

Francis Richter Has Mastered the Braille System of Reading

BACK INTO HARD WORK AT VIENNA MORE HOPEFUL THAN EVER AND STRONGER



FRANCIS RICHTER AND HIS COUSIN OTTO KRAUSE, WHO ASSISTED HIM WITH THE BRAILLE THIS SUMMER. THE SMALL INSTRUMENT IS THE BRAILLE TYPEWRITER.

BY ALMA A. ROGERS.
Francis Richter has taken up the routine of student life again, having returned to Vienna the 24 of September. A few days later Professor Labor, his teacher in composition, also returned, and lessons were renewed at once.

Mr. Richter is so desirous of mastering the science of music that he has started in on two lessons weekly. He is now in third part counterpoint, a section that abounds in technical problems, the solution of which is necessary to correct construction of musical composition. The lessons with Professor Labor are always a delight to the young student. It is the Herr Professor, it will be remembered by those who are following Mr. Richter's progress, who taught him the Braille. Thus the study in Braille progresses with the study of music. The exercises to be solved are written down in the Braille musical notation. The student then works them out at the piano, copies them on his Braille typewriter, and returns the copy to his teacher.

I don't think I have mentioned the Braille typewriter before. It is a small machine with six piano keys, corresponding to the six dots used in the Braille. By different combinations of these dots the alphabet and notes are represented, letters being used for the latter. The typewriter reduces the labor of writing quite one-third. To write by hand a double sheet of music punctured with tiny holes in sections of six is required. Heavy paper is placed between the slate covers, and the writing accomplished by means of a sharp pointed tool, the stylus, being inserted through the metal holes into the paper. A series of raised dots results, which the student in time learns to read with great rapidity. At first the work is very slow and trying, each dot of each character having to be counted. But as the pupil gains in his conception of form, he begins to observe the angles formed by the dots as well as their number, and when proficient follows the angles almost entirely. Francis Richter is well along in this last stage.

Richter's Teacher in New Location.

We were quite surprised to find that the Labor family had left the old house in which they have lived for more than 26 years, every corner of which was familiar to the Herr Professor. It is one of the oldest houses in Vienna, I should fancy, with a narrow court presided over by an ancient housekeeper in a woman who takes care of the halls and opens the door at night, besides serving the landlord in the capacity of agent. The Labor Wohnung was at the top of the four long and narrow circular flights of stairs. Years ago, when Herr Labor's sister's husband, a sculptor, was living, the old house is said to have been the gathering place of artists, musicians and poets. Many memories of the sculptor's art remain.

The new Wohnung is in a modern house with large, lofty rooms, one of the largest of which is set apart as the Herr Professor's study. The room is high enough to permit of the placing of the fine pipe organ, which was the gift of a musical society 15 years ago. In addition are two concert pianos, several bookcases filled with Braille volumes, sculptures and various ribbons and other mementoes of the public honors accorded the Professor Labor, who not only holds the gold medal of the Society of Arts and Sciences, a most distinguished honor, but has also been awarded the title of Royal Organist to the Court by the Emperor Franz Joseph. A group of a dozen or so tiny busts of great musicians is interesting from their suggestiveness of models which the sensitive fingers of the blind artist have no doubt longingly studied. To have his organ at hand must be a great joy to the Herr Professor, and afford compensation for the strangeness incident to new surroundings. The old rooms were too low to allow the organ to be set up.

We were privileged to hear the organ at the last composition lesson, when Herr Labor played the Bach Fantasia

and Fugue in G minor for his pupil, whom he wishes to acquaint with organ literature. Nobody in Vienna can play the organ like Herr Labor. The instrument has a splendid tone. It is one of Francis Richter's dreams to possess a pipe organ of his own, and since everything seems to be coming to him these days, no doubt the organ will be along when it is needed. It is strange how nature sometimes withholds the showers until hope is almost spent, and then pours them out in torrents.

Rejoicing Over Braille.

Mr. Richter spent his vacation with his aunt and cousins in Germany and reports a fine time, of which he gives evidence in improved personal appearance. Last year wore off a good many pounds, but he has them all back now, and has returned rejoicing in the work before him. He now perceives the significance of the Braille to his life, and indeed I do not think a single day since his return has passed without some expression of his joy in it. I wish every person who has hesitated in giving him this opportunity could hear him exclaim, as I many times have: "O, my lovely Braille, my lovely Braille." It is literally opening a new world to him to take the place of the one which is shut out.

Perhaps here I had better say that nothing can be done for his sight. His case has been passed upon by three of the chief oculists in Europe: Dr. Fuchs, whose position at the head of his specialty in the Vienna Medical Clinic has made him known the world over, as well as his books; Dr. Moller, a younger man, noted for skillful operations; and third, Dr. Pagenstecher, of Wiesbaden, who has performed some remarkable cures. Each one pronounced the case absolutely hopeless. So now the best thing seems to be to turn all possible attention to the Braille, which gives him a measure of independence that nothing else can. I fancy the most bitter drop in the cup of the unseeing is the dependence on others which it engenders.

Delving Into Literature.

When Mr. Richter left Vienna the middle of last June he could scarcely be said to have passed the painful stage in the acquisition of the Braille. He carried with him a book of contractions in the English alphabet, and upon his return, I at once sent to London-English Braille cannot be had here-for his first books, with which he is familiar, and "ivankho," the latter in abridged form.

We learned then that there are now three grades of Braille, the first grade without contractions, the second moderately contracted, and the third more fully contracted. Last Sunday was really an event day in his history. He read the news of the week in a magazine of Braille in the second grade. He was so happy he said he felt like jumping into the air.

Francis Richter unexpectedly found a helper in the Braille this summer in the person of his 15-year-old cousin, who became greatly interested and learned the system. Together they created several bulky volumes, copying Schiller's "Bell" in the German, without contractions. He now has the German contractions, also, and other things. So that the young man has already the beginning of a library. The photograph shows the two cousins and the Braille typewriter.

The cousin put his new science to an amusing use which shows the boy side of it. He is the presiding officer of a secret society of boys about his own age, five or six of his playmates. It occurred to him that the Braille would make a fine secret code. So he introduced it into the body, and now those boys are the envy of every other boy in school.

Richter Gives a Concert.

Francis Richter gave a concert in the neighboring city of Korne during his vacation. The press reports, written by



ERIC SCHMEDES, THE FAVORITE SIEGFRIED OF THE HOFOPER WHO IS ENGAGED FOR THE PRESENT SEASON AT THE METROPOLITAN. NEW YORK. THE COSTUME IS THAT WORN IN SIEGFRIED.



WIEN - K. K. Hofoper

THE HOME OF OPERA IN VIENNA A FINE BUILDING IN FRENCH RENAISSANCE STYLE. CLOSED BUT SIX WEEKS IN THE YEAR, AND STAGING ITS PRODUCTIONS MAGNIFICENTLY, NO OTHER CITY IN THE WORLD OFFERS SUCH OPPORTUNITY TO STUDENTS

a professional musician, are gratifying in the extreme. His repertoire consisted entirely of numbers studied here, among them the Sonata Appassionata, by Beethoven, his last study with Prentner. His Bach playing was called perfect. I regret that I have no translation of the article.

Mr. Richter was also the subject of a most unusual notice in the June Musical Leader, New York, written quite unknown to us by the musical correspondent of that paper who was present at his improvisations on the Ondy.

The item also contains a clever allusion to Leschetizky's fourth marriage, which occurred about the same time, he having succeeded in divorcing his third wife in order to marry a pupil. Numbers one and two were likewise divorced and are still living. The new bride is just a little matter of 20 years younger than her 33-year-old husband. The correspondent deems the marriage an evidence of Leschetizky's "love of the full quartet chord."

The subject of Leschetizky reminds me of a good story. Let me preface by saying that the general idea of Americans over here is that they are a people of strange and sensational attributes, given to as great extravagances of action as of money. The incident occurred in the Leschetizky house. The new bride and some friends were celebrating the Herr Professor's birthday so they planned a little drama representing Leschetizky in the process of an interview with an

American prodigy, brought over by his adoring mamma. The prodigy wore short trousers, bare legs and child's light white ruffe, although his head was on a level with the Herr Professor's. The dialogue runs in this wise, after the adoring mamma has come to a period: Leschetizky: "How old is your son, madam?" Adoring Mamma: "Six years, Professor, he is the twin of his brother." Leschetizky: "But I thought you said his brother was 87?" Adoring Mamma: "O, all things are possible in America, Professor."

These Wonderful Americans.

The Summer when I was spending some weeks in the Kurnic Alps in Southern Austria, we took some walking tours among those splendid and little-known mountains. Upon one occasion we met a middle-aged German, who looked like he might be a college professor, with his wife, returning from our objective point, and we stopped to ask the way. They informed us that Seisera was half an hour further and that it would not be possible to make it and traverse the six miles back to the station in time for the train, as they themselves had only sufficient time. We went on, found the wild little valley at the foot of a bleak jagged mountain and stopped at the inn for coffee. The keen mountain air quickly revived our weary bodies, and even infused itself into our minds suf-

ficiently to exude as sentiments written in the traveller's book, and on the inevitable postcards. Twenty minutes were consumed, and then we took the trail back. The dread of having to walk four miles more from the station gave wings to our feet and we arrived there just as the German Professor and his frau leisurely walked in. They greeted us smilingly and we entered into conversation, covering points of interest in the vicinity and Switzerland. When they learned that we had climbed the Grindelwald glacier, said to be the most dangerous in the Schweiz, to a point of between 3000 or 3000 feet in ordinary clothes and shoes, the guide taking only the precaution to rope the three of us to him, the German lady threw up her hands and exclaimed in good-humored deprecation: "Diese Amerikaner!"

Changes of the Grand Opera House.

Opera under the new management shows numerous changes. Mahler, now of the Metropolitan, New York, was a stickler for the classics. His successor, Weingartner, has put on several new operas and for the first time in 30 years opera has been heard in French. This last innovation is due to the presence of a new tenor star, Delmore, who is winning many laurels. He was even permitted to sing his role in Carmen in French while the balance of the opera was done as usual in German. Samson and Delilah was given entirely in French.

He is already engaged in the Manhattan Opera-house, New York. Eric Schmedes, the favorite Siegfried of the Hofoper, has obtained leave of absence and goes now to the Metropolitan for a season. He will sing Parsifal, Siegfried, some others, and the new opera of Tiedland, which has made a sensation here. It is written by D'Albert, the famous musician of Berlin. As I expect to accompany Francis Richter there tonight, I may have something more to say of it next time, as well as our experiences in seeing the Wagner cycle was given three times a year, and there is considerable curiosity as to what his successor may do. Wagner holds as nothing else. In spite of the fact that the other operas beside the Ring are repeated many times a year, seats go so quickly that they are difficult for students to obtain. Sometimes in the first half-hour after the opening of the box office all the low-priced seats are gone. We early learned, however, that the bureau buy up seats, and we often obtain them there at the advantage of a krona.

The programme for the season of the Philharmonic, Tonkunstler, Concert Verein and other societies are out with a simply bewildering wealth of musical offerings. If one were hearing music simply for pleasure, one could easily fall into hopeless confusion in trying to make a selection. But as we adhere strictly to the educational line, we have at least a guiding principle. Last Sunday morning we had a breakfast-consultation, as usual. Indeed, the consultation, also as usual, was the greater part of the breakfast, we having become accustomed to the European fashion of coffee and rolls. Marcel



WEINGARTNER, THE SUCCESSOR OF MAHLER IN THE MANAGEMENT OF THE HOFOPER

de Bousser read the entire list of concerts and Francis Richter selected 28 that he just couldn't miss. So the strenuous days are beginning. Vienna, October 2.

A Wife in Each Place.

New York Press.
Sherman is an excellent story teller. It is said he can beat DeWey and Adlai Stevenson. Our candidate for Vice-President is credited with the following: "There was an awfully irreligious fellow in Utica who had been given up as a hopeless case by his family and friends. He cursed and swore like a pirate, and was always kicking up a row about nothing. One day the Rev. Dr. X happened to hear one of his outbursts and said to him: 'My friend, just drop a few of those hard words. Did you ever stop to think where you will go when you die?' 'Go!' shouted the fellow. 'Go! Why, to heaven or hell; it doesn't make much difference. I have a wife in each place.'"

Preaching and Practice.

Puck.
I heard him in the courtroom. His speech transfixed the crowd: "Never," said he, "should violence or mob rule be allowed. Rise calm o'er passions, slow to judge. Heed well the ancient saw, 'Obedience to authority.' It is the keynote of the law." I saw him in the grandstand. Hatless and out of breath. He joined the crowd that clamored for the helpless umpire's death. "You robber, scoundrel, ruffian, thief. Till you butt in, you dough-head dot!" "Too bad you can't be beached!" And when the ump went down blind and black. "Was my friend's hand that fired the fatal trick."