

TOPICS OF THE TIMES.

**Better Let
It All
Come Out.**

If the officials and employees of the Standard Oil Company ever in Elizabeth withhold knowledge of what happened last week in their Bayway experimental laboratory, they will not show the wisdom usually characteristic of that large corporation. Concealment, or even an attempt at it, will result in making a bad matter worse, or at least in throwing suspicion around what in all probability was merely an unfortunate accident.

Of course, there was no intention to harm the men who have been working with ethylene in an endeavor to find a way to increase the efficiency of gasoline by rendering more nearly perfect its combustion, and presumably what were supposed to be adequate precautions in the shape of gas masks were taken. It seems to have been the general impression that the investigation in progress had its dangers, but these were not taken seriously and were a subject of jesting rather than of apprehension.

Ethylene, which lately came into use as an anesthetic, has been acclaimed as safer than either chloroform or ether, and it has been administered to animals with frequency and for long periods without causing injury. Yet the men in the laboratory reacted in a way that showed them, apparently, to be the victims of a cumulative poison—one, that is, which does not produce noticeable effects until after it has accumulated in the system in considerable quantities.

This peculiarity has suggested that the men suffered, not from the ethylene which in small quantities, in spite of their masks, they had been breathing for some weeks, but from some as yet unknown impurity in the gas as prepared. Their symptoms, after their resistance was overcome, were those of delirium or mania, and one of them has died. Others, less deeply affected, are expected to recover as soon as the mysterious poison can be eliminated.

All these phenomena no doubt will be closely observed by the company's chemists, and the store of knowledge will be increased—not for the first time at deplorable cost.