

panies are very commonly the victims of an unjust discrimination against them in the public mind. Not only are they cheated directly by people who misrepresent facts, who exaggerate losses, or who deliberately bring about the disaster against which they insure, but juries are very apt to allow their natural sympathies with poor and unfortunate litigants to interfere with their strict sense of absolute justice. A lawyer who can work upon the sympathies of a jury need not depend upon the law or the evidence for a verdict against an insurance company. One reason for this unjust discrimination is no doubt the fact that the average mind has not yet grasped the scientific basis of the legitimate insurance business. To very many men and to nearly all women, insurance is a game of chance, in which Company bets against a certain eventuality taking place within a certain time, and with all games of chance more or less cheating seems to be regarded as inevitable, if not exactly justifiable. The average man knows that nothing is more uncertain than the life of the individual. What he does not realize is that there is scarcely anything more certain than the law of averages applied to a great number of human lives classified according to certain conditions. It does not strike him that any illegitimate interference with the operation of this law to the prejudice of the company is as truly a robbery as is a theft from a tradesmen's counter.

ELECTRIC FIRES.

Electricity is experiencing the tendency of mankind to make anything a scape-goat that is available and cannot retaliate. Mysterious fires nowadays are commonly attributed to electricity, just as in earlier days all manner of mysterious visitations of sickness, accident and other calamities were attributed to witchcraft. The poor witches, so-called, could not prove their innocence, so neither can electricity, so it is being charged with most fires whose origin is mystery. The Electrical Bureau of the U. S. National Board of Fire Underwriters have issued a report on electric fires in the last quarter and fires so classed without evidence. The report states that "Numerous fires reported as due to electricity have, upon further and more reliable investigation, been found to have been due to other causes. Of these a \$65,000 loss was due to spontaneous combustion in a pile of hair and packing material. A loss of \$165,000 occurred in the celluloid room of a factory as the result of overheating celluloid on a softening press. A \$4,000 loss resulted by overturning a candle while storing away goods. An \$18,000 loss in a hotel was attributed to a defective flue. Other fires attributed to electricity were found to be due to an overheated smokestack, a leaky

gasoline lamp, spontaneous combustion in oiled canvas, a gas heater, burning shellac in a bake oven and an overheated furnace pipe. Reports were received from inspection departments aggregating \$1,601,047, supposed to be due to electricity, but they are not included in this report, as the causes could not be definitely proven as electrical, principally because the fires destroyed the conclusive evidence of their origin." The most common cause of fire from electricity is the crossing of wires, by which high power currents are sent into buildings that are not prepared for such experiences. A singular accident is thus reported: "A wire which had been thrown over an electric light wire (3,000 volts) had its end tied around a tree in a private yard, and made contact with a wire cable used for a swing. The owner of the premises in attempting to remove the wire grasped the swing cable and was instantly killed." It is quite evident, from this and other reports, that electricity is very much over-rated as a cause of fires.

ONTARIO LOAN COMPANIES.

TWO CLASSES OF BUSINESS DEFINED—SIGNS OF GENERAL PROSPERITY.

On the 26th June we published a table showing the principal items in the statements of 52 loan companies in Ontario whose loans on mortgages comprise over 95 per cent. of the whole sum which is advanced on such securities by companies organized to transact that class of business.

In this issue we publish a table giving the total amounts of the resources of these companies, in capital, deposits and debentures, with the several classes of loans for which they are utilized. Also, the extent of real estate in their possession, which was acquired chiefly by foreclosure of mortgages, though, in the case of some of the companies, styled "Loaning Land Companies," a considerable amount of the properties they hold have been purchased for sale, principally to their stockholders. The returns of the Ontario Trust companies are reserved for future reference. Their business is essentially different from that of a mortgage loan company, though they also advance money on mortgage, as also do insurance companies.

Companies of the "Loaning Land" class are continuing a form of business which is akin to that of a "Building Society," that is, they receive instalments of money from persons desirous of owning their own home, and assist them in accomplishing this highly laudable ambition. Their system differs from the original Building Society, as the members are stockholders whose stock is styled "Terminating," as distinguished from the "Permanent" Stock of the ordinary and the more impor-