

Success and Failure.

Peary failed to reach the North Pole, but he got nearer to that elusive proposition than any other of the numerous explorers who have tried to penetrate to that arctic region that has been so long an undiscovered country. He was within 191 miles of the pole, a short distance from the point desired, if the transportation in the frozen north were equal to our own in the matter of speed over good railroads. Peary beat the record of Capt. Cagni of the Italian Duke of Abruzzi expedition by over 50 miles, and is to be praised for his persistency and courage, but, nevertheless, many are asking what particular good has been accomplished by his efforts? Even if he had reached the regions where it is claimed there are 3,000,000 square miles of unoccupied territory, would this have been of any benefit to humanity at large? asks Boston Budget. Would the country have been inhabitable, and if it were, how would intending settlers ever get there through the icy barriers that would oppose their progress on all sides? Possibly in the distant future, modern inventiveness might be able to make journeying to the pole comparatively easy, so that even excursion parties might go there on pleasure trips, but at present this seems to be as little likely of realization as would be a trip to Mars on a flying machine. However, man is an inquiring animal, and is always wanting to eat of the tree of knowledge, and if only his curiosity would be gratified by the invasion of the North Pole, there would be some advancement made in developing the spirit of enterprise without which there is no progress in any acknowledged practical direction. Science would be benefited by the discovery, if nothing else came from it for the prosperity of mankind. Peary has not attained the summit of his ambition, but that will not discourage others from trying to outdo him. His example will encourage them to venture farther than he did, for as he followed others he will have, no doubt, many successors. The best solace that Peary has in his defeat is the faith that his wife exhibited during his silent absence in his ability to return to her unharmed, even though she knew from experience all the difficulties and dangers of arctic travel.

National Department of Health.

The plea made by Prof. Norton of Yale university for a national department of health is not to be ignored, remarks the Troy Times. Yale has taken up the matter, and other institutions and men of high professional standing are giving attention. A bulletin put forth by Yale's department of social science reminds the American people that the four causes of waste of human life and energy are preventable death, preventable sickness, preventable conditions of low physical and mental efficiency and preventable ignorance, and urges action by the people through the government to check this waste. Prof. Norton asserts that not less than 750,000 lives can be saved in the United States annually by the employment of proper means, and he puts the economic side of the question in almost startling form. Estimating wages at one dollar per day, which no doubt is far below the average, the professor shows that the yearly loss by illness is considerably over \$1,000,000,000, while by the methods proposed at least half this sum could be saved. In an era notable for the economizing of force, that is a statement to compel serious thought.

Lowest Telegraph Rates.

Spelling reform has had a new and important development in a direction which no one has heretofore thought of. In Europe messages are charged for according to the number of letters, instead of words, as in this country. All trans-Atlantic messages from America are charged for by letter in accordance with the European system. The adoption of spelling reform will cause a modification of the schedules of the international telegraphic companies, and the consequent saving of money. For example, "thru" will have to be charged for as four letters instead of six, as formerly, and so on through the entire list. It will cause no trouble to the operators, because they for years have been using the shortest form by which words could be spelled without possibility of mistake. Consequently they will have nothing new to learn.

Out in Los Angeles there is a burglar who has recently been busy stealing oil paintings. This will come as a surprise to people who have supposed Los Angeles to be a place where there was nothing but a few fruit warehouses and a real estate boom.

Mr. Edison promises a cheap motor car, and M. Santos Dumont is satisfied that his new aeroplane will be the best runabout. Meanwhile the walking will be good, provided pedestrians are expert at dodging.



THE INVENTIONS OF HAWKINS

By EDGAR FRANKLIN

THE CHEMICO-SPRINKLER SYSTEM.

The gathering at the Hawkins' home that night was, I suppose, in the nature of a house-warming. The Blossoms, the Ridgeways, the Eldridges, the Gordons were there, in addition to perhaps a dozen and a half other people whom I had never met. Also, Mr. Blodgett was there.

Old Mr. Blodgett is Hawkins' father-in-law. There is a Mrs. Blodgett, too, but she is really too sweet an old lady to be placed in the mother-in-law category.

Blodgett, however, makes up for any deficiencies on his wife's part in the traditional traits. He seems to have analyzed Hawkins with expert care and precision—to have appraised and classified his character and attainments to a nicety.

Consequently, Hawkins and Mr. Blodgett are rarely to be observed wandering hither and thither with their arms about each other's waists.

Finally, I was there myself with my wife.

It seems almost superfluous to mention my presence. Whenever Hawkins is on the verge of trouble with one of his contrivances, some esoteric force seems to sweep me along in his direction with resistless energy.

Sometimes I wonder what Hawkins did for a victim before we met—but let that be.

Dinner had been lively, for the guests were mainly young, and the wines such as Hawkins can afford; but when we had assembled in the drawing-room, conversation seemed to slow down somewhat, and to pass over to a languid discussion of the house as a sort of relaxation.

Then it was that a pert miss from one of the Oranges remarked: "Yes, the frescino is lovely—almost all of it. But—whoever could have designed that frieze, Mr. Hawkins?"

"Er—that frieze?" repeated the inventor, a little uncomfortably, indicating the insane-looking strip of painting a foot or so wide which ran along under the ceiling.

"Yes, it's so funny. Nothing but dots and dots and dots. Whoever could have conceived such an idea?"

"Well, I did, Miss Mather," Hawkins replied. "I designed that myself."

"Oh, did you?" murmured the inquisitive one, going red.

Hawkins turned to me, and the girl subsided; but old Mr. Blodgett had overheard. He felt constrained to put in, with his usual tactful thought and grating, nasal voice:

"It's hideous—simply hideous. I don't see—I can't see the sense in spending that amount of money in plastering painted roses and undressed young ones all over the ceiling, Herbert."

"No?" said Hawkins, between his teeth.

"Folly—pure folly," grunted the old gentleman. "No reason for it—no reason under the sun."

Hawkins at least reserves family dissensions for family occasions. He held his peace and his tongue.

"Yes, sir," persisted Blodgett, "everything else out of the question, the house might catch fire to-night, and your entire stock of painted babies go up in smoke. Then where'd they be? Eh?"

"See here," said Hawkins, goaded into speech, "you just keep your mind easy on that score at least, will you, papa, dear?"

"What's that? What's that?"

"This house isn't going up in smoke," went on the inventor, tartly. "You can take my word for it."

"Isn't, eh?" jeered the elderly Blodgett with his nasty sneering little chuckle. "And how do you know it's not? Eh? Smarter men than you, my boy, and in better built houses have—"

"Look here! This particular place isn't going to burn, because—" Hawkins rapped out.

"What isn't going to burn, Herbert?" inquired Mrs. Hawkins, with a cold, warning glance at her husband as she perceived that hostilities were in progress. "Is he teasing you again, papa?"

"Teasing me!" sniffed Blodgett with an unpleasant leer at Hawkins.

"Teasing that antiquity!" Hawkins growled in my ear. "Say, isn't that enough to—"

"Don't whisper, Herbert—it isn't polite," continued Mrs. Hawkins, the playfulness of her manner somewhat belied by the glitter in her eye. "Let us all into the secret."

I do! There isn't anything sweeter waiting for me in Heaven than to feel myself emptying a pan of dishwasher on that old reprobate from one of the upper windows.

"Why, Griggs, sometimes in the night I dream I have him on the floor, that I'm just getting even for some of the things he's said to me and about me, and I wake up in a dripping perspiration and—"

"Stop, Hawkins!" I guffawed. "Strikes you funny, too, does it?"

"The inventor cried angrily. 'I suppose you think it's all right for him to talk as he does? Criticize my decorations, tell me they'll all burn up some day, and all that?'"

"Well, but they might."

"They might not!" shouted Hawkins in a fury. "You don't know any more about it than he does. You couldn't burn up this house if you soaked every carpet in it with oil!"

"Why not?"

"Aha! Why not? That's just the point. Why not, to be sure? Because it's all prepared for ahead of time."

"Private wire to the engine-house?" I queried.

"Private wire to Halifax! There's no private wire about it. See here, Griggs, do you suppose that poor little brain of yours could comprehend a truly great idea?"

"It could try," I said, meekly.

"Then listen. You remember those dots on the frieze all through the house? You do? All right. Just close your eyes and conceive a little metal tube running back into the wall. Imagine the little tube opening into a large supply pipe in the wall."

"Is that clear? Then conceive that the supply pipe in each room connects

a wooden affair, lined with lead. Over the top, and some two feet above the tank proper, the heavy cover was suspended by a weird system of pulleys and electric wires. To the under side of the cover was fastened a big glass sphere filled with white stuff.

It was a remarkable contrivance. "There—that's simple, isn't it?" said Hawkins, with a happy smile. "It may be if you understand it."

"Why, just look here. See that big glass ball? That's full of marble dust—carbonate of lime, you know. The tank is filled with weak sulphuric acid. When the ball drops into the acid—what happens?"

"You have a nasty job fishing it out again?"

"Not at all. It smashes into flinders, the marble dust combines with the sulphuric acid, and forms a neutral liquid, bubbling with carbonic acid. Even you, Griggs, must know that carbonic acid gas will put out any fire, without damaging anything. There you are."

"I see. You smell fire, rush up here and knock that ball into the tank, and the house is flooded through the dots in your frieze. Remarkable!"

"Oh, I don't even have to come up here," smiled Hawkins. "See that?"

"That" was a little strand of platinum wire in a niche in the wall.

"That's just a test fuse, so that I can see that she's all in working order," pursued the inventor, leaning his cigar against it. "There's half a dozen of them in every room in the house. As soon as the heat touches them, they melt and set off my electric release—and down drops the cover of the tank—and all the ball breaks, the valve at the bottom opens

"I'm sure I don't know."

"But I had it up-stairs. We were both smoking."

"So you did," I said. "The last I saw of it you leaned it against that fuse thing—"

"Great Scott! That's what I did!" gasped the inventor, turning white. "Well, what of it?"

"Why, suppose the infernal thing has burned down to the fuse!" cried Hawkins, hoarsely. "Suppose it melts through the wire and sends down that top!"

"Will it start the stuff running?"

"Start it! Of course it'll start it. Gee whizz! I'm going up there now, Griggs!"

Hawkins made for the stairs. I smiled after him, for he seemed rather worked up.

I turned back to the dancers. It was a pretty scene. To the rhythm of a particularly seductive waltz, the guests were gliding about the floor. I noted the gay colors of the ladies' gowns, the flowers, the sparkling diamonds.

And then—then I noted the frieze! My eyes seemed instinctively to travel to that stretch of ugliness—they fastened upon the dots with a kind of fascination. And none too soon.

From one of the dots spurted forth what looked like a tiny stream of water. Another followed and another and yet another. The whole multitude of dots were raining liquid upon the dancers from all sides of the room!

The streams came from north, east, south and west. They came from the hallway behind me—a hundred of them seemed to converge upon my devoted back. I was fairly soaked through in a second.



The Streams Came from North, East, South and West.

with a supply in the rear of the house, and that the big pipe terminates—or rather begins—in a big tank on the top floor?"

"But what on earth is it all?"

"It's the Hawkins Chemico-Sprinkler System!" announced the inventor. "For the Lord's sake!" I gasped.

"Yes, sir! It's something like the sprinkling system you see in factories, but all concealed—perfectly adapted to private house purposes. Every one of those dots is simply a little hole in the wall through which, in case of fire, will flow quart after quart of my chemical fire-extinguisher! How's that?"

"Er—is the tank full?" I asked, gliding hurriedly away from the wall.

"Of course it is. Oh, sit where you were, C—Griggs, don't drag in that asinine clownishness of yours. Or, better still, come up with me and see the business end of the thing—the tank and all that."

"The stuff isn't inflammable, is it? We're smoking, you know."

"An inflammable fire-extinguishing liquid!" cried Hawkins. "Why, can't you understand that—bah!"

He laid a course to the upper regions and I followed.

"Out here in the extension," he explained, when we reached the top floor. "There!"

automatically—and down goes the tank, full of extinguisher."

"Well, I must say it looks practical."

"It is!" asserted Hawkins. "Some night—if the night ever comes—when you see a roaring blaze in one of these rooms subdued in ten seconds by the gentle drizzle that comes out of that frieze, you will—"

"Mr. Hawkins, sir," interrupted Hawkins' butler at the door.

"Well, William?"

"Mrs. Hawkins, sir, she says as how your presence is desired down-stairs."

"Oh, all right," said the inventor, wearily. "I'll be down directly."

"No rest for the wicked," he commented to me. "Come on, Griggs, we'll have to dance."

"The festivity was in full swing when we descended.

Mrs. Hawkins came over to us and remarked in low tones to her spouse: "Now just try to make yourself agreeable, Herbert. It's not nice for you to steal away and smoke."

The panic can hardly be fancied. Men and women shrieked together in the utter amazement of the thing. They laughed aloud, some of them. Others cried out in terror.

They leaped and sprang back and forth, to this side and that, in the vain endeavor to dodge the innumerable streams. Some slipped and almost fell, carrying down others with them. And all were doused.

Then, as suddenly as it had started, the food ceased.

"Well, God bless my soul!" ejaculated Mr. Blodgett, putting up a hand to wring his collar. "What in Heaven's name happened?"

"Great Caesar's ghost!" said Hawkins' voice behind me.

He had returned from his trip to the top floor extension.

"It's all right," he called with cheery indifference to the contrary sentiments of two dozen people. "There's no danger. It won't hurt you."

"But it does. It bites!" cried the girl from Jersey. "What is it? Where did it come from?"

"Yes, it does bite! It smarts awfully! By Jove! The stuff's eating me! What is it, Hawkins? Oh, Mr. Hawkins, wherever did it come from? Why, it ran out of those dots—I saw it! What is it?" echoed from different parts of the room.

"It's only my sprinkler—my fire-extinguisher," Hawkins explained. "It went off by accident, you see. There's nothing in it to hurt you. It's

perfectly neutral. It can't bite—that's imagination."

"But it does!" cried Mrs. Gordon. "It stings like acid. It actually seems to be eating my skin!"

"Bite! I should say it did!" growled Mr. Blodgett. "It's chewing my hands off—I believe it's carbolic acid. I do—I'll swear I do. No smell—but it's been deodorized. That's it—carbolic acid!"

"Carbolic fiddlesticks!" said Hawkins.

Then a puzzled expression came into his eyes. He raised one of his wet hands and tasted it—and spat violently.

"Say! Hold on! Wait a minute!" he cried.

Hawkins darted off up-stairs. I could hear him bounding along, two steps at a time, until he reached the top.

Silence ensued for a few seconds, save for an exclamation here and there, as one or another of the guests discovered that his or her neck or ear or arm was smarting.

Then the servants piled up from below. They, too, were wet and frightened. They, too, had discovered that the liquid emitted by the Hawkins Chemico-Sprinkler System bit into the human epidermis like fire.

"That is it? That is it?" the cook was drearily intoning, when hurrying footsteps turned my attention once more to the stairs.

Hawkins was coming down at a gallop. In his arms he carried a keg, which dribbled white powder over the beautiful carpet.

"Say," he shouted to me. "That ball didn't bust!"

"It didn't?" I cried.

"No! There's no marble dust in the stuff!" said the inventor, landing on the floor with a final jump and tearing into the parlor. "It's pure, diluted sulphuric acid!"

"Acid!" shrieked a dozen ladies. "Yes!" growled Hawkins, depositing his keg on the floor. "But we'll get the best of it. William, bring up a wash-tub full of water! Mary, go get all the washrags in the house! Quick!"

The homely household articles arrived within a minute or two.

"Now," continued Hawkins, dumping half the keg into the tub. "That's baking soda. It'll neutralize the acid. Here, everybody. Dip a rag in here and wash off the acid."

"Oh, hang propriety and decency and conventionality and all the rest of it!" he vociferated as some of the ladies, quite warrantably hung back. "Get at the acid before it gets at you! Don't you—can't you understand? It'll burn into your skin in a little while! Come on!"

There was no hesitation after that. Men and women alike made frantically for the tub, dipped cloths in the liquid, and laved industriously hands and arms and cheeks that were already sore and burning.

Picture the scene: A dozen women in evening dress, a dozen men in swallow-tails, clustered around a wash-tub there in Hawkins' parlor, working for dear life with the soaking cloths.

Ludicrous, impossible, it was just the sort of thing that could happen under Hawkins' roof and nowhere else—barring perhaps a retreat for the insane.

Later the excitement subsided. The ladies, disheveled as to hair, carrying costumes whose glory had departed forever, retired to the chambers above for such further repairs as might be possible. The men, too, under William's guidance, went to draw upon Hawkins' wardrobe for clothes in which to return home.

The inventor, Mr. Blodgett, and myself were left together in the drawing-room.

"Well, it's a good thing that was diluted acid instead of strong, isn't it, Griggs?" remarked Hawkins. "Originally I had intended using the strong acid, you know, for the reason—"

"Aaah!" cried Mr. Blodgett. "So that was more of your imbecile inventing, was it? Fire-extinguisher! Bah! I thought nobody but you could have conceived the idea like that! What under the sun did you let off your infernal contrivance for?"

"Oh, I just did it to spite you, papa," said Hawkins, with weary sarcasm.

"By George, sir, I believe you did!" snapped the old gentleman. "It's like you! Look at my coat, sir! Look at—"

I was edging away when Mrs. Hawkins entered. She was clad in somber black now, and her cheeks flamed scarlet with mortification.

"Well!" she exclaimed.

"Well, my dear," said Hawkins, bracing himself.

"A pretty mess you've made of our house-warming, haven't you? You and your idiotic fire-extinguisher!"

"Madam, my Chemico-Sprinkler system is one—"

"And not only the evening spoiled, and half our friends so enraged at you that they'll never enter the house again, but do you know what you'll have to pay for? Miss Mather's dress alone, I happen to know, cost \$200! And Mrs. Gordon's gown came from Paris last week—\$450! And I was with Nellie Ridgeway the day she bought that white satin dress she had on. It cost—"

"Glad of it!" interposed Blodgett, with a sardonic chuckle. "Serves him jolly well right! If you'd listened to me 15 years ago, Edith, when I told you not to marry that fool—"

"Griggs! W-w-w-where are you going?" Hawkins called, weakly.

"Home!" I said, decidedly, making for the hall. "I think my wife's ready. And I'm afraid my hair's loosening up, too, where your fire-extinguisher wet it. Good night."

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