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NIAGARA FALLS AND BUFFALO.

After the completion of the great tunnel works now in progress at Niagara Falls, there will be nothing to hinder the rapid rise and growth of that interesting town into a great and wonderful city. Its dwellings and factories will be supplied with light, heat, and motive power at an extremely low cost, and useful industries of every kind ought there to flourish with unwonted vigor.

Near to Niagara, only twenty-five miles distant, is Buffalo, already a large and prosperous city, the head center of lake navigation. The simple extension of conductors over the short distance above mentioned will bring to the people of Buffalo a direct share in the economic and other advantages of the new and great enterprise.

We look toward Niagara and Buffalo with hopeful interest, expecting soon to witness there many novel applications of electricity for industrial, domestic and municipal purposes. In the latter category the promotion of the public health and the expulsion of diseases by electrical agencies seem to be among the reasonable possibilities of the near future.

PATENT TRICKS—OLD AND NEW.

Some time ago, under this heading, we briefly explained some of the methods practiced by sharpers upon unsuspecting patentees, for whose benefit we will now repeat our remarks and make a few additions.

When an inventor receives a patent, his name is immortalized in the Official Gazette, and he immediately becomes the object of attack from a horde of hungry aspirants for money, among whom are ex-clerks, patent brokers, and pretended legal lights of varying degrees. The patentee is deluged with circulars and letters from this class of gentry. Some write to inform him confidentially that his patent is good for nothing; but on receipt of a certain fee they will set it right and make it sound as a silver dollar.

These pretended sellers try to make it appear they are reliable by giving respectable references, and cite names of patentees for whom they purport to have sold patents. One mode of procuring these references is as follows: They write the patentee they have a customer who will buy a county right in Minnesota for \$500, and pay by deeding 25 acres of land in Arkansas, really worth \$1,000, but the parties are so anxious to obtain the patent right they are willing to let the land go, and take the right, in settlement, provided \$50 cash is paid and a mortgage is given for \$500.

One of the latest tricks is the following: The patentee receives a letter from A. & B. asking for how much he will sell his patent for such and such a State. He replies, giving a price, say \$5,000. The patentee soon after receives another letter from X. Y. Z., saying that A. & B. write they have corresponded with you, and now say they have decided to purchase the patent on the terms named, provided the title and claims are found to be correct.

A new edition of the same class of swindles is worked by a gang of confederates as follows:

One of the swindlers writes to the patentee asking if the patent has been disposed of. If not, he would like to correspond with a view to purchase or manufacture. Reply is made that the patent is for sale. Then comes another letter from the swindler, saying substantially, "We have examined the invention very carefully, and if you will furnish us with an opinion or report as to the scope and validity of your patent we will, if same is satisfactory, make you an offer either for purchase or license on royalty. Our proposition will be based entirely on the nature of the opinion or report.

The patent insurance dodge is another scheme for relieving inventors of their cash. This purport to be a corporation for insuring inventors against infringements. By paying eight dollars cash within 30 days of the issuance of the patent, the concern undertakes to insure the patentee for one year against any infringement of his patent by other people, besides giving advice and services for which other lawyers charge anywhere from \$250 to \$10,000.

A French trick played with much success on American inventors is the following: The new patentee receives by mail, from Paris, a flaming ornamental document of provisional membership, which looks as if it came officially from the president of the famous Academy of Sciences, with a letter informing Monsieur le John Smith, of Snuffkinsville, Arkansas, Republique des Etats Unis, that the Academy has observed with pleasure his invention for planting seeds, so important for agriculture; in view of which they have voted to confer upon M. le Smith the honorable distinction of membership in the Academy.

Such are a few of the adroit schemes now in vogue for swindling "innocent" inventors. Bills have been introduced in Congress to protect innocent purchasers of patents, i. e., infringers. Might it not also be well for somebody to formulate a law to protect innocent inventors?

Annual Meeting of the American Society of Civil Engineers.

The American Society of Civil Engineers held its annual meeting on Wednesday and Thursday, January 20 and 21. The afternoon was devoted to the general business of the society. In the evening valuable papers on the Elevated Railroads of St. Louis, the great Weehawken passenger elevator, and other subjects were read.

On Thursday an excursion was made to the above elevator and viaduct. The reservoir and high service tower of the Hackensack Water Company were also visited and examined. The party then proceeded by steamer to the Brooklyn Navy Yard. Here by the courtesy of Captain Henry Erben, U. S. N., the engineers were permitted to examine the cruisers Maine and Cincinnati, and the armored ship Miantonomoh, as well as the large engines being built for the Cincinnati and Raleigh. The docks were also examined. In the evening a reception was given at the house of the society, 127 East 23d Street, New York, where at 21:30 o'clock by the society's timepiece an elegant collation was served, followed by a number of speeches, which were enthusiastically applauded.