TALKING MACHINES.

Herr Faber's talking machine, which has lately come over to have a palaver with the British public, is a very ingenious affair. Not that there is much actually new in it; for in this, as in other matters, there is nothing new under the sun; but it is honest in its way; it does the best it can, and it is

what it professes to be. A distinction between the honest and the deceptive in such contrivances deserves to be noted. There have been some socalled talking and singing machines, in which the talking and singing really came from human lips, under such circumstances as led the audience to believe that mechanism produced the sounds. We know very little about Roger Bacon's speaking head: but there is reason to believe that, if the machine were ever produced at all, the sounds emitted came from human lips. A famous exhibition, called the Invisible Girl, was a deception in which much ingenuity was displayed. In this machine there was a girl or concerned, who did the talking and singing, and who was invisi-ble to the audience; the deception consisted in leading the visitors to suppose that she was in a small globe suspended in mid-air. There were four upright posts, united at top by four horizontal rails, like the framework of a table. Bent wires, springing up from the posts, converged to an ornamental centre; and from these wires were suspended a hollow copper ball, with four trumpet-mouths on four sides. This was all the visitors saw. Any person wishing to propose a question spoke it into one of the trumpet-mouths, and presently afterwards an appropriate answer came from all the four mouths. The voice was so soft that it seemed to come from a very young and diminutive being indeed—a fairy, an invisible girl. French and Italian were spoken by the voice as well as English; witty and lively remarks were made, as well as questions answered; and songs were beautifully sung in silvery tones. It was admitted on all hands to be an attractive exhibition; and as there were means of verifying the fact that the globe touched nothing whatever, except four ribbons by which it was suspended, the surprise felt was great. The facts of the case were these. One of the posts was hollow, as were two of the rails; and there were openings in the rails just opposite two of the trumpetmouths. In an adjoining room was a lady seated at a piano-forte; a very small opening in the partition between the two rooms enabled her to see what was going on; while a concealed tube was carried from a point near the level of her ear to the hollow part of the machine, beneath the floor. Founds, as we know, travel very easily through tubes; and thus the questioning, the answering, the singing, and the piano-forte play ing were transferred from roon to room. When a spectator asked a question, speaking at one of the trumpet-mouths, the sound was reflected from the trumpet back to the opening in the horizontal rail, which opening was neither seen nor suspected by the audience; it went down the rail, under the floor, and into the adjoining apartment, where the lady heard it; and the sounds in the opposite direction were similarly conveyed. The sound became so altered in character and intensity by this process of transmission as really to seem to come from the hall; and when an answer was given to a question expressed in a whisper, the impression was very strong that the answers really came from the ball. Far less clever than this Invisible Girl was the so-called Anthropoglossos, exhibited in colored bust suspended from the ceiling of a room, with some machinery inside, which purported to produce sounds; but the speaking and the comic singing really came from

with very little scientific skill. But the more interesting contrivances are those in which the sounds are really produced by a mechanism of pipes, bellows, keys, vibrating reeds, etc. Musical instruments have in some cases been played with surprising success by such means, involving the expenditure of an almost incredible amount of time, patience, and ingenuity in devising the requisite arrangements. Vaucanson's fluteplayer was a wonderful example of this kind. It was a life-size figure, dressed in the ordinary fashion of his day (about 1730), and standing on a pedestal, both figure and pedestal being full of delicate machinery essential to the working of the machine. When wound up with a key, the figure played real music on a real flute. Air was projected from the mouth to the embouchare or mouth-hole of the finte; and the force of the current was varied to suit the loudness or softness of different passages, as well as the different pitch of their octaves, the opening between the lips being varied to assist in producing the desired effects. The fingers, made of some elastic material, stopped the holes in the proper order for producing the several notes. The machine was constructed to play a certain number of tunes, beyond which its powers did not extend. Soon afterwards the same clever mechanician produced his automaton flageolet-player. The flageolet had only three holes; and so diverse was the intensity of wind required to produce all the notes of a tune with such limited means, that the pressure varied from one ounce for the lowest note up to fifty-six pounds for the highest. Another of his productions was his automaton pipe and tambour-player; the figure of a shepherd, standing on a pedestal, played nearly twenty minuets and country-dances on a shepherd's pipe held in the left hand, at the same time playing on a tambour (a kind of hybrid between a tambourine and a small drum) with a stick held in the right Maelzel's automaton trumpeter, exhibited about sixty years ago, was quite a triumph of ingenuity. A figure, dressed in the uniform of a trumpeter of Austrian dragoons, when wound up by a key, played the Australian Cavalry March, and a march and allegro by Weigl, on a trumpet, and was accompanied by an orchestra, the sounds of the trumpet being admirably produced. Then, his dress being changed to that of a French trumpeter of the Guard, the figure played the French Cavalry March, all the signals, a march by Dusrek, and an allegro by Pleyel. When we consider the numerous modifications of pressure with which the lips of a trumpeter touch the small end of the trumpet, the production of such results by machinery is certainly surprising. Soon after Maelzel's time, Maillardet produced an automaton piano-forte player. The figure of a lady, seated at a piano-forte, played no less than eighteen tunes, keeping on for an hour when once wound up; the machinery was laid open at intervals in such a way as to show that it was really mechanism that played. The white keys or natural notes were pressed with the fingers in the usual way, but the flats and sharps resu were produced by pressing on pedals sam with the feet. The inventor succeeded in in

making this lady more graceful in her

an adjoining apartment, through tubes laid

attitude and movements than is generally the case with automata. Somewhere about 1820 there was an exhibition of two automaton flute-players in London; the two figures played eighteen duets, which must have required a vast amount of interior

Another class of these ingenious contrivances comprises pieces of mechanism which imitate the cry of certain animals and the song of birds. This has been rather a favorite problem with clockmakers. The cathedral clock at Lyons, made by Lippius de Basle, and repaired by Nourisson in the seventeenth century, had a series of dial plates on which the time of the year, the month, the week, the day, the hour, the minute was shown. Besides these there were figures of angels, a dove, and a cock; the hours were announced by the crowing of the clock, thrice repeated, after a pre-liminary flapping of wings; and when this crowing was done the dove descended, and the angels came forth from a recess and played a hymn on a set of bells. We speak of this clock in the past tense, not know-

ing whether Lyons still possesses such a curiosity. The marvellous clock in the beautiful cathedral of Strasburg had at one time a complication of mechanism still more elaborate; bells, arranged in a particular position, played three different tunes at three, seven, and eleven o'clock every day, and thanksgiving at Christmas, Easter, and Whitsuntide; when this was finished, a cock, which stood on the top of the tower, stretched out his neck, shook his comb, clapped his wings twice, and crowed twice. The bombardment may perchance have ruined the tower, but at any rate the mazy intricacies of the clock have become unmanageable long long ago. Vaucanson's duck, constructed a hundred and thirty years ago, quacked like a real duck. Among the curiosities preserved at Versailles in the time of Louis the Fourteenth was a clock made by Martinot. At the completion of every hour two cocks crowed alternately, and clapped their wings; after which two little doors opened, two figures appeared bearing two cymbols or gongs, and two sentinels beat on the cymbals with clubs. Maillardet constructed an oval box about three inches in length, from which, when the lid was opened, a tiny bird flew out, fluttered its wings, opened its bill with a tremulous motion, warbled its little song, and then shut itself down again in its nest. Those who remember the little automaton called the Swiss nightingale, at the International Exhibition eight years ago, will be prepared to understand that Maillardet has had many imitators. Some years ago there was an exhibition in London comprising figures of a child, a monkey, a goat, and a hare. The child said "Pa" and "Ma," and the goat bleated. In other automata we may sometimes meet with a bleating sheep; and there was one in which a dog barked whenever fruit in a basket was touched by an intruder.

The machines which, with more or less success, imitate human speech, are the most difficult to construct, so many are the agencies engaged in uttering even a single wordlungs, larynx, tongue, palate, teeth, lipsso many are the inflections and variations of tone and articulation, that the mechanician finds his ingenuity taxed to the uttermost to imitate them. The speaking doll, which gives forth its melancholy and woebegone "Papa!" and "Mamma!" is a won-derment to all the little folks, who regret very earnestly that such dolls are too expensive to be freely purchased; but it is never-theless a poor affair, albeit there has been much care and thought bestowed in devising the kind of vibrating reed to be used. About ninety years ago, a pamphlet ap-peared concerning two large brazen heads that were constructed by the Abbe Mical to effect something in the talking way. What was really done is rather doubtful; but we are told that entire phrases were pronounced, that the sounds were "surhumaine;" that there were two cylinders, one of which could produce determinate phrases, with proper intervals and prosody, while the other could produce all the sounds of the French language, analysed and reduced to the smallest number. There were people uncharitable enough to believe that the speaking was managed by a living person in an adjoining apartment, as in some other instances which we have mentioned; but the information is too slight to enable us to judge on this point. Kratzenstein, a few years later, made experiments on a series of tubes and vibrating reeds, which, by the aid of bellows, enabled him to produce or imitate the sounds of the vowels; but he appears to have made no attempt with the much more

difficult sounds of consonants. Wolfgang von Kempelen, inventor of the far-famed automaton chess-player, constructed a talking figure which cost him a large amount of thought, time, and inventive ingenuity. First he made experiments with tubes and vibrating reeds, which enabled him to imitate the sound of the continental "a," like our "ah;" then, with a tube and a hollow oval box hinged like the jaws, he produced the sounds of "a," "o," "ou," and an imperfect "e;" then he succeeded with the consonants "p," "m," and "l," and afterwards a few others; but there were some consonants or sounds which he never succeeded in imitating. Having combined the results of his researches, he constructed a head which contained the requisite wind-tubes and vibrating reeds, and a bust provided with some kind of bellows. Thus armed, his automaton could prenounce the words "opera," "astronomy," "Constantinople," "vous etes mon amie," "je vous aime de tout mon cœur," "Leopoldus secundus," and "Romanum imperator semper Augustus." These words were spoken when the machine was wound up, without any player being required to press upon keys and pedals. Tubes to imitate nostrils produced "m" and "n;" a funnel and a reed changed "s" into "z," "sch," and "j," and there were various pieces of mechanism to imitate more or less successfully the movements and action of month, lips, teeth, tongue, palate, glottis, lungs, etc. Altogether it was what the chess-player was notreally an antomaton.

Professor Willis and Sir Charles Wheatstone some years ago devoted a good deal of attention to this matter; not, of course, tor any exhibition purposes, but to analyze the production of vocal sounds in a scientific way. Sir Charles showed the results of his experiments at one of the meetings of the British Association. Professor Willis separated all the sounds, whether letters or exclamations, emitted in speaking, into etc. three groups, which he called mutes, sopants, and narisonants. Doctor Rush, of Philadelphis, preferred a classification into tonic monothongs, tonic diphthongs, sub-tonics, and aspirations. Willis, leaving conscrants untried, made experiments in the mode of producing vowel sounds by mechan-With an air chest, vibrating reeds, and ism. cavities and tubes of different kinds, he produced a great variety of sounds. One curio is result of his experiments was, that with the same apparatus, drawn out gradually in length, he could produce in length, succession all the vowel sounds which are

A THE REST OF THE PARTY NAMED IN COLUMN TWO IS NOT THE OWNER.

heard in such English words as "see," "pet," "pay," "past," "pan," "caught," "no," "but," "book," "boot;" we find, in effect, that the lips protrude more and more as this series advances; and this supplies a noteworthy confirmation of the views held on

this matter by the experimenter. Some of the readers of this page may perhaps remember Professor Faber's automaton speaking figure, called the Euphonia, when exhibited in London. It was a draped bust with a wax face. Concealed from the visitors were sixteen keys or levers, a small pair of bellows, and numerous little of metal, wood, and india-rubber. When any word or sentence was spoken, either by Faber, or by one of the audience, the exhibitor mentally divided all the syllables into as many distinct sounds as they embodied; he pressed upon a particular key for each particular sound, which admitted a blast of air to a particular compartment, in which the mechanism was of the kind to produce the sound required; there were thus as many pressures as there were elementary sounds. By a modification of the movements, whispering could be produced instead of speaking.

The present exhibitor, Herr Faber, is, we believe, a nephew of the professor; and his object has been to improve upon the automaton which his relative invented fourteen years ago. One good point about it is that every part of the mechanism is laid fairly open to the visitors. True, a wax head or mask is used, through the lips of which the produced sounds are really emitted; but this mask is at intervals removed, to show the movements of india-rubber lips and tongue belonging to the machine itself. The elementary sounds, by further analysis, have been brought down to fourteen, all others having been found to be really compound sounds. made up of two or more elements. A lady, seated at a kind of key-board, has fourteen keys or short levers before her; a sentence is given out, in any one of two or three languages; the lady instantly analyses the sounds, and decides which combination will produce each, or which combination will produce the whole of them; she then plays, somewhat in the manner of harmonium-playing, giving the proper number of pressures on the properly selected keys. Some sounds are difficult to imitate, some are imitated readily; a laugh is capitally given, and a cry is sufficiently doleful for all required purposes; a whisper and a sigh are also producible. Whether the machine can cough, sneeze, biccup, we are not certain; but it is admitted that a singing machine, really and bona fide such-combining words and music as a human singer would do-still remains beyond the skill of any automaton maker. -All the Year Round.

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