

Correspondents' section: 'A. F. Hill—You have misunderstood our questions. Let it be put this way:—'Under what code is it justifiable to read a private letter reflecting on a third party before a number of people?'²⁹

Nor did the Wellington press let the matter lie. It reported the attempts of the Orchestral Society Committee to get their young conductor to change his mind—without success. It published numerous letters from 'Dulcimer', 'Another Fiddler', 'Pianist' and 'An Outsider', which in themselves would make a not unfamiliar psychological study. The *New Zealand Mail* sought out a Mr Lachmann and obtained from him a translation of the entry on de Kontski in Meyer's *Konversations Lexikon*, held to be the most comprehensive of German encyclopaedias, and printed the result on 15 October 1896, with the comment: 'that any artist should have attempted to cast a doubt on the *bona fides* of the Chevalier in the face of the existence of such a record such as we are now enabled to publish is, to say the least, unjust'. But their note showed no evidence whatsoever for de Kontski's ever having been a pupil of Beethoven.

Christchurch (or the representative of the *Triad*), was more critical:

Truly a wonderful man is the Chevalier! Whilst the first faltering steps across the platform suggest the fear of senile failure, yet no sooner is the keyboard placed within his grip than doubt gives way to amazement at the energy, the brilliancy, the power of his manipulation. Under the spell of this phenomenal feat, I could not help fancying that the Chevalier merely assumes the clever disguise and gait of an octogenarian, and that beneath it is hidden the rosy cheek, the daring of youth, impatient alike of restraint and tradition. My theory found some confirmation when I beheld the gay and youthful eccentricities sparkling through almost every one of his "classical" readings. There was, for instance, the "Moonlight Sonata," the secret of which he is supposed to have gathered at the feet of its profound composer. Beethoven must indeed have been a revengeful man if he did hammer these two first movements so cruelly into the head of the infant prodigy now before us. "Never," exclaims enthusiastically the responsible critic of a contemporary, "never have we heard such an interpretation of the work." Wonderfully true; and, let me add, I fervently trust that we shall never, never hear it thus interpreted again!³⁰

The Musin Company, also performing in Christchurch, in the same notice won acclaim: 'Both Mr Musin and Mr Scharf have already so firmly established their reputations as fine artists among us that it is almost needless to add another word in their praise'. Musin had invited Alfred Hill to join them and the Company now also included the harpist Constance Hatherly, pupil of the famous Chevalier Oberthur and champion lady plunge-diver of the colony. It was for her Alfred Hill wrote the harp solos in *Hinemoa*.

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