

**EDISON'S GREAT SERVICE**

Has Helped to Make This Nation's Prosperity.

Turning from the sweep and glitter of American prosperity to the men who have made it possible, one thinks of Thomas Alva Edison. His is "the honest life, the useful life, the friendly life" that deserves earnest attention in this astonishing year of moral incendiarism.

"We are groping on the verge of another great epoch in the world's history," he said to me not long ago. "It would not surprise me any morning to wake up and learn that some one, or some group, of the 300,000 scientific men who are investigating all over the earth has seized the secret of electricity by direct process, and begun another practical revolution of human affairs. It can be done. It will be done. I expect to see it before I die. I expect to see airships flying before my death. Such a discovery will make it possible to drive ships across the sea by electricity at a rate of 40 or 50 miles an hour—three days across the Atlantic from shore to shore.

"I worked as a Western Union operator in Detroit, Memphis, Louisville and Boston," said Mr. Edison, "and all the time I studied and experimented with electricity. The first serious thing I invented was an electrical machine to count votes in congress. I had been handling press reports as an operator, and I noticed it took a long time to count the votes after each roll call. My machine would show the total vote a few seconds after the roll call. I thought the device was a good one, and I think so now. But when I went to Washington and showed it to the chairman of the committee, he said, 'Young man, that works all right, but it's the last thing on earth we want here. Filibustering and a delay in the count of the vote are often the only means we have for defeating bad legislation.' I was sorry; but I ought to have thought of that before. My next practical invention was the quadruplex telegraph. I started in to work it on the Atlantic and Pacific telegraph line between Rochester and New York. But there was a chump at the other end of the wire and the demonstration ended in a fizzle. It was years before the quadruplex was adopted. . . . Then I joined hands with a man named Callahan, and we got up several improved types of stock-tickers. These improvements were a success. When the day of settlement for my inventions approached I began to wonder how much money I would get. I was pretty raw and knew nothing about business, but I hoped that I might

get \$5,000. I dreamed of what I could do with big money like that, of the tools and other things I could buy to work out inventions. But I knew Wall Street to be a pretty bad place, and had a general suspicion that a man was apt to get heat out of his money there. So I tried to keep my hopes down; but the thought of \$5,000 kept rising in my mind.

"Well, one day I was sent for by the president of the Gold and Stock Telegraph Company to talk about a settlement for my improvements. He was Gen. Marshall Lefferts, colonel of the Seventh Regiment. I tell you, I was trembling all over with embarrassment, and when I got in his presence my vision of \$5,000 began to vanish. When he asked me how much I wanted I was afraid to speak. I feared that if I mentioned \$5,000 I might get nothing at all. That was one of the most painful and exciting moments of my life. My, how I beat my brains to know what to say! Finally, I said, 'Suppose you make me an offer!'

"By that time I was scared. I was more than scared. I was paralyzed.

"How would \$40,000 do?" asked General Lefferts.

"It was all I could do to keep my face straight and my knees from giving way. I was afraid he would hurt my heart beat. With a great effort I said as calmly as I could, 'I guess that'll be all right.'

"With that money I opened a new shop and worked out apparatus for the Western Union Telegraph Company. My automatic telegraph, which handled 1,000 words a minute between New York and Washington, was bought out by Jay Gould and the Western Union Company. It is in litigation yet.

"Then the quadruplex was installed. I sold that to Jay Gould and the Western Union Company for \$30,000. The next invention was the mimeograph, a copying machine. "When Bell got out his telephone transmitter and receiver were one. Professor Orton of the Western Union Company asked me to do something to make the telephone a commercial success. I tackled it and got up the present transmitter. The Western Union Company eventually made millions of dollars out of it. I got \$100,000 for it.

"Looking over the whole country," said Mr. Edison, "I have come to the conclusion that the greatest factor in our progress has been the newspaper press. Russia is much bigger than this country in every way. She has a tremendous population and immense natural resources. Yet she is 50 times slower. Why? Because she lacks the power of a

free press. She cannot unite or harmonize her forces. But when we want to do anything in America the newspapers take it up. Everybody reads the newspapers, everybody knows the situation, and we all act together."—James Creelman in Pearson's Magazine.

**To Prevent Railway Wrecks.**

The recent English railway wreck really emphasizes the fact that disasters of that sort are uncommon not only in Great Britain but on the Continent as well.

What can be done, asks a railway engineer, writing to the Iron Trail, to avert these horrors in this country and to make travel as safe here as it is in other countries where fast time is made?

Some say we must have better men. No better men ever handled engines or trains than we have in America. The trouble is, the best men are often discharged for some trivial matter and newer, younger, less experienced men take the places of these older ones, and the chain is weakened in just so many more places.

Some say give us better equipment. The American engines and cars lead the world; there are none better.

Others say the train order system is wrong—that it is very weak.

Under the present method of operating single track roads it is hard to get a better system. It has its faults, to be sure, but the various railroad clubs and train rule committees are ever endeavoring to make the system more perfect.

Some say, give the men shorter hours on the road. Those who speak thus strike close to the mark—for many, many times do these wrecks occur because the overworked brain of the man on the road or in the office responds no longer clearly and safely.

There are those who say, give us a safe and sure interlocking system of signals—give us a block system.

This is another vital question. There are these facts, though, in connection with this question which might help one in studying the needs of a block system.

If the great railroad companies would stop for one year the great expenditures on straightening tracks and lowering grades, with a view toward greater earning capacity of freight trains, and for a year put the amount they would have expended on roadways into installing a safe block system, a great gain toward safety would have been made. The whole cry is "greater dividends"—not safety to the traveling public. Each year millions go into "dills and cents" into new bridges, into new stations, but never a cent into block systems.

It is true though that some roads are doing so things along this line. They will in time be the popular routes of travel.

There are two other very important things needed in connection with safe traveling, whether the block system is installed or not, and they are:

First, cut down the monster tonnage trains so they will be safe to handle. Secondly, by all means cut down the hours of those who have to handle

these heavy trains, so they will have less time on the road and more in which to rest. It is one thing to tell a man he should rest enough, but if he refuses and is laid off for a time with his wages suspended—well, that is another thing. A second offense would mean dismissal. Then when he would apply for a position on some other road, he would be turned down for insubordination for having refused to go out when he was positive in his own mind that he was in no condition to accept the responsibilities of another trip without more rest.

**REMOVING THE TAX FROM "DENATURED" ALCOHOL.**

Alcohol upon which tax has been paid in this country may be purchased by one complying with certain restrictions, varying with the locality, and used for any purpose the purchaser sees fit. It has been well shown by Chief Chemist Wiley, of the United States Department of Agriculture, that much of the so-called Scotch and other whiskeys are made in our country from this "rectified spirits of wine." Our topic has not to do with the matter of prohibition and the moral or physiologic side of the alcohol question or the sophistication of alcoholic beverages, but is concerned with what has been incorrectly termed "duty-free alcohol," and the recent legislation enacted by the United States congress, which was advocated by many temperance people. This law, which does not become effective until January 1, 1907, essentially allows the manufacturer or withdrawal of alcohol free from tax after it has been "denatured," or rendered unfit for a beverage. It is of great importance, and will be far-reaching in its effect.

Mr. Mason, the United States consul-general at Berlin, has said that "the enactment of laws covering all uses of alcohol in 1887 (by Germany) was an example of intelligent and far-seeing fiscal legislation." The German farmers at that time felt the effects, severely, of competition with the cheaper-grown cereals of the United States, Argentina, and Australia. The making of alcohol for technical purposes as cheaply as possible saved to Germany the profits of Teutonic husbandry. Particularly was it beneficial to those on the eastern border, where the land is poor but suitable for the growing commercial alcohol is made.—From "Free Alcohol in the Arts and as of Potatoes, from which much of the Fuel," by Cha. Baskerville, Ph. D., F. C. S., in the American Monthly Review of Reviews for August.

**Strange Lafcadio Hearn.**

It will surprise no one who knew Lafcadio Hearn at all well to hear that a negro woman in Cincinnati now claims recognition as his widow and seeks to obtain, as such, a share of the

American royalties on his remarkable literary work. Hearn spent several years in the Ohio city, and it is sufficiently notorious that in his purely private and domestic relations he condescended with colored persons only. Notwithstanding his extraordinary literary attainments, his profound and varied scholarship, and his brilliant and poetic intellectual equipment, Lafcadio Hearn admitted no member of his own race to genuine intimacy. Among his fellow-workers—he was then engaged in journalism—he was regarded with good-will, though never with understanding or affection. Of his real and inner life none had the merest inkling. In Cincinnati, as in New Orleans subsequently he was a mystery. He had no social life of which any white person was even remotely aware.

In New Orleans, a truly cosmopolitan city and always in close touch with Paris, it soon became known that Hearn, whatever motives may have actuated him in Cincinnati, had a perfectly definite and more or less far-flung purpose so far as concerned his chosen associations there. He had attracted the attention of the



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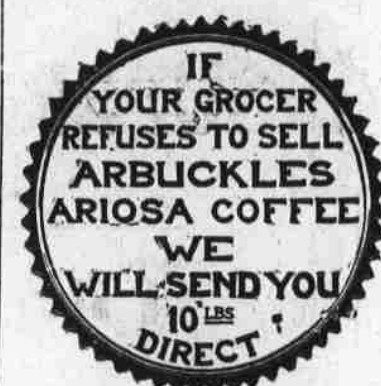
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French writers of his day by translations of "L'Amour," "Gautier" and others. His facile reproduction of the essence and the aroma of the original persuaded the literateurs of Paris that a miracle had been vouchsafed to man. When finally he published, not the translation, but the English equivalent of Theophile Gautier's "Le Nait de Chopatra," the attitude of the French group was transformed from complacent indulgence to honest and enthusiastic wonder. The whole literary and intellectual world realized the presence of a special and peculiar luminary.

All this time, however, Hearn was living in the downtown river front quarter of New Orleans with negroes—not the ordinary "scoutfield" type, but the Congo priestesses and prophetesses, as a matter of fact with no less a personage than Marie Laveaux, the "Voodoo Queen." He was studying the Congo superstitions, folk-lore, songs, music and incantations. It was his passion, the same passion which later took him to the West Indies, to Martinique, to Haiti, Barbadoes, always in a fruitless quest. For he

found that the so-called "African music" previously elaborated by Gottschalk, as in the "Tamboula" and other compositions, was a mere barbaric adaptation of Spanish melodies, translated by the slaves from Santo Domingo, while the nursery croonings of the old bandanna'd blacks in New Orleans—"Le Crocodile," "Doux Canaris," etc.—were mutilated French songs brought from Haiti to Louisiana by the refugees.

That Hearn lived with the Cincinnati negroes in an intimate domestic relation is easily imaginable. That he actually went through the form of a legal marriage his acquaintances will believe with difficulty. If throughout his career in the United States he ever paid tribute to any convention whatsoever, the men who came nearest to knowing him have never heard of it.—New York Sun.

When Miss Angela Burdett-Coutts was created a baroness by Queen Victoria, 25 years ago, there was not a single negroess in her own right in the British kingdom.

ALFRED HENRY LEWIS RECENTLY SAID: "I like age. Things grow better in my eyes as time claps years to their existence. I am for what is old as much as any moss or any ivy. Like that King of Aragon, give me old wood to burn, old books to read, old wine to drink, OLD FRIENDS TO TRUST."

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**AGE AN ASSET**

to consider when weighing the character of a financial institution; force of character being cumulative. This is particularly true of corporations which deal in contracts which are to mature in the years to come. Albion W. Small, Professor of Sociology in the University of Chicago, recently made this point clear. He said: "I am happy to say that my chief reason for taking a policy in the Mutual Benefit Life was that my father had been a policyholder in that company for thirty years, and has been thoroughly satisfied with the investment. I am not an expert in the matter, of course, but from the amount of attention that I have given to the subject, which is not a little, I am strongly inclined to prefer a company with the traditions of the Mutual Benefit."

**THE COMPANIES IN LEADING STRINGS**

are, of necessity, capital stock companies. Under stress of competition they write participating policies, but largely of the discredited "tontine" or deferred dividend variety. In the effort to establish themselves they resort to the "Preliminary Term" device, which is proscribed in Massachusetts and the District of Columbia; to the "Advisory Board" scheme now outlawed in many states; to the dating back of policies, for seven years, which practice is now in the courts of Indiana; include in their policies, catchy but speculative insurance features which well established and competently managed companies frown upon, and do other things which are not to their Future good.

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