

THE INVENTIONS OF HAWKINS

By EDGAR FRANKLIN

THE HYDRO-VAPOR LIFT.

I may have mentioned that it was customary for Hawkins and myself to travel down town together on the elevated six days in the week.

So far as that goes, we still do so; for it has come over me recently that any attempt to dodge the demagogue inventions of Hawkins is about as thankless and hopeless a task as seeking to avoid the setting of the sun.

For two or three mornings, however, I had been leaving the house some 10 or 15 minutes earlier than usual.

There had lately appeared the old, uncanny light in Hawkins' eye; and if trouble were impending, it was my fond, foolish hope to be out of its way—until such a time, at least, as the police or the coroner should call me up on the telephone to identify all that was mortal of Hawkins.

Three days, then, my strategy had been crowned with success. I had eluded Hawkins and ridden down alone, the serene enjoyment of my paper unpunctuated by dissertations upon the practicability of condensing the clouds for commercial purposes, or the utilization of atmospheric nitrogen in the manufacture of predigested breakfast food.

But upon the fourth morning a fuse blew out under the car before we left the station; and as I sat there fuming about the delay, I walked Hawkins.

He was beaming and cheerful, but the glitter in his eye had grown more intense.

"Ah, Griggs," he exclaimed, "I've missed you lately!"

"I hope you haven't lost weight over it?"

"Well, no. I've been busy—very busy."

"Rush of business?"

"Um—ah—yes. Griggs!"

It was coming.

Hawkins stared hard at me for a moment; then I gave him another push.

"Hawkins," I said, hurriedly, "have you followed this matter of the Panama canal?"

and he toppled into the canal and wallowed about in its waters until the ride was over.

Unhappily, my own place of business is located farther down upon the same street with the Blank building, where Hawkins has—or had—offices. There was no way of avoiding it—I was forced to walk with him.

But the suppressed enthusiasm in Hawkins didn't come out, and I felt rather more easy. Whatever it was, I fancied that he had left the material part of it at home, and home lay many blocks up town. I was safe.

"Good-by," I smiled when we reached his entrance.

"Not much," Hawkins responded. "Come in."

"But, my dear fellow—"

"You come," commanded the inventor. "There's something in here I want you to see."

He led me in and past the line of elevators.

So we were not going up to his offices! We seemed to be heading for the cigar booth, and for a moment I fancied that Hawkins had discovered a new brand and was going to treat me; but he piloted me farther, to a door, and opened it and we passed through.

Then I perceived where we were. The Blank building people had been constructing an addition to their immense stock of offices; we stood in the freshly completed and wholly unoccupied annex.

"There, sir!" said Hawkins, extending his forefinger. "What do you see, Griggs?"

"Six empty barrels, about three wagon-loads of kindling wood, a new tiled floor, and six brand-new elevators," I replied.

"Oh, hang those things! Look—where I'm pointing!"

"Ah! somebody's left a packing-box in one of the elevator-shafts, eh?"

Certainly, more than anything else, that was what it resembled.

"At the first glance it appeared to be nothing more than a crude wooden case about the size of an elevator car, standing in one of the shafts and contrasting unpleasantly with the other new, shining polished cars.

"Packing—ugh!" snapped the inventor. "Do you know what that is?"

"You turned down my first guess," I suggested, humbly.

"Griggs, what appears to you as a packing-case is nothing more nor less than the first and only Hawkins Hydro-Vapor Lift!"

"The which?"

"The—Hawkins—Hydro—Vapor—Lift!"

"Hydro-Vapor?" I murmured. "What- ever is that? Steam?"

"Certainly."

"And lift, I presume, is English for elevator?"

"The words are synonymous," said Hawkins, coldly.

"Then why the dickens didn't you call it a steam elevator and be done with it? Wasn't that sufficiently complicated?"

"Oh, Griggs, you never seem able to understand! Now, a steam elevator—so called—is an old proposition. A Hydro-Vapor Lift is entirely new and sounds distinctive!"

"Yes, it sounds queer enough," I admitted.

"Just examine it," said the inventor, joyously, leading me to the box.

There was not much to be examined. Four walls, a ceiling and a floor—all of undressed wood—that was about the extent of the affair; but in the center of the floor lay a circular iron plate, some two feet across and fastened near the edge with a circle of highly ornamental iron bolt heads.

Beside the plate, a lever rising perpendicularly from the floor constituted the sole furnishing of the car.

"Now, you've seen a hydraulic elevator?" Hawkins began. "You know how they work—a big steel shaft pushed up the car from underneath, so that when it is in operation the car is simply a box standing on the end of a pole, which rises or sinks, as the operator wills."

"I believe so," I assented. "I think it's time now for me to go—"

"That principle is fallacious!" the inventor exclaimed. "Consider what it would mean here—a steel shaft 16 stories high, weighing tons and tons!"

"Well?"

"Well, sir, I have reversed that idiotic idea!" Hawkins announced, triumphantly. "I have had a hole dug 16 stories deep, and put the steel shaft down into it."

It was about what one might have expected from Hawkins; but despite my long acquaintance with his bizarre mental machinery, I stood and gaped in sheer amazement.

"Now, then," pursued the inventor, "I have had a steel tube made, a little longer than the shaft, you understand."

"What! Even longer than 16 stories?"

"Of course. The tube fits the shaft exactly, just as an engine cylinder fits the plunger. The elevator stands upon the upper end of the tube. We let steam into the tube by operating this

lever, which controls my patent, reversible steam-release. What happens? why, the tube is forced upward and the elevator rises. I let out some of the steam—and the tube sinks down into the ground! That iron plate which you see is the manhole cover of the tube, as it were—it corresponds, of course, to the cylinder-head of an engine."

"And the people who own this place—did they allow you to do it, or have you been chloroforming the watchman and working at night?" I inquired.

"Don't be absurd, Griggs," said Hawkins. "I pay a big rent here. The owners were very nice about it."

"They must have been exceedingly so, I thought; nice to the point of imbecility. Had they known Hawkins as I know him, they would joyfully have handed him back his lease, given him a substitute cash bonus to boot, and even have thrown in a non-transferable Cook's tour ticket to Timbuctoo before they allowed him to embark on the project."

"Well," Hawkins said, sharply, breaking in upon my reverie. "Don't stand there musing. Did you ever see anything like it before?"

"Once, when I was a child," I confessed. "I fell while climbing a flagpole, and that night I dreamed—"

"Bah! Come along and watch her work."

"No!" I protested. "Oh, no!"

"Good Lord, why not?" cried Hawkins.

"My wife," I murmured. "She cannot spare me, Hawkins, you know—"

not yet."

"Why, there isn't the slightest element of danger," the inventor argued. "Surely, Griggs, even you must be able to grasp that. Can't you see that that is the chief beauty of the Hydro-Vapor Lift? There are no cables to break! That's the great feature. This car may be loaded with ton after ton; but if she's overloaded, she simply stops. There are no risky wire ropes to snap and let down the whole affair."

"I know that, but there are no wire ropes to hold her up, either, and—"

Hawkins snorted angrily. Then he grabbed me bodily and forced me along toward the door of his Hydro-Vapor Lift.

"Actually, you do make me tired," he said. "You seem to think that everybody is conspiring to take your wretched little life!"

"But what have you against me?" I asked, mournfully. "Why not let me out and do your experimenting alone?"

"Because—Lord knows why I'm doing it, you're not important enough to warrant it—I'm bound to convince you that this contrivance is all that I claim!"

"Oh, had I not spent the days of my youth in a strenuous gymnasium! Had I not been endowed with muscles beyond the dreams of Eugene Sandow, and been expert in boxing and wrestling, and in the breaking of bones, as the Japanese!"

Then I could have fallen upon Hawkins from the rear and tied him into knots and even dismembered him if necessary—and escaped.

"But things are what they are, and Hawkins is more than a match for me; so he banged the door angrily and grasped the lever."

"Now, observe with great care the

we almost flew up against the roof of the car.

That was the law of inertia at work. Then we descended to the floor with a crash that seemed calculated to loosen it. That was the law of gravitation.

I presume that Hawkins figured without us.

I was the first to sit up. For a time my head revolved too rapidly for anything like coherent perception. Then, as the stars began to fade away, I saw that we were stuck fast between floors; and before my eyes—large and prominent in the newness of its paint—loomed up the number 13.

It looked ominous.

"We—we seem to have stopped," I said.

"Yes," snapped Hawkins.

"What was it? Do you suppose anything was sticking out into the shaft? Has—can it be possible that there is anything like a mechanical error in your Hydro-Vapor Lift?"

"No! It's that blamed fool of an engineer!"

"What!" I exclaimed. "Do you blame him?"

"Certainly."

"But how was it his fault?"

"Oh—you see—bah!" said the inventor, turning rather red. "You wouldn't understand if I were to explain the whole thing, Griggs."

"But I should like to know, Hawkins."

"Why?"

"I want to write a little account of the why and the wherefore, so that they can find it in case—anything happens to us."

Hawkins turned away loftily.

"We'll have to get out of this," he said.

He pulled at his lever with a confi-



"Hug the Wall!"

dent smile. The Hydro-Vapor Lift did not budge the fraction of an inch.

Then he pushed it back—and forward again. And still the inexorable 13 stood before us.

"Confound that—er—engineer!" growled the inventor.

Just then the Hydro-Vapor Lift indulged in a series of convulsive shudders. It was too much for my nerves. I felt certain that in another second we were to drop, and I shouted lustily:

"Help! Help! Help!"

"Shut up!" cried Hawkins. "Do you want to get the workmen here and have them see that something's wrong?"

I affirmed that intention with unprintable force.

"Well, I don't!" said the inventor. Why, Griggs, I'm figuring on equipping this building with my lift in a couple of months!"

"Are—are they going to allow that?" I gasped.

"Why, nothing's settled as yet; but it is understood that if this experimental model proves a success—"

But my cry had summoned aid. Above us, and hidden by the roof of the car, some one shouted:

"Hallo! What is it?"

"Hallo!" I returned.

"Air ye in the box?" said the voice, its owner evidently astonished.

"Yes! Get an ax!"

"Phat?"

"An ax!" I repeated. "Get an ax and chop out the roof of this beastly thing, so that we can climb out, and—"

Hawkins clapped a hand over my mouth, and his scowl was sinister.

superbly genteel motion with which she rises," he instructed me.

I prepared for that familiar head-grogginess of the rest-of-you-staying-below sensation and gritted my teeth.

Hawkins pulled at the lever. The Hydro-Vapor Lift quivered for an instant. Then it ascended the shaft—and very gently and pleasantly.

"There! I suppose you've trembled until your collar-buttons have worked loose?" Hawkins said, contemptuously, turning on me.

"Not quite that," I murmured.

"Well, you may as well stop. In a moment or two we shall have reached the top floor; and there, if you like, you can get out and climb down 16 flights of stairs."

"Thank you," I said, sincerely.

"This, of course, is only the slow speed," Hawkins continued. "We can increase it with the merest touch. Watch."

"Wait! I like it better slow!" I protested.

"Oh, I'll slacken down again in a moment."

Hawkins gave a mighty push to the controlling apparatus. A charge of dynamite seemed to have been exploded beneath the Hydro-Vapor Lift!

"We're going too fast!" I cried.

Up we shot! I watched the freshly painted numbers between floors as they whizzed by us with shuddering apprehension: 9—10—11—12—

Hawkins, I think, was about to laugh derisively. His head had turned to me, and his lips had curled slightly—when the Hydro-Vapor Lift stopped with such tremendous suddenness that

"Haven't you a grain of sense left?" he hissed.

"Yes, of course I have. That's why I want an ax to—"

"Tell that crazy engineer I want more steam!" bawled Hawkins, drowning my voice.

"More steam?" said the person above. "More steam an' an ax, is it?"

"No—no ax. Tell him I want more steam, and I want it quick! He's got so little pressure that we're stuck!"

We heard the echo of departing footsteps.

"Now, you'd have made a nice muddle, wouldn't you?" snarled the inventor. "We'd have made a nice sight clambering out through a hole in the top of this car!"

"There are times," I said, "when appearances don't count for much."

"Well, this isn't one of them," rejoined the inventor, sourly.

I did not reply. There was nothing that occurred to me that wouldn't have offended Hawkins, so I kept silence.

We stood there for a period of minutes, but the Hydro-Vapor Lift seemed disinclined to move either up or down.

Once or twice Hawkins gave a push at his lever; but that part of the apparatus seemed permanently to have retired from active business.

"Shall we move soon?" I inquired, when the stillness became oppressive.

"Presently," growled Hawkins.

Another long pause, and I hazarded again:

"Isn't it growing warm?"

"I don't feel it."

"Well, it is! Ah! The heat is coming from that plate!" I exclaimed, as it dawned upon me that the big iron thing was radiating warm waves through the stuffy little car. "Your Hydro-Vapor Lift will be pleasant to ride in when the thermometer runs up in August, won't it?"

Hawkins did not deign to reply, and I fell to examining the plate.

"Look," I said, "isn't that steam?"

"Isn't what steam?"

"Down there," I replied, pointing to the plate.

A fine jet of vapor was curling from one point at its edge—a thin spout of hot steam!

"That's nothing," said Hawkins. "Little leak—nothing more."

"But there's another now!"

"Positively, Griggs, I think you have the most active imagination I ever knew in an otherwise—"

"Use your eyes," I said, uneasily. "There's another—and still another!"

Hawkins bent over the plate—as much to hide the concern which appeared upon his face as for any other reason, I think.

"Well," he said, "she's leaking a trifle."

"But why?"

"The plate isn't steam-tight, of course; and the engineer's sending us more pressure."

His composure had returned by this time, and he regarded me with such contemptible eyes that I could find no answer.

But Hawkins' contempt couldn't shut off the steam. It blew out harder and harder from the leaky spots. The little car began to fill, and the temperature rose steadily.

From a comfortable warmth it increased to an uncomfortable warmth; then to a positively intolerable, reeking wet heat.

I removed my coat, and a little later my vest. Hawkins did likewise. We both found some difficulty in breathing.

The steam grew thicker, the car hotter and hotter. Perspiration was oozing from every pore in my body. Sparkling little rivulets coursed down Hawkins' countenance.

"Hawkins," I said, "if you'd called this thing the Hydro-Vapor Bath, instead of Lift—"

"Don't be witty," Hawkins said, coldly.

"Never mind. It may be a bit unreliable as an elevator, but you can let it out for steam-baths—50 cents a ticket, you know, until you've made up whatever the thing cost."

Bzzzzzzzz! said the steam.

"I'm going to shout for that ax again," I said, determinedly. "Ten minutes more of this and we'll be cooked alive!"

"Now—" began the inventor.

"Hawkins," I decline to be converted into stew simply to save your vanity. He—"

"Hey!" shouted Hawkins, dancing away from his lever into a corner of the car and regarding the iron plate with round eyes.

"What is it, now?" I asked breathlessly.

A queer roaring noise was coming from somewhere. The Hydro-Vapor affair executed a series of blood-curdling shakes. From the edges of the plate the steam hissed spitefully and with a new vigor.

"That—that jackass of an engineer!"

Hawkins sputtered. "He's sending too much steam!"

For a moment I didn't quite catch the significance; then I faltered with sudden weakness:

"Hawkins, you said that this plate corresponded to the cylinder-head of an engine? Then the tube beneath us is full of steam?"

"Yes, yes."

"And if we get too much steam—we seem to be getting it—will the plate blow off?"

"Yes—no—yes—no, of course not," answered Hawkins, faintly. "It's bolted down with—"

"But if it should," I said, dashing the steaming perspiration from my eyes for another look at the accursed plate. "If it should," the inventor admitted, "we'd either go up to Heaven on it, or we'd stay here and drop!"

"Help!" I screamed.

"Look out! Look out! Hug the wall!" Hawkins shrieked.

A mighty spasm shook the Hydro-Vapor Lift. I fell flat and rolled instinctively to one side. Then, ere my bewildered senses could grasp what was occurring my ears were split by a terrific roar.

The roof of the car disappeared as if by magic, and through the opening shot that huge, round plate of iron, seemingly wafted upon a cloud of dense white vapor. Then the steam obscured all else, and I felt that we were falling.

Yes, for an instant the car seemed to shudder uncertainly—then she dropped!

I can hardly say more of our descent from the fatal thirteenth story. In one second—not more, I am certain—12 spots of light, representing 12 floors, whizzed past us.

I recall a very definite impression that the Blank building was making an outrageous trip straight upward from New York; and I wondered how the occupants were going to return and whether they would sue the building people for detention from business.

But just as I was debating this interesting point, earthly concerns seemed to cease.

In the cellar of the Blank building annex a pile of excelsior and bagging and other refuse packing materials protruded into the shaft where once had been the Hawkins Hydro-Vapor Lift. That fact, I suppose, saved us from eternal smash.

At any rate, I realized after a time that my life had been spared, and sat up on the cement flooring of the cellar.

Hawkins was standing by a steel pillar smiling blankly. Steam, by the cubic mile, I think, was pouring from the flooring of the Hydro-Vapor Lift and whirling up the shaft.

I struggled to my feet and tried to walk—and succeeded, very much to my own astonishment. Shaken and bruised and half dead from the shock I certainly was, but I could still travel.

I picked up my coat and turned to Hawkins.

"I—I think I'll go home," he said, weakly. "I'm not well, Griggs."

We ascended the winding stair and passed through a door at the top, and instead of reaching the annex we stepped into the lower hall of the Blank building itself.

The place was full of steam. People were tearing around and yelling "Fire!" at the top of their lungs. Women were screaming. Clerks were racing back and forth with big books.

Older men appeared here and there, hurriedly making their exit with cash boxes and bundles of documents. There was an exodus to jig-time going on in the Blank building.

Above it all, a certain man, his face convulsed with anger, shouted at the crowd that there was no danger—no fire. Hawkins shrank as his eyes fell upon this personage.

"Lord! That's one of the owners!" he said. "I'm going!"

We, too, made for the door, and had almost attained it when a heavy hand fell upon the shoulder of Hawkins.

"You're the man I'm looking for!" said the hard, angry tones of the proprietor. "You come back with me! D'ye know what you've done? Hey? D'ye know that you've ruined that elevator shaft? D'ye know that a thousand-pound casting dropped on our roof and smashed it and wrecked two offices? Oh, you won't slip out like that! He tightened his grip on Hawkins' shoulder. "You've got a little settling to do with me, Mr. Hawkins. And I want that man who was with you, too, for—"

That meant me! A sudden swirl of steam enveloped my person. When it had lifted, I was invisible.

For my only course had seemed to fold my tents like the Arabs, and as silently steal away; only I am certain that no Arab ever did it with greater expedition and less ostentation than I used on that particular occasion.

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Frenchman Took No Chances

The Frenchman's proverbial foresight in time of emergency was well illustrated in Paris when the impending May day strike made many timid souls fear the return of the commune and the fall of the republic.

The bakeries, groceries, fish and butcher shops were all sold out by the evening of April 30, and many a Parisian household could have stood a siege of weeks before capitulating to the enemy.

One citizen in particular was desirous of having what army men would call a self-contained apartment. Hence he not only laid in a great stock of provisions, but for fear lest the city waterworks should be dynamited, he filled his bathtub with drinking water.

Even that did not satisfy him. Gaz-

ing at the bathtub, it occurred to him that the water could be made to do a double service. So off he dashed to the fish market, whence he returned in triumph with a dozen live fish to inhabit the tub.

History does not relate how many hours he amused himself by fishing in the bathtub on the fateful May 1; but, plainly, the French army lost a good commissary general when this man chose to remain a civilian.—N. Y. Evening Post.

Not Inviting.

Vegetarian—You want to go back to nature.

Prodigal—Yes; but the trouble is that she doesn't kill the fatted calf.—N. Y. Sun.

FOR THE BREAKFAST TABLE.

"Popovers" Had Origin in Brain of Chinese Cook.