

The Preservations of Failures in Business in Ambrose Bierce's *The Failure of Hope and Wandel*

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ABSTRACT

This research investigates to reveal the obstacles faced by the main characters Jabez Hope and Pike Wandel in Ambrose Bierce's flash fiction entitled *The Failure of Hope and Wandel*. Hope and Wandel run an ice business together and face several knowledge problems. Using qualitative method and explorative approach, this article analyzes how the excess of obstacles encountered at the beginning of the business process negatively affects the formation of qualified enterprises. This research is reviewed through Patrick A. Gaughan's theory of causes of business failure including experience, fraud, and disaster. Both Hope and Wandel never know that ice is abundant but will easily melt when the spring comes. In conclusion, this story is imaginative but real in the sense that any business could easily collapse if the owner forgets to pay attention to the core of the business materials. This study allows for a deeper understanding of the complexities of human experience, culture, and history as conveyed through narrative.

Keywords: Ambrose Bierce, Business, Failure, Patrick A. Gaughan, The Failure of Hope and Wandel

INTRODUCTION

Flash fiction is a developing genre characterized by a remarkably brief narrative structure that has gained significant prominence in the realm of literature. The growing appeal of flash fiction can be attributed, to some extent, to its concise length making it suitable for small displays, as well as to the prevailing "one-byte-and-go culture" (Al-Sharqi & Abbasi, 2015; Shapard, 2012). In 1992, James Thomas introduced the phrase "Flash Fiction" to encompass narratives of 750 words or less (Al-Sharqi & Abbasi, 2015; Thomas & Shapard, 2006). Yet, as a result of the ongoing restructuring and evolution of the

flash fiction genre, its word count currently varies between 50 and 1,000 words, or between 75 and 1,500 words (Batchelor, 2012; Gurley, 2015). A flash fiction composition titled "The Failure of Hope and Wandel" was authored by Ambrose Bierce and published in 1874. The narrative exposes the challenges encountered by the primary protagonists, Jabez Hope and Pike Wandel. These two people brought their business perilously close to collapse (Bierce, 1874; Gaughan, 2015; Pomeranz, 1999).

A business is the structured activity of individuals to manufacture and delivery commodities and

services to fulfill the demands of society. Business, in its broadest sense, encompasses both profit-driven entities like manufacturing companies and non-profit organizations such as schools, hospitals, and charities (Alsaaty & Makhlouf, 2020; Gaughan, 2015; Gheraia, et al., 2019). Failure of a business firm is an occurrence that can result in significant financial losses for any shareholder. The three primary elements that might undermine a corporation are economic constraints, financial considerations, and management expertise. The final aspect emphasizes the significance of managerial abilities in averting bankruptcy and is a key reason why workout experts place substantial emphasis on managerial talents during the process of corporate turnaround (Alsaaty & Makhlouf, 2020; Gaughan, 2015; Gheraia, et al., 2019). It is also the one that receives greater emphasis in this specific journal.

Presented in Ambrose Bierce's *The Failure of Hope and Wandel*, this essay explores the phenomenon of how seemingly straightforward issues can transform into unresolved impediments in the realm of corporate management. This narrative delves beyond a simple account of business failure and presents a thorough examination of the many barriers that can impede even the most ambitious entrepreneurial aspirations (Bierce, 1874; Gaughan, 2015; Pomeranz, 1999). While both persons may possess aspirations, the realization of their desires is not readily achievable. The primary factor is their disregard for the fundamental components in business, namely the ice that readily dissipates.

METHOD

The study employed a qualitative approach focused on reading, quoting, analyzing, comprehending, and formulating theory derived from Patrick A. Gaughan. Offline and online books, internet pages, and articles are among the written data sources that provide support for the study of this work. The researchers meticulously analysed Ambrose Bierce's flash fiction novel, *The Failure of Hope, and Wandel* through a theoretical lens. They then proceeded to establish a connection between the data source and the theory. The scope of this study is Ambrose Bierce's flash fiction, with Patrick A. Gaughan's theory of Causes of Business Failure serving as the analytical framework. Moreover, a detailed explanation of deepening analysis is provided.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Business and Its Trust in 'The Failure of Hope and Wandel'

The Failure of Hope and Wandel is a brief narrative authored by Ambrose Bierce. The poem was initially published on September 5, 1874 in *Fun* under the title "Cool Correspondence." A posthumous publication of the work was included in the 1970 compilation of *The Complete Short Stories of Ambrose Bierce*. The novel consists of a sequence of correspondence exchanged between two associates, Hope and Wandel, who jointly manage a business (Bierce, 1874; Gaughan, 2015; Pomeranz, 1999). Hope is writing from Chicago, having been unable to get goods to Wandel for sale in New Orleans because of the frozen state of Lake Michigan.

Nevertheless, this inspires Hope to consider establishing an ice trading enterprise to transport to New Orleans, given the scarcity of ice. He encloses a fragment of ice in his letter to Wandel, which only liquefies and smudges the correspondence. The two correspond and Hope offers him a vast storage facility of ice that he can transport to New Orleans and generate a substantial financial gain. Nevertheless, when spring arrives and Hope endeavors to disperse the ice, a catastrophe occurs and it spontaneously melts (Bierce, 1874; Gaughan, 2015; Pomeranz, 1999). Hope advises Wandel to outpace payment to the creditors. The comprehensive narrative of the flash fiction, in the form of data, can be found in the Appendices.

The concluding letter from Mr. Hope discloses that Lake Michigan has undergone thawing, resulting in the melting of all the ice within the warehouse. The company is destined for failure. Mr. Hope concludes by asserting that Mr. Wandel's inquiry regarding the ice's authenticity as either fresh or saltwater indicates his little knowledge about the ice industry. It is crucial to acknowledge that the ice industry enjoyed significant popularity during the 19th century (Bierce, 1874; Deakin, 1972; Denton, 2020). Large ice blocks were collected from frozen lakes and thereafter kept in ice houses, such as the one Mr. Hope employs for storing his ice. One critical weakness in Mr. Hope's concept is the decision to place his icehouse directly on the ice. Consequently, with a shift in weather conditions and the melting of the iceberg, the entire stock is depleted (Bierce, 1874; Deakin, 1972; Denton, 2020).

This is intriguing how Bierce expresses his flash fiction through written correspondence. Through the medium of letters, readers are able to independently envision how the dialogues are conveyed through written communications. The challenges are undeniably more tangible than ever before. The veracity of the circumstance or the actual occurrence of those two buildings may be questioned (Bierce, 1874; Deakin, 1972; Denton, 2020). However, it is the inherent potency of short fiction. Individuals could envision based on their own linguistic comprehension. Some readers speculate that the fiction is likely to be based on reality in a different region of the world. Others will consistently perceive any imaginary character or occurrence as lacking any genuine meaning (Bierce, 1874; Deakin, 1972; Denton, 2020). Most of them disregard those facts and persist in reading and deriving pleasure from fiction.

Despite the inherent conflicts between reality and fantasy in flash fiction, Bierce's writing stands out due to his emphasis on the business dimension. Bierce's works are renowned for their depiction of inspiring commonplace concepts, and this particular story is no exception. Although mostly focused on business, the story may also have psychological elements. The correspondence serves as evidence of a decline in trust between the individuals involved (Bierce, 1874; Geddes, 2017; Wallace, 2022). Although one partner is committed to establishing a commercial relationship with the other, the latter lacks knowledge about ice. This story carries significant expectations, which are often encountered in business-related

situations in daily life. Hence, the collapse of their enterprise may be attributed mostly to misinterpretation and insufficient understanding of any ice-related industry (Bierce, 1874; Geddes, 2017; Wallace, 2022).

Business and Its Potentials to Fail

A business is the structured endeavor of individuals to manufacture and delivery commodities and services to fulfill the demands of society. Business enterprises are present in many sectors such as manufacturing, retail, finance, transportation, media, and entertainment (Jakes & Burrus, 2022; Lane & Schary, 1991; Wiczorek, et al., 2021). A business model outlines the systematic approach by which a company generates and provides value to its clients, and thereafter transforms the payments received into profits. Proficiency in both product and business model innovation, along with a deep understanding of customer needs and technological progress, is essential for business innovators to fully leverage the advantages of innovation (Jakes & Burrus, 2022; Lane & Schary, 1991; Wiczorek, et al., 2021).

It is well recognized that every business operating is driven by the objective of maximizing profits. Profits, however, were not readily attainable. In due course, a substantial profit may arise, but it will promptly diminish. Under certain circumstances, certain enterprises opt to attract a larger number of consistent customers, even if the profitability is not particularly substantial for them (Jakes & Burrus, 2022; Lane & Schary, 1991; Wiczorek, et al., 2021). By adopting such positions, organization enhances the coordination between buyers and

sellers, between systems and individuals, or even between supply and demand. It transcends mere financial gain. Despite the potential for greater gains, trust is of considerably greater importance than any financial resources in the entrepreneurial context (Jakes & Burrus, 2022; Lane & Schary, 1991; Wiczorek, et al., 2021). In larger organizations, there is often a dedicated department to public relations that is responsible for upholding confidence among all stakeholders. In the absence of proper maintenance, it is likely that the firm would decline and ultimately collapse as a result of the erosion of trust (Denton, 2020; Gaughan, 2015; Gheraia, et al., 2019). An often referenced statistic, the rate of business failures is widely regarded as a crucial indicator of the economic condition. Hence, individuals who believe that the creation and growth of new enterprises are the main catalysts for employment growth in the economy would have a particular interest in the statistics on company failures (Alsaaty & Makhlof, 2020; Gheraia, et al., 2019; Hamdani, et al., 2023). Corporation failures refer to the deliberate termination of a company either due to financial obligations to creditors or through legal actions resulting from certain breaches of trust. The correlation between the business cycle and the rate of business failure implies that reallocating resources among various stakeholders could exacerbate recessions (Alsaaty & Makhlof, 2020; Gheraia, et al., 2019; Hamdani, et al., 2023).

Patrick A. Gaughan identifies experience factors, fraud, and disaster as the primary causes of business failure (Alsaaty & Makhlof, 2020;

Gaughan, 2015; Gheraia, et al., 2019). The experience factors encompass a range of minimal managerial level of experience. One possible explanation is a deficiency in business acumen or a lack of practical experience. Often, the chase of profits takes precedence over the effort to sustain the firm itself. The scam linked to improper accounting practices within the company. Additional factors contributing to this phenomenon include economic recession, employee disengagement, lack of concern for internal control, potential erosion of ethical standards, difficulty in adapting to new transaction types and volumes, and outdated organizational regulations (Alsaaty & Makhoulf, 2020; Gaughan, 2015; Gheraia, et al., 2019). The catastrophe encompasses unwelcome major events that have the potential to undermine the safety of people, buildings, or the operational framework of a company. Acquiring precise metrics and implementing targeted measures are necessary to reconstruct the business after a catastrophe and reinstate regular operations (Alsaaty & Makhoulf, 2020; Gaughan, 2015; Gheraia, et al., 2019). Further factors are suggested to illustrate potential causes of business failure. The contributing causes encompass flawed business planning, insufficient entrepreneurial acumen, deficient consumer interactions, managerial ineptitude, and inadequate funding (Denton, 2020; Gaughan, 2015; Gheraia, et al., 2019). Those concepts usually pertain to highly important managerial aspects for company. An inadequate strategy will result in a rapid deterioration of the execution. The development of entrepreneurial skills is essential for establishing resilience in internal

management capabilities and for safeguarding against any external competition (Denton, 2020; Gaughan, 2015; Gheraia, et al., 2019). Insufficient trust in the firm and its personnel can lead to a decline in customer relations. Another important aspect is the effective management of financing to prevent the business from incurring debt before it can go further (Denton, 2020; Gaughan, 2015; Gheraia, et al., 2019). Moreover, in the absence of integrity, company is always susceptible to failure. Integrity, by virtue of its honesty and sincerity, has the potential to enhance the reputation of managerial entities and the organization as a whole (Alsaaty & Makhoulf, 2020; Gaughan, 2015; Gheraia, et al., 2019). Asserting honesty also emphasizes the need of individuals in the corporate realm being cognizant of their own skills to perform the appropriate tasks. Although it may not always be accurate, it should necessarily be accurate beforehand. Often, it is necessary to delay personal wishes in order to provide priority to the demands of clients or suppliers (Jakes & Burrus, 2022; Lane & Schary, 1991; Wieczorek, et al., 2021).

Integrity also encompasses leadership that consistently nurtures trust. By cultivating increased integrity, any organization may consistently prevent engaging in unethical and risky activities or making judgments that have the potential to harm the company's operations (Alsaaty & Makhoulf, 2020; Gaughan, 2015; Gheraia, et al., 2019). Furthermore, integrity could also lead to improved prospects for partnerships or investors seeking to invest in business. Furthermore, it has the potential to enhance novel

advancements and concepts originating from other enterprises seeking to engage in collaboration with the existing firm. Under some circumstances, even a cooperation can consistently outperform mere competition.

The concept of integrity encompasses robust moral values such as transparency and impartiality, which in turn enhance the establishment of more stable trusts (Jakes & Burrus, 2022; Lane & Schary, 1991; Wieczorek, et al., 2021). By expressing this, a positive sentiment might be disseminated even more without damaging existing reputations, therefore enabling individuals to protect the company from potential collapse or destruction. Indeed, the essence of business lies not only in the pursuit of increased financial gains. The objective is to cultivate improved relationships both within and beyond the confines of the organization (Jakes & Burrus, 2022; Lane & Schary, 1991; Wieczorek, et al., 2021). Unequivocally, integrity can always prevent corporate failure.

Furthermore, such business should also take into account the enduring concepts on expertise and knowledge. Competencies are essential for developing different innovations as they enable the use of knowledge in innovative ways, hence promoting innovation that is vital for achieving company success (Huang, et al., 2023; Perifanis, et al., 2023). Furthermore, it is correlated with the concept of flexibility, where knowledge serves as a basis, while skill allows for adjustment to evolving market conditions. Competence and expertise are mutually reinforcing as practical elements must be harmonized with their theoretical foundations.

Increased efficiency can be achieved by using talent to optimize the effective use of information, thereby enhancing processes and resource allocation (Gadzali, et al., 2023; Perifanis, et al., 2023). The acquisition of knowledge provides theoretical frameworks for problem-solving, while the development of skills enhances practical problem-solving abilities necessary for conquering problems. Thus, by doing so, firms can also acquire a competitive advantage since the balancing of skill and knowledge allows them to successfully leverage their strengths, so earning a competitive edge in the market (Gadzali, et al., 2023; Perifanis, et al., 2023).

Obstacles in Business in Bierce's Flash Fiction

Based on the previously discussed themes and theories, it is evident that Bierce's flash fiction incorporates certain challenges within the realm of business. Moreover, the failure is exhibited due to the presence of business hurdles that led to their outcome. See the Appendixes for the comprehensive analyses conducted by highlighting each letter.

The opening paragraph of the first letter recounts a concise narrative of Mr. Jabez Hope's remorse for failing to carry suitably appropriate attire for the frigid Chicago (Bierce, 1874; Geddes, 2017; Wallace, 2022). The second paragraph discusses the frozen Lake Michigan and Mr. Jabez Hope's intention to pursue a commercial venture centered around the ice. The statement "Did you ever see such captivating ice?" evoked astonishment from Mr. Jabez Hope, a resident of the southern region who had never encountered

snow or a frozen lake (Bierce, 1874; Geddes, 2017; Wallace, 2022). Shortly thereafter, he dispatched the letter to Mr. Pike Wandel, along by a slender slip serving as a specimen of the ice. Engaging in such behavior indicates his lack of awareness regarding the transient quality of ice.

The following said statement is intriguing. The film depicts Mr. Hope's journey and his aspirations to glean anything from the ice. Enclosing ice in a letter is somewhat foolish since it will readily undergo melting. He acknowledges the plethora of resources available, but he lacks knowledge on how to convert them into a profitable enterprise (Bierce, 1874; Jackson, 2021; Millenia, et al., 2023). Given his adept management of the ice, it is quite likely to be unsuccessful. He lacks any managerial abilities in relation to any establishment, especially Ice. He is highly captivated by ice, however lacks the knowledge to manipulate it. It is also plausible that those two individuals reside on opposite states of the United States, which would facilitate the melting of the ice during its transportation at that particular moment. Individuals will perceive his expressions solely as humorous in the context of interpersonal interactions (Bierce, 1874; Jackson, 2021; Millenia, et al., 2023). Although this statement may be sarcastic, the truth remains that he also desires the firm to prosper, as seen by the Appendixes. Wandel's message appears to lack comprehension of the fact that the slip of ice has melted. He alleges that Mr. Hope neglected to include it. However, he persists in his belief in his partner and divests all the firm assets in anticipation of the new business endeavor (Bierce, 1874;

Jackson, 2021; Millenia, et al., 2023). Nevertheless, the statement "but, I say, has anybody tried to grow ice in this vicinity?" appears to raise uncertainty regarding the feasibility of cultivating ice in New Orleans. That indicated his limited understanding of the prevailing meteorological conditions in that area. Yet another indication of corporate failure is displayed. The mutual trust between them is meaningless when considering their lack of understanding concerning ice. The notion of proximity implies the presence of other competitors who have engaged in the same business (Bierce, 1874; Gheraia, et al., 2019; Listyaningsih, et al., 2023). They refrain from discussing ice itself. The aforementioned lake may exhibit frozen conditions during the winter season. Mr. Wandel is mostly concerned with the financial gains derived from any competitive endeavors. He himself lacks comprehension of ice-related matters. Placing faith too easily is detrimental to the future success of the firm (Bierce, 1874; Gheraia, et al., 2019; Listyaningsih, et al., 2023).

In his third letter (refer to the Appendixes), Mr. Hope disclosed that he has been exploited by collaborators involved in the construction of his warehouse on the ice and the planning of his ice company. It is crucial to acknowledge that the ice industry enjoyed significant popularity during the 19th century (Bierce, 1874; Gheraia, et al., 2019; Listyaningsih, et al., 2023). Large ice blocks were collected from frozen lakes and then kept in "ice houses" similar to the one Mr. Hope employs for storing his ice. "I believe this ice of ours gains in coldness as the warm weather comes on!"

symbolized his limited understanding of business, which ultimately resulted in the demise of the company.

The passage is becoming increasingly illogical in human reasoning system. While any ice will readily melt in the presence of warm weather, he is of the opinion that it will also acquire coldness. Undoubtedly, it is excessively ludicrous to deserve any mention (Bierce, 1874; Gheraia, et al., 2019; Listyaningsih, et al., 2023). The ice is likewise becoming thinner. Surely they are aware of the impending arrival of spring. Their ice supply will readily dissipate. Given their competence in selling ice, this flash fiction may be a highly humorous piece. However, it may be argued that this narrative conveys the message that individuals should possess knowledge in several fields and should avoid excessive arrogance in their pursuit of immediate financial gain (Bierce, 1874; Gheraia, et al., 2019; Pasopati, et al., 2022).

Their fourth letter (refer to the Apendixes) revealed that they received hundreds of orders. Nevertheless, they were unaware of whether the ice was actually new or packed with salt. It represented another deficiency in their understanding (Bierce, 1874; Pasopati, et al., 2022; Wang & Hu, 2022). Furthermore, their knowledge of the ice temperature was limited to the statement "Is it as cold in the middle as the outside cuts?"

It is very amusing how they operate a firm only through written correspondence. Hence, this flash fiction revolves around the realm of commerce and even delves into its inherent foolishness. Their ignorance of ice quality illustrates their deficiency in entrepreneurial acumen

(Bierce, 1874; Pasopati, et al., 2022; Wang & Hu, 2022). They possess knowledge solely of the continuing orders. Nevertheless, they lack the knowledge of how to dispatch the ice. In order to offer it at a reduced price, it is imperative that they possess prior knowledge about ice (Bierce, 1874; Pasopati, et al., 2022; Wang & Hu, 2022). In his concluding letter (see to the Appendices), Mr. Hope discloses that Lake Michigan has undergone thawing, resulting in the melting of all the glass in the warehouse. One critical weakness in Mr. Hope's concept is the decision to place his icehouse directly on the ice. This implies that any fluctuations in weather conditions and the subsequent melting of the iceberg would have catastrophic consequences for their business (Bierce, 1874; Pasopati, et al., 2022; Wang & Hu, 2022). It is a contributing factor to the business's failure. Organising a meeting of the creditors and failing to attend indicates an attempt to deceive the creditors. Exhaustion of all inventory results in the inevitable demise of the business. Mr. Hope concludes by asserting that Mr. Wandel's inquiry regarding the authenticity of the ice as either fresh or saltwater indicates a limited understanding of the ice industry (Bierce, 1874; Pasopati, et al., 2022; Wang & Hu, 2022). Indeed, each of them possess an equivalent degree of expertise regarding the business, which ultimately led to the disappointment of their respective enterprises. The concluding letter outlines the three foundational elements of Gaughan's theory. By virtue of their deficient managerial abilities, fraudulent activities, and even catastrophic outcomes, they effectively fail their firm. There is a

lack of understanding regarding ice (Annasai, et al., 2023; Bierce, 1874; Hollensen & Saeidi, 2023). In fact, they sought to deceive the investors. They also experience additional calamities when they construct the ice house above the stage of ice melting. It is pragmatic to ascertain their preferred approach to advancing their firm. It is akin to constructing a corporation atop feeble ice. Their imminent acquisition of profit will be accompanied by an inability to effectively handle it (Annasai, et al., 2023; Bierce, 1874; Hollensen & Saeidi, 2023). However pragmatic, it lacks a sufficient idea altogether. Hence, it is imperative for any firm to prioritize knowledge above other financial sufficiency.

In the short story of *The Failure of Hope and Wandel*, it can be concluded that it involves business failure due to lack of knowledge, disaster, and fraud. The obstacles faced by the characters Hope and Wandel are the beginning of the downfall of their business. Knowing many things about the business they are going to create is one of the ways to prevent business failure. The characters actually don't know much about the business they are going to run. They want to gain more profit, but they want it instantly. They lack more knowledge of building such ice businesses. Therefore, this flash fiction could also be categorized as sarcastic comedy. It is because of the silliness in the business of ice that both Hope and Wandel build above the thin ice.

CONCLUSION

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APPENDIXES

“From Mr. Jabez Hope, in Chicago, to Mr. Pike Wandel, of New Orleans, December 2, 1877.

*I will not bore you, my dear fellow, with a narrative of my journey from New Orleans to this polar region. It is cold in Chicago, believe me, and the Southron who comes here, as I did, without a relay of noses and ears will have reason to regret his mistaken economy in arranging his outfit. To business. Lake Michigan is frozen stiff. Fancy, O child of a torrid clime, a sheet of anybody's ice, three hundred miles long, forty broad, and six feet thick! It sounds like a lie, Pikey dear, but your partner in the firm of Hope & Wandel, Wholesale Boots and Shoes, New Orleans, is never known to fib. My plan is to collar that ice. Wind up the present business and send on the money at once. I'll put up a warehouse as big as the Capitol at Washington, store it full and ship to your orders as the Southern market may require. I can send it in planks for skating floors, in statuettes for the mantel, in shavings for juleps, or in solution for ice cream and general purposes. It is a big thing!
I inclose a thin slip as a sample. Did you ever see such charming ice”*

“From Mr. Pike Wandel, of New Orleans, to Mr. Jabez Hope, in Chicago, December 24, 1877.

Your letter was so abominably defaced by blotting and blurring that it was entirely illegible. It must have come all the way by water. By the aid

of chemicals and photography, however, I have made it out. But you forgot to inclose the sample of ice.

I have sold off everything (at an alarming sacrifice, I am sorry to say) and inclose draft for net amount. Shall begin to spar for orders at once. I trust everything to you--but, I say, has anybody tried to grow ice in this vicinity? There is Lake Ponchartrain, you know.

From Mr. Jabez Hope, in Chicago, to Mr. Pike Wandel, of New Orleans, February 27, 1878.

Wannie dear, it would do you good to see our new warehouse for the ice. Though made of boards, and run up rather hastily, it is as pretty as a picture, and cost a deal of money, though I pay no ground rent. It is about as big as the Capitol at Washington. Do you think it ought to have a steeple? I have it nearly filled--fifty men cutting and storing, day and night--awful cold work! By the way, the ice, which when I wrote you last was ten feet thick, is now thinner. But don't you worry; there is plenty.

Our warehouse is eight or ten miles out of town, so I am not much bothered by visitors, which is a relief. Such a giggling, sniggering lot you never saw!

It seems almost too absurdly incredible, Wannie, but do you know I believe this ice of ours gains in coldness as the warm weather comes on! I do, indeed, and you may mention the fact in the advertisements.

From Mr. Pike Wandel, of New Orleans, to Mr. Jabez Hope, in Chicago, March 7, 1878.

All goes well. I get hundreds of orders. We shall do a roaring trade as "The New Orleans and Chicago Semperfrigid Ice Company." But you have not told me whether the ice is fresh or salt. If it is fresh it won't do for cooking, and if it is salt it will spoil the mint juleps.

Is it as cold in the middle as the outside cuts are?"

"From Mr. Jabez Hope, from Chicago, to Mr. Pike Wandel, of New Orleans, April 3, 1878.

Navigation on the Lakes is now open, and ships are thick as ducks. I'm afloat, en route for Buffalo, with the assets of the New Orleans and Chicago Semperfrigid Ice Company in my vest pocket. We are busted out, my poor Pikey--we are to fortune and to fame unknown. Arrange a meeting of the creditors and don't attend.

Last night a schooner from Milwaukee was smashed into match-wood on an enormous mass of floating ice--the first berg ever seen in these waters. It is described by the survivors as being about as big as the Capital at Washington. One-half of that iceberg belongs to you, Pikey.

The melancholy fact is, I built our warehouse on an unfavorable site, about a mile out from the shore (on the ice, you understand), and when the thaw came--O my God, Wannie, it was the saddest thing you ever saw in all your life! You will be so glad to know I was not in it at the time.

What a ridiculous question you ask me. My poor partner, you don't seem to know very much about the ice business." (Bierce, 1874)

“From Mr. Jabez Hope, in Chicago, to Mr. Pike Wandel, of New Orleans, December 2, 1877.

I will not bore you, my dear fellow, with a narrative of my journey from New Orleans to this polar region. It is cold in Chicago, believe me, and the Southron who comes here, as I did, without a relay of noses and ears will have reason to regret his mistaken economy in arranging his outfit.

To business. Lake Michigan is frozen stiff. Fancy, O child of a torrid clime, a sheet of anybody's ice, three hundred miles long, forty broad, and six feet thick! It sounds like a lie, Pikey dear, but your partner in the firm of Hope & Wandel, Wholesale Boots and Shoes, New Orleans, is never known to fib. My plan is to collar that ice. Wind up the present business and send on the money at once. I'll put up a warehouse as big as the Capitol at Washington, store it full and ship to your orders as the Southern market may require. I can send it in planks for skating floors, in statuettes for the mantel, in shavings for juleps, or in solution for ice cream and general purposes. It is a big thing! I inclose a thin slip as a sample. Did you ever see such charming ice?”

(Bierce, 1874)

“From Mr. Pike Wandel, of New Orleans, to Mr. Jabez Hope, in Chicago, December 24, 1877.

Your letter was so abominably defaced by blotting and blurring that it was entirely illegible. It must have come all the way by water. By the aid of chemicals and photography, however, I have made it out. But you forgot to inclose the sample of ice.

I have sold off everything (at an alarming sacrifice, I am sorry to say) and inclose draft for net amount. Shall begin to spar for orders at once. I trust everything to you--but, I say, has anybody tried to grow ice in this vicinity? There is Lake Ponchartrain, you know.” (Bierce, 1874)

“From Mr. Jabez Hope, in Chicago, to Mr. Pike Wandel, of New Orleans, February 27, 1878.

Wannie dear, it would do you good to see our new warehouse for the ice. Though made of boards, and run up rather hastily, it is as pretty as a picture, and cost a deal of money, though I pay no ground rent. It is about as big as the Capitol at Washington. Do you think it ought to have a steeple? I have it nearly filled--fifty men cutting and storing, day and night--awful cold work! By the way, the ice, which when I wrote you last was ten feet thick, is now thinner. But don't you worry; there is plenty.

Our warehouse is eight or ten miles out of town, so I am not much bothered by visitors, which is a relief. Such a giggling, sniggering lot you never saw!

It seems almost too absurdly incredible, Wannie, but do you know I believe this ice of ours gains in coldness as the warm weather comes

on! I do, indeed, and you may mention the fact in the advertisements.” (Bierce, 1874)

“From Mr. Pike Wandel, of New Orleans, to Mr. Jabez Hope, in Chicago, March 7, 1878.

All goes well. I get hundreds of orders. We shall do a roaring trade as "The New Orleans and Chicago Semperfrigid Ice Company." But you have not told me whether the ice is fresh or salt. If it is fresh it won't do for cooking, and if it is salt, it will spoil the mint juleps. Is it as cold in the middle as the outside cuts are?” (Bierce, 1874)

“From Mr. Jabez Hope, from Chicago, to Mr. Pike Wandel, of New Orleans, April 3, 1878.

Navigation on the Lakes is now open, and ships are thick as ducks. I'm afloat, en route for Buffalo, with the assets of the New Orleans and Chicago Semperfrigid Ice Company in my vest pocket. We are busted out, my poor Pikey--we are to fortune and to fame unknown. Arrange a meeting of the creditors and don't attend.

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