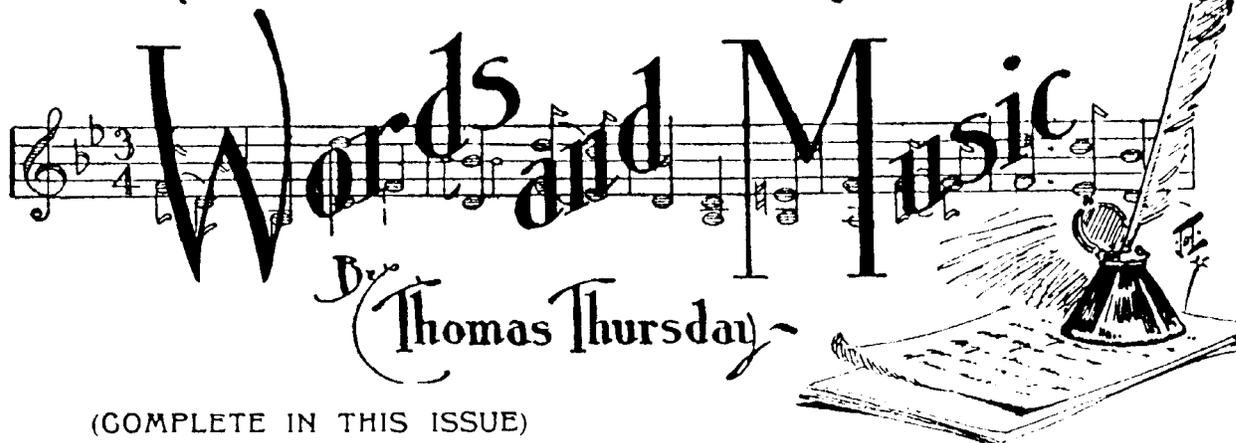


An Adventure of Jefferson Sweeney—Author.



(COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE)

CHAPTER I.
TEMPORARILY UNEMPLOYED.

TAKE it from me, Jim, there must be something the matter with those song-writing fellows. Why, I bet I could write better songs than they do with my left hand—or even blindfolded in the dark. I pity anybody who's got to sing stuff like that. Of course, I'm not knocking, but it's a cinch that they must compose their melodies on a dishpan instead of a piano. I bought a copy of that theatrical magazine called *Maudlin Melodia*, and, believe me, when I read the advertisements of the latest songs I promptly decided that the song business would go into the hands of a receiver unless I get busy and help them out. On the level, Jim, don't you think I could beat those guys writing songs?"

"Surely, Jeff; why don't you try?" I chirped. I felt certain that my pal and furnished-room mate could excel those regular writers, and I was willing to do everything possible to encourage him. Leave it to Jefferson Sweeney to show people the right way to do things!

Although the fact that we resided in Mrs. Snickers' boarding house was a severe handicap to Jeff's art, I figured that he would be able to hurdle such minor obstacles with ease.

Jeff was temporarily unemployed, but I was perfectly willing to pay his expenses and take general care of him until his volcanic genius erupted into a lava of dividends. The rent extracted by Mrs. Snickers was quite meager—likewise the portions she slipped us at the table—and since my salary had been raised to a higher altitude at the Crookometer factory I was able to defray both our board bills with comparatively small hardship.

Anyway, I believed Jeff to be an excellent investment and that for every dollar I loaned to him I would receive ten or more in return. Although my motive was not of a mercenary nature, Jeff insisted that he would pay me back with compound interest just as soon as the literary world awakened to the fact that he was a versatile scribe.

Hitherto he had tried his hand at writing stories for the magazines, with considerable success; so much so that he had succeeded in having two of his gems accepted by periodicals so large and prominent that one even claimed a circulation of more than two thousand. The mere fact that he had numerous rejections to his credit was not his fault, but rather another demonstration of the gentry who have a strangle hold on the editorial jobs when they ought to have a toe hold in the plumbing business. Jeff says so, and, of course, he ought to know. All of which shows that Jeff's batting average in the literary league was not so bad, especially when you take into consideration the editorial southpaws he was obliged to face.

"Listen, Jim," continued Jeff; "on your way home from work to-morrow night stop in Duster's bookstore and get me a copy of 'How to Write a Popular Song; or, Making a Fortune Without Brains,' by Fuller Scales. I seen it advertised in the magazines and maybe it might help me with my work. But I guess I know all there is to know about song writing; you don't have to know much, anyway."

"How much will the book cost, Jeff?"

"One dollar and ten cents, net, according to the advertisement."

"What does 'net' mean, Jeff?" I asked.

"Well, Jim, a net is something they use to

catch things in—like fish.. But I think it's a little raw when they use it to sell books with, though I admit that I've been caught a good many times myself." Jeff yawned and suggested that we retire for the night, as it was nearing ten o'clock.

CHAPTER II.

INSPIRATION AND CASEY.

ABOUT ten minutes after I slid under the sheets I fell into a much-needed sleep which was accompanied by a terrible dream. I heard the constant crack of machine guns and numerous rifle shots—crack-crack-crack—just like that. Then I heard an awful shouting, and awoke to find Jeff pounding away at his typewriter, dressed in his pajamas.

"What are you shouting about, Jim?" he asked, grinning. "Dreaming?"

"What are you trying to do, Jeff—write songs at three a. m.?"

"Well, I got a corking idea for a song while I was half asleep, and I thought it would be a good idea to reel it off while it was still fresh in my mind. Did I wake you up?"

"I should say you did! I thought that I was somewhere in Flanders hearing machine guns spout—caused by you banging on the typewriter, I guess. I sure was scared!" And I was.

"Sorry, Jim, but wait until you see the song I just wrote; it's a peacherino, believe me!"

"What's the title?" I asked drowsily.

"It's pretty sad, Jim. I've called it 'When Pitcher McCarthy Hit Casey on the Bean.' Take a slant at it and compare it with the stuff you hear nowadays." Jeff passed me his handiwork. Here's the chorus:

Whanger smashed single to the right field fence;
But the way he stole second was more than
immense.
Speeder hit a scorcher that knocked Hookus on
his ear—
You can take it from me, but that crowd did
cheer!
Then Muffins slams the pill 'way up near the
moon—
They didn't find the ball till the next afternoon!
We needed only another run to even up the
score,
And the mob went wild till their voices got sore.
The next three men got their base on balls,
Which made Manager Flipper foam like Niagara

Falls!

Then Casey strolled to the plate with his bat in
his hand,

Which made all the girls exclaim: "Say, ain't he
grand?"

But such a riot of joy ne'er before was seen
When Pitcher McCarthy hit Casey on the bean!

"What do you think of it, Jim?"

"Pretty good—for three o'clock in the morning. But what happened when Mr. Casey was hit by Mr. McCarthy?" I inquired, not able to understand the song's climax.

"What do you suppose happens, you poor goop!" snapped Jeff, getting red in the face. "Would you like me to give you a demonstration? Do you mean to tell me that you don't know what happens when a fellow gets cracked on the bean with a baseball? You wouldn't expect him to sing, would you? As far as I know, Jim, he either gets a place on first base or a place in the hospital. Take it from me, if all the people were like you I'd have to have my songs illustrated!"

CHAPTER III.

TAPPING OUT HARMONY.

THE following evening, as soon as we had finished our meager supply of hash, onions, and near coffee, Jeff asked Flossie Hemp, the star boarderess, if she would assist him to compose a melody to his song. He painted in bright colors the great chance she would have to become rich and famous via the song-writing route. Now, Jeff didn't know one note from the other, so he figured that Flossie would be able to show him a thing or two about extracting harmony from a piano. She was the only person in the house who could get any sound out of Mrs. Snickers' antique instrument, and, needless to say, she was delighted to help Jeff as much as possible.

"You see, Miss Hemp," explained Jeff, "all you've got to do is tap out a little harmony to the words I've written and I'll get some goop that knows something about arranging songs to do the rest. If I sell the song—which I surely will—I'll split fifty-fifty with you. Of course I can't let you have your name on it, but if it's a hit I'll mention your name to the actresses and actors, telling them that you helped me out. Are you satisfied?"

"I don't care about the name, Mr. Sweeney—all I want is the coin. I saw a gorgeous new——"

“That’s the idea!” interrupted Jeff. “You’re, just like that old Turkish song writer, Omar Kayslam, who said: ‘Take the cash and let the credit blow.’ You remember reading that, don’t you?”

“Can’t say as I did,” replied Flossie. This didn’t surprise me at all, because when a girl has to measure out ribbons all day at Flooker’s Department Store she hasn’t got any time to delve into the squeaks of song writers, Turkish or otherwise.

Flossie started off by doing a “do re mi fa sol la si do.”

“Hit that ‘do’ key; harder, Miss Hemp,” said Jeff. “It sounds like money.”

After practicing and guessing for about two hours, they succeeded in setting a certain amount of notes to “When Pitcher McCarthy Hit Casey on the Bean.” Although Jeff’s voice would have been more at home selling fish up an alley, he managed to get within twenty yards or so of Flossie’s notes.

“This piano must have been used by Pocahontas,” he complained. “It don’t seem to harmonize with my voice at all.”

“Well, my old music teacher, Professor Rumble, always said that you can’t get harmony out of oatmeal,” teeheeed Flossie, taking a slant at Mrs. Snickers.

“I wish you’d whistle instead of trying to sing, Mr. Sweeney,” chirped Mrs. Snickers from the corner of the room where she was trying to extract a few tears from the latest sob book. “I can’t read with such a racket. If you don’t know how to whistle, hum. And I wish Miss Hemp wouldn’t strike the keys so hard; I’m afraid she’ll put the piano out of tune.”

“No chance of doing that,” answered Jeff. “Paderewski’s grandfather did that long ago.”

“I’ll have you understand, Mr. Sweeney,” snapped the landlady, “that my piano is in perfect condition. Besides, I didn’t agree to furnish a piano with room and board.”

“That’s all right, Mrs. Snickers,” retorted Jeff. “If you can prove that Miss Hemp has broken anything that isn’t already smashed, I’ll pay for it.”

“You said it,” whispered Flossie. And so it went until the song was finally wedded to Flossie’s best melodies, after which we dashed up to the camp.

CHAPTER IV. GENIUS IS GENIUS.

THE old lady ought to put that piano in a glass case and hire a watchman,” growled Jeff as soon as we landed in the room. “Can you imagine her kicking about anybody putting it out of tune? Why, if that thing could talk I bet it would tell you all about the Battle of Yorktown!”

“Never mind, Jeff,” I said soothingly; “you’ll be able to buy a piano for yourself pretty soon.”

As Jeff disrobed for the night, he threw one of his shoes at the wall just out of peevishness.

“Listen, Jeff,” I pleaded; “please don’t get any more inspirations at three a. m. I’d like to get a little sleep tonight.”

“Can’t be helped, Jim,” he replied, pulling on a sock. “Genius is genius, you know, and it’s liable to hit a fellow any time. Why, only the other day I was reading a book called ‘Private Lives of the Old Music Masters; or, Why Barbers Went Hungry,’ by Professor Rufus Halfoff and, believe me, Jim, those fellows used to compose songs at all hours of the day and night. Why, one chap named Harmonio Peperino used to go without sleep for a week. Another guy, Sirius de W. Flapdoodle, used to live on three soda crackers a day before he became rich and famous. Genius is a wonderful thing, Jim,” he concluded, taking a slant at himself in the mirror.

“But say, Jeff, why is it that inspiration don’t come to a fellow in the daytime?”

“I don’t know, Jim; maybe it’s bashful or something.”

However, as I extinguished the light, I hoped that nothing would cause Jeff to leave the bed until morning.

CHAPTER V. UNDOUBTEDLY THE RIGHT PLACE.

THE following Sunday Jeff and I decided to search around the neighborhood for somebody who knew something about music.

“What will they soak me to arrange my song, do you know, Jim?”

“No idea, Jeff. A couple of dollars ought to pay the bill.”

At 1861 Civil Avenue we spied a sign reading “Professor Tralalar Bang, Music Teacher.”

“Let’s try him,” Jeff suggested, leading the way up the stoop.

An exceptionally pretty girl answered the bell, all of which made Jeff certain that the place was just what he was looking for.

"Is the professor in?" asked Jeff, taking off his hat.

"Oh, yes; just step into the conservatory and I'll inform father that you have called," she replied, giving Jeff a charming smile.

"I guess this is the right place all right," he whispered as soon as the young lady departed. And when Jeff makes a remark like that about a lady—why, said lady must be a considerable looker, because if there ever was a misogynist Jeff was it.

The professor turned out to be a short, heavy-set man of middle age, with just enough hair on his head to keep about three teeth of a comb in active service.

"I think your song is marvelous," he told Jeff, after trying Flossie's notes on the piano.

"Thanks," returned Jeff, flushed. "How much will you charge to arrange it?"

"Well, now—ahem—considering the fact that you are not a wealthy man, I should think that ten dollars would be a fair price." The professor turned an innocent-looking face upon Jeff, and ran his fingers through at least three of his half a dozen hairs.

Jeff gasped. Ditto yours truly.

"What will we do about it, Jim?" he asked, scratching his ear.

"Let the professor go ahead and arrange it," I replied, figuring that if the song turned out to be a hit a little thing like ten bones would be a mere nothing.

"All right, professor, go to it," said Jeff. "When will it be finished?"

"I'll complete it by to-morrow night, and have my daughter deliver it to you," replied the professor as he led us to the door.

As soon as we arrived home, Jeff got busy with his typewriter and started to hatch out some more song lyrics. I interrupted several times to ask how he was getting along, but for reply he placed his finger to his lips, which meant that he was in deep concentration.

CHAPTER VI.

A POSTPONED ORDER.

IT is with a heavy heart that I record this chapter in the life of Jefferson Sweeney. Although he finds consolation in the fact that great masters of literature, like Rupert Bloos, Gouverneur Sobb,

and John Hendrick Bing had their ups and downs before buying villas on the Hudson, I refused to be cheered by the successes of less talented scribes than Jeff.

However, he now admits that he made a slight mistake in supposing that all publishers were capable of recognizing genius as soon as it poked its head above the horizon of a mediocre world. It had cost him ten dollars—of my money—to have Professor Bang arrange the song, and when it drifted back, after two weeks, from the first publisher to which he had sent it Jeff was as peeved as a hungry elephant after muffing a misdirected peanut. And when he had read the letter that accompanied its rejection he dashed around the room like a Kansas cyclone out upon a practice spin. Here's the letter:

DEAR MR. SWEENEY: Whatever the inclosed is supposed to be, we thank you for submitting the same. We publish songs—not riddles. It may interest you to learn that the two basic principles of popular songs are as follows: first, words; second, music. Since your effort lacks both those essential features, we are obliged to return it to you. Very truly,

BOFIDDLE & STRING,
By DE LANCEY GUFF.

Rather sarcastic! Anent this affair Jeff commented as follows: "Believe me, Jim, those fellows must have glass eyes and wooden heads! Why, they don't know song hits when they see them. I'll leave it to anybody with a spoonful of brains to judge whether or not my stuff isn't far ahead of those regular writers."

Flossie, of course, was heartbroken over the whole business. She had left a deposit on a new gown at Madame de Murphy's Maison Parisienne, with full expectations of paying the balance from the proceeds of the songs. However, as soon as Flossie was appraised of the sad news, she immediately asked madame to hold the gown for a few days more.

CHAPTER VII.

A BRILLIANT PLAN.

"LISTEN, Jim," Jeff said later in a calmer manner, "I've decided to change my name. Maybe they think that a fellow with a name like mine can't write songs."

"Do names count, Jeff?" I inquired, wondering if it was so.

"I should say they do! That's why I'm going to take one of those hide-and-seek names myself. Just look at the fancy names on the songs and novels."

To make sure that he would adopt a fitting name, Jeff delved into a volume entitled "Aristocrats of the Old World; or, Who Used to Be Who," by Baron Deliverus Lightknob. Due to the fact that he found such a vast assortment of noble-sounding names, he cogitated long and ponderously before making a selection.

"I guess Algernon St. Cyr just about fits my talent," he decided, throwing the book upon the bureau.

"Sounds rather elite and distinctive," I affirmed. And it surely did.

Jeff sent out the song again, this time to the Jazzerino Music Company, and the name of the author and composer was not Jefferson Sweeney now, but Algernon St. Cyr. But the title remained the same—"When Pitcher McCarthy Hit Casey on the Bean."

CHAPTER VIII. PRUNES ON THE SIDE.

A WEEK passed, during which time Jeff gave his brain a much-needed rest by staying as far away from the camp as possible. He would tramp the streets for hours at a time with a notebook in hand, jotting down anything that impressed him as being good song material.

He had visions of Eva Tangleway, Grace La Due, and Harry Louder singing his song gem before great and enthusiastic audiences.

Flossie, in turn, cared nothing for fame, and less for the applause of the multitudes. But that gown! Would Madame de Murphy wait just a little longer? She would. Flossie's anxiety was caused more or less by the rapidly approaching ball to be given by the Big Noise Social Club, of which she was an honorary member. And maybe she wouldn't make Tillie Giggle jealous when that glove-counter expert piped her new regalia! Well!

And then, a few days more of anxious waiting, a little more anticipation, and the world was theirs. The sun shone, the birds sang, and the moon, beamed—just for Flossie and Jeff.

Soon as I had arrived home from work, accompanied by a certain amount of grease and grime, I was appraised of the glad news. The song was bought and paid for! Not a word was inclosed with the fifty-dollar check. Just "Pay to the Order

of Algernon St. Cyr," et cetera.

"Letters don't count, Jim," Jeff informed me. "Although the price paid for my song is pretty low, it's all right for a starter. Anyway, it proves that there is at least one publisher in the country with brains enough to appreciate a song hit when he sees it."

As soon as Mrs. Snickers had cashed the check, Jeff gave Flossie her share, and that young lady immediately dashed out and brought back the cherished gown, much to the admiration of the landlady.

"Ain't it just gorgeous?" she asked the assembled company, displaying her heart's desire.

"It looks great, Miss Hemp! Great!" chirped Jeff. "Stick to me and you'll soon be owning motors and yachts."

Much joy in the house that night! The landlady even went so far as to give us an extra portion of prunes and enough butter to cover sufficiently at least three slices of bread. Jeff was obliged to admit that she could be human if she tried.

That night Jeff slept as calmly as Rip Van Winkle was supposed to have slept. Not a murmur, not a twist, not a sign of restlessness was noticeable during the entire slumber period.

CHAPTER IX. BUSINESS SKILL.

THE following morning a slight tap on the door was accompanied by a letter that Mrs. Snickers slipped under the crack. Jeff was the first to read it, and then—bang!—like a bolt from the sky his hopes and dreams were dashed to oblivion! Luck apparently was not twin to genius or even a distant relation.

Here's the letter:

MR. ALGERNON ST. CYR, *13 Luck Avenue, Cleveledo, Calichussettes.*

DEAR SIR: Recently we sent you our check for fifty dollars (\$50.00). In doing this our bookkeeper, in a manner that is still puzzling us, made a grievous mistake. Check should have been sent to another person.

Be kind enough to rectify his error by returning the aforementioned sum as soon as convenient.

Your song is under consideration. Yours truly,

JAZZERION MUSIC COMPANY,
By OCTAVO FLATT.

Well, maybe Jeff wasn't peeved! Boy! He ran his fingers through his wealth of red hair in a manner that betokened no great love for a certain music publisher.

"Believe me, Jim, this world is all wrong!" he complained. "How does that goop expect me to return money that I already spent? Can they have me arrested?" he suddenly asked, his face turning from a red to a whitish hue.

"I don't know, Jeff," I replied, not knowing anything about the law on that point.

Jeff, for the next few minutes, paced around the room like a caged wild cat, and then, getting a sudden inspiration, exclaimed:

"I'm going to take a chance, Jim. I'll teach those birds a lesson, take it from me!"

He dashed over to the typewriter and yanked off the cover. His face regaining its fiery color, Jeff proceeded to assault that innocent piece of machaism in an extremely vicious manner. He walloped the commas, banged the semicolons, and

pounded the periods.

"Take a slant at this, Jim," he said, passing me the following letter:

MR. OCTAVO FLATT, *care of Jazzerino Music Company, Bedlam, Orefornia.*

"MY DEAR FLATT: You said it! Take it from me, "mistake" is the correct word. If you can show me how to return money that I've already spent, you might have a chance of getting back your coin. Hereafter, count your change before leaving the box office, and give my regards to the bookkeeper. He's my idea of a regular guy.

And, listen! Since my song is paid for, why not publish it? Yours seriously,

ALGERNON ST. CYR.

"Believe me, Jim, they've got to publish my song now!"

And Algernon St. Cyr—née Jefferson Sweeney—smiled triumphantly. He considered himself a business man as well as a genius—a bird that does not occur in many regions.