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MUSIC AND THE DRAMA.

THOSE who saw and heard "Blind Tom," the negro musical prodigy at The Victoria, Thursday evening, could not but be mystified. Whether his alleged idiocy is real or assumed, whether he is merely acting a carefully rehearsed part, or whether he is truly as he represents himself, are debatable questions. In any event, he has a marvellous memory, both musical and recitative. There are so many inconsistencies that one is prone to doubt. In the first place, having such imitative faculties, how is it that his programmes are the same, with few exceptions? The repertoire here was the same as given at hundreds of performances, for many years past? When he heard him in 1892, everything was the same, only Mossowski's Serenata was substituted for Mendelsohn's Rondo. Then, on the other hand, supposing Tom to be an idiot, it would be easy to understand how difficult it would be to train him to go through a regular programme without breaking out into something startling and unexpected. One can understand him going through a prepared programme, but it was hardly consistent with the claim of utter imbecility, when, during the test of his phonetic spelling, he asked gentlemen in the audience to repeat words he had not heard clearly. Behind the scenes, he mumbled all sorts of uncanny sounds, and his conversation was irrational and abrupt as any poorly mentally unbalanced creature. Then, at the end of the performance, whilst he was playing the national anthem, the curtain began to drop, and he turned around impatiently and ordered the curtain to be rolled up, until the piece was over. If he were blind, how did he know the curtain was falling?

One marvels why Nature should select one, apparently coarse and sensual, to interpret divine melody and harmony. No one will say that his reading of the classical pieces was beyond criticism. Take Paderewski's *Melodie Antique*. There was the same varied tone color, all the cantabile effects and flexible execution of the Polish pianist. De Pachmann or Friedheim could not have rendered Beethoven's *Moonlight Sonata* more acceptably. When critics write of virtuosi of the calibre of Jossely, Rubenstein or Paderewski, their playing is spoken of as exhibiting rare imagery, original conception and scholastic treatment. "Blind Tom" produces the same effects. His music has all the nuances, all the sound contrasts of the others. Is it all mere imitation? Is there no head, no heart entering into his wonderful music? Is it all an enigma? A spiritualistic friend of mine submits that Tom is a medium in the hands of some departed master. His

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