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THE UNKNOWN EDISON

A GREAT deal has been written about Edison, the "Wizard," and about Edison, the man. Yet there are phases of his life and work of which the average person is totally unaware.

For instance, how many people know that paraffin paper and the phonograph were introduced by the same man? Or that the brain responsible for the incandescent lamp was also the birthplace of a contraption to electrocute roaches? Notice is rarely given to Edison's helicopter, although he designed and actually built one. Edison not only gave us new words, but he also changed the meaning of several. The first use of the word filament, as an electrical term, is attributed to him. When the inventor was developing a telephone transmitter at Menlo Park, he also originated the idea of using the now familiar "Hello" as a call word in telephone conversation. And so the list of the "Wizard's" unknown brain children goes on, increasing in length and interest. However, an index of the personal traits of the man proves to be even more interesting.

It is common knowledge that Edison was deaf, but not many knew that he could detect, through his teeth and skull, sounds that would entirely escape the keenest-eared listener.

He kept an old organ in the rear of his workshop, and occasionally played simple airs on it. In his younger days he had a real fondness for drama, and often attended the theater with his friends. Edison had little time for fiction or so-called "light reading," but he was absolutely devoted to Victor Hugo, so much, in fact, that his friends dubbed him "Victor Hugo Edison." He had no hobbies, except work, nor did he play any outdoor games. However, he was addicted to one indoor sport, the venerable old game known in this country as parchesi. Edison's temper rarely got into print for he seldom lost control of himself, but when he did, a small riot usually ensued. Sometimes, if a workman happened to incur Edison's displeasure, the Wizard would pound the nearest table, and even lapse

into profanity, while the suffering delinquent would vainly try to make his excuses heard above the din.

These little-known outcroppings of Edison's nature, while merely representative of a long list, serve to show that there is yet a lot to know about one of our most famous countrymen.—M. E.

A BIG JOB

THIS fall, for the first time in the history of industry, the members of a single profession have been called upon to find the solution of a single problem.

The American Engineers Council has sent a call to a hundred thousand engineers in all parts of the United States to concentrate their efforts on finding a solution to the problem of unemployment. Some feel that the engineer is to blame, as he is the founder and developer of mass production methods. This feeling is not wholly justified, however, as the engineer has done much to provide new jobs by creating new industries and new branches of the old ones, from time to time.

The fact remains that engineers can probably do more toward providing jobs for the jobless than can any other group of men, and it is sincerely hoped that a solution will be found through the combined efforts of the nation's engineers.

ENGINEERING AND WAR

WAR IS declared in Manchuria, and at this very hour Japanese troops are engaged in a hard struggle for the possession of Chinchow. But this news of world-wide interest is also news for those whose life interest is engineering. The fire back of all the diplomatic and political smoke in Manchuria is the possession of railroads. When Russia in 1890 first started extending her hands to the East, she built a railroad between Port Arthur and herself. But the Russo-Japanese War caused her to lose that part in Manchuria, and Japan obtained what she had long wanted, a foothold in Manchuria. China, disorganized and corrupted as she was, saw and understood

the significance of this move, so she started building railroads too—with Japanese capital. China had no money, but Japan did. An exchange resulted, with the agreement that if China failed to pay the money in one year the debt would be converted to a “loan” agreement. China failed to pay the debt, thereby making Japan the virtual owner of the railroad. Japan can use these railroads, which are of vital importance in an undeveloped country like Manchuria, to extend her own sphere of influence. If Japan should get Manchuria, she would be the possessor of the rich coal and iron deposits there, which she sorely needs. The railroads and the mines, both engineering jobs, thus suddenly assume titanic importance in an international dispute.—H. M. McF.

TOMORROW—MAYBE

“ORCHESTRA rehearsal at eight o’clock tonight?—O.K., Howdy, I’ll be there—And I’ve written an arrangement of ‘Nobody’s Sweetheart’ that’s plenty keen. —Yes, I’ll bring it along. Well, I’ll be seein’ you. —So long.”

I’ve been studying math for just twenty minutes, it is seven-thirty now. Well, I can study after I come home from practice, so I toss my book aside and make a bee line for the bathroom. Enroute I call downstairs, “Say, Dad, may I have the car tonight? —Oh, just to practice. Some math, but I’ll be back early.”

Eight o’clock finds me at Howdy’s, but where is Chuck? We can’t do anything without a first trumpet. Eight forty-five. We run through the first number. Quarter of eleven, and we haven’t worked on my arrangement yet. I’d certainly like to see if it’s going to sound all right or not. “Just two more,” says Howdy, “then we’ll try it over, Gene.” Eleven-ten. We play it and the boys like it. (My arranging is getting better all the time.) “Let’s work this up tonight,” from Van. “It’s a good arrangement.”

Quarter of twelve and I’m at home again, raiding the ice box (an old custom of mine). Success. A dish of fruit, milk, and meat for a sandwich.

I’m too sleepy to study math tonight. Tomorrow night I’ll make up for lost time.—E. E. K.

A STEP FORWARD IN THE AIR

ON DECEMBER first a new department of commerce ruling went into effect. This rule says that all incoming airplanes must circle airports to the left when preparing to land. This will be uniform throughout the country and will be required at all regular airports.

A rule of this sort has been needed for a long time. In the past a pilot could never be sure that he would not meet another plane circling in the opposite direction, when he circled the port to lose altitude and observe such things as wind direction and condition of the field. Of course, with traffic still light enough to be easily controlled, there have not been many accidents caused by this sort of thing, but air traffic is steadily increasing and the rule will be distinctly valuable in the future and will take a load from the pilot’s mind at the present time.