

A Series of Talks on Music



C. C. LAUGHER, MUS. BAC., BOWMANVILLE, Ont. No. III.

THE VIOLIN

The violin is the principal Orchestral instrument. It is the soprano of the string quartette, the quartette of instruments being, violin (soprano), viola (alto), cello (tenor), contrabass viol (bass). The quartette more often used is 1st and 2nd violin, viola and cello.

The face value of the material in a violin may not exceed many cents, but that same little instrument may be valued at several thousand dollars. I quote from the catalogue of an American violin dealer of the better known makers as follows: Guarnerius \$18,000; Bergonzi \$9,000; Guarnerius \$8,500; Stradivarius \$7,500, etc.

Everyone is familiar with the shape of the violin which is entirely hand made, its weight being 8 1/2 ounces, has 4 strings and is played with a bow. The tone of the violin resembles the human voice. It was formerly larger, but to "Gasper da Salo" we owe its present shape. A well made violin consists of 70 parts, and it is generally understood that the old Italian makers used such a delicacy in the making of violins, that it is often spoken of as a violin secret which died with the makers of that period. Violinists are familiar with such names as Stradiyari, Stainer, Guarnerius, Cremona, Amati, etc. Mozart says to choose a violin by its looks is like choosing a singing bird by its feathers.

Modern violin students smile to think of the great violinists playing with the chin on the right hand side of the tail-piece. Now we play with the chin on the left hand side of the tail-piece.

Violin compositions were in evidence around 1630. About that time the art of violin playing was generally understood.

Two notes at one time may be

played on a violin and with a quick sweep of the bow four notes may be played almost simultaneously. The violin and its music hardly bears description. Hear the great violinists of today and the execution and interpretation forms will simply amaze one.

Let us review the career of the greatest violinist that ever lived, Niccolo Paganini, an Italian, born 1784, died 1840. Although Niccolo was very delicate his mother dreamed that he would become the greatest violinist. This inspired him for at 6 years he was a remarkable player and at 9 years he played at a concert, playing his own original variations. It must be remembered that the noted Paganini played only his own compositions. At 11 years of age his father took him to Parma to take lessons from the great teacher, Rolla, but Rolla was sick in bed, and while Niccolo waited in an adjoining room, he saw a violin and a music composition lying on the table, and taking the violin he played the composition so perfectly that Rolla inquired what master was in the house. On seeing a mere boy he could hardly believe; his own eyes and protested that he could teach him nothing.

Paganini played astonishing feats on one and two strings to imitate a conversation between two lovers. He took off the 2 middle strings D and A and played the duet on the remaining strings. So well was Paganini received and appreciated that Pope Leo XII decorated him with the Order of the Golden Spur. Reports were abroad that he was a child of Satan, whom one man declared he saw directing his bow at a concert. Paganini frequently visited an old Florentine castle and people declared that he held intercourse with the devil for they heard all manner of queer noises coming from the place. When he made his first appearance in London throngs followed, him in the streets, even pinching him at times to see if he were real. In his playing he combined the arco and pizzicato together, plucking the strings with his left hand and at the same time using his bow with his right, making most astonishing feats. He turned his violin to produce different effects, his system being mostly his own even though he had much training. Paganini was much opposed to the wiles of society leaders. On one occasion they tried to secure for him \$1,000 worth of violin music in return for the price of a dinner. On another, while concertizing in Paris he received a pressing invitation to dine with

notable company, and a postscript adding "Do not fail to bring your violin." Paganini returned the invitation card with the following written upon it, "My Violin does not dine." Paganini wrought a revolution in the violin world. Vieuxtemp, the renowned Violinist, who had heard the wonderful Virtuoso said "He is the greatest of us all."

NATIONAL ECONOMIC PROBLEM.

The following interesting extract from an article by Mr. E. W. Beatty, president of the C. P. R. appeared recently in the Montreal Gazette:

"So much for the manner in which the transportation machinery of the country is carrying out its obligations to the Canadian producer. Other aspects of the transportation problem are less satisfactory. There are many people who look upon the railways as custodians of public funds which cannot be expended. They have kept us in the state of losses and vanished profits to a railway as it may be to a corner grocer. It is to these people unthinkable that the good reputation of its railway securities in the world of investment should be carefully guarded. To those, however, who understand these things clearly and who view the matter from the standpoint of broad public interest, it is at once apparent that the Canadian public pays a very low rate for the quality of service rendered, and that a time is rapidly approaching when, if Canadian railway securities are not to be made less desirable to investors than almost any other kind of industrial security, railway rates will either have to go up, or railway operating costs go down. Such persons recognize that it is not because the situation of the railways is an easy one that certain companies have been able to show net earnings—very low net earnings compared to the actual cash invested in the industry—but because in the past the shareholders of such companies have been, as they are to-day, courageous persons willing to supply the means for constructive enterprises in which no one but themselves had faith and because, too, their officers have been skilled, resourceful and loyal business men, assisted by staffs filled with the spirit of pride and devotion to their work. This, indeed, is the thing which has made it possible for Canada's railroads to function successfully during the war without making anything like the demands that foreign roads—less efficient in serving their community, yet earning the same rates and paying the same wages—have made up their public exchequers. I do not believe that this strain upon the railways and this tendency to weaken the general reputation of Canadian Railway securities should continue. The servant, after all, is worthy of his hire, and railway capital is not less worthy a servant than other forms of capital whose earnings have not been so consistently depressed.

"The net earnings during the war years of those companies which showed net earnings, would have been much lower had the Canadian railroads been making expenditures for maintenance which circumstances would have justified, but which conditions prevented during that period. These arrears have now to be made up. During 1919 the Canadian Pacific laid 70,000 tons of steel rail. In place of say 2,000,000 ties, worth 4¢ in 1914, the Canadian Pacific laid 4,231,000 ties at 8¢ per tie. The conventional advance in the rate of railway wages is well known. Further advances may be necessary when the very near future is indicated by business conditions in the United States. The cost of coal for the operation was \$1.00 in 1913. Now it is \$1.75. The cost of hauling an average train of 100 passenger cars, with 1000 tons of freight, is \$1,600 in 1913, to \$2,400 in 1919. It is higher to-day than it was in 1913. Penalties of 100% have been levied on the railways. The cost of fuel was \$1.00 in 1913, and to-day they are paying \$1.75. The cost of other materials, such as iron, steel, and copper, has advanced 100%. The cost of maintenance has advanced 100%. The cost of labor has advanced 100%. The cost of everything has advanced 100%. The cost of everything has advanced 100%."

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