

Piano and Song eBook

Piano and Song by Friedrich Wieck

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CHAPTER I.

On elementary piano-forte instruction.

You ask, my dear friend, for some particular information about my piano method, especially with regard to my mode of elementary instruction, which differs essentially from that in common use.

I give you here the main points; and, if you place confidence in my experience of forty years, and if you will supply those details which I have omitted, your own varied experience as a thoughtful, talented, and earnest piano-teacher will enable you to understand my theory, from the following dialogue between my humble self under the title of Dominie, my friend, and the little Bessie:—

Dominie. My dear friend, how have you managed to make piano-playing so utterly distasteful to little Susie? and how is it that the instruction which you have given her for the last three years actually amounts to nothing?

Friend. Well, I will tell you how I have proceeded. First I taught her the names of the keys, that was pretty dull work for her; then I made her learn the treble notes, which was a difficult matter; after that I taught her the bass notes, which puzzled her still more; then I undertook to teach her a pretty little piece, which she hoped to perform for the delight of her parents. Of course she constantly confused the bass and treble notes, she could not keep time, she always used the wrong fingers and could not learn it at all. Then I scolded her,—she only cried; I tried a little coaxing,—that made her cry worse; finally I put an end to the piano lessons, and she begged me never to begin them again; and there you have the whole story.

Dominie. You certainly might have begun more judiciously. How is it possible for a child to climb a ladder when not only the lower rounds, but a great many more, are wanting? Nature makes no leaps, least of all with children.

Friend. But did she not begin to climb the ladder at the bottom?

Dominie. By no means. She certainly never was able to reach the top. I should say, rather, that she tumbled down head foremost. To speak mildly, she began to climb in the middle; and even then you tried to chase her up, instead of allowing her, carefully and quietly, to clamber up one step at a time. Bring me your youngest daughter, Bessie, and I will show you how I give a first lesson.

Dominie. Bessie, can you say your letters after me? so,—c, d, e, f.

Bessie. c, d, e, f.



DOMINIE. Go on,—*g, a, b, c.*

BESSIE. *g, a, b, c.*

DOMINIE. Once more: the first four again, then the next four. That's right: now all the eight, one after the other, *c, d, e, f, g, a, b, c.*

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BESSIE. *c, d, e, f, g, a, b, c.*

DOMINIE. (*after repeating this several times*). That's good: now you see you have learned something already. That is the musical alphabet, and those are the names of the white keys on the piano-forte. Presently you shall find them out, and learn to name them yourself. But, first, you must take notice (I strike the keys in succession with my finger, from the one-lined *c* to the highest treble) that these sounds grow higher and become sharper one after the other; and in this way (I strike the keys from one-lined *c* to the lowest bass) you hear that the sounds grow lower and heavier. The upper half, to the right, is called the treble; the lower half is the bass. You quite understand now the difference between the high sharp tones and the low deep ones? Now we will go on. What you see here, and will learn to play upon, is called the key-board, consisting of white keys and black ones. You shall presently learn to give the right names both to the white keys and the black; you see there are always two black keys and then three black keys together, all the way up and down the key-board. Now put the fore-finger of your right hand on the lower one of any of the two black keys that are together, and let it slip off on to the white key next below it; now you have found the key called *c*; what is the name of the next key above it? Say the whole musical alphabet.

BESSIE. *c, d, e, f, g, a, b, c.*

DOMINIE. Well, then, that key is called *d*.

BESSIE. Then this one must be *e*.

DOMINIE. And now comes *f*. Anywhere on the key-board you can find *f* just as easily, if you put your finger on the lowest of any three black keys that are together, and let it slip off on to the white key next below it. If you remember where these two keys, *f* and *c*, are, both in the treble and the bass, you can easily find the names of all the other keys. Now what is the next key above *f*?

BESSIE. *g*, and then *a, b, c*.

DOMINIE. Now we will say over several times the names of the keys, upwards and downwards, and learn to find them skipping about in any irregular order. At the end of the lesson we will try them over once more, and before the next lesson you will know the names of all the white keys. You must practise finding them out by yourself; you can't make a mistake, if you are careful to remember where the *c* and the *f* are.

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I told you that the sounds this way (I strike the keys upward) grow higher, and this way (I strike them downwards) they grow lower. So you see no tones are just alike: one is either higher or lower than the other. Do you hear the difference? Now turn round so as not to see the keys; I will strike two keys, one after the other; now which is the highest (the sharpest), the first or the second? (I go on in this way, gradually touching keys nearer and nearer together; sometimes, in order to puzzle her and to excite close attention, I strike the lower one gently and the higher one stronger, and keep on sounding them, lower and lower towards the bass, according to the capacity of the pupil.) I suppose you find it a little tiresome to listen so closely; but a delicate, quick ear is necessary for piano-playing, and by and by it will become easier to you. But I won't tire you with it any more now, we will go on to something else. Can you count 3,—1, 2, 3?

BESSIE. Yes, indeed, and more too.

DOMINIE. We'll see; now keep counting 1, 2, 3, 1, 2, 3, as evenly and regularly as you can. (I lead her to count steadily, and strike at the same time a chord in three even quarter-notes.) Now we'll see if you can count evenly by yourself. (I count 1 of the chord with her, and leave her to count 2 and 3 by herself; or else I count with her at 2, and let her count 1 and 3 alone; but I am careful to strike the chord promptly and with precision. Afterwards I strike the chord in eighth-notes, and let her count 1, 2, 3; in short, I give the chord in various ways, in order to teach her steadiness in counting, and to confine her attention. In the same way I teach her to count 1, 2, 1, 2; or 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6; at the same time telling her that music is sometimes counted in triple time, and sometimes in 2/4 or 4/4 time.) Now, Bessie, you have learned to count very well, and to know the difference in the tones. It is not every child that learns this in the first lesson. If you don't get tired of it, you will some time learn to be a good player. As soon as you are rested, I will tell you about something else, that you will have to listen to very carefully.

BESSIE. But I like it, and will take pains to listen just as closely as I can.

DOMINIE. When several tones are struck at the same time, if they sound well together, they make what we call a chord. But there are both major and minor chords: the major chord sounds joyous, gay; the minor, sad, dull, as you would say; the former laugh, the latter weep. Now take notice whether I am right. (I strike the chord of C major; then, after a short pause, that of C minor; and try, by a stronger or lighter touch, to make her listen first to the major and then to the minor chords. She usually distinguishes correctly; but it will not do to dwell too long upon these at first, or to try to enforce any thing by too much talk and explanation.) Now I will tell you that the difference in the sounds of

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these chords is in the third, counted upwards from the lower note c, and depends upon whether you take it half a tone higher or lower, e or e flat. I shall explain this better to you by and by, when you come to learn about the tonic, the third, the fifth or dominant, the octave, and so on. (It is advantageous and psychologically correct to touch occasionally, in passing, upon points which will be more thoroughly taught later. It excites the interest of the pupil. Thus the customary technical terms are sometimes made use of beforehand, and a needful, cursory explanation given of them.) That is right; you can tell them pretty well already; now we will repeat once more the names of the keys, and then we will stop for to-day. Just see how many things you have learned in this lesson.

BESSIE. It was beautiful!

DOMINIE. I hope you will always find it so.

BESSIE. When may I have another lesson?

DOMINIE. Day after to-morrow; at first, you must have at least three lessons a week.

BESSIE. What shall I do in the next lesson?

DOMINIE. I shall repeat all that I have taught you to-day; but I shall teach you a great deal of it in a different way, and every time I shall teach it to you differently, so that it shall always be interesting to you. In the next lesson we will begin to play, first on the table, and at last on the piano. You will learn to move your fingers lightly and loosely, and quite independently of the arm, though at first they will be weak; and you will learn to raise them and let them fall properly. Besides that, we will contrive a few exercises to teach you to make the wrist loose, for that must be learned in the beginning in order to acquire a fine touch on the piano; that is, to make the tones sound as beautiful as possible. I shall show you how to sit at the piano and how to hold your hands. You will learn the names of the black keys and the scale of C, with the half-step from the 3d to the 4th and also that from the 7th to the 8th, which latter is called the leading note, which leads into C. (This is quite important for my method, for in this way the different keys can be clearly explained.) You will learn to find the chord of C in the bass and the treble, and to strike them with both hands together. And then in the third or fourth lesson, after you know quite perfectly all that I have already taught you, I will teach you to play a little piece that will please you, and then you will really be a player, a pianist.

FRIEND. From whom have you learned all this? It goes like the lightning-train.

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DOMINIE. A great many people can learn *what* is to be taught; but *how* it is to be taught I have only found out by devoting my whole mind, with real love and constant thought, to the musical improvement and general mental development of my pupils. The advancement will unquestionably be rapid, for it proceeds step by step, and one thing is founded upon another; the pupil learns every thing quietly, thoughtfully, and surely, without going roundabout, without any hindrances and mistakes to be unlearned. I never try to teach too much or too little; and, in teaching each thing, I try to prepare and lay the foundation for other things to be afterwards learned. I consider it very important not to try to cram the child's memory with the teacher's wisdom (as is often done in a crude and harsh way); but I endeavor to excite the pupil's mind, to interest it, and to let it develop itself, and not to degrade it to a mere machine. I do not require the practice of a vague, dreary, time and mind killing piano-jingling, in which way, as I see, your little Susie was obliged to learn; but I observe a musical method, and in doing this always keep strictly in view the individuality and gradual development of the pupil. In more advanced instruction, I even take an interest in the general culture and disposition of the pupil, and improve every opportunity to call forth the sense of beauty, and continually to aid in the intellectual development.

FRIEND. But where are the notes all this time?

DOMINIE. Before that, we have a great deal to do that is interesting and agreeable. I keep constantly in view the formation of a good technique; but I do not make piano-playing distasteful to the pupil by urging her to a useless and senseless mechanical "practising." I may perhaps teach the treble notes after the first six months or after sixty or eighty lessons, but I teach them in my own peculiar way, so that the pupil's mind may be kept constantly active. With my own daughters I did not teach the treble notes till the end of the first year's instruction, the bass notes several months later.

FRIEND. But what did you do meanwhile?

DOMINIE. You really ought to be able to answer that question for yourself after hearing this lesson, and what I have said about it. I have cultivated a musical taste in my pupils, and almost taught them to be skilful, good players, without knowing a note. I have taught a correct, light touch of the keys from the fingers, and of whole chords from the wrist; to this I have added the scales in all the keys; but these should not be taught at first, with both hands together. The pupil may gradually acquire the habit of practising them together later; but it is not desirable to insist on this too early, for in playing the scales with both hands together the weakness of the fourth finger is concealed, and the attention distracted from the feeble tones, and the result is an unequal and poor scale.

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At the same time, I have in every way cultivated the sense of time, and taught the division of the bars. I have helped the pupils to invent little cadences with the dominant and sub-dominant and even little exercises, to their great delight and advantage; and I have, of course, at the same time insisted on the use of the correct fingering. You see that, in order to become practical, I begin with the theory. So, for instance, I teach the pupil to find the triad and the dominant chord of the seventh, with their transpositions in every key, and to practise them diligently; and to make use of these chords in all sorts of new figures and passages. But all this must be done without haste, and without tiring the pupil too much with one thing, or wearing out the interest, which is all-important.

After that, I teach them to play fifty or sixty little pieces, which I have written for this purpose. They are short, rhythmically balanced, agreeable, and striking to the ear, and aim to develop gradually an increased mechanical skill. I require them to be learned by heart, and often to be transposed into other keys; in which way the memory, which is indispensable for piano playing, is unconsciously greatly increased. They must be learned *perfectly* and played well, often, according to the capacity of the pupil, even finely; in strict time (counting aloud is seldom necessary) and without stumbling or hesitating; first slowly, then fast, faster, slow again, *staccato*, *legato*, *piano*, *forte*, *crescendo*, *diminuendo*, &c. This mode of instruction I find always successful; but I do not put the cart before the horse, and, without previous technical instruction, begin my piano lessons with the extremely difficult acquirement of the treble and bass notes. In a word, I have striven, as a psychologist and thinker, as a man and teacher, for a many-sided culture. I have also paid great attention to the art of singing, as a necessary foundation for piano-playing. I have devoted some talent, and at least an enthusiastic, unwearied love to the subject. I have never stood still; have learned something of teaching every day, and have sought always to improve myself; I have always been something new and different, in every lesson and with every child; I have always kept up a cheerful, joyous courage, and this has usually kindled the same in my pupil, because it came from the heart. Moreover, I have never been a man of routine, have never shown myself a pedant, who is obliged to hold fast to certain ideas and views.

I have lived up to the century, and have tried to understand and to advance the age; have heard every thing great and fine in music, and have induced my pupils also to hear it. I have opposed with determination all the prejudices and false tendencies of the times, and never have allowed impatient parents to give advice about my lessons. I have insisted upon a good and well-tuned instrument for my pupils, and have endeavored to merit the love and confidence both of my pupils and of their parents. In fact, I have devoted myself thoroughly to my calling, and have been wholly a teacher, always fixing my eye on the true, the beautiful, and the artistic; and in this way have been of service to my pupils.

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FRIEND. But how do you find parents who sympathize with your ideas and with your lofty views?

DOMINIE. I have found that almost all the parents of my pupils have entered into my views, if not immediately, at least after they had been present at a few lessons. In the case of those few who would not enter into them, I have abandoned the lessons; but, nevertheless, I have found that my time has been fully occupied. My friend, do you not think that views like these will assist in the training of young and inexperienced teachers, who are striving for improvement? and do you not think they will be useful even to those who already possess general mental culture, and who are animated by an ardent love for their calling? I especially avoid giving here any exclusive method, a servile following of which would be entirely contrary to my intentions, and, in fact, contrary to my method.

But as for the rest! Alas, all those who do not understand me, or who choose to misunderstand me, those are the worst!—especially the ill-natured people, the *classical* people who bray about music, stride straight to the notes, and have no patience till they come to Beethoven; who foolishly prate and fume about my unclassical management, but at bottom only wish to conceal their own unskilfulness, their want of culture and of disinterestedness, or to excuse their habitual drudgery. Lazy people without talent I cannot undertake to inspire, to teach, and to cultivate.

This chapter will, almost by itself, point out to unprejudiced minds my method of giving more advanced instruction, and will show in what spirit I have educated my own daughters, even to the highest point of musical culture, without using the slightest severity. It will, indeed, cause great vexation to the ill-minded and even to the polite world, who attribute the musical position of my daughters in the artistic world to a tyranny used by me, to immoderate and unheard-of “practising,” and to tortures of every kind; and who do not hesitate to invent and industriously to circulate the most absurd reports about it, instead of inquiring into what I have already published about teaching, and comparing it with the management which, with their own children, has led only to senseless thrumming.

CHAPTER II.

AN EVENING ENTERTAINMENT AT HERR ZACH'S.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE.

HERR ZACH, *formerly a flute-player, not very wealthy.*

HIS WIFE, *of the family of Tz. (rather sharp-tempered).*

STOCK, *her son, 17 years old (is studying the piano thoroughly).*



MR. BUFFALO, *music-master of the family.*
DOMINIE, *piano-teacher (rather gruff).*
CECILIA, *his daughter, 13 years old (shy).*

ZACH (*to Dominie*). I regret that I was unable to attend the concert yesterday. I was formerly musical myself and played on the flute. Your daughter, I believe, plays pretty well.

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DOMINIE. Well, yes! perhaps something more than *pretty well*. We are in earnest about music.

MADAME, of the Tz. family (*envious because Cecilia received applause for her public performance yesterday, and because Mr. Buffalo had been unable to bring out Stock,—all in one breath*). When did your daughter begin to play? Just how old is she now? Does she like playing? They say you are very strict, and tie your daughters to the piano-stool. How many hours a day do you make her practise? Don't you make her exert herself too much? Has she talent? Isn't she sickly?

DOMINIE. Don't you think she looks in good health, madam,—tall and strong for her years?

MADAME, of the Tz. family. But perhaps she might look more cheerful, if she was not obliged to play on the piano so much.

DOMINIE (*bowing*). I can't exactly say.

ZACH (*suddenly interrupting, and holding Dominie by the button-hole*). They say you torment and ill-treat your daughters dreadfully; that the eldest was obliged to practise day and night. Well, you shall hear my Stock play this evening, who, some time, by the grace of God, is to take the place of Thalberg in the world. Now give me your opinion freely (of course, I was only to praise): we should like very much to hear what you think about his playing, though perhaps Mr. Buffalo may not agree with you.

(Mr. Buffalo is looking through the music-case and picking out all the Etudes, by listening to which Dominie is to earn his supper.)

DOMINIE (*resigned and foreseeing that he shall be bored*). I have heard a great deal of the industry of your son, Stock. What are you studying now, Mr. Stock?

STOCK (*in proud self-consciousness, rather Sophomoric*). I play six hours a day, two hours scales with both hands together, and four hours Etudes. I have already gone through the first book of Clementi and four books of Cramer. Now I am in the Gradus ad Parnassum: I have already studied the right fingering for it.

DOMINIE. Indeed, you are very much in earnest: that speaks well for you, and for Mr. Buffalo. But what pieces are you studying with the Etudes? Hummel, Mendelssohn, Chopin, or Schumann?

STOCK (*contemptuously*). Mr. Buffalo can't bear Chopin and Schumann. Mr. Buffalo lately played through Schumann's "Kinderscenen," that people are making such a talk about. My mamma, who is also musical, and used to sing when papa played the flute, said, "What ridiculous little things are those? Are they waltzes for children? and then the babyish names for them! He may play such stuff to his wife, but not to us."

DOMINIE. Well, these “Kinderscenen” *are* curious little bits for grown-up men’s hands. Your mother is right, they are too short: there certainly ought to be more of them. But they are not waltzes!

STOCK. Indeed, I am not allowed to play waltzes at all. My teacher is very thorough: first, I shall have to dig through all the Gradus ad Parnassum; and then he is going to undertake a concerto of Beethoven’s with me, and will write the proper fingering over it. I shall play that in public; and then, as he and my aunt say, “I shall be the death of you all.”

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MR. BUFFALO (*who has overheard him, steps up*). Now, Herr Dominie, how do you like my method? Perhaps you have a different one? Nevertheless, that shan't prevent our being good friends. Certainly, if any thing is to be accomplished in these times, it is necessary to keep at work,—that is my doctrine. But Stock, here, has unusual patience and perseverance. He has worked through all Cramer's 96 Etudes in succession without grumbling. He was wretched enough over them; but his papa bought him a saddle-horse to ride round on every day, and he revived in the fresh air.

(Herr Zach with his wife and an old aunt are playing cards in the further room.)

DOMINIE. But do you not combine the study of musical pieces with the study of exercises, in order that the cultivation of the taste may go hand in hand with mechanical improvement?

MR. BUFFALO. My dear friend, you are too narrow-minded there,—you make a mistake: taste must come of itself, from much playing and with years. Your Cecilia played the two new waltzes, and the Nocturne of Chopin, and Beethoven's trio very nicely. But then that was all drilled into her: we could tell that well enough by hearing it,—Stock and I.

DOMINIE. Did it sound unnatural to you,—mannered? and did you think it wooden, dry, dull?

MR. BUFFALO. Not exactly that; but the trouble was it sounded *studied*. The public applauded, it is true; but they don't know any thing. Stock and I thought—

DOMINIE. Do you not think that the taste for a beautiful interpretation may be early awakened, without using severity with the pupil? and that to excite the feeling for music, to a certain degree, even in early years, is in fact essential? The neglect of this very thing is the reason that we are obliged to listen to so many players, who really have mechanically practised themselves to death, and have reduced musical art to mere machinery,—to an idle trick of the fingers.

MR. BUFFALO. That's all nonsense. I say teach them the scales, to run up and down the gamut! Gradus ad Parnassum's the thing! Classical, classical! Yesterday you made your daughter play that Trill-Etude by Carl Meyer. Altogether too fine-sounding! It tickles the ear, to be sure, especially when it is played in such a studied manner. We stick to Clementi and Cramer, and to Hummel's piano-school,—the good old school. You have made a great mistake with your eldest daughter.

DOMINIE. The world does not seem to agree with you.



MADAME, of the Tz. family (*has listened and lost a trick by it, steps up quickly, and says maliciously*). You must agree that she would have played better, if you had left her for ten years with Cramer and Clementi. We don't like this tendency to Schumann and Chopin. But what folly to talk! One must be careful what one says to the father of such a child! It is quite a different thing with us. Mr. Buffalo is bound to our Stock by no bond of affection. He follows out his aim without any hesitation or vanity, and looks neither to the right nor to the left, but straightforward.

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DOMINIE. I beg your pardon, madam: you may be right,—from your point of view. We must be a little indulgent with sensitive people. But will not your son play to us?

(Stock plays two Etudes of Clementi, three of Cramer, and four from the Gradus, but did not even grow warm over them. The horse his father gave him has made him quite strong.)

* * * * *

I may be asked, “But how did Stock play?” How? I do not wish to write a treatise: my plan is only to give hints and suggestions. I am not writing in the interest of Stock, Buffalo, & Co.

After the playing, we went to supper: the oysters were good, but the wine left a little sharp taste. My timid daughter did not like oysters; but she ate a little salad, and at table listened instead of talking.

A few innocent anecdotes were related at table about horses and balls and dogs and Stock’s future. On taking leave, Madame said condescendingly to Cecilia, “If you keep on, my dear, one of these days you will play very nicely.”

CHAPTER III.

MANY STUDENTS OF THE PIANO AND FEW PLAYERS.

(A Letter addressed to the Father of a Piano Pupil).

It is a pity that you have no sons, for a father takes great delight in his sons; but I agree with you, when you say that, if you had one, you would rather he should break stones than pound the piano. You say you have many friends who rejoice in that paternal felicity, and whose sons, great and small, bright and dull, have been learning the piano for three years or more, and still can do nothing. You are doubtless right; and, further, they never will learn any thing. You ask, Of what use is it to man or boy to be able to stammer through this or that waltz, or polonaise or mazurka, with stiff arms, weak fingers, a stupid face, and lounging figure? What gain is it to art? You say, Is not time worth gold, and yet we are offered lead? And the poor teachers torment themselves and the boys, abuse art and the piano; and at the end of the evening, in despair, torment their own wives, after they have all day long been scolding, cuffing, and lamenting, without success or consolation. You speak the truth. I have had the same experience myself, though not to the same degree, and though I did not bring home to my wife a dreary face, but only a good appetite. But I did not give myself up to lamentation over piano-teaching. I gathered up courage and rose above mere drudgery. I reflected and considered and studied, and tried whether I could not manage better, as I found I could not succeed with the boys; and I have managed better and

succeeded better, because I have hit upon a different way, and one more in accordance with nature than that used in the piano schools. I laid down, as the first and most important principle, the necessity for “the formation of a fine touch,” just as singing-teachers rely

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upon the culture of a fine tone, in order to teach singing well. I endeavored, without notes, to make the necessary exercises so interesting that the attention of the pupils always increased; and that they even, after a short time, took great pleasure in a sound, tender, full, singing tone; an acquirement which, unfortunately, even many *virtuosos* do not possess. In this way, we made an opening at the beginning, not in the middle: we harnessed the horse *before* the wagon. The pupil now obtained a firm footing, and had something to enjoy, without being tormented at every lesson with dry matters to be learned, the advantage of which was not obvious to him, and the final aim of which he did not perceive. Until a correct touch has been acquired, it is of no use to talk about a fine singing tone. How can we expect to arouse an interest by mere toneless tinkling, while stiff, inflexible fingers are struggling with the notes; while the pupil sees only his inability to do any thing right, and receives nothing but blame from the teacher; while, at the same time, so much is to be kept in mind, and he must be required to observe the time, and to use the right fingers? Poor, stupid children! Later, after teaching the notes, I did not fall into the universal error of selecting pieces which were either too difficult, or such as, though purely musical, were not well adapted to the piano; but I chose short, easy pieces, without prominent difficulties, in the correct and skilful performance of which the pupil might take pleasure. Consequently, they were studied carefully, slowly, willingly, and with interest, which last is a great thing gained; for the pupil rejoiced in the anticipation of success. The struggle over single difficult places destroys all pleasure, palsies talent, creates disgust, and, what is worse, it tends to render uncertain the confirmation of the faculty already partially acquired,—of *bringing out a fine legato tone, with loose and quiet fingers and a yielding, movable wrist, without the assistance of the arm.*

You suppose that talent is especially wanting, and not merely good teachers; for otherwise, with the zealous pursuit of piano-playing in Saxony, we should produce hundreds who could, at least, play correctly and with facility, if not finely. Here you are mistaken: we have, on the contrary, a great deal of musical talent. There are, also, even in the provincial cities, teachers who are not only musical, but who also possess so much zeal and talent for teaching that many of their pupils are able to play tolerably well. I will add further, that the taste for music is much more cultivated and improved, even in small places, by singing-societies and by public and private concerts, than was formerly the case. We also have much better aids in instruction books, etudes, and suitable piano pieces; but still we find everywhere “jingling” and “piano-banging,” as you express it, and yet no piano-playing.

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Let us consider this aspect of the subject a little more closely. In the first place, the proper basis for a firm structure is wanting. The knowledge of the notes cannot afford a proper basis, except in so far as it is of service in the execution of a piece. Of what use are the notes to a singer, if he has no attack, and does not understand the management of the voice? of what use to the piano-learner, if he has no touch, no tone on the piano-forte. Is this to be acquired by playing the notes? But how then is it to be learned?

One thing more. Owing to an over-zeal for education, children are kept in school from seven to ten hours in a day, and then they are required to work and commit to memory in their free hours, when they ought to be enjoying the fresh air. But when are they then to have their piano lessons? After they have escaped from the school-room, and consequently when the children are exhausted and their nerves unstrung. What cruelty! Instead of bread and butter and fresh air, piano lessons! The piano ought to be studied with unimpaired vigor, and with great attention and interest, otherwise no success is to be expected. Besides this, much writing, in itself, makes stiff, inflexible fingers. But when is the child to find time for the necessary practice of the piano lessons? Well, in the evening, after ten o'clock for refreshment, while papa and mamma are in bed! And now, after the school-days are happily over, and the children have possibly retained their red cheeks, then their occupations in life lay claim to their time; or, if they are girls, they are expected to busy themselves with embroidery, knitting, sewing, crochet, making clothes, house-work, tea parties, and alas! with balls; and now, too, comes the time for lovers. Do you imagine that the fingers of pupils sixteen years old can learn mechanical movements as easily as those of children nine years old? In order to satisfy the present demands in any degree, the technique should be settled at sixteen. Under all these circumstances, we find the best teachers become discouraged, and fall into a dull routine, which truly can lead to no success.

In conclusion, I beg you to invite the piano teacher, Mr. Strict, to whom you have confided the instruction of your only daughter, Rosalie, to pay me a visit, and I will give him particular directions for a gradual development in piano-playing, up to Beethoven's op. 109 or Chopin's F minor concerto. But I shall find him too fixed in his own theories, too much of a composer, too conceited and dogmatic, and not sufficiently practical, to be a good teacher, or to exert much influence; and, indeed, he has himself a stiff, restless, clumsy touch, that expends half its efforts in the air. He talks bravely of etudes, scales, &c.; but the question with regard to these is *how they are taught*. The so-called practising of exercises, without having previously formed a sure touch, and carefully and skilfully fostering

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it is not much more useful than playing pieces. But I hear him reply, with proud and learned self-consciousness: "Music, music! Classical, classical! Spirit! Expression! Bach, Beethoven, Mendelssohn!" That is just the difficulty. Look at his pupils, at his pianists! See how his children are musically stifled, and hear his daughter sing the classical arias composed by himself! However, it is all musical! Farewell.

CHAPTER IV.

A CONVERSATION WITH MRS. SOLID, AND FOUR LESSONS TO HER DAUGHTER.

MRS. SOLID. I should be glad to understand how it is that your daughters are able to play the numerous pieces which I have heard from them so correctly and intelligently, without bungling or hesitation, and with so much expression, and the most delicate shading; in fact, in such a masterly manner. From my youth upwards, I have had tolerable instruction. I have played scales and etudes for a long time; and have taken great pleasure in studying and industriously practising numerous compositions of Kalkbrenner and Hummel, under their own direction. I have even been celebrated for my talent; but, nevertheless, I never have had the pleasure of being able to execute any considerable piece of music to my own satisfaction or that of others; and I fear it will be the same with my daughter Emily.

DOMINIE. In order to give a satisfactory answer to your question, I will lay before you a few of my principles and opinions in respect to musical culture, with special reference to piano-playing. Educated ladies of the present time make greater pretensions and greater demands than formerly in regard to music and musical execution; and consequently their own performances do not usually correspond with their more or less cultivated taste for the beautiful, which has been awakened by their careful general education. Thus they are aware that they are not able to give satisfaction, either to themselves or to others; and from this arises a want of that confidence in their own powers, which should amount almost to a consciousness of infallibility, in order to produce a satisfactory musical performance. This confidence has its foundation in a full, firm, clear, and musical touch, the acquisition of which has been, and is still, too much neglected by masters and teachers. A correct mechanical facility and its advanced cultivation rest upon this basis alone; which, moreover, requires special attention upon our softly leathered pianos, which are much more difficult to play upon than the old-fashioned instruments. It is a mistake to suppose that a correct touch, which alone can produce a good execution, will come of itself, through the practice of etudes and scales. Even with masters, it is unusual to meet with a sound, fine, unexceptionable touch, like that of Field and Moscheles, and among the more recent that of Thalberg, Chopin, Mendelssohn, and Henselt.

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I will speak now of the selection of pieces. Our ladies are not contented to play simple music, which presents few difficulties and requires no involved fingering; and from which they might gradually advance by correct and persevering study to more difficult pieces. They at once seize upon grand compositions by Beethoven, C.M. von Weber, Mendelssohn, Chopin, and others, and select also, for the sake of variety, the bravoura pieces of Liszt, Thalberg, Henselt, &c. How can they expect to obtain a command of such pieces, when their early education was insufficient for our exalted demands in mechanical skill, and their subsequent instruction has also been faulty and without method?

If you were to request me to supply in some degree your own deficiencies, before I proceed to the further education of your daughter, I should not begin with the wisdom of our friend Mr. Buffalo: "Madam, you must every day practise the major and minor scales, in all the keys, with both hands at once, and also in thirds and in sixths; and you must work three or four hours daily at etudes of Clementi, Cramer, and Moscheles; otherwise, your playing will never amount to any thing."

Such advice has frequently been given by teachers like Mr. Buffalo, and is still daily insisted on; but we will, for the present, set such nonsense aside. I shall, in the first place, endeavor to improve your touch, which is too thin, feeble, and incorrect; which makes too much unnecessary movement, and tries to produce the tone in the air, instead of drawing it out with the keys. This will not require a long time, for I have well-formed, young hands to work upon, with skilful fingers in good condition. I will employ, for this purpose, several of the short exercises mentioned in my first chapter, and shall require them to be transposed into various keys, and played without notes, in order that you may give your whole attention to your hands and fingers. Above all things, I wish you to observe how I try to bring out from the piano the most beautiful possible tone, with a quiet movement of the fingers and a correct position of the hand; without an uneasy jerking of the arm, and with ease, lightness, and sureness. I shall certainly insist upon scales also, for it is necessary to pay great care and attention to passing the thumb under promptly and quietly, and to the correct, easy position of the arm. But I shall be content with the practice of scales for a quarter of an hour each day, which I require to be played, according to my discretion, *staccato*, *legato*, fast, slow, *forte*, *piano*, with one hand or with both hands, according to circumstances. This short time daily for scale-practice is sufficient, provided, always, that I have no stiff fingers, or unpractised or ruined structure of the hand to educate. For very young beginners with weak fingers, the scales should be practised only *piano*, until the fingers acquire strength.

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I should continue in this way with you for two weeks, but every day with some slight change. After a short time, I would combine with this practice the study of two or three pieces, suitably arranged for the piano; for example, Mozart's minuet in E flat, arranged by Schulhoff, and his drinking-song, or similar pieces. We will, at present, have nothing to do with Beethoven. You are, perhaps, afraid that all this might be tedious; but I have never been considered tedious in my lessons. I wish you, for the present, not to practise any pieces or exercises except in my presence, until a better touch has been thoroughly established. You must also give up entirely, for a time, playing your previous pieces; for they would give you opportunity to fall again into your faulty mode of playing. I shall also soon put in practice one of my maxims in teaching; viz., that, merely for the acquisition of mechanical facility, all my pupils shall be in the habit of playing daily some appropriate piece, that by its perfect mastery they may gain a fearless confidence. They must regard this piece as a companion, friend, and support. I wish you to learn to consider it a necessity every day, before practising or studying your new piece of music, to play this piece, even if it is done quite mechanically, two or three times, first slowly, then faster; for without ready, flexible fingers, my teaching and preaching will be valueless.

MRS. SOLID. But what pieces, for instance?

DOMINIE. For beginners, perhaps one or two of Huenten's Etudes Melodiques; a little later, one of Czerny's very judicious Etudes from his opus 740; and for more advanced pupils, after they are able to stretch easily and correctly, his Toccata, opus 92,—a piece which my three daughters never give up playing, even if they do not play it every day. They practise pieces of this description as a remedy for mechanical deficiencies, changing them every three or four months. In the selection of these, I aim especially at the practice of thirds, trills, stretches, scales, and passages for strengthening the fourth finger; and I choose them with reference to the particular pieces, sonatas, variations, concertos, &c., which they are at the time studying. Likewise, in the choice of the latter, I pursue a different course from that which the teachers alluded to above and others are accustomed to follow; though I hope my management is never pedantic, but cautious, artistic, and psychologic. It is easy to see that many teachers, by giving lessons continually, particularly to pupils without talent, are led, even with the best intentions, to fall into a mere routine. We find them often impatient and unsympathetic, especially in the teaching of their own compositions; and again, by their one-sided opinions and capricious requirements, by devoting attention to matters of small importance, and by all sorts of whimsicalities, they contract the intellectual horizon of their pupils, and destroy their interest in the lessons.

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MRS. SOLID. Your careful mode of proceeding is certainly extremely interesting and convincing; but allow me to request an answer to various objections and considerations which are now and then brought forward, particularly by teachers.

DOMINIE. To that I am quite accustomed. The good and the beautiful never obtain uncontested recognition. No one has ever offered any new improvement, and fearlessly spoken the truth, without being attacked, defamed, and despised, or entirely misunderstood. Our age can show many proofs of this; for example, let us remember homoeopathy and magnetism. Clara Wieck was not appreciated in Leipzig until she had been admired in Paris; nor Marie Wieck, because she does not play exactly as her sister Clara does. The same is the case with my present book, which relentlessly treads upon the incredible follies and lamentable errors of the times. I am quite prepared for opposition of any kind.

MRS. SOLID. I should like to suggest to you that there are other teachers who have given themselves a great deal of trouble, and who are very particular; but it is not their good fortune to have daughters like yours to educate.

DOMINIE. Have given themselves a great deal of trouble? What do you mean by that? If they do not take pains in the right way, or at the right time and place, it is all labor in vain. Of what use is mere unskilful, stupid industry? For instance, when a teacher, in order to correct a stiff use of the fingers and wrist, and the general faulty touch of his pupil, gives some wonderful etude or a piece with great stretches and arpeggios for the left hand, and gives himself unwearied trouble over it, it is a proof of abundant painstaking; but it is labor thrown away, and only makes the imperfect mode of performance the worse.

And now with regard to my daughters. It has been their fortune to have had me for a father and teacher: they certainly have talent, and I have been successful in rousing and guiding it. Envy, jealousy, pride, and offended egotism have tried as long as possible to dispute this; but at last the effort is abandoned. They say that it requires no art to educate such talent as theirs, that it almost “comes of itself.” This assertion is just as false and contrary to experience as it is common, even with educated and thoughtful people, who belong to no clique. Lichtenburg says: “It is just those things upon which everybody is agreed that should be subjected to investigation.” Well, I have made a thorough investigation of these accusations, with regard to my three daughters, and all the talented pupils whom I have been able to educate for good amateurs, and, according to circumstances, for good public performers. The great number of these suffices for my justification. I must add, still further, that it is exactly the “great talents” for singing, or for the piano, who require the most careful, thoughtful, and prudent guidance. Look around at the multitude of abortive talents and geniuses! Talented pupils are just the ones who have an irresistible desire to be left to their own discretion; they esteem destruction by themselves more highly than salvation by others.

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MRS. SOLID. But it is said that you have been able to educate only your three daughters, and none others for public performers.

DOMINIE. Madam, you cannot be serious. If I were to declaim Leporello's list, you might justly consider it an exaggeration; but if, instead of replying to you, I should urge you to read what I have written on the subject, or if I should present your daughter Emily to you, after three or four years, as a superior performer, you might pardon my vanity and my ability. I do not possess any magic wand, which envy and folly could not impute to me as an offence. Nevertheless, unless circumstances were very adverse, I have, at all events, been able in a short time to accomplish for my pupils the acquisition of a good, or at least an improved, musical touch; and have thus laid a foundation, which other teachers have failed to do by their method, or rather want of method. But you have something else on your mind?

MRS. SOLID. You anticipate me. I was educated in Berlin, and in that capital of intelligence a taste prevails for opposition, negation, and thorough criticism. How can you educate artists and *virtuosos*, when you yourself are so little a *virtuoso*? You are not even a composer or learned contrapuntist. A teacher of music wins much greater consideration, if he himself plays concertos and composes pretty things, and if he can calculate and give vent to his genius in double and triple fugues, and in inverse and retrograde canons. You cannot even accompany your pupils with the violin or flute, which is certainly very useful and improving.

DOMINIE. The egotist is seldom capable of giving efficient instruction: that lies in the nature of the case. Even a child will soon perceive whether the teacher has a sole eye to its interest, or has other and personal aims in view. The former bears good fruits, the latter very doubtful ones. I will say nothing about the stand-point of those egotistical teachers whose first aim is to bring themselves into prominence, and who at the same time are perhaps travelling public performers and composers. They are, it may be, chiefly occupied with double and triple fugues (the more inverted the more learned), and they consider this knowledge the only correct musical foundation. At the same time, they often possess a touch like that of your brother, Mr. Strict, mentioned in my third chapter, and are utterly devoid of true taste and feeling. While pursuing their fruitless piano lessons, which are quite foreign to their customary train of thought, they regard their occupation only as a milch cow; and they obtain the money of sanguine parents, and sacrifice the time of their pupils. You may try such agreeable personages for yourself: I could wish you no greater punishment.

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And now I will speak of the violin and the flute. I have never availed myself of those expedients; it is a method which I have never learned. I will describe for your amusement a few interesting incidents, which I had an opportunity to witness in a not inconsiderable city, while on a journey with my daughters. The teacher with the flute was a gentle, quiet, mild musician; he was on very good terms with his pupil, and indulged in no disputes; every thing went on peaceably, without passion, and "in time." They both twittered tenderly and amicably, and were playing, in celebration of the birthday of an old aunt who was rather hard of hearing, a sonata by Kuhlau, which was quite within the power of both. The old aunt, who, of course, could hear but little of the soft, flute tones, and the light, thin, modest, square piano, kept asking me: "Is not that exquisite? what do you think of it?" I nodded my head and praised it, for the music was modest and made no pretension.

I will pass next to the violin. The possessor of this was a type of presumption, vulgarity, and coarseness, and understood how to make an impression on his pupils and their parents by the assumption of extraordinary ability. He consequently enjoyed a certain consideration. He was, moreover, a good musician, and played the violin tolerably in accompanying the piano, in Beethoven's opus 17 and 24. In this portrait you have a specimen of the violinist as a piano teacher. Of course he understood nothing of piano-playing, and took no interest in Wieck's rubbish about beauty of tone; he cared only for Beethoven. He now and then tried to sprawl out a few examples of fingering, in a spider-like fashion; but they were seldom successful. His pupils also possessed the peculiar advantage of playing "in time," when they did not stick fast in the difficult places. At such times he always became very cross and severe, and talked about "precision;" in that way instilling respect. His pupils did not jingle, but they had a peculiarly short, pounding touch; and floundered about among the keys with a sort of boldness, and with resolute, jerking elbows. They certainly had no tone, but the violin was therefore heard the better; and after each performance we might have heard, "Am I not the first teacher in Europe?"

MRS. SOLID. You certainly have shown up two ridiculous figures.

DOMINIE. True; but I leave it to every one to make themselves ridiculous.

MRS. SOLID. I am very glad that you have furnished me here with the criticisms of which I stand in need; for I might otherwise have been in danger of supplying you with an example at the next soiree, perhaps at the banker's, Mr. Gold's. But, as I should like to hear your answer, I will listen to, and report to you, what is said in a certain though not very numerous clique, who are opposed to you and your labors.

DOMINIE. Those people would act more wisely, if they were to study my writings; in which I will make any corrections, if there is any thing that I can add to them, for the advantage of truth, right, and beauty.

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And now allow me, Miss Emily, since you are pretty well advanced, and are not quite spoiled, to show you in a few lessons how to study these variations by Herz (Les Trois Graces, No. 1, on a theme from "The Pirates"). They are not easy; but I will teach them in a way that shall not weary you or give you a distaste for them. I have intentionally chosen these variations, because they do not lay claim to great musical interest; and, consequently, their mode of performance, their execution, gives them their chief value. Moreover, they possess the disadvantage for teaching that they are of unequal difficulty, and require, therefore, the more skill on the part of the teacher to compensate for this.

First Lesson. Miss Emily, these are very clear, graceful variations, which require an extremely nice, delicate execution; and, especially, a complete mechanical mastery of their various difficulties. Although these variations may seem to you too easy, I am governed in the selection of them by the maxim that "what one would learn to play finely must be below the mechanical powers of the pupil." The theme of the Italian song, which is the basis of these variations, is very well chosen, and you must take great pains to execute it as finely as possible, and to produce a singing effect upon the piano-forte. After the piece is thoroughly learned, you will be greatly aided in the production of this imitation of singing by the careful and correct use of the pedal which raises the dampers. The theme does not offer great mechanical difficulties; but it requires a loose, broad, full, and yet tender touch, a good *portamento*, and a clear and delicately shaded delivery; for you must remember that "in the performance of a simple theme the well-taught pupil may be recognized."

EMILY. But you do not begin at the beginning: there is an introduction to the piece.

DOMINIE. Perhaps we shall take that at the last: I can't tell yet when. A great many things in my instruction will seem to you misplaced: it may be that the final result will restore to me the approval which I desire.

EMILY. Do you always give such a preliminary description before you begin a piece with a pupil?

DOMINIE. I like to do so; for I wish to create an interest in the piece, and to state in connection my principles and views about music and piano-playing. Now we will try the theme, first quite slowly; and then the first easy variation, with the last bars at the end of it, which introduce the theme once more, and which should be played very clearly and smoothly. We will then take from the introduction only the right hand, and study the most appropriate fingering for it. I never write this out fully; but only intimate it here and there, in order not to interfere with the spontaneous activity of the learner. We will also take a few portions for the left hand from the finale. In these you must carefully observe the directions which are given for its performance, and try to execute every thing correctly and clearly; for a careless bass is prejudicial to the very best playing in the treble.

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My lesson is now at an end; for we have taken up a good deal of time at the beginning with the scales, and passing the thumb under correctly, with the different species of touch, and the appropriate exercises for these. I do not wish you yet to practise the first variation with both hands together, for you do not yet strike the skipping bass evenly enough and with sufficient precision; and you might accustom yourself to inaccuracies, especially as your left hand has, as usual, been neglected, and is inferior to the right in lightness and rapidity. We shall find this a hindrance; for the object is not to practise much, but to practise correctly. Therefore play these passages first slowly, then quicker, at last very fast; then slow again, sometimes *staccato*, sometimes *legato*, *piano*, and also moderately loud; but never when the hands and fingers are fatigued, therefore not too continuously; but many times in the course of the day, and always with fresh energy. At present, you need not play *fortissimo*, or with the pedal: for in that way you might be led into a tramping style, with a weak, stiff touch, and a habit of striking at the keys with straight fingers; and that I do not like. We will look for the true and the beautiful in a very different treatment of the piano; and, first of all, in a clear, unaffected, healthy performance, free from any forced character.

Second Lesson. Transposition of the triads and dominant chord in their three positions, and in various kinds of measure; and practice of these, with careful attention to a correct touch and loose wrist; cadences on the dominant and sub-dominant; practice of the skipping bass in the theme, and in the first and third variations, with practice in striking and leaving the chords, observing carefully the precise value of the notes. You must attend also to striking them not too forcibly or too feebly, and take special care with regard to the fourth and fifth fingers, which do not easily give the tone with so full a sound as the other three fingers. Now we will try the theme with both hands together, and consider the correct expression, and likewise the *piano* and *forte*, as well as the nicest *crescendo* and *diminuendo*. We will then take the first easy variation, of which you have already acquired a mastery: we will play it exactly *a tempo* and with the bass chords, which should usually be given *staccato*, and which must be played with delicacy and flexibility; but it will be well for you to practise first the bass part once alone, in order that you may hear whether all the tones sound evenly. Now the first variation will go pretty well with both hands together; with increasing mastery of it, the requisite shading in the right hand can be produced. As your right hand is not yet tired, play to me now several times, first slowly and then faster, the passages which I gave you from the introduction. When the right

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hand becomes a little fatigued, take a portion from the finale for the left hand. You may also try over the adagio; but I recommend for your special practice the part for the right hand in the third variation. You cannot make a mistake about it, if you do not try to play it too fast, and if you carefully observe the fingering indicated. Now I will play the theme to you, as nearly as possible as I heard the famous tenor Rubini sing it. You see I place the fingers gently upon the keys and avoid raising them too high, in order not to injure the nice connection of the tones, and to produce a singing tone as far as possible. At the end of the lesson you will play the theme to me once more.... I perceive you play it with too much embarrassment, and not freely enough. It will go still better two days hence, if you play it frequently during that time, slowly, and become quite accustomed to it. In addition, you will practise industriously every thing which we have gone through, especially the first variation; but you must always do it with interest, and never with weariness. Of course you will practise *without notes* all the little exercises for the touch, and for the fourth and fifth fingers, and the cadences.

Third Lesson. Other little exercises; trills, scales with shading for one hand alone and for both together; the skipping basses, &c. We will begin to-day with the bass part of the second variation. You observe that often there are even eighth notes in the treble, while in the bass there are even triplet eighth notes. In order to play these properly together, even with only mechanical correctness, it is necessary that the left hand shall acquire a perfectly free and independent movement, and shall bring out the bass with perfect ease. You must pay special attention to any weak notes, and accustom yourself not to give the last triplet, in each bar, and the last note of this triplet, too hurriedly, too sharply, or with too little tone. Notice how much difficulty this equal playing of the triplets occasions to the right hand, which moves in even eighth notes. While you play the left hand, I will play the right: you must listen as little as possible to my playing, and preserve your own independence. You must learn to play this variation entirely by yourself with both hands together; but we must not be too much in a hurry about it, and must give time to it. All restless urging, all hurry, leads to inaccuracies in playing. You have learned enough for to-day; but you may play the other variations, with the whole finale, straight through, that you may not get into the habit of stopping at the difficult passages which you have already learned.

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Fourth Lesson. New exercises for striking stretches, and for the extension of the hand and fingers; but this must be done prudently, that the sound touch, which is always of the first importance, shall not be endangered. Besides this, the repetition of the exercises learned in the preceding lessons; but all to be played with a certain shading and delicacy. We will to-day begin at the beginning, with the introduction. I will now make amends for my want of regularity, and show you that I can begin at the beginning, like other people; but all in good time. To-day, in those portions of which you have acquired a mastery, we will give particular attention to the expression, and to the correct use of the pedal. If what I suggest to you with regard to the shading at any place does not entirely correspond to your understanding of the piece, or to your feeling, you must at once express your difference of opinion, and ask me for the reason of my view. You, perhaps, do not like to play this place *crescendo*, but *diminuendo*. Very well; only play it finely in your own way; it will also sound very well so. I proposed the *crescendo* there, because the feeling grows more intense; perhaps, in the next lesson, you will acknowledge that I was right. This place I should play a very little slower, though without a striking *ritardando*; then a little faster here; do you think it ought to be played *crescendo* or *diminuendo*? We must try in this variation to present nicely shaded little pictures. Here you might use more energy and decision. This place you should play merely with a correct mechanical execution, but without special expression; for we require shadow, in order that the succeeding idea, eminently suggestive of the theme, shall be brought out with more brilliancy. In general, the whole must be made to sound natural, without musical pretension, and as if it were the production of the moment; and should not create a distorted, overdrawn effect, or exhibit modern affectation.

Each piece that I undertake to teach you will give me an opportunity to talk to you a great deal about the correct expression in playing, and about its innumerable beauties, shades, and delicacies; while I shall pay constant attention to the production of a beautiful singing tone. The next piece will be Chopin's Notturmo in E flat; for your touch has already gained in fulness, and is now unobjectionable.

This is the tyranny with regard to correct execution, which stupidity and folly have taxed me with having exercised towards my daughters. "Expression must come of itself!" How cheap is this lazy subterfuge of the followers of routine, and of teachers wanting in talent! We see and hear a great many *virtuosos*, old and young, with and without talent, renowned and obscure. They either play in an entirely mechanical manner and with faulty and miserable touch, or else, which is less bearable, they strut with unendurable affectation and produce musical monstrosities. In order to conceal their indistinct mode of execution, they throw themselves upon the two pedals, and are guilty of inconceivable perversions.

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But let us proceed with your instruction. You already play your piece intelligently, with interest and enthusiasm, and without any of the modern, empty affectations. If any other passage should occur to you at the *fermata* in the second part, which shall lead appropriately to the dominant, try it; and combine it, perhaps, with that which is written. You may make two passing shakes upon the four final sixteenth notes; but you must play them very distinctly and clearly, and the last one weaker than the first, in order to give it a delicate effect, as is done by singers. With light variations of this kind, it is allowable to introduce various ornaments, provided they are in good taste and nicely executed. The case is quite different in the performance of the compositions of Beethoven, Mozart, Weber, and others, where reverence for the composer requires a stricter interpretation, although even this is sometimes carried to a point of exaggeration and pedantry. Now try the first variation once more. That is better: you already play the skipping bass with more precision, more briskly and evenly. We begin to perceive the correct speaking tone in the bass, and a certain delicacy and freedom in the treble. You need not play both hands together in the second variation, which is the most difficult, until the next lesson. To-day you may first play the bass alone, while I play the treble; and afterwards we will change parts, and you can play the treble while I play the bass. But we will not go farther than the fourth variation. I have not much more to say about this piece. We will begin next a beautiful Etude by Moscheles, which I recommend highly to you, in order to strengthen and give facility to the fourth and fifth fingers: this may be your companion and friend during the next two or three months.

MRS. SOLID. Your very careful mode of instruction assures me that Emily will acquire a mastery of these variations, and will learn to perform them finely.

DOMINIE. She will be able, after a week or two, to execute this piece with understanding and confidence, and to play it to her own satisfaction and that of others; while her awakened consciousness of its beauties and of her ability to interpret it will preserve her interest for it.

The objection is quite untenable “that children lose their pleasure in a piece, if they are obliged to practise it until they know it.” Do people suppose that it gives more pleasure, when the teacher begins in a stupid, helpless way, and tries to make the pupil swallow several pieces at once, while he continually finds fault and worries them, than when the pupil is enabled to play a few short, well-sounding exercises, with perfect freedom and correctness, and to take delight in his success? or when afterwards, or perhaps at the same time, he is conscious that he can play one piece nicely and without bungling, while it is all accomplished in a quiet and pleasant manner?

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MRS. SOLID. Do you pursue the same course with longer and more difficult pieces?

DOMINIE. Certainly, on the same principle.

MRS. SOLID. But, if you are so particular about every piece, and always take so much pains to improve the touch, it will be a long time before Emily will be able to execute several long pieces and can learn other new ones beside.

DOMINIE. Do you wish your daughter to learn to jingle on the piano, in order to become musical? or shall she grow more musical by learning to play finely? I am sure the latter is your wish, as it is mine: otherwise, you would be contented with an ordinary teacher. You must consider that, when she has made a beginning, by learning to play one piece thoroughly and quite correctly, the following pieces will be learned more and more quickly; for she will have acquired a dexterity in playing, as you may observe with yourself and with every one. To be able to drum off fifty pieces in an imperfect manner does not justify the expectation that the fifty-first piece will be learned more easily or better; but to attain a perfect mastery of four or five pieces gives a standard for the rest.

In this way, and by mechanical studies, such as I have begun with Emily, the greatest ease in reading at sight is gradually developed, in which all my pupils excel, when they have remained long enough under my instruction, and in which my daughters are pre-eminent. But for this it is necessary to continue to study single pieces, industriously and artistically, and with great exactness; for otherwise the practice of reading at sight, which often amounts to a passion, leads very soon to slovenliness in piano-playing and to more or less vulgar machine-music.

MRS. SOLID. I am more and more convinced that a style of instruction which is illogical, intermittent, superficial, and without method, can lead to no good result, or at least to nothing satisfactory, even with extraordinary talents; and that the unsound and eccentric manifestations and caricatures of art, which cause the present false and deplorable condition of piano-playing, are the consequence of such a prevalent mode of instruction.

CHAPTER V.

ON THE PEDAL.

I have just returned exhausted and annihilated from a concert, where I have been hearing the piano pounded. Two grand bravoura movements have been thundered off, with the pedal continually raised; and then were suddenly succeeded by a soft murmuring passage, during which the thirteen convulsed and quivering bass notes of the *fortissimo* were all the time resounding. It was only by the aid of the concert

programme that my tortured ears could arrive at the conclusion that this confusion of tones was meant to represent two pieces by Doehler and Thalberg.

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Cruel fate that invented the pedal! I mean the pedal which raises the dampers on the piano. A grand acquisition, indeed, for modern times! Good heavens! Our piano performers must have lost their sense of hearing! What is all this growling and buzzing? Alas, it is only the groaning of the wretched piano-forte, upon which one of the modern *virtuosos*, with a heavy beard and long hanging locks, whose hearing has deserted him, is blustering away on a bravoura piece, with the pedal incessantly raised, —with inward satisfaction and vain self-assertion! Truly time brings into use a great deal that is far from beautiful: does, then, this raging piano revolutionist think it beautiful to bring the pedal into use at every bar? Unhappy delusion.

But enough of this serious jesting. Hummel never used the pedal. He was an extremist; and, in his graceful, clear, elegant, neat, though not grand playing, often lost fine effects, which would have been produced by the correct and judicious use of the pedal; particularly on the instruments of Stein, Brodmann, Conrad Graff, and others then in use, which were usually lightly leathered, and had a thin, sharp tone. The use of the pedal, of course always allowing it to fall frequently with precision, was especially desirable in the upper treble, in cases where the changes of the harmony were not very frequent; for the tone of those instruments, although sweet and agreeable, had not much depth, and the action had but little strength and elasticity. But on our instruments, frequently too softly leathered, which have a full tone, and are so strong and penetrating, especially in the bass, it is enough to endanger one's sense of hearing to be subjected to such a senseless, incessant, ridiculous, deafening use of the pedal; frequently, moreover, combined with a hard, stiff touch, and an unsound, incorrect technique. A musical interpretation in any degree tolerable is out of the question. You cannot call that art, it cannot even be called manual labor: it is a freak of insanity!

A few words to the better sort of players. The foot-piece to the right on the piano-forte raises the dampers, and in that way makes the tones resound and sing, and takes from them the dryness, shortness, and want of fulness, which is always the objection to the piano-forte, especially to those of the earlier construction. This is certainly an advantage; the more the tone of the piano-forte resembles singing, the more beautiful it is. But, in order not to injure the distinctness and detract from the clear phrasing of the performance, a very skilful and prudent use of the pedal is necessary in rapid changes of harmony, particularly in the middle and lower portion of the instrument.

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You all use the pedal too much and too often, especially on large, fine concert pianos of the new construction, which, with their heavy stringing, have in themselves a fuller, more vibrating tone; at least you do not let it fall frequently enough, and with precision. You must listen to what you are playing. You do not play for yourselves alone; frequently you play to hearers who are listening for the first time to the pieces you are performing. Try a few passages without pedal,—for instance, those in which the changes of the harmony succeed each other rapidly, even in the highest treble,—and see what repose, what serene enjoyment, what refreshment is afforded, what delicate shading is brought out. Or at first listen, and try to feel it in the playing of others; for your habit is so deeply rooted that you no longer know when and how often you use the pedal. Chopin, that highly gifted, elegant, sensitive composer and performer, may serve as a model for you here. His widely dispersed, artistic harmonies, with the boldest and most striking suspensions, for which the fundamental bass is essential, certainly require the frequent use of the pedal for fine harmonic effect. But, if you examine and observe the minute, critical directions in his compositions, you can obtain from him complete instruction for the nice and correct use of the pedal.

By way of episode to my sorrowful lecture on the pedal, we will take a walk through the streets some beautiful evening. What is it that we hear in almost every house? Unquestionably it is piano-playing; but what playing! It is generally nothing but a continual confusion of different chords, without close, without pause; slovenly passages, screened by the raised pedal; varied by an empty, stiff, weak touch, relying upon the pedal for weight. We will escape into the next street. Oh, horrors! what a thundering on this piano, which, by the way, is sadly out of tune! It is a grand—that is, a long, heavy—etude, with the most involved passages, and a peculiar style of composition, probably with the title “On the Ocean,” or “In Hades,” or “Fancies of the Insane;” pounded off with the pedal raised through the most marvellous changes of harmonies. Finally, the strings snap, the pedal creaks and moans; conclusion,—*c, c sharp, d, d sharp* resound together through a few exhausted bars, and at last die away in the warm, soft, delicious air. Universal applause from the open windows! But who is the frantic musician who is venting his rage on this piano? It is a Parisian or other travelling composer, lately arrived with letters of recommendation, who has just been giving a little rehearsal of what we may expect to hear shortly in a concert at the “Hotel de Schmerz.”

CHAPTER VI.

THE SOFT-PEDAL SENTIMENT.

You exclaim: “What is that?—a sentiment for the soft pedal! a sentiment of any kind in our times! most of all, a musical sentiment! I have not heard of such a thing in a concert-room for a long time!”

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When the foot-piece to the left on the piano is pressed down, the key-board is thereby moved to the right; so that, in playing, the hammers strike only two of the three strings, in some pianos only one. In that way the tone is made weaker, thinner, but more singing and more tender. What follows from this? Many performers, seized with a piano madness, play a grand bravoura piece, excite themselves fearfully, clatter up and down through seven octaves of runs, with the pedal constantly raised,—bang away, put the best piano out of tune in the first twenty bars,—snap the strings, knock the hammers off their bearings, perspire, stroke the hair out of their eyes, ogle the audience, and make love to themselves. Suddenly they are seized with a sentiment! They come to a *piano* or *pianissimo*, and, no longer content with one pedal, they take the soft pedal while the loud pedal is still resounding. Oh, what languishing! what soft murmuring, and what a sweet tinkling of bells! what tenderness of feeling! what a soft-pedal sentiment! The ladies fall into tears, enraptured by the pale, long-haired young artist.

I describe here the period of piano mania, which has just passed its crisis; a period which it is necessary to have lived through, in order to believe in the possibility of such follies. When, in the beginning of this century, the piano attained such conspicuous excellence and increased power, greater technical skill could not fail to be called out; but, after a few years, this degenerated into a heartless and worthless dexterity of the fingers, which was carried to the point of absurdity and resulted in intellectual death. Instead of aiming to acquire, before all things, a beautiful, full tone on these rich-sounding instruments, which admit of so much and such delicate shading, essential to true excellence of performance, the object was only to increase mechanical facility, and to cultivate almost exclusively an immoderately powerful and unnatural touch, and to improve the fingering in order to make possible the execution of passages, roulades, finger-gymnastics, and stretches, which no one before had imagined or considered necessary. From this period dates the introduction of *virtuoso* performances with their glittering tawdriness, without substance and without music, and of the frightful eccentricities in art, accompanied by immeasurable vanity and self-conceit,—the age of “finger-heroes.” It is indeed a melancholy reflection, for all who retain their senses, that this charlatanry is made the solitary aim of numberless ignoble performers, sustained by the applause of teachers and composers equally base. It is sad to see how, engaged in artificial formalisms and in erroneous mechanical studies, players have forgotten the study of tone and of correct delivery, and that few teachers seek to improve either themselves or their pupils therein. Otherwise they would see and understand that, on a good piano, such as are now to be found almost everywhere, it is

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possible with correct playing, founded on a right method, to play, without external aids, *forte*, *fortissimo*, *piano*, *pianissimo*,—in a word, with every degree of shading, and with at least formal expression; and that this style of playing, with the requisite mechanical skill, sounds far more pure, and is more satisfactory than when a feeling is affected through the crude, unskilful, and absurd use of the pedal, especially of the soft pedal of which we are now speaking. This affectation only gives one more proof of our unhealthy, stupid, and unmusical infancy in piano performances. A good-natured public, drummed up and brought together by patient persuasion and by urgent recommendations, of which *virtuosos* can obtain an abundance (for the tormented cities which they have visited cannot otherwise get rid of them), attend these concerts and listen to dozens of such inexperienced piano-players. One plays exactly like another, with more or less faulty mechanical execution; and none of them are able, with all their thumping and caressing of the keys, to bring out from the instrument a broad, healthy, full, and beautiful tone, delicately shaded and distinct even to the softest *pp*. But, instead of this, they fall into a pedal sentiment; *i.e.*, they play with outside pretension, and with intrinsic emptiness.

You unworthy performers, who have so disgusted the artistic public with piano-playing that they will no longer listen to fine, intelligent, sensible artists, whose dignity does not permit them to force themselves into the concert-hall, or to drag people into it from the streets! you base mortals, who have exposed this beautiful art to shame! I implore you to abandon the concert platform, your battle-field! Hack at the piano no longer! Find positions on a railroad or in a factory. There you may perhaps make yourselves useful; while by the lessons you give (for it usually comes to that, after you have travelled all over the world) you will only ruin our young people, now growing up with promising talent for piano-playing, and will produce successors like yourselves, but not artists.

I must whisper one thing more in your ear. I will say nothing about simple truthfulness, about tenderness and sincerity of feeling, or wholesome refinement, about poetry, inspiration, or truly impassioned playing. But, if your ears are not already too much blunted, you should be able to discover, at least in a very few minutes, on any instrument, unless it is of the worst sort, or has already been battered to pieces by you, how far you can carry the *pianissimo* and *fortissimo*, and still preserve the tone within the limits of beauty and simplicity. You will thus be able to interpret a piece with at least superficial correctness, without mortally wounding a cultivated ear by exaggerations and by maltreatment of the instrument and its two pedals.

This style of playing has nevertheless found its numerous defenders and admirers in our century, which has made every thing possible. This senseless enslavement and abuse of the piano has been said to be “all the rage;” a fine expression of our piano critics to justify insane stamping and soft-pedal sentimentality.

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How far what I have here said relates to our modern errors in singing, and how far it may be applied to them, I leave to the intelligence of my readers and to my explanations in subsequent chapters.

To return to my theme: I have still one word on this subject for rational players. Even they use the soft pedal too much and too often, and at unsuitable places; for instance, in the midst of a piece, without any preparatory pause; in melodies which require to be lightly executed; or in rapid passages which are to be played *piano*. This is especially to be noticed with players who are obliged to use instruments of a powerful tone and stiff, heavy action, on which it is difficult to insure a delicate shading in *piano* and *forte*. For this reason, a sensible and experienced teacher, whose sole aim is the true and the beautiful, should make the attainment of an elastic touch and well-grounded style of playing an indispensable requirement. I prefer that the soft pedal should be used but seldom, and, if the pedal which raises the dampers is used at the same time, it must be only with the greatest nicety. The soft pedal may be used in an echo; but should be preceded by a slight pause, and then should be employed throughout the period, because the ear must accustom itself gradually to this tender, maidenly, sentimental tone. There must again be a slight pause before the transition to the usual more masculine tone, with the three strings. The soft pedal is, moreover, most effective in slow movements with full chords, which allow time to bring out the singing tone, in which consists the advantage of the stroke of the hammers on two strings alone.

CHAPTER VII.

A MUSICAL TEA-PARTY AT THE HOUSE OF JOHN SPRIGGINS.

I once more introduce my readers to the scenes of my active, musical life, with an invitation to accompany me to a musical tea-party. My object is, in a short and entertaining manner, to remove very common prejudices; to correct mistaken ideas; to reprove the followers of mere routine; to oppose to malicious cavilling the sound opinions of an experienced teacher; to scourge dogmatic narrow-mindedness; and in this way to advance my method of instruction.

* * * * *

DRAMATIS PERSONAE.

JOHN SPRIGGINS (*jovial and narrow-minded, a member of an ancient musical family*).

MRS. SPRIGGINS (*irritable, envious, and malicious*).

LIZZIE, *their daughter, 13, years old (lively and pert)*.

SHEPARD, *her piano-teacher (very laborious)*.



DOMINIE, *a piano-master (very stern).*
EMMA, *his daughter, a pianist (silent and musical).*

MRS. SPRIGGINS (*to Dominie*). So this is your daughter who is to give a concert to-morrow? She is said to have less talent than your eldest daughter. With her, they say, nothing requires any labor.

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DOMINIE. You must ask my eldest daughter herself about that. I have hitherto held the opinion that both of them played correctly, musically, and perhaps finely, and yet both differently: that is the triumph of a musical education. But this cheap comparative criticism is already too thoroughly worn out. Pray what else have you on your mind?

MRS. S. Have you not yet sent your younger daughter to school? They say your eldest could neither read nor write at fourteen years of age.

DOMINIE. My daughters always have a private teacher in the house, in connection with whom I instruct them in music, in order that their literary education shall occupy fewer hours, and that they shall have time left for exercise in the open air to invigorate the body; while other children are exhausted with nine hours a day at schools and institutes, and are obliged to pay for this with the loss of their health and the joyousness of youth.

MRS. S. It is very well known that your daughters are obliged to play the whole day long.

DOMINIE. And not all night too? You probably might explain their skill in that way. I am astonished that you have not heard that too, since you have picked up so many shocking stories about me and my daughters.

MRS. S. (*dismisses the subject, and asks suddenly*). Now just how old is your daughter Emma?

DOMINIE. She is just sixteen years and seven weeks old.

MRS. S. Does she speak French?

DOMINIE. Oui, elle parle Francais, and in musical tones, too,—a language which is understood all over the world.

MRS. S. But she is so silent! Does she like to play?

DOMINIE. You have given her no opportunity to speak, she is certainly not forth-putting. For the last two years she has taken great pleasure in playing.

MRS. S. You acknowledge, then, that formerly you had to force her to it?

DOMINIE. In the earlier years of her natural development, as she was a stranger to vanity and other unworthy motives, she certainly played, or rather pursued her serious studies, chiefly from obedience and habit. Does your daughter of thirteen years old always practise her exercises without being required to do so? Does she like to go to school every day? Does she always sew and knit without being reminded of it?

MRS. S. (*interrupting*). Oh, I see you are quite in love with your daughters! But they say you are terribly strict and cruel in the musical education of your children; and, in fact, always.

DOMINIE. Do you suppose I do this from affection? or do you infer it, because they have proved artists, or because they look so blooming and healthy, or because they write such fine letters, or because they have not grown crooked over embroidery, or because they are so innocent, unaffected, and modest? or—

MRS. S. (*irritably*). We will drop that subject. But I must give you one piece of good advice. Do not make your daughter Emma exert herself too much, as you have done with your eldest daughter.

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DOMINIE. If that is so, Mrs. Spriggins, it seems to have agreed with her very well.

MRS. S. (*vehemently*). But she would have been better—

DOMINIE. If she had not played at all? That I can't tell exactly, as I said yesterday. Well, you are satisfied now with Emma's state of health?

MRS. S. It is of no use to advise such people as you.

DOMINIE. I have always devoted myself to my business as a teacher, and have daily taken counsel with myself about the education of my daughters, and of other pupils whom I have formed for artists; and, it must be acknowledged, I have done so with some ability.

MRS. S. (*not attending to him, but turning to Emma*). But does it not make your fingers ache to play such difficult music?

DOMINIE. Only when her teacher raps her on the knuckles, and that I never do.

(Emma looks at the parrot which is hanging in the parlor, and strokes the great bull-dog.)

JOHN SPRIGGINS (*entering with his daughter Lizzie*). Herr Dominie, will you be so good as to hear our daughter Lizzie play, and advise us whether to continue in the same course. Music is, in fact, hereditary in our family. My wife played a little, too, in her youth, and I once played on the violin; but my teacher told me I had no talent for it, no ear, and no idea of time, and that I scraped too much.

DOMINIE. Very curious! He must have been mistaken!

JOHN S. But I always was devotedly fond of music. My father and my grandfather, on our estate, often used to play the organ for the organist in church, and the tenants always knew when they were playing. My father used often to tell that story at table. Ha, ha! It was very droll!

DOMINIE. Curious!

JOHN S. Well, to return to my violin. I gave it up after a year, because it seemed rather scratchy to me, too.

DOMINIE. Curious! Probably your ear and your taste had become more cultivated.

JOHN S. Afterwards, when I accepted an office, my wife said to me, "My dear, what a pity it is about your violin." So I had it restrung, and took a teacher. It seems as if it were only yesterday.

DOMINIE (*casting down his eyes,—the servant brings ice*). That was very curious!

JOHN S. But the government horn-player thought he could not get on in duets with me.

DOMINIE. Curious! So you were obliged to play only solos? But to return to your daughter. Will you be good enough to play me something, Miss Lizzie?

MRS. S. (*condescendingly, in a low voice*). She is a little timid and embarrassed at playing before your daughter Emma.

EMMA. You really need not be so.

MRS. S. Bring “Les Graces” by Herz, and Rosellen’s “Tremolo.”

LIZZIE. But, mamma, I have forgotten that piece by Herz, and I have not learned the “Tremolo” very well yet. That is always the way with me. Mr. Shepard says I may console myself: it was always the same with his other scholars. He says I shall finally make my way. But Mr. Shepard is so strict. Are you very strict, Herr Dominie?

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MRS. S. Why, my child, you have heard me say so before. Herr Dominie is the very strictest—but (*playfully*) he will not acknowledge it.

DOMINIE. There is one thing you must allow, Mrs. Spriggins,—that my pupils always take pleasure in my lessons; and that must be the case because their progress is evident and gives them delight, and every thing is developed in the most natural way.

MRS. S. (*less sharply*). We won't discuss that; but how are your daughters able to play so many pieces to people, and moreover without notes, if they have not been obliged to practise all day long, and if you have not been very cruel with them, while my Lizzie cannot play a single thing without bungling?

DOMINIE. Allow me, madam, it must be the fault of Mr. Shep—

MRS. S. No, no! you must excuse me, but we don't permit any reflections on our Mr. Shepard: he is very particular and unwearied.

DOMINIE. It does not depend entirely upon that, but—

JOHN S. Upon my honor, it is marvellous to see how talented pupils always seem to flock to *you*. It is easy to teach such! Ha, ha! You must not forget, however, that my grandfather played on the organ. Now, Lizzie, sit down and play something.

(*She chooses a cavatina from "The Pirates," with variations. The introduction begins with e_{flat} in unison. Lizzie strikes e in unison and the same in the bass, and exclaims: "There, mamma, didn't I tell you so? I don't remember it now."* Mr. Shepard enters, steps up hastily, and puts her finger on e flat._)

SHEPARD. Pardon me, Herr Dominie, I will only set her going: it makes her a little confused to play before such connoisseurs; she loses her eyesight. Don't you see, Lizzie, there are three flats in the signature?

JOHN S. Courage now! Aha! Lizzie can't get at the pedal, the bull-dog is lying over it. John, take him out.

(*After the removal of the bull-dog, Lizzie plays as far as the fourth bar, when she strikes c_{sharp} instead of c, and stops._*)

MRS. S. Never mind, begin again. Herr Dominie is pleased to hear that: he has gone through it all with his own children.

(*Lizzie begins again at the beginning, and goes on to the eighth bar, where she sticks fast.*)



SHEPARD. Don't make me ashamed of you, Lizzie. Now begin once more: a week ago it went quite tolerably.

(Lizzie begins once more, and plays or rather scrambles through it, as far as the eighteenth bar; but now it is all over with her, and she gets up.)

DOMINIE. Skip the introduction, it is too difficult: begin at once on the theme.

JOHN S. *(to his wife)*. We will go away and leave the gentlemen alone. By and by, gentlemen, we will talk about it further over a cup of tea.

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(Lizzie refuses to play.)

DOMINIE. Mr. Shepard, let Lizzie play a few scales or some chords; a few finger exercises, or some easy dance without notes.

SHEPARD. She has nothing of that kind ready. You see I always take up one piece after another, and have each one played as well as I can; she repeats the difficult parts, I write the proper fingering over them, and am very particular that she does not use the wrong fingers. I have taken a great deal of pains, and quite worn myself out over the lessons. Lizzie does the same, and practises her pieces two hours a day; but—but—

(Lizzie goes away with Emma.)

DOMINIE. Mr. Shepard, with the best intentions in the world, you will never accomplish your end. Even if Miss Lizzie is only to play as an amateur, and is not intended for any thing higher, for which in fact she has not sufficient talent, you must pay some attention beforehand to the acquirement of a correct tone, and get rid of this robin-red-breast touch; and you must then endeavor, by scales and exercises of every kind, to give to her hands and fingers so much firmness, decision, and dexterity, that she can master her pieces, at least with a certain distinct tone and a tolerable touch. You are not less in error in the choice of her pieces, which are far too difficult,—a fault of most teachers, even with the most skilful pupils. The pieces which your pupils are to execute should be below their mechanical powers; for, otherwise, the struggle with difficulties robs the player of all confidence in the performance, and gives rise to stumbling, bungling, and hurry. The mechanical powers should be cultivated by studies and exercises, in preference to pieces, at least to those of certain famous composers, who do not write in a manner adapted to the piano; or who, at any rate, regard the music as of more importance than the player. This may apply even to Beethoven, in the higher grade of composition; for his music is full of danger for the performer. The only course which can ever lead to a sure result, without wearying both pupil and parent, and without making piano-playing distasteful, is first to lay a foundation in mechanical power, and then to go on with the easier pieces by Huenten and Burgmueller. If you try to produce the mechanical dexterity essential for piano performance by the study of pieces, except with the most careful selection, you will waste a great deal of time and deprive the pupil of all pleasure and interest; and the young Lizzie will be much more interested in the hope of a husband than in the satisfaction of performing a piece which will give pleasure to herself and her friends. There can be no success without gradual development and culture, without a plan, without consideration and reflection,—in fact, without a proper method. How can there be any good result, if the pupil has to try at the same time to play with a correct touch, with the proper fingering, in time, with proper phrasing, to move the fingers rightly, to gain familiarity with the notes, and to avoid the confusion between the treble and the bass notes,—and in fact has to struggle with every thing at once? And what vexations! what loss of time without success!

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(Shepard listened with attention, and a light seemed to dawn upon him.)

(Dominie and Shepard go in to tea.)

MRS. S. Well, gentlemen, have you come to any conclusion? Is not Lizzie a good pupil? She is obliged to practise two hours every day, however tired she may be. Do you think we should continue in the same course, Herr Dominie?

SHEPARD. Herr Dominie has called my attention to some points which will be of use to me.

DOMINIE. Only a few trifles.

JOHN S. After tea will not Miss Emma play to us?

EMMA. The piano is very much out of tune, some of the keys stick, the action is too light, and the instrument generally is not calculated for the successful execution of any thing.

JOHN S. I beg your pardon: it was considered by everybody a very fine instrument when we bought it, sixteen years ago. We had a great bargain in it at the time, for we purchased it of a neighbor who had improved it very much by use. Mr. Shepard will confirm what I say, Miss.

(Emma bows her head thoughtfully, and looks at Shepard suspiciously.)

JOHN S. My violin has very much improved during the last twenty years. On my honor, if Lizzie were a boy, she should learn to play on the violin, to keep it in the family. Ha, ha, ha!

DOMINIE. That would be curious!

(Dominie wishes to take leave with his daughter.)

MRS. S. *(condescendingly)*. I hope you will come to see us again soon. The next time Lizzie will play you Rosellen's "Tremolo;" and Miss Emma must play us a piece too.

DOMINIE. You are extremely kind! *(Takes leave.)*

CHAPTER VIII.

SINGING AND SINGING-TEACHERS.

(A Letter to a Young Lady Singer.)

MY DEAR MISS ——,—You are endowed with an admirable gift for singing, and your agreeable though not naturally powerful voice has vivacity and youthful charm, as well as a fine tone: you also possess much talent in execution; yet you nevertheless share the lot of almost all your sisters in art, who, whether in Vienna, Paris, or Italy, find only teachers who are rapidly helping to annihilate the opera throughout Europe, and are ruling out of court the simple, noble, refined, and true art of singing. This modern, unnatural style of art, which merely aspires to superficial effects, and consists only in mannerisms, and which must ruin the voice in a short time, before it reaches its highest perfection, has already laid claim to you. It is scarcely possible to rescue your talent, unless, convinced that you have been falsely guided, you stop entirely for a time, and allow your voice to rest during several months, and then, by correct artistic studies, and with a voice never forced or strong, often indeed weak, you improve your method of attack

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by the use of much less and never audible breathing, and acquire a correct, quiet guidance of the tones. You must also make use of the voice in the middle register, and strengthen the good head-tones by skilfully lowering them; you must equalize the registers of the voice by a correct and varied use of the head-tones, and by diligent practice of *solfeggio*. You must restore the unnaturally extended registers to their proper limits; and you have still other points to reform. Are you not aware that this frequent tremulousness of the voice, this immoderate forcing of its compass, by which the chest-register is made to interfere with the head-tones, this coquetting with the deep chest-tones, this affected, offensive, and almost inaudible nasal *pianissimo*, the aimless jerking out of single tones, and, in general, this whole false mode of vocal execution, must continually shock the natural sentiment of a cultivated, unprejudiced hearer, as well as of the composer and singing-teacher? What must be the effect on a voice in the middle register, when its extreme limits are forced in such a reckless manner, and when you expend as much breath for a few lines of a song as a correctly educated singer would require for a whole aria? How long will it be before your voice, already weakened, and almost always forced beyond the limits of beauty, shall degenerate into a hollow, dull, guttural tone, and even into that explosive or tremulous sound, which proclaims irremediable injury? Is your beautiful voice and your talent to disappear like a meteor, as others have done? or do you hope that the soft air of Italy will in time restore a voice once ruined? I fall into a rage when I think of the many beautiful voices which have been spoiled, and have dwindled away without leaving a trace during the last forty years; and I vent my overflowing heart in a brief notice of the many singing-teachers, whose rise and influence I have watched for twenty years past.

The so-called singing-teachers whom we usually find, even in large cities and in musical institutions, I exempt from any special criticism, for they would not be able to understand my views. They permit soprano voices to sing scales in all the five vowels at once; begin with *c* instead of *f*; allow a long holding of the notes, "in order to bring out the voice," until the poor victim rolls her eyes and grows dizzy. They talk only of the fine chest-tones which must be elicited, will have nothing to do with the head-tones, will not even listen to them, recognize them, or learn to distinguish them. Their highest principle is: "Fudge! we don't want any rubbish of Teschner, Miksch, and Wieck. Sing in your own plain way: what is the use of this murmuring without taking breath? For what do you have lungs if you are not to use them? Come, try this aria: 'Grace,' 'grace!' Produce an effect! Down on your knees!"

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There are again others who allow screaming,—“the more the better,”—in order to produce power and expression in the voice, and to make it serviceable for public performances. They may, indeed, require the singing of *solfeggio*, and prattle about the requisite equality of the tones; and they consequently make the pupil practise diligently and strongly on the two-lined *a*, *b* flat, *b*, where kind Nature does not at first place the voice, because she has reserved for herself the slow and careful development of it. As for the unfortunate gasping medium voices, which are still less docile, and which sigh in the throat, and after all can only speak, such teachers postpone the cultivation of these to the future, or else they exclaim in a satisfied way, “Now we will sing at sight! Hit the notes! Let us have classical music!” Of these, also, I forbear to speak.

And as for the singing-teachers, whose business it is to educate the voice for “the opera of the future,” I am really unable to write about them. In the first place, I know nothing about “the future,” the unborn; and, in the second place, I have more than enough to do with the present.

And now I come to those who honestly wish to teach better, and who in a measure do so. But even they are too pedantic: with prejudiced views, they pursue one-sided aims. Without looking around to the right or to the left or forwards, and without daily learning, reflecting, and striving, they run in a groove, always ride their particular hobby, cut every thing after one pattern, and use up the time in secondary matters, in incredible trifles. For the formation of a fine tone, not a minute should be lost, particularly with lady singers, who are not strong, and usually cannot or ought not to sing more than twenty days in a month, and who surely ought to be allowed to use their time in a reasonable manner. Moreover, these are the teachers whom it is most difficult to comprehend. Though they use only seven tones, they are plunged in impenetrable mysteries, in incomprehensible knowledge and a multitude of so-called secrets, out of which, indeed, nothing can ever be brought to light. For this, however, they do not consider themselves to blame, not even their hobby-horses; but, as they say, “the higher powers.” We will, for once, suppose that three-fourths of the measures which they are accustomed to employ in their treatment of the voice and of the individual are good and correct (the same is true of many piano-teachers); but the remaining fourth is sufficient to ruin the voice, or to prevent its proper development, and therefore nothing correct is to be gained. There are other teachers who never can get beyond the formation of the tone, and are lost in the pursuit of *perfection*,—that “terrestrial valley of tears.” Truly a beautiful country, but which is only to be found in Paradise!

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Others, instead of thinking, "I will try for the present to do better than others have done," so harass and torment the poor mortal voices with their aim at perfect equality and perfect beauty of tone, the result often is that every thing becomes unequal and far from beautiful. Some teachers make their pupils so anxious and troubled that, owing to their close attention to the tone, and the breath, and the pronunciation, they sing their songs in an utterly wooden manner, and so in fact they, too, are lost in optimism and in tears; whereas, for singing, a happy confidence in the ability to succeed is essential. Others pursue an opposite course, and are guilty of worse faults, as you will see if you look around. Some of them have no standard of perfection, but use up the time in an exchange of ideas with their pupils, with mysterious and conceited "ifs" and "buts." They are very positive, but only within the narrow circle of their own ideas. They make no advance in a correct medium path. Some allow pupils to practise only *staccato*, and others only *legato*, aiming thereby at nobody knows what. Some allow them to sing too loud, others too feebly; some philosophize earnestly about beauty in the voice, and others grumble about unpleasantness in the same; some are enthusiastic about extraordinary talents, others fret about the want of talent; some have a passion for making all the sopranos sing alto, others do just the reverse; some prefer a shadowy, others a clear voice. They all rest their opinions upon the authority of some famous screaming-master who has written a singing-system. Upon like authority, some cultivate chiefly the deep tones, because it is very fine, and "creates an effect," for soprano voices to be able suddenly to sing like men, or rather to growl, and because it is the fashion in Paris. Others, on the contrary, pride themselves upon the head-tones; but they are none of them willing to pay much attention to the medium voices: that is too critical and too delicate a matter, and requires too much trouble, for the modern art of singing. As a last resort, they bethink themselves of kind Nature, and lay the blame upon her.

Well, I will say no more upon this point, but will proceed. Have I not already, in my piano instructions, insisted on the importance of a gradual and careful use of every proper expedient to extend, strengthen, beautify, and preserve the voice? I am thought, however, to infringe upon the office of the singing-masters, who hold their position to be much more exalted than that of the poor piano-teacher. Still, I must be allowed to repeat that voices are much more easily injured than fingers; and that broken, rigid voices are much worse than stiff, unmanageable fingers, unless, after all, they amount to the same thing. I demand of singing-teachers that they show themselves worthy of their position, and allow no more voices to go to destruction, and that they give us some satisfactory

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results. I believe in fact, in my homely simplicity, that the whole thing may be accomplished without any mystery, without trading in secrets or charlatanry; without the aid of modern anatomical improvement, or rather destruction, of the worn-out throat, through shortening or increasing the flexibility of the palate, through the removal of the unnecessary glands or by attempts to lengthen the vocal passage, or by remedying a great many other things in which Nature has made a mistake, and on which special doctors for the voice, in Paris and London, are now employed.

We supply the want of all these by the following little rule:—

Three trifles are essential for a good piano or singing-teacher,—

*The finest taste,
The deepest feeling,
The most delicate ear,*

and, in addition, the requisite knowledge, energy, and some practice. *Voila tout!* I cannot devote myself to the treatment of the throat, for which I have neither time nor fitness; and my lady singers are so busy with the formation of true tone, and in attention to the care and preservation of their voices, that they only wish to open their mouths for that object, and not for anatomical purposes. In piano-playing also, I require no cutting of the interdigital fold, no mechanical hand-support, no accelerator for the fingers or stretching machine; and not even the “finger-rack” invented and used, without my knowledge, by a famous pupil[A] of mine, for the proper raising of the third and fourth fingers.

My dear young lady, if the Creator has made the throat badly for singing, he alone is responsible. I cannot come to his assistance by destroying the throat with lunar caustic, and then reconstructing it. If the throat is really worn out, may it not perhaps be owing to the teacher, and to his mistaken management?

Nature does many things well, and before the introduction of this modern fashion of singing produced many beautiful voices: has she all at once become incapable of doing any thing right?

We will, then, simply return to the *three trifles* above-mentioned; and in these we will live and work “with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our mind.”

[A] Reference is here made to Robert Schumann, who, in order to facilitate the use of the weaker fingers, employed a machine for raising the fingers artificially, which resulted in loss of power over them, and necessitated the abandonment of piano-playing.—*Tr.*

CHAPTER IX.

THOUGHTS ON SINGING.

Our vocal composers, followed by many singing-teachers and singing institutions, have almost banished from music the true art of singing; or, at least, have introduced an unnatural, faulty, and always disagreeable mode of delivery, by which the voice has been destroyed, even before it has attained its full development. The consideration of this fact induces me to communicate some portions from my journal, and to unite with them a few opinions of the noted singing-master, Teschner, of Berlin.

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Must we again and again explain to German composers that, though we do not require them to compose in Italian, they ought, at least, to learn to write in German in a manner suited for singing? otherwise, in their amazing ignorance and infatuation, they will wear out the powers of opera singers, and torture the public, apparently without a suspicion that it is possible to write both grand and light operas with true, characteristic German thoroughness. Even German opera requires a constant attention to the right use of the voice, and a methodical, effective mode of singing. It tolerates no murderous attacks on single male and female voices, or on the full opera company; it is opposed to that eager searching after superficial effect, which every sincere friend of the opera must lament.

Is it, then, so difficult to obtain the requisite knowledge of the human voice, and to study the scores of Gluck, Haydn, Mozart, Rossini, Bellini, and Donizetti with a special regard to this? Do our vocal composers make too great a sacrifice to their creative genius in making a study of those things which are essential? You consider it mortifying to inquire of those who understand singing, and you are sensitive about any disturbance of your vain over-estimate of your own powers; but you are not ashamed to cause the destruction of man's noblest gift,—the human voice! If taste, feeling, and a fine ear are, and always must be, the chief requirements in composing for the great public, I ask you how you can lay claim to these three trifles, when you constantly violate them?

COMPOSER. If Mrs. N. had executed my aria to-day in as earnest and masterly a style, and with as agreeable a voice, as she did that of Rossini yesterday, she would have given as much satisfaction; for it is much more interesting and expressive both musically and harmonically, and written with more dramatic effect.

SINGER. You make a mistake, and you always will do so, as long as you consider the study of the voice as of secondary importance, or, in fact, pay no attention whatever to it. The latter aria, which is composed with a regard to the voice, and to the employment of its most agreeable tones, puts me into a comfortable mood, and gives me a feeling of success; yours, on the contrary, into one of dissatisfaction and anticipation of failure. Of what importance is the musical value of a composition, if it can only be sung with doubtful success, and if the voice is obliged to struggle with it, instead of having it under control? You attach less importance to the free, agreeable exercise of the voice than does the unanimous public. I do not wish to excite compassion, but to give pleasure by a beautifully developed style of singing. You pay some attention to adaptability to the piano or the violin: why are you usually regardless of fitness for the voice?

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Critics have often asked, Why does Jenny Lind sing so coolly? why does she not sing grand, passionate parts? why does she not select for her performances some of the later German or even Italian operas? why does she always sing Amina, Lucia, Norma, Susanna, &c.? In reply to these and similar questions, I will ask, Why does she wish always to remain Jenny Lind? why does she endeavor to preserve her voice as long as possible? why does she select operas in which she may use her pure, artistic, refined mode of singing, which permits no mannerism, no hypocritical sentiment, and which possesses an ideal beauty? why does she choose operas in which she can give the most perfect possible image of her own personality? why operas in which she may allow the marvellous union of her powers of song to shine conspicuously, without doing violence to her voice and forcing its tones, or casting doubt upon her lofty, noble, and beautiful art? why does she first regard the singing, and only afterwards the music, or both united? This is the answer to the same questions which are likewise asked about Henrietta Sontag and all great singers. Even the passionate Schroeder-Devrient seldom made an exception to this rule, although she was not independent of the theatres.

These questions should be an urgent warning to our young female singers not to sacrifice themselves to any of the modern screaming operas, unsuited for singing; but to preserve and watch over their voices, and to guard them from immoderate, continued, and often inartistic exertion; in fact, to sing always in the voice-register with which nature has endowed them, and never to shriek; to renounce the present, fashionable, so-called "singing effects," and the modern scene-screaming, as Jenny Lind and Henrietta Sontag have always done. Then their voices would remain useful for the opera, as was formerly the case, from ten to twenty years; and they would not have to mourn, as is too common, after a very short time, a feeble, broken voice and departed health.

Let Jenny Lind and Henrietta Sontag be placed as the finest models before our young, gifted, ambitious singers. They are to be regarded as miraculous phenomena; especially in our times, when the modern style of singing has, for reasons difficult to justify, so widely deviated from the old school which was so fruitful in brilliant results,—that of Pistocchi, Porpora, and Bernacchi. What could show more clearly the destructiveness of our present opera style than the sublime beauty of their singing, combined with their noble, refined, sound voices, such as may perhaps still be found among you?

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The managers of our theatres are in want of tenor singers who can act. They should consider that tenors who have any voices left have never learned to act, and tenors who are able to act no longer have any voices; because, as a rule, they either have studied too little, or have studied erroneously. Unless the voice has received a correct and fine

culture, the German comic operas lead immediately to destruction of the voice, especially of the sensitive, easily injured German tenor voice.

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Here I take occasion to remark upon the universal prejudice, that “a tenor ought to develop the chest-tones as far as possible, that they are the finest.” In tenors, with very few exceptions, this mistaken treatment has been speedily followed by the loss both of voice and health. Nicely shaded singing, from *piano* onwards, is thereby rendered impossible; and tones which are always forced must remain unpleasant, even although powers thus laboriously gained may sometimes have a fine effect in the opera. A tenor who wishes to preserve his voice and not to scream in the upper tones, who desires always to have a *piano* at command and to possess the necessary shading and lightness as well as elegance and flexibility, should cultivate the *falsetto*, and endeavor to bring it down as far as possible into the chest-register. This is as indispensable as is the use of the head-tones for the soprano. When the *falsetto* has too striking a resemblance to the chest-voice, and is even inferior to it in power, it is the result of want of perseverance and prudence in its cultivation. It ought to be almost imperceptibly connected with the chest-register by the introduction of the mixed tones.

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We shall probably soon be called upon to read an “Address of Young Female Singers to the Composers of Germany,” as follows: “Freedom of thought! freedom in composition! freedom in the opera! but no annihilation of the throat! You are hereby notified that we protest against all operas which are repugnant to the true art of singing; for it is not in your power to compensate us for the loss of our voices, although it may be possible for you, after using up our talent as quickly as possible, to look around for others, with whom you can do the same. First learn to understand singing, or, rather, first learn to sing, as your predecessors have done, and as Italian composers still do, and then we will talk with you again.”

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“What a pedantic outcry about German want of adaptability for singing! Pray where is there the most singing?” It is, I agree, in Germany. “Is not singing taught in the public schools? And consider, too, the innumerable singing clubs, singing societies, and singing institutions!”

That is just the misfortune which requires a thorough investigation. How many promising voices do these institutions annually follow to the grave? Who is it who sing in the schools? Boys and girls from thirteen to fifteen years old. But boys ought not to be allowed to sing while the voice is changing; and girls, also from physical reasons, ought not to sing at all at that age. And what kind of instructors teach singing here? Our epistolary and over-wise age overwhelms our superintendents and corporations with innumerable petitions and proposals; but no true friend of humanity, of music, and of singing, has yet been found to enlighten these authorities,

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and to prove to them that the most beautiful voices and finest talents are killed in the germ by these unsuitable so-called singing-lessons, especially in the public schools. Girls' voices may be carefully awakened, and skilfully practised, and made flexible and musical; but they should be used only in *mezzo-voce*, and only until the period of their development, or up to the thirteenth year, or a few months sooner or later. This ought also to be done with great experience, delicacy, practical knowledge and circumspection. But where are we to find suitable singing-professors, and who is to pay them a sufficient salary? Therefore, away with this erroneous instruction of children in singing! away with this abortion of philanthropy and the musical folly of this extravagant age! Can such a premature, unrefined, faulty screaming of children, or croaking in their throats, without artistic cultivation and guidance, compensate for the later inevitable hoarseness and loss of voice, and for the destruction of the organs of singing?

The tenors who belong to these singing societies and institutions force out and sacrifice their uncultured voices, and scream with throat, palate, and nasal tones, in the execution of four-part songs by this or that famous composer, which are far from beautiful, and which serve only to ruin the voice. Who was the lady who sang the solo in yonder singing academy? That girl, a year ago, had a fresh, beautiful, sonorous voice; but, although she is only twenty years old, it already begins to fail her, and she screws and forces it, by the help of the chest-tones, up to the two-lined *a*, without any thing having ever been done for the adjustment of the voice-registers and for the use of the head-tones, and without proper direction from a competent superintendent. Instead of this, he was continually exclaiming: "Loud! forcibly! *con espressione!*"

While even the street boys in Italy sing clearly, and often with great ability, their national songs, so well suited to the voice, and in their most beautiful language, our northern voices, which are obliged to contend with the great difficulties of the German language, are sacrificed in the most cold-blooded and self-satisfied manner in the schools and singing societies, while all artistic preparation, by which alone the voice may be preserved and cultivated, is neglected.

Who are at the head of these institutions and societies? Musicians it is true; but they are strangers to any special education in singing, or are not skilful singing-teachers, who understand how to combine methodical cultivation of the voice with practical execution. Their entire instruction consists, at most, in hitting the notes and keeping time. These musicians say: "Whoever joins my society must know how to sing!" What does that mean? Where are they to learn it? And, even when you have succeeded in obtaining for your academy a few imprudent but well-taught singers,

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does not the preservation of their voices then require the greatest care and watchfulness? Is that in your power? Have you the requisite knowledge for it? Are not these few well-educated voices obliged to sing by the side of singers who have been taught in a wrong manner, and who have no pure, correct intonation? Then what do these societies amount to? Do they improve or destroy the voice? They make the members musical. A fine consolation for the loss of the voice! They teach them to hit the notes and to keep time. A great comfort after the voice has been destroyed by false culture!

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A singing-teacher who has no firm, decided principle, who is constantly wavering backwards and forwards, and who frequently leads others into error by his untenable opinions; who cannot quickly discern the special talent and capacity of his pupils, or discover the proper means to get rid of what is false or wrong, and adopt the speediest road to success, without any one-sided theories of perfection; who mistrusts and blames, worries, offends, and depresses, instead of encouraging; who is always dissatisfied instead of cordially acknowledging what is good in the pupil; who at one time rides a high horse instead of kindly offering a helping hand, and at another time praises as extravagantly as he before has blamed, and kills time in such ways as these,—he may be an encyclopaedia of knowledge, but his success will always fall short of his hopes. Firmness, decision, energy, and a delicate, quick perception; the art not to say too much or too little, and to be quite clear in his own mind, and with constant considerate kindness to increase the courage and confidence of his pupils,—these are requisite above all things for a singing-master as well as for a piano-teacher.

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“My singers are to be educated for the public, for the stage, and must therefore sing loud, study hard, force their execution, and make use of a great deal of breath. How else will they be able to produce an effect?”

Answer. What, then, is the effect of your culture? I know of none, except that they at first are applauded, because they are young and pretty, and are novelties; because they have good voices, and the benevolent public wishes to encourage them; and then they disappear in a year or two without leaving any trace.

“The singing-teacher can succeed in cultivating not more than one good voice in twenty, with any noteworthy result. Hence the decadence of the art of singing.”

Answer. Unless some unusual disturbance or sickness occur, all voices improve till the twenty-fourth year. When this is not the case, it is to be attributed only to the singing-teacher.

“Many voices acquire a sharp tone, which is the precursor of decay.”

Answer. All voices are, and will remain, more or less tender, if their culture is correct.

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“Only Jenny Lind and Henrietta Sontag were allowed by the public to give out their voices naturally and lightly without straining them, and to sing *piano* and *pianissimo*, and their celebrity is a justification of this privilege.”

Answer. But how would they have obtained their celebrity, if this were not the true, correct, and pure mode of singing?

“Our singers also try the *piano* and *pianissimo*; but they can produce no effect on their audiences by it, as you may see every day.”

Answer. Good heavens! I should think so! With such a *piano*, with strained voices, faulty attack, and the use of too much breath,—a *piano* which only gurgles in the throat, or deeper! That I do not mean: I must refer you again to the three trifles mentioned in my eighth chapter.

“But some voices have no *piano*, and many singers do not take the right course to acquire it.”

Answer. What a wide-spread, groundless excuse! Here we may see the error of our times. People look for the fault outside of themselves, and not in themselves. The inventive power of the age is here truly astonishing! When, owing to false management, the voice soon degenerates instead of improving with time, it is the consequence of a faulty formation of the throat, and of the neglect of London throat brushes! If such badly educated voices can no longer produce a *piano*, it is owing to the unskilfulness of nature, and to the false construction of the necessary organs! If the *piano* is only a wheeze, the reason is found in the deficiency of palate, and excess of muscles! If several times in the month, the worn out, weary voice can only groan and sigh, or cannot emit a sound, it is the result of a change in the weather, or other meteorological conditions! If we complain of unpleasant, shrieking tones, occasioned by the mouth being too widely stretched, then “the rays of sound take an oblique, instead of a direct course”! If the poor, strained medium voice, even with the help of a great deal of breath, can only produce dull, hollow, veiled, and unpleasant tones, that is said to be a necessary crisis, of which cruel Nature requires a great many in the course of her development of the voice! Finally, if from long and forced holding of the chest-tones, they are changed into noises like the bellowing of calves and the quacking of ducks, and the instructor finally perceives it, then again we have a crisis! And, alas! no one thinks of “the three trifles.”

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What occasions the want of success of our singing-teachers, many of whom are musical, possess a delicate ear, fine culture and feeling, have studied systems of singing, and exert themselves zealously to teach rightly?

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They fail in the culture of the tone, which is not to be learned from books or by one's self, but only from verbal communication. To learn to produce a clear tone, with a light, free, natural attack; to understand how to draw forth the sound with the use of no unnecessary breath, and to cause the sound to strike against the roof of the mouth above the upper row of teeth; to improve the pronunciation; to adjust the registers,—these, with many other things, may seem very easy; but to teach them all in the shortest time, without wearing out the voice and without falling into errors; to persevere in teaching to the end, even if the pupil already sings correctly; to know what is still wanting and how it is to be attained,—all these one must acquire by long and constant experience.

When Schroeder-Devrient came from Vienna to Dresden, a young but already celebrated singer, though at that time wanting in the proper foundation for singing, she was not a little surprised when Miksch called her attention to this deficiency. She devoted herself thoroughly to the primary formation of the tone under the instruction of Miksch, and must still remember the old master, and his extraordinary practice in this particular. Miksch learned it from Caselli, a pupil of Bernacchi. He had just sung as a young tenor, with great applause, in a concert, and introduced himself to Caselli, who was present, expecting to receive his approbation; but the latter, instead of commending, assured him frankly that his mode of singing was false, and that with such misuse his voice would succumb within a year, unless he adopted a correct culture of tone. After much hard struggle, the young Miksch renounced all further public applause, and studied the formation of tone assiduously and perseveringly with Caselli, after having previously allowed his over-strained voice a time for rest.

If a singing-teacher has, by chance, met with a docile pupil, possessed of a voice of unusual beauty, it frequently happens that the studies are not pursued with sufficient perseverance; and, perhaps, are continued only for a few weeks or months, instead of allowing a year or more, according to circumstances. Richard Wagner agrees with me, when he says, "Why, then, write operas to be sung, when we no longer have either male or female singers?"

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Since modern progress has come to regard "the three trifles" as belonging entirely to the past, and in their place has proclaimed, "Boldness, Spirit, Power," two evil spirits have had rule: they go hand in hand, ruin the voice, wound the cultivated ear, and provide for us—only empty opera houses. One of these evils has been frequently alluded to by me. It is "the expenditure of a great deal too much breath." The finest voices are obliged to practise with full breath until they shriek, and the result is mere sobbing, and the heavy drawing of the breath, just at the time when the tone should still be heard. Even if every thing else could be right, in such a culture of the tone, which must very shortly relax the muscles of the voice, that one thing, in itself, would be sufficient to destroy all promise of success.

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The second evil endangers even the male voice, which is able to endure much ill-treatment; while the female voice is quickly forced by it into a piercing shrillness, or is driven back into the throat, soon to be entirely exhausted, or is, at least, prevented from attaining a natural, fine development. This second evil is the reckless and destructive straining of single tones to their extreme limits, even to perfect exhaustion. The poor singer urges and squeezes out the voice, and quivers to the innermost marrow, in order that the two requirements of "Boldness" and "Power" may be satisfied. But the "Spirit" is still wanting, which should be shown in a light and well-shaded delivery. The effect of extreme shading, however, is accomplished in a single "romanza." The unfortunate, misdirected singer, who must aim at effect, lays out so much force on single tones, or even on whole lines, and that, too, in the best register of his voice (the other registers do not permit this), that the succeeding tones are forced to retire powerless into the throat; and the beautiful, fresh, youthful tenor or bass voice concludes with exhausted groaning and mere speaking tones. The "romanza" is now at an end, and certainly "Boldness, Spirit, and Power" have worked in union. The task is executed the better, because a rude accompaniment has probably sustained the singer in a most striking manner, and has completed the total effect.

By such management, to which I must emphatically add the continual holding of the tones, even in the *forte*, voices are expected "to come out," to be developed, inspired, and made beautiful. What healthy ear can endure such enormities in tone formation, such tortures in singing? These, then, are the modern contributions for the embellishment of art! A curse on these evil spirits! If my feeble pen shall assist in bringing such singing-teachers to their senses, and shall help to save only a few of our fine voices, I shall consider my mission fulfilled, and the aim of this book, so far as it concerns singing, accomplished.

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I have heretofore combated many prejudices, both in earnest and in sport, successfully and unsuccessfully; but one I find very obstinate,—it has pursued me incessantly for years. A piano-player, with a rigid, strained, and vicious touch, proceeding from the arm, may play a great deal, but his playing is thoroughly vulgar and without beauty. He feels this himself, and the playing of my pupils pleases him better. He wishes me to change his style to their better manner; but he still continues to pound, to bang, to exaggerate, and to play in his own way, and only wishes his style to be improved, and his power of execution to be increased. If a performer of this sort is not much more than twenty years of age, something may yet be done for the improvement of his touch, and consequently of his style of playing; but this is only possible by laying aside all his

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accustomed pieces of music, and by diligently practising, daily, small easy exercises, which must be played delicately, with loose fingers, and without allowing the arm to give the slightest assistance; otherwise, all labor will be thrown away upon him. How else can you begin, except by laying a proper foundation for a better style? I have frequently urged this principle both by speech and in writing; but the difficulty always returns, and especially in the cultivation of female singers.

A girl of eighteen comes to me: she has heard of the excellent cultivation of my lady singers, and wishes to obtain the same for herself. In order that I may hear her voice, she selects the “Erlkoenig,” by Schubert, that perilous piece, which is apt to lead even highly cultivated singers into frightful atrocities. Heavens! what must I hear? With the remains of a fine, youthful voice, whose registers are already broken up and disconnected, she shrieks out the “Erlkoenig,” between sobs and groans, with screwed-up chest-tones, and many modern improprieties, but nevertheless with dramatic talent. The piercing voice, forced to its utmost, fills me with horror; but also with pity for such a glorious endowment, and such an unnatural development. At the conclusion, her voice succumbed to the effort, and she could only groan hoarsely, and wheeze without emitting a sound. She has, however, frequently produced great effect in society, and drawn tears with this performance: it is her favorite piece. Let us abandon this singing for parties, this melancholy *dilettantismus*, everywhere so obtrusive! The girl is only eighteen years old: is she beyond salvation? I endeavor to build her voice up again, gradually, by gentle practice. She succeeds very well in it, and after six lessons her natural docility arouses hope. The head-tones again make their appearance, and the practice of *solfeggio* brings out once more the stifled voice which had been forced back into the throat by senseless exertions; a better attack begins to be developed, and the chest-register returns to its natural limits. She now declared, with her mother’s approval, that she really would continue to study in this way, but she could not give up the performance of her effective and spirited conception of the “Erlkoenig.” She came a few times more: I could perceive that the good structure was tottering. After a few months, she had entirely sacrificed her voice to this single “Erlkoenig.” In such tender years, one such idol is sufficient. What a price for an “Erlkoenig”! The old, experienced singing-teacher, Miksch, of Dresden (with the exception of Rossini, the last famous champion of the old school), has often warned me that radical amendment is seldom possible with such over-strained and broken voices, which already are obliged to struggle with enfeebled muscles, even although youth may excite great and decided hopes. There is also another difficulty: that one of these strong, over-strained

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voices must hereafter be used with much less strength, if we wish to cultivate a correct tone; and it is impossible to tell whether the chest-tones, when they are restored to their true limit, will ever come out again as powerful and at the same time as beautiful. Let no musician, however talented and cultivated he may be, ever adopt the teaching of singing, unless he can combine with firmness of character great patience, perseverance, and disinterestedness; otherwise, he will experience very little pleasure and very little gratitude. Even if the “Erlkoenig” does not stand in the way, every voice presents new and peculiar difficulties.

A Few Words addressed to Singing-Teachers on the Accompaniment of Etudes, Exercises, Scales, &c.

It is common for teachers to play their accompaniments as furiously as if they had to enter into a struggle for life and death with their singers. At the beginning of the lesson, the lady singer ought to commence quite *piano*, at *f* in the one-lined octave, and to sing up and down from there through five or six notes, without any expenditure of breath, and should guide and bring out her voice by a gentle practice of *solfeggio*; and yet you bang, and pound on the keys, as if you had to accompany drums and trumpets. Do you not perceive that in this way you induce your pupils to strain and force their voices, and that you mislead them into a false method? In such a noise, and while you are making such a monstrous expenditure of strength, to which you add a sharp, uneasy touch, and a frequent spreading of the chords, how can you watch the delicate movements of the singer’s throat? Is it necessary for me to explain how such a rude accompaniment must interfere with the effort to sing firmly and delicately? Are you not aware that a light and agreeable, but at the same time firm and decided, accompaniment encourages and sustains the singer, and also assists and inspires her? You ought, in every way, to seek to cultivate in your pupil the feeling for the right, the true, and the beautiful; but what is the girl of eighteen to think of *your* culture and *your* sentiment, if you pound the keys as if you were one of the “piano-furies”?

While this is your mode of accompanying the etudes, how then do you accompany the aria, the song? If, for instance, the pupil is singing tenderly, and wishes to bring out an artistic, delicate shading, you take advantage of that occasion to make yourself heard, and to annoy the singer and the audience with your rough shading. A singing-teacher who does not take pains to acquire a good, delicate touch, and who neglects to pay constant attention to it, is wanting in the first requirement; and this is closely connected with the want of “the three trifles.”

CHAPTER X.

VISIT AT MRS. N.’S.



MRS. N.

Her daughter FATIMA, eighteen years old.

AN AUNT.

DOMINIE.

Towards the end of the evening, the piano-teacher, MR. FEEBLE.

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DOMINIE (*rather anxiously to Fatima*). Will you do me the favor, Miss, to play something on the piano? Your aunt has told me a great deal about your playing.

FATIMA (*smiling graciously*). But, really, the piano is out of tune,—so my teacher says.

DOMINIE. But does not your teacher attend to having your piano always kept in tune?

FATIMA. Mamma says it is too expensive to have it tuned so often; it gets out of tune again so quickly. It is an old, small-legged piano, as you see: mamma is always saying, when I am older I shall have a Chickering. The tuner comes regularly once in three months; the time is not yet up.

DOMINIE. But is your teacher satisfied with the tuning of your piano?

FATIMA. Well, he has got used to it. It is the same with the other instruments he teaches on.

MRS. N. Now, pet, play us something. Mr. Dominie likes music; he is a judge of it; his daughters play too.

FATIMA. But what shall I play, mamma?

MRS. N. You have got heaps of notes there. Mr. Dominie, pray select something.

DOMINIE. But I don't know which pieces Miss Fatima can master, and which she has now at her fingers' ends.

AUNT. Pray, Mr. Dominie, choose any thing. They are all fine pieces. It makes no difference to her which she plays.

DOMINIE. But do you play that whole heap?

AUNT. She has played it all. She has played ever since she was ten years old, and she has a very good teacher. He taught here when my sister used to accompany her lover's solos on the flute. Oh, those were charming musical evenings! And the teacher often played the guitar with them *extempore*. It was just like a concert.

DOMINIE. Indeed! that must have been very fine. Now, Miss, I beg—

FATIMA. But, mamma, just say what I shall play.

DOMINIE. Is not your teacher here this evening? He will know best.

AUNT (*whispers to Dominie*). He is busy this evening, composing some grand bravoura variations, which are to be dedicated to Fatima on her eighteenth birthday, the day after to-morrow. You must come to see us on that day. Fatima will play them at sight.

MRS. N. Fatima, don't hold back any longer. Play "The Huguenots" by Thalberg: that's a very fine piece.

DOMINIE. Pray do! I have not heard it since I heard Thalberg play it.

AUNT (*to Dominie*). Don't you make your daughters play it then? Oh, that magnificent choral! That brings tears to my eyes! But the dear child always takes it too fast: her fingers run away with her.

MRS. N. Here it is. Please turn round so that you can see her hands, Mr. Dominie. You are such a famous teacher, perhaps you can make some suggestions. (*I was expected only to admire.*)

DOMINIE. I don't like to disturb her freedom in playing; but I will turn round, if you say so.

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(Fatima scurries through the piece excitedly, and plays in a bold way,—not, however, without ability, but with a feeble touch, without proper fingering, without tone, without time; and gets over the first two pages, with her foot always on the pedal, in such a senseless, indistinct manner that Dominie, in despair, was forced to interrupt with the remark, “But you might take the tempo_ a little more quietly.”_)

(Fatima leans back amazed, and stops playing, looking at her mother with a contemptuous expression.)

AUNT. It is owing to her great execution, and then, too, her youthful enthusiasm. Don’t you like her natural expression?

FATIMA. My teacher always makes me play it so. It is in that way that I have learned to play so much at sight.

DOMINIE. But don’t you study your pieces?

FATIMA. For the last four years I have played only at sight, so that now I can get on anywhere in the musical clubs. That is what mamma likes.

DOMINIE. But do you not play any scales and etudes? do you not practise any exercises?

AUNT. She has not done those things for the last four years. My sister thinks it is rather a hindrance, and is too pedantic. Her teacher thinks so too, and he teaches her the fine concert pieces of Doehler, Liszt, Dreyschock, Willmer, and Thalberg. She learns execution by these. She has gone through all Thalberg’s music; and we have sent to Leipzig for Willmer’s “Pompa di Festa.”

DOMINIE. All this shows great enthusiasm, but really a little too much hot haste.

(Dominie wishes to continue the conversation, in order to escape the unpleasant necessity of “turning round to the piano.”)

MRS. N. *(interrupts)*. My child, just begin again at the beginning, and let us enjoy the whole of “The Huguenots.” Mr. Dominie likes it.

(Fatima consents, and hurries through the whole Potpourri with a confident, conceited air, to the great despair of Dominie. At the choral, the aunt taps him on the shoulder, and whispers.)

AUNT. Is not that touching? It is a little too fast, you will agree; but then the execution! Has not the girl a great deal of talent? Just hear!

* * * * *

But what did Dominie say after the performance was over? He only bowed stiffly, and what he said to himself will always remain a secret. He only *felt*.

They go in to supper. All who submitted to hearing the daughter perform on the badly tuned piano, which was at least a tone and a half too low, were invited to supper and handsomely treated. The wine was better than the piano. Presently the teacher, Mr. Feeble, having finished his birthday bravoura composition, appeared and was introduced. Fatima whispered to him, giggling, "I played the whole of 'The Huguenots;' it went splendidly." Mr. Feeble simpered. Dominie and he talked together, unheard, at the end of the table.

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DOMINIE. The young lady has talent, Mr. Feeble.

MR. FEEBLE. Indeed she has!

DOMINIE. How is it, Mr. Feeble, that she does not combine serious studies with her playing?

MR. FEEBLE. Oh! I used to make her play exercises by A.E. Mueller, and some Etudes of Czerny's, and sometimes a few scales. But the child was so volatile, and had so little perseverance, and was so quick at learning every thing! And then her mother wanted her to play modern pieces for parties, and we had to busy ourselves with those. But our method has borne good fruit, as you can see. Is not it so?

DOMINIE. Do you not think, with firmness and decision, you could have set Mrs. N. on the right track? Could not you cultivate the mechanical powers of your pupil, and combine an understanding of the musical construction of the piece, with her "playing at sight"? The young lady, not to speak of other faults, has no tone on the piano.

MR. FEEBLE. She can use the pedal for that, and, when she is older, she will acquire more strength; her touch is a little too weak at present. And, besides, she is not to play in public for money, but only in company, and because it is the fashion. Indeed, my dear sir, if I insisted on scales and exercises, I should have very few lessons in this city. I have a wife and children to support, and my old father, the former organist, is dependent upon me. You can do all this with your own children; but think how much time it requires to *study* the music!

(The company bid each other "good-night.")

FATIMA (*flippantly to Dominie*). I believe your daughter Emma is a very good player; but they say she has not so much talent as your eldest daughter.

DOMINIE. Indeed! who told you that?

CHAPTER XI.

SECRETS.

(A Discourse on Piano-Playing, delivered to an Audience of Lady Pupils.)

Ladies,—As I am about to make a journey of a few weeks with my daughters, we will suspend for a short time our musical meetings. On my return, you will resume them with fresh interest. We will then not only play and sing together, but occasionally talk



upon kindred subjects. Your friends will be made welcome, provided they are really interested in simple and noble musical performances, which make no attempt at display. We will exclude from our circle malicious criticism and idle curiosity: we require the accompaniment of the violin and 'cello, but not of those two disturbing elements.

To-day I wish to propound a query in regard to piano-playing, to the partial solution of which you will perhaps be glad to give some attention. You may be sure that I shall always speak only upon subjects which are not even mentioned in the most crowded piano-schools.

Query. Why is it that our young, educated ladies, who enjoy the advantages of sufficient talent, industry, a serious purpose, and all the necessary aids, are usually dissatisfied with their progress and with their success in piano-playing?

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Their education is a sufficiently careful one, extending to all branches of knowledge; but their intellectual advancement in music (although it has been fostered for years, by constantly listening to good music, and frequently to the performances of distinguished players, and by a critical comparison of their own performances with these) is still small in proportion to their power of execution, and to the mechanical facility which they have acquired. These are certainly essential to a correct and agreeable rendering of a piece of music: the compositions which are to be performed ought, however, never to demand the exercise of all the mechanical skill which has been acquired, for in that case, by the struggle with mechanical difficulties, only embarrassment, discouragement, and anxious haste are apt to take the place of boldness, confidence in one's self, and command of the music. It is the duty of teachers, in choosing studies for the improvement of technique, to select only such as are within the mechanical powers of the pupil, in order that he may make steady progress, and may acquire a pure and delicate style of execution, retaining at the same time a lively interest in his pursuit. But why has the acquirement of this technique been usually unsuccessful?

1. Because you begin to acquire it too late. In order to gain facility and flexibility of the fingers and wrist (which a child in the sixth or seventh year, with a skilful teacher, may acquire in four lessons), from fifteen to twenty lessons, according to the construction of the hand, are necessary with persons from ten to fourteen years old. For other reasons also, we must urge that the mechanical facility should usually be acquired, or at least a complete foundation for it laid in childhood, and not left to be formed by a course which is destructive of all spirit, at an age when labor is performed with self-consciousness,—an age when our ladies are talking a great deal of musical interpretations, of tenderness and depth of feeling, of poetry and inspiration in playing, to which they are led by the possession of our classical piano compositions and immortal master-works, and by intellectual friends and teachers aiming at the highest culture. You reply: “But even if your mode of elementary instruction should meet with faithful disciples, how, in such young pupils, are we to find perseverance and sense enough to continue these severe exercises, even in your interesting manner?” My dear ladies, children ought to do it merely from habit, although in many cases, after the beginning, talent and correct musical instinct may make their appearance. Uninterrupted enjoyment would indeed be unnatural, and where you find it vanity will usually be its moving spring, and this seldom bears good fruit. You may as well ask whether our great literary men and artists always like to go to school, or whether they did not delight in a holiday. Let this be the answer to the strange question, Do your daughters like to play? Good heavens! After they are able to play, and that without much effort, and a little at sight; when they can master, with a musical appreciation, easy, graceful salon music, or even the easier compositions of Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Chopin, Hummel, Moscheles, &c.,—then they take pleasure in playing, and they play a great deal, and with enthusiasm.

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2. But, in case children should sometimes begin in their sixth year, you must remember what is said, in the first chapter of this work, with regard to the prevalent false method of teaching beginners. You, however, are supposed to have had better and more sensible teachers. Let me nevertheless quote for your amusement the remark which I have heard so frequently in the course of my long life as a piano-teacher: "In the beginning, a poor, rattling piano, that is forty years old, and that is tuned regularly once a year, and a cheap teacher, will do well enough. As soon as the children learn to play really well, then we will have a better piano and a better teacher." Yes; but that time never comes, and the parents soon conclude that even the most gifted children have no talent, and take no pleasure in music; and so they stop learning, only to regret it when they are older. But the parents console themselves, and after a while the old piano is never tuned at all. But, as I have told you, I do not refer here to *your* teachers, for whom I have a personal regard, and who teach on excellent pianos.

3. Don't be angry with me for my suggestion, ladies: *you do not make enough use of the minutes*. While our learned education absorbs so much time, while our friends require so many hours, while, alas! balls and dinners consume whole days, we must be sparing of the remaining minutes.

"Now I must rush to the piano! I must go to dinner in ten minutes: two scales, two finger exercises, two difficult passages out of the piece I have to learn, and one exercise to invent on the dominant and sub-dominant, are soon done; and then the dinner will taste all the better."

"My dear Agnes, we might talk for ever about this dreadful snow, it won't melt the sooner for it: how do you like this passage that I am going to play to you? It is from a charming Nocturne, by Chopin, and is so difficult that I shall have to play it over fifty times, or else I shall always stumble at this place, and I never shall know the Nocturne to play to any one. Don't you think it is beautiful?—so spiritual and original! I can tell you it will be something to boast of, when I have accomplished that. You like it better the oftener I play it? So do I."

"We have an invitation out. Mother has a great deal to arrange, and directions to give. We shall have to go in ten minutes. I must rush to the piano, though I am in rather an inconvenient toilette: I may as well accustom myself to play in it. I shall have to spend three hours this evening without any music. Well, to make up for it, I will occupy myself for the next ten minutes with an exercise for this obstinate fourth finger, though it is pretty dry. That weak finger has been a hindrance to many a fine passage and scale. That is better! Now I can put on my tight gloves. Suppose I should put on the left glove on the way."

Well, my young ladies, how many hours do you think all those minutes would make in a year? But I hear you say, "What is the use of worrying to pick up all those stray

minutes, like lost pins? We have a whole hour to practise every day, when nothing prevents.” Exactly, when nothing prevents.

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I will now tell you a few of my secrets for piano performers.

If in piano-playing, or in any art, you wish to attain success, you must resolve to work every day, at least a little, on the technique. Sickness and other unavoidable interruptions deprive you of days enough.

Practise always with unexhausted energy: the result will be tenfold. Do you not frequently use the time for practising, when you have already been at work studying for five or six hours? Have you then strength and spirit enough to practise the necessary exercises for an hour or more, and to study your music-pieces carefully and attentively, as your teacher instructed you? Is not your mind exhausted, and are not your hands and fingers tired and stiff with writing, so that you are tempted to help out with your arms and elbows, which is worse than no practice at all? But, my dear ladies, if you practise properly, several times every day, ten minutes at a time, your strength and your patience are usually sufficient for it; and, if you are obliged to omit your regular "hour's practice," you have, at any rate, accomplished something with your ten minutes before breakfast, or before dinner, or at any leisure moment. So, I beg of you, let me have my minutes.

Practise often, slowly, and without pedal, not only the smaller and larger etudes, but also your pieces. In that way you gain, at least, a correct, healthy mode of playing, which is the foundation of beautiful playing. Do you do this when neither your teacher, nor your father or mother is present to keep watch over you? Do you never say, "Nobody is listening"?

Do you take enough healthy exercise in the open air? Active exercise, in all weather, makes strong, enduring piano fingers, while subsisting on indoor-air results in sickly, nervous, feeble, over-strained playing. Strong, healthy fingers are only too essential for our present style of piano-playing, which requires such extraordinary execution, and for our heavy instruments. So I still beg for the minutes: your walks take up hours enough.

Excessive and fatiguing feminine occupations, and drawing, or painting, are by no means consistent with an earnest, practical musical education; not only because both those occupations require so much time, but because they deprive the fingers of the requisite pliability and dexterity, while knitting, according to the latest discoveries, produces an unnatural nervous excitement, which is unfavorable to healthy progress in music. I at least, in my instruction on the piano, have never been able to accomplish much with ladies who are devoted to knitting, crochet, and embroidering. My dear ladies, you who have been born in fortunate circumstances, and have been educated by your parents, without regard to expense, should, at least, allow the poor girl in the country, who is obliged to hide her talents under a bushel, the small privilege of making a collar for your mother's or your aunt's

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birthday present. I assure you your mother or your aunt, if you surprise them instead with a fine piano performance, will be as much pleased as if you strained your eyes and bent your back for days and nights over the needle-work. And now as regards painting: painting and music, though theoretically so nearly related, agree but poorly in practice; at least, if you are in earnest about either. You say painters often play on the guitar and the flute. That may be true: I will allow them those two instruments. But piano-playing stands on a different footing, even for mere amateurs. Sweet melodies on those instruments may afford an agreeable companionship for the painter in his rambles through the woods and over the hills; but piano-playing should be the friend of a life-time, ennobled by the elevating enjoyment of lofty master-works. Therefore, I beg you, do not dissipate your powers too much. Leave the art of painting to your friends, who are either without talent for music, or who have no opportunity to study it. Our short lives do not allow the successful practice of several arts. Of what advantage to our higher culture is it to be able to do ten things tolerably well; what gain for the future, for humanity, or for the true happiness of the individual? And even if you can succeed in painting something which scarcely can be said to resemble a rose, of what advantage is it, when we have so many real roses to admire?

My dear ladies, I warn you, generally, do not be afraid of the so-called classical, heavy music, especially Beethoven's, if you desire to learn from it, only or chiefly, repose, lightness, facility, elasticity, graceful, delicate playing, and a fine touch. It is necessary to play such music after those brilliant qualities have already been, to a certain degree, acquired by mere studies and appropriate pieces. It is, however, still more foolish and impractical, when parents (who perhaps are skilful musicians, but who have no recollection of their own youth) hold the mistaken opinion that their children ought, from the very beginning, to practise and play only fine classical music, in order that the children's ears may not be injured by false progressions, by insignificant finger exercises, and by easily comprehensible Italian airs, and that they themselves may not be ruined body and soul. Gracious heavens! how much pure music, suited to the piano, have not my daughters, as well as many others whom I have brought up to be fine performers, played and studied!—such, for instance, as the music of Huenten, Czerny, Burgmueller, Kalkbrenner, A. and J. Schmitt, Herz, and many others. Who finds fault now with their musical culture, with their sound taste, or their want of love for classical music? What a long road a child has to travel through Etudes of Cramer, Moscheles, and Chopin, before he comes to Bach's Well-tempered Clavichord, or before he is able, or ought even, to study Beethoven's Sonate Pathetique! It is not well, though quite

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in the spirit of the times, to condemn without experience, from one's own prejudiced point of view, the methods which those skilled in their business have for years successfully tried and practised. It is possible to make pupils musical in the above way, but they will be only dull, clumsy bunglers on the piano; not fine artists, who alone can give a worthy and noble interpretation of classical music. I desire that my daughters may never forget my well-considered instructions, sustained by the experience of many years; and that they may, in grateful remembrance of their father and teacher, repay to their pupils what they owe to him.

But I see among my audience several beginners in singing, and I beg to be allowed a word to them. So long as many of our German song composers consider it beneath their dignity to study the art of singing in the old Italian master-works, and under the guidance of well-qualified singing masters,—as Gluck, Naumann, Hasse, Haendel, Haydn, Mozart, Salieri, Winter, and others have done,—I warn you to take care of your tender voices, which are so easily ruined, and not to allow yourselves to be misled by ingenious opinions, and by music otherwise good. The loss of your voices follows in the footsteps of modern tortures in singing, as you may see sufficiently in all our theatres, or, indeed, may experience yourselves in numberless German songs. Apply also to singing what I have just said about piano-playing: as you should choose for the piano music suited to the piano, so for your studies in singing select only that which is adapted to the voice; under the guidance of prudent and educated teachers, not of modern voice breakers, who allow you to scream, “in order to bring out the voice.” When you have acquired a good technique, when your attack is sure, and a certain skilfulness in singing has been developed, then only you may try, by way of experiment, a few pieces of such spirited but unskilled song composers, who frequently commit sins in every line against correct representation, the register of the voice, the breathings, the pronunciation, and a hundred other things.

Look around and see who sing these so-called classical songs. They are either singers who do not know what singing is, and who have no taste for it, which, in consequence of their education, they never can have; or those who no longer have any voice, and accordingly sing every thing, or, rather, declaim it, because they cannot sing. I recommend you to sing (to mention the names of two only of our most excellent song composers) the charming songs of Fr. Schubert and Mendelssohn, who, in constant intercourse with the most judicious masters of singing in Vienna and Italy, have striven constantly to compose scientifically, and have at the same time produced clever songs; but you should sing them not too often, or too many of them. Singing in the German language, and in syllables, and often with clumsy melodies, requires a great deal of voice, and easily leads to many faults and to a false manner. Remember how strictly Jenny Lind selected, for performance in her concerts, the songs of Schubert, Mendelssohn, and Schumann. In this way she succeeded in winning great success, even with small, short songs.

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Finally, one more secret for performers, which weighs heavy in the balance. You ought, especially if you have not received good early instruction, to acquire a habit of moving the fingers very frequently, at every convenient opportunity; and particularly of letting them fall loosely and lightly upon any hard object, while the hand lies upon something firm, in an extended position.

You must accustom yourselves to do this unconsciously. For example, while reading, at table, or while listening to music, allow your hand to lie upon the table, raise the fingers, and let them fall, one at a time, quite independently of the wrist; particularly the weak fourth and fifth fingers, which require to be used a hundred times more than the others, if you wish to acquire evenness in the scales. If it attracts attention to do this on the table, then do it in your lap, or with one hand over the other. To drum with your fingers and stretch your hands on the backs of other people is not often practicable, and is not necessary. That was only pardoned in the zealous and original Adolph Henselt, who, though otherwise such a modest and amiable artist, even now, in St. Petersburg, makes himself ridiculous in this way, by his practice of finger movements.

Now you perceive the reason why I cannot answer the question which has been asked me innumerable times. How much do your daughters practise? I cannot count up the finger movements and the stray ten minutes just spoken of; but it is certain that they practise fewer hours in the day than many thousands who learn nothing, for they never practise and never have practised wrongly, but always correctly and advantageously.

One thing more. After my experienced, watchful eye had observed in our circle many moving fingers in consequence of my lecture, a distinguished lady of Vienna whispered in my ear: "But, my dear Herr Wieck, my Amelia is not to be a professional player: I only want her to learn a few of the less difficult sonatas of Beethoven, to play correctly and fluently, without notes." My dear ladies, I do not aim with you at any thing more than this. A great many circumstances must combine for the formation of fine concert performers; in fact, the whole education, from the earliest youth, must have reference to this end. If this were not so, Germany especially, on account of its natural musical talent, would be able annually to furnish thousands of *virtuoso* performers.

Has my lecture been too long to-day? I ask your pardon. My desire to make myself useful to you must be my excuse, if I cannot dispose of such an extensive subject in a few words. I have not yet exhausted it.

CHAPTER XII.

THOUGHTS ON PIANO-PLAYING.

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My daughters play the music of all the principal composers, and also the best salon music. Limited views of any kind are injurious to art. It is as great a mistake to play only Beethoven's music as to play none of it, or to play either classical or salon music solely. If a teacher confines himself to the study of the first, a good technique, a tolerably sound style of playing, intelligence, and knowledge are generally sufficient to produce an interpretation in most respects satisfactory. The music usually compensates for a style which may be, according to circumstances, either dry, cold, too monotonous or too strongly shaded, and even for an indifferent or careless touch. Interest in the composition frequently diverts the attention of even the best player from a thoroughly correct and delicate mode of execution, and from the effort to enhance the beauty of the composition, and to increase its appreciation with the hearer. In the performance of classical music, inspiration—that is, the revelation of an artistic nature and not empty affectation—can be expected only from an artist, and not from a pupil. Therefore, with more advanced pupils, I take up in my lessons, in connection with a sonata by Beethoven, a nocturne or waltz by Chopin, and a piece by St. Heller or Schulhoff, Henselt, C. Meyer, &c. Elegance and polish, a certain coquetry, nicety, delicacy, and fine shading cannot be perfected in the study of a sonata by Beethoven; for which, however, the latter pieces present much greater opportunities. Besides this, variety is much more sustaining to the learner; it excites his interest; he does not so soon become weary, and is guarded from carelessness; his artistic knowledge is increased, and he is agreeably surprised to find himself able to perform three pieces so distinct in character.

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“Expression cannot be taught, it must come of itself.” But when are we to look for it? When the stiff fingers are fifty or sixty years old, and the expression is imprisoned in them, so that nothing is ever to be heard of it? This is a wide-spread delusion. Let us look at a few of those to whom expression has come of itself. X. plays skilfully and correctly, but his expression continues crude, cold, monotonous; he shows too pedantic a solicitude about mechanical execution and strict time; he never ventures on a *pp.*, uses too little shading in *piano*, and plays the *forte* too heavily, and without regard to the instrument; his *crescendi* and *diminuendi* are inappropriate, often coarse and brought in at unsuitable places; and—his *ritardandi*! they are tedious indeed! “But Miss Z. plays differently and more finely.” Truly, she plays differently; but is it more finely? Do you like this gentle violet blue, this sickly paleness, these rouged falsehoods, at the expense of all integrity of character? this sweet, embellished, languishing style, this *rubato*

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and dismembering of the musical phrases, this want of time, and this sentimental trash? They both have talent, but their expression was allowed to be developed of itself. They both would have been very good players; but now they have lost all taste for the ideal, which manifests itself in the domain of truth, beauty, and simplicity. If pupils are left to themselves, they imitate the improper and erroneous easily and skilfully; the right and suitable with difficulty, and certainly unskilfully. Even the little fellow who can hardly speak learns to use naughty, abusive words more quickly and easily than fine, noble expressions. What school-master has not been surprised at this facility, and what good old aunt has not laughed at it? But you say, "It is not right to force the feelings of others!" That is quite unnecessary; but it is possible to rouse the feelings of others, to guide and educate them, without prejudicing their individuality of feeling, and without restraining or disturbing them, unless they are on the wrong path. Who has not listened to performers and singers who were otherwise musical, but whose sentiment was either ridiculous or lamentable?

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It is generally acknowledged that, among other things, I have succeeded more or less with all my scholars in the attainment of a fine touch. People desire to obtain from me the requisite exercises for the development of this; but not much can be gained from these. The important thing is *how* and *when* they are to be used; and that most careful attention shall be paid in the selection of other etudes and pieces, in order that nothing shall be played which shall endanger the confirmation of the correct touch already acquired, or shall undo what has been accomplished in the lessons. As I have said before, it does not depend upon much practising, but upon correct practising; and that the pupils shall not be allowed to fall into errors. I am constantly asked, "How many hours a day do your daughters practise?" If the number of hours spent in practising gives the measure of the standing of a *virtuoso*, then my daughters are among the most insignificant, or in fact should not belong to the order at all.

This is the place for me to explain myself more fully with regard to playing with a loose wrist, in order that I shall not be misunderstood. The tones which are produced with a loose wrist are always more tender and more attractive, have a fuller sound, and permit more delicate shading than the sharp tones, without body, which are thrown or fired off or tapped out with unendurable rigidity by the aid of the arm and fore-arm. A superior technique can with few exceptions be more quickly and favorably acquired in this way than when the elbows are required to contribute their power. I do not, however, censure the performance of many *virtuosos*, who execute rapid octave passages with a stiff wrist; they often do it with great precision, in the most rapid *tempo*, forcibly and effectively. It must, after all, depend upon individual peculiarities whether the pupil can learn better and more quickly to play such passages thus or with a loose wrist. The

present style of bravoura playing for *virtuosos* cannot dispense with facility in octave passages; it is a necessary part of it.

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I will now consider the use of loose and independent fingers, in playing generally; *i.e.*, in that of more advanced pupils who have already acquired the necessary elementary knowledge. The fingers must be set upon the keys with a certain decision, firmness, quickness, and vigor, and must obtain a command over the key-board; otherwise, the result is only a tame, colorless, uncertain, immature style of playing, in which no fine *portamento*, no poignant *staccato*, or sprightly accentuation can be produced. Every thoughtful teacher, striving for the best result, must, however, take care that this shall only be acquired gradually, and must teach it with a constant regard to individual peculiarities, and not at the expense of beauty of performance, and of a tender, agreeable touch.

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It is a mortifying fact for many critics, artists, composers, and teachers, that the general public show much more correct judgment and appreciation of a fine, noble piano performance, and of a simple, pure, well-taught style of singing, and also understand the characteristics of the performer, much more quickly than they do. The sensibility and appreciation of beauty with the public is less prejudiced, less spurious, more receptive, and more artless. Its perceptions are not disturbed by theories, by a desire to criticise, and many other secondary matters. The public do not take a biassed or stilted view. The admiration for Jenny Lind is a striking proof of this, as is also the appreciation of many piano-players.

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The age of progress announces, in piano-playing also, “a higher beauty” than has hitherto existed. Now, I demand of all the defenders of this new style, wherein is this superior beauty supposed to consist? It is useless to talk, in a vague way, about a beauty which no one can explain. I have listened to the playing—no, the thrumming and stamping—of many of these champions of the modern style of beauty; and I have come to the conclusion, according to my way of reasoning, that it ought to be called a higher,—quite different, inverted beauty,—a deformed beauty, repugnant to the sensibilities of all mankind. But our gifted “age of the future” protests against such cold conservatism. The period of piano fury which I have lived to see, and which I have just described, was the introduction to this new essay, only a feeble attempt, and a preliminary to this piano future. Should this senseless raging and storming upon the piano, where not one idea can be intelligently expressed in a half-hour, this abhorrent and rude treatment of a grand concert piano, combined with frightful misuse of both pedals, which puts the hearer into agonies of horror and spasms of terror, ever be regarded as any thing but a return to barbarism, devoid of feeling and reason? This is to be called music! music of the future! the beauty of the future style!

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Truly, for this style of music, the ears must be differently constructed, the feelings must be differently constituted, and a different nervous system must be created! For this again we shall need surgeons, who lie in wait in the background with the throat improvers. What a new and grand field of operations lies open to them! Our age produces monsters, who are insensible to the plainest truths, and who fill humanity with horror. Political excesses have hardly ceased, when still greater ones must be repeated in the world of music. But comfort yourselves, my readers: these isolated instances of madness, these last convulsions of musical insanity, with however much arrogance they may be proclaimed, will not take the world by storm. The time will come when no audience, not even eager possessors of complimentary tickets, but only a few needy hirelings, will venture to endure such concert performances of “the future.”

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I ought to express myself more fully with regard to expression in piano-playing. It is difficult to perform this task, at least in writing; for it can more easily be practically explained to individual learners. Intelligent teachers, who are inclined to understand my meaning, will find abundant material, as well as all necessary explanations, in the preceding chapters; and I will merely say that a teacher who is endowed with the qualities which I have designated as “the three trifles” will seek to excite the same in his pupils; will refine and cultivate them, according to his ability, with disinterestedness, with energy, and with perseverance; and truth and beauty will everywhere be the result. Thus he will remain in the present, where there is so much remaining to be accomplished. These three trifles certainly do not have their root in folly, want of talent, and hare-brained madness; therefore the possessors of the latter must look to the “future,” and proclaim a “higher,” that is, an “inverted beauty.”

Rules for Piano Pupils.

You must never begin to learn a second piece until you have entirely conquered the first.

You ought to fix your eyes very carefully on the notes, and not to trust to memory; otherwise, you will never learn to play at sight.

In order to avoid the habit of false fingering, you should not play any piece which is not marked for the proper fingers.

You should learn to play chords and skipping notes, without looking at the keys, as this interferes with a prompt reading of the notes.

You must learn to count nicely in playing, in order always to keep strict time.

To use for once the language of the times, which boldly proclaims, "Such things as these belong to a stand-point which we have already reached," I wish that the musicians of "the future" may as happily reach their "stand-point," not by hollow phrases and flourishes, and the threshing of empty straws, but by practical, successful efforts, and striving for that which is better.

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“What is the value of your method, in the instruction of pupils who have for years played many pieces from notes, but have played them badly, and whom we are called upon to lead into a better way of playing?”

A reply to this frequent inquiry can be found in my first chapter. Above all things, let the notes which have already been played be laid aside for a long time; for a mistaken style of playing these has become so confirmed that to improve them is hopeless, and the tottering edifice must fall to the ground. First, improve the touch; help to acquire a better and more connected scale; teach the formation of different cadences on the dominant and sub-dominant; and the construction of various passages on the chord of the diminished seventh, to be played with correct, even, and quiet fingering, *legato* and *staccato*, *piano*, and *forte*; pay strict attention to the use of loose fingers and a loose wrist; and allow no inattentive playing. You may soon take up, with these studies, some entirely unfamiliar piece of music, suited to the capacity of the pupil. It is not possible or desirable to attempt to make a sudden and thorough change with such pupils, even if they should show the best intentions and docility. You should select a light, easy piece of salon music, but of a nature well adapted to the piano, which shall not be wearisome to the pupil, and in the improved performance of which he will take pleasure. But, if you still find that he falls into the old, faulty manner of playing, and that the recently acquired technique, which has not yet become habitual, is endangered by it, lay this too aside, and take instead some appropriate etude, or perhaps a little prelude by Bach. If, in the place of these, you choose for instruction a ponderous sonata, in which the music would distract the attention of the pupil from the improved technique, you give up the most important aim of your instruction, and occupy yourself with secondary matters; you will censure and instruct in vain, and will never attain success. You must consider, reflect, and give your mind to the peculiar needs of the pupil, and you must teach in accordance with the laws of psychology. You will succeed after a while, but precipitation, compulsion, and disputes are useless. The improvement of a soprano voice, ruined by over-screaming, requires prudence, patience, calmness, and modesty, and a character of a high type generally. It is also a very thankless task, and success is rare; while on the piano a fair result may always be accomplished.

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I return once more to the subject so frequently discussed, that I may try to relieve the universal difficulty of our lady pianists. I have heard much playing of late, in parties both small and large, on well-tuned and on ill-tuned pianos, on those with which the performer was familiar, and on those to which she was unaccustomed; from the timid and the self-possessed; from ladies of various ages, possessed of more or of less talent, and in various cities: the result was always the same.

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We hear from the ladies that they could play their pieces at home before their parents or their teachers; but this is never sufficient to enable them to save their hearers from weariness, anxiety, and all sorts of embarrassment. My honored ladies, you play over and over again two mazourkas, two waltzes, two nocturnes, and the Funeral March of Chopin, the Mazourka and other pieces by Schulhoff, the Trill-Etude, and the Tremolo by Carl Meyer, &c.: "it makes no difference to you which." You might be able to master these pieces pretty well, but, instead of this, you yourselves are mastered. You become embarrassed, and your hearers still more so: the affair ends with apologies on both sides, with equivocal compliments, with encouragement to continue in the same course, with acknowledgment of fine hands for the piano, with uneasy, forced congratulations to the parents and teacher; but it is always a happy moment when the fatal soiree is over. The next day I am forced to sigh again over the same, miserable, poorly and tediously performed Funeral March of Chopin, and over the timorous B major Mazourka by Schulhoff. The left hand is always left in the lurch in the difficult, skipping basses of this piece, and in others of the present style, which are rich in harmony and modulations. The bass part in this piece is apt to suffer from timid and false tones; frequently the fundamental tone is omitted, or the little finger remains resting upon it, instead of giving the eighth note with a crisp, elastic, and sprightly touch, and the chords are tame and incomplete. You do not give them their full value; you leave them too quickly, because you are afraid of not striking the next low note quickly enough; but, on the other hand, you do not strike it at all, and one missing tone brings another one after it. The right hand, being the most skilful, is supposed to play with expression, and really does so; but this only makes the performance the worse. The fundamental tone is wanting, and you are led to make a mistake in the skip, and strike the wrong key. Finally, the whole thing is ended in terror. I have an uneasy night; I dream of your fine hands, but the false and the weak notes start up between like strange spectres or will o' the wisps, and I wake with the headache, instead of with pleasant memories.

Allow me to give you a piece of advice. Play and practise the bass part a great deal and very often, first slowly, then quicker, during one or two weeks, before playing the right hand with it, in order that you may give your whole attention to playing the bass correctly, delicately, and surely. Even when you can get through the mazourka tolerably well, you must not think, on that account, that you will be able to play it in company, under trying circumstances. You ought to be able to play the piece by yourself with ease, very frequently, perfectly, and distinctly, and in very rapid *tempo*, before you trust yourself to perform it even slowly in company. At least,

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practise the more difficult passages for the right hand very frequently, particularly the difficult and bold conclusion, that it may not strike the hearer as rough, weak, tame, or hurried. It is an old rule, "If you begin well and end well, all is well." You ought to practise the skipping bass over and over again by itself, otherwise it will not go. An incorrect or deficient bass, without depth of tone and without accentuation, ruins every thing, even the good temper of the hearer. One thing more: you know very well Chopin's Nocturne in E flat, and have played it, among other things, for the last four weeks. Suddenly you are called upon to play in company. You choose this Nocturne because you have played it nearly every day for four weeks. But alas! the piano fiends have come to confuse you! You strike a false bass note, and at the modulation the weak little finger touches too feebly: bah! the fundamental tone is wanting. You are frightened, and grow still more so; your musical aunt is frightened also; the blood rushes to your teacher's face, and I mutter to myself, "*C'est toujours la meme.*" The present style of skipping basses requires a great deal of practice and perfect security; it is necessary for you to know the piece by heart, in order to give your whole attention to the left hand. It is also essential that you shall have acquired a clear, sound touch; otherwise, you cannot give a delicate accent and shading. You must never allow yourself, *without previous preparation*, to play those pieces of music in company, in which an elegant mode of execution is all-important; otherwise, you will be taken by surprise by unexpected difficulties. You must always pay special attention to the fundamental tones, even if there should be imperfections elsewhere. Where one fault is less important than another, of two evils choose the least. You have been playing now for six or eight years: are you repaid for the trouble, if it only enables you to prepare embarrassments for others? You are not willing to play easy, insignificant pieces; and such pieces as you choose require industry, earnestness, and perseverance.

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Young ladies, it is easy to discover the character of a person from his manner of standing, walking, moving, and speaking, from the way he bows, puts on and takes off his hat, or the arrangements of the household; and we seldom are in error about it. It is also possible to infer beforehand how you will play and what sort of a performance you will give, from the manner in which you take your seat at the piano. You sidle up to the piano lazily, bent over in a constrained manner; in your embarrassment, you place yourself before the one-lined or two-lined c, instead of before f; you sit unsteadily, either too high or too low, only half on the seat, leaning either too much to the right or to the left; in a word, as if you did not belong to the fatal music-stool.

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Your manner awakens no confidence, and in this way announces that you have none yourself. How do you expect to exercise control over a grand seven octave piano, if you do not sit exactly in the middle, with the body erect and the feet on the two pedals? You are not willing to look the friend straight in the face, with whom you are to carry on a friendly, confidential discourse! Even if your attitude and bearing were not so injurious and dangerous for the performer as it is, still propriety and good sense would require that you should excite the confidence of your hearers in you and in your playing by a correct position of the body, and by a certain decision and resolution, and should prepare him to form a good opinion of you.

There are, indeed, many *virtuosos* who think they give evidence of genius, by throwing themselves on to the music-stool in a slovenly, lounging manner, and try to show in this way their superiority to a painstaking performance, and to make up by a showy *nonchalance* for what is wanting in their playing. You are, however, a stranger to such assertion of superior genius, and to such an expression of intensity of feeling; you do it only from embarrassment, and from a modest want of confidence in your own powers, which is quite unnecessary. Our great masters, such as Field, Hummel, Moscheles, Mendelssohn, and others, had no taste for such improprieties, for such manifestations of genius. They applied themselves to their task with earnest devotion, and with respect for the public.

CHAPTER XIII.

ON MUSICAL TALENT.

A large and varied experience is required for a correct estimate of musical talent in the young. Do not be deceived by the early evidences of talent; for instance, interest in melodies, correct feeling for time, an instinct for accenting the important notes, inclination for some peculiar though often perverted style of performance, quick apprehension, a natural aptitude for playing, a nice hearing, animation, rapid progress, docility, superficial gayety; even if all or a part of these traits are observable in early youth, they must not excite too sanguine hopes. I have often met with such phenomena, and have been called upon to educate such little piano prodigies. They advanced quite rapidly, and understood every thing readily, if I did not make too much demand upon their wavering attention. I dreamed of the extraordinary surprises that these marvellous youths would create at twelve or fourteen years of age; but the fulfilment of my ideal I saw only in my mind's eye, for just then the improvement came to a sudden stand-still,—a fatal moment, when the teacher is perplexed to know what to do next. The musical nature seemed to have exhausted itself, to have out-lived itself. The pupil even felt this: his interest in the piano and in music generally grew feeble, his playing suddenly became careless, powerless, spiritless; he

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played with evident indifference. Out into the fresh air! into open natural scenes! Now for a journey! I allowed a long vacation to intervene; the pupil was quite contented, and had no desire for the piano, or, if so, only jingled a little. At last we began again, but we spent our time without much result; he was nevertheless still musical, but he finally ranked at best with dozens of other players, and ended as an ordinary piano teacher. Similar halts in progress occur in fact with all pupils, especially with female scholars; but they are not usually so lasting, so discouraging, or so significant of exhaustion. They are surmounted, after a short interval, by the discontinuance of serious musical studies; perhaps by reading at sight for a while; by occupying the pupil for a time with the theory, or with attempts at composition or improvisation; by allowing him to listen to other players better or worse; by giving him interesting books to read; by making him acquainted with Beethoven, or in other ways.

From our observation of such sudden changes, and of the frequent occurrence of unskilful management, we can explain the sudden appearance and equally sudden disappearance of innumerable infant prodigies in our age, who have excited hopes, and have almost all of them been lost, or have passed out of sight, and resulted in nothing of value.

I have always preferred a gradual, even a slow development, step by step, which often made no apparent progress, but which still proceeded with a certain constancy, and with deliberation, and which was combined with dreamy sensibility and a musical instinct, requiring slow awakening, and even with a certain flightiness, one for which the patient labor and perseverance of six years or more was required, and where childishness allowed no encouragement to sordid speculations for the future. In such cases, when my instructions were not disturbed by untoward circumstances, the result has always been a desirable one. But how much patience and perseverance has this required! I have reflected much and have often spoken, both seriously and playfully, of the slow advancement of my pupils. Allow me here to describe five phases or stages of human development.

First Stage. In the first two or three years, man is far behind the animal, whose quick instinct distinguishes the good from the bad, the useful from the injurious. The child, without hesitation, rolls off the table, or knocks his brains out, or destroys himself with poisonous herbs or arsenic. Nevertheless, let him at that age hear plenty of pure sounds, music, singing, &c. He will soon learn to listen, like the little black poodle. He already has a dim suspicion that other things exist which are not evil, besides mamma, papa, the nurse, the doll, and the sound of words.

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Second Stage. From the fourth to the seventh year, instinct is developed; which, in the animal, surprises the observer in the first two weeks of life. Now we should begin with the technique, at least with the correct movement of the fingers upon the table. The child should be told that he shall soon produce the pleasant tones, which he has been accustomed to hear from infancy; but that for this a quick and quiet movement of the fingers is necessary, which must be acquired by daily practice. This is entirely in accordance with nature, for man is appointed to learn. Let the child lay his hand upon the table, and knock upon it with the first finger (*i.e.*, the thumb) stretched out, without using the muscles of the arm, then with the second, third, and fourth fingers, in an almost perpendicular position, and with the fifth finger extended. Then let him strike a third with the first and third fingers together; a fourth, with the first and fourth fingers; first with the right hand, then with the left hand, and afterwards with both together, &c.

Third Stage. From the seventh to the twelfth year. At this stage unruliness makes its appearance, and at the same time—the notes; but not Beethoven. That would indeed be an unfortunate musical indulgence. Violent outbreaks of untamed strength; unexpected freaks; alternations of rude instinct and quick intelligence, of lofty fancy and artless simplicity; disobedience; much appetite, &c.,—all these must be shaped, and made subservient to the object we have in view. Do you understand me, gentlemen?

Fourth Stage. Excellent parents, who desire to see the ripe fruits of your care and labor, have patience! First there comes the foreshadowing of manhood,—a very interesting period. The youth steps out of the animal into the human kingdom, and often is unable to forget his earlier condition, but revels in sweet remembrance of it. Try now, gently and timidly, Beethoven, Chopin, Schumann, and the like. This extraordinary being, “one-fourth animal and three-fourths human,” requires to be awakened, excited, and to have the imagination aroused; and, above all, requires the most careful guidance. It is necessary to stir and agitate the nature, in order that reflection, conscience, the sensibilities of the soul, feeling, creative power, and all inward conditions shall be developed; and that out of this chaos shall be brought a clear and beautiful order.

Fifth Stage. The adult man in his eighteenth year. The year, however, varies with individuals, and can be modified at will. If I should enter into details of the four earlier stages of humanity, and treat in addition of the adult man, I should be obliged to write a philosophical work on the subject, and that might not be entertaining. I should be obliged to beg your indulgence for a tedious book, and my daughters certainly would not thank me for it; they are very sensitive. But I must, nevertheless, secretly whisper in your ear that “my daughters, like the daughters of many others, have been carried through these five stages in the most careful and thorough manner.” I ought to know that best. Here you have the answer to many strange questions.

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Cautions.

I warn pianists, and others also, in playing:

1. Against any showy and unsuitable display. Why should you wish to attract attention, and to create an effect by foppishness and all sorts of grimaces, or by curious and marvellous exhibitions of *virtuoso*-ship? You have only to play musically and beautifully, and to deport yourselves with modesty and propriety. Direct your whole attention to the business in hand,—that is, to your performance; and endeavor to secure for it the interest of the public, who are so easily rendered inattentive. We want no more public performances from eccentric geniuses.
2. Do not devote yourself exclusively to pieces calculated to show the skill of the performer. Why desire always to show off your power in octave passages, your trills, your facility in skips, your unprecedented stretches, or other fantastic feats? You only produce weariness, satiety, and disgust, or, at least, you make yourselves ridiculous.
3. Play good music in a musical and rational manner. The public are tired of hearing Potpourris, made up of odds and ends, tedious Etudes, Rhapsodies, Fantasias without fancy, dismal monotonies and endless, cheap, silly cadences that mean nothing. Learn to understand the age, and the world in which you live.
4. Do not make yourselves ridiculous by new inventions in piano-playing. I mention, for example, one of the most foolish affectations of modern times. You try to quiver on a note, just as violin and 'cello players are unfortunately too much inclined to do. Do not expose yourselves to the derision of every apprentice in piano manufacture. Have you no understanding of the construction of the piano? You have played upon it, or have, some of you, stormed upon it, for the last ten years; and yet you have not taken pains to obtain even a superficial acquaintance with its mechanism. The hammer, which by its stroke upon the string has produced the sound, falls immediately when the tone resounds; and after that you may caress the key which has set the hammer in motion, fidget round on it as much as you please, and stagger up and down over it, in your intoxicated passion,—no more sound is to be brought out from it, with all your trembling and quivering. It is only the public who are quivering with laughter at your absurdity.
5. Give up the practice of extreme stretches. Widely dispersed harmonies may sometimes produce a good effect, but not by too frequent and too eager an employment of them at every opportunity. Even the greatest beauties in art can lead to mannerism, and this again to one-sidedness. Art should be many-sided, and you must never produce the impression that you are inclined to make the means an end. I beg you to reflect that too much practice of very wide stretches enfeebles the muscles and the power of the hand and fingers, endangers an even, sound touch, and makes the best style of playing a doubtful acquisition. Teachers ought therefore to use great prudence,

and only gradually to permit their pupils, especially young girls, to practise great extensions and wide stretches. To learn to be able to strike ten notes is quite enough.

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6. Before you perform a piece, play a few suitable chords, and a few appropriate passages or scales up and down (but play no stupid trash, such as I have heard from many *virtuosos*), in order to try whether the condition of the instrument presents any unexpected difficulties. Try carefully also the unavoidable pedal. A creaking, rattling, grating pedal is a frightful annoyance; I wonder if the piano of “the future” is to suffer from this also. Chopin’s Funeral March, with obligato accompaniment of a squeaking pedal sentiment, even although the omissions and mistakes in the bass do not occur,—alas! who can describe the effect of this melancholy march?

7. I have written a special article on the manner of sitting at the piano, and I will refer you once more to that.

8. Use no mechanical aids in practising, not even the dumb key-board; although, with very careful use, that is not without value. Strength will come with time; do not try to hurry nature. The table is the best “dumb key-board,” as I have already explained. The “hand-guide” is also unnecessary: its value is compensated by its disadvantages.

9. Do not let your hearers crowd too near while you are playing. Do not play the same piece *da capo*. You may be justified in breaking off in the midst of a piece, if there is loud and continuous talking, &c.

I hope you will give me the honor of your company again at my soirees: I am no writer of comedies, but I can tell you a great deal that is interesting and amusing which I have myself experienced.

CHAPTER XIV.

EXTRAVAGANCES IN SINGING AND PIANO-PLAYING.

(An Evening Party at Mr. Gold’s.)

DRAMATIS PERSONAE.

MR. GOLD, *the banker (fond of music).*

MRS. GOLD *(sings, and is an invalid.)*

MR. SILVER, *bookkeeper (formerly a singer with Strauss).*

MR. PIOUS, *a friend of the family (a musical impostor, and a hypocrite generally).*

MR. FORTE, *a foreign piano virtuoso (of weak nerves).*

DOMINIE, *a piano-teacher.*

EMMA, *his daughter.*



(Mrs. Gold has just been singing in the modern Italian manner; suddenly alternating exaggerated high and low tones, given in a jerking manner, with inaudible pianissimo_ in the throat, and quavering on every note, with many ornaments, and always a quarter of a tone too flat. She sang all the four verses of "Fondly I Think of Thee" by Krebs.)

DOMINIE. Will you not go on, Mrs. Gold? The piano is a little too high, and you are obliged to accustom yourself a little to it.

MRS. GOLD. I cannot sing any more. That beautiful song has taken such hold of me, and I feel so badly. *(Whispers to Dominie.)* Mr. Forte did not accompany me well, either: sometimes he did not come in right, and played too feebly; and sometimes he improvised too much in playing, and overpowered my voice, which is a little weak just now.

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DOMINIE (*aside to Emma*). What an evening of singing! Oh dear!

MR. GOLD (*who has been earnestly talking about stocks all the evening in an adjoining room, rushes in, but rather late, after the close of the song, and impetuously presses his wife's hand*). Marvellous! magnificent! delicious! wonderful! My dear, you are in excellent voice this evening. If Jenny Lind could only have heard you!

MR. PIOUS. Charming! superb! how touching! There is a religious character in this piece, something holy about it! I beg of you, do sing that air by Voss, "True Happiness." That will make our enjoyment complete; it is truly ravishing! There is something divine in singing, and your expression, your feeling, Madam! You give yourself up so entirely to the composition!

(*Mrs. Gold has already taken up "True Happiness," and can hardly wait while Mr. Forte murmurs off the introduction, quite after his own fancy, with a sentimental piano*. Mr. Pious drops a tear at the close of the introduction, the four bars of which have been transformed into eight bars by the great *virtuoso*. During the tremulous, affected performance of "True Happiness," Mr. Pious rolls up his moistened eyes; and, at the end of the first verse, where the accompanist once more gives the reins to his fancy, he says, "I am speechless, I cannot find words to express my emotion!")

DOMINIE (*aside to Emma*). That you may call forged sentiment, the counterfeit of feeling. You hear now how one ought *not* to sing. For an earnest, true musician, such a warmth in singing is only empty affectation, disgusting, sentimental rubbish, and hollow dissimulation. You will, however, frequently meet with such amateur infelicities.

(*Mrs. Gold has finished singing all the verses of "True Happiness," and seems now to have almost entirely recovered. Mr. Gold continues to converse about stocks in the adjoining room. Dominie remains with Emma at the end of the parlor, depressed and worried.*)

MR. FORTE (*keeps his seat at the piano, and says in French to Mrs. Gold*). Madam, you have reached the climax of the beautiful in music. I count it one of the happiest moments of my artistic tour to be allowed to breathe out my soul at the piano, in the presence of one like yourself. What a loss, that your position must prevent you from elevating the German opera to its former greatness, as its most radiant star!

MRS. GOLD (*by this time quite well*). I must confess that Jenny Lind never quite satisfied me when she was here. She is, and must always remain, a Swede,—utterly cold. If she had been educated here, she would have listened to more passionate models than in Stockholm, and that would have given the true direction to her sensibility.

MR. FORTE. You are quite right; you have a just estimate of her. In Paris, where she might have heard such examples, she lived in perfect retirement. I was giving concerts there at the time; but she refused to sing in my concerts, and therefore she did not even hear me.

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MR. SILVER (*whom the excitement of the singing has at length reached*). Do you feel inclined now, Madam, to execute with me the duet from "The Creation," between Adam and Eve?

MRS. GOLD. Here is "The Creation," but we will sing it by and by. Mr. Forte is just going to play us his latest composition for the left hand, and some of the music of that romantic, deeply sensitive Chopin.

MR. GOLD (*rushes in from his stock discussion*). Oh, yes! Chopin's B major mazourka! That was also played at my house by Henselt, Thalberg, and Dreyschock. Oh, it is touching!

ALL (*except Mr. Silver, Dominie, and Emma*). Oh, how touching!

DOMINIE (*to his daughter*). If he plays it in the same manner in which he accompanied "True Happiness," you will hear how this mazourka should *not* be played. It, by the way, is not at all *touching*: it gives quite boldly the Polish dance rhythm, as it is improvised by the peasants in that country; but it is, however, idealized after Chopin's manner.

(*Mr. Forte plays several perilous runs up and down with various octave passages, all the time keeping his foot on the pedal; and connects with these immediately, and without a pause, the mazourka, which he commences presto*_. He played it without regard to time or rhythm, but with a constant *rubato*, and unmusical jerks. A few notes were murmured indistinctly *pp.*, and played very *ritardando*; then suddenly a few notes were struck very rapidly and with great force, so that the strings rattled; and the final B major chord cost the life of one string. _)

MR. GOLD. Excellent! bravissimo! What a comprehension of the piece! Such artistic performances make one even forget the stock-exchange!

MRS. GOLD. You agitate my inmost nerves! The English poet, Pope, holds that no created man can penetrate the secrets of nature; but you have penetrated the secrets of my soul. Now do play at once the F sharp minor mazourka, opus 6.

MR. PIOUS. What a musical evening Mrs. Gold has prepared for us! What sublime sorrow lies in this production!

MR. SILVER (*aside*). What would Father Strauss say to this affected, unmusical performance, that bids defiance to all good taste?

DOMINIE. Mrs. Gold, it would be well to send for the tuner to replace this broken B string. The next one will break soon, for it is already cracked, and its tone is fallen.

MR. FORTE (*with a superior air*). It is of no consequence. That frequently happens to me; but I never mind it. The piano is a battle-field where there must be sacrifices.



DOMINIE (*whispers to Emma*). He thinks that if the sound is not musical, still it makes a noise; and tones out of tune produce more effect than those that are pure.

EMMA. Where did he learn piano-playing?

DOMINIE. My child, he has not *learned* it. That is genius, which comes of itself. Instruction would have fettered his genius, and then he would have played distinctly, correctly, unaffectedly, and in time; but that would be too much like the style of an amateur. This uncontrolled hurly-burly, which pays no regard to time, is called the soaring of genius.

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(Mr. Forte storms through various unconnected chords with the greatest rapidity, with the pedal raised; and passes without pause to the F sharp minor mazourka. He accents vehemently, divides one bar and gives it two extra quarter notes, and from the next bar he omits a quarter note, and continues in this manner with extreme self-satisfaction till he reaches the close; and then, after a few desperate chords of the diminished seventh, he connects with it Liszt's Transcription of Schubert's Serenade in D minor. The second string of the two-lined b snaps with a rattle, and there ensues a general whispering "whether the piece is by Mendelssohn, or Doehler, or Beethoven, or Proch, or Schumann," until finally Mr. Silver mentions Schubert's Serenade. Mr. Forte concludes with the soft pedal, which in his inspired moments he had already made frequent use of.)

DOMINIE *(to Emma)*. You should never play in company, without mentioning previously what you are going to perform. You observe, as soon as the Serenade was mentioned, it put a stop to the guessing.

ALL *(except Mr. Silver and Dominie)*. What a glorious performance! what an artistic treat!

MRS. GOLD. What spirituality in his playing!

MR. SILVER *(asking Mr. Forte for information)*. I noticed, in the Serenade, you made only one bar of the two where it modulates to F major, in your rapid playing of the passage. Was that accidental?

EMMA *(aside)*. He ought to have played a little slower just there.

MR. FORTE. In such beautiful passages, every thing must be left to the suggestion of one's feelings. Perhaps another time I may make three bars, just as inspiration and genius may intimate. Those are aesthetic surprises. Henselt, Moscheles, Thalberg, and Clara Wieck do not execute in that manner, and consequently can produce no effect, and do not travel.

DOMINIE *(to Emma)*. I hope that your natural taste and your musical education will preserve you from such preposterous extravagances.

EMMA. Such playing makes one feel quite uncomfortable and worried. Probably that is what you call "devilish modern"?

DOMINIE. Yes.

EMMA. But do people like it?

DOMINIE. Certainly: a great many people do. It has the superior air of genius, and sounds very original.



(Mrs. Gold has “The Creation” in her hand, and Mr. Silver leads her to the piano for the execution of the grand duet between Adam and Eve. Mr. Forte is exhausted, and Dominie plays the accompaniment. Mr. Silver sings intelligently and unaffectedly; Mrs. Gold, as before, but with still less regard to time, and more out of tune; but she tries to compensate for this by introducing very long ornaments at the fermate_ in the *allegro*, sung with her thin, piercing, over-strained voice; and she frequently rolls up her black eyes. At the conclusion, Mrs. Gold was led to the arm-chair, in great exhaustion of feeling._)

MR. PIOUS. The divine art of music celebrates its perfect triumph in such interpretations of Haydn. Mrs. Gold, were those delicious *fermate* of your own invention?

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MRS. GOLD. NO: the charming Viardot-Garcia first introduced them as Rosina in "The Barber of Seville," and I had them written down by a musician in the theatre. But the employment of them in this duet is my own idea. I have already surprised and delighted a great many people with them in parties. The grand, rushing, chromatic scale with which the artistic Garcia astonishes every one, when acting the dreaming, fainting Amina in "La Somnambula," I introduce in the grand aria of the divine "Prophet;" rather timidly, it is true, for the boldness of a Garcia can only be acquired on the stage.

EMMA. But, father, Jenny Lind sang in this duet in Vienna, quite simply, and with a pure religious spirit.

DOMINIE. That is the reason Mrs. Gold says that Jenny Lind sings too coldly, and ought to listen to more passionate models. But we will talk more about this at home.

MRS. GOLD. Now, Mr. Dominie, will not your daughter Emma play us some little trifle? Afterwards I will execute with Mr. Silver, "By thy loving kindness, O Lord," and a few duets by Kuecken, and finish, if the company wishes, with the "Grace" aria.

DOMINIE. Will you allow me first to replace this broken string?

(After Dominie has finished, Mr. Forte strides up to the piano, and plays his Etude for the left hand, with the right hand extended towards the company.)

DOMINIE *(to Mr. Forte, after the conclusion of the piece)*. Would it not have been easier and more to the purpose, if you had used both hands?

MR. FORTE. We must forgive old people such pedantic observations. You entirely mistake my stand-point. Do you not see that I am standing with one foot in the future? Are you not aware that the public wish not only to listen, but to see something strange? Do you not perceive also that my appearance of ill-health produces a great musical effect?

MR. PIOUS. Do you not feel the special charm and the fine effect which is produced by the left hand playing alone, and no less by the right hand extended?

DOMINIE. Is it so? Well, probably feeling has taken a false direction with me. I shall be obliged to accustom myself to such Parisian flights of sentiment.

(Emma played Chopin's Ballad in A flat major, after Dominie had previously announced it. The company were attentive.)

MR. FORTE *(at the conclusion)*. Bravo! A very good beginning, Mr. Dominie. I am sorry that I am obliged to take leave now: I am obliged to go to two more soirees this evening, and have many letters of introduction to deliver.

MR. SILVER. Miss Emma, I have just heard that you play finely a great deal of Chopin's music. Let us hear his two latest nocturnes.

MRS. GOLD (*to Emma*). Have you heard the famous Camilla Pleyel play Kalkbrenner's charming D minor concerto? Do you not also play such brilliant music? for example, Doehler's beautiful, pathetic Notturmo in D flat. Mr. X. lately played that to us enchantingly.

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EMMA. I know it. I am teaching it to my little sister, Cecilia.

DOMINIE. Will you allow her now to play Chopin's two nocturnes, Opus 48?

* * * * *

I will say nothing about the conclusion of the singing,—the “Grace” aria. At midnight there was a grand supper, washed down with sweet wine, and seasoned with bitter recollections of this musical evening.

CHAPTER XV.

CONCLUSION.

I have received the following communication from an old literary friend, to whom I sent my eighth chapter, requesting his opinion of it:—

MOTTO.

*There are unreceptive times, but
that which is eternal outlives all
times.*—JOH. VON MUELLER.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I have read your eighth chapter. What you facetiously call “the three trifles” seem to me to be three most important points, even if you had described them simply as *fine* taste, *deep* feeling, and a *good* ear. Who expects superlative excellence from the age in which he lives, and who dares to attack it, in its most vulnerable parts? You grow more harsh and disagreeable, and you do not seem to consider how many enemies you make, among those who think that they have long ago advanced beyond these three points. Just now, too, when there is so much said about “the intellectual” in music, and about “the inner nature of the future,” and when such fine expressions are invented about it, you come forward with your three unseasonable trifles in the superlative degree. Do you imagine that our intelligent age cannot discern your hidden satire?

You say that our times are in need of your three trifles, *and* the necessary knowledge and experience. *Voilà tout!*

As for Prince Louis Ferdinand, Dussek, Clementi, Himmel, Hummel, C.M.v. Weber, Beethoven, &c.,—who has not heard all about them?

After them, comes the period of “piano fury,” and the compositions appropriate for it. Now the three trifles required are *distorted* taste, *hypocritical* feeling, and a *depraved*

ear, combined with the necessary superficiality and some power of production. *Voila tout!*

After that, musicians bethink themselves once more of the genuine three trifles, and return to reason, and we are allowed to take delight in Chopin, Mendelssohn, Fr. Schubert, Robert Schumann, and a few others of the same sort, and again in Beethoven.

These were succeeded by mere dry imitators; they were not, however, of much significance.

Finally, the very latest progress introduces a still more extravagant piano fury. The three trifles are now *distorted* taste, *no* feeling, and *no* ear for tone; and with these are required the necessary audacity, immeasurable vanity, senseless exhibitions of strength, a poor touch upon the piano, and what they call "intellect." The compositions are now embellished with appropriate pictures on the cover, and with attractive title-pages. In addition, there is much talk about a "higher beauty," "the stand-points which have been already surmounted," "artistic flights," and the "misunderstanding of the inner consciousness," "Genius must be free," &c.

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My old conservative friend, you are seen through. Your influence, and more especially your ideas about singing, belong only to a past age. They date from the last century. You will be derided with your Jenny Lind and Henrietta Sontag. They are lifeless images of singers, to be kept in a glass case. Are you willing to remain ignorant of the magnificent modern style of voice? Can you not go forward with the advancing age? Progressive philosophers will rap you over the knuckles. You imagine that our times will stop for a couple of lectures! You will yet have to learn what "intellect" signifies. In short, I should not like to stand in your shoes. You should conclude your book with "Pater, peccavi."

Even in misfortune,

Your sympathizing friend,

V.E.