

IF Kreisler is irresistible when he speaks on his fiddle, he is hardly less of a *grand charmeur* in private intercourse. And the winsomeness of the man explains to some extent the fascination of the artist. For sincerity is at the root of the matter in both cases. The greatest of living violinists is at the same time the simplest and most modest of men.

Kreisler is a man of wide interests who can talk about many other things besides his art. Hear him on his recent visit to China and Japan, for instance, and he will surprise you by the variety of his impressions and the acuteness of his observations.

The Japanese

THE Japanese especially delighted him with their ceremonial politeness and exquisite manners. He recalled, for example, how he had seen two cyclists collide violently and then get up, not to abuse one another, but all smiles and bows and mutual apologies.

"And then their audiences! Never have I played to any more attentive, although to most of them, I suppose, the music meant no more than Japanese music does to us."

Touching on this point, however, Kreisler mentioned that the gramophone is having a great influence in the East in spreading a knowledge of Western music, although it is responsible also for two somewhat amusing misapprehensions.

"In the first place, they think that nobody can be of much account unless he figures on the records of a certain famous company—fortunately, I did so myself! And, second-

KREISLER TALKS

THE GREATEST VIOLINIST, WHO IS NOW IN NEW ZEALAND, DISCOURSES ON HIS TRAVELS AND THE NEW MUSIC

ly, they are firmly convinced that all European music consists of quite short pieces of the type that they hear on the records."

"And what about China?"

In China

"OH! China is equally wonderful, but in a totally different way. I played for the natives there, too—in response to their urgent requests, I should explain, perhaps, for it formed no part of my original programme—and the way in which they listened was perhaps more remarkable still. For I understand that in the ordinary way music in China is invariably treated merely as an accompaniment to conversation. And I wonder if a European audience would listen as patiently and politely to a concert of Chinese music!"

"They not only listened: they actually made me play one piece three times! The work in question was Cyril Scott's 'Lotus Land,' which had, of course, a strong Oriental flavour; and my own 'Tamborin Chinois' I also had to play twice—though perhaps this was merely out of compliment to myself."

Asked his views on latter-day musical developments, Mr. Kreisler expressed himself very decidedly.

"Frankly, I have not the least idea," he observed, "where some of these modernist people are going to

And between you and me, I doubt if many of them know any better themselves.

"Please do not think that I am suggesting insincerity—not in the case of all, at any rate. For some of the most advanced of all I know to be absolutely, even fanatically, sincere—Schönberg, for example. I was actually at school with him, and for some of his earlier works I have the greatest admiration. If I cannot follow him in some of his later manifestations I do not question for a moment his sincerity.

Stravinsky

"AND the same applies to Stravinsky, who also has given proofs in his earlier productions—'Petrouschka,' for instance—of his ability to write brilliantly what one may call normal music. Where this is the case one can but conclude that when subsequently they go beyond our understanding the fault conceivably may lie with ourselves."

"But, unfortunately, I cannot say the same of all. For whereas I have no doubt that such men as Schönberg and Stravinsky are perfectly sincere, I am afraid too many others seize upon their examples merely as excuses for writing sheer nonsense, and then putting it forth as the very latest thing in ultra-modernism.

"Why do they do this? It is not

difficult, I fancy, to understand the reason, the truth being, of course, that it is very hard, unless you happen to be a genius, to do anything new or remarkable on existing lines. Many are trying to do this, but few succeed. Write nonsense, however—be extravagant, preposterous, outrageous—and you will attract attention at once!

The Temptation

"HERE, therefore, is the temptation, and I am afraid that too many are succumbing to it at the present time. Music on the old lines is finished, they say. They, at any rate, cannot do anything more in this way. Therefore, they argue, let us start again on entirely new principles, and then we shall have just as good a chance as anyone else.

"Hence, therefore, some of the monstrous and impossible productions which we are asked to accept nowadays—not only in music, be it noted, but also in pictorial art, where the efforts of the atonalist, the polytonalist, and the rest are precisely paralleled by those of the post-impressionists, the cubists, and the like.

"I deny that such exercises bear any relation to legitimate art. They are the product, not of evolution, but of revolution, and I refuse to believe that artistic results of any value can be arrived at in this way. Art means building up, not pulling down, and it is idle to create a chaos in the hope of possibly building a new world on the ruins. But I repeat—for the sincere and legitimate pioneers I have nothing but respect, even though I may be totally unable to follow them."



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