

The Tendency In discussing some recent amalgamations of companies engaged in the Employers' Liability business, the "Insurance News," of Manchester, says: "There is really not room" for all the newly-created companies. It regards the movement for the fusion of interests as "a step in the right direction." Its approbation is based upon the excessive number of companies. It seems that the competition is keen, and as the companies show no disposition to work in unison, the business is in a somewhat demoralized state. The "News" adds that other amalgamations might be judiciously and profitably entered into just now.

The tendency of the times is markedly towards the judicious and profitable blending of several businesses under one management.

Department Stores in Revolt. The proprietors of the large department stores in Gotham have not taken kindly to the recent promulgation of the New York "Fire Insurance Exchange" announcing an advance in department store rates, and they are said to be considering the advisability of combining to form an insurance company of their own. They now deal in everything, from Abbey's Salt to mowing machines, and the addition of a fire insurance branch to the business could be made at trifling cost. We are to assume that the profits of the first year on their buildings and merchandise, said to be insured for \$60,000,000, would more than cover the cost of organizing a company. But it is a safe deduction from the experience of even clever underwriters that, unless New York department stores differ from similar establishments in other cities, they will find the rates imposed by those who framed the new tariff reasonable enough. However, if those most interested think otherwise, assuredly they may not be blamed. The insurance branch of a department store will be a novelty—during the first and, in all probability, only year of its existence.

The Chinese Puzzle. One of the first effects of the growth of disturbances in the East is giving the English bankers something to mink about in addition to their own immediate surroundings, and the daily cares and anxieties of their clients. Several Chinese banks are reported by late London cablegrams to have suspended payment, and European firms are said to be withholding advances. The secretary of the Bank of England views the financial situation with some concern, as the stoppage of payment by Chinese banks would be "reactionary and far-reaching in its consequences." He is also of the opinion that a war hindering the import and stimulating the export trade will increase the demand for silver.

Altogether, the situation is one calculated to bother the best statesmen of Europe. With half a dozen nations occupying the territory of China, the man who

*Disentangle from the puzzled skein. . . .
The threads of politic and shrewd design*

on the part of their leaders, will deserve the thanks of a world fast wearying of warfare.

Many devout men, as they read of scenes recalling the horrors of the Indian Mutiny, will forgive Lord Salisbury for his veiled allusion to the missionaries as the principal cause of the present outbreak in China. The political morality taught by Confucius and his disciples 2,500 years ago may not be a religion, as it does not inculcate the worship of any god; but it seems to have suited the people of the Flowery Land better than the modern christianity which Western civilization is vainly attempting to cram down their throats along with Western merchandise and manners.

Thrift's Handicap. There is much that is instructive and interesting in the paper contributed to the "Atlantic Monthly" by Mr. James W. Alexander, entitled "Some Prejudices about Life Assurance." On the subject of excessive taxation, he has something to say which ought to make policyholders sensible of their interest in the protection of companies from the treatment they too frequently receive at the hands of stupid legislators, greedy and needy municipalities, and unwise supervisors of insurance. He asks his readers to examine the facts and adds:

"The Insurance Report of the State of Connecticut, a State in which all the prominent companies do business, gives 11,972,373 as the total number of policies held in the regular companies reporting to that State. Is it credible that, if the multitudes of intelligent men who hold these policies were alive to their own interests, they would permit the operations of their companies to be handicapped and their prosperity threatened by onerous taxation and by hostile legislation? The influence of such a body of citizens would, if actively used, control the situation. Taxation of a life assurance company means inroad upon the profits, and, therefore, increase of the price paid by the policyholder for his assurance. Yet the war tax imposed during the Spanish war, in the shape of stamps, is estimated to have cost the companies reporting to Connecticut more than \$700,000 in 1898 (excluding industrial companies). It has been estimated that there are several companies whose individual tax is not less than \$100,000.

Another evil is, that taxation is so unequal and so unscientific. One State exempts; another taxes gross premiums two per cent. One State collects \$500,000 per annum from life assurance companies alone in taxes; another State taxes on "reserves;" and the general government comes in and blankets the whole with a tremendous tax. Meanwhile, the companies suffer indirect taxation on their investments, and pay heavily on real estate. Only a few weeks ago a bill was introduced into the New York Legislature, which proposed to tax mortgages one half of one per cent. Although this bill has not passed, there is no evidence that the multitude of policyholders, whose dividends