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From "The Insurance Observer" we glean that the fire companies in France made a trade profit of \$3,318,000 last year out of a premium income of \$22,507,000, after deducting reinsurances. The trading profit was therefore 14.74 per cent. of the premiums. It would be highly interesting to have a comparative statement of the premiums, amounts at risk, losses incurred, and expenses of the fire companies of Great Britain, France, Germany and other European countries, for compiling which table our London contemporaries have the requisite materials; they are not available here.

Blackmail as a Fine Art. A trial in New York has brought out startling evidence as to how strikes are started and stopped. A walking delegate was proven to have levied black mail on employers of men to ward off a strike; or to settle one. If the money was paid, no strike, if refused, the men stopped work. The walking delegate made a fortune out of payments of this kind. The insurance companies out West have had similar experiences as reported by the United States "Review." The St. Louis boodle investigations reached the insurance question on Friday. James A. Waterworth, the St. Louis rater, told the grand jury that the refusal of the insurance companies to put up money for the boodlers in the Legislature of 1894 was responsible for the passage of the bills forbidding local boards and coinsurance. The combine demanded \$40,000 to prevent the passage of the bills. When repeal bills were introduced two years ago, the same amount was demanded to secure their passage, but this was afterward reduced to \$35,000. The companies refused to put up and the bills were killed. When the business men of the State attempted to secure repeal of the anti-insurance measures this year, the combine wanted \$25,000 to pass them, which was refused, and only one repeal bill got through.

Directors' Responsibility. A decision was given last week in the Superior Court in this city of the utmost importance to bank directors. Mr. Grenier was president of the Banque du Peuple. Mr. Toussaint Prefontaine was invited to join the Board. He was shown statements of the bank's affairs which Mr. Grenier certified as correct, whereupon Mr. Prefontaine became a director. Not long after this the bank failed, entailing heavy losses upon its shareholders and depositors. Mr. Prefontaine's loss was \$43,000. He consequently brought suit against President Grenier to recover this amount on the ground that, he had been induced to join the Board and invest money in the bank on the strength of statements that Mr. Grenier assured him were reliable, but which proved to be deceptions. The Court gave judgment in favour of Mr. Prefontaine condemning Mr. Grenier to recoup him the above amount which he had lost by being misled into becoming a director.

Acetylene Gas. The "Review," London, England, says:—"We are quite prepared to admit the virtues of acetylene, and have gone to the extent of trying it ourselves. We are putting up a big plant, not domestic, but where we can keep a long way off it. At the same time, when it is claimed that it is safe and harmless, we cannot quite agree here. We fail to see what the fact of its being an explosive or not being one, has got to do with the danger of this eminently brilliant and agreeable, but somewhat unstable, adjunct of civilization." Our valued contemporary in the same number publishes the following:—"The American yacht Vagabond carried an acetylene plant, and wanted insurance for £4,000. The marine company hesitated a good deal, but at last issued a policy at about the time when an explosion took place on board the yacht. It is stated that the fumes of the gas were ignited by the galley stove fire, or