

A MYSTERIOUS FIRE.

In a former article on the subject of lubricating machinery we refer to some of the villainous compounds that were sold under the name of lubricating oils. In this case only the damage to machinery was considered. This, however, is not all the danger that grows out of the use of those adulterations. Illuminating oils, with the adulterations that are put upon the market are still worse, for while only the damage to machinery may arise from the adulterations of lubricating oils, the danger to life and property from illuminating oils is still greater. The discovery of petroleum is no doubt one of the blessings of the present age, and when honestly and properly prepared, is the best for illuminating purposes of anything we have outside of gas, but the rascally mixture of benzine and other inflammable substances that are put upon the market is a fruitful cause of nine-tenths of the accidents that occur. A fellow with no character, knowledge or principle, goes into the oil trade; his stock consists of a barrel of benzine, a barrel of kerosene oil, a few pounds of rosin or some other stuff to give it body, and then advertise a new illuminating oil, made upon scientific principles, and warranted to give a brighter light and stand a high fire test, and no danger of explosion, etc., and cheaper than any oil ever put on the market. He will pour some of it into a shallow dish, and drop a burning match into it to satisfy his customers that it will not explode and in this way people are humbugged into buying a compound that is more dangerous than gunpowder.

It is well known to any who has given this subject any attention, that even clear benzine, when put into a hollow dish, will not explode; it will burn rapidly, but is easily put out by throwing a cloth over it; but when it is confined in a tight vessel, only partly filled, then is the time when it becomes dangerous, for the gas which it generates, from the volatile nature of it, soon fills the can, and if the cork is removed and it comes in contact with fire, it will explode like dynamite, and is about as dangerous to have it around. Even the best oil needs care, for it is impossible, with all the care that can be had in refining, to entirely deprive it of volatile matters, that will generate gas if left standing in a warm place. A lamp that has been used in the evening and stood over night, partly full of oil, should never be lighted in the morning without allowing the gas to escape. Blowing out lamps in the evening is another practice that should never be indulged in; the air that is blown down the chimney is often forced down the tube, carrying the blaze with it, and if the oil should happen to be low, an explosion is likely to take place. The only safety is by buying nothing but the best, no matter about the price, a few cents on a gallon of oil is a small matter when compared to the destruction of life and property that almost every day occurs from the careless use of kerosene oil. Kindling the fire in the morning with kerosene is another practice that has cost many lives and a great destruction to property; and if Bridget must light the fire with kerosene oil, by pouring it out of the can, impress upon her mind the oil must be poured upon the wood, and the can corked up and put away before the match is lighted. Kerosene oil is not the only element of danger that we have in our factories and dwellings to guard against. There are many other fruitful sources that are entirely overlooked, that cause most of the mysterious fires.

The careless use of matches is one constant source of danger; not but which the matches may be harmless enough in themselves, if left alone, but when dropped upon the floor of a wood shop, covered with shavings, or in a barn where hay and straw is chattered about, if stepped on or picked up by mice, they become one of the sources of mysterious fires. It is well known that rats and mice will carry off matches for the phosphorus which they contain, and of which they seem to be fond; but if one of them ignites while Mr. Rat is endeavoring to extract the phosphorus, he never stops to sound the alarm of fire, but takes himself off to some place of safety, and as no fire has been used in the building it is considered a clear case of incendiary, but Mr. Rat is the last one to be suspected of being the incendiary. Spontaneous combustion is another cause of mysterious fires, that

are put down as incendiary, but I believe that nine-tenths of them are from this cause.

That there are some fires that can be traced to incendiary there is no doubt, but I am not willing to believe that mankind are so depraved as to be guilty of all the arts of incendiary that are laid to their door.

Vapors arising from volatile matter take fire with less heat than many suppose. A steam pipe running through a box of pine saw dust has been known to take fire several times, and the heat of the steam was probably never over 300, the inflammable vapor that was distilled out of the turpentine contained in the sawdust furnished in the means of ignition.

Oily rags or cotton waste used around machinery, and saturated with oil, is another fruitful cause of mysterious fires, that occur where no fire is used. The statistics show that a great majority of the fires that take place in manufacturing establishments happen between Saturday night and Monday morning, and as it is the custom in all well regulated mills to require the operatives to clean up their machines on Saturday afternoon, unless the oil waste used for that purpose is carefully collected and removed to some safe place, the chances are that before Sunday night, fire may be generated from spontaneous combustion.

In a discussion of this subject a few years ago in order to satisfy ourselves on this subject, we made a number of experiments with different fibrous substances and oil. We found that cotton waste that had been used in cleaning machinery, and well saturated with oil, when covered up with iron turnings and dirt, which is found under the laths of all machine shops, took fire so as to smoke in two hours, and when partially uncovered and a portion of it is exposed to the air it burns up freely until the waste is all consumed. When saturated with linseed oil it took fire much sooner.

Some painters were at work in a house where a portion of the wood work was being finished in oil, and rags rubbing it were thrown into a closet. At noon, when all the workmen were absent to their dinner except one, who happened to have his dinner with him, and while sitting in the room adjoining the closet, discovered smoke issuing from it. Upon opening the door he discovered the rags on fire, which blazed up lively, until the timely application of a few pails of water, which as good luck would have it were near at hand. The fire was extinguished with but little damage, whereas if the building had been left alone at the time, or the fire broke out at night, in all probability it would have been consumed, and another mysterious fire would have been recorded, "probably the work of an incendiary."

Another case of spontaneous ignition occurred in a store. A bottle of olive oil was spilled upon the floor, a quantity of saw dust was thrown over it to soak it up. The sun happened to be shining in upon it at the time, and in less than an hour it took fire.

In planing mills where the machinery is scarcely ever cleaned up, I will admit that there is little danger for greasy waste being thrown around, but there is an element that is quite as dangerous as waste. The fine dust that collects around and under the machines becomes saturated with oil and grease, together with the villainous compounds, under the name of lubricated oils, and as they scarcely ever are cleaned up they are only waiting for favorable conditions to develop into a first class fire.

The statistics of the insurance department in most states show the average time for planing mills, sash and door factories, furniture factories to burn in eight years; while foundries, machine shops, black smith shops and other working establishments is about twenty. Now why is it so many wood-working establishments is burned up? There is no reason why a planing mill should burn any more than any other shop, if proper precaution is taken. It is true that there is a great deal of combustible matter in and around it, but even that is no good reason why they should burn up so often. With the improved devices for taking away the shavings and dust, a planing mill can be kept as clean as any other shop, and if the machines were brushed off and the accumulations of dust and grease scraped off every day

there would be but little danger from that source.

Most of the mills that are built at the present time are well protected from fire, so far as the engine is concerned, with fire-proof shavings room, but with all the care that may be bestowed upon these two important parts of the mill unless proper precaution is taken to keep the machines free from those accumulations of grease and dust, mysterious fires will still continue to break out when they are least expected, and planing mill owners will be obliged to continue to pay double the insurance which they ought to pay.—[C. R. Tompkins, M. E., in *Journal of Progress*.

NORTHWESTERN ONTARIO.

Year by year the operations of the lumber men in Muskoka are becoming less and the pine limits are decreasing or rapidly disappearing.—*Herald*.

A man named Dennis, of Detroit, has taken his mill machinery to Lynch Lake, Joly town ship, where he intends cutting birch lumber for the Toronto market. He will ship by the N. & P. J. R.

Two large saw mills are to be built on Casselman's farm, near Katrine, to cut lumber for the firm of Platt & Bradley. The pine around Doo Lake is said to be sufficient to last twenty years—if not too rapidly consumed.

Messrs. R. & G. Strickland, of Lakeside, are carrying on a large lumbering business in Oakley this winter. They have four camps in operation in which forty four teams are employed; in the one camp alone—that of which James Taylor is foreman—there are nineteen teams. The depot for supplies is Wood Lake camp, presided over by Mr. R. Kail. Mr. Alex. Moffatt, their managing clerk, lives here, and fills the position to the entire satisfaction of the company. Mr. Ketching, of Draper, has the contract for supplying the above camp with oats, pork, flour and other provisions. Mr. Jackson Foster is engaged to assist Mr. Ketching in teaming in the supplies from Gravenhurst.—*Banner*.

Mr. Martin, the timber and lumber inspector for the N. & P. J., returns next week from Bracebridge and Huntsville, where he has been looking after the erection of the fine station buildings nearly completed at those points, to lay out the work for the Burk's Fall's station.—*Arrow*.

"What Say You to a Piece of Roast Beef and Mustard?"

Well, there is much to be said. The question being asked of the banqueter at the average boarding house, calls up reminiscences of close contiguity to the horns, and beefsteak three or four times thereof. He, of course, will pass unless it occurs to him that he needs a hinge for his trunk. Should there be any suffering the effects of an indulgence in such sinuous fare, use McGregor's Speedy Cure, a sure and effectual remedy for dyspepsia, constipation and affections of the stomach and liver. Sold by J. McKee. Trial bottles free.

Advice to Mothers.

Mrs. Winslow's Soothing Syrup should always be used when children are cutting teeth. It relieves the little sufferer at once; it produces natural, quiet sleep by relieving the child from pain, and the little cherub awakes as "bright as a button." It is very pleasant to taste. It soothes the child, softens the gums, allays all pain, relieves wind, regulates the bowels, and is the best known remedy for diarrhoea, whether arising from teething or other causes. 25 cts a bottle. Be sure and ask for "Mrs. Winslow's Soothing Syrup," and take no other kind.

Perhaps the most extraordinary that success has been achieved in modern science has been attained by the Dixon treatment for Catarrh. Out of 2,000 patients treated during the past six months, fully ninety per cent have been cured of this stubborn malady. This is none the less startling when it is remembered that not five per cent. of the patients presenting themselves to the regular practitioner are benefited, while the patent medicines and other advertised cures never record a cure at all. Starting with the claim now generally believed by the most scientific men that the disease is due to the presence of living parasites in the tissues, Mr. Dixon at once adapted his cure to their extermination; this accomplished the Catarrh is practically cured, and the permanency is unquestioned, as cures effected by him four years ago are cures still. No one else has ever attempted to cure Catarrh in this manner, and no other treatment has ever cured Catarrh. The application of the remedy is simple and can be done at home, and the present season of the year is the most favorable for a speedy and permanent cure, the majority of cases being cured at one treatment. Sufferers should correspond with Messrs. A. H. DIXON & SON, 305 King street west, Toronto, Canada, and enclose a stamp for their treatise on Catarrh.—*Montreal Star*.

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