

**A Great Calamity  
and its Cause.**

"The causer of these timeless deaths" at the Windsor Hotel, New York, has good reason for life-long remorse. Yet his action was merely that of almost every careless cigarette smoker. We have all seen him. He is hurrying through the hallway of the hotel or house, and, without pausing, strikes a match, lights a cigarette, and tosses the former aside without a thought of the consequences. In this case, the match fell into a lace curtain, and the papers have horrified us with full and ghastly particulars of what followed. Perhaps it is not too much to hope that such a scene of death and disaster as was witnessed by the people of New York on St. Patrick's Day will at least quicken us into a spasmodic enquiry into the possibility of some such catastrophe happening in our own city. It is said there are similar death-traps in Montreal. Let the proper authorities attend to same without delay. As for the cigarette fiend, what can be done with him? We have no quarrel with My Lady Nicotine. The man who finds delight in what he is pleased to call a quiet pipe of tobacco by his own fireside is almost invariably a thoughtful and amiable companion. But the cigarette fiend is not a smoker. He is frequently such a slave to the habit of lighting his combustible, dust-filled atrocities anywhere and everywhere, that the hallways of hotels and offices are not more sacred to him than the rear platform of a street car, where he may always be found poisoning the air and burning the clothes of those forced into close although temporary companionship with him. Recalling what we have seen and heard of the habits of some cigarette smokers, we would not be surprised to learn that many fires, the origin of which have never been traced, are believed by insurance men to be due to a cause similar to that to which is attributed the pitiful disaster at the Windsor Hotel.

**Acetylene Gas Again.** If any of the risks incidental to the use of the much-discussed illuminant, acetylene gas, are not yet known, we are at least in a fair way to obtain full information. The latest report dealing with defects in gas machines is that of Mr. William H. Merrill, Jr., Secretary of the Underwriters' Bureau of Fire Protection Engineering. The Bureau has been examining acetylene gas apparatus, and the N. Y. "Journal of Commerce" comments upon two serious defects therein reported by Mr. Merrill as follows:—

One is a dangerous air mixture which is liable to occur when the machine is recharged. The gas exhibits dangerous explosive qualities within certain limits of air saturation, and many devices of reasonable mechanical merit have required reconstruction to obviate air mixtures of this character. The other is the excessive and dangerous heating which occurs in machines in which small quantities of water are applied to a large bulk of carbide.

As to the storage of carbide, which has occasioned considerable discussion, and which is a matter upon

which the New York Fire Department has issued a special code of stringent rules, Mr. Merrill expressed the opinion that the principal hazard was not in the storage of the carbide when packed dry and warm in air-tight drums, so as to render it impossible for the carbide to come in contact with water or moist air. Where the real hazard seems to come in is in the removal or redistribution of the carbide. After opening a drum, it may perhaps be left open or imperfectly closed; and, if the drum be left in this condition in the moist air of an ill-ventilated cellar, it is possible for a slow generation of gas to take place, and an explosive mixture thus formed by its accumulation.

It is recommended that all carbide stores be thoroughly ventilated and above ground, and the drums in which carbide is contained, besides being air-tight, be strong enough to resist the rough usage incidental to the handling of a heavy product. Most drums now in use are constructed of tin, but protected from mechanical injury by an exterior wood case.

**Women and Work.** The ever-increasing employment of women in work that used to be reserved for men is again attracting general attention in Great Britain, owing to the report that the Postmaster General is about to admit a hundred more women into the service he presides over. Thoughtful writers are dilating upon what they consider to be the serious side of this incursion of woman into fields of labour once reserved exclusively for man, and it is predicted that, as a result of the growing independence of woman, there will be an increase in the number of those who live in a state of celibacy. He that said it was not good for man to be alone, placed the celibate among the inferior states of perfection. For this reason, and because of the future effect upon the vital statistics of Merry England, there is mourning among the students of statistics.

The "Young Woman," a paper devoted to the gentler sex, recently published an article dealing with the ascent of woman. It is stated that, whereas the census taken six years before the Queen ascended the throne contained no reference to any other occupation for women than that of domestic service, the last census revealed 61,000 female dressmakers, 70,000 women employed in public houses, nearly 5,000 in printing offices, and in the Post Office about 30,000. That they are also entering into mercantile pursuits is shown by the regrettable fact that, despite their possession of a larger share of prudence and economy, 758 women were adjudicated bankrupt in a recent year. Another paper is engaged in calculating the changes likely to be wrought in the insurance business by the advent and ascent of woman.

Whatever may be the outcome of the activity and industry of the girl of the period, we trust that she will not become proud and arrogant, or render it impossible for us to say with Shakspeare:—

*Her voice was ever soft,  
Gentle, and low—an excellent thing in woman.*