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GOSSIP GATHERED BY THE GADDER

Melody

By HARRY NORTON

This season of giving is near, give freely and give joyfully! If you can neither give in cash nor in kind, consider giving to others who may need assistance. Remember, giving is not limited to the holidays, but can be a part of your daily life. Happy Holidays to all!

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Published by Walter Jacobs

(1924)
MELODY

Yuletide Vibrations
By Frederic W. Burgy

CHRISTMAS: the perfect day, but not only one special day. It is a season, a period of "holy" when waves of music make the air ring and sing with the melody of joy; the season of giving and of thanksgiving when every present is completed to his head or change his viewpoint.

Christmas is particularly the season of cheer and good-will, the time when everybody is impelled to live in love and charity with their neighbors. Sing is in the air, orchestras are playing and that universal solo orchestra, the piano, is sending forth its vibrations of sweet sounds from every household.

What would life be without music? Nowadays its aid is brought with real service on every occasion and in all places: homes, schools, religious gatherings, social gatherings, houses of worship, hospitals, indoors and outdoors; welcome at all times, never out of season, it perpetually sends forth its vibrations of laughter and delight and songs with looking onto its wings.

Music prevents you from taking life too seriously. There is a tendency in many quarters to make a fetish of what is called "truth"—that elusive, celestial being which everybody worships at a distance, ever concealing behind the seven veils of mystery and romance. The gentle art of "pretense" with our masks and our draperies!

The truth is there all right, but we don't feel like giving up our sweet dreams and illusions—at least, not yet awhile—and so we invent our theories of relativity and continue to discover new delights and pastimes with our fine arts and our arts.

Then let the hallelujah strains of Christmas singing ring and sing and the dancing chimneys herald the golden hours of Jesus, with softly following sea-caps running all over companions and the whole world vibrating to "the sweetest sound of every bell..."—halls of music, bells of bells..."—the "Queen of the Night" with her own bells and started like a race of pearls...

Beautiful visions of "A Perfect Day"—Yuletide, the season of song and of laughter!
Master Musicians and Modesty

Told he was the most modest man he ever knew, a giant of music would have been inclined to ask, with a petulant smile, “But...why?” He would have felt that modesty was a condition he was often in, but not always; that it was a quality that came and went, and that in any case it was not a characteristic that could be definitively attributed to him. Perhaps, he might have argued, his modesty was more of an appearance than a reality; that he was, in fact, far from modest, and that his modesty was merely a defense mechanism, a way of hiding his true self from the world.

When asked why he was so modest, he would have replied, “Because I am not afraid of failure. I am not afraid of being judged. I am not afraid of being found wanting. Modesty is a protection against such fears.”

Modesty, he would have said, was not a virtue, but a necessity. It was a shield, a barrier against the harsh realities of the world. It was a way to survive, to thrive, to remain true to oneself.

But modesty was also a mask, a façade, a way to hide one’s true feelings, one’s true self. It was a way to keep others at a distance, to keep oneself safe. It was a way to avoid vulnerability, to avoid the pain that comes with being open, with being honest.

He would have admitted that he was sometimes modest, sometimes not. It depended on the situation, the people involved, the circumstances. But he would have insisted that modesty was not a trait he could control, that it was a part of him, a part of his nature.

And yet, he would have argued, modesty was not a weakness, but a strength. It was a way to stay true to oneself, to remain true to one’s values, to one’s principles. It was a way to avoid the pitfalls of self-importance, the dangers of self-aggrandizement.

In the end, he would have said, modesty was simply a way to navigate the complexities of the world, a way to survive, to thrive, to remain true to oneself.
who goes through this life without an enemy is a failure. He lacks backbone and initiative; he lacks that force which sometimes victory from defeat; he lacks will-power—the foundation on which success is built. He is just a misfit whose life becomes a fluke.

Look out for the man who works a lot and says little. He is a good worker, and being a good workman he has infinite patience. It is not well to cross swords with such men. They know their business, and unless you know your business as well, it is best to let them be. They are like the Lord of the Rings: weary and slow and silent, yet patient, and you will wonder how such a man as he is able to stand the strain of such a life.

Mr. Walls—Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. Thatcher—Will I yield to the gentleman who compelled this bill before?

Mr. Blaine—Does the gentleman think this is doing in this bill to poker laws that you would say it prohibitions?

Mr. Blaine—How does the gentleman know—

Mr. Walls—In the business talking about the poker.

Mr. Walls—Now, the gentleman has inaugrated me, and as the remarks are part of my dissertation and will remain in the record, I will say a few words to explain what I mean by what the gentleman is talking about. The gentleman is talking about the poker which is used in the game of poker. I must say at once, there are a great many persons who think the poker is not the game of poker, but is the game of poker. My mind is made up on that question, and I am satisfied that the poker is the game of poker.

Mr. Walls—a bill is here which I am now about to introduce, and it is to prohibit the sale of poker in the State. I do not think it is necessary to have any such bill, but I think it is necessary to have a bill which will prohibit the sale of poker in the State.
Put and Take
ONE-STEP
GEORGE L. COBB

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Listen to the Knocking Bird

By D. L. McCulloch

HUMAN animals are funny birds. How wise they think they are, and yet how gullible. There isn’t any way in the world wherein people show their lack of common sense more than in the choosing of a piano. It doesn’t make any difference about the wisdom shown by a person in other lines. A genius at finance, and a good in business, careful and cautious at all other times, is a “mark” when choosing his piano. The more he knows in some other line, and the better his judgment, the less he knows of both when picking out the instrument for his own entertainment and his children’s education.

It’s a puzzle to me why—and I think there is no “why” to it any more than there is a reason for a woman getting off a car backway. I have wondered often at the actions of people in this regard, and have finally come to the conclusion that by their lack of common sense in choosing instruments they wish to gauge their wisdom in everything else—the exception proving the rule.

There are many things to be considered in the choosing of a piano. Two things that any piano must have are good tone and action. This is not alone for those who have mastered the technique of playing, but have educated themselves to a realization and appreciation of good tone quality. It isn’t the best news to tell, or the
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MELODY

most enjoyable thing to hear, and it is a crime the way most people respond when buying a piano for their children to commence their musical education. I have heard countless times something like this: "Don’t show me no good piano. I am just buying this now for my children’s entertainment. When they have studied three or four years, and have learned to play good music well, I will get them a good piano."

I am sure you never realized that way and I hope that after reading this article you never will, because no greater mistake could be made than to purchase in this manner. If you buy an old worn-out instrument, how can the child learn proper technique? It just can’t be done! and the money which isn’t always saved by such a purchase is wasted on the unnecessary lessons given later. You have heard many times, as have I, a pupil remark that he just couldn’t do on his piano what he could do on the teacher’s. A piano need not be new to be satisfactory, but it must be worn out. When it has reached the stage where the keys are loose and nearly every note strikes back at a rattle like a corn-sheller, it is an abomination. Any one who can learn to play properly on such a "box" is nothing short of a genius.

You may not be able to price a new instrument, but you can buy a piano that is a good one, even that is no excuse. In any city in the land you can buy used pianos that are good. Quite often instruments are offered for sale that are not really salable, due to bad condition. The piano that is old, or one-design not up to date. You may buy a piano a piece of furniture, with its work as a musical instrument entirely secondary. Such people would not think of having a piano with the varnish badly scratched, or blistered from too much heat or dampness, because it wouldn’t look so good to the tongue-wagging neighbors of the neighborhood.

For a beginner “lumpy” is much more important than the piano. The key must have the proper mechanical action in order that the pupil may master difficult technique. A piano key is held in place by a pin running through it at the balance. To keep it from wavering from side to side, the key works on a guide-pin in a rill right under the ivory. On both sides of each pin the key is braced with a piece of cloth. This is to keep the key perfectly steady where it should be, and true. It must be light, but still have some weight, or the key will stick when pressed down. After years of use these bracings become worn, badly, and of course the key wobbles. At the same time all of the pinning in the action has become loose.

In the ordinary upright piano action there are five points where the parts are joined together by pins. These pins are held solidly in the wood in one part, and have a bushing of felt around them in the other. When all of these bushings are worn out you can easily imagine what a wonderful mechanical mechanism has been ruined. Those who have worked in the shop of a piano house can understand why a piano has only a certain amount of use in it. Mr. Elmer H. R. Majer, Manager of the National Pianola Company does not expect his tin gas wagon or his automobile to last forever. He knows that it gets in worse condition all the time, until finally it is ready for the Goodwill Salvage Co. Most people, however, feel that the piano is altogether different in this respect. They will tell you a piano is just like a violin—it improves with age. It’s a wonder they don’t say the same thing of an egg.

I have heard many people praise an old top of a piano to the skies that wasn’t fit for anything but fire-wood. They tell you that their pianos have such a wonderful tone and, no matter what you paid, you couldn’t buy a new piano with a tone like their instrument. They are right, too, but not in just the way they mean. If a manufacturer turned out instruments with a tone like some of these, he couldn’t give them away with a cake of soap.

The tone of a piano is created in the strings with age in one respect only. The seasoning of the wood in a violin is what produces the richer and more musical tone. Age does the same for the sounding board. A piano over twenty years old is going to sound better than a new one. Do not think that this is the same thing altogether different to the steel in strings. These become crystallized, rusted, and lose life through the bushings and other felt parts of the action wear out, and the action, which is replaced by the corn-sheller. The strings, or wires, in the base of the strings is worn down thin and hard. I have seen them worn clear to the wood core. Fine, lovely, delightful, and inspiring tone, when so well seasoned wood can only be found in a piano of an age. The increases in the harmonies become filled with dirt, rust, and dust from the strings, and this also improves the tone.

Keep your piano in good condition. Have competent workmen look after it regularly. When they tell you it needs repining, and parts replaced—buy a new piano. This is the only way to treat yourself fairly.

Your piano must have the proper material for the finish of the color of the case. ManyAverage Men should remember this. It often happens to match the furniture. This will be taken into consideration, because (and I have said this often) the piano is NOT a piece of furniture. You can paint it if you want to, and then again he might not.

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The wrong advice you should avoid, regardless of the sincerity of the donor’s intentions. These intentions are sometimes good, and other times not.

Don’t think that an acquaintance or a teacher can be partially influenced by a commission. Some are partially influenced, some knowingly and willingly lie, in order to get their “cut.” Nearly every music store in the U. S. A. will pay, and does pay, a “bit” to the teacher or performer who “just happened” to come along with the purchase. Par- don me for one cover here—I should have said that you pay the bit instead of the music store.

Admitting that their intentions are good, the capable performer or teacher usually has little or no knowledge of the reasons for a piano being good or otherwise. You may get advice a thousand times more valuable, if you can talk to a tuner or action man who has had factory and music store experience. Factory experience is of value to him in arriving at conclusions regarding respective worth of pianos, because he learns there how they are made and from what materials. He learns in one factory what is used in another plant, and if it is better or worse material he learns “why.” Store experience is essential, enabling one, as it does, to determine by working over and requiring used pianos of all makes those that stand up best under abuse and give the longest service. Believe me, and I speak from much experience, you can’t fail a piano mechanic on pianos.

Don’t try to put it over on him. He may tell you that a certain piano suits a good deal, but it surely does stand the gaff. He knows the makes that stand solidly in tune, and he knows the ones that can’t be tuned properly at any time. Owing to faulty construction, some pianos have many strings with faulty vibrations. These false vibrations cannot be tuned out, and a tuner that can do a new job on such a piano is indeed clever.

Don’t expect to buy the best instru- ment in the world for the price of a medium grade one. Many people believe they can do it, and they are the fish that grab the hook of the malicious salesman. Yes, and some of the notable boys, too. They know that no one else could do it, and they are just as sure that they can.

Don’t set out to show all your friends how, and you can save on a transmis- sion of this nature. You may have a hard time later “saving your face” with the same folks. The prices of pianos in reputable stores represent quite closely their worth. There are a few exceptions to this.

Don’t be too much time listening to the “Knocking Bird” who sells pianos. Too many salesmen try to sell their goods by proving the poor quality of their competitor’s stock. Many of them seem to know their competition’s line better than their own. There are few indications of champion apparent in the average unsophisticated buyer other than general appearance. Collin- and vegetable-cutty keys, or, more particularly, ivory with a wavy grain, is a certain indication of mediocrity. Your greatest safety in choosing will lie in the reputations certain firms have made for their product. This is the one best bet in choosing a piano, and it goes for most everything and everybody under the shining sun. If a good reputation can be purchased, it’s a new one on me. It isn’t in the deal I play with.

Don’t take any stock in the tales the “salesmen will tell you that a certain (Continue on Page 16)
MELODY

A New Place For Your Phonograph
By Feur J. Koch

Quite one of the truly big innovations of farm-life is the phonograph. It has a week-ends and holidays, entertaining friends and relatives from the city or other country-sides on the garden-party of the farm. Naturally, weather at all permitting, no one wants to sit indoors when the weather is so fine, and chairs and benches are brought to shady spots well outside. There are lawns and meadows for some; there are croquet-pits and perhaps tennis courts for others, while many of the others are content just to throw themselves in the box grass on the ground.

Then, by and by, of course someone wants music. But, have you been looking for it, but the given one was the first to ask?

They knew that the farm, like every properly-kept farm in Anglo-Saxon lands these days, has its talking-machine, violets or what it may be. But they know, too, that even since the last visit of the music-buys of the place will have acquired no end of new records for this. Therefore they do want to hear these records; hear all old familiar pieces, and yet—well, who wants to be the victim, and with tending instrument and changing pieces every so often even confined at the open window and INDOORS!

Against this, one ingenious farmer near Pitsaakt, Ohio, has arranged a very, very simple, but neat-the-less attractive and delightful, concept of the phonograph. Out in the garden he has had, this long time, a nice box—a perennials, as what farm has not.

So close to this instrument that the twigs and branches would interfere to form one seeming whole he planted other rose-bushes, such as to secure his roses in blossom in substantially all the cold months of the year. While giving these inexpensive plants a chance to grow, and permitting care-freely to his purpose whenever a moment might be handy, our yeoman friend devoted certain spare moments of his time to other ends.

Dropping in at the cross-road's tins-box, he secured for next to nothing old bits of scrap and sheet metal that happened to be about. Of these, he had the lumber make a box or container large enough to contain the phonograph. This box was made water-tight along all edges, and was further fitted so that one might slip the box of the instrument in easily from the side. This done, the sub-end of the horn could be slipped through a hole just big enough to receive in the top of the metal container, coming then to exactly the desired position to fit the instrument inside the box. A little slot at one side, too, allowed of the winding; one might lift the lid if he wished to change records in turn.

This box, then, was firmly covered well within the clamps formed by what would seem, on first sight, just one great rose-bush. On holidays, and other occasions when company was due, the instrument was slipped inside. The horn was adjusted; the record put into position, the instrument was wound, and all things ready for just touching off. Incidentally, that horn, too, was painted to harmonize with the roses at such moment in bloom.

Desebts, are sent among the shrubbery in the garden and, on signal, one of the family will start off the talking-machine contained in the rose-bush. And what so lovely then as the serenade, or what it may be, being forth from what is a perfect cloud of per- fume and a perfect avalanche of lovely blooms?

For Wood, What Would You?

If you—who perhaps for a livelihood may be playing the pictures and musician—it may be made for business upright piano—were about to purchase for personal use a "concert" or a "baby" grand instrument, in its construction and finish, and what would you wish for a wood? Would you choose a wood that was capable of being tinted to an ivory white, as was the famous piano that accompanied (in tone and on tour) that marvelous contralto, Jenny Lind, on her first concert tour of America back in the early "something" or "other"? Or would your preference be for wood which could be "tinted" to an almost jet black or perhaps to a deep brown?

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