

# Thomas A. Edison, the "Nineteenth Century Wizard"

If an excuse be needed for repeating the oft written biography of Thomas A. Edison, the "wizard of electricity," it may be found in the fact that it is one of the most instructive and encouraging in the annals of human endeavor. While in a general way all are familiar with that biography, yet the man Edison is lost sight of in the halo of romance which has been cast about him, and his wonderful achievements by the multiplicity of his inventions.

Such another scientific genius perhaps never existed since the beginning of the world, yet he lives and moves among us an individual of the simplest and most approachable kind, particularly human in his sympathies and decidedly human in his appetites and acquisitiveness. Had he been born in the fourteenth century instead of the nineteenth, one writer has observed, he would probably have his activities terminated in short order at the stake instead of being honored with medals and re-

assimilation of an enormous amount of food swallowed in haste, without regard for hygienic laws.

A temperate man, yet he uses tobacco in excess, a world famous man, yet he is perfectly indifferent to clothes and society and cares nothing for fame or the applause of others. Without being a mathematician, he performs in his own way the most abstruse calculations; without school or college training, he has outstripped the most carefully "educated" men of our times. He is a perfect human machine, created at just the right time to perform the work for which the century was ripe.

Though totally devoid of pride or self-consciousness in his achievements, Edison has a just appreciation of the relative values of things and stands forth conspicuous as almost the only inventor who has realized a vast fortune from his labors. He has thrift and acquisitiveness in perfection and has detected great principles and prospective millions in

American, but of European people, who all delight to honor him. Of medals from scientific societies and decorations from crowned heads he has more than he cares to count or, in fact, has kept a record of, all of which goes to show that in honoring this modest and unassuming inventor monarchs and men of science recognize that they are also honoring themselves.

The main facts in Edison's career cannot be repeated too often for the benefit of the rising generation and as illustrative of the possibilities of one lifetime. Only fifty-four years old (Edison was born at Milan, O., Feb. 11, 1847), he may well be pardoned for giving his years as nearly a hundred since he has crammed so much into them. His primary education was received more from his mother, who before her marriage was a school teacher, than in any school, and at twelve years of age he was selling papers on the Grand Trunk railway and owned a news

says, never to work upon an invention unless he had satisfied himself beforehand that it would be a success in the field for which it was intended.

His fortune may be said to have come to him soon after he reached New York in 1871. He invented a "stock printer" and automatic telegraph system while working at a salary of \$200 per month. His invention was eagerly seized upon by the Western-Union Telegraph company, which contracted with him for all his future telegraphic inventions, and by means of this option has since secluded from the world many a patent which would have won an ordinary man fame and fortune.

It was thirty years ago that Edison took out his first patent and a quarter century ago that the commissioner of patents at Washington complained of the "young man in New Jersey who has made the path to the patent office hot" by traveling it so frequently. As contributory to the perfect development of the telephone he compelled Professor Bell to divide his profits with him by fighting him in the courts, and after his victory for a time abandoned telegraphy, in which he has won such distinct successes in his duplex and multiple systems, his process for telegraphing from a moving train, etc., and devoted himself to "phonics," in which he made many discoveries, such as the microphone, which multiplies sound; the aerophone, which amplifies it, and, above all, the phonograph, which reproduces it indefinitely. Then there are the kinetoscope and other kindred concits—in fact, Edison seems to have driven his trains along parallel tracks, but always with electricity, either immediate or suggested, as the motive power.

Electricity, like fire, is a good servant, but a bad master. Edison has always kept it in his proper place as a servant to mankind, and in 1879, after years of experimentation, took the public into his confidence by giving a demonstration of what he had done in the way of incandescent lighting. He successfully solved the problem of universal lighting by electricity, which was the commercial subdivision of the light and its distribution from a central point, as with gas. After this whatever he did was accepted as a matter of course, for he had accomplished what experts had declared was impossible.

The incandescent light has been termed his greatest achievement, but there is no limitation to the genius of an Edison, and when he shall have turned his serious attention to aerial navigation his admirers will at once plume their wings for flight and send in orders for their aerodromes, or whatever he may recommend. In fact, it has been claimed that Edison has made a long step forward in this direction by his latest improvement on the storage motor, which has reduced the weight of the average battery nearly one-third and also increased its power, so that it may soon become universally applicable as a means of propulsion. Another invention to which he has devoted, it is said, a capital of \$3,000,000 is his "magnetic separator" for extracting iron from low grade ores. This system is already in operation and, if Edison's hopes are realized, promises to revolutionize the iron and steel industries of the world.

Then, again, as an incident of his greater work, Edison has developed a method of constructing houses of cement after the old Mexican fashion by using "mamposteria," or conglomerate, poured into molds, making such a saving in construction that buildings may be erected at a great reduction from present prices. Having now some 500 patents to his credit, Edison derives from them a princely income; but, although always keeping his eye on the "main chance" for himself, he has been of incalculable benefit to the world and incidentally added billions to its total wealth. In his storage battery motor alone are doubtless great possibilities as yet untested; by his telegraphic and telephonic inventions civilization has been immeasurably advanced, while the world may yet be enriched beyond all calculation by his magnetic separator and kindred works. Now, with his grand climacteric of mental and physical development years away, with all the accumulated knowledge derived from years of investigation carefully conducted step by step, one cannot but believe that Thomas Alva Edison has yet residing within that cunning brain of his vast potentialities which despite the incredible achievements already to his credit may yet astonish the world.

**FREDERICK A. OBER.**

**A Forgiving Husband.**

Seattle, June 11.—A peculiar incident occurred last night at the union depot just before the Portland train pulled out for the metropolis of Oregon. A man laboring under the influence of great excitement but tonholed a policeman and told his

troubles in a confidential but convincing manner. It was to the effect that his wife had left home and he had gone to the depot to intercept her in case she should take the 9:40 p. m. train for the web-foot city.

While he was speaking to the officer his wife put in an appearance with a man named J. W. Owens, who formerly ran the O. K. dining rooms at 2521 First avenue near Vine street. Both Owens and the woman gave evidence of having been imbibing rather freely and when the waiting husband saw his wife's condition he burst into tears.

Instead of taking an axe and using the business end of it on the man who had brought his wife to the depot in such a deplorable condition, the husband, who is understood to be J. W. Middleton, the successor to Owens in the O. K. dining rooms, merely requested him to assist in conveying the woman to a hack which they all three entered and were driven rapidly away.

On arriving at the O. K. dining room the situation was somewhat complicated by the discovery that Mrs. Owens and her little boy were there watching the place until Mr. Middleton returned. Under the circumstances the gallant Mr. Owens remained within the secluded confines of the closed conveyance while Middleton assisted his wife inside.

Then Mrs. Owens and her son went home, while her devoted spouse drove to Middleton's saloon a block away and, after conversing for a few moments of the sidewalk, dismissed the carriage and entered the saloon with his friends.

What Owen's intentions were concerning the woman are known but to the pair alone, but the husband claimed to the policeman that his wife had run away. He appeared, however, to be blessed with a forgiving disposition and to be very glad to meet his wife again.

**Committed Suicide**

Victoria, June 10.—George Koenig, for many years proprietor of the Shawmag Lake hotel, was found drowned in the north end of the lake

this morning. He had been missing since 5 o'clock, when he left the place ostensibly for the purpose of bringing in the cows. When several hours passed and he did not return, his wife and friends became anxious and a search was instituted. Nothing had been seen of him when the noon train passed, but not long afterwards his body was recovered near the outlet to the stream. His clothes were lying on the bank.

Those searching for him feared the worst when a note addressed to his wife was found in the safe. It was written in German, and in it the writer expressed sorrow for the manner in which he had treated her and implored her forgiveness.

The news of Mr. Koenig's death on the eve of the re-opening of his hotel came as a shock to his many acquaintances in this city. He was down a few days ago attending to general business and arranging for tomorrow's reopening. His act had evidently not been in contemplation very long, as the nature of the preparations made by him when here was such as to preclude this theory. It is not known here that he was worried by financial troubles, and the reason for his self-destruction is a mystery which may be made clear at the inquest.

Geo. Koenig was a native of Germany, and has been in this country about fifteen years. Thirteen years ago he purchased the Shawmag Lake hotel from Chas. Moreton. It was destroyed about six months ago, but was rebuilt on a more pretentious scale and was to have been opened tomorrow. Mr. Koenig leaves a widow and two children.

"Suppose I give you your supper, said the tired looking woman. 'What will you do to earn it?'"

"Madam," said Meandering Mike, "I'll give you de opportunity of seein' a man go 't'roo a whole mornin' wit'out findin' fault wit' a single thing."

The woman thought a minute and then told him to come in and set the table.—Washington Star.

Job printing at Nugget office.



THOMAS A. EDISON.

ceiving the approbation of his fellow men. Had he lived in most ancient times he would have been hailed as a demigod. But it is to the lasting benefit of the world in general and of this country in particular that Thomas Alva Edison was born in the world's most progressive century and that his birthplace was in America.

It may come as a surprise to many minds that Edison is not an original investigator, not an inventor in the primary sense, but that he is and has been all along merely an improver of other men's ideas; forming an intermediary link between the speculative philosopher and the practical consumer. There never was another combination like Edison, of the earnest inquirer into nature's partially revealed secrets endowed with a well stored and logical mind which carefully co-ordinates facts and pursues an experiment to its inevitable conclusion. Not only is he a mental wonder, but a marvel of physical well being, capable of laboring for the solution of a knotty problem for days and nights in succession without rest and of quickly recuperating by a few hours' sleep and the rapid

in inventions discarded by others as impracticable.

It has been said that Edison has never made an original discovery, as the physicists regard discoveries, but he has improved and made available numerous discoveries of others, which, after all, is just as important in the end. But for Edison, perhaps, many an invention that is now working incalculable benefit to humanity might still be lying dormant. All these of which he is the putative father would eventually come to light, of course, as beneficent nature intended, but probably in a later century or period. Thus the present generation is Edison's debtor even though it be conceded that it cannot laud him as more than an agent in carrying on the great scheme of world development by anticipating cosmic discoveries an aeon or so. Always thrifty and with an eye to the main chance, no matter how absorbed he may become in his work, Edison is the typical Yankee, the original concept of our Uncle Sam. Shrewd, calculating, kindly, honest, tenacious of his rights and ready to fight for them, but never aggressive—in fact, he is the ideal not only of

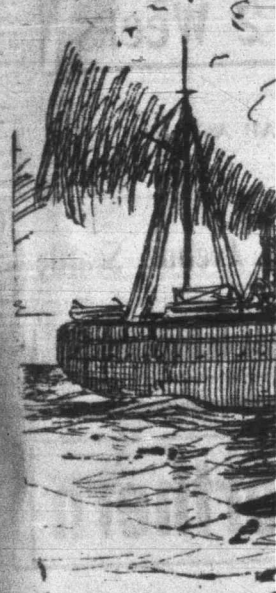
stand, a bookstore and a vegetable market. An omnivorous reader, he made several attempts to devour whatever libraries he came across, taking indiscriminately to fiction and mathematics. At fifteen he printed in a baggage car a paper said to be the first ever published on a railroad train, and although he was editor, typesetter, pressman, "devil" and vender, paragraphs from it were so good as to be copied in such journals as the London Times.

This venture came to an untimely end through an explosion of chemicals with which Edison was experimenting, and he was forthwith "fired." Having learned telegraphy from a station agent whose child he had saved from being run over by a locomotive, he secured a position in a Canadian telegraph office, which he later left in a hurry after having caused a collision through negligence, owing to his absorption in an experiment. At seventeen he was in Memphis, Tenn., earning \$125 per month and rations as a government operator and later on in Boston, when he took out his first patent. As this did not yield him a pecuniary reward, he formed the resolution, he

## Whaling, Pa

What's the matter with whaling? asked the reply to a question used by the New England whaler when he would inquire what was the matter with whaling? The whaler's answer was "gone to the dogs" and not old enough to go in for whaling for himself. And "What's the matter with whaling?" the whaler's answer was "gone to the dogs" and not old enough to go in for whaling for himself. And "What's the matter with whaling?" the whaler's answer was "gone to the dogs" and not old enough to go in for whaling for himself.

Compare the last season's catch reported from New Bedford via Francisco with the catches of the lucky seasons that have followed it and we shall find some of the best whaling grounds. By the last account the total catch in the Arctic was less than thirty thousand, the best vessel getting twelve, while a few years ago



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larger number was not considered for one ship. And this includes not only the season closed, but what were left over last autumn. It is called the "catch for years" and was one of the greatest outlays of money any way they fix it, the whalers seem to be "playing safe" for if they get a small catch their rewards are small. They make a large one, the whalebone run down on nothing in consequence. In finance, the phenomenal

1893, when the banner catch of the decade was made. There were twenty vessels of the Arctic whaling in the Arctic ocean right alongside and permit me to be harpooned or death. Generally the whaler off for the pack ice and he never securely out of sight as they hear the whir of the harpoon. To encourage the whalers who have made