

Pithy Pointers from the Nation's Business

A Page of Interesting Exhibits from the Organ of the Chamber of Commerce of the United States, September 1925, Issue

THE HARDNESS OF VARNISH

Measurements of the hardness of varnish have been made by the Bureau of Standards on samples received for test in the Bureau's-laboratory.

The marked effect of humidity on the measurements was revealed on a very humid day in the laboratory, the bureau reports. To illustrate, a spar varnish with a drying period of two days showed a hardness factor of .333, the relative humidity being 50 per cent. At four days, with a humidity of 60 per cent, the hardness factor was 387. At six days, with a humidity of 80 per cent, the hardness factor was only .240, and seven days, with a humidity of 50 per cent, the hardness factor was .447. The marked decrease in the hardness factor on the sixth day, when the humidity was 80 per cent, is significant.

FOR TESTING BRICK

A portable machine for testing bricks has been designed by Dr. A. H. Stang, of the engineering mechanics section of the Bureau of Standards, and construction is reported virtually completed. The machine will weigh about 40 pounds and is hydraulically operated. The principal dimensions are: height, 16 inches; width, 6 inches; length, 12 inches.

Because of the proposed change in specifications of the American Society for Testing Materials, which will probably eliminate all tests except the cross-bend test, the bureau explains the need for a testing machine is evident. Using the machine designed by Dr. Stang, the Bureau says, an inspector can test bricks on the job and will not need to send specimens to a testing laboratory, thereby avoiding delay in obtaining an indication of the quality of the brick.

A GROWING LIBRARY

A law library which would have been complete, with all of the volumes of American decisions and all of the volumes of American statutes, has recently been calculated to have contained one hundred years ago about 180 volumes of decisions and 60 volumes of statutes. Today, it is said, a library which would be complete in the same sense would contain 18,500 volumes of decisions and 5,500 volumes of statutes. One hundred years in the future, if the increase during the last century is maintained, such a library would have to contain 1,850,000 volumes of decisions and 550,000 volumes of statutes.

U. S. SHIPPING IN THE DOLDRUMS

Shipbuilding may be in the doldrums around the world, as some folk assert, but the center of these doldrums seems to be in the United States. On June 30 of this year the reports showed that in the United States the merchant tonnage under construction aggregated only 92,000. In England one shipbuilding company at the moment had under construction 60,000 tons and was fitting out or repairing 16,000 tons more. It would appear that, however great the depression of shipbuilding may be elsewhere, the American variety of depression in that industry is unknown.

Nation's Business enjoys a great nation wide and a respectable world wide circulation. There are hundreds of subscribers here in Camden and vicinity. There could well be hundreds more. We find the magazine indispensable. Business men who desire to keep step with the times, welcome Nation's Business every thirty days as a safe, dependable and entertaining councilor. These "Cullings" are from the September issue. Ed.

KEEPING UP WITH THE JONESES

Fred Kelly, who writes for "Nation's Business Magazine," talked with Leonard Ayres, the Cleveland statistician, about it.

"The automobile," said Colonel Ayres, "is one of the most highly competitive articles ever sold to the public. If you buy a piano your neighbor's piano doesn't come over and stand alongside of it to show up yours as inferior. But the moment you buy a car you are in competition with your neighbor. You are obliged to look at his car across the street and observe that it is better than yours. Immediately you secretly hope to have a better car just as soon as you can afford it—if not even sooner. No matter whether you're at home or, riding about, your car is in competition with others, always ready to be a symbol of your status, you are almost forced into buying a better car than you can afford."

That reminded Colonel Ayres, too, that the big sale of cars during the last season hasn't been due to an increased demand for cars so much as to the fact that all cars more than a year or two old have suddenly become obsolete. The last season has seen a number of new improvements which have made people willing to dispose of old cars while they were still in good working condition.

WHAT PRICE FIRES

The record shows that nearly 15,000 persons were burned to death last year, and more than 1,600 were injured by fire. Of these persons, 80 per cent were dependents—mothers, children, and inmates of state institutions.

With a total of \$548,810.639, the property loss was the highest ever recorded for the nation—an average of \$1,503,590 a day, or \$1,044 for each minute of the year. That property loss of more than half a billion is more than three times the amount of the Chicago fire loss, and more than any other country has ever endured in one year. Ten years before, the property loss was \$221,437,000—a figure indicating that the United States is now burning more than \$2 where it once burned only one. What will the loss be for 1934?

Fire departments and water supplies are maintained at a cost of another half-billion dollars a year, so that a billion dollars is paid every year to keep fires down and out. If that billion dollars of tribute money were piled up on one side of a road to be paid one dollar at a time on the other side of the road, and if one man began the job, carrying a dollar across the road every minute day and night, the payment would require twenty-seven generations of men, each man living to the age of 70, which means that if the work had been begun twenty-two years after the birth of Christ, it would have been completed just last year. But fire collects a billion dollars from the American people in one year.

That towering pile of dollars would pay for nearly three Panama canals, would pay the salaries of all the teachers and school superintendents in the United States for a year and a half, or would keep the postal service going for nearly two years. Economy and patriotism would be well served could the American people declare "Millions for fire prevention but, not one cent for tribute."

MONEY IN TRIFLES

It sometimes appears that those selling unnecessary articles—goods that people can get along without—fare better than those who deal in necessities. The leading shoe merchant in a thriving city of 40,000 though he has a large investment, and must pay a big rent, has difficulty in showing a clear profit of \$10,000 a year. In the outskirts of the same city a man with a little store only about 12 feet square, with a trifling rental, sells soft drinks, cigarettes, candy, ice cream, toy balloons, automobile pennants and similar articles. His entire investment is never \$1,000 at any one time and yet he says he is making nearly \$1,000 a month. Pretty soft we'd say.