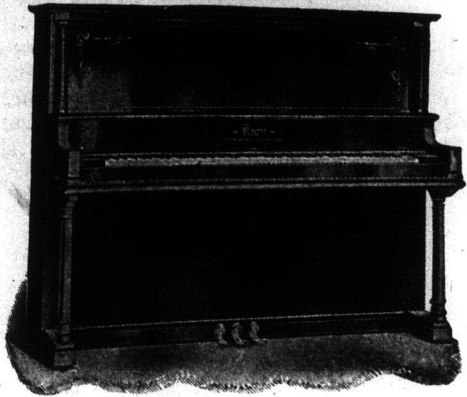


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Music and the Drama.

To her Violin.

Vague secrets, whispered by the leaves
Of priestly oaks in dim Dodona;
Dreams of Greek maids on roseate eves
In those hale days ere Man had
known a

Worse pain than Love's divine disease;
Occultest runes of moonlit seas,
Musing around the Cyclades;
Weird sorrows of the wandering breeze,
The wandering brook, the wandering
bird,

And all delicious agonies
And all high-haunting mysteries
Whereto the soul of Man hath stirred;
All feelings that elude the word
And yet whereof some sound hath
shown a

Bright shadow of perfectest shape
From whose true spell would none
escape —

Are known of thee, O deep Cremona!
Thou wizard piece of subtlest wood
Whose power is felt, not understood!
Thou instrument of sphinxlike bent,
Preboding Music's roundest riddle
And still, despite thy magic might,
The ribald rabble dub thee Fiddle.
—Henry Austin.

We have all heard something about "holding the mirror up to nature," and read the lines of the poet, Burns; "Oh, wad some power the giftie gie us, to see oursel's as ithers see us!"—but have you ever thought of applying the idea to your music practice? Has it occurred to you that you may see yourself outwardly exactly as others see you by the simple expedient of practising before a mirror? If not, then you will learn much by using a mirror as an aid to your daily practice. Almost every music student has some mannerisms that might well be dispensed with, and probably many faults in the management of the arms, hands, and fingers that should be corrected. Indeed, even great artists are not entirely free from these defects.

The trouble is that mannerisms and undesirable habits are usually unconsciously acquired by the student and are not apparent to him, though often painfully visible to the beholder. Others see you exactly as you appear when performing and are quick to note any awkwardness, stiffness, straining, or incorrect fingering, but you are not benefited thereby because to you the effect is invisible.

Even were your friends to call your attention to these faults it would be difficult for you to correct them or even to realize just what might be wrong. Right here is where the mirror comes in as a friend, as well as an absolutely impartial and faithful critic. When you play before a mirror you may see you deportment and the way you handle your instrument just as these things are and not as you imagined they were. Every movement, every wrong swaying of the body, every slip of the fingers, every awkward position will be clearly reflected, and if you observe closely what you see you can but profit thereby.

If you are a player of the violin, harp, viola, cello, or guitar, and will practice for a half hour each day before a good mirror, hung on the wall in such a position that you can plainly observe every movement you make, you will realize very forcibly just what is meant.

If there are any faults as to the position of the arms and hands, or pronounced mannerisms of any kind they will be instantly and vividly apparent so that you may be able to correct them without suggestions from others.

All instrumental performers, no matter what instrument be employed, can utilize this device with splendid results, and the effect on his future performances will surely be beneficial in the extreme. Vocal students may also profit by the use of a mirror. The

mirror used, however, should be large enough to be effective and be placed in a way to permit as full a view of the performer as may be necessary for his special purpose.

An easy attitude, a correct position and a graceful management of the arms and hands are not only wonderfully effective in improving the technique of an instrumentalist, but also assist an audience to a better understanding and appreciation of his work. The great majority of teachers do not pay enough attention to these matters.

Before an instrumental performer can justly call himself an artist he must not only be able to read and comprehend music and know how it should be played, but must also have his arms, hands, and fingers under such perfect control as to be able to use them always just at the right moment and just in the particular way that may be required. He must know how to make every shift of position, how and when to move the arms, how to place the fingers, just how much force to use in producing tones, and the most practical fingering to use for any passage encountered. In short, one must become familiar with every movement required, the various qualities of touch, and other items too numerous to mention here. These things are of such importance that special attention must be given them in order to become a proficient performer.

In thousands of cases the instruction may be thorough and complete enough, but the carelessness or indifference of the pupil may be responsible for his failings. A student must be careful to listen attentively and remember what he is told by the teacher, and then use every effort to accomplish the results aimed for. Now, of course, no mirror, or any device or scheme of any kind, can ever take the place of personal instruction in music. One must have a teacher, and a good one, in order to make progress, but many points as to position, fingering and general technique are apt to be forgotten or overlooked by the pupil, no matter how careful the teacher may be, so that seeing himself in action, as it were, when reflected in the mirror, is certain to impress upon him some points hitherto but imperfectly understood and refresh his recollection as to others.

In the case of a violinist the work may be confined to watching one arm and hand at a time. He may take a position in front of the looking glass which will show the movements of the bow arm only and after improving any noticeable defects therein change positions so as to bring the left hand and arm into view and proceed similarly. An instrument may easily slip out of position, the arms be held awkwardly, the wrist improperly stiffened, or the fingers be spread apart in an ungainly fashion. All of these faults and many others may be got rid of entirely by the aid of a mirror.

To any student who wishes to improve his work, the results of this sort of practice will be instructive and satisfying, for when he sees himself actually overcoming certain difficulties he cannot fail to be encouraged to greater efforts toward improvement.

Sir John Hare, the eminent English actor, will be the principal judge in the Earl Grey musical and dramatic competitions in Toronto, which opens on April 4. The programme for the various evenings will be issued very soon, and the names of the judges who are now being arranged with will be announced in it. Entries for the competition closed on March 15th and are very satisfactory to the committee acting for his Excellency. A series of interesting events for the general public during the week of April 4 at the Royal Alexandra are promised.

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