



### SELLING PATENTS FOR CASH MADE EASY.

A new and very ingenious method of entrapping the unwary inventor has recently been inaugurated, and under a guise so complete and alluring as to be worthy of more than passing mention. It is not every inventor who immediately upon the issuance of his United States patent receives from what appears to be a reliable corporation with an immense capital, a cash offer of hundreds or perhaps thousands of dollars for his patent. If you are an inventor, dear reader, and have recently obtained a patent, you may be the fortunate one—but beware!

The scheme of procedure is so tortuous, and the methods employed so well formulated, that the suspicions of the most wary are likely to be put to sleep. Picture to yourself a manufacturing company duly incorporated with a capital of \$2,000,000, and with a formidable board of directors. The company has been formed, so it states in its prospectus, with the purpose of purchasing, manufacturing, or controlling patented devices of approved commercial value. Surely this is a laudable and praiseworthy enterprise.

When the victim, among the many inventors whose names appear weekly in the Patent Office Gazette, has been selected, he receives a letter from one of the officers of the company, saying that the victim's patent has been placed before the executive board of the manufacturing company, and in view of the merits of the invention that the company has decided to make an offer for the patent; that it will pay so many thousands of dollars in cash and a like amount in seven per cent cumulative preferred stock of the company. Preliminary to the closing of the contract, however, there will be found the following carefully-worded requirement, which is a condition precedent to the conclusion of the purchase. It is to the effect that few of the patents that the company has "purchased" (?), or has now under consideration, have been worked sufficiently to have been tested in the courts as to validity or infringement, and that, therefore, any patent purchased by the company must undergo a thorough examination by the company's expert before such sale can be consummated. The statement then follows that such examination has been made by the patent counsel of the company, who has gone over the specifications very carefully and pronounced them O. K. This certainly is most satisfactory to the patentee, and he almost feels the hard crisp gold in the hollow of his hand, but this is not all. It is a rule of the company that before such sale can be consummated, an expert opinion shall also be "rendered from the classification at Washington," whatever that may mean, "by the patent attorney and mechanical expert of this company." The letter also states that all the patents so far considered by the company have been passed upon favorably by the company's counsel, and the deals closed. It also states that the company will not consider any counter proposition and any change from the above conditions, from which it may be inferred that they would not listen for a moment to the inventor, even though he would part with his patent for one-half the price offered. In order to clinch the argument and close the contract, it is remarked incidentally that during the past ten days the stock of the company has risen from \$50 to \$100 per share.

The bait is a very attractive one, and is thoroughly sugar-coated. Swallowing is made easy. The inventor, who is often not a man of affairs, takes home with him the letter he has received, and with pride lays it before his wife, who, perhaps, has not always been in entire sympathy with his taste and talents for invention. Here he has received a *bona fide* cash offer from a rich corporation, and at the same time becomes a stockholder in the enterprise, which pays "at least seven per cent cumulative dividends on the preferred stock, and will undoubtedly pay twice that on its common stock." He writes to the counsel of the company, but is somewhat staggered when he is informed what the fee will be for conducting the examination "in the classification at Washington." He is called upon to go deep down into his pocket, but why should he hesitate?—the prize is such a rich one. Beware! my friend. Beware! The fee asked, perhaps, is not exorbitant for the service which is supposed to be rendered, but is it made in good faith? Does the company really desire to become the owner of your patent? Is it sincere in its professions, or is it striving to wheedle you out of a "lawyer's" fee and then turn you down? If it is sincere, why does it offer you an enormous price for a patent which you would gladly sell for one-half or one-tenth the price? The proposition is unbusinesslike, and bears an unsavory odor. You are asked to become a stockholder in a company which makes a claim to paying handsome dividends

on its stock, but would you care to embark on an enterprise conducted on such loose business principles, even assuming the intents of the promoters to be honest?

Upon what is the company now paying its dividends? The prospectus states that "the company proposes to erect a plant of sufficient magnitude to manufacture the several lines which can be economically produced." Beautiful words! Delightful vagueness! There are two features of the enterprise concerning which there is positively no vagueness. If you join the enterprise and sell your patent, you must pay the counsel of the company his good round fee. If you are not fortunate enough to be blessed with an inventive faculty, and do not have at the moment a patent to sell, be of good cheer, nevertheless, you will be allowed an opportunity of purchasing some of the stock of the company in the open market, and you had better get in quickly, for it has gone up one hundred per cent in ten days. "O tempora! O mores!"

#### Brief Notes Concerning Patents.

The wear and tear on the telegraph operator's nerves are said to be particularly severe on account of the great number of signals which he must send in the course of a few hours' work and also because of the great rapidity with which he must work. As is well known, the various signals are made by a combination of the dot and dash, the letter "p," for instance, requiring five dots and the letter "b" a dash and three dots. With the telegraph key now in use, in sending the five dots indicating a "p" the operator must depress and release his key five times and thus it is estimated that in the course of sending messages in the ordinary pursuit of his work, the operator is compelled to make one hundred and eighty thousand depressions and the same number of relaxations in the course of eight hours' work, during which time he would send about 15,000 words. It will readily be seen that the work is exceedingly trying on the nerves. Much of this labor has been avoided by the use of a new invention, recently patented by Horace G. Martin. It is about the size of the Morse relay and is known as the "autoplex." It has one lever which works from the side, there being a contact point at each side. As long as the lever is held at one side, the automatic mechanism is set in motion and the dots are sent out one after the other. Upon shifting the lever to the other side, the dash mechanism is set in motion and the dashes will be repeated indefinitely if desired. With this device a word which requires thirty-two movements is sent with twelve and it is estimated that the operator's work is reduced by two-thirds.

A new device by which water can be applied to the roots of plants constantly and without danger of flooding the earth in which the plant is growing, has been designed by a German inventor and recently introduced into this country. It consists of a glass bulb resembling in shape an incandescent electric lamp but somewhat larger. This has a long neck at the narrow end and the extremity of this is supplied with a vent through which the bulb is filled. When the bulb is inverted the water is held in place by suction, but the pointed end being thrust into the ground, the water is drawn therefrom slowly but in sufficient quantities to supply the plant.

A great deal of overhead cable is now used in the transportation of materials about quarries, mines, and similar plants, and heretofore the method pursued of painting these metal cords with the preservative necessary to prevent the action of the moisture of the air has been an exceedingly tedious and dangerous task. A means of doing this work mechanically has been recently devised. The apparatus consists of a cylindrical tank with a slot through its entire length. When the tank is placed in position, it fits above and around the cable with the latter in the slot. The tank is then filled with the preservative and it is applied to the cable by means of a lining of packing which comes in contact with the wire cable as the apparatus is passed along the wire. There are grooved wheels at either end which support the weight of the tank and maintain it in its proper place on the wire and a pendant weight keeps it in an upright position.

As the result of offering a prize for the best device for the purpose, a type of apparatus has been adopted in the German army for the purification of water. The prize was won by a Berlin firm which now has the contract of building a number of outfits, and it is proposed to supply one of them to each army corps. With the aid of these it is hoped to be able to furnish the men with a good supply of wholesome water, although it may be necessary to draw the same from sources which may be more or less contaminated. The apparatus is in the shape of a portable engine and in operation it has a capacity of fifteen gallons an hour. In order to put it to the severest test that could be devised, the apparatus was tried on water which had been mixed to a high degree with typhoid and cholera germs, and in the water delivered there was no trace of the diseases.

During his fourth term in the penitentiary at Trenton, N. J., Charles Filer invented a machine for sewing the bottoms of trousers, which has heretofore been done by hand. This device, it is claimed, will do the work of twenty men and do it better. The attention of some capitalists in Trenton and other parts of New Jersey was called to the machine, and before Filer's release patents were secured in this and foreign countries for him. When the gates were opened to set him at liberty, he found himself a member of a powerful company with himself as the superintendent. Incidentally a young woman who had become interested in him has agreed to marry him and he has decided to live a new life.

In order to demonstrate beyond all doubt that the fender invented by him would do all that he claimed for it, Benjamin Lev, of Cleveland, Ohio, threw himself in front of a car equipped with one of the fenders while it was moving down a very decided grade at the rate of twelve miles an hour. The inventor had taken no precautions in the way of protecting his body with extra clothing or by giving notice to the motorman of what he was about to do, but he had several persons present to witness the unusual test. He had claimed that the apparatus would strike any one in the way of the car and pick him up without doing him the least injury and his experience vindicated his promise. The car was stopped as soon as possible and he was taken from the basket of the fender and found to have sustained no injury whatever. He had not a scratch as the result of the demonstration. The fender consists of a lattice-work of band iron and pivoted at an angle of about forty-five degrees in front of the car. At the lower end of the fender is a hollow rubber cylinder which strikes about the ankles of a person in the way of a car, and the force of the fall is taken up by the body falling on the inclined surface of the fender which immediately tips back with the weight thrown upon it and holds the person as if in a basket. A flexible screen also prevents the person struck from being injured by coming in contact with the front part of the car.

The third-rail system has been robbed of much of its danger by an innovation in construction which has been worked out by Louis E. Walkins, of Springfield, Mass. This consists of the third rail as it is ordinarily used, except that it is inverted and suspended from brackets in such a way that there is no opposition offered to the passage of a sliding shoe projecting from the car truck and in contact with the lower part of the rail. The third rail is fastened to the brackets by means of a lock-joint insulated wedge, and the whole is covered in such a way that it is impossible for man or beast to come in contact with the charged rail without getting down on the ground and reaching up and under the covering. Besides the element of safety offered, another feature is that the rail is kept free from the accumulations of snow and ice which are a serious annoyance where the rail is exposed, as is the usual practice. The cost of an installation of this kind is said to be but little more than the present system now in use in New York.

In street railway practice, much trouble and delay are occasioned by the accumulations which gather in the grooves of switches, thus interfering with their operation. A recent improvement in this line is a self-cleaning switch. The point instead of traveling back and forth on a solid bed, rests on pieces of rail with a large chamber underneath which has a connection with the sewer, and by this means all dirt falls through at once and is carried away. This switch is the invention of P. J. Ramion, of Syracuse, N. Y., and has a number of other incidental features which may be availed of or discarded at the desire of the company. For instance, it is supplied with accommodations for a small heater by which the metal is kept at a temperature which will melt the snow as it falls, thus preventing another source of delay in winter weather. Another feature of the device is that it can be worked from the platform of the car by an ingenious arrangement. The essential feature however is the means of carrying off the dirt which usually collects in the groove and prevents the operation of the point.

As a means of facilitating the movement of its trains, particularly in its yards, the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railway has installed a rather elaborate telephone plant, connecting the terminal headquarters with the flagmen's houses along the tracks. This will prevent congestion of the tracks in the yards and also do away with delays of city traffic at street crossings. In the future, all freight trains will be stopped in the suburbs or outside of the city until the main yard can be communicated with and it can be learned that there is a track in readiness for the train. The cause of blocked crossings has been caused mostly by allowing trains to enter the yard before there is room for them, and they are necessarily held up on some street crossing.