

of evil. But there are thousands of borrowers who have been given a start in prosperity by a mortgage loan, and these persons are ready to praise the bridge that carried them over.

While wise restrictions have long since been placed by law upon the borrowing and lending powers of companies which use foreign capital so freely—restrictions that tend to the protection of debenture-holders, and strengthen the confidence of trans-Atlantic lenders in the safety of these institutions—it is open to question whether some of the recent legislation is not of a nature to work injustice to the lender, whether an individual or an association.

It is important to bear in mind that there is a wide and salutary difference between the powers conferred by law upon Canadian loan companies and those of Australasia. The latter, or some of them, are largely trading corporations, making advances upon wool, animals and other products, and acting as agents for the sale of these. Canadian companies, on the other hand, are prohibited by their charters from engaging in such business. Nor are they permitted to lend even on land so largely in proportion to their capital as concerns in Australia and New Zealand nominally of a similar character.

#### ONTARIO LOAN COMPANIES.

We observe a significant statement in the report of the Western Canada Loan & Savings' Company, to the effect that the repayments on mortgage loans made by this company were very satisfactory, and amounted to nearly a million and a half of dollars. Now, the total loans of this company are \$6,705,000, and two-thirds, if not three-fourths of them, are on farm property in Ontario. The sum thus repaid is the largest, we believe, ever repaid to the company in any one year. It speaks well, therefore, for the Ontario farmers when they were able, in a year when prices obtained for their grain and cattle were so low, to pay up mortgage loans in the proportion here indicated.

While rates for loans here, on real estate, continue to be low, it is found possible to do something towards reducing the cost of money obtained abroad. We are told, for instance, on very good authority, that the Western Canada, which is not surpassed by any in advantageous rate of borrowing, obtains new debenture money at  $3\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. The president of the company, in his address to the shareholders, ventures the opinion that the shrinkage in price of farm land in Ontario has reached its lowest point, and that we may fairly look to see it recover its former value ere long. Mr. Allan also congratulates the shareholders on the fact that for thirty years the company has regularly paid ten per cent. dividend, a fact which speaks for itself in the matter of the company's management. The Profit and Loss Account shows that net profits were sufficient to pay dividend and to carry \$14,965 to Contingent Account, which fund stands at a larger sum this year than last. The total investments of this company are now \$6,705,000.

The funds of the Union Loan and Savings Company appear to have been well employed during the past year, the new mortgages issued having amounted to \$350,000, and the company has done well. The report says that payments, both of interest and principal, have been reasonably well met, but after paying 8 per cent. dividend it has been deemed prudent to increase the Contingent Fund by \$10,000, making it now \$28,537, while the Rest is swelled to \$260,000. As the capital of the company as originally subscribed and intended to be fully paid is \$600,000, and \$599,680 of this is paid up, and as the portion paid of the further issue of stock with 20 per cent. paid is \$79,965, it follows that the Reserve is now more than 38 per cent. of the paid-up capital of \$679,645. There is, besides, some \$320,000 subscribed still at call as security for debenture holders. Power has been taken, we observe, to increase the stock by the issue of \$500,000 more of 20 per cent. shares. Deposits and debentures show an increase of \$34,000 on the year, and the company's mortgages now amount to \$2,581,000. The report makes feeling reference to the removal of two members of the board. One, Mr. McGee, by death; another, Mr. Crocker, by failing health. Mr. James C. McGee and Mr. John Stark have been chosen to fill these vacancies. Dr. Geikie has been elected president in the room of Mr. McGee, and Mr. Stark vice-president; and we note a new feature in the selection of Mr. McEwen, of Edinburgh, as a resident director in Scotland.

The earnings of the Imperial Loan & Investment Company last year were somewhat remarkable, according to the report, amounting, as we make it out, to \$82,200, as against \$60,000 in the previous year. They consisted of interest earned and premiums on stock. We are not told how much is earned and how much is premium. The report admits that the company was robbed of more than \$31,000 last year by the book-keeper and cashier, but it adds that this sum has been made up from the profits of the year. There is no reduction of dividend; indeed there is an addition of \$2,000 to Reserve, and the contingent fund is slightly increased. Mr. H. M. Pellatt has been chosen a director in room of Mr. Wilkie.

The twenty-first annual report of the Midland Loan and Savings Company has been submitted to the shareholders. The company, with mortgages of \$1,309,000, shows net profits of \$34,174, which pays seven per cent. dividend on the \$360,000 paid-up stock, and leaves increased additions to both reserve and contingent funds. Repayments in 1893 were \$154,923 and new loans \$223,419.

#### FIRES ON THE FARM.

Mr. Wilkie, the retiring president of the Toronto Board of Trade, rendered a public service the other day by calling attention to the economic importance of Health on the Farm. He might well have added a paragraph on the importance to the farmer of lessening the fire waste. The losses of insurance underwriters on farm risks have

led some companies to withdraw from writing such risks. And we have seen, not long ago, a conservative company like the Agricultural, of Watertown, increase its rates by reason of the excessive losses of recent years in this direction. Again, the experience of Ontario Mutuals, which do principally a farm business, goes to show that there is a serious annual loss of property by fire on the farm, that might be greatly reduced if proper care were taken.

In the last report of the Ontario Inspector of Insurance we find a table in which are classified the causes of 1,481 fires reported by mutual fire insurance companies in 1892, causing an insurance loss of about half a million. No less than one-fourth of these fires have arisen from such preventible causes as defective chimneys and flues, sparks, matches, lamps and lanterns, stoves and pipes, spontaneous combustion. Three hundred and sixty fires are put down to these causes, while incendiarism accounts for ninety-five and lightning for between four and five hundred. Reports of inspectors of individual companies teach a very similar lesson.

The farmer and his household need to be taught greater care in matters connected with fire and fire-places, or with combustible material in house or barn. Defective chimneys and flues have caused, according to this list, just as many fires as stoves and pipes, that is eighty-eight each, twelve per cent. in all. And next to incendiarism and lightning, these two are the most prolific causes of fires on the farm. Rank carelessness is indicated in a great many of these instances, as well as in the use of lanterns, matches, or lamps. Seventy-three fires, or five in every hundred, were caused by lamps or lanterns. And besides, of the 320 cases in the list in which the cause of fire is "not stated" or "not known," we feel sure that a large proportion may rightly be put down to stove-pipes, chimneys, or lamps.

July, August and September are the months in which farm fires were most numerous. This suggests the danger of summer kitchens, which are in many cases lean-to sheds, with their stove-pipes stuck through a wooden roof. A disc of zinc, with a hole cut in it to let the stove-pipe through, may be placed on the board or shingle roof; but this is not so much intended as a preventive of fire as a scheme to keep out the rain. The idea that any screen is needed to keep sparks from coming out of the pipe and setting fire to the roof does not seem to occur to the average mind. Chimneys are often badly built, and flues shamefully ramshackle. Stoves are put dangerously near wood-work; pipes, which often become red hot, or rusted into holes, are run through unprotected wood partitions with the stupidest defiance of the laws of combustion. Ashes are kept in wooden boxes; oiled rags are allowed to lie in forgotten corners; the chance of fire from sparks out of chimney or stove-pipe falling on dry shingles or on the pile of wooden chips in the back-yard, is looked upon as a matter of no consequence, instead of being guarded against as a grave danger; imperfect lanterns are used in the barn, too.