THE STUDY OF HARMONY.

IT is a source of much annoyance to all conscientious teachers who attempt to have their pupils pursue harmonic studies in connection with piano-forte instruction, to find how very seldom they can arouse sufficient interest in the subject to get the pupils to do any commendable work. The pupil seems to feel that the teacher is thrusting some foreign subject upon his consideration—a subject that is irrelevant and unnecessary to his progress in the art. With this impression in view, he revolts, and though, out of deference to the teacher's wishes, he may write out the prescribed exercises, yet he plainly shows his carelessness by the numerous errors his work contains, as well as by the hurried style in which it has been written. There are many reasons why this lamentable result obtains, chief among which is the undisciplined state of the mind of the average pupil, a state that is inactive and indolent from habit and predisposition. Such a pupil hates to go to school, hates to study, hates to work and hates to play, if there is much exertion connected with it. The majority of pupils in school, succeed better in writing, reading and history, than in mathematics and sciences. We find the most lovely dancers to be frequently the most brainless and vulgar people. And what can we expect of such people when they attempt to study music? They succeed well at the mechanical part—that is, as well as this can be mechanically done—without the assistance of any thinking, but, as soon as they are required to use their brains to aid their mechanism,—"Ah, no, indeed; that is too much like work, too much like arithmetic; we had rather play!"

Another reason why the study of harmony is distasteful to pupils is the methods employed by teachers in presenting it.

Some teachers, who are, no doubt, conscientious, postpone the study of harmony until the pupil has been playing some two or three years. No less an authority than Goetschine says, in his book (Materials Used in Musical Composition), that scholars must be reasonably expert in piano playing and in reading at sight before commencing harmony, for "the study of composition cannot be successfully pursued by any scholar whose attention is still partly engrossed by the Rudiments of Music."

Now this is true in reference to the higher study of composition and invention, but it is not true of harmony, a science which embraces all the laws of music and even the very rudiments of music itself.

Again, many teachers and other people confound Harmony with Thoroughbass. Speak of harmony to them, and there arises a vision of Richter, with a string of figured bases, of triads, and seventh chords, and ninth chords, and eleventh chords, not to mention pentachords; of inversions and resolutions, and suspensions, and retardations; of organ points and pedal notes; of canti fermi and counterpoints *ad infinitum*. Is this a subject to give a child? As soon might you teach him geometry, with its pentagons and hexagons, its quadrilaterals and its parallelopipedons; or astronomy, with its plane of ecliptics and perihelion measurements, its asteroids and its satellites.

Yes, we would teach all these things to a child, but we would do it gradually and employ a rational method of going about it. You can, if you know how, teach a child, before the age of nine, to comprehend all the principles of geometry, and to define all angles, surfaces and bodies.

You can give the same child, by proper illustration, an accurate conception of the solar laws and the movements of the heavenly bodies, teaching him all the planets and many of the constellations.

So you can teach a child the laws of harmony from the very outset, if you adopt a common sense method of doing it; teaching principles, not names.

And who will say that, if this can be accomplished, that it is not the correct method of procedure in the education of the child? It is this very remissness on the part of teachers and parents in the earliest work of instruction that breeds so much inability in the pupil's mind later on.

The impressions gained in early life are far more lasting than at any time later on. A principle early embedded in the child's mind takes root and grows. It is never lost, but ever expanding, and in after-life, if it was a good seed, it is sure to bear fruits of peace, happiness and prosperity.

There is really no way to improve the musical thinking and to make musicians but to study harmony.

There is just the same distance between you and Laplace that there is between you and Beethoven. To arrive to the plane of one takes a life of mathematical thinking, of the other a life of musical thinking.

Oh, if the present generation of piano-players would just stop and read the history of the thousands upon thousands of brilliant pianovirtosi who have flashed across the zenith of their time as brilliant meteors, sinking at last to the cold earth in total and eternal oblivion, and would then gaze into the azure vaults of our musical heaven to-day and behold there, shining bright by their own self-made light, the fixed galaxy of the immortal composers, then, indeed, would there fall over the earth one tremendous, awful silence. All the pianos in Christendom would be hushed in one moment of thoughtful comparison and reasoning on the true destiny of human life, and many that stopped to think would close the piano fosever and go to seek the true way "ad astra per aspera." The first lesson on the piano should be a harmony lesson, and each succeeding lesson should be likewise. Harmony does not necessarily mean written lessons, although writing is a great aid to the speedy accomplishment of the art.

The basis of harmony lies in the cultivation of musical thought or of the musical ear. The naming of scales, intervals and chords is merely as means to an end, the chief end being to facilitate a description of them.

The pupil's conception of the chord lies in the way it sounds to him, and it makes little difference whether it is an under-chord or a "moll" chord or a minor chord; he should be taught to recognize it by its sound. He must, when he hears it, be able to form a mental image of how it looks on paper or on the instrument, and *vice versa*, when he sees it on paper, or on the instrument, the looks of it must call up to his mind the sound of it.