

# BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS



*IT is an amazing paradox that the Nobel Prizes, awarded to persons who have contributed materially to the benefit of mankind by their work for peace or in the fields of medicine, science or literature, should come from funds provided by a man who gave the world some of the most powerful agencies of destruction. But Alfred Bernhard Nobel, Swedish chemist and engineer, manufacturer of dynamite, ballistite, and other explosives was an amazing man.*

Alfred Nobel was thin, sickly, and nervous, but quite unafraid of high explosives. His father, Emmanuel Nobel, had invented a naval mine used by the Russians in the Crimean War, and was interested in the possibilities of nitroglycerine as an explosive. Alfred worked diligently with his father and gradually took the lead in the experiments. He found that the only sure way of exploding the oily, soupish liquid was to confine it in a strong container and set it off with a sharp primary explosion. He invented the blasting cap.

In 1861, when Nobel was twenty-eight, he went to Paris in the hope that he might interest French bankers in his explosive. The bankers were not impressed, but Napoleon III heard about the young chemist's activities and persuaded a financier to provide him with capital. Back in Stockholm with a draft for 100,000 francs, Alfred Nobel commenced to manufacture nitroglycerine for commercial use.

In 1864, an explosion occurred at Nobel's laboratory and his youngest brother and four workmen were killed. Alfred went on resolutely. He set up his plant on a barge moored on a lake and worked without regard for his health. Within a year the Swedish Government was using his explosive to blast a railway tunnel under Stockholm and he had established manufacturing companies in four countries. But Nobel's troubles were far from being ended. His plant in Norway blew up in 1865. Early in the following year, seventy cases of nitroglycerine exploded on a ship at Panama. The wharf and sheds were wrecked, another ship was damaged and sixty people were injured. The cost of the damage was about a quarter of a million pounds. Then, just a few days later, a block of buildings was wrecked and fifteen people were killed at San Francisco, when nitroglycerine exploded in an express wagon.

Shortly after the San Francisco disaster, Nobel arrived at New York with several boxes of explosive with which to give a demonstration. His visit was most unwelcome. When he gave a public demonstration at a quarry there were only about twenty men bold enough to attend and they kept well away from the "dangerous man". Nobel poured some of the dread liquid on a flat piece of iron and as he raised a hammer the spectators dived for