

BOILER INSPECTION.

Massachusetts Claims to Have the Work Exceedingly Well Done.

From The Boston Globe.

Boston in particular and Massachusetts in general have many good things peculiar to themselves for which they are duly thankful, but perhaps the one thing in which the Commonwealth and its capital are favored far beyond any other section of the country is in the matter of boiler explosions. While the other parts of the country in the last three years have been devastated by nearly 1,500 explosions, which have been more or less serious and wrought considerable destruction to life and property, the Bay State has not recorded one.

The State possesses a corps of boiler Inspectors who do their work so well that almost every chance of a boiler explosion has been eliminated. For it is mainly through their efforts that this sort of accident has been prevented for the last few years.

The boiler Inspectors are connected with the district police and form a very important branch of this service. They are responsible to Chief Wade for their actions, and it was he who reorganized the department so thoroughly and brought it into its present splendid condition.

The boiler Inspectors are ten in number, and each one has his own particular district to look after. The Inspectors have to deal only with those boilers which carry no insurance. The latter are regularly inspected by the company which takes them as a risk, and they do not come under the jurisdiction of the State Inspectors. A very large proportion of the boilers in Massachusetts carry no insurance, and no figures are at hand to determine the exact number, but from the books of the Inspectors those without insurance must be near one-half of the total if not more than that.

According to the latest figures from the report of Chief Wade, his ten Inspectors made examination on 2,814 boilers during the past year in all parts of the State and found only thirty-six which should be condemned. On the other boilers inspected there were in many instances defects which had to be remedied, and some of them were serious, and the parties who owned the boilers were called upon to make repairs before their licenses would be renewed.

The Boiler Inspector's art is one that is very little known. The Inspector must be a man of many capabilities and have a very general knowledge besides some natural gifts which will enable him to do his work.

In the first place he must have an ear for music, not that he must be a performer or able to read a difficult composition from one of the old masters offhand, but his ear must be well trained to appreciate good music and true sounds and to know the minute he hears a false one. For boilers are inspected by ear almost entirely.

The Inspector's chief instrument is a little hammer, very similar to one which geologists carry. With it he sounds every portion of a boiler's shell, looking for the least suspicion of a crack or break. These occur most frequently at the seams where two plates of the boiler come together, and they have been the cause of more than half the loss to life and property that has occurred in the country on account of boiler explosions.

"Formerly," said Mr. Dyer, "it was the custom in building a boiler to lap the plates over each other and to secure them by a double and sometimes triple row of rivets. In the clamping of these rivets and the screwing up of the bolts the plates between them were frequently cracked, sometimes imperceptibly to the eye or ear, and they went along for months perhaps before they did any damage. Then they went up with a crash that caused much destruction.

"Now in building boilers it is the custom not to lap the plates as formerly, but to cover the seam that is made when they come together by long strips on the inside and outside and to rivet these. Thus there is no chance for any cracking or breaking and no insidious and unseen defects can creep in that are very hard to find or very apt to be dangerous.

"Our work is not very well known. A man who inspects a boiler is not given very much thought by the public, as a rule, and few people realize exactly how important is his position. We work inside and outside of the boiler and have to make a thorough inspection of the shell, the tubes, the braces, and all the other parts.

"When the boiler is large enough we have to crawl inside of it and make a thorough examination in that manner. If it is not large enough we have to make our inside examination by means of our hammer and our ear or other means, as the occasion and situation demands."

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