

pianist whose authority as an interpreter cannot be questioned. However, many students are so situated that this course is impossible. It is also often quite impossible for the teacher, who is busy teaching from morning to night, to give a rendering of the work that would be absolutely perfect in all of its details. However, one can gain something from the teacher who can, by his genius, give the pupil an idea of the artistic demands of the piece.

If the student has the advantage of hearing neither the virtuoso nor the teacher he need not despair, if he has *talent*. Talent! Ah, that is the great thing in all musical work. If he has talent he will see with the eyes of talent—that wonderful force which penetrates all artistic mysteries and reveals the truths as nothing else possibly can. Then he grasps, as if by intuition, the composer's intentions in writing the work, and, like the true interpreter, communicates these thoughts to his audience in their proper form.

TECHNICAL PROFICIENCY

It goes without saying, that technical proficiency should be one of the first acquisitions of the student who would become a fine pianist. It is impossible to conceive of fine playing that is not marked by clean, fluent, distinct, elastic technic. The technical ability of the performer should be of such a nature that it can be applied immediately to all the artistic demands of the composition to be interpreted. Of course, there may be individual passages which re-

quire some special technical study, but, generally speaking, technic is worthless unless the hands and the mind of the player are so trained that they can encompass the principal difficulties found in modern compositions.

In the music schools of Russia great stress is laid upon technic. Possibly this may be one of the reasons why some of the Russian pianists have been so favorably received in recent years. The work in the leading Russian conservatories is almost entirely under supervision of the Imperial Musical Society. The system is elastic in that, although all students are obliged to go through the same course, special attention is given to individual cases. Technic, however, is at first made a matter of paramount importance. All students must become technically proficient. None are excused. It may be interesting to hear something of the general plan followed in the Imperial music schools of Russia. The course is nine years in duration. During the first five years the student gets most of his technical instruction from a book of studies by Hanon, which is used very extensively in the conservatories. In fact, this is practically the only book of strictly technical studies employed. All of the studies are in the key of "C." They include scales, arpeggios, and other forms of exercises in special technical designs.

At the end of the fifth year an examination takes place. This examination is twofold. The pupil is examined first for proficiency in technic, and later

for proficiency in artistic playing—pieces, studies, etc. However, if the pupil fails to pass the technical examination he is not permitted to go ahead. He knows the exercises in the book of studies by Hanon so well that he knows each study by number, and the examiner may ask him, for instance, to play study 17, or 28, or 32, etc. The student at once sits at the keyboard and plays.

Although the original studies are all in the key of "C," he may be requested to play them in any other key. He has studied them so thoroughly that he should be able to play them in any key desired. A metronomic test is also applied. The student knows that he will be expected to play the studies at certain times. For example, he is asked to play the first study at a certain tempo, and the examiner starts the metronome at two, eight notes to the beat. If he is successful in doing this, he is marked accordingly, and other tests are given.

Personally, I believe this matter of insisting upon a thorough technical knowledge is a very vital one.

The mere ability to play a few pieces does not constitute musical proficiency. It is like those music houses which possess a few pieces of beautiful technical grasp should be a contributing

factor. The student is a very advanced technical exercises, like those of Tausig, is also very deservedly popular. Less is heard of the studies of Penselet, however, notwithstanding his long service

in Russia. Henselt's studies are so beautiful that they should rather be classed with pieces like the studies of Chopin.

PROPER PHRASING

An artistic interpretation is not possible if the student does not know the laws underlying the very important subject of phrasing. Unfortunately many editions of good music are found wanting in proper phrase markings. Some of the phrase signs are erroneously applied. Consequently the only safe way is for the student to make a special study of this important branch of musical art. In the olden days phrase signs were little used. Bach used them very sparingly. It was not necessary to mark them in those times, for every musician who counted himself a musician could determine the phrases as he played. But a knowledge of the means of defining phrases in a composition is by no means all-sufficient. Skill in executing the phrases is quite as important. The real musical feeling must exist in the mind of the composer or all the knowledge of correct phrasing he may possess will be worthless.

REGULATING THE TEMPO

If a fine musical feeling, or sensitiveness, must control the execution of the phrases, the regulation of the tempo demands a kind of musical ability no less exacting. Although in most cases the tempo of a given composition is now indicated by means