



TRAPS FOR THE UNWARY INVENTOR.

We have had occasion from time to time to call attention to the practices of "Patent Sales Agents" in inducing patentees to place in their hands the sale of their patents. The ordinary method employed in carrying out this work is to write to the inventor, informing him that his device has been carefully examined and has been found to possess great merit; that it is believed by bringing the invention to the attention of the proper people (whoever they may be) there will be no difficulty in finding a purchaser. The fact is then adroitly set forth that in order to carry out this work, much time and labor will be required, and though the patent will be sold on a purely commission basis of from 5 to 10 per cent, or any other similar amount, in order to cover the necessary expenses for printing circulars, providing models, conducting correspondence, or for some other similar cause, a retaining fee is required, payable in advance. This is not the universal method employed by the "Sales Agents," but it is the most popular method, and such offers should be carefully looked into. The integrity of the parties should be thoroughly examined into before any credence is placed upon their claims.

There is another method of procedure, however, which has reached any considerable importance only within the last year or two. The service performed by these parties is an actual service for which the parties in question are perfectly entitled to proper remuneration. In some cases, however, the methods employed by them are irregular, and the results to be obtained elusive. The very respectable character of the parties who solicit this class of business renders it necessary to make a thorough investigation before placing any business in their hands. As a rule, they advertise themselves as being bankers, or as being corporation lawyers, and the method of procedure is somewhat as follows:

Soon after the inventor has received his patent and has received the usual notice in the Official Gazette, he will receive from Mr. A. B., a banker, a carefully and innocently written letter, stating that the said A. B. has examined with great interest the inventor's patent and has not only become convinced of its great worth, but has a customer who wishes to invest in the invention. He states that before doing so, however, it is necessary to have a thorough examination made into the validity of the invention. Correspondence is solicited upon this subject, and later on the "banker" will advise the victim that he knows of a very competent lawyer, Mr. X. Y., who will undertake the examination into the validity of the patent and will report upon its status, and that it is quite necessary to have the search made and the report prepared before the sale can be concluded. The fee for making the infringement search is, of course, very considerable, and when the report is rendered it is drawn in such a way that the intended investor decides that he will withdraw from further negotiation, and the sale is, therefore, never concluded and the matter is quietly dropped, the object of the whole transaction having been attained in the large fee which has been exacted from the inventor for the infringement opinion.

The matter, however, may take a somewhat different form, and Mr. A. B. may write to the inventor and state, as in the former case, that he has a client who is extremely anxious to purchase the invention. In order to carry out the plans of the client, however, it is necessary to form a stock company. The amount of stock at which the company is to be capitalized is generally placed at an enormous sum, according to the nature of the invention; anywhere from \$50,000 to \$5,000,000 may be named as the proper amount at which the company should be capitalized. The innocent or unsophisticated inventor is naturally dazzled by the enormous wealth which is soon to be his. In order to place the matter on a proper business basis, however, it is necessary that the company should become incorporated. It is necessary that this work should be placed in the hands of a competent corporation lawyer, and the latter is adroitly drawn into the transaction. The fee which he exacts for attending to this service of incorporation is very liberal and is paid by the inventor. When the company is formed and the handsomely engraved stock has been issued, the inventor discovers that the interest of all parties concerned, as in the former case, suddenly languishes, and the inventor awakes to the fact that he has parted with his patent to a phantom company and holds in lieu thereof a quantity of worthless stock with which he can do nothing. Of course, the character of the pretensions of the promoter can be tested by insisting upon a cash payment as part of the consideration, and the inventor should refuse to make any advancement

for the incorporation of the company until such demand shall have been satisfied, or until the financial responsibility of the contracting parties has been carefully looked into, and the desire of the purchasers to acquire an interest in the patent has been proved to be *bona fide*.

Prize for Locomotive Driving Mechanism.

The Verein Deutscher Maschinen-Ingenieure has offered the sum of 10,000 marks (\$2,500) in prizes for the invention of a driving mechanism for passenger locomotives.

Complete working drawings of a locomotive are wanted, which is capable of drawing on a straight-away road a load of about 180 tons at an average speed of 72 miles per hour for three hours without stopping. The water supply can be replenished at intervals of 72 miles. The maximum speed of the train should be 150 kilometers (90 miles) per hour. The inventor, besides furnishing a complete description and statement of the efficiency of his locomotive, must also supply a computed statement of disturbing motions.

Furthermore, the Society offers a prize for the complete working drawings of a railroad coach which shall travel smoothly and safely at a speed of 90 miles an hour, and which is so constructed that the passengers will be as fully protected as possible in case of accident. Particular attention should be given to apparatus for ventilating, heating and lighting the coach. The brakes should be of such type that the train can be brought to a standstill in a short time. Provision should also be made for the serving of refreshments to passengers during the journey.

In general the inventor should keep in mind the provisions which have been made for the construction of rolling stock for the main German lines, as well as the standard German gages. The car couplers may be of any approved style. The drawings are to be drawn to a scale of 1 to 20; details on a scale of 1 to 1, 1 to 5, and 1 to 10. Participants in the contest should be Germans, or else employés of a locomotive or car works situated in Germany. The first prize is 5,000 marks (\$1,250); the second prize is 3,000 marks (\$750); the third prize is 2,000 marks (\$500); special prizes may also be awarded in the discretion of the committee for special work.

The Society retains the right to publish either full or partial descriptions of the designs which have received prizes. All plans must be submitted by 12 o'clock M. on December 1, 1902, to the Secretary, Society of German Locomotive Engineers, F. C. Glaser, Berlin, S. W., Lindenstrasse 80, I, Germany. The plans must be submitted under a *nom de plume*, which is written upon the drawings and also upon a sealed envelop inclosing the real name of the inventor.

Artificial Marble in Denmark.

The lack of marble in Denmark has led to many attempts to produce a substitute which would equal in decorative effect the natural product and would not exceed it in cost.

Some success has been achieved in the manufacture of this article in Sweden, but the thin slabs would not keep their shape, inclining to bend and warp. The veins were stiff and angular, and the soft transitions of color which make variegated marble a thing of beauty were wanting.

A significant advance has been made in this industry by a Danish master builder, who is producing a stone of such delicate transition of tints and play of color that it is impossible to distinguish it from the natural product; while as to cost of manufacture, it can compete with all other artificial marbles. The imitation of the more expensive species does not exceed in cost that of the cheaper ones.

The inconvenience hitherto met with, that the mass had to be greased to prevent adhesion (thereby destroying the crystalline surface characteristic of the genuine article), has been overcome.

The process of manufacture is simple and easily learned, and the cost of the outfit does not exceed \$175. The article can be produced in any form desired—columns, plain or fluted, and capitals—as readily as flat slabs. It is claimed that even pictures may be made of this material. It seems to have the durability of genuine marble, but its cost is only about one-tenth as much. At the present stage of the development of the industry, the maker is able to produce a slab about half an inch thick at a cost of 14 cents per square foot.

The inventor's name is Soren Schongaard, and his address is Copenhagen.

Germany's match-making industry, in which about \$9,000,000 is vested, is said to be almost ruined by the output of the American Diamond Match Company's new factories near Mannheim. Six months ago matches made in German works were sold at \$20 a case; now they are selling at \$16 a case, which is a dollar below the cost of production by German machinery. The Diamond Match Company uses machinery made in the United States.

Brief Notes Concerning Patents.

According to the New York Sun, John W. Bookwalter refused \$1,000,000 for the patent rights of a new steel process which he has invented. By means of this process it is possible to remove impurities from iron at the side of the converter instead of at the bottom. It is said that less power is required and that a steel of greater purity is obtained.

Hugo Jone, a chemist in the city laboratory of Chicago, has devised a battery for the production of electricity directly from coal. The city is paying the expense of the experiments which Mr. Jone is carrying out. The new battery is said to be in practical and convenient form.

On October 22, Professor Sidney Howe Short, the inventor of the first electric car operated in the United States, and consulting engineer of the Dick, Kerr Electrical Company, died after an operation for appendicitis. He had been engaged in electrical work for twenty-four years. Professor Short was graduated from the Ohio State University in 1878. He established the Short Electric Railway of Columbus. He was a professor in the Denver University for several years and during that time he invented his car, which was tried on the University's grounds.

A lieutenant-colonel in the Swedish army, Mr. G. Baunerhjelm, has for some time experimented with wireless telegraphy (Marconi's system). It is claimed that he has recently made improvements in this line which, if practical, will be useful for military purposes and at sea. The newspapers state that he has invented an electric radiator or reflector which, combined with the Marconi system, can send the electric waves, and with them the message, in the desired direction. The drawback of the system seems to be that a telegram cannot be sent in a certain direction a longer distance than 25 or 30 miles, but for many purposes this may be sufficient. The experiments will be continued, and further improvements may be made.

An exhibition of the Carley life float which has been attracting an unusual amount of interest among shipbuilders, yachtsmen and marine enthusiasts, was given September 23 on the lower bay off Romer Shoal Beacon. The exhibition itself was most successful and many eminent authorities volunteered the opinion that the Carley float was a most effective life-saving appliance. The float was easily tossed over the bulwarks of the steamer. Eighteen men jumped into the water and climbed into the float. This float was designed to hold fifteen people, yet the eighteen, whose aggregate weight was somewhere in the vicinity of 3,000 pounds, failed to submerge the cylinder, and experts admitted that it would save the lives of almost as many more clinging to the lifelines outside.

A curious condition of affairs as to the rights of inventors who are also public servants, in the employ of municipal bodies at the time of an invention, occurred in England recently. One of the officers of the London County Council invented an apparatus to record the force of water issuing from a hydrant, and the patent therefor was claimed and assigned to the Board. It thereafter appeared that the use of public funds for paying renewals was forbidden by law, so the Board was compelled to reassign the patent to the original inventor for his own benefit—ostensibly—stipulating that the Board should have the use of the device without charge, free of royalties for the term of its life, and also that the name of the Council should not be used in connection with the sale of the invention to outside parties. This seems an ingenious stratagem to obtain the device without any payments whatever, leaving the inventor to maintain the patent in force for the Board's use. Outsiders would scarcely care to invest in such an invention, when the chief source of profit—public use—was taken from it.

An article in the Edinburgh Evening Dispatch on india-rubber has brought the suggestion that the real inventor of waterproof was not Mackintosh, of Glasgow, but Prof. J. Syme, of Edinburgh. It is claimed on the authority of a book sent by Prof. Chiene, of Edinburgh University, that Prof. Syme published in 1818 an article in the Annals of Philosophy, announcing his discovery of benzene and its solvent power on caoutchouc. Having dissolved the rubber, Prof. Syme relates that he rendered various textures (such as a silk cloak) waterproof by brushing with a thin solution. The article did not appear in the Annals until some months after he had sent it, and not long afterward Mackintosh took out a patent for applying the solution to make water-proof cloth. A correspondent says even if it were true that Syme discovered that benzene would dissolve india-rubber, that in no way proves that he invented waterproof. India-rubber can be dissolved by many things, such as turpentine, naphtha, and ether, and before 1820 india-rubber was dissolved and used for commercial purposes by Mackintosh, of Glasgow, who used coal-tar naphtha, and by Hancock, of London, who used turpentine.