

Extract concerning Gottschalk

From JAMES GIBBONS HUNEKER, 'STEEPLEJACK', 1918

At one concert Gottschalk, fresh from Paris, a pupil of Camille Stamaty (he never studied with Chopin, as biographers say, but he played for Chopin and heard that marvellous Pole play; the reason I speak by the card is because I asked a pupil of Chopin's, Georges Mathias, in Paris, and he assured me that Gottschalk, then considered a brilliant talent, was never under the tuition of Chopin), with Thalberg played the elder pianist's fantasia on themes from "Norma" arranged for two pianos, and my father remembered the difference of the scale-passages; Thalberg's scales were a string of pearls, the scales of the New Orleans virtuoso were glittering star-dust. Louis Gottschalk, with whose family I was intimate, had a more dramatic temperament than Thalberg, who was impassive, and a believer in Baudelaire's line: "Je hais le mouvement, qui deplace les lignes." Linear his art, rather than colourful, yet his touch was golden. In Gottschalk's playing there was something Lisztian and diabolic.