and call loans. The column "expenses of management" will make some of the old companies that can do business for 12 to 16 per cent. smile, as they will see many instances in which young offices have spent nearly the whole of their premium receipts for their business. Among this class of companies 30 to 40 per cent. commissions is below the average, and it is evident to the merest tyro in life assurance, that nothing but failure awaits such extravagance.

In a former letter, I referred briefly to the suit of the Knickerbocker Life Insurance Company *vs.* J. B. Ecclesine, of the New York *Underwriter*. Mr. E. was arrested for an alleged libel on the company, but on an argument of a motion to vacate the order of arrest, Judge Freedman held that the matter was not libelous of itself and released the defendant. A further motion by the defendant, requiring the company to amend its complaint, by alleging the specific cases in which persons had refused to insure or been deterred from insuring in the company, by reason of the publication of the alleged libelous matter was also granted by Judge Freedman. So that the Knickerbocker's complaint, does not thus far appear to have found much favor with the courts. This suit has attracted a good deal of attention among insurance people, and the final task required of the company, to prove before a jury, specifically, instances of damage, to its business will necessarily be a very difficult one.

The meeting of the Executive Committee of the the National Board of Fire Underwriters, recently held in this city with closed doors, was neither harmonious nor satisfactory in its final conclusions. Two questions particularly agitated the Committee—the rating of dwellings by the National Board, and the interesting rebate question. With respect to the dwellings, it was finally agreed that where a local board declined to rate the dwellings in its locality, the rate should be left free for the companies to write as they pleased. This was a defeat of the high pretensions of certain members, who quite dogmatically insisted that all such ratings should be by the National Board. The Committee of Conference, to whom was referred the questions of rebate and brokerage, at the late convention of out-town companies held in this city, made an informal statement, for information, that they would report to the National Board, at its spring meeting, a recommendation for the adoption of flat or net rates, leaving parties getting insurance to pay brokers if they employed them, and relieving the companies from all rebate, brokerage and commission on direct risks. Unless the National Board can meet the difficulties connected with this rebate question, it will soon become disintegrated. The New York city companies, which do no agency business, are allowed the unequal privilege of allowing a rebate to customers in lieu of commissions, while out-town companies are deprived of this privilege. But the greatest difficulty is in the annoyance and loss occasioned to respectable agents over the country, adhering to Board rates, by agencies of strong companies not in the Board, which advertise to take the same class of risks for one-sixth to one-eighth less. It is hard for an agent to stand by uncomplainingly and see his business carried away by these guerrillas. The National Board has already accomplished much good in the cause of sound underwriting, and it is to be hoped that the several agencies can be so far protected as to secure the cheerful adhesion of their companies to the Board.

New York capital is largely represented in the insurance business of Missouri, and therefore our underwriters have just heard with marked satisfaction of the passage, after a protracted and bitter struggle, of an excellent general law for that State, to be administered by a department. It requires all stock fire and life companies to put up a guarantee deposit of $100,000, and make specific annual statements after the forms provided in New York. This act will rid Missouri of some fifty "wild cats," and clear up the atmosphere, so that the business classes can see the inside of any company, home or foreign, soliciting confidence and business. Thus the good work goes bravely on. The area in which bogus companies can operate is, happily, being rapidly restricted.

Now that they have reached a third story, the new building of the New York Life and Equitable Life Insurance Companies are the notable objects on Broadway. The New York Life's building will be ready for occupation in about a year, and will cost, with lot, about $1,500,000. Numerous applications for rooms have already been made, and the company expect to have their own apartments at a nominal rent. I have not been able to learn the cost of the Equitable building and lot. The building is granite, and a most solid and beautiful structure, and cannot cost less, probably, than the New York Life's structure. These buildings, and the corporations that own them, are doubtless destined to stand for generations, and long after their founders shall all have become companions with the insensible clod—continue the beneficent work to which they are devoted.

M. A. C.

Fire Record.—Collingwood, March 5.—Mrs. Cooke's tavern, on the road to Meaford, six or seven miles from this place, was totally consumed with contents; the inmates had barely time to escape; loss $1,200 to $1,500. No insurance; the fire caught from a defect in the chimney.

Osprey Township, Co. Grey, Ont., March —. The barn and outbuildings of John Hutchinson, with contents, were consumed. No insurance. The fire was caused, as is supposed, from a spark from a lighted pipe.

St. Catherines, March 5.—Barn of Mr. Hagan; no particulars.

London, March 6.—S. Stewart's brick cottage on Maitland street, occupied by Mrs. Chisholm, caught fire, it is thought, from the hall stove. The flames were extinguished, but the house and furniture were damaged to the extent of $500.

Tavistock, Ont., Feb. 28.—The store and premises of Mr. Moore, were consumed. Mr. M. had just received a large stock of goods, and his loss is therefore heavy.

Mount Forest, March 4.—The premises occupied by Mr. Colcleugh, druggist, together with the telegraph office and *Examiner* printing office, were totally consumed by fire. The fire commenced in the rooms above the telegraph office, and is supposed to have originated from a defect in the chimney. Insurance on Mr. Colcleugh's stock, $2,000, and on the *Examiner* office, $500.

Peel Township, Ont. Feb. 25.—The barn of Terence Hanlen, lot 2, con 3, Peel, was totally destroyed by fire. The whole of his grain, hay, and farming implements in the building were consumed.

Brockville, Ont., March 4.—The dwelling of Robert Ferguson took fire; the flames were soon put out; the premises and furniture sustained considerable damage.

Stratford, Feb. 28.—The cooper shop of Mr. Needham was entirely destroyed by fire, with its contents. The Council, satisfied that it was the work of an incendiary, offered a reward of $200 for his conviction.

Thorold, March 2.—A disastrous fire broke out in the grocery store of Mr. John Cloy, and the flames quickly communicated to the stores of Mr. Leonard and Mr. Hart, all of which, with most of their contents, were totally destroyed. During the progress of the fire, great consternation was created amongst the crowd, by the explosion of a quantity of gunpowder, kept for sale in Mr. Cloy's establishment. Fortunately, nobody was seriously injured. Mr. Cloy was insured for $8,000 in the British America; Mr. Leonard for $2,200; Mr. Hart was also fully insured. The total loss is estimated at $20,000, and the amount of insurance on goods and buildings about $14,000. The origin of the fire is unknown.

Superintendent Barnes and the Life Companies.—There can be no doubt that the the condition of several life companies in New York demand a prompt and searching investigation on the part of Mr. Barnes. There can be no doubt that the official report of officers to the department are "cooked," and fail to show the real condition of many of the companies. The unreal is easily dressed, and named real; the fictitious is easily reported in a guise that will not necessarily excite suspicion. That these things have been done, everybody believes. That some of the companies are reckless is well known. That a four and one half per cent reserve cannot be in hand after paying losses, and the extraordinary expenses incurred, is manifest. The public welfare demands a thorough investigation. The reckless companies should be punished. Mr. Barnes should let the companies know that he is superintendent, and that the duties of the office will be performed. There must be retrenchment, or there will be ruin.—*Chicago Spectator.*

—Mr. Chisholm, of the North British and Mercantile Insurance Company, Edinburgh, and who holds the diploma of the Faculty of Actuaries in Scotland, has been appointed Actuarial Assistant in the Imperial Life Assurance Company, London.

—The Chicago *Spectator* objects to the attempted introduction into American Life Assurance of the tontine principle, as unwise and dangerous. It considers such schemes dangerous, because they eventually strain the resources of a Company, and tempt it for the sake of maintaining its past position to encroach on the future, while at the same time it conceals both the fact and the results.

—Mr. Barnes is preparing to make a valuation of the business of all the Life Companies doing business in New York.

TONTINE DIVIDEND SYSTEM.

Tontine annuities, which were first made attractive by Lorenzo Tonti about the middle of the seventeenth century, have become exceedingly popular throughout Europe, and in some parts of South America. A tontine is quite the reverse of life assurance, it being, in fact, a combination of persons who contribute to a common fund; so that as years roll on, and the numbers surviving diminish, the income is, of course, constantly increasing to those who live, until the last members of a class enjoy most extraordinary advantages from the system. In 1689 the last survivor of the tontine in France, a widow, just before her death, enjoyed an income equivalent to $20,000 of our money, for her original subscription of about $80. So popular has this system been in Europe, that many governments have used it for the purpose of raising money for national support. There are many persons so situated that they care little for leaving money for those that come after them (who, they may consider, have little or no claim upon them), and prefer to enjoy while living a large annual income, which, combined with entire safety, their money could not produce in the shape of interest in any other way. Such are those who invest in tontine. Life insurance, as has already been observed, is quite the reverse of the tontine principle; and the arguments which cause persons to invest in securities of this character appeal to a higher and more unselfish motive than those which influence the investment in tontines. The popular apprehension in the minds of many persons who are asked to insure their lives, but who have not given life insurance much study, is that, in case of a long life, the investment may prove a bad one; but a careful investigation will prove that this objection is not well founded. We have before us a policy in one of the leading mutual companies, issued more than twenty-five years ago, taken out originally for $5,000, on which, when the policy became a death claim, more than $10,000 was paid, the excess over the original amount of the policy being