

INSURANCE.

Something of a novelty in insurance companies is the Congregational Fire Insurance Company. It really is only an agent for the Hand-in-Hand office, and its premium income of \$12,055 is handed over to the latter office, less the retention of a sum of \$3,490, which is of the nature of a commission for obtaining the business. Part of this profit, as usual, is devoted to church and similar objects, whilst the remainder is hoarded away. This reserve fund now exceeds ten thousand dollars. We are not told what it is being reserved for.

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A gentleman has just died over here, whose ability in the management of commercial undertakings found considerable occupation in the insurance world. Richard Musgrave Harvey was born in Gloucester in 1839, took his degree at Trinity, Cambridge, in 1861, and then found his work before him in the Mining Lane quarter of the City. His insurance commitments included directorships in the Alliance Marine and General, London Trust Company, the Guardian and the Guardian Fire and Life, and the Reversionary Interest Society, and there were others.

NEW YORK LETTER.

Policy of the North British.—Status of the Prussian Companies.—The Union Situation.—Heavy Philadelphia Losses.—Official "Strikers."—Other Notes of Interest in Gotham.

New York, December 5th, 1899.

The affairs of the North British and Mercantile Insurance Company continue to interest the fire insurance people of this city, and indeed of the whole country. The matter of appointing an assistant manager was courteously left wholly to the judgment of Mr. E. G. Richards, the new manager for the United States. Thereupon, Mr. Richards has appointed as his associate, Mr. J. F. Hastings, who has for some time been general manager at the home office of the National Fire Insurance Company of Hartford. In the intimate relation which has there existed, Mr. Richards has had plenty of opportunity to observe Mr. Hastings' character and methods, and there is no doubt that he has made a wise choice. On the 27th ult., General Manager George H. Burnett tendered a complimentary banquet at Delmonico's to the retiring Manager, Mr. Bowers, and Mr. Richards, together with a few friends. It is expected that Mr. Richards will pursue a very vigorous policy in the management of the North British, and that the company will forge rapidly ahead both in assets and income.

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Supt. Payn has at last consented to admit the Prussian fire insurance companies, which have so long been excluded from this State by reason of the stringent retaliatory laws on the Statute book of the Commonwealth. This was brought about by the recent admission of the New York Life to Prussia, and by the fact that the Mutual Life is now seeking admission, and, therefore, would not oppose the appeals of Prussian companies. The Equitable Life now announces that it probably will not return to Prussia. Since the admission of the Prussian companies to this State, the conditions upon which the New York Life was restored to Prussia have transpired. The conditions turn out to be the most arbitrary and rigorous of those required by any Government. The very first one named will form a good illustration of

the conditions as a whole. It provided that only on penalty of expulsion the company may change any by-law, or make a new one, without first notifying the Prussian Government, and obtaining its approval. There is no wonder, therefore, that American companies have been slow to comply with such onerous and unreasonable conditions as these.

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Just at the present time fire underwriters in this vicinity are looking very anxiously at the probable outcome of the new rules recently adopted by the "Western Union," the well-known association of insurance companies which manages fire insurance matters throughout the Western states. The most important of those rules provides for "graded" commissions in accordance with the character of the hazards written. This rule has stirred up a grievous conflict between the Union companies and those who do not belong to the organization, the two classes being often represented in the same agency. One thing is certain, and that is, that having adopted this rule, the Union companies should insist upon its strict observance. If they find that it will not work, it will then be time enough to rescind the order. There is no way of ascertaining whether a law is a good one or not, except by a strict enforcement.

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The great fire in Philadelphia last week, in which something like \$2,000,000 worth of property was consumed, has tended to still further dishearten fire insurance managers in this city. The losses are very generally distributed, nearly every company of any account being represented. Perhaps the grief of the companies here is somewhat mitigated by the knowledge that the Lloyd's of London was the greatest loser, having a line of \$114,000. This great fire has again caused the question to be severely agitated whether rates should not immediately be raised in such large cities as New York, Philadelphia, Boston and Chicago.

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At the present time the outlook appears a little more hopeful for the Mutual Reserve Fund Life Association, several States which had revoked its license having now withdrawn that revocation, and permitted the company to do business as before. Commissioner Craig, of Tennessee, re-admitted the Association on the strength of an inquiry made by Deputy Insurance Commissioner Brinkerhoff of Illinois. It was reported that the Connecticut Insurance Department would examine the Mutual Reserve, but this turns out to be a mistake. The Association may be considered to be starting on a new lease of life, but how long this lease will prove to be cannot be guessed even by the most astute prophet.

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The prospect now is that insurance companies may again look to be harassed and annoyed by the insurance departments of various Western commonwealths during the coming year. Several of these gentlemen have already begun to "show their teeth," and have intimated that they should be extremely arbitrary in their demands upon the companies. As your well-informed readers are aware, this matter of state supervision is one of the most crushing discouragements to the companies seeking to do business here. They are annoyed by frequent and unnecessary examinations, for which they must pay usually an exorbitant price, and they are called to fulfill burdensome and unreasonable requirements, often by men without knowledge or judgment. The solution to this pro-