

THE St. Lawrence in flood. Using boats in Montreal streets to get citizens from their homes.



Thomas Edison Worked in Canada on Grand Trunk

Held Position of Night Operator at Strathroy—Home Was in Port Huron and He Made Many Visits to Sarnia, Where He Is Known as "Al."

Thomas Alva Edison is a great man. His name is a byword in scientific circles all over the world, and he is most appropriately known as the wizard of electricity. It is needless to say anything more of the Edison of today. What he has done and what he is doing speaks for itself.

Yet away back, in about the year 1853, and for some time later "Al," as he was more familiarly known in his boyhood days was not an unfamiliar figure on the streets of Sarnia. His home was just across the river in the American city of Port Huron, and as ferry service between the two towns was somewhat similar to that of the present day, it was but natural that young Edison was a frequent visitor to the little Canadian municipality.

One of Al's (well, I call him Al, because they still do across the river) trips to Sarnia at the time the late King Edward, then the Prince of Wales, honored the town with his presence, is of more than usually interest to Canadians, containing as it does a most amusing feature of the occasion.

The incident in question is taken from Messrs. F. L. Dyer and T. C. Martin's "Edison: His Life and Inventions."

"When I was a boy," says Edison, "the Prince of Wales, the late King Edward, came to Canada. Great preparations were made at Sarnia, the Canadian town opposite Port Huron. About every boy, including myself, went over to see the affair. The town was draped in flags most profusely, and carpets were laid on the cross walks. A stand was built, raised above the general level, where the prince was to be received by the mayor. Seeing all these preparations, my idea of a prince was very high; but when he did arrive, I mistook the Duke of New-castle for him, the duke being a young looking man. I soon saw that I was mistaken, and did not meet expectations. Several of us expressed our belief that a prince wasn't much, after all, and said that we were thoroughly disappointed. For this one boy was whipped. Soon the Canuck boys at-

day operator slept, I started for it on foot. The night was dark, and I fell into a culvert and was knocked senseless."

Summoned to Headquarters.

The balance of the story must be supplied from the biography. "Owing to the vigilance of the two engineers of the locomotives, who saw each other approaching on the single track, nothing more dreadful happened than a summons to the thoughtless operator to appear before the general manager at Toronto. On reaching the manager's office, his trial for neglect of duty was fortunately interrupted by the call of two Englishmen; and while their conversation proceeded, Edison slipped quietly out of the room, hurried to the Grand Trunk freight depot, found a conductor he knew taking out a freight train for Sarnia, and was not happy until the ferryboat from Sarnia had landed him once more on the Michigan shore. The Grand Trunk still owes Mr. Edison the wages due him at the time he retired from their services, but the claim has never been pressed."

Used Engine Whistle.

Residents of Sarnia, or of any of the

towns along St. Clair River, are more or less familiar with the ice jams that during the winter often totally block this mighty stream of fresh water, isolating the Canadian and American sides from ferry service of any description. In this respect another paragraph from Messrs. Dyer and Martin will not be amiss: "The same winter of 1862-64, while at Port Huron, Edison had a further opportunity of displaying his ingenuity. An ice jam had broken the light telegraph cable laid in the bed of the river across to Sarnia, and thus communication was interrupted. The river is three-quarters of a mile wide, and could not be crossed on foot; nor could the cable be repaired. Edison at once suggested using the steam whistle of a locomotive, and by manipulating the valve converted the short and loud outbursts of shrill sound into the Morse code. An operator on the Sarnia shore was quick enough to catch the significance of the strange whistling, and messages were thus sent in wireless fashion across the ice flows in the river."

seemed to have been purposely hampered. The strong cross current prevented their reaching out any distance from shore. The cold numbed their fingers, and the great pile of debris all over the streets blocked passage with a boat. As an instance, we were only two blocks from land when rescued, and we had to transfer into three different boats, and even then at great danger, the water being from 12 to 15 feet in depth.

Hero of the Hour.

In such a time of trouble, some central executive agency for the distribution of food and shelter was needed, and the national Cash Register Company, with President Patterson as manager, stepped in and took command. Any Londoners who have visited this mammoth plant will realize how well they are able to cope with such an emergency. With his marvelous organization and system, President Patterson has proved the hero of the hour. Within six hours after the first rise of water, the carpenter shop of this plant was making relief boats at the rate of one a minute. At the same time their ten-story office building was being fitted up as a hospital and refuge for at least 5,000 homeless people. The thirty motor trucks of the company were scouring the country for food and clothing. The building was made the headquarters for all relief and rescue work, the militia, and all the various agencies of help and aid for the 60,000 homeless.

Autos Volunteered.

The automobile has been of great use in this disaster. With all telephones, cars, trains and other means of transportation and communication handicapped or destroyed, the motor car has been of great value. Hundreds of private owners have donated their cars for days at a time. Money does not count now. Everything is free. At last the water has gone down, and everyone is working feverishly to restore light, water and sources of heat. When the flood came on it submerged the gas and electric plants and partially destroyed the waterworks. Our sewerage systems are torn out, and telephone cables broken and poles down. The downtown section is a most horrible sight. The store fronts are all washed out, and the stocks are either destroyed or carried away in the current. The property loss will mount up to at least \$50,000,000, counting everything. The lives lost will be less than a thousand, only a few hundred at the most.

Three Bridges Gone.

However, three of the bridges are gone, the paint stores are all destroyed along with the wholesale houses. There is not a clothing store left unsold. In fact, every store in town of any consequence has suffered in part or in whole.

The streets are littered with a conglomeration of junk (the most descriptive word I can apply)—pianos, motor cars, millinery, furniture, dead animals, everything and anything, all washed up in most disconsolate looking heaps. Silverware is to be found along with garbage. They tell me the interiors of the 5 and 10 cent stores are simply beyond any description whatever. Imagine it for yourselves if you can.

Nevertheless, this catastrophe will have a good result. We are all going to jump in and make this city more substantial and safer than before. If San Francisco and Galveston and Baltimore have been successfully rehabilitated and are still improving, so can we here do the same. Let me say this: that we haven't as yet given away our claim to being the Gem City of Ohio.

H. C. TREHARNE.

Escape Flood, Confront Fire.

We were indeed lucky to have been in only one night, as most of the people farther away from the points of rescue were compelled to stay three or four nights. Some of them report thrilling tales of crossing roofs and escaping to escape from burning to death. Thursday morning began to snow, a regular blizzard. The people on the roofs, well-nigh froze to death, and indeed many of them worn out by the long vigil did drop from their perches and were drowned. The work of res-

Graphic Letter to Advertiser Describes Thrilling Escapes and Wild Scenes in Dayton

Mr. H. C. Treharne, a Yearly Visitor to London Gives a Vivid Picture of Flood Times in the Ohio City.

To the Editor of The Advertiser:

Being a yearly visitor in London and acquainted with a number of its people, I thought perhaps a letter from this flood and fire ridden district might be interesting.

The last five days have been the most exciting in Dayton's history, and the sad event of Tuesday, March 25, will be long remembered. On that morning, after days of continuous rainfall, the great Miami River had risen level with the top of the dikes and levees. The night before whistles had been sounded at intervals, and city officials had warned those in the district most liable to be flooded to remove their personal effects and families to higher ground. At that time no one entertained an anxious thought of a universal overflow. At 4 a.m. a newspaper put a flood extra, warning all to be on the alert, as back water from the sewers was already appearing in the lower districts.

At 8 a.m. the uptown streets were well filled with sightseers, the levees were lined with them, and all over town knots of people gathered, discussing probable danger.

Like Flight From Pompeii.

A few minutes after 8 o'clock the unexpected happened. The entire river seemed to rise a few feet. It spilled over the levees on both sides and trickled down the streets. Most of the crowd ran for high ground, about a mile away, and yet a few remained on the streets. But in several minutes more the trickling down the street swelled until it filled the gutters, and then all at once it rose a foot, then two feet, and until it was three or four feet deep, and running like a millrace. Then the people did run. The main avenues of escape were a choked mass of fleeing motor cars, cabs, wagons, animals and people. As they passed the store where we were busy at work salvaging goods, the scene reminded me of the flight from Pompeii, or some equally famous flight such as mentioned in history. The screaming of people, the honking of horns, rattling of wheels, and above all the steady thump of thousands of feet. It is an odd sound, the sound of a vast multitude running at once, and is not often heard.

Seek Upper Stories.

Already in the districts nearest the river the streets were cleared of humanity. All had climbed to upper

floors of buildings, and now the wreckage began to float. Automobiles, horses, and all manner of debris began to float down, and as they passed the buildings with plate-glass fronts one could hear the smash of the glass, and cries of dismay from the owners who were safe on upper floors.

We worked at our store until we saw that we must go, and then we ran with all the rest. A friend and I started down East Fifth street for high land only about six blocks away. We had covered possibly two-thirds of the distance, and were then in water to our waists. We came to one cross street, where the current ran fearfully strong and carried down parts of a lumber yard. It was too high to go farther, so we climbed a nearby fire escape and found safety on the third floor of a very stout brick building, where we found possibly 60 others in the same plight.

Work of Human Chain.

We had been there only a few minutes when a big crowd wagon and team washed down and lodged alongside of us. The wagon was packed with people, and, seeing they were in danger of being washed farther, we formed a chain in the water and carried them in. We were there in the building all Tuesday night and Wednesday, when we were all taken out in boats Wednesday night. We had only some bread and water while there, and we were a hungry and wet-looking lot of people when we reached land.

At night we lived in fear of fire. All over town we could see the glow and often the flames of these awful fires. Three or four blocks of the wholesale and manufacturing district burned to the water's edge. At several places frame houses were washed up in heaps of debris, caught fire, and burned the inmates.

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HOW GERMAN CITIES

Continued From Page Seventeen.

works and tramway depots, for hospitals and schools.

"The city of Frankfurt, with the institutions under its control, possesses within its boundaries 12,300 acres of land, more than half of the entire area. Outside, the municipality owns 3,800 acres, making a total of 16,100 acres. Of this, 3,500 acres are covered with wood, which will probably be used for building purposes. The largest part of the timber is produced by the municipal forest."

How to Deal With Small Plots.

"You have seen how our streets are laid out, and how the necessary land is acquired. But a difficulty arises from the fact that most of the land outside German cities is not in the hands of great owners, but of small proprietors, and any of these plots of ground, when acquired, would be unfit for building purposes, being too small or too narrow. It is, therefore, necessary to bring these small plots into a shape more suitable for building purposes, and this is done by redistribution. All the plots of ground belonging to different owners, situated in a given area, are united into one plot. Out of this plot is taken the land needed for streets and squares, and then the remainder is carved into suitable sites, and each land-owner receives a site corresponding in size to the area which he has handed over, less the area taken for streets."

Buying for Streets.

"In cases of redistribution the city acquires without payment the land required for streets. But in cases where the city has to give the land required for streets out of its own property, or to acquire land by purchase or expropriation, the law provides that the land-owners are obliged to repay the expense which the city has had in forming streets as soon as they begin to erect buildings on those streets. They have to pay for each site according to the length of its frontage. Besides this, they have to pay the cost of keeping the streets in repair during a certain number of years. In cases where public works are especially profitable to the land-owners of a certain district, the city has power to raise a special rate from these land-owners."

"In this way the municipality secures its share of the profits which accrue to the land-owners by town extension. Vacant sites are rated not on the income they give, but on the capital value. Moreover, the unearned increment is fixed on a sliding scale, and people have to pay a certain percentage of the profit they have made by selling a building or a vacant site."

Good Houses.

"Now, with reference to the provision of good and healthy dwellings for the working classes. The building regulations of Frankfurt at a very early period forbade the erection of unhealthy houses, and during the period of industrial expansion no cellar dwellings or back-to-back houses—and it may be added, no slums—could come into existence. The town is divided into three districts or zones. In the lower zone buildings with basements and three stories are permissible; but in the outer zone houses may not have more than two upper stories, and in small streets only one."

"It is all the more necessary to provide plenty of open space because in many parts of Germany, and certainly in Frankfurt, people cannot afford to



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have houses of their own. The working classes, and even the middle classes, are compelled to live in flats, because the price of land, and in consequence the rent of houses, is very high.

"The cities are, therefore, devoting ever-increasing attention to the housing of workmen employed by them and of the less prosperous inhabitants of their districts in general."

Count Bernstorff is German ambassador to the United States.