

from 750,000 tons per month in 1892 to 1,200,000 tons in 1899, and even then is far behind requirements.

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At last the prospectus of the Yorkshire Wool Combers Association is before the public, and subscriptions towards the capital of twelve and a half million dollars are invited. There used to be a working agreement as to prices between the firms now amalgamated but it fell through, and between then and now there has been, in the eyes of the woolcombers, too much undue competition. The trust movement has come to stay with us, and no amount of talk about it, being un-English will stop it. Our chief aim should be to see that we avoid the too prevalent evil of over-capitalisation.

#### INSURANCE.

The system of insurance against what is known as the risk of loss of profit which up to date has been worked by the National Reliance Insurance Company is now also annexed by the Fine Art and General office. Circulars are out laying it down as a strict condition of the insurance that the amount of the policy be equal to the annual profits of the insurant's business for the three years prior to the date of the policy. The assurant gets, in the event of fire a sum either proportionate to the amount paid by the fire office, or enough to make the profits for the twelve months after the fire equal to the previously declared average.

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The British Fire Prevention Committee that voluntary association of gentlemen expert or interested in fire prevention, has opened a regular station near Regents Park, for the purpose of experimenting in appliances and extinguishers. Buildings of fire-proof brick filled with all the kinds of fire-proof fittings of which a test is required are set on fire by means of gas jets. Gas to the value of \$150 was consumed in a recent experiment. Representations of local authorities, insurance companies, building contractors and manufacturers of fire-resistant materials attend these incendiary seances in the Committee's large garden, and, whilst an electrician pyrometer registers the successive heats, photographs are taken of the progress and effect of the flames.

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Although many of the early war-risks undertaken by the operators at Lloyds, have run off, owing to the expiration of the assured time, quite enough have remained to mature into claims with the result that many of the underwriters are well-qualified to understand the disgusted feeling of a.....

"Bookie, paying out at 10 to 4," as the popular song puts it. The ultimatum issued by President Kruger is responsible for a lot of this. Just before it was issued policies were being placed for a week at 40 per cent. These are being now sent in as claims.

#### NEW YORK LETTER.

The North British Resignation.—Outlook for Fire Insurance.—Prussia and American Life Insurance Companies.—Mutual Reserve Troubles.—Other Matters of Interest in the American Metropolis.

New York, Nov. 7th, 1899.

The chief interest in fire insurance circles in this city for the past two or three weeks has been based upon speculation as to who would be the new resident manager of the North British & Mercantile Insurance

Company. The resignation of Manager H. E. Bowers and Assistant Manager Ecker was a great surprise, although it transpires that this had been tendered as long ago as July first. No one doubts the ability of Mr. Bowers, and he has many friends in this city who will be sorry to see him disappear from managerial circles. However, he is quite well advanced in years, his health for some time has not been strong, and it is probable that the strain of overseeing the affairs of the great North British has become irksome and perhaps menacing to a none too robust constitution. Applications for his position have, of course, been numerous, but the appointment will likely not be made until after considerable deliberation. Manager George H. Burnett from the Home Office in London has been in the city for some three weeks, and will personally arrange for Mr. Bowers' successor.

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The outlook for fire underwriting in this country is by no means encouraging. The rate wars in various parts of the United States have reduced the premium income, while the losses in nearly every locality have been notably heavy. Added to this have been the troubles of the companies in the Southern and Southwestern populistic commonwealths, which have not only interfered with the free transaction of business, but have also added to an already too large expense ratio. The companies could stand a somewhat heavy expense rate during periods when losses were unusually light, but the combination of excessive expenses and abnormal losses is not calculated to favor the production of dividends on shares. The effort is ever towards some satisfactory solution of the fire insurance problem, but unfortunately the goal seems no nearer now than it has been for ten years past.

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The success of the New York Life in obtaining readmission to Prussia is particularly important both from the life insurance and the fire insurance point of view. It is thought that arrangements may now be made whereby the Prussian fire insurance companies, which, for some years, have been excluded from this state by the operation of the retaliatory laws, may be admitted here. Among these are the Prussian National and the Magdeburg, which will be glad of the chance to transact business freely in this rich and populous commonwealth. It was at first reported that the Equitable and the Mutual Life had abandoned the idea of entering Prussia. Inquiry at these offices, however, develops the fact that no such determination has been made, and it is likely that we may again see these great companies competing with the Prussian corporations on their own ground.

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Much discussion and many opinions have been evoked as the result of the recent examination of the Mutual Reserve Fund Life Association. Defenders have been found for the Association, but it must be confessed that the prospects for its successful continuance are not very flattering. It is handicapped in advance by an adverse report from the Superintendent of Insurance in its own State. It is confronted with heavy and increasing death losses, and it now undertakes the difficult task of placing itself, late in life, upon a legal reserve basis. We would not say that it is impossible for the Mutual Reserve to overcome the difficulties which beset it, but it is easily seen under what disadvantages it must labor. To add to its troubles, its agents have before them the problem