

influential offices will unite in an endeavor to restore the Board to its former usefulness.

I have referred to the failure of the Commonwealth Fire. I may properly mention, "in this connection," the fact that the appointment of William M. Tweed, Jr., son of the great "ring" master of Tammany, "Boss" Tweed, as receiver, has excited general surprise and suspicion here in the minds of underwriters. It was known that Superintendent Miller had been something of a politician in the western part of this State, and was a personal and political friend of Governor Hoffman; but that, in the administration of so purely non-political an office as that of Insurance Superintendent, he should appoint one of a family so generally distrusted and hated by the honest portion of the community, will only cause those to be still more outspoken who have not hesitated to assert that his "personal examinations" of the insurance companies is a "put-up job." Tweed, *fit* is an Assistant District Attorney, with \$10,000 a year, and other "fat takes" from the corporation. Tweed, *per se*, who is now running the Albany Legislature, is already worth his millions, plundered from the city by various devices.

The reaction of the general business among life companies during the year, 1870, the fact that two of them have gone to the wall, and that certain others must soon follow, puts an effectual squelcher upon the organization of any more new companies for some time to come. In a list of seventy-five life companies now before me, which includes all the companies of any character in the Union, I find that thirty-six of the seventy-five severally issued a less number of policies in 1870 than in 1869, and that thirty-nine companies on the list insured a less amount than in 1869. Many of these companies that have "gone back on themselves" are among the most substantial and popular; such as the *Etna*, decrease in the amount of insurance for 1870, 18 per cent.; *Equitable*, 20; *Guardian Mutual*, 19; *Knickerbocker*, 40; *Manhattan*, 30; *National of U. S.* (Jay Cook & Co.), 47; *Washington*, 46; *Mutual Benefit*, 58; *Northwestern*, *Milwaukee*, 26; &c. But the But the financial stagnation to which the companies were subjected in 1870 will do them good finally. It will teach them to labor and to wait; to be patient and economical. This is the law and the necessity of the business. It has its infancy, youth, and manhood. But many of the companies acted as if they believed they could anticipate normal development. *Vanus!* The grandest oak has its rings to indicate the patient growth of years which developed its stately height and splendid foliage.

An important Bill now before the Legislature (passed the Senate)—"An Act to provide for the incorporation and future regulation of life, health, and casualty insurance companies, and in relation to agencies of such companies"—prepared under the direction of Superintendent Miller, is likely to become a law. Among its twenty-three sections is one which provides that no life company shall hereafter be organized with a less capital than \$500,000—\$250,000 of which shall be deposited with the Insurance Department at Albany. This requirement will make the business of organizing companies hereafter "no joke." The Act, however, should go further, and adopt the salutary rule of Massachusetts, by limiting the dividends to the legal rate of interest payable in the currency of the time. This would be more effectual than a \$1,000,000 guarantee fund to shut out speculative capitalists.

The convention of Insurance Superintendents which is to assemble in this city on the 24th prox., is likely to be a meeting of considerable interest. We apprehend that the deliberations are not to be restricted to a dozen or so of Superintendents, but that Mr. Miller will invite the co-operation of distinguished actuaries and officers of long experience. If the convention shall be able to agree upon a uniform set of blank returns for all the Departments, and effect some degree of uniformity in the general legislation and practice of the De-

partments, it will not have assembled in vain. It is almost too much to hope that it will be able to agree to recommend to the several legislatures a bill for a uniform valuation in all the Departments, with the same assumptions as to interest and mortality. Now almost every Department has a different standard of valuation, so that a valuation in Massachusetts, with the Actuaries' Table and 4 per cent., is no *revise* of a valuation in the New York Department, where the American Experience and 4½ per cent. is the standard.

In connection with Mr. Miller's codification of the life insurance laws of this State, I should have referred to certain proposed changes in the fundamental law of Massachusetts. Mainly under the advice and championship of Hon. Elizur Wright, Massachusetts legislation upon the subject of life insurance has been distinguished for practical sagacity and an abiding sense of equity in behalf of the policyholders. And hence the "Old Bay State" has, to a considerable extent, given to other States their "cue" in such matters. Your readers are doubtless familiar with the Massachusetts "non-forfeiture" law, by which a policy is kept alive to the extent of all over-payments in the first year, after the assured has ceased to pay premiums. Mr. Wright now asks the Legislature to repeal the "non-forfeiture law," because experience has shown that it protects some policyholders too much, and others too little or not at all; and further, because in all cases where the party is insurable at the time of the lapse, there ought to be no deduction of forborne premiums from the claim. He now proposes to have the *cash surrender value* of the policies of Massachusetts companies established by an Act which is to supersede the present non-forfeiture law of that State as respects new policies. I have not space here to insert the Act, but the nub of it is, that a retiring member shall receive the reserve for his policy, less a sum sufficient to enable the company to replace his policy by a new one equally advantageous to the association; or, in other words, less the brokerage the company must pay to get a substitute policy. The question as to what is a fair surrender value has been the *questio vexata* of the business in this country from the beginning, and the practice of the companies, generally niggardly and inequitable until a comparatively recent period, has been the great scandal of life insurance. Many of the older offices got much of their "vast accumulation" from a quasi robbery of retiring members, by returning them little or nothing on the annual payments of years. There is much of forcible truth in the following paragraph from Mr. Wright's argument in behalf of his proposed law:—"I submit that an honest company cannot suffer in the long run by having its policyholders always free to withdraw in cash their self-assurance or savings banks deposit"—(by which he means the over-payments of the first years of the policy)—"subject to a proper charge to compensate the company for its loss of insurance value. Moreover, I submit that there can be no more effectual safeguard against mismanagement of the funds entrusted to life insurance companies, than to establish by law the exact surrender value of any insurance policy, at the end of any policy year in its existence." There ought, in connection with this Bill, should it become law, to be some proviso to protect companies against a rush of surrenders in time of financial stringency.

Some enthusiasts in the medical profession, including certain medical examiners, have occasionally advanced the theory that as the discoveries and improvements in the laws and practice of hygiene have already increased human longevity, there is no reason why man's life, by further discoveries and improvements, may not be extended from a century to 150 or even 200 years! And passing from "grave to gay," I am reminded of the present happy condition of one of our life insurance Presidents, who, at the round age of three score and ten, which was exit-time in Solomon's day, has recently taken to himself a

buxom young wife. He is the father of two life insurance companies, and hopes to be the father of a second family. Let us hope that his wife's "average expectation" on the law of "vital statistics" may not be disappointed.

The insurance press hereabouts turns out many things known under the general designation of "life insurance publications." They are, however, mostly ephemeral, catch-penny concerns, designed for business uses among offices. The number of American works having anything of a standard character and permanent value to the profession are few. Without any interest in it except what an examination of the work has inspired, I refer with satisfaction to Mr. M. Bigelow's "Life and Accident Insurance Reports." The first volume (Hurd & Houghton, publishers,) has just been issued. It contains all the American cases that have been published as late as the beginning of the present year. The next and succeeding volume will contain the subsequent American and English cases, and a selection of the most valuable English decisions heretofore published. The compilation has been thoroughly and conscientiously done, and the volume must be highly valued by the profession. There are 226 important cases, duly indexed, with an index to table of cases cited in the opinions and notes, and an alphabetical index by subjects.

Finis.—We are having the most charming weather possible for mid-April, and "all hands" are happier and more hopeful. Business, though not active, is, on the average, fair, with an outlook for steady improvement.

FIRE RECORDS.—Morpeth April 11.—A fire broke out in the upper part of Mr. Samuel Kitchen's dwelling. The building was quickly enveloped in the flames; and notwithstanding the exertions of the people of the village and surrounding country, the following buildings were entirely consumed, viz.:—Mr. Kitchen's store and dwelling, Mr. Sexton's hotel, Messrs Roll's & Wilson's storehouses, Dr. Fraser's office, Mr. W. R. Wood's boot and shoe shop, and Mr. Noblin's house. Mr. W. Wilson's large brick building was badly damaged—the wood-work being burned, windows broken, and walls warped. The greater part of the contents of the various buildings was saved from the fire, but of course much injured in removing. Messrs. W. J. Taylor and G. C. Wood are, also losers from removal of goods. This is the second time the goods of Messrs Heyward, Taylor and Wood have been thrown into the street within a few weeks. The insurance on any was light, and on Wilson's store-house and Jackson's goods there was none.

Meaford April 13.—Several barns in this city were burned recently owing to the dryness of the season.

Amherst, N. S. April 1st.—A large barn at Napin, owned by Mr. James Ripley, son of Thomas, was destroyed by fire with nearly all its contents, including twenty-two cattle. Loss \$1200; no insurance. The fire was caused by Mr. Ripley's son, seven years old, playing with matches in the barn.

London, April 13.—A fire broke out in the lumber shed of Mr. W. J. Thompson, carriage-maker, Dundas street, which extended to the broom factory of Messrs. R. & J. Gurd, and the residence of Mr. E. Miller, caretaker of the Primitive Methodist Church, the whole of which were totally destroyed. The firemen were promptly on hand, but the limited supply of water prevented them from saving anything. The losses are:—Mr. Thompson, about \$2,000; Messrs. Gurd, \$1,000; Mr. Miller, on furniture and building, about \$1,000. Loss \$5,000, no insurance.

April 12th.—The residence of David Glass, situated on the bank of the river was partly destroyed by fire last night, it occurred about 10 o'clock, the servant while lighting the gas in the billiard room in which a quantity of green branches had been hung about, and the gas