

HE SINGS FOR THE PHONOGRAPHS.

Chicago Man Who Makes \$50 a Day by Stretching His Lungs.

Away out in the extreme northwestern part of the city, near the Milwaukee railroad tracks, Silas Leachman puts in four or five hours every day singing at the top of his lungs, though not a soul is in hearing but his wife. When he gets tired of singing he varies the proceedings by preaching a negro sermon, or gives an imitation of an Irish wake, and altogether conducts himself in a way that would lead the neighbors to consider him a fit subject for a lunatic asylum—if there were any neighbors, but there are not. This is the very reason Mr. Leachman chose the lonely spot for his residence. No one ever goes out there to hear him sing, and yet he is getting rich at it. He earns something over \$50 every day, though he never sees one of his auditors. Mr. Leachman sings for phonographs, and as he has a monopoly of the business in the West, he contrives to keep busy, and has even been heard to express a wish that he were twins. He has better protection in his monopoly than a copyright or an injunction, or unlimited legal talent could afford. Nature gave him the peculiar qualities that enable him to reproduce his voice perfectly on the wax cylinders. Hundreds of persons have attempted to break in on his profitable monopoly, but the results of their efforts put an effectual stop to their attempts. And so Mr. Leachman goes on enjoying the monopoly and reaping the profits thereof.

There are four other men in the East that also do work for the phonograph, but while they have to have a man to play the piano while they sing, another to make the announcement, another to change the cylinders, and a fourth to keep the machines in order, Mr. Leachman is the entire show in himself. Furthermore, he can give an unlimited number of impersonations, while the other four men are limited to a few specialties each. Mr. Leachman is a natural mimic, and therein lies the secret of his success. He sings ballads, negro melodies, and Irish, Chinese, and Dutch dialect songs. He plays his own accompaniment on the piano and takes care of the machines. He prepares three "records," as the wax cylinders are called, at one time. To do this three phonographs are placed near the piano with the horns at one side pointing away from the keyboard at an angle of 45 deg. The horns have to be placed very carefully, for a fifth of an inch makes a great difference in the tone the cylinders will reproduce.

When the horns have been adjusted exactly right Mr. Leachman seats himself at the piano and, turning his head away over his right shoulder, begins to sing as loud as he can, and that is pretty loud, for he is a man of powerful physique, and has been practicing loud singing for four years. He has been doing this work until his throat has become calloused so that he no longer becomes exhausted after singing a short time. As soon as he has finished one song he slips off the wax cylinders, puts on three fresh ones without leaving his seat, and goes right on singing until a passing train compels him to stop for a short time. In the four years he has been in the business he has made nearly 250,000 records. So great is the demand for them that he cannot fill his orders. It is such exceedingly hard work that he cannot sing more than four hours a day. He gets 35 cents for every cylinder he prepares. He has a repertoire of 420 pieces, and his work is put on the market under a score of names. He has a remarkable memory, and after once hearing a song can not only repeat the words and music correctly, but he can imitate excellently the voice and expression of the singer.

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