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ANOTHER RUNAWAY ELEVATOR.

Another fast running hydraulic elevator in one of the tall New York office buildings recently dropped beyond the working speed, and was brought up by the safety clutches with a jerk that severely shook up the car load of passengers, and in the case of one man caused a dislocation of the knee. Coming so quickly after the accidents of the past few months at the American Tract Society building, this mishap is distinctly unfortunate for the reputation of the hydraulic system of elevators as such—for the elevators at the Bowling Green building, where this accident took place, are of the same type that earned an unenviable notoriety a few months ago, when one of the cars ran away, with results similar to those in the accident of Thursday week. The representative of the company that put in the elevators is reported as saying that the cause of the car running away was that the attendant opened the valve that controls the descent of the car too wide for the full load of passengers that filled the car at the time, and he felicitates the public upon the fact that the safety clutch was so prompt in its action. To judge from the complacency with which the makers seem to regard the accident, one is driven to the conclusion that this type of elevator is liable to run away at not infrequent intervals, and that even if the victim suffers from an occasional shaking up, or a dislocated joint, he must be thankful that a quick-acting clutch saves him from a worse disaster.

As a matter of fact, every time the clutches on an elevator are automatically thrown in, whether they stop the car or not, it is an evidence that the working of the elevator system is at fault. If the speed of the car is to depend upon the nice judgment of the attendant as to the proper relation between the opening of the valve and the load that the car is carrying at the time, the safety of the public certainly hangs upon a very slender thread. If the company's explanation of the accident is correct, the car must have dropped eight stories before it was arrested, or from the thirteenth story to the fifth. It will naturally be asked: What would have been the result had the car begun to drop at the sixth or seventh story? A brake to be thoroughly efficient should be able to check a car before the runaway has traversed one, or, at the outside, two stories. Unless the makers of hydraulic elevators can place the speed of the car under better control than the recent mishaps would indicate, they must be prepared to see this type driven out of the field by the positive control which marks the worm and pinion gear of the electric elevator.

RAPID TRANSIT SCHEME APPROVED BY THE PARK BOARD.

The Park Board of the City of New York has withdrawn its inopportune obstruction to the scheme for providing rapid transit, and this great work is to go forward, as far as the board is concerned, even if its prosecution should involve the destruction of two or three trees at the Battery. The members of the board who have now voted to approve the plans of the tunnel are to be congratulated on the prompt action which they have taken. The motives which led the Board originally to oppose the plans were commendable, for the Battery Park has already been abominably disfigured by the erection of the elevated road, and it should be the first duty of the guardians of this historic ground to see that no further outrage of the kind is permitted. In the present case the removal of the trees would take place in the interests, not of a private corporation, but of the people themselves. It was a case of sacrificing a minor public interest to one of vast proportions, and the Park Board, in retiring from its former position, has evidently taken this view of the case.

Meanwhile the hearing before the Appellate Justices drags wearily along. The engineer for the rapid transit commission has long ago given his testimony and explained in full detail the amended plans and estimates by which he has been able to cut down the cost of the work to less than $30,000,000, and it must be admitted that the estimate has every indication of being careful, detailed, and conservative. It is based upon the accumulated experience which the large engineering operations of the kind in the past twenty-five years have provided, more particularly in the very city in which the new work is to be done. The plans were amended to meet the objections of cost which the opponents of rapid transit raised against the Broadway scheme, and the route is now laid out beneath the adjoining thoroughfare—Elm Street—recommended by the experts who testified against the first plans. Yet for the past few weeks the hearing has been taken up with a mere reiteration by the engineers of the enemies of rapid transit of the same objections that were urged against the first scheme. Civil engineers whose reputation for professional sincerity is surely worth something to them do not hesitate to make the obviously preposterous assertion that Mr. Parsons' $30,000,000 tunnel is liable to cost from $50,000,000 to $60,000,000. Civil engineering is as exact a profession as any other; and estimates on a tunnel whose floor is but 15 feet below street level can be made with at least as much certainty as for deep and difficult river foundations. It does not take an engineer to perceive that in the appalling list of contingencies which the expert testimony against the tunnel scheme is detailing with weary iteration, the "wish is father to the thought."

THE SUPPRESSION OF A FRAUDULENT SYSTEM OF PATENT PRACTICE.

Everyone who appreciates the deep interest which is taken by inventors in all that concerns the Patent Office and the general patent business of the country will understand the feeling of relief with which the news of the disbarment of Wedderburn & Company has been received. It has been well understood that the arraignment of this notorious firm was the arraignment not merely of one or more individuals, but of a pernicious system of patent practice which was not only working great harm to the interests of the inventor, but was bringing the whole patent business as such into disrepute.

It remained to be seen whether the high standing of one of the most learned of the professions was to be prostituted by the introduction of such proceedings as characterized the business methods of this firm. The atmosphere is at last cleared, and the profession is relieved by one skillful cut of the knife of an unwholesome growth which was gradually poisoning the entire system of the patent practice.

Had the charges preferred against this firm failed to stand, it would have been disastrous for the great body of inventors at large, for a blow would have been struck at the prestige of the Patent Office from which it would have been slow to recover, and a premium would have been put upon such demoralizing methods as marked the practice of the firm in question. Veracity, honor, fidelity to the interests of the client on the one hand and the interests of the Patent Office on the other, the disposition to make personal interests altogether subservient to those of the client, and, in fact, every quality which should mark and does mark the representative patent practitioner, would have been cheapened in the eyes of the world, and the objectionable methods which have now been condemned would have received widespread advertisement and the appearance of official sanction.

As it is, an additional safeguard has been placed upon the interests of the inventor, and the honor and fair name of one of the most difficult, responsible and easily misunderstood professions has been signally vindicated. That the profession of patent attorney is difficult, is shown by the fact that its duties necessitate a more or less intimate acquaintance with the history and present status of the various arts and sciences the world over; that it is responsible is seen from the fact that the brightest hopes, and what are considered to be the most valuable secrets of the inventor, are intrusted to its keeping and largely depend for their fulfillment upon the fidelity with which the trust is preserved and prosecuted; and that it is misunderstood, is shown by the fact that its recognition is not in any degree commensurate with the knowledge, skill and fidelity which are necessary for the effective discharge of its duties.

The public, however, have not been the only victims, for at least two United States Senators have no doubt innocently been persuaded to aid the scheme by allowing their names to appear as members of the Wedderburn board of award.

The interests of the patent practitioner are insignificant in comparison with the widespread mischief which was being done to the public in the lowering of the whole tone and spirit of the patent business. The methods of the now disbarred firm appealed to the most sordid instincts of the people, and sought to invest the patent system, which is intended for the encouragement of useful inventions, with the features which characterize a reckless game of chance. The public was encouraged to invent, not with the object of improving existing arts, but for the purpose of obtaining monetary rewards and empty and meaningless badges of distinction. The luckless inventor was urged on to enter fields which had already been thoroughly covered, and he was encouraged to apply for patents on devices which were as old as the hills. This trading upon the credulity of the public was worked to such advantage that it grew exceedingly lucrative—a fact which was duly noted by a few other equally unscrupulous but less daring firms who followed with more wary steps along the lines which the pioneers in these extraordinary practices had laid down.

With regard to these smaller firms, whose offense has been only a little less glaring than that of the one in question, it can only be hoped that the strong hand with which Commissioner Butterworth has crushed the chief offender will now be laid upon every firm whose methods are in the least degree questionable. While it may be a difficult matter to prescribe an exact code of ethics for the guidance of those who represent the inventor before the Patent Office, the recent inquiry has shown that there is, at least, a speedy and drastic remedy for such grossly irregular practices as have lately been flaunted before the office.

The field for genuine invention is vast and ever increasing. With every new discovery new avenues are