

# My People Or a Career?

**W. F. Fransee Who Studied at Feet of Sevcik With Jan Kubelik, Let Other Pupil Win Fame at Violin While He Became Missionary**



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BY MRS. R. J. BOYLAN.  
"Choose," said Conscience, "your people or your art."

And W. F. Fransee, first violinist and director of operas, chose "My People."

He left the crowded theaters of the world's big cities, where success had been his and went to spend his life in dingy, dirty districts helping the people of his own and kindred races to live better. He became an ordained minister in order that he might give them soul strength as well as bodily health.

This very day this man, who, like Kubelik and Kocian, studied under Sevcik, is at his work in the foreign sections trying to give his people a chance in this new world civilization that is such a problem to them.

He is well fitted for his task. Seven languages can his tongue talk and his ear understand. He loves his work and his people and he has a little brown-haired, brown-eyed enthusiast for a wife who is truly a helpmeet. He was more than most ministers—the fire of the musician.

He makes even his music help him. Men and women who could not be won in any other way or who are too home sick to listen to sermons can not keep from hearing the songs of his violin. Often these songs are home songs and they bring the tears that are God's medicine for the soul breakers "Heimweh."

Rev. Fransee trained for his profession in the Conservatory of Music in Prague, Bohemia. After his graduation he made a concert tour through Europe, including England and Scotland. He played in Glasgow and the manager of the Metropolitan Opera House, New York, heard him. The manager offered the young musician a position in his orchestra. It was accepted and when the tour was over the violinist went to New York, where he remained for five years. He was successful but he did not use his spare time as many musicians do. Instead he visited the parts of the city where his poor countrymen lived. Sometimes he took his violin with him and gave them of his music. Often he was depressed because he felt that they were rapidly losing the best that they had brought with them from their European homes and only gaining in its stead the worst that is in America.

From New York he went to the Grau Opera Company of Boston as director of grand opera and afterwards to the Castle Square Opera Company in Chicago. Meantime he directed many orchestras, glee clubs and chorals and once went to Texas to lead a sangster.

In Chicago he found the needs of his people great, but he found also that there were many organizations who gave their time to them as well as many volunteers who worked in the foreign sections.

The conditions in cities not as large as Chicago seemed harder and more hopeless because there were fewer helpers for the foreigners. He saw them exchanging their faith in God for a fatal unbelief. He saw their children growing up

without school knowledge. He saw their homes becoming dirtier and less sanitary the longer they lived in America. He realized that the work was big and that he could only give one life to the cause.

He had many conscience battles. His music quarreled with his duty, but duty won.

## ORDAINED FOR SERVICE SIX YEARS AGO.

He gave up a future that was hung with success banners and entered the ministry, being ordained by Bishop Spelmayer six years ago.

For six years he has served as a missionary for the First Methodist Church of East St. Louis, Ill. He has a mission on North Ninth street where services are held every Sunday and prayer meeting every Friday night.

All his days and many of his nights he spends going from home to home helping the men, women and children to whom few persons think of giving aid.

His congregation has no limits, neither has his work. He looks for employment for men and women, sees that they have medical care, encourages them to send their children to school and in every way he can serve them as a brother.

His reward is seldom more than the satisfaction of his own conscience. Often when his people are in trouble they look for him. After the trouble has been straightened out they forget about him or feel ashamed to speak to him.

There is a kindergarten in connection with his mission, where children who are younger than school age may stay through the day while their parents are at work. A deaconess is in charge of them. Besides this there are junior league societies and girls' and boys' clubs. For a number of years he worked away at his task and few persons besides those connected with his church knew that any effort was being made for the foreigners.

Gradually organizations outside of his church learned what he was doing and asked him to tell them about his people. He has often spoken before women's clubs and given them valuable advice about the kind of work that is helpful.

In several months he will be given a new building in which he will be able to do many of the things on a large scale which at present must be done in a small way.

In speaking before the Women's Civic Federation of his city about the usefulness of a day nursery he said, "There is a need for a day nursery here because laboring men's wages are so small, and the saloons are so many that the women have to work away from home."

A number of girls who belong to the Young Women's Christian Association wished to do a Christmas charity last year and asked Rev. Fransee to select a poor family. The hard part of that task was not in finding the family, but in selecting the one from the many that really needed the gifts most. He did this part, however, and the Sunday before Christmas he and a committee of the girls walked far out railroad tracks and down a

muddy road to the home. Home is a kind word to apply to the habitation built by the father of scraps of lumber that he was able to find. In it were the father, mother and three children. The girls had brought clothing for these and gifts. The parents as well as the children could hardly believe that such good fortune was theirs. They looked at the toys as one might look at a star far off in the heavens and wonder at its beauty, never dreaming of taking it in one's hands.

When his people are sick he often has to help give them medicine. He has found that they are ashamed to tell their physicians that they cannot read directions on the bottles and thus can not give medicine as it should be done.

"Many times," he says, "my people have had as many as three physicians in one day. They send for one, he comes. He orders medicine. They get it, but can not give it. The patient grows worse and they send for another physician and so on."

"The only way they can be helped is for some one to stay right there and give the medicine. I have done that. I have sat up night after night in order that no mistakes might be made."

"Once I went into a home as the physician was going out. The wife was very sick. The man had given his last \$2 to the physician and had no money to get the prescription filled."

"I was able to help there. 'Another day I went to see a family living in a little addition that is built of pieces of freight cars. A little baby had been born, the ninth in that family and the mother had not recovered but had become seriously sick and was then burning with fever. Her face was covered with flies and she had tossed about so in her suffering that she was lying on the child."

**FOREIGNERS AFRAID OF THE HOSPITALS.**

"Her husband was home and the other children, but they could do nothing for her. I said, 'Your wife should be in the hospital.'"

"He objected. Many of my people fear to go to hospitals or to let those they love be taken there. They do not know the ways of hospitals and they think that one who goes away in an ambulance is already in a hearse."

"I explained to the man and at last he consented, but he would not go with his wife. He wished me to do that. I wrapped mother and child in the blankets I could find and rode with them in the ambulance. My relief came too late.

**T**OP, left—W. F. Fransee and Mrs. Fransee. At right—Jan Kubelik. Below—Kubelik, his wife and five little girls at play.

The mother could not recover. When she died I could not bear to think of having the funeral from the awful shack in which the home was, so I had her taken to the mission. My funds were low and there was no money for a funeral, but friends of the church who heard of the death gave me enough money to give that good woman, that mother of children, decent burial.

"I sent for the oldest girl and told her to dress the children in the best clothes they had, in order that they pay their mother their last respects by going to the funeral. She went home and came back with all of the children except a little boy of 3. When I asked why she had not brought him, she said, 'There was nothing for him to wear.'"

"I hurried to the home and found the little fellow standing in the middle of that cold house; there was a cold, drizzling rain falling, the floors covered with mud and he wearing only a little apron. I wrapped him up in some rags and carried him to my house, where we found clothes for him to wear to the funeral."

"When the burial was over the father came to me and said, 'You are such a good man that I am going to give you some of my children. You may have that little baby and some of the others, but I can not give up my oldest boy, nor that little fellow of 3. He looks so much like my dead wife.'"

"I didn't know just what I would do with the children but I did know that greater danger threatened the oldest girl than any of the others and I asked for her at once. He was glad to give her to me. I kept them in my house for a while and then found good homes for them."

"I was sorry afterwards that he did not give me the other two. He let the oldest boy, born blind you in America, grow up without schooling, and he let a woman take that little fellow and pretend he was hers in order that she might beg."

This instance is given in order that you may see just how far this work is from grand opera.

He does his duty as a citizen of the United States and helps his fellow men and women when they

wish to become citizens. Notice the fellow women. That part of his work did not begin until this year when for the first time Illinois women were permitted to vote in civic elections. At the request of the women's clubs he spoke before

## OLD MASTERPIECE IS FOUND IN PHILADELPHIA

Old paintings are among the most elusive of art treasures, even though—as has been contended of late—their primitive colors neither fade nor change. An old master may be one thing today and something quite different under later expert treatment.

This happened recently to Carlo Dolci's sixteenth century picture in the Memorial Hall collection, where it was catalogued as "Youth and Love." When it was turned over for restoration to Artist Pasquale Farina, he found that it was in reality one of the Florentine artist's missing masterpieces, "Salome With John the Baptist's Head." Some graceless fellow had painted a heap of fresh fruit over the discolored head.

Since coming to Philadelphia from Buenos Aires ten years ago to undertake the restoration and reconstruction of the great Munkasy pictures in the Wanamaker private collection, Mr. Farina has made old masters an especial study. Under his restoring hands, the great chronological collection of John G. Johnson and the old masters in Memorial Hall and at the Fine Arts Academy have resumed pristine brilliancy and perfection. He has utterly demolished the "Golden Bloom" and "Faded Color" theories, heretofore so useful to dealers intent on victimizing long-purged collectors.

Incidentally, he set about collecting old masters himself. The expert has in this a vast advantage over the mere man of money, and soon Mr. Farina began to engage the Italian authorities' attention. Most of the genuine old pictures nowadays are from old castles in Italy; and the government forbids their removal from the country. How this edict is evaded by a thousand cunning devices is another story; but Mr. Farina, two or three years ago, found that he possessed a private gallery in Rome of more than 100 old masters, none of which was permitted to take to America.

One, however, he did bring over, with the aid of friends in Naples—a fine "Madonna," by Joseph Carucci, a famous Florentine painter, who flourished during the first half

meetings of foreign women explaining to them their rights and their duties. Which may be in some the grand opera of tomorrow, but which have no place in those of today and yesterday.

He takes interest in any project that is for the advancement of his people and the city in which they live. He is a member of the Pastors' Alliance and his fellow ministers love him as men love younger brothers who have had more privileges than they.

Some time ago a concert was given by the First Methodist Church and Rev. Mr. Fransee agreed to give of his violin music for the evening's entertainment. There were those among the audience who had never heard such music as he brought forth from his instrument

and for days after there was talk of the "missionary who plays the violin."

Since then he has taken part in a number of church entertainments and recently he was a soloist in the annual entertainment of the Schubert club, the leading women's musical club in his city. The concert was directed by Oliver Howard Clark, who also has known the pleasure of study in old world music centers. This is Rev. Mr. Fransee's way of "paying back" the interest taken in his people by men and women of the city whose homes are happier and more comfortable.

His music is his recreation after hard days and nights at his work. His conscience allows him that much pleasure after his great sacrifice.

of the sixteenth century. Carucci was a careless genius, fond of painting goddesses and bacchantes, and in no wise inclined to save his soul, as other artists did, by painting saints, angels and holy virgins for predella and altar pieces of the churches.

But he painted one "Madonna" on a wooden panel ruthlessly sawed from an earlier picture; and this, by a process of bargaining, some years ago came into Mr. Farina's possession.

Carucci—he called him "Il Pontormo" in his time, because of the suburb where he lived—lavished all his skill on this Madonna. The painting was critically regarded as one of the finest examples of Florentine art.

But it was obscured by the "bloom" and dust of ages, the colors dull, the draperies almost invisible. Recently Mr. Farina set about a long-delayed task of disclosure and restoration, with this Pontormo "Madonna" as subject. The countenance sparkled anew; the flowing draperies were light, feathery and free flowing just as when the colors were first laid on in distemper, more than four centuries ago.

Traces of a dim figure in the inner angle of the left elbow caught the artist's eye, and beneath Il Pontormo's heavy impost he found an old man's head painted with miniature-like care—the head of St. Peter. That was the last of Carucci's work. The painting beneath it was even rarer than a century older.

With true antiquarian zeal, the artist at once proceeded to destroy the Pontormo picture, one of the loveliest Madonnas of the Florentine school, in order to reveal an unknown artist's conception of "Christ in Gethsemane."

The photographic reproduction of this picture, painted at least six centuries ago, in an artistic landmark, denoting the beginning of that amazing movement in Italian art which culminated in immortal masterpieces of Venetian, Umbrian and Neapolitan schools in the sixteenth century.

This now long-moldered painter had little notion of drawing or perspective. He outlined his figures

with a graving tool, the marks of which are plainly visible. His figures are manifestly portraits from life, the faces finished with miniature-like delicacy. He gilded as well as painted, and on the hair and drapery of his Savior and saints may still be seen the gleam of gold—a tradition of the Byzantine manner.

Pontormo himself evidently thought nothing of this old picture. It was evidently much larger originally; but the great Florentine cut out of it the panel he desired, and covered this to such excellent purpose that his "Madonna" remained untouched for nearly 400 years. The earlier painting—in distemper, now hard as enamel—is an extremely rare example of art in the earlier period of the renaissance.

There are many cases," said Mr. Farina, "in which painters of all periods, made use of canvases or panels on which amateurs or inferior masters had already painted a picture."

"No matter how inferior the painter, every one of his canvases or boards was properly prepared. These men of no repute were equal to their masters in sound knowledge of the technical part of the painter's art."

**Americans Wearing French Shoes.**  
The tables have been turned this spring, for instead of American slippers being sent for by fair Parisiennes, who admit the superiority of American footwear, a French slipper—as frivolous and extreme as only a French footcovering can be—has arrived to play its part in this American summer.

The new slipper has an enormously high Louis heel and the thinnest of thin turned soles. It is ideal for dancing, not only because of the high heel and paper thin sole, but also because the broad strap at the front holds it as firmly on the foot as a well fitting buttoned shoe. The exaggerated size and the huge buckle is absurdly in contrast with the speck of a cut steel ornament on the slipper toe; but all the same this is a very smart and a very popular slipper style.