

FAMILY STORY

A SONG IN PASSING.

SIG. Il Primo Tenore was tired and very cross. The afternoon had been most trying. At his practice hour the piano was out of tune, the accompanist had played abominably, and he half suspected that he had himself made a false note. Whereupon he had called the luckless Celestino by some very hard Italian names, and setting his hat and coat had started out for a walk in the avenue to relieve his stuffed feelings.

As he walked along briskly in the clear, cold, winter air, noting how people paused to look at him, nudging one another as the famous singer passed, his spirits slowly rose. He was very handsome, was Il Tenore, and the ladies were always wont to eye him admiringly, even when they did not know that his broad chest could send forth one of the finest voices in the world.

Il Signore was forgetting all about the opera which was to come that night, forgetting the unpleasantness of the afternoon, his hatred of the robustness of his hat and coat had started out for a walk in the avenue to relieve his stuffed feelings.

Il Signore was smiling softly to himself at the wide-eyed looks of admiration in the faces of two pretty school girls who had just passed him, when an unwelcome sound struck upon his sensitive ear. The smile faded from his lips and a frown wrinkled the complacent forehead as his eye caught sight of the obnoxious traveling piano and the quaint little figure which was "making the music go."

Il Signore strode angrily to the curbstone.

"Basta!" he cried in fierce Italian to his humble little compatriot, "why do you shriek at me that horrible tune? Why do you sound it to me—to me, Il Tenore? Cielo! Do I not hear it often enough? Do I not work over it night and day, and must I always hear when I would forget for a moment? Ah—must I not sing it to-night, that note which drives me crazy? Corpo di Bacco! It is maddening!"

The poor Italian maid had begun to cry at the first angry tones of the grand gentleman who had spoken the only words that she had understood since morning. But such unkind words!

"I did not know, signore," she began.

"Bah! You did not know! Well, take yourself off. I will give you this note to sound that tune to me again," and he thrust a round dollar toward the girl, who was drying her eyes on her green silk apron.

But the little maid did not reach forward to take the money, as he had expected.

"Oh, signore!" she cried, eagerly, "I played it this time as I always play it oftenest, because I love it so. Oh, signore, do you really love the beautiful music?" and an expression of wonder came into her soft brown eyes as she raised them admiringly to the tenor's handsome face.

"You love the music? My little aria!" he cried, half pleased, half scornfully. "Well, my child, and why do you love it so well that you play it always on your horrible instrument, so that I must hear it as I go by? Bah!"

"Oh, signore, it is so beautiful, so tender, so full of the great feeling. I love the master who wrote it so well, and I feel that I could love the one who sang it, too, if he sang it with the great master meant. Oh, I feel how he could do it!" and the little brown hands clasped themselves eagerly together on the blue silk handkerchief.

"So you know how I should sing it, do you? Well, my child, you shall come and hear me, and I hope, little one, that my singing will please you as the great master's would have done," and Le grande Tenore hastily wrote a few words on a card and handed it to the still wonder-eyed girl.

"Oh, signore, a thousand thanks," the girl began to say fervently. But the handsome gentleman had already gone, and Bettina, looked after his departing figure, then glanced down at the bit of cardboard in her hand and breathed a quick sigh of wondering delight. Could it really be true, and was she going to hear the grand gentleman with the dark, shining eyes and the lovely long mustache sing her song—her beautiful song?

Bettina crept between the shafts of the piano and dragged her heavy instrument to the next block. Her day's work was not ended yet, and many weary hours must pass before that would come to pass for which her soul was longing. But all that afternoon the tired little feet trudged manfully over the cobble-stones and the round, weary arms turned the heavy crank with new zest and dragged the heavy machine with a back aching less than usual.

Yes, Bettina rose, and as she leaned far over the balcony, she, too, shouted "Bravo! Bravo, signore!" in her soft Italian tongue. And, with all the might of her little brown arms, she, too, sang

with her, and since then his leg had never straightened out. So Bettina had to drag the piano and make the music alone. And hard work it was for a girl of 16. But he had made the dingy room where he worked to blossom with flowers of the most intricate designs known to botany—flowers such as do not grow in the cold America, nor blossom in any but the most tropic of climes; flowers of such varied hue as only an Italian imagination could recall from the gardens of its own bella patria.

He made little windmills, too, that spun prettily and with kaleidoscopic effect when there was just breeze enough to fill them, but not too much to tear the mimic sails. But as this was a delightful combination of weather which Boston seldom vouchsafes to the little would-be buyers of windmills the old man's trade was slender. For even his roses were viewed askance by the skeptical eyes accustomed to the frail, pale beauties of our less florid meadows. These green, purple, yellow and blue blossoms were too impressionistic for even the Boston taste.

Bettina had no mother to insist upon the polite conventions of good society nor to act as chaperon when her daughter attended the opera. So when, after their scanty supper, Bettina announced that she was going to the opera that night her father expressed only wonder at her good fortune and rejoiced thereafter with her. For he was fond of his pretty daughter, though he was sometimes a harsh master and made her work very hard.

Bettina had never been to the opera. Her acquaintance with the stage was limited to sundry visits to the dime museums and the galleries of the cheap theaters. But this was to her a land of pure delight. She watched the surging crowd, the beautiful ladies and their attendant cavaliers, the rows upon rows of happy, smiling faces, and she knew that she, too, was a part of it all.

Then came the overture—the dear, blessed music that she loved—and then, oh, wonderful! another fairy world, even more bewildering than the one about her, was opened to her dazzling sight.

Bettina sat motionless, rigid, the tears standing in her soft, brown eyes, her head bent forward, with parted lips, her hands clasped close about a great bouquet. More than one of that vast audience noticed the girl, sitting there alone in her great, self-unconscious delight. And their eyes moistened, too, seeing her happiness, and they wished that it was all as new to them, as real and as beautiful, that they, too, might enjoy it as a child, with all its glamour.

Then he came forth—oh, the beautiful gentleman! Her signore, in his plumed hat and velvet cloak. A prince he was, the glittering, jeweled hero of Bettina's dreams, of the fairy tales which the dark Italian mother used to tell long ago on that sunny land across the sea.

Breathlessly she watched him, the color flushing deeper in her olive cheeks, the soft eyes growing bright and luminous with excitement, as his clear voice rose high among the rafters of the great hall.

Oh, how he sang! Bettina had never heard or imagined such music as this, and her little soul thrilled with the delight of sweet sound. The beautiful ladies in their satin gowns, the jewels flashing in the soft light, the bright colors which the chorus wore, the music of the great opera itself—all these were to her but an indistinguishable blur of color and of melody. It was all only a background to that central, glorious figure, which was the essence of it all; the divine spirit of music itself; the good genius who had permitted her this taste of bliss.

So the opera went on, act by act, and Bettina sat there like one entranced, drinking in deep draughts of ecstasy.

At last, at the very end, came the tenor's grand solo. A few soft flourishes, a tremulous note of prelude and then—her song; her own little song, which she ground out day after day, and a hundred times a day, in the rain and the snow; in the cold and the heat. But it was her tune so glorified and made perfect that to Bettina it seemed an air chanted by one of the very angels of heaven, so sweetlike was it and so clear, so round and full, so tremulously soft and tender.

It was a farewell love song which he caroled to the beautiful lady with golden hair, as she stood on the balcony above. But as he finished Bettina's eyes were full of tears and her heart was lifted far above the dome of the great hall into another world; for she felt that it had been sung to her.

Yes, he sang as the master would have wished, but better; oh, better than any one but the angels could!

Then came the mighty storm of applause that wakened Bettina from her trance, and through her tear-dimmed eyes she saw the whole house wildly waving handkerchiefs and cheering. She heard the cries of "Bravo, bravo!" in her dear, native tongue, as the great bouquets fell at his feet, at the feet of the grand gentleman who sang her little song.

Then Bettina rose, and as she leaned far over the balcony, she, too, shouted "Bravo! Bravo, signore!" in her soft Italian tongue. And, with all the might of her little brown arms, she, too, sang

her offering, the great gorgeous bouquet, quite at the tenor's feet.

He picked it up, the huge bunch of paper roses. He picked it up, smiling and bowing, and held it there before the great audience, a bewildered mass of bright colors and vivid green.

There was a hush, a moment's pause, and then, thinking it some huge joke, the great hall resounded again with clapping and cheering and shouts of laughter.

But he turned and looked up at her and singled her out from among them all for his sweetest smile and lowest bow—her, the little Bettina, at whom the whole house was looking in laughing wonder.

And as the great curtain opened again and again at the demands of the people for one last glimpse at the great singer, Bettina saw him standing there, radiant, beautiful, holding her flowers close to his breast, but with all the others lying at his feet.

Then the bright vision faded from Bettina's sight, and she wakened from her blissful dream of brief, unreal happiness, of light and beauty and melody, wakened into the dark night, alone.

Often, oh, often after that, whenever Il Tenore sang the little aria, he would glance instinctively up at the right-hand balcony, close to the stage. But the two brown eyes were never there, brimmed full of tears, to tell him he was singing as the master would have wished.

Still, the little song always brought before his eyes the vision of a quaint, small figure in kerchief and apron and beflowered bonnet; of a sweet, olive face and glorious eyes beaming softly into his; a vision which would gradually fade and grow dim and vanish, leaving him, too, in the dark, alone.—Short Stories.

The Plakat.

So aggressive is the plakat, a little fish from Siam, that the entertainment it affords has become a national pastime, but not a very creditable one, to say the least. The fishes are trained to go through regular battles, and are reared artificially for the purpose, while the license to exhibit them to the general public is farmed out and brings a large amount of money into the royal coffers. They are kept in aquariums built for the purpose and fed upon the larvae of mosquitoes, and every possible care taken of them.

When the fish is in a quiet state, with the fins at rest, the dull colors are not at all remarkable. But if the two are brought together or within sight of each other, or even if one sees its own image in a looking-glass, the little creature becomes suddenly excited. The fins are raised, and the whole body shines with metallic lustre and colors of dazzling beauty, while the protruding gill membrane, waving like a black rill round the throat makes grotesque the general appearance.

In this state of irritation it makes repeated dashes at its real or reflected antagonist. If now two are placed together in a tank they rush at each other with the utmost fury.

The battle is kept on until one is killed or put to flight, but not until they are entirely separated does the victor shut his gaudy fins, that, like flags of war, are never lowered until peace has been declared.

The Horse a Hard Fighter.

"Hoofs No Match for Horns" was the title of an interesting item I read the other day," said a rich ex-cowboy, who is stopping at one of the Broadway hotels. "It described a fight between a horse and a cow. Now, I never saw either cows or buffaloes attack a horse so as to amount to anything, but I want to rise right up and testify to the wonderful fighting powers of the horse. He is built for more ways and kinds of fighting than any other product of nature. He can bite, and he can kick out behind and he can strike with his fore legs. When he is in action he fights all over. If you want to see fun you should see a wolf pack attack a bunch of horses on the plains. The horses get together with their heads forming the hub of a wheel, and their bodies forming the spokes. Then they fight the wolves with their hind legs. They fill the air with wolvish, and every wolf lands dead, wounded or ill. Horses avoid a fight as a rule, but will go out of their way to kill a snake. They jump on the snakes, clubbing their hoofs and using them like a mallet. The only other fights they seek are with unmounted men, whom they frequently attack, or else with one another; and in the latter case they resemble a buzz saw in action, all parts going at once."—New York Sun.

Lightning Strikes.

Certain facts about lightning strikes, the result of years of experiment by the United States weather bureau, have recently been tabulated. Thunderstorms reach their maximum in June and July, though reported in every month except in January, the region of winter thunderstorms centering about Louisiana. Forty such storms are the maximum average for any such section. The average annual loss of life from lightning in the United States is twenty-four persons; of loss of property over \$1,500,000. People living in cities and thickly built towns run little danger, the risks in the country and suburbs being five times as great. For the same reason the center of a grove or forest is much safer than its edges or isolated trees, the dense growth acting to distribute the current.—Hochester Herald.

Paid the Preacher.

A novelty in advertising is shown in a Scotch church. The congregation could not pay its minister, when a soap firm offered to pay \$50 a year for five years on condition that its advertisement be hung up in front of the gallery in the church; offered accepted.

By the time a man is ready to die, he is fit to live.



Too Much of a Good Thing. It is "sand" that makes a man a "brick." With strength to carry his load; But the average soul is sure to kick When he finds it spread too bloom'ing thick Along life's weary road.

Value of Good Roads.

"Here in Virginia the value of good roads can be illustrated practically. In those sections where the country is traversed by thoroughfares improved in modern style, farms can be sold without effort. Intending purchasers know that a rich farm would be of little value if there were no way to reach a market with the products. For this reason many fine lands, with riches in the soil, are uncultivated and unsought. Good roads double and treble the value of such property. Let the good work of the Good Roads Association go on.—Lynchburg Advance.

An Argument for Good Roads.

A news item states that an impulse to the movement of good roads on the part of the authorities has been given at Los Angeles by a woman bicyclist, Miss Glover, who is suing the city for damages for severe injuries caused by falling into a hole in the pavement of Broadway in that city. It is thought there that a few verdicts against the city will do wonders toward securing good pavements. This is in accord with the views of the Uniontown judge who says that if a century road is in such condition as to hurt a wheelman the township is liable for damages. All good wishes to the bicycle. It will yet prove the argument for better highways.

Convicts as Road Builders.

The use of convicts on public roads has been intimately connected with the growth of road improvement in North Carolina. As far back as 1867 the State made provisions for the use of convict labor in road building. The Mecklenburg road law is a great improvement, and under its provisions many miles of the finest roads in the South have been constructed. Returns from eighty counties showed an average cost of 30 cents per day for keeping convicts, but by the use of convicts on the roads the cost has been reduced to a general average of 24 cents. Convicts are carefully described and photographed. Shorter term inducements are offered for good behavior. They are employed in road building, much as hired men, under a superintendent and without guard. They are allowed to remain at their homes from Saturday night to Monday morning. This novel experiment has been in operation a year and not a convict has attempted to escape or declined to labor faithfully, and the result has been a decided improvement. An examination of county records shows that but few convicts have escaped, convict health is better in road building than when in jail, that their labor is more efficient than that hired at 50 to 75 cents per day, the cost of convict keep is reduced and fine roads are thus obtained at a minimum cost.

The Bird Did Not Fall.

People who were walking along a San Francisco street not long ago suddenly heard piercing cries from the upper story of a lodging house, says the Post of that city. A woman was leaning from a window and for a moment it was thought that some brute was trying to throw her out.

A second look, however, showed that she held in her hand a bird-cage. She had been hanging it out of the window to give her bird the sun, when the bottom dropped out. The startled bird was fluttering about the top of its prison, and the woman was screaming: "Oh, he'll fall! he'll fall! My poor little birdie!"

This was only for a moment. With great presence of mind she turned the cage upside down, so that her pet could not drop out and be dashed upon the cruel pavement. And then the captive went sailing away over the tops of the buildings. For some reason he did not fall.

Edison Burned a Thousand Letters.

Thomas A. Edison went back to his house in Orange, N. J., last evening. He spent the day very quietly in the office of the Edison Electric Light Co. As he did not have anything in particular on his hands, and wasn't wrestling with any big problem, he just sat around and talked to President William D. Marks and the men. He is a most unassuming man, without any trace of big head, and enjoys a good story with all the heartiness of a boy in college.

He told Prof. Marks more strange and wonderful things that he had come upon in his laboratory work than the professor would have believed if he had heard them from anybody but Edison. Now and then he would flash out with one of his ideas, and Prof. Marks would realize that there was a giant at play in his office.

While, as president of the electric company, Prof. Marks began to dispose of a pile of correspondence, Edison told a story of consideration that

few busy men would have for their stenographers.

"I got forty or fifty personal letters a day," said he. "People write to me from all parts of the world—not about my business, but their own. My stenographer was sick for six weeks, and the letters piled up, a couple of thousand of them. I didn't have any time to open them myself—other people's business, you know—so I left them there. By and by the stenographer got well; but just before he came back I took the letters and burned them. He couldn't attempt to go through 1,000 letters, could he?"

Prof. Marks' stenographer was impressed by the thoughtful act, but was also much shocked.

"Oh, nothing ever came of it," exclaimed the wisard, easily.—Philadelphia Ledger.

Outwitting an Indian.

Fighters of Indians need to be men of quick wit and a steady hand. Such a man was John Hawks, one of the settlers of Hadley, Mass. An exploit of this pioneer, in 1876, is narrated by the historian of Deerfield. The Indians had made an attack upon Hatfield, and troops from other towns had gone to the rescue. Among the men from Hadley was John Hawks.

Soon after the Hadley men got ashore John Hawks, who was behind a tree, heard some one call him by name. A Pocumtuck Indian, who had taken a position behind another tree, had recognized Hawks as an old acquaintance. Hawks returned the compliment, and each man began taunting the other, and daring his enemy to come into the open and fight the thing out.

The Indian had the best of it, and was perfectly aware of his advantage. At any moment some of the gathering Indians were likely to come up behind Hawks and force him out of his cover. Under such circumstances, of course, the Indian was in no haste to expose himself.

However, the white man was not blind to the danger of his own situation. Something must be done, and that speedily. He knew what his adversary counted upon, and that gave him his clue.

All at once he sprang from behind his tree, and levelled his gun as if to repel an attack from another direction. The Pocumtuck took the bait, and sprang forward. He would capture Hawks the moment his gun was empty.

Quick as thought the white man wheeled, and before the Indian could raise his gun or reach his cover gave him a fatal shot. It was all the work of a few seconds, and Hawks, though wounded in the ensuing fight, lived to fight other battles.

In the City of Culture.

One of the Listener's friends, a lady, tells him this pleasant story, which rather goes against the common notion of a street car conductor's ways:

"I found myself on a moving electric car the other day minus my purse, having forgotten it for the first time in my life. I motioned violently to the conductor to let me off, so that I could go back after it. He did not stop the car, but came forward to my seat, handing me five cents—to ride home with and pay him some other day. He surmised, no doubt, that I was en route for the library and not for E. H. White & Co.'s. I was almost too much surprised to thank him adequately, but all day I felt as though something joyous had happened to me, and when I met my conductor again, which was not till almost a week after the occurrence, it was like meeting an old friend."

Boston culture sometimes crops out where one wouldn't expect it. In a popular restaurant the other day, where the prices are moderate and the waiters girls, a middle-aged business man, well dressed and of genteel appearance, beckoned to a waitress, pointed to some open windows and then said loudly: "Can't you shut down one of them windows?"

Whereupon the girl called to the head waiter: "This gentleman wishes to know if you won't please close one of those windows."—Boston Transcript.

Forced to Extravagance.

There is a man in Alexandria, says the Washington Post, who has a great deal of money, to which he is deeply attached. He has a well-preserved silk hat which he would like to wear every day, but silk hats are expensive, so he has been wearing his for these many years on Sunday. The last time the stars visited the Alexandria man's house they were generous. They brought twins, a boy and a girl. The father was sitting in the parlor when some one entered to bring the news. "Well, you're a father now," said he. "Boy or girl?" asked the Alexandria man. "Both—twins." "Great Scott!" cried the father, springing to his feet; "give me my silk hat. I might as well wear it every day now. What's the use trying to be economical, anyway?"

A Mormon Missionary in Maine.

A Lewiston lady says that she was coming up from Durham the other day and her carriage breaking down she had to stop several hours in a lonely house eight miles from Lewiston and while there she was introduced to a reverend looking gentleman who turned out to be a Mormon missionary. He showed her illustrations of Salt Lake City, the temple and the home of the people. He was evidently selected because of his persuasive powers of speech, for he placed the Mormon religion in a pleasant light, comparatively.

No man or woman ever lived who could steadily refuse to play the part of a martyr.

A man who sits around and boasts of his ancestors, makes a mighty poor ancestor himself.

DO NOT CARE FOR PENNIES.

Citizens of Arizona Have No Regard for Small Change.

Have you ever noticed that men in Arizona do not pay their bills with chicken feed or small change? In the older States when a purchase is made, exact change is usually tendered, and one thing certain—a bill is not broken if it can possibly be avoided. Here in the West any ordinary little purchase is made simply by asking for the article, and when it is passed across the counter a piece of money amply large to cover the cost is thrown down. When change is made, the customer carelessly drops it into his pocket, apparently without counting it, and goes out without once mentioning the cost of the article. He gets just as good a deal as though he had jeweled the dealer for half an hour.

The custom of throwing down a larger piece of money than is necessary is not done, as a rule, to exhibit the cash, for in this territory everybody has money. It is only to show apparent indifference, and is a mark of liberality.

It may be said that pennies have no abiding place in the West, especially in this territory. Even at the postoffice, where everything is supposed to be legal tender, pennies, 2-cent and 3-cent pieces are unknown. Change is made to the cent by postmasters, but they do it with postage stamps or postal cards. No where else are odd pennies recognized, even in the banks. A check drawn for \$4.98 would be paid with a \$5 bill without a word. The same is true in all the shops and stores; change is made to the nearest nickel, sometimes only to the nearest quarter or dollar. Poor Richard's saying: "Take care of the pennies," etc., does not apply to Arizona, as small change, anything under a dollar, is by most people considered only as trash of little value.—Phoenix (Ariz.) Gazette.

Some Top-Heavy Names.

"I admit that I have rather a hard name to spell or pronounce, and that is why I encourage my friends in their proclivity to call me Zig," said O. O. Ziegenfuss. "But while I make this confession as to my own outlandish patronymic, I want it understood that mine is not the worst name in the world. Once while I was doing newspaper work in Denver our editor advertised for a new boy. A bright-appearing young fellow with a mild look in his eye answered the call and said he was ready to go to work.

"All right," said the editor; "let me ask your name." The lad hesitated a moment and eventually fished out a card which bore the name "Herman V. Morgenausgelagen."

"Very well, Mr. Morgenausgelagen," said the editor, "take that desk and answer any calls that may be made. But first let me introduce you to the members of the staff. My name is Dicken-sheets. This fair-haired gentleman here is Mr. Felewisch. The brunette on your right is Mr. Ekingreen, and the gentleman with the sylph-like form is Mr. Ziegenfuss."

"These were all genuine names, but the new office boy would not believe it. He was on his dignity in a moment and said: 'I will have you understand, sir, that I came here to work and not to be joshed. I do not propose to stay in a place where I am insulted. Good-day, sir.'"

"Clapping his hat on his head he left. We tried to call him back, but it was no use."

This story led to others in regard to strange names. "I used to know a man in Missouri named Auxie Anchio Ben-sulli Maria Penith Hildreth Dickinson Tompkins," said Bob Davis. "I have heard Dan Quille tell of a colored boy in Washington City who bore the cognomelic burden of Thomas Ditymas Christopher Holmes Henry Cadwalder Peter Jones Henry Clay Anderson."—San Francisco Call.

The Banavia Flea.

All tourists in the Highlands know Banavia. They may not know why a lobster is, in the West Highlands, called a "Banavia flea." From a book referred to, we gather that a good many years ago an American was stopping at the Banavian Hotel, and he made himself very obnoxious by his contemptuous remarks on Scottish scenery. "Ben Nevil," he said, "do you call that a mountain? You should see our mighty Rockies! Loch Linnhe! Do you call that a lake? You should see our Lake Superior!" and so on.

The Highland walter was exasperated, and procuring a live lobster, he secreted it, in requital of the insults, in the American's bed. Hardly had the American gone to sleep, when the lobster caught him firmly by the toe, and he jumped out of bed with a yell and rang for "boots." "Boots," he said, solemnly, rubbing his toes as he spoke, "you may not have such big mountains and big lakes as we have in the States, but you have the most-ration big fleas I ever experienced."

An Eskimo Superstition.

For many years the furriers have noticed that all the skins of polar bears which they have received have been mutilated by the loss of the nose. A Parisian furrier has discovered that this is a result of a superstitious belief prevalent among the Eskimo that wherever a polar bear is killed his nose must be cut off and thrown upon the ice or bad luck will follow the hunter.

Put the Pugilists to Work.

Why not take the champion brutes to Indian territory and make a rail-mauling contest?—Cleveland Plain-dealer.

When a girl's handwriting would be a disgrace to a 10-year-old child, her friends compliment it by calling it "characteristic."