

DANGER OF THEATRE FIRES.

Experiments Indicate That "Fire Curtains" Are Not Fireproof.

Whoever imagines that the famous iron curtains in theatres, which are lowered and raised with such solemnity at stated times and are made the subject of all kinds of municipal regulations, are any real protection against fire could do well, says the Grand Magazine, to study the account of certain experiments carried out in Vienna.

A theatre was constructed in the most approved fashion, the auditorium furnished with the usual galleries and pits and the stage with scenery. Lamps of every system—electric, gas and oil—were placed in great numbers and in the walls certain spy holes were provided through which the commission of engineers and architects who were conducting the experiments might see what went on within the building.

In the first experiment a fire was lighted on the stage and the ordinary curtain dropped, the ventilators in the auditorium being open and those on the stage closed. After the lapse of a minute or two the observers saw the curtain bulge out toward the auditorium, allowing the flames and smoke to rush forth at the bottom with such volume that the entire theatre was enveloped in an instant.

The gas lamps were extinguished immediately and were soon followed by the disappearance of the oil lights. As for the electric lamps, though they did not go out at once, they became quite invisible by reason of the dense smoke. In a quarter on an hour a temperature of 720 degrees Fahrenheit was registered in the theatre.

Next time the same experiment was repeated under identical conditions except that on this occasion the iron curtain was lowered. Its protective powers, however, proved quite illusory. The flames burst forth into the auditorium with greater violence, if possible, than before; the thermometer registered a temperature bordering upon that of the electric oven, and an analysis of the air disclosed the fact that it contained more than 8 per cent. of the deadly carbonic oxide gas—that is to say, far more than sufficient to asphyxiate whoever had not been burned to death.

A third experiment showed that the audience can only hope to escape if the actors consent to sacrifice themselves, which they can hardly be expected to do. It was found that if the stage was set on fire and both curtains kept up the ventilators on the stage being open and those in the auditorium quite closed, the stage became transformed into a chimney, as it were, while the auditorium remained intact, as the flames and smoke were carried away from it.

An Orange-Packing House.

The things one sees in an orange-packing house are a pleasure to the eye, delightful to the olfactory, and, when the local manager or overseer is a generous and indulgent person, also most excellent to the taste. The operations are quiet and simple but systematic, and carried on by all possible mechanical and automatic devices for the saving of labor and effectiveness of service. At one end of a long building the oranges are unloaded from the van; at the other end, a few minutes later, they are snugly ensconced in a railway car; ready at the door to begin its long journey eastward. Between these points of exit and entrance much has been done in a quiet way. First the oranges are gently dumped into a receptacle, whence they are carried on a belt or moving platform to an upper part of the building, where they pass slowly along before a group of workers, who pick out the culls, or imperfect fruit, and drop them into chutes for disposition elsewhere. The other oranges are allowed to pass on down an incline to the separators, in the meantime their weight being taken and registered automatically as they move along. The separators consist of long troughs with slits or openings of varying widths at the bottom, through which the oranges drop according to their sizes as they are carried along, thus separating themselves into the three grades by which they are known to the market. These grades are based on size, and are known as "standard," the smallest; "choice," the next in rank, and "fancy," the largest of all. As they separate themselves and drop from the moving belt, the oranges run down in golden streams by little side chutes to a small canvas platform or box, whence they are removed by the nimble fingers of the packers, usually young women, wrapped in soft paper, and placed in boxes for final shipment. An expert packer will fill from eighty to ninety boxes per day. From these busy young women the boxes are carefully trundled to a nearby bench or table, where other employees deftly seal and close up the open side. One more turn by other ready hands and the finished boxes are passed into a car drawn on a convenient siding, where, carefully secured and piled to the roof, they are seen no more until they reach the great distributing centers in the Eastern markets.

All parts of Africa, except Abyssinia, Morocco and Liberia, are connected directly or indirectly by railroads. French Africa has a total of 10,000 miles of railroads, half of which is in the hands of the French.

NAUTICAL TERMS ON LAND.

Many of Our Most Common Expressions Come From the Sailor.

"Our country is rich in sea terms, yet thousands of those who use them never dream of their origin," said Lieut.-Com. Cleveland Davis of the United States navy. "For example, if I were to say to you, 'How are you?' and you reply 'First rate' you perhaps little know that you are alluding in perpetuating the remembrance of the old line of battleship, 'first rate.' The navy, you know, in the past days had six rates or classes of vessels. 'Sea proverbs' are also met in daily use. For instance, 'The devil to pay.' One never thinks why 'devil' or 'pay' should be mentioned. The saying, 'way seam,' obtained among the talkers of the seams of a ship's deck. The out-side seam, called by sailors the water-way seam, obtained along the talkers the term of 'the devil' through the difficulty of calking it. 'To pay' is to run not pitch along the calked seams. 'We say of a man who is going wrong, he is on the wrong tack.' Sometimes in error using the work track. A vessel on the wrong tack may drive ashore, or, if in a hurricane be engulfed in the heart of the storm. 'Suppose, again, that I 'spin' you a 'yarn.' I may tell you of the unlucky fellow who is among the breakers, of the villain sailing under false colors, the heroine showing 'signals of distress,' the hero striving bravely against 'wind and tide,' yet true to his love as the 'needle to the pole,' presently the two are 'wafted' by a 'favoring gale' safely into port.

"Again in politics, the 'ship of state' sails on, a leader is at the helm, and occasionally some high official is 'thrown overboard' by his party.

"Colloquially, we growl at an interrupter for 'shoving in his oar'; we speak of two scoundrels as 'tared with the same brush,' we advise our friend to 'go with the current,' and we speak of him to others as fair and 'above board.' Jack is a bit 'rakish' and sometimes 'half seas over,' and if he does not reform he will find himself 'high and dry' and 'laid up for good.

"Such terms as 'in good trim,' a 'snug berth,' to 'carry on' at 'close quarters,' to 'sit out,' and so on, are familiar to all—except their origin. I can give you the derivations of at least two of them.

"To 'carry on,' for example, is to keep sail set longer than a careful sailor would do; in other words, recklessness. The modern meaning of 'close quarters' is pretty well understood; the derivation, though, is probably little known. 'Close quarters' were strong wooden barriers stretched across the deck and used for retreat and shelter when the ship was boarded. The old slave ships were fitted in that way in case of the slaves getting loose. In the old naval wars the term means two ships in action, with their sides touching, as was often the case.

"The sailor, on the other hand, has borrowed extensively from the lanaguage of the navy the ship has 'bonnets' and 'stays,' 'earrings' and 'jewel blocks,' 'braces' and 'sheets.' The sailor 'dresses' her to receive company, and often 'puts her about.' You will be asking me where I am bound and putting me on the 'black list,' or telling me to 'clear out,' or that I am going 'adrift.' Then again, you may 'fall foul' of me and be 'overwhelmed.' Overwhelmed, though is a true sea word, being derived from the Saxon 'wylm' or 'wave.'

Soldiers March to Whistling.

An incident occurred in London recently which would have shocked the military officer of a century ago. A battalion of the Irish Guards, led by two mounted officers, was marching along Oxford street to the merry accompaniment of a fife and drum band. Suddenly, with a flourish of drumsticks, the music ceased, and for a little time the soldiers tramped along with solemn and steady tread. A boy came up a side street whistling the song of the moment, "My Irish Molly, O." A soldier in a fit of abstraction joined in. The refrain was immediately taken up by others, and it flew to the front and rear ranks, until presently the whole battalion marched to its own whistling accompaniment.

Making Paper From Peat.

Peat cardboard is comparatively a new product. For many years experiments in making this much-used article from peat were tried without success, but about three years ago an Austrian inventor obtained patents for a process which did not necessitate the use of chemicals, and did not require the boiling of the "half stuff." A company was formed in this country, a plant was erected among the peat bogs of Michigan, and large quantities of the paper (boxboard) are being turned out. The machine room contains a 120-inch five-cylinder machine, with forty-one driers, and the heater room contains four 150-pound heaters. No refiners are used. Paper can be, and is, produced in two hours from the time the peat is dug out of the ground, and it is declared to be of a superior quality. It is of a brown color, is odorless, not as brittle as strawboard, and resists moisture to a greater degree. The peat paper is made in practically the same way as strawboard, the patent being upon the process for reducing the peat to a workable pulp.



Fay Courtney Leading Lady at the Baker Theatre

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PERIL IN RACKED NERVES.

Distinguished English Physician Sounds Note of Warning. "Breakdown of the nervous system is no mere society craze which it is fashionable to suffer from, but is becoming a national calamity which bids fair to rob our descendants of many of those qualities which have done so much to make the empire what it is," says Dr. Guthrie Rankin, in the Contemporary Review. The existence of mental deterioration, Dr Rankin declares, stands forth as a bold landmark in every case of neurasthenia. He adds: "It declares itself in many ways and finds its expression in no sustained note, either of excitement or depression. It varies in its manifestations, so that whereas one patient is apathetic and careless of the future, another is keenly concerned as to the state of his health and in mortal dread lest he die; whereas one is so absorbed in his own ailments that his business and domestic affairs are utterly neglected, another takes such a list of the concerns of other people that he has no time to look after the health of anything else either of the family or of himself. "Whereas, one has a settled pain that nothing seems to touch, but is otherwise well, another has aches everywhere, one being no sooner got rid of than a successor is found elsewhere to supply its place; whereas, one pins his faith implicitly to every new remedy or doctor he hears of and loses no time in taking the one or consulting the other, another treats drugs and doctors alike with the loftiest disdain, and puts his trust in what he is pleased to call the efficacy of nature; whereas, one believes in the cheese cure and has been benefited by nothing in the way of treatment until Providence put him in the way of this method, another has found even that fail, but has discovered his panacea in Christian Science. "It is among women that nervous debility is most rampant. "Those who belong to the cultured and leisured class of society," says Dr. Rankin, "are the greatest sinners. They become, especially in the earlier half of their womanhood, swept into the whirl of social ambition, and many sacrifice not only their health but their duty to the remorseless demands of the wooden image at whose shrine they worship. "They have neither time nor desire for the ordinary affairs of life; domestic obligations have little claim upon their attention; they find no opportunity for the practice of the old fashioned homely virtues; their lives become a dreary worship of Mammon and a restless search after social novelty and physical excitement. "Prevention of this disease is only possible, Dr. Rankin maintains, by reforming social customs and personal habits. Adherence to simplicity of life and a social disapproval of the immoderate use of alcohol and tobacco would also, he thinks, help toward its extermination.

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