



Whether Common or Not

By WILL M. MAUPIN.

An Evening of Old Songs

A few nights ago I took the Little Woman to the theatre—or rather we went together. Frankly it was to a vaudeville entertainment, and we enjoyed it to the limit. But there was one number on the bill that made an especially strong hit with me. It was given by a man and a woman who were artists on the banjo, but it wasn't so much the way they played the banjo as what they played that made the big hit with me. They didn't play a lot of that June-moon-spoon ragtime rot, nor jigs and reels and turket trot. The woman dressed in the old-fashioned way—crinoline and flowered silk and all. Then the two of them played the old-time tunes that our fathers and mothers used to enjoy. As they played the tunes the words of the old songs were flashed on a screen, and I sat there and sung them to myself and had more fun than I've had since the time I ran that raketooth in my foot and couldn't work in the garden but could go fishing.

"Wait for the wagon!" When they played it I could imagine that I was hearing my mother sing it again. "Susannah don't you cry;" I knew it the minute the banjos started it. "A buckwheat cake was in her mouth, a tear was in her eye—" My, how it started the feet to keeping time. "Darling Clementine!" Do you remember that nonsensical song with the plaintive tune?

"Drove the ducklets to the river Every morning just at nine; Stubbed her toe against a sliver, Fell into the foaming brine!"

I can not remember all the verses, for there were a score or more, but I can remember how they used to sing it years and years ago. Then they played:

"I wandered today o'er the hills, Maggie,

To watch the scene below—
—and if that old song hasn't got all these modern love songs beaten both ways from the middle then I don't know a thing about music and melody and sentiment. And—

"Darling, I am growing old; Silver threads among the gold Shine upon my brow today; Life is fading fast away."

Have your girl play and sing that for you, then let her sing one of those purple slush things like "Meet Me Tonight in Dreamland," or "Afraid to Go Home in the Dark" monstrosities perpetrated of late years.

And "Seeing Nellie Home!" Ah, that was a beautiful one. It struck me right where I lived. And when I heard it again after the lapse of years I couldn't help feeling sorry for those who preferred such trunes as "Everybody's Doin' It" or "Bunny Hug." They played "When Johnnie Comes Marching Home," and all the rest of the old-timers, and when the Little Woman and I got back home I could hardly refrain from going to the music cabinet and tearing up about half the stuff that the Biggest Girl has accumulated.

I am not much of a singer, but when I break loose and sing some of those old songs I certainly do put a lot of expression into them. Also main strength and awkwardness. But I enjoy my own singing a whole lot, and I'd rather hear myself sing those old songs than to hear anybody else singing some of the so-called songs of these later and musically degenerate days. When my ship comes in bringing me more

money than I need for myself and family, I am going to employ a double quartet of the best singers I can find, and I'm going to take them on a tour of the country, giving free concerts to the people. And the program is going to be made up of the old songs of your childhood days and mine. Here is a program I have long had in mind:

"We Meet, We Meet Again, Boys;"
"Wait for the Wagon."
"Annie Laurie."
"Silver Threads Among the Gold."
"Believe Me if All Those Endearing Young Charms."

"Sextet from Lucia."
Medley of plantation songs—"Old Kentucky Home," "In the Evening by the Moonlight," "Nellie Gray," "Old Black Joe," "Old Shady," "Goin' Back to Dixie," "Massa's in de Cold, Cold Ground," "De Gospel Ship" and "Old Uncle Ned."

"Sweet Belle Mahone."
"O, Susannah!"
"Come Where the Lilies Bloom."
"Soldier's Farewell."

Medley of national airs of all nations.

"Star Spangled Banner."
"Auld Lang Syne."

Of course I haven't included all the old songs that I love—but I have in mind the time limitations of a single evening. Now if you have any suggestions for the improvement of that program, just let me know. My ship may sail in any old time, and there's no telling when I may bring my concert company to your town hall.

Will Carleton

A reader of this department asks the publication of Will Carleton's "Memorial Day" poem and "The New Church Organ." The memorial day poem will be published later, and at a more appropriate time, but "The New Church Organ" is given here. In reading it you should bear in mind that it appeared nearly forty years ago, and at a time when very few churches tolerated instrumental music, and those located only in the larger cities. In the rural communities "the devil was in the fiddle," and the mere thought of instrumental music in the "meeting house" would bring on several varieties of religious fits. Carleton wrote right down to the hearts of the people, and while there is a vein of humor and sarcasm in this poem, there is also a hidden appeal to that old prejudice against music that once existed in the hearts of most church people—and still lingers in the hearts of a few:

THE NEW CHURCH ORGAN

They've got a brand-new organ, Sue,
For all their fuss and search;
They've done just as they said they'd do,
And fetched it into church.
They're bound the critter shall be seen,
And on the preacher's right
They've hoisted up their new machine,
In everybody's sight.
They've got a chorister and choir,
Ag'in' my voice and vote;
For it was never my desire
To praise the Lord by note.

I've been a sister good an' true
For five-an'-thirty year;
I've done what seemed my part to do,
An' prayed my duty clear;
I've sung the hymns both slow and quick,
Just as the preacher read,

And twice, when Deacon Tubbs was sick,
I took the fork an' led!
And now, their bold, new-fangled ways
Is comin' all about;
And I, right in my latter days
Am fairly crowded out!

Today the preacher, good old dear,
With tears all in his eyes,
Read, "I can read my title clear
To mansions in the skies."
I al'ays liked that blessed hymn—
I s'pose I al'ays will;
It somehow gratifies my whim,
In good old Ortonville;
But when that choir got up to sing,
I couldn't catch a word;
They sung the most dog-gondest thing,
A body ever heard.

Some worldly chaps was standin' near;
An' when I see them grin,
I bid farewell to every fear,
And boldly waded in.
I thought I'd chase their tune along,
An' tried with all my might;
But though my voice is good and strohg,
I couldn't steer it right;
When they was high, then I was low,
An' also contrawise;
An' I too fast, or they too slow,
To "mansions in the skies."

An' after every verse, you know,
They play a little tune;
I didn't understand, and so
I started in too soon.
I pitched it pretty middlin' high,
I fetched a lusty tone,
But, Oh, alas! I found that I
Was singin' there alone!
They laughed a little, I am told;
But I had done my best;
And not a wave of trouble rolled
Across my peaceful breast.

And Sister Brown—I could but look—
She sits right from of me;
She never was no singin'-book,
An' never went to be;
But then she al'ays tried to do
The best she could, she said;
She understood the time right through,
An' kep' it with her head;
But when she tried this mornin' oh,
I had to laugh, or cough!
It kep' her head a bobbin' so,
It e'en a'most come off!

And Deacon Tubbs—he all broke down,
As one might well suppose;
He took one look at Sister Brown,
And meekly cratched his nose.
He looked his hymn-book through and through
And laid it on the seat,
And then a pensive sigh he drew,
And looked completely beat.
An' when they took another bout,
He didn't even rise;
But drewed his red bandanner out,
An' wiped his weepin' eyes.

I've been a sister, good an' true,
For five-an'-thirty year;
I've done what seemed my part to do,
An' prayed my duty clear;
But Death will stop my voice, I know,
For he is on my track;
And some day I to church will go,
And never more come back;
And when the folks gets up to sing—
Whene'er that time shall be—
I do not want no patent thing
A squealin' over me.

Brain Leaks

A good average during the year is much better than a big flash right at the start.
The figure "3" is the hardest numeral on the typewriter to find just now.
This is the time of year when everybody gets calendars that they never can find six months from now.

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