

FORTUNE WON BY ACCIDENT

Flores Dame Smiles on Ardent Wooers at Unexpected Moments.

VALUE OF THINKING AND WORKING
An Instructive and Suggestive Review of Achievements Springing from Accidents—Stories of Successful Inventors.

It pays to think—even about trifles. Not long ago a young man who was visiting in a strange city had that experience known to so many when riding on street cars. He wanted to get off at a certain street, the name of which he knew, but the locality of which he was in ignorance. The car was crowded. He had told the conductor the name of the street, but as is not unusually the case, the conductor used in pronouncing the name of the streets was on the order of the "all aboard for Chicago-walk" that so frequently confounds the railway traveler when the trains are "called" in stations.

"Your street's two blocks back," said the conductor suavely when the young man asked him if he had arrived yet. More or less angrily, the youth said: "It's a wonder somebody wouldn't think of something that would tell a passenger when he got to his street."

"Well, why don't you invent something?" asked the conductor.

The young man got to thinking, and to working. The other day he received \$20,000 for a street car device that could be utilized to show the names of the streets automatically. He thinks it is worth more. This man of woman who conceives an idea that is patentable almost invariably has visions of immense wealth, but how often the dream is realized may be found by consulting the patent office authorities, the men who handle thousands and thousands of these "children of the brain" that never bring to their inventors even the amount of money necessary for getting them patented. But on the other hand, there are a great many patents that have made their originators immensely wealthy, and famous as well.

One would naturally suppose that the greatest returns would be from the large affairs, such as the electric railroad, the telephone, and the telegraph, but such is not the case, for the small household inventions, mechanical toys, and puzzles have given quicker returns and greater profits for the money expended than any of the larger affairs.

At some time or other in life everybody has turned his mind to getting a patent, and the usual cry has been, when one man succeeded in amassing a fortune, that he had luck. Luck never enters into the patent business, except in so far as one invents something at the time that that something is wanted by the buying public. The man who invented "Figs in Clover" happened to strike the public fancy, and millions of people all over the country were chasing the little marbles into the middle pen. The man made millions on his simple puzzle because he launched it at the right time.

The rewards gained by inventors in the past fifty years have been far in excess of those that accrued to the earlier inventor, although the general public has believed that the great majority of inventors either die in the poorhouse or the insane asylum. This impression was due partly to the fact that Whitney, who invented the cotton gin, not the inventor of the rubber tire, and Goodrich, who first vulcanized rubber, and Morse, the father of telegraphs, all died poor, and derived no benefits from their inventions.

Fortunes for Little Things. Naturally, when a great invention is put upon the market the inventor is exploited in all the newspapers and magazines, but when some little trifle is brought out there is hardly any notice taken of the man himself or what he has given to the world, but it is just such little things that have been, if not the source, the start of great fortunes.

J. W. McCall in 1867 invented the little metal paper fastener without which no office is now considered complete, and though but a trifle it made wealth for its inventor. Such a little thing as the rubber tip on a pencil brought \$200,000 to its inventor, Hy-

men L. Lipman, and that small piece of metal which you wear on the heel of your shoe to protect it, has made up to 1897 over \$1,000,000 for its projector.

A man named Canfield first hit upon the notion of making arm-pit shields seamless, with a sheet of cloth-covered rubber, and it brought him an income of many thousands a year. The man who invented the metal fasteners for buttons must have been a bachelor, for it did away with sewing, but it made him a millionaire.

The barbed wire fence, about which many have said unkind things as they disentangled themselves, was worth over \$1,500,000 in royalties to the originator. A countryman, whose loss from eggs being broken on their way to market was a serious thing, evolved the idea of packing them in separate compartments, and this simple device is now used altogether, and the countryman is not obliged to toll for his daily bread.

It must not be thought from this that the field is occupied entirely by man, for it is not. Woman has entered into competition with him in this field also, and some of her patents have been as useful and as good money makers as those belonging to the sterner sex. Invention by women covers all the branches of life, and, strange to say, quite as many patents are granted them for improved machinery as for articles of women's wear.

The first patent ever granted to a woman in the United States was for a machine for the weaving of straw with silk or thread, and this was patented in 1809 by Mary Kies. Mary Jane Montgomery invented the mowing machine, and in 1868 she took out a patent on a machine for punching holes in corrugated metal. Her many inventions earned her a considerable fortune, as fortunes went in those days.

A woman in California made over \$50,000 from her invention of the baby carriage, and a woman in Washington, Mrs. Johnson, made a good thing out of the invention of the cream sweeper, for before that time all cream was stirred with a spoon until it was frothy.

Criminals have played an important part in some of the world's greatest inventions, and some have made small fortunes out of their discoveries. Charles Flier, who devised the new lock-stitch sewing machine, was serving his fourth term for burglary when the idea was perfected. When he was released his idea was backed by some capitalists and he was given a salary of \$5,000 a year to superintend the construction of the machines, in addition to a royalty. At the same time he sold his English rights for \$50,000 cash and \$25,000 worth of stock of the English company.

Four governments of the old world are now using a coin maker that was designed by a counterfeiter, and it was only from the fact that his coin were so perfectly made that he was discovered. The attention of Scotland Yard was called to the almost perfect coins that were being circulated, with the result that Henry Harvey was lodged in jail as a counterfeiter. The government recognized that here was a machine far in advance of what it was using, and, as there was no patent on it, appropriated it.

The discovery of thermite has helped science and mechanics to such an extent that one steel manufacturer remarked that it would, when in general use, decrease the cost of steel ships one-third, yet the inventor was Fritz von Schmidt, known to the European police as "Count Eber", because he was a scientist who, when wanted for a burglary, always vanished as quickly as that volatile spirit. Von Schmidt was discovered by his efforts to patent his invention. He explained to a patent agent in Berlin that his patent would do, and offered to make his way into the attorney's safe, but the attorney called up the police instead.

Acetylene gas, one of the most important industrial inventions of the last decade, was stumbled upon by accident by a man named Wilson, who had an electrical furnace in North Carolina for metallurgical purposes. From time to time he used a great deal of rock salt in his furnace stock, and also limestone as a flux. Whenever these two materials were fused together, as he noticed after a while, the air produced by the intense electrical heat included a dirty grayish substance wholly unlike anything he had ever seen.

How Carborundum Was Found. For weeks he noticed this substance without giving more than a passing thought to

it and continued to dump it into the river upon the banks of which he had built his furnace. Soon the pile of slag was so high that the top reached above the water, and then a curious thing occurred. The water would sizzle and steam as the slag was dumped in, but this day, as the last of the slag was poured onto the little island, some of it remained red hot. Suddenly there was a brilliant burst of flame, so prolonged and so hot that there was danger of the furnace catching fire.

Then Wilson began to think. The next day he took some of the curious looking substance and wet it with water, but much to his surprise, nothing came of it. Then he struck a match and held it near the mixture, and immediately a bright flame was produced, and Wilson knew that he had discovered something valuable. His discovery was acetylene gas, and he made a fortune out of it.

Another substance that is now used entirely in all places where grinding has to be done is carborundum, the discovery of which was also purely accidental. The proprietor of some iron works in Pittsburgh had installed a furnace which burned natural gas, and after a time it was discovered that a sort of slag formed on the inside of the furnace, finally taking up so much room that the fire had to be drawn and the furnace cleaned. There then arose a new complication, for nothing that they could do would remove this hard substance; cold chisels had no effect on it, and finally the furnace had to be torn down.

The proprietor, who was a man of many others, was naturally curious as to what this substance could be, and one man took some of the crystals and ground them into a fine powder, treated the dust with some adhesive preparations and pressed it into blocks, and the result was carborundum, the hardest grinding substance known.

A German manufacturer of nitroglycerin was the inventor of dynamite, but was not seeking for it at the time he received proof of its explosive qualities. Nitroglycerin is a liquid which will not explode, but will burn with a steady flame when fire is applied. One day the manufacturer spilled some of the stuff on the floor, and a little later dropped a lighted match in the same place. The explosion which followed was astonishing, and quite a little disconcerting, but he had discovered dynamite, and his fortune was made. While nitroglycerin will not explode while in liquid form, it becomes explosive the instant the particles are separated so that each has sufficient air about it. This fluid vaporizes whenever sufficiently shocked, and is then so inflammable that the mere heat of the shock sets it off.

The name of the German who spilled his nitroglycerin was Nobel, and he patented the combination and became immensely wealthy.

Edison and the Phonograph. The greatest of our own inventors, Thomas A. Edison, owes his invention of the phonograph partly to an accident. Edison had been working night and day to perfect the telephonic system, and had constructed a number of small sheepskin drumheads, to test their value as diaphragms as compared with metal and other substances. To some of these sheepskin diaphragms he had attached a magnetic needle which was intended to project toward the magnet and assist in conveying the vibration caused by the human voice.

These did not fulfill Edison's expectations, and were discarded as useless. His assistants soon discovered that by holding the drumheads close to the mouth, and making a sort of guttural sound, a noise approaching music could be heard much the same as when a piece of paper is wrapped around a comb. In attempting to playfully stop one of the men from playing on it, Edison touched the little needle, but no sooner had he done so than he gave one of his characteristic starts and requested the operator to repeat the performance. It was repeated, and again he touched the needle, with evident delight. He went among his assistants asking them to hum, sing, and talk against the little drumhead, keeping his finger ever so lightly on the little needle.

"I have it!" he suddenly exclaimed, and retreated to his office and commenced drawing diagrams for new machinery, which his assistants speedily made, and a few days later the first phonograph was put together. It was a crude affair, the plate making an impression on wax. It talked imperfectly, but it showed Edison that he was on the right track, and he rapidly improved it until now it is almost

perfect. The phonograph was at first regarded as a mere toy, but later it was sold for \$1,000,000.

The inventor of the air brake, George Westinghouse, is one of the best known inventors of the present day, but it was a long time before he could get moneyed men interested enough in his air brake to back him. Perhaps the one thing in his life that McKee Rankin regretted was that when Westinghouse offered him a half interest in the air brake for \$500 he did not accept it. This invention netted Mr. Westinghouse many millions of dollars, and brought him world-wide fame.

George Hartley, a foundryman, was offered \$10,000,000 for his patent on making malleable iron direct from the molds after he had proved that it would do all that he claimed for it. This is probably the largest sum ever offered for an invention before it had been placed upon the market.

In this field there are large awards awaiting the successful, and it is a mistake to imagine for a minute that the whole field has been culled. The greatest inventions are now being brought out, and there seems no limit to human genius. There is no such thing as a halting point in invention, as the progress is constant and unremitting. It is eternal evolution, and the man who collects his thoughts and writes to make two blades of grass grow where one grew before" is certainly as praiseworthy now as when those words were uttered 2,000 years ago.—Chicago Inter-Ocean.

SOME TRICKS IN TRADE
Story of a Combine Which Turned the Tables on Trust Busters.

T. Burr Thrist, president of the National Amateur Press association, talked at the annual convention in Philadelphia about the trust evil. "Trusts, combinations," said Mr. Thrist, "have many striking advantages, particularly if they keep their operations secret. This fact was impressed on me in my boyhood by an incident that I saw in the streets of Cleveland. "As I was idling in the streets one afternoon a hawk's cries assailed my ear. The man had a truck filled with paper and envelopes, and in a loud voice he yelled: "Here y'are! Box o' paper an' twenty-five envelopes only one dime!" "But suddenly his yells were drowned by louder ones, and another hawk, crowding the first out of the way, jostling him rudely, shouted, as he pushed along a bigger truck: "Five cents—only a nickel—box o' paper an' twenty-five envelopes! Only one nickel!" "The trucks came near colliding. The two men glared at each other. The spirit of competition and rivalry ran high, and the people, drawn by the shouts, hurried from their houses. "And, finding that the two kinds of paper were identical, the people bought up the cheaper sort hungrily. I was amazed to see the business that the nickel man did. As for the dime man, poor fellow, he shouted on lustily, but it seemed that the louder he shouted, the more of his rival's stock the people bought. "Finally the sales ceased. Everybody had bought enough paper to last a year. The dime man departed first, and then the nickel man left a few minutes later. I followed to see a repetition of the rival sales in the next street. "The dime man, to my amazement, was waiting around the corner, and, as he piled a lot of his stock on the other's heavily empty truck, I heard him say with a chuckle: "It works fine, Bill, don't it?"—New York Tribune.

Maxims of a Reporter. Hitch your hotel stories to a star; you may get passes. It's an ill wind that doesn't blow the bricks from somebody's chimney. Remember that where there is smoke there is 'a' conflagration that will give proved disastrous," etc.

A weather prophet is without honor in a newspaper office. It's a wise politician that knows his own interview after the 'club reporter gets through with it.

A fake in time saves a good deal of trouble. A fool and his opinions are soon in type. Take care of the cigarettes and the stories will take care of themselves.—Fuch.

Omaha National Bank of Omaha, Nebraska

Statement Made to the Comptroller of the Currency, Sept. 4, 1906

Table with columns for RESOURCES and LIABILITIES. Resources include Loans and Discounts, Overdrafts, U.S. Bonds for Circulation, etc. Liabilities include Capital, Surplus Fund, Undivided Profits, etc.

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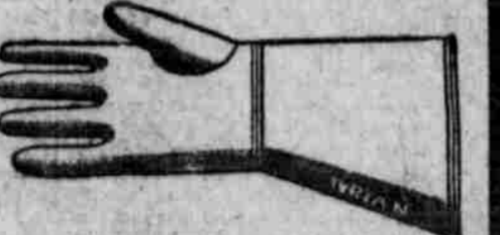
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