rates is due in the main to the failure of the assured to realize that insurance companies merely apportion the fire losses, taxes and expenses among the great mass of property owners. Anything which increases their disbursements or complicates their operations must consequently advance the price of indemnity. Much can be accomplished by care and prevention on the part of the assured; if this is not attempted, policy-holders must expect to pay higher premiums.—N.Y. Commercial Bulletin.

FIRE PREVENTION IN THE UNITED STATES.

So much has been said about this year's enormous fire waste and the disastrous losses sustained in all sections of the United States and Canada, that unusual interest attaches to methods of fire prevention and action by property owners in the direction of improving the character of the risks. The question is of first importance in large cities where great insurable values are concentrated and almost every variety of fire hazard is encountered. In England, since the Cripplegate blaze attracted general attention, experts have been giving unusual study to the subject; testing fire-resisting materials and conducting independent investigations so as to estimate accurately the fire hazards of cities where a single disaster might be attended with fearful destruction of life and property.

Edward Atkinson, an authority on the subject, in discussing recent progress in the United States in methods of fire prevention, writes to the "Evening Post:" "Although our methods of fire prevention are very much ahead of what they were ten or fifteen years ago, there remains still much to be accomplished. Losses by fire are still excessive, but in proportion to the value of property at risk now, as compared to the year 1880, the ratio of loss has been greatly lessened. There has been a very rapid increase of capital in ratio to population; that has been proved by the enormous increase in the amount of insurance taken out. There has been greater progress in this relative gain in capital to population in the last five years than ever before. Therefore, from the fact that the aggregate of loss does not increase, and is really less than in some previous years, we have absolute proof of a large relative gain and of improvement in the art of building and in the methods of protection.

"The difficulty is that the more conservative underwriters cannot impose a penalty for non-compliance with safe conditions. Too many owners consider their duty done when they have taken out a policy of insurance with little regard to the standing and condition of the insurance company, seldom reading the conditions of the policy, and neglecting the most obvious safeguards in the care of their property. So long as there are underwriters whose policies are accepted who will write these risks without imposing safe conditions, the more conservative companies become powerless to impose them. The time of betting that bad risks will not burn, and running for luck on chances, still governs too many competing insurance companies to render a remedy for neglect easy to accomplish. So long as owners fail to discriminate in the selection of their underwriters, or, in consequence of the magnitude of their risks, are forced to take such policies as they can get, the prevention of loss by fire will be deferred.

"What could be more injudicious, to say the least, on the part of owners than the construction of a great department steel-framed shop, eight or ten stories high, incombustible in respect to material, but built with a large opening from basement to attic through every floor, giving positive assurance that the contents will be more sure to be completely destroyed, through the very stability of the building than they would be in an ordinary warehouse without these great openings from floor to floor.

"The fundamental issue is this (quoting from my recent pamphlet on 'The Prevention of Loss by Fire'): 'When will owners and occupants comprehend the fact that after the insurance company has done its duty by careful selection of risks and thorough inspection, all that it can do is to pay indemnity for loss, which, if large, is in nine case sout of ten due either to the lack of apparatus for preventing such loss, or to lack of care and order in the conduct of the work? The only persons who can prevent loss by fire are the owners or occupants of the insured premises. Upon them rests the responsibility for heavy loss, when any occurs, in nearly every fire.'

"So long as the fundamental principle is neglected by the owners and occupants of real estate, all charges against cities, underwriters, and fire departments are futile and foolish. It is as hopeless to try to help a capitalist to save his property from loss by fire who is incapable of fulfilling his own duties to the property and to the public as it is hopeless to try to lift an incapable or intemperate workman to the level of a skilled mechanic."

Notes and Items.

At Home and Abroad.

A Benefit Association.—Judge Hammond in the Massachusetts Supreme Court has authorized the receivers of the Massachusetts Benefit Life Association to pay a third dividend of five per cent. Under this order $50,000 will be distributed among policyholders whose claims have been allowed by the court. This makes a total of forty-five per cent., and substantially closes up the affairs of the association.

No Action on Mutual Life Resolution.—Among the measures which failed of action in the present session of Congress, was the resolution urged by the Mutual Life Insurance Company of New York, directing the intervention of the Department of State with Germany, in order to secure, if possible, the re-admission of that company to Prussia. The measure was one of considerable interest to insurance companies, some of whom were opposed to the resolution on the ground that American insurance companies, seeking admission abroad, should comply with the regulations of the countries with which they