

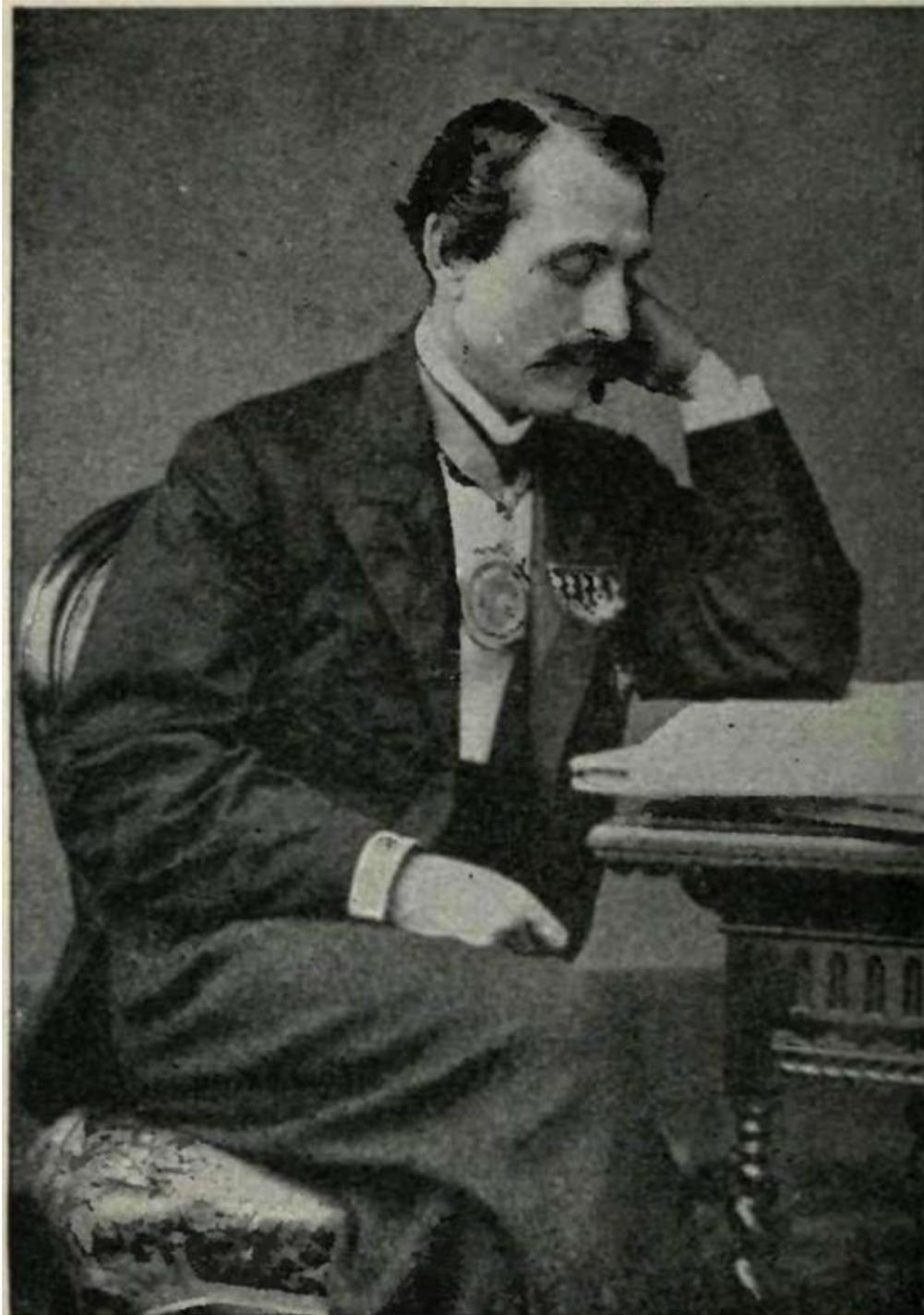
LOUIS MOREAU GOTTSCHALK.

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L. M. Gottschalk

The first of American composers and pianists to attain American fame was Louis Moreau Gottschalk, who was born in New Orleans May 8, 1829, and died in Rio Janeiro December 18, 1869. Gottschalk was of mixed parentage, French and German, the French predominating and his father was a merchant in New Orleans. When the boy gave incontestible evidence of talent for music and promise of originality, he was taken to Paris, where his mother made a home for him and he had the very best instruction possible to be obtained at that period. His master in piano was Stamaty. He made the acquaintance of all the younger French literateurs and musicians and artists, and later on his home became a gathering place for bright spirits of every sort. Among the intimate friends were such as Bizet, A. Duvin-Duvivier, Rossini, the brothers Escudier, and all the most eminent in French letters.

Gottschalk had very early a distinct note in his playing, a peculiar combination of refined and distinguished melody, graceful harmony, piquant rhythms, and a style which at once commanded attention. He made most successful appearances in the provincial parts of France, in Switzerland, Germany, and in 1851 made a concert tour in Spain, where he was received with high favor by the queen. This tour lasted nearly two years. His first American tour was in 1853, when he traveled over a large part of the country playing everywhere with great success. Again in 1862 and 1863 he came to America and went as far as the Pacific coast. Meanwhile he had made extensive tours in Cuba and other parts of the West Indies and Central America, and also in South America. He not only played piano concerts, in which his own compositions occupied most of the program, but also planned brilliant festivals, bringing together great masses of instrumentalists and singers, and he composed for such occasions elaborate and highly effective scores. In one of his letters he gives particulars of such an affair and complains in particular of the vast trouble it was and the time it took to prepare the written parts for so many instrumentalists (copyist's bills for a single festival sometimes reaching two thousand dollars) and the incessant care necessary in revising and correcting the parts in order that accidentals might be alike in all.

Gottschalk died under circumstances never wholly cleared up, near Rio Janeiro, December 18, 1869. He left a brother, who now lives in Chicago, Mr. L. Gaston Gottschalk, the distinguished baritone; also two sisters.

Unquestionably he was one of the most interesting of musical personalities America has produced.

Among his compositions are several songs, concerning which his brother gives the following particulars:

"Referring to our conversation of the other day about my brother's songs, if I remember rightly, he wrote only eight.

" 'Oh, Loving Heart' was dedicated to Sher. Campbell, the baritone, who left such a name in English opera that many people must certainly remember him yet. One morning at our old home in New York City, on Ninth street, I remember my brother improvising the theme which further on was to be that song, when somebody pushed open the door and walked into the parlor, and listening to the improvisation suggested that it would make a splendid song for himself, and on the spur of the moment it was jotted down, harmonized and dedicated to our friend Campbell, at whose suggestion it had been written as a song.

" 'Idol of Beauty' was written for Brignoli, who at that time, you may remember, was not an idol of beauty but the idol of the American and English public, as he had been before in Paris.

" 'Mountaineers' Song' was written and dedicated to William Castle, the excellent tenor who, with Campbell, made English opera what might have been taken for a permanent fixture in America.

" 'Night and Shepards' was taken from a piano composition called 'Pastorella-e-Cavaliere' and was dedicated to Miss Clara Louise Kellogg.

" 'I Don't See It, Mamma,' is dedicated to, judging by the lettering, the possessor of some Chinese name, which letters placed in the right order would read the very plain name of an American girl.

" 'Cradle Song' was dedicated to Mrs. Verian, at that time a prominent concert singer, whose daughter Nina was renowned for beauty and talent as a young actress. She unfortunately died at sea at an early stage of her career.

" 'The Butterfly' had been written before Carlotta Patti, who from 1861 to 1862 traveled in my brother's concert company and was the pyrotechnic display to show the wonderful compass of the voice, the original copy running to high G above C above the staff. 'Ave Maria' was written for the fete day of our mother and on that occasion was sung at the

Baltimore Cathedral by a friend of ours, Mrs. Mary Buckler, to whom it was dedicated.”

THE LAST HOPE. RELIGIOUS MEDITATION.

(5th Grade.)

Of the origin of this piece Gustave Chouquet in *La France Musical*, gives the following account:

"During his stay at Cuba, Gottschalk found himself at S--, where a woman of mind and heart, to whom he had been particularly recommended, conceived for him at once the most active sympathy, in one of those sweet affections almost as tender as maternal love.

"Struck down by an incurable malady, Madame S-- mourned the absence of her only son, and could alone find forgetfulness of her sufferings while listening to her dear pianist, now become her guest and her most powerful physician. One evening while suffering still more than usual, 'In pity, ' said she, making use of one of the most ravishing idioms of the Spanish tongue, 'in pity, my dear Moreau, one little melody, the last hope.'

And Gottschalk commenced to improvise an air at once plaintive and pleasing, one of those spirit breaths that mount sweetly to heaven, whence they have so recently descended. On the morrow, the traveler-artist was obliged to leave his friend to fulfill an engagement in a neighboring city. When he returned two days afterwards the bells of the church of S-- were sounding a slow and solemn peal. A mournful presentiment suddenly froze the heart of Gottschalk who, hurrying forward his horse, arrived upon the open square of the church just at the moment when the mortal remains of Senora S-- were brought from the sacred edifice." "The Last Hope" consists of quite a long introduction and an equally long coda or afterlude, and between these parts a most lovely melody, played twice through with slightly different treatments. The melody begins with measure 49, and the second stanza ends in measure 86. All that follows is coda, designed to bring around to the close, but in this ease doing so with a profusion of ornament entirely characteristic of the composer. In playing it the effect is better if the choice notes are taken ("as the author plays it"). Gottschalk himself had a way of playing a passage of this kind as if it meant volumes, even with a minimum of actual subject matter. The introduction is more

important. Beginning with the serious first four measures and the two measures of rhythmic figure work following, it goes over the same idea again in the key of C sharp (mm. 8 to 14). Then follows some measures of modulation. chromatically treated, beautifully done (mm. mm. 14 to 27). There we bring up with two of those simple chords which Gottschalk played so meaningfully, followed by several measures of embellishment. A few additional short ideas complete this part of the work, saving only mm. 42 to 45, which require particular notice. Observe that the small notes in measures 42 and 44 are counted at their full value, while the small notes in mm. 43 and 45 have no appreciable value, the large notes only being counted in the measure. The embellishing grace notes merely retard the principal notes a little. Those in mm. 42 and 44 ought to have been written as large notes, since they form the rhythmic content of the measures.

THE DYING POET.

(4th Grade.)

This piece is one of a set written under the pseudonym of "Seven Octaves," a contract with another publisher giving them the use of his name for several years longer. "The Dying Poet" is practically a sort of nocturne or reverie, upon a single principal idea, quite simply worked out. It is to be played with sentiment. Obviously a title of this kind demands a story, but nothing of the sort has been furnished by the composer. It is at all events a very pretty melody, if not at all deep.

LE BANANIER. (CHANSON NEGRE.)

(5th Grade.)

In his very first published composition Gottschalk began to work the vein of negro rhythms which afterwards served so well as a basis of his compositions. The piece represents the characteristic repetition of a simple form with slight changes of coloring and occasional changes of rhythm such as the slave dances generally showed. The piece is quite practicable and demands little from the player.

TWO SONGS: "O LOVING HEART, TRUST ON."

"SLUMBER ON, BABY DEAR."

Gottschalk's "Slumber Song," first written as a piece for piano, illustrates his manner remarkably well. The melody, while simple, is delightfully simple and singable. The harmonies are varied enough for such a melody. It has very long prelude and afterlude, to dispose of which without monotony is likely to tax the resources of many players.

"O Loving Heart, Trust On," has a vast popularity and well deserved it. It is effective and pleasing.

Should a more difficult piece or two be desired, his extremely brilliant arrangement of the overture to "William Tell" is recommended. His brilliant concert piece, "La Bamboula," is another illustration of his concert style.