it appear to him that the rates charged are excessive, he shall fix a reasonable rate, and the rate so fixed shall be binding upon all such companies doing business in the State. If any such insurance company refuses to insure property at the rates fixed by the insurance Commissioner, it shall be fined two hundred dollars for each offence.'

While the Insurance Commissioner of New Hampshire is in good repute, he is not sufficiently familiar with insurance to fix equitable rates on all kinds of property, and, even if he were, such sweeping authority should not be vested by the State in any individual. The insurance companies direct their underwriting operations according to the results of their individual experiences. Some companies refuse certain classes of risks which are sought for by others, and there are few if any companies writing all kinds of hazards in New Hampshire requiring insurance. Another feature of importance is the moral hazard, which the law entirely ignores. Carefully managed companies do not wish to issue their policies to notorious firebugs, and yet the statute above quoted would seem to allow them no discretion, and this condition of affairs is in a State where the valued policy law is in force."

The Journal, in the article from which we quote, characterizes this law as "a disgrace to the intelligence of the State," and, as an argument for its repeal, points to the possibility of the Insurance Commissioner forcing a dwelling mutual insurance company to write planing mills for suspicious parties at a nominal price, and thus driving every honest company out of New Hampshire.

Altogether, the framers of many of the insurance laws in the United States seem to have only one object in view: to harass, worry and hamper the companies to such an extent that legitimate underwriting in America will soon become a lost art, and insurance as a business disappear.

Workmen's Compensation Act. In discussing, last week, the marked increase in the number of accidents, The Chronicle called attention to some new forms of peril now adding to the yearly waste of human life. We also referred to the opinion expressed by a leading London insurance journal that the Workmen's Compensation Act has increased the recorded casualties of all kinds coming under its operation, and that the compensation assigned specifically by the collective wisdom of the nation has, stimulated claims in a most remarkable manner.

Now we have another opinion added to those already expressed upon this important matter. The chairman of the Ocean Accident Company, at a late meeting thereof, indulged in some caustic comments upon the figures and deductions of the British Government in connection with the passage of the Workmen's Compensation Act. The chairman is reported as saying:—

"How deceptive the figures adduced appear even to those in authority, may be gathered from a consideration of the speech of Mr. Chamberlain, who, I may say, was a godfather to the Act. His information as to the prospects of the claims arose from official reports received by the Home Office, which, as I stated at the last annual meeting, and we have since demonstrated by experience, were absolutely unreliable and deceptive. The Act is barely seven months' old, and I am able to say from actual experience instead of hypothetical deductions based on theory or reports that already in eight of the most important trades we have exceeded Mr. Chamberlain's yearly maximum in actual claim payments without any allowance for expenses or any provision for the unexpired risks to arise during five months yet to come. If the returns of the factory inspectors had been accurate, his estimate might possibly not have been very far wrong, but we knew well that in these returns a minority of accidents have in fact hitherto been reported.

"A consideration of the returns from factories and workshops for the past three years alone form material for comparison, which are most interesting. They are as follows:—

	Fatal Cases.	Non-Fatal Cases.
1896	490	32,961
1897	513	39.816
1898	575	56,835

"This last year—1898—requires careful examination, as the first half of the year preceded the operation of the workmen's compensation, whilst the latter half provides the only experience gained since the operation of that Act."

It is perhaps, too early to pass final judgment upon an Act having for its object the alleviation of human misery and the decrease of suffering among the hard-working poor. But, in the course of another six months, the critics of Mr. Chamberlain will be able more correctly to guage the effects of the Workmen's Compensation Act, and to predict its future results from the experience of a year—a period affording a somewhat fairer test than the seven months upon which the chairman of the Ocean Accident bases his denunciation of the "hypothetical deductions" built up from the reports collected by the Home Office. It is certain that the figures furnished by the Ocean Accident will be given serious consideration by others than insurance men.

The British Fire Prevention Committee. The thirteenth publication of this useful body consists of a capital illustrated description of the Testing Station recently fitted up by the B. F. P. Committee, who thus explain their aims and purposes:—

The purpose of the tests undertaken by the British Fire Prevention Committee is to obtain reliable data as to the exact fire resistance of the various materials, systems of construction, or appliances, used in building practice. Such data have not as yet been available, owing to the fact that nearly all investigations in this direction have been carried out by individual makers, or inventors with specific commercial objects in view. The few official tests hitherto made in the United States and on the Continent have unfortunately been in minor importance only, inasmuch as they were mostly organized to meet some special circumstance, such as the specification of work in a parti-