

PIANO PLAYING

ing of the piece, away from the piano. When next you go to the piano—after several hours, remember—try to play the piece. Should you still get “stuck” at a certain place take the sheet music, but play only that place (several times, if necessary), and then begin the piece over again, as a test, if you have better luck this time with those elusive places. If you still fail resume your silent reading of the piece away from the piano. Under no circumstances skip the unsafe place for the time being, and proceed with the rest of the piece. By such forcing of the memory you lose the logical development of your piece, tangle up your memory and injure its receptivity. Another observation in connection with memorising may find a place here. When we study a piece we—unconsciously—associate in our mind a multitude of things with it which bear not the slightest relation upon it. By these “things” I mean not only the action of the piano, light or heavy, as it may be, but also the colour of its wood, the colour of the wall paper, discoloration of the ivory on some key of the piano, the pictures on the walls, the angle at which the piano stands

GENERAL RULES

to the architectural lines of the room, in short, all sorts of things. And we remain utterly unconscious of having associated them with the piece we are studying—until we try to play the well-learned piece in a different place, in the house of a friend or, if we are inexperienced enough to commit such a blunder, in the concert hall. Then we find that our memory fails us most unexpectedly, and we blame our memory for its unreliableness. But the fact is rather that our memory was only too good, too exact, for the absence of or difference from our accustomed surroundings disturbed our too precise memory. Hence, to make absolutely sure of our memory we should try our piece in a number of different places before relying upon our memory; this will dissociate the wonted environment from the piece in our memory.

With Regard to Technical Work: Play good compositions and construe out of them your own technical exercises. In nearly every piece you play you will find a place or two of which your conscience tells you that they are not up to your own wishes; that they can be improved upon either from a rhythmical, dynam-