

A FACTORY OF FEAR.

DYNAMITE-MAKERS EAGER TO OBEY ALL SAFETY RULES.

Making and Mixing the Terrible Explosive—20,000 Pounds Turned Out Daily—Shanties in a Jersey Wilderness.

RECENTLY the Cuban Junta, located in this city, placed a large order for dynamite, variously estimated at from 50,000 to 500,000 pounds, says a New York correspondent. It was probably nearer the former than the latter figure, but even if it was the minimum amount, it would be sufficient to tear some pretty big holes in the Spanish ranks, if properly applied.

The concern that secured this order has made lots of dynamite for the Cubans in the past twenty months; it also supplies the needs of Uncle Sam whenever he is in want of anything in this line. For a long time it was kept busy turning out 20,000 pounds of the stuff a day for the contractors at work on the Chicago canal. In a year it turns out enough of the explosive to almost blow the earth into smithereens.

It would seem that a concern which does all this would be an imposing affair, with a factory, or series of factories, with numberless acres of floor space. But it is just the reverse, and a stranger could stand in the very centre of the dynamite factory and not recognize it as such.

Dynamite is a peculiar commodity,

one building and an explosion to occur in any one department, the shock would cause instantaneous upheavals throughout the building, killing or maiming every one in the place.



FILLING CARTRIDGES.

Several hundred people are employed in the factory, including a dozen women. Each and every one of them realizes the danger of their calling, and they exercise the greatest caution in performing their work. There are certain rules formulated by the company which they must obey, and this they are only too glad to do. One is that no matches, firearms or explosives of any kind must be carried on the person. Another is that no iron or steel pegs can be worn in the shoes. Wooden pegs are permissible, because they are safe.



HUMBLE ABODE OF THE BIGGEST DYNAMITE FACTORY.

and it is manufactured under peculiar conditions. Uncertainty is the ruling thing about dynamite, and this dominating feature permeates the whole establishment. The factory is located at Gibbstown, N. J., a place so small, and in a section of the State so sparsely settled that the outside world would never have heard of its existence, perhaps, were it not for the dynamite.

Its remoteness from everything was the reason of the factory being located there. A branch railroad runs into the property connecting with the principal railroads and the Delaware River. By these means the commodity is shipped through the country and to the seaports.

The factory spreads over a mile of swamp land and is nothing more than three-score of wooden buildings, one-story in height, and not very securely built. For the most part they look for all the world like the run-down cabins of the South and are just about as handsome. They have one modern appliance, however, and that is an attachment for depriving lighting of its powers.



WORKERS MAKING CARTRIDGES.

None of these shanties are very close to the other. Plenty of open space is a necessity when tens of thousands of pounds of dynamite are always lying around. Commercial prudence accounts for the cheap and scattering look of the factory. Experience has taught the owners that a single big building would be a rash enterprise. Explosions occur once in a while no matter how carefully they are guarded against, and it is an easy matter to replace the shanty.

A more potent reason is the protection it affords to the work people. Were all the business concentrated in

This latter rule was formulated some years ago, after one of the workmen had stepped on a tiny piece of dynamite, the nails of his shoes causing it to explode. The shock caused quite a quantity of the stuff on one of the work tables to go off, the shanty was blown up and there were some fatalities among the workmen.

There is no need of employing special men to see that the precautionary rules are observed, as every workman is a spy upon his neighbors, for he knows that his safety depends quite as much upon the others as upon himself.

Dynamite is principally a mixture of sulphuric acid, Chile saltpeter and boxwood sawdust. There are a good many other things which enter into its composition, and before it takes the shape of the finished cartridge it passes through a variety of hands. There is one thing that the dynamite worker is thankful for, and that is his job will never be usurped by machinery.

Nearly a dozen of the shanties are chemical houses. They are called "safety buildings" and are used for the storage of the many acids which help to make dynamite what it is.

One of the initiatory stages of the cartridges is "cooking" of the dynamite gelatine. The product of the cook is nitro-glycerine. Many acids are poured into a big leaden tub, the most conspicuous feature of which is a thermometer like a hawk, and chilled water is added from time to time to keep the temperature of the mixture down. Should it evince a sudden desire to rise there is nothing for all hands to do but run.

After all the acids have been added the mixture is allowed to stand, and then nitro-glycerine comes to the top like cream in milk. It is skimmed off and carried to another house, where it is mixed with the prepared raw material, principally sawdust.

When the coalition has been effected the result is loose dynamite, looking for all the world like brown sugar. It is conveyed to another building, called the pack house, where it is stuffed into the cartridges. The loose dynamite is placed in a dampened trough on a damp table, and the men fill the long narrow tubes with the stuff, using wooden scoops. Great care is taken that none of it drops on the floor, as a happening of that kind might be the preliminary of a big disaster. In this room the cartridges are packed for shipment. The women in the factory are employed in a little house given over to making the paper caps for the cartridges. As there is no danger about this work, machinery is em-

ployed to some extent, and as a result only a dozen women are employed.

As little finished dynamite is kept on the ground as possible. Stock is never maintained. The dynamite is shipped off as rapidly as it is made into cartridges, and the burden of watching it passes on to others.

ONE OF NATURE'S VAGARIES.

A Curious Tree Formation Growing on a Farm in New Jersey.

The white oak represented by the cut is growing on the farm owned by Miss Rhoda Hampton, on the Hampton Road, north of the Marlton Turnpike, and about four miles from Camden, N. J. The larger body is 2x4 feet in its diameter and the smaller 1x2 feet. It appears to be sound and quite solid above the union. The earliest date the writer could learn of its being observed, says R. Bingham, in Meehan's Monthly, was about forty years ago, when it was said to be about as large as a man's body. There has been much discussion as to the cause of the sing-



A FREAK OF NATURE.

ular growth. The inside of the parts are more nearly flat and the outside more oval, as indicating a split, but the trunks are too far apart at the ground. The smaller trunk is larger just below the union than farther down, as if a branch had been turned down and rooted; but the writer thinks that as a fence formerly ran through the opening, two saplings had been drawn together and bound with a with to serve as stakes to hold the rails in place. The marked rod gives the dimensions of the opening more correctly than the medium-sized man who stood back out of the shade of the trunk.

The editor of Meehan's comment is that "this is undoubtedly a case of natural inarching, the union having occurred at an early age. Very good reasons, derived from a knowledge of the manner in which wood is formed, would be adduced against the idea of a split trunk, as also against the suggestion of a branch turned down and rooting. No theory but natural inarching will suit the case."

SEA GULL-FOULED THE LOG.

Captain Wonders Why the Patent Device Wouldn't Work.

When the British steamship Pacific, on a recent trip, was nearly half way across the Atlantic the patent log refused to work. The log was trailing astern as usual, but Captain Young could get no results from the indicator.



THIS SEA GULL MADE TROUBLE.

At two bells of the forenoon watch he ordered a sailor to haul in the line to learn the cause of the trouble. Only a few fathoms had been reeled when a sea gull was pulled, dripping with spray, from the wake.

The bird, which was still alive, had become entangled with the line in a most intricate way. The cord was wound around its head and legs, and, during the efforts of the sailors to extricate the victim, became entangled with its wings also.

It was necessary to break the gull's neck in order to straighten the log line.

Sailors say that the obstruction of a ship's log by birds, as well as fish, is not rare, and that an albatross will frequently foul the line.

During 1896 the big Anaconda copper mine, in Montana, earned a profit of \$4,000,000, the output in that year being 107,000,000 pounds of copper, nearly 500,000 ounces of silver and about 15,000 ounces of gold. More than \$1,000,000 was spent on improvements.



Your Gifts.

If you have the gift of seeing, ever look for beauty; Noting faults in all your friends, is plainly not your duty.

If you have the gift of hearing, list to what is best; Shut your ears to everything that is not good and sweet.

If you have the gift of talking, use but pleasant words; Let your speech be glad and merry as the songs of birds. —Emma C. Dowd, in Youth's Companion.

The Gingerbread Man.
But five years old was little Nan
When she fell in love with a gingerbread man.
She said as she placed him beside her cup,
"I love you enough to eat you up!"
And then the roguish little miss
Devoured her sweetheart with a kiss;
"How nice you are!" said little Nan—
And that was the end of the gingerbread man.

Years passed, and the maid to womanhood grew,
And she had of suitors a dozen or two;
But she found none as sweet as the gingerbread man,
"For he was a regular snap," sighed Nan. —The Commonwealth.

The Blossom of My Heart.
Azure eyes a-twinkle,
Amber locks a-curl,
Silver laugh a-tinkle,
Shining teeth o' pearl;
When she is nigh
I gaze and sigh
I cannot fly
The spot;
There is no fairer blossom than
That sweet Forget-me-not.

Poets sing of beryl's
Gems of peerless hue;
Could they meet the pearls
In her eyes of blue.
Each captive wight
To be her knight
With wild delight
Would plot;
For she can smile to witch the world.
My sweet Forget-me-not.

When the blossoms shimmer
In the dawn o' May
When her eyes grow dimmer
On our wedding day,
And in my bride
I lead my bride
May joy betide
Her lot;
The blossom o' my heart for aye,
My sweet Forget-me-not!
—Samuel M. Peck, in Boston Transcript

As to Friends and Enemies.
Preserve me from my friend, because I whisper in his ear
The little secrets I'd not like a cruel world to hear;

And if he at some loose-tongued time gives forth what I have said,
The world will say he speaks the truth, and sadly wag his head.

But if my enemy should spread that self-same truth, you see,
The world would cry "He doubt it—he's the fellow's enemy!"
—John Kendrick Bangs, in Harper's Weekly.

A Commonplace Letter.
It seemed so little, the thing you did—
Just to take the pen in your hand,
And send the warm heart's greeting, hid
'neath the common two-cent stamp of the land.
But over the mountains and over the plain,
And away o'er the billowy prairies went
The small, square letter, to soothe the pain
Of one who was fretted with discontent.

She was ill and tired, the long, hot day
Had worn itself to the merest shred;
The last of the light, as it ebbed away,
Fell on her patient needle and thread.
A shadow came flying across the space
Where the fading sunlight filtered through;
There was just the gleam of a sweet young face,
And a voice said, "Here is a letter for you."

The quick tears blurred in a sudden mist,
But she brushed them away, and then she smiled,
And you should have seen how she kissed
and kissed
The postmark's creole, like a child.
Why, the name brought back the long ago
When she dressed in her best of afternoons,
When she found it a pleasure to sit and sew,
And her seams were hemmed to tripping tune.

Poverty, change, and the drudgery
Of work that runs on without an end,
Had fettered the heart that was light and free,
Till she had almost forgotten she had a friend.
The people at home so seldom write,
Her youth and its pleasures lie all behind;
She was thinking bitterly but last night
That "out of sight is out of mind."

Now, here is your letter! The old little break
Beyond these levels flat and green;
She thrills to the thrush as his flute notes wake
wake
In the vesper hush of the woods serene;
She sits again in the little church,
And lifts her voice in the choir once more;
Or stoops for a four-leaved clover to search
In the grass that ripples up to the door.

It was very little it meant for you—
An hour at best when the day was done;
But the words you sent rang sweet and true,
And they carried comfort and cheer to one
Who was needing to feel a clasping hand.
And to hear the voices she used to hear;
And the little letter, the breadth of the land,
Was the carrier-dove that brought home near.
—Mrs. E. Sangster, in Christian Advocate.

A Chinese Superstition.
The Hong Kong Telegraph says that the fact that Li Hung Chang's coffin, which he carried with him on his trip around the world, was burned in a fire on the steamer Glenarney, indicates to the Chinese superstitious mind that the great statesman will reach a very old age.

A New Ornamental Plant.

A new ornamental plant from Japan, physalis francheti, promises to rival the Otaheite orange and the Jerusalem cherry tree as an ornamental forced tree for house decoration. It forms many curious fruits which have inflated calyxes two to three inches in diameter, inclosing fruits the size of large cherries. These calyxes are at first green, but during the last of August turn to a brilliant orange-scarlet, the inclosed fruits taking the same color. Their size makes these calyxes very showy and they dry well. It is a hardy and promises to make a fine pot plant.—Detroit Free Press.

Number of Living Animal Species.

The editors of the Zoological Record have recently drawn up a table that indicates approximately the number of living species of animals. The following are the figures given: Mammals, 2,500; reptiles and batrachians, 4,400; tunicata, 900; brachiopods, 150; crustaceans, 20,000; myriapods, 3,000; echinoderms, 3,000; coelenterata, 2,000; protozoans, 6,100; birds, 12,500; fishes, 27,000; mollusks, 50,000; bryozoans, 1,800; arachnids, 10,000; insects, 230,000; vermes, 6,150; sponges, 1,500. General total, 366,000 distinct species.

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