

## MIXERS OF FEATHERS

Their Trade Is One That Takes Many Years to Master.

### SORTING OUT THE GRADES.

The Work of the Blower, a Machine That Is at Once Both Simple and Wonderful—The Combinations the Expert Must Know How to Mix.

Feather mixing is one of the hardest trades to learn, but when mastered is also one of the best paying methods of earning a living. The worker who intends to make this trade his life work must start when he is young, for it takes on an average thirteen years for a man to work up from pillow filler to feather mixer.

Feathers that have been plucked from hens, ducks, turkeys and geese are the only kinds of feathers that are used, says the Chicago Tribune. One kind of feathers at a time is placed in the drum to be beaten and to be sterilized by hot air process. The drum is a large machine not unlike the washing machines used in laundries. In the center of each machine is an axle with eight beaters attached. The beaters make over 200 revolutions a minute, beating the dust out of the feathers and cleaning them thoroughly. A thin screen on the front and back of the machine lets the dust out.

This part of the feather work is the most unhealthy, for the windows in the drum room are not allowed to be opened, and the dust that comes from the feathers is inhaled by the worker. Many of the drum men contract consumption in a year or more doing this work and are compelled to give up and seek other employment. The work is not so unhealthy as it was in former years, for the men now are allowed to leave the room while the machine is in operation.

After the feathers have been beaten and sterilized in the drum they are placed in the blowing machine to be sorted and to be deodorized by the cold blast. As in the drum, the kinds of feathers are put in the blower separately. The blower is the most simple and yet the most wonderful machine that is used in the feather business. The machine is built with a large funnel shaped mouth on top and always is placed at one end of a large room.

The feathers are placed in the funnel, through which they fall down into the center of the machine. The cold air blowing from the fan deodorizes them, and they leave the machine in a steady stream, flying all over the room. The worker finds himself in what looks like a miniature storm, for the feathers fly around as high as the ceiling. An onlooker well might wonder where the sorting comes in of the maze of feathers.

It is here that the wonderful part of the machine lies, for the air pressure is so arranged that the heaviest feathers, which are also the cheapest, will fall precisely in a bin about five feet away from the blower. The next heaviest will fall in a bin fifteen feet away from the machine, and the rest of the seven different grades of feathers will fall accurately in bins that have been provided for them. The down, which is the most expensive, flies around in the air the longest, but when it comes down it falls into a bin that is placed over seventy-five feet away from the blower. Thus the seven different grades of feathers have been sorted, each kind in a bin and without having been touched since leaving the blower.

The drum and blower man, after putting in five years at this kind of work and also learning the different grades of feathers, takes another step upward in the business and becomes an assistant to the mixer. His work consists of weighing feathers and learning the different combinations that are used in stuffing pillows. In a few years he probably will know how to mix some of the combinations, but usually it takes five years of experience before an assistant can become a mixer.

The combination used in the cheapest pillows is hen and turkey feathers. Duck and turkey combination is used in a little better grade of pillows, and the best combination of all is duck and goose feathers. The most expensive filling is made of downy feathers from geese. These combinations have different prices, and the mixer must know these prices and when he can experiment with the various kinds of feathers to try to get a cheaper combination that will last as long as the dearer kind.

#### Animal Suicides.

One of the most frequent causes of loss of animals in a circus menagerie is suicide, of which there are numerous well authenticated cases. In speaking of this characteristic a trainer who has been constantly associated with wild beasts for more than forty years says: "The instinct for self destruction is common among all kinds of animals, and the causes are in many instances the same as usually impel a man or woman to take his or her life. Probably the most pronounced of these causes are loneliness, homesickness, loss of companions or progeny and ill health. There are animals that periodically have a return of the suicidal mania and that can be saved from self destruction only by the most intelligent and careful treatment. As a rule, however, when the animal has made up its mind, so to speak, to commit suicide nothing can prevent it, and the keeper, not only for reasons of humanity, but also because an animal in that condition is extremely dangerous, often is compelled to end its sufferings by hastening its death."—Spare Moments.

### Sheridan's Double Marriage.

It was in 1857 that the Gretina Green marriages were made illegal. A glance at its registers may yet inspire the novelist of the future. One entry will be sure to puzzle. Twice within a few days occurs the record of the marriage of Richard Brinsley Sheridan to Miss Grant. There was only one R. B. S., only one bride for the same gentleman. The double entries are not the result of any blunder on the part of the Rev. Mr. Vulcan. The parties were really twice married at Gretina Green. Arriving on a Sunday they were duly wedded, and sped away to Edinburgh. There, however, Sheridan chanced to glance at a newspaper in which appeared the lucubrations of a lawyer. In these plainly stated was the fact that no contract executed on a Sunday is binding. Clearly, then, their wedding was not legal. Back to Gretina Green they scurried, to be remarried on a week day and leave the dual record to perplex later generations of sympathetic searchers of the records.—St. James' Gazette.

### The Buzzard in Flight.

There can be no doubt that the buzzard is the living aeroplane in perfection. It cannot sail against the wind except as other birds do—by sheer power of moving wings—but it can sail at amazing speed before the wind, at right angles to the wind and can sail within a few points of the wind. When there is no wind its flight is clumsy—not much of an improvement on the flying of a hen. Authors are wont to describe the buzzard as sailing in the sky on days when the earth perspires beneath a sultry, still atmosphere. But it will also be remembered that these authors invariably describe the buzzard as being "a speck in the brassy heavens." As a matter of fact, that is just the point of the buzzard's aerial knowledge. When there is no breeze close to the earth it is always to be observed roosting in a tree or flying laboriously into the zenith until it finds an upper current, where it can navigate without labor.—New York Times.

### Bones and Their Places.

It was a colloquy at a north side butcher's shop. "Oh," said the little woman, "that's an awful big bone in that small steak. I don't like to have to pay for all bone."

"Yes'm," said the butcher politely, but with a touch of irony in his answer, "that do seem to be a good deal of bone, but the animals what's comin' to this market now seems to have more or less bone in 'em. And really as animals is built now I don't see how they can get along without bones."

"That may all be true," said the little woman, and there was a wicked twinkle in her eye, "but this morning I found a good sized bone in the sausage, and I leave it to you, honest now, don't you think that is going a little too far?"

And the butcher could not say a word in reply.—Indianapolis News.

### Incidental Music.

One afternoon a couple from an adjoining town presented themselves to a Boston divine and asked to be married just as he was about to enter the pulpit to conduct an afternoon service. The minister replied that he regretted that he could not at that moment comply with their wish, but that immediately upon the conclusion of the service he would take pleasure in performing the ceremony. The lovers after demurring seated themselves in the rear of the church. When the minister had finished the service he made the following announcement: "The parties who are to be joined in matrimony will present themselves at the chancel immediately after the singing of hymn 415, 'Mistaken Souls That Dream of Heaven.'"—Exchange.

### Big Jumps by Rabbits.

How fast do hares and rabbits run? Perhaps you have wondered while out gunning and watched the elusive animals speeding away. According to J. G. Millais, the length of a hare's stride is about four feet, while that of a rabbit is about two feet. Under conditions of fear the hare is said to leap ten to twelve feet, some authorities claiming that it can jump ditches ten to twenty-five feet in width. A hare can jump upward perpendicularly five feet. Rabbits can make leaps of six or seven feet horizontally, but cannot jump higher than three feet. When compelled to do so, it is said, rabbits can swim as well as dogs.—Philadelphia North American.

### A Bright Bird.

The cuckoo is as likely to steal its nest as to make it, but this fact does not take from the point of the following pun, quoted from Short Stories: "A young Englishman being asked at dinner whether he would have some bird's nest pudding, said, turning to his hostess: 'Ah, yes. Bird's nest pudding, and what kind of a bird may have made it?'"

"Oh, it was the cook who made it," was her prompt reply.

### Not Always.

"Remember, my boy," said Uncle James as he gave Bobby a coin, "that if you take care of the pennies the shillings will take care of themselves." Bobby looked a trifle dubious.

"I do take care of the pennies," he replied, "but as soon as they get to be shillings pa takes care of 'em."—London Tit-Bits.

### Tonsorial Artistry.

Customer (facetiously)—Do you suppose you can cut my hair without making me look like an idiot? Barber (d'idently)—It will be a pretty difficult thing to do, but I will try.—Lippincott's Magazine.

Saying well causes a laugh. Doing well causes silence.—French Proverb.

## CELEBRATED CRANKS

Genius That Was Linked With the Manners of a Bear.

### A DINNER WITH DEAN SWIFT.

The Way the Whimsical Misanthrope Treated His Publisher—Carlyle and Tennyson as Growlers—Stories of Handel and Von Bulow.

Carlyle, in addition to his other troubles, was a great sufferer from dyspepsia. He was therefore anything but sympathetic in intercourse with his friends, anything but fair in his estimates of other writers.

Though Carlyle personally liked Tennyson, he spoke with impatience of his "cobbling his odes," dismissed Jane Austen's novels as "dishwashings," Hallam, the historian, as "dry as dust" and Goldsmith as an "Irish blackguard." Even the writers of editorials in the press were scored by the irritable sage of Chelsea. "What are these fellows doing?" he asked. "They only serve to cancel one another."

A characteristic incident illustrates Carlyle's disposition to inflict pain even on a friend. An artist who frequented the house of Carlyle painted a picture of him in his dressing gown smoking a pipe by the fireside and Mrs. Carlyle in an armchair sitting opposite him. The portrait was hung at one of the Royal academy's exhibitions and, though not a striking work of art, was purchased by Lord Ashburton, Carlyle's friend, for £500.

The delighted artist hurried off to the Carlyles, expecting congratulations on the sale and some manifestation of pleasure on their part at having such a value placed on a picture of themselves and their domestic interior. He delivered his glad tidings, but the only response he got from Carlyle was: "Well, moon, £500 was just £495 too much."

Browning one day left a copy of his new poems at Carlyle's house. In speaking of this action to Tennyson the next day Carlyle broke out with a savage snarl:

"What did that fellow mean by leaving that cart load of stones at my door?"

Tennyson himself, though not nearly so roughly as the Chelsea sage, was yet considerably of a growler on occasion. Especially did this tendency on his part become manifest when he suspected a disposition on any side to lionize him.

It is related that at a dinner in London to which he had gone much against his will at the solicitation of a relative the poet laureate soon discovered that the company were expecting some pearl of thought from him. He glowered at the gathering in such a way as visibly to disconcert some of them. Then, as if purposely to utter the most unpoetical remark he could devise, with a grim smile he turned to his hostess—all the guests in absolute silence waiting the slightest word of genius—and growled out:

"Madam, I like my mutton cut in chunks—in chunks, madam, in chunks!"

Perhaps the greatest growler of literature was Dean Swift, that whimsical misanthrope who evinced a morbid delight in humiliating his social inferiors because he himself when young had been outrageously affronted by his superiors.

Swift had acted as private secretary to Sir William Temple. Once when Sir William was confined to his bed with gout the king, William III., visited him, and Swift officiated as his majesty's guide through the gardens of Moor Park. The king taught the secretary how to cut asparagus in the Dutch way, and Swift had also the felicity of seeing him eat the vegetable.

Years afterward, when Swift was dean of St. Patrick's cathedral in Dublin, his publisher, Faulkner, called at the deanery on business connected with some proof sheets. Having been detained until near dinner time, he was pressed by the dean to dine with him. Asparagus was one of the vegetables, and the guest asked for a second helping.

"Sir," snapped Swift, pointing to Faulkner's plate, "first finish what you have upon your plate!"

"What, sir? Eat the stalks?" asked the astonished publisher.

"Aye, sir. Eat the stalks or you'll have no more! King William always ate his stalks," added the dean in his most imperious manner.

Whereupon the meek Faulkner, yielding to the dean's will, ate the stalks most submissively.

Shortly after the dean's death Faulkner was relating the incident as an illustration of Swift's insolence.

"And you were silly enough to obey him?" asked some one.

"Yes," replied Faulkner, "and let me add, sir, that if you had dined with Dean Swift you would have eaten your stalks too."

John Hunter, the famous English surgeon, was a man of great eccentricity and of most bearish manners. His wife, a witty and beautiful woman, was the friend of many distinguished persons of the time—the eighteenth century—her intimate friend being Mme. d'Arbly. The two were the moving spirits of a sprightly salon. But Hunter, whose mind was set on science to the exclusion of all else, gave scant approval to his wife's pursuits.

On returning home late one evening he unexpectedly found his drawing room filled with musical professors, connoisseurs and others whom Mrs. Hunter had assembled. Hunter was greatly irritated by the presence of these guests. Walking straight into the center of the room, he addressed the astonished company in this strain: "I knew nothing of the purpose to

hold such a kick-up. I should have been informed of it beforehand, but as I am now returned home to study I hope the present company will at once retire."

Which "the present company" at once proceeded to do.

Handel, the musician, possessed a great natural wit, which was frequently spiced by his rather caustic references to the merits of his fellow musicians.

When "The Messiah" was being performed in Dublin, Dubourg led the band and one evening had a finale to make ad libitum. Following the fashion, the violinist took his cadenza through various keys and continued the improvisation until the uneasy Handel began to wonder when he would really come to the "shake" that was to terminate the part and bring in the other instruments. Eventually Dubourg finished the cadenza with a grand flourish, whereupon Handel, to the great distress of the leader, put his hands to his mouth and shouted across the hall:

"Welcome home, welcome home, Mr. Dubourg!"

On one occasion a perturbed singer had some warm words with Handel, who had been making some sarcastic references to his ability, and wound up by threatening to jump on the harpsichord that Handel played.

"Let me know when you will do that," retorted Handel, "and I will advertise it, for I am sure more peoples will come to see you jump than to hear you sing!"

It has been said that the frankness of another noted musician, Hans von Bulow, almost equaled that of Handel. Bulow was accustomed at one time to meet a large class twice a year in Germany at which many members were listeners, while those who wished to play might send in their names to him. Sometimes Bulow chose those whom he preferred and sent out for them, while the rest waited in terror for their turn to come. This nervousness of anticipation was not without cause.

An awkward English girl one day went to the piano and, frightened almost out of her wits, managed to play her selection after a fashion.

"Ach!" roared Bulow. "You play the easy passages with a difficulty dot is simply enor-mous!"

Once in playing at a concert Bulow stopped abruptly and ordered the ushers to turn the piano around. His reason was asked, whereupon he replied that a woman in the audience annoyed him unpeppably by fanning herself out of time.

As far as the audience was concerned, Bulow always made a point of doing exactly as he pleased. On one occasion the orchestra he was conducting had just given a very long Brahms symphony, quite beyond the comprehension of the listeners. When the audience failed to give Bulow the applause

he expected he turned upon them furiously.

"What! You do not like it? I will teach you to like it!" and he had the entire composition played through again from beginning to end. Brahms was always applauded after that, if only in self defense.

But when a Leipzig audience insisted on recalling Bulow, despite his repeated refusals to play again, he came forward and said, "If you do not stop this applause I will play all Bach's forty-eight preludes and fugues from beginning to end!"—Edwin Tarrisse in St. Louis Republic.

### Embarrassing.

A famous scientist whose early home had been in a country district had long promised to visit the scenes of his boyhood and deliver a lecture in aid of the funds of one of the institutions of the place. At last he fulfilled his promise, and the lecture was given. When at the close of his lecture he was conversing with some of the principal promoters of the affair they warmly congratulated him on the facility with which he made rather technical matter interesting and clear to his uncultured audience.

"Oh," said he, by way of explanation, "I invariably fix my attention upon the member of my audience who strikes me as having the least intelligent face, and I continue to explain any subject upon which I touch until I see by that person's expression that he understands it."

Almost directly afterward the leading public official of the little town came into the room and made his way to where the scientist was standing.

"Sir," he exclaimed, "you cannot possibly believe how much real pleasure you have given me tonight. It seemed to me all the time as if your eye was never away from me, that you spoke to me alone and that your whole wish was to make me understand every word you said."—Chicago Journal.

### "Dixie."

The original music which is most characteristically American is that of the colored brother. This is mostly melody and ragtime. Some of the leading songs are "The Swanee River," "Old Kentucky Home," "Dixie," "Old Black Joe" and others. It is told that Christine Nilson has said that when she found an American audience heavy on her hands she knew well that she could bring them out of the dumps by rendering "The Swanee River." For expression of the quick and alert American spirit nothing can be compared with the quick and ragtime section of "Dixie," and wherever, in the presence of an American audience, the band strikes up the tune, whether it be in Boston, New Orleans or Chicago, the hall resounds at once with responsive applause. "Dixie" is really our most popular national tune and comes near interpreting American spirit in peace and in war than any other. Then, too, it is originally and wholly American.

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