

Literature.

BROWN'S HARMONAPŒTIUM.

(WRITTEN FOR QUEENS COUNTY GAZETTE.)

C. B. Brown sat one evening by the table, in his snug little home, reading a late paper. His wife put away the tea things, swept up the hearth, and taking her knitting sat down beside him, and soon no sound was heard save the busy click of the knitting needles.

Mr. and Mrs. Brown looked very cosy as they sat before the bright wood fire in their small, neat sitting room. There was no patter of little feet, no merry laugh of childhood in their home. One child had been given them, for a brief period, but before the little-bud had begun to expand the dread reaper came, and the crib was now empty. No more children came to take its place, but husband and wife were all the world to each other, and therefore did not miss the companionship of little children as other people would have done.

Brown read and re-read his paper, occasionally giving his mustache a twist. He had a heavy black mustache, with a real scientific curl at each corner of his mouth. No doubt the curl was produced by magnetism, for he had a habit when studying inventions, (he was an inventor), of twining the ends of his mustache around his finger.

Presently he laid aside the paper, and watched his wife's fingers knitting stitch after stitch in quick succession.

"Mary," he said, after watching her a few moments in silence, "I have been reading in this paper, (laying his hand upon the article in question) of a man who is making thousands of dollars for writing poems, or lyric verse. Why in this advanced age of science—no, I won't say advanced, for we are only standing upon the threshold of science, and long before the twentieth century expires the things that look impossible to us now will be made practical and plain."

His wife looked up with a smile and asked:

"Chris, what are you thinking about? I believe in the undeveloped future as much as you do, but I fail to catch the drift of your thoughts."

"Well, I will put my thoughts in a nutshell, and say, why can't a machine be made to turn out poetry or lyric by the yard?"

His wife laughed heartily, but not a smile crossed his face for his brain pulsating with such a stupendous idea that he felt awed. For the first time in her married life his wife said:

"Chris, it cannot be done."

"Wait! wait!" he said, quickly, "let us talk it over before you say it can't be done. If some one had said at the beginning of the nineteenth century that before it closed people would be talking around the world by the use of wires, he would have been called a lunatic, and most likely he would have been shut up in an asylum for the insane. But he all been accomplished, and achieved one thing quite as mysterious and perhaps more so. You have always stood by me, Mary, and your suggestions have been a great help to me. I depend upon you for help in the future and I know you will not disappoint me."

His wife felt much moved by his words and the tone of his voice.

"I will take back what I said just now, Chris," she said, her eyes filling with tears. "The idea seemed so ridiculous that a time would come when lyric would be sold by the yard for a few cents when we now have to pay such a fabulous price for a few stanzas."

They talked the matter over until a late hour that night. Indeed for weeks they talked and studied, making diagrams without number. It was inspiring to watch them, with paper and pencil, working with all their intellect and determination to solve a problem, to advance science and knowledge. It is by such determined wills to conquer or die that our old world is rapidly advancing into light, civilization and Christianity. And who can tell that before the next century expires aerial ships may navigate the air and telescopes tell us what kind of people inhabit Mars, and whether the moon is a big cheese, or volcanic matter.

Business called me from home for three months. The next morning after my return home, just as I was sitting down to a late breakfast, my housekeeper came in and said C. B. Brown would like to see me.

I told her to show him in, and ordered on some more coffee.

A moment later Brown came in. The first glance at his face told me he had something important to communicate.

After shaking hands with him and inquiring after his wife's health, I invited him to sit down and have some breakfast with me, remarking also that he could tell me all that had happened while I had been away, as we ate.

He accepted my invitation and sat down on the opposite side of the table. I now had a good look at his face, and was shocked to see how pale and thin he looked. His eyes, too, were bright and restless.

"What have you been working at since I saw you last, Brown?" I presently inquired.

"Science, my friend, science!" he replied, helping himself to another slice of toast.

"You are making a martyr of yourself, Brown, to your pet theory, I returned, earnestly.

"Martyr," he repeated, "is not that what the whole human race is doing and have been doing since the beginning of the world? Every branch of science, civilization and Christianity has had its scores of martyrs. But there is something elevating and inspiring in that kind of martyrdom—for a man to give his life to elevate the human race. But there is a downgrade of martyrs—drunkenness, crime, debauchery and vice, piled upon the altar of infernalism, until the sight is loathsome and the stench sickening."

We had finished our breakfast, so I put my hand upon Brown's shoulder and said:

"Come into the sitting-room, and tell me what is your last invention."

"Yes," he replied, quickly, "I came as soon as I heard you had arrived home to show you the last production of my brain. It is my own idea; it may be crude, but all the same I have it. I can tell you there is fortune, glory and all that sort of thing in it."

He carefully unfastened his coat, fumbled in his inner pocket, and brought to view a tiny machine, in outward appearance resembling a diminutive hand-organ, and holding it towards me, he exclaimed:

"Behold, behold, here is the great machine!"

"What is it, Brown, said I. "Is it a spacemill?"

"Spacemill," he sneered; "that, sir, I call the Harmonapœtium, a wonderful piece of mechanism which is destined to win for me an earthly immortality."

"Do you expect me to pronounce that word?" I asked. "If I could I would start for South Africa to-morrow. I began to spell H-a-r-m-o-n-a-pœ-t-i-u-m."

"Say that name over again, and say it easy," I said, laughing.

"The Harmonapœtium," replied Brown with dignity, and please don't make it the subject of your unseemly remarks."

"Well, what is the thing for, anyway?" I asked, impatiently.

Brown's face flushed to a deep red, but looking me straight in the face he said:

"It's a machine for making poetry."

"Poetry!" I exclaimed, in astonishment, looking at him to see if he were really sane. "Look here, Brown," I continued, "I am your friend, and I would not like to think that you were a fraud. To make poetry there must be an inspiration in the maker that puts soul into the poetry or else it is no poetry at all. Now how are you going to get that little machine inspired?"

He threw back his head and laughed scornfully.

"If I can't put as much soul into the poetry that comes from that machine as there is in the poetry that is going through the Hebdomadal press, then I will eat the machine," he said, decidedly.

How he could eat the machine puzzled me, after such a hearty breakfast. But the way some people can stretch is wonderful.

"Do you please," I said, aloud, "and explain how it works."

Brown resumed:

"Here you have a bit of mechanism—a mere toy as it were—that is so ingeniously contrived, that by turning this handle you set in motion a sort of ethereal afflatus, that produces a first-class article of lyric."

"Well, let me see how it works," I returned, beginning to feel very much interested.

"Certainly, that is why I came. Well, now, you see this little screw? You turn it twice to the left; this acts upon a piston that communicates with the parallax of the centrifugal eccentric motion which at once sets the anti-friction main spring. But, never mind, this is mere detail that you cannot be expected to understand."

"I had just arrived at that conclusion, myself," said I. "However, go on."

He continued:

"You turn the screw as I mention before and you have elegant verse."

He suited the action to the word, and after a few revolutions of the crank he opened the lid, drew forth a sheet of paper, and read:

Good-bye, my mother,  
Good and brave;  
I meet the foe beyond the wave.  
If no more to you I come,  
We will meet beyond the tomb.

"Oh, come now, Brown, that won't do!" I exclaimed.

"You just wait a minute," was Brown's reply. "That was a mistake. I turned the screw a half turn too much. Beside, my friend, the mechanism is new. You cannot expect it to be perfect upon a half turn. Why Tennyson and Longfellow wrote and rewrote their poetry at least a hundred times before they considered it perfect. But just observe, I pull out this delicate little stop, and move the pointer on this small dial—you remember my mother's watch?"

"Is it possible you have spoiled your mother's gift to construct this monstrosity?"

"Softly, softly, my friend. All must give way before science. Now, as I told you before—"

"Oh, bother your explanations. Start the machine up and let me see what it can do."

"See here, my friend, if you are going to get cross, I will put it in my pocket and go home."

"All right, Brown," I said, soothingly, "go on. I unfurl my aricular appendages and am all attention."

As I said then you set this stop as I mentioned—this way—and you have heroic verse."

"Confound it! Give me the machine, and if there is any poetry in it I will soon jerk it out," I said, unable longer to restrain my impatience.

"Go ahead! go ahead!" said the inventor, "go ahead, by all means; and if the machine don't make better poetry than the infernal devil that you are always writing, I'll smash it up!"

"Don't be personal, Brown, it is not polite," I responded, as soothingly as I could.

I knew that he was worn out both in body and mind or he would never have spoken to me in that way.

Taking the machine I turned the crank to the tune of slow metre. Brown watched me with a smile upon his face I could not interpret. There was perfect silence, neither of us caring to speak. The machine vibrated and a prickling sensation ran up my arms. After turning for about five minutes, something snapped, and the machine stopped. We opened the lid and brought out the following poem:

To whom does sweetest joys belong,  
Come pure love and tune my song,  
And show me the happy pair  
Where love softens all their cares.

It is not the nymphs and swains  
That thoughtless fly into their chains;  
If they get bliss without design,  
Ivies and oaks can grow and twine.

If drawn together by charm of gold,  
Two sordid souls of earthy mould,  
So two rich mountains of pain  
May rush to wealthy wedlock too.

As well might thunderbolts try to wed,  
With sheets of lightning dress the bed,  
Or Sampson's Foes might as well  
In peace and harmony to dwell.

Two kindred souls alone must meet  
With love that makes the bondage sweet,  
Pure holy love, not base desire,  
That steepens the soul in sensual fire.

Bright Venus on her rolling throne,  
Is drawn by gentlest birds alone,  
Then happiness feeds their mutual love,  
And Cupid yokes the cooing doves.

We looked at each other for at least five minutes without speaking. Brown's face wore the same peculiar smile. Extending my hand, I said:

"Let me congratulate you, Brown, you are a genius."

"Then you appreciate the sublime lyric?" he asked, with that undefined smile playing around the corners of his mouth.

"Do you expect me to understand such twaddle," I cried, indignantly.

"Perhaps you will understand it better before the year expires. It may be a little beyond your comprehension just now," he said, calmly.

"Yes, thank heaven, it is; and I hope it will remain so, I responded, sarcastically.

"Although you depreciate my invention, the world will recognize its value in about fifty years from now," he returned.

"And where will you be then Brown," I inquired.

"In a martyr's grave, and the world will be reaping the benefit of my labors," he answered.

Then, with the same smile still upon his face, he took up the machine and hastily left the house.

I threw myself into an easy chair and tried to think the matter over. Suddenly an idea struck me. I jumped up and looked around for the poem. It was gone!

"Confound it, why didn't I look into the box before I began to turn the crank?" I exclaimed aloud. But why should he give me a warning? Then another idea rushed into my busy brain. I could see it plain now. I smiled and soliloquized: "You are a genius, Brown. You shall have a bid to the wedding—you and your Harmonapœtium."

ALAN LEIGH.

The young men who think it is not necessary for them to establish a reputation for honesty, sobriety and integrity in order to achieve success in the future, are harboring very dangerous thoughts. There is no young man here of average intelligence, whose course and conduct are not observed by the community, or who is not measured according to his merits. The worthy young man is known from the unworthy, and although he may sometimes think he is not appreciated or his course not commended, he will learn sooner or later what character and manhood really stand for in his case. It is best to be always upright, industrious, and above reproach. It pays in more ways than one, and leads to victory.

A remembrance of our own youthful mistakes and follies will lead us to judge those of others with sympathy and indulgence, and the recognition that we have reached the time of life when gentle dignity and cheerful serenity are more becoming than sparkling vivacity or any affectations will save us from being ridiculous.—March Ladies' Home Journal.

Do not fancy that you are no longer capable of contributing to the pleasure of your little world. Encourage your love of approbation. It has a legitimate form of egotism—the wish to be pleasing. Put forth whatever magnetism you have, and cultivate any little gift of wit or liveliness you may possess.—March Ladies' Home Journal.

Dusting Highly Polished Furniture.

The more highly a surface is polished the more liable it is to show the marks of anything that is passed over it. The best materials for dustcloths are soft, worn silk, worn French flannel, and a fine quality of cheese-cloth. A damp cloth will cloud the polish of furniture and therefore should not be used.—March Ladies' Home Journal.

And Still They Trail.

A bacteriologist asked a woman who did not usually have to go on very dry streets if he might make an experiment on one of her skirts. It was a comparatively new one and of course received the daily brushing, too. He found on one part of the skirt binding at the hem the following small managerie: Two hundred thousand germs, many bearing diphtheria, pneumonia, and tonsillitis, also collections of typhoid and consumption microbes. The owner has been convicted to the short skirt.

Golden Thoughts.

No woman is blinder than she who deems herself faultless. The shadow of a trouble is generally blacker than the trouble itself. This world is full of beauty, and if we did our duty it would be full of love. Faith will not make the sun rise sooner, but it will make the night seem shorter. Prayer is the peace of our spirits, the soul of meditation, the rest of our cares. We shall be called upon to give an account not only of our idle words, but of our idle silence. Did it ever occur to you that while charity begins at home it is frequently abroad when called upon.

Woolen underwear, hygienically speaking, is not so good for all-round purposes as cotton or linen, the latter, if meshed, being preferable. If one perspires readily he will chill as readily when wearing woolen underwear, as it holds the moisture, thus keeping the surface of the body damp.—March Ladies' Home Journal.

How to Clean Ivory.

Piano keys and ivory knife handles should be cleaned with alcohol. Twice a week rub the keys of a piano with a clean cloth wet with alcohol, and they will always look well. A solution of two-thirds alcohol and one-third sweet oil will take ink stains from wood, but if they are fresh stains and not large it is well before trying the above recipe to take a soft cloth, breathe upon the stain, rub gently while the spot is damp, and it will rub out without any trouble.

A White Season in Women's Wear.

A white season is predicted for this summer, which means that many light accessories of women's costumes will be worn; but they will be of the pastel shades rather than the more brilliant colorings—the brighter shades to be used with white, and the lighter tones with black.—March Ladies' Home Journal.

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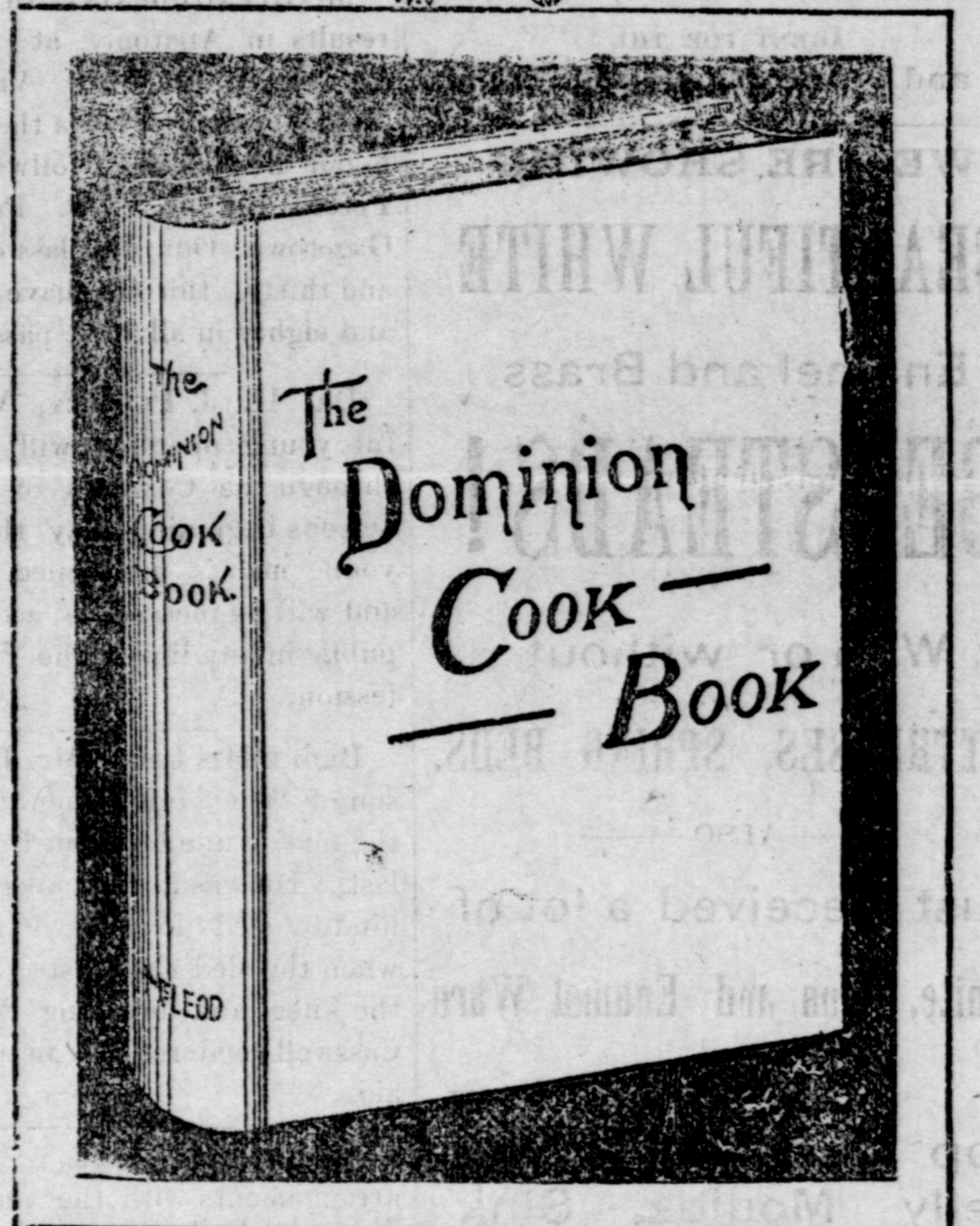
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