

the quartette myself, didn't I? Besides, so much depended on it. The whole town was in on the game. We was due to become a public institution. When I first saw their team line I admit I weakened; but after that I resolved to make good, if such a thing might be. Not that they was not the worst I ever seen, and I have saw some, as the saying goes.

"My new yellow fiddle missed combustion on two of its most useful strings every time I begun to play. I don't think she had a octave on her whole keyboard. She was an arpeggio, like enough. Anyway she missed a peg or so every once in a while. When she done that, as leader, I only waved the bow and beat time right earnest. There was other ways of knowing we was trying to get at the Holy City, because there was nothing doing in Sidonia Centre except the Holy City. You couldn't stroll out for a little walk on your snow shoes of a bright winter morning without meeting the grocer's boy beating time with a copy of the Holy City in one hand while he lifted up his voice and sang. If you went out in the logging camp, where the men was chopping, you'd see 'em all hurry through their lunch at the noon hour, and then each lumber jack'd lean up against a stump, haul out his copy of the Holy City and sail into it for fair until the foreman called time. You couldn't pass a window without getting evidence of disappointed Holy City vocalists that couldn't make the choir. If you went out of a night to pay a social visit, there sets the utter and entire family around the \$4.98 centre table, lifting up their voices and handing you out 'Jee-roos-sa-lum!'

"AS for the choir, 'the town fell for it in mass,' as Walt Whitman says. There was standing room only on the sidewalk near the tracks when we was practising in the log schoolhouse. Once in a while we had to raise the window for air when we was practising our formation plays, and occa-sioned a flute-like note of Wilbur, or a section of Miss Sue's metso would float out to the public, which was waiting at the dead line. The log schoolhouse was right across the track from the station, and sometimes when we opened the window, Nordenskjold could hear his fair-haired bride's voice wrastling with the score where it says, 'Lift up thy voice and seeng!' When he sees what social distinction has come to him, a poor labouring man he goes into a trance. They found him asleep at the switch one evening, waiting for the window to open again; and a couple of hours later a man come down the track from Allensville to ask how he had got two log trains together in a head-on collision. But that was, only one of many crimes committed in the name of the Holy City. I have maybe started fifty choirs, but when I think of that one—!

"Wilbur come to the first rehearsal in his Sunday clothes, with a pink tie done in a wide bow. Miss Sue was gowned in lavender, with a pale heliotrope tie around a hand embroidered collar that cost twenty-two cents. Right here was where relations got strained, early as it was in the game; because a station agent's wife can't do much at twenty-five per, even with rent free in a box car. Such as Mrs. Nordenskjold had, she done with. For Doty and me it didn't make so much difference, because we was leading citizens and could discard mere conventionalities.

"Doty he sets up the melodeon and throws back his hair like a strong Englishman rejoicing to run a Marathon race where there ain't no competition. From my earlier observation of bass melodeon players, I knew what he'd do. He'd pull out that Vox Populi stop at the east end of the melodeon until it wobbled like a woman confessing her sins, and then he'd cast a pleading glance on me asking to be turned loose in the same room with that melodeon, just to show what class he was in.

"Ladies and Gentlemen," says I, 'you will please take your places back of the melodeon—'

"There I seen difficulty again. 'Why not in front of the melodeon?' asks Miss Sue, smoothing down her heliotrope tie.

"Doty he hands me the high sign of distress.

'Why, Miss Sue, in that case' says I, 'the organist would be hid!'

"In the other case,' says Miss Sue, severe, 'the Metso would be hid!'

"A choir master has to use diplomacy. I had to explain to Miss Sue that her voice couldn't be hid, nowhere, nor her personal popularity suppressed. She compromised by standing at the far end of the line where half her new clothes would show. The station agent's wife, owing to the methods of the heartless corporation that furnished the box car, was the only one willing to stand behind the melodeon. Anyhow, I got the team formed up the best I could.

"Now, my dear yung friends,' says I, 'please bear in mind the necessity of a composed attitude. Let your eyes pass over the audience with a lofty and stern expression. A superior demeanor is desirable in persons of your situation in society. At the start, let the sheets of the music be held lightly but firmly at about the elevation of the waist and at an angle of about forty-five degrees, which should be preserved when the music is raised to the level of the chin. If your hand shakes, lean on the melodeon; but in no case display any uneasiness or anxiety as to the results.'

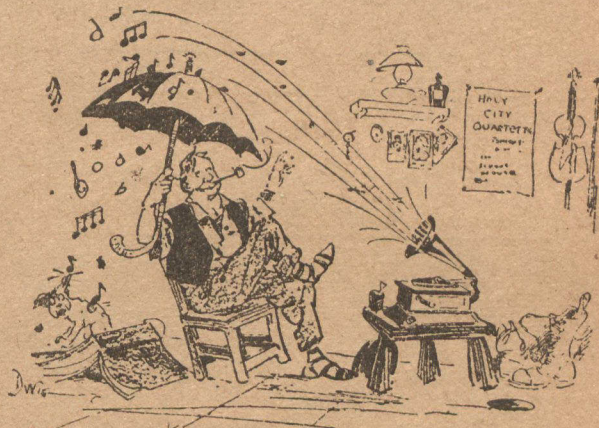
"That last was hard doctrine for me, for I was sure uneasy. Wilbur's Adam's apple began to walk up and down his neck, and the sweat stood on Doty's face; but after several false starts they got the flag and away they went. I will not go into details; but confidential, what they did to the Holy City was a lasting shame.

"I rang the bell for another start. I had a sudden idea that since the whole field never would get away with anything but a ragged start and end in a dis-habeel finish best thing to do was to make it into a cantata, and divide it into parts. Says I, after explaining the idea, 'My dear young friends, after this Dr. Doty will execute a few bars in advance, after I kick him in the back, an act, of course, not perceived by the audience. Then I take the rail with the violin, and carry the running for a few stanzas. When I raise the bow and wave for anyone of you to begin, please lift your sheet music with dignity and composure to the level of the chin, get set and wait for the gun. Remember to produce the tones from the lower chest, as much as possible, by the operation of the diaphragm.'

"MISS SUE gave a startled look at me, and I saw I was in wrong on the instructions. She didn't have time to record a protest on the charge of having a diaphragm on her person, for right then Wilbur got loose, and began to tell, sweet and thin, about what he was dreaming in regard to the Holy City. After that it was go as you please. I didn't

the spark somewhere.

"I was patient. I cooled 'em out, and put in a little time showing them how to carry their handkerchiefs, explaining that it was customary for a tenor to wear his stuck up his left coat sleeve, whereas in the case of a soprano it might be allowed to hang gracefully from the left hand. Then I starts in to explain the value of the round mouth in producing chest tones, when I happened to take a look at Wilbur. His mouth was round permanent, round as a whistle, anyhow, and no man knowing



It was my master's voice all right.

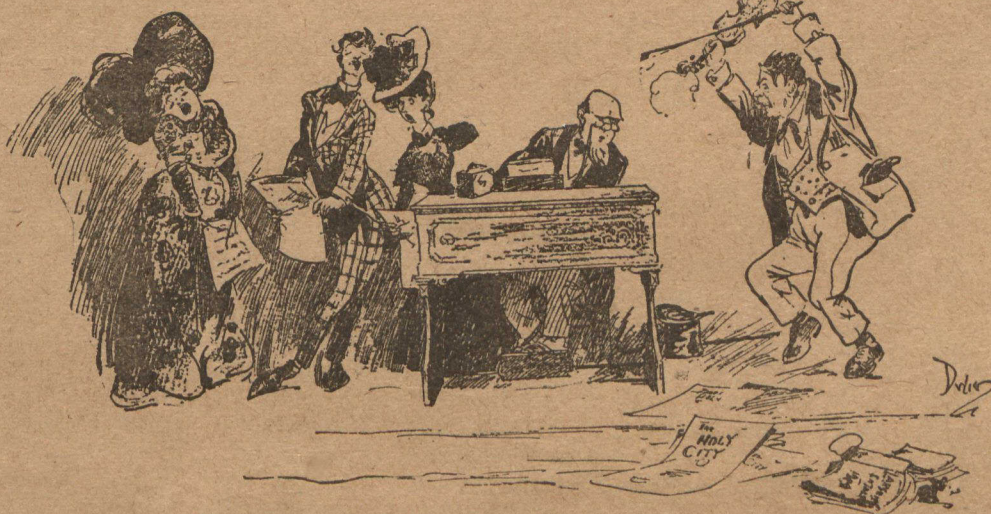
his occupation could accuse him of harbouring any diaphragm at all. Perhaps my suspicions showed in my gaze, because right then Miss Sue breaks in, insisting for a rising vote on a division of the score. 'I think Wilbur ought to have the place where it says Hosanna in the Highest,' she allows.

"Certainly, certainly' says I, 'that goes, because Wilbur certainly is the highest Hosanna, if not the main scream. But now, let us resume. Let us throw enthusiasm into the game. Miss Sue, when you see Dr. Doty pull out the tremolo and play with crassed hands, why, you cut loose your emotions and get carried away by Jee-e-rusalem, deep and strong. Wilbur and Mrs. Nordenskjold remain looking over the audience until you break through with the H-o-o-ly Citee. Then all the rest of us get into the mass play, hit the ball hard, and rush it down the middle of the field for a touchdown. Jee-roo-sa-lum, Jee-ROO-sa-lum, everybody bunched as close as possible. Doty with all the stops out and both pedals down furnishing interference for the runner, and me calling the signals from the side line when necessary. Understand now, we finish on the keen lode for Jee-roo-salem, all together. Wilbur at Hosanna, and Miss Sue busy with short-arm work, clinched with the H-o-o-ly Citee. Now then—'

"Say, it's so much more kind-hearted to start a quartette than it is to launch a soloist; because in the former case you make four people happy instead of only one. You ought to seen the contented look that come on them four faces when I finished coaching them. The whole quartette wiggled its feet to get a good hold on the floor, waiting for the word to get away. What happened? I decline to answer. But we repeated it, da capo and otherwise until by eleven o'clock Doty was exhausted. By then, the birdlike notes of Wilbur could not be heard four seats back, and the station agent's wife was in need of dope or the battery. Miss Sue outstayed the bunch; which shows the benefit of training on buckwheats and sausage. About midnight I closed the practice and we started home.

"All Sidonia Centre was waiting to receive us, lined up along the railroad track. Me? I ain't any fool, and I saw my finish right then. I knowed Miss Sue had resolved to run that choir. She was that chesty you could have hung a flatiron on her new heliotrope tie. She led Wilbur by his lily-white hand, and paid no attention to common folks. Two influences bust all quartettes eventually—marriage and jealousy.

"From that time on things went from bad to worse. Miss Sue got that jealous of Wilbur standing (Concluded on page 27.)



What they did to "The Holy City" was a lasting shame.

need to arrange the music in parts, then constructing the score as they went along. When the tenor had come under the wire Miss Sue was at the head of the home stretch, singing metso with her eyes set; and when she struck the 'Ho-o-ly Citee' she made the lamp flicker. Doty he give the melodeon the time of its life. As for the station agent's wife, she blew up at the turn, and when it came to 'Jee-roos-sa-lum' two spaces above the bars, she refused the hurdles, and I had to cover up with the two remaining strings of my new violin, the other two having lost