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Civic Inspection of Buildings.

Ottawa, Ill., has inaugurated a civic "Fire Board," comprising 3 aldermen, 3 citizens appointed by the mayor and a fire marshal, whose duty it will be to investigate all local fires and report through the daily papers. The Board will employ an expert inspector whose duty it will be to examine all the buildings in the city, and to call attention to every removable or probable cause of fire, the absence of fire walls, and any defects in the construction or equipment of buildings that increase the fire risk. Especial attention is to be given to chimneys. A civic inspector has, or should have this advantage over others, he ought to be supported by a by-law making his recommendations enforceable by law after being endorsed by the Fire Board.

Board of Trade Vaults.

On Monday last two bricklayers were seen gazing at the wrecked stack of vaults in the Board of Trade building. Their comments on the flimsiness of the work were exceedingly caustic. In the first place, they considered the light shell of brickwork around the vaults as utterly inadequate for the protection of the contents in case of a severe fire. One of the men called the bricking, "veneer," which, he said, only served to deceive—he used a racier word—those who trusted such vaults to protect their books, papers, etc. Then, said one of the men, there ought to be fire-bricks used for such work as the brick coating was only intended as a fire protection, and for this purpose, in his judgment, ordinary bricks were not suitable. The views of practical mechanics on matters connected with their trade are generally valuable. The best protection, however, for vaults in such a position would be the use of unflammable wood for floors, doors, beams, desks, etc. Were such

material used, the intensity of heat during a fire would be materially reduced, whereby the vaults would be the better able to protect their contents from becoming calcined, as were those in most of the Board of Trade vaults.

Slow Burning Construction Fallacies.

The reports of experts have brought out that buildings, claiming to be built according to the rules for "slow burning," are examples the very opposite; they were found, says Mr. Edward Atkinson, "nearly as bad or worse than the ordinary methods of combustible architecture with hollow walls and hollow ceilings." He points out that the clause in a specification, "Hard pine girders must be treated with three coats of fire-proof paint," has no meaning, as there is no fire-proof paint. Girders so treated, when of green timber, are apt to acquire "dry rot" in a short time. Mr. Atkinson objects to the provision that, "timbers or joists may be hung in iron stirrups," as though iron stirrups are tolerated in slow burning construction, a preference is given to direct supports. In regard to all openings into the shaft to be protected with "approved iron doors," and openings into stairways to be protected by "approved single iron doors," he makes the following remarks:—"In factory practice the iron door and the iron shutter have been wholly superseded by the fire door properly made of wood encased in tin, lately improved by putting between the tin and the wood one thickness of Sackett wall board on each side. Iron doors and iron shutters are very apt to warp and curl, letting the fire pass and keeping the firemen and the water out." Slow burning construction is better than swift, but it seems to accept eventual "burning" as the destiny of the building. Would not, "No burning construction" be a more desirable phrase, and specifications drafted accordingly?