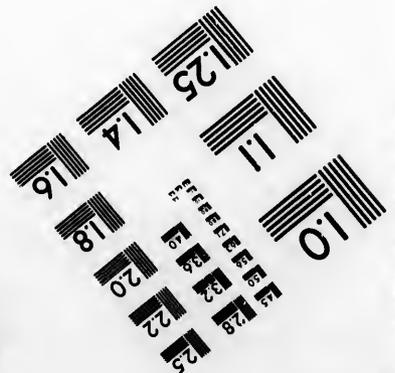
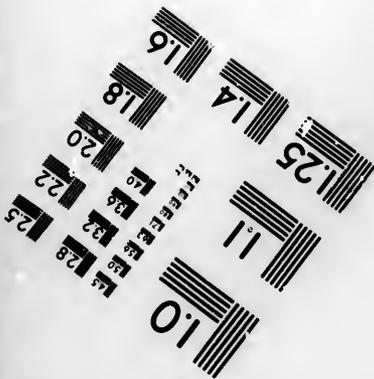
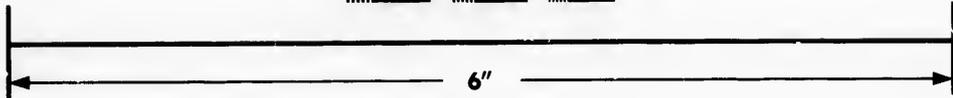
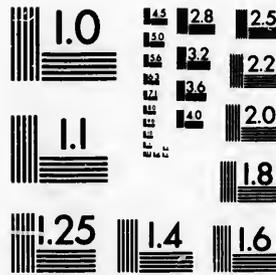


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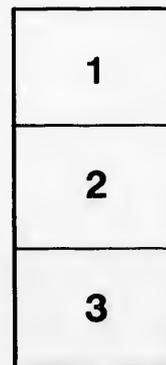
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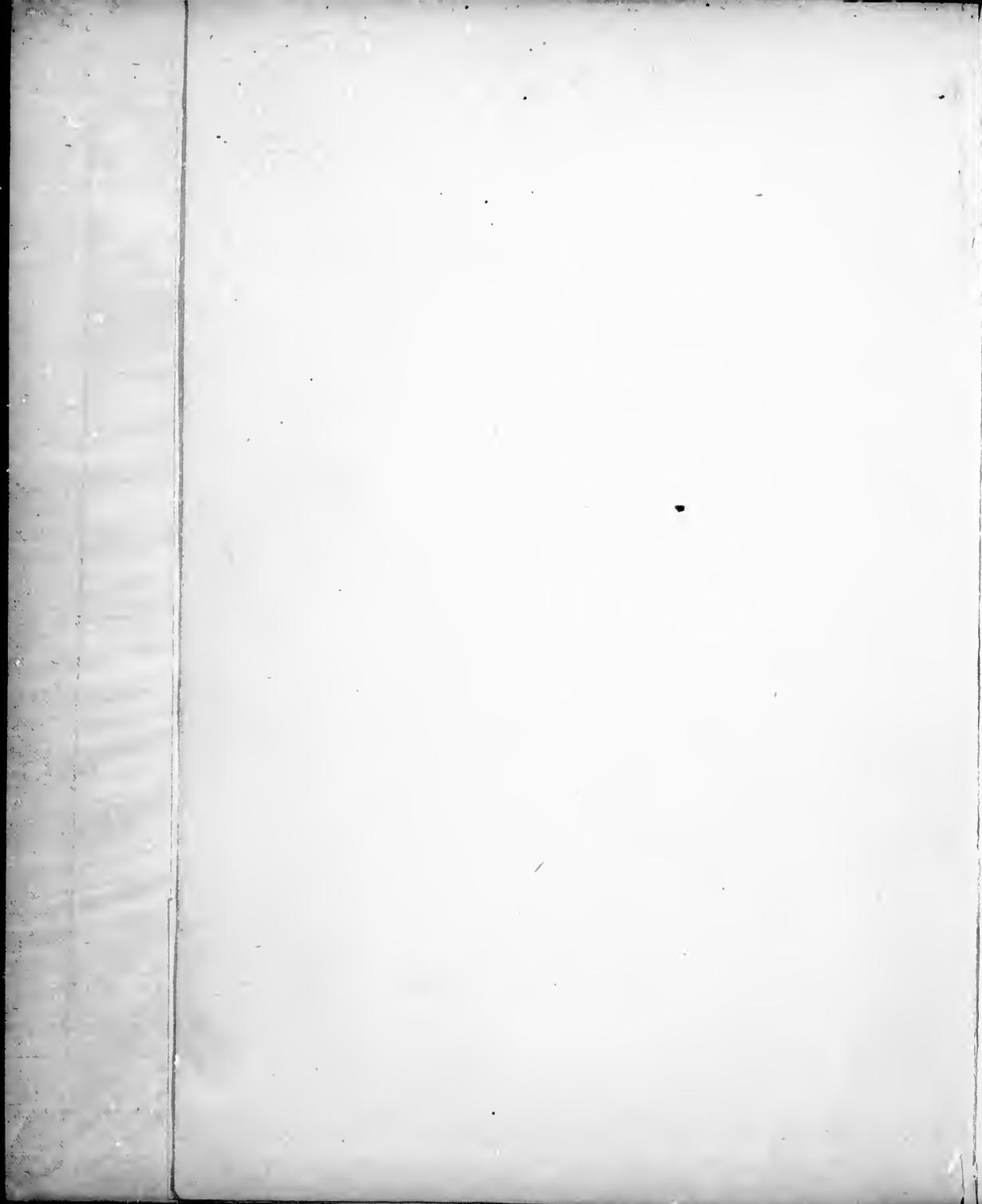
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THE ART
OF
PIANOFORTE TEACHING

BY
T. C. JEFFERS.

TEACHER OF PIANOFORTE AND ORGAN AT TORONTO COLLEGE OF
MUSIC, MOULTON LADIES' COLLEGE, ETC.
ORGANIST AND CHOIRMASTER CENTRAL METHODIST CHURCH.

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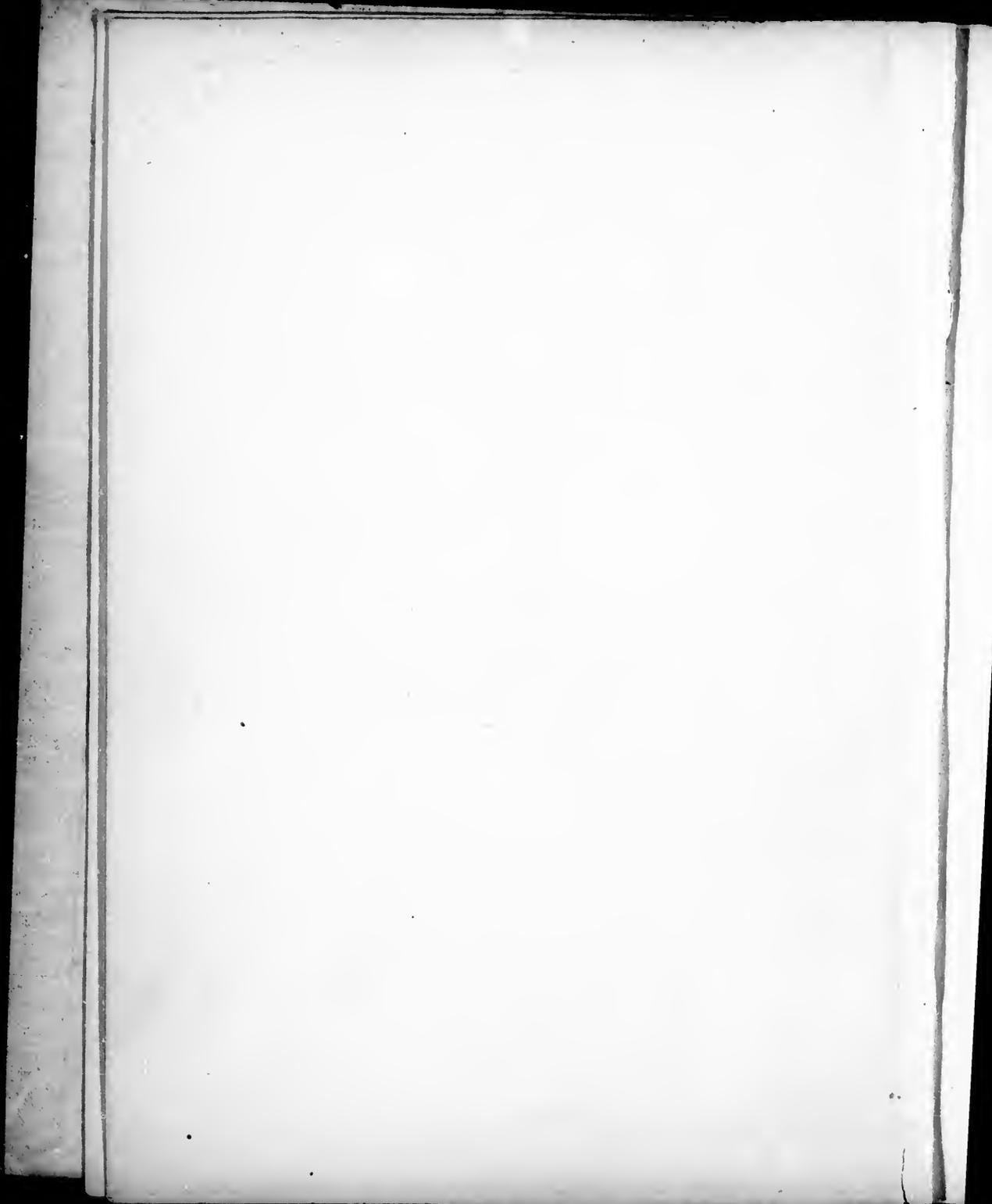
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F. H. TORRINGTON, ESQ.,

THIS LITTLE WORK

IS DEDICATED, WITH THE KIND REGARDS OF

THE AUTHOR.



THE
ART OF PIANOFORTE TEACHING.

PRELIMINARY.

At the outset the greatest care should be taken to form an exact estimate* of the pupil's present musical knowledge; technical powers; industry; time at his disposal for practice; ability to read at sight; musical feeling; touch; grasp of hand; and how long and with whom he has studied previously. All of these things will very materially affect the course to be taken, the pieces to be chosen, and the length of the lesson to be given. Not until the teacher has a good idea upon all these points should the first lesson be set. It is here that the importance of having a good teacher comes in. An inferior one will form a false estimate on all of these points, not having a correct standard within himself whereby to judge. To the inferior teacher the pupil's playing may appear quite passable,—to the

other, numberless faults may manifest themselves, for which corresponding remedies and means of correction will be suggested to his mind.

The truly wise teacher will not discourage the pupil by at once entering upon an endless catalogue of his errors, but will rather strive to inspire him with new hope, at the same time pointing out the path to higher perfection.

After the first enquiry as to the pupil's knowledge, the importance of an earnest, resolute start should be impressed upon him. He should be deeply imbued with the spirit of persevering and conscientious study before beginning. Much depends upon this. If he goes home with the firm intention of at once devoting himself to careful and systematic daily practice, a great deal will already have been accomplished.

OF POSITION.

The pupil should sit up straight, and as quietly as possible. At the same time it is all wable to betray, in a very slight manner, his innate feeling for the music he is interpreting. A turn of the head—a motion of the wrist—of the eyebrows,—will often serve the audience as a key to the *nuances* of the

piece. I have seen *virtuosi* who owed half of their marvellous command over their audiences to an eloquent and graceful physical carriage, and to the expressive play of their features. The strongly marked personality of a performer has much to do with success in concert ; and when once the audience is brought under this magnetism, the music almost seems to proceed, as it were, from the performer, rather than from the instrument itself.

But this is no excuse for the contortions and writhings whereby many players seek to express their feelings. Angular elbows, head shakings, and undue tossing of the hands should all be avoided.

The seat of the performer should be just high enough to have the elbows on a level with the keys. The fore-arm and the back of the hand should be on the same level, and the fingers, to the second joint, curved under, but not so far as to cause the nails to strike the keys. In scale passages the fore-arm may be turned slightly outward from the body.

OF TOUCH.

Much has been said and written as to the means of bringing about a free and beautiful musical touch. Every now and then one meets with a teacher who

solemnly informs you that he, and he alone, has discovered the true secret of touch. You may usually infer from such talk that he is a beginner without experience, a bag of conceit, or a humbug. As a matter of fact, good teachers are surprisingly numerous in this country, and a correct piano method widely diffused everywhere. The only difference is that some are more careful than others, some have greater gifts for imparting knowledge, and some have better judgment as to the course of study to be pursued. The consensus of ripe musical opinion goes to prove that a correct pianoforte method is confined to no one country. Of course there always will be a young Mr. Greenhorn, who cannot trust himself safely in any hands but those of Signor Peanutti, or Herr Donnerspieler, or Monsieur Volage. But when Mr. Greenhorn attains to years of discretion and knowledge—when he is Mr. Greenhorn no longer—he sees plainly that he would have fared equally well, if not better, with Mr. Jones, Mr. Macdonald, or even with Mr. O'Brien. The trouble with Mr. Greenhorn is, that he usually does not know a good teacher from a bad one, and so he is quite as likely to make a mistake with one nationality as another.

He who studies in a good school, with a good master, must necessarily acquire a good pianoforte

method ; whether he study in Iceland or in Patagonia matters little. As far as pianoforte teaching goes, England and America can to-day furnish fully as good pianoforte teachers as any in the world. All this goes to prove that good pianoforte methods, of whatever country, are identical. There is but one good method, and that is the one that produces good playing, and practice has more to do with it than anything else.

There is an erroneous and vulgar superstition on this point, and it is time it was finally got rid of.

As to European Conservatories, those of St. Petersburg and Paris are the most exclusive, their pupils having the highest average standing and talent, while their course of study is very strict, and their professors among the finest in the world. Leipzig, too, has a largely attended conservatory, and, outside the conservatory, possesses musical advantages whose number and cheapness attract many students.

THE LEGATO TOUCH.

The *legato* touch is the one necessary for ordinary finger passages, and is executed by the fingers alone, without any stiffening of the wrist. The back

of the hand, wrist, and knuckles, remain level, the fingers assuming a curved position, so that the keys are struck with their points, the thumb of course striking upon its side.

Now it is precisely this stiffening of the wrist that constitutes the main difficulty in securing a pure and flowing *legato* touch. Fully fifty per cent. of all piano students are in the habit of playing with the wrist more or less stiffened, and weighing heavily on the fingers from the arm. It is obvious that any weight placed upon the finger muscles will impede their free action, and render the execution hard, stiff, clumsy, and disjointed. In short, when the wrist is stiffened, the finger, wrist, and fore-arm become one solid piece, and rapid finger execution is impossible with a finger whose total length only ends, practically speaking, at the elbow.

Imagine playing with fingers a foot-and-a-half long!

Besides this, a strict *legato* cannot be executed with a stiff wrist, for the whole of the hand thus becomes, as it were, one big finger, with which *legato* scale passages are out of the question, there being no means of connecting the tones.

Imagine playing scale passages with one big finger!

Bear in mind that *finger passages* are spoken of. A stiff wrist is frequently necessary in the *portamento* touch, and with some chord and octave passages.

Various means are taken to cure this fault. Making of each finger passage a wrist exercise before playing with the fingers, in order to secure looseness and relaxation of the whole hand and wrist when the finger falls, is one way ; another is to allow the hand to fall loosely in a relaxed condition on the keys before playing ; a third, to practise 1, 2, 3, and 4 finger exercises with the unoccupied fingers lying still and relaxed on the surface of their respective keys while the exercise is being played ; a fourth, to practise finger exercises very slowly, with the fingers raised as high as possible, in order to obtain the necessary strength in each individual finger, without the aid of the arms' weight ; which is a very good exercise for strengthening the extensor muscles, and sadly needed.

All of these exercises are very useful, and serve to keep the student's mind on the main point, viz., the necessity of playing finger passages with a *legato* touch, and a relaxed hand and wrist.

With very young and heedless pupils it is often useless to explain all this. It suffices, however, to insist constantly upon a very soft and connected style,

until the habit of a loose wrist is formed, when the necessary strength may also be acquired by raising the fingers high and practising firmly and slowly.

With all this practice the importance of a delicate and musical accent, or rhythmus, cannot be too much insisted upon, as it is one of the chief virtues of good pianoforte playing.

But even after all these remedies have been used, some wrists remain obstinately stiff. Either the muscles are naturally rigid, or the skin is too tightly drawn upon them, or the conducting power of the nerve fibres is too slow. Or it may be that the pupil is too old to make a player, or is not intelligent, or lacks industry; for one or all of these reasons the purpose of the teacher is often defeated.

THE STACCATO TOUCH.

This is executed by the hand swinging loosely from the wrist, as on a hinge, down upon the keys, and at once resuming its raised position at right angles to the wrist. Let the pupil imagine the keys to be red-hot, and he will not linger fondly on the notes where the *staccato* is marked. A *staccato* with the finger from the knuckle-joint is often used, with effective results. All the scales and finger exercises should be practised *staccato* as well as *legato*.

OF OCTAVES.

Octaves must be practised very slowly at first in order to get rapidity, clearness, and ease. Pupils generally fancy that the reverse is the case. Not so; the difficulty in the way of good octave playing is a lack of uniformity of hand-motion from the wrist. This can only be secured by slow practice. Let the passage be practised in this way:—Allow the hand to lie loosely on the keys, with the fingers curved, and the wrist level. Do not allow the wrist to rise while playing. Keep it down, and level. Now raise the hand at right angles to the wrist, and throw it down lightly and firmly on the octave, relaxing the muscles of the wrist as soon as the keys are pressed down. Repeat these motions on the other notes, saying, “One,” aloud, on striking, and “two” on raising the hand. The hand must never “hover” over the keys before striking, but must be tossed lightly and firmly from note to note, without hanging fire in any way, or keeping the wrist rigid for any length of time. The speed may afterwards be quickened.

If all the finger exercises, scales, and arpeggios are *practised in octaves* immediately after being played in single notes, there will not be much necessity for

devoting any time to larger works on wrist-playing, until the student is very far advanced. This method also helps to consolidate the work and save time, a great thing in pianoforte practice.

THE PORTAMENTO TOUCH.

This touch is useful when a certain quiet but firm emphasis is needed for a particular note or chord, detaching it from the following notes. When two or more successive notes are to be so played, it is indicated by placing dots over the notes and a slur over the dots. In the case of single notes, a dot is placed over the note and a straight dash over the dot. Such notes are to be executed with a stiff wrist, using the hand and fore-arm as one, with a firm pressure touch, and separating them from the following ones.

OF TECHNICAL STUDIES.

It is indispensable for every student to have a thorough grounding in finger exercises, scales, arpeggios, octaves, trills, and chords in skips. Beginners should practise these for the first three months with the *legato* touch, but afterwards with the *staccato* and *portamento* as well, using the *crescendo* and *diminu-*

endo. It is by these means that the technical habit and touch is formed, so that this acquired style will not be departed from when the difficulties of execution are such that the mind has not time to think of anything beside the mere notes. The technique must be made involuntary.

All of these exercises should be practised : *First*, very slowly, with fingers raised very high in order to acquire strength and independence ; *Second*, rapidly and smoothly, with fingers not raised except for the necessary accents. The greatest attention should always be paid to the practise of the different rhythms, and in order to secure this the pupil should count aloud. The exercises should also be played with one hand at a time quite as much as with both hands together ; in fact for the first month or two it is better to practise technical studies altogether with each hand separately, so that a proper touch and style may be formed, and in order to give the mind wholly to every little detail. When both hands are employed from the first, it is impossible to properly attend to the position of the hand, the touch of each individual finger, the wrist, tone quality, connection, and accent. It is only when these habits have been formed in each hand separately, and with the simplest exercises, that they should be brought together.

The structure and formation of the scale should also be dwelt upon, pointing out that each major scale is composed of two halves, or tetrachords, and that the upper or second half of one forms the lower or first half of the next one following in the circle of scales. The relation between each major scale and its relative minor should be shown, and in order to keep them constantly together in the mind, they should be practised in pairs, first the major scale and then its relative minor. The pupil should repeatedly write out each scale, adding not only the key signature, but also placing the sharps, flats, or naturals before the proper notes while writing the scale.

The scales and arpeggios of all the keys should be constantly practised, not forgetting the arpeggios of the dominant and diminished sevenths.

After trying all others I have come to the conclusion that for general purposes the technics of Louis Plaidy are the best when properly taught and practised. Plaidy's way of teaching his technics is, I believe, not generally known in this country, but any teacher educated in a good school may use the book with advantage. Plaidy himself had a way of taking each simple exercise to pieces, and practising it in groups of two fingers, afterwards taking it as a whole, which I have found to be highly beneficial. He thus

combined the slow trill of the first section with the three and four finger exercises following it. This consolidates and varies the practice, and saves much time. Each finger exercise should also be practised *staccato* and in octaves, and finally with different shades of *crescendo* and *diminuendo*, thereby obtaining that control of touch so necessary to expressive and artistic playing. All the exercises should of course be transposed to other keys, so that the thumb may be accustomed to smooth action on the black notes, and the hand to various positions while playing.

The exercises of Aloys Schmidt, taken in connection with those of Plaidy, are very serviceable. Considerable attention is given to obtaining independence of the fingers and a quiet position of the hand, by holding down one or more notes, while the remaining fingers play. These may also be used for freedom of touch, by allowing one finger to lie *on the surface* of the key, without pressing it down, while the others play.

For more advanced players the Tausig-Ehrlich daily studies are of the greatest use, when practised according to the rules in the book which should always accompany them.

One fourth of the whole practice time should always be devoted to technical studies.

Many parents and students imagine finger exercises to be so much useless drudgery and waste of time. I once heard a story bearing upon this point, which I shall tell.

Dennis O'Rafferty had prospered somewhat in business, and as a result he and his wife decided that their daughter Joanna should take music lessons. A "professor" was duly engaged to visit the house, and the lessons began. On each lesson day Mrs. O'Rafferty left her kitchen after the teacher had arrived, and proceeded to listen at the parlor door. What she heard there pleased her not. Joanna was learning the first exercise for two fingers in Plaidy. A second, a third, a fourth lesson passed, and each day, as she mounted guard at the parlor door, the same monotonous exercise greeted her unwilling ears. She heard it with mounting impatience, until at last she could bear it no longer, and at the fifth lesson she threw open the door, tossed her apron across her arm, marched into the parlor, and thus saluted the astonished professor :

"Look here, my good man, I doan't loike that shtoyle at all, at all. *I* want Joanna to play *all over* the pyanna," (with an eloquent sweep of her hand), "not in *one shpot* !!!"

ETUDES.

The indiscriminate use of *études* is much to be deplored, but the evil is a difficult one to remedy. Many pupils and most teachers seem to imagine that they are the end itself, not the means to an end. Study after study is gone through, and piece after piece is learned, but whether the studies have any direct bearing on the pieces, nobody takes the trouble to enquire. The studies may be all scale passages, and the pieces all chords, but the teacher goes on his stubborn way without caring to examine the relation between the two.

Now all this is wrong ; the proper use of the study is to prepare the way for the piece, and should be chosen with a view to that end ; the technical exercises will take care of the even development of the fingers. No piece should be given to a pupil unless his powers are ample and more than ample for its execution ; and to make sure of this the study which precedes the piece should be, throughout, of the same character as its most difficult passages. At the same time care should be taken to have both studies and pieces steadily progressive. The studies of Cramer, Henselt, and Chopin are, of course, pieces

in themselves, and may be taken independently of others ; but there are a vast number of études that, apart from technical uses, have little or no musical beauty, and are of no service after having been learned. These studies should never be given without a definite purpose.

The only master that I know of who seems to have fully realized this crying need is Charles Hallé, who prefixes to each piece in his piano school, technical exercises directly bearing upon the difficulties within. But, unfortunately, these exercises are not quite extended enough to enable the pupil afterwards to play with ease the passages which they are intended to surmount.

Czerny and Moscheles, it is true, have systematically endeavored to anticipate and overcome every conceivable difficulty by means of their studies ; but, alas ! of new forms of difficulty there is no end, and the student constantly finds himself confronted with passages the like of which he never remembers to have seen before.

To use a common illustration, the purpose of the study is this : In order to swing an axe with ease, you must first swing a sledge-hammer for a while ; the axe will then appear light as a toy in comparison.

RHYTHM.

A correct notion of the rhythmic value of notes is by no means general among students. Too many acquire the "tune" and play it from memory.

Many players can perform pieces with brilliant finger passages creditably, who are totally at a loss in the slow movements from the sonatas. An accurate mental estimate of the length of the different kinds of notes is of the first importance to the musician.

The time of all pieces should be understood apart from the melody. At the outset, and later, when difficulties in time occur, it is a good plan to cause the student to play the rhythm of the piece on one or more notes, without regard to the melody. Thus a correct idea of time is cultivated, and an intelligent application of its principles is begun. The author purposes issuing a series of exercises on this subject which he hopes will prove helpful to teachers in giving their pupils an accurate idea of time in music.

After the piece has been mastered the student should play it in strict time to the beat of a metronome. He will thus acquire a regularity of rhythm and a decision of style which is of the first importance in many passages where a *tempo rubato* is not advisable. Should he not be able to play to the metronome

because it is out of sight, it is better to make a small attachment to the pendulum which will cross and recross his line of vision.

METHOD IN PRACTICE.

All authorities on technique, all experience, and all good teachers say, and say emphatically, that *slow practice* is the foundation of good piano playing. And yet, with all this warning, pupils do not seem fully to understand the importance of it. Generally, they seem to take the injunction to mean "somewhat slower than for performance." There should be no misunderstanding about it. The first practice of a piece should be *four times as slow* as the speed of performance, and the longer it is practised at this slow *tempo*, the more unerringly accurate will it be when executed at its marked *tempo*. Even after a piece has been worked up to its full speed, it is absolutely necessary to return constantly to the former slow practice, if it is to be kept in use.

It is a mistake to incessantly practise a piece as a whole. The difficulties should at once be attacked and thoroughly practised, beginning a few notes before them, and including a bar or more at their end. So

the mind, in practice, is put into the same condition as in performance, *i.e.*, the act of passing from an easy part to a difficult one. This kind of study should be continued just as long as the piece is used.

Practising a piece as a whole is like trying to level mountains by digging on their tops and in their valleys alike; so, while the mountain tops lower, the valleys sink, and at the end of a hundred years of this kind of work, their relative heights will be the same. Dig on the hill tops alone till they are level with the plain, then unite all together.

If a particular difficulty prove obstinate, construct a study of similar, but more difficult, passages, and thus endeavor to overcome it.

SOLOS.

On the choice of pieces a great deal depends. It should always be borne in mind that nothing should be given the pupil that he may not reasonably expect to master after proper practice. Thus, if the pupil's hand be very small, the piece should not contain many octaves, large chords, or passages requiring a hand of the ordinary grasp. To the studies and technical exercises may be left the stretching of the hands' tendons.

Again, if a pupil lack greatly in poetic sentiment, he should not be given, too early, a piece in which poetic sentiment is the prime factor. Rather let him approach the goal by slow degrees, and develop the imagination gradually.

Chord playing demands a special feeling for harmony, and until the pupil's general musical culture reaches that stage, pieces should not be given him whose effect altogether depends upon a warm appreciation of the chord progressions of which they are mainly composed. It is better that the few chords which occur in other works should be dwelt upon, their construction understood, and their connection with one another clearly shown. It is only when the ear keenly appreciates an artistically used dissonance, and when its resolution causes the deepest satisfaction, that the pupil can properly be said to "feel" the harmony. The use of the pedal in this kind of playing demands the closest attention, and the most refined taste, in order to produce a perfect *legato*, and that harmonious fulness which the faint sounding of the over-tones imparts to the chords.

Another piece will present the greatest difficulties in time, while the demand for finger dexterity will be comparatively small. One should be quite sure that the intellect and musical conscience of the pupil are

quite equal to the task before assigning it to him. This is particularly true of the slow movements from the sonatas. The works of the great masters were not bequeathed to us for purposes of murder.

If it be true that the souls of the dead are permitted to hear all that passes on earth, it is clear that there is no heaven for composers !

A thoroughly representative list of all the schools of composition (except the School of Trash), should be given to the pupil ; and, when the proper time arrives, the music of the great masters should be especially dwelt upon. In this way the student becomes, in a measure, acquainted with the whole range of piano literature, and learns to appreciate the characteristics of each different style.

ACCIDENTALS.

A common fault with pupils is to forget accidentals which occur in the first part of the bar, and to play notes on the same line or space as if they were not affected by them. The greatest care is necessary in order to avoid this. Another fault is, when some chords of the diminished seventh occur, to imagine

the accidental before the wrong note. For example,  in this chord many pupils play F-sharp instead of G-sharp. When asked why they do so, they invariably reply that the sharp is before the F, thus betraying a false notion that the note of the chord *nearest* to the accidental is the one affected by it. They do not generally understand that the note on the line or space which is *embraced* by the accidental, is the one altered.

MELODIOUS PLAYING.

The player who wishes to play a melody well should sing the notes, mentally, as he plays them. This helps to give a *cantabile* character to the phrases, and has a good effect upon the touch. The fingers playing the notes of the melody should press more strongly than those playing the accompanying ones, in order to give prominence and a certain intensity and prolonged character to the tones. The phrasing and shading should be carefully thought out, and one's whole feeling brought to bear upon them.

Listen intently to your instrument while you play, as a violinist does to his ; it is probable that you will thereby acquire a singing touch, a beautiful tone, and an expressive style.

PLAYING FROM MEMORY.

Theoretically, all people can play from memory, but some find so much difficulty in acquiring the art, that they do not persevere until they succeed. Many try to fix the printed notes in their minds, but with this method recollection soon fades, and the memory grows inaccurate in proportion as the mental picture becomes obscure. It is better to imagine the chords and melodies upon the keyboard, which never fades, and which is constantly before one in playing. Various mnemonic aids are instinctively made use of, and chords are thus associated with one another so as to form a continued and suggestive chain.

Printed notes are but characters agreed upon to represent certain keys and rhythms; to memorize them is to burden the mind needlessly. It is preferable to remember the piano-keys and music, rather the signs for them, which are neither shorthand nor any help whatever.

All concert pieces should be memorized. Their usefulness in an emergency is thereby doubled.

PUBLIC PERFORMANCE.

Confidence before an audience should be acquired from the earliest age. When pupils are constitution-

ally nervous nothing will cure them but playing at least once a week before an audience of one kind or another. They may play before one another in classes of fifteen for four weeks in private, and the fifth week a more public appearance may be made. This will, I think, quietly and effectively cure the most aggravated case of nervousness, and tend to a more finished performance. As it is now, many students suffer very greatly from this evil, and some even go so far as to take drugs before appearing in public. Sometimes ordinary drugs fail, and the performer is at a loss what to do. In such a case I should say that prussic acid, taken in large doses, would probably be effectual in removing all nervousness—and the performer as well!

The true cure for nervousness is constant appearance in public, and bringing the whole mind to bear upon one's music.

Before appearing in public one should be thoroughly familiar with the piano to be played on, otherwise the nicest shades of expression cannot be given with certainty and clearness of touch.

The final act of the student with the teacher should be a public pianoforte recital from memory, with a verbal analysis of the works performed. This end should always be borne in mind by the teacher, and

the current pieces chosen with a view to a properly contrasted and representative programme. Much time is saved in this way, and the goal is reached more quickly than by an aimless and desultory kind of study.

OF READING AT SIGHT.

After a fair degree of technique has been acquired, the student should form the daily habit of reading at sight. From the music at his command such pieces should be chosen as do not present any great difficulties of execution, and these should be played steadily and resolutely through to the end, without stopping to correct any mistakes, whether in the time or in the notes. It is by obliging the mind to grasp quickly the rhythm and notation, and by keeping the regular number of beats in each measure, that the power of reading at sight rapidly expands. The student should also accustom himself to reading from the full vocal score, and, later, from the full orchestral score. Then he will indeed become a musician.

ENSEMBLE PLAYING.

Duet practice is one of the best and most interesting ways for increasing the power of reading at sight, and

every opportunity of the kind should be taken advantage of. The playing of concerted music for the piano and other instruments may well be called invaluable ; it wields, perhaps, the most potent of all influences in rounding and developing the young musician. It gives him steadiness of rhythm, readiness of resource, and that power of sympathetically aiding and accommodating himself to the musical feeling of the players with whom he may be performing.

MANNER TO PUPILS.

The teacher's manner should always be as encouraging as possible, without loss of strictness. It is of no use to lose one's temper or to speak harshly ; that only confuses and discourages, while the wear and tear on the teacher himself is very great. More music teachers have been sent to an early grave by irritability and nervous outbreaks than we can easily conceive of. All this may be avoided if the teacher will early acquire the proper attitude towards the pupil ; to speak quietly ; not to expect too much ; and to allow the pupil to do the counting aloud. In cases of wilful indolence, a sharp reprimand, judiciously worded, may be very beneficial, but to be always scolding is sure to discourage the pupil, and is very wearing upon the teacher's own temper.

On the other hand it will not do to be inoffensively dull and uninteresting during the lesson. It is better to crystallize important points into pithy phrases which will stick in the pupil's memory, and exert a moulding influence upon the bent of his study.

ON THE STUDY OF MUSIC.

The study of good music—how good a thing it is!

Many there are who can look back with satisfaction and pleasure upon hours spent at the pianoforte, lost to all else save the joy of drinking in deep draughts of inspired melody and harmony. There is a sense of solid enjoyment in pianoforte practice that I think no one but your thorough-going industrious practiser can fully understand. He is so busy with mind, eyes, ears, and fingers. The sense of growing power is so perceptible. The feeling of gaining ground every moment is so satisfactory. One hardly wonders at the numberless students toiling day in and day out at an apparently endless task. Then, too, as the composition gradually reveals itself to the ear; as new beauties come to light; new curiosities of structure, rhythm, and harmony, break in upon the mind—the feeling of power and of pleasure grows upon one. And when work is done for the day, and good progress has been made, what elation there is! what a

spring in the step, what a consciousness of music within, of acquired musical wealth!

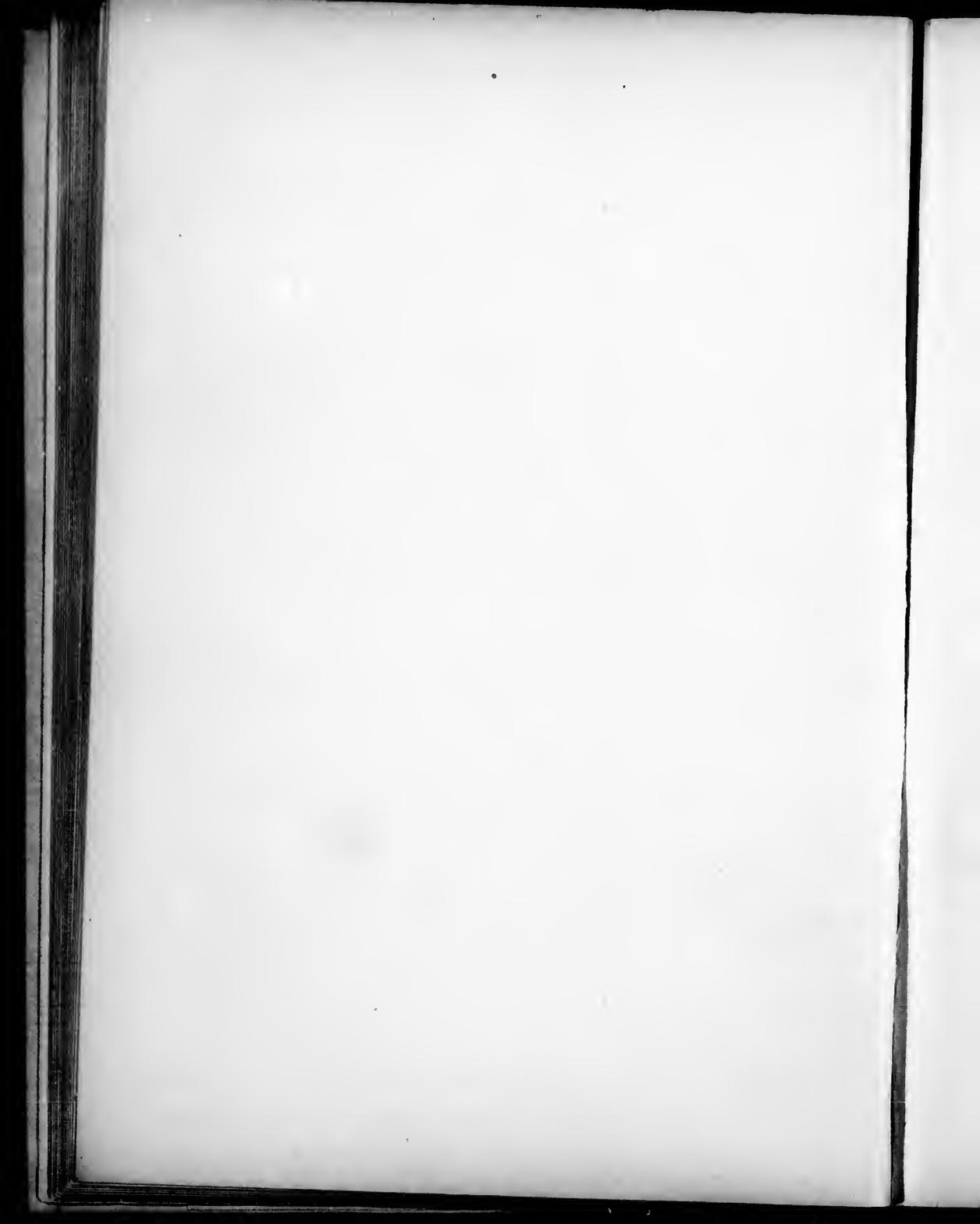
Many an old musician there is who can turn a backward glance upon a life spent in constant study, with feelings almost too deep for words. How imperceptibly that young love of music has grown, year by year, until it has become the sovereign passion of his being. How it has entwined itself with every thought, every action, every ambition! How it still spurs him forward, beckons from afar, and cries "Onward!" and yet "Onward!" until at last his music is all played, his songs all sung, and he lays him down in a green and quiet spot, silent and still for aye. The keys where once his hand loved to linger shall feel another touch; the circle of friends among whom he labored shall hear another voice; and the place that knew him once shall know him no more.

This is our mission in life—to cause good music to be heard in the land. And it is the mission of music to lighten toil, to comfort sorrow, to sweeten the lot of all mankind. May it be our constant endeavor so to live and so to work, that the heart of the world may be strengthened and moved upon by a power refining and ennobling—the power of good music.

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SOME MUSICAL DON'TS.



SOME MUSICAL DON'TS

I.

IN GENERAL.

DON'T think that you know all that is in this little book before you have read it.

DON'T choose the pianoforte for your instrument if you have greater natural gifts for the big drum.

DON'T begin your studies with the idea that long and persevering practice is at first a very amusing thing.

DON'T think, on the other hand, that it will always be an irksome task to go to your daily practice. After a few months of watchful care, the *habit of practising* is formed, and the pupil does his daily work with growing satisfaction.

DON'T leave the length of your practice-time to chance. Set apart so many hours for practice (from

one to four), and *do not allow that time to be shortened*, even for a single day, especially for the first few months. Be very strict about this.

II.

OF POSITION.

DON'T make perpetual obeisance to the instrument. Sit upright, and yield easily to the movements required by the execution of the piece.

DON'T be eccentric ; don't be stiff.

DON'T arch your knuckles like unto the back of a camel. The back of the hand, to the middle joint of the fingers, must be nearly level. The remainder of the fingers must be curved under, but not too far. Keep the wrist level also, especially in playing octaves.

DON'T play with your fingers sticking straight out. That is a natural position for a bunch of radishes, but not so desirable for a pianoforte player. Shape the fingers like so many little hammers, and strike the keys with the points.

DON'T stiffen any of the muscles of the hand or wrist. It is impossible to play well with a stiff hand or wrist. The pair of cords running down the centre of the inner side of the wrist must not protrude much. If they do, you may be certain that the wrist is stiff.

DON'T constrain the hand. Play always with relaxed muscles. The wrist must be easy and loose.

DON'T bring the weight of the arm and stiffened wrist to help the strength of the fingers in finger passages. Play with the strength of the fingers alone. All else must be loose and easy.

DON'T leave this to chance, but begin each day's practice with exercises for obtaining a loose wrist, or in octaves, if the student's hand be large enough.

III.

ON PRACTISING TECHNICAL EXERCISES.

DON'T begin to practise with two hands together at first. Always take the hands separately. They may be united when each hand can execute its part perfectly.

DON'T attack a passage at too great speed. On the contrary, great deliberation is necessary. One sixteenth note per second, counting two to each, is about the proper rate of speed. This may be quickened gradually, until the limit of clear execution is reached. Bear in mind that slow, very slow, practice is the secret of good pianoforte playing.

DON'T begin your slow practice with a weak, irresolute touch. The fingers should be raised as high as possible, and the keys struck with crisp firmness and precision ; but without any feeling of heavy pressure, stiffness or bearing heavily upon the hand.

DON'T imagine that this method is to be used in rapid practice. This is a gymnastic exercise intended to strengthen the lifting and striking muscles of the fingers. In rapid passages the fingers are not raised more than is necessary for the clear enunciation of each note. Let the wrist and hand be loose.

DON'T practise even finger exercises and scales without accent or rhythm. Play everything *in time*, with different rhythms, and with varying degrees of loudness.

IV.

OF PRACTISING STUDIES AND PIECES.

DON'T begin your practice at too rapid a *tempo*. At the first reading sixteenth notes should be played at the speed of quarter notes, *andante*; other notes accordingly. This is very important.

DON'T stumble or hesitate, even at a first reading. If you do, you may be quite sure that you are practising too fast. Take it at a slower *tempo*.

DON'T begin twice. Look at the piece carefully, and begin with the firm resolve that you will not stop, no matter what happens.

DON'T play out of time. You should be able to count aloud regularly throughout the piece, giving the proper length to each note. Counting aloud is the best way to acquire correct ideas of time. Schumann says:—"Play in time! The playing of many *virtuosi* is like the gait of a drunkard!"

DON'T play where rests are marked. You might as well try to walk on water.

DON'T repeat a piece over and over, like a machine wound up to go for ever. Seek carefully for the

difficult passages and practise them a dozen times oftener than the rest. Do this each time that you play the piece through.

DON'T begin exactly *at* the difficulty. Attack it a measure or so *before*, and in this way connect the more easy portion with the difficult.

DON'T abandon this method. Practise every piece in this way as long as you continue to use it.

V.

MEMORIZING.

DON'T answer a request to play, by the statement that you "can't play without your music." *All* your pieces should be memorized.

DON'T think that the gift of musical memory is shared by only a few. I have never yet met any student who was unable to memorize, when properly taught. Memory is like a muscle ; if you do not use it, it will be weak ; constant exercise alone makes it strong.

DON'T memorize the printed notes upon the page. You will never succeed in doing it perfectly, and will

soon forget. They are only signs for things to be done. Why not remember the *things* themselves?

DON'T try to memorize the printed notes. *Memorize the shapes of the various chords UPON THE KEYBOARD ; the course which EACH MELODY TAKES ; and the beats or pulses of time during which each note is to be held down.* This is the true secret of playing from memory. The study of Harmony, (practically applied to the keyboard), is an aid to this, because it familiarizes the mind with the shapes of all the chords and their different positions.

DON'T half-memorize any piece. If you forget a part, it is because you have imperfectly connected that part with what comes before it. Play over with the aid of the printed notes, the preceding part with the portion which you have forgotten. Repeat several times slowly and carefully, observing the shapes which the notes take upon the keyboard. If you again forget, repeat this process until you have the whole piece perfect.

VI.

ON PLAYING BEFORE AN AUDIENCE.

DON'T avoid playing before people. On the contrary seek every opportunity of doing so, even if it be

only one of your own family. It is in this way alone that you can acquire confidence and true mastery.

DON'T allow your attention to be taken off your performance by the presence of any one. Fasten your mind firmly upon what you are doing, and pay no attention to any movement or sound near you. Listen to your instrument, and to nothing else. This is the true cure for nervousness.

DON'T consider that you *know* a piece until you can play it perfectly, from memory, before an audience. This is the only reliable test of thorough knowledge.

VII.

ON GOOD AND BAD MUSIC.

DON'T regard the piece given you as poor music, because you dislike it. Your taste may be poor. It is your duty to try to understand the *best* music, not that which takes your fancy at a first hearing.

VIII.

OF COMMON FAULTS IN BEGINNERS.

DON'T put down one hand after the other when striking chords for both hands. Every note must be

struck exactly at the same instant, unless otherwise marked. This very common fault in beginners makes one almost fancy that the two lobes of their brain do not work together, but, like a team of badly managed horses, pull one after the other.

DON'T use the pedal between two opposing harmonies. Please don't!

DON'T play weakly or flippantly. Practise with a firm touch, lifting each finger high during slow practice. Play earnestly, with resolution.

DON'T begin to perform mechanically or thoughtlessly. Have the love of beauty in your heart and mind before you commence, and endeavor to produce in your hearers the same feelings which inspire you.



