

That much-talked-about industrial organization, the Bedstead Trade Alliance, lives on in spite of prophecies as to its rapid annihilation. Just now it is in trouble again. The agreement between men and masters is that, where the men leave work on account of their employers not observing the schedule of prices agreed to by the whole trade, the Alliance pays the strikers out-of-work pay. The masters are now finding this rather a drag, and want to cut down the full strike pay to only four weeks. The bedstead makers and brass and iron workers reply to this with a proposal to further increase the present generous rates.

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We were just beginning to wonder what was the matter with Spain. She has not had her familiar "reorganization" of debt for twenty years, and people were rubbing their eyes and asking if Spain were at last actually solvent. Now the overdue reorganization is being prepared. England is not a heavy holder of Spanish securities. We have, however, substantial investments in the mines of the peninsula, including that international affair, the Rio Tinto.

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As we are now at the end of the home railway half year, we are getting most gloomy prognostications about dividend matters. Gross receipts have steadily gone up for the last five or six years, but working expenses are the trouble. No matter what effort is made to stem the tide, it rolls on. Coal contracts are being closed at \$4.00 per ton instead of about \$2.60, and the effect of the increased prices will lie upon dividends for a twelvemonth.

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Talking of railways reminds me that the late severe and senseless fall in Canadian Pacific quotations is being recovered from. Traffic returns keep up well, and although generally, owing to the damage to the spring wheat by the absence of rain and the presence of the Hessian fly, Americans are in a slumpish condition on 'Change, Canadian Pacifics do not share in the depression.

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Where the time is not ripe for a trust in any particular British industry, we find amalgamation in progress. Wm. Beardmore's, the great forge firm at Glasgow, has united with Napier & Co.'s shipbuilding business. War material will be an important product of the fusion. In these days of alarm, participation in such an industry should be possible.

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This week the Companies Bill, that much-needed measure of financial reform, has passed its second reading and has been referred to the standing committee on trade. With 1,261 companies going into liquidation in 1896, and causing a loss of \$75,000,000, there is palpably need for legislative improvement.

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The most notable company promotion of the week is that of the Bird's custard powder firm. The whole capital of \$1,500,000 is taken at the purchase price, no valuation of the assets is given, and the profits are only shown for the two last years, and they are lumped together.

INSURANCE.

A case of interest to underwriters was heard here last week. Mumford, an underwriter at Lloyd's, had granted Molinos d'Arroy a policy of insurance on a large stock of rice and paddy stored in her mills 130 miles north of Manila, in the Philippine Islands. This was in December, 1898, after hostilities between Aguinaldo and the United States had broken out. As the Filipinos were driven back past the mills their commanders requisitioned a quantity of the produce, giving receipts. The policy covered loss or damage "directly caused by war."

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To the lay eye there does not seem much doubt as to liability, but the legal eye can always see wonderful possibilities in a phrase. The case was argued at length, and at length the judge gave it as his opinion that the food was as much "lost" as if it had been seized forcibly by the army, and the pieces of paper given by Aguinaldo were of no account. Judgment against the underwriter for \$75,000.

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Seizing the psychological moment when the tramways exhibition is being held in London, the Ocean Accident and Guarantee Corporation has issued a beautifully-gotten-up review of the tramway system of the United Kingdom as a cover for an exposition of the corporation's scheme of tramway insurance—whether in connection with its employees, its passengers, or third parties—as well as machinery and plant risks. The Ocean does it all.

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An attempt made by a section of the members of the Blackburn municipal corporation to secure the agreement of the corporation to a request for Parliamentary powers for the insurance of home property against fire was defeated last week. Is the bubble bursting?

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Laborious Parliamentary debates are resulting in agricultural laborers being brought inside the pale of that estimable measure, the Workmen's Compensation Act. The possibilities of the intended measure are being well calculated by insurance managers.

RECENT LEGAL DECISIONS:

ACTION BEFORE DEATH FOR DECLARATION THAT A LIFE POLICY VALID.—On the second day of July, 1897, a temporary policy of life insurance was issued on his life, to a person named Powis, by the Equitable Life Assurance Society, and two days later, the policy was assigned to a man named Honour. A few days later, a final policy was substituted for the temporary one, the amount being £4,000, with the premiums payable in half yearly instalments, in June and December. In June of the following year, Honour duly tendered the amount then due, but the company refused, and afterwards continuously refused, to accept payment, alleging that the policy had not been bona fide taken out by Powis, and transferred for good consideration to Honour. That, though, ostensibly taken out by Powis, Honour had found the money, and, in reality it had been taken out by Honour on a life in which he had no insurable interest, and the transaction was therefore a gaming and wagering one within the statute of 14 George III, Chapter 48, and so was invalid. Honour thereupon commenced an action against the insurance company for a declaration that the policy