

an improvement upon the old way of naming rates, as some term it, from intuition. Intuition may give satisfactory results to underwriters, but is hardly explainable to the assured.

I note particularly Mr. Folger's reference to the fact that in the vicinity of Portland, Oregon, classifications are open to inquiring students, but in the East I think he will find that nearly all company classifications are under the jealous eyes of the managers, and not easily accessible even to the companies' special agents in whose hands the duty of making rates is placed, and certainly no special is favored with more than a glance, and then only at the records of his own company.

In practice we often find the same building fronting on two streets and rated by different committees, with two rates upon it at wide variance from each other, which must be as ludicrous to the assured as it ought to be mortifying to underwriters when the element of guess-work becomes so painfully evident. Underwriters have the data for and the business should stand the additional expense, if any, of making a combined classification which shall be useful. A scheme of this kind is desirable, not only to appease the clamors of unjustly taxed insurers, but is desirable to the companies themselves, as a system of rates based upon a narrow but full margin of profit upon each class would effectually do away with non board competition, which seeks only those classes which are paying not only their own losses, but contributing to others, and it would also do much to settle the very vexing question of commission.

Does it not seem that the possible benefits to be derived are such as to make it worth an effort on the part of, say, twenty-five of the leading companies, to formulate a plan whereby a trial can be made?"

THE "SUPREMES" OF THE IRON HALL.

We have nowhere seen the pretentious humbuggery of title assumed by the principal Iron Hall manager, and the docility of his dupes under autocratic control of funds, so well and pithily stated as in the following from the *Indianapolis News* :—

No more gorgeous array of officers was ever created in a Central American army. Men of "supreme" titles stumbled over one another. But above all powers and dominions of supremacy Somerby exalted sat as "Supreme Justice." Why he was not called a "supra-supreme" we cannot imagine. Probably he did not think of it. His word was constitution, law—anything you please. What he said went. The money of the order was paid out on warrants signed by him, or stamped with his name by the supreme accountant, or the supreme cashier, or the supreme office boy. He was supposed to be subject to the "Supreme Sitting;" but that body really was subject to him. It did not sit. Gradually Somerby got himself all mixed up with the Supreme Sitting, so that he could not tell himself and that apart. For example, in November last year, he sent out a circular in aid of the bank with the convincing title (it was called the Mutual Banking Security and Trust Co.) in which he said, "the Supreme Sitting heartily recommends that institution," when the Supreme Sitting, as a matter of fact, had not sat since the bank was opened. He advised the branches to patronize the "good will" bank for indemnity bonds. He as "Supreme Justice" approved the bonds, though himself meanwhile unbonded. In the interest of "our system" he traveled over the country corrupting legislatures and drawing warrants for unitemized expenses and mileage. And all the time he was boasting of his reputation—of his honorable conduct. And all the supremes sang his praise, and all the branches bowed in reverence to him.

ABOUT AMALGAMATIONS.

Amalgamations still continue to be the order of the day. Rumors have been rife for some time past about one or the other company, and when they are so explicit that the company can be surmised, such company has been very prompt to deny the soft impeachment. The gospel now preached by interested parties is that the day of small things is past, the knell of small companies is sounding and in fright they rush into the arms of their more colossal brethren to find peace and safety. When people lose their heads in a scare such as this, it does not augur well for the interests which they have been so handsomely remunerated to safeguard. And, looking at it from a shareholder's point of view, there are one or two considerations which come most prominently to the front. In the first place, the enquiry comes as to the reason of such a deal. If the business is sound, and worth anything, it is certainly worth more to the vendor than the purchaser. Then, in the negotiation of such transfer, the matter is carried on between the managers and chairmen, before even many of the directors are let into the secret, and the whole thing is cut and dried before ever the shareholders have any opportunity of expressing an opinion on the subject, and when they are permitted to assert their rights in the disposal of their property, it is already too late, as any interference would only further compromise the company already hopelessly entangled by those very ones who have been put in the position of trust. The situation is truly a deplorable one, and the results seem to point to the destruction of all joint stock enterprise, so far as this business is concerned. To attain to the position of manager of an insurance company is a prize only for the few, but it is one unique in its attributes. Whatever may be the management, whatever the results, the blame falls anywhere but upon the manager. In other businesses, if the head cannot direct the body aright, it is soon deposed, and an abler one put up in its stead. But in the fire insurance business a company may drag on for a quarter of a century or longer, saddled by a veritable old man of the sea, and be in no better position at the end than it was at the beginning, although its contemporaries have advanced to a pitch of prosperity undreamed of in the past, or the end may come more speedily by what certainly looks like a betrayal of trust. Rumor speaks of large sums being disbursed, the lion's share of which goes into the pockets of those who have brought about the transaction, and but for which the transaction, doubtless, would never have been suggested or carried into effect.

It is not, however, our province to preach morality, so we leave them to enjoy their gains as best they may. Our chief concern is the curtailment of insurance facilities which these amalgamations must necessarily entail. It must in the end tend to cripple commercial enterprise. All things work in circles, it is said, and we may look for other companies to be formed to take the place of those which retire; but what a preparation of the ground are these mutations amongst existing companies! What a different environment will they be born into! The difficulties they will have to contend with are so great as to render their prospects well nigh hopeless. The solid and lasting is of slow growth while the temper of the age is impatient of results, looking to reap ere the seed has been buried in the soil. Constant comparisons are made between the infant and the grown man, without allowance for the interval of time between the two and the circumstances of nutriment and surroundings. Consequently there is a straining of the scarce nascent powers of the infant to affect the prowess of the man. It is the old story of the frog and the bull. And to this and this