

GRESHAM LIFE ASSURANCE SOCIETY.

In days when international financial and commercial relations have been turned topsy-turvy by political events and various important channels of communication altogether closed for the time being, a company like the Gresham Life Assurance Society, whose peculiar hallmark is the cosmopolitan character of its business, could not escape entirely unscathed. Thanks to the circumspection and perspicacity with which its affairs have been conducted by the management, not only through the critical year 1914 but previously, the effects of the international upheaval are relatively less serious than might quite reasonably have been anticipated. The new business of the Society, was, as might have been expected during such unprecedented disturbances in the world, somewhat affected, and it is no surprise to find a reduction in the amount of new assurances during 1914. However, the Gresham is not dependent solely for its prosperity upon its business in its Home Land. In recent years great energy has been displayed in building up the business of the Society both at home and in all parts of the British Empire, including Canada, and as a result of these efforts the Home and British Empire new business has been consistently increasing. Although, as was wisely remarked at the recent annual meeting, too much reliance cannot be placed upon a particular figure of this kind, it is yet of interest to note as evidence of the resiliency of the Society's organisation that in the first five months of the current year a larger volume of new business by over 10 per cent. was obtained than in the corresponding previous period of 1914. Under the Continental business of the Society, provision has been made for the occurrence of just such devastation of human life as is now passing before our eyes, and the Society has in the majority of its Continental contracts limited its liability from War Risk to amounts based upon the mathematical reserves.

THE SOCIETY'S POPULARITY.

In any case, taking the results of 1914 as they are and without reference to the achievements of the preceding years, it can fairly be said that the Society's popularity in the diversified fields of its operations was again demonstrated in convincing fashion. An issue of over 5,000 policies for sums aggregating close on ten million dollars under conditions so hostile to progress may indeed show that the Gresham is so firmly rooted in public favour and has obtained so secure a footing in many areas that no disaster can affect its business with fatal seriousness or more than temporarily.

Other points in the report to which attention may be drawn are a further increase in the rate of interest realised on the funds, viz., from £4 2s. 7d. per cent., after deduction of income tax, to £4 3s. 5d. per cent., again leaving a substantial margin of profit over the rate assumed for valuation purposes; and a moderate disbursement in respect of death claims, which were only 83 per cent. of the expectation and absorbed but a trifle more than in 1913. The ratio of expenses

shows a fractional recession in comparison with the previous year. Total funds are \$53,000,000.

THE GRESHAM IN CANADA.

While for many years past the Gresham Life has invested very large amounts of its funds in Canada, it was not until 1912 that the Society began active operations here. Under the management of Mr. A. R. Howell, an effective organisation has been developed and sound progress is now being made. Last year the Gresham issued in Canada policies new and taken up, \$1,025,346, an increase of \$140,000 on the preceding year and at the close of the year had a net amount of \$1,989,875 Canadian business in force. In view of the developments of three years, of the amplitude of the Gresham's resources and of the skilful character of its management, it may legitimately be expected that in the future the Canadian branch will contribute an increasingly important proportion of the Gresham's whole business.

Finally it may be noted that while busily engaged in dealing with manifold urgent problems affecting the Society's welfare, the management and staff of the Gresham have found time to take their share in patriotic endeavor. The Society presented an ambulance motor car to the Red Cross Society, while the staff, not only in England, but at various branches, has made a splendid response to the call to the colours. Of the English staff, several have distinguished themselves, and at least one has made the supreme sacrifice while performing an act of splendid heroism. The Society is continuing the payment of salaries in all or in part to those on military service, and retaining their places for them, while those left behind, mostly ineligible for military service, have willingly taken on additional labours as a result of the absence of their colleagues.

POLICY CONDITIONS MUST BE ADHERED TO.

An important decision has been given by the New York Court of Appeals that there is no cause of action by a policyholder against a company unless all conditions of the policy are complied with or a waiver of them specifically stated. In the case in question (*Lassa vs. United Commercial Travellers of America*), the Court of Appeals ordered a verdict by the lower court in favor of the plaintiff to be set aside on the ground that the principal point in the case was the fact that notice of a fatal accident was not given within the time required by the policy. It was a condition of the policy that the claimant should give notice within ten days after the accident, and in the event of death notice should be given within the ten days next succeeding. None of these conditions were complied with. There was a general statement in the complaint to the effect that these conditions had been waived, but the court held that the complaint was faulty, as it did not state how the conditions had been waived. The court also held that the insurance statutes must be interpreted strictly and that unless all the conditions are pleaded or a waiver of them specifically stated, cause of action has not been made.

The point is one of much importance to policyholders and the decision now given enforces the necessity of systematic instruction as to their responsibilities in matters of this kind.