

(For the CANADIAN ILLUSTRATED NEWS.)

THE STUDY OF THE PIANO.

The study of the piano has become so universal that to "learn music" is to learn the piano. Fashion, the desire to utilize this fine piece of furniture, so elegant and so indispensable, and the small satisfaction of being spoken of by one's near friends as an "excellent musician," a satisfaction which favours more particularly a species of composition easy of execution, and as rapid as it is showy, have urged the young people of the day into the pleasant road of piano-ism (*pianologie*.)

So, through the instrumentality of mediocre composers and musical adventurers, the instrument which has most contributed to the progress of musical art and, by its numberless perfections, produced so many worthy and accomplished virtuosos, is also the one which has most perverted the popular taste by becoming so easily accessible to the vain or shallow-minded amateur. These latter succeed so well, that on their miserable performance of one of those compositions in which meaningless formulas take the place of ideas, they cover the plagiarisms and inelegant phrases with the loud pedal, and the listener astonished by so much noise, declares that he can understand nothing but that "it ought to be very beautiful!"

The time was, when a variation of Mozart, a sonata of Steibelt or a gavotte of Handel, formed the chief musical attraction of the drawing room; but now meaningless noise and incoherency have replaced all these, and if an artist without the fear of man before his eyes (and, happily, we still meet such an one, occasionally,) has the courage to venture upon an adagio of Beethoven or one of those poetic works of Chopin or Mendelssohn, he may be sure before-hand that the most beautiful and expressive phrases of these gifted composers will pass unperceived and unappreciated, if, indeed, they do not weary the exceptional listener whose politeness has prevented him from joining in the general conversation.

The idea generally entertained, that the education of a young lady is not complete without music (and why music more than any other art?) has, more than any other thing, led to the study of the piano by individuals with neither taste nor aptitude for it. To be a pianist requires a special organism, because to a correct ear and a proper sense of rhythm, qualities which every one knows are indispensable to a musician, must be added a hand both supple and well proportioned—natural gifts which judicious training and intelligent labour will increase and develop, but which can never be entirely supplied.

In blissful ignorance of all this, however, the young lady commences her lessons on the piano, with little or no aptitude for it, and probably upon an instrument, if not detestable, at any rate unfavourable for a continuous and conscientious course of study, taking in turn half a dozen different masters, upon whom in succession she rests the responsibility of her lack of progress, never for an instant dreaming that the cause may be with herself.

When a professor, jealous of his reputation, has succeeded in acquainting the parents of the pupil of some of her deficiencies without wounding too much the parental pride, he certainly cannot blame himself if, notwithstanding all, they still persist in his continuing his instructions: and he will do so all the more willingly now that he has relieved himself, in advance, of a somewhat onerous responsibility.

But more frequently the parents entertain lofty and illusory ideas of the wonderful musical talent of the child, and eagerly point out to the professor, certain indications of talent as deceptive as they are unreal, and of which they constitute themselves the sole judges.

After several lessons, however, the professor often discovers that he has on his hands only a little dunce upon whom he is wasting both his time and his pains. He has now before him the delicate alternative of respecting the parental susceptibility by maintaining a strict silence on the subject, or to express frankly the uselessness of his instruction, and by so doing make for himself enemies who, instead of esteeming him more for his scrupulous delicacy, only deem him on every possible occasion. Would it not be wiser and more just on the part of such parents to consult the professor, after a sufficient proof of his right to their confidence, as to the musical ability and talent of their child?

I have already spoken of a bad piano. Its influence upon the progress of the pupil seems generally to be completely ignored. How many pupils, highly gifted, by nature, have obtained only indifferent success for lack of a suitable instrument? How many have developed only an unspeakable disgust for an art of whose charms they have never even caught the first glimpse, because they are forced to toil at a piano either old and discordant, without vibration, the action heavy and unequal, or else one of those instruments loud and clanging in tone, with handsomely ornamented case and (above all) *cheap in price*, but whose poor, wretched action stifled the rising artist? What taste or enthusiasm could such an instrument ever inspire, upon which it would be utterly impossible to render properly those light and delicate shades, those beautiful singing phrases with which all the works of the great masters abound, and which find such easy and delightful expression upon such instruments, for example, as a "Steinway" or a good "Chickering." Whatever may be said, it is particularly at the commencement of the study of the piano that a good instrument is the most important. An agreeable tone will compen-

sate the young student for the monotony of the rudimentary exercises, by contributing to develop his natural taste, and an easy and sympathetic action will secure for him, if he is well taught and has a flexible hand, a good quality of tone and an elastic and in some degree intelligent touch. An inferior piano, on the contrary, by inspiring in him a distaste for an art whose least attractive side has been presented to him, will destroy the slightest taste for music, and he will contract a faulty technique which he will never be able to correct.

OCTAVE PELLETIER.

PERFORMANCE OF THE MESSIAH, AT TORONTO.

We extract the following account of this musical event from the *Mail*.—The Philharmonic Society of Toronto gave a performance of "The Messiah" at the Grand Opera House, which was crowded from parquette to gallery. The soloists were Mrs. Granger Dow (soprano), Mr. Simpson (tenor), and Mr. Egan (bass). Our local talent was represented by Mr. Wright, the Misses Dexter and Miss Madison. The orchestra was supplemented by Emil Wahle's band and Mrs. Morrison's orchestra. It is not our intention to give any detailed notice of the performance, for the reason that it was the least satisfactory of any that has been given under the regime of Mr. Torrington. This was owing to no fault of the energetic conductor, or to any unusual shortcomings on the part of the members of the Society. Admirably suited as in the Grand Opera House in many respects for these representations, it was apparent that its acoustical peculiarities had baffled the calculations of those gentlemen who had made the necessary arrangements for the disposition of the choruses and orchestra. The chorus singing is generally the best feature of the performances of the Society, but last night there was an obvious falling off in effect. The outlines of the choral numbers were in many cases blurred or indistinct; the sound of certain of the vocal sections appeared to reach the audience separately instead of simultaneously, while in the orchestra, many of the instruments were inaudible, and others were by comparison too prominent. The orchestral prelude with the striking fugue that follows were, however, rendered very fairly, and the effect of the Pastoral Symphony was pleasing. Of the choruses, the "Hallelujah," and "He Trusted in God" were sung the most efficiently, and were among the numbers that gave unusual satisfaction. The choruses in the first part of the Oratorio were rather unsteady, but this was doubtless owing to the singers being bewildered by the acoustics of the house. Mr. Simpson, who possesses a tenor voice of fine quality, was the most successful of the soloists. He interpreted the recitative "Comfort ye," and the succeeding aria "Every valley," in a most finished and artistic manner, and threw great expression into his singing of "Behold and See," and the preceding recitative. The few liberties he took with the score must of course be condemned. Mrs. Granger Dow sang in her usual pleasing manner, but having heard her on previous occasions in music of a lighter character, we are convinced that her *forte* does not lie in oratorio. In the air, "Rejoice greatly," the lady introduced a shake that was not in the score, and which was decidedly out of tune, thus illustrating the danger of taking such licences. Mrs. Pieton Osler gave "O thou that tellest," and her effort seemed to gain the approval of the audience. Mr. Egan, as principal bass, sang very fairly, and far more conscientiously than on the occasion of the production of the "Creation" at the Music Hall. The Misses Dexter and Miss Madison, as representatives of our amateur talent, acquitted themselves in a manner that excited some degree of pleasant surprise, and called forth great applause. Mr. Wright did his best with the aria, "But who may abide," and the recitative, "Thus saith the Lord," but it was regretted that he was totally unequal to the occasion, and sang painfully out of tune. The second part of the oratorio was concluded by eleven o'clock, and we understand that the third part was very creditably sustained. It is believed that at the next concert given by this Society at the Opera House, a sufficient arrangement will be adopted in regard to the orchestra and chorus which will be productive of happier results.

PERE LA CHAISE.

Pere-la-Chaise is the necropolis of illustrious personages. Moliere and La Fontaine's tombs are situated in a little garden, which has been brushed up for the occasion; a crown of boxleaves lies on Moliere's sarcophagus. In the chapel-vault of the Raspail family two slabs are placed, with a piece of chalk for visitors to inscribe their names; Seribe's tomb is neglected, though his wife is living and very rich; ex-Minister Walewski has eight wax tapers burning, illuminations in honor of the dead. Casimir-Perier has neither flowers nor crowns; he was the Thiers of France over forty years ago. Heloise and Abelard are surrounded by visitors, all young and certainly lovers; Alfred de Musset has a lyre of blue pearls; Aimée Desclée is as forgotten as if Parisians did not still sincerely regret their pet actress; Frederic Soulie has at last a tomb, after twenty-seven years of expectation. How patient are the dead! De Balzac has a pretty metal crown, lying on a closed book bearing the title, "Human Comedy;"

Talma has an elegant crown of crape, ornamented with pearls, and Allan Kardec, the founder of spiritualism in France, is covered with a profusion of flowers that must impede his appearance at any spiritualistic seance; the interior of Rossini's chapel is strewn with flowers, and two enormous natural laurel crowns hang from the bronze torches which ornament the entrance; Auber remains in a temporary vault, with a dozen other persons, awaiting a definite resting-place. The Communist Flourens has a tiny bouquet of *immortelles* with pansies—truly for thoughts, but sad ones. The immense *fosse commune*, where the Federals were buried pell-mell, is guarded by soldiers; a few red *immortelles* have been deposited on the mound.

VARIETIES.

THE Emperor William found everything too dear for him at the Bayreuth Bazaar in Berlin, and turned away with the remark that he really could not afford to pay such prices.

WHEN Thomas Carlyle read Professor Tyndall's Belfast Address, he threw it aside with emphatic contempt, saying, "It is a philosophy fit for dogs, not for men."

THE venerable office of tipstaff exists no longer in the English Court of Exchequer. The last tipstaff died the other day, and the Lord Chief Baron decided not to appoint any body in his place. So go the old landmarks one by one.

WE have heard of a certain exporter who made a large sum of money when all his rivals in trade were complaining of dull times, simply because he had packed his goods in a convenient and attractive form; and one may well believe the story.

THIERS was recently paid a particular honour by some gamins who made a snow statue of him opposite his house, and crowned it with a white paper hat on which were inscribed the figures for five milliards, the amount of the ransom.

MR. HOLMAN HUNT has recently been engaged in painting a portrait of his son. The child is represented on his return from a successful bird's nesting expedition. He is accompanied by a couple of Pomeranian dogs. As one leaps up to him, the boys throw himself back, laughing wildly, and holding out the nest in triumph.

It is fact well established by statistics that about 104 or 105 boys are born to every 100 girls, yet at maturity the girls almost invariably out-number the boys. A larger number of boys die than girls. This is a doubtless owing to the fact that the boys are more exposed to inclement weather, contagious diseases, and accidents.

MARK Twain says:—"If you neglect to educate the mind of a woman by the speculative difficulties which occur in literature, it can never be educated at all. If you do not effectually rouse it by education it must remain for ever languid. Uneducated men may escape intellectual degradation, uneducated women cannot." Mark talks of what he knows.

ACCORDING to the *London Directory* the most common names are as follows:—Smith, 19 columns; Jones, 9; Brown, 8; Williams, 6; Johnson, 5; Clark, Davis, and White, 5; Wood and Harris, 4; Evans, Green, Roberts, and Robinson, 4. Upon comparing these with the *London Directory* of thirty years since, in each case the numbers now are about doubled, showing the rapid growth of the family of Smith, Brown, and Jones.

BABY-shows are believed to be an American invention, but it was left to Austria to get up a nose show. Eighty persons were told, competed for the prize offered for the most extraordinary nasal prominence in form, size and colour. The jury decided that only three out of the whole could be admitted to compete for the prize, which was finally adjudged to a competitor from Vienna, possessed of what is stated to be "a gigantic nose, of a deep violet-blue."

SEVERAL journals have stated that the celebrated "Violin Player," by Raphael, has been lost, but the fact is that it has never left Rome, though the public are not allowed to see it. It is reported that it will ere long be sold along with a few paintings forming the collection of the Sciarra Palace. This notice we hope will not be lost sight of by the authorities of the National Gallery. Mr. Disraeli will not turn a deaf ear, we are certain, to any proposal in moderation.

THE Polish inhabitants of the Grand Duchy of Posen find themselves in rather an unenviable position. It would seem that these benighted beings, like the Danes of Schleswig, or the French of Alsace and Lorraine, have been indulging in dreams regarding what is called the principle of nationalities. This principle, according to the new law of nations, is exclusively German, and does not concern any other nation whatsoever. For some time past the Polish language has been excluded in Prussian Poland from the law courts and all public offices, German being substituted in its place. The Polish language is likewise excluded from the principal educational establishments.

AUTOGRAPH mania is as fierce as ever in Paris, and the merest scrap of the handwriting of a celebrity commands an extravagant price. At a recent sale of autographs an historical sketch by Bossuet was sold for £15 15s.; two letters from Leibnitz relating respectively to the Councils at Bale and Trent, fetched £7 and £2; an epistle of Louis XVI to the Comte de Broglie brought £6 15s., and one from Mirabeau £2 10s. Talking of autographs, the celebrated American actress, Charlotte Cushman, has been selling her autograph at a shilling a piece, the proceeds being devoted to a New York charity. Might not some of our celebrities follow her example?

A LEGACY OF WAR.—In the United States at the end of the last fiscal year, on the 30th of June, 1874, there were 102,457 army invalid pensioners on the pension roll, receiving 10,038,377 dollars a year; 107,516 army widows and dependent relatives, receiving 13,537,196 dollars; 1,551 navy invalid pensioners, and 1,785 widows and relatives; 17,620 pensioners, survivors of the war of 1812, and 5,312 widows of the soldiers. The total number of pensioners of all classes on the 30th of June, 1874, was 236,241, a decrease of 2,170 during the year. The aggregate annual rate of pensions of all classes was 26,254,071 dollars 10 cents, a decrease from the preceding year of 5,645 dollars. The roll contains the names of 410 widows and soldiers in the Revolutionary War.

How a Lady should Sit on a Horse.—The author of *The Book of the Horse* says:—"The ideal of a fine horsewoman is erect without being rigid, perfectly square to the front, and, until quite at home in the saddle looking religiously between her horse's ears. The shoulders should be perfectly square, but thrown back a little so as to expand the chest and make a hollow waist, such as it observed in waiting, but always flexible. On the flexibility of the person above the seat all the grace of equestrianism, and on the firmness below all the safety depends. Nervousness makes both men and women poke their heads forward—a stupid trick in a man, unpardonable in a woman. A lady should bend like a willow in a

storm, always returning to an easy yet nearly upright position. This seat should be acquired while the lady's horse is led, first by hand, then with a leading stick, and finally with a lunging rein, which will give room for cantering in circles. But where a pupil is encumbered with reins, a whip, and directions for guiding her horse, she may be excused for forgetting all about her seat or her position. The arms down to the elbows should hang loosely near but not fixed to the sides, and the hands, in the absence of reins, may rest in front of the waist."

HISTORY OF THE WEEK.

JAN. 20.—The Rev. Canon Kingsley is reported to be dying.

The Custom's officers at Hoboken, lately, made a \$45,000 seizure.

Cook & Co's, bankers, of Chicago, have suspended. Liabilities not ascertained.

The Prussian authorities have imprisoned the Bishop of Paderborn in the fortress of Weesell.

The curling match between Quebec and Montreal has resulted in favor of the former by 26 points.

Moulton's examination was continued at the City Court, Brooklyn, in the great scandal case, yesterday.

Berlin despatches to the London *Times* report the release of the captive German Bishops.

The physicians in attendance upon Prince Leopold announce that His Highness has suffered a relapse, and is in a weaker state.

JAN. 21.—The Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs has succumbed to the harassing nature of the duties imposed on him growing out of the difficulties in connection with the Montenegrin outrage. His successor's policy is to be more conciliatory.

A conspiracy to create a general uprising against King Alfonso is already on foot in Barcelona, the principal movers being Republican and Carlist chiefs.

Lépine's sentence has been commuted to two years' imprisonment and perpetual disfranchisement.

The *Pall Mall Gazette* says the Montenegrin Government have resolved on war even if it be not already declared by Turkey. Representatives of European powers at Constantinople are endeavoring to effect an amicable solution of the difficulty.

A London despatch says that the prompt action of Spain in the Guesav affair will have the effect of making recognition of the new monarchy by foreign powers more certain.

The Right and Left Centres united have carried a motion for the consideration of the Constitutional Bills at Versailles, defeating the Government and the Right on the question.

A despatch from Madrid says it is likely Count Valmeida will be appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Spanish army in Cuba.

JAN. 22.—Tom Ballard, the notorious counterfeiter, has been sentenced to 30 years' imprisonment.

The physicians of Prince Leopold have reported less favorably on the condition of their patient.

Disastrous floods are reported in California, caused by the recent heavy rains in that state, interrupting railway and stage communication in many districts.

Religious disturbances in the Canton of Geneva, Switzerland, in connection with the baptism of children by Old Catholics, have necessitated the presence of the military.

A rumor was current, in Toronto, that the Hon. Mr. Crooks, the Ontario Treasurer, had resigned, being unwilling to risk the chance of another reverse by appealing to a fresh constituency.

In the Quebec Legislature, yesterday, Mr. Church's motion to bring Messrs. Middlemiss, Dunsereau, Duvernay and Cotté before the Committee on the Tanneries Exchange, and make them answer the desired questions was carried on a division. An amendment, however, was carried, to the effect that the examination of Mr. Cotté should be conducted with closed doors, and that the committee should report to the House only such portions of his evidence as should have reference to the exchange.

JAN. 23.—Mr. Charles Sprague, of Boston, the banker poet, died yesterday, aged 84.

Turkey has withdrawn its demand for the trial of those implicated in the Montenegrin outrages by a Turkish tribunal.

The report of the Emigration Commissioners shows a total arrival of emigrants at Castle garden, for 1874, of 1,243,762.

The English Government have demanded an explanation from Peru, for interference with the passengers of a British steamer at Callao.

A bill has passed the United States House to allow Lt. Commander Pierson to accept the military Order of the Bath from the Queen, in recognition of his gallant services against the Japanese.

The *Journal de St. Petersburg* indicates that Montenegro has the support of Russia in her difficulties with Turkey. The prospects of an amicable adjustment of the disagreement are said to be more hopeful.

The iron masters and colliery proprietors of South Wales have turned the tables on their employes, and threaten a general lock-out unless they all return to work within a week, which would have the effect of throwing 100,000 persons out of work.

JAN. 25.—Montenegrin subjects residing abroad have been ordered home, and 12,000 troops have been despatched to the frontier.

The ice in the harbor at New York has swept away all the buoys, rendering navigation extremely difficult and exposing the shipping to serious danger.

A despatch from San Francisco says that the flood at Marysville and surrounding district has abated, leaving the inhabitants in great destitution.

A shocking case of alleged baby-farming has come to light in Holly Stone, Mass., no less than five infants having been put out of the way within two months by means of laudanum.

A skating match is announced through a New York despatch, to take place in Brooklyn, the 26th inst., between a gentleman of this city and Mr. Campbell Lawson, of Nova Scotia.

In a proclamation issued yesterday, by Alfonso XII to the inhabitants of the Basques Provinces and Navarre, he says he longs for peace, but will fight for his rights, and will see that full justice is again done to the Roman Catholics. His Majesty was officially proclaimed in Cuba, yesterday, by Captain-General Concha.

Jan. 26.—The Montenegrin difficulty has ended into a compromise.

Alfonso has formally notified Her Majesty of his accession to the throne of Spain.

It is stated that a preliminary understanding has been arrived at between the Carlists and Alfonsists.

The Senate Committee on Finance have decided not to take any further action in the matter of specie redemption this session.

The first reading of the Bill for the creation of a Senate has passed the French Assembly, although opposed by the Left.

A terrific gale, accompanied by rain, has been raging on the British Coast for the past two days, numerous casualties resulting therefrom.