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OUR MODERN YOUTH

DOES THE SLANG AND APPARENT IRREVERANCE OF OUR YOUTH OF TO-DAY INDICATE THAT THERE HAS BEEN ANY REAL CHANGE. A WELL-KNOWN WOMAN WRITER RELATES HER EXPERIENCES

IT struck me as funny that when Youth came to play with me I should be reading "Twenty Years After."

Her coming at that moment recalled with something of a shock the fleet-footed passage of time. For, just so many years ago I used to go, very shyly, to play with a lady whose age then was what mine is now. So that Youth was to me what I was, in the past, to that gracious friend.

A Sense of Values

BUT Youth didn't come shyly. The present generation has a better sense of values than that. It knows that it is charming, and sweet, and attractive, and has no cause to apologise. Also it pays its elders a compliment undreamt of in the days of our shyness. It is the compliment of treating us as contemporaries. What though we played the piano when it sucked a coral? Aren't we both playing the piano now? That is Youth's philosophy, or so I read it in her snapping, bright eyes.

So Youth came to play with me. We have two pianos, which she declared to be perfectly topping. We'd play Chaminade first, if I didn't mind, for "her reading was appalling; never could sight-read for nuts!" And didn't I think Chaminade a nice change after all the high-brow stunts they gave one at the college?

To Know the Worst

BUT, first of all, please, might she sit on the rug and have a cigarette while I played for her? She wanted to know the worst, please. She was sure I was an awful nib at technique, and she'd like to discover, before venturing to play on that second piano with me, just what she had let herself in for. She was sure I should be sorry I had asked her to come. I'd no idea what a duffer she was. I'd want to put her out on the mat, like a howling Pekingese. And what had I been playing when she passed yesterday? Scarlatti? How awfully brainy!

And I wrote, didn't I? Goodness! She felt like a worm! Everything was so exciting and high-brow. No. She did not play at all well. Her

rhythm was ghastly, her technique deplorable, her reading a crime, and she hadn't any memory.

I looked at her brow, broad and arched; at her hands, strong and capable; at her wrists, supple and firm. I suggested that perhaps things were not quite so bad as she implied. And, as to being brainy, brains were of little use without practice. I seldom practised; but she, I was sure, practised regularly. No! no! She was a slacker. I'd no idea how she slacked.

Hailstorm of Discords

AT length we got going. She at her piano, I at mine. "Shall we begin?" I asked, ready for anything from this lively maiden. "Righto!" called she. "Please count! Oh! I tremble! I shake! How you'll hate me in one little minute!"

At the first double bar she turned her face to me; it was happy and shining. "Did you ever hear anything so appalling?" she asked. "I didn't once get the key! Don't you hate the sound of me? But I warned you, and you wouldn't believe. Try again? Righto! Let's! Three—and—four—and one! Now!"

It was like a cyclonic hailstorm of discords. But she rode it after the fashion of a modern Valkyrie. So that gradually, steadily, after each repetition of the storm, I became conscious of two things: a perfect sense of rhythm and a touch that was purposeful and firm. I smiled to myself. I found the new, go-ahead methods amusing.

"When she gets the right notes that child will make you sit up," I thought. And so we persevered for an hour, scattering avalanches of wrong notes, dropping our flats and our sharps, in a rhythmical metre and swing, interspersed with breathless apologies for her playing and enthusiastic eulogies on the tone of my two pianos.

At length I got her to play me something solo. She was sure she couldn't. If I'd only heard her master on Wednesday! Perfectly raving! Took off the roof! My goodness! Well, then, she'd play a little thing of Brahms'. Awfully high-brow, but quite easy. I wouldn't mind its being high-brow? Her friends did. They wanted jollier

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