Inventors' Page

Patents as an Investment.

To a person having only a small measure of business instinct it is always a practical question as to whether or not the expenditure of money will bring compensation justifying the outlay. There are numberless instances to which we might refer, where even the most simple of patented inventions have yielded returns amounting to thousands of pounds upon an investment representing the cost of a patent. Take, for instance, the "See that Hump" hook, the barb-wire fence, or the simple pencil sharpener, so commonly used by school children, all of which have netted to the inventors absolutely enormous sums.

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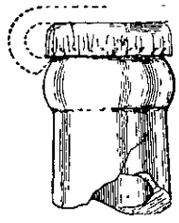
Painter Crimp Cap.

One of the most simple inventions, almost universally in use to-day, is the "Crimp Cap," patented by William Painter in 1892. Everyone has seen these caps, which are applied to thousands of bottles. Millions of crimp caps are manufactured every year, and the demonstrated value of this small invention is such that the rights under the patent could probably not be acquired for a cash price of £50,000. This patent illustrates furthermore the permanent value of patent protection, for, strange though it may seem, while the patent was issued in 1892, the protection was not realised from whatever until eight or ten years later.



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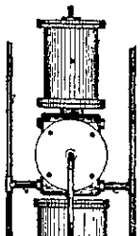
Westinghouse Brake.

That more complicated inventions are more valuable even than those of the simple type herein before enumerated is a fact well substantiated. Among these may be classified the air-brake. The cut is a view from the original patent of George Westinghouse, Jr., issued to him March 5, 1872. It has been said, and with much truth, that this invention was the most useful device patented in the nineteenth century, having in view the actual benefit derived by humanity. Enterprises capitalised in the aggregate at many millions of pounds have resulted directly from the exploitation of the air-brake, and its inventor, who was once only a machinist, is many times a millionaire to-day.



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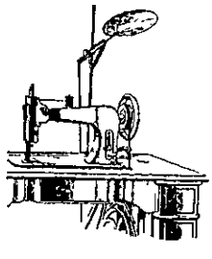
Morris Fan Attachment.

It is wonderful how little real difficulty is experienced during these days of up-to-date methods of promotion in successfully marketing inventions for which a real need exists. To monopolize such demand it is incumbent upon the inventor or manufacturer to protect himself by a patent. In 1907 Mr. W. W. Morris patented a fan attachment for sewing machines. Recognising that during hot weather, and even in a heated room, it is a warm task, for women folk especially, to run a sewing machine, Mr. Morris devised a simple appliance adapted to be connected with the treadle, and thus operated automatically to actuate a fan directing air towards the operator while using the machine. The Morris Patent Fan Company is now manufacturing these devices, and they are being sold all over the world. The inventor realised the desirability of a contrivance of this nature, and he is now reaping the benefit.



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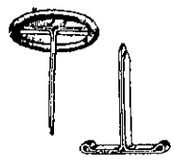
McGill's Paper Fastener.

Few persons employed in any way about an office have not used the McGill paper fastener. The St. Louis "Globe Democrat" some time ago published an interesting account of the origin of this valuable little contrivance, and following is an extract therefrom:—"There is a potential influence which surrounds some people, and inevitably brings them to wealth or celebrity, or both. As an instance, I can cite a personal experience in my early life while practising law. In the same city there lived a young man of the name of McGill, also a lawyer. One day I was fastening a lot of documents together with the rude appliances then in vogue, when Mr. McGill spoke up and said: 'I have an idea that I can produce a better fastener than that.' The next day he handed me a rough specimen of the present fastener, which is shaped like a letter T. McGill offered me a quarter interest to get it patented, but I laughed. He persevered, secured his patent, and to-day has an income of between £80,000 and £100,000. He resides in Paris, and the last time I was abroad tendered me a banquet there. It was his luck, or whatever it may be termed, to strike fortune through a simple device, and my luck to refuse to share it with him."



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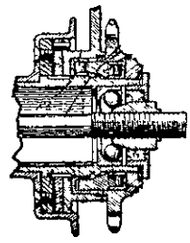
The Morrow Brake.

The wonderful success of A. P. Morrow with his back-pedalling brake, which was patented in 1900, is well known. His invention was one which meant an unlimited demand during the popularity of the bicycle, and few wheels to-day are not equipped with this brake. Morrow simply recognised at the psychological time the vast field for the promotion of his invention, and his small investment in a patent has more than repaid him handsomely.



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The United Shoe Manufacturing Company is another corporation which controls practically the trade of the world in boot machinery, on account of the acquisition of all patents which are reasonably meritorious. The corporation has a very large number of patents in New Zealand.

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Gillette Razor.

Taking up the current issues of nearly all our leading magazines you will be confronted with the picture of "a man with an idea." That man is King C. Gillette, the inventor of the Gillette Safety Razor. It is the same old story: a practical commercial invention, a man with consummate energy and perseverance, and a patent of great breadth and value. The company exploiting this razor claims to have sold three millions of them, a business of nearly, if not more, than £3,000,000 in two or three years, and with boundless possibilities, for the breadth of the patent has prevented nearly all competitors from entering the field. The Gillette razor is patented in 22 countries, and in some countries there are several patents in connection with the manufacture of the invention.

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The business of the whole commercial world almost, at the present day, is derived from the promotion of patented inventions. Statistics show that from six to seven-eighths of the entire manufacturing capital of the world is based on patents, either directly or indirectly. The above may be fully appreciated when the large interests of the railroads, telegraph and telephone companies, steel and iron industries, and electrical and machine factories are brought to our attention. If patents for invention were not valuable the policy of the General Electric Company, perhaps the largest electric corporation in the United States, to acquire the patent rights to nearly all the patents issuing every week for commercially valuable electric inventions would be an inadvisable one to pursue. In like manner it is a notable fact that the Mergenthaler Company is the assignee of nearly every patent granted during recent years for improvements in linotype machines. Furthermore, the various type-writer companies, as well as the larger corporations manufacturing machinery of all kinds, vie with each other in their efforts to secure the patent rights to inventions which represent practical improvements in the manufactures which they are putting on the market.

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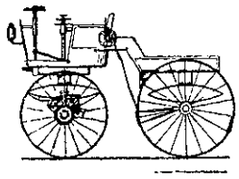
Selden Automobile.

We could continue indefinitely giving instances of profitable inventions, which when protected properly by patents have brought fortunes to the inventors thereof. We can tell how Selden, a patent attorney, some thirteen years ago, and before automobiles were believed practical for commercial purposes, obtained a patent for his motor vehicle which was so protected that nearly all the automobile companies in the United States are compelled to be licensed to manufacture and sell under this patent; how Hugo Cook, of Dayton, Ohio, working for daily wages in that city, devised those improvements by which cash registers were practicalised; and Edison, a telegrapher at the time, sold his first invention. It was a small affair, though of important application, relating to telegraphy. He took it into the office of a telegraph company on Broadway and offered it for sale almost tremblingly. The president of the company examined it, and, when the youthful genius came back by appointment later, gruffly told him that the company would pay thirty-six thousand dollars for the contrivance. Edison had never dreamed of getting one-tenth of such a price, and, as he himself tells the story, he decided that the cheque was valueless when the cashier of the bank on which it was drawn refused to cash it until he was identified. But he got the money, and the capital thus furnished him gave him a start in the career which has proved so brilliant and so useful to humanity.



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It is told that Singer was in such financial circumstances that he had to borrow £8 in order that he might perfect his first sewing machine. Winton, the automobile man, was a machinist twelve or fifteen years ago.

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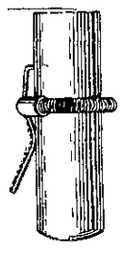
Duryea Clip.

The simplicity of an invention does not negative is patentability nor its value. The holder for attaching pens and pencils to the pocket, patented by Duryea, in 1905, is an invention which met a remarkable demand as soon as placed on the market, and which required comparatively little inventive skill in its conception. Sold at only three pence apiece, thousands of pounds were realised from the contrivance.



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Charles G. Biedinger patented a machine for making paper wrappers and exploited the same through a financial backer. His share of the proceeds up to a recent date was £18,600. This amount is not huge, it is true, but represents a very comfortable fortune.

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Henry Berman, in a recent article upon Woman, The New Maker of New Ideas, dwells particularly upon the success which women have already attained in the inventive field. "Up to ten years ago, a search of the Patent Office reports would have attested to the customary claim of the male doer of things that woman was backward where great originality was required. But behold what a decade has done! Not a page of the official report of patents but that some woman's success is recorded. And not alone this; for each year there is to be found an increasing number of successful women inventors whose inventions are not patented in their own names, but bought outright by manufacturers and business firms who themselves secure the patents.