

## HINTS ON VELOCITY.

BY ERNST VON MUSSELMAN.

It is with the understanding, when speaking of velocity, that we do not refer to the mere passing over of so many notes at a record-breaking rate of speed, but, taking into consideration that quality is of as much value to one's execution as is quantity, we argue for that smooth, facile rapidity which is at once both musicianly and artistic, and which can come only after most exacting care. With some, velocity must mean a sacrifice of everything else for its attainment; witness, the many attempts to create a new speed record in the so-called "Minute" valse by Chopin. If we are aiming to be musicianly, we must eventually realize that speed of execution is not all; in fact, it is only a very small part of what goes to make the artist. We cannot hope to forget that these same little notes, when passing into more rapid forms, still contribute their important parts to the meaning of the whole composition and are therefore not to be slighted.

We have all witnessed plenteous examples of both good and bad velocity. And even if these bad examples were created by undue nervousness, it only illustrates the careful training necessary to withstand the ordeal of public appearance. On some occasions there was such forcing of speed that practically all of the beauty was torn from the composition. Again have we been whisked through such pulseless lightning-flashes of speed that it left us dazed and breathless at what we could not comprehend. We here recall to memory the many traditions handed down concerning the performance of that one-time popular pianist, Louis Moreau Gottschalk, whose cadenzas were likened unto a bursting shower of scintillating pearls, and whose trills had all the perfect beauty of a bird's notes. And yet, we have it from good authority that his velocity was far from being a marvel of speed, but, instead, his notes were so perfectly balanced, his trills so evenly distributed, that his performance took on the appearance of a far greater velocity.

This, in itself must constitute a gentle hint to the aspiring pianist. It should argue for the securing of perfectly balanced tones in the slower practice, and once the fingers are working in perfect alternation with each other, it must eventually follow that a perfect brilliancy will occur in passages of velocity. This, then, means a painstaking care. It represents hours and hours of fatiguing work to establish a base for this future speed. But by and by, when one has finally secured an absolutely even flow of notes in the slower form, and with it that pulsing rhythm which means the very life of music, velocity will follow as naturally and freely as the rush of notes from the birds' throats and you will scarcely know why, whence, or where.