

Peter Tarbox's "Mouth fur Pie."

BY CORA BROWN.

"There's a charming little widow,
Who keeps a candy shop,
Where all the children buy their chewing
gum.
She sells taffy for a penny,
Her name is on the door—
Oh, there's music in the face of Widow
Dunn!"



AND so there was music
in her very laugh, and
it was all true about
the chewing gum and
taffy.

In the rhyme the name is Dunn,
but Munn does just as well, and the
children sang the words at her till
she was tired of hearing them.

But she never said so. "Dear
little things," she would say, "they
do think it such a joke!" and would
nod or laugh out of her pretty
brown eyes at them, when they
passed the shop, singing.

But, alas! life wasn't all a joke
for the little woman.

There wasn't much of a fortune
in chewing gum, and though she
worked hard to keep the small shop
going, there was all the housework,
and then the garden in the sum-
mer, and always Ted.

"Yes, thank goodness, always
Ted!" she would say, as she patted
the smooth black head and the lit-
tle crooked back.

Of course Ted could tend shop; it
was such a tiny place, he could
reach almost everything from his
chair; but it tired him so, poor lit-
tle chap!

"Oh, mother, what good am I?"
he would say, dismally, when she
would insist on his going to bed,
pale and shaking, after holding out
too long.

"For mother to love," she al-
ways answered, and that comforted
him.

"And my poor boy must be a
cripple all his life because I am
poor," she would think, bitterly,
though she never spoke of it to any
one else, not even Ted. She was
too proud.

"One hundred dollars!" She said
these words so often, they were al-
ways on her mind, and once when
Johnny Smith asked her the price
of the big blue kite, she answered
calmly, "One hundred dollars,"
and he almost fell over backward.

Why, it was a fortune. Never
did she expect to have that
much money at one time; yet that
was the sum that would take Ted
into the great hospital where he
might be made as straight and as
strong as other boys.

The great physician Dr. King
himself had said so. He had been
visiting in the village and saw Ted
one day when he came in to buy a
fishing line.

"Send him up to Boston, madam,"
said he, after having examined him
through professional curiosity.
"Nothing so serious here that we

cannot set it right." And she
watched his professional back all
the way down the street with ach-
ing eyes.

She never told Ted, who hated
the "ugly man" for hitting his poor
back so, but day and night the
words burned in her brain.

She wrote and made all inquir-
ies. Yes, that was the price to be
paid, and it might as well have
been a thousand.

The little shop was the front
room of the very oldest house in all
the town. Years before Grandfather
Munn had built it, filled it with
books and called it his little libra-
ry. It looked very much like a
round collar box, or a slice of jelly
cake, with windows on two sides,
and a door back and front.

But grandfather was dead now,
the old farm was sold, and nothing
was left but a tiny strip of ground
about this round house, and here
Ted and his mother kept shop.

When father died Ted was only
five years old, and mother looked
like a girl. Since then, after Ted
fell out of that apple tree and hurt
his back, and mother and he had
moved into the round house, moth-
er had some gray hairs, and her
face wasn't so rosy; but she was
"the most beautiful mother in the
world", as Ted always said.

The house was divided into three
parts. "Cut it just like a pie," moth-
er had told the carpenter. "The
front half for the shop, the other
part into two quarters, one for the
kitchen and the other for the bed-
room."

And here where grandfather had
stored his dusty old books, were
displayed jars of peppermint, boxes
of lozenges, chewing gum and a few
toys.

A little window cut in by the
front door, was gay with kites, pans
of taffy and bright pin-wheel pa-
pers.

A few useful things, such as fish-
ing lines and pins, filled the case on
the short counter; a little bell tink-
led when you pushed open the door;
and a sign swung over it, "A.
Munn, Confectioner," painted in
blue letters.

"And with the garden where we
can raise vegetables and lots of
flowers," mother had said, "we
shall do very well."

The first money went for the pad-
ded chair on wheels.

"And now I can help!" cried Ted
after the first proud journey
through the three rooms. "I can
tend shop, and with a long handled
shovel I really think I could dig
the garden!" And he looked so hap-
py that mother smiled brightly;
but after she had left him "to shut
down that cellar door", she buried
her face in her apron and sobbed as
if her heart would break.

Three years had gone by since
then, the little shop had paid
enough to keep them comfortable,
but that one hundred dollars was

never out of her mind; and now it
was a month before thanksgiving
day.

"What a thankful woman I
should be if I only had that blessed
money!" thought the widow Munn.

She was clipping white chrysan-
themums for the breakfast table
while the rolls baked, and the fra-
grant odor of fresh boiling coffee
came out in the little garden.

"Do you calk'late on that punk-
en of yourn fur thanksgiven pies?"
called a voice over the fence.

"Well, I hope so, Peter," answer-
ed the widow, looking up pleas-
antly.

Peter was long and lank and
freckled, but his mild blue eyes had
a kindly expression.

"Well, I can tell you you need-
n't," he said.

"Well, if it doesn't turn out well,
no pumpkin pies then," laughing as
she stood facing him.

"No, you don't mean that," in a
sympathetic tone. Well, now,
ruther—" Then he stopped short
in embarrassment. "They'll have
a-plenty of 'em down to the store,"
hesitatingly.

"No doubt of it," said the widow,
brightly; "but, as I say, if that
pumpkin refuses to ripen, no pump-
kin pies."

"Look er here, Mis' Munn, I've
got a plan. If you'll agree, done it
is," bringing his brown fist down
with a thump. "You 'member that
day you bought the skillet off er
me, an' I come into the kitchen fur
the change? Well, you wus a-bak-
in' pies, an' you offered me a slice
of punken, which same I tuk, an'
I ain't never forgot it."

"I'm glad you liked it, Peter,"
said the widow, her eyes dancing
with fun.

"I've told more people about that
pie! Nowhere I go can I get a taste
like it. 'Mis', says I, 'tain't the
same—too much er too little of
somethin'; tain't like the widow's."

"Why, Peter, I feel awfully flat-
tered. You deserve the prettiest
chrysanthemum in the bunch,"
handing one over the fence, which
he took with awkward pleasure.

"Well, as I was sayen," fastening
the flower in his threadbare coat,
"I'm a lonely critter—don't have
no home comforts. Now, if I was
to get the punken and fixen, could-
n't you make up a batch of them
pies and let me have a couple of
em?" gazing at her shrewdly.

"Why, with all my heart!" cried
the widow; "only I don't want you
to provide anything."

"Calk'ating to make 'em out of
that punken?" pointing a lean fin-
ger at the green globe.

"Well, it does look a little doubt-
ful, doesn't it?" an anxious frown
on her forehead as she stooped to
thump it.

"Decidedly," swinging his long
leg over the fence, and stooping
down beside the astonished little
woman, "tain't nothen but punk',

tapping it knowingly. "I tell you
you tell me what to git, jist gimme
a pie when you git done, and take
the rest fur your trouble. What
do you say?"

"That those rolls are burning,
sure as life! Come round to the
kitchen," and away she flew. "Stay
and have a cup of coffee with Ted
and me," drawing the pan of puffy
rolls from the oven, while he stood
watching her from the doorway.

"Have you got your wagon with
you?" peeping out through the hol-
lyhocks to where a gray horse and
a covered wagon, filled with bright
tinware, stood in the shade. "You
go tie him and come back. I'll
call Ted, and we'll talk things
over," breaking the steaming rolls
apart, setting the flowers by Ted's
plate as she did so. "Company to
breakfast, son," she called softly as
the sound of his wheels came from
the next room, and Peter's foot
sounded on the gravel. "Hope
you'll like them as well as you did
the pie," she said gaily.

"Anything you set out to do
can't be beat, Mis' Munn," answer-
ed Peter, gallantly, and Ted beam-
ed approvingly.

Such a gay little breakfast as it
was! It was all settled about the
pies before Peter left, and somehow
his kind, homely face, and the look
in his eyes when Ted wheeled him-
self out in the garden, made the
little widow take him into her con-
fidence.

The pathetic little story of the
coveted hundred dollars was told,
and when she broke down in it his
earnest grasp of her hand comfort-
ed her beyond telling.

"Sho, how!" he said, kindly.
"Don't cry—you'll git it. Why, I'll
help you. No, no, not that way!"
as she drew back. "I'll do better.
Jist leave it to me, and if next time
I come I aint thought out a plan to
git that hundred dollars, you can
go back on maken that pie."

And they parted, the best of
friends, the widow immensely
cheered by his comforting words;
and the tin peddler climbed into
his wagon with a serious look on
his face.

"Go on, Bess," he called softly to
the gray mare. "We've got a tough
knot to think out today, old lady;
but we'll do it, or my name ain't
Peter Tarbox."

And down the long road they
went in the shade of the trees, the
tins jingling pleasantly, catching
the little sunbeams that shot down
through the branches, while Peter
whistled absently and forgot to call
his wares.

It was a week before he returned.
The little shop had been closed for
the night, but a cheerful light shone
through the back window.

"You certainly do look comforta-
ble in here," said Peter, after he
had shaken hands and asked after
Ted. "Yes, I'll sit down, fur I've
got lots to tell you. Read that,