

Edison Tells of Intended Vacation

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THOMAS A. EDISON, in a stained-spotted suit and an old slouch hat, drawn well down on his forehead, straightened up from a dilapidated little table over which he had been bending, threw a stub of a pencil down on a yellow pad of paper, and settled back in an arm chair.

"At last," he said "I've finished work on my storage battery and now I'm going to take a rest."

He gazed thoughtfully out of a window of his laboratory office for a moment.

"For I'm tired—very tired," he added simply. "I'm all worn out."

Next second his eyes twinkled merrily.

"Yes, I've planned for a great vacation," briskly and enthusiastically, "and it will begin after I've spent a few weeks in Florida, where I'm going in a few days. And the best part of it all is this—it will last two years."

Mr. Edison rubbed his hands in anticipatory joy.

"I'm going to have a fine time—splendid time during these two years. I'm just going to rest. Yes, sir, that's what I'm going to do, and I'll tell you how I'm going to do it. Up in my house across the street I've a big book of over 400 pages filled with notes that I've jotted down from time to time during the last fifteen or twenty years. They relate to things that I've observed while working out my various inventions, and I've simply put them down and done nothing with them because I've not had time to investigate these various incidental phenomena. Now, however, I'm tired—thoroughly tired—and I've made up my mind to drop industrial science for two whole years and rest myself by taking up pure science—by investigating the thousand and one properties of metals and chemicals that I've got notes about in my book.

"Strenuous vacation? Not a bit of it. All I'm going to do is what every pure scientist does—the fellow who finds out the actions of metals and chemicals under different conditions and in various combinations by experimenting, but who does not apply the results industrially.

"Guided by my notes, I'm going to mix things in laboratory mortars and chemists' tubes and what not and watch for results. That's all pure science does. It never thinks things out, like industrial science. It just blunders, stumbles against discoveries, while industrial science is the result, in greater part, of concentrated and consecutive thought.

"It will be fun and maybe I'll find out something worth while—who can tell? Anyway, I'm looking forward to a real good time, and, I believe, that by hustling a little I'll be able to investigate everything that I've notes about in my book."

What his notes relate to Mr. Edison will not disclose, except to say that one of his investigations will be conducted toward finding a wood that will be a good substitute for coal, when that fuel becomes more scarce and a great deal more expensive than at present.

"I firmly believe," said Mr. Edison, "that the time will come when we in this country will secure most of our heat from wood in some form or other. The wood that will be used will come largely from tropical South America, where sprouts spring into full-grown trees in three or four years. Then the vast Amazonian forests will be worked and nourished on a scientific basis by capitalistic syndicates and the world's fuel supply thus conserved for all time. And science will find a way to make the wood almost, if not as good, for heating purposes as coal. Perhaps it will be used something after the manner of charcoal—I believe that charcoal will some day be pretty generally used in the place of coal.

"But don't think that we'll live to see all this. The coal supply in this country is



ST. VALENTINE'S MESSENGER—Photo by a Staff Artist.

far greater than most people imagine. Immense deposits in the Hudson bay region are waiting to be opened, and great lignite beds are still unworked. Only after these and the present mines are worked out will people turn to the forests of tropical South America for their fuel. When that will be, time alone can tell—perhaps not before the days of our grandchildren's grandchildren. But sooner or later it will come, and it won't do any harm for me to follow up certain observations about tropical wood as a fuel that I jotted down in my book years ago. It'll all be a part of my rest, you know, and recreation means pleasure, doesn't it?"

Mr. Edison thinks that the growing of wood for fuel on land in temperate America would not prove remunerative enough for serious undertaking.

"There are thousands of acres of now uncultivated land in this country admirably adapted for such a purpose," he said, "but the scheme is impracticable for the simple reason that our climate is not tropical enough to insure quick growth to the trees. After an acre was once cleared of wood, it would take sprouts six or eight or ten years to attain sufficient size for fuel purposes. This fact alone militates against such a plan to provide a substitute for coal.

"Some enterprising fellow, though, could make a small fortune by securing control of several thousand acres of land of this description already wooded and harvesting the crop. I have about 25,000 acres of stunted woodland up in the Orange mountains, and I've figured out that each acre is capable of supplying the fuel equivalent of a ton of coal. Just now in my laboratories I'm burning a lot of this wood, thus outwitting the men who these days are getting two or three times the usual price for coal.

"The scheme to secure heat by boring down to the earth's center also appeals to me as being impracticable, except in vol-

cantic regions. There the earth's crust is thin and the molten matter comparatively near the surface; hence, it could be easily reached and obtained by means of pipes sunk down to it and utilized for manufacturing and heating purposes. In the non-volcanic regions, the crust is too thick and the molten interior so far distant that to reach it by boring would be a too problematical undertaking for invested capital. And that part of the world is non-volcanic where heat is needed for bodily comfort and fuel consuming industries thrive.

"But while many men are busying themselves with these and other schemes to secure heat, on the other hand, if the signs of the times count for anything, I believe that the next few years will witness a great development of hitherto unworked coal fields by big manufacturers. The late coal strike has proved to them that they must have their own mines and in this way be independent of outside operators and insure against enforced closing down of their mills for lack of fuel.

"I happen to know of several owners of industrial establishments who are already seeking to secure and work coal lands, and these men assure me that many of their rivals are aiming in the same direction."

Here Mr. Edison reverted to his vacation.

"Now that I'm about to take a rest and am beginning to get a true perspective of the last twenty years of my life, I begin to realize more than ever before how very little I know—how very little I have accomplished. Why, with all my work in electricity I don't know what electricity is. True, I've thought out several inventions and made my brain and body weary thereby, and I've got my name noised about, but what have I done—what do I know—after all? Why, simply this—very little, hardly anything, when we think of the things still to be done and still to be learned—of the forces all around us

that we don't understand in the least, that we scarcely dream of.

"Yes, sir; that's gospel truth. But say," Mr. Edison's eyes laughed merrily—they are eyes that never lose their sparkle and fire, no matter how tired the rest of their possessor's body may be—"perhaps I'll learn a little bit of the unknown during my two years' vacation. Anyway, I'm going to work hard to do so, and I'm going to have a fine rest."

Prepared for Him

"What have you to say for yourself?" exclaimed the angry father as the prodigal put in his long-deferred appearance.

"I knew you'd ask that," the young fellow replied. "You thought you'd have me at a disadvantage. You remembered that I wasn't anything of a talker. But I'm prepared for you, father. If I can't say anything for myself I've got somebody here who can do the talking for me. Come in, Gladys. Father, this is your new daughter-in-law." His voice dropped to a hoarse whisper as he impressively added, "And she's a professional elocutionist, as you'll mighty soon find out."—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

Exterminate Gypsy Moth

The gypsy moth fight seems to be on once more, says the Springfield Republican. The gypsy moth committee of the State Board of Agriculture in its report declares that the moth was under control when the policy of extermination was abandoned. It holds that at present the abandonment has resulted in immense loss and in the impending danger that everything in the eastern part of the state will be eaten up. Now comes the mayor of Malden and petitions that the work be taken up once more and that the state pay \$100,000 for the beginning.

An Editor's Journal

The woes of a Billville editor are summed up in the following memoranda:

"Monday—Struck on the left ear with a rock, thrown by unknown party.

"Tuesday—Mayor threatened to horse-whip us, but we were on the roof when he called.

"Wednesday—Received one dollar on subscription and paid out six on the grocery bill.

"Thursday—We have been officially informed that there is some chance of our being appointed postmaster before the next president is elected."—Atlanta Journal.

A Young Old Man

"I have had all the experience I want in politics," said Senator Jones of Nevada, "and I think I had better begin and make some money by giving my entire time to business."

This is the declaration of a man 70 years old, who will retire from the senate with the termination of the present congress, and is next to the oldest senator in continuous service in congress.

What a text for some of our young men who feel old at 60 and whose minds dwell largely on pensions.—Boston Globe.

Got the Worst of It

A prominent Philadelphia clergyman tells this story on himself: "It was Sunday morning, and I had started for church. The family were preparing to follow, when the youngest, a 5-year-old, protested, 'I do not want to go to church.'

"I don't feel much like it myself, Fred, this morning," replied his mother, "but we must go. Father has to go—has gone already, and he has to preach."—Philadelphia Ledger.



The Great Western Stove company has just completed its new building, 66x 125, five stories high, on Harney street, between Ninth and Tenth, and have moved into same. The above cut shows the structure. John Latenser was the architect.



The George H. Lee company broke ground this week for their new building, 44x132, three stories high, on Harney street, between Eleventh and Twelfth. John Latenser is the architect.