

"Richest Baby in America" is Now 21

John Nicholas Brown, Whose Fortune Has Been Rapidly Growing Ever Since He Was Born, Is Eagerly Watched by Eligible Society Girls



Baby Brown and His Pet Cat.—and—
Earliest Known Photograph of Multi-Millionaire Baby Brown.

JOHAN NICHOLAS BROWN, "the richest boy in America," became of age on February 22 and entered into possession of his vast fortune.

Young John Nicholas is the heir of the Browns of Providence, R. I., and the last bearer of the name in his family. The fortune of his grandfather, John Carter Brown, amounted to \$25,000,000 when he died in 1874. By a curious combination of circumstances young John Nicholas has inherited practically all of this fortune, which has been accumulating for years.

An accountant has calculated that that fortune of \$25,000,000, if allowed to accumulate since 1874 at the moderate interest rate of 5 per cent annually and compounded semi-annually, would amount to \$254,673,263.94 to-day.

Who will be the bride of this phenomenally wealthy young man? When a fellow possesses such extraordinary riches it is inevitable that a great number of girls should be thinking about marrying him and that a great many mothers of girls should be thinking along associated lines.

Doubtless many charming young women are already planning to help him make up his mind without delay, so that he may not make a bad mistake. He is a nice-looking young man and he has probably been reared with more care than any boy in America on account of his financial value. Why shouldn't a girl be thinking of marrying him?

Doubtless he will be expected to make his choice earlier than an ordinary young man. Will he yield to these amiable suggestions, or will they transform him into an obstinate bachelor, as has happened in some similar cases?

Naturally a great many girls in the fashionable Newport set, with which he has associated since birth, have an eye on him. Will he marry a Vanderbilt, an Astor, a Goetz, a Havemeyer, a Harriman—some one nearly as rich as himself?

Or will he astonish the world by making a romantic match with a poor girl? Will he, perhaps, succumb to some young beauty of the stage, from which his relations have doubtless planned to protect him? Will he go among the artists' studios for his bride? Will he go abroad to find a wife, as a number of rich men have done lately, because they say American society girls are too independent and difficult to live with?

Young Brown is at present a student at Harvard. As most people know, his wealthy grandfather was the founder of Brown University, that important institution of learning at Providence, R. I. When the young heir's mother decided to send him to Harvard a good deal of chagrin was felt at Brown over the thought that the last bearer of the founder's name was not going to be a student there.

But many friends of the Brown family rent their sons to old Harvard, and so the golden youth had to go there. A few words explaining how young John Nicholas came to be so monstrously rich are necessary. Old John Carter Brown, who made the original fortune out of textile mills and founded Brown University, left his \$25,000,000 in trust for his children in

1874. He had three children—John Nicholas Brown, Harold Brown and Sophia Augusta Brown, who became Mrs. William Watts Sherman.

His son, John Nicholas Brown, died nine weeks after he married Miss Nathalie Bayard Dresser, who became the mother of John Nicholas, Jr. He left his property to his son. His only brother, Harold Brown, died ten days after his brother, and though married left no sons. He bequeathed all his interests to his nephew. The aunt, Mrs. William Watts Sherman, during most of her life, left her property in possession of the Brown estate, so that while yielding her a great income it helped to increase the little boy's fortune.

Throughout his life John Nicholas Brown has been protected with extraordinary care and immense outlay from anything which might threaten his health or his safety. As a baby he was quite delicate, and it was often said that his life hung by the proverbial thread.

"No price is too great to pay for my baby's life," said Mrs. Brown during one crisis of his life. She then engaged a special train to bring four New York doctors to attend him.

He had one doctor of high standing always in attendance on him, and whenever anything out of the ordinary troubled him the most famous specialists in the country were summoned immediately.

He had a special private cow of the highest breeding to keep him supplied with pure cream. For a long time he was ordered to drink a quart of pure cream daily.

His cow was pastured on an immensely valuable piece of property on Bellevue avenue, in the heart of the fashionable colony at Newport. This piece of land was commonly called "the cow lot" by the smart set. The land was valued at about \$100,000. Baby Brown's cow led a very happy life there, eating the best of grass and corn and protected by a special caretaker.

As soon as the boy was old enough to ride he had a pony of his own, but he was always accompanied by two mounted attendants, one on each side.

During his whole life the boy was guarded by a score of detectives on account of the rumors that he might be kidnapped, and to protect him generally. Whenever his mother heard of any new cause of anxiety she increased the number of his attendants.

"I would gladly pay \$100,000 a year," she once said, "to keep him safe."



The Poor Little Rich Boy, Baby Brown, Gazing Eagerly Out of His Window at the Free and Easy Street Urchins at Play and Longing to Have Some Real Fun With the Boys in the Street.



Baby Brown Laying the Cornerstone of the Brown Memorial Gates at Brown University, While the President and College Faculty Stand by in Their Official Robes.

Even his bedroom had barred doors and windows.

When he went to Emmanuel Church at Newport on Sunday he was accompanied by a nurse and two men attendants—detectives.

"Never take your eyes off Master John. You never can tell what may happen to him," were his mother's instructions to them.

The kidnapping reports became so persistent at one time that Mrs. Brown declared she would take her boy to Europe and keep him there if they continued.

She actually took him away in 1907, but brought him back the next year.

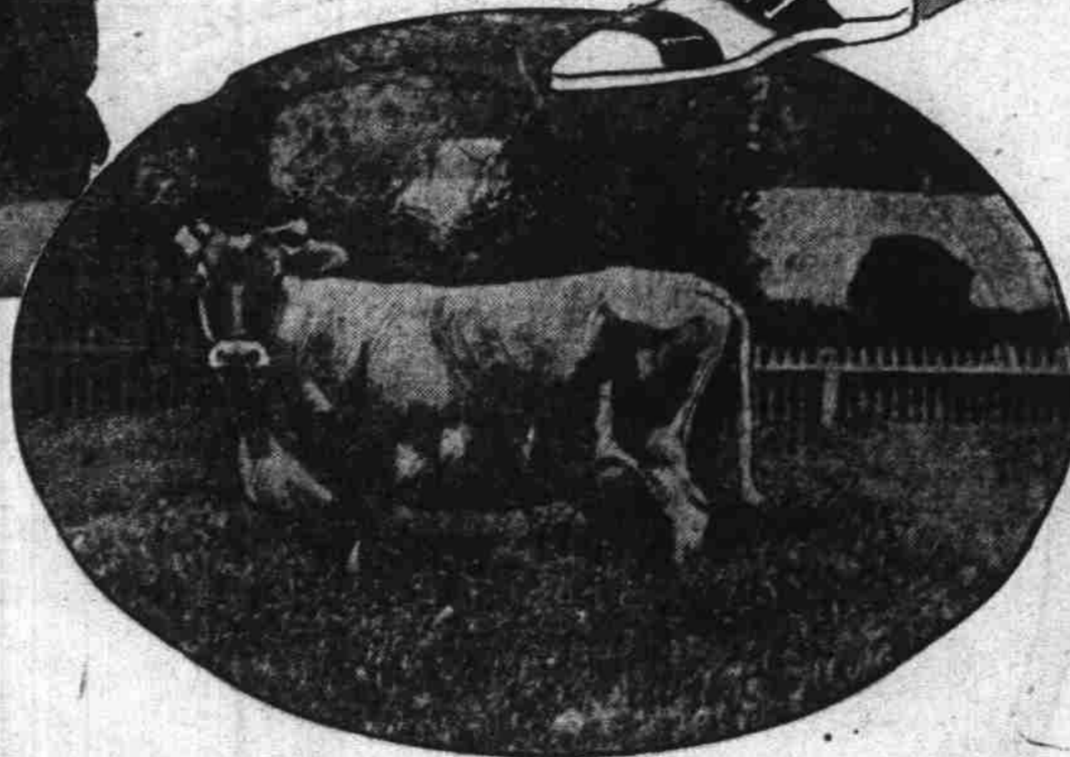
When he went abroad he was well taken care of. He was accompanied by his mother, one aunt, one cousin, two maids, one maid servant and two men servants. Although such immense sums were spent on him he was not allowed to have all the toys that are given to other boys because he was likely to hurt himself with some of them. It was decided long ago that he could not have firecrackers on the Fourth of July. Once he hurt himself with a firecracker and after that such playthings were considered out of the question.

His very tame pony was long his principal plaything. He conceived the idea of having a sleighbell on the pony's neck to warn people he was coming, and this was thought to denote mechanical genius.

When he was twelve years old he attained considerable proficiency in playing the piano, and his relatives said that he might become a professional musician—or almost one.

A special athletic trainer, a former all-around champion, was engaged exclusively to give little John Nicholas physical training in his private gymnasium.

When he was still only a baby his



The Cow That Gave Milk for Baby Brown Browsing in a \$100,000 Clover Field on the Brown Estate at Newport.

mother started to build for him a palace that should be a child's paradise. This place was the villa now known as Harbor Crest, situated on Halldon avenue, one of the most beautiful parts of Newport. Mrs. Brown had to obtain special permission from the court to spend all the money from the boy's estate necessary to build this palace.

The site was exceedingly healthful as well as picturesque. It was on a knoll overlooking the waters of Narragansett Bay. The water touched the edges of the lawn where the little boy could play under the care of his attendants and drink in the ozone. It was hoped that through this life he would grow out of the poor health that threatened him.

In this sheltered and salubrious spot beautiful gardens and playgrounds were laid out to make a real outdoor paradise for the little heir.

But perhaps the most delightful features of the palace were the two great upper floors. On the second floor were two nurseries—one for the day and one for the night—a gorgeous bathroom and a room for his principal trained nurse.

The night nursery was eighteen feet each way. Nobody was allowed to breathe the air in it at the same time as John Nicholas lest dangerous or unhealthy germs should be introduced into the apartment. The day nursery was 22½ feet by 16 feet 3 inches.

Up on the third floor was the special playground of the golden boy. This apart-



John Nicholas Brown, Now a Student at Harvard. Although the Browns were the Founders of Brown University and the Child Laid the Foundation of the Brown Memorial Gates at the College, Yet the Young Man Picked Harvard for His College Rather to the Disappointment and Chagrin of Brown University Authorities.

ment was 37 feet by 30 feet.

In this room was an alcove in the wall that could be turned into an improvised stage or a miniature menagerie, as the whim might happen to strike him. There was also a huge storeroom for toys and implements.

Here he could be perfectly happy, however cold, wet and miserable the weather might be outside. There was room for a small army of playmates.

The alcove was provided with movable scenery, set pieces for children's plays, mechanical apparatus of various kinds for entertainments, big magic lantern slides and moving picture screens.

In the grounds of the palace was a dock, to which a fine motor launch was sent. A huge fresh-water pond upon the grounds was stocked with fish and swans. Upon this John Nicholas could sail his miniature boats and mechanical yachts, planned according to the designs of his neighbors, the Herreshoffs.

There were great stables, and whenever he wished it the smooth concrete floor of the stable could be converted into a roller-skating rink, while his miniature mechanical band furnished music from one of the stalls.

When he was eight years old John Nicholas learned to run an electric runabout himself, but, of course, with a skilled attendant beside him to see that nothing went wrong.

At one time Mrs. Brown feared that he was suffering from some mysterious sickness due to a germ which had invaded his quarters in spite of all precautions. It was winter, and in order that he might be absolutely surrounded by doctors she rushed the heir down to New York bundled up in furs. He recovered from the mysterious malady.

There have been signs that various persons of the fair sex were making their plans to take care of John Nicholas. A few years ago Mrs. Rose Diestelhorst, of Kansas City, who was administering the estate of her daughter Elva, was asked by the court if she were educating her child thoroughly.

"Elva is going to marry John Nicholas Brown, the richest boy in America," said Mrs. Diestelhorst. "She doesn't need an education for fast."

On inquiry Mrs. Brown stated that she had never heard of little Elva Diestelhorst.

One of young Brown's greatest friends at Newport was young William Henry Vanderbilt, oldest son of the late Alfred Vanderbilt, who was regarded as the chief inheritor of the Vanderbilt millions.

The circumstances of the two boys had many points in common. Both were heirs of immensely wealthy families. Little Brown had lost his father before his birth. Little Vanderbilt had lost his by divorce when he was a baby.

The boys were related by marriage, as Mrs. Brown's sister married George W. Vanderbilt. They both lived on Halldon Hill, the most beautiful part of Newport.

When they were both lads young Brown organized "The Brenton's Reef Yacht Club." He was commodore of the club, which had one member besides himself—Vanderbilt.

Young Brown's first sailing boat was a fifteen-footer, called the Murmur. A special instructor, Mr. Hoffmann, taught him to handle his boat, which had a crew of two men. The other member of the club, Captain Vanderbilt, owned the fifteen-footer Caprice, named after his mother's thirty-footer Carice.

The two boys went together to St. George's Preparatory School, Newport, where their parents and attendants could watch them. It would have caused their mothers too much anxiety to send them farther away.

The amount to which the Brown fortune would have grown at five per cent has already been mentioned. As a matter of fact there is no way of finding out how much the entire estate now amounts. The growth of certain parts of it, however, has been reported at times in court proceedings and such parts have increased much faster than the five per cent rate mentioned.

For instance, \$4,000,000 saved by his father in 1900 had grown to \$11,000,000 in 1906.

While young Brown was in Europe special measures were taken to ensure him against kidnapping. According to London reports, Lloyd's was asked to insure the child against total loss by kidnapping at a premium of 55 per cent. It was suggested that half of the amount should cover any ransom in case of kidnapping.

When John Nicholas outgrew his little pony he learned to ride a big horse. Two men still rode with him, one on a horse and the other on a bicycle to catch him in case he should fall.

The great care lavished upon John Nicholas's health and training seems to have been successful in overcoming his early delicacy and making him fairly normal in strength. He is of pleasing appearance, with light hair and blue eyes.