

deed declared, on the 4th of March, 1754, young Caron to be the sole rightful inventor.

This was the first process of the man, who afterward, as Monsieur de Beaumarchais, was destined to interest the entire cultivated world in his processes. This case had made the name of the watchmaker, Caron Son, well known in Paris, and the consequence was that the King Louis XV., ordered a watch made by him. By means of his inventions published to the four corners of the earth by the interesting law suit, the young watchmaker was enabled to make the watches as diminutive of size as demanded. The joy of the King at the handsome and excellent timekeeper constructed by Caron was so great, that he invested him with the title of "Furnisher to the Court." Madame de Pompadour ordered a similar one, and Caron in person handed it to the all-powerful *amis* of the monarch. The watch was so small that it was mounted in a finger ring; it was 4½ lines in diameter, and not thicker than two-thirds of a line. It was wound by a new and very ingenious contrivance, and ran thirty hours with great exactness.

Caron had opened his path. The princes and princesses all ordered watches of the same Lilliputian pattern, and their young producer always carried it himself to the place of Versailles and handed it to the purchaser, because, of course, everyone wanted explanations concerning the thing, especially the ladies. The King favored him greatly, and even received him personally. The favorite wrote the following letter in 1754 to a relative in London. "I have finally delivered the watch to the King, who did me the honor of recognizing me, and remembering my name. His Majesty ordered me to wind it, and to explain it to all the gentlemen of the *Lever*. Never has the King received an artist with so much kindness; he desired information about every part of the movement. I lauded the magnifying glass at this opportunity, the one you presented me with, and it was universally admired. The King used it to inspect the ring watch of Madame de Pompadour. He demanded one like it for himself, on which I am engaged at present. All the gentlemen of the Court follow the example of the King, and each one desires to have his watch first. I have also constructed a remarkable little pendulum for Madame Victoria (one of the daughters of the King). It has two hands, and from whatever side it is viewed it indicates the time."

If all this attests the skill of young Caron as horologist, his personal attractiveness, and even his faults, were calculated to pave his fortune in a manner little suspected. A still young wife of a Court official, who also had ordered a watch by him, took so lively an interest in the tall and shapely young man with the *spirituelle* face, that she influenced her husband to surrender to him his office, by paying a certain pension. This was nothing uncommon at that time, and the King patented the office to Caron, who stood in his special favor, as well as that of Madame de Pompadour and his daughters. From this day forward—November 9, 1755, when not yet 24 years old, young Caron left the store of his father in the Rue St. Denis, hung horology on a nail, and played the roll of courtier in the palace of Versailles, with a self-esteem of his actual value that was not by any means circumscribed by too great a modesty.

And, indeed, he moved upon the beeswax flooring of the palace as if he had been to the "manor born." He had become acquainted with the daughters of Louis XV. by means of his watches. They were four old maids, with the remnants of a convent education, who lived in great retirement in the palace, and suffered much with ennui. They passed their time as well as they could, and their strict rules permitted; one played several instruments, the other painted, the third studied languages, and the fourth took an interest in the mathematical and mechanical arts, and at times essayed to be a watchmaker. They gave a musical soiree once a week, at which also the King, the Dauphin and various other princesses were wont to attend. When they learned that Monsieur Caron also performed upon several instruments, and was especially expert upon the harp, he was invited to perform before them. The harp, little known until then in French society, was just beginning to grow into favor. The young harpist delighted the old ladies, and understood how to make himself so amiable with all of them that he was regularly invited to assist in these concerts, and to assume the role of bandmaster. He also instructed the royal daughters upon the instrument.

The awakening ambition of Caron, since such favors were showered upon him, aimed with single calculation for higher objects which he wished to obtain

in the court world open before him. The old gentleman whose office he had purchased, died, leaving his youthful wife a widow, and she consented to become the wife of Caron. This gave him not alone wealth, but also another name, which threw around him a halo of nobility, even if only by the effrontery of its inventor. Because if the son of the humble Caron, from the Rue St. Denis, henceforward styled himself Caron de Beaumarchais, he simply added the cognomen upon the strength of an estate which his spouse had possessed formerly, either as a thing real or imaginary. Enough, the Court of Versailles counted one nobleman more—Caron de Beaumarchais, of whose patents of nobility no one knew anything definite.

It is not to be supposed that such a bold character lacked jealous and envious enemies. But he possessed spirit and wit, together with courage and confidence to break a lance with them morally and physically. He fought a duel with a nobleman and killed him. This added not a little in making him respected. With malicious verses and quick repartees, he understood how to be respected.

A cavalier had undertaken once, when he returned through the ante-chamber, coming from the boudoir of the royal ladies, to ridicule him in the presence of the courtiers.

"Monsieur," he addressed him, and held out a costly watch, "you understand something about watchmaking. Would you be so very kind, I pray, as to look at mine; it is in disorder."

"Monsieur," Beaumarchais responded, "since I have ceased to be occupied with watchmaking, I have become very unskilful."

"O, do not refuse me this favor."

"Be it so; but I reiterate that I have become very unskilful."

He took the watch, opened it, lifted it up high as if examining it closely, and let it drop.

Deeply bowing, he turned to the cavalier saying:

"I cautioned you that I had become very unskilful."

And he left the apartment while the duped nobleman collected the pieces of his timepiece.

At another time, Beaumarchais heard that evil-minded persons had prejudiced the princesses, by telling them that he stood in unfilial relations with his father. He therefore went to Paris, visited his father in the watchmaker's shop, and