

For the artist and the critic of aesthetics, however, the value of reference to existing works that have already met with acceptance, is simply that these productions have proved to contain elements capable of touching certain chords of emotion, and have therefore fulfilled the general laws of art, and are worthy of study as psychological hints.

They are, to the artist, like Baedeker's guide books; they afford some indispensable information as to some things to be looked for, but they by no means exhaust the subject; and when the critics insist upon comparing all art to art, they are in reality finding fault with the Almighty for not moulding the mountains after the description of the guide-books.

They are comparing Vesuvius to the fuses that have been honored with its name; a glorious sunset to the limelight at the theatre. The secret of great art can not be weighed out and sold in newspaper articles; but the mystery of life is too deep for the plummet of art, and so there can never come an end to art—or not until the mystery is exploded.

I regard as the best critical writing that which is either avowedly or surreptitiously self-expression on parallel and dependent themes, if such lead to clarity and definiteness.

A self-obliterated critic is, to my thinking, as satisfactory as a stale Stilton cheese, so economically hollowed out that only the rind remains standing.

It possesses neither the interest of a ruin nor of a scaffolding.

It merely arouses animosity for exciting an appetite without gratifying it. It is a poor empty cheat; it has even ceased to have a distinctive odor, but takes that of the viands nearest to it. You may pour rich, generous wine continually into it, and its poor spare ribs may retain some of it, but there is no substance to absorb it, there is nothing to ferment and ripen, and the wine, without changing its character, is obviously not improved in such a vessel. A good ripe blue Stilton, quickened with the best liquor, needs no apology for its presence on the table.

And it needs no demonstration to prove that it is preferable to get wine from the wood than to drink it out of a stale cheese rind.

The critic who merely spreads his innocuous platitudes and imbecility over the original soil, is not a quickening agency, but an altogether abominable nuisance. Only when a critic is himself original—a writer not merely of labels and echoes, but of views; a man, who, in his interpretation of others' philosophy, illustrates his subject with an experience of life at first hand—only the man whose thought is thus quickened by the thought of others, and who, in turn, quickens our thought, can be of any service to us.

## RHAPSODIES.

EBONY AND IVORY.  
(A Study in Digits.)

(By Bryceson Trehearne.)

II.

Who comes to-day, with sunlight on his face,  
And eyes of fire, that have a sorrow's trace,  
But are not sad with sadness of the years,  
Or hints of tears?

He is a king, or I mistake the sign,  
A king of song—a comrade of the Nine—  
The Muses' brother, and their youngest one  
This side the sun.  
—Eric Mackay.

I remember the occasion well.

It was a particularly bleak and icy day, in the heart of December—the wind rattled shrilly through the frosty air, and tiny flecks of snow flittered waveringly down and quilted the earth with a glistening mantle of downy white.

London was bathed in a sepulchral gloom—that hung on the housetops like a shroud o'er a corpse. Here and there, where the density was thinnest, wan glimmers of flickering light could be faintly discerned which, I assume, must have emanated from a few stray gas jets, generously lit for the enlightenment of an exasperating community by a considerate corporation. To me, they appeared more like young stars that had wandered aimlessly from their spheric nest, and becoming hopelessly entangled in the meshes of the darkness, found themselves suspended on the filmy threads of the fog.

The wind stung my flesh with the intensity of a fire-flare, but this did not have the effect of dampening my ardor or lessening my zeal, for was not the ringing pulse of an anticipatory realisation tingling in my veins and contravening the too-persistent wooing of a glacial, murky atmosphere?

It was the afternoon of the Paderewski recital, and I, among many other pianistic enthusiasts, was hastening to pay reverential obeisance at the shrine of our idol and king—the monarch of the keyboard.

The perversity of the elements hindered any rapid advance in ambulation, obstacles would continually and annoyingly creep out of the gloom and confront us—poor, innocent wayfarers—as we trundled our footsteps through the sodden slush, laboringly onward.

When I reached the doors of the Temple of the Muse—prosaically known as St. James' Hall—I was hot and steaming with the breathlessness of anxiety, lest all the available accommodation should have been allotted. The gods (of the booking-office) were kind, however, and assigned to me in return for a nominal remuneration just 4 in. of bare board in the hind part of the hall. Although I cannot lay claim to being excessively obese, I mentally reflected on the tortures and anatomical malleation I should have to endure in order to conform myself within the capacity of the apportioned province. It proved much worse than I had forestalled.

In my herculean endeavors to reach the strip of board, it became palpably and painfully evident that I was causing an intense amount of physical discomfort to the specimen of masculinity seated collaterally, and during the period of penance, ere the recital commenced, echoes of a strain of luminous blue swear-words reached my sensitive ears from time to time, and made me feel as if I had alighted on a plot of purgatorial ground.

He needn't have growled. I was in a far more calamitous predicament.

The seat directly facing mine was occupied by a lady with a most opaque head-gear—a popped hat of gold persephone—so thickly strewn with embellishments that I nearly dislocated the pivot of my spine in the attempt to dodge the trimmings and discover a crevice.

It is a misapprehension on the part of the critics to assert that the entire enjoyment of a pianoforte recital depends on the sense of hearing alone. In truth, the art of the pianoforte recital is of a distinctly Wagnerian type, inasmuch as it appeals more or less to each sense, embraces the spirit of every art—subordinating the whole to music, I grant you. Our enjoyment of the recital depends on many things—mere trifles you will say—such as the lady on our right, the gentleman on our left, the state of our soul, the fit of our boots, the size of the hat in front of us—all these seeming details are to the full as important as the piano-playing we have come to hear. And, if I may be permitted to say so, the personality of our pianist affects most keenly our appreciation of his art.

To the majority of listeners an interesting visual subject is an inspiration—a face sunned by the light of passion and shadowed by the sheen of blood, creates a rapturous, ether-like atmosphere, in which they are transported in the haze of dream to an enchanting pre-Raphaelite wonder-world.

Truly it is as important to please the eye as to enchant the ear.

This vital fact has long been grasped by the intuitive Southern mind of the organ-grinder, who seeks to enhance the charm of his matchless music by the picturesque form of his fantastically-attired monkey. I am ever attracted by the plaintive face of the pensive ape in that gay scarlet jacket, which seems but to deepen its wearer's melancholy. For I am intensely sensitive to beauty—spiritual, mental, and musical; beauty commands my undying homage. Beauty is a vital necessity of the pianist's art—I do not mean mere cold correctness of note or feature, but rather the fateful, pitous beauty of the saints of Leonardo or the organ-grinder's monkey.

The pianist's whole art cannot be confined in the crude definition piano-playing. Our critics dimly apprehend this truth, and, burgeoning forth into passionate platitude, sound all the dictionary's deeps for the "not quite"—I need scarcely say they fail to find it; and such terms as virtuosity, expression, soul, &c., applied to ideal pianism glide off their subject as water off a duck's back. For the art of the modern pianist is the revelation of a unique personality through an inevitable, perfect medium. Wherefore this personality is of paramount importance in both its own esteem and that of its audience—and, profligatim, it is irresistible.

When these thoughts flittered through my mind I had spent about sixty minutes on the afore-mentioned "stool of repentance," and then my well-nigh exhausted patience was rewarded by the spectacle of three stalwart retainers of the House of Erard, removing, bodily, the top of the much-advertised "Paderewski Grand," after which edifying performance another gorgeous functionary came forward, and, with a spotless handkerchief, ostentatiously removed any mischievous microbes deposited, possibly by sacrilegious fingers, upon its immaculate ebony and ivory keys by the profane multitude at the Royal Aquarium, where the instrument had been recently exhibited.

After another wait of twenty minutes, varied only by the excitement of a young lady falling as well as she could through the densely-packed mass of piano-loving humanity in a fainting condition—the "Piano king," with much embarrassment, entered his audience chamber.

He has a strange face—the face of an ascetic monk of Ribera's, a type of rare mediæval beauty. As I gaze, I bethink me of the features of the youth beloved of Leonarda Da Vinci, which Mr. Walter Pater has reproduced for us in his "Renaissance." The nose is delicately modelled; the profile is irregular, but there is not an inch of space on his mask that is not full of meaning and magnetism. Look at the faces of most people, even actors, and you will discern waste places, protuberances of meaningless fat, or harsh accents of structure. Now, Paderewski's face—the full face—is marred by the cheek bones being too prominent and too high—his Slavic origin without doubt; but even this fullness is eloquent. The face at times blazes with radiance; it is like Swinburne's in its rhythmical suggestiveness, but it is Swinburne with a chin.

I was glancing the other day at an old portrait of the poet of "Laus Veneris." There he looked slightly as Paderewski does now. The same slender, beautiful, white girlish neck; the same proud brow and wonderful gaze; but the Swinburnian chin had all the diffidence of a poached egg, while Paderewski's is strongly modelled, and denotes a temperament thoroughly intact.

Have you seen Swinburne's head painted by Watts, the poet painter? The resemblance to Paderewski is there the strongest—a resemblance, by the way, largely dependent on coloring and expression.

Both men are poets to the core.

But the piano has commenced to whisper, sweetly and dreamily. Yes! there is something piquantly ascetic in the cool white tones, caressed by Paderewski—they become "sugary sweet," quite "virgibus puerisque," and as cloistral as the eyes of Cléo de Mérode; they can express subtler shades of feeling than all the coloring of the orchestra can portray; they defy analysis; they cause the ravished pen to pause spellbound on the verge of adjective, as a green lucent sea-wave, curling, curving, indolently, deliciously—of a sudden poised on the breathless brink of tidal thunder, never to break in clouds of tossing foam and cool, bright spray; and yet they cause also an acceleration of the pulse, an in-

definable "Sehnsucht" faint as the pale gold Rhine wine of the poetic title which one links instinctively with affairs of the heart.

They are indeed the essence of music—rarefied, intensified, the veritable mass-esses of the soul, manipulating its every nerve with the skilled tenderness of the sympathetic psychologist, refining on exquisite shades of emotion, waking the whole keyboard of feeling with sure sensitive touches.

I find a strange analogy to his touch in moonlight. For the moon subjects heaven and earth to her own silver sheen, invests all things with her pale mystical glamour; the moon, in her own far-off divine way is quite an egoist, and believes almost exclusively in subjective art. All tone gradations, of light shade but not of color, are hers, from the weird white of winter to the tawny gold of harvest—ivory spring, amber of summer—but she is always indisputably the moon—her lovely monotone of coloring is her personality.

How different from the vulgar catholicity of the universal sun are the exquisite limitations of the exclusive moon—how different, and how infinitely sweeter! The moon transcends the sun as art transcends nature.

The moon is no more a reflection of the sun than the dream is a reflection of the real. The sun has no personality at all; he is deplorably deficient in personal hypnotism, he conceives of an object as in itself it really is—and that is unpardonable! The moon is all temperament and personality; she puts her own ebony and ivory interpretation upon the world.