

## The Symphony

It was amateur night at the Galey and the house was packed. Never since the little theater had been built was there such an audience. The manager was beside himself with excitement, but the people before the curtain did not confuse him half as much as those behind.

The weekly prizes of \$1, \$2, and \$5 were always contested for eagerly by the people of the Latin quarter, whose patronage the house solicited, and more especially this Friday night it seemed. The manager knew why such an unusual number elbowed and pushed each other in their eagerness to get near the door.

The winners of the coveted dollars would not squander them this week. Instead, they would send them directly to the homeland, where relatives and friends were in terror and suffering.

"They can't all go on, Steve," said the manager to his assistant, "we'll have to thin them out. See what kind of a turn each one does and take the best; get the funniest every time. The people have cried enough this week—they're paying to be amused tonight, so be careful not to get any weeping-willow acts. Hustle up, now! I'll look after the seating. The law allows us to squeeze in 100 more."

The assistant hurried behind the scenes and began sorting the performers. It was no easy task, and many were the threats and curses as one after another was refused a chance to go on. He had almost finished his selection when he came to a swarthy little man in the costume of a Sicilian peasant.

"Hullo!" said the assistant. "What do you do. Speak up?"

"Me play de pian," said the little man, moving his fingers over an imaginary instrument. "Me play a good. Ye-es."

"No pianists," said the assistant, moving on. "People no like. Get the hook. Understand?"

"But—me play a nice. Me no getta da hook. Me maka da pian to talk!"

"No doubt you can make it walk, but I can't let you try. Next!"

The little man turned away, muttering as his fellows had done, and the curtain went up for the first performer.

There was something wrong with the audience that night. It was extremely critical and hard to please. The merriest jokes fell flat and the cleverest trickster was only faintly applauded.

"It's funny," said the manager as he and his assistant met in the rear of the hall. "What ails them? That last song was well done and mighty catchy. Why don't they clap?"

"I don't know," said the other, gloomily. "At the rate they're turning 'em down the whole bunch could have gone on. What! I told that fellow to keep off."

The little man in Sicilian costume was standing in the middle of the stage. He looked a bit of old Italy with his curly locks and long gold earrings. "I come to play to you of the homeland," he said in his native tongue. "I have the music that can make you see it as it lies in the sunlight. It will make you see the sea, the olive groves and the clear blue sky. Listen!"

The audience grew suddenly still as he seated himself at the piano and struck a few soft chords. Then the notes began to weave themselves into a story, and as the musician unfolded it to his listeners his face grew rapt and was beautiful.

When he stopped, the crowd broke into a frenzy of applause. Men sobbed and women screamed.

"What'll he do next?" asked the manager. "The man is a wizard. That's fine! He's playing the Italian National air. Hurry up, Bowley, and throw the pictures of the king and queen on the screen before they stop singing. The roof'll fall with their noise."

When the lights were turned on again the excitement had spent itself a little, the man who had caused it all was gone. A reporter for one of the dailies came hurrying up and seized the manager by the arm.

"How'd you get him, Davy?" he asked. "Where is he? I want to interview him. Quick, before he escapes!"

"He's gone already," said the manager. "I wanted to see him, too. He's just the man for the place."

The reporter stopped him. "Do you mean to say you don't know who he was?" he cried. "He was Lorenzo, the great composer."

"I was thinking some of hiring him at 15 per," he said. The next minute he added thoughtfully: "What do you suppose made him do it? He must have had reason."

Hurrying homeward was the little man in peasant's costume.

"Ah! they understood!" he mused.

"I knew they could. They loved it for itself alone, not because I, the great Lorenzo, played it. No other but the Italian could have appreciated it as they did. To the English—bah—it would have had to be explained in cold words so that they might follow. What care I if I get no gold beyond the beggarly first prize, perhaps? Appreciation is more than applause or money to a man who loves his art as I love it."

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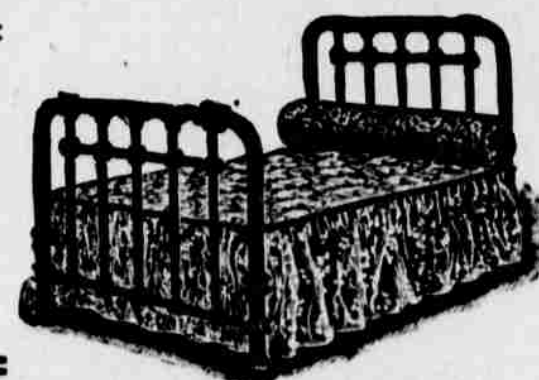
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