

sufficient acquaintance with its peculiarities had been learned many centuries ago to enable it to be woven into cloths often of considerable size. At the present day the finer grades and longest fibres are still somewhat extensively used for weaving into cloths, from which drop curtains for theatres, suits of clothing for firemen, and various other articles, are made, among which are asbestos mail bags for railway transit. So important is the matter of fire protection in theatres now regarded in the leading cities of Europe and in the United States, that special legislation has decided that asbestos curtains of a size sufficient to completely shut off the stage from the body of the house must be a part of the stage furniture. As an instance of what can be woven from this material, it may be mentioned that the curtain of the Academy of Music, Philadelphia, by which the stage is separated from the body of the house in case of fire, is 54 feet wide and 53 feet high, and is made almost entirely of pure asbestos, only 3 per cent. cotton being employed, presumably to facilitate the weaving.

As a protection for firemen asbestos clothing has been proved to be of the greatest advantage. By its aid they have been able to enter burning buildings and approach so closely to the flames as to extinguish them in a much more speedy manner than by the old plan of fighting them at a distance. Of a somewhat similar character are the fire shields, also made of asbestos, which are placed between the burning building and those who are fighting the flames, thus protecting them largely both from the great heat and from the dense volumes of smoke as well. As for the great heat which can be endured when clad in these garments, the story of the extinguishing of the Coste gas well in western Ontario only last year is quite fresh in our memories. Here the huge jet of gas which issued from the stand-pipe of the well became ignited, and the screw-cap which closed the pipe having received some injury could not be adjusted so as to effectually close the orifice. Several expedients were resorted to in order to arrange the cap successfully, till at last, under promise of a heavy reward, some one, clad in an asbestos suit, boldly approached the flame itself, a thing absolutely impossible without the protection thus afforded, adjusted the cap properly, screwed it on and extinguished the ignited gas. But while the use of this material for the purpose of clothing has steadily increased within