

Reminiscences of the Great Joachim by One of His Pupils

Prof. Isador Troostwyk, of the Yale School of Music Spent Three Years of Study with the Master in Berlin—Dramatic Episode in Which Joachim and Wieniawski Both Figured—Joachim's Kindness, Strictness and Sense of Humor—"Bow-ing the Soul of Violin Playing"

New Haven, Conn., Jan. 14, 1916.

"THE death of Josef Joachim," said Prof. Isador Troostwyk, head of the violin department of the Yale School of Music at Yale University, "brought to my memory the picture of my beloved teacher as, with Henri Wieniawski, his great contemporary, he stood on the stage of Kroll's Theater in Berlin one afternoon nearly thirty years ago."

"It was in February, 1879, and I had



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then been studying with him about a year. Wieniawski was announced to give a concert at Kroll's Theater and Joachim had invited all his pupils to attend. Wieniawski, who was already suffering from the dreadful disease, asthma, from which, strangely enough, Joachim died, was to play the Mendelssohn Concerto. As he had not played in Berlin for several years, the house was packed to its utmost capacity.

"After the orchestra played the few opening bars of the Concerto, Wieniawski commenced the lovely theme of the first movement, when suddenly in the middle of the cadenza he was seen to throw up his arms and motion that he was unable to continue playing. Great consternation prevailed, but after a short interval, a chair was brought to him and he resumed playing in a sitting position. Again he broke down, this time so completely that he was carried from the platform.

"Joachim at once went to Wieniawski and volunteered to substitute for him. The offer was gladly accepted and, dressed in his walking suit, with Wieniawski's violin under his arm, Joachim went upon the stage and played the 'Chaconne' by Bach in such an inspiring way as to arouse the audience to the highest pitch of enthusiasm. With the orchestra sounding fanfares and the wild cheering of Berlin's music lovers the climax was reached when Wieniawski, who had revived, wishing to show

his appreciation, led Joachim upon the stage and embraced him heartily. The event was all the more important, as, at that time, Wieniawski and Joachim, who had been lifelong friends, were not on good terms. Needless to say, it healed the breach.

Kind, but Strict

"That is only one of the many instances," continued Professor Troostwyk, "of Joachim's kindness to his fellow artists and his pupils, and in the three years I studied with him I found him always the same generous master. I was not sixteen, the required age, when I took the examinations at the Royal High School of Music at Berlin, of which he was director, but through him I was granted special privileges and allowed to enter. 'You have not a good violin, my little Hollander,' said Herr Joachim to me after a few lessons. 'I will lend you one.' And, at my next lesson, to my great astonishment and delight he appeared with a splendid Guarnerius from his world-famous collection of violins. During my three years at the school I had this beautiful instrument to use, even taking it home to Holland with me on my annual vacations from July to September.

"But, though kind, the great master was also most severe and strict, and could be extremely sarcastic. In fact few of his pupils escaped the biting edge of his keen and witty tongue. To the diligent ones he was always obliging and encouraging, and marvelously patient for one nervously constituted. He was merciless where bowing was concerned and his desire to impart the secret of his genius with the bow made him indefatigable in his effort to make his pupils worthy of their teacher.

"Remember, my little Hollander,' he would say to me, patting me on the shoulder, 'der Bogenstrich ist die Seele von Violinspielen.' (Bowing is the soul of violin playing.) It is said his teaching may be recognized everywhere by the bowing of his pupils.

"Joachim was to me the veritable grand old man. He was then in his prime, a tall, splendidly formed man, with white hair and beard and kind brown eyes peering through large glasses. When playing, however, off would come his glasses, though he was extremely nearsighted. As I remember, he was very careful and conventional as to his dress, with the exception of his large black hat, which set carelessly on his white hair and gave a picturesque touch to his imposing figure. He was charming to meet socially and a brilliant conversationalist, and when he appeared at our club, which met every Saturday night, we were sure of a delightful evening. He had always a droll tale to tell, often at his own expense, but more often at the expense of his pupils.

Hatred for Wagner

"The hatred of Joachim for Wagner and his music was one of his characteristics and, like all his pupils, I soon learned that the name of the great German composer was taboo with my teacher. He never allowed his pupils to play his music and when Wagner came to Berlin in '79, the great violinist did not attend. His pupils were also advised to stay away, but, like the others, I risked his wrath and was present at the concert.

"During my three years under Joachim in Berlin, many of the world's famous musicians visited that city. Max Bruch was associated with the school and other members of the Berlin musical coterie were Hans von Bülow, Brahms and Franz Liszt, with Sarasate a frequent visitor. It was a very painful period for Joachim, as during that time he separated from his wife, Amalia Weiss, the contralto, from whom he was

afterward divorced. It was said he felt the separation keenly and I remember distinctly his fits of depression. Mme. Joachim, whom I met once, was a woman of great personal charm and very kind to her husband's pupils.

"Joachim's sense of humor was one of his marked characteristics and I remember well with what gusto he told me the following story: He was on a concert tour in Holland and spent several days in Amsterdam. It was a particularly severe winter and the *grachts* (canals) were covered with a thick ice crust. Everybody was enjoying the skating and the *baanvegers* (sweepers) had a busy time keeping the *grachts* clean. Having taken up his abode at the Amstel hotel, which is located on the principal *gracht*, the Amstel, Joachim could watch from his window the merry crowd of skaters. His interest grew until he, too, felt a desire to skate, though he had never before indulged in this sport.

"However, it looked so easy that he secured a pair of skates and boldly struck out. The result was as painful as it was surprising; but Joachim picked himself up, and, nothing daunted, dashed off again, with precisely the same result and added pain. For nearly an hour the great violinist whirled wildly about on his new skates, the *baanveger*, who had heard him play at a concert the evening before, watching him from the bank. Finally Joachim landed in a most undignified heap, almost at the feet of the sweeper. 'Ah, Mynheer!' quoth that functionary, 'you see skating is not as easy as fiddling!'"

A. T.

Woman Comes to Rescue of Exiled Belgian Musician

Upon the representation of Mrs. George H. Gould, wife of a wealthy retired leather manufacturer, of No. 26 West Sixty-ninth Street, New York, that they would have no occasion to be in want again, Henry De Rudder and his

wife, Edith, refugees from Antwerp, were discharged on Jan. 21 when arraigned in the Men's Night Court for exercising improper guardianship over their six-year-old daughter Madeline. The couple were arrested by agents of the Children's Society. De Rudder and his wife were playing a violin and a cello along the street while the child collected offerings. When arraigned, De Rudder said he had been a musician at the opera house in Antwerp until the outbreak of the war. When the opera closed, the country was in such condition that he decided to take his life's savings and bring his family to the United States. He found himself unable to obtain employment here.

Give Recitals at Teachers College, Columbia University

A series of concerts is being given at Teachers College, Columbia University, the talent being supplied by Charles Prescott Poore. On Thursday afternoon, Jan. 20, Hanna Wolfe, pianist, played a program of modern French and modern Russian music, with a group of Chopin. On Thursday afternoon, Jan. 27, David Griffin, baritone, with William Silvano Thunder, accompanist, will furnish a program of songs. Thursday afternoon, Feb. 3, will be devoted to a program of French songs, by Mary Cassel, soprano. The recitals begin at 4:10, and are open to the public.

Kinds Words from Montreal

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Inclosed find amount for another year's subscription to your valuable paper.

Best wishes to you for a prosperous year.

Yours very truly,
THEODORE VANDER MEERSCHEN,
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