

of its own notes even though the note is one that has been advertised as stolen.

INSURANCE.

The North of Scotland Fire Insurance Company, a small local concern, was comfortably finished up last week. The liquidator, Richard Duffy, who was formerly its manager, had charge of the closing ceremonies, and the Norwich Union takes over whatever was of value in the Scottish office. The old proprietors who would have lost some of their capital had the Norwich Union kept them strictly to the letter of their agreement are enabled by the generous action of that society to sever their connection with the North of Scotland without financial loss to themselves.

That there is ample need for burglary insurance offices in the British metropolis is shown every year by the annual statement issues by Sir Edward Bradford, the Chief Commissioner of the metropolitan police, given the burglary statistics of the year. The return just issued shows that 498 burglaries inflicted a loss of over twenty-six thousand dollars upon householders.

An appendix to the report seems to show that an insurance company that would cover the loss of property left by forgetful people in 'busses, trains or cabs would be of use to a very large number of people. The amount of property left in trains in the course of a year is incredible, and in London alone the articles left in cabs and omnibuses only in the last twelve months numbered thirty-eight thousand. They included almost every small article thinkable from jewellery and bank-notes to opera-glasses and umbrellas.

One of the companies started last year, the New Era Assurance Corporation, has issued a report covering fourteen months' trading from which some idea of its progress and possibility of successes can be obtained. Its income from premium was \$36,260. It paid in claims \$7,700. The expenditure on management, etc., including that heavy outlay inseparable from the starting in life of new insurance organizations now, was nearly a hundred thousand dollars, so that the first report shows an adverse balance of just upon seventy thousand dollars. There is no dividend this time, but the directors of this industrial life office take their full fees from revenue.

The pretty full returns now to hand showing the results of the insurances upon farming stock in Great Britain during the past year indicates what it has paid moderately well in Scotland and very badly indeed in England and Wales.

NEW YORK LETTER.

Prospective Re-insurances.—Will Payn Remain in the New York Insurance Department?—Death of Martin Bennett.—The American View of the South African War.

New York, December 19, 1899.

The chief interest in fire insurance circles at the present time centres in the events which may transpire on the first of the year, as a result of the adverse conditions with which the business has been so long surrounded. It is freely predicted that there will be a large number of re-insurances on account of reduced surpluses and the unfavorable outlook generally. Upon scanning the field closely, your correspondent

is of the opinion that, while some re-insurances are possible, the number will not be large, and will be mostly confined to companies organized within the past few years, and which have not been conducted along careful and conservative lines. One re-insurance is already announced, that of the companies controlled by the firm of Jameson & Frelinghuysen. These companies are the Globe, the Rutgers and the Insurance Company of the State of New York. The Manhattan Fire has taken their business, the contract to go into effect on Thursday, December 28. The Manhattan thus secures a good line of business, and the stockholders of the foregoing companies are relieved of a weighty liability. It would hardly be fair to name the companies likely to retire, because there is now no certainty in the matter, and I prefer to allow them to make their own announcements.

Apropos of what was said in my last about insurance supervision, Superintendent Payn, of the New York Insurance Department, is making a desperate struggle to keep a grip on the position which he has held for several years. The office is an appointive one, and Governor Roosevelt is determined that Payn shall go.

Fire insurance in this country has sustained a heavy loss, and the city of Hartford a grievous affliction, in the death of Martin Bennett, Manager of the Lion Fire, and the Scottish Union and National of which event your readers have already been informed. There is no need to reproduce the figures here, as everyone knows the tremendous strides made by these companies since Mr. Bennett became their manager many years ago. He has left them in good hands, however, and although at this writing his successor has not been named, there is little doubt that Mr. James H. Brewster, long Associate Manager, will succeed Mr. Bennett as United States manager of the companies. Mr. Brewster is a thoroughly trained, broad and capable fire underwriter, and will, no doubt, continue the marked success of these important companies, which have had so profitable an experience in this country.

In my opinion there is a disposition on the part of stockholders and directors of insurance companies at the close of an unfavorable year to be too critical, and too ready to find fault with the responsible managers of their several companies. It is very often, in fact nearly always, outside of the power of any company manager to prevent the disasters which threaten fire insurance on every hand. No one man, for example, is responsible for sweeping conflagrations, of which there have been many during the past year, nor can any man prevent the unfortunate trend of obnoxious and hurtful legislation, which has embarrassed and hindered the business in many States. Fortunately, the Home Office managers of our important foreign companies are broad and liberal in their views, and are quite willing to make allowances for the misfortunes which they realize could not be prevented. Thus, there have been few important changes in the United States managership of foreign companies during the past ten or fifteen years.

Although not strictly within the scope of a communication on insurance matters, I cannot refrain from some words regarding the war in South Africa, and the view which seems to be generally taken here. So far as I can judge, the sympathies of Americans of the reasoning class seem to be entirely with the British.