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London Fires and their Causes. For purposes of comparison with the causes of fires in Montreal, and as a matter of burning interest to the compiler of insurance statistics, the following summary of the report for 1898 of Commander Wells, of the London (Eng.) Fire Brigade, will be useful. Some of the principal causes of fires, of which 3,380 were classed "slight," and 205 "serious," were:—

Lights thrown down.	319
Mineral oil lamps upset.	221
Sparks from fires.	188
Children playing with lucifers.	122
Defects in flues.	105

Of the 3,585 fires at which the London firemen attended, human life was considered in danger in 164 cases, and loss of life actually occurred in 85 cases. Deadly lamps, matches and mischievous children, and foul and faulty chimneys, seem to be a menace to life and property everywhere.

Beer and Old Age Pensions. Among the many schemes for providing pensions for the aged is that of Mr. Logan, of the British House of Commons, and, in a recent speech at Market Harborough in the good county of Leicestershire, this gentleman claimed for his plan that it surmounts the greatest obstacle, as it will produce the necessary money, and make old age pensions immediately available. Mr. Logan's suggestion involves an extra tax of 8c per gallon on beer; 75c per gallon on spirits; and \$1 per gallon on wine. The total revenue obtained from such an imposition would exceed \$150,000,000, and it is calculated that \$130,000,000 would enable the British Government to give \$1.25 per week to each person who has attained the age of sixty-five. Mr. Logan contends that beer and spirituous liquors are not necessities, and therefore should be heavily taxed, along with race-horses, hunters, precious stones and other luxuries.

We have not yet heard from those who advocate

prohibition of the manufacture and sale of intoxicants; but it opens up a perplexing train of thought if pensions for the aged are to be dependent upon the failure of the followers of Sir Wilfred Lawson to make the Englishman a total abstainer. Let us suppose that the beer and the whiskey are banished by prohibition, and the consequent pension money. . . . Pshaw! Such a supposition is as great an absurdity as the proposal to increase the price of "four 'arf and 'arf." We hope to hear more of this funny but plausible proposition.

French Fires. The light-hearted people of gay Paris **Mirth and** are said to be poking endless fun at the **Matches.** matches made in France under State monopoly. These are not of the kind sought to be made by mammas with marriageable daughters, but are supposed to be ordinary every-day lucifers, to the careless use of which insurance statistical tables attribute such a large percentage of fires. It seems that in France the slivers of wood sold to the people do not act in a luciferous manner. The State manufactured atrocities are not tipped with a sufficiently combustible substance to be readily ignited by friction, and, instead of kindling into flame, emit irrespirable and suffocating fumes. The latest suggestion of Gallic humour has a Max O'Rellian flavour. It comes in the form of a proposal that, as these French matches will not burn, they should be used for fire-proof building material.

Government interference with the manufacture of matches, peculiarly an occupation of the extreme poor, seems to be unfortunate, and once produced a storm of indignant criticism in England. When Mr. Robert Lowe, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, proposed a tax upon matches, several thousands of factory hands marched in procession to Westminster, and virtually forced a repeal of a measure as obnoxious to the poor Londoners, as are the exhalations of the French lucifer to the Parisians.