

UNION MUTUAL LIFE COMPANY.

A HIGH-HANDED PROCEEDING—MR. TARBOX TARRIED.

(From the Wall St. Indicator.)

If ever engineer was hoist by his own petard that man has been Mr. Commissioner Tarbox, of Massachusetts. Having, with that mean sagacity which is the offspring of malice, engineered a movement on the Union Mutual Life Insurance Company of Maine, which was evidently intended should result in great detriment to that institution, he suddenly finds its door slammed in his face, and this action of its plucky President not only justified and applauded by the newspaper press of Maine, but also by that of Massachusetts, whose official representative in the controversy Mr. Tarbox is. The preliminary correspondence to this summary proceeding was conducted in a courteous and business-like manner by the President of the company, but by Mr. Tarbox with an overbearing conceit that is properly termed "impudence" by newspapers of the two States more particularly interested in the controversy. The result must be a very humiliating defeat and surprise to Mr. Tarbox, who has, in the slang of the time, decidedly "got left" in the worst possible fashion.

Mr. DeWitt's action is not without a precedent. Our readers will remember that, when the Mutual Life Insurance Company was threatened with a raid by the late unlamented Smyth and his myrmidons, its President, Mr. Winston, met the enemy in a somewhat similar fashion, and his action was approved by the policy-holders and the public. The objects of the two representatives of state authority were, however, different. In the case of Smyth it was plunder, in that of Tarbox malice. Both officials, however, as the holders of authority especially designed to be exercised for the protection of policy-holders' interests, are to be equally condemned, as such authority is as much prostituted when used to gratify personal malice as when exercised to replenish the coffers of a political party, with incidental pickings for the dirty party tool who would so use it. This consideration, no doubt, has influenced the press, apart from the merits of the case, in so universally condemning the action of the Massachusetts Commissioner New York has had its Smyth and Massachusetts its Tarbox. Let us hope, in the interests of insurance, that such specimens of supervisors may rarely exercise their brief authority.

Mr. DeWitt has very properly rounded up his action in regard to the matter by requesting Insurance Commissioner Smith, of Maine, to select from the insurance officials of other States conditors in the examination of the company on which he has just entered. This was an admirable stroke of policy, not only as showing an unbounded confidence in the solvency of his company and the integrity of his own management (which we confidently believe will be fully justified), but as giving a finishing touch to Mr. Tarbox, whose damaging insinuations against the company are thereby rendered utterly harmless in the estimation of all fair-minded persons. Mr. DeWitt evidently does not shrink an examination; he only, and very reasonably, desires that it be conducted fairly. The general impression seems to be that Mr. Tarbox and his employees are not capable of so conducting it; a very severe judgment on a public official holding such important powers as these conferred on Mr. Tarbox. He has been tarred with his own brush.

LIFE INSURANCE BY GOVERNMENT

The Danish Government is trying to check socialistic tendencies among its people by a scheme for life insurance and annuities. A bill embodying this scheme is now pending in the legislature of Denmark. Only contributors to the fund are to be allowed the advantages of it, but any Danish subject, regardless of age, sex or physical condition, may become a member of the company, which is to be organized and conducted by the government, and will receive in return for payments, as a minimum, the sum paid in with compound interest at 4 per cent. a year. After a certain number of payments the member has the choice between a life annuity and a lump sum, not less than the minimum. Deficiencies in the fund are to be made up by taxation of the entire people. Unlike Bismarck's plan for the pacification of German discontent by insuring everybody, the Danish project does not contemplate compulsion. If the bill becomes a law, the initiation and progress of this experiment in governmental life insurance will be well worth watching from this side of the Atlantic.—*Am. Ex.*

GOLD MINING.—It is scarcely believed the Government are likely to appeal from the recent decision of the Court of Appeals confirming the validity of the DeLory Gold Patent. The annoyances which have arisen all along from the disputes given rise to on this question, have certainly had a most deterrent effect upon the mining industry in the County of Beauce. As soon as a definite decision is obtained from the Government on this matter, we learn that it is the intention of the Canada Gold Mining Company, and others interested, to enter upon very extensive operations, far in excess of anything so far attempted in that interesting and promising section of the country.—*Quebec Chronicle.*

LIFE INSURANCE FRAUDS.—FALL RIVER, Dec. 10.—It is said there has been a collusion between medical examiners, agents and others here for two years in a graveyard insurance scheme. Broken down constitutions, consumptives and unhealthy persons have been insured for sums ranging from \$1,000 to \$5,000, and physicians, agents and others would hold the policies till the death of the insured, and pocket the insurance or sell the policies to rum-sellers, who would give the victims enough rum to hasten death, and then collect the insurance. A suspected physician and agent left the city recently.

SPECULATION.

(N. Y. Shipping List.)

There is a kind of speculation which is perfectly legitimate and which has been practised by business men from time immemorial; it is the purchase or sale of commodities for actual delivery at a given time. There is another kind of speculation which is clearly illegitimate: it is the pretended purchase or sale of products for which no delivery is intended. This is simply betting upon the price of an article at some future time. In point of morality, it is difficult to distinguish the difference between this form of gambling and the betting upon cards, dice, a horse race, or a dog fight. This gambling system in trade and commerce is mainly the outgrowth of the last twenty-five years, and that it is pernicious in its far-reaching influence cannot be denied. And yet it has many apologists. Even so conservative a journal as the *North American*, of Philadelphia, attributes "the great increase of American wealth, national enterprise, the volume of commerce and the relative independence of our financial operations from the abject subservience to foreign control and domination which twenty-five years ago impoverished our country and made it a mere tributary to the overgrown wealth of Europe," to the progress of the spirit of American speculation during that period.

If man is born a gambler, as has been asserted, he has certainly every facility for exercising this propensity in the modern system of trading in produce options for future delivery, where the property is not expected to be delivered, but settlements made by the payment of differences in price, which amounts to betting that prices will be higher or lower at some specified future time than at present. This might be comparatively safe business, and result in certain profit to a man who possessed accurate knowledge of the supply and demand of any particular article, if the natural laws of trade were allowed to take their legitimate course, but while this is the principle upon which the great number of small traders operate, it is liable at any time to be turned to naught by the professional speculator, who, with money to back him, sees that his opportunity is to go contrary to the course which the crowd take, and by such manipulation as he well knows how to apply, make prices go up when they ought to go down, or the reverse, and secure his profits by forcing most holders to sell, or frighten those who are short into buying. If the transaction were only to the extent of the actual demand there would be no opportunity for such operations; but while there are those who will sell vastly more property than exists, or will buy more than can ever be delivered, there will be some individual or combination of individuals who will turn the folly of others to their own profit but there will come a time when the judgment of the most astute speculator will be at fault; much speculation makes him mad; a successful adventure begets overweening confidence in himself; if he can set at defiance the laws of trade in one instance, why may he not always do so with impunity? Simply because the effect of the violation of these laws is so far-reaching that he fails to comprehend it.

But whether the great operator succeeds or fails makes little difference; in the one case he gets the money of the smaller fry, in the other case fails to meet his contracts; and in either case he disturbs the natural course of the markets, unduly depressing or elevating prices, to the detriment of either producers or consumers, or both. The smaller speculator is assisting to do the same thing on a reduced scale, and with less chances in his favor, and yet the number of persons who speculate does not seem to diminish. Probably, in the long run, ninety-nine out of every hundred lose more money than they make by so doing. Some are satisfied with a few trials, but the many do not stop short of exhaustion, and then there are new men to take the place of those who drop out. Each one expects to be the lucky one hundredth man.

NEWSPAPER ADVERTISING EXTRAORDINARY.

When Mr. J. G. Bennett ordered the steambot down the bay to decorate the walls of Fort Lafayette with an advertisement for his paper, he stirred up a bigger hornet's nest than he expected. Of course the Government could not stand such a piece of impertinence as the defacement of the walls of the fort in that way, and the conductors of the paper were promptly notified to remove the obnoxious sign. But it seems that Fort Lafayette is built of a peculiarly porous stone, and that the embryo Raphael had used his white lead with no unsparing hand. A corp of the *Herald's* employees went down the bay with erasers, patent solutions for removing grease from clothes, and gallons of benzine. But it was of no use. Like the blood on the key which Mrs. Bluebeard dropped, the deep stain could not be removed. Then a board of officers went to the fort and held a consultation. The employees were told to remove the marks even if it was necessary to cut a foot deep into the stone. The work was at once begun, and according to the last reports the stonecutters have gone some twelve inches into the stone without being able to destroy the ruffianly defacement. It is said that an English officer of artillery who came up the bay a few days ago immediately cabled his government to send two or three ironclads to Gibraltar, as it was rumored here that Mr. Bennett proposed taking the Namouna down there and ornamenting that historic rock with a puff of his journal. It is also said that this escapade of the owner of the paper may lead to unpleasant complications between General Hancock and his subordinate officers. It is pertinently asked where were all the bold boys in blue on that eventful night. The General naturally throws the blame upon his subordinates, and they as naturally shirk it, one upon another. But the bare fact remains that Fort Lafayette was captured without resistance by an unarmed yacht.—*N. Y. Sun.*

THE GOOD BANK CLERK.

HAGUE ON THE "BANKING INTERESTS OF CANADA."

A good bank clerk is one who being thoroughly trustworthy, has a natural aptitude for figures, who is ready of hand and quick of eye, who can handle money neatly and expeditiously and see in an instant whether what he handles is good or otherwise. A first rate teller will detect a forged note or spurious coin by its very touch, even while he is handling thousands. Those who handle cheques must acquire a quick rapid power of observing signatures and be able to detect in an instant any attempt at fraud or forgery. A good clerk must combine correctness and rapidity. A large banking office is like a complicated piece of machinery. A slow man in it puts everything out of gear, and so equally does an incorrect man. I need not tell you that in a bank slovenliness and incorrectness are unpardonable sins. Cash must be balanced to a cent, so must books, no matter how numerous and complicated the entries. I have spent months at a time in hunting for differences of a few shillings, and though the work was hard the discipline was salutary. If errors are permitted to creep in, they grow with astonishing rapidity. A good bank clerk, too, must understand the nature of the instruments he deals with, viz.: cheques, bills, drafts, receipts, and such like. As he grows older he should learn enough of the law with respect to these things to be able to tell whether the documents that pass through his hands are legal or not. Thus, commencing at very small beginnings and rising into habits of promptitude and accuracy, he will gradually have more and more of responsibility placed upon him, until he rises to the highest post but one of a banking establishment. The training he has undergone, if he has thoroughly submitted to it, will last him as long as he lives. Clerks who have to deal with the public must learn to be courteous and patient. A crowded counter is a severe test of a man's nerve. There are unreasonable and foolish people who would try the temper even of a saint. A good bank officer will, however, learn to meet unreasonableness with patience and disarm folly by courtesy.

EAST INDIAN GOLD.

(London Mining World.)

The position of Indian gold companies has not improved. There is from them all little else but a story of failure. Gold exists in the Wynaad without doubt, but it is so scattered in the quartz that the crushing of that quartz results in disastrous losses, and the last state of those companies that have proceeded to this test has been worse than the first. Some of them, who have spent all their money, have incontinently gone into liquidation. Others at their wit's end, are simply asking, "What shall we do?" and awaiting some inspiration from the shareholders in general meeting assembled. Not a solitary success gives the faintest relief to a picture, the colors of which are absolutely dark. The vast sums of money subscribed for Indian gold mines appear to be hopelessly lost, though it would be wrong to think that the amounts are so large as those which appeared in our frequently published "Indian Gold List." Of the forty or forty-two companies, whose subscribed capital was represented by £4,592,000 it is probable that not much more than half that sum is represented by actual cash, subscribed by the shareholders. The losses upon Indian gold mines are not so serious as might be thought, certainly not so great as those of the Electric Light companies, which have gone to an even more untimely grave; but in all conscience the losses have been heavy enough. The starting of Indian gold companies was wild work while it lasted, and it would have been far better, as was suggested at the time, to try one or two companies, and then to proceed with the others, but the public had been misled by the reports of a *colerie* of experts whose predictions, made with the utmost assurance, have been falsified in every particular.

Some of the companies failing to extract gold from the quartz are now turning their attention to agricultural pursuits, and if they can hold their hands for two or three years, the shareholders may yet reap a fairly remunerative return upon the capital they have embarked. If, however, immediate winding up is resorted to, they will lose the uttermost farthing.

NEW YORK v. CHICAGO.—It has been one of Wall Street's complaints for some time past that Chicago had diverted a great deal of speculative funds from the New York stock market. This may be true, but it will also prove that Chicago has so far put a great deal of money into the pockets of New York speculators. Within the last two years, several millions of dollars have been made in the Chicago market by New Yorkers who formerly did not know the difference between corn and wheat or pork and bacon. Within the last three weeks hundreds of thousands of dollars have been made in corn alone in the different Chicago offices in this city. L. G. Quinlin is said to have got sick and worn out figuring up profits and signing cheques for his customers. Some of the oldest Wall Street singers seem to have left stocks and turned altogether to grain and provisions.—*N. Y. Sun.*

EDISON'S ELECTRIC LIGHT.—Among the unlisted securities, few are so little traded in now as the electric light stocks. This is doubtless almost wholly due to the unfortunate experience of those who bought these stocks at fabulous prices when they first came on the market, and have since seen them go, comparatively speaking, almost out of sight. Of course the Edison companies, and their stock issues, made the market for this class of securities—and ruined it again also. A one hundred dollar share of the Edison Electric Light Company once sold on the Street at \$4,000. The same stock can now be purchased for \$170, and the well informed doubt if it is worth even the latter small sum.—*N. Y. Stockholder.*