

FIRE AND WATER ENGINEERING.

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FIRE AND WATER ENGINEERING

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Fire Engineers' Associations

League of American Municipalities

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Electrolysis, the bane of nearly every city waterworks department, still defies the ingenuity of scientists to check its influence. Its relentless effect upon water mains is causing thousands of dollars' worth of damage in every municipality where electricity comes into contact with the water pipes. Damage is usually found where pipes are laid close to electric car rails and is caused by the leaking electricity coming in contact with and following the pipe for miles. Escaping electricity ruins the pipe by attacking the fiber of the metal and after a while the pipe bursts. The trouble is experienced chiefly in house connections made in streets through which cars run.

There is little hope that the fool and the match will ever be divorced. It will therefore be a privilege from time to time to record such needless loss of life as that which happened a few days ago at the burning of a boathouse at Nantucket, Mass. In this instance the smoker threw a lighted match so close to an oil-soaked mop that the latter burst into flames which quickly spread over the recently oiled floor. Instantly the interior of the boathouse was a mass of flames, and two young women and one man were burned to death. Others saved their lives by leaping overboard. It is inconceivable how a man can be so thoughtless as to throw a burning match or a lighted cigarette or cigar stub upon the floor, when by exercising no more effort he could have thrown it out of an open window, of which there are said to have been several on all sides of the boathouse.

A western newspaper has suggested that we have a "Fire Prevention Day" as well as Flag Day, Arbor Day and Labor Day. The suggestion is not a bad one, and if reason is wanted for an inspiration there certainly is not lack of incentive. The matter of fire prevention is becoming the most important subject that is commanding public attention, and its significance will continue to grow as time advances. The fact that the masses of people seldom read this class of literature when it appears in the newspapers makes the adoption of some other means of reaching them imperative. They probably could be reached if there were a liberal house to house distribution of anti-fire tracts printed in many languages. There are a number of points that could be brought out in them, such as that dull fires should not be stimulated by pouring kerosene on them; that matches should not be left around for children to play with; that gasoline should be handled

more carefully than gunpowder; that it is unsafe to light a match to find something in a storeroom or closet and then throw the match on the floor; that oily waste, which may take fire of itself, should not be tucked away in a cupboard; that a leak in a gas pipe should not be hunted for with a light. This is a part of the practical information which could be given in forcible language. If the tracts were illustrated the information would be even more impressive. Fire prevention is largely a household matter, and a direct appeal should be made to the household.

The Appellate Division of the Supreme Court has upheld the judgment of Justice Boyhan in the Fourth District Municipal Court in this city, fining Christman & Company and Winter & Company, piano manufacturers, fifty dollars each for not complying with the order of the then fire commissioner, Rhinelander Waldo, to put automatic sprinklers attached to a tank on the roof through their buildings. The judgment was rendered under section 773 of the charter, providing a penalty of fifty dollars for not complying with the commissioner's orders. Both defendants refused to comply on the ground that the order was unconstitutional, and that the section of the city charter had been repealed. The Appellate Term finds that the section had not been repealed and that the order was constitutional. The presiding justice, Seabury, writing the opinion, in which all concur, says: "The fact that under a law such as this, there is a possibility for unjust discrimination on the part of the municipal authorities does not of itself affect the constitutionality of such a law. The action was brought to test the law giving the commissioner such wide latitude in fire prevention. Two hundred other factory cases have awaited the outcome of the test. The attorney for the two piano manufacturers, contends that the fire department recognizes the plans of only five manufacturers of automatic sprinklers, including the concern known as the "Fire Extinguisher Trust," of which O. C. Barber is president. He says there is a plan on foot to make it compulsory for every factory exceeding 50 feet in length to install a system of automatic sprinklers. There are about fifty thousand such factories in the greater city. The cost of such installation in all the plants would aggregate many millions of dollars.

Governor Dix has signed the bill of Senator T. D. Sullivan, of New York, establishing the office of State Fire Marshal. That official is clothed with sweeping powers, under the act, for the enforcement of fire laws, and may order improvements for the better protection of employes in factories and other buildings. He will receive an annual salary of seven thousand dollars. He is authorized to appoint a first and second deputy, at salaries respectively of five thousand dollars and three thousand dollars, and other necessary assistants. If enforced as they should be, the provisions of the measure would doubtless result in materially reducing fire losses in this state, but no one with a particle of discernment believes that it has been enacted for any purpose other than an asylum for political mendicants. It has been announced in public print that Edward F. Croker is likely to be made Chief Marshal. No better selection could possibly be made, but unless a radical transformation has taken place very recently, whereby the olive branch has bridged the long-existing chasm between the former chief and Tammany Hall, this prediction will never be fulfilled. The fire marshal will be named by the Tammany chieftain,

and he will be expected to use the office in a way that will best conserve that political institution. His power and influence will be second only to that of the Governor, and can be made one of the most profitable graft-producing agencies in the commonwealth. His staff of assistants number hundreds, located in every city (except New York), town and village in the state; his prerogatives are practically unlimited; his right to enter any premises are indisputable; his decrees are irresistible, and his authority to cause arrest is equal to that of sheriff or coroner. The state fire marshal is a czar within himself. Hence it will be seen that this department can, by prostitution and perversion, be made a veritable Eldorado, capable of yielding fabulous sums of political pape. All that is necessary is to place the proper man in office—and the political bosses will look out for that.

The crusade against the loan sharks in this city should be carried forward with unabated vigor until every one is driven out of business. Not only are they the most heinous of impostors, but they are as unnecessary in any community as a steam laundry in the Garden of Eden. This has been proven by the fact that since the crusade was begun, banks and mutual aid institutions have offered to make loans whenever security can be given, and at legal rate of interest, whereas the patrons of the loan shark pays from seventy-five to one hundred per centum, and sometimes more. These cut-throats find the greater number of their victims among the employes of city departments. The extent of the usurious loan business in this city is placed as high as twenty million dollars annually. The fear of discharge, due to the attitude of many employers toward their men who assign their wages to secure loans, serves the loan shark as the most efficient collection agency which could be devised. The losses in the salary loan business, therefore, are nowhere near so large as the loan sharks claim. Evidence that the borrower's fear of discharge gives the lender the potential means of extorting high rates is found in the fact that salary loan sharks will not, as a rule, lend to those. Joseph Johnson, fire commissioner, has communicated with the commissioner of accounts, R. B. Fosdick, in an effort to stop loan sharks from lending money to the employes of the fire department. Johnson recently sent a letter to the various companies, asking for information regarding loans to the men. There were fifteen questions relative to the amount borrowed, interest paid, and the time for which the loans were made. He said the replies would be treated confidentially, and that no disciplinary measures would result. Several firemen responded that the interest paid had been from one hundred per cent. to one hundred and twenty-five per cent. a year. Proprietors of the various department stores and many large corporations are heartily co-operating in the movement, and are organizing mutual aid associations which aim to help worthy employes needing temporary financial assistance. Moreover, there is a general determination not to recognize assignments of salaries to the loan shark, and the courts will not afford them refuge. Early in June, the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court, in a written opinion by Justice Laughlin, affirmed the decision of the Appellate Term of the Supreme Court, in the Thompson vs. Gimbel case, in favor of the latter, by reason of which employers can legally refuse to acknowledge assignments of wages, unless notice is given within three days after the loan is made to the employe and within three days after the agreement, assignment or note concerning the same was given.