

## Importance of Fundamentals

It often happens that violin students, who are either self-taught or who have been taught by teachers who do not understand how to give their pupils the fundamentals of the correct mechanism of violin technic, are a loss to know why it is that they are so helpless when they try to play compositions where technic of any difficulty is involved. Their troubles usually come from the fact that they have not a proper mechanism or technic. They may be likened to a machine, which it is necessary at times to run at high speed and with the greatest accuracy, but which has certain parts missing altogether, or badly made, or defective. Such a machine will not run satisfactorily, and often will not run at all. Think of what would happen if an automobile were made without springs, a watch without a balance wheel, or a threshing machine without the proper gears.

As a single instance of this, let us take the example of slurring when passing from one string to another. The violin student who tries to do this with his whole arm and without wrist action has an action as faulty as that of an auto made without any springs. It would seem so self-evident that this bit of technic must be mastered before any violin playing fit to be heard can be done, that one would think every teacher would insist on each of his pupils mastering it at a very early stage. And yet, what do we find? I have had many pupils come to me who had played for years, and yet who could not do this bit of wrist work at all. Yet they were trying to play difficult compositions. They might just as well have tried to drive a clumsy ox cart at the speed of a racing sulky.

### Theory of Wrist Action

Really skillful violin teachers, of course, train their pupils do all branches of fundamental technic, just as the constructor of a fine piece of machinery makes all the parts to run in the proper manner and at the proper speed to produce the necessary results which the machine was intended to accomplish.

The theory of the wrist action I have mentioned above is easy enough, but in practice it is difficult for the beginner, and requires much practice. The first exercise for the acquirement of this bowing is given below and is on the open strings.



Eight notes (or later on twelve or sixteen) are taken in the down and the same number in the up bow. After the open G and D strings are practiced in this manner fifty times or so the open D-A and open A-E are taken up and practiced in a similar manner. Extreme smoothness and absolute accuracy in time must be observed. The bow is simply pulled along and the slurring is done by moving the hand up and down from the wrist. Many

pupils try to do passages like this with the forearm or with the whole arm, and with the wrist stiff. It is needless to say that neither speed nor smoothness can be accomplished in this way. The bow must be transferred from one string to another entirely by the dips and elevations of the hand from the wrist. All the joints of the arm must be loose and elastic. It takes much practice for the novice to do this even passably well, but it is worth all the time spent on it, since it is not only difficult, but impossible to play the violin well without it.

### Scales in Sixths

As soon as this bowing has been mastered reasonably well on the open strings it can be used to advantage in practicing scales in sixths, as given in Schradieck's Scales, or any other set of scale studies as given below.



Practicing the scales in this manner really kills three birds with one stone, because we get practice in using the wrist in crossing strings, in fingering for double stopping at intervals of a sixth, and in long bowing.

The violin student who practices these studies faithfully until he can execute them at high speed will have a golden reward, since he will find that he is able to play passages in a smooth and finished manner which were absolutely impossible for him before he mastered it.

Besides the examples given above, many similar studies involving the same principles can be found in almost any violin instruction book or set of studies.

## The Guarneri or

ONE of the most famous families of violin makers of Cremona was the Guarneri, or Guarnerius family. Andreas, the father of the house, made instruments bearing dates from 1650 to 1695. His two sons, Joseph and Peter, and his grandson, Peter, of Venice, all made violins of some note, but the genius of the family was his nephew, Joseph del Gesu, so called because he put the initials I. H. S. (Latin—"Jesus, Savior of Men") in his violins. His violins bring enormous prices at the present day, and are much sought after by violinists; indeed, they are preferred by some violinists to those of Stradivarius. There is an immense number of imitations on the market.

The violins of Joseph are made with bold and rugged outlines, and above all things he strove for tone, in which he was eminently successful. He constantly sought for sonorous wood, from which to make the bellies of his violins. The story goes that he found a vast supply of pine which possessed wonderful properties for tone production, and which proved a mine of wealth for him. The bellies made from