From Across the Line.

NEW YORK INSURANCE LETTER.

Board of Casualty and Surety Underwriters—Fire Insurance Rates and the State—Savings Bank Life Insurance not Successful—Special Correspondence of THE CHRONICLE.

By far the most interesting and important event in insurance circles in this city during the month was the meeting of the Board of Casualty and Surety Underwriters, which occurred at the Hotel Astor on October 18 and 19, closing with a grand banquet on the evening of the latter day. This association is composed of the leading casualty and surety companies of the country, and necessity has compelled them of late years to draw closer and closer together for mutual advantage and protection. A detailed account of the meeting is of course impossible, but it may be said that the most important address delivered was that of Hon. George F. Seward, president of the Fidelity & Casualty Company, who spoke on the subject of "Withdrawal of License as a Penalty for Violation of State Insurance Laws." Mr. Seward dwelt upon the injustice of such an action as a uniform practice on the part of state insurance departments, showing that in most cases the penalty was not commensurate with the offence, that it very often meant a confiscation of property; that it seriously affects many individuals who are innocent of any offence, and that as the penalty is not imposed by a court, the accused has no opportunity to defend himself. Mr. Seward has proved a strong voice of the casualty companies in the many controversies which they have had with state insurance departments, and is unalterably opposed to the officious meddling which has become so common among the insurance commissioners of a number of the states.

State Rate-Making.

The fire underwriters of the East are at last wakening up to the importance of the situations which may develop as a result of the law in Kansas, which may prove an entering wedge for a large amount of paternalistic legislation. The trouble is that instead of uniting to prevent the passage of such a law the underwriters stood passively back either through fear or indifference and now they are beginning to realize what the consequences may be if such laws are threatened in every state. Nearly every day some important insurance official is giving expression to his views on the subject of rate making by the State, but as we have said these expressions are coming too late to stem the tide which threatens to overwhelm the companies and place not only the matter of rates but also of commissions in the hands of the state. This is too large a subject to discuss here at great length, but nearly all underwriters are agreed, now that their attention is brought to the subject, that rate-making by the state is not only a direct interference with the usual prerogatives of trade, but that it may often be carried on by men wholly unable to grasp the subject with any sort of intelligence or ability.

It will be of interest to the readers of THE CHRONICLE to know that the Massachusetts scheme for writing industrial insurance over the counter through savings banks has practically failed, in accordance with predictions made by your correspondent when the plan was proposed a year or two ago. Almost no business is being written in this way, and voluntary propositions for insurance are nearly unheard of. This shows that the agent is and will continue to be a necessary factor in the business, since very few either in the industrial or ordinary classes can see the necessity of insurance until it is brought to their attention by the solicitor.

Notes and Items.

The Union Life Insurance Company, of this city, has, by the order of the court, passed under the control of the insurance department, and will re-insure its risks in the Metropolitan Life. This confers a distinct benefit upon the policyholders, who will now be well cared for.

The rate war in burglary insurance in this city has not been settled at the present writing, and the proposition seems to be a very difficult one to handle.

Col. A. H. Wray, United States manager of the Commercial Union Assurance Company, recently journeyed to Chicago, where he was initiated in the Ancient and Honorable Order of the Blue Goose.

Very favourable comments are made in this city upon the appointment of F. W. Lawson as United States manager at Chicago of the London Guarantee & Accident Company, to succeed the late Captain A. W. Masters.

The New York Life Insurance Company has resigned from the Association of Life Insurance Presidents.

Manager Robert Lewis, of the Alliance Assurance Corporation, of London, arrived in this city from England a week ago.

Manager Charles Lyman Case, of the London Assurance Corporation, has returned from his European trip.

Manager E. G. Richards, of the North British & Mercantile, sailed for Europe recently by the steamship "George Washington."

Manager J. J. Guile, of the Sun Insurance Office, has just returned from a visit to Chicago and the West.

The New York Board of Underwriters advises that the high pressure water system of this city will shortly be considerably extended.

By an advertisement in the local papers Ferris E. Shaw and others announce their purpose of forming a corporation to be called the United Fire Insurance Company, of New York, with a capital of $200,000.

QUERIST.

New York, November 3, 1909.

THE NATIONAL TRANSCONTINENTAL railway commission has made its report for the last fiscal year. During the twelve months ending March 31 last, they expended on the construction of the line between Moncton and Winnipeg a sum of $24,892,772, and the whole expenditure to that date totals $51,950,717. At the end of March there were 725 miles graded and 345 miles of track laid. The entire line was under contract for construction.