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FIRES DUE TO ELECTRICITY.

Four times a year, a report upon what are termed electrical fires, that is, fires due directly to electricity, is made by the electrical committee of the National Board of Fire Underwriters in the United States. In the latest of these reports thirty-seven fires are dealt with. While it is true that, owing to the increasing use of electricity for traction, factory power, light, &c., and by reason often of careless wiring, new and unexpected causes of fires are being detected, it is also learned that many fires reported as due to electricity have, upon further and more careful investigation, been found to have been due to other causes.

There were six reports of loss by lightning received in which lightning followed telephone or lighting wires into the buildings. Also, six pole and tree fires are reported. In one case a limb of a tree, after being burned off by contact with a primary wire, fell and crossed the primary with the secondary, sending high potential current at 2,300 volts into three dwellings, in each of which fires were started.

The usual large number of fires and burnouts due to crosses between telephone and high-tension wires is noted. Of these crosses eleven were found on lighting wires and four on trolley wires. Grounding of circuits is a frequent cause of fire. The most common cases of the grounding of circuits as reported during the last quarter are as follows: Fixture wires grounded on gas pipes, feeder wires grounded under sidewalks and service switches grounded on outside walls.

It is also to be observed that the contact of wires with awnings and metal work on buildings occasionally starts a fire. In the report in question seven fires are attributed to the overheating of resistance coils and heating devices, one being caused by an electric smoothing iron, one starting from a heater, one from a drop light left on a wooden seat, and four from resistance coils on rheostats. Two fires are reported due to the burnout of motors, one from an electric fan and two from incandescent arc lamps. All these circumstances teach that we do not yet know all that is to be known in "harnessing" electricity.

WILL UNIONISM DECAY?

Just as in many fruits, the full completion of maturing is but an invisible step from the beginning of decay; so in successful accomplishment, often lies the germ of future failure. Trades Unionism in its day has done a great work. Capital is, and always has been, selfish, though perhaps not more so than Labor, and, in pursuing its chief object, to obtain as much return as possible from as little as possible expenditure, the moral right of individual helpers has often been trodden upon. In old days this course met with comparatively few obstacles that could not be overcome; capital was strong, labor weak, with the natural result that the one was being continually overridden by the other. Then came the days of organization, and unions were evolved which did much to protect the worker from the greed of grasping employers. They did good work, and such work was sorely needed; had it not been for the success with which they met in the face of a most determined resistance, the condition of labor today might have approached something very near to serfdom.

But just as the man who has been bullied all his life will, upon his being placed in a position of authority, be the very one to become a particularly aggressive bully of all those placed beneath him; so trades-unionism, from being a protector of the weak, is fast degenerating into a merciless dictator wherever it sees an opportunity. Formerly a union had to have right and justice indisputably on its side before it would make an attempt to gain better terms; at any rate, before it could even hope to win. Now, the only consideration, as often as not, is "are we strong enough, or are our employers at a sufficient disadvantage to allow of our snatching the victory?" The success of the comparatively new idea of the practical organization of labor has been largely due to public sympathy with its primary purpose of protecting the men who did the work from the aggressive encroachment of those who chiefly profited from it. The individual worker was weak, and had to accept the terms offered him or starve; a thousand such workers