FRANCE MAY TAKE OVER INSURANCE COMPANIES.

The Commercial Bulletin, N.Y., says:—"The French Government is discussing the advisability of taking over fire, life, marine, accident and all other kinds of insurance business in France, thus making insurance a Government monopoly. It is thought that the plan will not be finally put through, but it is being energetically advocated now and the insurance companies are vigorously fighting it.

The scheme contemplates paying fire insurance companies something for the good will of their business, but the companies writing other branches are to get nothing, simply being allowed to run off their risks, liquidate their affairs and divide their assets. Managers of French companies have urgently requested their agents to bring all possible influence on the deputies from their respective districts and also upon the various Chambers of Commerce and like organizations."

GRESHAM LIFE ASSURANCE SOCIETY.

The report states that during the year 1909 6,514 policies had been issued, assuring a net amount of £1,986,394. The new premiums for the year amounted to £90,965 and a sum of £114,096 had been received as purchase money for annuities. The income of the society for 1909 amounted to £1,422,802. The death claims amounted to £447,820, and were within the expectation. The claims on endowments maturing amounted to £354,986. The rate of interest realised upon the life fund, less tax, was £4 2s. 1d. per cent. As a result of the year's operations, the sum of £273,119 had been added to the funds of the society. The assets now amounted to £10,315,985.

General Manager James H Scott is to be congratulated upon the satisfactory result of last year's business.

FIRE LOSSES LIKELY TO DECLINE.

Speaking before an open meeting at Richmond, Va., on the 6th instant, held under the auspices of the Chamber of Commerce, Franklin H. Wentworth, of Easton, secretary of the National Fire Protection Association, said that he believed the peak of our abnormal fire waste has been passed, and that barring a second San Francisco earthquake or similar disaster, the ensuing years will show a decline in the lamentable burning of our created resources.

"We burned, last year, $204,000,000 of insurable property," said the speaker. "This was thirty-five millions less than the fire waste of 1908. In drawing encouragement from the fact of this decrease we do not overlook the fact that enormous areas of our cities and towns are still wooden. We know that because of this combustible construction America is yet for many years to sustain very heavy losses from fire; but about ten years ago, fostered by thoughtful men, a new era in building was quietly begun. During the past decade buildings destroyed by fire have, in ever increasing proportion, come to be replaced by buildings conforming to improved fire resisting standards. The influence of these better buildings, erected here and there during the period indicated, is beginning at last to modify our mortifying statistics.

"We apparently have as many fires as formerly, but they do not seem to be quite so disastrous in extent. It is this fact that makes us hopeful of the future. In addition to this there is no doubt that the forcible manner in which the press has been bringing the alarming statistics of the fire waste before the people is getting a result in improved habits of care in the handling of fire. During the year the United States Government has awakened to its responsibilities in this direction and has fortified the fourteen years' agitation of the National Fire Protection Association by the issuance of an impressive bulletin calling attention to the enormous burden of the fire tax upon the country and the folly of cheap and shoddy building construction. The State of New York, after spending year after year for half a century hundreds of thousands of dollars of the people's money in the Catskill and Adirondack mountains for men to patrol railroad tracks and put out fires from sparks from coal burning locomotives, has at last placed this responsibility where it belongs, upon the railroads themselves. They are now to use oil for fuel in the forest portions of the State. Every year New England suffers frightful waste in her standing pine from forest fires set by locomotives, campers and automobilists throwing matches and lighted cigar stubs along wood roads. This sort of carelessness and irresponsibility is beginning to be curbed and will naturally be followed by a decrease in the number of fires.

"The prohibition of the shingle roof, which is new generally recognized as a conflagration breeder, is to-day almost universal within city fire limits, and from the more enlightened communities it is excluded altogether. Burning shingles can be carried great distances by the wind or draught of a conflagration, and when they may alight in their turn upon other dry shingles they make fearful havoc. The natural anarchy of the American temperament does not readily respond to admonitions to correct its careless habits and recognize its public responsibilities, but our common impoverishment by the stupendous proportions of the fire tax is beginning to impress itself upon us so forcibly that even the most heedless of us is forced to give some thought to the common good and the common safety."

MANITOBA ASSURANCE COMPANY HAS INCREASED CAPITAL.

The subscribed capital of the Manitoba Assurance Company has been increased to $400,000 and the paid-up capital to $100,000

This increased capital together with a net surplus (over and above all liabilities) exceeding $200,000 gives the company an exceptionally strong position in itself and with the additional guarantee of the "Liverpool & London & Globe" the security is unsurpassed in the Fire Insurance World. The directors of the company are as follows:—Sir Edward Clouston Bart, president; J. Gardner Thompson, vice-president; George E. Drummond, F. W. Thompson, James Crathern and Sir Alexander Lacoste