



Whether Common or Not

By WILL M. MAUPIN.

The Old Songs

Recently I published a tentative program of an "Evening of Old Songs," and asked for suggestions. I remarked that when my ship came in I intended organizing a double quartette and touring the country for the purpose of giving concerts in which only the old-time songs would be sung. Well, the suggestions are coming in, all right. And most of them call my attention to the fact that I did not include "Listen to the Mockingbird." Don't see how I missed it, for that used to be my particular portion of the program when a concert was given in my home town. As a musician I always have been a failure. The only instrument I ever could play on was a jewsharp, but before my natural teeth and I agreed to disagree I could insert a couple of my fingers in my mouth and make a mockingbird sit up and take notice. Carrie Hill used to play "Listen to the Mockingbird" on the piano, and I stood by her side and performed the bird act.

From the reception that has been accorded my old-time concert suggestion I believe it would be a mighty successful tour from a financial standpoint. Already I have invitations from a dozen cities, and applications from a lot of men who, while admitting that they may not be first-class singers, insist that they'd just love to join voices with others in singing the old songs. You'll know my musical education has been neglected when I tell you that the other night I attended a "campfire" of old soldiers and reveled in hearing them singing a lot of old songs. Their singing wouldn't have passed muster in musical circles, but it made a hit with me. They put more into the "Battle Hymn of the Republic" than I ever before heard, and while "Beans, Beans, Beans" is not a classical lyric it certainly did sound good the way those old fellows sang it with their memories going back to the old days. When they sang "Tenting on the Old Camp Ground" their voices, cracked and wavering, gave us all glimpses of those dark days and told of the comradeship that grew and strengthened during the long years of war. They sang the "Vacant Chair," and the old bugle calls, and wound up with "America" in a way worthy of men who had done so much to make the America of today.

For fear that my ship may be a long time making its appearance in the offing, I am considering the organization of a stock company to put my concert company on the road. I am willing to let the stockholders designate all the officers, especially the treasurer, but I shall insist upon being allowed to select the program, and when the whole thing is ready to spring on a waiting public it will be difficult to prevent me from standing off in the wings and joining in on the chorus.

Remarkable Industry

I am reading the story of the most remarkable man that probably has lived since time and space began. It is running in a weekly magazine with a boasted circulation of 2,000,000, and is really worth reading. It is about a man who was a bookkeeper or something like that until he was forty years old—then lost his job. He couldn't get another one, so he

began work as a common laborer, joining the force of a big city contractor. He worked on the concrete board among Italians and Greeks and Hungarians. Inside of five years he had learned the contracting business, two or three languages and saved more money than he had earned during the time. Then he engaged in contracting a few years and made more money than he could haul in a hay wagon. Then he went up country a few miles and bought a dilapidated, worn-out and abandoned farm. According to the story he has been on that farm about a year and a half. In that time, with the aid of a hired hand, admittedly lazy and of little service, he has reshingled and resided the house, remodeled it inside, rebuilt the barn, put up a mile or two of fence, pruned, sprayed and cultivated an orchard of 400 or 500 trees, set out a mile or two of small fruits, laid out a three-acre garden with geometrical precision and planted it to a dozen different kinds of vegetables that sell at a premium in the big city near by, organized a "Pioneer" club and aroused a wonderful interest in his new ideas, and engaged the services of a corps of lecturers on agricultural topics. In his spare moments he painted the house and barn, whitewashed the trees, fences and outhouses, re-organized the village library, aroused the churches to a fight against existing evils, raised a fund of a thousand dollars to be given as prizes for the best kept lawns and gardens, and done various other little chores like those mentioned. The more I read of his story the more I wonder what on earth he does to put in the long hours in which he has no work to perform. It just beats all how much a man can accomplish in the line of farming, gardening, orcharding, etc., etc.—with a pen and a few reams of paper.

Cabinet Impossibilities

- For Secretary of the Interior—Uncle Joe Cannon.
- For Secretary of State—John D. Archbold.
- For Secretary of War—General Leonard Wood.
- For Attorney General—Joseph Sibley.
- For Secretary of the Treasury—Frederick D. Eldridge.
- For Secretary of Commerce and Labor—Boies Penrose.
- For Postmaster General—Any express company magnate.

Two Letters

Moline, Ills., Jan. 16.—May the day soon arrive when your ship comes in and you will be enabled to take that tour of the country. And when you start, order the run to be made direct to Moline, and grant me the privilege to be one of your number to direct people's thoughts to higher and nobler things through songs and the singing of the old-time kind. If I can not be one of the company, "for the love o' Mike" come and let me hear the old songs once again. Keep going with your good cheer, and may joy, peace and happiness be yours.—C. S. T.

Hastings, Mich., Jan. 19.—I read with pleasure your contribution in The Commoner of Jan. 17, headed, "An Evening of Old Songs." I'd like to be the advance agent of your company when it is organized. Fail-

ing this, however, my second choice is a front seat when you come to this town. I am not very old, but your little reminiscences carried me back to when the lines mentioned were more popular than now—back to the days when I went to the "Doyle" school with Dee and Hector and Mary and Etta; back to the parties when we sang the songs of yesterday and played the games now nearly forgotten; when good natured Henry Jollands playmaster and sentenced Hattie to walk the cedar swamp with Hector to redeem her forfeit. We readers of the "Whether Common or Not" department always get a message from our yesterdays, and each one is a rare treat. Irreverence for the dreams of youth, and also for the days of youth, have robbed us of much that goes to make up real life. Your story makes one think of going back for a while. Will Carleton expresses it well:

"Let's go a visitin' back to Griggsby's Station;
Back where th' latchstring is hangin' from th' door;
Where everyone about th' place is dear as a relation;
Back where we once were so happy an' so poor."

Our Michigan poet wrote of the common people and could feel and live with them. You have paid a most creditable tribute to this most excellent character, who though he attained honor and such wide reputation, was content to live and die just "Will Carleton." "Over the Hills to the Poorhouse" will live as long as the language in which this paragraph is written.—F. R. H.

Brain Leaks

"Precedent" has stood in the way of a lot of justice. The man who reaches his ideals puts them pretty low to start with. Either a lot of laws should be repealed or some judges should be recalled.

There's a heap of difference between being light-hearted and light-headed.

Honestly now, did you ever read "Paradise Lost," or all of Shakespeare's plays?

Our idea of a lonesome man is one who has nothing but dollars with which to associate.

Our hands applaud the operatic and the classical, but our feet keep time to the old tunes.

The biggest job a man has to tackle is the one he must do today when it should have been done yesterday.

Of course the world owes you a living, young man; but you've got to be a good hustler if ever you collect the debt.

WOE EVERLASTING

It is again a land of mourning. From the housetops goes forth the wall of anguish and the light of the sun is obscured by the raven banners of ruin. Congress has commenced consideration of the tariff and every man, woman and child who has profited by the Payne-Aldrich exorbitancies is searching the soul for new sounds with which to voice pain and despair.

Every one of them, from the little fellow who makes two bottles of perfumery a day up to the great trusts who operate in millions, is convinced that the world will come to an end if his special brand of privilege is taken away.

For the last twenty years the people of the United States have protested against tariff laws that promoted extortion and protected it. On the 7th day of last November this protest was practically unanimous.

Can the present clamor of the interested few efface the memory of that protest?—Denver News.

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