

For years past I have pointed out the danger of fire caused by the wax match commonly in use. The striking immunity from fires for a long series of years in South Australia some time ago was attributed principally to the almost exclusive use in the State, during that time, of the safety-match ; and Dr. von Schwartz, in his " Fire and Explosion Risks," states, " Statistical reports show that, in certain years, 80 per cent. of the total outbreaks of fire were caused by matches, either dropped or trodden on, thrown down whilst still glowing, or used as playthings by children." The following, bearing on this subject, is taken from the *Australian Fireman* :—

" Out of nearly six thousand fires in Chicago, more than one-sixth were due to the careless use of the ' criminal match.' The campaign against the latter, which is now assuming considerable force and proportions (will be pushed vigorously until none but safety-matches can be obtained in the United States. Even then, burning matches carelessly thrown away after use will be responsible for many fires. State Marshal Sullivan, of New Orleans, has issued an edict against the ' criminal match '—that is, the ordinary friction-match which can be ignited on any surface. He has announced that it must go and be replaced wholly by the safety-match. In Harrisburg, Pa., a short time ago a friction-match, dropped on the floor of a cellar, was stepped upon and resulted in a property-loss of 300,000 dollars. Had this been a safety-match no fire would have occurred. In many up-to-date European countries the ' criminal match ' which ignites on anything is outlawed, and safety-matches are required to be used exclusively."

In continuation of previous reports on the subject, the following, bearing on the efficacy of holding inquiries into the origin of all fires, is interesting :—

Dr. F. J. Waldo, City Coroner, reporting on his work during 1910, under the City of London Fire Inquests Act, states that although in only two cases was a public inquest considered necessary, he personally, with the assistance of the police and the Coroner's officers, inquired into the causes and circumstances of 152 fires. " This system of personal investigation at the site of fires," he adds, " has been the means of preventing the oversight of any case of fire which should be publicly inquired into, whilst at the same time the cause of many fires has thereby been ascertained, and the expense of unnecessary inquests prevented. In 125 of the 152 fires the causes were determined, leaving only 27 fires the causes of which could not be ascertained." The past year was especially remarkable for the small number of serious fires occurring within the boundaries of the city, a favourable result, which Dr. Waldo thinks may be in part, at any rate, attributed to the working of the City Fire Inquests Act. It is to be noted that in only two cases was it necessary to hold public inquests ; the remaining 150 fires were inquired into personally, and " the expense of unnecessary inquests prevented." The Act referred to is a special Act operating over the city-area only, and not throughout the County of London.

Appended are the following tables :—

- 1. Summary of calls attended by each brigade.
- 2. Fire loss in each district.
- 3. Annual cost of each brigade.
- 4. Summary of the causes of fires in each district.
- 5. *Personnel* and equipment of each brigade ; also detailed reports dealing with each fire district.

I have, &c.,
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1. SUMMARY OF FIRE CALLS.

District.	Fires.	Chimney Fires.	Bush, Grass, and Rubbish Fires.	False Alarms.	Out of District.	Total.
Auckland	78	8	16	57	8	167
Christchurch	69	4	6	162	12	253
Dannevirke	7	2	..	..	..	9
Dunedin	75	13	17	20	3	128
Feilding	7	1	1	1	..	10
Gisborne	20	1	..	..	3	24
Greymouth	4	..	2	..	..	6
Hastings	8	..	..	..	..	8
Hawera	6	..	..	..	..	6
Hokitika	6	..	2	..	..	8
Lawrence	3	..	..	..	..	3
Maori Hill	2	1	2	3	..	8
Masterton	12	2	2	3	1	20
Milton	3	..	..	..	..	3
New Plymouth	10	2	..	..	..	12
Oamaru	9	..	..	..	..	9
Palmerston North	33	6	3	4	2	48
Petone	12	2	..	1	..	15
Whangarei	52	1	1	..	..	4
Totals	366	43	52	251	29	741