

INGENIOUS AUTOMATONS

It will not do for "we folk" of the present generation to fancy that we are so wonderfully ingenious after all. When we take a glance into the past and its wonderful achievement we are often astounded at what we see and find. An exchange recites some of the automatic inventions of men of past ages, in a recent article of great interest, and we reprint it, believing it will prove interesting to our readers, as follows:

Automatons—mechanical contrivances designed to imitate the actions of living creatures—are mentioned in chronicles dating back to very ancient times. Among such early devices were walking statues, attributed to Daedalus, and a flying dove, the work of one Archytas. In comparatively recent times Friar Bacon is said to have constructed a head of brass that could speak and another man produced a mechanical fly that would fly around the room and return finally to its master.

In the 13th century one Albertus Magnus after 30 years of work produced an automaton in the form of a human being which went forward when anyone knocked, opened the door and saluted the visitor. A Frenchman constructed a duck which was reputed to behave in so lifelike a manner as to appear exactly the same as living birds of that species. Some credulous writers even went so far as to record that by means of an acid in its stomach this mechanical duck was able to digest food.

Many of the automatons described in old accounts doubtless never really existed except in imagination, like the famous Frankenstein which, according to Mrs. Shelley's romance, was constructed out of human bones and tissues by a young student of physiology, endowed with a spectral and convulsive life; and which at length proved the undoing of its author.

There is no question, however, that many marvelously ingenious self-moving devices have been made. For instance Haroun al Raschid presented to Charlemagne a water-clock in whose dial were 12 doors, one of which opened for each hour. At noon when all of the doors were open 12 mounted knights came forth, paraded round the dial and then returned inside the clock, the doors being closed behind them.

A toy that was constructed for Louis XIV consisted of a carriage drawn by two horses. In the carriage was a miniature figure of a lady, with attendants. The coachman would crack his whip, the horses' legs would move and the carriage would roll forward in a remarkably natural, lifelike manner. On reaching a point opposite the king's seat the carriage would stop, the page would step down and open the door for the lady, who would alight and present a petition.

In the 18th century, we are told, a Frenchman

constructed a figure of a flute-player which would place its lips against the instrument and produce tones with its fingers in a manner strikingly like that of a human player. The same man later produced a flageolet-player which while playing the flageolet would beat a tambourine.

One of the most noted pieces of mechanism of this kind is a clock in a cathedral at Strassburg, Germany. It not only indicates the minutes, hours, days, months, years and important festivals but it shows the motions of various heavenly bodies and contains numerous figures moved by machinery. The quarter hours are struck by the statues of four old men. At each quarter hour a figure representing death moves forward but another representing Christ with a spear meets him and drives him back. At the fourth quarter hour the figure of Christ retires inside the clock and death comes out, striking the hour with a bone in his hand. This is followed by the ringing of chimes.

SAYINGS OF WISE MEN

To try things oft and never to give over doth wonders.—Bacon.

Those who bring sunshine to the lives of others cannot keep it from themselves.—Berrie.

Nothing is done beautifully which is done in rivalry nor nobly which is done in pride.—Ruskin.

Morality is a code of rules proper for the guidance of humanity in its highest conceivable perfection.—Spencer.

Let us have faith that right makes might and in that faith let us to the end dare to do our duty as we understand it.—Lincoln.

Where there is love in the heart there are rainbows in the eyes which cover every dark cloud with gorgeous hues.—Beecher.

NOT TAKING CHANCES

Sam, a colored character, was about to be tried on the time-honored charge of chicken stealing. After the charge had been stated the judge turned to the prisoner and said: "Sam, you may have your choice between having your case tried by me, or by a jury of your peers."

"What's peers?" asked Sam.

"Peers, Sam, are your equals, men of your own class or situation—your own kind."

"You all jest try dis case yourself," said Sam. "I aint gonna be tried by no chicken thieves."

"I don't like your heart action," the doctor said, applying the stethoscope again. "You have had some trouble with angina pectoris."

"You're partly right doctor," said the young man, sheepishly, "only that aint her name."