

## STORIES of New Jersey

from the floor of the Stock Exchange to brokers. He slept there for two nights and spent his days studying the machinery.

On the morning of the third day after his arrival he was watching the operations when the master instrument exploded suddenly and stopped. The office was in a panic. Mechanics worked feverishly but without success on the machine. The head of the concern rushed into the instrument room, wild with worry. He demanded that some one do something, and Edison volunteered. The two days he had spent studying the operation of the instrument were worthwhile. It was soon fixed. The next morning the inventor went to work for the Gold Indicator Company at the then fabulous salary of \$300 a month.

In the fall of 1869 Edison and two associates formed a general telegraphic agency. The concern finally became a subsidiary of Western Union, and the president of that company retained Edison as an employee. The inventor perfected an attachment for the stock ticker which made certain that the machines in all the brokerage offices were working in unison.

"Well, young man, what do you think you should get for this invention?" the head of Western Union asked Edison after a successful demonstration.

Edison hesitated. He had considered asking \$5,000, but doubtful of being able to get that much he had decided on \$3,000 as a likely figure. But when the time came he could not bring himself to suggest even that.

"You name a price," the inventor said.

"Well, how would \$40,000 strike you?" Edison was speechless. The president of Western Union, mistaking his silence for dissatisfaction, went on: "Really, Mr. Edison, we can't afford any more."

With the \$40,000 in bills in his pocket, Edison decided to open his own plant for making telegraphic equipment in Newark, though he remained in the employ of Western Union. Before long the firm was employing fifty men; then they had to put on a night force. When this was done, Edison himself acted as day and night foreman, sleeping for half an hour or an hour at a time in the shop.

His financial affairs were always in disorder. Mathematics and especially bookkeeping were hidden mysteries that he could never understand. All bills as they came in were put on a hook, and whenever he had any spare cash he pulled off the top bills and paid them. Thus the newest creditors were paid first, and the bills which were longest overdue were seldom reached. A committee of the "bottom of the hook" creditors visited him once to demand payment of their accounts. They saw his system and advised him to get a bookkeeper at once.

It is a question which was the more perplexed, Edison or the bookkeeper. After three months the inventor asked about his financial status. When told that there was a profit of \$3,000 on the books, he promptly gave a party for his assistants. A day or two later the bookkeeper revealed that some old bills Edison had hidden away changed the profit into a loss of \$5,000. Still later new papers were uncovered which once more showed a profit, this time of \$7,000. And that was the end of the bookkeeper.

He was working on his automatic telegraph, which revolutionized the business. Where forty or fifty words a minute could be tapped out by hand, Edison's instrument could send three thousand words a minute and print them on the tape at the receiving end. By this time, though less than 25 years old, he was a recognized, successful inventor. Others brought their inventions to him for help, and his stock and telegraph equipment was selling rapidly.

On Christmas day 1871 Thomas Edison married Mary Stilwell. After a short honeymoon to Boston they lived at 95 Wright Street, Newark, for a time and then moved to 65 Bank Street.

By 1872 Edison had five shops, all of them turning out products he had invented. His automatic telegraph was in general use, and in 1873 he went to