

ish companies had to pay a tax on their investments, foreign companies, whose investments were abroad, were not subject to this tax. We don't quite see what that fact has to do with a burdensome discrimination against one class of British policyholders. It is the policyholder, not the company, who is hit.

THE LIFE AGENT AND HIS WORK.

Unlike almost any other business of magnitude, that of life assurance is distinctly one depending upon solicitation for its results. The exceptions are so few as to prove the rule, that men do not assure their lives of their own unaided motion, but through the intervention of the middle man, or agent. It is perhaps one of the anomalies of our times that this should be the case, but such is the plain fact, and a state of affairs likely to continue for an indefinite period. At this time we do not propose to discuss the why and wherefore, but rather to call attention to the present and prospective magnitude of the work before the agent, and the qualities which he should bring to its successful accomplishment.

If we look at what has already been accomplished in the United States and Canada, combined, we cannot fail to be impressed with its greatness, for we see that in the comparatively short period covered by life assurance transactions, the amount of assets held by the companies largely exceeds all the banking capital of the country; that nearly one billion four hundred millions of dollars have been paid to policyholders since organization; that present assets amount to over eight hundred millions; that during the single year 1890 nine hundred millions of new assurance was written; and that the aggregate amount in force to-day is upwards of three and a half billions of dollars. Great as these results are, the possibilities of the future are still greater. With less than one in ten of the present assurable population assured, and with the rapid growth of population on this continent, joined to the fact that intelligent appreciation of the nature and benefits of assurance grows even faster than the numerical increase, some idea of the magnitude of the field to be occupied may be had. The development of the large possibilities of the field manifestly rests with the agency force, and the extent and permanence of their work depends upon the qualities of head and of heart which enter into it.

In the first place, the life assurance agent should feel the importance and dignity of his calling. He is entitled to feel that in a business sense, purely, that which he represents is second to none, whether judged by its financial importance or as a contributor to the stability and prosperity of the community; while above and beyond all this he is entitled to regard himself as engaged in a work of public benefaction. His is the agency through which the unity and comfort of the home is preserved, education promoted, and the peril to virtue which suffering poverty presents averted. In a majority of cases, when the agent has induced a man to assure his life, he has conferred a distinct benefit, unlike that belonging to any other business transaction nominally measured by dollars and cents. He has a right

to respect his calling and to be proud of it, and to look with dignified pity (while seeking to bless with a policy) upon the small-brained, short-sighted fellows, who regard him in the same category with vendors of patent rights and other sellers of questionable wares.

But something more than a proper estimate of his calling by the life agent is required to achieve success in it. He must have practical *working qualities* adapted to his special work. And the first in order is a thorough knowledge of the fundamental principles and current practices of life assurance in general, and of the plans and practices of his own company in particular. We do not mean that it is needful for the ordinary agent to acquire actuarial knowledge, and to enter into the technicalities and formulas of the business as a qualification for good work, but rather that he should be sufficiently master of his subject to be able to make clear to inquirers what features are fundamentally necessary to the system of legitimate life assurance,—in short, to give an intelligent reason why certain things are required, in the very nature of the business. This knowledge, however, is to be held as a reserve fund, to be drawn against only on demand. No greater mistake can be made by an agent than to go into a dissertation on the abstract subject of life assurance in his ordinary canvas. The practical results, enforced by authenticated examples, are all that is of interest to the average insurant, and it will be time enough to tap the fountain of knowledge when the occasional inquirer asks for elucidation.

Among the important qualities which must be possessed by every successful life agent is that compound of nameless elements which we call *adaptation*. Without it, whatever his other qualifications, he will, at best, but indifferently succeed. Not only is he called upon to meet and influence people in widely different occupations and professions, but those whose business resources or family affairs require a careful survey in order to approach them with proposals according to their several requirements. Besides these dissimilarities, account is to be taken of the personal peculiarities, temperaments, prejudices and habits of thought of the various individuals who are to be approached. Many an agent has met with a repulse, because he has been wanting in tact and failed to know how to adapt himself to the subject of his solicitation. To know the *when, how and what* to say is a valuable accomplishment for the life assurance agent, and one which he cannot cultivate with too great assiduity. He is to have a keen sense of the surroundings in any given case, and the faculty of adapting himself to them.

Other things being equal, it is not too much to say that *persevering industry*, systematically directed, is the crowning quality of the life agent who would stand in the front rank. Mere industry, however excellent, is not sufficient, but must be closely allied with a perseverance which refuses to acknowledge failure. "At it, and always at it," may be a good motto; but to be always at it does not necessarily mean effort in a straight line until the end is reached. Prevailing perseverance must have a definite object, and allow no diversion of effort until the object is accomplished. "Select your