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AN IMPORTANT DECISION by the House of Lords has been secured by the persistent courage of the Gresham Life of England concerning the payment of income tax on annuities paid. The large sum of £349,556, so paid by the Gresham for the three years ending with 1885, was assessed by the authorities for income tax, and on refusal of the company to pay such a manifestly unjust tax, the matter went to the Divisional court for decision. Here the decision was adverse to the company, which promptly took the case to the Court of Appeal. Here again the tax commissioners were sustained and the case went up to the House of Lords, which unanimously reversed, with costs, the decision of the lower courts. According to the opinion of the Lord Chancellor and his associates, the only portion of annuities justly taxable is the balance of receipts over disbursements. This is an important victory for the life companies transacting annuity business, and the wonder is how anybody could ever have thought that money paid out to annuitants should be subject to a tax on the paying company.

THAT THE FORMATION of the National Association of Life Underwriters in the United States two years ago was a movement in the interest of better practices in agency work and would elevate the standard of agents generally we have never seen questioned. Its membership already embraces the principal workers by virtue of their connection with the thirty odd State and local associations, and it has all the elements of both a formative and a reformatory institution. The meeting of the executive committee at Chicago recently revealed their appreciation of the latter fact. They adopted an address to the various companies, to be presented at the annual meeting of the association this fall for adoption, in which, among other things, they call

for fair treatment of the resident agent by the curtailing or suppressing altogether of the rambling "executive special," and express emphatic disapproval of rebates and bonuses. The policy "twister" receives special attention, with the pious recommendation that wherever spotted his name be passed along the entire line and the owner treated according to his deserts. We hope the National Association may continue its weed-pulling mission in the life insurance garden.

THE DESTRUCTION of life and property by unforeseen calamity has again found striking illustration at Titusville and Oil City and intervening towns in the oil regions of Pennsylvania. The terrible Johnstown flood of 1889 was scarcely more destructive and far less horrible, for in this latest calamity, which occurred on Sunday the 5th inst, flame and flood united as an irresistible besom of destruction. The waters were overwhelming, but riding upon their surface came a river of oil from bursting tanks and overflowing reservoirs, which being soon ignited, presented a scene for more than twenty-five miles to which the most lurid picture in Dante's *Inferno* is tame. Literally a rushing torrent of flame flanked by naphtha explosions, filled the valley, mocking all human endeavor to stay its progress or evade its deadly force. The loss of life was great, the list of the injured a long one, and the property loss immense. From the insurance standpoint the results are important, while to the unprotected elsewhere, either by life or accident insurance, the lesson must be an impressive one.

TO A CERTAIN EXTENT the banking capital of a country represents its accumulated wealth and largely measures its commercial prosperity. The bank receives from and pays to, as needed, that which already belongs to the individual or for which he becomes responsible, and is simply an extended exchange agency. The assets accumulated by life insurance institutions are also in a degree a measure of a country's prosperity, but in a very different way. Life assets do not represent accretions of wealth made up of individual deposits from which each shall take out only what he has put in this year or next year, but a vast fund held in trust for distribution over future years to individuals or families, in many cases several times more