

The Chronicle

Insurance & Finance.

ESTABLISHED JANUARY, 1881.

PUBLISHED EVERY FRIDAY.

Vol. XVIII. No. 28.

MONTREAL, FRIDAY, JULY 15, 1898.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION - \$2.00

The Perils of Petroleum. While insurance men and others are engaged in estimating the risk associated with the use of the new luminant, acetylene gas, the dangers arising from the use of an old illuminant, petroleum, has been made a subject of national importance, and so numerous have been the accidents and so great the loss of life resultant from the extensive use of petroleum by the poor that the British Parliament have now appointed a Special Committee to make an investigation into the causes of the perils surrounding the use of this mineral oil. It is admitted that the poorer classes in England have benefited by the abundant supply of this cheap oil, yet the price paid by the people is a heavy one if its use is to cause an annual loss of a large number of lives.

Those conducting the agitation for Government enquiry are clamouring for a stringent system of inspection, prohibition of the sale of oil for lighting purposes with a flash point below 100° Fahrenheit; the subjecting of lamps to government inspection, and said lamps to be of some standard pattern, thus reducing the danger of explosion. One of the latest of many fatal accidents in England is thus reported by the Insurance Guardian:—

An inquest was held recently at Liverpool on the body of a married woman named Kelly, wife of a railway labourer, who died of burns caused by the explosion of a petroleum lamp. An Explosive Act inspector said the oil used gave off inflammable vapour at 75 deg. Fahrenheit, and was very dangerous. He considered the lowest flashing point should be 100 deg. The jury returned a verdict of accidental death, coupling with it a recommendation that the sale of oil at so low a flashing point as in this case, should be prohibited.

The Coming Conference. The refusal of a sulky Senate to appropriate money to defray the expenses of holding a meeting at Quebec, to discuss all points of difference between the United States and Canada, has evidently been reconsidered, and the Commission will meet as arranged.

The topics to be discussed at the meeting of the plenipotentiaries are of the highest importance to Canada, and it is to be hoped that the extraordinary

growth of friendship and good-feeling between the countries concerned will make a satisfactory agreement upon every matter in dispute possible. The members of the Commission are big men, and they will have big problems submitted to them to deal with. Revision of the Behring Sea sealing regulations, the fishery laws, the alien labour law, transportation of troops of either country through the territory of the other, and reciprocity in trade, "without unnecessarily disturbing any existing industry in either country." Such subjects will furnish work worthy of the intellectual giants of the great English-speaking countries. The good understanding now existing between Great Britain and the United States warrants the belief that all prejudice and feeling will disappear before the desire to heal disputes and reconcile all international differences; but our own representatives will probably recall the following sayings of Mr. Justice Haliburton's immortal Sam Slick:

"There are no people in the world so eloquent as the Americans; they beat the ancients all hollow; and, when our diplomatists go for to talk it into the British, they do it so pretty, it's a sight to behold. * *

Hardly anything they take in hand they don't succeed in. They do rub John Bull down so pretty, it does one good to see 'em."

Calcium Carbide Again. The reference in our issue of the 1st inst. to the exhibition at the Imperial Institute, London, of acetylene gas apparatus has been followed by enquiries from some of our readers for information as to the agents or manufacturers of the lamps, generators and burners mentioned. The acetylene gas patents displayed at the recent exhibition in London are owned and sold by the International Industrial Syndicate, Limited, 84 Bishopsgate Street, London, G. B.

We stated in our remarks: "It is now claimed that all suspicions as to its (acetylene gas) safety have been swept away." But, whatever learned professors may say about the use of acetylene gas being rendered safe and practical, the attention of fire underwriters is not being withdrawn from the various hazards connected with the increasing use of the new luminant. The improvements in genera-