have operated to bring about this change—competition, and the growing belief that suicide is one of the many forms of disease. But since this liberalizing of policies there appears to have arisen a new condition, or possibly only an accentuation of a condition, which already existed—namely, self-destruction for the purpose of defrauding life insurance companies. Instances are becoming more numerous in which business men working under high pressure and becoming financially embarrassed have committed suicide and left either to their heirs or their creditors a large life insurance.—"Chicago Evening Post."

PERSONAL.

Mr. J. W. Mooney has been elected president of the General Agents' Association of the Ontario Mutual Life Assurance Company.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.

We hereby acknowledge, with thanks, the receipt of bound copy of the "Post Magazine and Insurance Monitor" (London, Eng.), also the New Hampshire Insurance Commissioner's Report for 1899.

Correspondence.

We do not hold ourselves responsible for views expressed by correspondents.

NEW YORK LETTER:

The Commercial Union-Palatine Deal.—Scarcity of Underwriting Ability.—The Classification Question.—The Mutual Life's Appeal.—Other Notes of Interest.

In fire insurance circles in this city and the vicinity, of course the chief topic of interest is the great transaction through which the Commercial Union, of London, has absorbed the Palatine, of Manchester. When first announced, this deal created considerable excitement, because it was supposed that it meant the immediate retirement of the Palatine, not only from its fields abroad, but from its territory in this country. Later developments, however, indicate that at present the transaction merely means the passing of the control of the Palatine to the hands of the Commercial Union people, and the continuance of the former company in this country, at least, as a separate underwriting institution. It is more than likely that the large organization of the Palatine in this country with its managers and important agencies in many parts of America will not be disturbed for some time to come. The Palatine's record here has been most honourable, although its experience has, at times, been unfavourable. Probably, under the protecting and guiding influence of the great Commercial Union, it will now be made a profitable arm of that important underwriting machine.

* * *

A condition which is soon likely to confront property owners in this city and other large cities near by, is the scarcity of the means of fire insurance. By this, we mean that in order to procure as much insurance as they need, many property owners will be obliged to resort to the expedient of availing themselves of surplus line privileges. The reason for this is that several of the smaller companies have retired, and, owing to the very unprofitable experience of many of the important companies, much smaller lines are now being carried than formerly. For once in their lives, the companies have been forced to employ a greater caution and conservatism in the acceptance of risks, particularly in congested districts. The list of firms asking for surplus lines is very large, and appears to be growing rapidly. This same condition was observed seven or eight years ago, after the heavy drain upon the strength of the companies, caused by the excessive losses of 1893-4. In the course of time, this naturally will tend to stimulate the organization of other insurance companies to compete for business, so true is it that fire insurance, as well as other commodities, which are sold in the open market, is influenced by the law of supply and demand.

* * *

A question which is causing considerable discussion in this country is that of the classification of fire insurance hazards. This question was prominently referred to by President E. C. Irvin, in his recent address before the National Board of Fire Underwriters. There is some diversity of opinion even among the ablest underwriters as to the value of classifications. One or two have publicly held that classification, in any form in which it was practicable, could not be made a sound basis for the obtaining of proper rates. No less distinguished a fire underwriter than Mr. E. G. Richards, manager of the North British and Mercantile Insurance Company maintained this opinion in an article published some weeks ago. President Irvin, on the contrary, believes that classification is a true guide to proper rating and earnestly advocates it in his reference to the subject, while Mr. Richards makes out a plausible cause from his point of view, we are inclined to think that the majority of underwriters are theoretically in favour of classification of some kind. But the practical use of such an arrangement seems to be as far away as ever owing to the inability of the companies to harmonize even on much less important questions.

* * *

Having been continuously excluded from the kingdom of Prussia, the Mutual Life Insurance Company considers itself sufficiently aggrieved to warrant it in placing the matter before the Congress of the United States. It has, therefore, prepared a petition including an elaborate statement of the cause, requesting an investigation by Congress into the circumstances of this exclusion, in order that some pressure may be brought to bear upon the Prussian government to withdraw the onerous conditions. At the present time the New York Life Insurance Company is the only one of the New York companies which has seen fit to comply in every respect with the rules of the Prussian Government.

TORONTO LETTER.

The Chief of the Toronto Fire Brigade retains his Position.—Thoughts on the Fire Insurance Position to Date.—A Word of Sympathy for Managers.—Appreciation.

Dear Editor:—After weeks of wrangling, and a wordy war on the part of the Board of Control and the friends and enemies of our Fire Chief Thompson, the City Council has voted, by a large majority, to retain the Chief in his position. You will remember he was charged with partizanship, and working for