

the special advantages offered. Great stress is placed on a statement published by it, which attempts to show that some four or five dollars is paid into the old-line companies for every one paid out for death claims. The disingenuousness of this statement becomes apparent when, on the debit side appear, not only the premiums for life insurance, but also the premiums on all forms of endorsement and tontine policies, as well as a consideration for annuities; while on the other side no credit is given for the following amounts paid out. The period covered is 25 years:—

Matured endowments and annuities .....	\$200,000,000
Surrendered, lapsed, and purchased policies .....	227,712,634
Dividends to policy holders...	274,901,428

Making a trifle of.....\$702,614,062 which the fair-minded "Mutual Reserve" has forgotten to place to the credit of the life insurance companies. It has also omitted to mention that some \$500,000,000 has been carried to reserve to meet obligations as they mature, obligations which will certainly come, and for which every life insurance company must make ample provision, or wind up in disgrace and confusion. Next week we shall continue our comments on this pamphlet, together with a reference to the report issued by the Superintendent of Insurance for New York.

\*Approximated.

#### ASSIGNMENTS FOR THE BENEFIT OF CREDITORS.

The law on this subject has, hitherto, been so unsatisfactory in Ontario and in the Maritime Provinces, that we have been in the habit of assuming that the law in the sister Province of Quebec has been open to no objection. As compared with other Provinces, Quebec has, since the repeal of the Insolvent Act of 1875, certainly occupied a better position than the other parts of the Confederation. Notwithstanding this, however, it has been found necessary, even in that favored Province, to so amend the law as to afford greater security to creditors. The effect, it is said, of the amendment just enacted there, will be that all assignments must now virtually be made before a judge. The creditors are to meet in the prothonotary's office and appoint the assignee, whose name must be submitted to a judge for confirmation or rejection. To the assignee thus selected, the debtor is bound to hand over, without delay, a full statement of his liabilities and assets and to make oath to its correctness. For the offence of misrepresentation, or secretion of assets, the debtor may be committed to gaol. In other respects, the law has been so altered as to throw greater safeguards around creditors and to make it more difficult for debtors to defraud creditors out of their just claims.

In the meantime the Act of the Ontario Legislature passed last session remains unproclaimed, and the law in this province continues on the old unsatisfactory footing, where the debtor practically chooses the trustee who shall represent creditors. Probably the local government is awaiting the final action of the Dominion House,

but there is no chance whatever of any measure of relief coming from that source during the present session. That august assemblage has been too busy squabbling over party issues to devote much attention to the needs of the mercantile community. Could any measure on the subject be made to have a beneficial influence, one way or other, upon any considerable number of votes for the next election, we might perhaps hope for some attention at the hands of the peoples' representatives. But the mere fact that an amendment of the law is needed in the public interest and for the suppression of fraud, appears to be no reason, in the eyes of our legislators, why the subject should receive any attention.

#### FIRE INSURANCE CLASSIFICATION.

We gladly insert in another column, a letter from a correspondent complaining of the insurance classification of Peterboro'. He looks at the matter, as persons ordinarily do, from his own standpoint. He has good buildings which are first-class in all respects and on this account he very naturally expects a low rate of insurance. The appliances possessed by the town for dealing with and extinguishing fires are further reasons why Mr. Lech is so urgent for a reduction. We have made some enquiries as to the classification and are informed that more than justice is done in giving it a "C" classification, as only a portion of the town is protected by the water-works system—which we understand is an excellent one so far as it extends. Property outside of the hydrants of the water works is dependent on the steam engine. That part of the town supplied by the steamer is only entitled to a "D" classification, but as there was a prospect, at an early date, of the extension of the water-works system over the entire business portion, it was placed in class "C." We would remind our correspondent that the principal factor in successfully coping with fire is to be early at the fire. This is impossible—especially in the night time—except in places having electric fire alarm and a paid fire brigade. In cities where a number of policemen are on duty and who by means of electricity can give an immediate fire alarm, the brigade arrives on the scene before the fire makes much progress. Hence the number of fires in such places that are extinguished with but little loss. We have no doubt that the insurance companies will give a fair classification to Peterboro' provided these improvements are made.

One defect in the association's tariff requires remedying, namely, to do away with that anomaly which does not discriminate between the rates charged on special risks, which rates are the same on a flouring mill or other special hazard in the city of Toronto, with all its fire appliances, as on one of the same class in Muskoka where there are no fire appliances whatever. The sooner some provision is made for applying the same rule to specials as applies to ordinary risks, the stronger the claim on the public will the association have.

Our correspondent would do well to remember that insurance rates are based,

not on the losses in a particular town or city, but on the average losses over a large area for a series of years. It is an undeniable fact that insurance companies have not made money for some years past. This may, in a measure, be owing to the loose manner in which risks are accepted and to which our correspondent refers. Insurance business is eagerly sought for and when he says that the greater the amount the better, we have no doubt that over-insurance is a prolific cause of fires, and agents are largely culpable in this respect. The insured are not always blameless in obtaining more insurance on their property than they ought to have. It is a wholesome rule that the insured should in all cases carry a fair share of the risk. If this were more rigidly enforced we should have fewer fires.

"Fire insurance and how the rates can be reduced," was a subject submitted for discussion at a meeting of the Kingston Board of Trade on Wednesday of last week. The city, it appears is classed "D," the rate in which is considered by the board to be too high. A retaliatory attitude has, it would seem, been adopted by the companies. Mr. Fenwick stated that the agents gave as a reason of the increased premium, the city's action in imposing a tax on the insurance companies. If the tax were not levied, they would, he said, change the city to class "C." It was found, however, that the companies could not be legally exempt from taxation and it was therefore resolved to ask the Fire Underwriters' Association what steps were necessary to effect a reduction in the rate on the mercantile risks of the city, also if the city could not be re-rated, so that the localities well supplied with water and fire appliances be ranked under the rate of other localities not so favorably situated. The Association is, doubtless, ready to hear any arguments which the authorities of Kingston may have to offer why the rate should be reduced. They may not know, however, that in all places where a tax is imposed on fire insurance companies, the classification of the city or town which imposes the tax, is lowered one letter.

#### OUR WEST INDIA TRADE.

A table, showing, somewhat in detail, our imports from the British and other West Indies will furnish information to some subscribers who have made enquiry of us on the subject. We give the figures by provinces;

ONTARIO IMPORTS.			
Article.	From Brit. & Foreign W. I.	From Brit. W. I. & Guiana.	
Cigars .....	\$ 34,670	\$ .....	
Coffee .....	2,367	2,367	
Molasses .....	435	4,521	
Rum .....	4,521	3,356	
Spirits .....	6,291	5,268	
Sugar .....	79,777	878	
Tobacco .....	878	279	
Packages .....	279	682	
Grass mats .....	682	170	
Lime Juice .....	170	129	
Other articles .....	129		
Total Ontario .....	\$ 130,194	\$ 16,762	
QUEBEC'S IMPORTS.			
Cigars ..	199,478	6,272	
Coffee ..	6,276	185,585	
Molasses ..	230,384		