

**HIS FIRST AFTER-DINNER SPEECH.**

[He takes his seat at the table and steals a glance at the toast list.]

"Thir.] from the last speaker—and a twelve-course dinner to be lived through first. Great Caesar! Well—maybe I'll die before we get to it. Hope so, I'm sure.

"Elegant oysters, but no taste to 'em. Perhaps it's my tongue—it feels sort-of blurred.

"Soup looks all right, but I don't seem to notice it as it goes down.

"Ladies and Gentlemen"—no, no—I mean—'Mr. Toastmaster and Gentlemen.' Wonder if I look pale? Feel pale, I'm sure. Glad I got a fishbone in my throat just then. It changed the current of my thoughts for a time, and eased up some of the pressure on my brain. Besides it headed off the man on my left from asking me questions which I haven't mind enough to spare to answer.—'There's a little story which comes to my mind, as I rise to address you.' By the Lord Harry, how did that story begin? Suppose it shouldn't come to my mind!

"Is this game? Shouldn't know it from chicken-feed. Am I eating like a civilized being, or am I ramming it down the way I used to do when I knew a thrashing was waiting for me after dinner? Wish that idiot across the table wouldn't look at the parting of my hair so often. Wonder if I got it crooked after all?

"Used the wrong fork for my oysters, becomes evident. Got to use oyster-fork now for the roast. Glad my wife isn't here; glad I've got one thing left to be glad for. 'There can be no question that the issues which are involved in this matter of—' that's not right. 'There can be no issue involved in this question which is not—' By Jove! but this room is infernally hot! 'There can be no questions involved in this issue'—oh, which way does the confounded thing go?

"While I eat this salad, I'm going to think this thing out calmly. I certainly know this speech by heart; I've gone to bed, and got up with it, too long to forget it now. There's no use in my getting rattled. 'There can be no question that this matter involves issues'—confound it, why can't that man let me alone? He may have nothing to do but eat his dinner and ask fool questions of men who have something on their minds.

"By Jove, we're getting pretty well through! My mouth is as dry as saw-dust; nothing seems to moisten it up. Never knew I had palpitation of the heart—but I've got it now sure. I'll see the doctor in the morning, if I'm alive—which I doubt.

"Guess I won't smoke; don't think I could hold my hand steady to light up. I'll have to take out more insurance if I've got heart disease—if I can get any company to take my risk.

"Great heaven! we've got to the toasts. First man looks as calm as mud. Wish I could just look that way, whether I said much of anything or not. But I don't. I look all colors—blue, just now, I think.

"Second man up! Three more before me. Wish I could go home. Afraid I forgot to applaud Number One. Must remember that this time.

"Two more! If my knees shake like this, I can't stand on my legs, that's all. I see my finish; I shall fall over and be carried out, and that'll be the best thing that could happen—so long as no body gets onto it. One more! George Thompson, when that man sits down you've got to get up. Oh, why can't I go home? I've had enough of this. I believe I'll—I'll run away—NOW!

"He getting through! 'The questions involved in this issue— The issues involved in this question—Ladies and—

Mr. Toastmaster and Gentlemen: As I rise to address you—as I rise to address you, a little story comes to my mind—My mind! I'ts a perfect blank—absolute. He's sitting down! Oh, I wish I were being hanged—I do, I DO!—'Mr. Toastmaster and Ladies'—or being shot for a deserter, or being wrecked on a barren island. Now its COME! He is calling on ME! They're looking at me! I know my necktie's under one ear—I know it—but I cant help it now; it's too late. Here I go. SPEAK, George Thompson! SPEAK, you fool!"

[Aloud]—"Mr. Toastmaster—L—L—and Gentlemen—"—Grace S. Richmond, in Truth.

**Accepted by Liszt.**

In the third paper of his "Memories of a Musical Life," in the September Century, Dr. William Mason tells of his acceptance as a pupil of Liszt, nearly fifty years ago.

When we arose from the table and went into the drawing-room, Liszt said: "I have a new piano from Erard of Paris. Try it, and see how you like it." He asked me to pardon him if he moved about the room, for he had to get together some papers which it was necessary to take with him, as he was going to the palace of the grand duke. "As the palace is on the way to the hotel, we can walk as far as that together," he added.

I felt intuitively that my opportunity had come. I sat down at the piano with the idea that I would not endeavor to show Liszt how to play, but would play as simply as if I were alone. I played "Amitie pour Amitie," a little piece of my own which had just been published by Hofmeister of Leipzig.

"That's one of your own?" asked Liszt when I had finished. "Well, it's a charming little piece." Still nothing was said about my being accepted as a pupil. But when we left the Altenburg, he said casually, "You say you are going to Leipzig for a few days on business? While there you had better select your piano and have it sent here. Meanwhile I will tell Klinworth to look up rooms for you. Indeed, there is a vacant room in the house in which he lives, which is pleasantly situated just outside the limits of the ducal park."

I can recall the thrill of joy which passed through me when Liszt spoke these words. They left no doubt in my mind. I was accepted as his pupil. We walked down the hill toward the town, Liszt leaving me when we arrived at the palace, telling me, however, that he would call later at the hotel and introduce me to my fellow-pupils. About eight o'clock that evening he came.

I had no idea then, neither have I now, what his means were, but I learned soon after my arrival at Weimar that he never took pay from his pupils, neither would he bind himself to give regular lessons at stated periods. He wished to avoid obligations as far as possible, and feel free to leave Weimar for short periods when so inclined—in other words, to go and come as he liked.

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