

backward from his seat. His cap was torn away, and the sleet pattered like a sand-blast on his bare skull.

Cold Spring Tank flitted past, and the last steep pitch was near, seventeen hundred to the mile. In a moment Bart was rushing madly down the descent. His head swam with the hideous speed. His board vibrated and trembled as it hurtled along the track. All seemed unreal, uncanny. But although dazed and buffeted, he never for an instant loosed his grip of the bars. A "green" man might have lost his head, and that could have had but one result.

Almost sooner than he could think, he was at the bottom of the pitch, darting over the Ammonoosuc bridge. Only a few hundred feet more. The track, he knew, was clear to its end, for cars and engines were housed for the night. Now for one last, long, hard pull!

Deaf, blind, numb, exhausted, bent almost double, he drained his strength to the dregs for a clutch on the handles; then he lifted, as if he would tear the flange from the centerpiece.

There was a terrific shrieking as the iron surfaces ground together. Fire followed each brake.

A building rushed by on the right—the carpenter-shop. Bart did not actually see it, but he knew it was gone.

Then came the car-barn, the turntable, the engine-house and repair-shop, and the long wood-shed. Less than thirty yards more! His speed was slackening on the level grade, but it was still tremendous.

And now the laundry was past—the last building. Twenty-five feet beyond it the cog-rail ended. Bart threw all that was left of himself into one final, mighty wrench.

A second later he found himself rolling blindly along the ties, head over heels and heels over head, cuffed, punched, battered, as if a dozen flails were beating him at once on every part of his body. At last he came to a stop, a bruised, dizzy heap.

After a little Bart sat up, tried his arms and legs, and found he could get

on his feet. He felt himself all over. Luckily his bones were well padded with muscle, so none of them were broken.

The storm was still blowing forty miles an hour, but by contrast it seemed to him to be almost over. He hunted until he found his bundle of papers; it had been tied tightly, and had not burst open. Then he limped up to the Base House.

"Here are your Stars," said he to the driver of the team, shivering outside. "I've done my part; now see if you can get 'em to Bethlehem before six o'clock."

A Match Story

By Gertrude L. Stone

Phil tried two matches before he succeeded in getting one to burn.

"I do wish we had some decent matches!" he exclaimed.

"Decent matches!" laughed grandma, whose lamp Phil was lighting. "I wonder what you would think of the very first matches I can remember, or, better still, of the first your grandmother's mother used. I have heard her tell about them, and I don't believe that lamp would be lighted now if you had had to use one of them. You would still be down on the hearth lighting your match; that is, if there wasn't any fire in the fireplace that you could use."

"If there wasn't any fire I could use?" repeated Phil, in a puzzled tone. "Why should I need any fire to light a match? I'd strike it."

"But the match wouldn't strike; it wasn't made so it could," replied grandma.

Phil put away the broken and burned matches, picked up the big Angora cat, and settled himself in a big chair. "If you'll tell about the matches that wouldn't strike," he said, in his most persuasive tone, "I won't fuss to-morrow night if I have to try three."

Grandma smiled and closed her book.

"What good were they if they wouldn't strike?" asked Phil.

"Oh, a great deal," answered his grandmother. "If you had some fire on hand you could light a 'spunk,' as they called them, very quickly, for sulphur blazes in a twinkling; and you could carry your match from lamp to lamp, instead of bringing the lamps or candles to the fire. Of course there are other things that light as quickly as sulphur. Paper does; but burning paper isn't very pleasant to handle. The way in which these matches were most useful was in lighting new fires, I think. People tried to keep fire on hand in those days, when a new fire was so hard to kindle, but if a new one had to be lighted it was a pretty fine thing to be able to use one of these spunks that you think were no good. To get a spark from flint and steel was no little trouble, and then this spark must be caught in a tinder-box—a box full of stuff that would kindle easily, but not blaze, stuff like—like—rugs," she added, with a meaning smile.

Phil understood. Only that morning he forgot to put up the brass fender, and a spark from the open fire had left a little round hole in grandma's hearth-rug. How sorry he had been!

"Now if you had wanted some new fire," grandma went on to say, "and had put the sulphur tip of a spunk down on that little burning spot, puff! you would have had a blazing match. Soon the wood of the match would have caught, and you would have had a new fire started. Think how much easier than to blow and blow to coax the burning tinder to light a piece of wood."

"People thought these matches wonderful helps, even if you couldn't strike them; but they did not have to use them a great while, because somebody thought of something better. I can just remember the next kind. They were tipped with sulphur and something else, but those, too, could not be lighted by scratching them. People lighted them by dipping them in a bottle. Strange way to light a match, wasn't it? That bottle was the most mysterious thing in the whole house to me."

It was filled with asbestos. You know what asbestos is, don't you? That queer kind of rock that is so very stringy and will soak up water or oil or any other liquid? This asbestos was soaked in sulphuric acid, a strong chemical that made the match tip blaze when it touched it. I always wanted to watch when my father lighted a match. Down went the match into the bottle. Just as soon as it touched the wet rock, fizz! we had a light. The first of these matches we had I've heard my mother say cost twenty-five cents for eighty-four."

Phil gasped, as he thought of a time in the year when he wanted lots and lots of matches. "I never could have saved enough money for a good Fourth if I'd had to buy my own matches," he said, with a sigh.

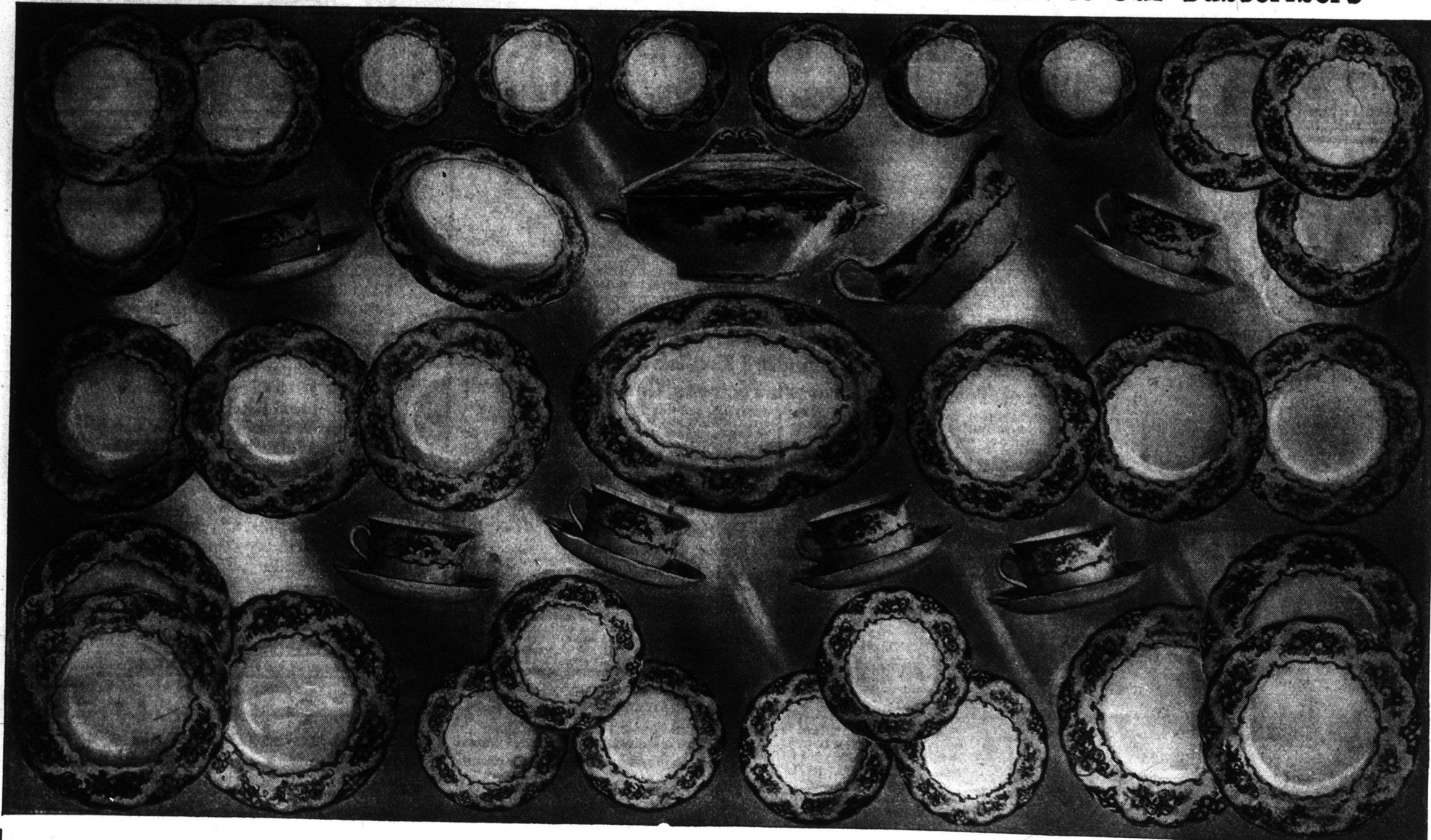
"You could have pieced out a match or two with a slow-match of rotten wood," said grandma, comfortingly. Then they both laughed to think how times have changed.

"I was quite a girl," continued grandma, "when we had our first friction-matches, matches that light by scratching on a rough surface, I mean. I am afraid you would not have thought them 'decent matches,' but I thought them very wonderful. They would not strike with a little easy scratching on the bottom of your shoe or the under side of a table; instead it took a very rough surface, and we had to scratch hard. We used sand-paper, folded two rough surfaces together, held the paper tight, and drew the match between the layers. And for all that, we thought these matches so fine that it never occurred to us that our grandchildren could possibly have anything better."

"Well," said Phil, laughing, as the supper-bell sounded, "perhaps these new parlor-matches of yours are pretty decent, after all."

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