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 Biography of an Inventor.

"Hunt's Merchant's Magazine" is an excellent work, and has no equal of its kind in the world, yet we must say that some of the autobiographies which are presented to the world through its columns contain statements altogether too highly colored; they may answer very well for fancy sketches, but scarcely come within the province of sober fact. In the last number (February, 1854) of this respectable periodical, there is a biography of E. B. Bigelow, a distinguished inventor and one whose name is more conspicuously associated with the power-loom for weaving figured fabrics than that of any other man, still we think that the author (N. Cleveland) is rather given to the use of a *free pencil*. Respecting the subject of the article—which is illustrated with a bad engraving of a very good-looking man—it is stated that having but *accidentally* witnessed the process of weaving coach lace, and having taken no notes of details—*only* remembering that hand looms were employed—and with only a piece of coach lace to guide him, he went home, invented and perfected a power-loom to weave the intricate fabric, and had it in operation within six weeks after its first conception. The plain inference to be drawn from such statements is, that Mr. Bigelow, perfectly *ignorant* of the art of weaving figured fabrics, and with only a piece of figured cloth to guide him, invented and finished a power-loom to weave such fabrics in about forty days. This we cannot credit. If it were true, then he certainly must be the greatest inventive genius that ever lived,—and before whose efforts, those of Fulton, Watt, Whitney, Evans, Morse, and Jacquard, become pale and spiritless,—those great men never performed a feat in invention like that recorded of Mr. Bigelow in this biography. That he has made many excellent improvements on carpet power-looms, we admit, and for this he deserves the thanks of the whole world, and we rejoice to know that he has been justly rewarded with something more substantial than mere thanks—pecuniary success—yet let us say that such highly colored and overdrawn statements as are made in this biography do him no good, but rather detract from his true fame. Those who are acquainted with the history of weaving will be inclined to believe that the information was furnished personally, and will be ready to attribute more than an ordinary share of vanity to its author; but we have the charity to believe that it is the product of an admiring and warm friend, who was not aware that Jacquard had invented the most ingenious and intricate apparatus con-

nected with the figured fabric loom, before Mr. Bigelow appeared upon the stage of time, and that *he* only adapted this loom, as it was, and of which he must have had much knowledge, to be operated by steam or water in place of hand power.

If we are not much mistaken Mr. Bigelow obtained the second American patent for carpet power-looms; the first patent he purchased. In his undertakings he has been most successful, and to him our country is no doubt indebted for the splendid triumph of weaving figured carpets by power. He has a carpet factory now in operation at Lancaster, Mass., said to be the model one of the world. He has secured more patents for improvements in power-looms, than any person in our country. His looms are employed in all our principal carpet factories, and the carpets manufactured in his own factory, which were exhibited in the Crystal Palace, did credit to his genius and the taste of his pattern designer. It was he who adapted the power-looms for weaving the beautiful silk brocettes, also exhibited in the Crystal Palace, and the only fabrics of the kind woven by power in the world. We are glad to know that he has obtained fortune as well as fame, and that while still a young man, these have been acquired by his inventions; may he live many years to enjoy the fruits of his genius and industry.

His life presents a hopeful example to all our young inventors. His first improvements were made when he was only 23 years of age, and his occupation—that of a physician—was altogether out of the line of making coach-lace and carpet looms. Many of the best inventions have been made by men who lived and labored at occupations very far removed from those which they improved and advanced by their genius.

Arkwright, the improver of the spinning frame was a barber, Cartwright, the inventor of the plain power-loom, was a clergyman; Fulton, the successful steamboat inventor, was a painter; Whitney, the inventor of the cotton gin, was a teacher. Genius is confined to no station, nor to any occupation. To every man, however high or low he may be, all the experience of the past and all the reasoning and wisdom of the present, reverberate the injunction,

"Act well your part, there all the honor lies."
