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PLAY WITH DEATH

Men Who Are Reckless in Handling High Explosives.

STORIES BY HUDSON MAXIM.

The Accident by Which the Inventor's Left Hand Was Blown Off—John Bender's Contempt For Dynamite—Mixing Fire and Nitroglycerin.

"It is practically impossible," writes Hudson Maxim in Adventure, "to make the ordinary laboring man appreciate the necessity of care in the safe handling of explosives, and the life of the careful man is always endangered by the actions of the careless one."

"After I had sold the works at Maxim and had invented motorite I needed a place in which to make the material and hired a branch of the works there for that purpose. It was winter. My wife had accompanied me as a precautionary measure. She was sitting in the laboratory to keep warm, near a big barrel stove charged with bituminous coal.

"On entering the laboratory for something my wife asked me what was in those two tin pails sitting near the stove. She said that she had a suspicion it might be nitroglycerin, and she informed me that one of my men had just been in stirring the fire and that the sparks flew out in all directions, some of them lighting in the buckets to be quenched on top of the oily liquid.

"Horrors!" I said. "It is nitroglycerin!"

"I called the man who had placed it there and told him to take it away. As it was necessary to keep the material from freezing he took it into the boiler house near by. A little later on, going into the boiler house, I saw one of the men stirring the fire while the other was standing with his coat tails outstretched in either hand, forming a shield to keep the sparks from flying into the nitroglycerin.

"In the manufacture of high explosives and in experimenting with them a little absentmindedness, a very slight lack of exact caution, a seemingly insignificant inadvertence for a moment, may cost one a limb or his life. The accident that cost me my left hand is a case in point.

"On the day preceding that accident I had had a gold cap put on a tooth. In consequence the tooth ached throughout the night and kept me awake a greater part of the time. In the morning I rose early and went down to my factory at Maxim, N. J. In order to test the dryness of some fulminate compound I took a little piece of it, about the size of an English penny, broke off a small particle, placed it on a stand outside the laboratory and, lighting a match, touched it off.

"Owing to my loss of sleep the night before my mind was not so alert as usual, and I forgot to lay aside the remaining piece of fulminate compound, but instead held it in my left hand. A spark from the ignited piece of fulminate compound entered my left hand between my fingers, igniting the piece there, with the result that my hand was blown off to the wrist.

"Once when entering my storage magazine at Maxim, in which were several carloads of dynamite along with 37,000 pounds of nitrocellulose, I saw John Bender, one of my employees, calmly but emphatically opening a case of dynamite with a hammer and a chisel. I promptly discharged him.

"Not long afterward the innkeeper at Farmingdale called on me to buy some dynamite and said he had engaged Bender to blow the stumps out of his meadow lot. I told him Bender was courting death for himself and everybody around when handling dynamite, but Boniface still wanted Bender to do the work.

"Well," said I, "the dynamite you want is 16 cents a pound, but if John Bender does not succeed in blowing himself up and killing himself with the dynamite you can have it for nothing. On the other hand, if he does blow himself up you must pay for the dynamite."

"A few days later there was some hitch in Bender's exceptional luck. A particularly refractory old stump had resisted a couple of Bender's dynamic attacks. The failure to dislodge the stump Bender took as a personal affront because it reflected upon his skill as a stump blaster.

"Next time," said he, "something is going to happen." He placed about twenty pounds of dynamite under the deep rooted veteran, touched it off, and several things happened in very quick succession. The huge stump let go its hold on earth and proceeded to hunt Bender.

"It was a level race, but the stump won. Striking Bender on the north quarter, it stove in four ribs, dislocated several joints and damaged him in several other respects and particulars. Boniface came to settle for the dynamite.

"Sixteen cents a pound," I said. "Bender hasn't a chance in a hundred. Wait till the doctors are through with him."

"What do you say to a compromise," suggested Boniface, "of 8 cents a pound? For, really, I do not believe that Bender is more than half dead." And the account was settled on that basis.

Kind words are the brightest of home flowers. They make a paradise of the humblest home.

THE GOLD WAS THERE.

But Mark Twain Missed It by Just One Pail of Water.

With Steve Gillis, a printer of whom he was fond, Mark Twain went up into Calaveras county to a cabin on Jackass hill, where Steve's brother Jim, a lovable, picturesque character (the "Truthful James" of Bret Harte), owned mining claims. Mark decided to spend his vacation in pocket mining and soon added that science to his store of knowledge. It was a halcyon, happy three months that he lingered there. One day with Jim Gillis he was following the specks of gold that led to a pocket somewhere up the hill when a chill, dreary rain set in. Jim was washing and Clemens was carrying water. The "color" became better and better as they ascended, and Gillis, possessed with the mining passion, would have gone on regardless of the rain. Clemens, however, protested and declared that each pail of water was his last. Finally he said in his deliberate, drawling fashion:

"Jim, I won't carry any more water. This work is too disagreeable. Let's go to the house and wait till it clears up."

Gillis had just taken out a pan of earth.

"Bring one more pail, Sam," he pleaded.

"I won't do it, Jim! Not a drop! Not if I knew there was a million dollars in that pan!"

They left the pan standing there and went over to Angel's camp, which was nearer than their own cabin. The rain kept on, and they sat around the grocery and barroom smoking and telling stories to pass the time.

Meanwhile the rain had washed away the top of the pan of earth left standing on the slope of Jackass hill and exposed a handful of nuggets—pure gold. Two strangers had come along and, observing it, had sat down to wait until the thirty day claim notice posted by Jim Gillis should expire. They did not mind the rain—not with that gold in sight—and the minute the thirty days were up they followed the lead a few paces farther and took out \$20,000 in all. It was a good pocket. Mark Twain missed it by one pail of water.—Chicago Post.

INSURANCE MAPS.

Handy Guides For Underwriters In Fixing Premium Rates.

Many persons must have noticed when making application for fire insurance that it is the practice of the underwriter to examine certain maps before he will fix the rate of premium or accept a risk on the property offered. His lithographic surveys marked off in diagrams of red and yellow and other colors are always in evidence, sometimes bound securely in dozens of large volumes, on other occasions laid conveniently in piles of loose sheets for handy reference.

Few persons realize, however, that these maps contain all the information which the underwriter desires to know about the building he is asked to insure and that in most instances more matters are explained to him by a single glance than the applicant could make even though he be the owner of the property.

As a matter of fact the details set forth are most explicit. The map-maker has managed by colors, characters and signs to give a full description of the construction, equipment and occupation of the building, everything which over fifty years of this sort of surveying has proved to be of any possible interest to the insurance man. It is so complete, for instance, that an agent in New York city can readily form a good idea of the character of a risk situated in some town in Missouri or California, or, vice versa, agents in towns in these western states can likewise tell the character of a risk in New York city.—Cassier's Magazine.

Poising on Nothing.

Away up in the air, far beyond the mountain tops, the great condors will hang poised as motionless as if perched on solid rock. True, their wings are outstretched, but even through glasses not the slightest motion is perceptible. They remain in this position for many minutes, sometimes for an hour, making a careful scrutiny of everything below them in their search for prey. Then, with a slight flitting of the wings, they flap slowly away, or, having found what they were seeking, dart like a bullet toward it. The eagle, hawk and other species have this same faculty of poisoning apparently on nothing.

Banked Rails.

In rounding a curve the tendency of the weight of a train is invariably to shift to the outside wheels. To counteract this tendency the outer rail of a curve is raised on a higher level than the inside, the elevation being in an exact proportion to the sharpness of the curve as determined by the principles of engineering. If both rails of a curved track were of exactly the same elevation a train would not dare round it at high speed.

Tender Hearted Youths.

Sympathetic Old Lady—You're kind hearted boys to help that poor fellow up. Here's a quarter for some candy. Enthusiastic Small Boy (helping fat man worse for liquor)—Thanks, missus, but jest hang around a minute and watch th' fun when he falls ag'in.—New York Times.

Comic Opera Milkmaids.

"I thought I would introduce a real cow into my comic opera." "How did it work?" "Didn't work at all. The milkmaids frightened the cow."—Washington Herald.

CURIOUS PERUVIAN TREE.

It Produces a Copious and Continuous Supply of Rain.

The rain tree of Peru grows very large, is rich in leaves and is called by the Indians tamakampi. It has the power of collecting the dampness of the atmosphere and condensing it into a continuous and copious supply of rain.

In the dry season, when the rivers are low and the heat great, the tree's power of condensing seems at the highest, and water falls in abundance from the leaves and oozes from the trunk. The water spreads around in veritable rivers, part of which filters into the soil and fertilizes it. These rivers are canalized so as to regulate the course of the water.

It is estimated that one of the Peruvian rain trees will on the average yield nine gallons of water per diem. In a field of an area of one kilometer square—that is, 3,250 feet each way—can be grown 10,000 trees separated from each other by twenty-five meters. This plantation produces daily 355,000 liters of water. If we allow for evaporation and infiltration we have 135,000 liters or 29,531 gallons of rain for distribution daily. The rain tree can be cultivated with very little trouble, for it seems indifferent as to the soil in which it grows. The tree increases rapidly and resists both extremes of climate.—Espasa Moderna.

A BRAVE TOREADOR.

One of the Most Thrilling Incidents of the Bull Ring.

The famous Spanish toreador Reverte figured in one of the most thrilling incidents ever witnessed in the arena. It was at Bayonne. After disposing of two bulls Reverte had twice plunged his sword into a third of great strength and ferocity, and as the beast continued careering wildly the spectators began to hiss Reverte for bungling. Wounded to the very quick of his pride, the Spaniard shouted, "The bull is slain!" and, throwing aside his sword, sank on one knee with folded arms in the middle of the ring. He was right, but he had not allowed for the margin of accident. The wounded beast charged full upon him, but the matador, splendid to the last, knelt motionless as a statue, while the spectators held their breath in horrified suspense. Reaching his victim, the bull literally bounded at him, and as he sprang he sank in death, with his last effort giving one fearful lunge of the head that drove a horn into the thigh of the kneeling man and laid bare the bone from the knee to the joint. Still Reverte never flinched, but remained kneeling, exultant in victory, but calmly contemptuous of applause, till he was carried away to heal him of his grievous wound.

Killing the Bad Taste.

"Maybe I won't have to take medicine again, and even if I do have to take it maybe the doctor will prescribe an ambrosial mixture, but if I should be condemned for my sins to swallow vile doses I know how I'll take them," a city salesman volunteered. "A man who was doctoring himself in the drug store showed me the way.

"The druggist had mixed a particularly obnoxious dose. The man before taking it asked for cracked ice. The errand boy brought it, several spoonfuls nearly pulverized. The sick man held that in his mouth until it melted, after which the medicine seemed as mild as tea.

"I always prepare my mouth that way for a disagreeable medicine," the man said. "The ice numbs the nerves, and the medicine slips down without leaving any taste, good or bad."—Exchange.

Origin of a Song.

The grumbling of a negro groom led to the composition of the immortal "Old Folks at Home." While waiting for a change of horses at a Kentucky hostelry the composer, Stephen Foster, author of so many beloved darky melodies, heard a melancholy negro murmur as he threw a set of harness to the ground: "I's sick an' tired o' dis life. I wisht I was back wif de ole folks at home."

"Where may that be, Sam?" asked Foster.

"Oh," answered the darky, "way down on de Savannah river."

The result was the song as we have it today.

Counter Diplomacy.

"I think you will like this goods, madam," urged a salesman in a Euclid avenue shop. "It is just the thing for a stout, middle aged lady." "Sir!" squeaked the customer in a rage. The clerk saw his faux pas and recovered himself quickly. "Pardon me," he smiled. "I mistook you for the young lady who was in here yesterday looking for something for her grandmother. Now that I look at you again, I see that this was an older person. Now, if you are buying for yourself, we have something over here that—"

—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

Literary Note.

The teacher had been talking to her pupils on Ouida's story, "The Dog of Flinders," and she followed her talk by an oral test. "Now, what is the name of the author?" she queried. "Small and Slangy Boy—Oh, You Ida."—Boston Record.

The Joke on Her.

"I suppose being the wife of a humorist is a continuous joke," said her former schoolmate. "Yes," she sadly sighed, looking at her faded and old fashioned gown, "and it's on me."—Exchange.

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