

WORKING FOR THE WIZARD OF SCIENCE—BY HIS SON

Charles Edison Tells of His Experiences, His Advantages and the Drawbacks He Has Been Able to Avoid in the So Often Unsuccessful Position of Working For Father

Thomas A. Edison can work all day and most of the night on his inventions. How would you like to work with him? Is he a hard taskmaster? How much work does he expect of his own son who works with him? How about the son's point of view? Here is an interesting subject for all business men with sons of their own, or for the sons of business men interested in the principles of efficiency as applied to the most particular case of his own son by the "Wizard of Efficiency," Thomas Edison.

Young Edison's Idea of It

Charles Edison—"Charlie," as his intimate associates call him—has put himself on record as regards his impressions of having his exceedingly brainy lad as employer. Without prying, it is possible to take a peep into the working relations of these two, and in a very few words to disillusion oneself of the idea that Thomas A. Edison is either a hard taskmaster or an indulgent parent. Here is what "Charlie" Edison has to say about it in the American Magazine:

One of the chief reasons why I work for my father is because he does not make any difference in his business treatment of me on that account. I know that if Thomas Edison were like some fathers, nothing would induce me to hold a job under him.

When I was graduated, and my father said something about my taking a job under him I told him I thought I'd like to work somewhere else for a while. Right here he showed his wisdom. Instead of arguing with me, he said, "All right! Go ahead!" He didn't even insist on getting a job for me. He let me corral one for myself. It was with the Boston Electric Light Company, and my salary was fifteen dollars a week. I stayed there a little less than a year, making an infernal nuisance of myself, poking around in various departments, but learning a lot about the work, and also learning to stand on my own feet in a business way.

Edison Didn't Interfere

My father didn't interfere. He just let me go ahead even when at the end of the year I started out with a friend to do a little travelling. We two boys headed for the West with only a few dollars in our pockets. We paid our way with odd jobs here and there, and finally landed in San Francisco with one dollar and a half between us. Still my father didn't interfere. Of course he knew I wasn't loafing. I wasn't really doing much work but I was learning a lot of things useful to me. The boy who goes straight from school or college into his father's office will never know from his own experience what average normal business relations are. From the very first he is the "son of his dad," and not only to his father but to everybody around the place. It is a bad plan. Even though he is going in with his father later, a boy ought to take his first job with someone else. Everybody, including his father, will have more respect for him if he has shown that he can make good by himself.

Usually two things are wrong with your father as an employer. One is that he is likely to let you have things pretty "soft." The other is that he will not treat your ideas and suggestions with the respect he shows for those of other men.

You are still his little boy to him. Anyway he knows you haven't any experience. He didn't let you get away. So he treats you with patronizing indulgence.

Had the Drop on Dad

That is where I had the drop on my father. I had knocked around in a few organizations before I went with him. I had picked up some ideas of my own. But even if I had not known from observation that if he had been like many men, he would have ridiculed my notions just because they were mine. I want to say that there isn't any better way of making a boy hate working for his Dad, and also of making him of no account in the business. Luckily for me, Thomas Edison has more sense than to do it.

I remember the first job he gave me when after five months in San Francisco, I came back to work for him. Of course I wanted to make a good showing; but when he asked me to figure the cost of some disc records my heart sank. I was an electrical engineer, and this seemed to me a job for an accountant. But when I told him so, he looked up sharply and said:

"All it takes is common sense. Just plain common sense."

Well, I didn't say anything more. I tackled the job, and found he was right.

Of course I would always go to my father for advice, and he would give it to me. But so far as my feeling that the relations between us affected my standing in the company, I might as well have been working for Charles M. Schwab, or anybody else. Father has no patience with inefficiency. If I hadn't made good after a fashion, he would have fired me, and if he hadn't if he had let me stay just because I was his son, I should have had a sort of contempt for him.

The Best Employer—Just Dad

As it is, I would rather be Thomas Edison's employee than anybody else's. And I think that plenty of other young men would gladly work for their fathers if they, too, could be sure of being treated as an employee. Lying on my desk right now is a letter from a friend who has just been graduated and who is facing the same problem that is worrying other boys. He writes:

"Father has been after me the last couple of months to go into the business with him. Into the factory as one of the employees. I've been worrying about this. I honestly don't know whether it would be the best thing for me. Father, and I get along pretty well, better than most fellows and their dads, and yet I feel that ought to go elsewhere for at least a few years. I see so many of the fellows in this city who work for their fathers, and they are either always loafing or scrapping around with them. It just doesn't seem possible for a fellow to work for his father and not take advantage of the fact that his old man is boss and that if he does lay down on the job he won't be fired."

"To come down to tacks, Charlie, the real reason for writing this letter is to get your advice on the thing. You've been working with your father a few years now. How are things going? Are you glad or sorry you decided to go with him? How about it? Do you think I ought to go with father?"

I know just how he feels. He isn't looking for a soft snap—and he's afraid he will get it! He wants to be "on his own." And I'm going to tell him he's dead right. That's where he ought to be for a year or two at least.

Curse of the "Soft Snap"

The curse of the soft snap has ruined plenty of fine young fellows. I know one chap who really had lots of ability, but his father offered him a desk job that involved only nominal work and he took it because it meant a good time. Well, he woke up one day to find that the business was on the verge of bankruptcy. He was five years out of college and had to begin all over, a grown man competing with boys at boys' wages.

Just now I am very much interested in the struggle of a certain organization to keep alive. The whole trouble with it is that "son is working for father." In this case, father happened to be the president of the company.

The vice-president retired. Three men had been working like tigers in anticipation of this very thing, and of course they expected that one of them would get the position. Nothing of the kind! The president simply booted his incompetent son into the place. One after another the three valuable men resigned and went elsewhere. The result is that the president is trying to swing his own job and theirs, too; for of course, he can't get competent men in their places if he is no more loyal to his subordinates than he has shown himself. The whole spirit of the organization has changed, and the business is going to pieces.

Mother May Do Mischief

Another danger of this father and son business is the part the mother sometimes plays. I heard of a case recently where a home was broken up because of this very thing. The mother nagged her husband into taking the boy into the business even though he was absolutely incompetent.

The father tried to start him at the bottom and train him up, but the mother fussed and insisted on his pushing the boy ahead. The man had sense enough to know he would wreck the business if he did. They quarrelled and quarrelled, until finally the father fired both his wife and his son! He told a friend that he would have gone either bankrupt or crazy if he hadn't.

Just on principle, I think it's not a good plan to mix family and business. I know my father doesn't care to have his relations harder than the other employees to make good. Instead of being jealous of me when I went into our business, I think the other men in the company pitied me. They knew I wouldn't have it "soft" from my father—and I haven't. But he has been mighty square to me.

Edison's Honor Code

Of course I think he is the finest boss in the world. For one thing, I have never known him to do a dishonorable thing. I have even known him to do things that seemed foolish to me, at the time, in living up to his word or to a contract. For instance, a year or two ago, we contracted to sell some materials to a firm at a certain price. Before we could deliver the goods prices rose enormously. So much so, in fact, that the buyers themselves realized that we would lose money, and offered to pay a higher figure. I was all for accepting their offer. But was my father willing? I should say not! He said to us:

"A contract is a contract and must be lived up to. Even from the point of view of straight business, it pays in the end."

My father was right, as usual. Some time after we had fulfilled our contract about that one sale, the same thing happened again. But this time we were purchasing the materials of the same firm to which we had been selling goods before. We offered, as they had, to release them from the terms of the contract, and they, in turn, declined to take advantage of the offer. This happened three times. So that quite apart from the ethics of the thing, it was good business, just as father had said.

Father hates deception or cheating, anyway. He was trying to buy a certain piece of real estate one time, working through an agent, of course. One night when we were at dinner the agent came in, quite excited, to tell father he had discovered that the land belonged to a widow who was sick and who had no idea of its value. He said he thought he could get it for a song. When he had finished my father said angrily:

"You pay that woman every cent the land is worth! And if I ever catch you trying to cheat anybody out of his rights, I'm through with you for life!"

That Long Day of Edison's

Father and I agree on many things, but there are some, of course, on which we differ. For example, I cannot and will not work twenty hours out of twenty-four, as he does. Father seems to find relaxation by changing from one piece of work to another. On the average, I put in ten solid hours at work; after that I want a complete change. However, I can get it from very simple things—just going over to New York and walking along the street, watching the crowds, talking with my friends, or even with total strangers. A human being is more interesting to me than any machine ever invented.

Father spends all day and most of the night on his machines and problems. But, for all that, I don't know that he ever really "works." He is simply having a good time. Sometimes I think he would have accomplished just as much if he hadn't put in so many hours at it—but I don't know. I certainly would not advise the average man to follow his schedule. If he did not have a wonderful constitution he couldn't have followed it himself.

His interest in work is infectious. To keep up with him everyone has to hustle, including myself. The men in the shops catch the spirit from him, too. I happened to go down to the works one Sunday recently and I found fifty men at work in the various departments.

The Secret of Interest

When I asked them what they were doing there



Our Prosperity And What It Has Cost

You remember the uncertainty as regards trade when the war broke out.

We finished 1913 with a balance of \$293,000,000 against us. We wondered—! The British Navy swept the German flag off the seas. The submarine remained, and the floating mine. Death lurked in the path of every vessel that carried the products of our farms and factories.

None but heroes of the finest type would have faced such dangers. But because the men of the Merchant Marine did face them, we finished 1917 with a trade balance of \$314,000,000 in our favor.

We were able to fill war orders amounting to one billion, eight hundred and twelve million dollars (\$1,812,000,000) from 1914 to 1917.

But what a price has been paid!

Remember the Lusitania! Remember the 176 vessels of which all trace has vanished, together with crew and cargo! Remember the 15,000 seamen of the Merchant Marine who have fallen a prey to the U-Boat and the hellish mine!

We are enjoying prosperity that was not dreamed of at the beginning of the war. Let us show our appreciation in the only way worth while—by contributing handsomely to the support of the widows and orphans of the seamen who have died for us. Justice demands we shall not let them want.

REMEMBER BY GIVING

SAILORS' WEEK

September 1st to 7th, inclusive

THE NAVY LEAGUE OF CANADA

COMMITTEE
Sir John Eaton, Chairman

Commodore Amelias Jarvis, President
(Canadian Division)
34 King St. West, Toronto.

they mumbled something about "having nothing to do, so I came down here." In reality, they were so interested in what they had been doing the day before that they couldn't let it alone, even on Sunday.

It is this interest in a man's job which is the dividing line between success and failure. I know of one case, though, where a man's interest in his job is holding him back. I had been keeping my eye on him and had decided to promote him. But when I tried to do it he shied off and wouldn't be promoted. His salary would have been larger and his position more important, so I asked him why he refused.

"Well, Mr. Edison," he said, "there are two reasons: First, like the thing I am doing now, and how do I know I should like Ferguson's job? And the other reason is that I honestly don't want the responsibility. I'd be worrying and fretting over the new job, whereas I'm as happy and interested as can be now."

Responsibility's Demand

Well, how are you going to promote men who don't want responsibility? Yet I have met a good many men like that. It seems to me it is a dangerous sort of content. Some day they may lose interest in the thing they are doing, and suddenly want the opportunity they are letting slip now. There are two ways of being in a rut; and the worse one of the two is to be so satisfied with your rut that you don't care about getting out of it.

What's a Calorie?

People Have Asked If It is a New Breakfast Food.

Since food conservation has become a vital factor in carrying on the war against Germany, the layman has encountered in his reading the new word calorie. This word, which formerly appeared only in scientific journals, now jumps at once from the daily papers, from the magazines, agricultural and trade press. In a way the Food Administration is partly responsible for the increased use of the word, and as a result has received letters from all parts of the country asking: "What is a calorie?" Some people have gone so far as to suggest that it is the name of a new breakfast food.

While in one instance the enquirer stated he had heard that it was a new type of explosive discovered by the War Department and wanted to know what the Food Administration had to do with it.

When fuel is thrown on a fire under a boiler heat is produced. This heat is required in order that the engine may perform its work. To do work of any kind requires energy. Food used or burned in the human machine produces energy to maintain the normal heat of the body and to do its work. Work done by the body comprises not only that which requires muscular or mental exertion, but also involuntary exertion, such as the beating of the heart, the expansion of the lungs, etc. The chemical process within the body which transforms our food into energy is similar in nature to the process which takes place when fuel is

burned over fire—though, in the body, the burning takes place very slowly and in every tissue, instead of in one central place. The value of food is determined by the amount of energy it yields to the body; and it also has a building and regulating function.

It was necessary that a unit be established, for measuring the amount of heat produced when food was completely burned. The unit chosen or universally adopted as the unit for measuring fuel value or energy value for any kind of food is called the calorie. It represents the same principle in measuring as the inch or foot, the units of measuring length; the pint or gallon, the unit of volume, and the ounce or pound, that of weight.

The calorie is the amount of heat required to raise the temperature of one kilogram of water 1 degree

Centigrade, or one pound of water approximately 4 degrees Fahrenheit. Our requirements of food, so far as the amount is concerned, can therefore be expressed in the number of calories needed for each person a day. It must not be forgotten, that the calories must be derived from the proper kinds of food.—N. Y. Herald.

FULLER

Do you hear that course dull music? Well that is the threshing machine busy in our midst.

Quarterly service at West Hurlingham was well represented from Fuller.

Mr. and Mrs. Frank Kellar are entertaining Mrs. A. Wannamaker and daughter, of Peterborough, also Mr. Jones of the same place this week.

Sorry to report Mr. John Calvert not so well of late.

Mr. and Mrs. Henry Fluke spent Sunday with Mr. and Mrs. Harold Christie.

The service in the Presbyterian church on Sunday evening was largely attended and a very impressive sermon was preached by Rev. McDonald from the text "One Thing Thou Lackest."

Miss Jennie Walker and Miss Maggie Hollinger spent one afternoon recently with Mrs. M. J. Hallett.

A large number from here attended Oak Lake Camp Meeting on Sunday.

Mr. and Mrs. Jno. Kellar, of Actinolite spent Sunday with Mr. and Mrs. Frank Kellar.

A number of farmers passed through our midst toward the station, shipping cattle and sheep. The many friends of the late Mrs. E. E. Howard extend their deepest sympathy to Rev. E. E. Howard, former pastor of this place.

HEAVY

Pessimistic Report
respondent of
McLaughlin, Alta.

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