

In an analogous way the laws of mortality, upon which the business of life assurance is based, have variations, and the different mortality Tables represent averages deduced from data furnished by the laws, or facts, of mortality as observed by the compilers of those Tables.

Whoever then speaks of the laws of mortality as non-existent, or non-scientific, because they do not rest upon "unvarying and invariable facts," speaks without due caution, as varying and variable facts are found in other departments of science.

The basal facts which are regarded as the laws of mortality are that: (1) every person born will die; (2) that every year of life is a year nearer to its end; (3) that the number of those who "fall by the way" increases after a certain stage has been reached; (4) that life can be shortened, or preserved for a longer term by certain habits and surroundings; (5) that contingencies exist that shorten or destroy life, as disease, or accidents; and (6) that at certain ages there is a more or less well defined expectancy that out of a given number alive of that age so many will die. These laws are as immutable, as scientific in nature, as the law of gravitation. The business of life assurance being based on these laws, it is therefore quite correct to speak of the "Science of Life Insurance" to which the writer we allude to sarcastically objects.

The variation in rates amongst the different companies does not disprove there being laws of mortality, as is alleged, but demonstrates their existence, for those rates express the interpretation put upon the mortality laws by each company, and the differences only show how closely those interpretations approximate. Take an illustration of this. Those who recognize and act upon the law of supply and demand in their daily business differ widely as to its operation. If the wheat supply is one-fourth less than last year's, no one can tell from this precisely to what extent prices will be affected. There are variations of judgment as to the influence on prices of changes in the relations of supply to demand, but no one doubts there being a direct and proportionate influence exercised by such changes. So it is with the laws of mortality, there is absolute agreement on the broad facts they express, but there are variations in judgment as to details. One company, for instance, may place its expectancy of deaths in one year at, say, 100, which the actuaries of other companies with the same data before them might fix at 99½, 100½, or more, or less. All might turn out fractionally incorrect, because there are factors in the problem that, to some extent, influence mortality rates, and cause variations in them, which are being constantly introduced by local circumstances and other conditions that are perpetually changing. England furnishes a case in point by its influenza epidemic which for several years has raised the mortality rates. Those rates, however, are not the record of any one or two years, they are averages derived from an extended term of years. The ephemeral, local phenomena which are constantly appearing have no power to alter the basal, fundamental laws of mortality upon which the business

of life assurance rests, and from which it derives its claim to be entitled a system supported by scientific facts. The phrase "Science of Life Assurance" is, therefore, we submit, strictly justifiable.

THE NORTH BRITISH & MERCANTILE'S THIRTIETH ANNIVERSARY IN UNITED STATES.

On the 17th November, 1866, the North British & Mercantile commenced its career in the United States. The following sketch is adapted from the *Surveyor*. The original Board of Directors in the States were: Chas. H. Dabney, chairman; E. P. Fabbri, Solon Humphreys, David Dows, S. B. Chittenden, with Ezra White as manager, and C. E. White, assistant manager. It is interesting to note that Mr. Humphreys is now the chairman, and sons of Messrs. Dows and White are on the present Board. The company opened its first American office at 74 Wall Street. Within five years of commencing business in New York the Chicago conflagration occurred in October, 1871, by which the North British & Mercantile losses were \$2,332,101. Not only were all the profits made since entering the States swept away, but the Chicago loss exceeded the whole of the Company's assets in America. On this disastrous news reaching the Board in London, a cable message was sent to the New York officers: "Pay losses, draw at three days' sight, and contribute \$5000 to relief fund for sufferers," which is one of the pluckiest messages ever transmitted by electricity. This message produced a profound effect in establishing confidence in the financial stability of the North British & Mercantile Fire Insurance Company; it also served as an enduring lesson upon the honorable character of the management. Before the close of the next year, in November, 1871, the Company's resources were drawn upon for \$742,067, this sum being required to cover losses in Boston, and, with that paid for those in Chicago, made a total of over three millions of dollars lost in the first six years of its United States career. In 1871 Mr. Caldwell was appointed General Agent, a position he held up to May, 1894. In 1876 Mr. Ezra White withdrew from the office of manager, and went on the Board as one of the Branch Directors. On this change Messrs. C. E. White and S. P. Blagden were appointed managers, and later on Mr. Dudley, now vice-president of the Aetna of Hartford, was made assistant manager. In 1877 Mr. C. E. White retired, and Mr. Blagden became sole manager, with Mr. W. A. Francis as assistant. In 1894 Mr. Blagden retired, and was succeeded by Mr. Henry E. Bowers, who still retains the position of manager. Mr. Bowers joined the North British & Mercantile staff after service with the Norwich Fire Insurance Co. of Conn., and forming one of an insurance firm. As special agent he adjusted the Company's losses at Boston, he then became manager of the Guardian, and on its withdrawal in 1894, he returned to the North British as manager in New York. In the 30 years of its United States career, the company has received in net premiums the sum of \$46,848,705, out of which losses have been paid for \$30,778,090. Its cash assets in the United States on 1st January last