

ABOUT GAS METERS.

WHY THESE ERRATIC INSTRUMENTS DO NOT EXPLODE.

Such an Accident is No More Likely to Happen to Them Than to Milk Bottles or Salt Bags—What Does Happen in Case of Fire.

The proneness of the average newspaper reporter to attribute cellar conflagrations to the explosion of gas meters represents what appears to be an inviolable race trait. No amount of contradiction and no accumulation of proof that such an accident is an impossibility seems to reach the news-gatherers, who go on reporting the explosion of gas meters, doubtless because the firemen have a tradition that meters are explosive and give this explanation of every fire which they cannot otherwise account for.

For the reassurance of nervous people it gives us pleasure to say that no gas meter ever exploded since the world began, and until they are made on very different plans and contain gas of very different composition from that now used for illuminating purposes such an accident is no more likely to happen to them than to milk bottles or salt bags.

The domestic gas meter has a more or less well deserved reputation for habitual mendacity, though as likely to lie against the gas company as for it; but it has never done anything to warrant the suspicion that it is liable to go off with a bang. It is a tin box of a little less than one cubic foot capacity, put together with soldered seams and japanned.

Into and through it passes the gas, which enters through the service pipe connecting the main with the house, usually of half an inch diameter. It has very little capacity for gas storage, and is not strong enough to carry gas under a greater compression than, say, half a pound per square inch. More than this would bulge its sides. In point of fact the pressure of gas in meters is rarely more than enough to balance a column of water two or three inches high.

If a gas meter is exposed to great heat from external fire, nothing very serious happens. The soldered seams will probably melt, allowing the gas to escape. This gas is not explosive, however. It becomes so only when mixed with air in certain definite proportions.

Should this admixture exist in a meter, which is almost impossible, its shell is not strong enough to offer any great resistance, and should an explosion occur by reason of fire reaching this admixture of gas and air the meter would be wrecked, but it is doubtful if any other damage would result. None has been wrecked from this cause.

If the seams of the meter are opened by the melting of the solder or by fracture from accident, the gas within it would escape, and, if it had the chance, burn. Outside the meter it might have opportunity to form the explosive mixture with air and do some damage.

What actually happens in the case of fires attributed to the explosion of gas meters is usually this: Gas which has leaked from defective pipes or worked into the cellar from broken or defective street mains accumulates in pockets formed by rafters and elsewhere and remains there until it comes in contact with an accidental fire of some sort. A fire starts in the cellar and the temperature gradually rises until the smoldering rubbish bursts into flame. This releases the mixture of gas and air along the ceiling and an explosion follows.

The meter, naturally enough, is thrown down and probably torn from its connections, and the conclusion is reached that, instead of being the victim of the accident, the inoffensive meter is the cause of all the trouble and has indulged its inherent propensity to set the house afire after lifting it from its foundations.

It is a perfectly safe generalization that the gas which makes trouble in cellars is wholly outside the meter and never inside of it. Grindstones sometimes explode with fatal results in saw factories, but the excellent old lady who, after reading of such an accident and recalling that there was an old grindstone in one corner of the cellar which had been there twenty years, hired a couple of tramps to carry it to the extreme corner of the garden and pour water on it for an hour, meanwhile giving thanks that it had not blown herself and family into eternity "unbeknownst to any of us," was of the type of those who, through fear of gas meter explosions, are all their lifetime subject to nervous chills.

There is not a gas meter in use under which it would not be perfectly safe to build a bonfire, provided, of course, there was not a quantity of gas outside of it which the same fire could reach.—New York Times.

Why Snow is Not Black or Red. Why is the snow white? is a question frequently asked. Because black snow would be dangerous; so would red or yellow. These are "warming up colors," and they change the sun's rays to heat. Such snow would soon melt again and prove a very poor protection. But white snow throws back the sunlight in just the form in which it receives it, and thus the snow can be long on the ground. Throw dirt on the snow and its dark color quickly makes it eat its way in whenever the sun shines on it. After a snowstorm, once let the horses' feet mingle the dirt of the road with the snow and sleighing will soon be over.—Professor S. C. Schmecker in Ladies' Home Journal.

To be sure, faint heart never won fair lady, but, on the other hand, discretion is seldom sued for breach of promise.—Indianapolis News.

Chicago—Bustle and Slouch.

In general, we live beneath a sky within a sky, and our funeral pall, while it occasionally lightens, seldom lifts altogether. Whether the newcomer approaches along the bluffs and ravines of the north or through the swamps and marshes of the south or over the wide stretching prairies of the west the dan trappings of the great horror show from afar. As he rattles along through perky suburban settlements or honest truck farms or half dried swales and disheveled swamps the horror grows.

Across the wide fields—gay with this year's flowers or somber with last year's weeds—separating the raw huddles of workers' cottages, tangles of telegraph poles and of trolley wires, lead on the eye toward ugly, shapeless hulks looming above the dingy horizon—foundries, elevators, machine shops, breweries, factories, icehouses—detached notes that preclude the great discord to come. Then avenues of tracks, shut in by the shameless backs of things and spanned by grimy viaducts; arrays of mean streets doggedly curtained against the sun and resolutely fighting off the sweet country airs.

The heart stinks, the stomach revolts as, through dirt, dust, grime, soot, smoke and cinders the trembling neophyte bumps and jars along toward the besmirched shrine of the two faced goddess of Bustle and Slouch.—Henry R. Fuller in Outlook.

Absurd Fashions.

Some of the fashions in France during the reign of Queen Marie were exceedingly absurd, particularly hair-dressing and hats, which were trimmed with such an extravagant wealth of feathers that the coaches had to have their seats lowered. According to Mme. Campan, "mothers and husbands murmured, and the general rumor was that the queen would ruin the French ladies."

One day Louis XVI. decided to forbid the court in a body to follow the royal hunt in coaches. In order to be freer he wished only to permit real sportsmen to attend. The noble ladies immediately rebelled, and the Princess of Monaco criticised the decision by means of her headdress, upon which arose a miniature royal coach, followed by two gentlemen on foot in gaiters. On the left of this was displayed a cypress garnished with black tapers, the large roots being formed of crape.

More absurd still was the hair-dressing of the mother of Louis Philippe, upon whose head every one could admire her son, the Duc de Beaujolais, in the arms of his nurse as well as a parrot pecking at a cherry.

A Matter of Opinion.

She had been having fun with Dudekins a long time, and he made up what mind he had to get even. It took the form of a brilliant and cogent conundrum, whose answer Dudekins thought was locked in his manly bosom.

"I have a conundrum for you, Miss Fannie," he said, when he saw her text.

"Ah," she replied, "what is it? Who gave it to you?"

"I made it up myself," he asserted, briding somewhat.

"Indeed? What is it?"

"Why are my clothes like the moon?"

She hesitated for a moment and Dudekins began to look triumphant.

"You may think," she said slowly, and Dudekins somehow felt the sand slipping from under him, "it is because they have a man in them, and you have a perfect right to think as you please, but, Mr. Dudekins, opinions differ."—London Tit-Bits.

Zeno's Paradox.

Many persons will recall the famous paradox of Zeno by which he sought to prove that all motion is impossible.

"A body," he argued, "must move either in a place where it is or in a place where it is not. Now, a body in the place where it is stationary and cannot be in motion, nor, obviously, can it be in motion in the place where it is not. Therefore it cannot move at all."

Bodies do move, however, and that is a sufficient answer to the ingenious philosopher.

Had a Better Story.

"Did you see the account of that flash of lightning that burned the hair from a boy's head without otherwise hurting him?"

"I did," answered the cheerful liar, "and I was pained to note the incompleteness of the story. Now, I happen to know of a case that is really remarkable. The lightning entered a barber's shop and not only undertook the task of singeing a man's hair, but it rung up the proper amount on the cash register."—Exchange.

Heads Turned Red by Eating.

Mocking birds are great epicures in their way, feeding on oranges, the berries of the palmetto and those of the china tree, apples, pears, cherries, peaches, blackberries and other small fruits. On the island of Key West they eat so freely the bright red prickly pears that grow on a kind of cactus that their bills, heads and throats become dyed as if with vermilion.

A Suggestion.

Mrs. De Blinks—No, sir, you cannot have my daughter with my consent. I detest you, and I wish I could think of some way to make you miserable.

Mr. Hicks—Well, then, why not become my mother-in-law?

Bicycles are generally considered a very modern invention, but some of the Egyptian obelisks, it is said, bear figures mounted on two wheeled vehicles resembling the old velocipedes.

Just as you are pleased at finding faults you are displeased at finding perfection.—Lavater.

Portuguese Hotel Clocks.

It is the fashion for Portuguese clocks to strike the hour twice over. Heaven only knows why, for certainly the people are not so keen about the profitable use of their time that they require to be reminded thus of its flight. The habit is apt to be irritating, especially in the night, when your bed, like enough a straw mattress and a bran pillow, chances to be near one of these monsters which dings its four and twenty strokes at midnight, with a pause between the dozens which merely stimulates expectation. If there are five clocks in the establishment, all with sonorous works—and the supposition is reasonable—they will, of course, differ widely, so that twenty-four may be striking, with intervals, during a maddening half hour.

You may happen to want to know badly which one of the monsters is the least mendacious, and the bells at your bed head communicate with two servants, one a Gallego and the other a Portuguese. In such a case ring for the despised stranger without hesitation. He will be with you in a minute, fresh and smiling, though half naked, and if he distrusts his own judgment about the clocks he will not mind saying so and hasten to awaken the landlord himself rather than that you should remain in doubt.

I regret to add that his more conceited fellow servant will more probably say whatever first comes to his tongue, more heedful of his own comfort than of your desires.—Chambers' Journal.

The Last Gladiatorial Combat.

Gladiatorial games were prohibited by an edict of the Emperor Constantine in A. D. 325, but from some cause, probably the loudly expressed disapprobation of the people, the edict was allowed to fall into disuse, and its penalties were never visited on its violators. During the reign of Honorius the defeat of the Goths in Italy was celebrated by games, but in the midst of the fights in the amphitheater of Vespasian a monk named Telemachus found his way into the arena and parted the combatants with a large professional cross.

The populace swarmed over the barricades and tore the monk to pieces, but the moral effect of the heroic act was permanent, and in A. D. 404 an imperial edict abolished gladiatorial sports in the Coliseum and shortly after throughout the Roman empire. The fight stopped by Telemachus was the last in the Coliseum, and that structure is now consecrated to the honor of Telemachus and the Christian martyrs who perished in the persecutions by Nero and other emperors.

Two Cruel Punishments.

The gantlope, or gantlet, was military and naval punishment for theft. A man had to run the gantlet of a long file of his fellow soldiers, each provided with a switch, and to prevent the sinner going too rapidly and to see that no man, impelled by motives of friendliness or kindness, failed to strike hard, a sergeant walked backward, facing the said sinner, with a halberd pointed at the latter's breast.

After a lengthy experiment this was found to be inconvenient and degrading, so recourse was had to another method, a variety of the same species of torture. The offender was tied to four halberds, three in a triangle and a fourth across. The regiment or company then filed off, the cat-o-nine-tails was placed in the hands of the first man, who gave the culprit a lash and passed on, handing the cat to the second, who also gave a lash, and so the game went merrily on until the offense had been expiated.—London Graphic.

Cats.

There are two curious things about cats that are not generally known. Yellow hairs, however few in number, always indicate the female. No male ever had the slightest tint of yellow. That is one curiosity, and the other is that a blue eyed cat is always deaf. To be sure, blue eyed cats are scarce, and it is possible that some deaf cats may not be blue eyed; but wherever you find a blue eyed cat that feline is absolutely incapable of hearing thunder.

Ancient Builders.

In Lahore there is or was a massive building made only of bricks and mortar, but the builders, who erected it in about 320 B. C., understood their business so well that the fabric defied the engineering efforts of four successive governments to remove it. India, too, can show plastered buildings white and shiny like marble and as smooth and polished as glass.

Beat Us on Time.

"Oh, come now, I s'y," exclaimed the Britisher, "you must admit we're ahead of you in a grite many w'ays."

"In one great particular I admit you are," said the Yankee.

"And that is?"

"Time. It's 8 o'clock in London, and it's only 3 here."—Philadelphia Record.

Juvenile Reasoning.

Mr. Wise—Johnny, can you tell me why the little hand on my watch goes faster than the big one?

Johnny (after mature reflection)—Papa, isn't it for the same reason that I have to run when I go walking with you?—Exchange.

Not Neglected.

Dobbs—You ought to do something for that cold of yours. A neglected cold often leads to serious consequences.

Mobbs—This one is not neglected. Four or five hundred of my friends are looking after it.

New Attraction.

Towne—I see Gayman had to pay Miss Koy \$25,000 for breach of promise.

Browne—Yes, and now he's trying to marry her for her money.—Philadelphia Press.

QUAINT COLLEGE LAWS.

Rules Prescribing the Dress of Harvard Students in Bygone Days.

The curious laws regarding students' dress which prevailed at Harvard up to the middle of the last century are illustrated by two eighteenth century waistcoats which are among the collections of the Boston Art museum. One was worn by a member of the class of 1749 and the other by his son in 1784.

The latter waistcoat is olive green in color, conforming to the college regulations, which required either blue gray, plain black, "mankoon"—a kind of buff—or olive. The coat and breeches which originally went with it, as one may read in the old time Harvard "Laws," were blue gray. Freshmen of that date were allowed only plain buttonholes, sophomores leaped to the dignity of having buttons on their cuffs, juniors might have inexpensive frogs to their buttonholes except that they might not have them on their cuff buttonholes and the senior enjoyed frogs, buttonholes and buttons complete. Seniors and juniors were permitted also to wear black Oxford gowns, such as are worn at graduation today, and a "night gown," or dressing gown, was permissible on certain unimportant occasions. It cost "not more than 10 shillings" for every appearance of gold or silver adornment.

The rules of costume were changed, of course, from time to time. In 1828, for example, the prescribed dress consisted of a black mixed coat, single breasted, "with a rolling cape square at the end and with pocket flaps, the waist reaching to the natural waist, with lapels of the same length." It is explained that "black mixed" called also Oxford mixed, was black with not more than one-twentieth part less than one-twenty-fifth part of white. The senior was allowed to support his dignity with three "crow's feet" of black silk cord on the lower part of his coat sleeve. Two crow's feet were permitted to the junior, one to the sophomore and none at all to the freshman. The waistcoat was of black mixed or of black or, when of cotton or linen fabric, of white; single breasted, with a standing collar. The pantaloons were of black mixed.

APHORISMS.

Good counsels observed are chains of grace.—Fuller.

The beauty seen is partly in him who sees it.—Boyce.

Admiration is the daughter of ignorance.—Franklin.

In great attempts it is glorious even to fail.—Lomlins.

The one prudence of life is concentration.—Emerson.

The golden age is before us, not behind us.—St. Simon.

Levity in behavior is the bane of all that is good and virtuous.—Seneca.

Better he drives out from among men than to be disliked by children.—Dana.

Loving kindness is greater than laws, and the charities of life are more than all ceremonies.—Talmud.

Have you so much leisure for your own business that you can take care of that of other people that does not belong to you?—Terence.

A Rattlesnake's Fangs.

You often hear of rendering a rattlesnake harmless by pulling out its fangs. True, again, you read of cases where a serpent so treated has bitten persons fatally. The reason for this is that a poisonous snake is deprived only temporarily of its venomous powers by the extraction of the two incisors in the upper jaw, at the bases of which are the poison glands. Of course you know that the fangs are hollow, so that when the animal strikes the venom gushes through them into the flesh of the person struck. Now, by drawing the two teeth the snake may be rendered harmless for a few weeks, but after a short time the two teeth just behind the original fangs move up and take their places, making connection with the poison glands and thus becoming poison fangs as good and effective as the old ones.

Horses and Cold.

Colonel Sir T. H. Hobble, writing in "The Indian Borderland" of the terrible storms and wind and snow which overtake the traveler on the high passes of the Herat mountains, remarks on the superior power of the horse to withstand cold. In one such storm over twenty men perished and many mules. All the dogs with the caravan were dead, but so far as I can remember, no horses. Yet some of the chargers of the Eleventh Bengal lancers got slowly on their legs the day after the blizzard literally sheeted with ice as an ironclad sheeted with steel. It is a fact worth noting that the horse will stand cold where a mule or a camel will not and where a dog will die.

Gates in Norway.

A curious feature to travelers in the highroads of Norway is the great number of gates—upward of 10,000 in the whole country—which have to be opened. These gates, which either mark the boundaries of the farms or separate the home fields from the waste lands, constitute a considerable inconvenience and delay to the traveler, who has to stop his vehicle and get down to open them.

Cruel and Unusual Punishment.

Mrs. Boerm (hopelessly)—Mortimer, I cannot make Willie mind.

Mr. Boerm (sternly)—William, do as your mother wishes, or I will make you go and sit in the cozy corner.—Brooklyn Eagle.

Harry's Declaration.

She—Oh, Harry, it is awful! Papa has forbidden you the house!

He—That's all right. It isn't the house I am after; it's you, darling.—Boston Transcript.

Fleeing De Maupassant.

It is said that the Norman peasant hit upon a happy scheme of fleeing Guy de Maupassant, who once maintained near his home at Etretat a rabbit warren of a few acres. They used to plant choice vegetables and rare shrubs in the adjoining fields, and every year De Maupassant had to pay for the damage done by his rabbits. After a few years he got tired of this sort of thing. He computed that the few rabbits he shot cost him about \$20 apiece, which was rather too much even for an enthusiastic sportsman to pay, so he determined to destroy his game preserve. There were only four or five burrows in the enclosure, and a few ferrets soon dislodged all the inhabitants.

One night after the rabbits had been destroyed the writer happened to visit his former preserve and detected a man skulking along under the trees, with a large bag slung over his shoulder. De Maupassant supposed that the man had come to steal wood and challenged him. The supposed thief took to his heels, leaving behind him his bag, which was found to be filled with rabbits of both sexes. The man was an honest neighbor, who, shrewdly reasoning that there could be no damages if there were no rabbits, had thought it advisable to restock the warren himself.

Bees of Fine Discrimination.

Morvin has some other odd things—for example, the sweetmeat stands under the portales or arcades, where friendly bees and wasps devoured the candies and were not scared off. I asked an old woman sitting behind a large stand loaded with candied fruit, dulces of all sorts, sugar plums and molasses candy:

"Won't these bees sting a fellow?"

"Oh, no, senor, don't be afraid. They are my intelligent and can tell a customer right off."

"But would they sting a thief, for instance?"

"Certainly, senor. They are very intelligent. Poor things! They do no harm and are much company. They must live!"

I watched these winged insects, with all their panoply of war ready, and was fascinated. Then I asked another question:

"But would not a Morvelian bee sting a Yankee?"

"Not if he were a customer, caballero!"—Mexican Cor. Boston Herald.

Safe Occupation.

Bridget, the pretty young maid of all work employed in a Boston family, confided to her mistress when taking service that she had lately become engaged to be married. She stated, however, that she and Tim would have to wait two years, and in the meantime she wished to be earning money.

When Tim made his first call one evening, the family remarked that they had never known so quiet a man. The sound of Bridget's voice rose now and then from the kitchen, but Tim's words were apparently few and far between.

"Tim is not much of a talker, is he, Bridget?" said the mistress of the house the next morning. "I should scarcely have known there was any one with you last evening."

"He'll talk more when we've been engaged a while longer, I'm thinking, ma'am," said little Bridget. "He's too bashful yet to do anything but eat, ma'am, when he's wid me!"—Youth's Companion.

Saw the Joke.

A prominent Bostonian inquired of a London shopkeeper for Hare's "Walks in London." The shopkeeper, after much search, found it on his shelves, but in two volumes.

"Ah," said the Bostonian, "you have your Hare parted in the middle over here."

"What?" queried the Englishman blankly, passing his hands over his hair.

The next day the Bostonian called for another book.

"I'm so glad you returned," said the Englishman. "I want to tell you I see that joke."

Cured.

The following is a Chinese joke: In a certain house there was a baby that annoyed every one by its continual squalling. At last a physician was called in. He administered a bolus of the soothing virtues of which he had a high opinion and offered to pass the night in the house to observe the effects of his remedy. After a few hours, hearing no noise, he exclaimed: "Good! The child is cured!" "Yes," replied the attendant, "the child has indeed stopped crying, but the mother has begun to mourn."

Relieved.

"That must be a pretty bad tooth-ache to swell your face like that. Why don't you see a dentist?"

"I did call on your friend, Dr. Pullen, yesterday and experienced great relief."

"You must be mistaken. Pullen has been out of town for a week."

"I know. I felt relieved when I found that out."—Exchange.

A Christmas Pie.

A customary feature of a Christmas dinner in old England was an immense pie of some kind. It was usually composed of fish and flesh and fowl. We are told that in the reign of Henry III. the sheriff of Gloucester was once ordered by that monarch to procure twenty salmon, ten peacocks and ten prawns for Christmas pie.

A Guide.

Dr. A.—Why do you always make such particular inquiries as to what your patients eat? Does that assist you in your diagnosis?

Dr. B.—Not much, but it enables me to ascertain their social position and arrange my fees accordingly.—Tit-Bits.

Wrong Again.

Football—Who was that impudent little brat who came into your room and acted in such an ill bred manner while I was calling on you this morning? Mr. Meekton—Er—why, to tell the truth, that is our youngest son.—Ohio State Journal.

Nothing to Do.

Kid in Bed—I'd better thought of going to bed.—Ohio State Journal.

Caveless Indeed.



Aunt Jane—Ears, go to bed that the picture of Uncle Sam served, but the fool artist who painted it upside down.—News.

Aerobatic Love.



Not the First Compliment.



Mrs. Chatterton—Bridget, I have a lot of policemen hanging this kitchen!

Bridget (blushing)—Tim, just what Officer Brannigan ma'am!—Brooklyn Eagle.

Never Stagnant.

"Ah, old man, I hear you've had an addition to your family."

"Yes, two."

"Not twins!"

"Oh, no—the baby and my wife's mother!"—Town Topics.

Expert.

"Could you do the landlord in the 'Lady of Lyons'?" asked the manager of a seedy actor.

"Well, I guess I might. I have done a good many landlords."—You're easy.—News.

A Big Sale.



"I don't see anything here worth. No; you might let me spool of No. 30 thread."—New Journal.