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IT was the stormiest rehearsal of the season. Everybody's temper was rough edged, from the leader of the orchestra down to the jolly little drummer who played zylophone solos while the comic man was doing his dance. The slender baton which the professor held tightly in his nervous hand had beaten a continuous tattoo on the music rack; the stage manager's voice seemed harsher than ever, and his commands all the more dictatorial.

Perhaps it all never would have happened but for the carelessness of several of the chorus girls, whose groupings and poses at the last few performances had been worse than the tableaux at a car drivers' ball. The star had noticed this shirking, and, with commendable ambition to make the New York run a series of brilliant hits, had conferred with the stage manager; and a call for a dress rehearsal posted in the wings was the result. Of course it had made everybody mad.

"To think of it," said the man who played the part of a fat, awkward old prince, who was always getting a laugh for the way he trod on the trains of the court ladies, "it is simply provok-

ing that with the work of a hard performance on us, we've got to rehearse and rehearse, just because a cheap chorus can't do its work."

"And the day before a matinee, too," said the tenor, whose chief ambition was to save his voice for his duet with the prima donna.

Such remarks were being made on all sides, and they only ceased when the cues carried the talkers to the stage. The leader of the orchestra, whom everyone feared, and whose remarks and criticisms were cuttingly sarcastic, had the fiercest temper of all. He was as mad as a baby elephant that finds its trunk too short to reach the best hay on the hay wagon. He had said all he could to the members of the orchestra, and everyone expected to see him throw his chair at some discordant player at any moment.

He rapped his baton again, and the sweet, restful air of a lullaby floated up from reed and string. It had a quieting effect, but not half so much as

the presence of the beautiful woman whose soft, rich voice was mingling with its notes in exquisite harmony. Though they had heard the song a hundred times or more, all listened, so sweet was its melody. With perfect ease and enchanting expression she touched her highest notes, until they sounded through the vacant theatre like the tinkling of some sweet toned bell. Her face, fair and serene, was as beautiful as the song she sang, and each note found a responsive chord in the hearts of those around her; for in the company of three score there was not one who did not love her. She was the prima donna, the one particular star of the cast. To her singing thousands had listened spell-bound, only to break forth in rapturous applause—yet she was so lovable, so companionable, so kind and willing to help those below her. Many a time a single word from her lips had fanned into a blaze of success the smoldering faggots of ambition that failure and the



UNDER THE SUNSET TREE.