

Anecdotes
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I had a charming letter recently from that very talented violin artist Maud Powell, whose art is I'm happy to say, becoming daily more matured and polished. In it she relates some of the funny and curious things that happened to her last summer, but I will let her tell the story herself, which she does delightfully:

“During my sojourn in the country this summer,” she writes, “I was in the habit of studying and practicing in a little cottage which had long stood uninhabited and labeled ‘For Rent.’ The sound of my instrument and the open doors and windows, so long closed, attracted the attention of the passers-by, especially children, whose curiosity frequently led them to make tours of investigation. So one morning it chanced that my practice was interrupted by the entrance of two ragged little urchins, the elder one nearly lost to view in a copious pair of trousers, held in place by a piece of string, his shoulders partially covered by remnants of a shirt whose color was quite unrecognizable through the dirt. He was a hero, however, in the eyes of his smaller companion, who regarded him with undisguised wonder and admiration, and evidently considered it a great privilege to be in his company.

“The ‘hero’ began immediately to pour forth a volley of questions, one of which was:

“‘What ye workin’ there for? Don’t ye know how to play yit?’

“He probably thought, not unlike many older and more cultivated people, that one must work until he reaches a certain point called ‘playing,’ when further practice becomes unnecessary.

“Fancy such conditions and all they imply!”

“Other questions were: ‘Why don’t ye give a show here?’ and ‘I s’pose ye’ve been all over the world and played in lots of shows and circuses, hain’t ye?’ Thinking a description of my tour with Gilmore’s Band might please him, I prefaced my intended remarks by the question whether he had ever heard of Pat Gilmore and his famous band. His answer was startling: ‘Naw,’ said he with a disinterested drawl, and then his eyes brightened with eager curiosity, ‘Say, air ye acquainted with a fella down there in New York named Jack the Ripper?’

“Poor Pat, such is fame!”

“At another time I was visited by a little barefooted Negro lass, who walked in uninvited, sat down, surveyed me calmly from head to foot a moment and then without waiting for me to stop playing (I was working on the Bach Chaconne) she asked me, in the cold, critical tones

assumed by the musical manager when the trembling aspirant for fame and riches stands before him 'on trial,' whether I could play 'Annie Rooney.'

"I played for her one of Sarasate's Spanish dances. When I finished she remarked with mild approval, 'That's a good tune. I like the plunk, plunk, plunk' (three pizz. chords). Finally I told her if she would dance I would play her a jolly good jig. So for several minutes the little black feet twinkled merrily to the classic rhythm of 'Irish Washerwoman.' The next morning, while I was at work, she slipped in very quietly, laid a single Hollyhock flower on my table and as quietly departed."

From the Archive of The Maud Powell Society for Music and Education