

The tendency of the times towards the formation of big corporations for the transaction of the world's business is the outcome of knowledge of the advantages to be derived from the absorption of competitors, and the concentration under one management of the affairs of many hitherto engaged in the same pursuit. The movement continues to be most marked in England, and the banks and insurance companies are gradually ensuring economy of management and some abatement in excessive competition by a process of amalgamation with or absorption of their rivals. The most recent instance is to be found in marine insurance, the British and Foreign Marine Insurance Company, having opened negotiations with the Southern Insurance Company of Melbourne for a transfer of the business of the latter to the former. The Southern is reported to have a capital of \$5,000,000 (\$250,000 paid-up); its reserve fund is \$150,000; and the English company will obtain the benefit of the Southern's business connections and probably improve the prospects of the shareholders of both companies.

Old as the Hills.

Dwellers in cities always entertain a sort of sympathy for victims of the practice of blowing out the gas. The life led by the temporary occupant of room No. 15 in some big hotel (generally a seller of farm produce or an exhibitor of prize cattle) does not warrant any censure or even a "served him right" verdict when, having disrobed and prepared for bed, he, by the exercise of lungs made powerful from inhaling the fresh air of the fields, blows out the gas and before morning is at peace with the world. At the same time, we frankly admit to a decided change of feeling, when reading of any serious results to the householder who, knowing that the mixture of carbureted and bi-carbureted hydrogen, the common gas which he nightly lights with a match or taper is explosive, proceeds to search for an escape of the illuminating aeriform fluid with a lighted candle. We decline to believe that the remark of Carlyle, or some equally famous cynic, that the majority of Britons are somewhat foolish is not a base calumny or a playful fabrication; but, when reading the reports in English newspapers of a Mr. Hill's indulgence in what the Insurance Record calls this "antiquated but still fashionable amusement" of searching for an escape of gas with a lighted candle, we have to blush for our kinsmen across the sea and to regret that it is as it is. The latest victim to this dangerous game lives at Lower Sydenham, on the outskirts of London. Let the London insurance journal tell the rest of the story.

"Owing to a leakage of gas, the Gas Company had been communicated with, and fitters had been repairing the pipes. The men went away leaving everything, it was supposed, perfectly safe, but shortly after midnight another smell of gas was noticed, and Mr. Hill, the occupier, searched for it with a lighted

candle. Suddenly an explosion took place, the front door was blown out, and Miss Hill was found with her hair and clothes in flames, Mrs. Hill was stunned, and Mr. Hill had all the hair burnt off his face and head."

It seems too extraordinary and improbable to admit of belief that similar cases of midnight madness occur with unfailing regularity every year. Yet the facts of this case are narrated with too much minuteness of detail to excuse any doubt of the existence of Mr. Hill of Sydenham, who is suffering from a form of stupidity as old as the name he bears.

A Master of Eloquence.

In the expression of strong emotion in a manner adapted to excite corresponding emotions in others, in the utterance of elevated and forcible thoughts in well-chosen language, Mr. George E. Foster stands out as a clear and distinct leader among the public men of the Dominion. His piercing eloquence has seldom, if ever, been so marked as at the recent banquet given by the citizens of Ottawa to Lord Aberdeen, the departing Governor-General. Even in reading the following fragment of Mr. Foster's speech, one is impressed by its power, patriotism and eloquent historical charm. He said:—

"It has been often said, not so often now as some years ago, that Britain was growing decrepit and infirm, that her power was waning and that the time was rapidly approaching when Macaulay's New Zealander should take his seat on London bridge and survey the ruins of an Empire greater than Rome had ever been. I deny the assumption, and I protest with all my heart against the inference. The expansive, the assimilative, the cohesive power of Britain is neither dead nor stagnant. The plastic crust from which in centuries past has burst forth that splendid energy that has ever and anon vivified the world has not stiffened to adamant. (Applause.) The typical vigor, the eruptive enterprise, the steady overflow of the higher life and potency are there still, and the march of Empire is ever forward. (Applause.) To-day her drum beat sounds on the far distant Pamirs, we hear the boom of her guns and see the flash of her steel in the rock passes of the Afridis. Her banners gleam at Hong Kong and Wei-Hai-Wei, and her flag floats over the vast insular continents of the Southern Pacific. In the whilom Dark Continent bugle calls to bugle from Bulawayo in the south to Omdurman in the north, and imperial outposts sentinel the Nile and the Niger while her cannon at Halifax and cannon at Esquimaux, backed by 5,000,000 loyal subjects, stand guard and sponsor for the foremost and best of her possessions. (Tremendous applause.) Who dares to say that the Imperial eye is dimmed, the Imperial heart numbed, or that the irresistible might of her strong right arm is shattered? Rather do we affirm that the insular has become world-wide, that the merely national has broadened into the truly Imperial, and that the sphere of Britain's influence and the grandeur of her power are immeasurably advanced. (Applause.)"

Such a speech deserves to be treasured with the best of the oratorical masterpieces of Nova Scotia's greatest son, Joseph Howe.

A Good Investment.

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