

IS FIRE PREVENTION A HOPELESS TASK?

**Mr. Croker, Late Fire Chief of New York City, Says
"No"—Fire Waste of the United States.**

Every day in the year there are close to thirty fires in Greater New York. At least fifteen of these are due to carelessness, caused by somebody disregarding the fire peril in a way that should be reckoned as a crime. In 1910, the money loss to property from fire in New York was \$5,936,333. There were nearly 10,000 fires. Of the most serious of these the factory fires were in a majority. But the factory owner is not to be singled out and blamed for conspicuous carelessness. The above statements are made by Mr. Edward F. Croker for twelve years chief of the New York fire department.

In Mr. Croker's opinion the causes for fires may be put down in this order: Carelessness in factories, which in most cases means dirt and rubbish and oily waste. Carelessness in the use of matches. Do you stop to watch where a lighted match falls after you have lighted your cigar? Bad electrical wiring. Careless housekeeping. Dark and dirty hallways. People, at night, scratch matches to find their way about, throw the match in a corner into a pile of rubbish, and a few hours later there is a call for the firemen. Dark basements. Tenants go down after coal or wood with a candle or with matches. A startling number of bad fires occur this way. Oil stoves. Old-fashioned oil lamps. Cigar and cigarette stubs. They are petty things taken one by one, but they are the principal reasons for the great number of fires occurring in a city like New York.

Many Fires Caused by Inexcusable Carelessness.

Ugly fires—oil, factory, packing house, or lumber yard—are practically all caused by inexcusable carelessness. This is one of the facts that makes the experienced fireman feel strongly against our national habit of playing with fire. It is true that in buildings where inflammable material or explosives are kept, and in industries where the danger of fire is greatest, certain regulations are in force to minimize the peril. These regulations consist mainly of signs reading "No Smoking," a watchman whose job is to keep an eye out for incipient fires, and a few fire extinguishers on the wall. And these regulations are in force solely because the insurance underwriters insist upon them, and not because the owners of the establishment are awake to the fire peril and seek to do their duty in this matter.

It requires no training in fire-fighting to understand how utterly inadequate such precautions are. In nine cases out of ten when small fires start in such places—as they are sure to start sooner or later—these safeguards amount to nothing.

Is It a Hopeless Task?

Since leaving the fire department of Greater New York to take up the work of preventing fires, Mr. Croker has been asked many times: "Do you not think it is a hopeless task?"

The answer always has been that, if he did think so, he naturally would not attempt to start such a campaign. But the question illustrates the attitude of a good portion of the public toward the fire problem. Most people look upon fire as something inevitable, almost natural, and consider their prevalence in this country something that must be borne, along with other damages caused by the acts of nature.

This is all wrong. The average fire is no more to be accepted as inevitable or natural than is the collapse of a poorly built building. Both may be ascribed to the same specific causes: careless building, careless inspection, careless usage. Both are preventable; and the occurrence of either is not to be considered as due to anything but pure, man-made carelessness.

The work of fire-preventing is not a hopeless task. On the contrary if owners and occupants of buildings throughout the country would adopt and put into effect a proper standard of cleanliness, inspection and common-sense carefulness, the number of fires in this country would be reduced 50 per cent. within a year. If the New York fire department had—as it should have—full authority to make inspections of all sorts of buildings, to enforce a standard set of fire regulations, and to make arrests when its orders against fire perils were disobeyed, that single department would cut New York's annual fire loss down 40 per cent.

The Fire Waste of the United States.

In the last fifteen years the records kept by the fire insurance underwriters show that approximately \$2,000,000,000 and 20,000 lives have been sacrificed to fire in the United States, and the figures are steadily growing. The annual loss in money per capita now is \$2.71. In Germany, which has the highest fire loss of any European country, the per capita loss is forty-nine cents. Berlin has one of the lowest rates of loss of any city in the world, and Berlin's fire department does not compare with New York's for efficiency. By cutting in two the actual number of fires that occur, as a standard regulation of fire conditions would do, the cause of one-half of our great losses would be done away with, and half of the problem would be solved at once.

Automatic sprinklers and automatic alarms should be installed to the last limit of precaution. There is no case where the old adage, "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure," is as true as with fire. The doors should open outwardly and be fastened only in such a manner that they will yield instantly to slight pressure. The windows should be unobstructed and the fire escapes should lead to safety instead

of into a trap. These are the changes that could be brought about without any revolution in most establishments, and they would be sufficient. It is the lack of them that is responsible for most of our fires.

Science of Fireproofing a Farce.

The science of fireproofing is a farce. What good does it do to make the walls, floors and ceilings of a building fireproof if you will fill it with inflammable material and fittings and expose them to contact with fire? It saves the building to some extent it is true. It doesn't save anything else. There is no such thing as a fireproof factory.

But with all these things—fire prevention, better buildings and better men in the fire departments—the war against fire never will be won until the people of this country have become educated to the new idea. It is the individual citizen who is responsible for the prevalence of fires, and he will continue to be so until he has been differently trained. You could build a country full of so-called fireproof buildings, and a careless people would find a way to burn them up. It is not too much to say that this education toward carefulness in regard to fire should begin with the training of children in the public schools. The boy who has been taught to regard fire as something that should be handled with the same care as explosives, or poisons, or deadly weapons, will not forget it when he becomes a man. The necessity for proper carefulness will be with him always. And only when this is true of all the people of this country will our fire losses cease to shame us before the civilized world.

COBALT ORE SHIPMENTS.

The following are the shipments of Cobalt ore, in pounds, for the week ended November 3rd:—Coniagas, 188,333; McKinley-Darragh, 212,694; Cobalt Lake, 114,430; La-Rose, 144,800; Cobalt Townsite, 117,094; Temiskaming, 138,730; Chambers Ferland, 64,000; Trethewey, 41,613; Crown Reserve, 51,080; Nipissing, 58,098; Kerr Lake, 60,000; Drummond, 60,000; total, 1,250,872 pounds or 625 tons. The total shipments since January 1st, are now 43,750,121 pounds or 21,875 tons.

In 1904 the camp produced 158 tons, valued at \$316,217; in 1905, 2,144 tons, valued at \$1,437,196; in 1906, 5,129 tons, valued at \$3,900,000; in 1907, 14,040 tons; in 1908, 25,700 tons; in 1909, 29,751 tons; in 1910, 34,041 tons.

OCTOBER'S COBALT ORE SHIPMENTS.

The following are the shipments of Cobalt ore during October:—

Mine.	Tons.
Beaver	59.3
Buffalo	122.2
Chambers-Ferland	32.0
Cobalt Lake	230.2
Cobalt Townsite	110.5
Colonial	24.0
Coniagas	132.6
Crown Reserve	30.6
Drummond	210.0
Green Meehan	42.9
Hudson Bay	62.8
Kerr Lake	92.0
La Rose	275.7
McKinley-Darragh	307.3
Millerette	30.0
Nipissing	128.7
O'Brien	69.2
Right of Way	61.2
Temiskaming	101.3
Tretheway	79.7
	2,202.2

The shipments for September were 2,149.9 tons.

The Indian population of Canada is 103,661, and the Eskimo, 4,600. The Indian population by provinces is:—Alberta, 8,088; British Columbia, 24,581; Manitoba, 6,104; Nova Scotia, 2,026; New Brunswick, 1,802; Prince Edward Island, 292; Ontario, 22,496; Quebec, 11,462; Saskatchewan, 9,943; Ungava, 1,246; Yukon, 3,500. Ontario Indian agricultural output was over half a million bushels of grain and roots, worth \$435,000. British Columbia follows with a \$350,000 crop. General increases are shown in Alberta and Saskatchewan, where the crops come to 72,459 bushels and 299,851 bushels.