

TRUST AND LOAN COMPANY OF CANADA.

By an inexplicable oversight there were several errors in the editorial notice of the above Company's report in last week's issue. In the report there are columns of figures given in sterling, £ s. d. and others in our currency. This was not noticed in the figures furnished for the editorial comments and several of the currency were read as sterling, hence the errors. The figures, as the published report on page 809 of last issue show, should read: mortgages, \$5,440,583; properties held under foreclosure \$162,437; interest overdue, \$31,304. The two latter items being less than in previous year are, as we said, bright features in this report of an institution to which Canada is under deep obligations for financial aid in earlier days and for an example of the wise management of a mortgage loan company.

THE ADJUSTER OF FIRE LOSSES.

The adjustment of insurance losses so as to do equal justice to the insurance company or companies interested and to the policyholder is a task often of great difficulty. It is always a task calling for a considerable amount of technical skill, knowledge of values, knowledge of men and of markets. An adjuster is often called upon to assess damages done by a fire when the evidence before him is exceedingly scanty, and what is available not always to be relied upon. When a stock in whole or part has gone up in smoke, along with all the books and papers of the owner, there is evidently an insoluble problem presented for the adjuster. When the books and papers are saved he is not in possession of complete evidence as to the extent of the loss, for books are rarely written up so closely as to indicate what the stock was at the moment of a fire. Books, too, are not an infallible record as they are much affected under "cooking" processes, as they also are by negligence and by ignorance of account keeping. Even buildings when much injured by fire tell often a very uncertain tale as to their real value before being burnt, for the fire may have destroyed all trace of some depreciative feature that seriously lowered the value of the structure. The ordeal of fire purifies and refines buildings as well as metals, as is shown by many an edifice, which was drifting towards worthlessness owing to some inherent defects, being declared a very valuable property, when a fire has passed over it and cleared away all evidence of its defects. As of men so owners of property destroyed by fire are prone to say, "Of the dead let nothing but good be said." Fire, however, works the reverse way, as in the case of a building burnt which was assessed as of considerable value. The fire cleared away the plastering and sheathing, by which the structural supports were exposed that were found to be so rotten as to

threaten the building's early collapse. Had this fact been known that structure's estimated value would have fallen 75 per cent., indeed to about one-third the amount for which it was insured under the belief in its being as sound as what it appeared to be. Had the fire there been partial, to say one-half the estimated value, even the most expert adjuster might have assessed the claim as just to the extent of more than the actual value of the whole building. This case, as do many others, shows the liability of a fire insurance company to a claim which is greatly in excess of any real loss to the policyholder. In the above instance the owner was quite unaware of the condition of his property, but in others too frequently the proprietor, finding his building or its contents getting into an unsaleable condition, forces a sale to the insurance company. Considering the intricate difficulties created by a fire in arriving at the true value of what has been destroyed, it is surprising how few appeals are made against the assessments of loss adjusters. This is strikingly evidenced by the official return of the total net amount of losses incurred in Canada last year which amounted to \$6,796,386, out of which the total of all resisted claims was \$84,299, which is only about \$12 for each \$1,000 of claims. How unjust, then, it is to charge the fire insurance companies with litigiousness, a fault from which they are singularly free. In an address on "Insurance" by Mr. A. F. Dean, before the Chicago College of Commerce he dwelt upon the qualifications of an ideal adjuster, who, he thinks, should be more than an "Admirable Crichton" in his accomplishments. Allowing for a spice of exaggeration thrown in for humour, the following has a considerable element of truth.

"He must know much of the nature and values of all classes of property. He ought to be a skilful accountant and enough of a builder to make a detailed estimate of the cost of replacing a vanished building. He ought to have a fair knowledge of literature and art, know books, pictures, music and musical instruments. He ought to be a family man and a ladies' man in the best sense of the term. He ought to be a connoisseur in pots, kettles and dish-pans, cook stoves, pianos, photograph albums, Little Liver Pills, Radway's Ready Relief, and all the long category of alliterative cure-alls, sewing machines, silverware, bedding, books, bicycles, bonnets and wearing apparel, without regard to age, sex or condition, from baby linen and ladies' lingerie to hob-nailed shoes, golfing suits, St. Patrick's Day regalia and liver pads. He ought to be able to recognize at their true value pictures of every school, including the boarding school. He ought to be an expert in all objects of "bigotry and virtue," with their endless variety and range in value, from the plaster casts and chromos in the humble home of the farmer or mechanic to the priceless art treasures in the palace of the plutocrat. He ought to be prepared to deal with all these things, hallowed by prejudice or associations, bruised, battered, torn, water-soaked, smoked or reduced to an ash-heap, knowingly, sympathetically, reverently and unflinchingly. The annals of statecraft furnish no more shining examples of diplomacy than could be told of the everyday experience of the fire adjuster."