

COMMERCIAL UNION ASSURANCE COMPANY, LIMITED.

Our contemporary the Pacific Coast Underwriter, in referring to the visit of Mr. E. Roger Owen, general manager of the Commercial Union, to San Francisco, and his purchase of an important site, for the erection of a large building for the housing of the Commercial Union, and its affiliated companies, said: "He has entirely changed the idea of the fire insurance world as to English methods of doing business. Previously the opinion existed here that the average British manager moved slowly. The result of Manager Owen's visit have proven that he at least moves with more than ordinary rapidity. The genius that can visit a city, pick a lot involving the investment of half a million dollars or more, plan the erection of a million dollar building, change a general agency, oversee the work of an already large department, and depart without any flurry, demonstrates that we may still learn from the leaders that come from overseas.

The purchase of the Nevada Block was a startling surprise. It is the most valuable piece of unimproved "financial center" real estate left and has remained an eye-sore to the public since the fire. The site is bounded by Pine, Montgomery and Summer Streets, and the line of the California Market. It was owned by the Flood and Hellman families. Many attempts in the past have been made to buy it. Various schemes have been suggested for its improvement. Manager Owen made an offer, demanded a quick acceptance or rejection and cabled the Home office that he had made the investment all within forty-eight hours. It is a full fifty vara lot and will afford ample opportunity for the Commercial Union to carry out its intentions of erecting a building which will be one of the show spots of this city as well as one that is befitting the dignity of a company which claims to be "the largest general insurance company in the world."

Until the absorption of the Liverpool & London & Globe by the Royal is completed the Commercial Union is still the "largest general insurance company in the world" and has behind it the largest record of absorptions.

No less than twenty British companies have been taken over since 1880. Of these the West of England, Palatine, Union and Ocean are maintained as direct writing companies, the parent company carrying in its statement debenture stock of approximately \$ 10,000,000 in connection with their purchase.

With such a record behind it and with its known aggressiveness of management it is to be assumed that the Commercial Union will not give up its important position without a struggle.

Holdings in United States.

The Commercial Union's holdings in the United States are very extensive, embracing—

Commercial Union, London.
Commercial Union, New York.
Palatine of London.
Union of London.
American Central, St. Louis.
California Fire, San Francisco.
Ocean Accident & Guarantee.

In addition it operates the Hand-in-Hand and the Atlantic Underwriters.

The Commercial Union's authorized capital at the close of 1918 was £2,950,000, divided into £10 shares with £1 paid. Early in January of this year it capitalized accumulated profits adding £2 paid to its shares, making £3 paid and then dividing each share into two at £5 with thirty shillings paid. This plan latterly has been followed by not a few leading British companies.

LIFE INSURANCE COMPANIES MUST MAINTAIN THEIR SURPLUSES

The need of a life insurance company for a substantial surplus, and of rates high enough to accumulate it, is forcibly pointed out by Former Commissioner Hardison, of Massachusetts, in his sixty-fourth life report issued this month. Mr. Hardison makes this point in discussing the influenza epidemic which caused considerable uneasiness among life and accident underwriters last year, but which subsided without loss to any insured person through the inability to pay its claims of any company operating in Massachusetts. The Commissioner states that a different story might be told, had the companies been lacking in this respect. Life insurance companies above all other corporations must maintain their surpluses to take care of emergencies like the one in question, for that is the purpose for which they are created. The insuring public is coming to realize this fact more and more as this great and beneficial business comes through every test with its resources unshaken and its integrity intact.

PREVENTING FIRES NOBODY'S BUSINESS.

As long as preventing fires and their consequent damages is nobody's business but that it is "every fellow for himself," in case of fire, it must of course be expected that—

Fires will be numerous;
Much property will be destroyed;
Many persons will be killed or injured;
Fire departments will cost more;
Tax rates be higher;
Insurance rates be higher;
and

The Devil will take the hindmost.