

LIBERTY SONG

By THAYER WALDO

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THE man in the officer's chair lit a fresh cigar and angrily flung the match aside.

"Cockeyed, idiotic business!" he snarled.

"A whole production tied up while we sit here waiting for some wop bum to be dragged in off the streets. It's the damndest thing I ever heard of!"

Stuart Booth eyed him contemptuously and said nothing.

Fiberg made a gesture of conciliation.

"Now listen, Nick," he begged; "be reasonable a little, couldn't you? Ain't the only chance we got worth anyhow a try?"

"Yes; I should think, Hormell," Booth put in coldly, "that after all the fuming you've done over this part, you might see how my suggestion works out before you start crabbing."

The director twisted swiftly around in the chair to face him, snapping:

"Look here, Stuart; I never agreed to this wild notion of yours, and I won't pretend to now. Here we have a scene that needs an operatic star, and you talk 'em into going after a dago banana peddler you've heard yodeling behind his pushcart. If I'm expected to enthuse over that—well, it's a laugh, that's all."

"All right; now we'll just add the rest of it; you want an Italian tenor, yet you can't afford anyone big for such a small role. There's no foreign language singer available on the lot, so where are you? Stuck. And then when I offer the one idea that may solve your problem, you beef!"

"Well," Hormell grumbled, "it simply doesn't sound sensible. If he was going into a chorus. . . . But the man's got to do a solo, and—"

"Hey, look!" Fiberg had turned toward the sound stage entrance.

"Is that him?"

The others swung around.

Just inside the door stood a little round man in baggy trousers and a gay lavender shirt.

His great mop of black curls was uncovered and the olive moon face beneath showed gentle perplexity.

Stuart Booth went forward, calling: "Hello, Pietro! Come right over here."

The Latin's teeth gleamed in a wide slow smile.

"Ah, Signor Boot! You send for me, si? Dey no tell me—Joost say, 'You Pietro Pasquale? Come to da studio.' I don't know what ees, but here I am."

Hormell had approached and was staring critically at the Italian.

Before Booth could speak again, he said curtly:

"All right, Tony—let's hear you sing."

The small dark man gazed up with polite incomprehension and replied:

"Excuse, pless; da name she's Pietro, an' I don't know Joost what you talk. Maybe you joke, si?"

"Keep still a minute," Booth said sharply to the director; "give me a chance to explain to him. . . . Listen, old timer; we're in a fix here; you can help us out and, incidentally, make yourself fifty dollars for a couple of hours' work—just singing."

The fellow made a quick little bow and said:

"Sure, sure; she's made me very happy to do somet'eengs for you."

The set across the stage, however, had caught his eye and he started to wander off toward it.

The actor grasped his arm as Hormell let out a snort of exasperation and demanded:

"Well, are we going through with the farce, or is this gentleman just a sightseer?"

"That's what I'm saying," Fiberg agreed.

"He acts like he was doing us a favor. What's the big idea?"

The actor glared sourly at him and turned again to Pietro, explaining: "You see, there's an Italian sequence in the picture we're making. Several of us are traveling along a mountain road and we come to a small inn. The proprietor's sitting on the piazza, carrying wood and singing some air from an opera. Now that's what we want you for! Can you do it?"

Pietro laughed—a full and carefree sound with no hint of scorn in it.

"Why, sure!" he exclaimed buoyantly.

"You mean like dees?"

Back went his head, a breath was taken, and suddenly there poured forth a rich torrent of golden melody as he began an aria from "I Pagliacci."

It rose and swelled and filled the great room with glorious music.

In a moment people from all over the stage had gathered round.

Not a note in all that song was less than perfection.

Long before he had finished, Fiberg and the director were huddled together, whispering excitedly.

Even Stuart Booth was astonished.

At last it ended and the little Italian gazed about him, a trifle startled.

Then Hormell and the producer were rushing forward in a dual fever of ingratiation.

"Say, that's the finest thing I ever gave a listen to!" Fiberg chattered.

And the director:

"Marvelous! Where have you been hiding all these years?"

In a quick aside to Booth, he breathed: "My G—d, man—why didn't you tell me about this sooner? He's the greatest find I've ever run across!"

Fiberg, an arm about the singer's shoulders, was talking rapidly:

"Now, Mr. Pasquale, here's the way I'm figuring it. You'll want to do a couple of small parts and then we star you. How about a six months' contract with options, at—well, say two hundred and fifty a week?"

The three studio men waited, their eyes upon the Latin's face.

For an instant bewilderment was there; then slowly he looked from one to the other with something very like disbelief.

"Joost a meenute," he said finally: "Maybe I'm don't understand again. You want that I come here every day and seeng for da peectures, si?"

They nodded.

Pietro Pasquale made a queer small noise in his throat and stepped back, shaking free of the producer's embrace.

"Excuse, pless!" He spoke with a ringing firmness. "She's very kind of you—but, no!"

"You—you mean you're refusing the contract?"

"Si, signor."

Palpably he was in dead earnest.

"Listen, pless: When I am a boy een Milano, always I seeng, Joost for happiness. Den one day somebody she's hear me an' say, 'You mus' study for da career! I am young fool, so I do eet. Five, six year I keep on, at las' get een La Scala opera an' pret' soon have da name een lights. Bravo, bravo! But all da joy she's gone when each night I have to seeng so much, so long. So now I have geeve all dat up an' come here where I can posita da cart to make eeng for Rosita an' da bambinos an' me. Seeng? Signor, I do eet for gladness, but she's not enough money een all da world to buy from Pietro a song ever again!"

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Guadalajara



Public Letter Writers in Guadalajara.

Prepared by National Geographic Society, Washington, D. C.—WNU Service.

AT DAWN comes the clang and peal of countless bells. The din is startling in its unexpectedness. It sounds like a battle call—or an alarm that Guadalajara is burning.

Hurriedly you get up and go out on the hotel balcony.

"All these churches," says a voice at your elbow, "and every bell with a different tone." It is the man from the room next to yours, a Spanish friend from the sugar plantations, in pajamas and straw sandals.

"I first came here more than 40 years ago, from Spain," he adds. "We made the last stretch in a four-mile stagecoach on leather springs, after a night battle with bandits. We got in just at dawn, with these same bells ringing. Nothing here has changed much—the same people, habits, churches, and bells. Even the hats are still here. Read at night, and your light draws the moths; turn out the light, and the bats fly in to eat the moths. But they don't eat their wings—next morning moth wings are all over your floor!"

In the street below now black-garbed women, their heads covered, are walking quietly to mass—women of all classes, peon and aristocrat, but hardly any men. Rattling heavily, a water cart turns the corner, sprinkling the streets and raising that ammonia smell of old adobe towns where humans and beast have long crowded the absorbent soil too closely. You meet that same smell, mixed with the scent of roasting coffee, when at early morning men wet the dusty streets of Aden or Baghdad.

"Ice!" "Bread!" "Morning paper!" All voices of the awakening city as truly as cackles, crows, grunts, and squeals are the alarm clocks of the farmer. Before the doorway halts an old man on a mule, carrying two big cans. A sleepy girl, with a clay jar, comes out and buys some milk. And the man rides on, calling his singsong "Leche, leche," milk, milk, in a despairing wail, more like a cry of pain than an invitation to buy.

Turkeys for Sale.

Now a country boy in a ragged straw hat comes driving a flock of turkeys. He carries a long stick, with a whip-like piece of string on one end, for flicking any errant turkey on the neck. He urges them on by hissing sounds, his tongue against his upper teeth, in the familiar Indian warning. They market thousands of turkeys on foot here, as in parts of Texas, the inquisitive, shapely birds marching with quick, graceful strides, necks jerking sharply with each step. One strutting gobbler, with pendent red wattles long as a prophet's beard, ruffled his bronze plumage and dragged his wings.

By the time you dress, clap your hands for coffee, and read a Mexican paper still damp and smelling of fresh ink, all Guadalajara is swarming. Tramcars are crowded; so are buses.

Hobbed-haired señoritas, in bright organdie, silk hose, and high heels, chatter and giggle their cheerful way to work in stores, beauty and curio shops, at switchboards or typewriters. Many are pure Andalusian types with blue eyes and blond hair, small, shapely hands and feet. The ease and joy with which man may look upon woman-kind in Guadalajara are proverbial. "In all Mexico, no others are so fair." "Surely St. Peter must have opened the gates of heaven to let down such a beautiful damsel," Mexicans say when a maid of pulchritude is passing.

Along with the crowd, ogling the girls, come sleek young bank clerks, bookkeepers in the brewery, the factories, motorcar and other agencies, spick and span in flannels of Hollywood cut, carrying sticks, smoking pungent native cigarettes.

The sidewalks of Guadalajara! Walk them at this hour and you see the city eye-high and close up.

Workmen idly dig up the pavements, as always; traffic police in white gloves blow whistles and wave cars to stop. And they do stop; for one dis-

pute with an alert Guadalajara traffic cop and the big jail yawns for you. On an open space soldiers are drilling and women wait before the colossal prison to get in at visiting hours. "They built the jail big enough to hold everybody in town as a warning," is a local saying.

Workers in Clay.

Through the suburbs you meet more groups coming to work. In a flower garden a sandal-footed man is setting out young plants to make a fancy pattern of birds and flags.

From the tail of his big black dog, asleep beside him, an old Indian artist plucks a few hairs, twists them deftly into his tiny, frayed brush, and resumes painting eyebrows on a clay head of Pancho Villa, master outlaw.

Pose for your own bust, if you like, and watch your nose and ears form swiftly from the mud. In half an hour old Pandura (Hard Bread), famed Indian sculptor, makes a fair likeness.

"This Guadalajara clay art is fragile and hard to ship," says a buyer from the States. "But it sells well. Not the busts so much, but these urns, vases, and water bottles, in old Aztec patterns. These dancing girls are good, too. In their wide skirts and big sombreros."

Around Tonalá village and the suburb of San Pedro Tlaquepaque, Indians have worked in clay from time immemorial. The Spaniards found them at it, making dishes for domestic uses, making idols, images, and figurines of men and beasts.

Untaught, and working far from the patter of studios and talks on art, these Indians produce excellent sculpture. Tiny pack mules, street hawkers, market women with chickens and baskets of fruit, vaqueros on rearing horses—all are formed and painted with fidelity to life. Sophisticated and erotic pieces also appear, with miniatures, ornaments, and vessels carrying a raised fretwork of deer, rabbits, ferns or palms. A fat clay pig, hollow, with a slit in his back through which coins can pass, is much sold as a child's savings bank. Happily for the child, these figures break easily; all you have to do is drop them.

San Pedro Tlaquepaque, once the retreat of Spanish wealth and fashion, is linked with the city proper by tram, through an old customs gateway. Country people taking things into town to sell had to pay a tax in the old days to pass this gate.

A tiny, bright-eyed nurse girl, certainly not more than ten, comes by, carrying a big fat baby. You feel the baby should get down, for a change, and carry the tired little girl.

Gambling is Prevalent.

On the curb's edge, three soldiers are playing cards with a greasy deck. One man deals, calling "Ocho de espadas," eight of spades, and other faces as they turn up.

Gambling is not thought a vice. Men accost you, holding up yard-long strips of colored lottery tickets. You can buy a whole or part ticket. Such peddlers work on a commission for the official lottery, which holds regular drawings, is run in a strictly business manner, and devotes net profits to charities.

Police appear dragging two disorderly men, one badly cut in a street fight. Certain knives here are made to fight with. Any battle-scarred mingling or cow-ranch veteran will tell you he'd rather face a gun fighter than a Mexican trained with the knife. This business of knife fighting is full of fancy tricks. One is to throw the knife; another is suddenly to hit your opponent in the face with your hat, and then stick him while he's off guard. Defense work is equally skillful. The trained fighter wraps his serape around his left arm, or even grasps his big hat by the inside of the crown, using serape or hat as a shield, while thrusting with the knife. In "Old Mother Mexico," Harry Carr tells of a Mexican knife battle, fought to a draw, in which the heavy wool serapes were cut to shreds, but neither man hurt!

Animals "Made Up" for Motion Picture Work

There are beauty hints for animals as well as human beings, and a score of make-up devices as well. To the motion-picture camera all the members of the animal kingdom are alike; the only difference is in the personnel of the respective make-up departments and the dressing rooms, observes a writer in the St. Louis Globe-Democrat.

The dressing rooms for the jungle beasts on the film lot of one company are a hundred closely guarded cages. The make-up man is as different from the manured attendants to the human players as are his charges.

A thick beard hides his bronzed skin. His beauty equipment consists of huge files, fantastic shears, combs with yard-long handles—the sort of tools a beautician might see in a nightmare. He moves from cage to cage, his hands deftly wielding the instruments. For heaven forbid that a cinema cat or a "movie" monkey should hear the call to "camera!" without first being primped and carried to the pink of pulchritude.

There are more than 500 beasts of all descriptions in the "movie" menagerie. Before the lens is directed toward any group of them they are carefully groomed. Nails are clipped chiefly for the protection of those working in the picture with them. Fur is combed and brushed; everything is done to make them attractively ferocious or attractively amiable.

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