

the vapour in the reservoir can get no access to the flame. In badly-made lamps they rarely occur, and are next to impossible to produce experimentally for the simple reason that petroleum vapour, like coal gas, is explosive only when mixed with air in proper proportions, and the mixture occurs only in very exceptional cases. Finally, lamp explosions, when they do occur, display a violence for which the quantity of mixed air and vapour in the partially-filled reservoir is wholly inadequate to account; and they occur with oil of very high flash-point as well as with oil of low. Hence, as we said the other day, they must be ascribed to the presence of some explosive impurity in the oil. All the lamp accidents which are not due to a genuine explosion of mixed vapour and air in the reservoir are beyond the reach of any change in the flash-point. But many might be averted by the proper construction of lamps, and yet more by abstention from acts of criminal folly on the part of the users. It is worth noting that all the expert witnesses who take the view that a safe oil is one which cannot form an explosive mixture at the temperature to which it may be exposed in the reservoir agree in saying that 100 deg. is not nearly high enough. Anybody may satisfy himself that on their assumption they are quite right by bringing a thermometer into contact with the reservoir of a powerful drawing-room lamp. He will find that the upper part, at all events, is very far above 100 deg."

THE VALUE OF A CHILD IN NEW JERSEY.

It is the irony of fate that in New Jersey the cradle of industrial insurance on this continent a justice of the Supreme Court of New Jersey has set aside a verdict against a street railroad company for \$5,000 damages for killing a child on the ground that the amount was excessive. "Children," observed the Court, "are an expense, as a rule, and not a pecuniary benefit to their parents." In a subsequent interview, the judge said he would consider \$1,000 an excessive award of damages in a similar case; but, if a rule of law could be applied to such cases, it should provide only nominal damages of one dollar.

In the original suit for damages the jury awarded the father of the child \$5,000. The railroad company appealed to the Supreme Court, where the award was cut down to \$1,000. The father secured a new trial. Again a verdict of \$5,000 was given. The railroad company appealed again. The last verdict was reversed, the judge assessing nominal damages of one dollar.

The case has of course been "fodder" for the yellow journals of New York. One of them has announced its intention of aiding the parents to carry the case to the court of last resort. Their pages have been filled with letters from all sorts and conditions of people who have unanimously written the learned judge down an ass. Strange to say, no charge of "vested interest" has been made or declared against him, merely assinimity, stoney-heartedness and an imperfect knowledge of his business generally.

Compensation for damages when extended to cover the case of a child who has no present earning capa-

city is a legal fiction with an object or rather with two main objects. First: As an admonition to the causers of the calamity that human life has a value. Second: To provide some necessarily inadequate solace to the parents or guardians of the victim. The Jersey Judge has merely confined himself to the legal fiction in its narrowest aspects without regard to the humanitarian aspect of the case, a peculiarly anomalous position for a New Jersey judge, when, as we have said, New Jersey has the honour of being the cradle of the greatest humanitarian movement of modern times—industrial insurance.

FIRE PROOF DECORATIONS.

(THE USE AND SERVICEABILITY OF ASBESTOS.)

The attention of insurance offices, and the British Fire Prevention Committee is being called to asbestos decorations for walls and ceilings. It is claimed by the makers that the unflammable properties, cost and artistic effect of the "Salamander" decorations entitle them to popular favour, and the *Architect* looks forward to the time when the premiums on fire policies will be largely reduced on houses having asbestos trimmings for ceilings and walls.

The *Insurance Post* (England), referring to the wisdom of universal adoption of asbestos for the purposes named says: "If, in calling attention to the serviceability of asbestos materials, we have to any extent assisted this desirable end (the reduction of fire premiums), we shall feel amply rewarded for our pains." The same paper adds:—

"It is well-known that the combustible nature of the ordinary decorative productions hitherto in vogue has proved a hindrance to their use in connection with building materials which are also inflammable, such as wood, lath and plaster, canvas, etc. In producing therefore, from asbestos a high-class and thoroughly artistic decoration, which, while absolutely unflammable, is, at the same time, inexpensive, this Company may claim to have supplied a very real and pressing public want. For the practical services it has rendered in the direction of checking the spread of conflagrations, and of limiting their scope and extent, it should have received long ere this the public recognition of the fire insurance offices. Unfortunately, however, these institutions are for the most part slow to acknowledge their best friends, and thus asbestos is left to establish itself in public favour unaided by even moral support from official quarters. It is gratifying to be able to record that the work of popularising asbestos manufactures is being slowly but steadily pushed forward. To quote only a couple of instances: The Lords of the Admiralty recently selected "Salamander" decorations for use in H.M. Navy as a protection from fire, and battleships now building are being fitted therewith. While on the occasion of the Chicago Exhibition, the White Star S.S. Company employed the same material for the decoration of the walls and ceilings of their special building. But compared with the sphere of usefulness that lies open before it, the extent to which asbestos has so far come into use is infinitesimal. Apart from private dwellings, the list is inexhaustible of