

"I always did like an open wood fire," he said, "and now I will have a roaring one."

So he touched the flame of the candle to the light kindling-wood, and in a moment it was afire.

"I will wash while it is burning up," said Ephraim.

He went to the place where he thought he should find the wash-stand, with hot and cold water running from the pipes, but he was amazed to find that it had followed the strange fashion of the room, and had gone also! There was an old hand-basin, with a cracked china pitcher, standing upon a movable wash-stand, but the water in the pitcher had been turned into solid ice.

With an exclamation of impatience and indignation, Ephraim placed the pitcher between the andirons, close to the wood in the chimney-place; and he did so with smarting eyes, for the flue was cold, and volumes of smoke were pouring out into the room. In a few moments he felt that he should suffocate unless he could get some fresh air, so he resolved to open the upper sash of the window.

When he got to the window he perceived that the panes of glass were only a few inches square, and that the woodwork inclosing them was thicker and heavier than it had been. He strove to pull down the upper sash, but the effort was vain; it would not move. He tried to lift the lower sash; it went up with difficulty; it seemed to weigh a hundred pounds; and when he got it up, it would not stay. He succeeded, finally, in keeping it open by placing a chair beneath it.

When the ice in the pitcher was thawed, he finished his toilette, and then he descended the stairs. As nobody seemed to be moving in the house, he resolved to go out and get his breakfast at a restaurant. He unlocked the front door, and emerged into the street just as daylight fairly had begun.

As Ephraim descended the steps in front of his house, he had a distinct impression that something was wrong, and he was conscious of a feeling of irritation; but it seemed to him that his mind, for some reason, did not operate with its accustomed precision; and, while he realized the fact of a partial and very unexpected change of the conditions of his life, he found that when he tried, in a strangely feeble way, to grapple with the problem, the solution eluded him and baffled him.