

Acetylene.

It is only comparatively recently that the general public have begun to awaken to the importance of the commercial production of acetylene gas. The combustion of this gas has been described as producing something akin to real sunlight. Even the brilliancy of the arc electric light, not to mention, of course, the milder incandescent electric light, pales its fires before the burning rays of light given by this new illuminant. Such, at least, is declared by those who are in a position to know. It has also been announced that illuminating gas companies throughout the country have, in many instances, acquired the right to use acetylene gas, the idea being that its primary importance consists in its use as an enricher.

Now, however, if one may judge from public opinions and statements by those who are regarded as experts, says Bradstreet's, the value of acetylene gas, as an illuminant, is to prove trivial compared with its real commercial significance. It may be recalled, the gas was discovered somewhat accidentally; that it is evolved by heating a mixture of coal and lime, or charcoal and chalk, in an electric furnace, and throwing the resulting compound into water. Here was a cheap and easily procurable substance, which, as described, was primarily to raise the illuminating power of ordinary illuminating gas, and which in time, as has been projected, would be carted about and delivered from door to door, to business places and shops, in tanks ready for use, much the same as tanks are delivered to proprietors of soda water fountains. It has even been outlined how specially manufactured lamps containing acetylene within them in sufficient quantities to run for a day, or for days, would practically supersede many of the older forms of illumination, and, in fact, one had almost begun to wonder what would become of the enormous, expensive illuminating distributing plants with which the streets of cities and towns are lined.

Now, however, it appears that the illuminating qualities of acetylene gas, as stated, are among the least important of its commercial qualities. Acetylene is turning out, it is declared, to be even a more extraordinary substance than the wildest flights of the imagination of its discoverers suspected. If all that is claimed for it be true, it means the cheaper manufacture of a great many substances used in the arts, which heretofore have had to be produced laboriously and expensively in commercial and chemical laboratories.

"Thus," says an exchange, "acetylene, on being passed through an iron tube heated to dull redness, turns rapidly and completely into benzene. This is a product of prime importance, and is the base of thousands of organic substances. In illustration of the transformations which can be effected, it may be pointed out that if the resultant benzene vapor be passed into strong nitric acid it is transformed into nitro benzene, and this, on treatment with hydrochloric acid and iron filings goes into aniline. With the formation of aniline the road is open for the production of the immense series of dye substances of which aniline is the starting point. Instead of transforming acetylene into aniline, however, it may be changed into carbolic acid; thence it is but a step to picric acid, the foundation of the modern high explosives. Or it may be made into aniline, and then boiled with acetic acid, when it is transformed into anti-febrin, the well-known fever specific. Again, by passing it through a tube heated to bright redness, naphthalene is produced, which is also the starting point of a legion of valuable chemicals. It would seem as though almost all the needs of man were able to be satisfied by this protean substance. The further investigation is pushed into its

possibilities, the more astounding and bewildering they become. By the action of nascent hydrogen acetylene becomes ethylene, and thus, on treatment with sulphuric acid and water, becomes alcohol, which, apart from its other uses, is absolutely necessary to the production of an enormous number of economic substances. In similar ways we can get such deadly poisons as oxalic acid and prussic acid, while acetylene is a cheap source of the aldehyde so much used in the production of artificial essences and the manufacture of mirrors. When, therefore, it is considered that from acetylene can be derived whole systems of dyes, medicines, essences, perfumes, poisons, explosives—not to mention cheap whisky—it will be seen that the latest product of the electric furnace has a utility out of all proportion greater than that which can be derived from its peculiar light-giving powers."

Oranges and Lemons.

The statistical position of lemons and orange is particularly interesting at the present time, for the reason that it would appear that the shippers of the Mediterranean fruit, contrary to their usual practice, are exerting all of their energies to getting oranges to the American markets at the earliest possible date. The statistics furnished of late, by receivers and shippers, point almost conclusively to the fact that the shippers in Sicily are devoting their attention chiefly to the forwarding of oranges at the earliest possible date, being impelled by the belief that in consequence of the failure of the Florida crop this year, the American market will offer greater opportunities to importers than ever before. This is true to an extent, but not to the full extent of the ideas of sellers on the other side. While the crop of Florida is undoubtedly so small as to become a most insignificant factor in the situation, the output of California fruit appears to be large. It is fully three weeks earlier in maturing than usual, and is being hurried forward. Besides, this market has focussed the attention of orange growers and handlers in every part of the globe, since it has become certain that there would be no Florida fruit to speak of, and, as the best consuming market in the world, it has naturally attracted supplies from every direction. Growing districts in remote parts of the world that have seldom, if ever before, sent any of their fruit to this country, are now represented in the visible supply at New York. For instance, at yesterday's auction sale, there were sold a lot of Egyptian Jaffa oranges, which realized \$3.50 per box—a high price considering the quality. Some of the people in the trade fear that importing will be overdone if it continues as at the present rate.

There are now en route to this market from Mediterranean ports, about 85,000 boxes of oranges, against 20,000 boxes at the same time last year, and 8,000 boxes for the corresponding period in 1893.

In their anxiety to get whatever advantage there may be in putting oranges into this market at the earliest possible moment, it looks as though shippers on the other side were neglecting lemons. Thus far this season there have been shipped to the United States 160,000 boxes, against 170,000 boxes last year. The shipments to this date in 1893 were 151,000 boxes. There is no accumulation of lemons here at the present time, but the indifferent condition of demand prevents any improvement in the market and cases, in fact, a rather easy feeling among holders. —New York Commercial Bulletin.

Andrew Jeffrey & Sons, wholesale carriage and hardware dealers, Toronto, have called a meeting of their creditors. The liabilities are about \$10,000, chiefly to Montreal firms. The assets will likely be about the same.

One of the prettiest lithographic hangers received at The Commercial office this season, comes from J. H. Ashdown, wholesale hardware, Winnipeg.

The market is easier for dressed hogs, says the Toronto Globe of December 20, several car lots of good hogs selling at \$1.40. Packers are bidding \$1.45 for choice lots, but sellers are asking \$1.50. The easier feeling is due to the fact that country dealers who have been holding for some time are now endeavoring to dispose of their hogs, as the weather is not favorable for holding.

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