

FIVE-FINGER EXERCISES.

The Chicago *Musical Bulletin*, one of the ablest musical journals, says :

"A technique adequate to the demands of modern piano-forte playing *cannot* be gained through the playing of pieces alone, however carefully chosen. The fingers require a discipline which can only be obtained by the frequent and careful practice of technical exercises, which should be conducted so as to furnish, at the same time, physical and intellectual, aside from musical drill. Thus the employment for beginners, of pieces alone, is necessarily a waste of valuable time, to which we may add that the best time for purely physical training is when the muscles are soft and pliable, and more readily influenced than after the practice of some duration. With them, as with more advanced pupils, the practice of five-finger exercises and technics, can take no secondary place, and the inclination manifested among some teachers to make the acquirement of proficiency in piano playing a path strewn with roses, is an unmixed evil which cannot be too deeply deplored.

"No pianist has ever yet risen to eminence who did not toil, early and late, at finger exercises and etudes. Those who have heard Carl Tausing, especially in the latter days of his life, will not hesitate to admit that such a perfect technique has not been possessed by any man of our age. Even Liszt, though greater as an interpreter, scarcely equaled Tausing in perfection of mechanism, and no man has ever been more earnest in urging the claims of merely technical work. His views are enforced by the example and precept of all the great teachers and pianists of Germany, as well as of Dr. William Mason and many others in this country, who have, in their own personal experience, tested the matter.

"It is vain to hope for any great results, without labor of the severest description, in music or any other art, and, while a beginner should be led as quickly as possible into the understanding and appreciation of the beautiful in music, his progress will only be retarded by any process which does not combine the study of *musical* works with etudes and five-finger exercises, designed for the development of technical facility—independence, strength, and control of the fingers.

"The purpose of combining pieces, or works possessing musical beauty, with those of merely mechanical value, should be the preservation and development of a musical feeling and instinct, with a love for the forms of beauty which are the *end*, but alone can never become the *means* of a technical education. Without them, the interest would soon flag, and the mechanical development could not be carried on with any degree of success. Yet, owing to the interest excited by the study of pieces, they are not as valuable in this respect as etudes, where the musical element is subservient to the mechanical. One might as well assert that the study of the higher mathematics is valueless, unless always devoted to practical subjects and having an æsthetic value as well, thus ignoring the intellectual discipline, which, once acquired, may be applied in a thousand ways. Just in the same way a *technical facility once gained* may be applied to the interpretation of a thousand forms of beauty, but can *never be acquired by means of such forms alone*.

"Seek first *technique*, and all these things shall be added unto you !"

Miss Gertrude Griswold, the young American Lady who received an engagement from the Grand Opera House in Paris, is studying *Marguerite* in Gounod's Opera, and will soon make her *debut* in that role.

PALESTRINA.

Giovanni Perluigi Aloisio da Palestrina was born at Palestrina, the ancient Praeneste, in 1524.* The memoirs of his childhood are scanty. We know but little except that his parents were poor peasants, and that he learned the rudiments of literature and music as a choir singer, a starting point so common in the lives of great composers. In 1540 he went to Rome and studied in the school of Goudimel, a stern Huguenot Fleming, tolerated in the Papal capital on account of his superior science and method of teaching, and afterward murdered at Lyons, on the day of the Paris massacre. Palestrina grasped the essential doctrines of the school without adopting its mannerisms. At the age of thirty he published his first compositions, and dedicated them to the reigning Pontiff, Julius III. In the formation of his style, which moved with such easy, original grace within the old prescribed rules, he learned much from the personal influence and advice of Orlando di Lasso, his warm friend and constant companion during his earlier days. Several of his compositions written at this time, are still performed in Rome on Good Friday, and Goethe and Mendelssohn have left their eloquent tributes to the impression made on them by music alike simple and sublime.

The Pope was highly pleased with Palestrina's noble music, and appointed him one of the Papal choristers, then regarded as a great honor. But beyond Rome the new light of music was but little known. The Council of Trent, in their first indignation at the abuse of church music, had resolved to abolish everything but the simple Gregorian chants, but the remonstrances of the Emperor Ferdinand and the Roman Cardinals stayed the austere *fiat*. The final decision was made to rest on a new composition of Palestrina, who was permitted to demonstrate that the higher forms of musical art were consistent with the solemnities of church worship. All eyes were directed to the young musician, for the very existence of his art was at stake. The motto of his first mass, "Illumina Oculos meos," shows the pious enthusiasm with which he undertook his labors. Instead of one, he composed three six part masses. The third of these excited such admiration that the Pope exclaimed in raptures: "It is, it is John who gives us here in this earthly Jerusalem a foretaste of that new song which the holy Apostle John realized in the heavenly Jerusalem in his prophetic trance." This is now known as the "mass of Pope Marcel," in honor of a former patron of Palestrina. A new Pope, Paul IV., on ascending the Pontifical throne, carried his desire of reforming abuses to fanaticism. He insisted on all the Papal choirsters being clerical. Palestrina had married early in life a Roman lady, of whom all we know is that her name was Lucretia. Four

* Our composer, as was common with artists and scholars in those days, took the name of his natal town, and by this he is known to fame. Old documents also give him the old Latin name of the town with the personal ending.