, is well known, however. Indeed there are a good many smaller companies which are also among the very best, alike for policyholders and stockholders. It is well, doubtless, that there should be now and then a company financially strong enough to do a world-wide business; but neither the underwriting situation nor the pockets of the stockholders require a wider field of operation in general than is sufficient to afford a healthy general average. It is a mistaken notion which a good many people have, that mere bulk is synonymous with strength among insurance corporations, though these same people do not easily mistake superior size for superior eatable value when they choose between a pumpkin and a peach. Diamonds are not so large as chestnuts but they are considered rather more valuable by a majority of mankind. An insurance company—and we have some such—may be very strong as well as very large, but it is well to remember that greatness has its perils. A turreted castle or a giant tree are more apt to be struck by lightning than a cottage or a rose bush.

It is really of prime importance for the directors and managers of some of the companies which are said to be on the amalgamation slate, to keep in mind the fact that the great mass of the people in England and America are not in love just now with movements for the aggregation of capital, and that grasping greatness may challenge a fatal hostility. The race for bigness by amalgamation methods may seem to the promoters to be desirable; but we offer the friendly suggestion, that in movements of that kind it will be wise to consider the ultimate as well as more immediate result. It is also well to bear in mind the fact, that a reduction in the number of existing companies by amalgamation does not really