

## THE BESS MACHINE CO.,

Laundry Machinery & Paper Slitters.

**I**N 1884 Albert Bess finished a three years apprenticeship as a machinist in the shop of Black & Clawson. He was then twenty-one years old. In 1888 while working in the shop of Black & Clawson he invented a slitting cutter to be applied to paper-making machines to cut the wide web into narrower webs as the paper ran from the machine. Paper slitters of various kinds were quite old but Mr. Bess' contrivance had many points of decided superiority. At this time there was in Boston the Koegel Slitter Co, whose slitters were being quite extensively sold.

Mr. Bess had no money, except his weekly pay as a machinist, but he had a foot-lathe in his kitchen at home, and when he got up his new-fangled slitter nothing would do but he must start a machine shop of his own. He borrowed fifteen dollars of the First National Bank, with Mr. Robert Andrews as security, and then went to the Beckett Paper Company and got their order for four slitters, Bess to take in pay for them an old lathe which was in the paper mill, and he got the lathe in advance. He now had two lathes and he rented a place and started his establishment, entirely without capital. Mr. Black, of Black & Clawson, was good enough to say "If you get too hard up you can come up to our shop and work awhile." Mr. Bess did find himself too hard up, and while he was the proprietor of a machine shop himself he could generally be found at work at Black & Clawson's shop. But while he worked as a journeyman at Black & Clawsons for the sure thing of weekly pay he kept a machinist or two at work in his own institution.

The new-paper-slitter was an admirable arrangement and sold on sight. Mr. Bess got his first hundred dollars from sales of slitters made to the Friend & Forgy Paper Co. at Franklin, Ohio, and he borrowed another hundred dollars with Mr. Montgomery of Oxford as security. He was now a manufacturer and a capitalist with debts and went at business with vigor.

But the Koegel Slitter Co., claiming a monopoly in improved paper slitters, notified Mr. Bess to stop infringing on their patent. Mr. Bess took council and was advised to go ahead. The Koegel Slitter Co. then sent agents and finally an attorney to size up Mr. Bess, and every effort was made to bulldoze him. The efforts would have succeeded with ninety-nine men out of one hundred but Mr. Bess was not a man to be bulldozed. He got his patent on his own invention and sold his slitters and told his opponents

to crack the whip. And the crack of the whip in the United States Court is no small matter for any manufacturer. Mr. Bess managed to save up one hundred and thirty dollars and proposed to take a trip in the far East among the paper mills with his slitter. Mr. Clawson, of Black & Clawson, told him that he did not think it would take him long to "blow in" the one hundred and thirty dollars, but he was mistaken. Mr. Bess was gone thirteen days and the net profits of the trip were six hundred and fifty dollars.

The Koegel Slitter Co. now boiled over and began a patent suit against one of Mr. Bess' customers in Franklin, Ohio, and Mr. Bess gave a thousand dollar bond of indemnity to the Defendant and took upon himself the full defense of the suit, employing Messrs. Parkinson & Parkinson, of Cincinnati, Ohio, as his counsel. The case was fought through the Court and Mr. Bess came out with flying colors, and the decision rendered by the Court was one of the most serious rebukes yet given to a patentee who seeks to squelch independent and superior improvements.

But Mr. Bess desired more extensive fields of manufacturing and contemplated the production of a full line of laundry machinery for steam laundries. He knew nothing about this kind of machinery and in fact he had seen little of it, but he took the bull by the horns and started a laundry and equipped it with the best modern machinery and operated it for ten months until he knew all about laundry machinery, and then sold it out, coming out without loss. He then got up a full line of steam laundry machinery of the most modern and ingenious construction and is now in full swing under the style of the Bess Machine Co. with an incorporated capital of twenty-five thousand dollars, with himself as President and his brother Arthur as Secretary and Treasurer. The establishment has moved into a larger shop with greatly increased facilities and is now in contemplation of much more extensive enlargements, it being found impossible to keep up with the orders on hand, the paper slitters alone making a very respectable manufacturing business. They are now the standard article in this line and are specified for all first-class paper machines and orders are filed for them by the hundreds.

Mr. Bess has now in contemplation the erection of a model laundry for the special purpose of exhibiting to visiting customers a full line of the Bess laundry machinery in practical operation.

It would be impossible for a young manufacturer to have brighter prospects.