

MUSIC - UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO



3 1761 07193 273 5

PIANO MASTERY

SECOND SERIES



HARRIETTE BROWER

PIANO MASTERY
SECOND SERIES





Warmly Yrs
Percy Grainger
Nov. 1915.

©
J. M. DUPONT
N.Y.
8.

PIANO MASTERY

SECOND SERIES

TALKS WITH MASTER PIANISTS AND TEACHERS

INCLUDING CONFERENCES WITH HOFMANN, GODOWSKY,
GRAINGER, POWELL, NOVAES, HUTCHESON AND OTHERS;
ALSO HINTS ON MACDOWELL'S TEACHING BY MRS.
MACDOWELL, AND REMINISCENCES OF JOSEFFY

BY

HARRIETTE BROWER

Author of "Piano Mastery" and "The Art of the Pianist"

WITH SIXTEEN PORTRAITS



NEW YORK
FREDERICK A. STOKES COMPANY
PUBLISHERS



PIANO MASTERY

SECOND SERIES

*TALKS WITH MASTER PIANISTS
AND TEACHERS*

INCLUDING CONFERENCES WITH HOFMANN, GODOWSKY,
GRAINGER, POWELL, NOVAES, HUTCHESON AND OTHERS;
ALSO HINTS ON MACDOWELL'S TEACHING BY MRS.
MACDOWELL, AND REMINISCENCES OF JOSEFFY

BY

HARRIETTE BROWER

Author of "Piano Mastery" and "The Art of the Pianist"

WITH SIXTEEN PORTRAITS



NEW YORK
FREDERICK A. STOKES COMPANY
PUBLISHERS

Copyright, 1917, by
FREDERICK A. STOKES COMPANY

Copyright, 1915, 1916, by
THE MUSICAL AMERICA

Copyright, 1915, 1916, by
THE MUSICAL OBSERVER COMPANY

Copyright, 1916, by
OLIVER DITSON COMPANY

*All rights reserved, including that of translation into
foreign languages*

MT

220

B86

CONTENTS

	PAGE
PRELUDE	ix
PERCY GRAINGER . . . Freedom of Thought in Piano Study	1
JOSEF HOFMANN . . . Inspiration in Piano Playing . .	18
GUIOMAR NOVAES . . . The Gift of Music	30
JOHN POWELL "Art the Expression of Life" .	39
ARTHUR SHATTUCK . . The Pianist Should Cultivate Many Sides of Art	53
LEOPOLD GODOWSKY . . The Laws Governing Technic and Interpretation	61
CARL FRIEDBERG	80
YOLANDA MÉRÖ . . . The Beautiful in Music	88
ERNEST HUTCHESON . . Technic and Interpretation . .	100
MR. AND MRS. A. K. VIRGIL	The Necessity of a Thorough Foundation 114
EDWARD MACDOWELL . . Related by Mrs. Edward Mac- Dowell	125
RUTH DEYO	The Technic of Interpretation . 134
MARTINUS SIEVEKING . . The Dead-Weight Principle . .	147
MARGUERITE MELVILLE- LISZNIEWSKA	The Art of the Teacher . . . 163
MRS. H. H. A. BEACH . . How a Composer Works . . .	179
LEO ORNSTEIN	Sanity in Music Study 188

Contents

	PAGE
HAROLD HENRY Fundamental Principles	201
HENRY HOLDEN HUSS . Elimination of Mechanical Etudes	208
RICHARD BUHLIG . . . The Value of Learning to Hear	215
MISCHA LEVITZKI . . . The Development of a Natural Technic	224
ETHEL NEWCOMB . . . Mental Problems in Piano Study	233
RAFAEL JOSEFFY . . . By Some of His Pupils	242
KATE S. CHITTENDEN . Simplified Piano Technic . . .	255
AUGUSTA COTFLOW . . . Technical Essentials in Piano Study	264

ILLUSTRATIONS

Percy Grainger	<i>Frontispiece</i>
	FACING PAGE
Josef Hofmann	18
Guionar Novaes	30
John Powell	40
Leopold Godowsky	62
Yolanda Méro	88
Ernest Hutcheson	100
Mr. and Mrs. A. K. Virgil	114
Edward MacDowell	126
Ruth Deyo	134
Marguerite Melville-Liszniewska	164
Mrs. H. H. A. Beach	180
Leo Ornstein	188
Henry Holden Huss	208
Mischa Levitski	224
Rafael Joseffy	242

PRELUDE

Encouraged by the success attending the appearance of **PIANO MASTERY**, Volume 1, a Second Series of Talks with great pianists and teachers has been prepared, at the request of the publishers.

In arranging the present volume, it was desired to include not only those who have become known to fame, but also those of the younger school of pianists who have achieved recognition for special gifts. A number of the latter have been included in the present volume. Lack of space, however, has prevented the inclusion of many more rising young artists who otherwise would surely have found a place in this collection.

It is earnestly hoped these familiar conferences with eminent pianists will be helpful and inspiring to all lovers of good music.

HARRIETTE BROWER.

150 West 80th Street,
New York.

PIANO MASTERY

SECOND SERIES

I

PERCY GRAINGER

FREEDOM OF THOUGHT IN PIANO STUDY

WHEN Percy Grainger, the Australian pianist and composer, arrived in America he was not known as a player and but little as a composer, although a couple of his works for orchestra had been performed during a former season. When he gave his first recital, he proved to be a pianist of solid attainments and also of unusual freshness and charm. His playing, his compositions, his personality, went straight to the hearts of his hearers; he soon found himself the lion of the hour; success attended each subsequent appearance.

It has been aptly said that a musician can do little or nothing without enthusiasm. In Percy Grainger, the quality of enthusiasm is

a potent force in his character and career. According to his own testimony, he loves to play, to compose, to teach, to visit new lands, to become familiar with new people. He has the youthful buoyancy that welcomes with eagerness each new event and experience.

To come into personal touch with Percy Grainger, to hear him in recital and with orchestra, is to be conscious of an entirely new series of experiences. Personally you feel here is a particular kind of mentality, one which is care-free, untrammelled; of most gentle spirit, yet bold and heaven-storming when bent on carrying out a purpose. Perhaps the words original and unconventional would apply, though no words can aptly describe so unique and complex a nature. At one moment he speaks of the homely matters of everyday living, with the utmost simplicity; at the next his remarks bespeak wide knowledge of men and affairs, of various countries and peoples. Whether he thoughtfully fixes a serious, searching gaze on you, or whether his face is sunny with smiles, you have the same impression of the utter sincerity and single-heartedness of the man, of the radiant vitality of his individuality.

It is the same when he plays. Sincerity

shines through everything he does, and the buoyancy of a fresh, earnest, healthful spirit carries you along with it. There is no flagging of energy, no moment of languor, all is vital and alive. At times his playing is electrifying. To hear him deliver the opening of the Tschaikowsky B minor Concerto is the most exciting experience; something that carries you off your feet like a whirlwind. As a pianist remarked to me recently, "A recital by Percy Grainger always makes one feel happy, inspired and ready to meet everything."

Although it has been my privilege to confer with Mr. Grainger at various times, it is pleasant to recall the memory of our first conversation. We were seated in the sitting room of their apartment in the hotel, and Mrs. Grainger had just poured tea for us. She might easily be taken for an elder sister of the young artist, instead of his mother. The same sun-bright hair, clear blue eyes and fresh ruddy color. She is his devoted and constant companion, accompanying him everywhere. You feel they must both have lived much in the open, have tramped "o'er moor and fen," have been steeped in fresh air and sunshine.

"I had not expected to come to America at this time," began Mr. Grainger; "but we came

primarily on account of my mother's frail health, which I am happy to say she has regained in this country. My European tour, embracing many concerts, had of course to be relinquished on account of the war. We sailed at three days' notice, and our intention was to stay two or three months at the most. It looks now as though we would remain in America for a long time.

"My mother, who is an excellent musician, was my first teacher. She began with me when I was five, and worked with me constantly, two hours daily, for five years. This was in Melbourne, Australia, where I was born. We left there when I was twelve. At about the age of ten I appeared in public and my career as pianist began. My teacher at that time was Professor Pabst, who subsequently became connected with the Moscow Conservatory. When we came to Germany, I went to Professor Kwast, at Frankfort, with whom I remained six years. Later I studied with Busoni, whom as pianist and teacher I most deeply revere.

"Together with playing and composing, I have found some time for teaching, though this work suffered frequent interruption on account of my tours as a pianist. But I enjoy

teaching immensely; it is such individual work; it is like conducting in its effort to bring out the meaning of the composer by means of another medium or mentality. It is showing others how to express the idea. This is where the true teacher can so greatly assist the student, by being able to show him exactly how various effects are to be made, provided, of course, the pupil is anxious to learn how. As for methods of teaching technic, I do not in general care for them; I avoid them. They are often only an excuse for laziness, as they prevent the pupil from thinking for himself. As for technical training, he can get it—after the foundation is laid—in the pieces he studies. I do not believe in set rules for technic; if the player wants to turn his hand upside down and play with the palm uppermost, I dare say he could do it, if he worked at it with the same zeal that he does with the accepted position. In other words, I believe we should inculcate principles of technical freedom and individuality in every player.

“Pupils often come to study with me from the various countries where I have played. I have appeared frequently in Scandinavia and Holland, and have had numerous pupils from both those lands, as well as from England and

the Colonies. The Dutch are a very musical people. I might say English and American pupils are perhaps the most talented, but their talent takes the form of doing things easily. There is talent that acquires all with hard work, and another sort that achieves without great labor.

THE SENSE OF RHYTHM

“You ask if I approve of the metronome. I certainly do; and it is amusing sometimes to see how different the mechanical idea of rhythm is from the true sense and feeling for it. We can also use the metronome for working up velocity.

“In regard to the natural feeling for rhythm, I don’t find people in general so deficient in this quality as is so often imagined. The common peasant, with no cultivation whatever, has an innate sense of rhythm. It will not harmonize, I grant you, with the beat of the metronome, but it is a very forceful and individual thing. He will put a swing and ‘go’ into a popular air which can never be found in mechanical rhythm. Mechanical means may be necessary in the student’s early stages, especially if the learner has not a just conception of the various note values.

MENTAL PROCESSES DURING PERFORMANCE

“About mental processes during actual performance of the piece in public, it is difficult to speak, as so many subtle influences are brought to bear. It is to be regretted that the custom prevails of playing everything without notes. I think many a fine pianist is greatly worried over the fear of failure of memory. This may affect his playing; it may prevent the freedom of utterance he might have, were he relieved of the fear of forgetting. All pianists agree that it is a great mental strain to perform a long and exacting program from memory; it is no wonder that even the greatest artists occasionally forget. It is no crime to have a lapse of memory, though it is annoying, especially if one is playing with orchestra. This has never happened to me; if it ever should I think I would treat the situation quite calmly; perhaps I would go and get the notes—I always have them with me—or I would look over the conductor’s shoulder, assure myself of the place and then go on. The great thing is to have presence of mind in such an emergency. If one is not very strong physically, or if a great deal depends on the result of one’s performance, the strain of performing an exacting

program in public, from memory, is greater. Of course it is not artistic to play badly, so it were much better to have the notes in front of one than to produce poor results. Most artists would play more naturally with notes before them—if accustomed to use them. Fear often destroys the perfection of what might be a fine rendition. The comfortable, the ideal way, I suppose would be to really know the piece from memory and yet play from the notes.

ART IS NATURAL

“Art is the expression of natural impulses; therefore I do not believe in being fettered by many rules. Rather I believe in being as natural and free as possible in the working out of artistic ideals at the instrument. For instance, I do not believe in people striving to acquire a certain pianistic style they are not fitted for. If the hand is small and the physique delicate, why not keep the dynamic scale small? Why not play with delicacy and fineness, instead of striving to become heroic? Pachman, for instance, is a pianist whose limitations are to a certain extent responsible for his greatness. It is said he never makes a real *fortissimo*; but

we admire his delicacy and *finesse* and do not wish him to strive for great power.

TECHNIC GROWS OUT OF HABIT

“The technic of an art is, to a certain extent, mainly habit. I do believe in habit. We get used to measuring skips, for instance, with eye and hand, until we can locate them automatically, from habit. It is the same with all sorts of technical figures; we acquire the habit of doing them through constant repetition. When the mechanical part has become automatic, we can give the mind fully to the emotion to be expressed. For I do not believe you can feel the structure of the piece and its emotional message at the same time. For my own part I am not much concerned about how the piece is put together; I think of it as music, as the expression of natural impulses, desires or aspirations.

PEDAL AND MELODY EFFECTS

“When teaching piano, I make a great study of pedal effects with my pupils. Many fine effects of *diminuendo* can be made with quick half pedaling. The subject of pedaling is none too well understood; most wonderful tonal colors can be produced by an artistic

use of the pedals." Mr. Grainger seated himself at the piano and played a brilliant passage ending with sustained chords, for which latter he used shifting, vibrating pedals with charming effect.

"Another point I make is the bringing out of a melody note above the other tones of a chord; that is to say, making one tone in a chord louder than the rest. This is not new, of course, but students forget to study it. The ability to bring out a desired tone comes with practice, for it is not easy to accomplish at first. Most learners think they must play such chords *forte*, whereas the best way to study them is *piano*.

PIECES THAT IMPROVE TOUCH

"Many of the modern French compositions are very useful in developing sensitiveness of finger, and I make much use of them with pupils. From Debussy *Reflets dans l'eau*, and *Pagodes* may be chosen; also the *Ondine* and other pieces by Ravel. From Cyril Scott take the *Lotus Land* and *Sphinx*, also the set of five *Poems*; all are valuable as touch developers. I find little attention is given to the study of *pianissimo* effects; these pieces give one much opportunity to acquire delicacy.

DELIGHTS OF STUDY

"Do not imagine I want less study because I seek to avoid many formalities. Study is the only thing I care about in life, but I love the study of nature as well as art. No one can study too much; but let us have the heart of everything, not only the formal side. I like to study the language of a people, but rather the phonetics than the grammar.

"To me art is joy. The more intensely studious the artist, the more joyous will he be in his art. To my mind everything connected with art and the study of art, should be easy, natural, individualistic, untrammelled and instinctive. Above all instinctive; 'Von innen heraus.'

"In art there is no escaping from one's true inner nature; neither for beginner nor for finished artist. It seems to me the teacher should not strive to teach any one pupil the entire gamut of pianistic technic, but concentrate rather upon those phases of it to which the pupil seems physically addicted, or emotionally attracted.

"One hour spent in practicing a phase of music for which a pupil has a natural physical or imaginative ability, will generally prove

more fruitful than many hours devoted to problems towards which the pupil is less instinctively impelled.

“Let each student and subsequently each artist choose those compositions that contain in abundance the particular pianistic styles for which his emotional and physical nature equips him. This course will make for individuality in the artist’s repertory, and tend to banish samishness from concert programs.

BEGINNING MUSIC STUDY

“Beginners at the piano need to learn so many things at the start. There is the training of eye, ear and hand, the learning of notes and note-values, together with all sorts of movements. If students could have thorough drill in these things before they come to us, how much greater progress they would make in the real business of playing the piano!

“As to instructing beginners, I find naturally no necessity for doing this on the piano; but I have taught beginners on the mandolin and guitar. I am fond of the combination of these instruments with strings and have written a number of compositions for a small body of string players. I play the guitar myself, and so does my mother; I have a special

method of performing on it. I prefer to take an out-and-out beginner on this instrument than to take some one who has played it a good deal, and be obliged to show him all over again."

NEW INSTRUMENTS

Mr. Grainger had much to say about composing for a small orchestra.

"Very interesting to a modern composer," he remarked, "are the several newly invented or perfected instruments, such as the Mustel organ, the various Saxophones, the Haeckel-phone; also the percussion instruments, such as the Marimbaphone, Bass-xylophones, Resonaphone, and the like. The tone of most of these new instruments is fairly delicate and sensitive, and would be swamped or lost in a modern mammoth orchestra. My own feeling is that it is in combinations of chamber music that these smaller, subtle, but highly characteristic instruments come into their own, and are heard at their full value. The latter-day tendencies are not toward noise and tonal effects on a gigantic scale, but rather toward delicacy, sensitiveness and, above all, transparency of color. Personally, I enjoy best of all writing for combinations of—let us say—

six to twenty instruments, such as four strings, celesta, English horn, two guitars and resonaphone. Or such a combination as this: five men's voices, Mustel organ, four woodwind instruments and six strings."

Some of Mr. Grainger's compositions already published embody the folk tunes of various countries in new and original forms. Those for piano include Shepherd's Hey, Green Bushes, Country Tune, and Colonial Song; these are also scored for full orchestra. They can be obtained for a smaller company of players, even as small a number as twelve.

Percy Grainger has been called by Runciman "the one cheerful, sunny composer living." Finck says of his music: "One really feels tempted to say that these are the best things that have ever come to us from England." Other critics have written much in praise of his compositions. "He catches us up and whirls us away in the spirit of the country dance." "His music sounds like the dawning of a new era." "Such genuine humor and wit, such enthusiasm, such virility and masterly musicianship as Mr. Grainger shows are met with only on the rarest occasions in a musician of any country. Indeed it is doubtful if

all these qualities are combined in any other composer now before the public."

These are words of high praise, from well-known authorities. We should rejoice to find a composer who can write in a healthy, sane and buoyant spirit. We do not want to be forever in the depths, racked by violent unhealthy emotions; we want to be on the heights, in the sunlight, whenever we can reach such altitudes.

Mr. Grainger's compositions are popular in England and on the Continent, and bid fair to become equally so in America. Like most true artists, he feels strongly that "wars or rumors of wars" should not be allowed to upset the internationality of art. The young Australian is deeply touched by the true spirit of artistic neutrality he has met on all sides in New York, amongst musicians of every nationality, and he points with pride to the fact that some of the best criticisms he has received in America have appeared in the German newspapers. He is no less proud of the high spirit of neutrality which permeates English musical life at present. Not long ago two large festivals of German music, one devoted to Brahms, the other to Wagner, were held there. Another "Festival of German Music"

is shortly to be held in London, side by side with a "Festival of British Music," in which the works of Cyril Scott, Frederick Delius, Stanford, Elgar and Percy Grainger figure largely. At present Frederick Delius, the great Anglo-German composer, and Percy Grainger run one another very close in popularity. Mr. Grainger is boundlessly enthusiastic over his "rival," who, in his judgment, is the greatest of living composers.

"It is inspiring to live in an age in which such noble and altruistic interpretations of the universality of art are displayed," said Mr. Grainger. "In Frederick Delius," continued his Australian admirer, "German and British qualities are most fortunately blended and have contrived to produce a unique genius, whose work recalls at once such creative types as Bach, Walt Whitman, Keats and Grieg."

Mr. Grainger is gifted as a linguist and is enthusiastic over the various tongues and dialects of the different countries through which he has traveled. He speaks German, Danish, Dutch and Norwegian, and has some knowledge of Icelandic, Jutish, Frisian, Faroese and the peasant dialects of Norway. This acquaintance with the languages has greatly assisted in the study of folk melodies. He is

considered one of the greatest authorities on folk songs and primitive music, having himself collected and carefully noted down nearly five hundred examples of traditional singing and playing in Great Britain, Scandinavia, New Zealand and the South Seas.

As a pianist Percy Grainger plays with clarity of touch, variety of tone color and splendid sweep and virility. He is able to set the composition before the listener in well-balanced proportions, and direct simplicity of thought. One feels the composer of the work under consideration would wish it played in just this way, with just this directness of utterance. At the same time the pianist lends to everything he touches the glow of his own buoyancy and enthusiasm, by means of which well-known themes take on a new meaning and make a new and unusual appeal.

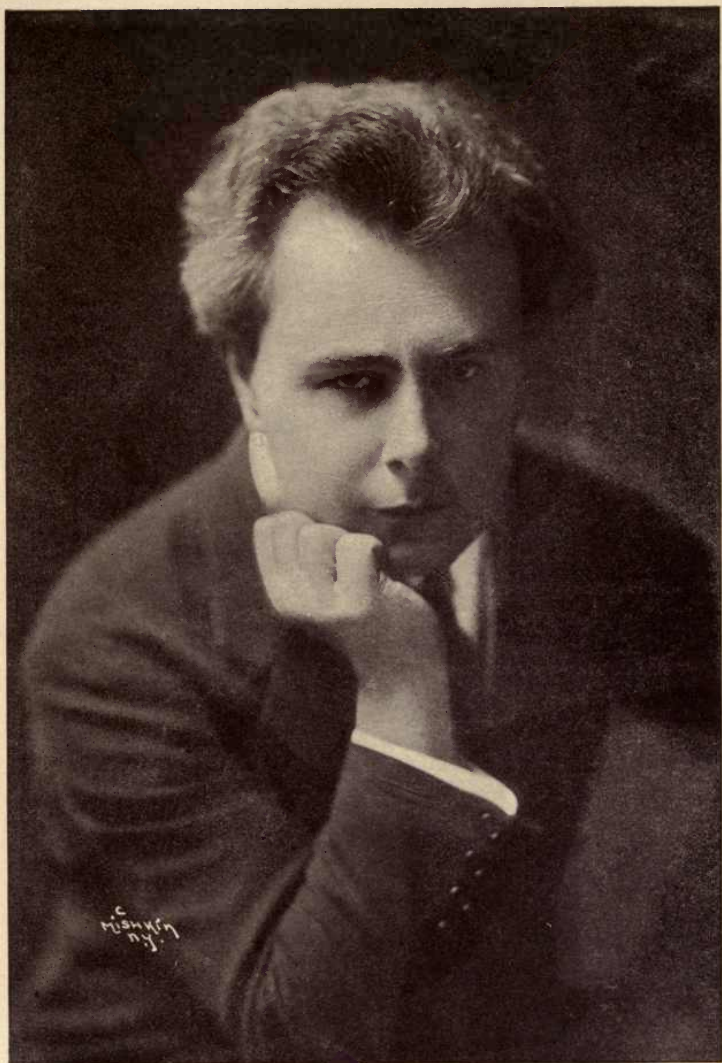
II

JOSEF HOFMANN

INSPIRATION IN PIANO PLAYING

AMERICANS naturally feel a peculiar interest in the art of Josef Hofmann, for they have seen it grow and develop from the wonder child of ten to the matured artist, who stands to-day on the mountain height of his profession. There must be thousands in this country who remember the marvelous exhibition of piano playing offered by the little Polish boy during the season of 1888, when, as a wonderful child prodigy, he was brought over to make his first tour of America.

He was such a little fellow, with such a serious face, as he came upon the stage in his simple sailor suit and climbed on to the piano stool. But we soon forgot all else, after the orchestral prelude, when he began to play. Ah, then it was no longer a tiny child, in a blue sailor suit; it was a man, who grappled with those handfuls of notes and flung them out into space with such sureness and freedom.



To Miss Harriette Brower with best
compliments of Joseph H. H. H.
New York 1916.

That powerful, singing tone did not belong to the puny strength of a child of ten. Neither did that sympathetic reading of the score, that understanding of the meaning of the music. No human power could have taught him these things; it was inborn genius.

No wonder people went wild with excitement and split their gloves in vociferous applause. It was almost beyond belief. The climax came when this mite of a boy began to improvise on a theme handed up to him by chance from any one in the audience. Then his powers were tested and not found wanting.

People shook their heads and said such precocity could not mature; that the lad would probably never be heard from in the future. In this they were vastly mistaken. The child prodigy retired from the footlights and spent seven or eight years in close study. Then he emerged into the light and returned to us a full-fledged artist. But that was not the end. Josef Hofmann was never content to stand still; it was only a milestone in his upward flight. He has always been at work, always progressing, never content with present attainments. Each year we have watched his growth, have felt his art become finer, more expressive, more subtle, until at the present moment it

seems wellnigh perfect. Yet the artist does not take this view.

"There are still difficulties I have not yet overcome, limitations beyond which I have not passed. I have not yet all the power I desire, nor always the ability to express every shade of emotion I wish to portray. There is still much I hope to accomplish in the expression of emotion and inspiration in piano playing." Admissions like these, coming from the lips of such a musician, are further proofs of the humility of the truly great artist.

Mr. Hofmann, in spite of pressing concert engagements, permitted me to come and talk over with him some of the phases of pianistic art.

I found him in his apartments overlooking the park. A fluffy white poodle took great interest in the entrance of the visitor, but was cautioned by his master, who held up a warning fore finger, "not to be a bore."

"You will meet my family by degrees," remarked the artist, smiling: "first my dog, then Mrs. Hofmann (who entered later) and my little daughter, Josepha." This little girl of nine has marked ability along artistic lines, and is already doing creditable sketches in water color.

We spoke first of the little Polish boy, who aroused such a furore in America at the age of ten.

"That was in '88," said Mr. Hofmann. "At that time I played the Mendelssohn Concerto in G minor, also his Capriccio, and the Beethoven Concertos in C major and C minor."

"Do not forget the improvising, which seemed so marvelous to us then."

"Oh, yes, I improvised, of course."

"Surely one who has such a perfect technic, who has solved every technical problem, can accomplish all one desires in interpretation."

"It goes without saying that an artist in these days must have a great technic: that is where piano playing really begins. But I do not consider that I yet possess a perfect technic, for I still have limitations. The artist, however, must allow the public to guess his limitations. There is as much art in choosing the right kind of compositions as in playing them. There are still some pieces I would not attempt; some that require more power, for instance, than I now have. The player should never urge his force to the limit; he must always keep something in reserve. If the tone is at its utmost capacity of production, it will sound hard; there must

always be some reserve power back of it. Rubinstein was capable of immense power, for he had a very heavy hand and arm. His fifth finger was as thick as my thumb—think of it! Then his fingers were square on the ends, with cushions on them. It was a wonderful hand, and very large besides. Yet with all his power, one felt he had more in reserve.

TECHNIC STUDY

“I do no technical work outside of the composition, for the reason that I find plenty of technic to work on in the piece itself. Every passage that presents the least difficulty is studied in minute detail, with well raised fingers, clear distinct touch, always taking care to put the finger down exactly in the middle of each key, not on the side of it. The piece is studied with every kind of touch, tempo and dynamics—studied till the player has command of every possible variety of tone, touch and degree of power or delicacy. When all these things are under control, he is ready to interpret the composition.

IDEAL INTERPRETATION

“I repeat that only when the player has control of the means, has he the true freedom

to clearly and adequately express himself. Then his interpretation takes on the nature of an improvisation.

“There are many circumstances which influence the artist’s interpretation. His prevailing mood at the moment, the piano, the mental quality of the audience, the acoustics of the space he has to fill, and so on. I play very differently in the concert hall from what I do at home in my study. When before an audience, I must take into account all the things I have mentioned. If I am to fill Carnegie Hall, my scale of dynamics is quite different from the one I use in a smaller space. There must likewise be corresponding differences in touch and tone color.

“You speak of the spiritual side of piano interpretation. To bring out that side surely depends on the absolute freedom and untrammelled condition, both mentally and physically, which one is in.

“I can affirm, therefore, that I do not know, beforehand, how I shall be able to play the piece, until I have tried the space, the piano, the hearers and myself. I may be able to control every point, and to express myself with perfect freedom, and then I may not. There are times when it seems I have nothing to say,

The notes of the piece are there, an inanimate skeleton. It is like a dinner table, daintily laid out, where the viands are wanting, and the listener goes away unfed.

TWO KINDS OF PIANISTS

“As I see it, there are two kinds of pianists. The more numerous sort may master every note, finger mark and sign of expression with commendable exactness; everything is thought out in the privacy of the studio. When they come before an audience they merely transfer this conception to the larger space, playing just as they would at home. They always try to play the piece in precisely the same way.

“I cannot believe this is the only way. I cannot do it myself and my master Rubinstein never did so. He never played a piece just as he had played it before; I cannot do this either.

“The other kind of artist, and their number is small, I admit, never play the piece twice in just the same way. They strive for the control which gives absolute freedom of expression. They realize how many forces react on the artist upon the platform—even the temperature! If I am playing the *Appassionata* Sonata on a sultry day, the passion may be somewhat

milder than it would be if the temperature were more bracing.

“It is of course necessary to plan a model in the studio, though the performance in public may differ from it, as it admits certain elements of improvisation. This results in a higher artistic mastery, because it is—within certain limits—free, spontaneous, and personal.

“This freedom of interpretation presupposes the artist’s mind and taste to be so well trained as to warrant him in relying on the inspiration of the moment. But back of it all must be his logical plan of action. I think I can say I belong to this small class of pianists who yield to the inspiration of the moment and improvise the composition at the piano.

TAKING RISKS

“If one is to play with freedom and inspiration, one must strike out boldly and not hold back in timidity or bashfulness; these are bad faults. We sometimes see people in society who fear to make a *faux pas* here or there; so they hold back stiffly and bore everybody, besides being very uncomfortable themselves. The player must cast fear to the winds and risk everything. He should be an absolutely

free and open avenue for the expression of the emotional and spiritual meaning of the music. When one can thus improvise the composition, it seems that the piano no longer sounds like a piano. It has been said that when Rubinstein played, the instrument did not sound like a piano. As you have heard Rubinstein, you remember how different his piano sounded from the ordinary kind; like another sort of medium, or like a whole orchestra—in spite of the many wrong notes. When playing himself he often struck wrong notes, yet in teaching he was very exact; he could not endure wrong notes or slips of any kind, in his pupils or in himself. But in public he took the risk! He was not troubled about the false notes if only he could present the emotional content of the music in the most compelling light.

“I heard Rubinstein play in Berlin, at his last concert there. Moszkowski sat beside me. Rubinstein, in playing his *Valse Caprice*, missed all but one of those treacherous high skips. When he hit that solitary one correctly, Moszkowski turned to me and whispered, humorously, ‘We must excuse him, for he can’t see any more.’ ”

THE METRONOME

"I notice, Mr. Hofmann, that you have a metronome standing here. In one of your answers to questions in the *Ladies' Home Journal*, I believe you disapproved of it."

"That was a misunderstanding. We cannot do without the metronome. It is the policeman! I may have said not to play with metronome, as a true sense of rhythm cannot be acquired in this way. But I never said not to use one. On the contrary the metronome is a necessity, for it gives us the correct idea of tempo; in that capacity I use it frequently.

MODERN MUSIC

"What do I think of modern music? Some of it is only contortion; Stravinsky and Schoenberg, for instance. Yet it is much sought after as a fad, nowadays, from curiosity, if for no other reason. If one falls in a fit on the street people run together, curious to see what has happened. What do they see? Contortion! The Stravinsky ballet, recently given at the Century, was fascinating in color, movement and ensemble, but the music was again—contortion.

THE PIANO AS A MEANS OF EXPRESSION

“Absolute control of all means in the performer’s power does not belong alone to the pianist, it may belong to the flute player, the violinist or ’cellist. It should always be possessed by the player who would improvise his interpretations.

“The piano is the universal instrument, the one independent medium. All other instruments either require or are improved by an accompaniment, even the voice. But the pianist stands alone, and controls everything. He can express every emotion, even despotism, by means of his instrument. We often say the piano expresses all these, when we really know it can say nothing at all without the pianist. If he have many emotions and the ability to express them, the piano will do his bidding.”

PLAYING WITH ORCHESTRA

“We regret you elect to give but one recital in New York during the season.”

“But I play a number of times with orchestra here. You have good ones in America.

“In assisting the artist the orchestra should take the part of an accompaniment, and although the conductor directs it, he should,

for the time being, efface himself. This the conductor of the New York Symphony is able to do. After we have played together five or six times, we come to be in perfect accord. A soloist ought to play with his orchestra in smaller places before appearing in the large cities if he wishes his ensemble to be at its best.

"Yes, I am a co-worker with Godowsky on the Progressive Series of Piano Lessons. It is slow and tedious business, this editing of the various pieces required. Every finger mark and sign of phrasing must be absolutely correct. It takes me several hours to edit a short piece. It is work fit for a schoolmaster.

"After my touring season, we shall spend the summer in Maine. Ah, how beautiful it is there, by the sea! I love it. Of course wherever I am, my time is fully taken up. In summer I exchange the rush of travel, the catching of trains, for the repose and quiet of a vacation by the sea. That is when I work on my programs and prepare the various concertos I am to play the following season."

III

GUIOMAR NOVAES

THE GIFT OF MUSIC

THE most dazzling meteor that shot across the pianistic sky during the past season—1916—was the young Brazilian pianist, Guiomar Novaes. We were quite unprepared for such an apparition; we had heard nothing of her; she came unheralded. In a season filled to the brim with the greatest piano playing the world can produce, she came—and conquered—by sheer force of genius.

The marvel of it! Such a talent in a family where neither the parents nor any of the eighteen other children showed any special musical inclination. Hers is surely a gift straight out of Heaven!

Many of us are familiar with the story of how this slip of a girl developed her gifts, first in her own country and then in Paris, where she took first place over 388 contestants, in the entrance examinations of the Conservatoire. At that examination her performance



A Miss Brower,
affectioneux souvenir
de Guisomar Noves
N.Y. May 1914



of Schumann's *Carneval* was so unusual in the mastery of technic, so poetic in interpretation as to greatly impress the jury, composed of Debussy, Moszkowski, Fauré and other distinguished musicians.

The young girl was about fourteen when she arrived in Paris, and began her studies with Professor Philipp, at the Conservatoire. At the end of the second year she received the first honor, a *Premier Prix du Conservatoire*. After this came many engagements to play in Paris, London, Switzerland, Germany, and Italy, which she filled with ever-increasing success.

Then came two years at home in Brazil, which she spent resting, working, thinking, growing and ripening, but playing little in public. Late in the year 1915 she and her mother came to New York, escorted by the Brazilian Ambassador from Washington.

"I think it is time for her to begin her American career," he remarked, after her first New York recital; "and," he added significantly, "I believe she is ready for it."

The young artist indeed proved herself ready. Her first long and difficult program revealed sentiment, power, passion and ripe musicianship. Her success was immediate and

complete. These are, briefly, the mere facts. But who can put into words the thrill, the spell of such playing as hers? In London, when she played there, it was chronicled: "She is one of the world's greatest pianists." After her first American appearance, Mr. Finck, in the *Evening Post*, said of her: "She is the greatest woman pianist now before the public, and even some of the men had better look to their laurels." Later, after her fourth triumphant recital in the metropolis, the same critic wrote: "Her tone has the limpid purity and beauty that the world adores in voices like Patti's or Sembrich's or Caruso's; in runs these tones are like strings of perfect pearls. Miss Novaes seems to get her inspiration direct from heaven. One has a feeling, when she plays Beethoven, as if she were in long-distance telepathic communication with him—as if he indeed were at the piano. And if her piece is by Chopin, Schumann or some other master, it is they who apparently are personally guiding her. This is no hyperbole; it is an impression, which makes this girl one of the seven wonders of the musical world."

What are the attributes in the performance of this "superpianist" as she has been called; what are the things that compel admiration,

that enthrall alike the unskilled music lover, the trained musician and the exacting critic? If we can discover them, analyze and reduce them to tangible terms, we may be able to apply the principles to the profit of our own studies.

On the technical side we can study the player's manner of tone production. Tone is the medium through which the musical idea is set forth. With Miss Novaes the tone seems to be produced by controlled relaxation. Much is said and written about relaxation in these days. The kind this girl possesses is plastic and beautifully controlled. With the most graceful movements of arm she forms and molds the tone to such quality as she desires. She plays with controlled weight, but it is weight that is *alive*, vital, not lumbering and "dead." With this condition of poise in arm, wrist and hand, every tone she produces, from feathery *pianissimo* to the utmost *fortissimo*, has a searching, vibrant quality, a quality that makes an instant appeal to the listener. Even a single tone has the poignant quality that makes a thrilling effect. She produces these tones without apparent effort; yet they carry a message quite apart from the studied phrases of other pianists.

Technic in her case is an "art in itself." No problem seems too difficult; all are flawlessly mastered. Imagine strings of pearls, large and small; in each string the pearls are exactly the same size, round and perfect; such are her scales. Her *glissandi* ripple up and down the keyboard with a perfect beauty and smoothness that the hand of no other pianist within memory has surpassed. Her chords are full and rich, her trills like the song of birds. The listener sits aghast at such absolute mastery, and marvels where this girl has acquired such consummate technic. He marvels still more at the interpretative genius, which seizes upon the inherent meaning of the composition, finds its poetic, emotional message, and is able to present it with such convincing, overwhelming conviction and appeal.

I have tried, in few words, to voice some of the causes of Miss Novaes' mastery, some of the means by which she conquers the keyboard, the music and our hearts, because I know she could not do so herself. She could no more explain how she does these things than a flower bud can describe how it becomes a perfect rose. She would only say: "Your praise may apply to a great pianist, but I am not a great artist." Such is her modesty and self-effacement,

We must let Guiomar Novaes say something for herself, however; she will do so in a pretty mixture of English and French, with a few sentences of Spanish thrown in here and there. When she talks, one hardly knows which to admire most, the pleasant voice and smile, the dimples that play hide and seek in her cheeks, or the artless sincerity of her words.

“I began to play piano when I was four, by listening and by picking out everything on the piano by ear; I taught myself by the ear. Sometimes it seems I learned to play before I learned to speak; it is true I knew my notes before I had mastered the letters of the alphabet.

“When I was six my studies really began. I was placed with a most excellent teacher, Professor Chiafarelle, an Italian musician. With him I learned a great deal, and began to play in Sao Paulo, my home city, when I was ten.

“He was my teacher seven years. Then our Government sent me to Paris, where I was admitted to the Conservatoire, and became a pupil of Isador Philipp for nearly four years.

TECHNIC PRACTICE

"I practice about three to four hours every day. I no longer practice the technic by itself, outside of pieces, for there is so much technic in the pieces themselves, that I work on that. But when I was a child I had to work on technic and on all kinds of exercises most industriously. I haven't time to do so now, for there is so much music to learn.

"Yes, I play Bach—much Bach, when I have time, but not every day."

"Some artists save their strength by playing with only half force during practice. Do you follow this course?" she was asked.

"No, in practice I use full power; that is, I try to make the piece sound as I want it to sound. If I should play with a weak touch, I would not get the *sonore*, how do you call it? Ah, yes, the sound. I would not get the sound as I want it.

MEMORIZING

"I really do not know how I memorize; it all comes to me very quickly—the music. I find it very amusing to learn by heart. You think I should not call it amusing—you think I should say interesting? Well, then, I think

it is very interesting to learn from memory. I can do it away from the piano, by thinking how the music looks when it is printed. I sometimes do this on the trains, when I am traveling. When I was in Switzerland, I found I had to play the Beethoven G major Concerto, in Paris, in a short time. So I learned it all by heart in fourteen days. It is true I had played at it some at home in Brazil; but now I really had to learn it. The Bach Organ Prelude and Fugue, transcribed by Moor, which I played at my third New York recital, I learned in four days. When I did so I was feeling very fresh and well rested, and equal to the task. I might not always feel able to do it so quickly."

PUBLIC PLAYING

"Do you really enjoy playing in public?" she was asked.

"Yes, I do like it. At a recital, I soon become so absorbed in what I am doing that I quite forget the audience; it is as if the audience was not there; it does not exist for me. I cannot say I always feel the same or play the same. The piano may seem different, the hall, the audience, too, and my mood."

"That is what Josef Hofmann says also," I remarked.

"Ah, what a great, big artist Hofmann is!" The dark eyes glowed with inward fire and the dimples deepened. "I think he is so wonderful. Schelling is a big artist, too. He played in my country, Brazillo, and had a great success there."

MODERN MUSIC

"Do you care for modern music—Schoenberg, Stravinsky, Korngold or Ornstein?" she was asked. The mention of these names awoke no answering gleam in the calm, sweet face.

"I do not know the music you speak of," she said. "I shall play something of Bach arranged by Emanuel Moor. Moor has written much; some fine things for 'cello, which Casals plays.

"You think I make good progress with English? I have only studied it five months, just since I came to New York. I am really surprised at myself to-day, that I have had the courage to speak to you in your own language. Usually I speak French, as, naturally I know that much better than English."

IV

JOHN POWELL

"ART THE EXPRESSION OF LIFE"

AN American pianist and composer of individuality and distinction is John Powell, of whom we have already heard a great deal, and will surely hear much more as we become familiar with his compositions and sit more frequently under the spell of his beautiful piano playing.

For the past two seasons Mr. Powell has been heard in recitals throughout the country. Those given in New York have been on a high plane of excellence. In fact, each program performed revealed an increasing power and eloquence of expression, more subtlety of insight, more command of the resources of the instrument and himself, more consummate skill in embodying the mental and spiritual message of the music.

Deeply impressed with these qualities in his playing, I found opportunity to question Mr. Powell about some particular aspects of pian-

ism, which we were able to discuss at some length.

We first took up the technical side, as I asked where he had acquired his technic.

"I studied with F. C. Hahr at home, before going to Vienna. There I spent several years with Leschetizky and worked terribly hard. This marvelous old man was a wonderful teacher. Of course the student had to understand him,—had to have the intelligence to grasp his ideas. He did not care to be thought to have a special method of technic, nor did he often talk to the pupil on the technical side of piano playing, unless he saw the need for it. Then he could be most explicit as to hand position and other fundamental points. Even with pupils who had been with him some time, if he noted any lapse or ineffectiveness, he would come right down to first principles."

"I am well aware Leschetizky asserts he has no method outside of loose wrists and firm nail-joints," I remarked.

"Back of these two ideas," answered Mr. Powell, "lies the foundation principle—concentration of will; if you have this concentration you can accomplish what you desire. This thought was the mainspring of Leschetizky's



To dear, wonderful Harriet Brower
with respects & admiration
from
John Powell.

teaching. If the learner grasped the idea, he could get a great deal from the master.

“For instance, the master would explain a principle to you, and if you saw its value you could work it out; the manner of the working out might vary, but the idea remained the same. He might take the subject of skips, let us say. You wish to play a tenth or a twelfth. He would tell you to place your thumb on C, then make an arm movement which shall describe a curve, up to the note you wish to reach, touching but not depressing it. A few slow movements of this kind will teach you the arm sensations you have in reaching for the note, and also how to measure the distance between the two. When this is accomplished you can play the skip with quickness and accuracy. So with large chords; the fingers are prepared for them; the portrait of them—so to say—is made in the air, before the chords are actually played.

TONE PRODUCTION

“There is a principle I have been working on for several years; it is one I consider very important, especially when applied to cantabile, or melody playing. It is the pressure necessary to produce a beautiful, singing tone.

We are told that as soon as the sound is produced on the piano, the tone begins to die. Some thinkers advocate letting up all weight on the key as soon as it has been sounded. This would virtually necessitate a new attack for each note. I find this idea has an injurious effect on the tone quality. A far better way is to transfer the weight pressure from one finger to another, by slight elevation of wrist and aid of arm; for the latter is but the tube through which the fluid flows—so to speak. The violinist, in melody playing, does not relax his pressure on the string or his firmness on the bow, because the tone has sounded, neither does the singer relax the diaphragm. Why should not the same principle hold good on the piano? I know that it does and that I am able to produce a more and more beautiful tone as I succeed in applying this principle more perfectly.

DAILY TECHNIC

“I believe in technical exercises outside of pieces, in fact I feel them to be a necessity, and do a certain amount daily. At this moment I have not been able to touch the piano for several days, not since my last recital. Therefore, I should need to exercise my fingers

and get them in running order, before attempting to play anything at all,—for the same reason that a piece of machinery must be oiled to be fit for use. It is necessary, too, to have a healthy body as well as a sound mind, if one wishes to do anything great in music or any other branch of art.” In this connection Mr. Powell had much to say of the Fresh Air Art Society, which he considers a most important movement in the world of allied arts. We then discussed the part played by the mind in musical delivery.

THE MIND IN PLAYING

“During the actual performance of a composition, what are the mental processes involved?” I asked.

“I feel the mind must be wholly occupied with the meaning of the music; its emotion and content should be lived through, during a performance of it. This is far removed from any consideration of the audience as listeners—what they are thinking about or whether the player is making a telling effect on them. If we can hold ourselves in this highly wrought, exalted state, we will be unconscious of the audience. We will even be quite unconscious of the keys our fingers are touching, for we

are only thinking of portraying ideas, feelings, emotions. To reach this state of consciousness, we must know the notes of the composition with absolute certainty in order to be oblivious of them. Piano playing does not consist merely of setting keys in motion; it is far beyond all that; it is an exemplification of inner experience, of life itself. For I hold that art is the expression of life.

“The mental state of the player during performance depends on his attitude towards music itself and the way he has studied it. There seem to be three stages in the learning of a composition. First to read it through as though it were a book; second to study it in detail; lastly, to get at the meaning and live through the experiences which caused those notes to be written and the composition to spring into being.

“Leschetizky may say to a student: ‘In six months you will study a certain composition; look it through now and become familiar with it—amuse yourself with it; later we will study it seriously.’ And if you merely read over the composition frequently enough, either at the piano, or as you would read a book, away from the instrument, you will, almost unconsciously, come to know the notes quite well.

After this comes the study in detail, and finally that wonderful assimilation of content which makes the work a part of your very being and life. The artist holding such an ideal of interpretation, can, when able to forget himself and his surroundings, give an inspired performance.

“Such concentration as this is far and away removed from reciting the notes of the composition while playing it, or ‘following it’ in *solfége*, as some recommend. If we long to express the inner emotion and feeling of the piece, we want to get away from mere mechanical memory, even to get away from those bits of ivory, which seem to hamper our flights of thought, though we must, perforce, have such accurate knowledge of them.

MUSIC CAN EXPRESS DEFINITE IDEAS

“I hold that music can depict definite ideas and emotions. I have made many experiments with adults and children, even with animals. A young nephew of mine, who had never heard any of Wagner’s music, listened to some of the motives I played for him, and tried to put into words their meaning, and what the themes describe, as he felt them. He often hit the mark with wonderful exactness, though

the words and descriptions were often crude. Music is called a language, a means of self-expression. We are all musicians in this sense—even composers. We can compose music by the tones of our voices in speech. We can cause the same sentence to have many meanings by using various inflections of voice.

“As I said a moment ago I feel the composer has a definite idea in writing his work, that it expresses certain thoughts, feelings, emotions. It is for the interpreter to discover what these are. He can do this if it be true that music really expresses a definite idea. When this is discovered, the interpreter should feel in playing what the composer felt in writing it, in order to adequately express his meaning. How many-sided the inner life of an artist must be! How wide his knowledge, how keen his sympathies! The artist must begin within—in his own soul. Life is the principal thing. It is a training of the spirit. Of what use to sit at the piano fifteen hours a day, as some do. That will not make an artist, if there is nothing within to express. I long to say to them: Don’t spend all the time in piano practice; don’t shirk responsibilities; don’t be a recluse. Mingle with others; discipline is life. Live bigly—Live!”

“Only music which is great enough to express real feeling and emotion is worth the learning or the effort to interpret. I do not waste time over what is not entirely worthy.”

HIS COMPOSITIONS

In the field of composition, Mr. Powell has worked mostly in the larger forms, although he is the author of a number of songs. Of the former there are three sonatas and two concertos for piano; a concerto for violin, also a sonata for violin and piano. He has written a couple of piano suites, entitled, respectively, “In the South” and “At the Fair;” also a set of variations and double fugue on a theme by F. C. Hahr, his former teacher. A choral work in oratorio form treats the church service dramatically, its author explains.

THE “SONATA TEUTONICA”

There are comparatively few American composers who have put out works in the sonata form. We are familiar with the great Four of MacDowell, or at least some of us are. As yet we have not produced many composers who have the gifts as well as the learning to cope successfully with this greatest of instru-

mental forms, so we need not wonder at the small number of such works produced.

That a sonata by a native composer has lately had a hearing in New York, is an event of importance worth recording. When this hearing proved the work to be an epoch-making one, built on broad lines, of deep and significant content, the event gave cause for sincere satisfaction.

The event referred to was the hearing of John Powell's *Sonata Teutonica*, played before the MacDowell Club, in April, 1916. This was the first performance of the work in America, though it had been given twice in London, namely on March 7th, 1914, when Benno Moiseiwitsch, the admired Russian pianist, played it in Bechstein Hall; and again in June of same year, on which occasion it was rendered by the composer himself.

At the MacDowell Club Mr. Powell preceded his performance by a short talk, in which he explained the structure of the work, the ideas embodied in it, its meaning and symbolism. He also read quotations from the descriptive pamphlet, prepared by the English writer Richard Brockwell. Mr. Powell's masterly performance of his work vividly set forth its spirit, and deeply moved his hearers. They

felt the event to be most unusual and portentous; that they were privileged to listen to an original composition of large dimensions and pregnant meaning, set forth in a truly inspired manner.

In going over the work subsequently with the composer, he said in part:

“In naming the work *Sonata Teutonica*, I had in mind not a country or a race of people, but rather the spirit of aspiration, the desire and effort to achieve something high and noble, which binds together in one bond of unity all the great souls of the ages. This spirit of Oneness links the great of the past, and descends through the philosophers, poets, musicians, sculptors and painters of every country, down to us to-day. The Idea of Oneness, taken in this sense, is to me wonderful and beautiful; I have pondered it deeply, and have tried to voice it in this composition. The conception has occupied my thought for years before I ever began to write the music, into the composition of which I have put four years of my life.”

THE MOTTO OF THE SONATA

“The Motto of the Sonata: ‘The ocean is in the drop, as the drop is in the ocean,’ seems to convey a sense of oneness and harmony. Or,

to put the same thought in another form; 'The Sonata is in the Movement as the Movement is in the Sonata.'

THREE MOVEMENTS

"The Sonata has three movements, which may be designated in this way: First, The Ideal; Second, The Temperamental; Third, The Actual. In other words, Part One typifies the emotional effect of the idea of oneness; Part Two, the universal Teutonic Temperament (this in a symbolic and not a racial sense); Part Three, triumphant result of this principle, acting on this nature, in the world of outer activity.

"First Movement—Allegro. Our first theme is the Motive of Oneness, the second is the Song Theme. As these unfold and intertwine, we come to the Motive of Victory, which also reappears in the last movement. In the first movement, it takes the form of a prophecy. The coda expresses the attainment of the sense of Oneness, and the whole ends softly, in ethereal harmonies.

"Second Movement: Andante, is a set of Variations on a Folk Theme. This second division of the work comprises four parts, namely, Variations, Fugue, Scherzo and

Finale. The effort has been, however, to preserve unity throughout all four parts. There is considerable variety in the Variations. One is a merry Ländler. Beethoven was fond of using the country dance, so was Schubert; Wagner has done so in his *Meistersinger*. In the Fugue we see the action of the various forces, temperamentally considered. The harmonies are dark and sinister; the gloom of mortal mind struggles with the spiritual, in writhing progressions, which threaten to obliterate the higher nature, but fail utterly, for the material is put down and the spiritual gains the ascendant.

“Third Movement: Marcia, in Rondo Form. The Theme of Triumph is a victorious announcement of the Theme of Oneness, which later rises to a chorale-like climax; the Theme of Oneness, predominating over the other harmonies, brings the work to a powerful and majestic close. This last movement occupies fourteen minutes, the first sixteen and the middle movement thirty-two, for performance.”

Musicians who have heard the Sonata have expressed their admiration in words of high praise. Some have called it great, vital, a stupendous, epoch-making work.

The composer was asked if he would, like

MacDowell, continue to express himself in works of this form.

"How can I?" he answered. "I have said all I have to say in this; further expression along the same line would be only repetition. I have put my heart's blood into this; it is a reflection of my deepest thought and experience, of my highest aspiration.

If the writer may be pardoned a suggestion, it could be wished that Mr. Powell had chosen another title for his work. The one selected requires much explanation to make it seem suitable to the spirit of the music. Even with the composer's elucidation, the term leaves the lay mind somewhat mystified. "Eternal Unity," "The Triumph of the Ideal," "The Universe," are a few of the titles which suggest themselves, as embodying more of the spirit and meaning of the music.

ARTHUR SHATTUCK

THE PIANIST SHOULD CULTIVATE MANY
SIDES OF ART

To any one fortunate enough to have opportunity for observation and comparison, the hands of the various pianists prove an exceptionally interesting and at the same time a psychological study. There are so many kinds, from the broad, plump hand, full-fleshed and muscular, all the way to the slender, sinewy hand, the embodiment of nervous energy. As the artist-teacher so frequently remarks concerning his pupils, "All hands are different," so it may be said of the artists themselves, namely, that the hand of each artist is unlike every other. A musician who once grasped the hand of Rubinstein reported that it seemed as soft and pliable as though there were absolutely no bones in it.

This remark occurred to me as I greeted Arthur Shattuck, the American pianist; I felt such a description would apply equally to him.

In appearance his hand recalls the model of Chopin's hand; the same long, flexible fingers, the same sensitive ability to expand which enabled the Polish master to accomplish those wide stretches which appear so constantly in his compositions.

Mr. Shattuck calls his hand "too flexible." "It is more difficult," he says, "to strengthen and solidify a soft, flexible hand than to limber up and make supple a firmly knit one. I have done a great deal for my hand by means of the right sort of practice. In short, I have worked very hard for what I have achieved, and am not at all ashamed to say so, or to admit the fact. Pianists who have reached a great eminence in their art often let it be thought they were not obliged to labor for such a result; they give the impression there is little need for them to practice, when the truth is they spend many hours daily in hard work.

"I believe in a certain amount of technical practice outside of compositions, as well as in the making of technical material out of difficult portions of them. I give a certain amount of time daily to pure technic study, using many combinations of double notes in all kinds of forms. I am old-fashioned enough to make

use of scales and arpeggios, and to believe in slow practice. Too much slow practice, however, I feel is a mistake; activity is just as essential, and, aside from certain exercises, the use of a very heavy touch should be made with discretion.

“My student days were spent in Vienna, for I was with Leschetizky a number of years. Those were years filled with many delightful experiences. I can also say I have witnessed some poignant scenes in the studio. It almost seemed as though there were three distinct personalities in the master. On some days he would be harsh, critical, exacting; at other times indifferent, and sometimes in rare good humor. When in such a benign mood, the sun shone and all was serene in the studio, for he approved of everything which was played.

“The master had two grand pianos in his musical work room; he always sat at one to make corrections and illustrate the passage under discussion. Of course he did not want the student to sit quietly and merely absorb his instructions in silence. He expected active interest, minute attention to his illustrations, and plenty of questions asked. The

student soon apprehended these conditions and, if wise, complied with them.

“When one has been for a long time—a good many years—with one master, even though he be the greatest in the world, there comes a time when the student must learn to go alone; he must work out his own salvation—must find himself. It is then necessary to hear all the music possible, piano, violin and song recitals, and above all the opera. In this way he becomes broadened and matured.

“To return to the subject of piano practice. I believe the attention should at all times be alert, thoroughly occupied with the matter in hand. Even if only making slow movements with single fingers, one must entirely concentrate on the effort. The mind must work as well as the fingers. The piece must be learned thoroughly, every note. If a small passage, or even a single note is mentally unclear, this may cause disaster at some unforeseen moment. To accomplish this the mind must be fresh. For if one is fatigued and finds it difficult to concentrate, it is much better to stop for a while, take up a book, or go to the window.

“I am a thorough believer in the Virgil Practice Clavier as an assistant to serious

study. I always carry a clavier with me, not only for technical work but for the practice of répertoire. When taking a long journey by rail or water, I have it set up in my stateroom, where I can work undisturbed. I could tell of many amusing experiences which have occurred during my travels with this instrument. On one occasion, in a little French village, several men carried it on their shoulders from the railway station to the hotel. As they walked through the main street, the bystanders stood respectfully in line and crossed themselves as it passed. At another time, in Norway, when I appeared with my clavier, I was told the hotel was full, but I could lodge in a stable or outhouse. After many persuasive arguments I at last convinced the hotel proprietor that my baggage was harmless by inducing him to look inside the suspicious looking box. When he found it did not contain dynamite or anything of a murderous nature, he allowed me to enter the hotel and gave me the best rooms in the house.

“With the clavier I also make use of the metronome.

“You ask about memorizing piano music. I have found the surest and best way to accomplish this is with solfège—reciting the syl-

lables of the tonic sol fa system as I play the notes of the piece. You are, of course, acquainted with Mr. Wager Awayne's manner of doing this; I think his ideas on the subject are wonderful.

"One word as to interpretation. When playing a melody, deliver it as a singer would do, and phrase where the singer would breathe. Study your music away from the piano; it is amazing how quickly you get at the form and shape; you can hear it mentally, undistracted by physical contact with keys. Form a decided idea of passage or piece, though it may vary from time to time."

Mr. Shattuck believes in the many-sidedness of art and its study, and has developed himself along other lines. He delights in drawing and painting and has made many sketches of out-of-the-way places. He has traveled all over the world and played in countries seldom if ever visited by musical artists. A few years ago it occurred to him that, as no pianist had ever toured Iceland, such a trip might be well worth the taking. His tour in that country proved to be both interesting and profitable. Later he visited Egypt, and after a series of concerts in the land of the Khedive, he secured a caravan and passed sev-

eral months on an oasis in the Sahara. The transporting of a grand piano into the desert land attracted no little attention. The idea of being alone with his piano in the desert appealed to the pianist, and he found it a splendid place to practice.

He says: "The stars spoke to me as I walked soft-footed through the sand; the pure night wind spoke the language of the universe. Here and there yellow lights, from a distant camp, flashed out like fireflies; now and then a silent, swift-footed Arab could be seen, stealing along among the shadows, reminding one of the fabled woman who haunts the Sphinx. Far away the Great Pyramid seemed to float between the desert sand and the cloudless sky, as though the golden palace of Aladdin was being transported through the air by the Genie of the lamp. For a pianist with a vivid imagination, and a real desire to work, it was an ideal place to study. Practice amid such surroundings was not work, only pleasure."

An artist with such an environment should be able to weave the subtle influences about him into marvelous tonal coloring on his instrument. He surely could picture the barbaric splendor of some passing cavalcade, the gold of those burning sands under the blaze

of noon, the witchery of moonlit nights; he could saturate himself with color and atmosphere, steep himself in the magic which would illumine the pages of the Liszt B Minor Sonata, or the various Hungarian Rhapsodies.

VI

LEOPOLD GODOWSKY

THE LAWS GOVERNING TECHNIC AND INTERPRETATION

YEARS ago, when Leopold Godowsky was a resident of America—or was it when he was making his first tour here?—I remember vividly on one occasion studying his pianistic work from a position of vantage almost directly over the piano, when he played with the orchestra under Theodore Thomas. I noted many things about his playing then, besides the ease, fluency and dynamic effects, which belong, of course, to every pianist's equipment. One of the principal points which struck me was the absolute precision with which everything was accomplished. Chords especially were prepared through the fingers taking form—in the air—of the arrangement of keys and intervals, and then descending on the group, or gripping them, as the case demanded. That is to say, the fingers and hand were prepared and made ready for the chord

before it was played, so that each tone had its place and value in the chord group. Single tones were also prepared and fingers made ready to take the key before the arm descended; arms and hands were slanted for scales and arpeggios; all was clean-cut, exact and well articulated.

TECHNICAL DIFFICULTIES UNKNOWN

Since those days the pianist has, through constant study and effort of thought, risen to a more exalted height. Technical mastery and perfection, such as few possess, have been won. Technical difficulties do not exist for him. All gradations of tone, from powerful *crescendi* to fine-spun *pianissimi* of gossamer delicacy, are alike delivered without trace of effort. There can be no question about the consummate perfection which molds and permeates everything he touches.

"The deep things of our art," says the master, "are little understood by general students of the piano. The great artist is an autocrat, a monarch; his work can only make appeal to the few; they alone can understand. That this should be so lies in the character of the instrument and its music. The piano is a marvel, perhaps the greatest instrument we have. It



Oct. 12. To Miss Harriette Brower
1916 with best compliments Leopold Godowsky

is so intimate, yet so impersonal. The singer must be supplemented by an accompanist, and can only sing one note at a time. The violinist can at best play but two notes at a time and he also must be assisted. The pianist, on the other hand, comes unaided before his audience; he alone must speak, for he has the field to himself. He must make clear his meaning on a more or less responsive medium of wood and metal; he must revivify the signs and symbols which are to paint the mood or picture. He must translate thought and feeling into tones; he must express what is subtle and deep, yet too intangible to put into words. Where language ends music begins.

“Among those who play the piano, we have almost every variety of exposition. There are some whose deep learning leads them to be philosophers; others feel called to be preachers of their art. Then we have the refined poets, the dramatic players, the *causeurs*, the entertainers, or those who have such high animal spirits that they exemplify a wild pony galloping over the plains.” The speaker mentioned examples of each of these varieties among the artists now before the public.

VARIETY OF TREATMENT AND AIM

“We need to consider what a man is aiming at before we judge him. A *causeur* cannot measure up to the standard of the philosopher, yet he may be most excellent in his line. It is seen that comparisons are not possible. It is futile to ask, ‘Who is the greatest?’ as is so often done. The public does not understand these distinctions; therefore, as I said, the truly great artist speaks to the few who can understand. This condition will doubtless exist for hundreds of years to come. And when, eventually, the masses do understand, the artist must also advance, so as to be always to the fore, always above the rest, to uplift others, for his calling is a very high one.

PIANO METHODS

“As to so-called piano methods I feel it necessary to look deeper than method in order to find the underlying principles. Perhaps the most important principle of all—one that I have been elucidating for many years—is relaxation. This is not the same as devitalization, which, if used indiscriminately and to excess, is very detrimental. Relaxed weight on the key differs from the old pressure touch,

which tended to stiffen muscles and make the touch rigid. The finger rests with easy arm weight on the key. If more power is desired use more weight, if less hold back some of the weight.

FINGER ACTION

“You ask if I approve of finger action, and finger lifting? We must have that; we cannot throw it away. Wide, free movements are necessary to develop the fingers, to stretch the skin and flesh between them, to render the hand and its playing members supple and flexible. So we must be able to raise the fingers and move them freely.”

“You refer to the early stages of piano study?”

“Not only during the early stages, but at any time. I consider these large, free movements and decided action of fingers as a necessary kind of gymnastics. Just as one exercises the body with all sorts of gymnastics, so we need well-articulated finger movements. I make a distinction, however, between the mechanics of piano study and the art of piano technic. To the former belong all forms of hand culture, finger training and gymnastic exercises. To the latter all the finer qualities

of touch, tone, fingering, phrasing, pedaling, agogics and nuance. Each one of these technical divisions is an art in itself.

“When these are thoughtfully considered, as being necessary for the equipment of the player, it is easily seen why there are so few really great artists among the many who come before the public as pianists. For it is a comparatively easy thing to learn how keys are manipulated, to attain speed, be able to make a *crescendo* here, a *diminuendo* there, to accent, to copy more or less perfectly the notes and marks in a composition. Almost any one can do these things with sufficient study. But these things do not make an artist—far from it. An artist worthy the name is only evolved after minute and exhaustive study added to musical gifts of high order.

“There have been musicians, like Liszt and Rubinstein, who were so gifted that the lack of exact knowledge did not prevent them from winning the world. Rubinstein was a child of impulse as well as genius; he never did things twice the same way; he relied on the inspiration of the moment, and one might say the same of Liszt. The art of piano playing has developed into a more exact science since their day.

ART OF PHRASING

"Among the things I have mentioned as belonging to the art of technic, we will speak first of phrasing. The question of phrasing is of exceeding importance, for phrasing itself is a great art. At the present time we know so much more about these things than was known even fifty years ago. Formerly composers put few marks on their music; there was little or no punctuation. Look at Rubinstein's compositions, for instance. It may be said that von Bülow was one of the first to formulate the laws of phrasing. Christiani's book on this subject is an interesting study, also one by Mathais Lussy. Perhaps the best book on music itself and its performance, at least the best I have ever seen, is by Adolph Kullak, a brother of Theodore Kullak. This is a learned and exhaustive work. The earlier edition has been translated into English; the revised edition is still, I believe, in the original German.

"In the matter of phrasing, Beethoven was considered very particular, Chopin also, but neither knew as much about the subject as we do now. Von Bülow did a great work in editing and phrasing Beethoven. Yet Klind-

worth, who also edited the master, is perhaps subtler in his readings. You remember that von Bülow himself gave preference to Klindworth's over his own edition, by advising students to use that of his friend. Of Klindworth's work for Chopin I cannot speak so highly. He has changed so many things from the original that it is not always clear just what the composer really meant. What Klindworth should have done in many cases was to put the changes in footnotes and leave the music of the original as it was written.

ART OF FINGERING

“Another branch of piano technic is fingering, also a fine art. Before Bach's time, as we all know, the thumb was not used at all. When he advised its use, it was not to be employed on the black keys. Fingering, like everything else in piano playing, has been an evolution. Even the fingering of the C scale, which seems so natural, was not known until Dussek thought of it. Chopin made great use of thumb on black keys. Von Bülow believed in much changing of fingers in order to make use of all. So did Klindworth. They evidently desired to make things difficult instead of easy. It can readily be seen that the use

of thumb on black keys must throw the hand out of position, tend to make the movement jerky, and force the hand nearer the name-board, where leverage is heavier. I believe in avoiding the use of thumb on black keys when possible, in order to keep the hand in a more natural position; this idea seems to me easier and more logical.

SUBJECTIVE AND OBJECTIVE

“We hear much talk of subjective and objective in musical interpretation. These terms are apt to be misleading. Pianists look at the subject from different viewpoints, according to their temperaments and aims. The impulsive nature takes the composition as it first appears to him, without further analysis, and strives to preserve that conception. He trusts to the present moment to furnish inspiration. Under extremely favorable circumstances he may be able to give a really inspired performance. Without these conditions his utterances may lack all glow and power. Rubinstein was an illustration of this style.

“On the other hand, the careful analytical player, who does not trust to first impressions, who studies every point and determines beforehand exactly how he will render the com-

position, may lack true inspiration and leave us cold. Von Bülow might be cited as a player of this type. The ideal interpreter is one who, keeping before him the first ideal, has thought out every effect and nuance he wishes to make, yet leaves himself mentally untrammelled, to be moved by the inspiration which may come to him during performance.

TONE COLOR AND AGOGICS

“These subjects are vitally important in piano playing. What dynamics are to the tone, agogics are to time and rhythm; this is the new term for the old one of *tempo rubato*. Rubato means “robbed,” which is again misleading, for it says nothing about *giving*. If we take away, we must return, to even things up; the new term expresses this better than the old.

“In order to have every note, every phrase clear, we must not run them all together, as the Germans sometimes make a long combined word extend across the page. If you open an English book you see each word separated from its neighbor by a slight space. Just so we learn to make the musical thought or phrase clear by the way we make it stand in relation to other phrases; the right distance

between them; it is the flexibility of rhythm, one might say, where everything is in artistic relation and balance."

LEGATO MELODY PLAYING

"Do you consider a legato melody is just as successfully connected with the pedal as with the fingers?" he was asked.

"By no means," was the quick reply; "though it can be used for special effects. The relaxed weight of hand on the key, the transference of weight from finger to finger, the condition of the hand in connecting a *legato* melody is very different from that of the hand lifted between each note; the tone has a different quality also. If a passage is marked legato, I insist on its being played with that touch. If chords are written in quarter, half or whole notes, I want them held in full time. One thing is unendurable—to hear the left hand before the right, constantly appoggiating. For real appoggiated chords, if the waved line only extends the length of each chord, both hands are played simultaneously. If one long waved line connects the two chords, the left hand plays first, followed by the right.

THE "PROGRESSIVE SERIES"

"The *Progressive Series of Piano Lessons*, with which I have been occupied for a number of years, in conjunction with a number of well-known artists, provides an eight-year course for teachers. Besides this there are, in conclusion, a résumé of the entire subject, the pith of the whole matter. Although the courses are nominally finished, I have about six years more work on compositions to be used with them."

On a subsequent occasion Mr. Godowsky was seen just before leaving for a Pacific Coast tour. We were soon in animated discussion, which lasted for an hour and would have extended much longer had not time pressed. Mr. Godowsky is a thorough master of English and expressed himself with fluency and exactness.

As we had discussed the technical problems of piano playing during a previous conference, I requested the pianist to go further and give his ideas on interpretation.

"One of the means, or perhaps it should be said the backbone, of interpretation is technic. I place technic on a higher plane than mechan-

ism. Others combine the two; I differentiate between them. Technic is the means of expression, the medium through which we give out the music. I believe that each pianist presents a certain mental type, which is revealed through his performance; one is a poet, another a philosopher, a third an orator or even a stump orator, and so on. For some it is possible to express what they feel; others are more reticent, and not given to showing emotion; they rather repress it and seem to stand aloof. Some are ready to reveal everything; they are the ones who are popular with the public. We do not say of these players that they 'descend to the public,' for they merely work out their natural temperament; they are *one with the public*, therefore they never fail to please. Those who have the highest ideals move in a realm apart; they never become popular in the above sense. Men who have made the greatest scientific discoveries are generally unknown to the world.

FACTORS OF INTERPRETATION

"The two great factors in interpretation are Logic and Proportion. If you examine a Greek statue you find it perfect in classic form and line. Its proportions are faultless.

Among the composers the most perfect examples of proportion are Beethoven and Brahms. They are the Greeks of musical art.

“These two qualities—logic and proportion—must dominate the thought of the interpreter also—he must express them in his work. In just the degree that he lacks them will his performance fall short of beauty and expressiveness.

“Some players might be called pianists of the piano. The instrument itself is paramount with them rather than the music. The piano itself stands first with them. They will make all possible effects that are legitimate within the scope of the instrument, but never strive to make it something it is not. De Pachmann, Grünfeld and Sauer are of this type. Busoni, on the other hand, does not entertain this view. He is so great, such a deep, profound thinker, such a philosopher; he is a class by himself. For him the piano often represents the organ. See his transcriptions of the Bach organ compositions. He interprets them in this style, with much pedal and great tonal sonority. As organ tones in a cathedral resound and reverberate, owing to the vast spaces, so are the

effects Busoni makes on the piano—of continuous tone-vibrations.”

“The piano is a wonder; there is so much to think of and study about it and its marvelous literature. I have found pianists generally are much deeper thinkers than singers, for example,” I remarked.

“Singers do not analyze their work as pianists do. If one has a beautiful voice, the mere quality of tone will enthrall the listener, outside of the song to be interpreted. If the singer merely vocalize a scale, it is still beautiful and appealing. But the pianist must do so many things besides merely playing the notes before he can make an appeal. He must consider tone quality, dynamics, pedaling, power and the whole concept of the piece.

“You speak of the word pianism. The word as used now includes, I take it, the entire subject of touch, technic, tone and performance. How odd that a word affects society like a new disease! All hasten to acquire it. The word pianism is the only one that can be applied to an instrument outside of the human voice. You can say vocalism, but not violinism.

THE PIANIST A CONDUCTOR

“The pianist is virtually a conductor, and his ten fingers are the instruments over which he holds sway. They are to do his bidding. He has a whole orchestra under his hands. The orchestral conductor merely directs his men; the pianist must both direct his whole orchestra and play all his various instruments, the fingers. His task is a more strenuous one than that of any other soloist.

“Then the literature of the piano. When you think of it, no other instrument has the literature of the piano. Has there ever been a composer like Chopin for any instrument? The greatest composers for violin were Vieuxtemps and Wieniawski; but their work cannot compare in value to what Chopin has done for the piano. He wrote solely for that one medium; he is the poet of the piano. Look at Beethoven; he did more for the piano than for any other instrument. He composed nine symphonies for orchestra and thirty-two sonatas for piano. A sonata, as you know, is a symphony for one instrument. His last five sonatas are greater than anything he ever wrote for orchestra. The Opus 57, *Appassionata*, is a superb symphony. His last sym-

phonies, outside of the Ninth, the greatest, are not equal to the last five piano sonatas in value. Berlioz wrote principally for orchestra; he may be called the first romanticist for that medium. I call him the apostle of ugliness. His works for orchestra cannot compare in value to what either Beethoven or Chopin has given to the literature of the piano.

PRINCIPLES OF INTERPRETATION

“To come down to more explicit terms in regard to ideas of interpretation, I feel that, after a certain period of study, the pianist should trust more to his intuitions in the interpretation of a composition. Intuition first, backed up by logical reasoning. Some put it the other way round; they put reason first, and as a result their performance is dry and soulless. For instance, I play a passage and make it sound pleasant, expressive; it pleases my ear. I then analyze the effects I have made and see if they are logical and correct. For I must prove each point according to laws of interpretation.

“There are laws of interpretation. One of them is never to lay stress on a concord, but rather on a dissonance. The stronger the dissonance the heavier the stress put upon it.

That is a fundamental law. Another principle is, not to fill rest places with sound. How many players sin in this way; either by not observing rests or by filling up the place of silence by tones prolonged by pedal. Silence plays a very important rôle in music. Silence should not be interfered with, filled up or obstructed. Many times it is necessary to hold pedal, if one has to jump from the bottom to the top of the keyboard. But one must know whether to bridge over the skip with pedal or to let there be silence between the two.

TRADITIONS

“We speak of traditions of interpretation. This should not mean dry, academic formulas—it should not mean the traditions of the schools and conservatories. They conserve the old ideas, for that is the meaning of the word. Real tradition in piano playing originates with great artists who have discovered and evolved certain effects through intuition. When these intuitions stand the test, and measure up to the highest standards of art, they become traditions.

“The subject of interpretation is a very broad as well as a deeply interesting one. It

is one upon which I have bestowed a great deal of thought and made many discoveries. I repeat, I feel we should trust more to our intuitions than we do. It is claimed by one learned man that, if the world had followed this course, we should now be on a higher plane of civilization than we are; present events seem to bear out his theory."

VII

CARL FRIEDBERG

AFTER listening to Carl Friedberg, both in recital and with orchestra, it was a pleasure to have the opportunity for a talk with him in the seclusion of the home; to find him the simple, unaffected gentleman, with frank, winning manner, quite willing to talk of his methods of teaching and of study.

"I might say at the outset," began the pianist, "that I believe the *legato* touch is of the most importance in piano playing; it is the *sine qua non* of beautiful tone. I am aware that some modern players do not agree with this: they think everything should be played with the arm. Even Busoni, whom I admire exceedingly and consider one of the very greatest artists, says in his edition of Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavichord* that there is no *legato* possible on the piano. I must differ from those who hold to this idea, for I emphatically believe and can prove there is a *legato* on the piano. It is the foundation of beautiful tone.

EXPRESSIVE TONE

"The tone an artist draws from his instrument should be round, full and expressive, capable of being shaded and varied, just as is the *bel canto* of the singer. We should learn to sing with our fingers. I knew the famous singer and teacher Rimini and played much for him. From this artist I learned a great deal, which helped me to acquire a singing, expressive tone on the piano.

"I endeavor to give my piano tone the quality of the singing voice. For this reason I have made myself familiar with a large number of operas of every school. When quite a young lad I learned *Tristan and Isolde* by heart, and I still know it, and many other opera scores.

"I have been largely my own teacher, though in the beginning I had most excellent instruction. I was a pupil of James Quast, the Dutch pianist, for four years, and later studied for some time with Mme. Clara Schumann. I also received suggestions from Anton Rubinstein. When I first played for him he expressed himself as especially pleased with my singing tone and my manner of using

the pedals. I deeply appreciated his words of commendation.

“Together with much concert work, I have done a great deal of teaching. For the last ten years I had been located in Cologne, at the Conservatory, where I had charge of the artist class. It takes the form of a *Meister Schule*, along the same lines as the one in Vienna over which Godowsky used to preside. Of course I often had to be absent on tour, but I still found considerable time for teaching.

“In my teaching I begin with finger training; for I am not one who believes in neglecting this side of piano technic. If you will come over to the piano I will show you just what I mean.” The artist seated himself at the keyboard, illustrating as he talked.

HAND POSITION

“I first require a correct position. In this I follow the advice of Rubinstein, who counseled the student to sit on a chair which would be the right height to keep the level of the arm and wrist, not allowing the elbow to hang below the keyboard. The knees are to be close together; the heels planted on the floor, with the soles of the feet resting on the pedals, but

not depressing them. The arms fall easily at the side, as Mme. Schumann taught, but not pressed against it. Now the hand is placed on five keys, in a vaulted position, just as Leschetizky requires. I will now hold my hand in this position, and depress one key with the middle finger. As you see, the condition of arm is quite loose and relaxed. You can move my arm back and forth, or in any direction you choose, but it will be impossible for you to dislodge my finger from the key, for it remains there with full relaxed arm weight.

MAKING THE FINGERS FLEXIBLE

"I now begin to make various movements to render the fingers flexible and independent. When they are somewhat under control I begin to train the thumb under the hand, ready for scale playing. The thumb moves under the hand, for the backward scale form, as soon as it has left its key, and is held under the hand until its turn comes to play. I am a great believer in thorough scale practice in all forms.

"In regard to equalizing the fingers, some players struggle to make all fingers equally strong; yet with all their effort the fourth finger can never be made as vigorous as the

thumb. And why should all the fingers be equal—one just the same as the others? It is not necessary. Just those slight inequalities of touch give variety and expressiveness to the playing. There are times when it is better to use weaker fingers than strong ones.

“When fingers have become somewhat trained, I begin on the hand, moving it up and down on the wrist. Chords are played with this touch; then from the elbow, and lastly in combination with the upper arm, which of course hangs loosely from the shoulder.

“For all this technical drill I use hundreds of exercises of my own, which have never been printed. I do not adhere strictly to one set of these, but invent new ones constantly, perhaps changing them every week. If fingers are weak and bending, they must be made strong by special pressing and gymnastic exercises.

LEGATO TOUCH

“The student concentrates his efforts on *legato* touch and on beautiful and expressive tone quality. If I have a melody to play I can do it, as many modern artists do, with a movement of hand and arm for each note—

that is to say, detaching one note from another. With proper pedaling, such a manner of playing can be made to sound very well." Here Mr. Friedberg illustrated his point. "Now I will play the same passage with pure *legato* touch and you will hear the difference. I prefer the pure *legato* to the detached way of playing. When a melody lies in more extended position, the hand can reach for the notes with steadiness and control. We might liken this tense reaching out from one note to another to a suspension bridge, swung between two supports—the fingers." This remark reminded me forcibly of William H. Sherwood's method of turning the hand and reaching out for the key, with slow, controlled motion.

"I believe in making everything musical, in always making the tone beautiful, even in technical exercises and scales," went on the pianist. "The piano is more than a thing of metal and wood; it can speak, and the true artist will draw from it wonderful tones. It should be part of his constant study to create beautiful tone. I believe a single tone can be made expressive. I can prove this to you." Here Mr. Friedberg played several single

tones here and there on the keyboard. Each of these was played with arm weight. The pressure was slightly relaxed after the key had sounded, not enough to remove the finger, but just sufficient to make the tone expressive and varied in quality and color. The tone *sang*.

"It is a most interesting study, this effort to discover new and beautiful effects of tone and variety of production. So much can be done with *staccatos*, too. There are so many kinds; the hand *staccato*, the finger *staccato*, the drawing off, elastic touch. *Staccato* can sometimes be executed with a single finger, for an entire passage, as this for example." Here the pianist dashed into a passage in eighth notes, from a Chopin mazourka, using only the second finger and keeping the rest of the hand closed. He then repeated the selection with normal fingering and *legato* touch; the contrast was very marked.

"If a student comes to you," I asked, "who plays tolerably well, though not trained along these technical lines, do you require him, first of all, to go through this technical drill?"

"I do not require it. I explain my ideas to him, illustrate them and show him the advantages of such training. He is at once anxious

to study in this way; I have never found one who did not wish to do so."

Since the above conversation, Mr. Friedberg has become more at home in this country, where his time is now fully occupied with teaching and many concert appearances.

VIII

YOLANDA MÉRÖ

THE BEAUTIFUL IN MUSIC

AT home in her beautiful apartments in New York, after a season of concert playing, Mme. Yolanda MÉRÖ, the brilliant Hungarian pianist, talked of her work and her musical ideas.

"I do not love technic for its own sake, and therefore I now practice it but little. Of course, I must play scales sometimes—not every day, however. You see I have no daily routine, as some pianists have; that is because I am not methodical, in the first place, and, secondly, because that kind of practice seems to me such a waste of time. When I am away on a tour, there is often no time to practice at all; and if there should be a little while here and there, the piano may be a poor one, so that I feel better just to let it alone and not attempt to practice at all.

"Some pianists take a silent keyboard with them wherever they go, but I have never done so. When I am here in my home, between en-



To Miss Harriette Brower
with kindest regards from
Yolande Mero-Seign

1916 April 27th New York
"

gagements, I practice; but even then I am not systematic about it. When the fever is on then I work with enthusiasm—a whole day at a time; but I must be in the mood to work or I accomplish nothing. If I am not in the mood, I would rather keep away from the piano or play only a bit to amuse myself.

CLOTH OVER THE KEYBOARD

“In the beginning, it is true, I had to practice technic very carefully and exactly. My father taught me at the start; that was when I was five and a half. One thing he made me do which I think helped me very much to gain accuracy. He would spread a cloth over the keyboard, and, with this barrier between my little fingers and the keys, I must play my scales, études and pieces.” (This reminds one of the little Mozart, playing before the nobility. Some one suggested it was only by means of magic he was able to accomplish such wonders. The little fellow indignantly protested, and offered to play the same piece with the keys quite covered. He was as good as his word, to the increased astonishment of the court.) “That sort of training made me so exact that I very seldom touch a wrong key now. But I am sure that this course can be followed only

with little children; with older ones or with grown-ups it is too late to try it.

“At the age of eight I had a woman teacher, Frau Professor Augusta Rennebaum, who is at the National Conservatorium at Budapest. I consider her a wonderful teacher, in fact, I have had no other. I have been with her from my eighth year until I came to America. With her I did all possible études, from Köhler and Czerny to Clementi and Taubert. That is, perhaps, why I do not practice technic now, I have been through so much. Moreover, it no longer interests me.

A SEEKER AFTER IDEAS

“What I want now is *music*, I want the ideas. My preference is for music filled with ideas, with emotion, not for pieces whose technical display will astonish and dazzle. A work like the Paganini Variations of Brahms, for instance, is full of brilliant technical feats which seem to obscure the deeper meanings of the piece. I play these Variations, to be sure, but they do not greatly appeal to me. I am very fond of Schumann, his *Kreisleriana*, Fantaisie Stucke, *Carneval* and other things. You mention my playing the Vogrich Staccato Caprice, which is a brilliant show piece. Quite

true, but that was a youthful indiscretion. I played it when a very little girl, and now, everywhere I go, I am asked to play it. I can assure you I never have to practice that, for I have played it so much.

“I feel there is other music just as beautiful as piano music. I am devoted to that for the violin or for the orchestra; it all interests me so much; chamber music, too. When there is such a wealth of instrumental music of all kinds, I feel it such a loss of time to spend so much of it on technic, pure and simple. Others may not agree with me however. There is Mme. Sophie Menter, for instance, who has a marvelous technic. She spends hours daily in five-finger technic work. This consists largely of repeating the same note with each finger in succession over and over again, now loud, now soft, with every conceivable variety of touch and tone. The principle she works on is equality. The theory is that as each finger plays the note, the ear must discriminate between the tones and strive to make each tone like all the others. If five fingers can be thus trained to play single notes with absolute evenness they will, it is claimed, preserve this equality in scales, arpeggios or whatever is played. For myself I could never follow such

a régime, but she has achieved wonderful results from it.

PRACTICING A NEW WORK

“When I take up a new work I play it through quite as a child would, carefully and slowly, from end to end. I do this over and over till the plan of the piece is in my mind and in my ear, till I can hear it. Then the real study of it begins; then I really work at it.

“I do not say to myself: Now I shall add this piece to my répertoire, therefore I will begin at once to memorize it, first one hand and the other, then both together. No, I study the contents of the piece as a whole, then each in detail. The result is that, almost before I know it has happened, I know the notes from memory. This seems to me a better way than to start at once to memorize the notes. For, in the effort to do this, and to play without them, in the early stages, one may miss many signs and marks which would otherwise be observed, if the printed page were before one. This does not mean that I am averse to committing the music away from the instrument, for I often do this on trains during my travels from place to place. There is so much tech-

nic to be found in pieces, and it is the sort of technic that is interesting, too. To take scales and play them to-day at a certain speed and to-morrow a little better, or worse, that is not sufficiently absorbing to keep my mind on them; I fall to thinking of other things. But to study a difficult passage in a musical work, to see and hear it grow better and better with practice—there is keen zest in that.

MEMORIZING A CONCERTO

“In studying a concerto, I first begin with the score, for I must know every note of each instrument of the orchestra as well as my own piano part. The player who does not do this is liable to come to grief during performance in public. It is a great responsibility, this playing with orchestra; much greater than playing solos. For in the latter instance one may cover a slip more easily. It is true one should be able to improvise a passage when playing with orchestra, but this seems to me more difficult.

KEEPING TECHNIC IN REPAIR

“In regard to keeping up my technic to concert pitch, I can say that I do not now practice scales and technical forms outside of

pieces. Of course in earlier days I had to do a great deal of pure technic study. But now I find all I need in the pieces themselves. When I have mastered the special forms contained in the piece, I have those and the piece as well.

"As for octaves, I do not now practice them outside of pieces; for if there is any octave work in a piece it is apt to give one plenty to do. Take the Sixth Rhapsodie of Liszt, for instance, can any octave exercise be devised better than that? Then there is the Fourth Rhapsodie also, as you suggest, on the same order, only not quite so difficult; both give splendid opportunity for octave study. Other pieces might also be quoted for this purpose.

"One word more about practicing. I can never do it when unable to give my whole time to it, for then I accomplish nothing; my whole thought must be on my work. Yes, I do all my practice at the piano. No one in the house has objected as yet; when they do I shall get a silent keyboard, but not before."

"It seems to me your art has grown, broadened and ripened to a wonderful degree, since you have been in America," I said to Mme. MÉRÖ, as we sat chatting in her music room

one forenoon, shortly after a New York recital, which had been performed with consummate mastery, with exquisite refinement of style and tonal effects. "I was deeply impressed with this fact on hearing your recital here the other day. As I remember, when you first played in New York, some six years ago, you were all fire and flame,—all temperament. Now it is temperament perfectly controlled, though the fire is there, just below the surface. But it is held in fine balance, tempered by unerring taste and skill. You must have lived deeply in these years."

"I am older and more matured," said the young artist, with her brilliant smile; "I have toned down some of my early enthusiasms. Then I have been a great deal before the public and have played much since I first came here; I have made several tours in this country and one in Europe in that time. The longer one is before the public, the more reposeful one can appear, at least on the outside; yet there may be an increasing anxiety below the surface. But we learn not to show it outwardly. It is the nervousness that grips one before going on that is so distracting. As soon as I have begun, played myself out a little, grown familiar with my audience and

established a sympathy between us, I am perfectly at home and do not think of the listeners.

“What you have found, that pianists have much more to say for themselves and their art than the vocalists have for theirs, is no doubt true. The reason is not far to seek. Is it not because the pianist must be a highly educated person, knowing many sides of his art? He must not only have mastered the technical side, but he must have a knowledge of harmony, form and counterpoint, and also know the works he plays. Then he must know many other things besides music,—literature, poetry, art,—life.

“To speak of the mechanical side, think of the years of exhaustive study which must be spent to acquire a modern technic for the piano. A person, however, with a beautiful voice, who spends two years or so with a good teacher, can sing in concerts and even go on tour. With perhaps thirty songs and a couple of arias, one is considered ready to come before the public. But to learn thirty songs would hardly match the labor bestowed on one Chopin étude. Then think of the *répertoire* a public pianist must have!

PIANIST OR SINGER

“On the other hand, the pianist is at a disadvantage when measured with a singer. Singing is always much more popular with an average audience than piano playing. The ‘tired business man,’ wishing to be entertained, will turn out to hear a singer render an aria and some nice English songs, when he could not stand the strain and mental fatigue of listening to a piano recital. This happens all over the country, and is a condition we pianists have to contend with. It may not be the condition in New York or in other music centers, where there is a large musical public, where there are many who know and love piano music. Of course musical appreciation has increased greatly, and the understanding of piano music is making wonderful strides. Yet for all this, the pianist must choose his programs very carefully in order to interest and not weary the average audience.

MODERN MUSIC

“I have not added much so-called modern music to my répertoire, perhaps because it does not always seem beautiful to me. It may be interesting, impressionistic, symbolic, but not

satisfying, as is most of Chopin, for instance. Very few of the extremely modern things make me feel I cannot rest without learning them,—or that I must play them.

“I have been interested in the work of the Russian Ballet, and the modern compositions they have illustrated, the music of *Petrouchka*, for instance, and some of the other selections. In Schumann’s *Carneval*, it seems to me much more might have been done with it in a choreographic way than has been accomplished. There is such a great variety in the various scenes, as you know, but as given by the Ballet, some of the best are left out. It does not seem a desecration to me as it does to some people, to see the *Carneval* pictured in the dance. For we have become somewhat accustomed to this through the work of Duncan and others. We have had Beethoven’s Seventh Symphony, the Mendelssohn *Spring Song*, and various Schubert and Chopin pieces portrayed in the dance. Why not the *Carneval*, or any other selection, if by so doing the music is presented more vividly to the imagination?

OLD MUSIC

“I am fond of the old music, pieces which one seldom hears of nowadays. One composer

whose music is much neglected, is Philip Emanuel Bach. I have found some lovely and little known things of his. Here is one, a Rondo in E major." And sitting down at the piano, Mme. Mërö illustrated as she talked. "I also play the Organ Concerto in D Minor, by his brother, Friedmann Bach. It has been arranged for piano by Stradal.

"Then there are some fine things of Haendel (outside of the *Harmonious Blacksmith!*). One is the set of Variations in D Minor, another is a Gigue in G Minor, both of which are little known. A Passacaglia by Frescobaldi has been arranged by Stradal also; and I use a Gigue by Hassler. One cannot place more than one or two of these old pieces on a program with safety. I shall add the Sonata Op. 110 of Beethoven to my list very soon."

IX

ERNEST HUTCHESON

TECHNIC AND INTERPRETATION

IN Ernest Hutcheson are united the abilities of the concert artist and the artist teacher. It is not easy to take high rank in both the art of playing and the art of teaching, but here is an Australian musician who has been able to do both. In this double capacity he has become noted on both sides of the ocean.

Mr. Hutcheson rightly feels that experience should loom large when estimating the value and usefulness of the teacher. He can often determine at once whether a prospective pupil can work with him to advantage or be better off with some other teacher.

"I would sometimes rather take a beginner," he says, "than one who has played a great deal and is very set in his ways. Various students come to me asking to be coached on the interpretation or pedaling of different pieces. They may not be in any condition, technically, to play those pieces, or to profit by my



To Mrs Harriette Brown
In sincere appreciation
Ernest Hatcherson.
New York, January 1917

ideas on the subject, for they have not taken the necessary steps to climb the heights required in such compositions.

“It is surprising how little many people comprehend where they stand in their musical studies. Where they *think* they are, and where they really stand, may be wide apart! A teacher needs large experience and acumen to help him decide quickly just what regimen is best for the pupil, both technically and musically. Some pupils can play a Mozart sonata respectably who would have little idea of the modern tonal coloring required to render even MacDowell’s little *Wild Rose*. Or they might play the Reinhold Impromptu with brilliancy, yet would quite fail to give the right atmosphere to the *Water Lily*. Some pieces which seem simple, so far as the notes go, present difficulties of another sort. How is it possible to attempt a Liszt Rhapsodie, when one cannot compass the little Fantaisie in D Minor, by Mozart?

FINDING NEW MUSIC

“My time has become so limited that I have not the leisure to look over quantities of new music. One would need to examine perhaps a hundred compositions to find one which

would be acceptable. Of course I make use of the entire standard répertoire in teaching; the ultra-modern things come to me, so to speak. As I find them, or hear them from artists, or occasionally from pupils, I make a note of them; in this way they come to me.

"I arrange my teaching lists like this," and Mr. Hutcheson showed a little blank book with lists of pieces, from the classics of Bach and Beethoven down to the present hour; certain signs indicated their special technical value.

"No doubt all teachers make such lists. Mine are not arranged in grades, however. I could never see the use of grading pieces. Pupils vary so greatly in comprehension and mentality that the same piece might be difficult for one pupil and very simple for another, both having studied for about the same length of time. This shatters the grade theory. I find myself at sea on the subject, and banish all thought of grades."

Knowing Mr. Hutcheson's wide experience in teaching, both privately and in music schools, in Europe as well as in America, I inquired his opinion as to the relative value of each.

"There is much to be said in favor of the

music school. A school is beneficial for its routine work and free advantages. If your pupil needs ear-training you can require her to attend such a class; it is the same with harmony. All pupils need drill in these subjects, and in a school they are included in the tuition. Then there are the opportunities to play in the concerts and musicals, often with other instruments and with the orchestra. If the student intends becoming professional these things are indispensable. In a school they can be obtained free of cost.

IMPORTANCE OF PLAYING IN PUBLIC

“The private teacher, though doing excellent work, finds himself at a disadvantage on these points. Playing before others is an absolute necessity. I have always insisted on it with my private pupils. I have had a large studio, seating 150 or 200, and generally have had a musical once a week, the pupils inviting their parents and friends. There is nothing which will take the place of the routine of playing before others. The only way to learn to play in public is—to play. Pupils who play their pieces correctly and well for me, will make shocking mistakes and go all to pieces through sheer nervousness, if playing for the

first time in a musicale. They soon get used to it however. Even three or four performances during the season will be of great benefit.

TECHNICAL TRAINING

“In regard to technical training there are certain principles underlying all correct teaching and playing. I do not believe in any special method. It is so easy to make a method, if certain phases are held up and magnified, to the exclusion of other phases of the subject. There are so many sides to be considered; they should all be viewed in the right perspective, and in just relation to each other. It is difficult even to speak of certain sides, for fear of seeming to neglect other phases which are equally important.

“Perhaps the three most important principles are: Position, Condition, Action. The first presents the least difficulty. With the second we are first concerned when a new pupil is taken in hand. There is usually stiffness. It may be that nothing can be done till the pupil learns to relax shoulders and arms. Then we come to the piano and touch single tones, using relaxed arm weight and a single finger. There are three different ways of touching a key; we can hit it, press it, or fall on it. The

first, of course, is harsh; the second term is sometimes misleading. Playing with relaxed weight of arm and a firm finger seems to express the idea. My old teacher in Leipsic, Zwintcher, used to say *legato* touch was like walking. As in that movement the weight of the body is transferred from one foot to another, as we take each step, so in playing a smooth *legato* on the piano, the weight of hand and arm goes easily from one finger to the next as we proceed.

POSITION AND TOUCH

“When easy, relaxed conditions of arm, elbow and wrist are understood, we secure an arched position of the hand, with rounded fingers. The latter are not to be straightened when lifted, as some are inclined to do, but should preserve their rounded shape. In all the earlier stages of piano study there must be decided finger action, with fingers kept at a medium height above the keys. A too high lift may cause strained conditions and hard tone; a too low position will not give a sufficient clearness and development.

“There are various forms of *staccato* touch; one is the drawing in of the finger, giving brilliancy and delicacy.

“In chord playing there are many touches, the one chosen depending on the character of the passage. We can use down-arm action, with great weight, or hand action at the wrist, or up-arm touch, always taking care to keep unemployed fingers out of harm’s way.” Mr. Hutcheson illustrated with a few measures of a Chopin Prelude, a Beethoven Sonata and the Schumann *Grillen*.

“For octaves, after the arched position of the hand has been formed the great point seems to be to touch the white keys up near the black ones, so that the hand shall not zig-zag in and out, but preserve an even line in playing both black and white keys, always keeping the other fingers out of harm’s way, by holding them up.”

Thoughts on Interpretation

OBJECTIVE AND SUBJECTIVE

“Interpretation has two aspects, an objective and a subjective. Imagine several fine orators reading the soliloquy from *Hamlet*. In many respects their versions would be identical; all would presumably pronounce the words correctly, give the right accents to strong syllables, punctuate intelligibly so that

the sense and construction of the speech would be clear; all would employ certain inflections of tone and rhythm in their effort to express the ideas of the author. That is objective interpretation.

“But each individual orator would probably go farther. He would hardly fail to add touches peculiar to himself: heightened stresses, delicate shades of voice, a barely perceptible dwelling on chosen words, gestures prompted by his own feeling; in short, he would endeavor to add his mental and emotional force, which we may call his artistic personality, to that of Shakspeare. This is subjective interpretation. No greater mistake could be made than to suppose that there is a latent antagonism between the objective and subjective sides. It is so in music also; the most ‘original’ rendering of any work may at the same time show infinite care of the composer’s intentions.

USE OF RUBATO

“One of the most harmful prejudices in regard to interpretation is the prevalent idea that one takes a ‘liberty’ in adding inflection and *rubato* not directly prescribed by the author. This is an absurdity, for any per-

formance devoid of such enrichment will inevitably be dry and mechanical, and the most unpardonable liberty one could possibly be guilty of toward a composer is to make his music sound mechanical. Hardly less is the suggestion often made to students that, while *rubato* may appropriately be used in playing Chopin and Schumann, it is out of place in Bach and Beethoven. The truth is that the degree of *rubato* necessary to a beautiful performance depends entirely on the character of the work itself, not on the name of the writer or the date of composition. Many of Chopin's and Schumann's works would be ruined by a lavish employment of *rubato*, and many Fantasias of Bach and slow movements of Beethoven call for as much rhythmical freedom as any modern nocturne or romance. These prejudices, for that matter, are even historically wrong; the old masters all used *rubato*, and Beethoven's playing, as far as we can judge from reports of his contemporaries, was so extraordinarily free that in all probability it would have been a severe shock to audiences and critics of the present day. Flexibility of rhythm, in fact, is and always has been as logical and correct a means of interpretation

as any other, provided always that it be dictated by artistic sense, not by caprice.

VARIETY OF TONE

“Rhythm is but one element of interpretation. Chief among the others are Tone, including accent and shading, Phrasing and Pedaling. In all of these we shall find the same necessity of exercising our own taste and judgment. The composer directly indicates his essential wishes; others he implies; other points again he leaves entirely to the player’s discretion. For instance, the author very rarely suggests, except by implication, a difference of tone between melody and accompaniment, yet even a beginner strongly feels the obligation of a marked difference of quality or volume.

“In phrasing, precisely the same principles apply to classical and modern works, but the usage of the classics in regard to *legato*-slurs differs very widely from that of the moderns. It is necessary, therefore, to interpret phrasing in the light of the composer’s idiom. Roughly speaking, it might be said that in classical usage the end of a slur does not necessarily involve an interruption of the *legato*, while in modern usage (particularly that of

Chopin) the presence of a slur does not always preclude such breaks.

PEDALING

“As for pedaling signs, the convention under which they are employed is radically incorrect, and accordingly we have to displace or ‘syncopate’ every sign in order to realize the writer’s intention. Nor is this by any means the only demand customarily made on our intelligence. Beethoven, for example, wrote for an instrument of very small resonance as compared with a modern Steinway. We are told that he played the entire theme of the second movement of his C minor Concerto without lifting the damper pedal; a similar performance on a piano of to-day would have the most disastrous results.

“While all musical notation, except the mere notation of pitch, is limited and inaccurate, that of the pedal is peculiarly inadequate, and the ear, our only safe guide, must constantly be invoked. The use of the soft pedal is almost always left to the native sense of the pianist; and the *sostenuto* pedal, found only on instruments of American make, has been practically ignored by living composers.

THE CONTENT OF THE PIECE

“The character of a piece is always the real key to its interpretation. We should be careful to seek the essential meaning, not merely display the outward form. Let me give a few instances. In the *Berceuse* of Chopin the pervading spirit is tenderness, soothingness, the song of mother-love; the conspicuous ornamentation is only incidental and should be veiled, not insisted on; the suggestion (in the left hand) of a persistently rocking cradle is wholly external and should never ‘creak.’ Take the same composer’s Funeral March; here the true character is that of dull, sullen grief, rising to anguish, relieved by hope or sweet memories; the hint of tolling bells and pageantry of woe is material, not spiritual, and should be kept in the background. I once knew a lady who ‘quite distinctly saw the carriage wheels go round’ when she heard this tragedy of tone! Again, look at the *Étude* in F minor, op. 25, No. 1. This is a tiny gem which might be compared to a wandering and wistful breeze, elusive, remote; it should be played in that mood, not as a study in speed and cross-rhythms. Is there any ‘moonlight’ in the C sharp minor Sonata of Beethoven?

Heaven forbid! It shows us a dark, tormented soul which finds fleeting peace in the Intermezzo, that 'flower between two abysses,' and drives on to a tempest of despair in the Finale.

"It is an excellent exercise in interpretation thus to take a composition, or more often a single theme, and attempt to describe its character in a few words. This does not mean to fit a story to it, to impose on it attributes not necessarily inherent, but simply to fix its indisputable qualities in the mind as a key to the right feeling.

"Let it not be thought, however, that the right feeling for music will alone insure good interpretation. The deepest feelings often fail to find adequate expression; concealed in the player's mind, they reach no listening ear. The mission of the interpretative artist is to communicate music, as he feels it, to others. Our Anglo-Saxon temperament always labors under the artistic disadvantage of a deep-rooted reluctance to show emotion. But emotion must be shown to be shared, and this, I think, is in substance what we usually mean in speaking of musical 'expression.' I am far from decrying the sensuous and intellectual elements of interpretation, though it seems that our modern world derives little satisfaction from

these elements when unaccompanied by poetic fervor, and on the other hand will forgive many offenses if once persuaded that a strong imaginative impulse sways its performers.

X

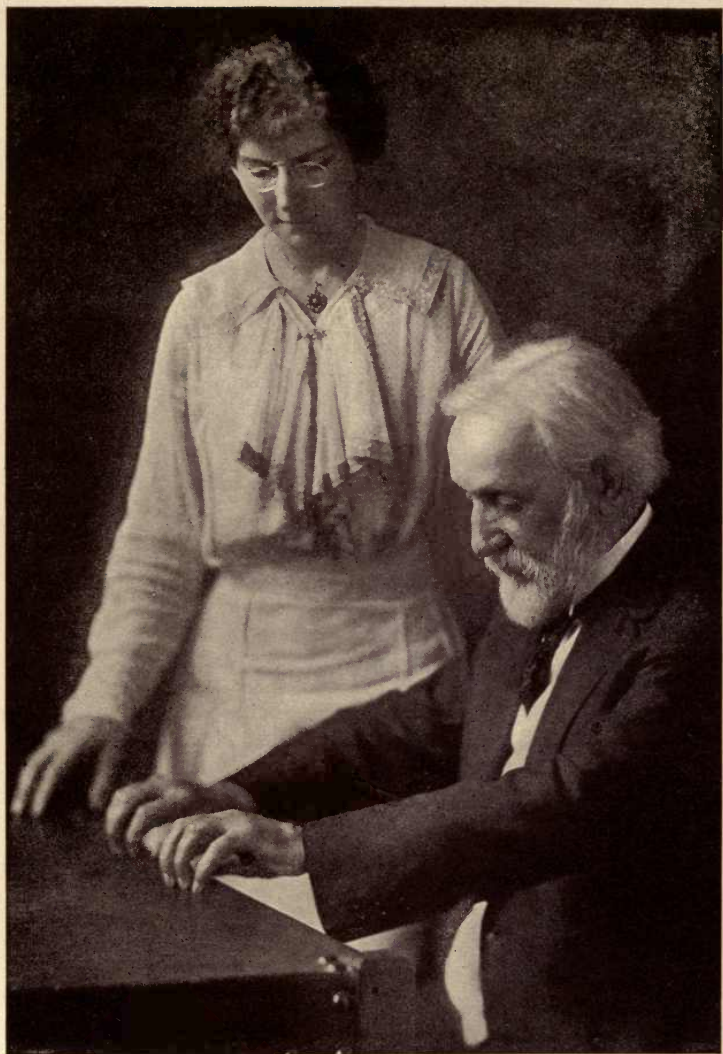
MR. AND MRS. A. K. VIRGIL

THE NECESSITY OF A THOROUGH FOUNDATION

IF Mr. Virgil were asked for what particular title he would wish to be known to posterity his answer would surely be "as a musical educator." To the cause of Education in Music he has consecrated his life.

It may be of interest to the army of teachers and players who use the clavier, who have found such benefit in the method of piano technic and study combined with it, to know a few facts in the career of the inventor of this remarkable instrument.

Almon Kincaid Virgil is a native of Erie, Penn. His father practiced law until middle life, then studied theology and became a Baptist minister. He was a highly educated man, with an intense love for music, and much natural ability for it. His son Almon was taught to play both 'cello and organ at a very early age; while occupied with school work, he de-



To our friend Miss Harriette Brower

Thomas Virgil

AK Virgil

voted much time to music. After graduating from a seminary, he entered college, but later was forced to relinquish his studies on account of ill health. To please his father he then took up the study of law at the Albany Law School; but as all his interests tended toward the study and teaching of music, he soon gave up all thought of being a lawyer.

In his early twenties A. K. Virgil, through the influence of a College President with whom he came in touch, became deeply interested in the study of psychology, and its application to correct educational principles in the study of music. From that period he has been a constant student of this subject.

HOW THE CLAVIER CAME INTO BEING

When young Virgil began—over fifty years ago in a western town—to teach music, he discovered that most piano pupils had very little idea of what they were trying to do or what they were aiming at. Even then he felt that the study of music should be made as thorough and logical as the study of mathematics or any other science. He began to strive at once to educate pupils to think; to do one thing at a time and do it thoroughly—to do nothing without correct thinking. His desire was to train

the mental and physical powers to form a perfect, well-balanced whole.

He discovered in those early days, that the average pupil had a very uncertain touch and poor key-connection. Some tones were likely to overlap, while others would be disconnected. He felt that if attention could be concentrated on a pure *legato* effect, away from, or quite apart from musical sound, both touch and tone would be greatly improved.

Two keys abstracted from an old piano served for an experiment he had in mind. When the inventor had arranged the action of these two keys to his satisfaction, he allowed one or two of his pupils to practice slow trill exercises on them. These pupils felt the benefit almost immediately, through more exact movements and better piano tone. Other keys were soon added to the first pair, as the idea grew and more improvements resulted. From such small beginnings as these sprang the first early effort called the techniphone, which finally developed into the Practice Clavier, and then into the perfected instrument we now have.

At the root of all this thought and experiment was the vital idea to awaken musical intelligence in the mind of the pupil, and pre-

vent so much indifferent, shiftless, aimless practice. For it is impossible to accomplish anything on the clavier without thought. A second idea of equal importance was to separate, for a time, the so-called mechanical side of piano study from the musical side; in other words to prepare fingers, hands and arms for the work they were to perform, before attempting that work. In every branch of labor the artisan must fit himself for his task before undertaking it; why should not the pianist do the same? Such a logical division of labor reduces measurably the time required to gain control of physical and mental forces.

It would seem both sensible and normal to begin one's musical studies in a way to gain the quickest results. But finger and arm preparation away from the keyboard had been little thought of. The very idea of moving fingers and playing exercises on a table or toneless instrument was considered detrimental. No,—tone must be heard; there could be no playing without tone. The fact that better and purer tones could be produced as the result of proper preparation, was difficult for teacher or student to grasp or believe.

Thus an uphill path lay before the inventor, to convince others his ideas were sound and

sensible. It has been a long and arduous struggle, but it has not been in vain. The results for good have been wide and far-reaching. Many have come to realize the truth of the principle he has preached and taught for so many years; countless students have been benefited,—many teachers all over America and also in Europe have been able to teach along scientific lines,—have learned what it is to have something definite to teach.

EDUCATION IN MUSIC

Mr. Virgil and his wife—formerly Miss Florence Dodd of London, who so ably assists him in his musical and educational labors—called at my studio recently. They had just arrived in New York after completing a successful year of musical activity in St. Petersburg, Florida, where they have established a music school, which is already in a very flourishing condition, with a large number of pupils enrolled.

“As yet we have done all the teaching ourselves,” said Mrs. Virgil. “You can get an idea of what that means when I tell you I begin at half past seven in the morning and teach right through the day till into the evening. It is absolutely virgin soil down there; they wel-

come our work with open mind and are eager for it. We are training some young teachers now, who will soon assist us in the work."

"We believe in teaching music and piano playing on educational principles," said Mr. Virgil. "The trouble seems to be that musicians are not educators, therefore they do not teach music along educational lines, nor with the same thoroughness used for other educational subjects. We feel this is quite a false view to take of music study. The foundation must be well laid if good results are to follow, and the only logical time to do this is at the beginning. Many teachers do not insist on this; there is truly great room for reform in music teaching. Personally we are using time, energy and all our skill to institute and spread these necessary reforms as far as we are able.

"There is one point on which I feel very strongly. A great deal of harm is being done by some artists who are not educators but who are besieged for lessons because of their great success on the concert platform. Their teaching experience includes nothing more than that gained from coaching advanced students in the interpretation of compositions. The harm comes when they declare that definite foundational study and strict technical prac-

tice are unnecessary, for technic can be mastered through the study of compositions. Artists who insist there is no need for special technical study—doubtless through ignorance of true educational principles, or because they have never taught the average student—are thoughtlessly doing harm to students the world over.

“For their part, the students are eager to catch at this advice, for they usually wish to get to the top of the tree with as little effort as possible. When they at last awake to the fact they have never laid an adequate foundation to build upon, the awakening is a sad one. For they find it disastrous to try to build up a *répertoire* without a foundation.

“Fifty years’ teaching experience has brought me in touch with thousands of students. From what I have seen of the general lack of preparation I steadfastly maintain that thorough technical study and practice are absolutely necessary and I earnestly warn students against contrary advice.

“It is true artists need not teach technic themselves, but I maintain they ought to consider the proper development of the faculties demanded in piano playing sufficiently to see the importance of advising students to do con-

sistent foundational work. I am thankful there are some artists who do this.

“When correct playing habits have been established and a certain amount of technical skill has been positively acquired, and the student has mastered the principal technical forms, he can dispense with the stacks of études which some teachers deem necessary. He can economize time by devoting himself to compositions of real musical value, to be included in a permanent *répertoire*. But I maintain that even advanced students should give some time each day to direct technical study.

“Some of those who now decry technical study forget what they did in early years to acquire their high pianistic skill. Others are endowed by nature with such wonderful genius and natural physical adaptability to the requirements of the piano that they have been able to dispense with much of the technical practice indispensable to the average student.”

INTERMEDIATE TEACHERS

“We feel,” supplemented Mrs. Virgil, “there is an important field for musical educators of understanding and ability in bridging over, as it were, the wide gap between the foundation of music study and the stage where

the student is ready for the artist teacher. A pupil may have started aright and laid a correct foundation, but if the succeeding steps are not logically taken, precepts which were so carefully inculcated in the beginning are neglected and forgotten. So there is an ever-increasing demand for intermediate teachers, who understand the principles of a thorough educational foundation, and can apply those principles to pieces of various degrees of difficulty. This naturally includes a large acquaintance with musical literature, as well as much experience in teaching. I might call such an arrangement a division of labor, though the expression smacks a bit of the workroom.

“LIVE WEIGHT”

“We hear a great deal in these days about the ‘dead weight principle.’ Mr. Virgil and I have always taught the principle of weight, but we prefer to call it the ‘live weight principle,’ for it is really vital and alive. It is of course the principle of relaxation, properly applied and adjusted. When you want great depth of tone you let down all the relaxed weight you have; if you wish softer effects some of the weight is suspended, held back, suppressed.

We teach easy relaxed movements from the start. The child must learn to do everything easily and gracefully, if it be only standing, walking, or entering a room. For it cannot be expected that a child who is stiff and awkward in everything else, can suddenly become easy and graceful at the piano without proper training."

CHARACTER BUILDING

"Music study based upon true educational principles is most assuredly *character building*," remarked Mr. Virgil. "The successful piano student must have purpose, perseverance and will power; but these qualities, with many students, are apparently lacking in the beginning. It is quite wonderful, however, what persistent effort on the part of the teacher will do to arouse the power of thought and determination in his students."

THE CLAVIER

"And this is just where the clavier, properly employed, becomes such an important ally," interposed Mrs. Virgil. "The majority of teachers do not half realize its value. No student can use the clavier under intelligent guidance, without developing mental control. Ex-

perience has taught me that the average student will play far more musically if he divides his practice between clavier and piano, than if he uses the piano exclusively,—this is to say, provided attention is given to ear-training and he is taught to listen to his own playing when he uses the piano. With the average student, use of tone the entire time tends to dull his musical sensibilities. We find that musically gifted students need the clavier just as much as others who are less highly endowed. Constant appeal to the emotional sense through tone is very taxing upon the physical condition; gifted students are apt to work a great deal more through their emotions than through their intelligence.”

“Yes,” added Mr. Virgil, “and you remember what Professor Butler has said: ‘Development through the emotions is ultimate weakness; development through the intelligence is ultimate strength.’ ”

Volumes might be written about the work of these earnest educators and their efforts toward musical preparedness and efficiency. They have accomplished much and the results of their labors are spreading in ever-widening circles, with ever-increasing influence.

XI

EDWARD MACDOWELL, AS TEACHER

RELATED BY MRS. EDWARD MACDOWELL

EACH year adds to the fame of our greatest American composer, Edward MacDowell. As his music is more frequently heard, it becomes better understood and loved. The various clubs bearing the composer's name, scattered over the country, are doing their share to familiarize people with his music. Perhaps the most potent factor in spreading this familiarity is the work which Mrs. MacDowell, widow of the composer, is doing. For the past five years she has traveled over the length and breadth of the land—"from coast to coast"—bearing her sweet message of harmony and beauty. As she ministered to her distinguished husband, with the most unselfish devotion, during his life, so she has consecrated her time and talents to the work of spreading broadcast a better understanding of his music, and to the upbuilding of the Peterborough Memorial,

which, mainly through her untiring efforts, has come to be a source of help and inspiration to many an artist.

While Edward MacDowell's fame in the future will rest on his many valuable contributions to musical literature, we do not forget he was a brilliant pianist and considered a great teacher. He had the gift of imparting, and numbered among his students some of exceptional talent; musicians who are now making an honorable career in the profession.

In regard to MacDowell's ideals of teaching and piano study, no one could speak with more knowledge and authority than Mrs. MacDowell herself, who studied very seriously with the composer for four years. She has been willing to give some of her valuable time, between lecture recital engagements, to a conference on these subjects, which is here set down with all possible accuracy.

"I began to study the piano when I was ten, though I had picked out many little things for myself before that time," began Mrs. MacDowell. "My first and only teacher in America was a favorite aunt, who, owing to changes of fortune, had come to New York from her home in the South. She was half French, a Jumel,—doubtless one of the orig-



Photograph by Davis & Sanford

EDWARD MACDOWELL

inal family—and was really a remarkable woman. She was a fine musician, and was able within one year to make a place for herself here, and obtain a large fee for lessons, something unusual for a woman to do in those early days.

“My aunt evidently felt I had some talent that was worth while cultivating, for she took me in hand and taught me thoroughly, for four years. After that I worked by myself for several years, until, under stress of circumstances, it was decided for me to make music my profession, and I went abroad to continue my studies.

“My goal was Frankfort, and my desire was to become a pupil of Clara Schumann. Her daughters acted as *Vorbereiters* for their famous mother. I learned they were slow, heavy and pedantic, without having inherited the gifts of their distinguished parents. Raff, Director of the Conservatory, seeing how matters stood, said it would be so much better if I could study with a teacher who could speak English, and mentioned the young American, Edward MacDowell, who was then just finishing his studies with Raff. I consented to try this plan for six months, though I confess I was not eager to come to Europe to study with

an American teacher; neither was the young professor anxious to accept pupils from his own country. However I began. My teacher put me through a very severe course of training. He has since confessed that he never would administer such Spartan treatment to any one else. He gave no pieces, but many études and much Bach. At the end of the half year, I was free to go to another teacher—to Mme. Schumann if I wished. But I had enough good common sense to see that I had made astonishing progress, much greater progress than other students. So I wisely decided to remain with my American teacher.

“We were both working very hard, each in our own way, without thought of any sentiment between us. I well remember my first piece, after almost a year’s study. It was the Bach A minor Prelude and Fugue, transcribed by Liszt.

TEACHING MATERIAL

“What teaching material did Mr. MacDowell use, you ask? I studied Czerny, Heller, Cramer (the original, not the Bülow edition), Clementi’s *Gradus*, and plenty of Bach, the smaller pieces, Inventions and so on. Mr. MacDowell did not give a great many tech-

nical forms outside of études. His idea was that scales and arpeggios need great concentration in order to render their practice beneficial. Many students cannot concentrate sufficiently, in which case they are apt to lose time over these forms. I mean to say they will practice scales better if they are interestingly treated in an étude than when they are studied alone.

“This was his idea. But Mr. MacDowell never claimed he was always right in his views, never felt his way was the only way. He was ever broad minded in such matters. He would say, ‘I do not work just that way,’ or ‘I do not see it in your light, but yours may be just as good a way as mine.’ He had not very much use for so-called piano methods; he said there was some good in each, but would not confine himself to any one. He felt that as there were so many degrees of intelligence, so many sorts of hands, a different method was required for each mentality. He did not always adopt the Leschetizky idea of an arched hand—at least for small ones like mine. A principle of his was to develop the muscles of the palm of the hand,

THE UNDER SIDE OF THE HAND

"This principle is one I have never heard spoken of; he made a great point of it. The under muscles are delicate, and care should be taken not to strain them; but with judicious training much strength of hand and fingers can be acquired through development of these muscles. In my own case, I attribute the ability to regain my technic quickly to this particular principle.

"After my marriage to Mr. MacDowell, I relinquished all thought of making a career, although he felt I had the necessary talent and ability. For fifteen years I scarcely touched the piano. I felt it more important to devote myself to caring for him, saving his time in many ways and shielding him from unnecessary cares. Then I took up my music after he passed away, and taught for five years. I have now had five years in the lecture recital field.

"For this work I needed to regain my technic, and what is more, to keep it up. I find some of my husband's exercises employing the palm or under muscles of the hand most beneficial. Here are a few of them." Mrs. MacDowell sat down at the piano, and laying her

outstretched hand on the keys without depressing them, raised the fingers singly and in pairs, and let them fall softly on their keys, without in the least disturbing or pressing the other fingers lying at rest. The fifth finger was especially spoken of as needing this exercise.

"I practice pieces with this kind of touch," commented the speaker, "when I go over them for technical purposes.

PLAYING SOFTLY

"One of Mr. MacDowell's ideas was to practice softly, with outstretched fingers. This did not mean to the exclusion of other forms of touch, else the player might lose force and vitality of tone. You remind me that William H. Sherwood also advised soft tone for practice.

"Another quality of tone is secured by a slight drawing in of the finger tips. I was told the other day, by a pedagogical authority, that this touch was no longer in use—was quite out of date. I am glad to know that you and others use it, and that various well-known artists approve of it.

MEMORIZING

"I do my memorizing away from the piano, and in several ways. Perhaps the most effective way is the mental photograph I make of the printed page. I can really see the notes before me. I can also recite them, thinking or speaking the two staves together, vertically, not one and then the other, singly. I think one should thoroughly know the piece in various ways, otherwise one may meet disaster when playing in public.

MACDOWELL'S CLASS

"A very helpful means of study—the fortnightly class, gave zest to the student's work. These classes were regular lessons, of course; in them the student was expected to play a piece through, in a semi-public manner. He was not obliged to memorize, though he could, if he wished, play without the notes. The idea was to go through the piece before others, so that the master himself could judge of the effect. Students usually brought something they had been recently working on in the alternate private lesson, or they might be asked to play a selection that had been laid aside for a few months, and needed review.

INTERPRETATION

“Mr. MacDowell had a strong theory that the pupil should use his own innate musical and rhythmic feeling to get at the meaning of the piece. He sometimes gave a composition of his own to two pupils at the same time, to see how they would work it out. He preferred to have them express their own individuality, if they did not offend against any musical law. The first lesson on a piece was always devoted to the technical side; after that came the interpretation.

“In my recital work, I am always asked to play MacDowell’s music; this is quite to be expected. I have a vivid memory of how he played his compositions, and I believe I am better able than any one else to give an adequate idea of his own desire as to its interpretation.”

XII

RUTH DEYO

THE TECHNIC OF INTERPRETATION

It has been truly said of Ruth Deyo that she has every attribute of a great pianist. Technic indeed, of the sort that is "an art in itself," temperament, a strong musical nature, and a something that appeals to an audience and compels sympathetic attention. You may call this something personal magnetism, or personality or what you will. But it holds the listener to the mental picture or the series of emotional states which are being depicted at the piano and through which we must live with the pianist. A recital by Ruth Deyo is a rich intellectual and emotional experience, and if the pieces happen to be by her master, Edward MacDowell, the occasion is truly a feast to the lover of his music.

MacDowell, who took deepest interest in her, felt that she really possessed the divine spark. He sent her to Europe, where she studied for some time, making her *début* in a



Photograph by Garo

Cordially yours
Theda Bara

recital in Berlin, with tremendous success. She received advice and encouragement from such musicians as Paderewski, d'Indy, Busoni, Carreno, Bauer, and later from her admired friend, Charles Martin Loeffler.

Everywhere she has played, both in Europe and America, Ruth Deyo has won high praise. A recent program consisting entirely of MacDowell's compositions, was given before the MacDowell Club of New York, and was received by the large audience of musicians with the highest approval. If Miss Deyo did nothing else but give her time and talents to making the music of our greatest composer known from one end of the land to the other, she would be doing a wonderful and uplifting work.

But Ruth Deyo is not alone a highly trained interpreter, she is a creative musician as well. As a small girl she gave a recital of her own compositions at the World's Fair in Chicago. She has already produced interesting pieces for her instrument; we shall hope to become familiar with more of her work in the future.

Let us listen while Miss Deyo tells us a little about her studies and her ideas of musical development,

EARLY INTUITIONS

"I began to play by ear when I was two and a half and to improvise when I was three,—of course not knowing the notes, nor having the least idea of what I was doing. All I did know was that to sit at the piano made me happy and seemed even more natural than playing with dolls.

"I wanted to reach the pedals and being quite too small for this, I tried to obviate the difficulty by sitting in a low rocking-chair with my hands far above me on the keys. My father, seeing this, took pity on me and had an extension pedal made,—the kind Josef Hofmann used when he made his tours as a small boy.

"My parents would not allow me to be exploited as a Wunder Kind so I played in public only occasionally and then only for charity. I was allowed to give a recital of my own compositions at the World's Fair in Chicago, but aside from this I was kept out of doors a great deal and lived as healthy a life as possible.

"Any talent which develops at a very early age needs much guarding, otherwise it may burn itself out before it has a chance to ma-

ture. My parents wisely understood that true artistic development must be gradual and not too meteoric and their understanding of what I needed made all possible difference to my early life and saved me from much that I might have had to undo later on.'

WITH MASON AND MACDOWELL

"When I was ten, I studied with Dr. William Mason, which instruction gave me an invaluable foundation.

"I had been away from New York for some time and was playing in Steinway Hall when he happened to walk down the corridor. He said to the friend who was with him: 'I know that is Ruth Deyo; I haven't heard her for a long time, but I recognize her touch. Only one who plays from the scapula can get such a pure tone.' He then came into the room. I was of course delighted to see him, for I had always looked up to him with a kind of worship as a child, and I was much touched that he recognized my playing.

"I was fifteen when I went to MacDowell. His teaching was very suggestive. His conceptions were big and his interpretative sense exceedingly fine. He was a very severe task-

master and he put me through a rigid course of technical training.

“He would not allow me to play anything but exercises for two months after I began my work with him. He rarely ever complimented, but scolded me a great deal. In fact, I never knew how much confidence he had in my future nor what he really thought of my playing until the last lesson I had from him, after having studied with him for two years.

“(It seems he told my father very frankly his opinion, but kept it carefully hidden from me.)

“At the final meeting of his Artist’s Class which was given at Columbia, I played the Schumann F sharp minor Sonata. I was just seventeen. He came to me afterward with tears in his eyes and let me see for the first time how deeply interested he was in my career and what faith he had had in me from the beginning. He said, ‘Now you must go to Europe. You have studied long enough with me; I can teach you nothing more,’ which was typical of his unfailingly modest attitude toward everything he did.

“I have always been deeply grateful to him for developing, to the utmost, my imaginative powers when I was very young. He believed

absolutely in the necessity of putting the musical thought of the composition before everything—that is, knowing clearly what the music has to express and then applying the necessary technical means with which to express this. He was not interested in technical problems *per se*, but deeply interested in musical ones. Also he never made sentimental comparisons between the arts, which unfortunately he has often been accused of doing. He was too simple and sincere a nature to have such a pose.

THE ESSENTIALS OF PIANO TECHNIC

“I feel it essential to make one’s equipment so good that the musical idea to be expressed can be said truly and directly without the interference of poor mechanism. It is necessary to keep in mind the fact that technic is a ‘means to an end’ and *only* a means. Not merely to say this and theorize about it; but to live it and prove it in one’s artistic life.

“There is, in music, an inescapable need of two things to produce good music, either as an interpreter or as a composer. These two are:—first, scientific knowledge; second, highly developed intuition. The latter is a thing of prime importance, as it is the ‘spark’

which gives life to a composition and without which it is an inanimate and meaningless series of notes. The former is the trained mentality by means of which one is able to express with scientific accuracy, and with the least waste of energy, all the beauty one finds in a composition.

EXTERIORIZING THE MUSIC

“The power of ‘exteriorizing’ is a most important one. I mean by that, the ability to give to the audience the exact impression of the music you desire to present to them,—thereby making the composition clear and intelligible and not muddled,—which it is bound to be if you only hear it in the inner ear and do not put the necessary technical work on it to express all your inner thoughts to the listener.

“The only way to avoid this insidious and natural fault, is first to analyze the composition with great care, as to its thematic material, its entire construction and so on. Then analyze with equal care, the technical means you apply to each part of the composition in order to bring out each special effect. Try to listen to yourself from the outside. You will find this one of the most difficult things to do

and one of the most fatal things to neglect. Self criticism is the artist's safeguard and the moment he becomes influenced by the audience's good opinion of him, in that moment is he bound to deteriorate unless he constantly keeps strict standards before him of what is artistically right.

"An artistic career is not the path of 'roses all the way' that it appears to be, and as it should quite properly appear. The outward glamour of it is one of its greatest charms, but the inward glamour of unremitting, relentless work to obtain the best and most beautiful results is really much more fascinating than all the outward displays of appreciation which honest artistic living is sure to bring.

"All these expressions of appreciation are tremendous incentives and real necessities to the artist who is giving the best that is in him to create a beautiful thing for his audience and for his own artistic ideals.

PLAYING IN PUBLIC

"This brings me to the interesting question of playing in public, and the necessary mental control in order to accomplish it. It simply means such a powerful and clear projection of the musical thought that an audience is moved

to listen intently from beginning to end without the desire to let its mind wander to other topics. The artist must be convinced of what he is doing before he can convince an audience; he must entirely forget himself while occupied with his work. The sympathetic current between an audience and the artist is one of the most inspiring things in a public career. I have never had this more strongly evidenced in my own life than when I was playing with the Boston Symphony Orchestra. I shall never forget the responsiveness of the Friday afternoon audience. I did not even hear a single cough through the whole concerto! And there was that indescribable something between the audience, orchestra, conductor and piano which seemed to make them all one; and every one's individuality sank in the interest of listening to and interpreting the music.

"This is really true artistic satisfaction, and nothing short of this means anything. The Royal Road to Art is, in spite of the necessity of keeping one's mind and heart open to all the good things the world has to offer, a very exacting and straight path.

"It is, however, infinitely worth every sacrifice; for the sacrifices only mean,—discarding the useless, destructive elements and keeping to

those that are constructive. It is not always easy to do so and one does not arrive at this beatific state in a day; but the struggle to gain it is worth every effort it costs and the rewards are infinitely generous if one works for the love of the working and without thought of immediate or dazzling results.

TONE PRODUCTION

“In my opinion the aim should be to get as pure and ‘unpiano-like’ a tone as possible. By that I mean the necessity of getting away from using the fingers like mechanical hammers. This gives to the tone a disagreeable quality, and used to be, unfortunately, very often associated with piano playing. Happily we are trying to get away from this as much as possible at the present time; and much advance has been made, owing to the realization of the fact that pressure on the keys gives a tone of far greater purity and beauty than striking a key from a distance. Such a touch may be employed for special reasons and certain effects,—but it ought to be used with great care.

INTERPRETATION

“The first thing to do in learning a composition and its interpretation, is to study its musical content and understand its construction. One must know what has to be accentuated and why; where the high lights come, the climaxes, also the unimportant parts (so called) though nothing in music is really unimportant. A very necessary part of true interpretation is to have respect for each voice and to give them all their proper value,—not to play every voice and every finger loud when we see *f* or *ff* in front of us.

“One reason why the pianist can practice Bach endlessly with no mental fatigue but with increased delight is because of the constant interplay of many voices demanding different qualities of tone. It is so interesting to find how the voices are all woven together in a supremely organic fashion with no waste material.

PLAYING WITH POWER

“One of the essentials of powerful playing or power in playing, is immediate relaxation after the key chord or octave has been struck. This quick muscular contraction and relaxa-

tion is an entirely healthy exercise as there can be no strain when properly controlled and at the same time the possibility of producing a powerful tone with no fatigue is limitless.

“Four things are essential to powerful playing: 1. Well developed and very strong fingers (arched hand is the safest position, though some pianists play with fingers quite flat). 2. Relaxed arm. 3. Impetus made from the shoulder. 4. Immediate relaxation after the chord has been played.

“Delicacy is obtained through loud practice, thereby training the fingers in these passages, which give them the proper background, as it were, and the necessary control over the passage. After this is done, it is possible to grade the tone from the loudest *forte* to the softest *pianissimo*, and produce a most delicate and at the same time clear tone which has equal carrying power with a note produced with more force.

KEEPING UP TECHNIC

“To keep one’s technic in order is rather a personal matter and to lay down rules is difficult. My own experience has been that a certain amount of very concentrated practice away from the piano is one of the most valuable

ways of keeping in good condition. Muscular exercises intelligently practiced are most beneficial.

“It is necessary to avoid undue fatigue, also to keep the mind fresh, so that it does not grow musically stale. Also to practice the piece slowly and carefully with the notes; no matter how well you think you know the composition without them.”

XIII

MARTINUS SIEVEKING

THE DEAD-WEIGHT PRINCIPLE

A MAN who has, according to his own account, solved all problems of the keyboard—a man who, during a dozen or fifteen years of unremitting effort has built up for himself a perfect piano mechanism, is truly a unique figure in the pianistic world. Few artists are willing to make, or can substantiate such a claim. Even the greatest of them confess to some limitations; they admit there are some problems a little beyond their reach. The eminent Holland pianist believes he has solved them all; he feels there is nothing on the technical side beyond his ken.

Mr. Sieveking tells us his piano method is founded on scientific principles unknown up to the present time. The most important of these is the principle of dead or relaxed weight. But we, in America, have for over thirty years, been familiar with Dr. William Mason's exposition of the principle of relaxation and de-

vitalization. Some of the most prominent teachers and pianists among us to-day were students of Mason, use his method and are working along the lines laid down by him. They cannot forget the ease and power this principle gave their master's playing, nor his beautiful touch and tone. Godowsky is a modern master who preaches relaxed, or dead weight of hand and arm upon the key. It is the vital principle of Hofmann's wonderful art. A host of others have testified to its value and necessity—Powell, Carreno, Schnabel, Leginska—to say nothing of the Breithaupt book on weight touch.

And now we are told that the principle of dead or relaxed weight has been unknown up to the present time! What does it all mean?

Thus I mused as I proceeded to keep an appointment with Mr. Martinus Sieveking, who had recently arrived in this country from Paris. It will be remembered that he toured America years ago, and proved himself a brilliant pianist and most excellent musician. I mentally resolved to settle the subject of weight touch with him the very first thing, before taking up other technical points which had occurred to me to question him about.

Let it be recorded at once that I came, saw,

and became convinced that here was one who had solved many if not most of the technical difficulties of the piano. While it may be too much to claim that the principle of dead weight has not been fully understood until now, it can be truthfully stated that the Dutch pianist has discovered a means of applying this principle in a manner that will improve touch and tone in a short time. If his directions are implicitly followed, the fingers will almost immediately become stronger while the tone will increase in volume and sonority. His authoritative words and manner bespeak the autocrat; but a man who has spent a good part of his life in devising means to obtain a big, luscious tone, strong fingers, fluent technic, and has succeeded to a remarkable degree, feels he has a right to be autocratic. Details of this conference will surely be of deep interest to teachers and students of the instrument.

I found Mr. Sieveking in his spacious studios, a man of commanding presence, winning manner, and speaking English fluently. Two grand pianos, one of foreign the other of American make, stood side by side in the center of the music room. The French instrument had been built for his special use; not only were

the keys wider, but the whole keyboard was tilted a little downward at the back, which he explained was a decided advantage.

HIS METHOD

"You want to know about my method of using relaxed weight?" he began. "I will gladly tell you all I can; what is more, I will show you each step. Let us sit here at this piano and demonstrate as we go along." As he spoke he caught my hand by one finger and held it up to test its weight; in fact he let the hand hang by one finger and then by another as he talked.

"Many people think they are using dead weight in playing, when the truth is they do not really understand the principle at all. I could mention a few pianists who do use it. Godowsky does to a considerable extent, Carreno also. It requires absolute concentration from the start, until it has become so much a part of one's being that it is 'second nature.' Its use increases the volume of tone in a wonderful degree."

All this time my hand had been held suspended in air; now he let go of the finger and the arm fell.

"You have an understanding of the dead

weight in the arm; now we will see if you can put it into the fingers."

The second finger of the right hand was placed on the key D, in a firmly arched position. The other fingers were well curved and raised, thumb extended from the hand, and arm hung down naturally at the side. Mr. Sieveking believes in arched hand, well curved fingers and high, free finger action, for all technical finger exercises. He says: "The fingers should be raised as high as possible (without strain). I insist on this important point, as I do not believe it possible to develop a fine technic without it. Sometimes the flat finger is employed by virtuosi to secure a beautiful tone, but at first the student should confine himself to the curved finger."

The second finger, resting on the key D and supporting the entire weight of hand and arm, was now tested over and over, by being lifted high and then allowed to fall back on the key. Arm weight increased as thought was consciously directed to this point.

"*Perfectement!* Now you see what I mean—now you have it! With your arm supported on the tip of the second finger, play a down stroke with the third finger, over and over again, always maintaining this heavy, weighted

feeling in the hand and arm. Of course you are familiar with the different sets of muscles which work the fingers, some of which lie on top and others on the underside of the arm. The extensors on top of the arm do the lifting, and as lifting is more difficult to accomplish than dropping or falling, we must give greater heed to the raising of the finger, that it may be done with quickness and exactness."

EACH FINGER BY ITSELF

Each finger in turn was now used as support, while the one next it was exercised with quick up-and-down movements. No weakness or bending, no hesitation in movement, no lifting except in an exactly straight line were allowed. The stroke was made with as much power as possible. Every player and teacher knows how important it is to gain power and clearness, and feels the need of some sure way to acquire these with the right conditions. I had made my own experiments along these lines; now it was a satisfaction to meet with a master who had worked them out so logically.

"We have now done the first exercise I give the students who come to me. The second goes a step further. As you see the first step only employs one finger at a time; for I consider it a

great mistake to play so-called five finger exercises, at first. The only sound basis for technic is to begin with one finger at a time. The second step employs two fingers in legato, but always with dead weight of arm, supported on the finger tips. We must be conscious of this condition at all times, which means—at first—constant thinking. One should also play with each hand alone, as concentration is a most important factor of all the work.

THE PROOF

“A player who has taken the two steps, as we have just done, has already the proof of what this method will do for him. In one hour I can convince him of its benefits. With two hours daily practice for one week, he will find his tone increased and his fingers appreciably stronger.”

OCTAVE TRAINING

“What about octaves?” he was asked.

“We need strength, suppleness and rapidity for octaves. I have special training for octaves. They call into requisition the muscles of the forearm; the wrist is but the hinge between the hand and forearm. With the hand in arched form, the playing fingers curved and firm, we

cultivate each finger in turn, with quick hand strokes on the key. Of course, for octaves, the first and fifth are most important, but all fingers can come in for this sort of training. At first use four repetitions on each key, and play up and down the keyboard, at least four octaves. Use the diatonic and chromatic scales. After these have been learned, I have invented various exercises which employ 8ths, 7ths, 6ths, 5ths and 4ths, in this way," and he ran over these forms with the greatest ease and speed.

TRAINING THE THUMB

"I have also many exercises for training the thumb in scale playing. Here is the first one: With the second finger on a black key and the arm weight suspended on it, the thumb passes from the white key on one side of it to the white key on the other side of it, the thumb describing an arched movement from one key to the other. The thumb is also trained to pass under all the other fingers."

"Have you any special counsel to give in the matter of memorizing?"

MEMORIZING

"In the first place, try to have the pupil learn something of harmony; even a little is helpful,

it is better than nothing. It will enable him to analyze the music sufficiently to give him some little idea of what he is trying to play. Take a small portion of the piece, say two measures at a time, learn one hand and then the other. Know them so thoroughly the notes can be recited or written. Thus one can think out the piece away from the instrument.

“I have had and now have students of great talent studying with me, several of them winners of the *Premier Prix* in Paris. They all testify to the benefits received from careful study of my exposition of the principle of dead weight. I have embodied these principles and exercises into a system; I hope to have the work published later on.” Mr. Sieveking took a book from the table and asked me to look it over. The text and musical illustrations were all written by his own hand, the former in clear, elegant English.

“This is a life work,” he said. “I have written it to aid teachers and students, for all must learn these principles. I have come to America for this purpose, leaving my home and family in Paris. I intend to return after accomplishing my mission here. Oh, yes, I shall concertize in America; but I especially desire to

compose. Here is a little piece, a Nocturne, which I began in Paris and finished in New York. Would you like to hear it?"

He began to play and I was soon absorbed in listening to the quality of his tone, so big, sweet and penetrating. Once he turned to me naïvely; "Do you like it—it's nice, isn't it?"

After a little he broke off. "I really cannot play on an ordinary sized keyboard, and my French piano is being repaired. On this one my fingers seem to get between the black keys and I can't get them out." And he held up those wonderful hands of his, surely the largest, most muscular and perfectly developed among piano hands.

"You see that photograph of two hands?" pointing to a picture on the wall. "One is Rubinstein's, the other my own—side by side. They are almost identical. Rubinstein's fingers had cushions on the ends; I believe these are necessary to play the piano successfully.

"Oh, yes, I use the metronome; you see I have one of extra size standing there."

The Holland master is a thorough believer in hard work. "I condemn my pupils to hard labor," he says. "Technic is brains, plus rightly trained muscles and nerves. To ac-

quire a technic, keep it up and constantly improve it, should be the aim of every pianist."

A VISIT TO SIEVEKING

"Come down and see me next Sunday afternoon—there will be music," wrote Martinus Sieveking, the Dutch pianist and composer, from his sylvan retreat on Long Island. The invitation was alluring; the day proved fair and we went.

Mr. Sieveking had chosen to locate for the summer not on the shore but a little inland, where green lawns and shrubbery abound. With him were Mrs. Elliott and Miss Inez Elliott, a young pianist, who had studied with this accomplished teacher for the past ten years. He considers her a thorough mistress of his method, and as yet the only authorized exponent of it in this country.

When we arrived at the villa, sounds of a piano met us before we reached the garden gate. Bach was being played with amazing fluency and velocity. We paused to listen and waited till the tones ceased before pressing the bell. The player responded, opened the door and led us at once into the parlor which served as his music room. It was a square room with several windows looking out to the

green. On a small mantle shelf stood a few drawings; prominent among them a photograph of Adelina Patti, sent him in commemoration of her seventieth birthday. Two concert grands took up the major portion of the room, though the whole space seemed dominated by the presence of the pianist himself. One felt here was a big personality; a man who had thought much, studied deeply, had lived and suffered.

In answer to some of my questions regarding his early life and career, the artist said:

"I was surrounded by musical influences from the beginning of my life. My father was a thoroughly trained musician, a conductor and composer, my mother was a singer. I have always lived in a musical atmosphere: I think this is one of the essentials if one would become a musician. At a very early age I began to play the piano; before long I began to compose. At twelve I played organ in a church. Later on I went to Vienna, to Leschetizky. The Professor took great interest in me and was especially kind. There were six of us, chosen out of a class of ninety, to be his special favorites; they were: Hambourg, Gabrilowitsch, Goodson, Schnabel, Newcomb and myself.

“After those happy student days, I concertized everywhere; I came to America also. But I was not satisfied with the success I had won, nor with what I had achieved. I felt there were deeper principles underlying my art which I did not yet understand. So I set to work to discover them. The result is the method I have formulated, which has cost me fifteen years’ hard labor. But I am satisfied with the result; I feel I have won out; I feel I have gained the correct principles of true piano technic. Life has been a bitter struggle at times. Sometimes I have had to go hungry—I have even had to starve! Thank Heaven, all that is over; there are now no financial worries. My aim is to benefit others with my discoveries. I want to help teachers to teach better and players to play better. I often give much time to those with talent who are unable to pay, yet are deserving. I want to be surrounded by talented, congenial people wherever I am.”

Yielding to our request, he began to play. First his *Souffrance*, written three years ago, when his son was very ill. It expresses a father’s anxiety for the recovery of the stricken one. After this Beethoven, Op. 27, No. 2, the “Moonlight.” Then a Bach violin Gavotte,

transcribed for piano by himself. Next some Chopin, and finally one of his latest compositions, a Nocturne, embodying a haunting, appealing melody. "Women like this piece," he remarked, in answer to our openly expressed admiration. "This and the *Souffrance* have, I think, the right to exist; they are modern but not futuristic, for I cannot write in that style. The Nocturne is a little after the manner of Chopin—I quite frankly acknowledge it. It certainly does not copy the Polish master, for it is distinctly modern; but it is in his spirit. I wrote it while staying in a beautiful villa, where there was a lovely garden with flowers and fruit. Blue skies overhead and sunshine and moonlight. Who could help being influenced by such surroundings. I have tried to express the feelings the environment made upon me. Some composers write from the heart, like Beethoven; some from the head, like Strauss. Wagner expressed both head and heart."

MORE ABOUT HIS METHOD

A little later he brought out the MS copy of his method, placed it upon the piano, and we fell to discussing the material and doing the exercises. After each one had been tried he

would say: "Do you approve of this? Do you think it will help? Is it not a good exercise? Any one who can play this with endurance and velocity has technic. These scale exercises will surely help everybody."

The master constantly spoke of the dead weight principle—the weight of arm hanging on the finger tips. While all this is true, the term "dead weight" does not, to my mind, convey the whole truth, and may mislead the uninitiated. It gives no idea, for example, of the extreme firmness of the fingers, nor of the muscular energy used to depress the keys in all finger exercises. It is this element of energy, combined with arm weight, which give power and sonority to the tone. Sieveking insists on high, large movements of fingers for all technical exercises and wants all the sonority that can be brought from the instrument. His whole mentality is built on large lines of thought: even his handwriting corresponds. Yet he can caress the keys most delicately when he wills to do so.

Later in the afternoon we had tea and delicious cakes made by Miss Elliott's fair hands. Sieveking was genial and told many anecdotes. He wished me to examine the hand of his pupil and note its beautiful development. "She

plays with the greatest perfection," he said. "You shall hear her; I insist she make a career."

The blaze of a glorious sunset met our eyes as we all left the villa and sauntered through the quiet, hedge-bordered streets, flanked by pretty villas and gardens. Our genial host insisted on accompanying us to the train and seeing us safely aboard. As he stood there on the little platform, waving us a farewell, his tall figure looming dark against the lambent sunset sky, the whole made an "impression" not to be forgotten. Had we only possessed the necessary gift, the scenes of the afternoon might have served as basis for a futuristic tone poem. Fortunately, or otherwise, we could only keep the group of mental pictures to hang on Memory's walls.

XIV

MARGUERITE MELVILLE- LISZNIEWSKA

THE ART OF THE TEACHER

To meet and talk with Marguerite Melville is almost equivalent to being taken directly into the studio of the late Theodor Leschetizky himself. This gifted American was the Viennese master's pupil and assistant for more than six years; she saw him under all sorts of conditions, understood him thoroughly, and always knew how to "take him." She can describe the man, his personality, his manner of teaching, of treating and handling pupils, so vividly and inimitably, that you feel you have really been in the famous work-room yourself, and eye-witness to the happenings there. You scarcely know which interests you more, the keen, analytical methods of the master, or the charming personality, ready wit and tact of the raconteur.

Like her distinguished compatriot, Edward MacDowell, Marguerite Melville was born in

New York City, of Scotch-Irish stock. Like him she has talent for piano playing, composition, and pedagogy. In place of his gift for drawing and painting, she possesses a voice and the ability to sing. Well-known vocalists advised her to specialize in singing. But she had the "pianistic bee in her bonnet," as she puts it, and chose the piano as her medium of expression.

A "LITTLE MOZART"

Marguerite Melville inherited music and lived in it from earliest recollection, as her father was an organist and her mother a singer. When little more than a child she left her native land, as protégée of William Steinway, and went to Berlin to study with Dr. Jedliczka. This remarkable pedagogue took great interest in her studies, and used to call her "his little Mozart." She found him a helpful, inspiring teacher, especially on the interpretative side. At his death she proceeded to Vienna to study with Leschetizky.

After a short period with an assistant she came to the master. He soon recognized in the young girl a rare spirit, one of the chosen. She relates that, contrary to others who feared the ordeal of lessons with the professor, she



To Harriet W. Brover
 with appreciation of her understanding
 of the things really worth while!
 "Marguerite McFille Lazienka."
 April 1916.

felt like a bird let out of a cage when she got to him. Here was a musician she could consult and advise with, who understood her and appreciated her talent. Not only did she enjoy his personal friendship in the home, but had the honor to become one of his leading assistants, which post she occupied for six years. During her last season in Vienna, she took twenty-two of her pupils to the master, besides those he specially asked her to prepare for him. "I love to teach," she says; "I feel I can understand the student's difficulties, for I have been through so much myself; I can help him over the hard places. It is often only a little stiffness here or there—in the wrong place—a lack of understanding, lack of sympathetic tone or expression; it may be but a little thing which stands in the way, which I am able to remove. I feel, too, that I can impart some of my own enthusiasm to the student."

On a certain occasion we had met to discuss the subject of piano playing and teaching.

TECHNIC A PERSONAL MATTER

"You want to talk about technic, I am sure," began Mme. Melville, with her charming smile. "Technic is such an individual thing; it seems to belong to each one personally. In its broad-

est sense it is not well understood by the general player. For this very reason a student might have listened to Leschetizky and not have known what he was talking about.

“There are a number of *Vorbereiters* in Vienna, but each one teaches in a different way, which shows there are no fixed and fast rules. Mme. Bree, for instance, advises high finger action; some of the others do not. For my own part I feel the best way is to fit the technic to individual needs. A pupil with a heavy hand and inert fingers needs decided, well-articulated finger action, in order to lighten up things, and develop the muscles; whereas the long, thin hand, with spidery fingers, may need opposite treatment—sometimes to hold the fingers down a bit, to make them cling to the keys and thus develop weight in them.

RELAXATION

“One hears a great deal of talk about relaxation, but that, too, is apt to be misunderstood. The pupil may think he relaxes, when his arm is actually quite light, showing it is not properly loose, for a really relaxed arm is very heavy. The arm undoubtedly controls everything. It is the seat of power; it is what the diaphragm is to the singer, the basis of every-

thing. It is the reservoir of weight. Whatever amount or quality of tone you want, you bring to bear more or less weight of arm on your fingers; you turn on the weight through the arm, or turn it off, in just such quantity as you need.

“Of course we cannot do without finger action; we must have it for the development of fingers and for certain effects; beginners must be taught it at the start. But later on we can get the fingers nearer the keys and thus gain in weight and ease of delivery, without such a high lift of finger.

ILLUSTRATIONS

“To illustrate how Leschetizky suited his teaching to each player: He often told one pupil to play a passage a certain way. The next pupil might be advised to play the same passage in quite a different manner. This was the cause of some amusing errors on the part of students. One would hear another told exactly how to interpret a certain piece. With elation he thinks, ‘Ah, yes, that is the way it should be done.’ Goes home, practices the piece thus and so; comes to the next lesson, and is told that is not the way to play the piece at all.

“When I brought my own pupils to the pro-

fessor, I always accompanied them and sat near them during the ordeal. Of course they were often nervous, and this condition did not improve their performance. Sometimes the professor made sarcastic remarks; their inability to grasp the full import of which did not improve the situation. I could usually pacify him and smooth things over for the pupil. I always tried to have her go right on, in spite of everything. If the professor was ruffled at her failure to apprehend his meaning, I would say: 'Don't expect quite so much; the pupil can't at once do all you require; you must be more humble—don't look for perfection yet.'

AMERICAN TACT

"One particular day something had gone wrong. It was class-day, too; a number of students had already assembled in the salon. When I came I found the master pacing up and down in the next room, in a rising state of excitement. I tried to calm him, but he utterly refused to be pacified. 'Very well,' I said, 'you surely cannot have the class to-day; I will go in and dismiss them. I'll tell them to come another day.' At this ultimatum, he calmed down instantly, went into the salon, and had never seemed in a more amiable, sunny mood,

“Of course I have witnessed some harrowing scenes in the studio. Leschetizky would sometimes criticize very harshly a player whom he thought conceited and self satisfied. If I remonstrated at such severity he would retort: ‘If a pupil cannot stand my criticism, how will he ever endure being flayed by the critics? He must learn to stand up under rough handling.’

“Some of the foreign students, generally—though not always—Americans, seemed possessed with the idea they must get a few lessons with the master before returning home, so they could call themselves his pupils. The *Vorbereiters* were often besieged with undesirable applicants. Great tact was needed to steer safely around these obstacles.

“One such case I recall. The pupil was really lacking in ability, but had staked all her hopes on having *one* lesson with Leschetizky. It had fallen to my lot to prepare her, and I soon found I could do little or nothing for her. So I explained the case to the professor, asking him to be easy with her for my sake. Her trouble was lack of rhythm—clearness also. At the appointed time I brought her to him. She seated herself at the piano with a flourish and began. The professor showed signs of uneasi-

ness and soon remarked, 'You might play clearer.'

"'Clearer than that?' she answered, as though he were demanding the impossible. Soon she was told she played wrong notes.

"'I assure you, professor, I have practiced this piece a great deal, and have never played wrong notes at home!'

"I saw the premonitions of storm, so suggested the lesson should terminate at the half hour, as the professor had another engagement. The young lady was not pleased with her lesson, but she could at least say she had had one.

MEMORIZING

"In regard to memorizing," continued the pianist, "I feel one should do it the easiest way. There are three factors—eye, ear and finger memory. To make such a mental picture of the printed notes that you can shut your eyes and see them; to hear so accurately that your mental ear knows them; also to feel them and know their position on the keyboard—all these should make the piece very sure. Some players commit their pieces in all three ways. For myself I can hardly say whether any one of these predominate. I can affirm that when I can play the piece I know it by heart. Musi-

cians have often told me I have a wonderful memory; I can retain my music almost indefinitely. The other day, after hearing Paderewski, I came home, thinking of the pieces I used to play of his—*Melodie*, *Nocturne* and other things. I haven't seen the printed pages of these for years, nor played them. I went to the piano and found them right under my fingers, without a slip. This ability to retain the notes in mind stands me in good stead for my recital work, when, under stress of teaching and many interruptions, I am not able to secure sufficient time for practice.

FOREIGN STUDY

“In regard to foreign study for Americans, I do not see the reason for opposing it. They are obliged to learn a new language, of itself an education. They see new lands, learn to know new people, become familiar with new ways of living. All this broadens them and benefits their music. They hear quantities of music, opera, orchestral and chamber concerts and recitals, which they would never have the opportunity to hear at home, at the price. If fond of Shakespeare, they will at least *see* more of him in one season in Germany than in a lifetime in America. These are a few reasons for

going abroad. Conditions may be entirely different hereafter; one cannot predict.

DEVELOP THE MUSICAL SIDE

“People often speak as though Leschetizky cared only to bring out the virtuosity of the student, to form him into a brilliant pianist. This was true to a certain extent, but it was also true that he sought to develop the musical side, which ought to underlie all virtuosity.

“Here is one illustration of what I mean. It was the case of a little Polish boy of twelve. He really had a big talent, but was fond, when at the piano, of putting on the airs of a virtuoso. I did not prepare him for the professor but I knew him, as he lived in the same *pension*. When he came to play in class, he walked up to the piano, seated himself as though he were some great one, and dashed into a Chopin Polonaise. He played it brilliantly, but had not gone more than eight measures, when Leschetizky went up, took his hands off the keys and pushed him off the stool, saying such playing was nothing but Polish exaggeration, and he didn't want to see him again. I felt keenly for the little fellow, who was all broken up over the turn of affairs; so I tried to pacify the professor, saying perhaps the stool was not quite

right, or he may have been nervous, and begged he might have another chance. The professor then turned on me, saying, 'You women, you must spoil everything.' I was a bit cross with him for his attitude toward the boy, but I can see now that he saw this streak of superficiality and exaggeration, and wanted to get it out. He could have done so, if he had had time to work with him. The boy needed several more such knocks. Five years later I heard him—now a full-fledged artist—in Copenhagen. He was then merely a brilliant virtuoso, entirely superficial, and seemed to me quite on the wrong track. That special sort of superficial exaggeration was what the professor tried to kill in the boy of twelve.

A SUSCEPTIBLE PUPIL

"An instance of how Leschetizky would handle a susceptible pupil. He was also a Polish lad, just over twenty, who came with his mother. She was devoted to him and looked after everything. The fellow was rather shy and given to blushing. The professor, of course, sized up his mentality and took delight in saying things to shock him, just to see him color up. Once, when he had something expressive to play, he was asked:

“ ‘How do you make love to a girl? I suppose you would say, shyly, “I love you;” whereas you should say it this way—’ the professor struck an attitude and said the words with the greatest ardor.

ILLUSTRATING INTREPRETATION

“Leschetizky used to say ‘there are no good teachers, only good pupils!’ There are many students who love music, yet work for years without getting beyond the clumsy, amateurish stage. They play everything on a dead level of monotony. It is for us as teachers to help such struggling ones over the intermediate stage to the place where they can bring some light and shade into their performance. I try to show them where and how to use variety of tone and accent. Sometimes I use a characteristic group of words that will just fit the phrase, and will give the right idea of stress. It is often in little turns and ornaments that the student’s lack of deftness stands out. When the pupil played a clumsy turn, Leschetizky would say: ‘Don’t build your balcony as big as your house.’ If the pupil asked just where to begin a crescendo, the professor would point to a leaf and answer: ‘Can you see just where this leaf begins to curve?’

“The longer I am in the work, the more I see the lack of talent for interpretation in the average pupil, or even in those who have more than the average aptitude. Perhaps not more than one in fifty has any sort of an idea how the piece should sound as a whole, without being told. You would think they might feel where this part should be subdued and that part be brought out; where the melody should be prominent or a hidden theme heard, where a retard or pause would be effective. Why must they always be told these things, why cannot they be felt?

“The professor never gave me special ideas for my own interpretation; he seemed satisfied with my conception. One has to be born with a sense of balance—of proportion. He used to say, ‘If you don’t feel it you can’t be taught it. Either you can play Schumann or you can’t.’

“At first I used to think I could get a great many ideas on interpretation by going to class and listening to the others. But I found he would treat the same piece quite differently for different pupils. If one took a certain reading as final, he was apt to find it changed on another occasion, if another pupil played the piece. So I gave up this idea. But when I

began to take my own pupils to the professor I saw the benefit of listening, for I began to appreciate the versatility of a great teacher.

TONE IN PIANO PLAYING

“It seems to me the principal thing in playing is tone—a beautiful, sympathetic quality, as near like the human voice as possible. When Casals plays the opening scale passage in the C major Prelude of the Bach Suite, as he does with such marvelous shading on each note, it is the tone which holds the audience spellbound; for there is no accompaniment to take attention from the player. It seems to me the greatest art that is thinkable.

“I always try at once to interest my pupils in tone study. It is a great incentive to those who have not formerly cared much for their music, or who may have lost interest in it. To make everything they touch beautiful, if it be only a scale or a Czerny study, gives zest to one’s practice. I never allow them to hit the keys, but rather to press or caress them. Even chords can be pulled up, to draw the tone out of the piano. Of course the fingers must have well-developed action. I might say they are like perfectly trained little animals, that run here and there

to do our bidding; or they are the brushes with which we paint the pictures.

“Music is such a beautiful art; we especially need it here in America, a country so full of the superficial, the rush of business and material interests. Artistic things get so easily pushed to the wall or crowded out of our lives. Even the least inclination to learn music should be encouraged in people of all ages. No one can foresee all it may mean to the individual. Americans are naturally artistic, the soil is receptive, but many material things smother artistic instincts.

“The attitude of some toward music is not such as will help its cultivation. We haven’t sufficient respect yet for the art, the artist or the teacher. Some think if they don’t like the playing of this or that performer, the trouble is with the artist. They are not willing to be humble enough to learn from one who is so far above them in knowledge. One sees this spirit in students who go abroad. If in the lesson, Leschetizky only heard a small portion of the piece, and chose rather to talk and expound his ideas, they often grew restive, wanted to turn the page, get over a lot of ground—get their money’s worth! ‘You should be glad to hear

what I have to say; it is of more value to you than for you to play the piece,' he would say.

"I often hear it said of a young musician who has come before the public in recital, that he should not have ventured out yet; he was not ready, and so on. I feel differently. He had probably come to the point in his experience when he wanted to give out something within him which could no longer be repressed. For him it was a step forward, a test to show him where he stood. He no doubt will reap more benefit from it than will his listeners. For now he can advance much more surely and intelligently."

XV

MRS. H. H. A. BEACH

HOW A COMPOSER WORKS

OUR American-born artist, Mrs. H. H. A. Beach, is both a composer of high rank and a pianist of distinction.

As a player, one critic has said: "She has many of those rare elements that conspire to make the true pianist. We have seldom heard delicacy and force, a poetic interpretation and a prosaic vigor so well combined. Grace, intelligence and sympathy are chief characteristics of her playing."

After years of quiet study and home life in Boston, followed more recently by a lengthy sojourn in Europe, Mrs. Beach, again at home, has emerged somewhat from her seclusion, and is now bringing the message of her own music to the many who are eager to hear it. Thus she is becoming personally known through her interpretative recitals and her very characteristic rendering of her compositions.

As a composer Mrs. Beach is known and

loved over the length and breadth of the land, for her many beautiful songs and piano pieces. Those who are familiar with such gems as *Ecstasy*, *The Year's at the Spring*, *June*, and many others may not know that the composer has written in the larger forms. Her Gaelic Symphony has been played a number of times by the Boston Symphony Orchestra, and also by the symphony orchestras of many other cities. It has lately met with an enthusiastic reception in Philadelphia, under the baton of Stokowski. Her piano Quintet, Mass in E flat, Sonata for piano and violin, and her choral works attest the variety and scope of her creative activities.

Dr. Percy Goetschius says of Mrs. Beach, the composer:

"She writes both like a man and a woman. Her music manifests traits of a delicacy and tenderness scarcely attainable by a masculine nature, and masculine traits as genuine and virile as any man could exhibit." If a recital of her works could be given without her name being attached, "those accustomed to proclaim the superiority of the male composer would possibly, without exception, fail to suspect they were listening to the artistic creations of a woman."



For
Miss Brower
with kindest regards
Amy M. Beach

It had long been my desire to come into personal touch with this rare individuality. My desire was realized when I was privileged to visit her apartments in the heart of old New York, which she has made her headquarters for the past two months. Who could help feeling at home in the presence of this cheery little lady, with her cordial handclasp, her genial manner, her clear blue eyes and sunny smile? The moments flew all too quickly as she spoke of her work as pianist and composer.

“Really, I cannot remember when I did not play the piano and compose. I know I was doing both at the age of four. I improvised little melodies then, but did not know how to write them down.

“My first piano teacher was my mother, with whom I studied for a number of years, until she felt I might be benefited by a change, when I was placed under well-known masters. I played with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, under Theodore Thomas, when I was still in short dresses, with my hair in a pigtail. I have kept up my piano work, and always expect to do so. When I am not playing I am composing, and *vice versa*. I do them both interchangeably and constantly, but not both at the same time. This keeps me fresh for each one.

I am a dual personality and lead a double musical life.

“I have naturally a very flexible hand, which does not become stiff if practice is relaxed for a bit. Then I am old-fashioned enough to believe in scales and exercises. I like to give an hour a day to these whenever possible. I do them on this little dumb keyboard, this small black case, which serves my purpose on trains and in hotels. At home in Boston I use the Virgil clavier, and thoroughly enjoy working on it. People are so fond of saying a soundless keyboard is mechanical; is it any less mechanical to do your technical work on a keyboard with tone? The exercises are the same. Should we not wish to save the wear and tear on our ears! My hearing is extremely sensitive, and I want to save it all I can. I often learn my pieces and all difficult passages on the clavier. It is a good idea to learn the Debussy Toccata on the clavier. Did you ever try to practice this piece slowly on the piano? The discords are so distressing they fairly hurt. The clavier came to my relief in this instance; I don't believe I ever could have learned the piece if I had done it all on the piano.

“As for practice material, I use the Rosenthal Technics. There are several books of

these, and I have found them excellent. Then, of course, I invent a good many exercises of my own."

"Can you tell me something about your work in composition—how you do it; or is that too difficult a question?"

Mrs. Beach's eyes twinkled.

"It would be very difficult to tell *how* I do it, but I can tell you *where*; always in the open, if possible. I like to sit out of doors, I want to be in the midst of nature when I write. If it is cold or bad weather when I write I try to have a room with wide windows, or a balcony.

"I cannot write unless I am in the mood, or have the inspiration. I cannot say to myself, 'I will compose three hours a day.' That would reduce the work to mere mechanism, without the divine spark. A theme or subject often rests in my mind for months or a year before I put it on paper. I always compose away from the piano—unless it be an accompaniment that I want to try with the voice part, then I sometimes take it to the piano, to see what changes are needed.

"The subject for the Fugue which I played at my recent concert was in my thought for over a year before I ever jotted it down. I was in Switzerland at the time. We had gone

to Meran. It was about this time last year. From my windows could be seen the whole range of snow-capped mountain peaks; the sight was truly enough to inspire one. I felt moved to put down the general plan of the Fugue on paper. A correct copy of the Fugue has not yet been made. This leaves me free to make changes whenever I wish. Sometimes a new idea occurs to me when I am playing in public; I use it then and there. The Prelude to this Fugue was actually composed at the piano: I wanted to give it the character of an improvisation, and think I have succeeded.

“The first draft of a composition is so fragmentary that it looks almost like shorthand. I can hardly write my thoughts down fast enough, and don’t take time to make everything clear. For instance, if I have a chromatic run, I put the first note and the last, and draw a line between them, for I can’t stop to write all those accidentals. I know what the signs mean, though others might not.

“Although I like to let an idea rest quietly in mind for a long time, so that I can live with it before I put it on paper, yet sometimes I write it down at once, while I am in the mood.

“Mr. Stoddard, the poet, once sent me, through a friend, a few verses, wondering if I

could do anything with them. They arrived in the morning mail. I read them; they suggested a musical setting. I began to work, and by twelve the song lay finished on my desk.

"I have spent the last three years in Europe, mostly in Munich, and have done much writing, besides a good deal of concert work. When Miss Kitty Cheatham came to Munich and gave a recital, she asked me to do some things for her. I had so much work on hand that I could not think of it then, but told her when the right moment came I would see what I could do. Months afterward a little volume of verses was sent me. I glanced through them, and felt that here were just the things for Miss Cheatham. I wrote quite a set of these little songs, and it gave me such pleasure to do them.

CHARACTER OF THE COMPOSITION

"I do not sit down, as some imagine I do, and say: 'Now I will write a concerto, a fugue, or some large work.' The character of that composition depends entirely on how the subject works up, whether it becomes a small form or grows into a larger work. I love to work in the large forms, they are just as easy if not easier for me than the small ones.

“Do not imagine, because the large forms come easier to me now, that I have not studied very seriously. I worked very hard for years. At the start I had one season with Junius Hill, in Boston, but everything beyond that has been my own labor. I possess about every treatise that has ever been written on the subject of harmony, theory, counterpoint, double counterpoint, fugue and instrumentation. I have a large library of these books. I have a good knowledge of French and German, and have made exhaustive studies of works in these languages. I can repeat whole chapters from Berlioz’ delightful book on instrumentation.

“In studying Bach I memorized a large number of fugues from the Well-Tempered Clavichord, not for the mere sake of committing them, but because I had made such a careful study of them. I wrote many of them out in score, in order to find exactly how they were constructed, and how the voices were led. I could write out the parts from memory, so thoroughly did I know them.

“In the study of instrumentation, the orchestra was my teacher; I was a close student of it. For obvious reasons it is difficult for a woman to become familiar with all instruments in use. Some of the largest she cannot play; in any

event it is not practical to take lessons on them all. But the orchestral composer must know the various voices of the orchestra. Thus I made a deep study of the band in action. I always had the score with me, and learned to know each voice as intimately as I know the voices of my own family. I wrote out scores of Beethoven from memory, and then would take my work next day and compare it with the playing of the orchestra. In this way I learned whole movements from symphonies by heart. Thus I feel that the knowledge I have acquired has been by my own effort; and what I compose is a part of myself."

To quote another sentence from Dr. Goetchius:

"The development of her very uncommon talent for composition has been almost wholly achieved by her own effort—unaided but also unbiased. In consequence of this somewhat unique fact, she has succeeded in preserving her individuality to a rare degree. What she gives is peculiarly herself."

The Gaelic Symphony will probably be heard in New York next season and we also hope to become more familiar with other works of this composer in the larger forms.

XVI

LEO ORNSTEIN

SANITY IN MUSIC STUDY

LEO ORNSTEIN, an ultra modern pianist and composer, was born in 1895 near Odessa, Russia. After coming to America he was thoroughly trained in the Leschetizky principles of piano playing by Mrs. Thomas Tapper, and in other musical studies at the Institute of Musical Art. Several years ago he went abroad for further study and recitals. He played in London and Norway, and had numerous concerts ahead when the outbreak of the war caused him to return to America.

"You heard me play years ago?" began young Ornstein, as we were seated in my studio for a musical conference. "It must have been about five at least, if it was in the Mendelssohn, G minor. Did I really ever do that? Ah, how long ago it seems! A lifetime appears to lie between that period of my life and to-day, so much has happened to me—I am another person."



Sincere Regards to:
Miss Harriett Brower
from Leo Crustein.

One could easily understand his feeling. For the student had developed into an artist, the fledgling into an aspiring composer; whose daring flights of imagination have already aroused much attention on both sides of the Atlantic. Whether, as some would have us believe, the startling innovations of the young musician are but the ravings of an unsound mind, or are to preach a new gospel of emotional impression and tone color; whether the youth is but a clever juggler with sounds, or is a new and brilliant star arising in the musical firmament, the future alone can decide.

It can be truly said, however, that one cannot talk with Leo Ornstein for five minutes without realizing he is absolutely sincere in his work. His fixed purpose is to express himself and his age with fidelity and honesty, according to his lights, no matter what critics or others may say to the contrary. And he has the courage of his convictions, plus enthusiasm enough to furnish forth a dozen less buoyant and more sedate brothers in art.

"The technical side of piano playing?" he continued; "what is technic but the means by which you can express yourself—it is the outward and material sign through which you are able to say what is in your heart to say; there-

fore it is subordinate, but must be individual. Do not think that I would for one moment belittle technic; one must have it, it is a necessity; but it sinks into insignificance before the meaning of the message one has to deliver.

“As a pianist I have had most thorough and excellent training, I am thankful to say; I play my Czerny constantly, and know my Bach from cover to cover. I feel Bach is the greatest master of all: his works will never fall into neglect. Still, we must realize we live in a different age; our customs, our manner of living, we ourselves are not at all like the people of Bach’s time—or Beethoven’s, or Haydn’s. Look at Mozart; could any music mirror and express the spirit of his age with more charming simplicity and fidelity? I love it; it is a perfect reflection of the time in which he lived. The technic to play Mozart, however, will not answer to play Debussy. Modern music requires an entirely different handling of the instrument. We cannot interpret modern ideas with the old style equipment. To illustrate: none of the older composers would think of making such requirements on one’s technic as this, for instance.” The young artist went to the piano and played a succession of shadowy, filmy chords. “I must here use the palm of

my hand as well as the fingers; the former depresses the white keys below, while the fingers touch the black keys above them. In another chord passage from one of my pieces, I had in mind the falling of blocks of granite, which descend softly with a muffled thud," again illustrating.

As a pianist Leo Ornstein has won high praise from the critics. Huneker says of him: "He is that rare thing, an individual pianist." Others have written that: "his playing has tonal beauty and clarity of style;" that "he has a touch on the keys as caressing as it is powerful—with an almost uncanny breathing into and inhaling from them something of inspiration." "He is a born virtuoso, with an ear unparalleled in its sensitiveness for tone color and tone quality. Trills and passages are faultless and are delivered with a freedom and perfection any one might envy."

On a later occasion Mr. Ornstein spoke more freely about technical development. "I have made a good many experiments and discoveries about piano touch and technic, especially when I was living in Paris. After being in Vienna, I went to Berlin and then to Paris, where I literally shut myself up in a garret and worked for about nine months. For one thing I want-

ed to make a study of some modern French music, for modern tendencies absorb me greatly. I procured a few pieces by Debussy and Ravel and studied them closely. Of course I memorized them in a few days and played them a good deal. But my playing did not satisfy me, though I did not see what was the matter. All at once it came to me that I was trying to make tone color with my fingers, when it should be done with the pedals. The moment this truth was borne in upon me, the problem was solved. I began to study all manner of pedal effects and tonal coloring with the pedals.

“In mastering piano tone and technic, the arm plays a vital rôle. Naturally, the fingers must be well trained, but in playing they do not need to be lifted high. In fact, the nearer they are held to the keys—provided strength and elasticity have been developed, the better the tone. Strength of finger is the great thing. A firm nail joint is absolutely necessary, quite as much for soft as for loud playing. People think it does not need much strength to play softly; I am sure the reverse is true. Fingers must be very strong and then held close to the keys, for pianissime effects, otherwise the tone will be mushy and uncertain. I have a whole

set of technics for strength and agility, which I go through when I am away from the piano; they are specially useful when traveling. Here is one:" he pressed one finger, firmly curved, into the table, and slowly rolled it from side to side. All fingers are to be treated in the same way. Another exercise for strength consisted in lifting one finger in curved position, as high as possible, while the other four were pressed down into the table with strong pressure. In neither exercise should the fingers yield or 'give in,' at the nail joints, but always preserve their rounded form.

When practicing I use full power, or nearly so—play slowly and firmly. When I thoroughly know the piece, I gradually go faster, till I have worked it up to the required tempo. It comes up without much trouble, when one thoroughly knows the notes. Many players make the mistake of at once playing quickly, after the slow practice; I find it much better to acquire speed gradually.

"It is so easy to fall into a rut in regard to interpretation. We grow accustomed to hearing compositions rendered in a certain way; any deviation from that standard startles us. I can feel the shock caused by novelty, go over an audience, when my rendition is not the con-

ventional one of the schools. For instance, in the G minor Ballade of Chopin, I hold pedal through each of those final runs, on through to the chord following; it makes a new and interesting effect. But it surprises the musicians sometimes, and I can see they do not consider it orthodox.

BEFORE A CONCERT

“It is true that on the day of a recital, I practice for hours—all day perhaps—but do not touch the pieces I am to give for my program. Instead, I practice many other things, often Bach. In this way the program seems to me much fresher than if I had delved on it up to the last moment. I play Bach a great deal; all the Well-Tempered Clavichord, the big organ Preludes and Fugues arranged by Liszt, and of course the Chromatic Fantaisie and Fugue.

“The artist’s playing in public is very deceptive, to the student. For the artist conceals the mechanism of his art, and only considers its emotional message before his audience. Therefore it is not always a real benefit to the student to hear a great many artists; that is, not a benefit to his technical development, though it should help him on the interpretative side.

“Let me give you a few words more about my Paris experiences. I brought a letter of introduction to the famous critic and writer, Calvocoressi. There is a wonderful man! He can speak and write eight languages—Greek is one of them. He writes for several English papers and two Russian, besides the foremost Paris magazines. I went to him, told him what I was doing, played for him and showed him some of my stuff. He at once spoke Russian to me, interested himself in me and helped me in a great many ways. He lectured on the music of Schoenberg, Stravinsky and Ornstein in the Sorbonne and other places.

“You have heard the story of my London concerts. It was a terrible experience; I can laugh at it now, but then it was heartrending. There seemed to be two factions; those who were open-minded enough to listen, who wished to understand what I was trying to do; the others who closed their ears and would have none of me. Well-seasoned concert goers said they had never seen a London audience so stirred and upset.

“A week after my first recital there, I gave a second, with an entire program of my own compositions. That occasion was the most trying one of my whole life. I was hardly con-

scious of a note I played that day, but I got through the ordeal in some fashion.

“I can well understand how my music must strike people on first hearing. Even good musicians can discover nothing whatever in it when they listen to it once; but I know many cases where they do see the meaning of it after repeated hearings. If they would but reserve their decision till they have heard a piece seven or eight times, they could judge of it better. It has often chanced that they understand it after the eighth time. You know *Pelléas and Melisande*, at its premier, was hissed off the stage and the curtain rung down on the second act. Now it is sung to sold-out houses. So I always feel like asking the listener to bear with me till after he has heard my work a few times. Even the *Wild Man's Dance* has become clear to some after the eighth time!

“As you say, I must always lead up to a piece like that: I could never let it out of a clear sky, so to speak. And I must work up my mood also, in order to be an efficient medium.

“You ask about my manner of composing. I can say I never sit at the piano when I compose, never try the thing over as I write it, and never under any circumstances change a note

of the piece after it is written; it must stand or fall as first set down. Perhaps after a few days I may condemn what I have written. If I find it unworthy I say to myself: 'Leo Ornstein, for shame! how could you write like that.' Then I tear it up. Probably I shall never make a second attempt on the same subject—it is gone, passed into oblivion.

"The composition comes into my mind full-fledged and complete as far as it goes. When I hear it, I make frantic haste to get it to paper lest I lose a note. This is a difficult task, because the rhythms are often so intricate, and I must preserve those as well as the harmonies. It is very difficult to decipher the first hasty draft of my pieces; no one can do it but myself, for I have a sort of musical shorthand. Tonic and other regular chords may not be written in at all, but I know what they ought to be. All must be jotted down so quickly there is no time to be careful. It only took about two and a half hours to put the *Wild Man's Dance* on paper. Publishers are asking for more piano pieces; I have composed a number, but oh, the task of copying them!

"When composing, I have often an incident in mind which the music is designed to illustrate; yet I am averse to affixing any special

title to the piece, as this may hamper player or listener, who are endeavoring to picture the scene or mood hinted at. To others the piece may suggest something entirely different from the picture or mood the composer had in mind when writing it; these may be quite as appropriate and legitimate as the one he had intended. I might tell you a pretty story about my *Wild Man's Dance*, that is, what the music means to me; to you it may mean an earthquake or a shipwreck. When you hear it you observe that at first there is some confusion, as the men fall into line. But soon the rhythms become very insistent and compelling, as the savages unite in their mad whirl. At last one of them comes out from among the others, and dances alone in the circle. This Dance is one of the most difficult compositions, and requires tremendous power to play. You may have heard about my playing it for Leschetizky. Of course I led up to it with some simpler and more melodious things. When I finished the Dance he seemed quite dazed by it. Then he sprang up, exclaiming, 'You must have lied to me, for no living mortal could put such a thing on paper!' I happened to have the manuscript with me, and showed it to him; he would scarcely believe it even then.

“Another piece that interested me to write was *Impressions of Notre Dame*. I visited the famous church almost as soon as I arrived in Paris. On my return to the hotel the first *Impression* sprang into my mind. A few days later, after another visit to the old pile, the second *Impression, Gargoyles*, was written.

“Some of my recently published compositions include a set of nine piano pieces (Op. 7), two songs, *Mother o’ Mine*, and *There Was a Jolly Miller*; also a Sonata for violin and piano, and one for piano and ’cello.”

It is evident that talent for composition went hand in hand with pianistic ability, for the young Russian began to compose at an early age. About four years ago new impulses led him into novel paths; his work began to manifest traits similar to those found in the music of Schoenberg and Stravinsky, although Ornstein was unacquainted with their compositions. As he himself explains: “I do not conceive of music in the way Beethoven did—as a mosaic of themes and motives, each developed and repeated, block-wise. I try to express feelings rather than forms—impressions, emotions, mental states of consciousness.”

To quote again from Huneke:

“I never thought I should live to hear Arn-

old Schoenberg sound tame; yet tame he is, almost timid and halting after Ornstein—who is, most emphatically, the only true-blue, genuine Futurist composer alive.”

XVII

HAROLD HENRY

FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES

"You are a real American?"

"Yes, a real simon pure American, born and bred here; educated in music here, too, with exception of about four years spent on the other side."

I was making the most of a flying visit to the city made by Mr. Henry, who was passing through New York *en route* to Peterborough, N. H., to enjoy a well earned vacation after a busy season.

"If you wish a word of personal history," began the pianist, "I am a Kansas boy, born and brought up in that state. My first piano teacher was Miss Geneve Lichterwalter.

"I studied at the University of Kansas, and was graduated from that institution, my teachers at that time being Carl A. Preyer for piano and George B. Penny for theory, the latter now located in Rochester, N. Y.

"After graduation, in 1902, I went abroad.

Three years were spent in Berlin, with Godowsky and Dr. Ernst Jedliczka. Then came a season in Paris with Moszkowski, and after that America. I made a few appearances with orchestras in Berlin, but my career virtually began in my own land, where I have taught and concertized for the past ten years.

“During this period I can affirm that my greatest teacher has been Experience; there surely can never be a more valuable one. A master can do only just so much for you—can take you about so far, can give you the benefit of his knowledge and experience. After that you must “go it alone”—you must work it out! It’s *doing the thing* that counts every time. If you want to be a concert pianist, then play in concert; there is no other way to become what you desire; you learn how to do it by doing it. Each year I do more public playing, though I do not permit this to interfere with my teaching. I devote five half days to instruction, which is all the time I am willing to give; I need the remainder for study and the preparation of my programs.

TEACHING METHODS

“Regarding methods in teaching, I can truly say I have as many methods as I have pupils,

for each one of them requires special treatment. No two pupils have the same physical and mental equipment; practically every hand presents a new problem. This fact proves the difficulty that confronts the careful teacher; it is one that makes constant demand on one's resources.

TWO IMPORTANT PRINCIPLES

"Firmness of the hand and relaxation of the arm are the most important principles to start with. The hand should assume an arched position, with firm knuckles and rounded fingers. When conditions permit I try to solidify the hand at once; but if I have a small, tightly-knit hand to deal with, it must be stretched and limbered up before anything else can be done. I use various gymnastic and stretching exercises; I also have a set of technical forms which have been of great benefit to me; I use them daily and give them to my pupils. They consist of trills, scales, arpeggios, octaves, double thirds, and so on. Pupils at the outset must learn free finger movements and finger action; eventually finger movement is well-nigh eliminated and the arm does the work. The trouble with pupils often is they do not see the necessity for repetition and constant drill. They seem to think if they have done an exercise a

few times, that is sufficient. If told to repeat it again and again, they exclaim, 'Oh, I've had that before!'

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Mr. Henry answered the following questions in a way which will be appreciated by every teacher and student:

1. How is finger development secured before the time comes when the arm does the work?

"By practicing slowly and as heavily as practicable, with curved, well-raised fingers."

2. What to do for weak finger joints?

"For weak finger joints I use what I call the 'pull touch.' Beginning with the finger flat on the key or table (for this can at first be done to great advantage away from the piano) it is pulled gently up to the normal curved position. This is also a preparatory melody touch."

3. How much technic practice outside of pieces?

"The amount of pure technical practice outside of pieces should depend on the amount of time the pupil devotes to practice. At least forty minutes out of four hours should be devoted to absolute technic. Personally—and I encourage my pupils to do the same—I keep

a practice schedule. In this way I rotate my technical forms so that nothing is slighted."

4. Velocity and power?

"Velocity and power are only attained through definite and systematic drill. As we are not good judges of our own speed in playing, the metronome is of incalculable value in working for velocity. All technical forms should be strictly rhythmic, and dynamics must also be considered. Accents are of tremendous importance in working for velocity. To attain power and endurance, all slow technical work should be done with as much tone as is practicable, keeping muscular conditions always right."

5. Best way to study chords and octaves?

"In playing chords and octaves, the hand should be extremely firm, the wrist and arm devitalized. Whether the wrist is held high or low depends entirely on the hand and wrist of the individual. I hold my wrist high in most chords and octave passages, for I am thus able to keep conditions more nearly ideal in this way; for pupils with large, loose hands, the low wrist is advisable.

"I have many technical forms for developing a chord and octave technic. In the main I get best results by teaching first a prepared

hand, lifting the wrist first, and allowing the hand to follow."

6. Scale practice with metronome?

"By all means practice not only scales, but all other purely technical forms with the metronome for velocity and power. I always break scales up into accented sections, each one of which I polish before practicing the scale as a whole."

7. Your views on modern compositions?

"The trouble with the modern composer is apparently the desire to be clever rather than sincere. While the average worth is high, the great bulk of things now being written—I speak of piano compositions—will not live, because the novelty of them which is their chief attraction, rapidly wears off. The extreme technical difficulty of much that is now being written entirely outweighs the musical content. Much time must be wasted before discovering that one neither wants to play or teach them. Nevertheless, I am constantly going through reams of new music, and when once in a while I come across something of real charm and inspiration, I consider my labor well repaid. In spite of the great difficulty of finding new things which are worth while, I feel it the duty of the concert pianist, a duty which he owes

himself and his public, to give programs that are at least unhackneyed. The disfavor into which the piano recital has fallen is the fault, not of the instrument nor the public, but of the performer in his stereotyped program-making. It is too much to expect, and it is taking our own attainments too seriously, to think that we can read so much that is of new interest into compositions which have been on every program for at least twenty years, to speak within bounds. Let us rather make familiar the little known compositions of the masters."

Mr. Henry is constantly widening his outlook and enlarging his repertoire. Each season adds to his influence as teacher and interpreter.

XVIII

HENRY HOLDEN HUSS

ELIMINATION OF MECHANICAL ÉTUDES

HENRY HOLDEN HUSS, American pianist, composer, teacher, belongs to a musical family. His father was long a beacon light among the teachers of a former generation, he himself has made an honorable career in his chosen profession. His musical studies were begun with his father and continued with Rheinberger in Munich. He also studied theory with O. B. Boise. He is well known as an excellent pianist, thorough teacher, and is the author of a number of ambitious compositions in the larger forms.

It is a pleasure to confer with so enthusiastic a thinker on pianistic problems as Henry Holden Huss.

"I believe in hobbies," said Mr. Huss, with characteristic animation and conviction; "we all have them. I don't mean hobby-horses, of course, for they constantly move, but never get anywhere."



Very cordially yours
Henn Moldenhues

"One of my hobbies is the advisability, really the necessity for short periods of study. No intelligent practice can be done if one sits at the piano several hours at a stretch. A pupil will tell you she has practiced two or three hours without stopping, as though it were a great virtue, something to be proud of; while you know she could not have done it with any sort of concentration. MacDowell told me that when he studied, it was with such intense concentration that he needed to rest a bit after fifteen minutes' work. And you remember, he was an athlete in physique and strength. After thirty minutes' practice, I think the player should rest four or five."

"Do you, then, approve of hour lessons?"

"Certainly, for the reason that I can call a halt and make a little diversion myself. If something is going on in the street below or a hand-organ is playing, we stop a few moments and listen; then we can resume the work in hand with fresh vigor.

"PIANO PLAYING" A BAD TERM

"I wish a new term could be invented to replace the universal one—piano playing—for this seems entirely lacking in dignity and meaning. Would not piano interpretation come

much nearer the truth? I suppose the term 'playing' has come down to us from the minne-singers, who played their little harps and sang their songs for the amusement of the gentry in the ages gone by. In these days our aim is really to interpret piano music. Even the little child does so with his simple pieces.

"Another of my hobbies is a vigorous opposition to the desecration of Bach's music for the piano, which results in its being hated by so many students. New pupils often say to me: 'Whatever you do, don't make me play Bach!' I ask why, and they answer that they hate him. Then I tell them I am sure they have been fed on the *Inventions*. They seem surprised I should know it and admit I am right. Many teachers, in small places, think it their duty to teach Bach under all circumstances. So they give the *Inventions*, using them as technical exercises. A young lady came to me not long ago who had had just this experience. She looked on Bach as one who wrote dry polyphony, with no soul or emotion. To prove how mistaken she was, I played part of the air, *My Heart Ever Faithful*. She thought it beautiful but would hardly believe it was Bach. I fully agree with you that the

gavottes, giges and sarabandes are a much more pleasing side of the great master to begin with than are the *Inventions*. Though even the *Inventions* contain much variety of expression, if one has the technic and ability to bring it out. The fact is, Bach expresses all shades of feeling; surely the *Chromatic Fantaisie* is as full of emotion as is anything of Wagner.

COMMENDS USE OF CLAVIER

“One thing I firmly believe in, and that is the elimination of the mechanical étude, and their name is legion. Think of those difficult things of Alkan, for instance. The fact that the distinctly intellectual side of music study is being more and more cultivated and investigated is a very definite and let me say modern cause for encouragement. Let me cite here something that sounds almost incredible. Czerny, dear old Czerny, frequently useful old Czerny, and sometimes foolish old Czerny, in one of his innumerable books of technical studies says: ‘As the student will probably find these exercises rather dry’ (he usually does!) ‘let him place a book or newspaper on the piano-desk to read while playing them!’ Fortunately nowadays we are ready to grasp

eagerly whatever makes for concentration of mind.

“Let us use our influence for the musical and expressive. I endeavor to make my pupils see that everything they do should have a meaning and should be expressive of some thought. The very technic of the piece is the body in which the musical thought of the composer comes to us. The player surely desires to present the composer’s ideas in as fair and perfect a body as possible. Hence the necessity of working at the technical side in order to accomplish this. I advise pure technical forms in place of a great many études.

“I have in my *Condensed Technics* endeavored to provide exercises that absolutely require great concentration, since they are all to be played with varied rhythms and shifted accents, and require transposition into all keys. Along with these technics I find it most advisable to search out the difficult passages in pieces and encourage the pupil himself to construct little études out of them. Most of my pupils, perhaps ninety-five per cent, have practice clavier, which I recommend to them all. I advise dividing practice between clavier and piano. For I have found in pupils who have been trained to use the clavier for a large part

of their practice, that while they may have excellent fingers, the musical sense has not been sufficiently cultivated, nor their idea of depth, power and variety of tone.

"How piano technic has advanced, through relaxed arms and wrists! You remember how much Paderewski has done for us all in this line. Among the present-day theories, we know there are some that are founded on principles and will stand. A baby placed before the keyboard pats the keys with outstretched fingers and quite naturally limp wrists. That condition of loose wrist is what one must have to secure a musical quality of tone. In getting back to nature we know we have come to the correct principle.

REJECTS FRIVOLOUS STUDENTS

"Of course, every teacher wants serious students. To speak frankly, if I see a girl fond of candy, French shoes and continued excitement, or a boy who must have his cigarettes and highballs, I say to them: 'There are plenty of teachers in New York who will be glad to have you as pupils and take your money. Go to them, for I don't want you. I only want serious workers.'

"It is a much-discussed question as to

whether the teacher shall explain what is to be done and let the pupil work it out alone, or whether he shall illustrate his instruction at the instrument. Though I believe in the former method, I cannot always follow it. If a pupil comes from a distance and wishes to get all the help he can, I must not only explain, but show him many things at the piano. For instance, if I say: 'You accent this passage too strongly,' he will answer, 'How much should I accent it?' The quickest way is to show him. Thus I find there are many points which cannot be described but must be shown.

"I wish you would write an article on the 'Greater Chopin.' We hear so much about him at present. One of my hobbies is to combat the idea of making everything of Chopin heroic. One pianist tried to make the first movement of the F minor Concerto heroic, and in my opinion it was spoiled in the process. Chopin's music seems to express every sentiment and emotion except humor. Did it ever strike you he is lacking in this? One would think the Scherzi would express humor, but they do not, to my thinking. Chopin could be bright, gay, capricious, but not really humorous, as Beethoven was or Schumann or MacDowell."

XIX

RICHARD BUHLIG

THE VALUE OF LEARNING TO HEAR

"INDEED I am glad to be in America—it is the best country to live in at present. I returned several months ago, after an absence of many years. In fact, I really grew up on the other side, as I was taken abroad when but a young lad."

The speaker was Richard Buhlig, an American pianist, who will make an extended tour of his native land.

It is pleasant to come into more personal touch with this pianist than is possible through listening to a recital by him. One finds many qualities of delicacy and sensitiveness for the subtleties in art and musical expression which are revealed during an interchange of ideas in musical conference.

"As a young boy," continued the artist, "I went to Vienna, to study with Leschetizky, and remained with him about three years. Since that period I have superintended my own de-

velopment. An artist must always do that—the sooner he can do so the better for him. If he is intended for public life, he only begins to learn many things about his art when he comes before an audience. This very act brings enlightenment. He then discovers what no one could ever tell him. He then gains experience, which after all is the great teacher. It has been my good fortune to play in almost every country in Europe, except Russia and the Balkans. The outbreak of the war prevented my filling the many engagements booked for me in Russia, but I had played in Germany for two seasons, until I left for this country.”

Mr. Buhlig has a winning personality; he has thought deeply on all subjects relating to his art. So just and cogent are his views on piano study that I questioned at once if he taught.

“Yes, I have for years done some teaching. I love to teach, and shall continue to do it here between my concert engagements. Many of my pupils are fighting in the different armies; in fact they are scattered everywhere. Some have come over to this side to continue work with me here, while some who have known of my career in Europe will put themselves under my guidance.

METHOD OF TEACHING

“You ask about my manner of teaching. I can say at once I have no method, though of course there are certain things every pupil must know how to do and work on daily. One needs trills, scales, chords and octaves; when one can do these things in every possible tempo and gradation of tone, piece playing becomes comparatively easy. I have no sympathy with cut and dried methods, or with endless repetitions of Czerny studies and other mechanical études. When every person is different from every other person in constitution and temperament, in mind and physique, how can a master have a method to fit them all? The thing is impossible! One pupil has a large, flabby hand—another a small, tight one. One pupil can move the arm well, but has no fingers; another has good fingers, but no command of arms. I treat the former student as though I only cared about fingers—for a time; while for the latter I work with arms as though they were the most essential things. So you can see the teaching must be entirely individual; a teacher must have as many ways of teaching as he has pupils.

“A teacher must have great experience as

well as tact and intuition, to know how to diagnose each particular case, and what to prescribe for it. He is a doctor in more senses than one. He must know the malady the pupil suffers from, also the best means to eradicate and cure it.

LEARNING TO HEAR

“Ear training is one of the most important branches of study. I find one of the greatest difficulties which stand in the way of progress, is the failure to hear what one is doing at the piano. The student may have an idea in his mind as to how the piece ought to sound, but often seems quite oblivious as to how he is making it sound. His head may be in the clouds while his hands are making the most atrocious errors as to tone and rhythm. I say to him: ‘I can lend you my ears for an hour to-day, but what of the many hours you will have to use your own till you come again?’ For the most a master can do is to give the student the benefit of his ears, while instructing him how to use his own. When the moment comes that the pupil actually hears what he is doing, consciousness is awakened and then progress begins. When that moment comes, the pupil realizes that his tone is not beautiful;

in fact it becomes consciously unbeautiful, where before it had been unconsciously so. He finds that his playing altogether is very different from what he would have it. It is a crucial period, and needs the firm hand of a master to prevent discouragement, to hold him up, and show him what to work for.

"I try to have the student learn to empty his ears, and then learn to listen. I say to him: 'Practice with empty ears, so that you may fully hear what you are doing. Don't play straight through the piece; rather pause often in your study. Sit back and listen to phrases. Play the phrase in various ways, noting what is wrong. Concentrate on each point, to make it as perfect as possible.' When teaching do not always tell the pupil the fault. Insist on his playing the passage till he himself finds out what is wrong. Is there not a line of Browning, which intimates that God uses us to help each other, by lending our ears out? We first help pupils with the use of our ears; but they must be shown how to use their own.

"While I do not care for mechanical études, I use Bach constantly; the *Inventions* to start with, and as much more as I can give. To get a pupil to see the form and shape of a single phrase of a Bach *Invention*, the pure beauty

and expressiveness of it, is doing much for his advancement.

USE OF PEDALS

“The pedal is another factor in playing, the use of which is not understood. There is much more to pedal playing than merely putting it down at one chord and taking it up at another. The pedal is an art in itself. It is the moonlight of the piano—the sunlight too; the fog if you will, and the atmosphere. I have made a great study of pedaling. I use the deceptive pedal, by which I mean that it gives quality and color to the tone, though the listener does not know it is being used. He would miss it if it were not there. He realizes the coloring of the tones, but may not detect use of pedal. The pedals are employed for color. I can use pedal for scales with such rapid foot-vibration that it amounts to a tremolo.

“My répertoire contains most of the large works in piano literature—the great sonatas and concertos. I am known on the other side as an interpreter of important works. I have not so good a repertoire of pieces in the lighter forms. Yet several years ago I was the first pianist, I think, to place a group of Debussy on a program. Other players would insert a

single number here and there, but I put nine or ten on my English programs, thereby making quite a propaganda for this style of music. Since then I have taken up Schoenberg and have done the same for him.

"We might question the right of some of these modern or futuristic works to be called music at all. They are not, in our accepted meaning of the term. They are pictorial, though I personally prefer to liken them to literature than pictures. The modern French composers are programatic—but more pictorial than literary.

"They have a kinship with painters, for they strive to paint pictures with tones. Modern painters, on the other hand, try to imitate music. We might say Debussy is related to Whistler. Schumann, on the contrary, finds his counterpart in literature.

"Of the two greatest musicians since Beethoven—Chopin and Wagner—I place Chopin first. Look at his Mazurkas,—what consummate mastery of form! Music, unlike other arts, has no subject matter to begin with: it starts with spirit. To me, the highest in music is not that which strives to depict pictures, scenes or states, but what is intangible, impalpable—spiritual. It is related of Schoenberg

that he was asked the meaning of one of his compositions. 'What does it mean? Why—music.' I understand that perfectly. Nothing I play has specific or tangible meaning; to me it is music: that is enough!

"Yes, one needs a particular style of technic to play the compositions of Debussy and the rest; creeping, sliding movements,—very little finger lifting, and always the shimmering pedals to give color and atmosphere.

INTERPRETATION

"In regard to interpretation, I feel that the artist must have a clear concept of the composition, its form and meaning; he must know how he wishes to make it sound. Naturally he strives at each repetition of it in public, to carry out this ideal; it would be most illogical to expect him to do otherwise. But he should play it as though he did it for the first time. That is one difference between the artist and the non-artist. The latter plays as though by rule, or as he has been taught, while the artist recreates anew, though on the lines he feels best express the feeling of the music. I admit that, as his surroundings vary, his mood may change a little. One day soft places may be softer, loud parts louder; he may have more

vitality at one time than another. But he surely must try to express the selfsame ideal. Again, the difference between the non-artist and the artist lies in the concept. The artist works out a matured concept and ideal, while the non-artist often plays as he feels, with no plan at all. You notice I do not contrast the artist with the amateur, for I believe the amateur can be an artist, on whom no necessity is laid to make a business of his art. I wish it might be possible to employ our art freely in this way, for the love of the doing. Then both teaching and playing would be a gift to those who are ready and appreciative. And when you think of it, how can dollars and cents repay the artist who gives an audience the best that is in him, the sum of all his experiences, the result of all his sufferings, his very life blood. Or to the teacher who gives to the pupil his ears, his eyes, his wide knowledge, insight and experience. If it were not necessary for the artist to have things for his well-being and existence, it would be a joy to give his art freely, without thought of mercenary return, but having the appreciation of the receiver. For I do not believe that only the receiver should feel gratitude; it is also grateful for the giver to give."

XX

MISCHA LEVITZKI

THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NATURAL TECHNIC

ONE of the pianistic sensations of the season of nineteen sixteen has been the playing of Mischa Levitski, as the inspired performances of the young Brazilian, Guiomar Novaes, had been the year before. Levitzki suddenly appeared in our midst, and had given his third recital before the season was half over. His first recital won an instant success; each succeeding one increased his hold on the public. The listener realized here was an unusual talent, already highly developed. A well-equipped technic, subtle feeling for tone color, clear grasp of the composer's meaning, ability to set all these forth with conviction and authority, made his performances full of satisfaction and delight.

Mischa Levitski is very young to have achieved so much. He has the boyish manner, the frank open expression and ready smile befitting his youth; but at the piano one feels the



To Miss Harriet Brower,
with kindest regards,
Mischa Leitzki
New York, N.Y. 12, 1916.

maturity of thought which tempers the young ardor of his nature. In conversation he is clear-thoughted and fluent, ready to share his experiences with the questioner, though he says sometimes, with winning modesty,—“it seems so to me, but perhaps I am rather young to judge.”

A recent chat with Levitzki elicited interesting facts about himself and his work.

“You ask for a brief account of my short career,” he began.

“I was born in Russia, though I am an American citizen, as my father was naturalized here thirty years ago. Eight years of my childhood were spent in Russia and then we came to New York. About a year and a half before we left the other side I had begun to study music.

“Not long after we arrived in America, I was taken to the Institute of Musical Art, and placed under the tuition of Stojowski. I also had to attend the public school as well, so that I was never able to practise more than two hours daily—often not more than an hour and a half. I merely mention this because people often imagine I must have practised incessantly, because I have considerable technic.

“After about four years at the Institute I went to Berlin, and had the privilege of study-

ing with Dohnanyi. He is a wonderful master and above all such a thorough musician. I know of no greater teacher, if the pupil is ready to profit by such guidance.

“In Berlin I could exchange the routine of school life for lessons with private tutors, and thus gave but two hours daily to school work, leaving all the rest of my time to be devoted to music. Here again I was handicapped in piano study. An injury to my right hand and arm, caused by excessive bicycle riding, prevented me from practising over two hours a day. This was a severe disappointment, when I was so eager to give all my time to music. But I thought music constantly, lived in it, made serious theoretical studies and heard no end of concerts and operas. I am happy to say, however, that the two following years of my four with Dohnanyi, I could use my hand for three hours each day.

THE GIFT OF TECHNIC

“We know there is such a thing as a natural technic, and I suppose that is what I have. I think technic is a gift, just as much as the gift for musical expression. But a gift in either direction must be developed to be of real value. I am beginning to realize this more and more.

“With my two great teachers I did very little technical study, as such. For example, I was told to practice scales, but I seldom did so. As my teacher never heard scales at the lesson, and as I was able to make a pretty good showing in my pieces, he thought I must have practiced them.

“When I went to Dohnanyi, he at first gave me smaller things than I had been doing—the *Kinderscenen* of Schumann and the earliest Sonatas of Beethoven. Some students might have objected to this, but I was very glad to study in such a careful, systematic way. He believes one must have much more technic than the piece requires, so he always gives pieces that do not tax your technical ability to the utmost, so that you may be able to more fully master their meaning and content.

“Dohnanyi allows the student to play the piece entirely through without interruption. He listens carefully, often jotting down faults on a slip of paper, though he generally remembers them. When the piece is finished—not before—he makes the corrections. Finally he plays the piece through from beginning to end. As he is such a master interpreter, this of itself is a great inspiration to the pupil.

“In regard to the technical side, the Hun-

garian master did not so greatly concern himself. He did not attempt to teach technic outside of compositions. The student must acquire this by himself. My technic advanced rapidly after the first year or two, for I began to play much more difficult music, in fact I played everything with him.

“Dohnanyi is very particular about clearness of touch, requiring the fingers to be well raised in slow and careful practice. The beginning and finishing of the phrase, its shading and balance, are all thought out. I acquired a well developed technic of the fingers; I could do almost anything with my fingers, but I did not know how I did it. Things came so easily to me that I never went deep enough into the subject to know how I accomplished them. I believe many artists—those who have the gift of technic at all events—do not analyze the principles which underlie artistic technic. Perhaps I should say few artists ever do. The gift of technic does not mean the understanding of it; that must be learned through patient study.

SOLVING THE PROBLEM OF TECHNIC

“For the past year and a half I have taken my own development in hand, which one must always do sooner or later.

"I feel that I am now solving the technic problem for myself. As I have said, I had never occupied myself much with that side,—never thought it necessary to inquire into the principles, so long as I could play the pieces I wanted to play. Over a year ago my need for deeper knowledge came almost as a revelation. As I pondered the technic problem on this certain day, a light seemed to dawn, and I then, for the first time, grasped the principles upon which the whole scheme of piano technic rests. The principles themselves are not new—they have been known for a long time. But it is rather the manner of their application that became the new light to me. It may be only in my own case that the working out will apply; it may not fit others.

"In one way it is no secret that I have discovered, yet it is very difficult to put into words; it would be easier to demonstrate it than to describe it. Briefly, it can be said the principle of relaxation plays a very large part; supple, yielding wrists, arms that hang quite free from the body; also the idea of playing easily, with no stiffness or strain anywhere. Of course these are Dohnanyi's principles, too; he uses them in teaching and playing, as do all great artists. But I have discovered for myself

methods of applying these principles; I know now just what I am doing, and why.

“I give much of my practice time—at least half of it—to working up my technic. I found that while I had good finger development, I fell far short in octaves. None of my teachers had given me systematic training in this branch of technic, so I have set myself to master it.

AN ARTIST'S PLAYING OFTEN DECEPTIVE TO THE EYE

“In watching the performance of artists, one is apt to be deceived as to movement and condition. They often make so little movement with fingers or wrist, that, to the casual observer, these scarcely seem to move at all. When you see Busoni play octaves, it seems as though his wrists must be stiff, so quietly are they held. But such cannot be the case, or he would not be able to execute octaves at all. In short, the public performance of the artist is apt to be very deceiving. He generally plays quietly with no unnecessary motions; in fact the greater the artist the more quiet his movements. For instance my own playing is quite different in public from what it is in the privacy of my own studio. There I play slowly, with well-raised fingers, and large free

movements. In public I eliminate much of this and use only the most necessary movements. During study hours I am not striving for power, but for ease of movement with right conditions; yet I have enough power when I need it. Public playing is the finished product, shorn of everything that savors of the work-room."

Here Mr. Levitzki brings out clearly a point which often mystifies both teachers and students. They seem to think, because an artist plays so quietly, with little movement of fingers, wrists or arms, it is not necessary for them to teach or study correct action of the various hinges of hand and fingers. This is a grave mistake. The artist has trained his anatomy through many years of severe effort; he probably continues to do so in the privacy of his studio. In public he foregoes all but the most necessary movement, for we are often told it is the highest art to conceal art. But no one ever gained command over his playing mechanism and the keyboard, without working for correct finger action, supple wrists and loose arms. It is folly to start at the top of the ladder, when, to make real progress, one must take the required steps leading to the goal. Rather start at the bottom, making the ascent

gradually and logically. Then there will be nothing to undo.

THE CLASSIC SCHOOL OF PLAYING

"I desire to play the classics well," went on the young artist; "perhaps that style suits me best—at least I love it. Mozart, for instance, Mozart the most difficult of all. The notes are often very simple, as you say; that fact is one of the chief difficulties. In works of other composers, the tones can be sustained or covered by the pedals, but not so in Mozart. Here the bare tones must stand forth unaided by pedals, which are to be used very sparingly. It seems to me the greatest requirement is absolute evenness; also beginning and ending the phrases in just the right way. You have heard Lhevinne, and you know what a fine technic he has. He worked at a Mozart Concerto three whole months before he could get it into shape. There is really a school of Mozart playing. At one of my New York recitals, I put one bravoura selection—the Rubinstein Staccato Etude—on the programme, just to prove that I could do that style too. And of course a pianist must have the Liszt Rhapsodies and works of like caliber in his repertoire. But I prefer the compositions of the classic masters."

XXI

ETHEL NEWCOMB

MENTAL PROBLEMS IN PIANO STUDY

"It was a liberal education to have known Leschetizky," remarked Ethel Newcomb, as we were chatting about her studies in Vienna.

"Leschetizky was such a wonderful man," continued this American pianist and teacher; "I can scarcely realize he is no longer with us; he was the best friend I ever had. If he took interest in a student, he never seemed to consider how much time he gave; in fact time seemed as nothing in such cases.

"To show how unstintedly the master gave of his time, I will mention this little incident.

"I had been so occupied with my own studies that I had not thought about public appearances. Leschetizky came to me one day and said:

"'I am losing interest in you; you don't seem to have the ambition you ought to have; you seem to have entirely settled down to your studies; you ought to be playing.'

“ ‘Why, Professor, what would you have me do?’

“ ‘Get out and play—give a recital, play with orchestra—only play!’ (He always wanted his pupils to play in public.)

“ ‘Very well,’ I said, ‘I will go to the manager to-morrow morning and see what can be done.’

“Next morning, on the way there, I met a noted singer, who informed me she was just arranging for a concert with orchestra, and asked me to appear with her. I was delighted at the chance of playing with the Philharmonic Orchestra of Vienna and of appearing with Mme. Francis Sayville, and gaily returned to the Professor with the news, telling him I had decided to play the Schumann Concerto. The Professor did not quite approve of my choice, saying I would have to stand comparison with the greatest artists. If I did well, people would say the music was so beautiful, it would sound beautiful no matter who played it; while if I did not do well, I would be blamed for attempting such a work. But I was not to be deterred, for I had worked on the Concerto a long time. The Professor rehearsed it with me almost every day. We would begin after supper and work till nearly midnight, so eager

was he to have it perfect, so utterly prodigal was he of his valuable time.

"At the orchestral rehearsal, there was a passage for flutes, which failed to come in. Not hearing it, I stopped. The conductor turned to know what was the matter. Instantly the Professor rushed up, calling out, 'the *Fraulein* is right, she knows the parts so perfectly and has such sensitive ears she was disturbed when the flutes didn't come in properly.' 'I said it to save you,' he told me afterwards. 'The next time if they fail to come in, you will have to play the flute part yourself.'

"The day before the concert, Leschetizky gave up his lessons, and we worked together both afternoon and evening. When he saw the large audience assembling on the night of the concert, he advised me to play the opening passage with quite a different touch and phrasing, to render the tone more brilliant and powerful.

STUDIES WITH LESCHETIZKY

"I studied and worked with the Professor between fourteen and fifteen years. The last four years I was his assistant. I was a very young girl when I went to Vienna—really only a child. I had been taught at home in America,

and my friends considered I had talent. In those days I could go to a concert, listen to a difficult piano piece, perhaps a Liszt *rhapsody*, come home and play it with reasonable accuracy, so acute were my ear and memory. I had studied some of the *rhapsodies*, and a lot of technic of the old Stuttgart school, but had no foundation of musical knowledge when I went to Vienna.

“I was duly prepared by one of the *Vorbereiters*, *Fraulein* Prentner, before taking my first lesson with Leschetizky. After a couple of lessons, I was told to play for the next class. These classes, as is well known, assembled every fortnight. I shall never forget this first experience. My name was called and I marched quite bravely to the piano, to play my three pieces, not knowing what was in store for me.

“My first piece went very well. At its close the Professor asked me to make a little modulation into the key of the next number. It was an impossibility; I had never studied music that way. The Professor appeared very much surprised; then he called up a lad of eight, since become one of the leading pianists of Germany, and asked him to make the required modulation, ‘for this lady.’ The incident was a revelation. I had looked upon myself as a

child. Now I was addressed as a lady, yet I couldn't match with a boy of eight! I began to see the difference between the training I had had and the kind to be obtained over there, where foundational knowledge is so thorough. They receive the sort of training that enables one to transpose, improvise, play a difficult composition in another key from the original; in short to be real musicians.

"I had studied with Leschetizky about ten years, when the call came for me to return to America. I told him I must leave for financial reasons.

"'No, you must not go,' he said. 'I will make you my assistant; you shall begin teaching at once; I will send you six pupils to-morrow.' And he did. I soon had a great many pupils. He introduced me everywhere as his assistant, and took the greatest pains to make me clear on every point. One wonderful summer I went with him to Ischl, and there we worked together daily, on how to teach, taking up every subject in detail. At that time I only half realized what a marvelous opportunity it was. He would discuss the hand from every point of view; what this sort of hand should do, and why another kind of hand should be held differently, and should be required to do other-

wise. This is why he often said he had no method. 'To make a pupil play three notes on the piano, expressively and with variety of touch, that is my method,' he would say. He was impatient of so-called methods; he used to say to me, 'You will not write method books—you will play, that is your mission!'

PUBLIC PLAYING

"The pianist is influenced more or less by the receptivity of his audience. I am certain one cannot always play in the same way; the piano, the room and the audience are factors to be reckoned with. I wish I could always rise above these things, but I am often influenced by various moods, and therefore play differently at different times. New York is perhaps the most trying city to appear in; yet American audiences are most encouraging and enthusiastic. European—or, to be more exact, German—audiences are cold. They do not consider the player; he is only a medium through which they hear the composition; in other words they go to hear the music, not the performer.

"This is a very subtle subject, the working of the mind during performance. Surely the ideal state is to be beyond the thinking and

planning stage, so that the player can freely listen to his own tones, without being in any way hampered or limited by questions of technic or memory. When I play, I am not looking ahead or anticipating what is coming; I am intently listening, listening to the tones as they flow from under my fingers.

“True listening—that hearing mentally by the inner ear—is possible only when one can so detach one’s self from one’s surroundings as to be entirely wrapped up in what one is doing. Then, and then only, one really begins to hear. I have seen this absorbed look come into the eyes of Ysaye, as he stands before his audience. After the first few phrases, his eyes take on a different look; when this comes I know he has found himself, that he really hears. It is the same with the great pianists also. When in this trance-like state, one is not always conscious of what happens. At a recent recital, when a recall was demanded, I was in such a mental state that I could not come down to a short, small piece for an encore. Before I knew it I had plunged into the Scherzo, Op. 39, of Chopin. I had not looked at this piece for two years. A sudden realization of the risk I was taking, almost made me come to grief, until I had recovered poise.

KEEPING TECHNIC AND RÉPERTOIRE IN REPAIR

“I practice from four to five hours a day, and generally play with about the power I deem necessary for the concert hall, as thus I can keep myself at concert pitch. I certainly believe in scales, and practice them in various touches and shadings. So also with octaves, chords and arpeggios. Whenever my technic seems to require it, I go over these things. Nor do I neglect the *Études*, Op. 740, of Czerny. Several of these, played consecutively, should put the hand in good condition. Leschetizky believed that the first three contain everything needed in piano playing. They were among the requirements for obtaining lessons from him. He usually called for one or two of these when the pupil first came to him. In fact, at any subsequent lesson, if he saw technical inaccuracy, he was liable to call for one of the Czerny studies, transposed into another key. So they had to be learned in all keys. I run through the four books frequently, and so keep them fresh in my fingers.

“One finds technical problems constantly in pieces. If I play the Tschaikowsky Concerto, I find there plenty of practice in chords. Leschetizky's idea was not to practice either

strenuous technic or études late at night, as this would probably result in stiff muscles next day. Rather play pieces at night, especially those containing variety of touch.

DIRECT METHODS OF STUDY

"I find that people often go 'round and 'round the subject of piano study, without going directly for the thing they are or should be aiming at. They run after this or that method, whatever is most largely advertised. Nowhere is this more evident than right here in New York. They take dancing lessons to help them play the piano. I say nothing against Dalcroze, or mechanical keyboards, but I do believe that if you want to study music, you should go direct to music itself, by the most direct route.

"I am convinced that America is improving the quality of musical training offered to music students. We have become more thorough and systematic. There are more things to be learned about music than just to play a few tunes on the piano. We are learning to try and find the meaning and significance of music itself."

XXII

RAFAEL JOSEFFY

BY SOME OF HIS PUPILS

THE name Rafael Joseffy has long been one to conjure with, whether in Europe or America, whether as pianist or as pedagogue. He was by birth an Hungarian, itself a fact of musical significance. He had studied with Tausig and Liszt, and when he came to America, in 1879, in the flush of youthful mastery of his instrument, he created a furore. He was at that time a marvelous virtuoso; he developed later into a poetic genius of the piano.

It would require a readier pen than mine to fitly describe either the manner of playing, or the teaching methods of this piano conqueror. He had many pupils and followers during his long residence among us, and his influence over the development of music in America was important. As the years passed he became more and more a thinker along the lines of music education, as is evidenced by his two valuable works on piano technic. These books prove



RAFAEL JOSEFFY

how carefully he worked out technical problems.

Technic for the piano is such an individual thing. In a sense it must be applied differently to each pupil. This enlists all the resources of the teacher, since the mentality of the student is varied in every case. And if the teacher must adapt his instruction to fit each and every individual, so, on the side of the pupil, there will be found every shade of comprehension and receptivity.

I have been able to confer with several of the American pupils of Rafael Joseffy, and what they have to say will be of deep interest to pianists and teachers.

ROSE WOLF

Mme. Rose Wolf, who was the master's assistant for about fifteen years, brought to her work a wide experience of masters and methods. Born in Russia, a student in the Rubinstein Conservatory, under the famous pianist, she also studied with Klindworth and Scharwenka in Berlin, and with Dr. William Mason and A. K. Virgil in New York. In fact she has investigated all methods, "to see what was in them."

"I had studied with Joseffy, with some inter-

ruptions, ever since I was fourteen," she says. "I feel I know his method thoroughly; in fact, his 'new book,' as we called it,—the *First Lessons*, we wrote, so to say, together. He consulted me about every exercise; my knowledge of Mr. Virgil's Method helped to explain many a point. During the past fifteen years I prepared most of the pupils for Joseffy, and alternated lessons with his.

JOSEFFY'S METHOD

"Here is a model of Joseffy's hand. You see how the fingers are rounded, the knuckles almost level on top; the knuckle of the fifth finger is as high as that of the second; the thumb is curved also; it is an ideal shape. He was very particular about hand position; that must be formed before anything else could be done. He takes up this subject in the opening chapter of *First Lessons*. Then comes finger action. He believed in high, free finger movements, especially at first; later the high action was reduced. Each of the exercises are to be taken in different touches—*legato*, *marcato* and *staccato*; these are for trills and five finger forms, in all keys. Much attention is to be given to chord study; the various positions both in three and four voices to be played in a variety of touches,

and always with fingers prepared beforehand for the keys.

Joseffy made much of the *staccato* touch, both for fingers and wrist. Finger *staccato* was not played by simply working the fingers quickly up and down, but rather by a slight drawing-in of the finger tip (as Doctor Mason taught). Wrist *staccato* was executed with the hand, the wrist being free and supple and fingers rounded. He did not advise alternating *legato* and *staccato* touches for scales, a few repetitions of each, as is usually done; he considered this method of practice a waste of time. But if *staccato* scale practice can be kept up for ten or fifteen minutes at a time, great benefit will result.

FINGERING

“Joseffy was very exact in all matters of fingering. When possible, a phrase or passage should begin with thumb and end with fifth finger. An ascending scale should end with fifth. Chords following single tones, in bass, should receive, not the fifth finger again, but the fourth or third, when possible. I took him the G minor Ballade of Chopin; he changed the fingering in such a way that I had to learn the piece all over again; but it then sounded

like quite a different composition, which shows how fingering can alter interpretation.

ORNAMENTS

“In regard to embellishments, he was particular to preserve the classic spirit, of bringing the mordent or grace note on the beat. This for Haydn, Scarlatti or Mozart, and even for Beethoven. For later composers the modern manner was generally chosen, though taste should decide. His taste was exquisite on all such points.

CHOICE OF PIECES

“One of the most valuable things about Joseffy’s teaching was his rare insight into the needs of his pupils. He was able to choose just the musical food they required. If the student lacked expression and a singing tone, he was advised to study nocturnes or other lyric music; if he needed bravoura, he was required to work on brilliant pieces. Sometimes he was allowed to play just the sort of composition that would bring out his best qualities in high relief.

“Joseffy never talked much in the lesson, never played the composition entirely through, only parts of it. The student imbibed more by

intuition than in any other way. He made you see what he meant, what the music stood for, its meaning and significance. If the pupil were not advanced sufficiently, he might get but little out of the lessons; but if really prepared, physically and mentally, he could grasp intuitively, a great deal of the higher side of pianism."

ALEXANDER BERNE

Mr. Berne, who is doing excellent work as pianist, teacher and composer, speaks enthusiastically of his lessons with Joseffy, with whom he studied for four or five seasons.

"Joseffy insisted on the following four fundamental principles: 1, Arched Hand; 2, Loose Wrist; 3, Slanting Position (for scales and arpeggios); 4, High Finger Action. He was very particular about position of the hand; that had to be formed before anything else could be done. Accuracy also was one of his hobbies; therefore fingers must be well raised during practice.

"With some pupils, I am told, he did not concern himself so much about technic. He was very exact with me, for which I am grateful, as it has helped me so much in my teaching.

SLOW PRACTICE

“Slow practice was greatly recommended, as only in this way could accuracy be acquired. After the piece had been played for him slowly and carefully, he would sometimes say: ‘Now play it fast, even if you drop some notes; I want to see what you can do.’

“He required much scale practice. At first we used a short scale of nine notes, for which it was necessary to pass the thumb under twice. This was played in all keys, hands singly and together. He claimed this little figure embodied the whole principle of the scale, without waste of time or energy. Later, scales in four octaves were studied in all keys.

RHYTHM

“Joseffy was a great stickler for perfect rhythm. He insisted this principle should be carried into everything. If the scale ended on a third beat, the following repetition, or new scale, must begin on the first beat of next measure, leaving one beat between. The same was true of all technical forms,

THE CLASSICS

“With the classic in music Joseffy was in complete *rapport*. He used much Bach, also Haydn, Scarlatti, Mozart, Beethoven. Then came Schumann, Brahms and, most of all, Chopin. His taste did not incline toward the ultramodern school, though he used the two *Arabesques* of Debussy.

“In Bach, when one voice is in eighths against another in sixteenths, the former was played *staccato* and the latter *legato*, unless otherwise marked. This reading gives variety to the parts and preserves the classic spirit. Joseffy used it for the older music.

“After the student had been initiated into technical methods, and had studied some pieces very carefully, he was told to bring several pieces for each lesson. Sometimes I had to prepare thirty or forty pages at a time—during the two weeks’ interval; the idea being to play through a number of compositions for smoothness, style and effect.

“At the beginning of his lessons, the student provided himself with a staff-ruled notebook, in which Joseffy indicated the technical matter to be studied. Many of the exercises in his new book,—*First Lessons*—were thus dictated to

me before the work was published. This is the book I use in my teaching, although I have adopted Joseffy's method of writing down exercises for my pupils, as it gives peculiar interest to their technical studies."

Mr. Berne relates many incidents, showing the personality of the great pianist and his kindly interest in his pupils. Lack of space prevents their inclusion. The accompanying portrait was taken by Mr. Berne at Joseffy's villa at Tarrytown.

EDWIN HUGHES

Mr. Edwin Hughes, who has been for a number of years—as student and teacher—a leading representative of the pianistic principles of Theodor Leschetizky, was a pupil of Joseffy for a couple of seasons before going to Vienna. Of the latter's teaching methods he says:

"Joseffy was immensely particular about fingering. I have known the whole lesson hour to be occupied with this subject. He would finger a passage in several ways, telling the pupil to practice them all and then decide which would best fit the hand. In his work as editor, he would spend many hours over the fingering of a single composition. He often hit upon

brilliant ideas in this line, though he was apt to be somewhat old fashioned and pedantic. This frequently showed itself in the changing of fingers on keys, for no special reason. With him fingering was almost an art in itself. He worked according to a principle, and always put that first. If a passage ought to be played *legato*, he would preserve that principle in the fingering.

INVENTING DIFFICULT EXERCISES

“He advised making difficult technical exercises out of pieces; that is to say, selecting the hard parts and then turning them about in different ways, for one hand or the other. This was the idea of Tausig and Liszt, with both of whom Joseffy studied. It is also Rosenthal’s plan; he doubtless got it from his teacher, Joseffy. Another technical stunt was to practice with uncomfortable hand positions, such as octaves with very low wrist, for instance. Afterwards the normal position of hands, or written arrangement of notes would be found much easier.

PERFECTION OR ENDURANCE

“He counselled the student to practice either for perfection or endurance. For the former

slow practice was necessary, with well-raised fingers and minute attention to every detail. For endurance the opposite course was observed. 'Play for speed, and keep it up, no matter if some of the notes are dropped,' he would say: 'go through the piece several times without stopping, and do not yield to fatigue; overcome fatigue!'

CHOOSING SUITABLE PIECES

"Choosing pieces from which one could learn a great deal, technically as well as musically, was almost a gift with him. Take, for instance, two works like the Schumann Fantaisie, Op. 17, and Chopin's Sonata, Op. 35. To the listener these works may sound about the same in point of difficulty, but the pianist will learn much more from the first movement of the Sonata than from the first part of the Fantaisie. For the same reason he did not favor either the Tschaikowsky or Grieg Concertos. 'Any one who can play chords can play those,' he would say. But from a Mozart or a Chopin Concerto one learns much. The *Intermezzi* of Brahms are more for interpretation than for technical mastery, as few technical problems are involved in them.

JOSEFFY'S BOOKS ON TECHNIC

"I make great use in my teaching of Joseffy's treatise on *Piano Technic*; I consider it a great work. He has treated every point exhaustively. Of course it is a book for advanced students, as he accepted no other kind. His *First Lessons*, which was issued later, I do not use. After a careful examination, I found the exercises just as difficult—many of them—as those in the larger work. He intended the *First Lessons* to precede the more advanced work, and started out with a few foundational exercises, but soon leaped ahead to advanced problems. He was very favorable to the Virgil clavier and to the method evolved by its inventor, Mr. A. K. Virgil. A pupil coming to him who had been well prepared in this method, he considered had a thorough foundation. I had been well grounded in this method before I went to him, through my studies with S. M. Fabian, of Washington. I found this preparation of the greatest benefit to me in my later studies.

"Joseffy was one of the greatest teachers of our time. As Rosenthal remarked: 'Why do Americans come over here to study, when they have one of the most remarkable teachers in

their midst?' Yet Joseffy himself counselled his students to cross the ocean and learn what Europe could do for them in matters of experience, travel, and musical inspiration."

XXIII

KATE S. CHITTENDEN

SIMPLIFIED PIANO TECHNIC

ABOUT the first musician with whom I came in contact, on my professional advent in New York, over twenty years ago, was Miss Kate Chittenden. We lived under the same roof and saw each other daily. I was attracted by her sincerity and fearless candor, her wide experience, and the justice of her opinions on most subjects. As I learned to know her better and got beyond a certain quaint, characteristic brusqueness of manner, I realized how sympathetic she was, how tender-hearted, how ready to help struggling talent, or those not even talented, who craved an assisting hand. I saw the *Synthetic Method*, which she organized and worked out, grow from its very inception.

Looking back over all these years, it seems to me Miss Chittenden's whole life has been one of devotion to her ideals. Those ideals I believe to be: To develop the most practical

method of piano study she could devise; to aid students to find themselves and work out the best that is in them; to help young teachers to establish themselves,—in short to “lend a hand.”

Kate Chittenden is an American on both sides of her family; her mother's people coming here in 1629, her father's in 1638. She happened to be born in Hamilton, Canada, where her parents went to visit and remained. In music she had the benefit of study with an extraordinary Frenchman, Jules Fossier. Later, at Hellmuth College, London, she was trained by Lucy H. Clinton, a pupil of Clara Schumann, who proved to be equally exacting.

Miss Chittenden came to New York in the fall of 1876. Later she was made organist and Choir Director of Calvary Baptist Church, a post she held for over a quarter of a century. In 1892 she joined the staff of the Metropolitan College of Music, which has since been renamed American Institute of Applied Music. She has been the Dean of the Faculty there since 1900.

SIMPLIFYING TEACHING MATERIAL

We conferred lately on the wide subject of piano teaching. I had remarked that in my

experience, neither singers nor violinists, as a rule, could give an adequate idea in words, of the essentials of music study and teaching; whereas the progressive teacher of the piano is generally able to impart much that is useful and helpful.

"That is because the piano is a universal instrument," said Miss Chittenden. "The singer can only sing one note at a time, a violinist can at most play two; but the pianist can depress about a dozen keys; the piano is the instrument of harmony."

"I was greatly interested in your exposition—given at the New York Music Teachers' Convention, held in New York in June, 1915—of the use of half-tones in teaching a comprehension of the material used in music. I believe teachers and students would appreciate a brief resume of your ideas."

"I was almost forced into these discoveries," answered Miss Chittenden, with a smile, "by the utter lack of *finger instinct* observed in most pupils who came to me. I found they needed to *feel* the black keys as well as the white—half steps as well as whole steps.

"We, therefore, start with the half-step, the smallest interval in music. At the back of the keyboard all keys are a half step apart. This

very fact seems greatly to simplify matters for the beginner. Who would imagine that out of the twelve sounds contained within the octave, 479,001,600 changes could be made!

“We emphasize the fact that each sound is to be considered the *starting point* of an independent system. The first technical application is made by starting from each one of the twelve keys in the octave and proceeding by half steps, using such variations of time, touch, and dynamics as one desires. Next, we introduce a half followed by a whole step, proceeding from the same starting point, always making clear the relationships. Then we build ‘Filled Seconds,’ utilizing three piano keys. With three sounds a number of rhythmic changes can be introduced; but in order to counteract the unstable influence of so much chromatic work, we always apply the same figure to the diatonic scale, taking care to emphasize the difference between the chromatic and normal sequences. After the three sounds are established, the middle one is eliminated, bringing us to the ‘sequence of whole steps’ (the basis of so much of Liszt’s filigree work).

“We can now take up minor thirds. I first use either B flat and D flat, or D sharp and F sharp—two mountain peaks with a valley be-

tween. The pupil can never mistake either of these for a major third, whereas the minor third on the white keys is sometimes misleading. I have the pupil *feel* this minor third chromatically up the keyboard, to learn its form and shape. It is then written out and played with different touches. After these, each of the four sounds, or piano keys, within the minor third are played in succession, as 'filled minor thirds,' to which eight different rhythms may be applied.

"As the model for major thirds, we use F sharp and A sharp—"two mountain peaks with two valleys and a small hill between"—equal to four half steps. They may be played together or in broken pairs. They may also be filled and played with variations, rhythms and shadings. They can also be preceded by an octave.

CHORD STUDY

"In teaching chords I use the three triads in this order: diminished, minor, major. Inversions are demonstrated by alternate hands, overlapping each other. I call them "shingles." The diminished seventh and dominant seventh are taken up in the same way and are quite simple after the drill with triads. There is a certainty of touch and vision that

comes from using chords chromatically and afterwards passing through the circle of keys, that results in fearlessness: it reduces the habit of stumbling so prevalent among immature pianists.

“I am glad to give you this brief summary of the work. I think the musician should not keep his discoveries to himself, but be willing to share them with others. Musicians ought to have a code of ethics and as inviolable an oath as physicians, who are not allowed to patent their knowledge; for if a doctor is known to secrete anything of public benefit, he is scorned by his fellows. Surely the followers of the most beautiful art ought to be as high-minded as those in the best of professions.”

“How long will it take the student to go through the various half-step forms which you use?” she was asked.

“About three months. Of course all depends on the ability of the learner and the amount of time she has to give. All beginners go through the work with my assistants.

“In a college such as Vassar, where the ordinary studies are accompanied by a large amount of laboratory work, as well as a good deal of special-topic writing, executive music has to be crowded out, and it is very difficult for

the students to get any satisfactory amount of practice. Executive music, in my judgment, should form no part of a college course. But as a side issue, for recreation and inspiration, it is invaluable. Nominally, the Vassar students are allowed one fifty-minute period of practice daily, but in point of fact, they are only able to get five half hours a week, or less. Consequently, I have to prune the course in piano just as close as possible. There is only time for the most essential things. I insist on good tone and rhythm, attention to phrasing and dynamics, and an intelligent use of the pedals. I use a large number of short pieces, for the less advanced pupils, such as Schumann, Opus 15, 99, 124; Chopin Preludes, and many of the best short modern compositions. My assistants—I have three in the College—give a lesson to each music student once a week. I give them a half hour lesson every other week; the alternate week I have them in classes, six in number.

“Piano music, however, has recognition at Vassar through the admirable course in Interpretation given by Professor George Coleman Gow, to performers in any branch of music. These classes are unique, as there are three recitations each week, and the works under consid-

eration are treated in such a way that at the end of the year the students understand thoroughly why the composition is good and what constitutes an artistic reading. They learn to criticize intelligently, and after the laws are once understood, students are called upon to criticize each other. This particular item is of peculiar benefit. A teacher may correct a fault over and over again, and his correction may have no appreciable effect; but let a fellow student criticize another and it makes an indelible impression,—it is the end of that fault.”

Miss Chittenden numbers over three thousand pupils who have studied with her in the course of her long career. For nearly eighteen years she has been head of the piano department in Vassar College, making the trip to Poughkeepsie every week during the entire season. Besides this she has been, for twenty-five years, a lecturer on the New York Board of Education free lecture courses, being the first woman ever chosen to lecture on music.

It has been recently said of Miss Chittenden:

“To an exceptional degree she is open-minded to all the new developments in the music world, and it is to her capacity for comprehending quickly new points of view and discriminating shrewdly between what is worth

while and what is of little or no value in the evolution of pedagogical work, that her success is in a great measure due. She has devised a comprehensive system for teaching children, which has produced eloquent results."

XXIV

AUGUSTA COTTLOW

TECHNICAL ESSENTIALS IN PIANO STUDY

WE in America have formerly been educated to think that the greatest artists of the keyboard must come from Europe. The first famous artist to visit and enthrall us with his art was Rubinstein. Each year after his advent, some new European aspirants for our admiration visited us, so that we began to look for a fresh pianistic sensation every season.

While we are grateful for all the old world has taught us in the past, we are learning to find ourselves in these days. We too have artists of the keyboard, who compare most favorably with those who come to us from over the water. I believe the views and experiences of our own pianists will be most helpful to the American student and teacher.

Augusta Cottlow, who has given the following conference, is an artist of whom America may be proud; her views will doubtless be read with deep interest.

"Prominent pianists of to-day seem to be fairly well agreed as to the essentials of piano technic—hand position, how to practice, and so on. Yet in the hand and mentality of the average individual there seem to be so many hindrances that it is not surprising that numberless students are crying out for more light on these subjects.

THE MEANING OF TECHNIC

"Before considering the mechanical side of technic, it would be well to have a clear understanding of what the word implies. Technic is the mode or means by which ideas are expressed, and this mode of expression should be perfected so that the ideas may be clearly set forth. This is a point which ought never to be overlooked, but I have found that in the intense desire to perfect the 'mode of expression,' the object of it all is too often lost sight of, and the student forgets what he is striving for. We must never forget that a great artist is not great simply because he has a wide range of tone-coloring, fine finger action, a velvety touch, or free and strong arm movements, but because he has ideas to express. Without ideas the most perfect technical equipment leaves the listener unmoved, except to excite the same

kind of admiration called forth by a fine acrobatic performance. The idea is truly the 'spirit that quickeneth' in music as well as in every other kind of work. Thus it is that the artist with great musical insight will produce exquisite effects with his technic, where the less gifted player, with the same technical development, can make little or no effect. It therefore behooves every student to increase his interpretative ability as assiduously as he is striving to perfect his mechanical control.

PATIENT STUDY

"It seems almost superfluous to touch upon the subject of patience, as nearly every artist has, in interviews or articles, dwelt upon the patience required to perfect a reliable technic. This is, of course, true in every line of human endeavor. Great lessons can be learned from the lives of men like Edison, for example, who sometimes spends seventeen or eighteen hours without interruption in his laboratory, working out his experiments. For the average student, who loves his work, four or five hours a day at the piano is no bugbear, on the contrary, a decided pleasure. It is not the amount of time spent, however, which taxes one's patience, but the *kind* of practicing one does; that is, whether

one learns a composition by repeatedly playing it over, or by the careful, slow, analytical process that goes absolutely to the foundation of its technical requirements. It is this analytical practice which tests the patience of those who wish to develop a fine technic, and, what is more important, of those who wish to *keep* this technic. Many students make the mistake of believing that two or three years of more or less analytical practice will establish their technic so that afterwards all will be easy sailing; but doubtless all artists will agree that it is the continuous perfecting of each detail that keeps their technic up to the standard, and brings that enviable 'polish' which is the cherished desire of every aspirant to pianistic success.

HAND POSITION

"Hand position has been a subject of much discussion, and the ideas regarding it have undergone some radical changes since piano playing became a fine art. At present the arched hand with wrist on a level with the keys is conceded the position of the greatest advantage for all types of hands, supple or stiff; for it gives the supple hand a brace and much needed support for the fingers, especially in

forte passages, while to the stiff hand with little back-action of the fingers it gives a kind of vantage ground, from which the fingers can fall perpendicularly into the keys. An important point to keep in mind is to tilt the hand slightly towards the thumb, so that the knuckles of the fourth and fifth fingers are at least as high, if not higher, than that of the second finger. This position enables the fourth and fifth fingers to fall perpendicularly into the keys, and not slantingly as they would otherwise do. A slanting position of the weaker fingers often leads to the bad habit of shoving the fingers down by means of the weight of the entire hand, and prevents independent action and the development of strength in the fingers. The fingers should by all means preserve a rounded position and be struck on their tips. Whatever may be said in favor of the stroke produced by the straightened finger, I have never heard a crystalline, carrying tone from any one who used it. It will be noticed I have used the phrase 'into the keys.' This is what the finger stroke must always be, even in melody playing where the fingers are not so much rounded. It is essential that the key be pressed down to its full depth at all times, in all manner of tone-color-

ing, even in the finest *pianissimo*, and in the greatest velocity; this is almost impossible with flattened stroke and straightened finger. The mechanism of the piano action is such that a quick and deep stroke is essential for the perfect action of the hammer against the string; otherwise the hammers are sluggish in their movement, and sometimes do not strike the strings at all. This is especially true in *pianissimo*, where the pressure is so light. The *pianissimo* touch must, therefore, be carefully practiced, as the greatest control is required to produce this quick and deep stroke with delicacy.

THE WRIST

“This wrist is one of the most important factors in piano playing. It may be said that elasticity of tone depends on elasticity of wrist. Too little attention is paid to the wrist; it is often allowed to remain rigid. Is it then any wonder that there is stiffness in the hands and arms? The muscles which raise and lower the fingers are situated in the forearm, and are connected with the fingers by tendons which pass through the wrist. If the wrist is held rigid, therefore, it is easy to see what must happen. One might say the secret of relaxation

lies in the suppleness of the wrist. This is gained by the almost constant activity of this member—by raising the hand by means of the wrist at the end of each phrase, by elevating the wrist slightly when the thumb passes under the hand in arpeggios, by drawing the hand down into the keys in melody playing, by sinking the wrist and lifting and lowering hand and arm in chord playing—by leading with the wrist, and so on. When the wrist is lowered, the muscles on top of the forearm are relaxed: when it is raised those underneath are relieved. The movement should not be sideways, as is often done, for this accomplishes nothing and looks affected; it should be an up and down movement, in a slightly rotary manner. The development of strength is also assisted by this elasticity of wrist, for every part of the hand and arm is thereby unhindered in its activity. Thus I consider the position of hands and fingers, and the freedom of wrists as most essential points in the mechanical phase of technic.

VELOCITY

“The question of how velocity is attained is often brought up, and many contend that velocity comes of its own accord as a result of

slow, careful practice. Velocity, in many individuals, is a natural characteristic, owing to great suppleness of hands and a quick, impulsive mentality; but *controlled* velocity is quite another story. It usually requires most assiduous practice with the metronome, beginning with one note and increasing rhythmically to two, four, six and eight notes to a beat, to gain this control. It is not so much a lack of rhythmic feeling as a lack of rhythmic control which makes this necessary. The majority of students have no idea of how to increase a passage rhythmically, and do not realize how uneven their technical control is. Most people throw up their hands in horror at the thought of practicing with a metronome; they are afraid of becoming mechanical, and so on. This might be the result, if one habitually played compositions through with metronome, but it should be used mostly for routine practice and analytical work in pieces.

TECHNIC PRACTICE

“For the student who can set aside four hours a day to practice, I have found that one hour of this time should be devoted to routine technical practice, embracing two forms of technic, one for the fingers, and one for wrists and

arms. At least twelve forms of technic should be gone over within a period of, at most, six weeks. For instance, if one practices scales and chords during the period of a week, employing both in several keys and forms, the next week could be devoted to trills and octaves, also practiced in various keys, fingerings and forms, and so on through the other divisions of technic. The twelve forms which I feel should not be neglected, and which are essential to the formation of a many-sided, well-rounded technic, are: Trills, Scales, Arpeggios (in various forms), Close Finger Work (triplets, broken thirds and the like), Octaves, Broken Octaves, Chords, Thirds, Fourths, Sixths, Repeated Notes and Skips. The principle of practicing the various forms of technic in routine work should be applied whenever these forms occur in compositions. This is true analytical technic practice.

TOO DIFFICULT PIECES

“There is one more point I would like to touch upon, and that is the great evil (I can call it by no other name!) of students attempting to play compositions which tax the technic of even advanced concert artists. This evil cannot be too severely condemned. It prevents the stu-

dent from developing the artistic side of piano playing, as his thoughts are so intent upon the technical difficulties involved, which he finds it impossible to master, as they are utterly beyond his present technical development. The argument often used by teachers on this subject is that the student can only acquire a knowledge of piano literature by studying the greatest compositions. They are quite mistaken, for one can get this knowledge by the thorough reading and hearing of these compositions, as I know by my own experience.

"We must always remember, as my dear old teacher, Carl Wolfsohn, early impressed upon my childish thought, that it is not **WHAT** we play, but **HOW** we play!"





PLEASE DO NOT REMOVE
CARDS OR SLIPS FROM THIS POCKET

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO LIBRARY

MT
220
B86

Brower, Harriette Moore
Piano mastery

Music

