

## **Louis Moreau Gottschalk.**

This gifted artist and composer was, in his day, by far the most prominent representative of the musical life of America, and enjoyed a fame which has not been attained by any succeeding pianist, though there are some to-day who have reached a higher musical plane of excellence, at least, in the art of composition. He was a native of New Orleans, La., where he was born May 8, 1829. His father came to Louisiana from England, and his mother was Aimee Marie de Brasle.

His remarkable musical talent made its appearance at the early age of four, and he was placed under charge of Mr. Litellier, a New Orleans musician, under whom he made such progress that at the age of six he was on one occasion permitted to play the organ in church. He at the same time began the study of the violin under Mr. Ely, and at the age of eight appeared in public at a benefit concert of M. Miolan, a violinist connected with the French opera. At the age of thirteen he was sent to Paris, where he took lessons under Charles Halle, and shortly afterward under Camille Stamaty, studying harmony with M. Maledan. In 1844 he made his debut as a composer with two ballades, *Ossian* and *Danse des Ombres*. In 1846 he made a tour through the Vosges, and in the season of 1846-47 gave a series of concerts, associated with the renowned Hector Berlioz, at the Italian opera. The following summer he visited Switzerland, and returning to Paris, gave a series of concerts, in which he met with flattering success. In 1849 he made a tour through France and Spain, remaining two years in the latter country, and on his return to Paris in 1852 created a genuine furore by his unexampled performances on the piano, both in his own compositions and those of the great masters. On his leaving for New York early in 1853, Berlioz wrote of him, Feb. 4 of that year:

Gottschalk is one of the very small number who possess all the different elements of a consummate pianist— all the faculties which surround him with an irresistible prestige, and give him a sovereign power. He is an accomplished musician — he knows just how far fancy may be indulged in expression. He knows the limits beyond which any liberties taken with the rhythm produce only confusion and discord, and upon these limits he never encroaches. There is an exquisite grace in his manner of phrasing sweet melodies and throwing off light touches from the higher keys. The boldness and brilliancy and originality of his play at once dazzle and astonish, and the infantile naivete of his smiling caprices, the charming simplicity- with which he renders simple things, seem to belong to another individuality distinct from that which marks his thundering energy — thus the success of M. Gottschalk before an audience of musical cultivation is immense.

He gave his first American concert at Niblo's on Feb. 11, 1853, and met with a flattering reception. In October of that year he gave a concert in the music hall, Boston, but was coldly received, and met with unfair treatment from the critics, who at that time could see nothing of merit that was not of German origin. During the winter and succeeding summer he gave concerts throughout the middle states, going to New Orleans, returning to New York in September and appearing in Philadelphia in November. He then went to the West Indies, where he remained six years, returning to New York in February, 1862, and appearing in April of that year in Chicago with Carlotta Patti, George Simpson Morcuc and Carl Bergmann. In 1865 he sailed for San Francisco, thence to Chili, subsequently touring through the South American states. In May, 1869, he went to Rio Janeiro, Brazil, where he organized a grand musical festival which was given at the opera house Nov. 26. During the performance he was seized with illness. He was removed to Tijuca in the hope that the air of a higher level would relieve him, but died there on Dec. 18, 1869. As a pianist Gottschalk possessed brilliant powers of technique and expression.

Art was to him a religion. While he was playing he became utterly absorbed in the music, and, watching his face, it seemed as though he was looking far beyond the present scene, and

translating on his instrument the poem which was being sung in his soul. The French said of him :

Il est mieux que bien, and a French writer, speaking of his playing, says :

"His talent united power and grace, precision and originality, wonderful playfulness with the utmost severity of style ; he was at the same time tender and elegant, nervous and pathetic, full of finish and expression, not forgetting poetry ; in short, he charmed, seduced, compelled, subjugated."

As pianist and composer perhaps the adjective that best describes his work is "finished." He played music as he wrote it — lovingly, throwing into its expression all his strongly marked individuality.

Among his works are *Mancenillier*, *Chasse de Jeune Henri*, *Songe d'une Nuit d'Eté* and *Moissonneuse Mazurka*, 1847 ; *Carnaval de Venice*, *Jerusalem*, *Chant du Soldat*, *Ricordati* and *Valse Poétique*, 1857, *March Solennelle*, *Minuit à Séville* and *Reflets du Passé*, 1858 ; *Manchega* (étude), *Souvenir de la Havane*, *Ardennes*, *Jeunesse Mazurka*, *La Chute des Feuilles*, 1860 ; *Polonia*, 1861 ; *Caprice*, *O Ma Charmante*, *Caprice Suis Moi* and *Berceuse*, 1861 ; several songs, 1863 ; *La Colombe*, *Ojos Criollos*, *Misere du Trovatore*, *Reponds Moi* (duo) *overture to William Tell* and songs, 1864, and a song and duo. *La Galina*.

