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LESSENING THE FIRE WASTE.

Once more an attempt is being made to secure concerted effort to abate the dreadful loss suffered yearly on this continent by fire. That important and extensive body in the United States, the National Fire Protection Association, departed from its accustomed programme at its Chicago meeting last week, to enter upon the question of the nation's fire-waste in general and conflagration losses in particular. After reciting a number of deplorable conditions which continue to exist, one of the worst of which is that public protection has not kept pace with the growth of buildings and increase of valuation, a resolution was adopted without dissent, as follows:—

"That an urgent appeal be and is hereby made to all interests to co-operate in bringing about better conditions by adopting improved methods of construction, by safe-guarding hazards of occupancy and by introducing automatic sprinklers and other private protection with private water supplies, quite in addition to the public fire service; and be it further

"Resolved, That we recommend that municipalities pass ordinances involving the adoption of an approved building code along the lines of the building code recommended by the National Board of Fire Underwriters, and requiring the introduction of automatic sprinklers with private water supplies in buildings of special occupancy and in so-called congested districts, to the end that the danger of sweeping conflagrations may be eliminated."

In his address the president, Mr. Hexamer, of Philadelphia, recalled to the memories of his auditors that the conflagration hazard of San Francisco was clearly pointed out to underwriters by the engineers of the Committee of Twenty, whose investigating work

with respect to many prominent cities of the United States has proved very valuable. He also pointed out that where six European countries have shown within the last five years a per capita loss by fire of 29 cents, the average per capita loss by fire in the United States and Canada in the like five years has been \$2.47, or eight times as much. The total loss of property in the United States by fire for the five years ending with 1905 is stated at \$866,617,000—an enormous sum.

A former president, Mr. Uberto C. Crosby, gave what was styled a commemorative address, dealing with conflagrations, special hazards, building construction, cement blocks, reinforced concrete, steam pumps, etc., as reported upon by special committees. It is important to observe what he says about the defects often found in concrete blocks, owing to their being made too often by inexperienced manufacturers. These, he describes, as in some cases, "porous and weak;" some specimens submitted to the concrete block committee for fire test "have actually disintegrated in the course of a few months while waiting for trial." The danger of building with such stuff as this is manifest, and the need of testing alleged "fire-proof" material strongly evident. Mr. Crosby says that the committee does not feel justified in presenting a standard for concrete blocks until investigations now being made are completed, but they hope to do so in another year. On the question of the best method of reinforced concrete for building construction, materials, proportions, values, and methods in making beams or columns are still the subjects of differences among engineers, so that the committee is not yet in a position to specify the entire detail of construction.

However, it ought to be a circumstance full of encouragement to those who, conscious of the national disgrace of such a showing as is contained in the fire-loss figures we have quoted, and earnestly desiring to see them lessened, that the co-operation of so ex-