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THE GROUNDWORK OF THE LESCHETIZKY METHOD

MALWINE BRÉE

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Malvina Brée

THE GROUNDWORK OF THE LESCHETIZKY METHOD

ISSUED WITH HIS APPROVAL
BY
HIS ASSISTANT

MALWINE BRÉE

WITH FORTY-SEVEN ILLUSTRATIVE CUTS
OF LESCHETIZKY'S HAND

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN BY
DR. TH. BAKER

net, $2.50
(In U. S. A.)

G. SCHIRMER, INC., NEW YORK

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Printed in the U. S. A.

TO MY HONORED MASTER

PROFESSOR THEODOR LESCHETIZKY

Twenty years ago I became your pupil, and for more than ten years you have considered me worthy to hold the office of your assistant. Let this be my justification for publishing, in this book, what you have taught me throughout this long period, and what I in turn have tested on hundreds of pupils.

I am well aware that a finished pianist can no more be formed by a theoretical method alone than a painter or sculptor can be trained by books on painting or sculpture; nevertheless, my book may claim a certain right to exist, if only as a welcome reminder to many former disciples of the Leschetizky School of their early instruction, and, for the later pupils, as affording a correct idea of the basis of that School.

Following the spirit of the latter, I have been at pains to avoid pedantry. My work does not aim at a slavish observance of rule, but is meant to be a guide to fine and correct piano-playing. I am rendered the more desirous of attaining this end by reason of the honorable distinction conferred upon my work by the illustrations of your own hand.

I thank you most sincerely for this distinction, and beg you to accept the dedication of this book. Thus it only returns to the fountain-head whence we all draw.

VIENNA, February, 1902.

MALWINE BRÉE.

(TRANSLATION)

VIENNA, Feb. 24, 1902.

MME. MALWINE BRÉE.

HONORED MADAM: My best thanks for the dedication of your book, which I of course accept most gladly. As you know, I am from principle no friend of theoretical Piano-Methods; but your excellent work, which I have carefully examined, is such a brilliant exposition of my personal views, that I subscribe, word for word, to everything you advance therein. Your "Groundwork of the Leschetizky Method" leads with a practised hand along the same path on which, for many years, you have won such striking success as my assistant by teaching in accord with my intention. Moreover, the tone of your work is not monotonously didactic, but enlivened by clever conceits and humor.

Approving the illustrations of my hand as genuine and lifelike, I declare your book to be the sole authorized publication explanatory of my method, and wish it all success and popularity.

With sincerest regard,

(Signed) THEODOR LESCHETIZKY.

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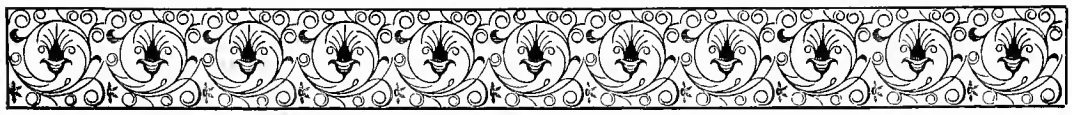


I

Attitude at the Piano

HERE one remark by Leschetizky: "Sit at the piano unconstrained and erect, like a good horseman on his horse, and yield to the movements of the arms as far as necessary, as the rider yields to the movements of his horse." Sit at such a distance from the keyboard that when the arms are easily bent the finger-tips may rest on the keys without effort, and the feet reach the pedals comfortably. The elbows should be held neither too close to the sides nor too far away; moreover, they should either be on a level with the keys, or be held but very little higher. Too low a seat, in particular, necessitates (in accord with the laws of leverage) greater exertion on the player's part, so that he is compelled, when playing forcible chords, to raise his shoulders, which has no very graceful look.

Many—even eminent—pianists lay too little stress on a graceful attitude while playing. They seem to think: "If only the ear be satisfied." That is not enough. The listener's ear should first be seduced through the eye, and thus be rendered more impressionable.

Neither does "posing" meet with our approval. The usual pose is to lean backward with a splenetic air and to play with slow negative movements of the head, the eyes rolled heavenward. Then there is the nonchalant pose with the disdainful expression of countenance; or the player bends over till his head almost touches the keys, and after every passage turns his face to the audience in smiling interrogation.

All this produces a more or less comical impression, and is apt to injure the effect of the finest playing. True feeling is not expressed by means of the pose, neither does a pianist's art find expression through his mien, but through his fingers; and true feeling manifests itself spontaneously, if the player really has it.

II

The Hand and Its Posture

THE pianist must renounce the so-called aristocratic hand, slender and gracefully formed, with well-kept nails. A thoroughly trained "piano-hand" becomes broader, supple in the wrist, and muscular, with broad finger-tips. The nails, too, must be kept short, for the springy pad of the finger-tip yields a mellower tone than the inelastic nail.

Too large hands are not always advantageous at the piano; but too small hands are often a disadvantage, even though such can generally bear fatigue better than large ones, and also more readily acquire the "pearly" touch. Large hands, again, show superiority in widespread chords, which small hands have to make good by means of dexterity and suitable arrangement. For the rest, there have been, and are, pianists of the highest rank with large hands and with small hands. The method of holding them is the same for both.

Fig. 1. How to Hold the Right Hand

Fig. 2. How to Hold the Left Hand

The hand should assume a decidedly vaulted form (see Figs. 1 and 2); for, apart from the unpleasing, amateurish impression made by playing with flat hands and fingers, the only way to get strength into the fingers is to hold the hand rounded upward. The wrist must be held somewhat lower than the knuckles, and the fingers so curved that the tip-joints fall vertically on the keys, which are touched by the tips of the fingers only. The thumb forms the sole exception, as it strikes the key not with the tip, but the edge; it is held away from the hand, with the tip-joint bent.

Now set the finger-tips in an easy posture on five consecutive white keys, and press them down together. Do this near the front edge of the keys, because the touch is lightest there, but do not hold them at the very edge, as they might slip off. The fingers being unequal in length, their vertical tips cannot, of course, stand in a straight line side by side, but form a line curving outward from the thumb to the 3d finger, and then inward to the 5th finger.

III

Wrist-Exercise

Fig. 3

AS soon as the posture of the hand is quite under control, press rather firmly on the five white keys and lower and raise the wrist slowly and repeatedly, taking care (1) that the hand remains rounded upward, (2) that the fingers retain their position, (3) that on raising the wrist it does not rise higher than its original position, and (4) that the upper arm does not follow the wrist-motion.

Repeat this exercise for only a few days, and with the hands in alternation.

IV

Some General Rules

THE following fundamental rules are very important even for the finger-exercises; they should, therefore, be learned at the very beginning.

(1) It is best to play all finger-exercises at first only with a light touch; after two or three days one may try to get more tone, always endeavoring to play

evenly (with equal strength of tone) with all the fingers. This is accomplished by an unequal exertion of pressure on the keys in conformity with the unequal length and muscular strength of the fingers. Strongest of all is the thumb; then comes the 3d finger, followed in order of strength by the 5th, 2d, and finally, as the weakest, the 4th. But in this case we do not observe the ordinary educational rule, and treat the weakling with indulgence; we must, on the contrary, exert the strongest pressure on it, to remedy its inequality. The dynamometer for the exertion of force at any given time is the ear. One must *hear* whether the tones finally sound equal in force. After some practice the fingers will accustom themselves to the necessary degree of pressure.

(2) It is not well at the outset to repeat the finger-exercises until fatigued. Avoid this by frequent alternation of the hands. Let us say, once for all, that the finger-exercises are never to be played with both hands together. After a time each hand may practise longer; but even then be careful not to overtire yourself. Should the hand begin to feel heavy, let it rest. Should one continue practice, one soon feels a trembling, or even pain, in the muscles, and this may injure the hand.

(3) Without interrupting practice, lower and raise the hand frequently while playing, as described in Section III. By so doing one prevents the hand from growing stiff.

(4) When the finger is raised from the key, it must not change its form, but remain curved (see Figs. 4 to 8). Bending the raised finger inward, or stretching it out stiff and straight, does not look well, and is a waste of strength at the expense of tone and velocity.

(5) Always keep a watchful eye on the finger-tip, and strike the key exactly with the tip; for that is the only way to bring out a full, strong tone.

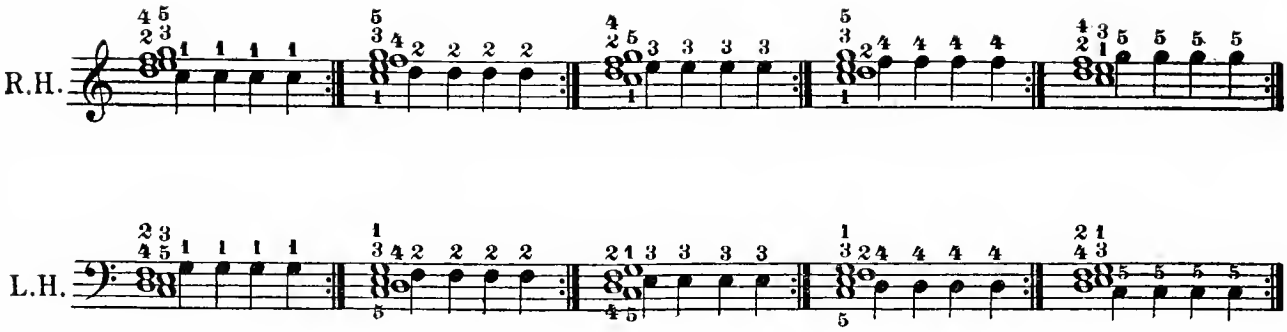
(6) Let us remark, in advance, that in playing a melody *forte*, or for strong accents, the black keys are struck, not with rounded, but with outstretched fingers. The fingers thus touch a wider key-surface and are less apt to slide off.

V

Finger-Exercises

1. One-finger Exercises

AT the start the simplest finger-exercises are the best, so that attention can be concentrated on the posture of the fingers and wrist.



While four fingers hold the whole notes, one finger plays the quarter-notes. Repeat each of the above and following measures *ad libitum.*

Holding the hand as in Figs. 1 and 2, press down the five keys together, and then raise the thumb just high enough to let the key rise to its level, keeping the thumb in touch with it. (Fig. 4.)

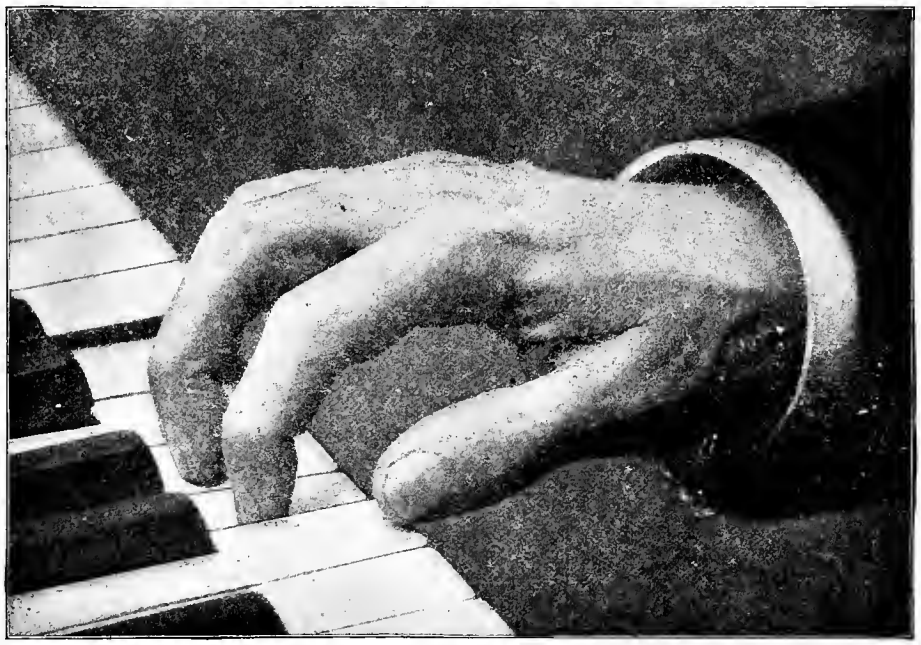


Fig. 4

Now the thumb presses the key down again, holds it a moment, and then rises again. Repeat this procedure several times, and then continue in the same

Fig. 5

manner with the 2d finger, raising it about one-third of an inch and striking the key repeatedly while the other fingers hold their keys. (Fig. 5.)

Fig. 6

Proceed similarly with the 3d finger, keeping the others down. (Fig. 6.)

Fig. 7

Fig. 8

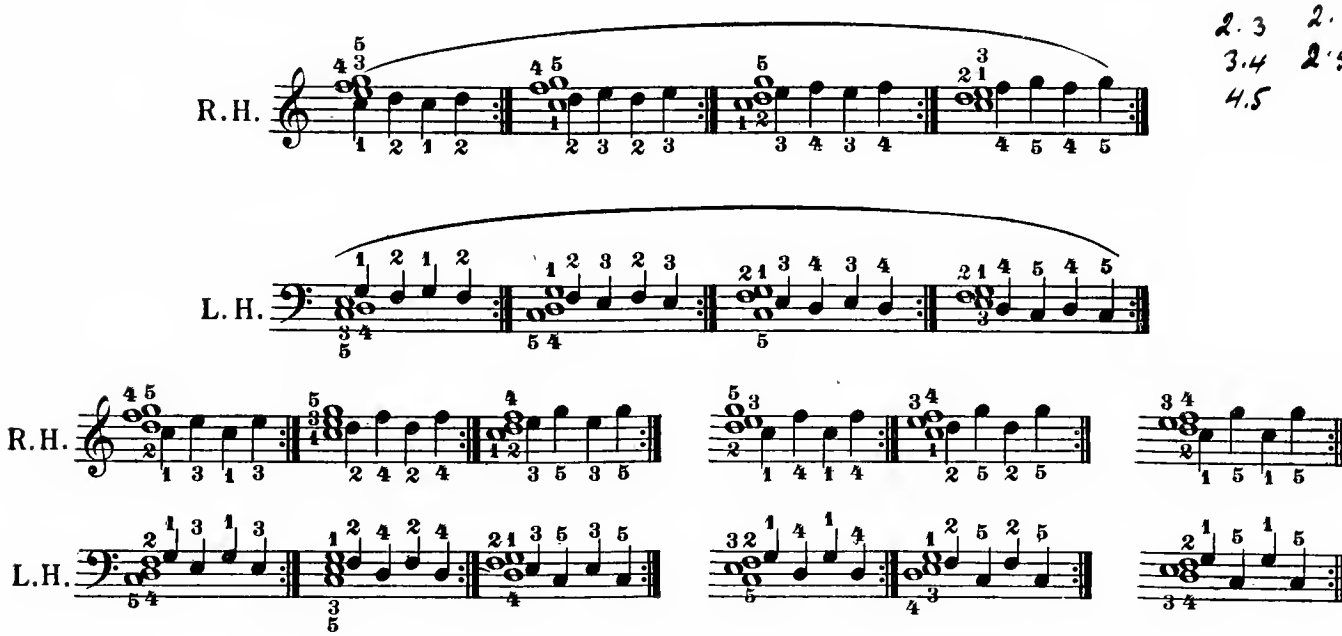
Now continue with the 4th (Fig. 7) and 5th fingers (Fig. 8). These two must, however, be raised as high as possible, so that the hampered 4th finger may acquire more independence and the 5th more strength. During this exercise of the five fingers, often repeat the wrist-movement described under "General Rules," to make sure that the wrist is loose.

After practising these exercises for some time *legato*, try them also *staccato* (compare Section XIV). For this each finger, after striking its key a short, swift blow, flies back high in its rounded form. This renders the fingers more elastic.

2. Two-finger Exercises

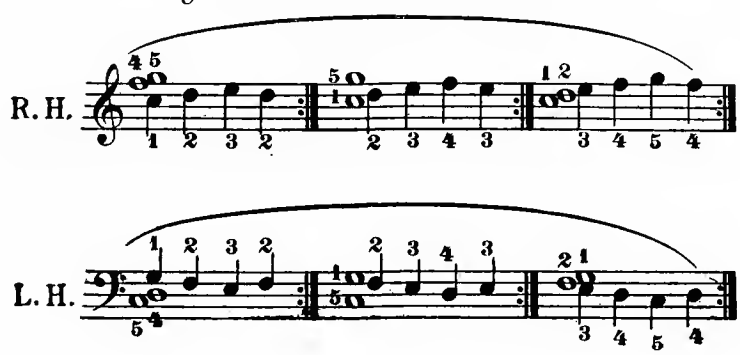
This is the application of Exercise 1 to two tones.

1.2 1·3
2.3 2.4
3.4 2·5
4.5



Press down the five keys, then play with two fingers according to the above examples. When one finger strikes its key, the other must go up *a tempo*. The active fingers should play *legato*, the other three holding their keys.

3. Three-finger Exercise



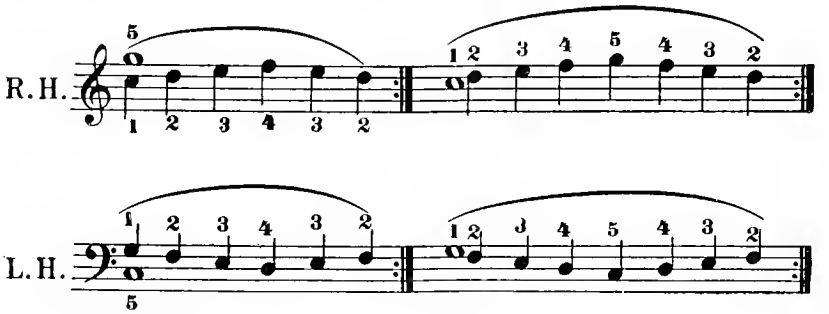
1232 1343
1242 1353
1252

2343 2454
2353 3454

12342 12342 23434 5.
12352 13454 5

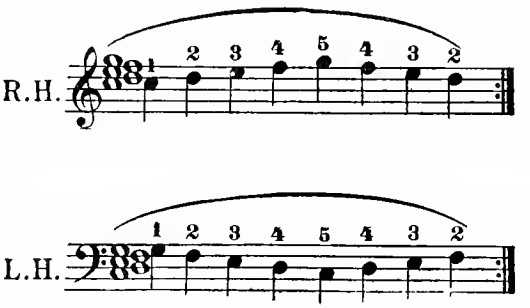
Two fingers hold down the whole notes, three play; but each finger holds down its key after striking, while the next in turn to play is raised *a tempo.*

4. Four-finger Exercise



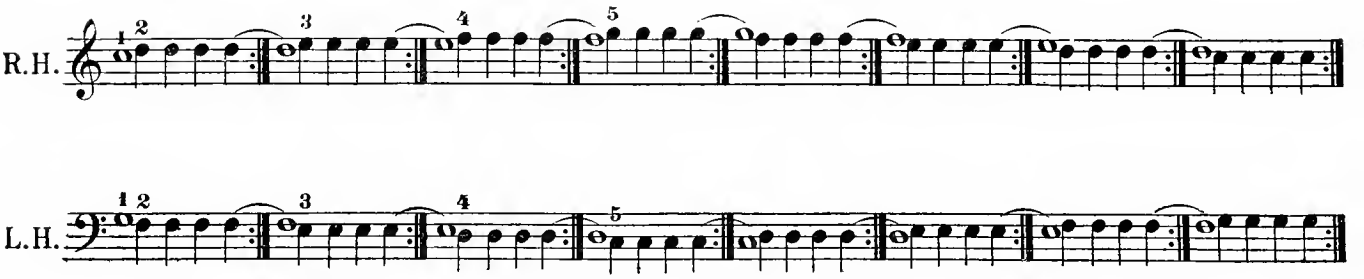
One finger holds down, four play, as above.

5. Five-finger Exercise



Press down all five keys. Then one finger after the other plays, and holds its key (as above); etc.

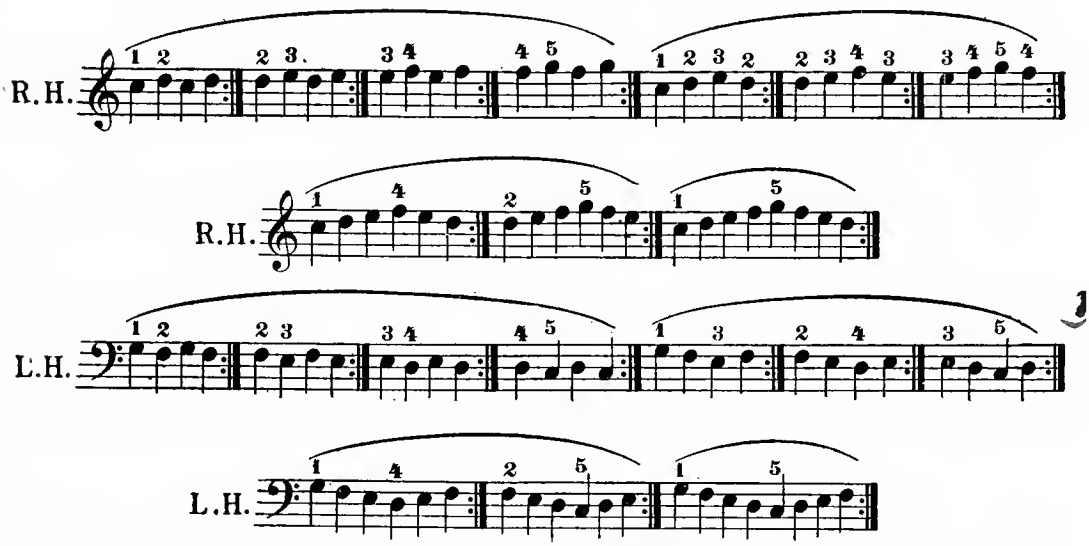
6. Finger-exercise with One Tone Held



Hold the first note of the measure and play with the next finger. Inactive fingers are to be held high in their rounded form, excepting the thumb, which is held bent and loose under the 2d finger (see Fig. 12).

Be careful not to hold the inactive fingers up spasmodically, for this would take too much strength from the active ones. And do not worry if the 4th finger jerks a little when the 3d finger plays, or if the 5th does likewise when the 4th plays. There is an anatomical reason for this, in the presence of a common tendon; so it does no harm. The breaking-up of this habit is a wearisome task, whose sole result would be, perhaps, a certain stiffness of the wrist.

7. Free Finger-exercise without Held Tones



Here, too, the finger must instantly fly up in rounded form when the next finger strikes. The thumb, after playing (that is, in all exercises where the right hand begins on *C* and the left on *G*), does not go under the palm, but stays close to its key, as if ready to press it down. (See Addenda, p. 83.)

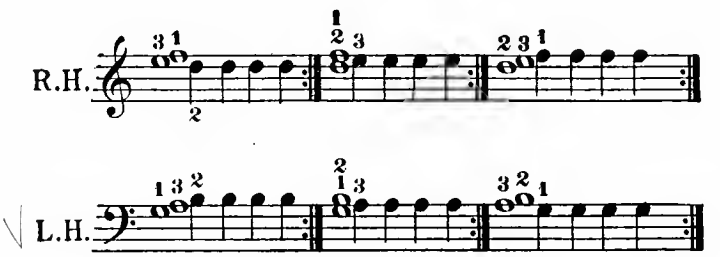
VI

Preparatory Studies for the Diatonic Scales

WHEN man was made, the Creator surely had no idea that he would eventually "perfect" himself as a pianist; for otherwise, in view of the scales and broken chords, he would have provided him with at least seven fingers on each hand, and furthermore, with seven fingers of equal length. For the

"piano-man" this would have obviated the unpleasant necessity of turning under his thumb once, at least. But with our insufficient number of fingers, turning-under requires special preparatory exercises.

Fig. 9



Two fingers hold their notes, one plays. The 2d and 3d fingers must form an arch, under which the thumb moves.

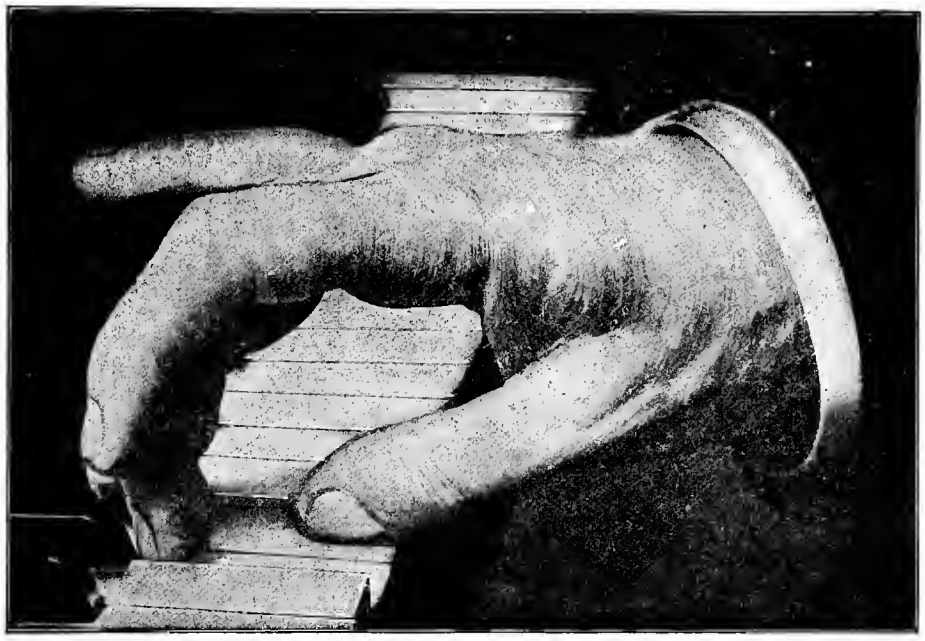
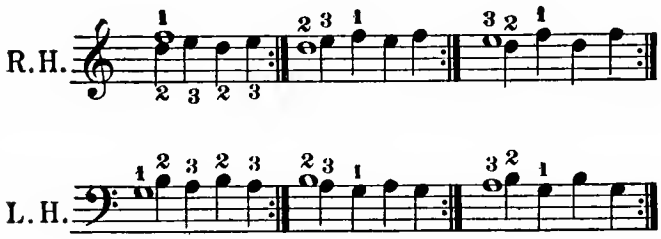
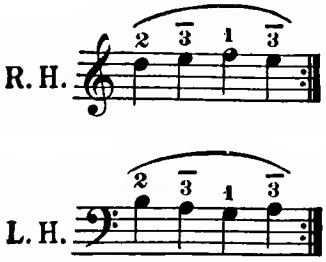


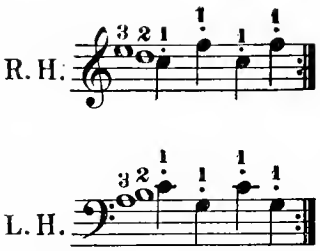
Fig. 10



One finger holds, two play.

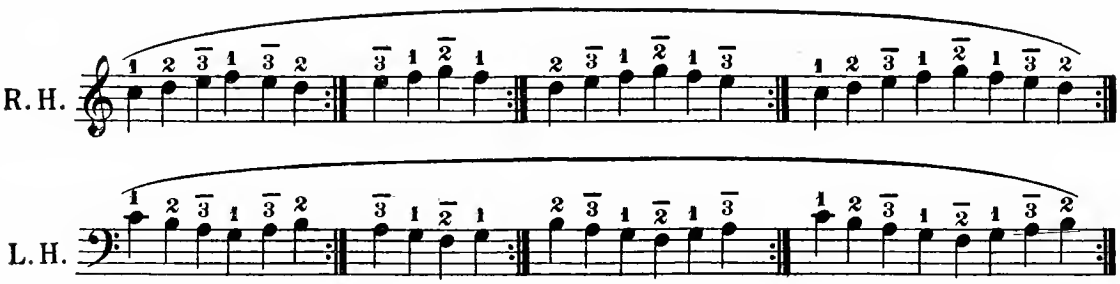


All three fingers play, and hold their notes after striking. Both in these exercises and the following ones, the fingers coming just before and after the thumb should strike rather stronger than the others, going either upward or downward, so that the turning-under and turning-over may not be noticeable. The notes requiring stronger accent are marked by dashes.



Two fingers hold their notes, while the right thumb, passing under them, leaps from *C* to *F*; the left thumb from *C* to *G*. Keep the thumb bent, and do not allow it to rise in too high a curve, but let it glide over the intermediate keys.

Take care in all these exercises to keep the hand quiet, and the wrist loose but unmoved; neither must the elbow rise when the thumb passes under.

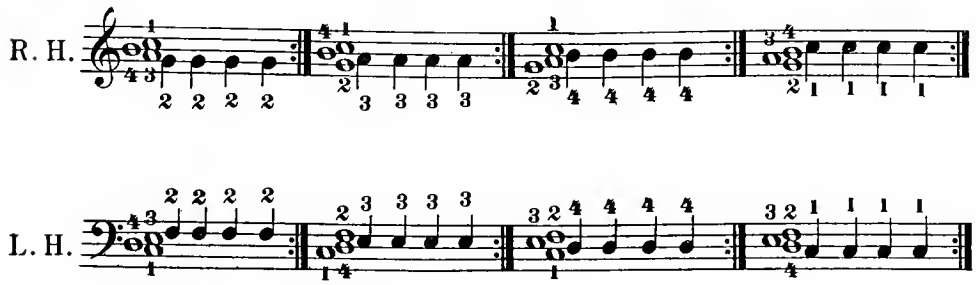


In the above free exercise without held notes, the thumb, in the measures beginning on *C*, passes instantly under the palm, in a bent posture, when the 2d finger has struck. From the second measure of this exercise on, the arms must follow up or down when the thumb turns under or a finger turns over.

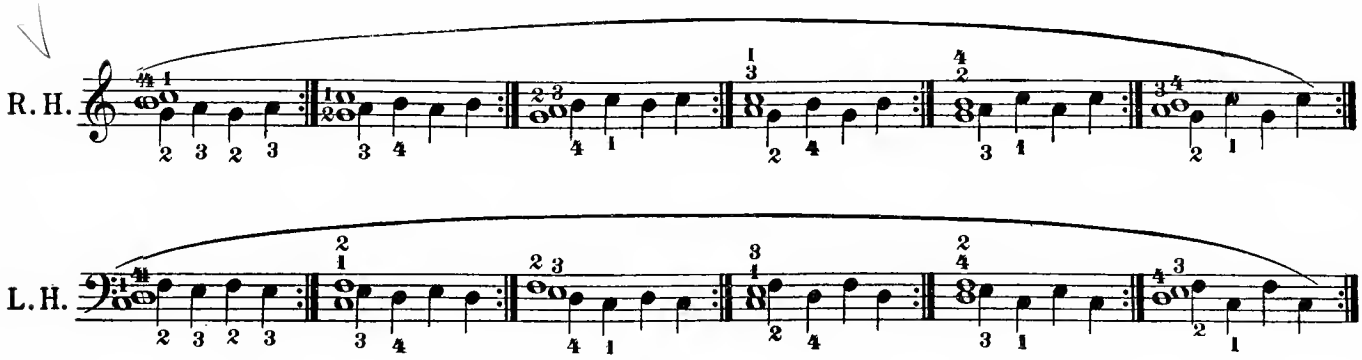
VII

The Former Preparatory Exercise, One Tone Wider

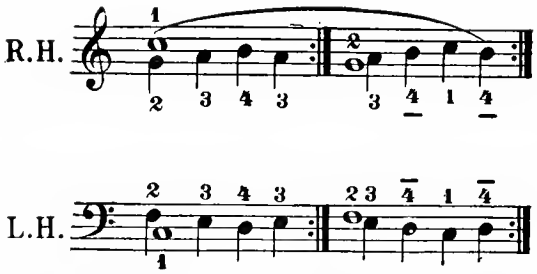
Fig. 11.



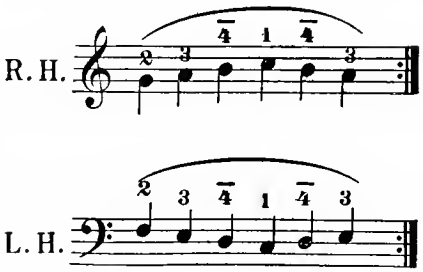
One finger plays, three hold.



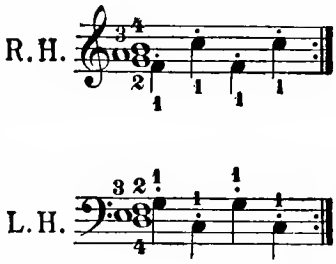
Two fingers play, two hold.



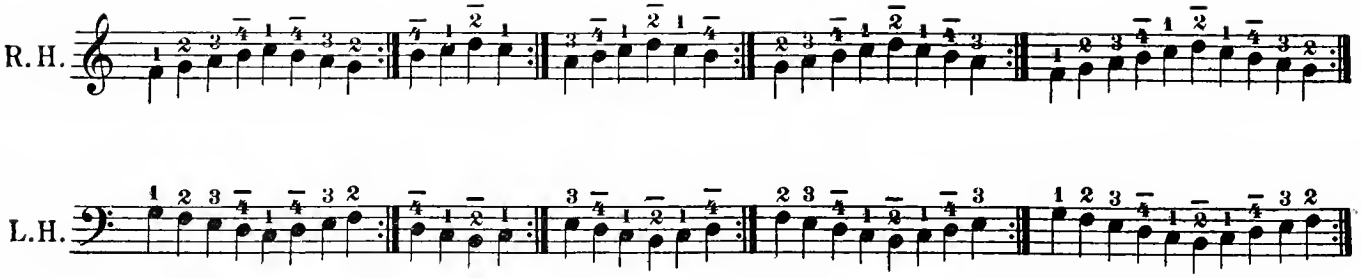
One finger holds, while three play and remain down after striking.



All fingers play, and remain down after striking.



The 2d, 3d and 4th fingers hold the whole notes, the thumb leaping as in the former similar exercise, without describing too high a curve. The wrist may now turn a trifle in the direction in which the hand is moving, when the thumb strikes its key.



Free exercise without held notes. The remarks on the similar exercise on p. 14 apply here.

VIII

Diatonic Scales

Fig. 12

Fig. 13

Fig. 14

IN scale-playing take care, above all things, that when the thumb turns under the arm is not thrust forward with a jerk, but follows the movement of the hand evenly and horizontally, gliding along much like a car on rails. Furthermore, hold the wrist loosely, without moving it up or down. The fingers should always retain their curve, even on the black keys. As remarked before, the thumb passes under the palm as soon as the 2d finger strikes; only at the end of a scale (playing *up* with the *right* hand and *down* with the *left*), the thumb should remain beside the hand, bent and ready to strike.

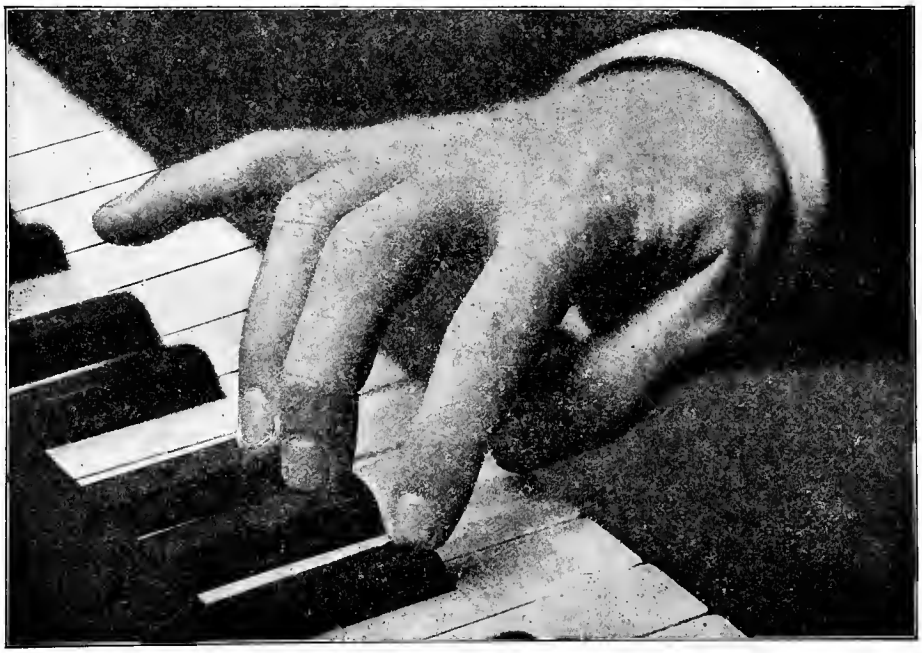
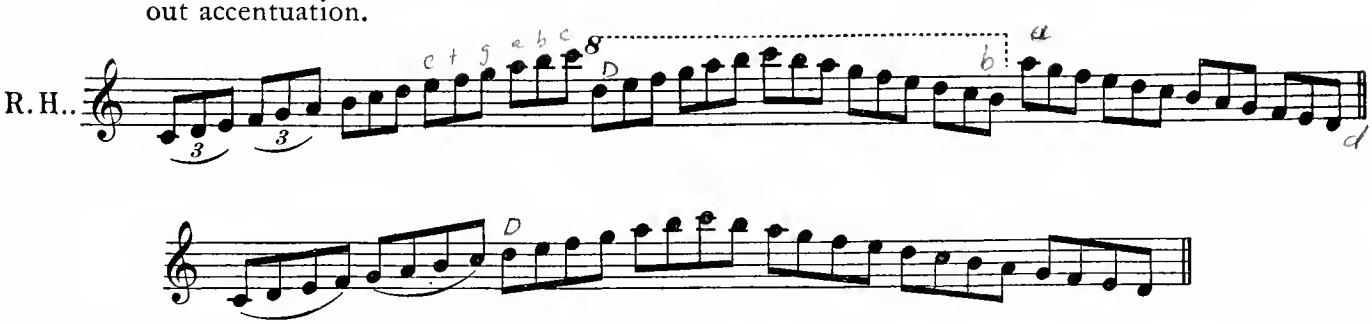


Fig. 15

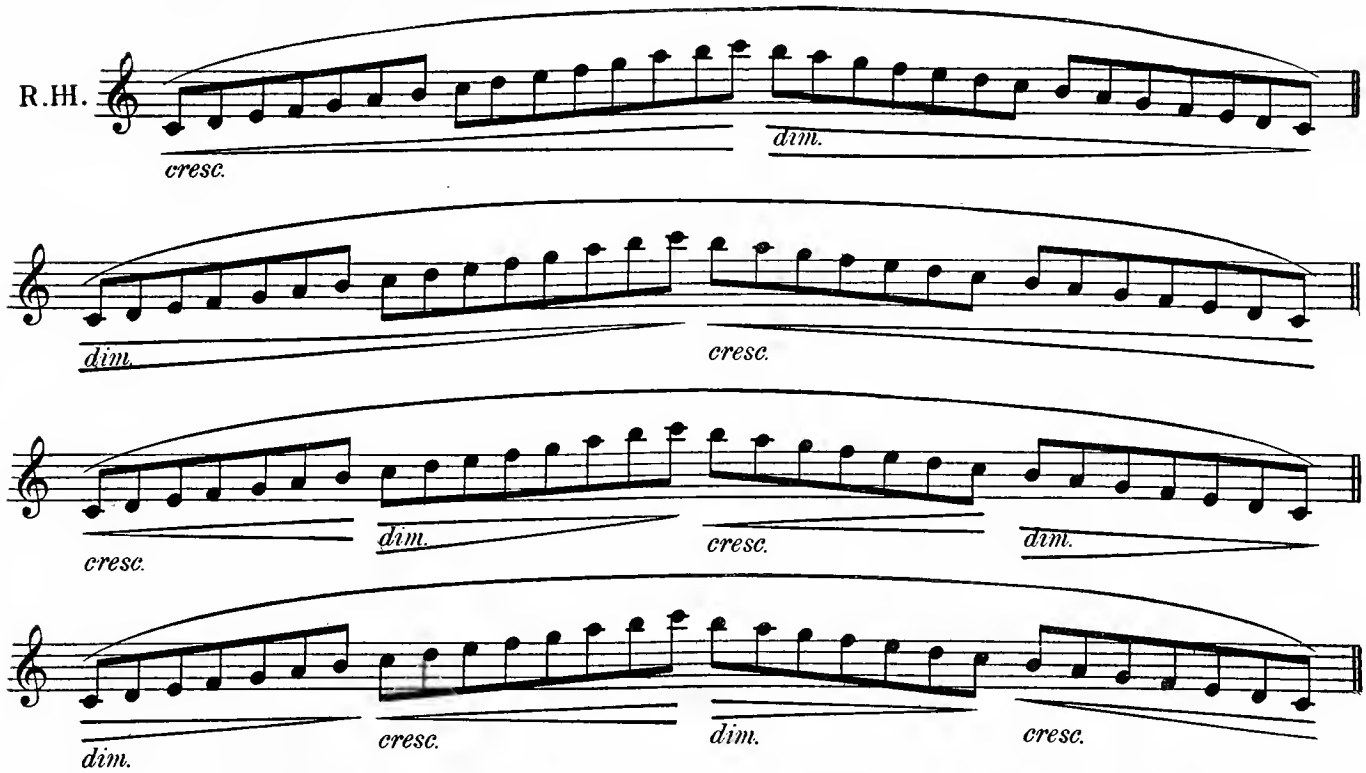
Practise the scales at first slowly and with a strong, even touch, without counting. Not until later should one gradually increase the speed, at the same time counting rhythmical groups of three (triplets) or four notes, but wholly without accentuation.



The left hand two octaves lower.

In rapid tempo "detach" the fingers, that is, lift them quickly after each stroke — as in *staccato* — which renders the scale "pearly."

Practise at first with each hand alone, then with both together in contrary motion, and finally parallel — through all the keys. When the slow scale with strong, even touch is thoroughly drilled into the fingers, practise it with the various dynamic shadings; at first *forte*, then *pianissimo*, and finally *crescendo* and *diminuendo;* the last two shadings in the variations shown in the following examples. In these also, to begin with, play slowly.



The left hand two octaves lower. Concerning *crescendo* and *diminuendo*, refer to the chapter on Dynamics. Pag 60

IX

Preparation for the Chromatic Scale

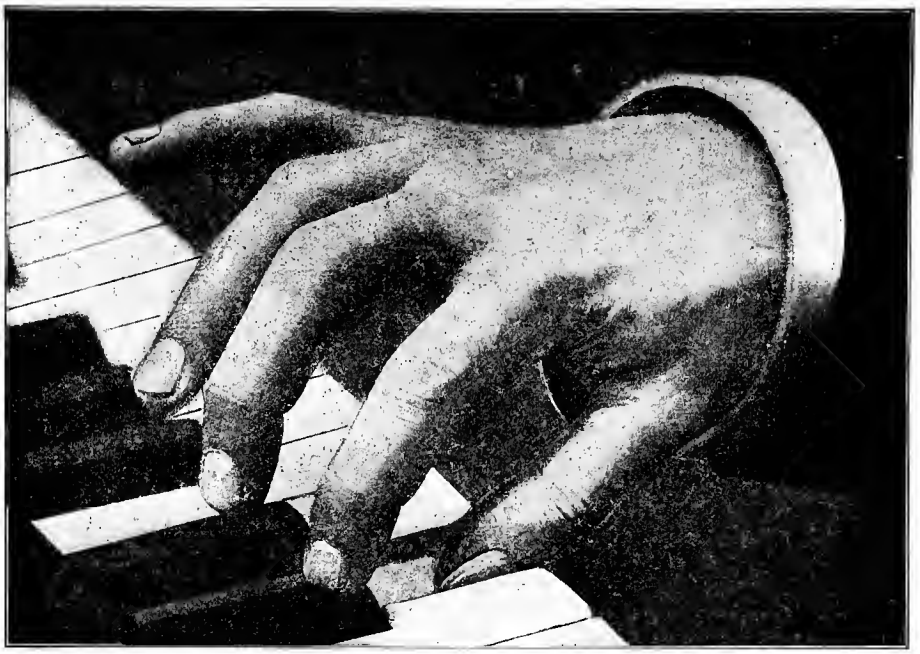
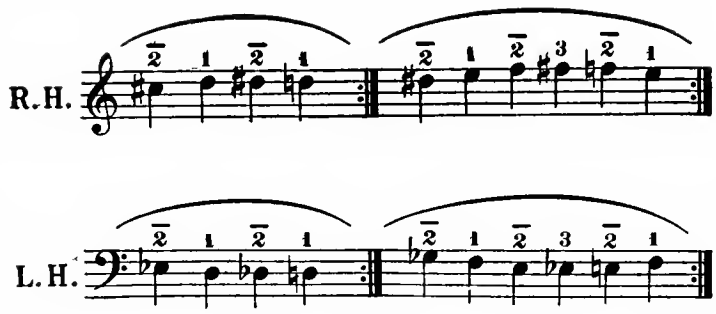


Fig. 16

THE thumb holds *D* near the black key; the 2d finger strikes *C*♯, presses it down quickly, and then passes rapidly over to *D*♯. Also reverse. (Fig. 16.)

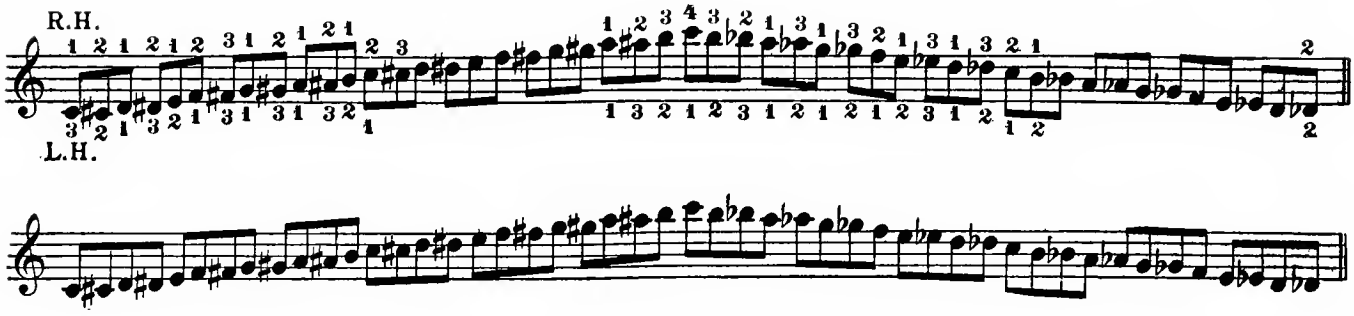
Fig. 17



Free exercise. At the two neighboring white keys bend the 2d finger a little more, that the fingers may keep in line. (Fig. 17.)

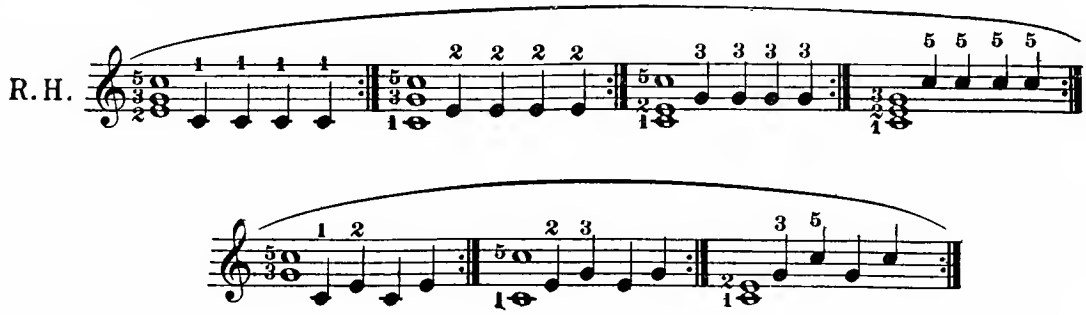
In both the exercises the wrist remains quiet and loose; but hold it a little higher than for the diatonic scale, so that the thumb strikes the key more with the tip. Be careful to strike the black keys very near the front edge.

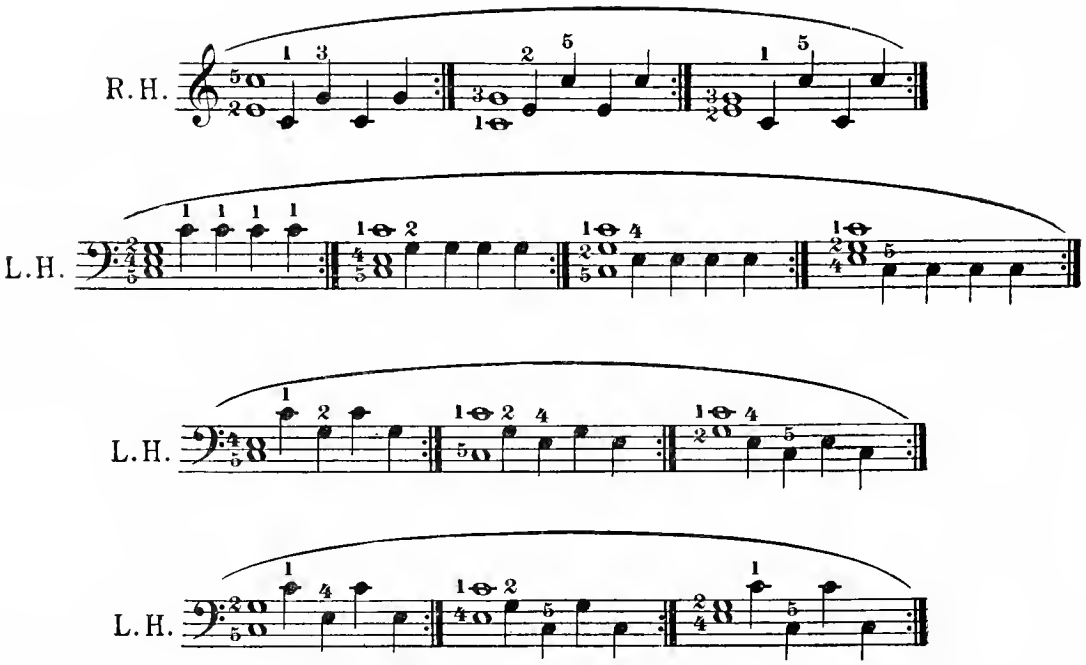
Observing the directions for both the chromatic and diatonic preparatory scale-exercises, begin now to practise the chromatic scale in groups of three and four notes, without accentuation.



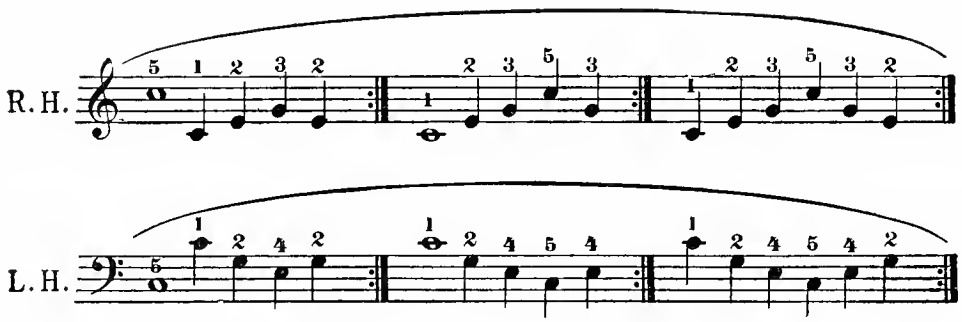
X

Preparatory Studies for Broken Chords (Triads)



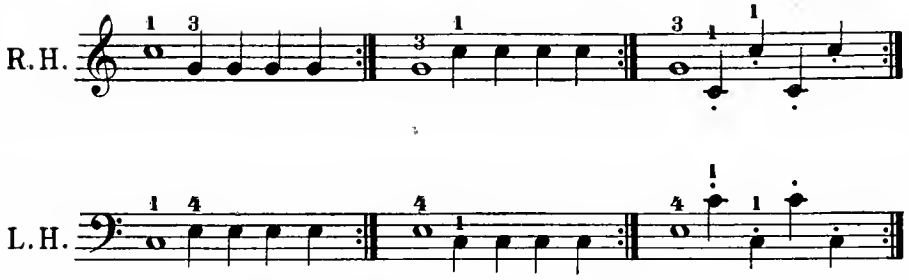


HOLD down the whole notes as long as the quarter-notes are played, keeping the hand arched and the fingers curved. Often move the wrist up and down without interrupting the playing.

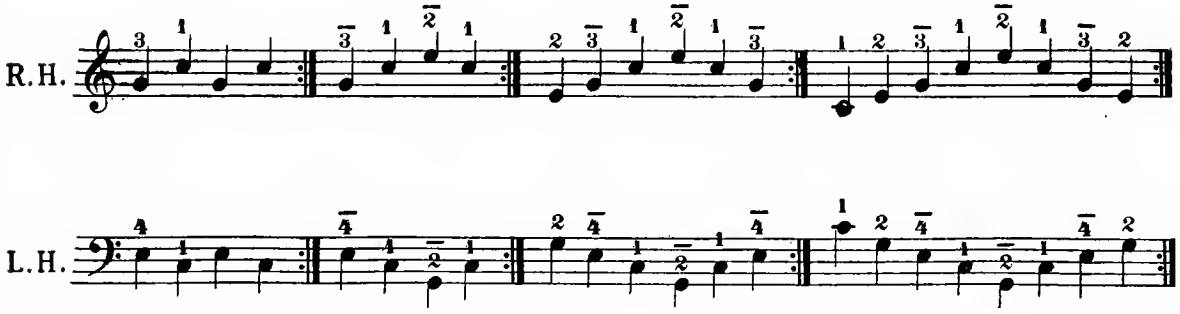


Let each finger lie, after striking, until its turn to play comes again. Otherwise, observe the directions for the preceding exercise.

Fig. 18

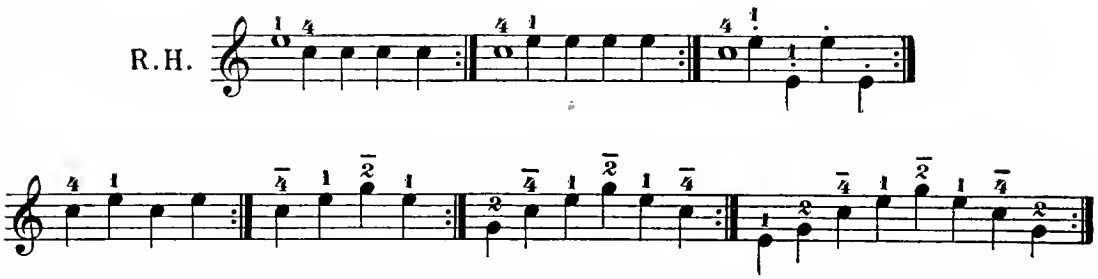


Hold the whole notes, play the quarters. Here, too, the 3d and 4th fingers must form an arch under which the thumb passes.

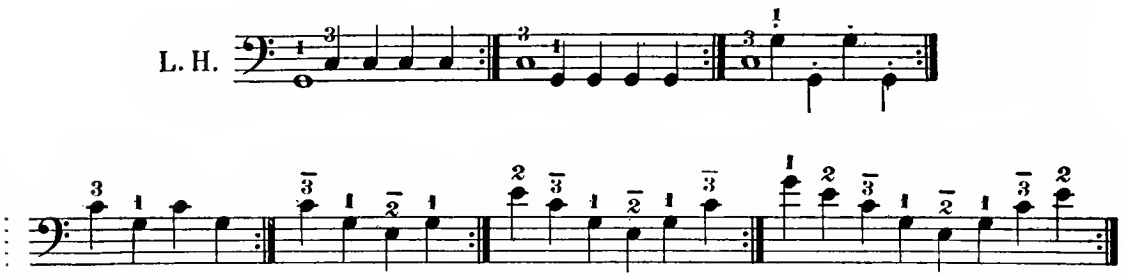


Free exercise. From the second measure on, hand and arm move in the direction of the next tone to be struck. The thumb in turning under, and the fingers in turning over, should not describe too high a curve.

Fig. 19

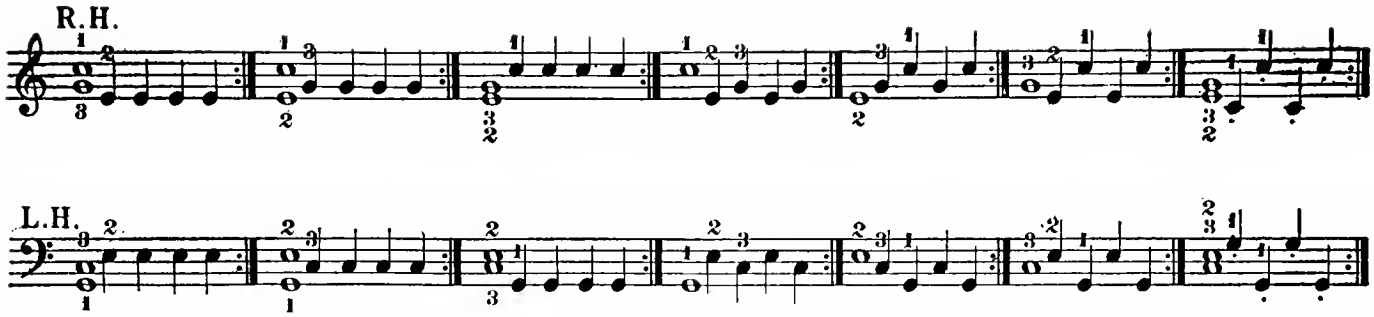


Triad-exercise in the first inversion.



Same exercise in the second inversion. For both inversions, observe the same rules as for the fundamental position.

Players having sufficient stretch to extend this exercise by a tone without forcibly contorting the hand, may take up the following exercises.

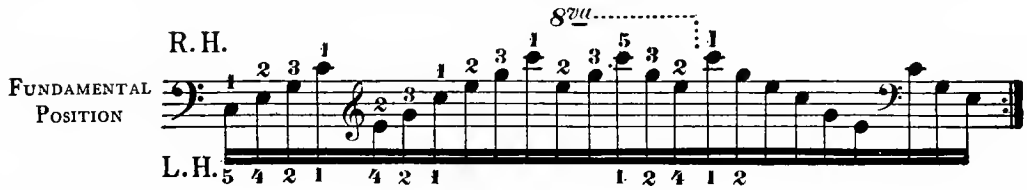


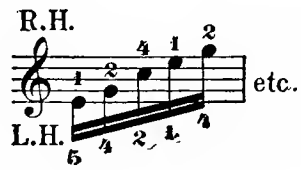
Observe the same directions as for the exercises with two fingers.

Here the fingers stay down after striking.

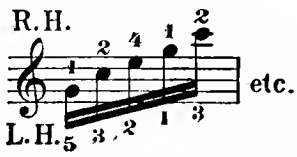
XI

Broken Chords (Triads)



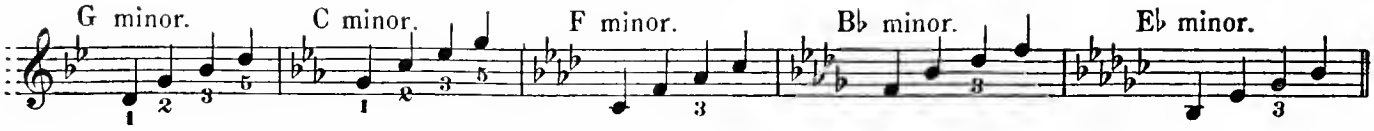


First Inversion

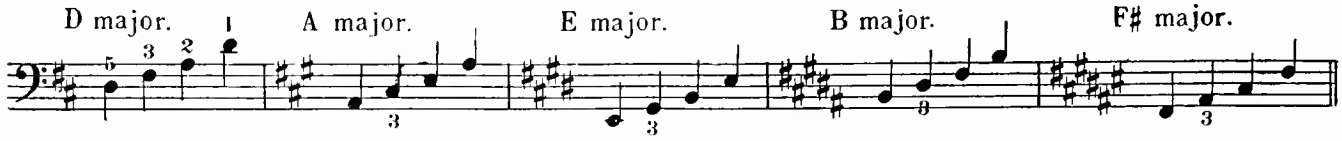


Second Inversion

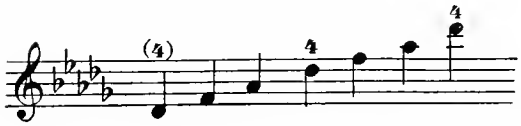
FIRST practise the fundamental position, and also the inversions, in *C* major; then in all other keys. The given fingering applies to all major and minor keys. Excepted from this rule are the following triads:

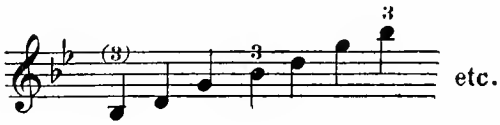


and for the left hand the fundamental position of



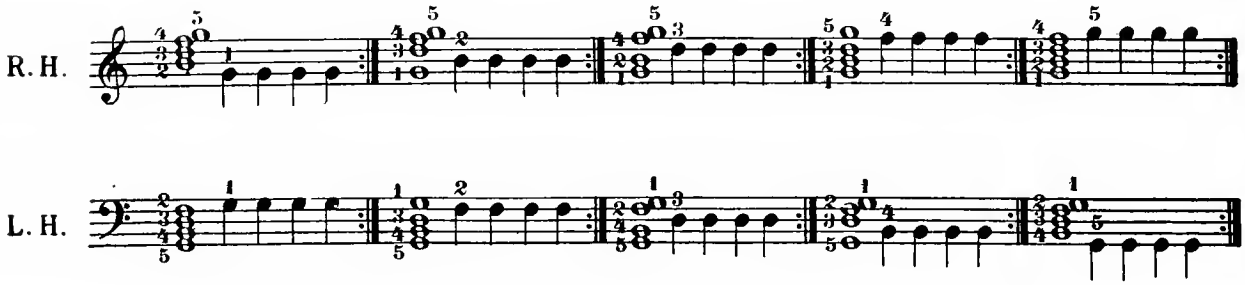
Another rule for the fingering is, that all broken triads starting on a black key must be begun with the 2d finger. However, it is very useful — though solely as an exercise — also to begin the triads with any finger which falls on the tonic in the course of playing. In *D♭* major, for example, when playing broken triads the 4th finger falls on the tonic *D♭*; and in the first inversion of *G* minor, the 3d finger falls on *B♭*. Therefore, instead of commencing to practise the *D♭* major triad with the normal 2d finger, begin with the 4th; and in *G* minor begin with the 3d instead of the 2d, etc.

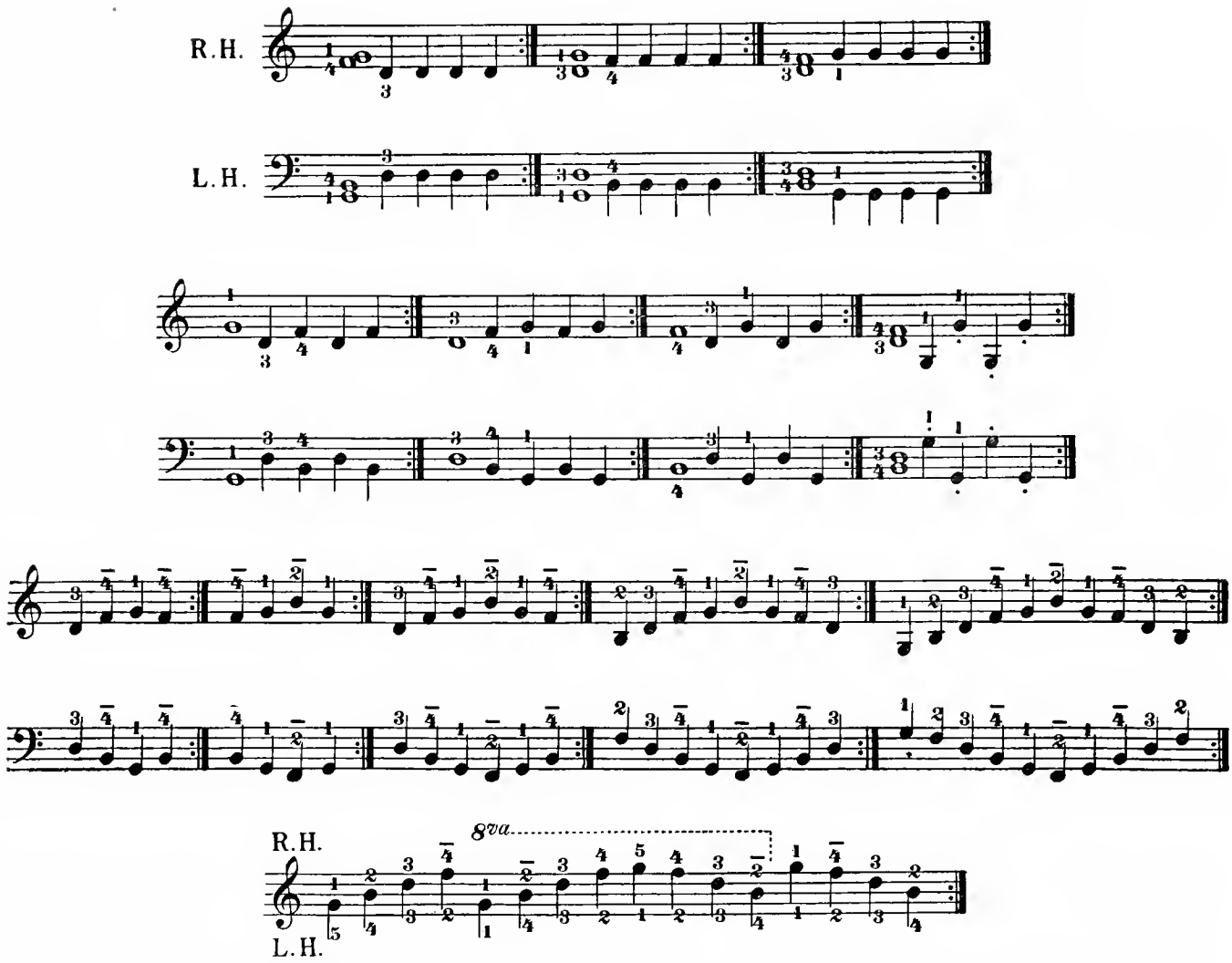




XII

Preparatory Studies for Broken Seventh-chords





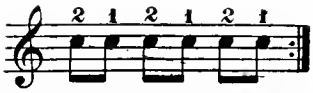
Practise these preparatory studies in all inversions and combinations (as in Section X).

XIII

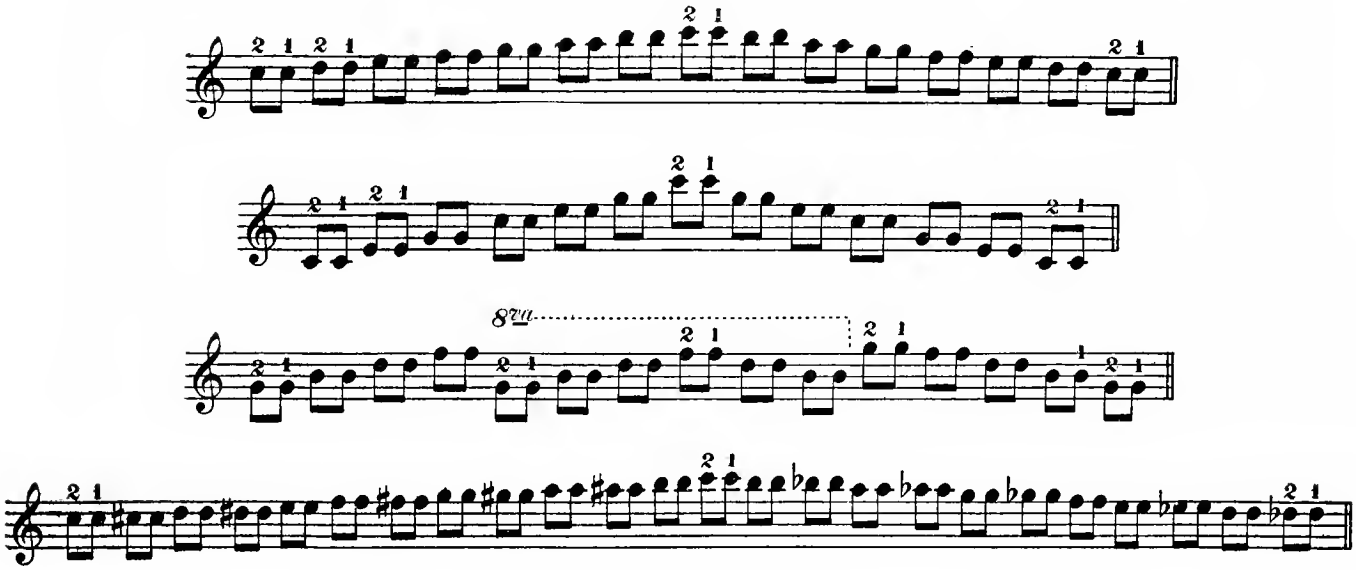
Alternating Fingers on the Same Key

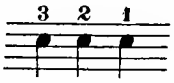
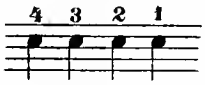
WHEN fingers alternate on the same key, they are moved only at the knuckles; they are held somewhat less curved than usual, and their tips make a "wiping" motion on the key. The wrist is held loosely and rather higher, allowing the hand to follow the movement of the fingers by turning slightly outward.

At first practise the alternation of fingers on only one key:



Then practise the diatonic scale, the broken triad, the dominant seventh-chord, and the chromatic scale according to the following examples:



Also play these exercises with three fingers:  and four fingers  with each hand alone; the left hand correspondingly lower.

The alternation of fingers on the same key in slow tempo is obsolete and superfluous; one can shade a succession of tones of like pitch better with one finger.

XIV

Styles of Touch

THE devotee of the piano who treats the "dry" finger-exercises disdainfully does himself the greatest injury; for such exercises are the same, for the "pianistic member," the hand, as voice-development for the singer's vocal organs. The pupils of Leschetizky, who particularly excel by their touch and their full, warm tone, owe this to the proper study of the finger-exercises. "C'est le ton, qui fait la musique" (It is tone which makes music); this the pianist should not

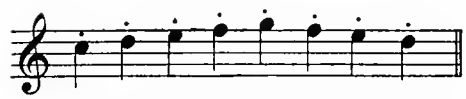
forget; and even if he be not able to rival the effect of a voice or a violin, he must still endeavor to approach them as far as possible.

This may be done, in the first place, by means of a well-developed *legato*. The execution of the *legato* is as follows: The finger is lifted — in the normal style — only when the next finger has struck its key. To obtain a *legatissimo*, let the finger lie a trifle longer, after the next tone is struck, like this:

When a strong, full tone is to be brought out *legato* in a *cantilena*, the strength of the fingers does not suffice, but must be reinforced by wrist-pressure in the following way: Touch the key lightly and force the finger to press it down deep (without losing contact with it) by means of a swift upward movement of the wrist; at this instant, wrist and finger-joints must be firm. The same effect may also be obtained by a rapid down-stroke of the wrist. Immediately after striking the tone, the wrist must return to its normal position, while the finger holds the key lightly. Practise this singing tone on five tones.

For the *staccato* the keys are not *pressed* down, but *struck* down from above. A distinction is made between finger-*staccato* and wrist-*staccato*, according as the striking lever hinges at the knuckles or the wrist.

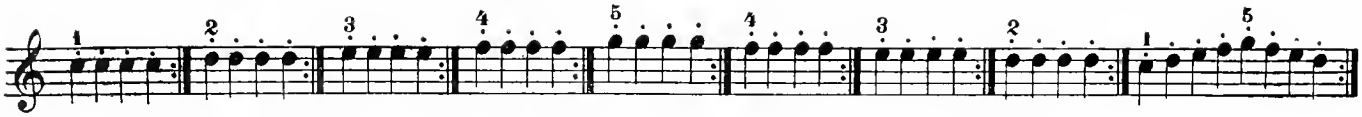
The finger-*staccato* is played by throwing the fingers upward. Practise slowly on five tones.



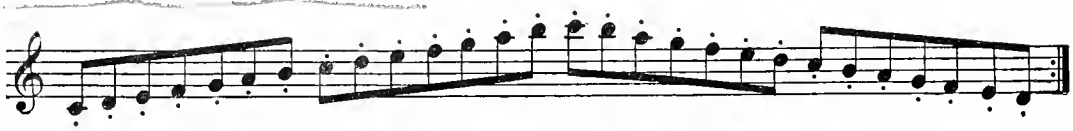
Holding the wrist loosely and unmoved, raise the bent finger high, strike the key swiftly, and let the finger fly back instantly as at first. In rapid tempo the *staccato* becomes a *non legato*, because the finger has not time to draw back fully before the next strikes, the two movements nearly coinciding.

Practise the finger-*staccato* at first on four tones, then through the scale in all keys. Begin slowly, increasing gradually. The thumb is carried under the palm as for the *legato* scales.

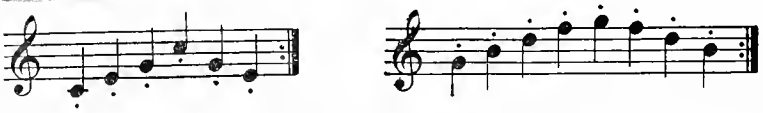
In the wrist-*staccato* the bent finger is thrown upon the key without further ceremony, striking it smartly, and being instantly withdrawn by the wrist. Practise it slowly in accordance with the following examples:



Here fingers and hand must "retain their position." This means, that the fingers, as in Finger-exercise No. 6, must cover their respective keys, and the wrist must yield neither to right nor left.



Play *ad libitum* through all keys.

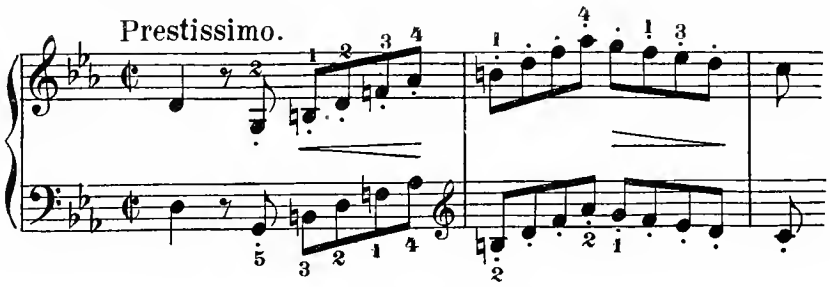


Practise the last two exercises in broken chords through one octave at first, in all inversions, then through several octaves. Also *ad libitum* through all keys.

Retain the position as far as possible, but follow the sideways movement of the fingers yieldingly with the wrist.

The rapping sound of the finger-tips in *staccato* cannot be avoided. But it does no harm, and in the burlesque style, e.g., Mendelssohn's Scherzo, op. 16, even has a good effect.

In the wrist-*staccato* the wrist movement of course becomes shorter, the faster one plays. In very rapid tempo the fingers have to stay close to the keys, and the hand-movement resembles a quivering. For illustration, the following passage from Beethoven's Sonata op. 10, No. 1:



Another short kind of touch is the "lifted" tone. For this, the wrist is loose, while the finger-joints are firm — in a state of tension. The bent finger touches the key lightly and noiselessly, presses it down with a swift, short stroke, and is instantly lifted from the key by the flying-back of the hand from the wrist. In continuous playing, the next finger falls on its key without hesitation. When two

notes or full chords are struck, the same rules apply to all the fingers employed together. It will suffice to practise the lifted tone at first on single keys, and thereafter on five notes.

In the examples below, the lifted notes are marked with an asterisk (*).

Liszt, Étude.

cantando

dolce con grazia

In the next example the marked note is treated as a lifted tone by reason of the finer tone-effect and more elegant phrasing, although it is *legato*. Also take the pedal.

SCHUMANN "PAPILLONS:"

Finally, in the Portamento, the finger presses down the key slowly, holds it firmly for a moment, and is then lifted by slowly raising the hand and forearm.

XV

On Octaves

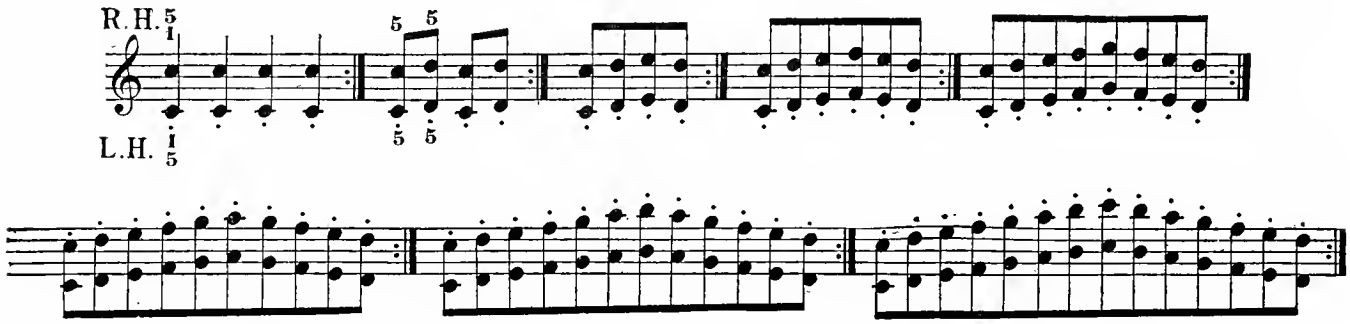
TO begin with, practise the following preparatory studies with each hand alone:

R.H.

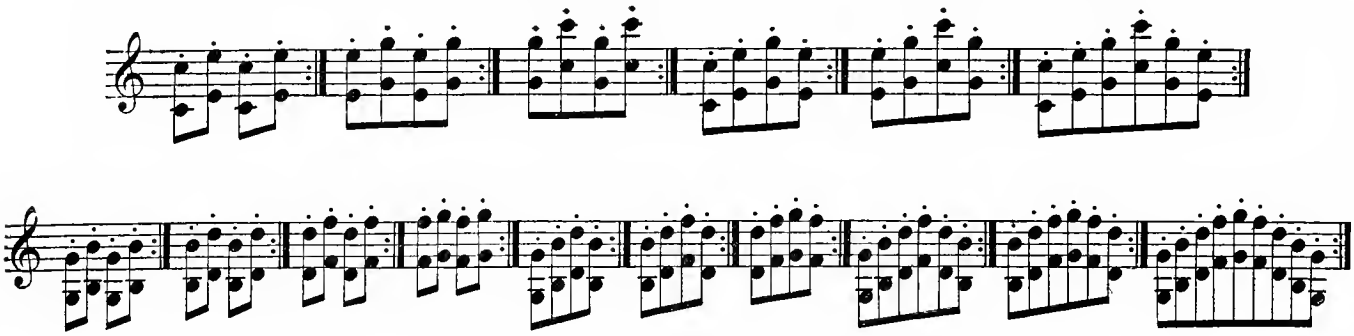
L.H.

holding the whole note with the tip of the little finger, while the thumb, easily curved, but firm in the joint, plays the quarter-notes *staccato*. Lift the thumb, at most, a handbreadth, and strike the key by means of a twisting motion of the wrist, which is held somewhat higher. After this, let the thumb hold its key while the outstretched and stiffened 5th finger plays. This exercise strengthens both fingers greatly, but ought not to be practised too long, as it is fatiguing.

After the preparatory exercises proceed to the practice of *staccato* octaves. Play them in the style of the wrist-*staccato*, taking care that the width of the stretch between the 1st and 5th fingers does not change when the hand is lifted, so that the octave may be struck squarely and clean.



Play this and the following octave-exercises slowly and forcibly at first, not trying a more rapid tempo until later. In this latter, as for the wrist-*staccato*, the fingers are held near the keys and the hand-movement resembles a fluttering.

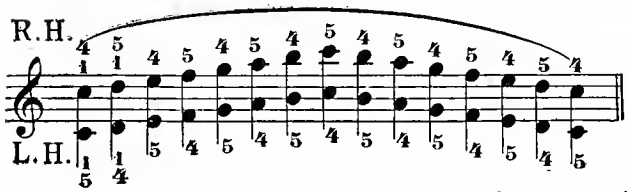


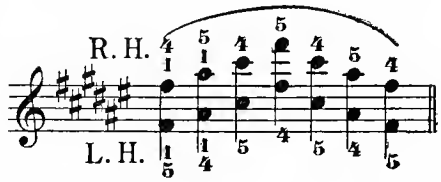
Broken chords in octaves are particularly hard to play clean on the white keys, on account of their dissimilar intervals. To learn to play them confidently, despite this difficulty, sol-fa the names of the notes mentally as you strike them while practising: *c-e*, *c-e*, *e-g*, *e-g*, etc., or *think* the interval (third, third, fourth, etc.). In quite a short time the fingers will gain confidence, just as if they themselves had learned to recognize the intervals.

Play *forte* and *fortissimo* octaves with a firm wrist held high, as it is absolutely impossible to bring them out with a loose wrist.

Octaves are played *legato* with an unmoved, but not stiff, wrist and with fingers gliding close over the keys. This gliding binds the tones almost more than the fingers do. In ascending, the right thumb should be held as for the Glissando; in descending, hold the left thumb similarly.

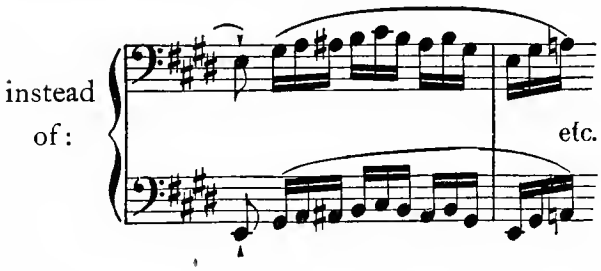
The fingering for both *staccato* and *legato* octaves is, the 5th finger on white keys, the 4th on black. When playing on either white or black keys alone, and *legato*, the 5th and 4th fingers alternate as follows:

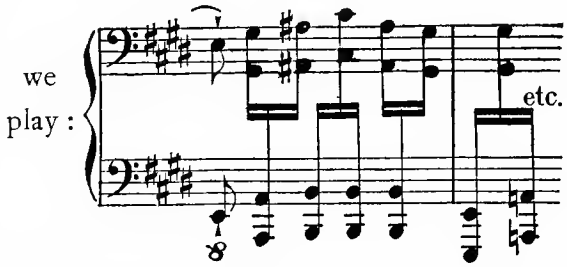




Small hands, which find the execution with 1-4 too difficult, or cannot develop strength enough, should always employ the 5th finger.

An effect employed in youth by Leschetizky, and now in general vogue, is that of after-striking octaves. They are substituted for passages written in simple octaves, like that in the third movement of Chopin's *E*-minor Concerto:





Here the thumb-notes are more forcibly played in both hands, thus making the entire passage sound stronger. (See ADDENDA, p. 83.)

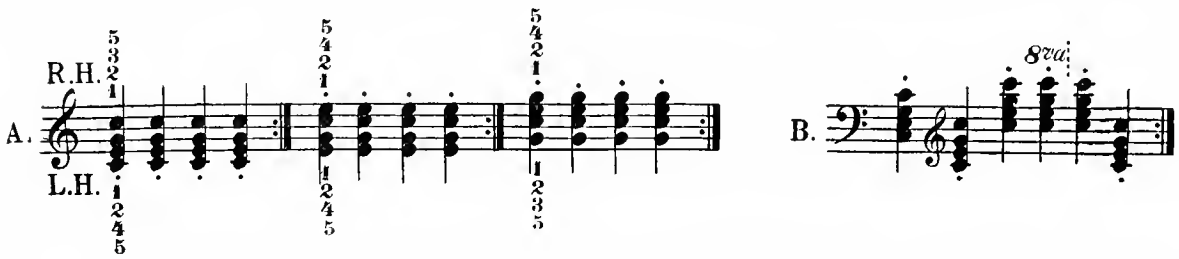
XVI

Chords

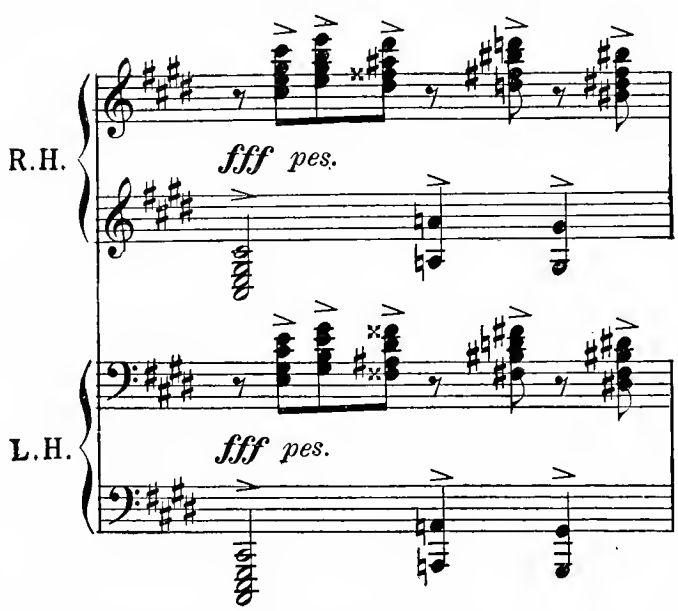
THE principle of playing chords is to press, not to strike them. The tones of a chord struck from on high sound hard, and do not carry well. Therefore, press the chords down in the following manner: The hand is arched as far as the stretch permits; the fingers are curved; the finger-tips and wrist remain firm during the stroke, which, as described in detail in Section XIV (*legato* in a *cantilena*), is effected by a wrist-movement upward or downward. In a slow succession of chords, either wrist-movement may be utilized; in a rapid succession, only the upward movement. For playing chords *forte* or *fortissimo* the wrist-movement must be greater and more vehement, for *piano* chords less extended and slower.

In order that chord-playing may not tire one too soon, it is indispensable not to hold the chords with a stiff wrist after striking them. Relax the wrist instantly after the stroke; then it will be unnecessary to expend more strength than is requisite simply to hold the keys down. Thus the hand rests, and can better resist fatigue.

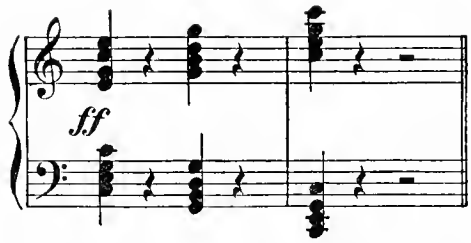
To make sure of striking a chord clean, it must be prepared before taken. To prepare, place the fingers on their respective keys, as if to take the measure of the chord; now, try to take its measure away from the keys, in the air, and keep on until the correct stretch is learned. By dint of practice, the hand finally learns to prepare the chord rightly at sight of the notes — to recognize its physiognomy, as it were. This is of peculiar value in taking the chord-leaps in modern virtuoso-pieces.



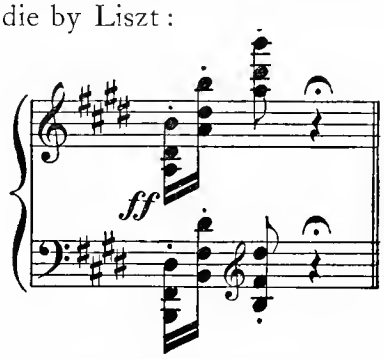
Practise each of these exercises with two kinds of touch; at first with the upward wrist-movement, the chord being lifted short off, as in this Prelude by Rachmaninoff:



When performing a piece in which there is a slow succession of chords, this upward movement may be more broadly executed, so that not only the hand, but also the arm, is raised. This is more especially the case, when *forte* or *fortissimo* closing chords are to be cut off short; for instance:



Also practise the foregoing exercises A and B with a thrown stroke, as for the wrist-*staccato*. True, the chords are now struck; but the good effect of this exercise sanctions the exceptions. Indeed, there are cases in which chords must be struck, when their rapid succession makes preparation of the hand impossible; e. g., in the Tenth Rhapsodie by Liszt:



For the exercises on p. 34, note also the following: Where a chord is repeated (as in Ex. A), the uplifted hand must retain the shape of the chord. Where a leap from one chord to another is to be executed (as in Ex. B), press the first one down short, and carry the hand over to the second with a swift swing. Where different chords follow in succession, the hand must already catch the shape of each new chord in the air.

For the prevention of fatigue during performance, also take to heart the following advice: When chords follow each other slowly, hold the fingers of the uplifted hand easily, after striking, in the shape of a fist, so that the muscles may rest. Such was Rubinstein's habit, and Leschetizky does the same.

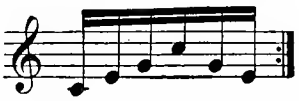
The fingering for flat chords, and its exceptions, are the same as for broken chords (see Section XI).

Below are pictured the various positions of the hand for all the different chords on *C*, as a study on the shape of the hand. Proceed, for the practice of these positions, as directed on p. 34, lines 6-11. First play the chord-tones together, and then broken.

After practising the chords on *C* for some time, proceed to the chords on *D♭*, which are to be treated similarly; and so on chromatically through all tones of the octave.

This study is of high value, both from a technical and theoretical viewpoint.

Fig. 20



First practise these, as well as all following chords, within an octave as an arpeggio; later as a suite of arpeggios (see Appendix). While practising, observe the same rules concerning the wrist and the thumb as for the Staccato (page 30).

Fig. 21

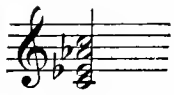


Fig. 22

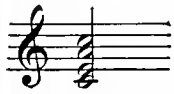


Fig. 23

Fig. 24

Fig. 25

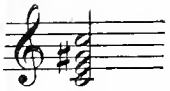


Fig. 26

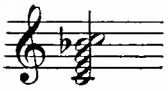


Fig. 27

Fig. 28

Fig. 29

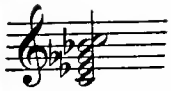


Fig. 30

Fig. 31

Fig. 32

Fig. 33

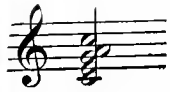


Fig. 34

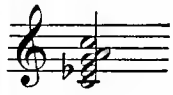


Fig. 35

Fig. 36

Fig. 37

Fig. 38

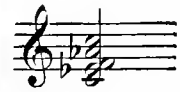


Fig. 39

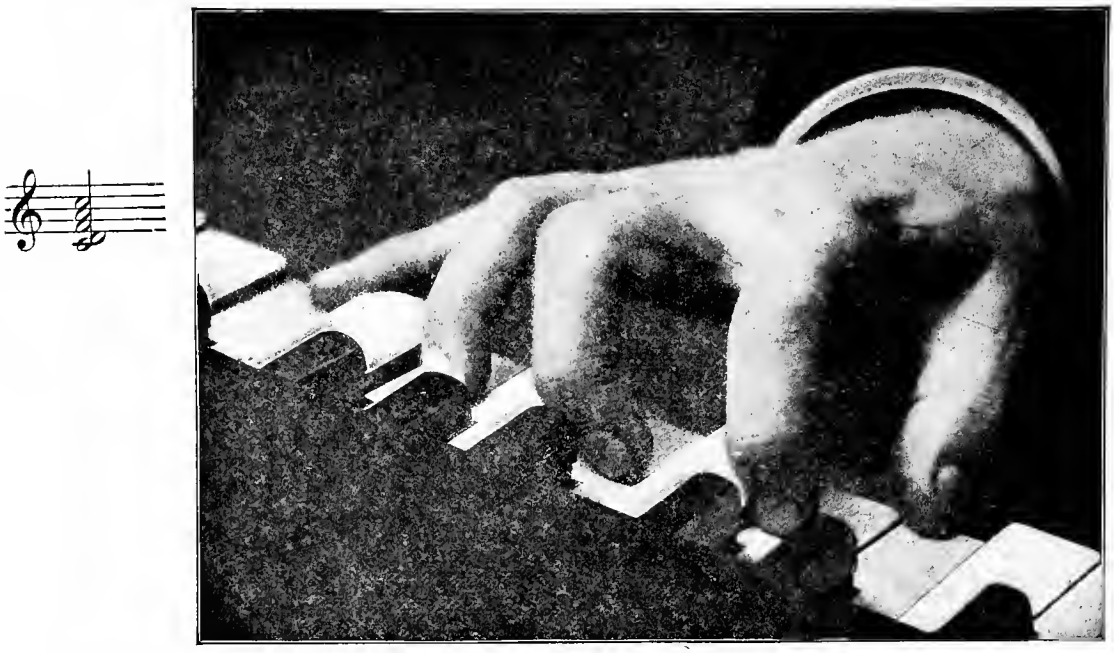


Fig. 40

Fig. 41

Fig. 42

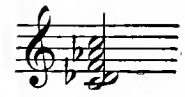
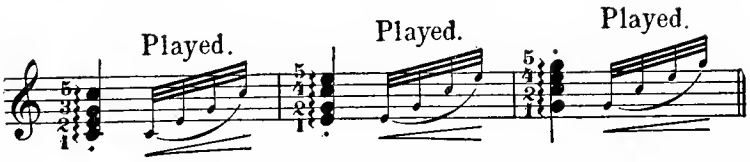


Fig. 43

Fig. 44

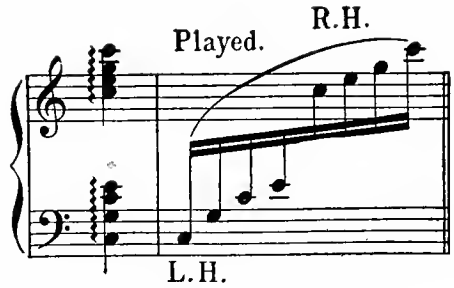
XVII

Arpeggios



HOLD the first three fingers of the chord ready over their keys, with the 5th finger extended. Now, while the first three fingers are pressing their keys, give the hand a quick turn towards the 5th finger, so that the latter strikes its key. This turn of the hand somewhat resembles the twist of unlocking with a key. The 5th finger must lift the note short, as this makes it sound fuller. Then the hand swiftly returns to the normal position, so as to prepare the next arpeggio (as described above).

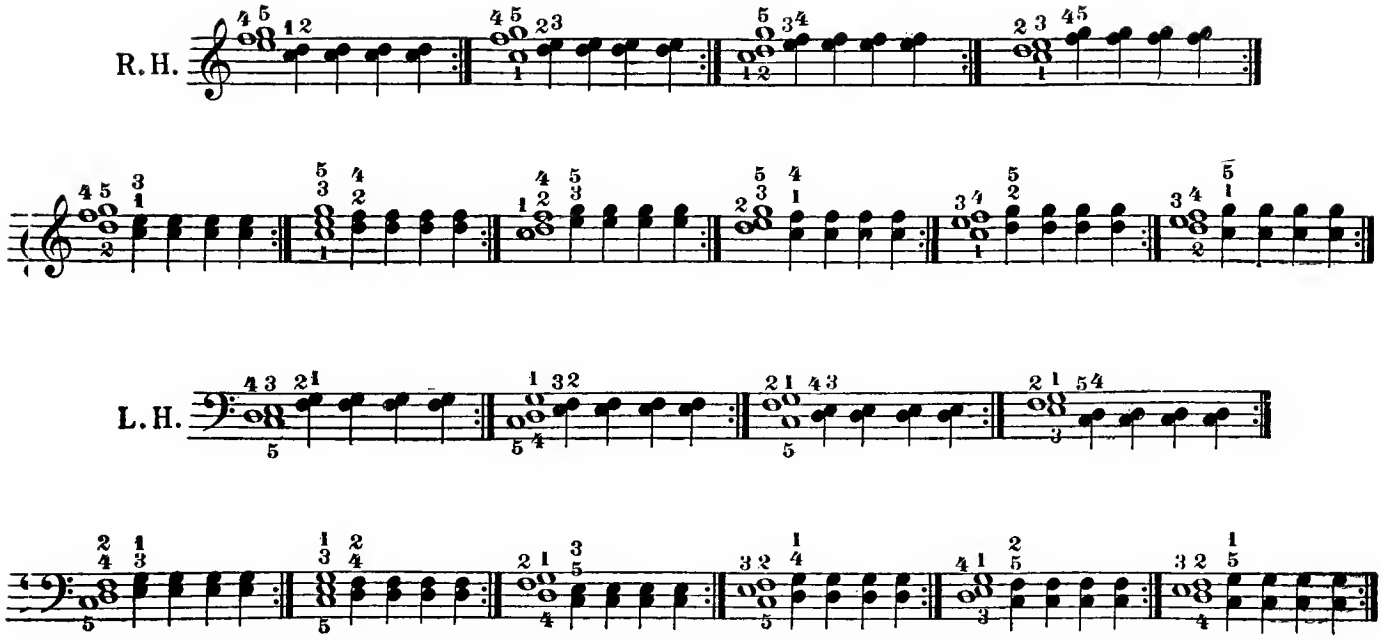
For arpeggios in both hands, do not begin with both hands together, but with the 5th finger of the left hand, the thumb of the right following just after the left thumb. The execution would be thus:



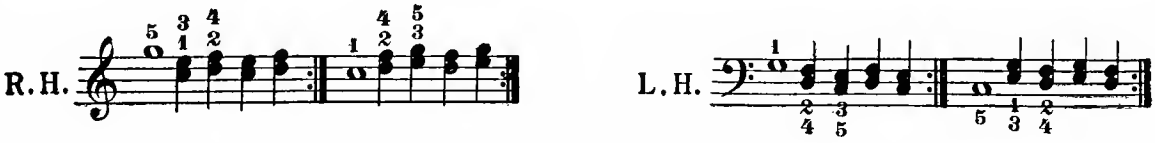
XVIII

Paired Notes

Preparatory Exercises



IN these exercises hold the hand as in the Finger-exercises, Section V. The wrist remains loose. Hold the whole notes and play the quarter-notes.

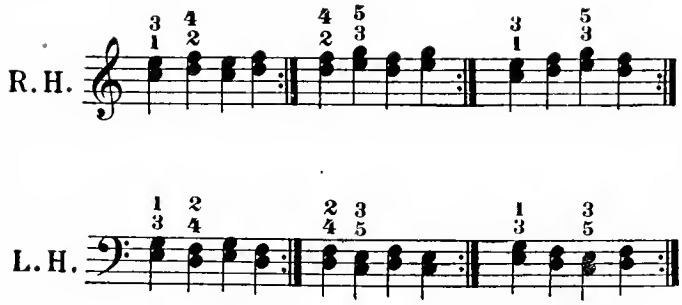


Hold the whole note, play the Thirds.

The Third which leads off is to be held until its turn to be played comes again.

Fig. 45

Fig. 46



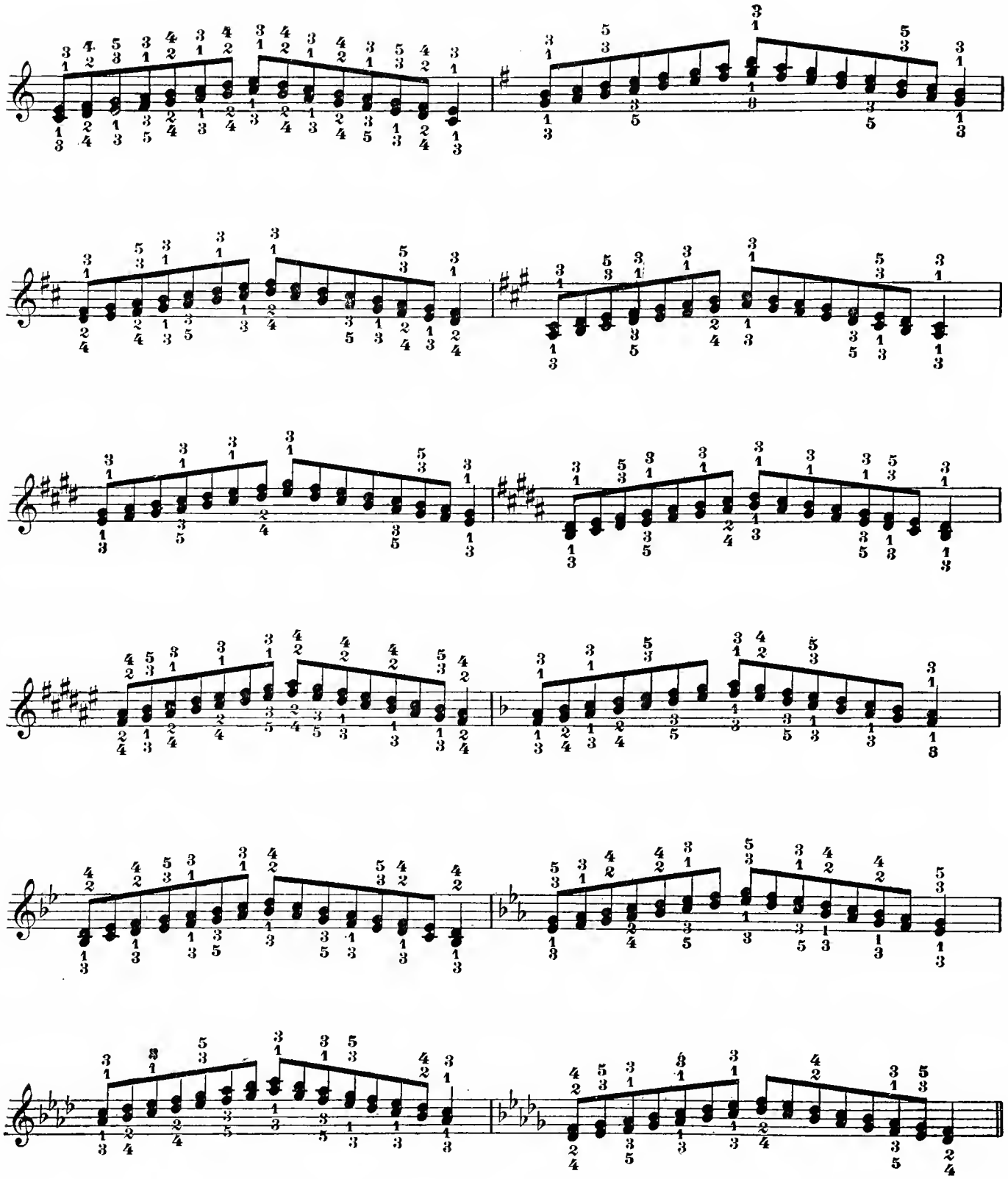
Free exercise without held tones. (Figs. 45 and 46.)

Turning over in Third-playing. In this exercise proceed as follows: In Ex. A press down the keys with the 2d and 4th fingers, in Ex. B with the 3d and 5th, and take the next-following Third, for the 1st and 3d fingers, with wrist high and a swift swing sideways. Now make this swinging movement of the hand backwards, so as to turn over the 2d and 4th, or 1st and 3d fingers respectively in order to take the initial Third. As a point of support for this swinging movement, use the 4th or 5th finger going up, and the thumb going down (in the left hand the reverse).

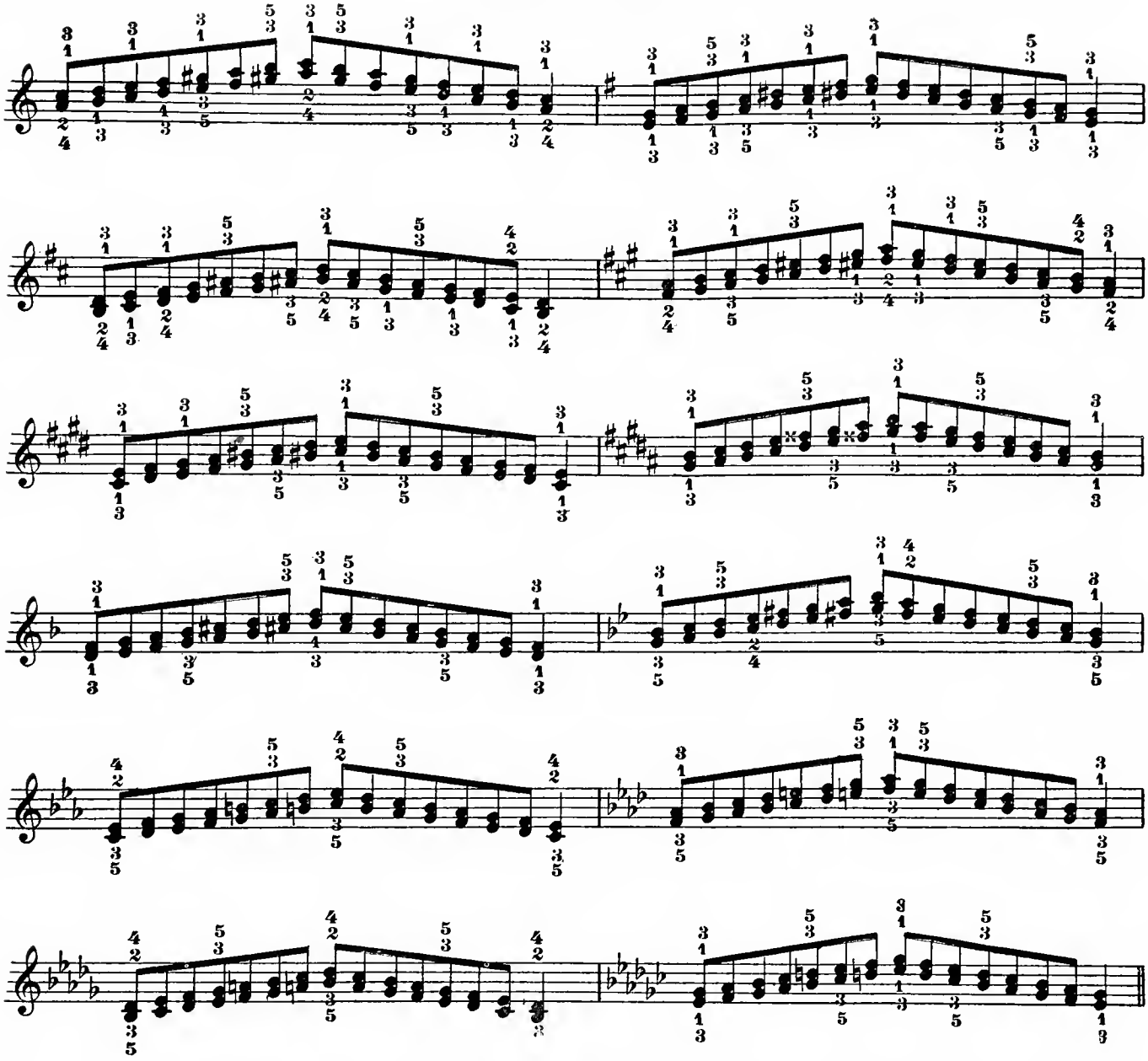
It being impossible in playing paired notes to bind both tones when turning over, merely bind the finger which acts as a point of support with the next tone: let go of the other tone just as the swinging movement is to be made.

Scales in Thirds

Diatonic. Major



Diatonic. Minor



Chromatic

Minor Thirds.

R.H. 3 1 4 2 3 1 4 2 5 3 3 1 5 3 5 3 5 3 5 3 5 3 5 3 5 3 5 3 5 3 5 3 5 3

L.H. 3 5 1 3 1 3 3 5 3 5 3 5 3 5 3 5 3 5 3 5 3 5 3 5 3 5 3 5 3 5 3 5 3 5

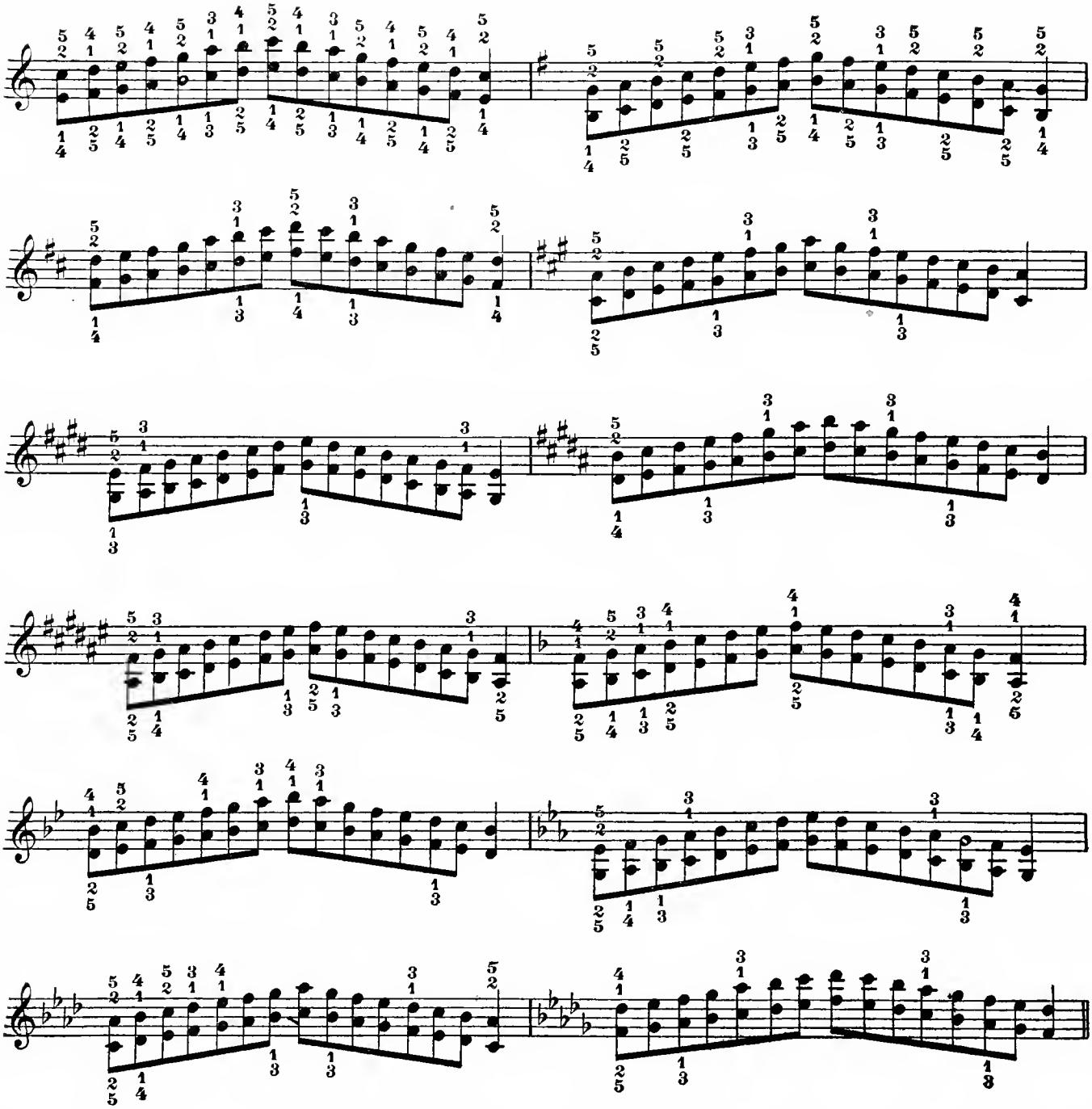
Major Thirds.

R.H. 4 2 5 3 3 1 5 3 3 5 3 5 5 3 5 3 5 3 5 3

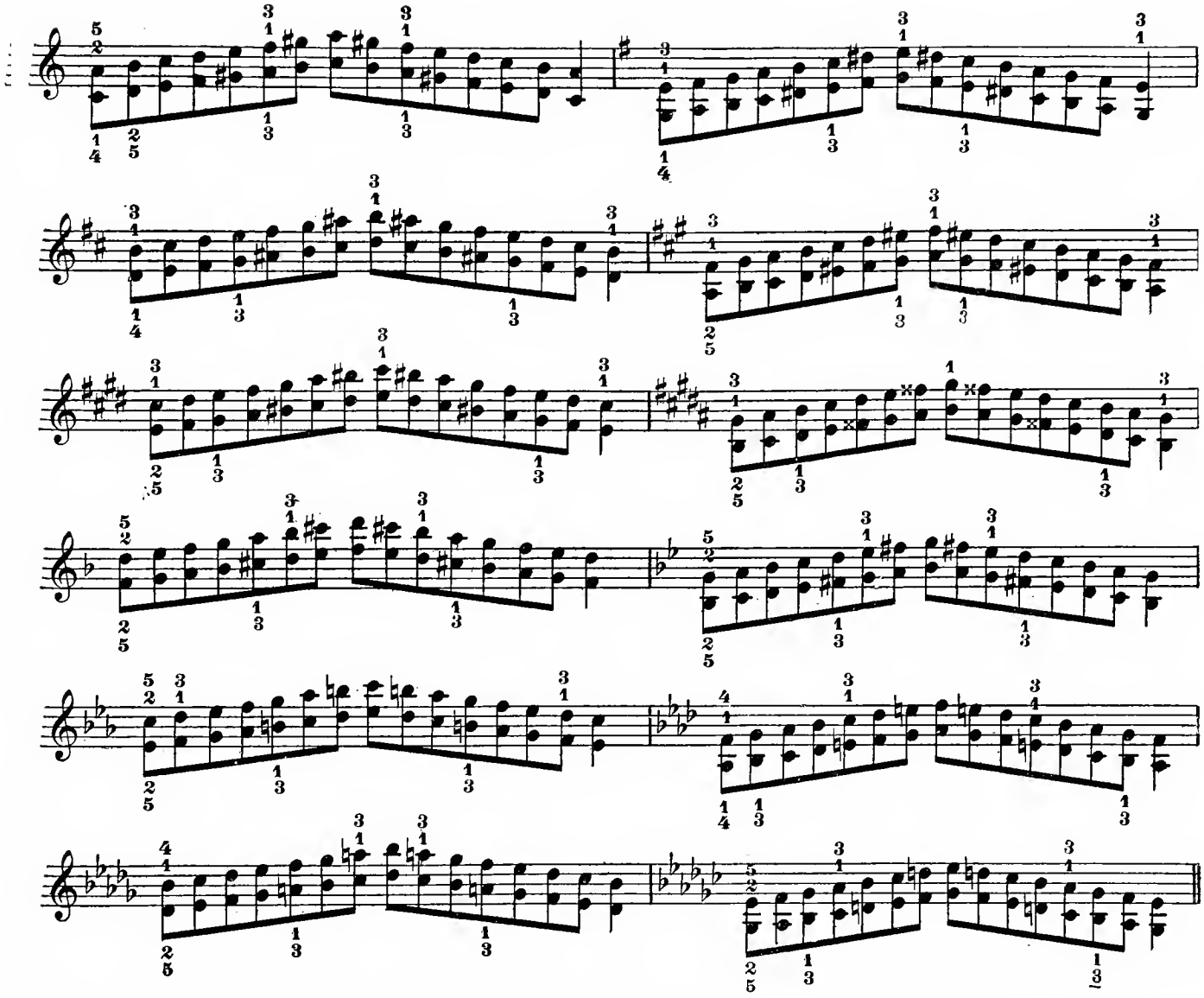
L.H. 2 4 1 3 3 5 3 5 2 5 3 5 1 3 2 4

Scales in Sixths

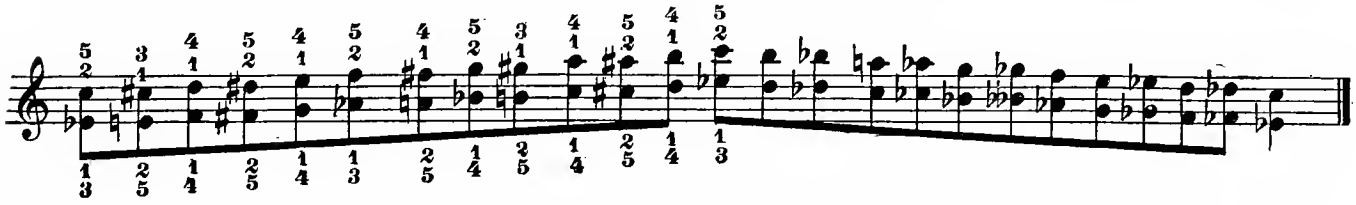
Diatonic. Major



Diatonic. Minor



Chromatic

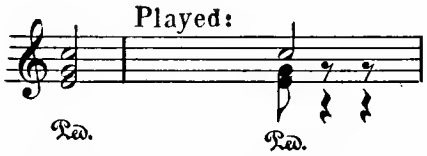


XIX

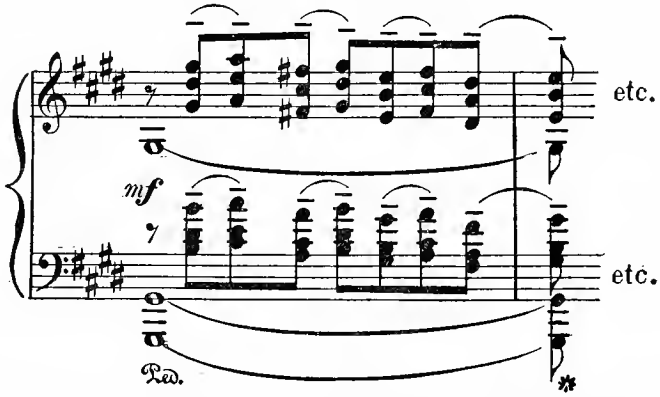
The Highest Part in Chord-playing

IN chords, the theme usually lies in the highest part. In order to bring it out when the chord is not to be arpeggiated, make the finger which bears the theme *longer* than the others. This is done by stretching this finger out on the key, touching white keys with the tip and lying flat on black keys, the other fingers remaining easily rounded. The "longest" finger presses its key down deepest, obtaining a fuller tone. When playing on white keys the wrist should be high and firm; but on striking the chord, it must instantly relax again and return to its normal position. Besides, the wrist should support the finger bearing the theme by not exercising equal pressure on all the fingers, but rather bearing down on the one in question.

If one can take the pedal with the chord, lift all the fingers but that bearing the theme instantly after striking the chord; e.g.,

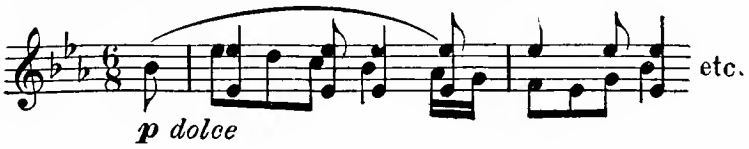


This example is from Rachmaninoff, Prelude:



Bind the highest part as far as possible, and let go of the middle parts directly after striking, with a gentle lift of the wrist.

The 5th finger generally bears the theme; but the above directions apply equally where some other finger has the theme, or where the latter lies in the middle of the chords (in alto or tenor); as in Brahms, op. 117:



XX

The Glissando

THE Glissando is the ideal of a diatonic scale, as it sounds very swift and "pearling" when well done. In this case, however, the false pearls are preferable to the genuine, because the former are far rounder and all precisely alike. This implies, further, that a Glissando must sound smooth and even. It must not be played jerkily, with uneven "spurts," neither should the finger-nail scratch the keys audibly when gliding over them. To close cleanly and decidedly on the final tone, let the finger slide down over the front edge of the key in question. This also gives the tone the requisite accent.

The 3d finger is to be employed, whether for playing up or down. To be sure, it is easier and more usual to play down with the thumb; but the tone is less velvety than with the 3d finger. Still, any one who is able to bring out a smooth Glissando with the thumb, is quite at liberty to play it so.

The Octave-glissando can be executed only by large and powerful hands. The tip-joint of the 5th finger is curled under, so that the nail glides over the higher keys, while the thumb depresses the lower keys with its inner edge. Going down, the attitude of the fingers is reversed.

The Glissando may be executed in all dynamic shadings, according to the force of the pressure exerted on the keys.

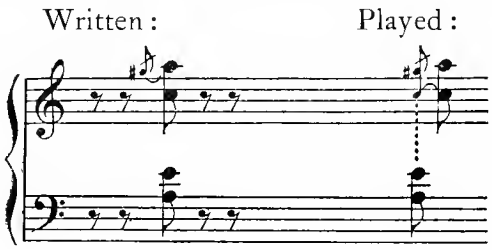
FIG. 47

XXI

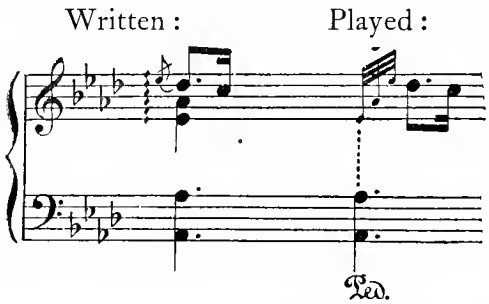
Embellishments

TO render the "embellishments" such in the true sense of the term, they must be sharp in outline and clearly and elegantly executed. Chief among them are the Appoggiatura, the Mordent, the Turn, and the Trill.

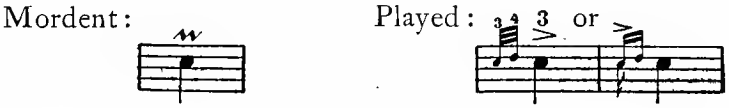
Touching the Appoggiatura we will merely remark, that it is to be played, in connection with paired notes or chords, by taking it together with the notes below it, the melodic principal note following instantly. The accompanying tone or chord in the bass must be taken simultaneously with the Appoggiatura.



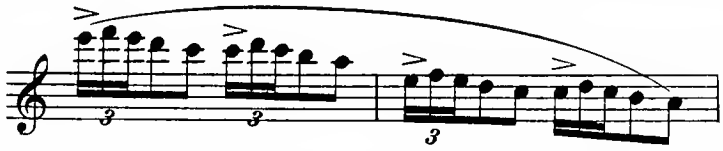
Execution may be facilitated, in the case of a chord, by a swift arpeggio, taking the first tone of the arpeggio together with the fundamental. By using the pedal, the **arpeggio'd** notes can be released.



In the Mordent, the accent usually falls on the principal tone ; it is, therefore, best played with the 3d and 4th fingers, the principal tone then having the strong finger. When one cannot avoid using other fingers, so that some weaker finger takes the principal tone, the difference in strength must be equalized by stronger pressure.

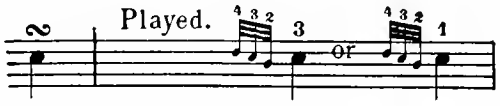


In rapid tempo the mordent is played like a triplet; e.g., in Leschetizky's Arabeske, op. 45:



these triplets being nothing more than mordents written out.

For the Turn, the following fingering is the most advantageous:

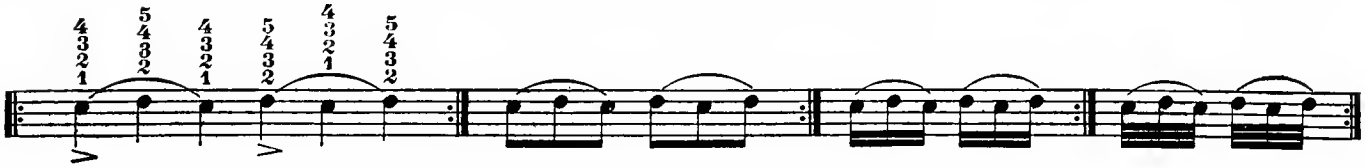


Frequently the position of the notes following the turn requires one to employ the fingering 3-2-1-2.

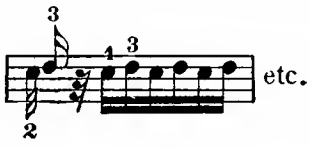
The Trill is the most important of all embellishments. First of all, evenness of finger-pressure is essential; for an even slow trill sounds more brilliant than an uneven rapid one. True, the best trill is both even and rapid. The difference in the strength of the fingers must again be equalized by difference in pressure.

For the right hand the best trill-fingers are 1 and 3; 3 and 5 are also good, and many do well with 2 and 4. 2 and 3 are not as favorable as is generally supposed. For the left hand, 1 and 2, and after them 2 and 3, are best at trilling.

It is a good plan to practise the trill in triplets, beginning slowly and accenting the first note of each triplet; later gradually faster and without accent. Also practise with all the given combinations of fingers.

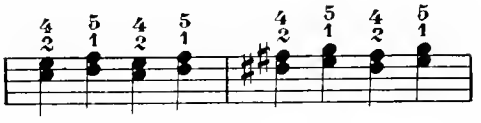


A trick for the execution of a *forte* trill is, to begin by striking both tones of the trill together *sforzando;* then quickly raise the finger from the principal note, strike the latter again instantly with another finger, and continue the trill rapidly.



For long trills, change from one fingering to another to prevent fatigue; for instance, alternate 1-3 and 2-3. (See Addenda, p. 83.)

The fingering for trills in thirds is as follows:



Any one finding $\frac{3}{2}\ \frac{1}{5}$ more convenient, may use these fingers; but only for trills in thirds without afterbeat.

XXII

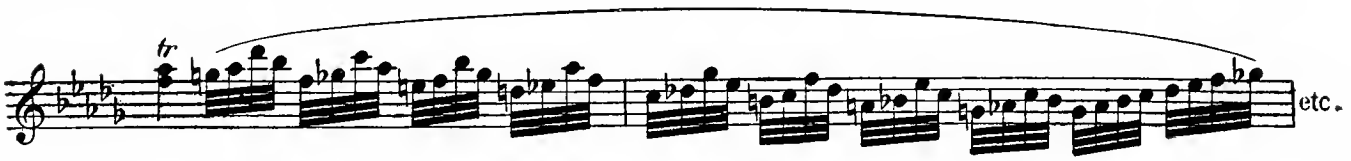
Dynamics

MUSICAL dynamics is the art of employing the various shadings brought out by changing force of tone.

Music possesses only three prime colors: *piano*, *forte*, and the *accent*. Out of these the rich color-scheme of the musical picture must be built up. This is achieved by a frequent alternation of the prime colors, and by transition from one to the other.

Forte and *fortissimo* cannot be brought out by the unaided strength of the fingers; the wrist must be brought into play. The finger-tips must be firm, and the wrist should not be loose. In point of fact, the *fortissimo* in rapid passages is not the product of individual finger-power, but the total effect of all factors of reinforcement which one commands, such as the pedal and the wrist-pressure.

Where the tones follow each other slowly, equal strength is put forth in *piano* and *forte*, only that in the former the keys are not pressed down quickly, but slowly, which brings out the soft, singing tone. In *piano* passages the wrist should be held loose; but the finger-tips must be held firm, for yielding finger-tips can bring out only a *piano* lacking in tone, and here and there a tone may fail to sound. In quick tempo the fingers are thrown with a loose wrist. "Fluttering" passages are light *pianissimo* passages on black keys, to be played with outstretched ("flat"), but firm, fingers; like this from Chopin's Berceuse:

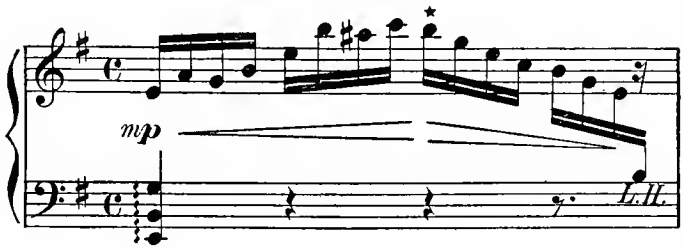


Accent is the marking of individual tones by stronger pressure, for either melodic, harmonic, or rhythmic reasons. An accent may be more or less strong or

weak, and is obtained with firm fingers and firm wrist. When the tone is to be prolonged, the finger holds the key down and the wrist is relaxed; or the tone is held with the pedal, and the hand withdrawn. This makes the tone more brilliant. For a short accent the hand is withdrawn, without taking the pedal.

For making a *crescendo*, begin with a loose wrist, gradually increasing the wrist-tension. For a *diminuendo* the action is reversed, the tense wrist gradually relaxing. Here this "gradually" is a chief factor; for the increase and diminution in intensity must not be accomplished "by spurts." Whoever needs to do so, may assist his fingers by his imagination, fancying, for example, the increasing roar of an approaching railway train, or the decreasing sound of one receding.

The tone to be most strongly marked is the dynamic climax or dynamic principal note, indicated here by an * (Leschetizky, Op. 40, No. 1):



Also observe whether a *crescendo* leads from *pianissimo* to *piano* or *mezzo forte*, or from *forte* to *fortissimo* (and for the *diminuendo* in reverse order), and calculate accordingly the tone-power of the dynamic beginning and end in each case.

XXIII

On the Pedal

THE pedal, for most good people and bad players, is an instrumentality for trampling on good taste. Not to dwell on the horrible pedalistic abuses of dilettantism, there are likewise two species of serious musicians who are more or less in the wrong as regards the pedal. Firstly, they are such as use the pedal rightly in general, yet with pedantic scrupulosity, so as not for heaven's sake to infringe the letter of harmonic law. These will do no mischief, but carefully avoid all interesting effects. Secondly, there are the pianists whose good ear generally guides them aright in pedalling, but who rely too much on instinct, and treat the pedal as a mere accessory. Thus it happens that their pedalling lacks uniformity in their various interpretations of one and the same piece. They forget that the pedal is quite as important as any other factor in piano-playing, and

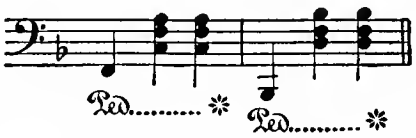
requires a no less careful study. Its purpose is not alone to reinforce the tone and to bind separated tones; it is also intended to produce special effects.

It would give the composer too much trouble to indicate between the notes all the fine, brief details of pedalling; these are left to the pianist himself.

The regulator for correct pedalling is the ear. Not Theory, but Euphony, is the final authority here. Consequently, the player should, above all, make up his mind which tones he wants to bind, and then verify by ear their actual presence and that they form no discord.* Then let him fix the pedalling, and practise it together with the music.

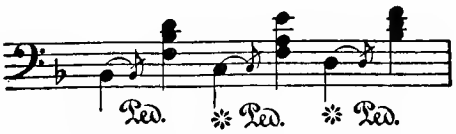
The pedal may be taken either simultaneously with the tone, or after the tone is struck. This latter may be termed a "following" or "syncopated" pedal.

The simultaneous pedal undertakes to hold the tone where the finger must be withdrawn and the tone should continue sounding; e. g.,



where the bass must sound through the last beat, although the 5th finger cannot hold it.

The syncopated pedal can be employed only where the tone or tones which should continue to sound can be held down by the fingers over the change of pedal.

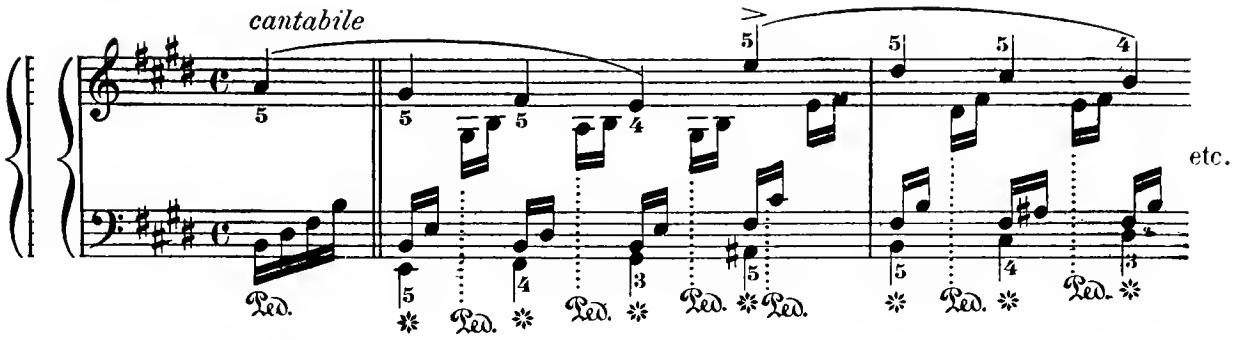


(The small notes merely show where the pedal is to be taken.)

Practise the syncopated pedal according to this example, striking the fundamental tone and holding it only until the pedal has taken the tone. Now strike the chord, and hold the pedal until you have struck the next bass tone; repeat this with each succeeding chord.

A fine exercise for syncopated pedal is Mendelssohn's Song without Words No. 1, because the harmony often changes.

* See ADDENDA, p. 84.

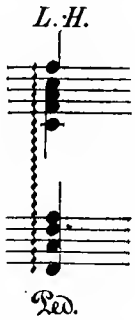


Here the tones are convenient to hold, therefore the pedal need be taken only on the second half of each beat, so that the foregoing harmony has time to die away without producing a dissonant effect, which would be unavoidable if the pedal were taken directly with the bass tone.

In the above example, besides, smaller hands must change the pedal quicker in the fourth beat of the first measure, as they cannot hold the bass tone with the fingers.

In all cases, observe the following general rules:

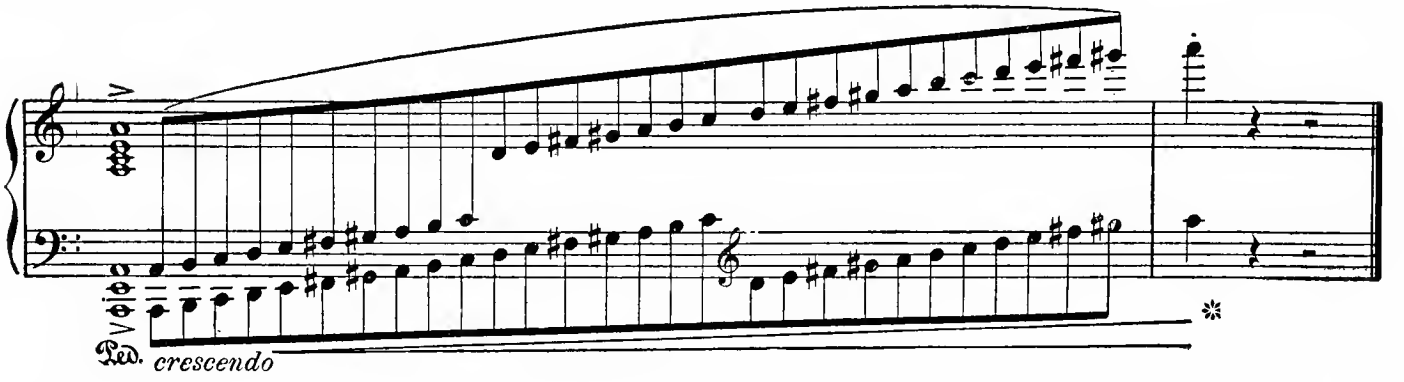
(1) In chords the bass tone must sound with its chord. When the bass cannot be held with the fingers in wide-spread arpeggio'd chords, it must be held with the pedal, which should then be taken simultaneously with the bass tone; e. g.,



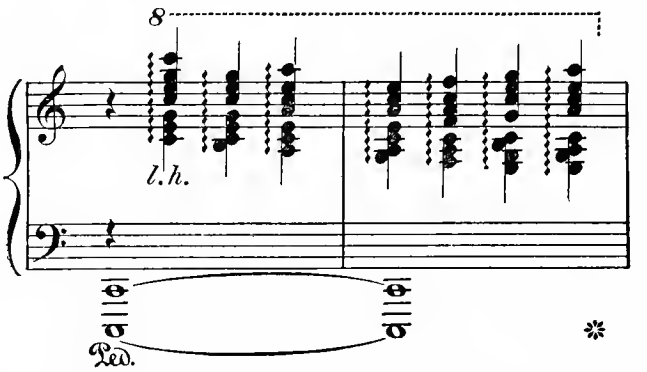
(2) The pedal may be more freely employed in high positions than when playing low or in the middle of the keyboard; because the shorter soundwaves of the treble produce a shorter resonance. In the treble, therefore, tones may be bound by the pedal which in themselves would form dissonances, yet are not felt as such by the ear. For example, play the chromatic scale upward and downward in the thrice-accented octave *with pedal*, to convince yourself that the above is correct.

(3) In connection with the pedal, the low bass tones are dangerous to the higher ones, because of their prolonged resonance; consequently, low bass tones must be sooner released by the pedal in ascending passages.

(4) For the ear, however, pedal-dissonances may be overpowered by a *crescendo*, the weaker tone being always covered by the succeeding louder one. Verify this by playing rapidly an ascending diatonic scale with both hands and lifting the pedal *a tempo* with the dynamic principal tone, the highest and loudest. This will produce no dissonance, but rather a stylistic effect, for instance at the close of the Chopin Étude op. 25, No. 11, in which the heavy fundamental chord likewise supports purity of tone:

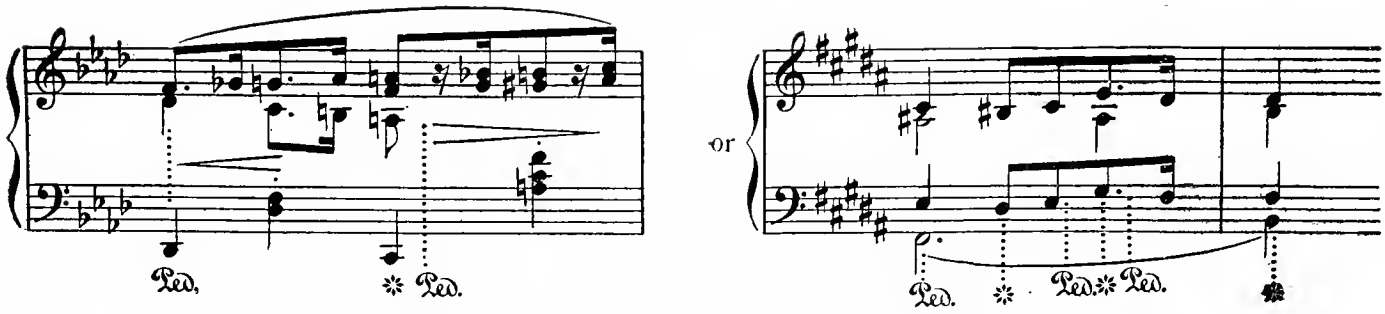


With the Organ-point, too, a pure pedal-effect is obtained, even when dissonant chords sound together; e. g.,



The soft pedal was not added merely for the sake of symmetry, but is valuable as a counterpart of the loud pedal, by veiling the tone. It may be used in *pp* and frequently at the end of a *diminuendo*, to taper it down more delicately. Here it assists the fingers, for the reason that they must not strike too softly in a *pp*, as that yields a "husky" tone.

To bind melody-tones well, while holding the fundamental, one must often employ a "false" pedal, though not for prolonged tones; as in Chopin's Fantaisie:



(The dotted lines show the places where the pedal is taken or released.)

XXIV

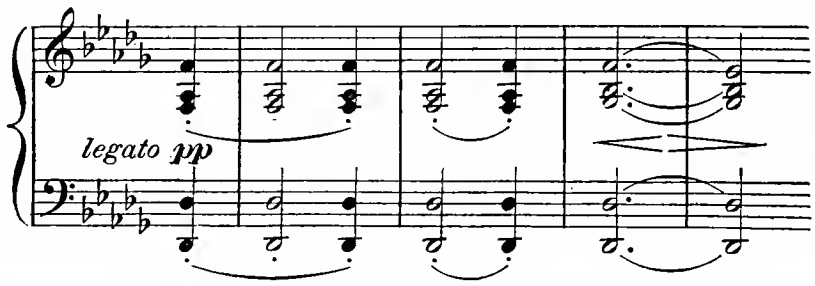
Rules for Performance

1. Melody-playing

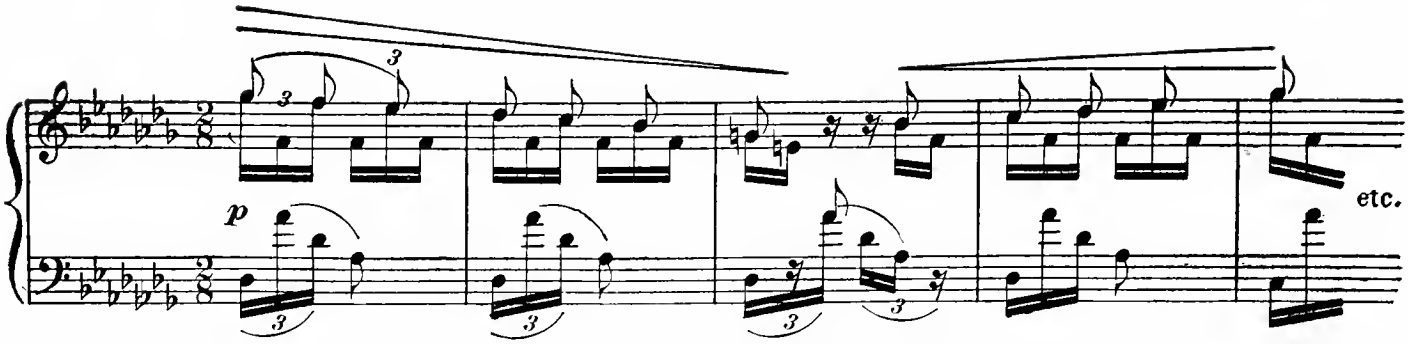
IT is probably true, in a general way, that the performance of a melody is a matter of feeling and taste. But as, on the one hand, these fine qualities are not common property, and, on the other, the best taste and most delicate feeling are, like all things spiritual, bound to the material world, the Rules for Performance given here will hardly prove superfluous. Do not consider them as fetters for the imagination, but as its helpers.

(1) Where notes of unequal time-value follow one another, the longer note must be played louder than the shorter one, because it is to sound longer; e. g.,

Beethoven, Sonata, op. 10, No. 2.

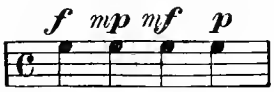


(2) Play a melody upwards *crescendo*, downwards *diminuendo*; e. g., in Schumann's "Des Abends:"

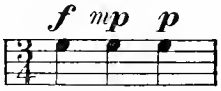


But where the melody rises or falls by a wide interval, the *crescendo* or *diminuendo* is executed with greater intensity.

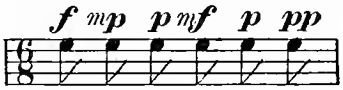
(3) The beats are unequal in accentuation, some being louder and others softer. Notes coinciding with strong beats are played louder, those on weak beats weaker. In 4-4 time play the first tone loudest, the third tone a trifle less loud, the second weaker, and the fourth weakest, somewhat as shown below:



In 3-4 time the first beat is strong and the other two weaker, thus:

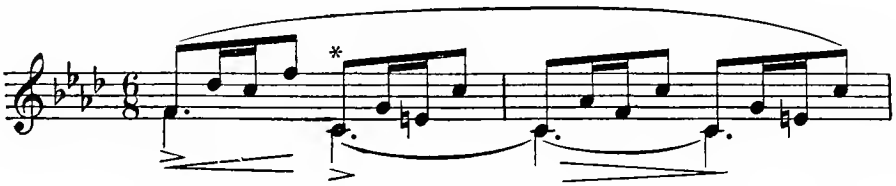


In 6-8 time the first beat is again the strongest, the fourth next in strength, the second and third weak, and the fifth and sixth still weaker:



(4) The directions given by leading composers are to be regarded as binding. Beethoven, in particular, indicated the shadings distinctly.

(5) Should it occur, that the first three rules come in collision on one and the same note, the majority decides what is to be done. For example, in a descending melody a long note falls on a strong beat. Rule 1 says: As a long note it must be played loud; but Rule 2 requires it to be played weak, as a lower tone; now Rule 3 decides that the tone, as falling on a strong beat, must be played loud; and this decision holds, Rules 1 and 3 forming a majority. E. g., in Leschetizky's "Canzone toscana," the tone *c*, marked *, is to to be played loud:

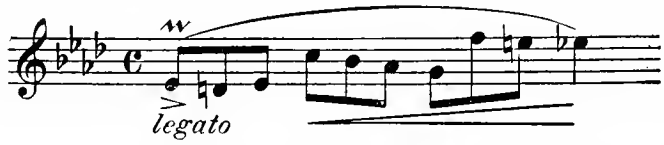


Exceptions to the Above Rules

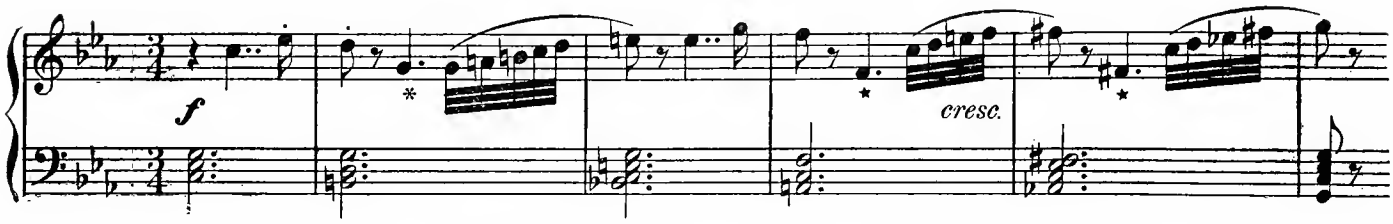
(1) When a short note on a weak beat is tied to the following note, forming a syncopation, it is considered as a long note, and is played loud.

(2) When the highest note, in playing upwards, falls on a weak beat, it is played louder than the one preceding it; e. g.,

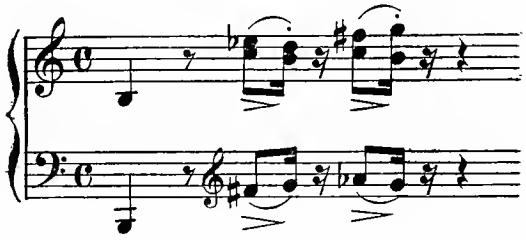
Chopin, *A♭*-major Impromptu:



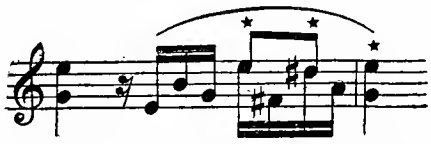
(3) When a long note, in playing downwards, falls on a weak beat, it should be played louder than the one preceding it; for example, the notes below marked * in Beethoven, *C*-minor Variations:



(4) A short note which is lifted after a longer one, should be played *piano* either ascending or descending; e. g., in Mozart's Fantasie:



The above remarks on the performance of melodies also apply to passages (especially important for Chopin) and accompaniment-figures. And not merely melodic passages, in which the melodic motive is to be brought out, are meant here, as for instance in the *E*-minor concerto by Chopin:



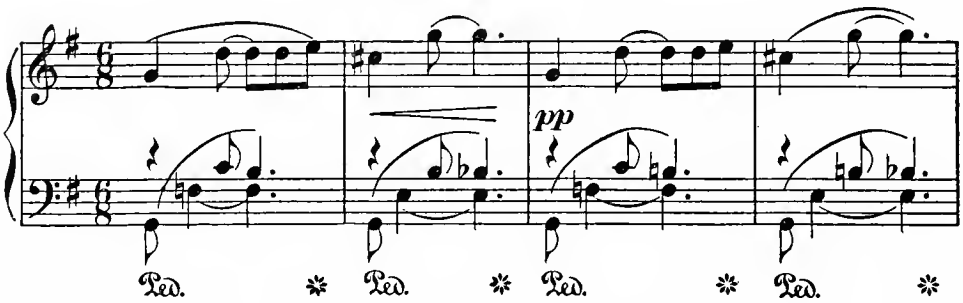
(The three melodic notes * are to be brought out.)

but also non-melodic passages, consisting of scales and broken chords, should be shaded; e. g., from Grieg's Concerto:

Do not be afraid to "shade" even Bach. Why should this great master enjoy the invidious distinction of a colorless, dry, rectangular interpretation? Tone-coloring is not an invariable sign of sentimentality. The latter resides rather in the *tempo*, e. g., in a *ritenuto* either too marked or wrongly placed, such as many Chopin-players cultivate.

In the melody one ought not, strictly speaking, to play several successive tones with equal dynamic power; for this causes a hardness of tone which one might be inclined to attribute to the great volume of tone. One may play evenly in *piano*, and yet not tenderly; in *forte*, on the other hand, one may obtain a tender effect in a figure by an opportune toning-down of dynamic energy.

Contrast in shading — that is, the repetition of the same phrase with varying dynamic expression — is also of fine effect in melody-playing. For instance, play a phrase, which occurs twice in succession, forcibly the first time, and repeat it like an echo *piano* (with the soft pedal); or play it *piano* at first, and then *forte*, as if to lend it special emphasis on repetition. The style of contrast in shading to be chosen in any given case depends partly on the meaning of the phrase, and partly on the player's taste; the following example is from Eduard Schütt, op. 35:



An observance of these fundamental rules does not in the least interfere with the play of original fancy or subjective emotion. One may rely implicitly upon the guidance of these delightful attributes — when one possesses them.

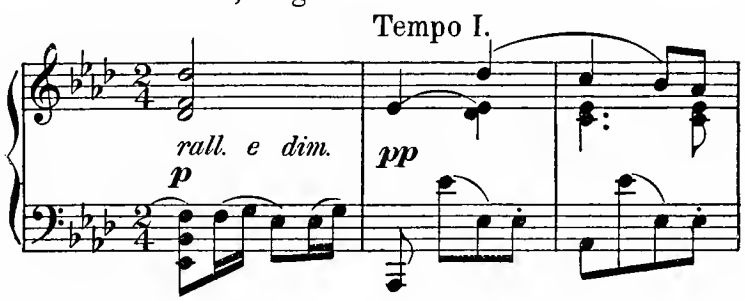
2. Tempo

If we may apply the term "color" to musical *dynamics*, the *tempo* would be the life and movement of piano-playing. But not the treadmill life of every-day monotonous routine,— not a metronomic movement.* As variety is the spice of life, charm of style, in like manner, flows from continual changes in the tempo, from contrasts in the movement.

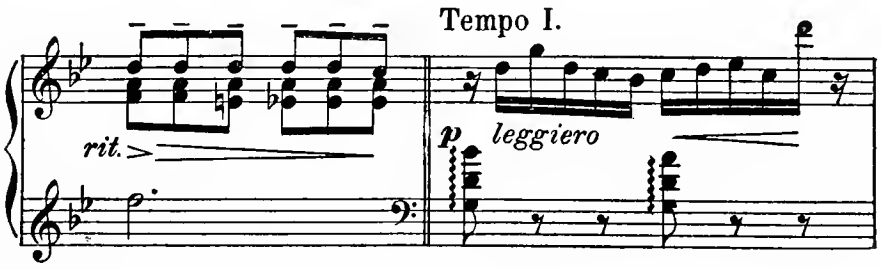
There is no composition which is played in a uniform tempo from beginning to end. Even in exercises this is allowed only in those practised solely for finger-dexterity. In the performance of other études, taste in style is by no means excluded, although in them its expression devolves chiefly on dynamic changes.

The changes in tempo must be so delicately graded that the hearer notices neither their beginning nor their end; otherwise the performance would sound "choppy." Thus, in a *ritardando*, calculate the gradual diminution of speed exactly, so that the end may not drag; and conversely in an *accelerando*, that one may not get going altogether too fast. In a *ritenuto*, moreover, many play the final tone a trifle faster, which abbreviates the *ritenuto* and gives the hearer a feeling of disappointment. Where an *a tempo* follows, it should quite often not be taken literally at the very outset, but the former tempo should be led up to gradually; — beginning the reprise of the theme like an improvisation, for instance. Thus, in the course of one or two measures, one would regain the original tempo; e. g.,

Paderewski, Légende.



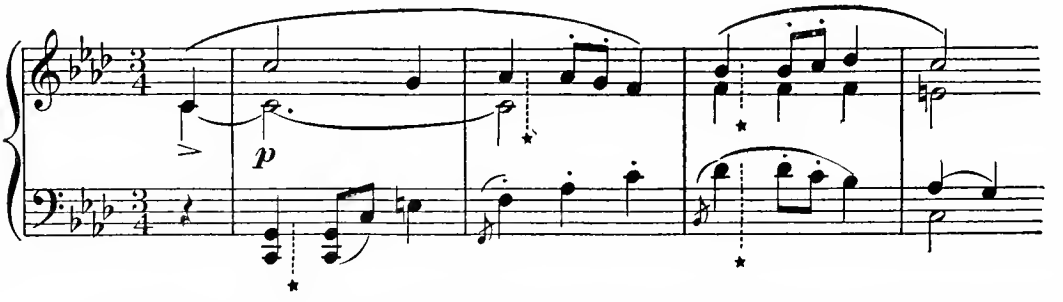
However, where the character of the composition requires it, begin the *a tempo* immediately at the original pace, as in this Prelude by E. Schütt:



* See Addenda, p. 84.

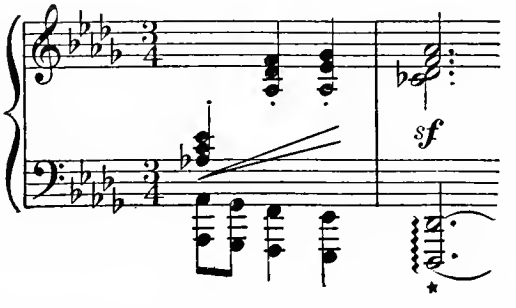
3. Rhythm

Rhythm does not depend on a strict observance of the measure, but permits, on the contrary, of a freer disposal over the beats, but only between the boundaries of the bars. Thus individual beats may be abbreviated to the profit of others, or lengthened at their expense, but not whole measures in proportion to other measures; e. g., in Schumann's "Grillen:"



At the sign * the quarter-note is prolonged a little at the expense of the following eighth-note.

This is, however, not in the least intended as an absolution for the blunder made by many pianists, of hurrying over the end of one measure and so beginning the next too soon. For such a "fever of rhythm" the best remedy is the counting of beats or half-beats, like eighth-notes or sixteenth-notes, in slow tempo. It is far more allowable slightly to retard the commencement of the next measure in case it is emphasized or any special rhythmical effect is desired; e. g., in Schumann's "Grillen":



The octave marked * is arpeggio'd, and so played that the lower bass tone exactly coincides with the first beat, while the upper bass tone is struck together with the right-hand chord, producing an extremely slight retardation.

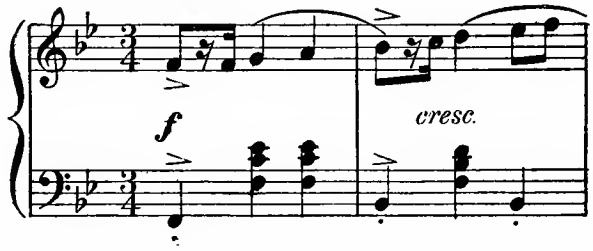
An abbreviation of the first beat *after* striking it is permitted in waltz-rhythm, for instance, by accenting the bass tone in the accompaniment and rapidly carrying it over to the second beat; the resulting — however slight — abbreviation

of the first beat may here be made good by throwing the wrist upward; then strike the third beat somewhat more lightly, *staccato*, and in exact time. By the wrist-movement one gives the accompaniment "swing;" but guard against overdoing it, otherwise the rhythmic effect becomes trivial.

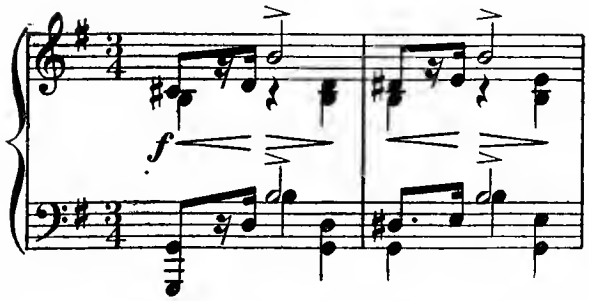
WRIST-MOVEMENT

In the 3-4 time of the Mazurka, the accent falls now on the first, now on the second, and again on the third beat; e. g.,

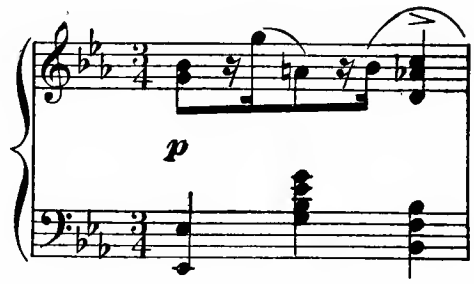
Chopin, op. 7.



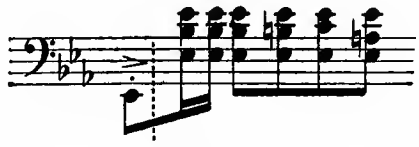
Leschetizky, Mazurka.



Leschetizky, Mazurka.



In a Polonaise-accompaniment, on the other hand, the bass tone must be accented and then followed by a minute retardation, the loss of time being made good in the next two sixteenth-notes. The second and third beats are played in normal time; e. g.,

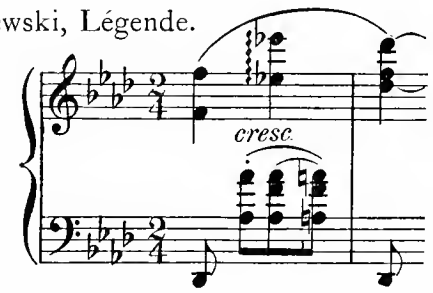


RETARDATION

4. Arpeggio-playing

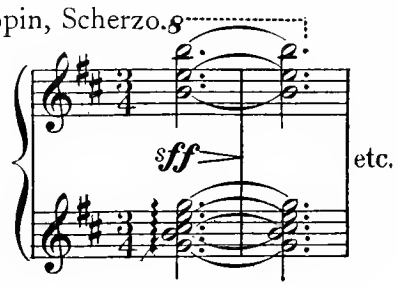
One must not always arpeggiate only such chords as are too wide-spread to play "flat." An arpeggio is also in order where a tender or delicate effect is desired. In such cases the right hand plays arpeggio, while the left strikes its chord flat; e. g.,

Paderewski, Légende.

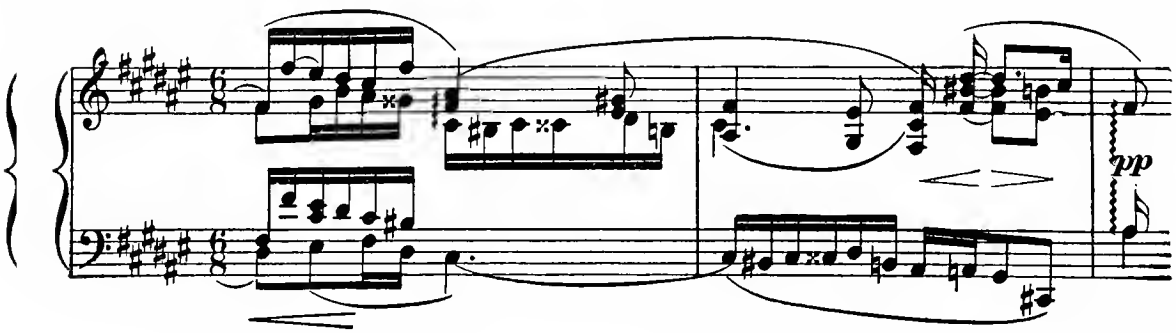


Conversely, the chord sounds energetic, and yet not hard, when the right hand strikes its tones simultaneously and the left arpeggiates; but this must be a very swift arpeggio; e. g.,

Chopin, Scherzo.

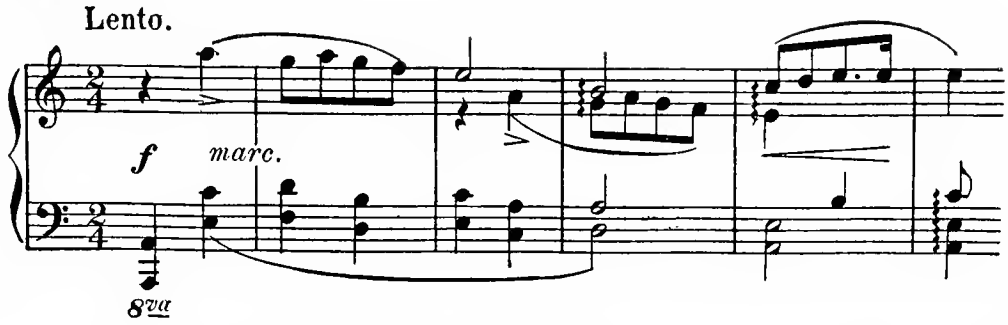


An arpeggio may also be employed where the polyphony is to be brought out more distinctly; but only at important points, for instance where one part ends and the other begins at the same time; as in Schumann's Romanze:

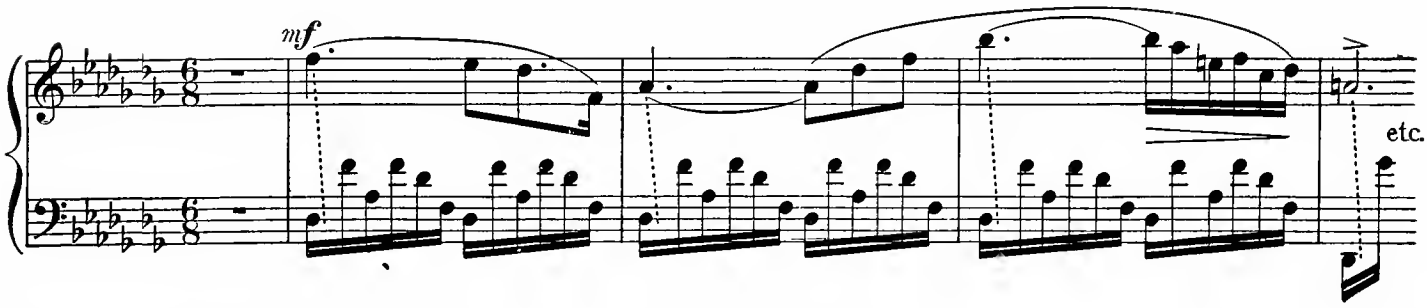


Similarly in a canon:

Paderewski, Thème varié.



Neither should bass tone and melody-note always be taken precisely together, but the melody-note may be struck an instant after the bass, which gives it more relief and a softer effect. However, this can be done only at the beginning of a phrase, and usually only on important notes and strong beats. (It is better for the hands to coincide precisely on weak beats.) The melody-note must follow so swiftly as to make the pause hardly noticeable for the uninitiated: e. g., in Chopin's Nocturne:



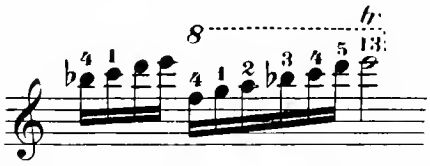
XXV

Fingering

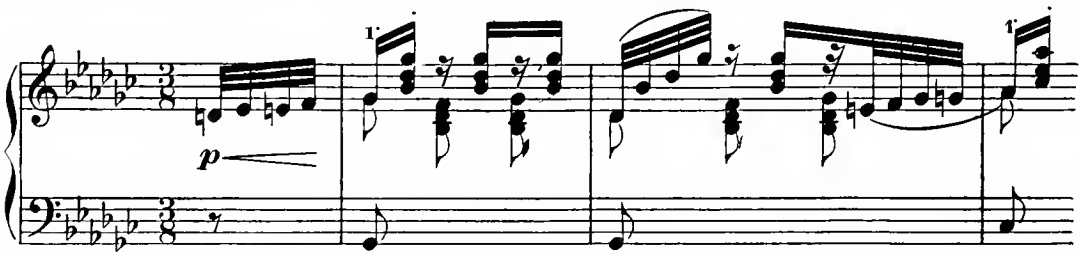
A FINGERING is good when easy; — provided that the effect is the same. Only the easy player can also play confidently and finely. In many cases, therefore, it is not feasible to fix the fingering in advance, because it must be accommodated to the size and stretching capacity of different hands.

To the rules for the fingering given in preceding chapters, only one more can be added, namely, that loud tones should be played, wherever possible, with strong fingers.

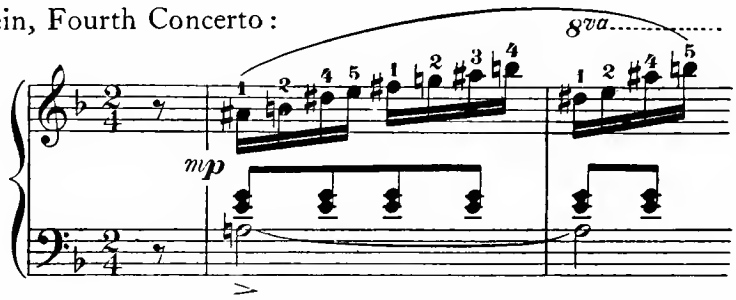
Contrary to all rules, one may sometimes let the fingers run out to the 5th, so as to save turning under. By so doing, a swift tempo can better be carried out; as in Weber's " Concertstück ":



Moreover, the thumb may turn under on a black key, when the tone is accented and the following one made easier to reach thereby. This turn should not, however, be made in the regular way, as in the scales, but with a swing of the wrist. The examples are from Leschetizky, " Cascade,"



and Rubinstein, Fourth Concerto:



In general, every one who has sufficient courage and the needful amount of confidence may go as far in the irregularities of fingering as he will, provided only that the passage is well played. Still, disregard of rule must not proceed from mere wantonness, but to facilitate the execution of difficult passages, or to make them sound better. First, try the fingering given in your piece, and retain it if it appears good; otherwise, seek another fingering adapted to your hand and individuality.

The pedal is of great assistance to the fingering. It binds intervals which the hand cannot stretch, and permits the hand to leave one chord in order to prepare the next. In the melody, too, a tone once taken may be held with the pedal when the finger is required elsewhere, and another cannot take its place.

XXVI

Practice and Study

ART is the most unique possession of man. It is not obtained by birth or heredity, but must be acquired by the individual. Were it otherwise, the artist's crown would be easily won, but of slight desert. When any one says he learns everything without effort, he either tells an untruth, or what he learns is valueless. Thought alone springs effortless from the brain; the technics of every art must be acquired step by step. How many strokes of mallet on chisel were needed, pray, to fashion a Venus of Milo from the rough block of marble? How many strokes of the brush did Rafael make, to create his Sixtine Madonna? and before he knew how to guide the brush aright, what pains did he have to take? Practice makes perfect; and through practice no talent is degraded — not even a pianistic talent.

Practice at the piano should not be an unreflective rattling-off of exercises by the hour or by the number of repetitions. To bear fruit, it must be the simultaneous training of head and hand. The simplest finger-exercise demands, for untrained fingers, the undivided attention of the student. He must see whether the hand is held right and the fingers move correctly; he must listen to each tone he strikes, and exercise thought in all. After the fingers have been controlled by thought, rightly applied, for only a few weeks, you will be convinced that they are at last growing independent and trustworthy. Then, for the study of pieces, most attention may be directed to the mental side.

Thinking is rendered easier by practising at first very slowly, not playing faster until you are sure of your ground. If progress is not rapid at the beginning, do not fancy that you can improve matters by sitting at the piano from morning till evening; that is harmful to health, and it is impossible, besides, to pay close and careful attention for so long. Four hours of sensible practice are quite enough. When one has to keep up an extensive repertory, one or two hours more may be devoted to the repetition of pieces.

As soon as one has thoroughly mastered the finger-exercises, scales, and arpeggios, they may be applied in the study of the études. Begin with Czerny's "School of Velocity," and then take up rather short, easy pieces. Play these latter at first, like the exercises, slowly with each hand alone, and while practising slowly play louder than you afterwards do when playing them faster. A point for étude-playing, in particular, is to play them — after they go well and quickly — several times in succession without stopping, as long as you can keep it up; this promotes endurance.

Thought is most essential in the study of pieces; for the way by which they are learned, or rather memorized, goes from brain to fingers, and never in the other direction, from fingers to brain. I lay stress on *memorizing*, because it is the best way to possess one's self permanently of a new piece. Go about it as follows:

To acquaint yourself with the piece in hand, read (play) it through only once, so as not to grow accustomed to a faulty fingering; then — according to the difficulty of the composition or the mental grasp of the student — take up one measure, two measures, or at most a phrase, at a time, analyze it harmonically, and determine the fingering and pedalling. Observe, however, that rapid passages must be tried rapidly, because fingering and pedalling might be suitable in slow tempo and not in fast. Determine them, therefore, in the given tempo, only then returning to the slow study of the piece.

Except to play the leading parts louder and the secondary parts softer, abstain for the present from fine shading and emotion, until Matter is conquered; else it may happen that you waste your finest feelings on wrong notes.

Now read your practice-measure or measures through carefully and repeatedly with the eye, until the notes stand out clearly before your mental vision, and name the notes a few times either aloud or mentally; and then — not before — play the measure or phrase from memory, but no faster than memory can dictate the notes.

If you forget a note, do not try to find it by groping with the fingers on the keys, or play on by ear, but try to recover the forgotten note in the mind. Should you fail, then glance at the music.

When you can play the phrase faultlessly and without hesitation by heart, proceed further exactly in the manner prescribed. Take up each time the portion just learned before, and also try to play the whole by heart from the beginning. This is "memorizing in the form of addition."

Next day, should you have apparently forgotten what you learned, do not feel discouraged, but practise it over again as before. You will rememorize it rapidly, and after a few such days of practice you will have made it yours for ever.

Now proceed to filing and shading; impart animation to the phrases, and distribute light and shade. Proceed dynamically and technically (as when memorizing), only step by step, suitably dividing long passages, for instance, and practising each division separately.

One never forgets a piece learned by this method, even when it is not often repeated; and neither memory nor fingers are so apt to fail one at critical moments as in the case of players accustomed to practise unreflectingly with the fingers. This latter class, to be sure, will find brain-study hard at first, and must be satisfied to learn two or three lines daily — and that not at one sitting, but with long

intervals. More advanced students, too, should interrupt study frequently, to prevent overtiring the brain. During such pauses they may busy themselves with technical exercises already well in hand, or leave the piano altogether. One finally arrives at the point of being able to think through a piece much faster than the fingers can follow.

Leschetizky says: "Learning by this method is only apparently slow. Even if one learn but a few lines daily at the outset, and later at most a whole page in one day, and assuming that study must be suspended for one-third of the year, the finished year nevertheless shows an outcome of over 200 pages learned, to which one may add some 100 pages of repetitions, such as occur in almost all pieces. In the very first year, therefore, a considerable number of pieces will have been learned, which the growing routine of following years will double or treble annually."

To students whose talent permits of their playing a piece from memory after glancing through it, I also recommend the above method of study. They will find it easy, and it will insure correctness when playing in public. In his domestic privacy, and on the concert-platform, the artist has two distinct individualities. When he appears in public, he leaves part of his security at home. It follows, that he can never have enough of it. The intending concert-player must, therefore, make it a point from the very start to play a piece faultlessly from beginning to end *the first time.* It is of no avail, to play it right only *on repetition.* Should you break down, or make a mistake, stop playing, and begin again after a considerable pause, making it, as it were, another "first time." Also observe this method while learning études and pieces, or their several phrases and divisions, and finally, when practising compositions already memorized. The best way to avoid mistakes, is to think. While at the piano, think of nothing but what you are playing, however sure you may be of it. Thought is like reins for the fingers, to keep them in the right road.

There is still another stage in correct piano-playing — self-criticism. Whoever has got so far as to criticize himself as sharply as his neighbor, is far advanced; for even the recognition of one's faults means much, although there is yet a long step to their amendment.

Those piano-players, too, who have no mind to give concerts, but play only "for their own pleasure," really ought to prefer to do it well and correctly. Or might this diminish "their own pleasure"? Let them try it, anyhow, if only from humane motives; for everybody likes to show off. What should we not have been forced to endure, had not a merciful Providence invented "stage-fright"? True, the genuine artist finds it a stumbling-block which can be done away with only by

dint of study in the way described above, and by much playing in public, whereby he gains a feeling of confidence. Let him do like the hero in Schiller's "Fight with the Dragon," who accustomed his horse to a painted dragon before introducing him to the real one, and take the edge off his dread of the public by much playing to others. Let him knock at every door and request a kindly hearing. And, having reached this stage, let him play before his fellow-artists. If he can meet their criticism, he is proof against the dragon himself.

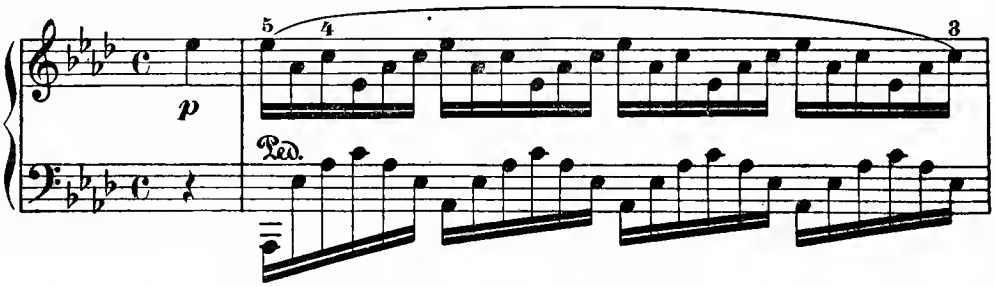
XXVII

Movements of the Hand and Arm

PIANISTS of fiery temperament often execute acrobatic marvels with their uplifted hands, as if to show the audience that they have risen superior to all earthly trammels, and make a mere play of difficulties. These are fancy tricks not wholly devoid of piquancy, and may be viewed with indulgence when accompanying virtuoso performance. In contrast to these are the necessary movements of the wrist, which serve to facilitate the execution of phrases, to support the rhythm, or to rest the hand after the tension of *forte*-playing by relaxation of the joint; there are, besides, the motions of the arms, which are thrown upward by an involuntary reflex movement after striking vigorously. None of these movements should be destitute of freedom and grace.

The necessary movements of hand and arm vary according to the character of the piece played. I do not mean that in a Scherzo the fingers may execute merry gambols on the keys or in the air, or creep along sleepily in a Berceuse. What I mean is, the influence on the tone, which in energetic passages, where the hands are lifted abruptly from the keys, differs from that in playing softly, or in melancholy strains, where they are raised slowly and the arm rises as much, or, still better, as little, as the wrist-movement demands.

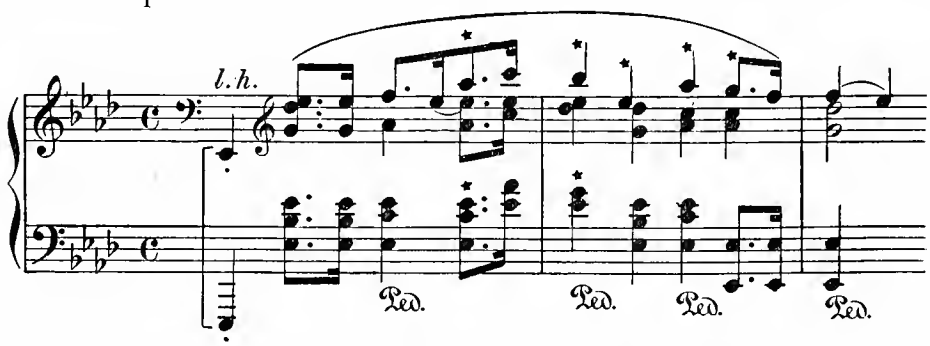
The upward, downward, and twisting movements of the wrist have already been treated at length in a former Section. Here I will mention only the sideways movement, whose aim it is to bring the hand into a convenient posture for taking the next notes. In the Chopin Étude op. 25, No. 1, for instance,



one can take the melody-tone *E♭* more easily, and render it more expressive, by turning the right hand (not too far) sideways; the left hand also turns in following the accompaniment-figure.

Talented students will find instinctively the proper employment of the wrist, and how to accommodate it to the varying position of the hand; others must acquire it by practice, whence arises a sort of "preparatory technics" for the promotion of an easy and sonorous execution.

The pedal is again very helpful. By holding and prolonging the tones, it leaves the hand free to assume the next-following position; as at all the chords marked * in Chopin's Fantaisie:



We may also add to the section on preparatory technics a device which makes it easier to play clean basses. These are not such a matter of course as one might imagine, as the appellation "pseudo-basses," invented by Liszt, proves. The usual reason is, that difficult passages or leaps in the right hand divert the eyes from the left. The device for getting the bass clean consists in touching the higher octave of the bass tone with the left thumb, without depressing the key; the 5th finger can then readily strike the bass tone, for every pianist has the stretch of the octave in his fingers. Also practise this trick without looking at the left hand, or in the dark.

Another device which may be mentioned in this connection, concerns wide leaps — a fertile source of incertitude. Through practice alone one cannot learn to take such leaps with certainty; one requires presence of mind, and likewise a certain knack which ought to be taken advantage of when practising leaps; namely:

For a leap on white keys, the hand should not describe a curve, but glide swiftly over the edges of the keys, striking the tone which is the objective point of the leap with the outer edge of the little finger, not with its tip. At the same time, the wrist must drop. This procedure has the further advantage, that the hand does not hide the key to be taken from sight, one being able to fix the eye upon it, which is necessary. It aids accuracy greatly to name the tone mentally before striking.

For a leap on black keys, the hand is also held close to the keyboard; but the finger (preferably the 3d) does not strike with its edge, but flat with the tip. For such a leap on black keys, the wrist cannot be dropped, but it must not be raised too high.

Do not be discouraged by so many rules for the training of fingers and hand. Through them the fingers finally acquire exquisite sensibility, and the wrist also soon learns to follow the movements of the fingers. The arm, to be sure, remains a clumsy fellow, always having to be guided lest he throw fingers and wrist off the track by faulty movements. Consequently, in the first scale- and chord-exercises one should look to it that the arm does not press forward too rapidly when playing up, and drag backward when playing down.

XXVIII

Who Should Devote Himself to the Piano?

A DELICATE question, indeed! I fear me, an echo from the World will reply, short and sharp: "No one!" But this were wrong, if only in consideration of the opulent, glorious literature of the piano, which deserves that an unbroken line of interpreters should arise—interpreters with a mission, of course. And here we have the reply to our question: Those with a mission for it should devote themselves to the piano.

But what qualities justify this claim? Were I to say: "Only a talent of the highest order," one might just as well assert that only millionaires have a right to live. In music, too, there must be a middle class.

Qualifications which one must have to become a thorough pianist are a good ear, a good hand, artistic temperament, fine sensibility, intelligence, and persevering industry.

The musical ear naturally varies in quality. Finest of all is the ear which recognizes absolute pitch, and can instantly tell the name of any tone, whether produced by a musical instrument or the ringing of a glass. Next comes the recognition of comparative pitch, which can tell any tone from its relationship to another key-tone previously struck on the piano. This kind of ear is only second-class, but is capable of further development; musicians possessing this ear have frequently a refined sense for shading.

The lowest grade of ear for a music-student should be that which enables him to sing correctly any tone he hears.

An inferior ear can be developed, raised to a higher grade, by a sort of singing-exercise; not actual vocal studies, for the singing voice is not taken into account. Merely sing some tone, which is so natural and easy to sing that you can find it again at any time, and find its name on the piano. Hold fast to this tone, as one from which to derive others. Now try the following exercise: Strike a tone on the piano, and sing to this tone the minor second, then the major second, and the other intervals in regular order, first upward, then downward; and keep at one interval until you can sing it correctly.

Also try, without looking at the keys, to name separate tones, then harmonic intervals, and last of all chords, played by some other person at the piano. If a quarter of an hour, at most, be devoted to these exercises daily, the ear will soon show progress.

Touching the hand and its qualifications, some observations were made in Section II; here I will only add, that even an imperfectly adapted hand may be moulded, by industrious and well-directed practice, into a "piano-hand"—it will accommodate itself to pianistic requirements.

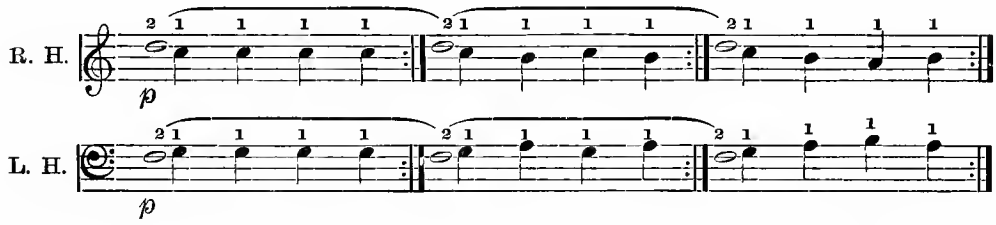
On the contrary, it is difficult to change the temperament. A phlegmatic pupil, even should he possess all the other good qualities, can drive a teacher to distraction, and his playing will never move his hearers. Better an overplus of temperament. It is an easier task to restrain it. A player without temperament is also emotionally dull when playing. And emotionality cannot be created, but only somewhat refined, or awakened in case it only sleeps.

Musicians themselves, however, should inveigh against the belief that music needs only emotion, feeling, and not intelligence as well. This last is needed, if only to make up for, or at least to hide, a possible defect in talent.

However great the talent may be, one can sooner attain eminence with industry and less talent than with much talent without industry. Unremitting industry will help over many a hard place, and enable its possessor to attain at least a respectable eminence in music; but talent without industry runs to seed. In fact, the arduous summit of Parnassus can be conquered only behind the double-team, Industry and Talent.

Addenda

To page 11. There are hands whose finger-joints are too yielding. This anomaly manifests itself most frequently in the middle (second) joint of the thumb; this knuckle-joint either projecting too far outwards, or bending inwards unnaturally so as to form an angle, which hinders a forcible downstroke, promptness in passing under, and the firm, confident striking of a chord or octave. This weakness of the principal thumb-joint can be cured only by patience and careful attention. Practise the following exercise *piano*, with each hand alone.



Take care to hold the thumb in its normal position (Fig. 1). If you should not succeed, support the joint for a time with the tip of the left-hand forefinger, which should touch the inner side of the joint without pressing it outwards.

Another anomaly, stiffness in the knuckle-joint of the 5th finger, may be overcome by the following exercise: Hold down any note, *E* for instance, with the 3d finger, and with the other hand lift the 5th finger by the tip as high as possible; then, with the 4th finger, strike *F* repeatedly and as forcibly as you can with a loose wrist. This treatment may also be applied for loosening the knuckle-joint of the 4th finger, which is by nature comparatively stubborn; only in this case the 4th finger is lifted, while the 5th repeatedly strikes *G*.

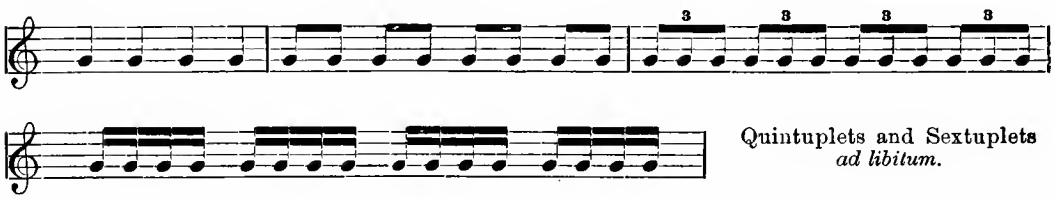
To page 33. When the octaves go smoothly and easily, practise them on one tone, or in scales, without interruption until fatigue sets in. It is an important point to breathe quietly while practising, for the opposite habit is unhealthful.

To page 59. When the trill is learned, practise it rapidly, without interruption or changing fingers, until you are tired; do this with each pair of fingers. Even when you can trill but a minute with the strongest fingers, your technique will have made a decided gain.

To page 62. One can hear them more readily at a distance, than near by—the audience better than the player. But the latter can hear the dissonance yet more distinctly if, without playing on, he holds down the pedal for a time and listens attentively to the resonant waves.

To page 69. At this point we may venture a word concerning the Metronome. Strictly speaking, 'tis a wooden *Capellmeister*, without an atom of subjectivity, though useful when not employed too often. It is not merely a timekeeper, but likewise a good instrument for training a defective sense of rhythm. Consequently, every player should make trial of it once in a while, and play scales, études or pieces with metronome-accompaniment. Then he will discover precisely where he may lose time in difficult passages, or gain in easy ones.

Those who are weak in time, are advised to practise the following metronome-exercise, either at the keyboard, or (simply by feeling) away from it:



Quintuplets and Sextuplets
ad libitum.

Do not set the metronome on too high a number, and let it mark quarter-notes, during which the exercise is repeated, at first in regular succession, and then skipping.

One ought also to play his pieces through once with the metronome for another reason, namely, to learn how to carry on equally two themes of different temperament but like tempo in one and the same piece. For this the controlling influence of the metronome is certainly valuable.

Appendix

1. Scale of Scales, Scale of Arpeggios, and Suite of Arpeggios

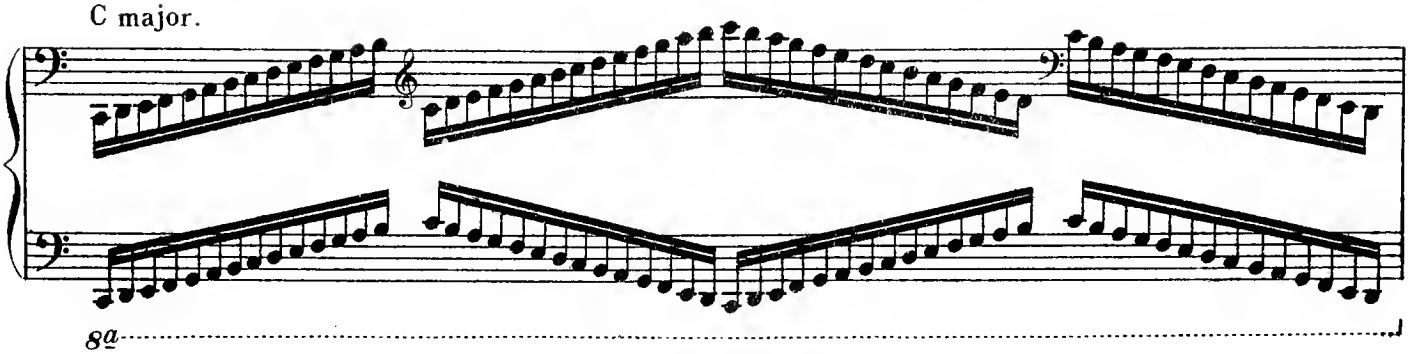
THE following Scale of Scales, Scale of Arpeggios, and Suite of Arpeggios, should not be taken up till the player can execute swiftly and evenly the ordinary scales and broken chords. Each section is intended to be played through without a break, for which purpose the connecting fingering is given. The Scale of Scales, in particular, requires great endurance.

Let no one, however, overdo these exercises, but stop when too tired, and rest before continuing. The requisite endurance will be acquired little by little.

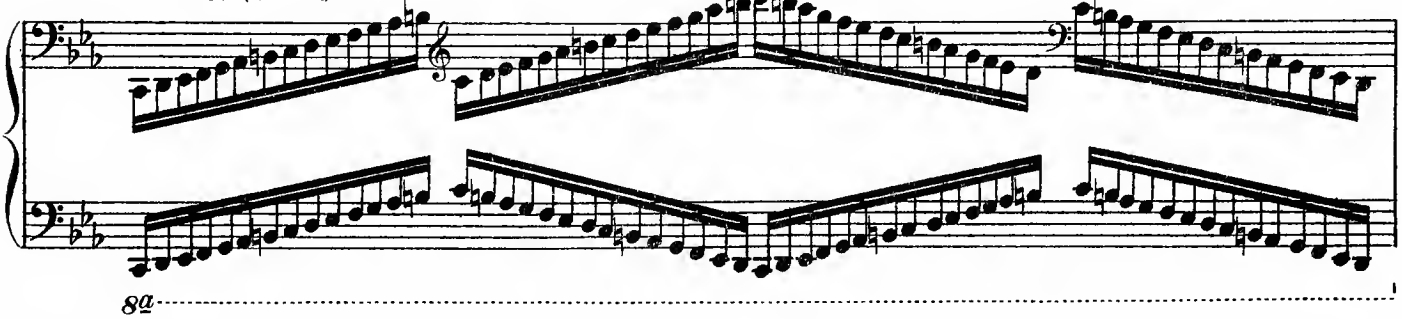
Play these exercises through once every day; this not merely keeps up the technique, but increases it.

1. Scale of Scales.

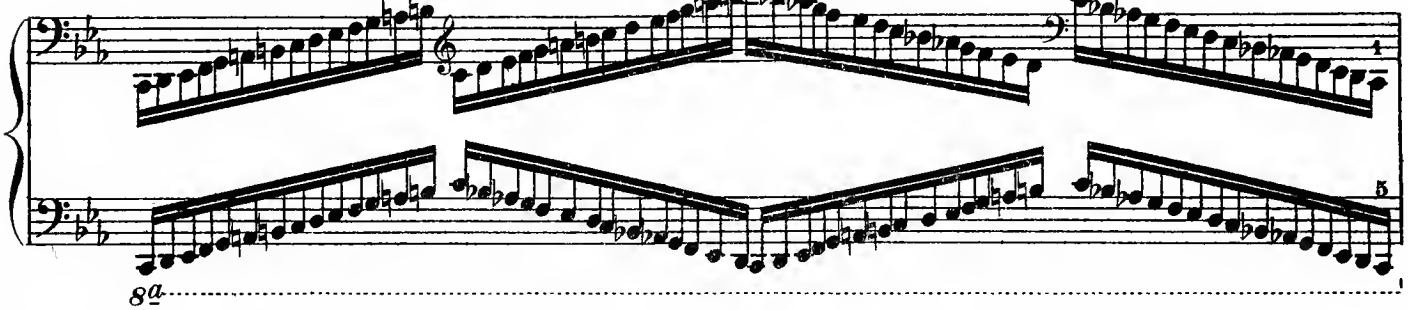
C major.



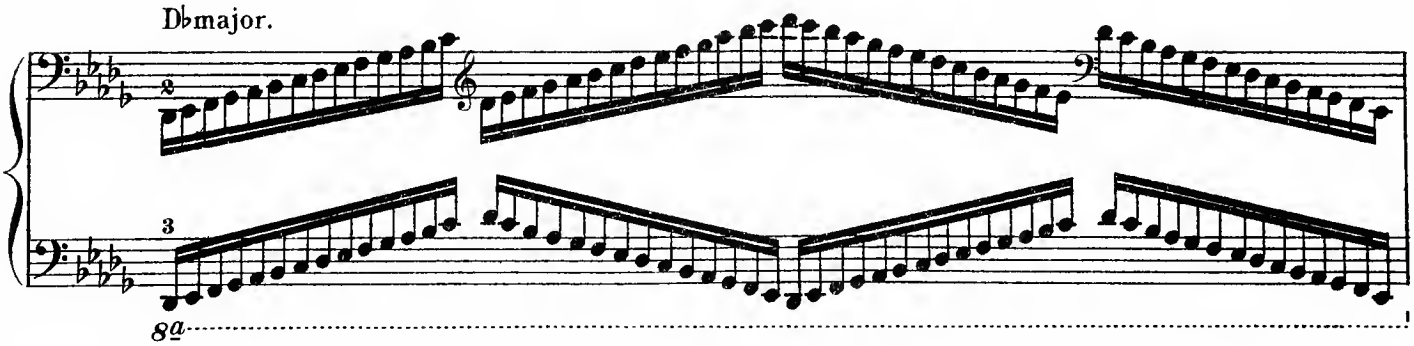
C minor. *(harm.)*



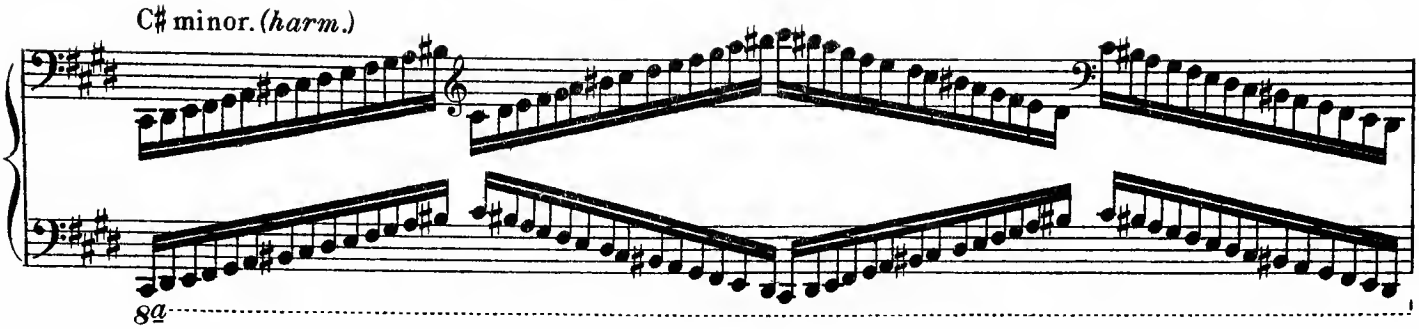
C minor. *(melod.)*



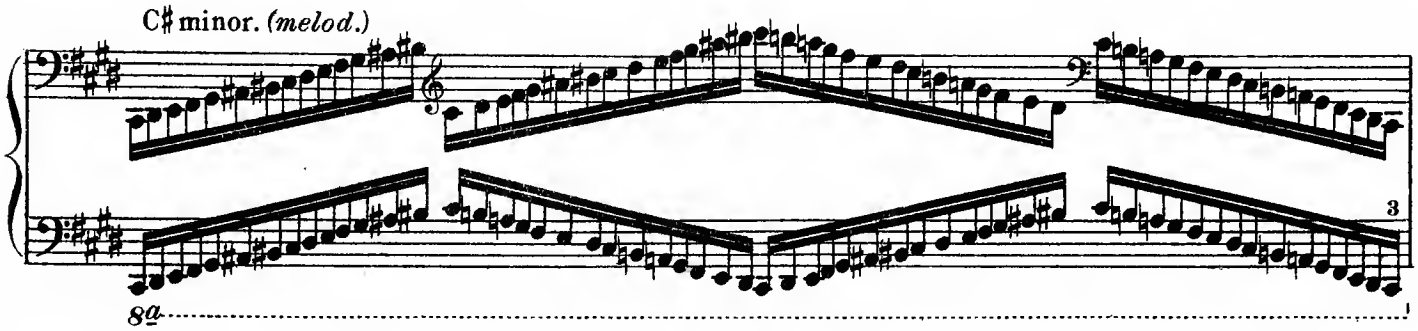
D♭major.



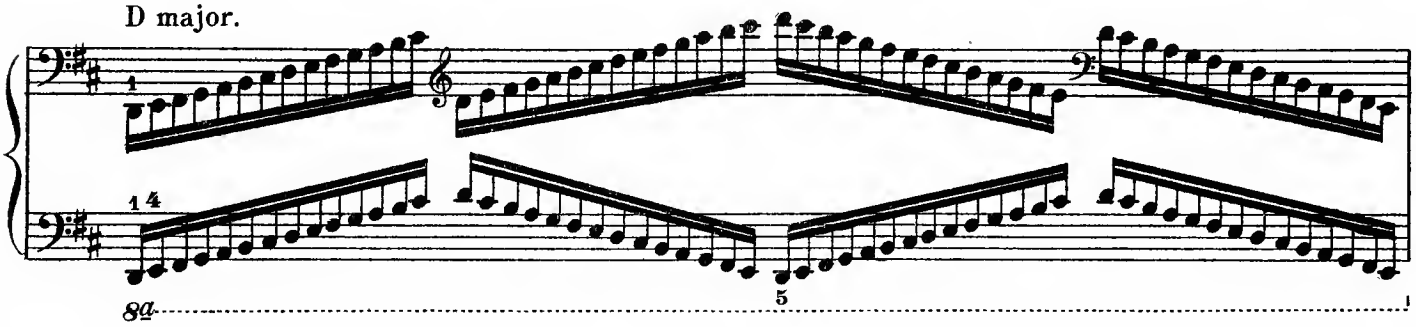
C♯ minor. *(harm.)*



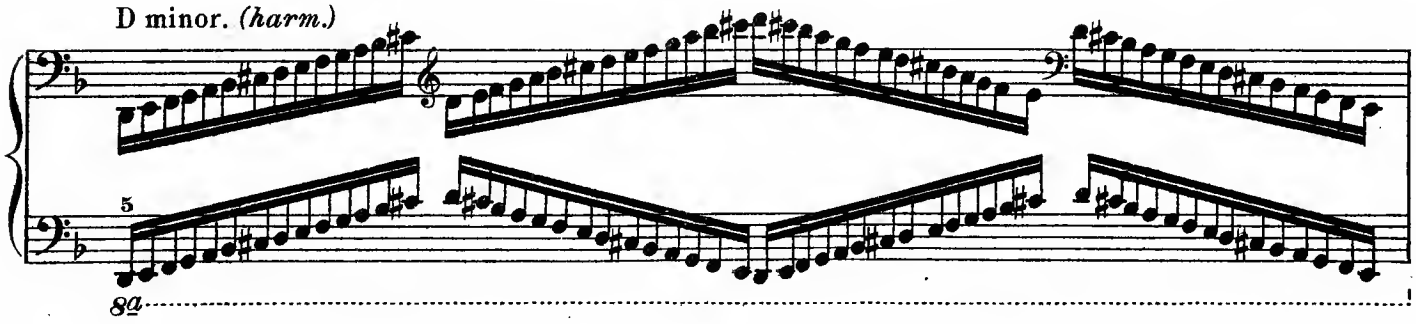
C♯ minor. *(melod.)*



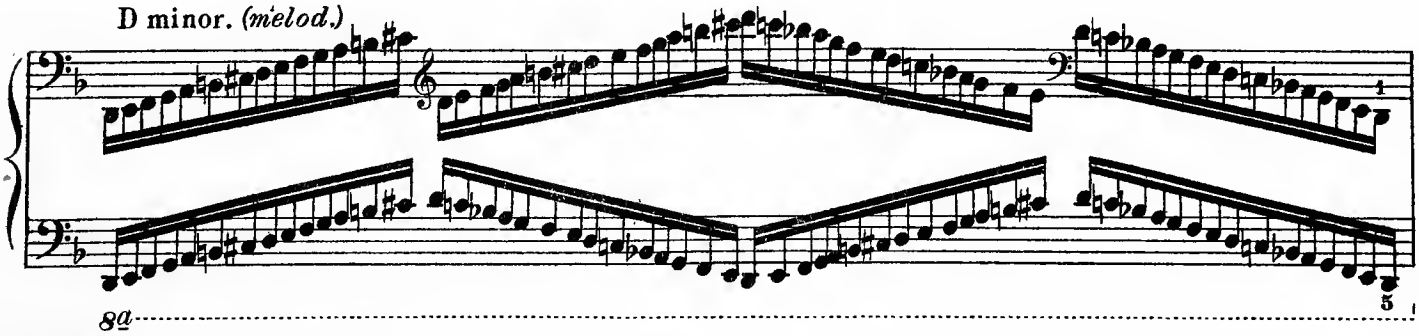
D major.



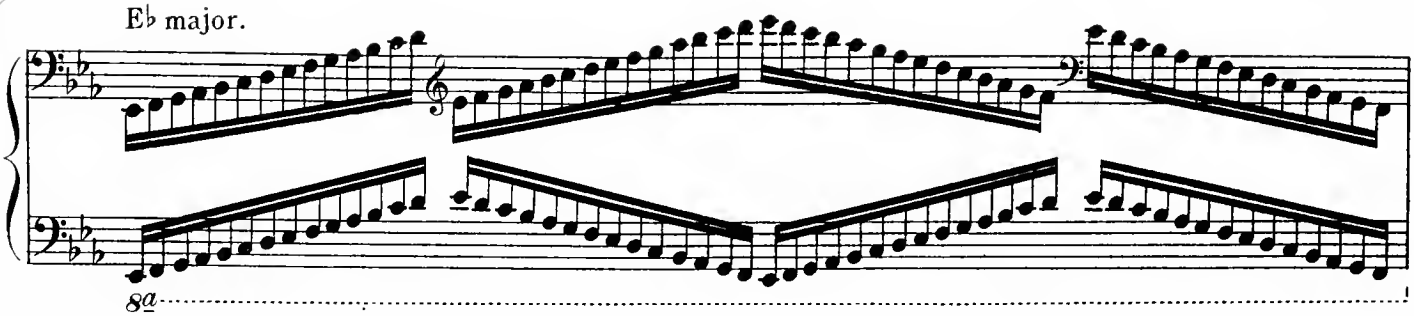
D minor. *(harm.)*



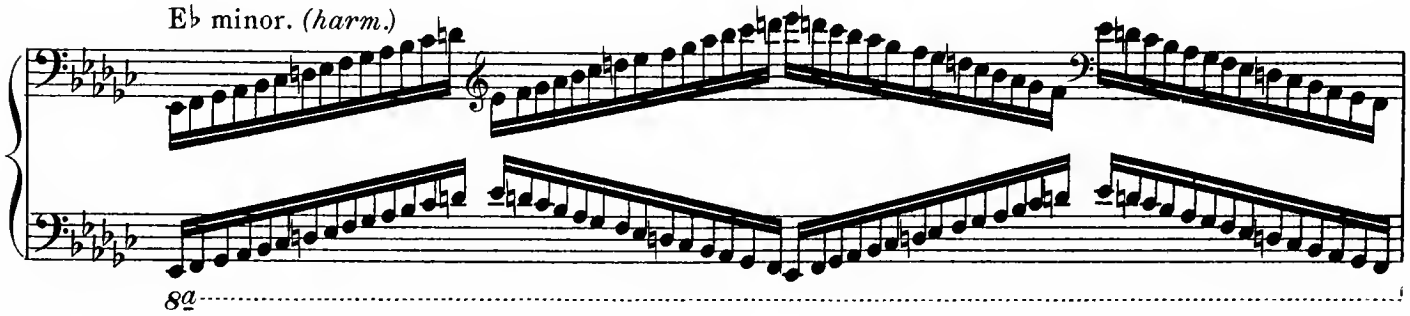
D minor. *(melod.)*



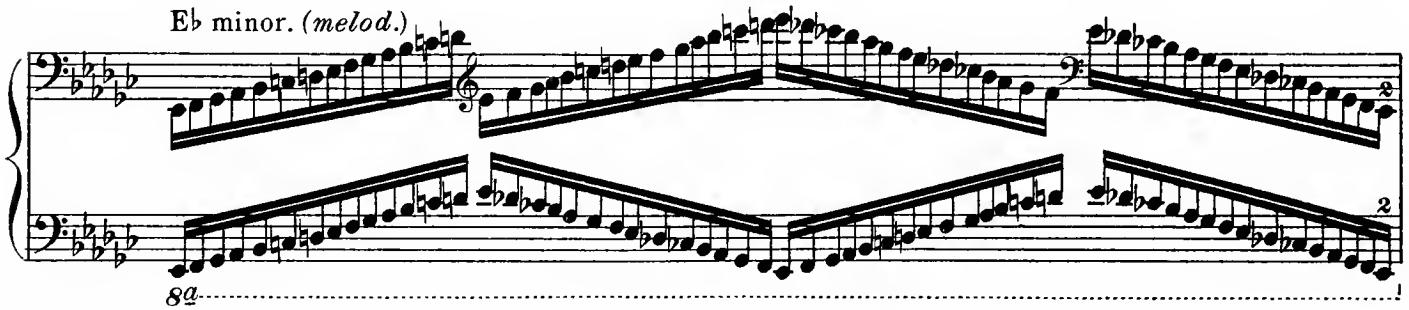
E♭ major.



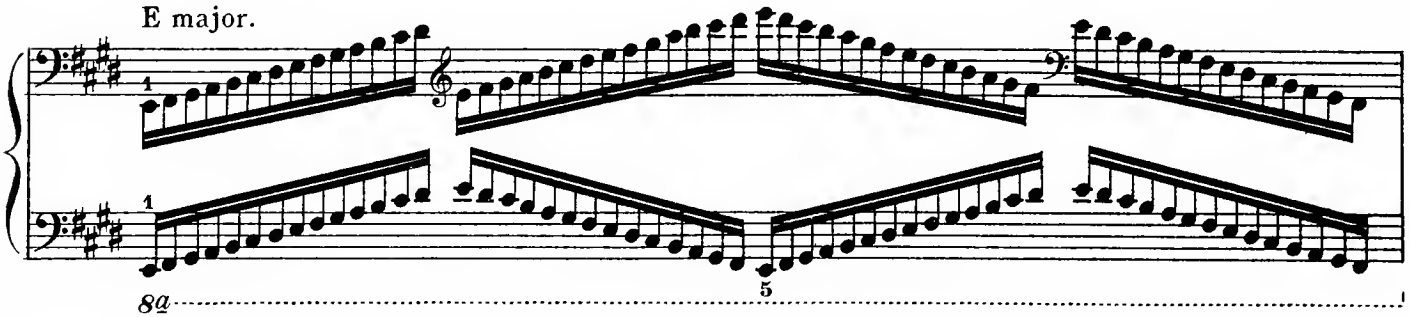
E♭ minor. *(harm.)*



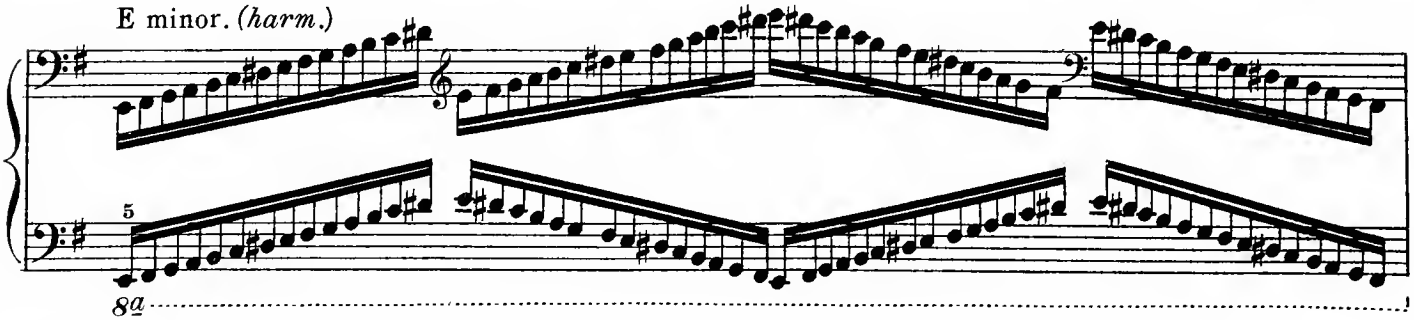
E♭ minor. *(melod.)*



E major.



E minor. *(harm.)*



E minor. *(melod.)*

8a

F major.

8a

F minor. *(harm.)*

8a

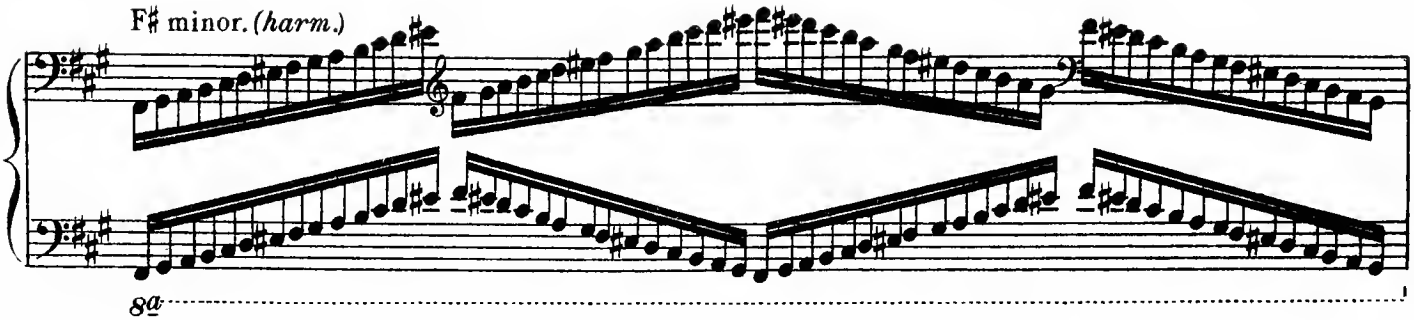
F minor. *(melod.)*

8a

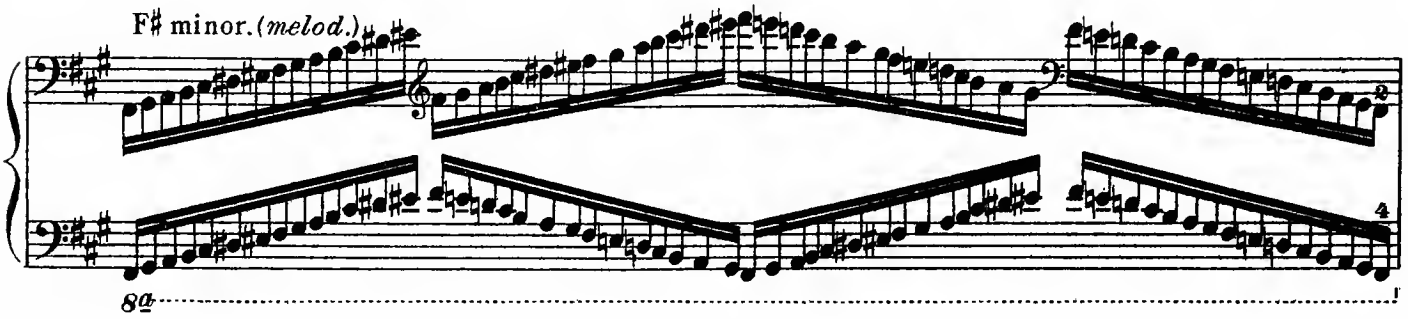
F♯ major.

8a

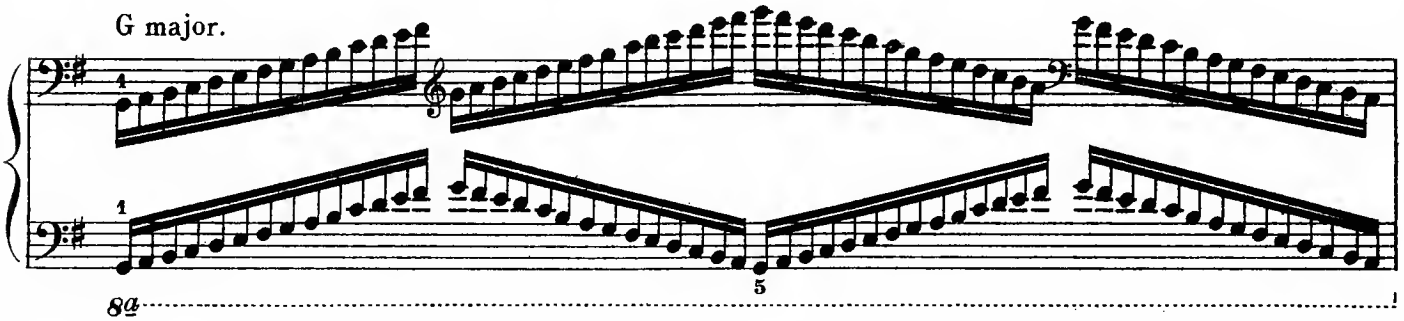
F♯ minor. *(harm.)*



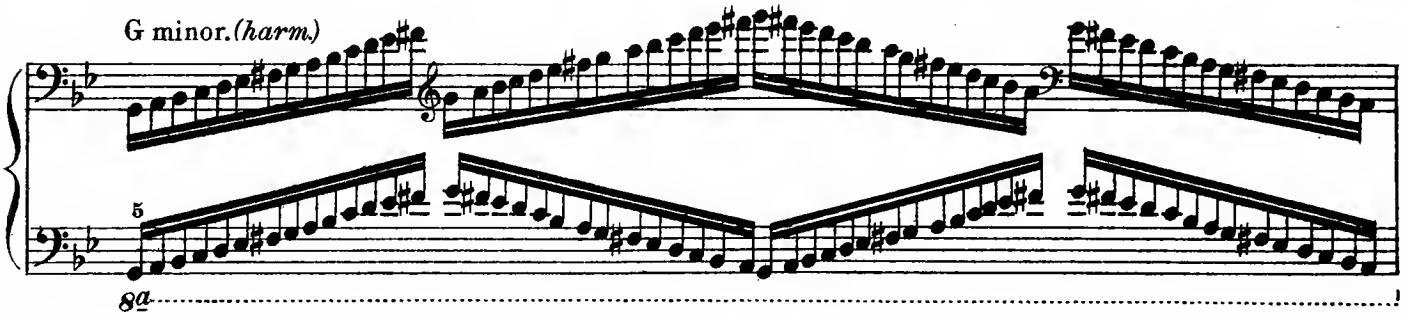
F♯ minor. *(melod.)*



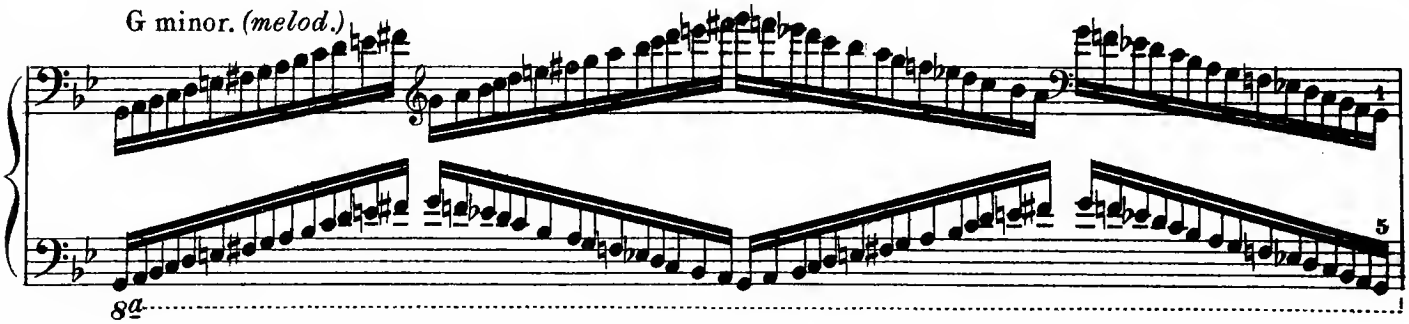
G major.



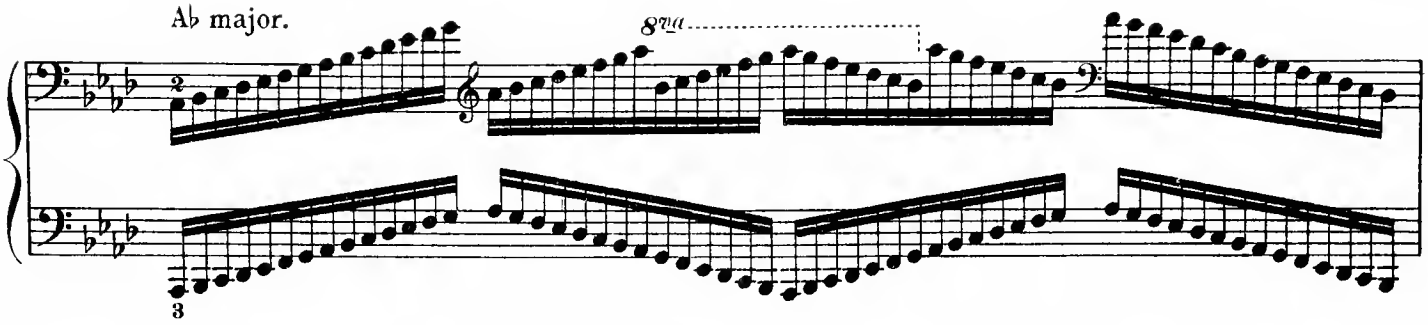
G minor. *(harm.)*



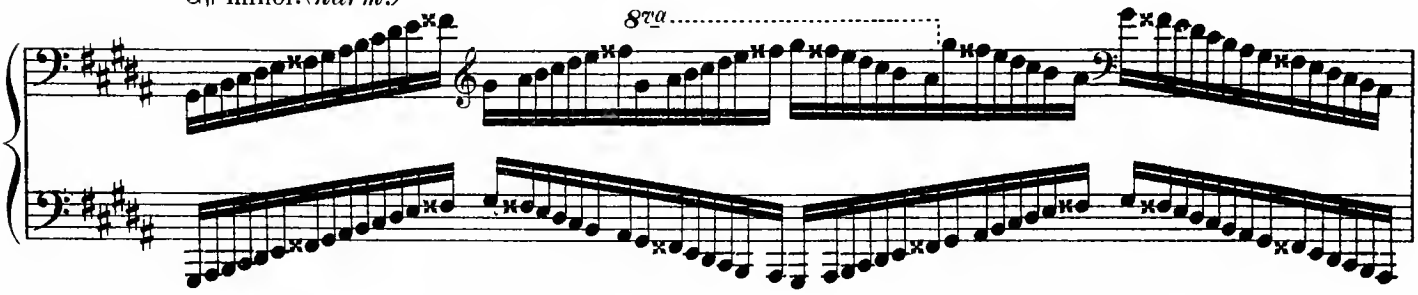
G minor. *(melod.)*



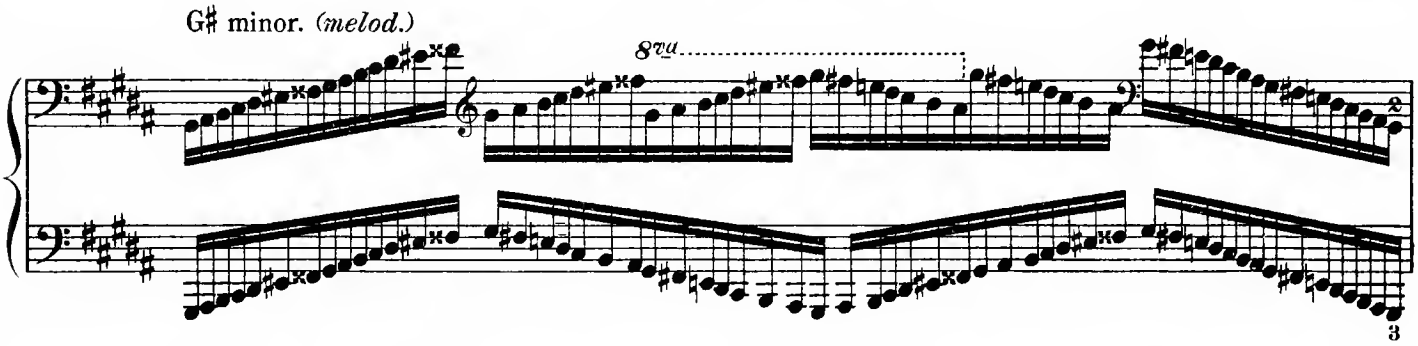
A♭ major.



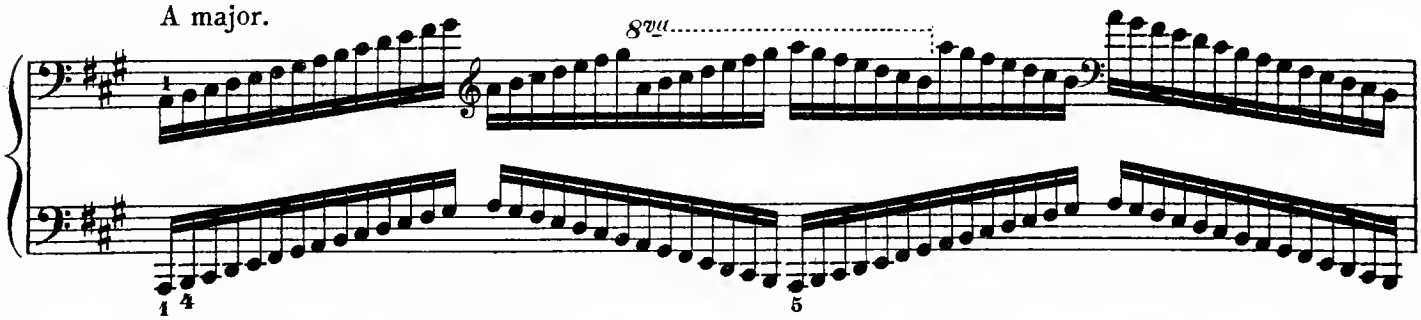
G♯ minor. *(harm.)*



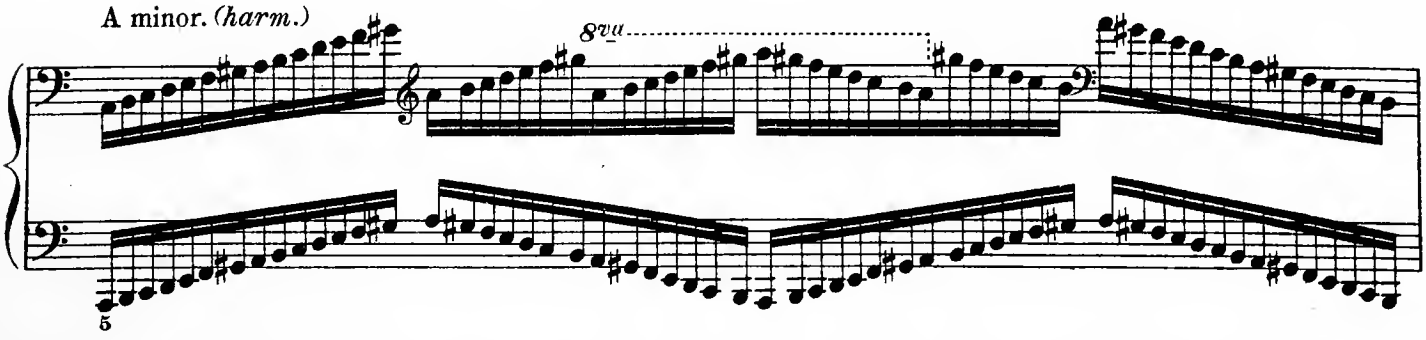
G♯ minor. *(melod.)*



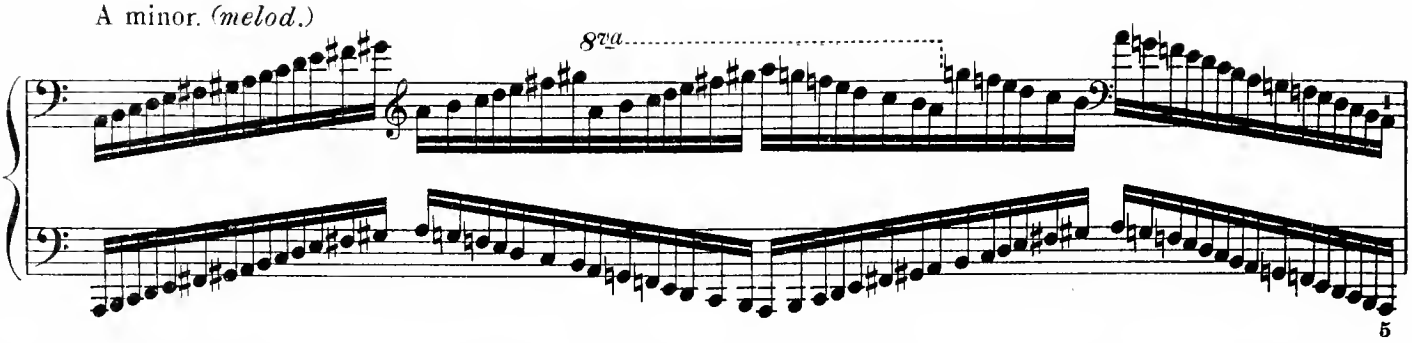
A major.



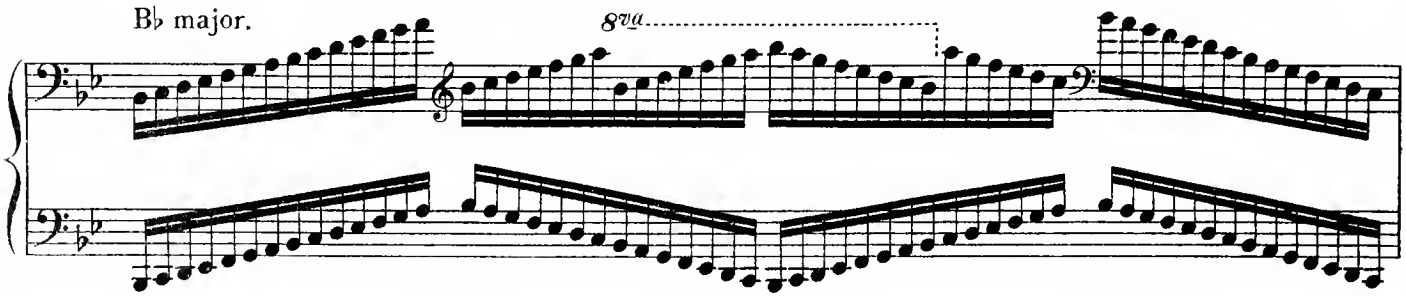
A minor. *(harm.)*



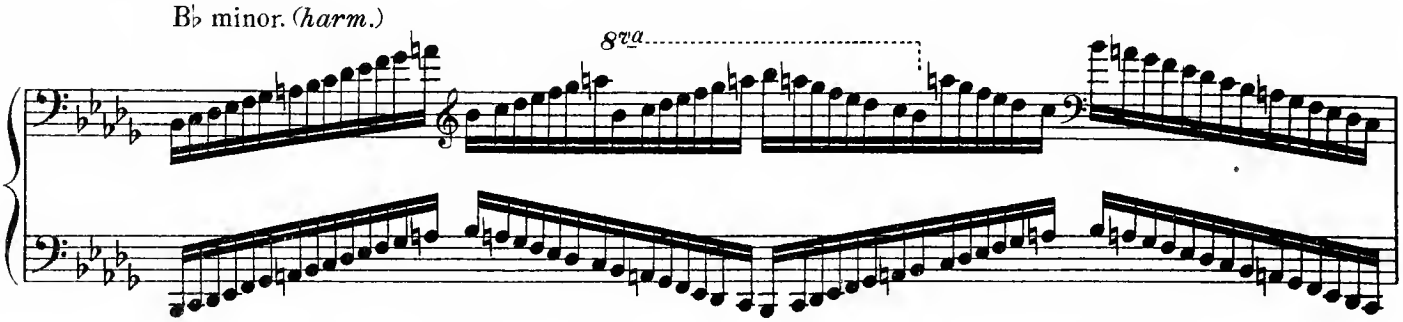
A minor. *(melod.)*



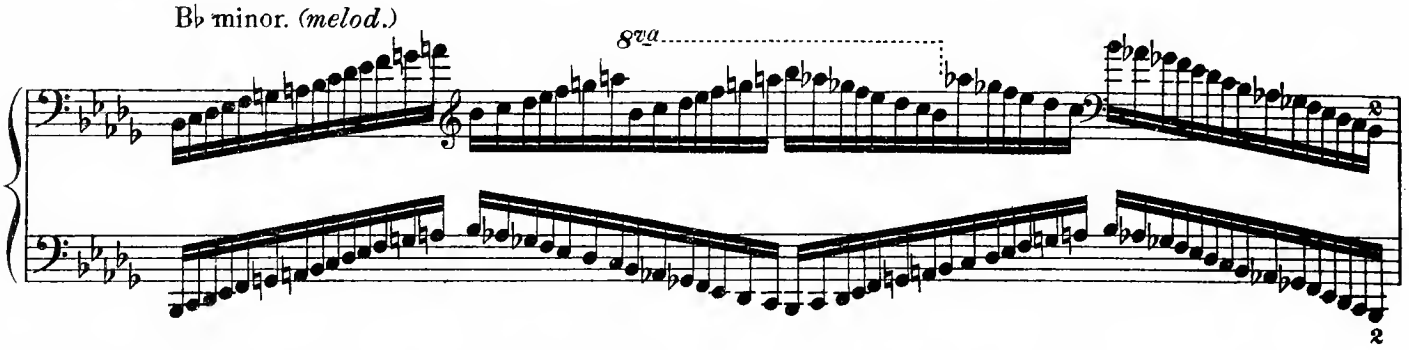
B♭ major.



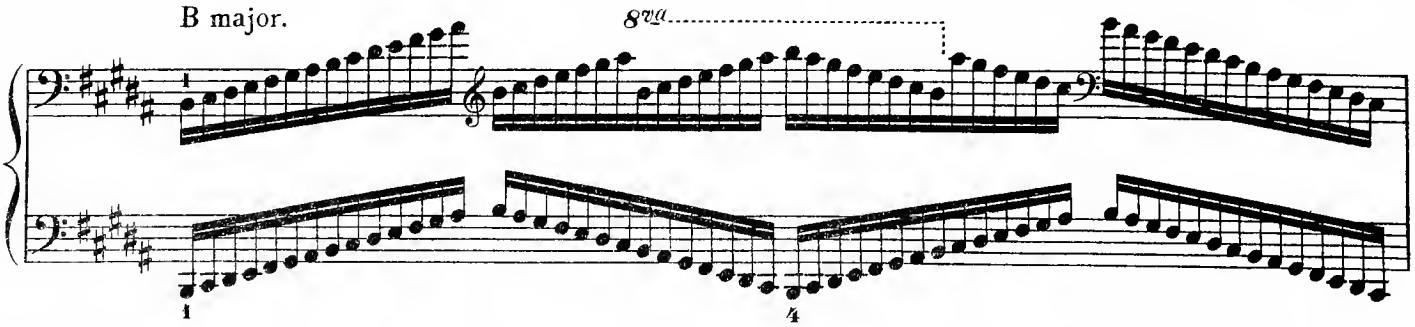
B♭ minor. *(harm.)*



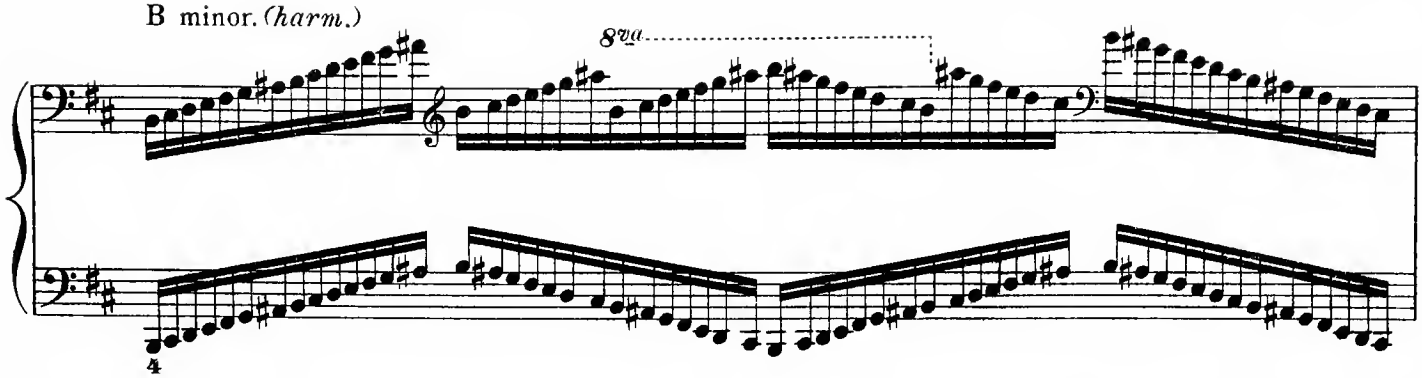
B♭ minor. *(melod.)*



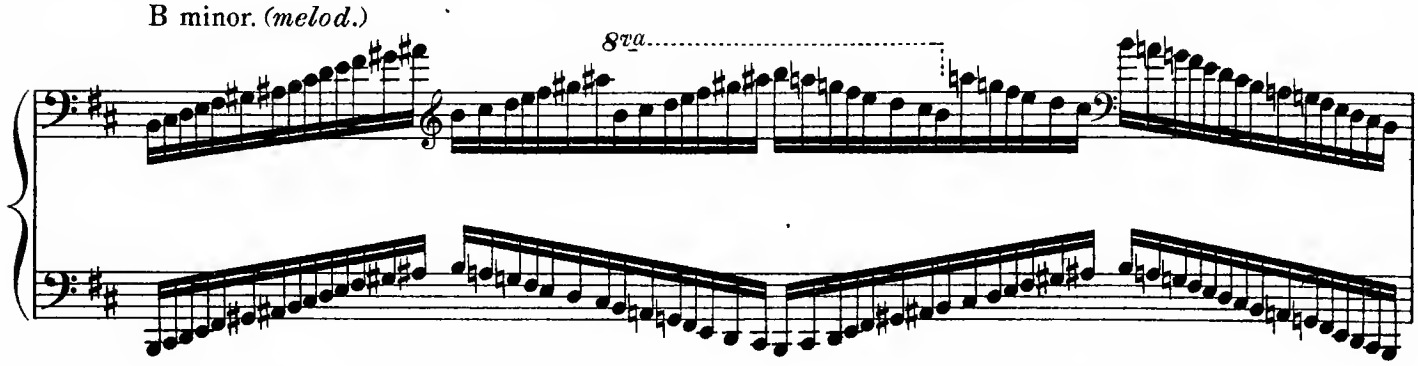
B major.



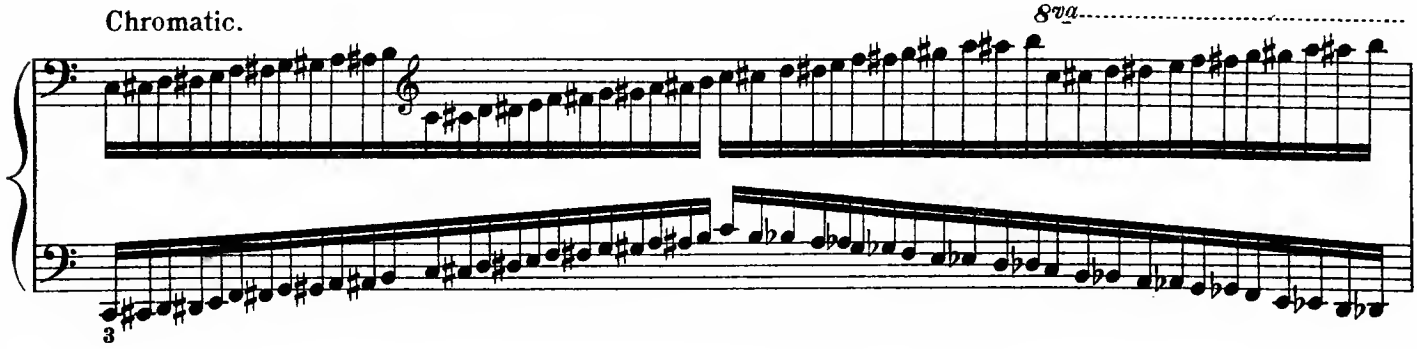
B minor. *(harm.)*

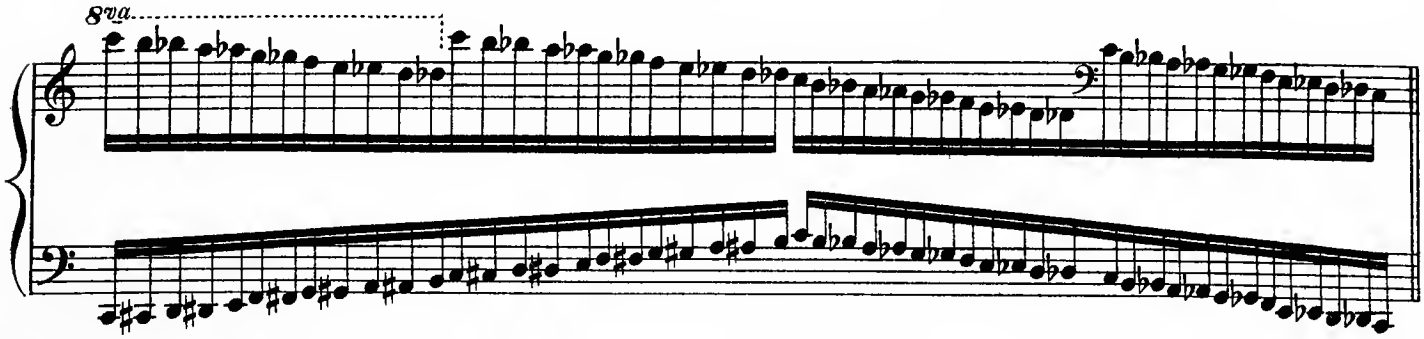


B minor. *(melod.)*



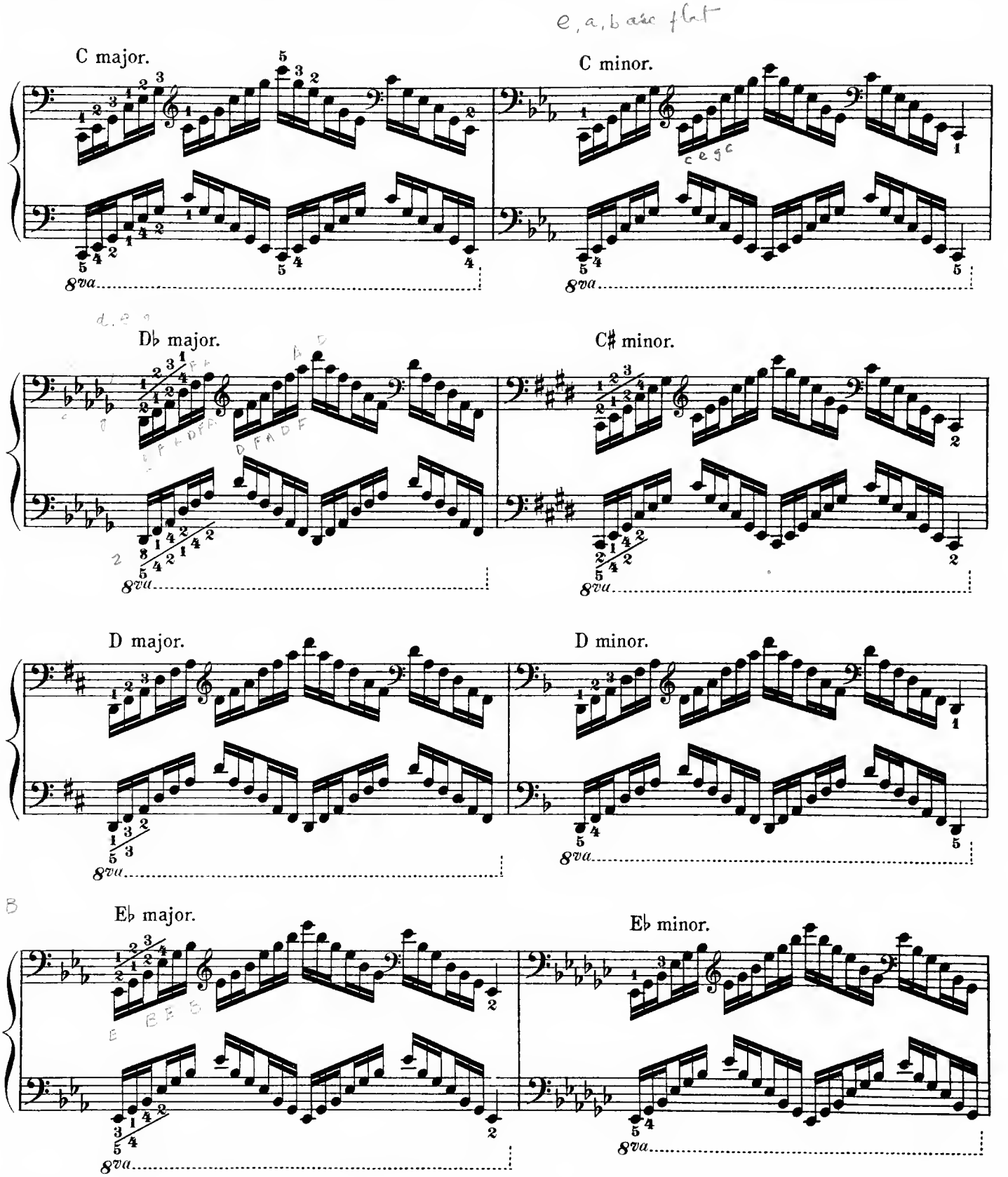
Chromatic.

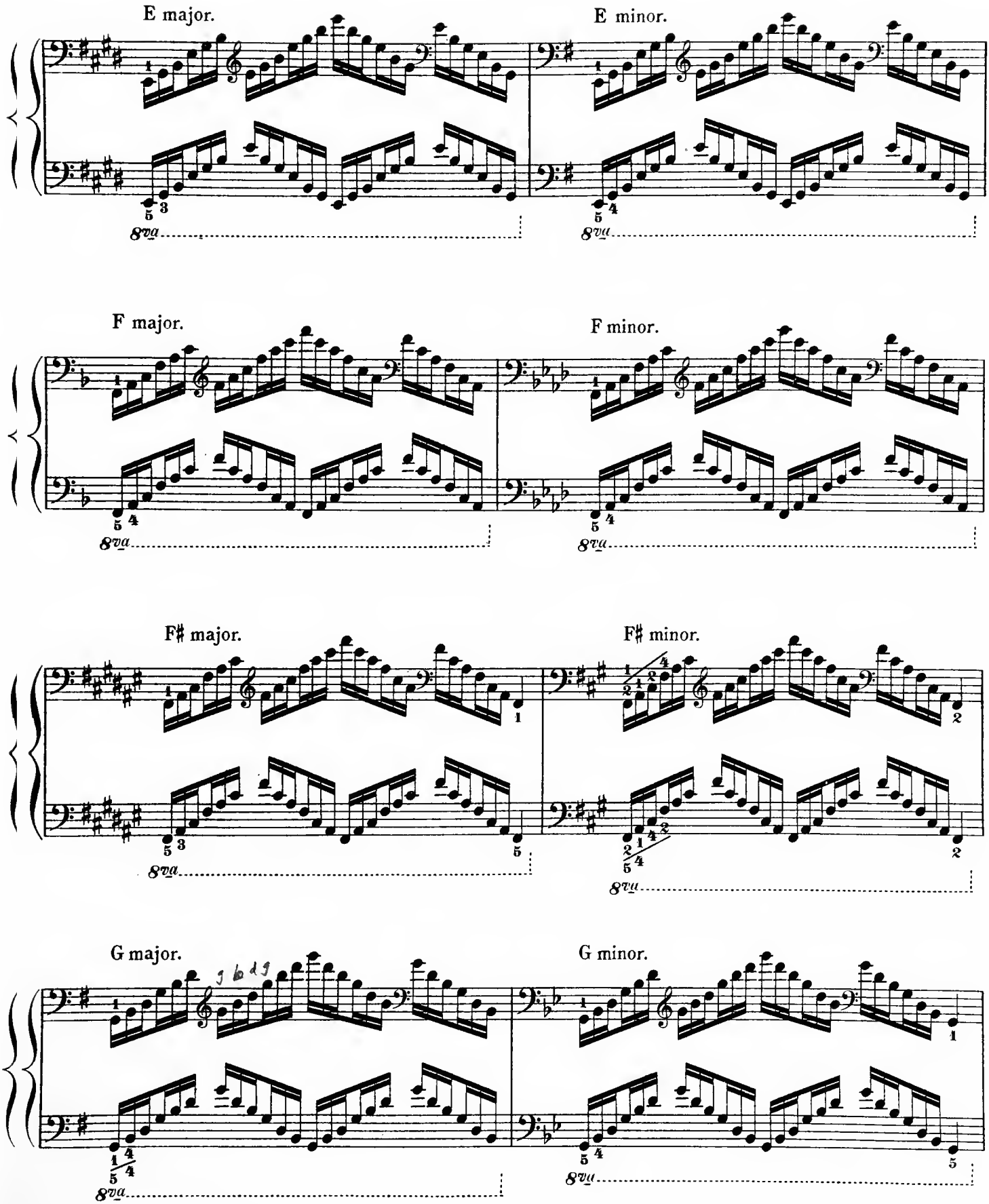




2. Scale of Arpeggios.

Practise with both the given fingerings. Take the keynote, wherever it stands, only with the regular fingering (that next the heads of the notes).




E major.
E minor.
F major.
F minor.
F♯ major.
F♯ minor.
G major.
G minor.
8va

A♭ major.

G♯ minor.

A major.

A minor.

B♭ major.

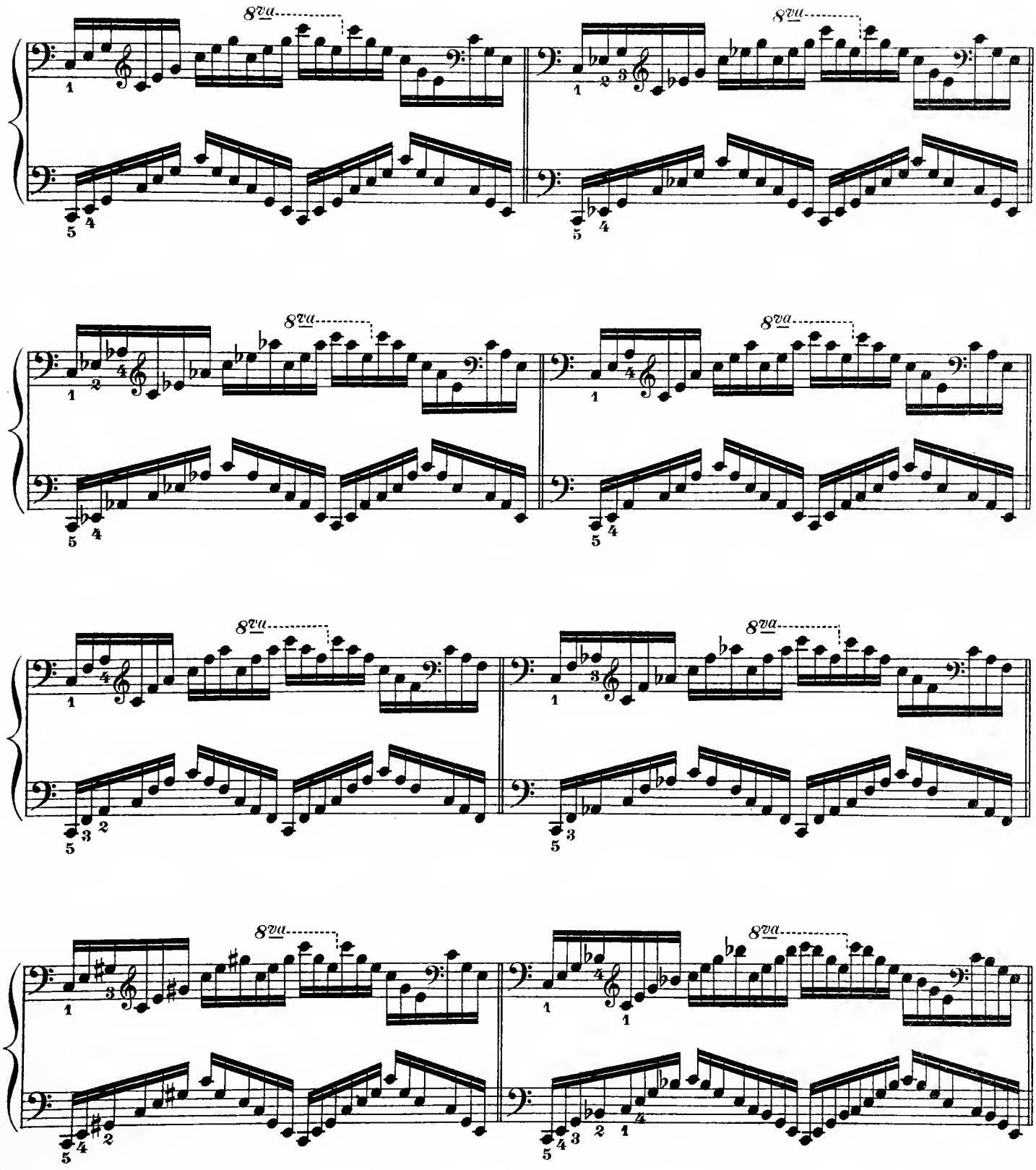
B♭ minor.

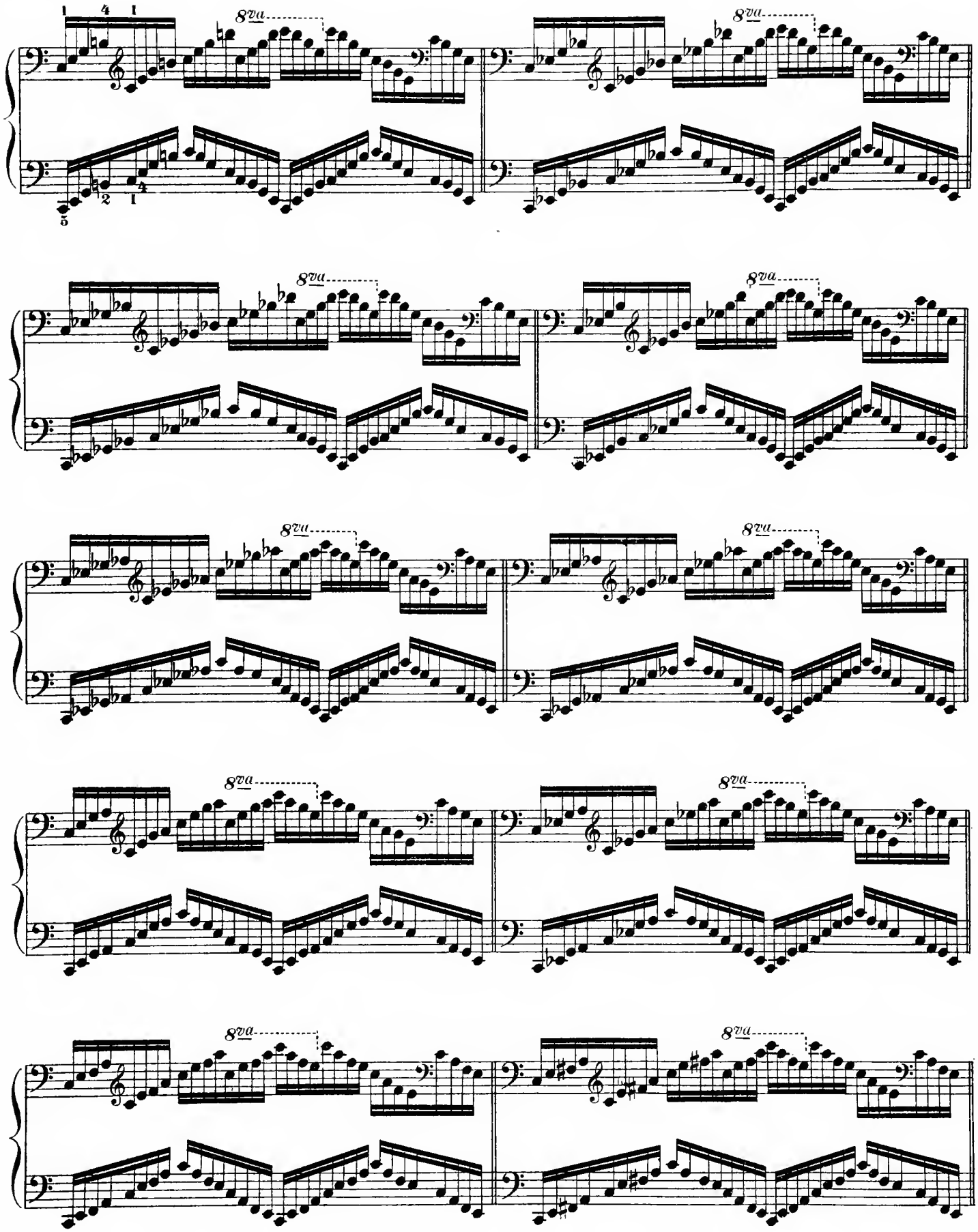
B major.

B minor.

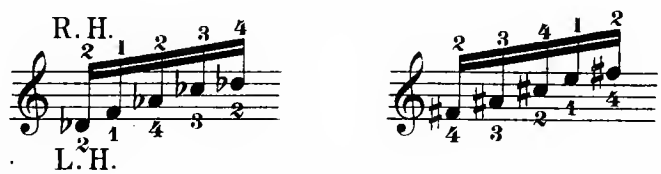
3. Suite of Arpeggios.

Triads and Seventh-chords.




8va
8va
8va
8va
8va
8va
8va
8va
8va
8va

Transpose the Suite of Arpeggios into all keys, employing only the regular fingering, as in the following examples:



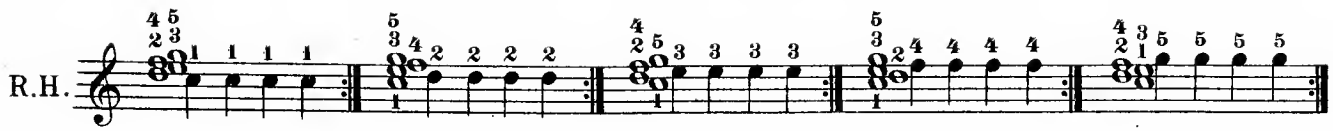
Conclusion

THE Groundwork of the Leschetizky Method is chiefly intended for piano-players who may be assumed to possess more than a rudimentary pianistic training. This does not, however, preclude the instruction of beginners, or even children, according to the Method. Such must first, of course, be taught the theoretical elements in one way or another. But from the moment that they set their hands on the keys, keep strictly to the rules of this book. Only do not let children play exercises as long as adult beginners, and of course do not allow them to attempt any requiring the stretch of a full-grown hand.

Pianists re-forming their method according to Leschetizky, will arrive at the goal only through entire abstention from playing in their former style while forming their new one. They must even give up sight-reading. Regard this change of method as a " treatment," so to speak, during which the prescribed diet must be strictly observed, for a lapse in the regimen would throw the fingers out, and consequently lose time. Even when the exercises and scales are thoroughly mastered in accordance with the Method, play nothing from your earlier repertory for some time, but take up études and pieces which you have never studied, playing none of the old pieces until you are sure not to lapse into the former manner of playing.

Do not fear to lose your old-time dexterity of finger during this enforced vacation; on the contrary, it will reappear afterward more potent and perfect than ever.

For such a change of method, patience, and still more patience, is needful; but one is repaid by the result. That has converted many an unbeliever.



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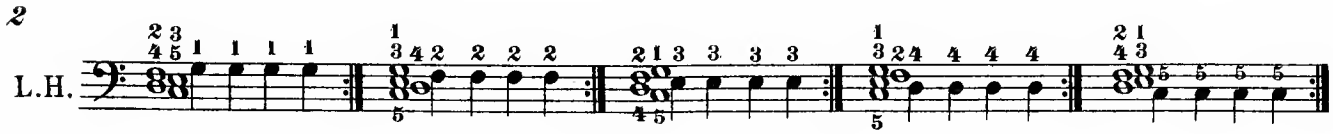
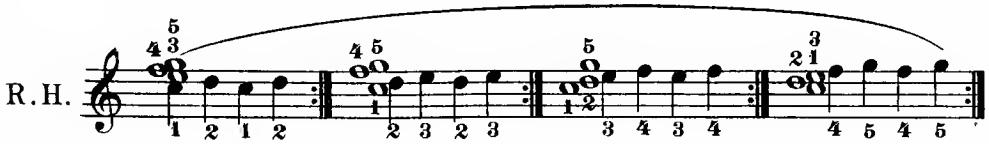
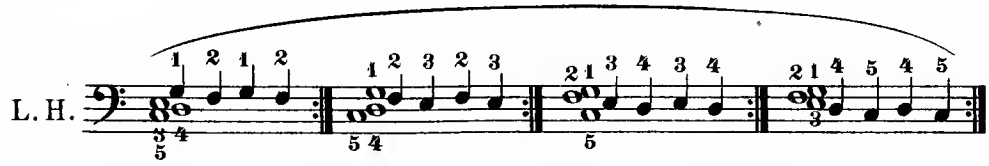
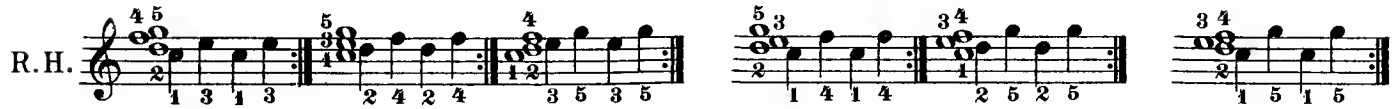
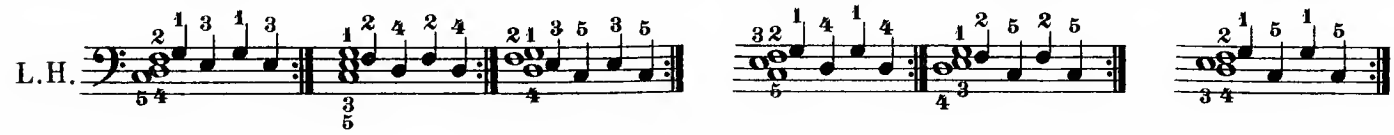
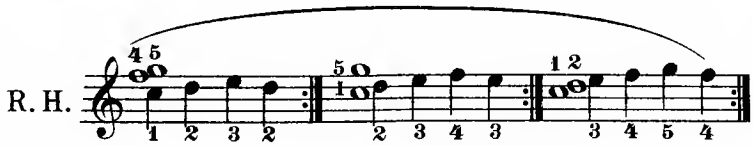


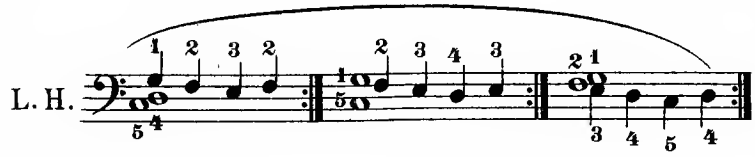


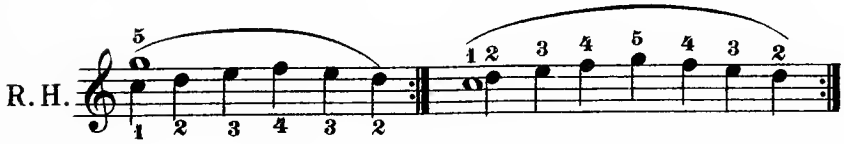


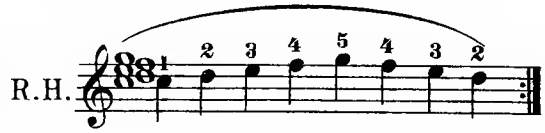


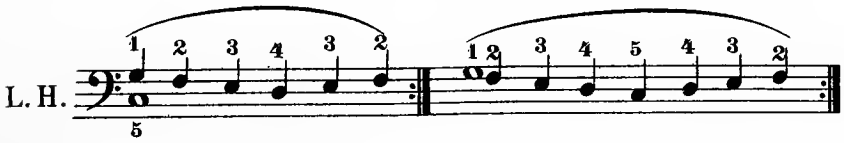


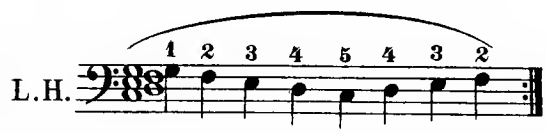


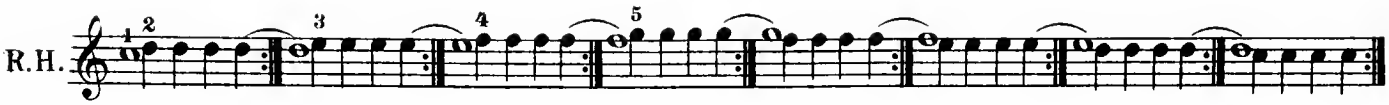


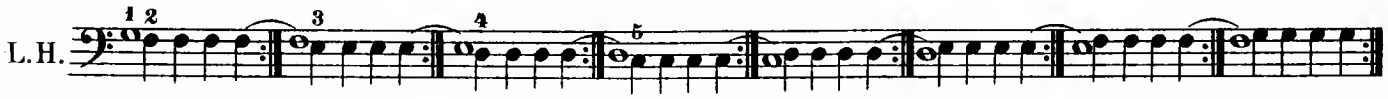


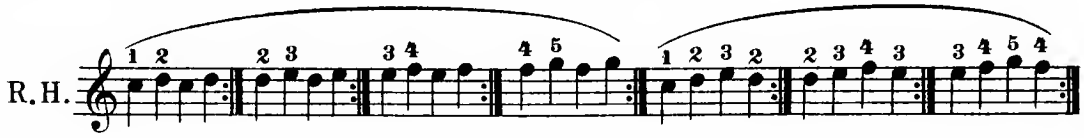







R.H.


L.H.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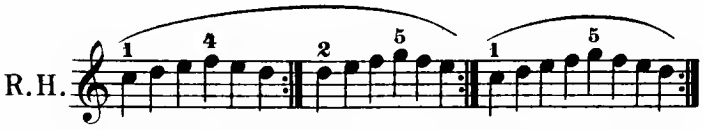
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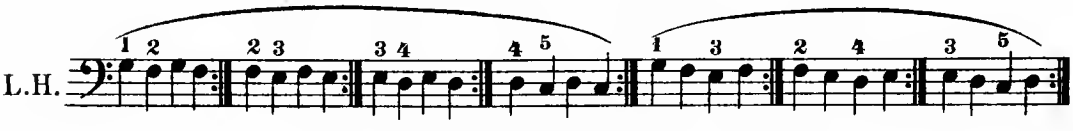
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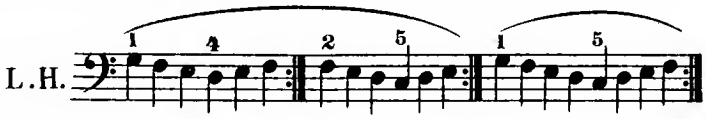
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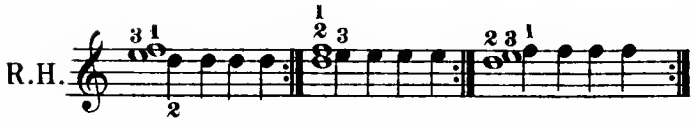
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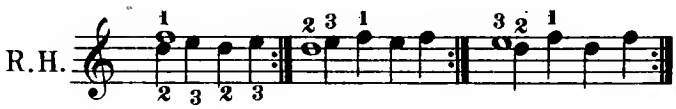
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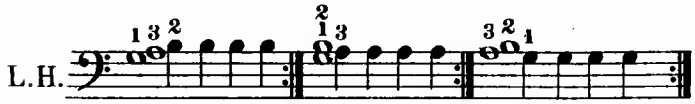
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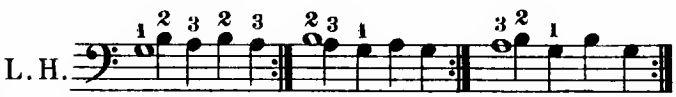
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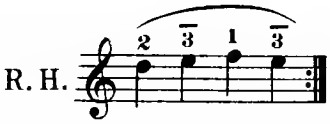
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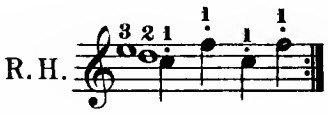
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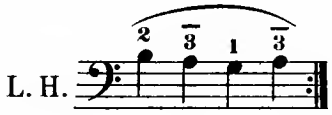
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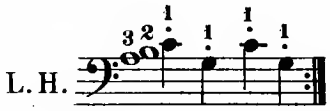
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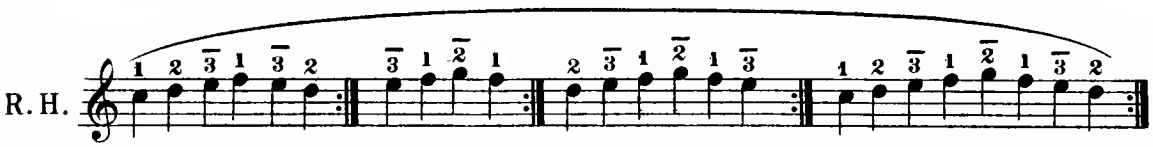
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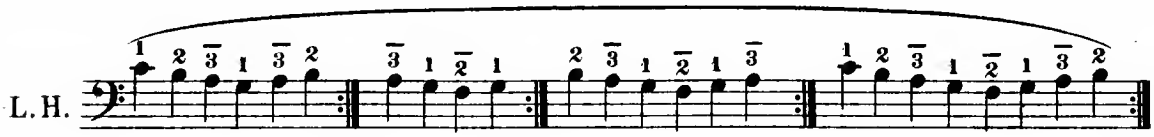
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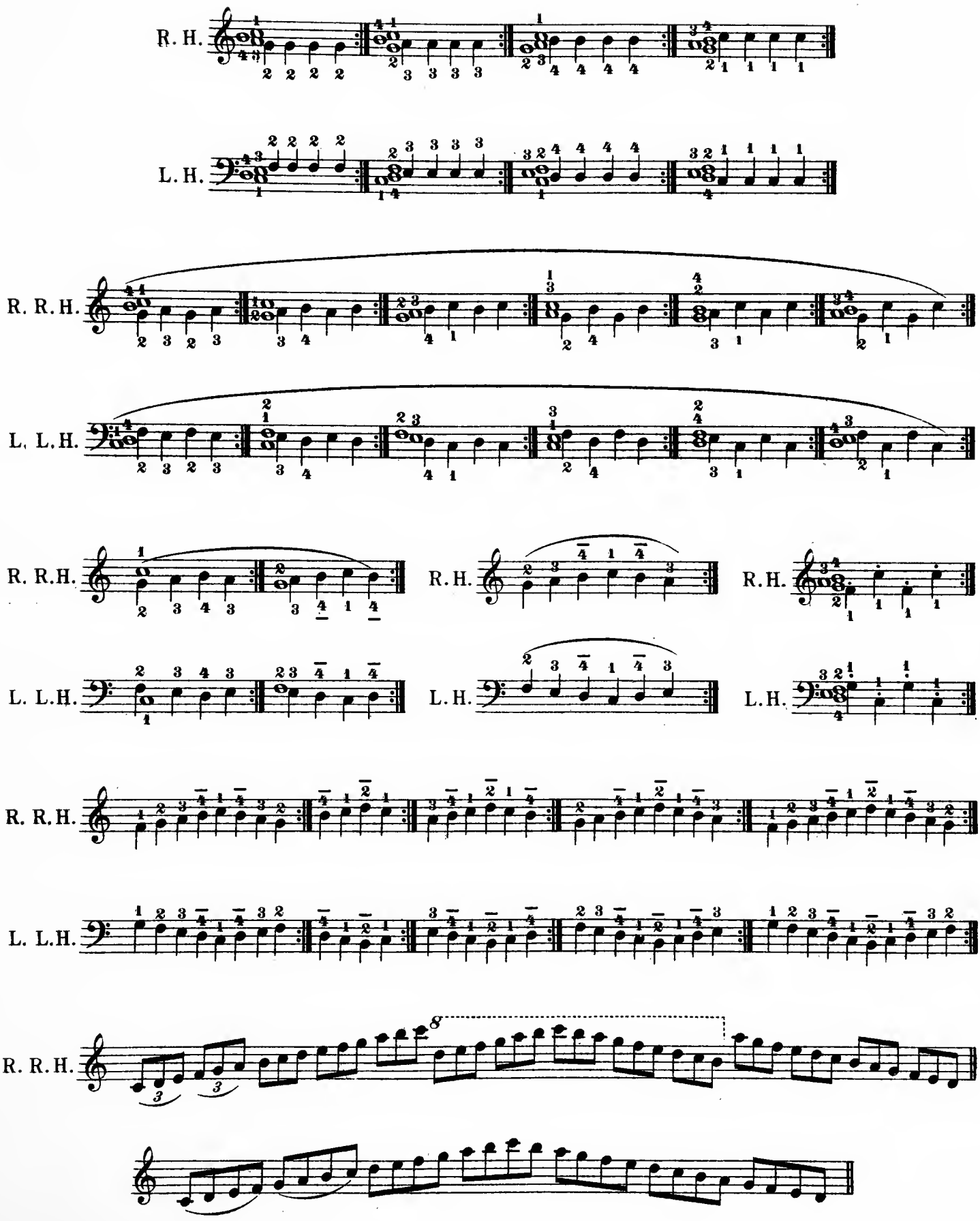
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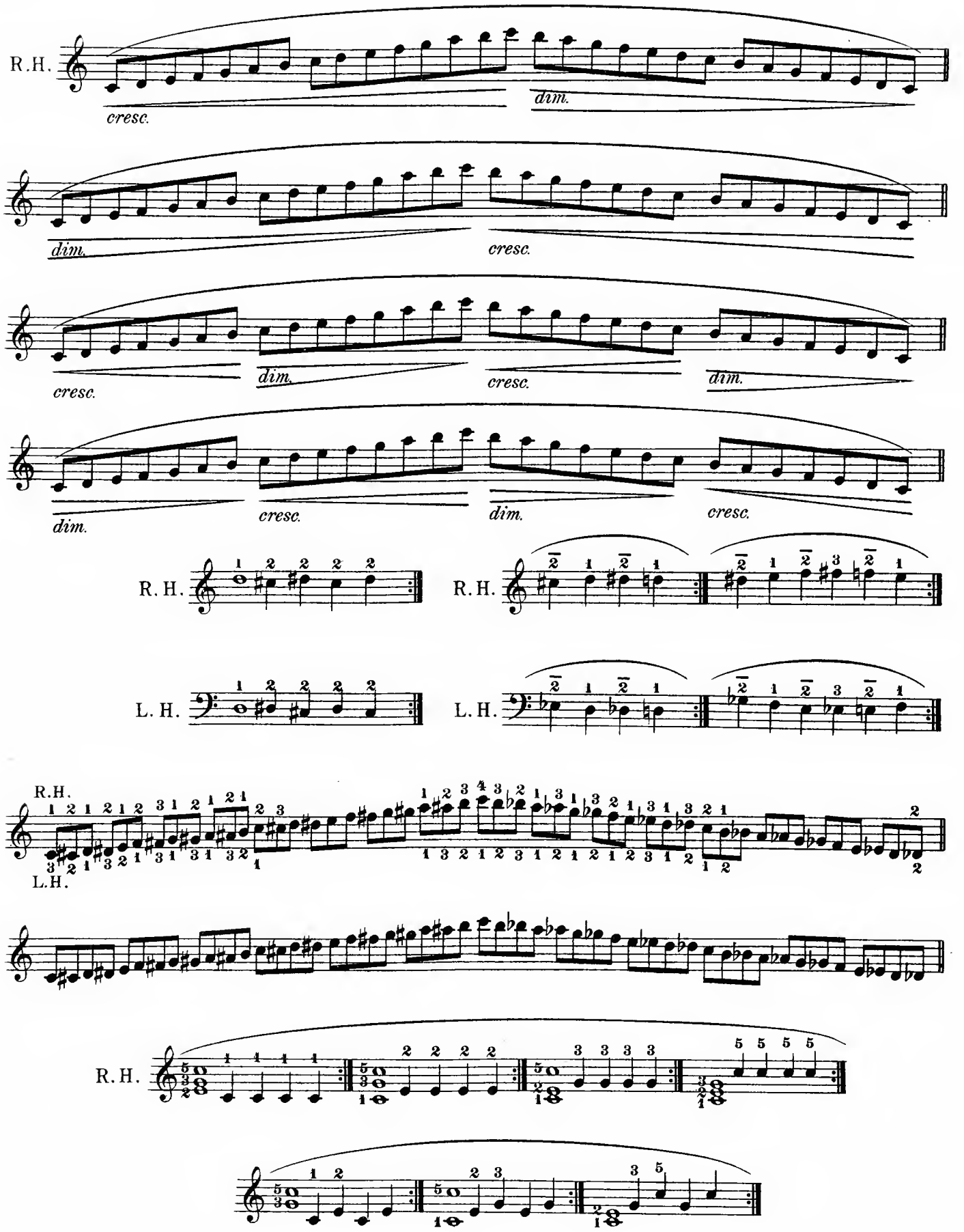
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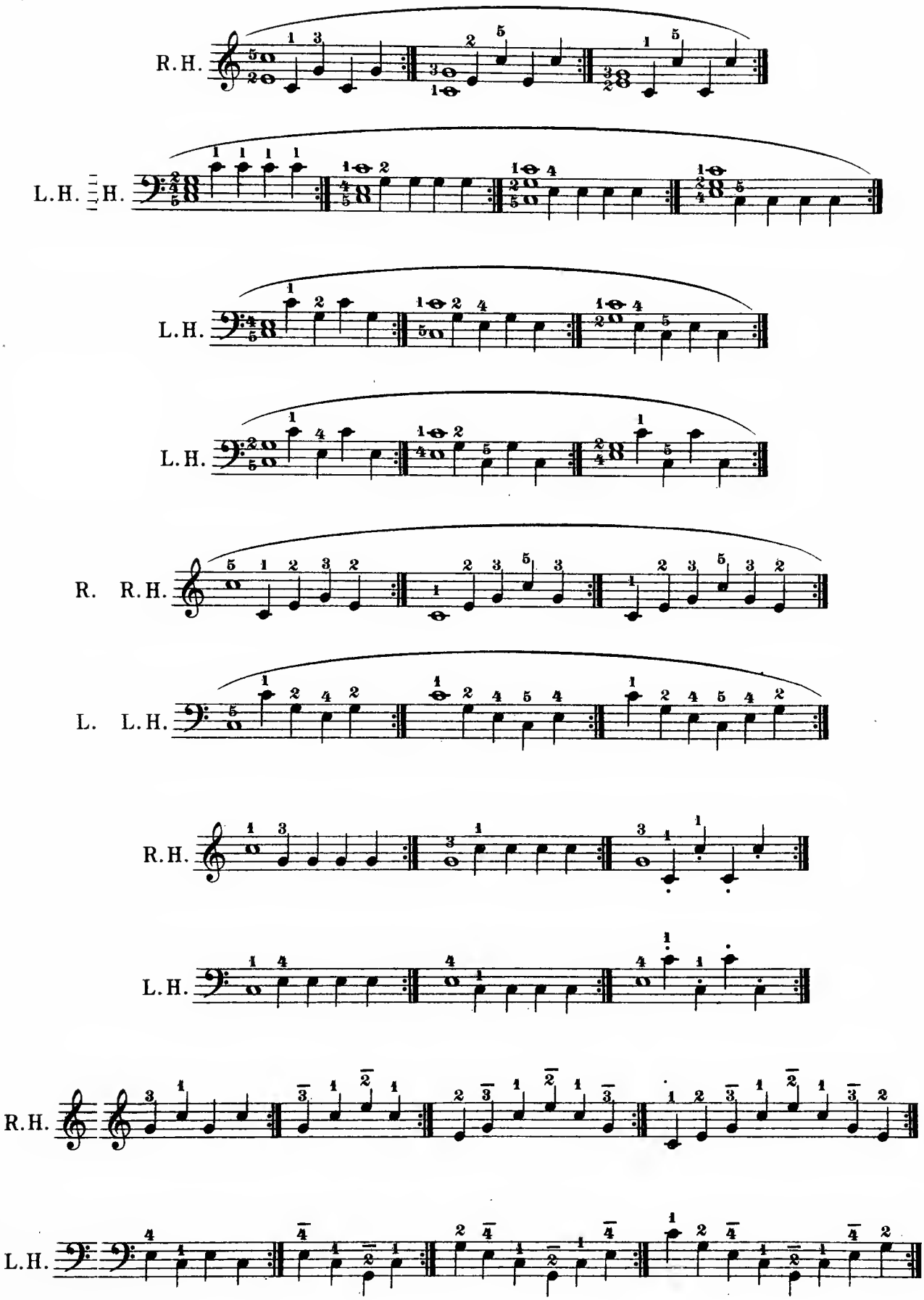
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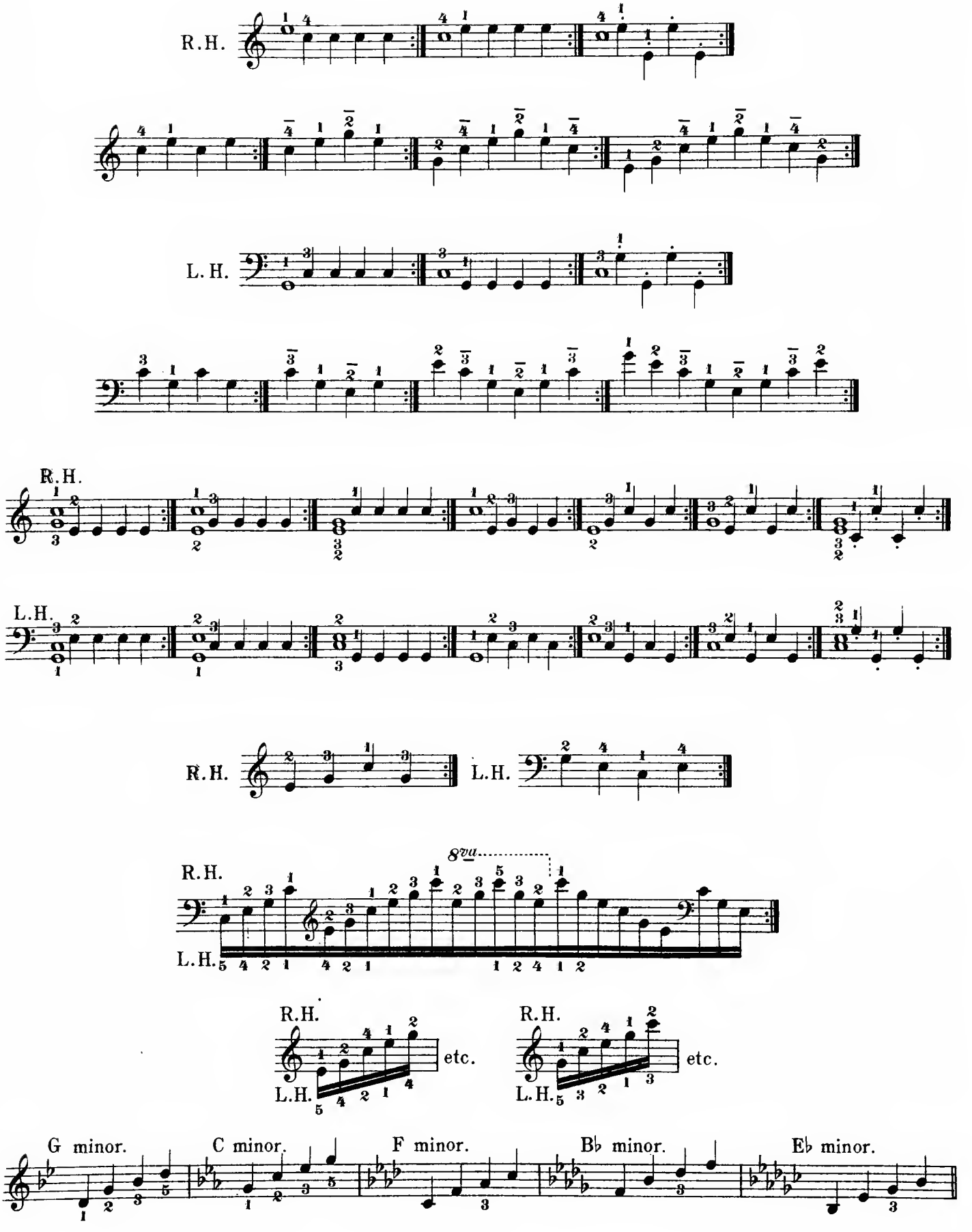
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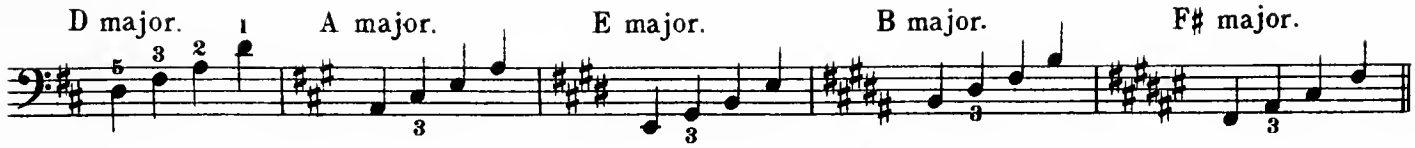
G minor.
C minor.
F minor.
B♭ minor.
E♭ minor.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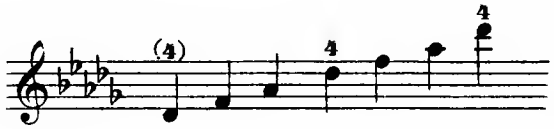
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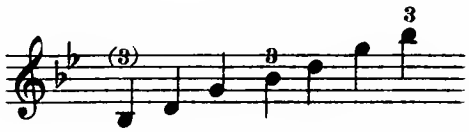
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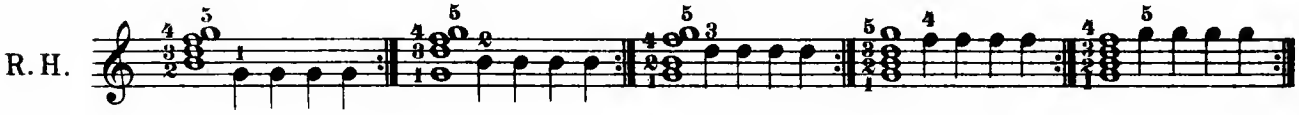
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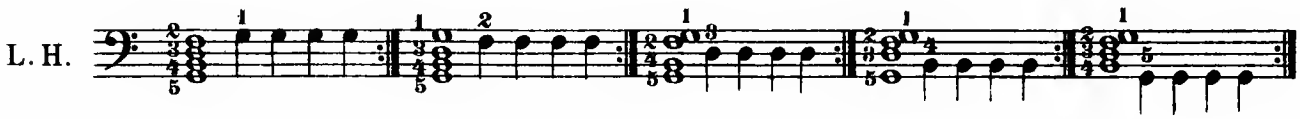
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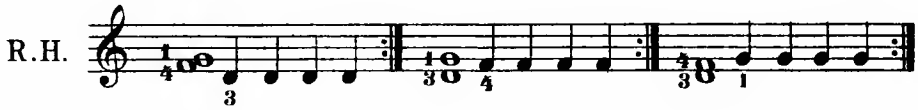
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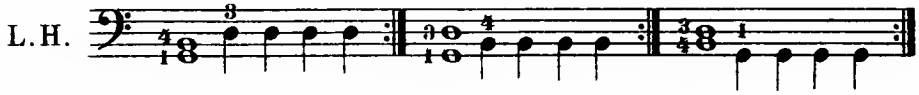
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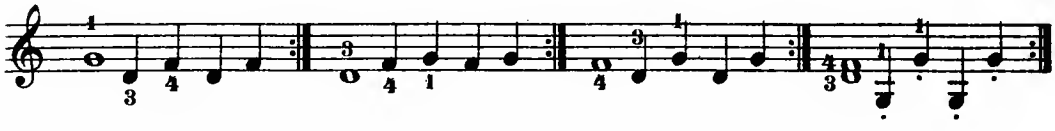

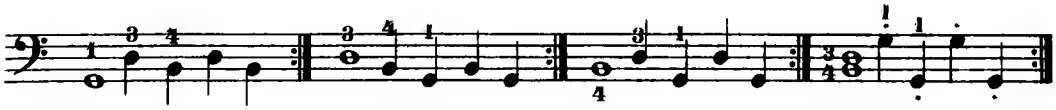

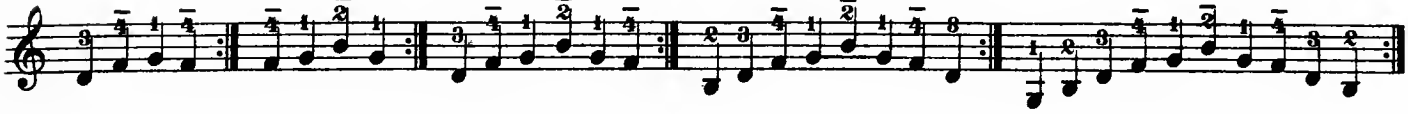

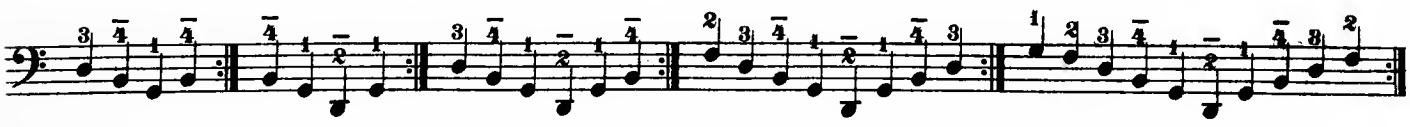

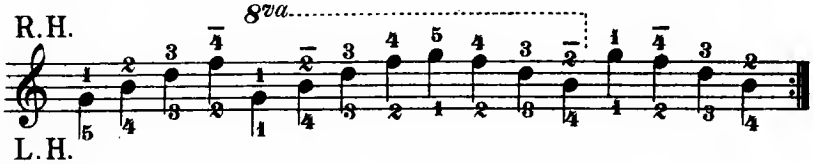
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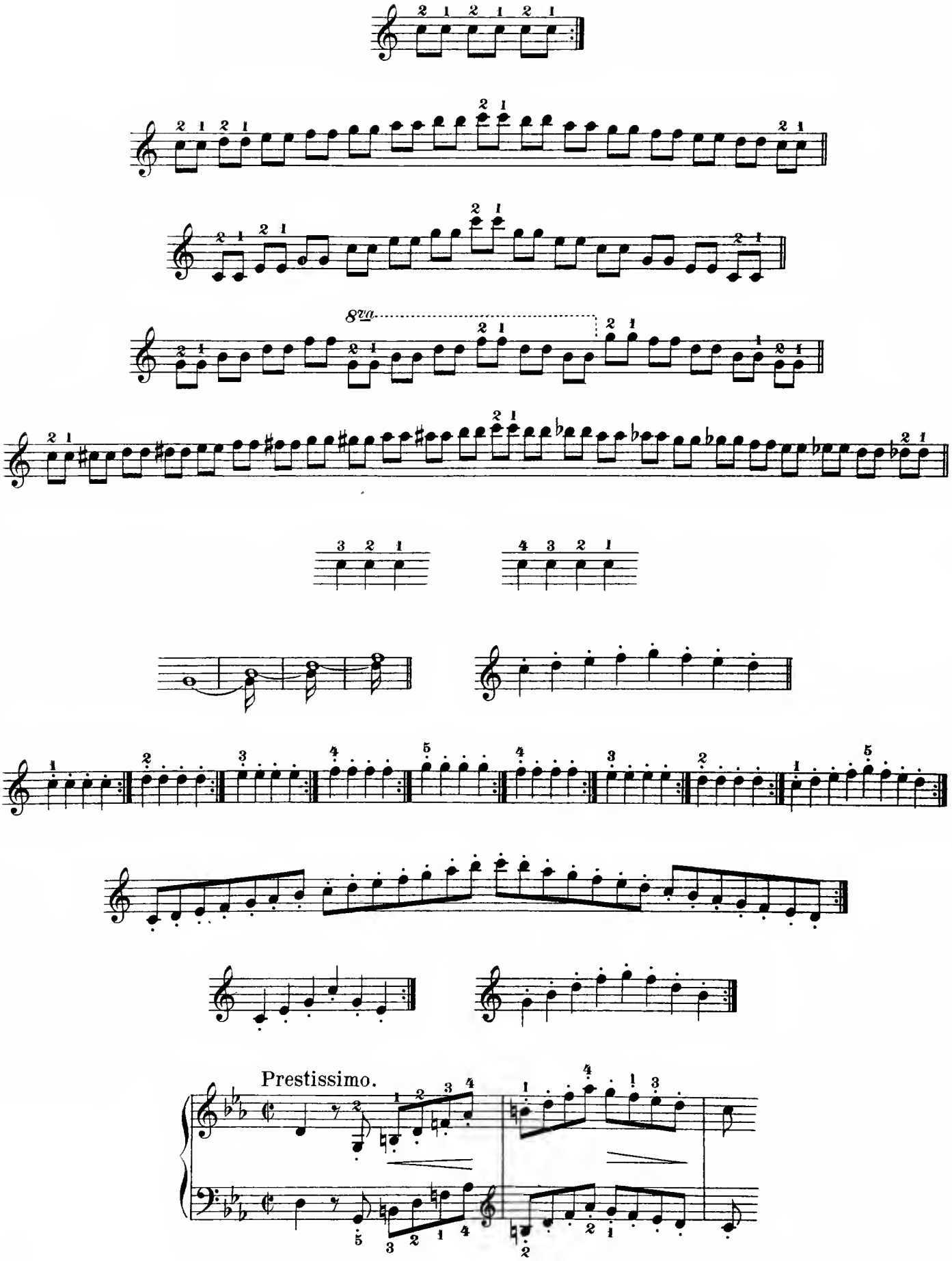
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Liszt, Etude.

cantando

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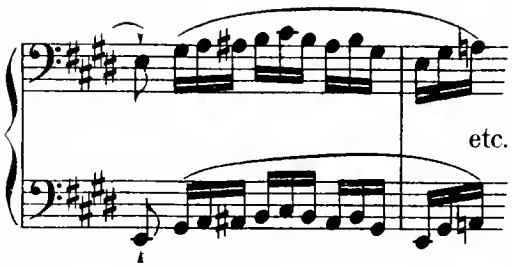
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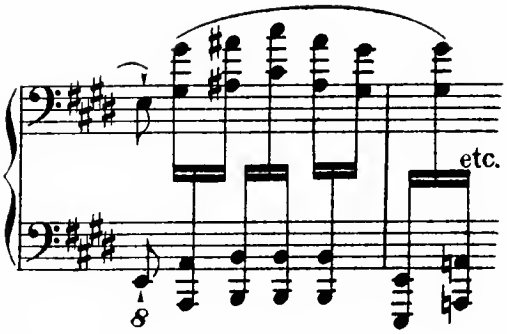
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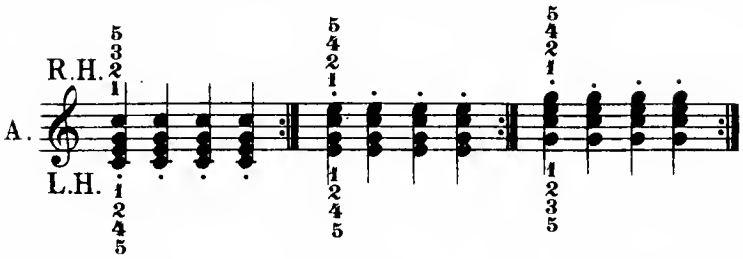
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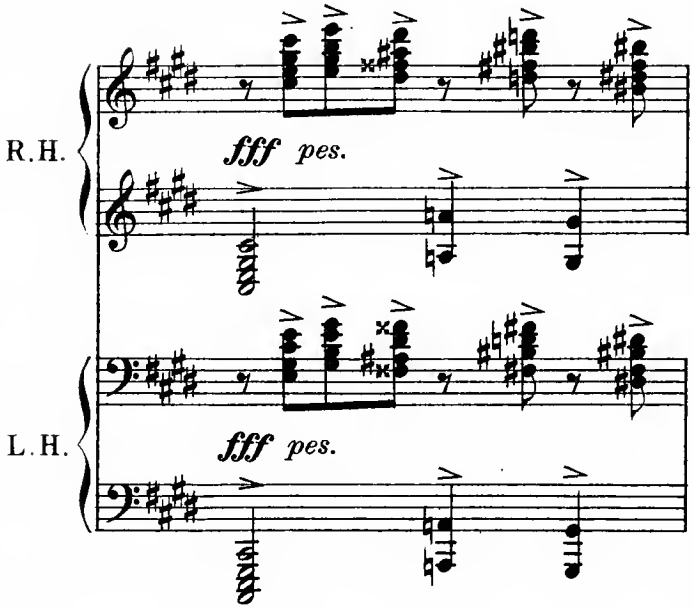
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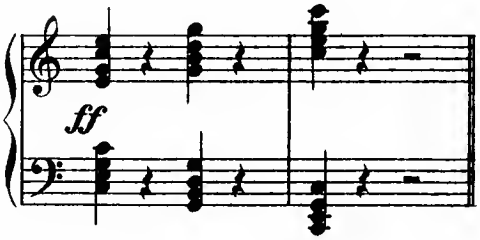
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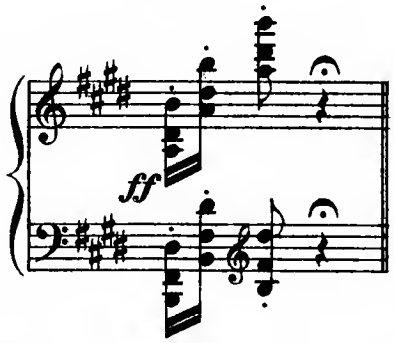
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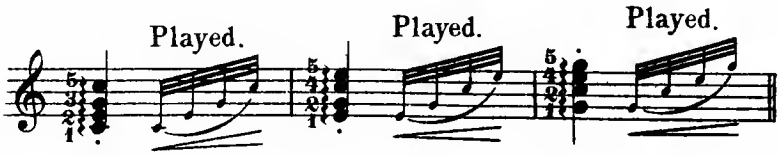
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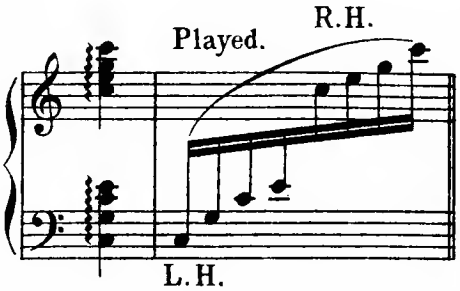
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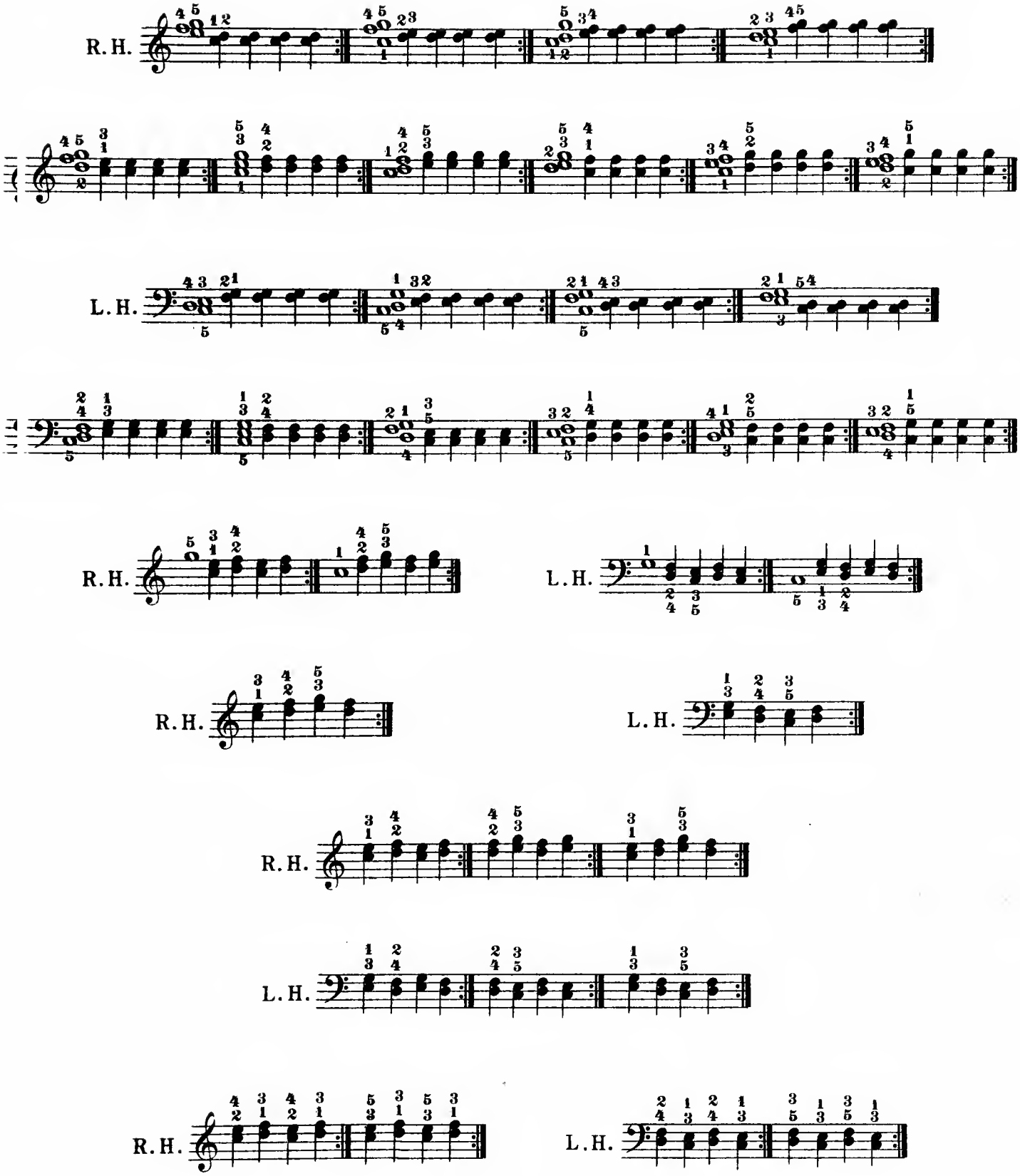
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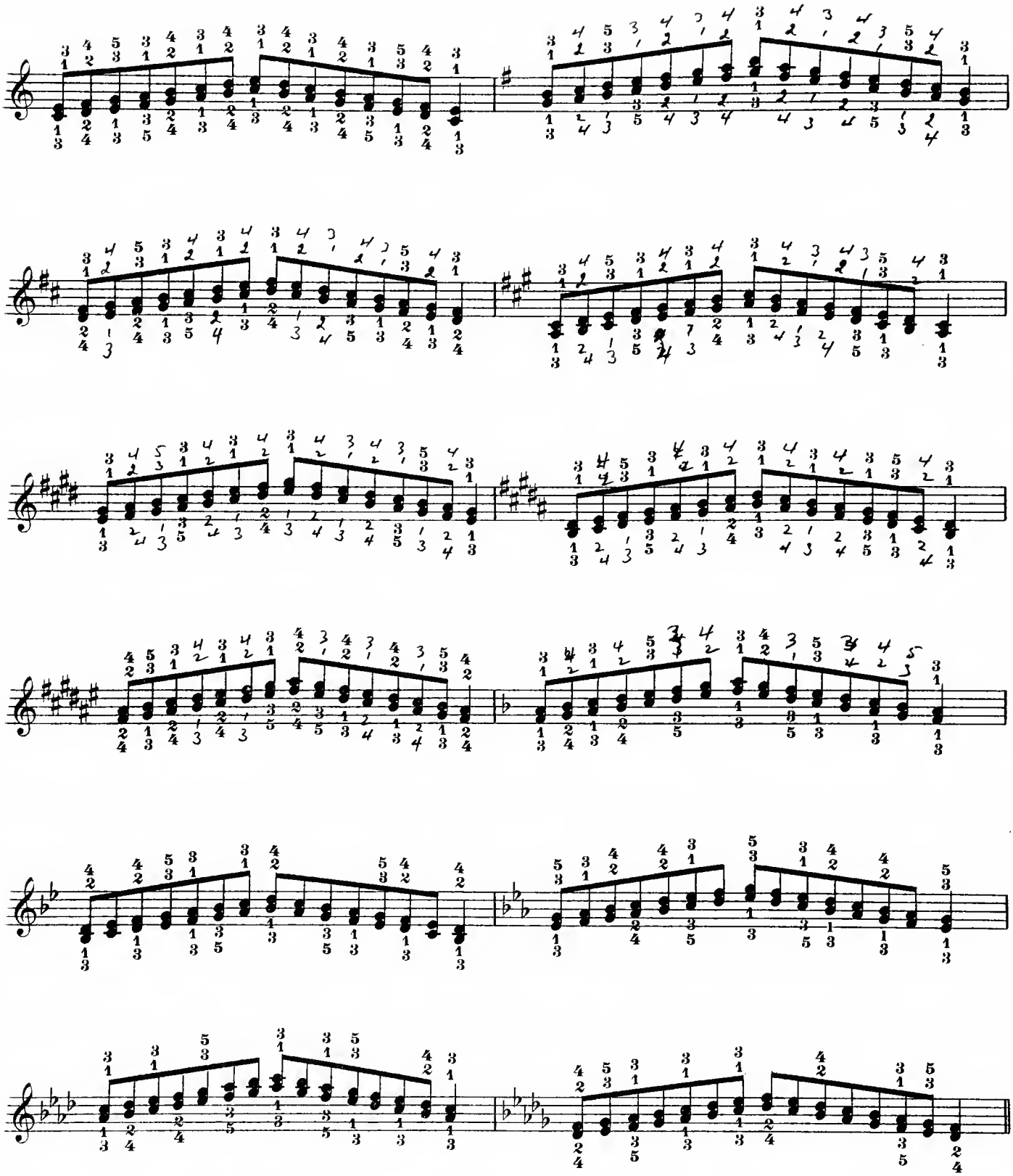

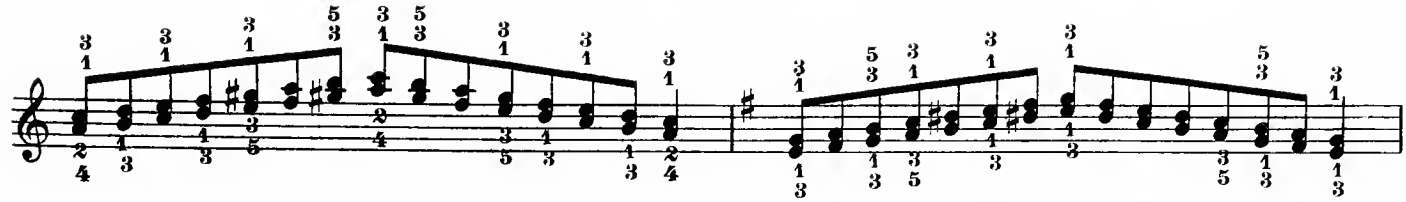

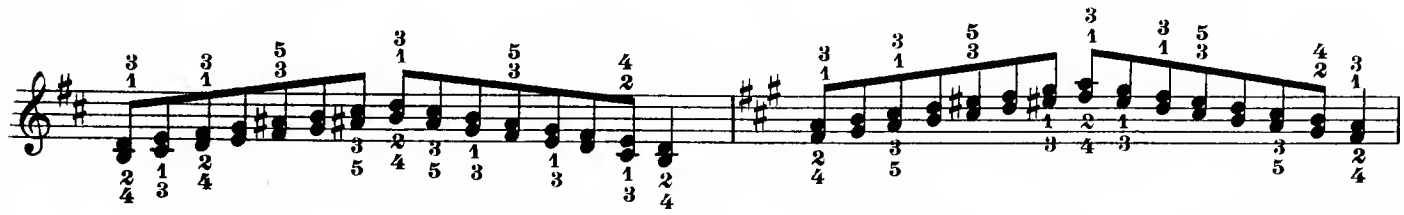

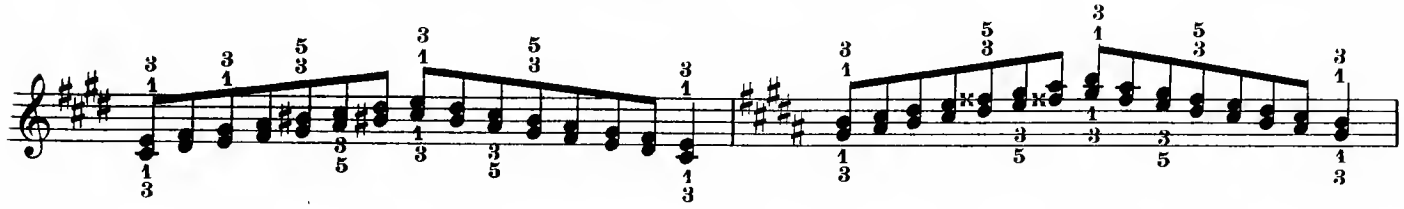

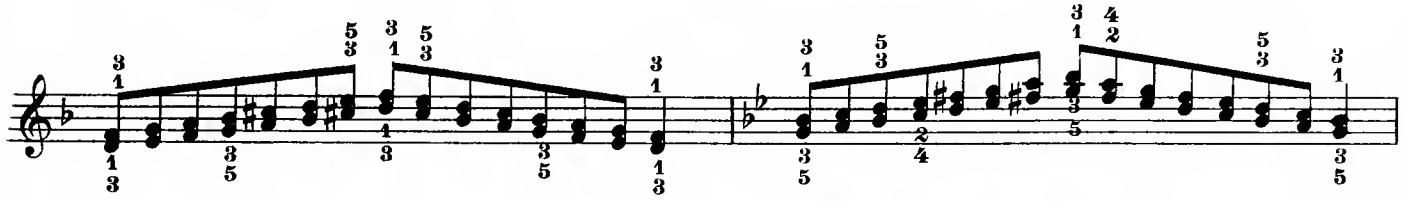

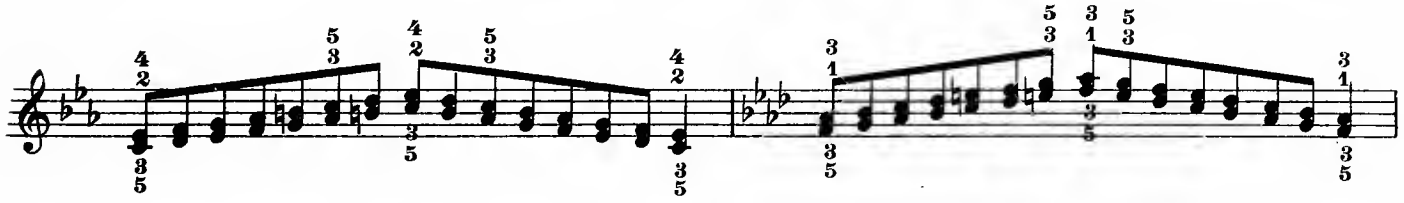

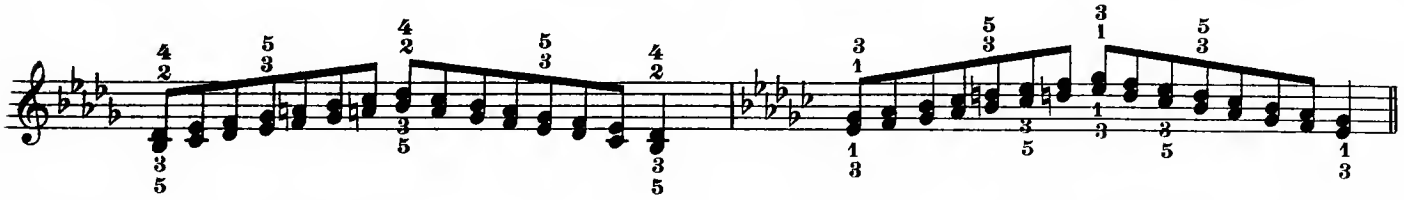

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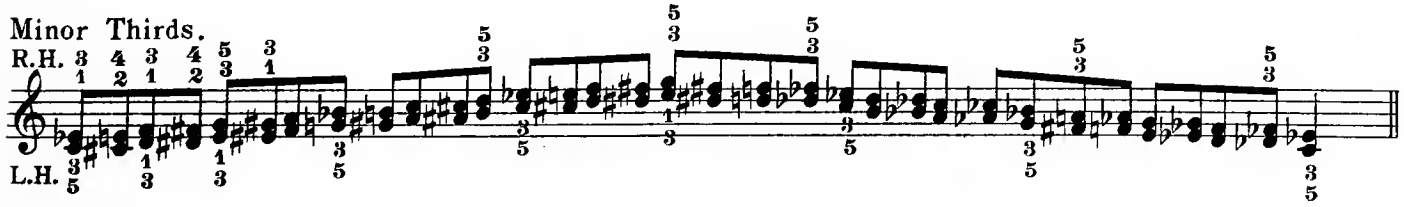
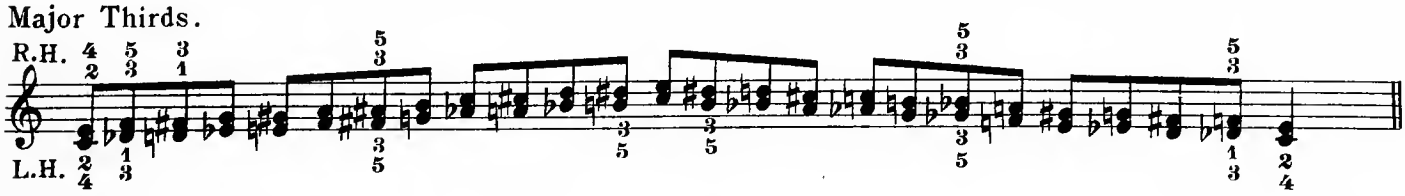
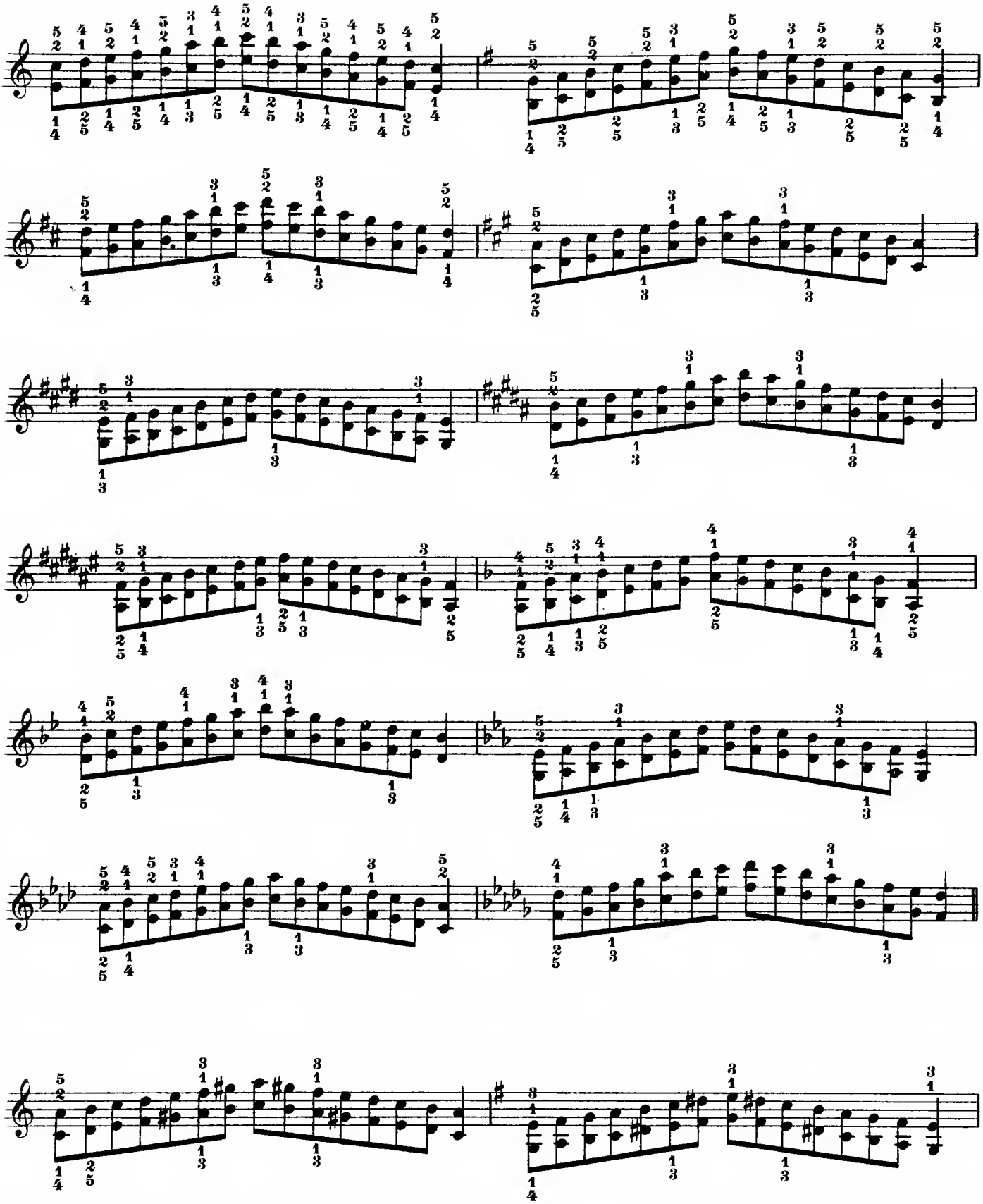
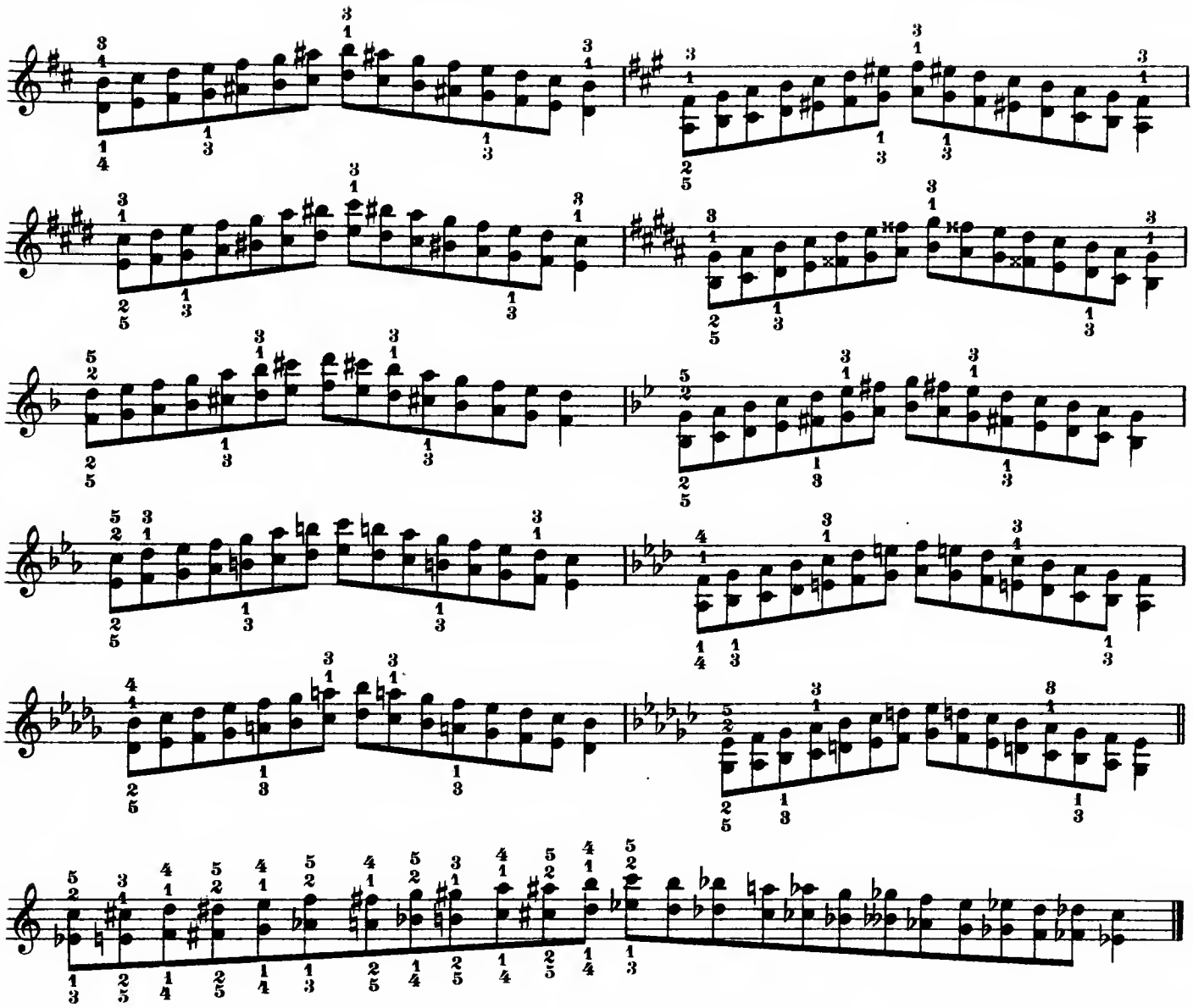
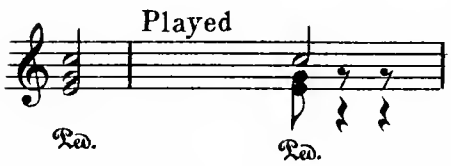


Major Thirds.





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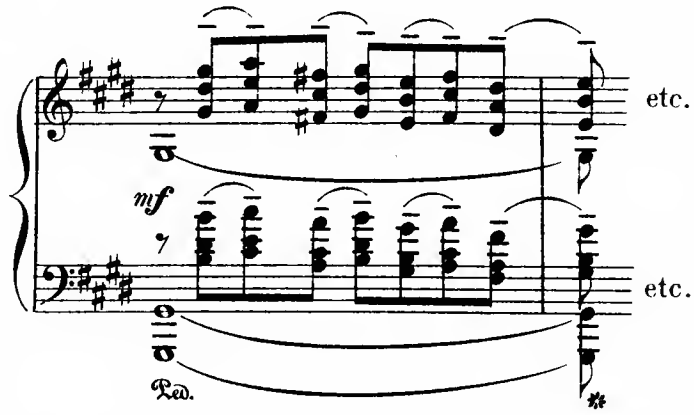
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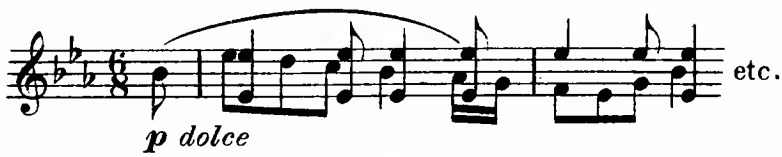
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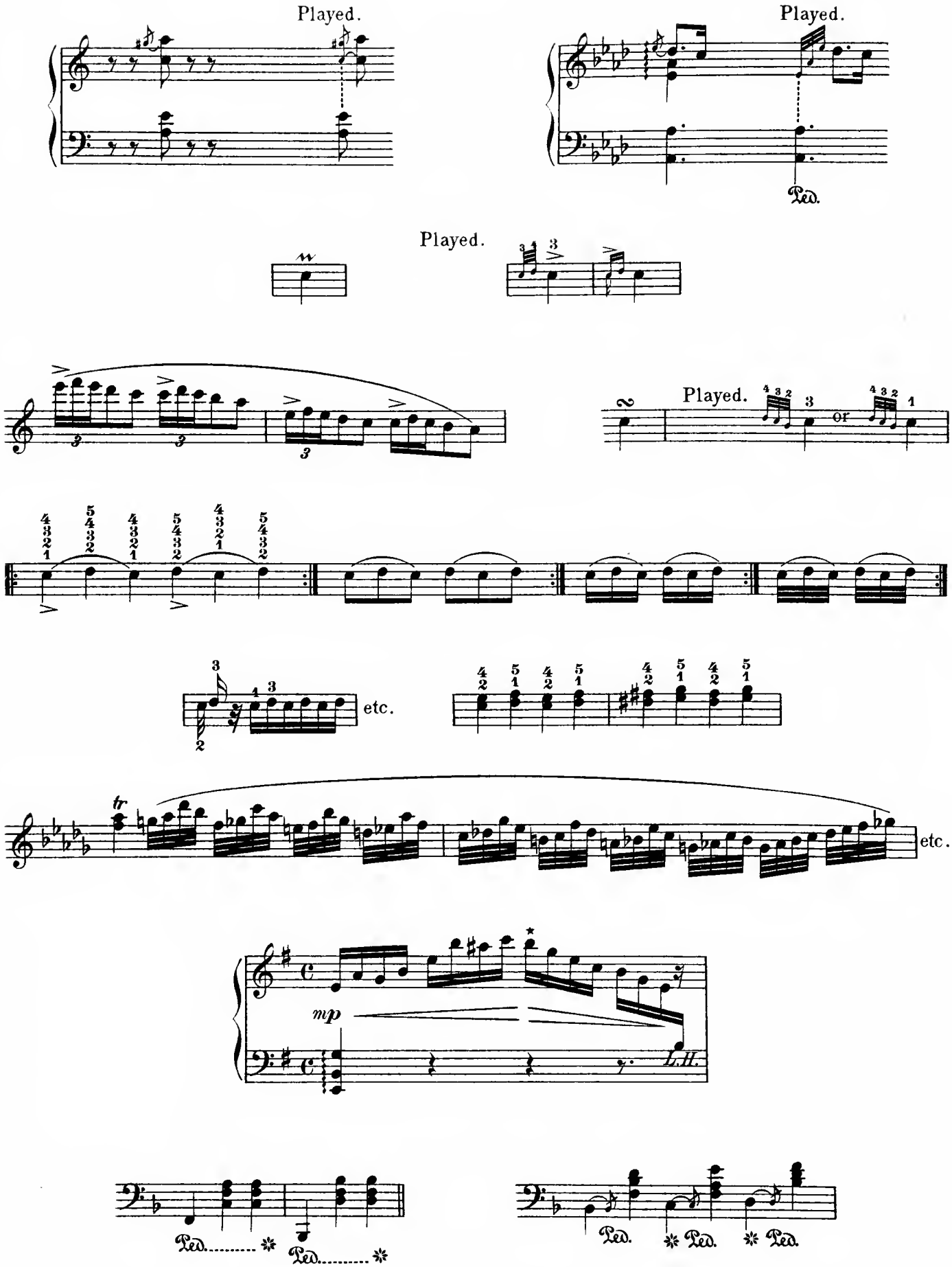
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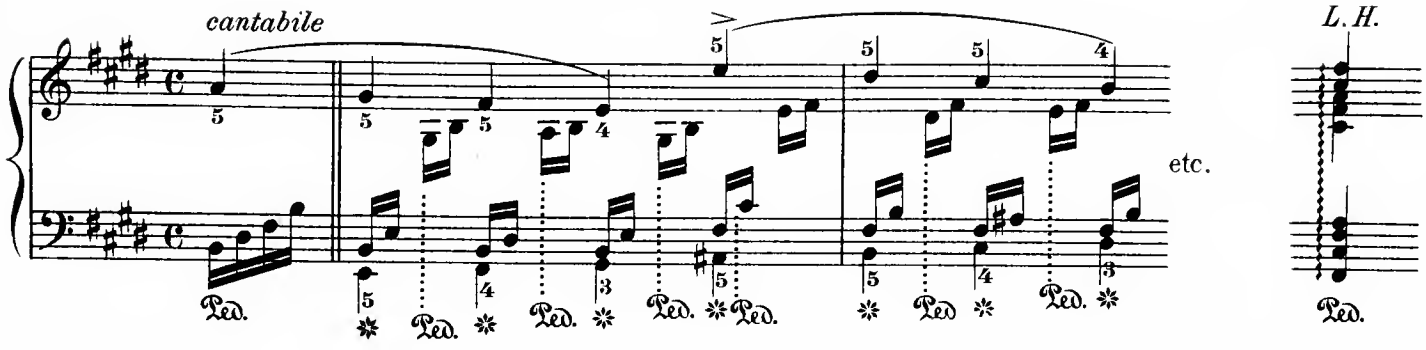
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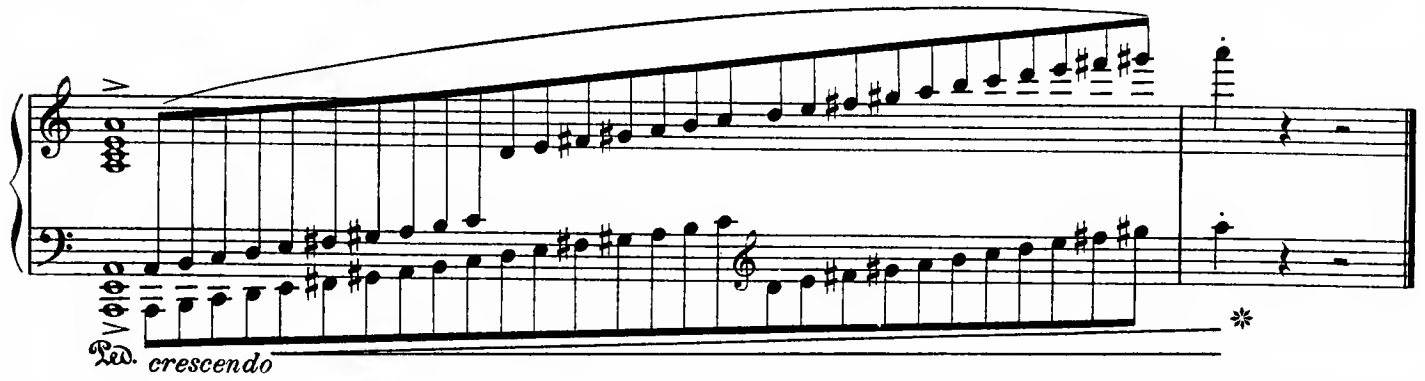
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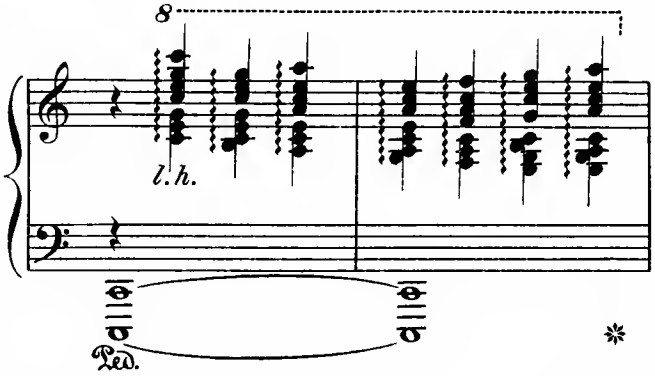
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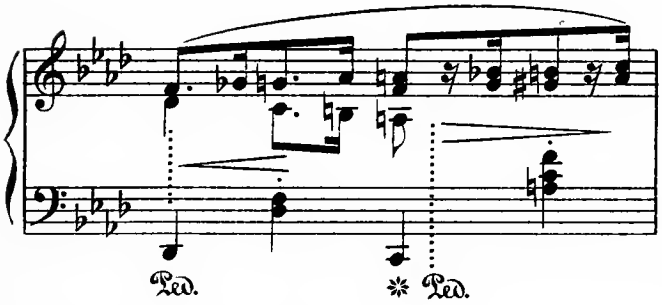
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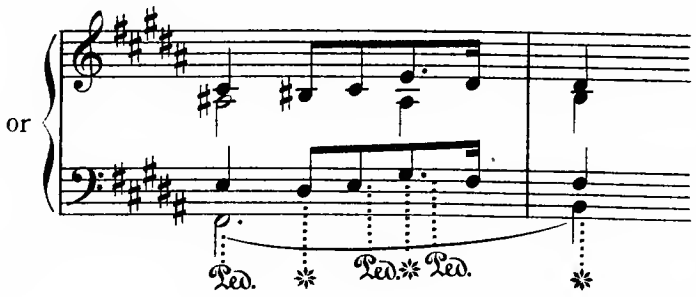
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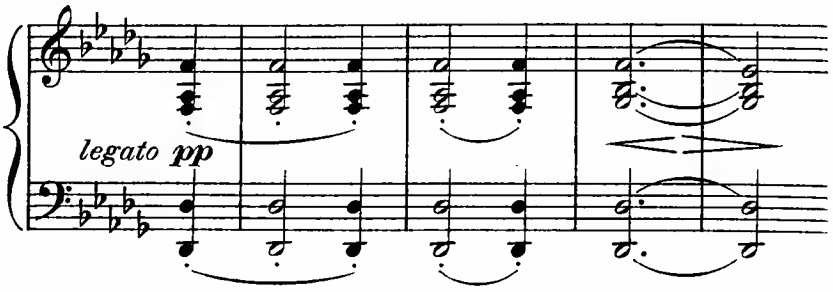
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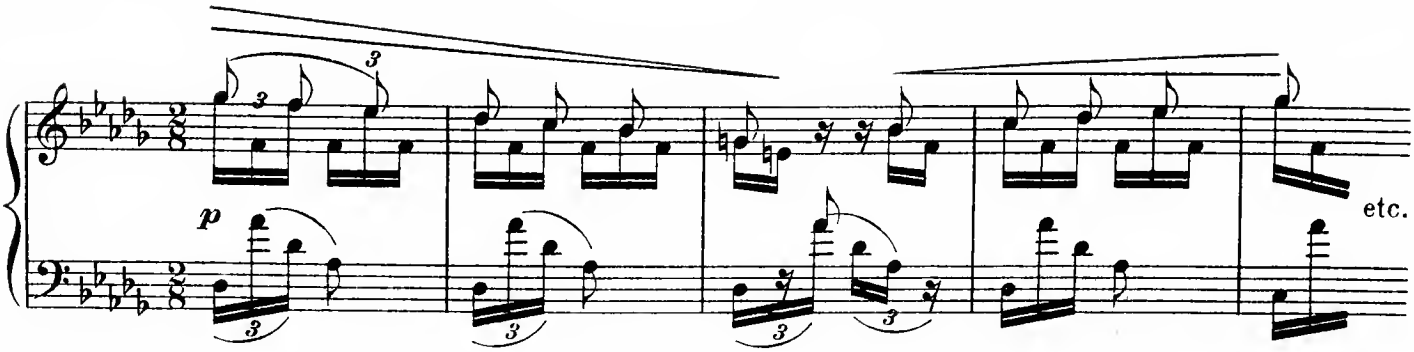
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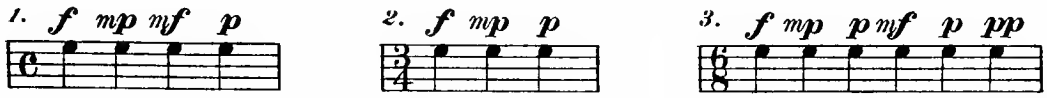
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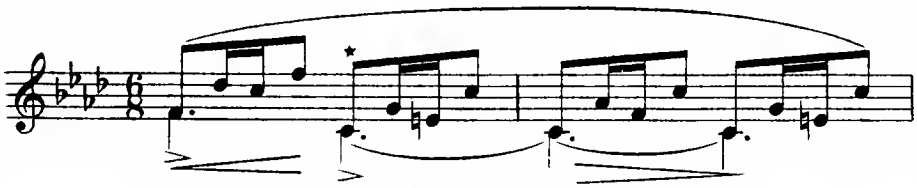

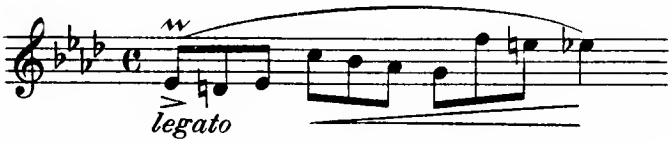
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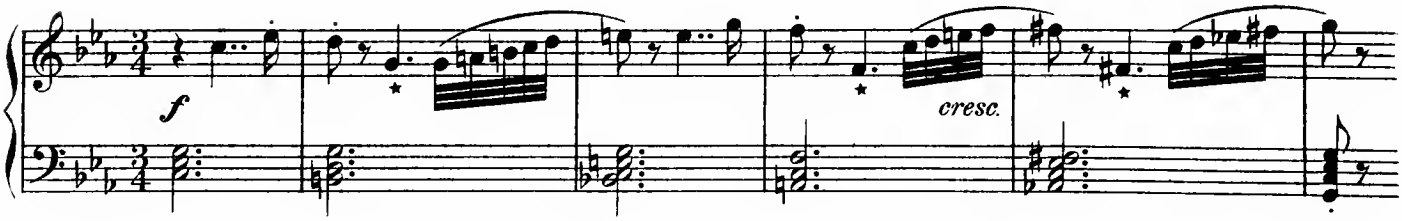
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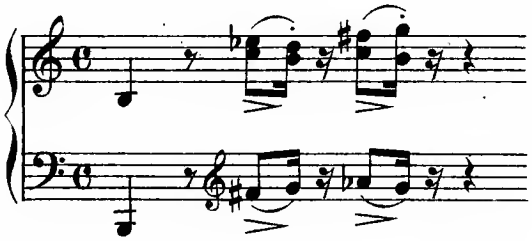

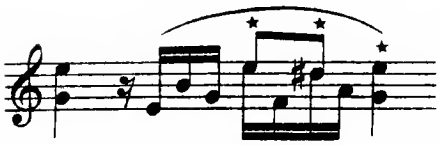

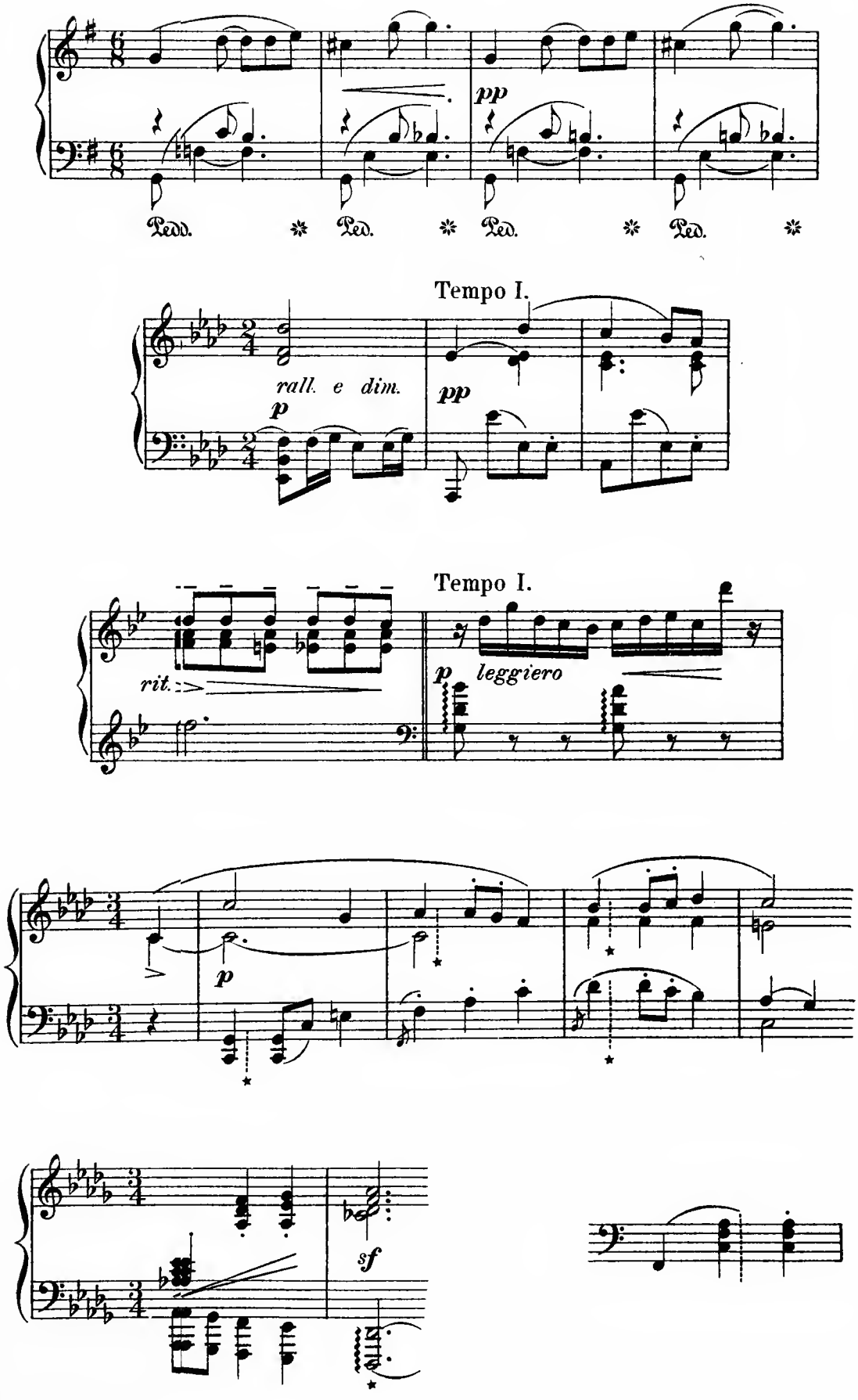
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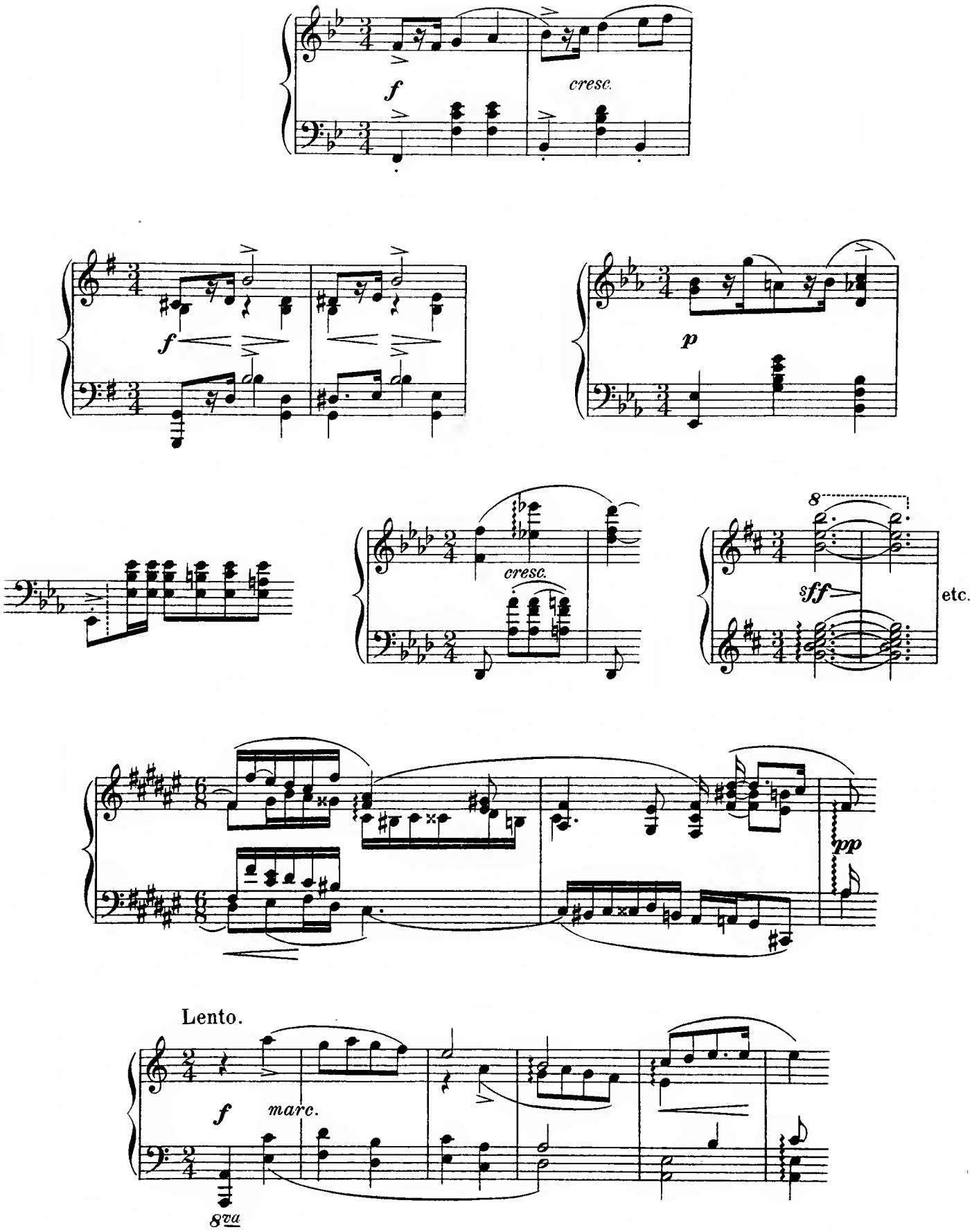
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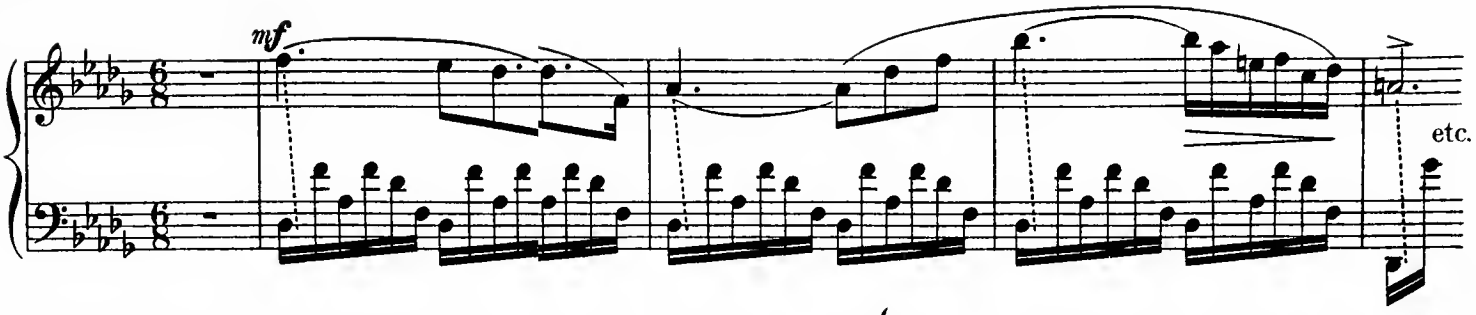
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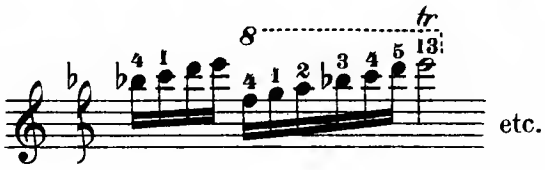
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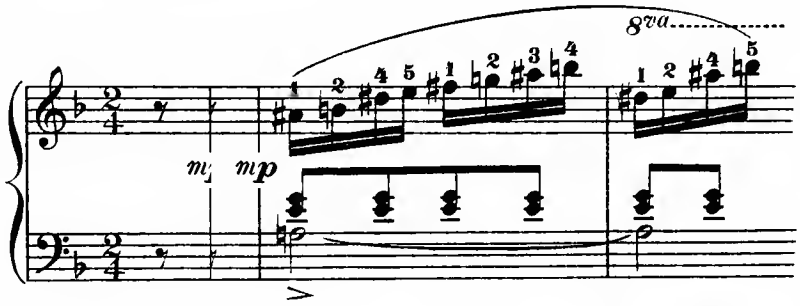
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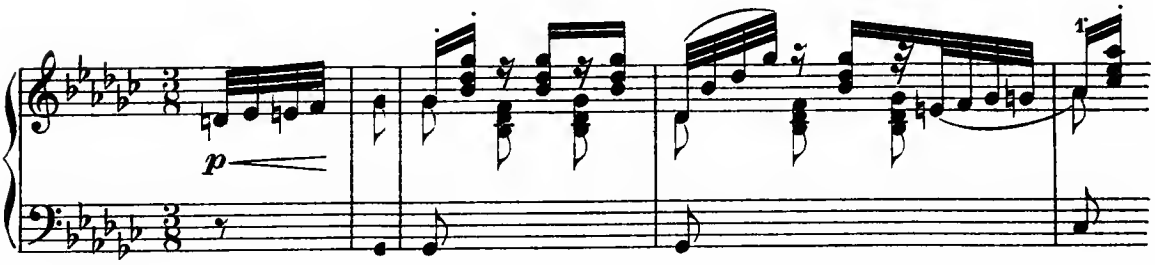
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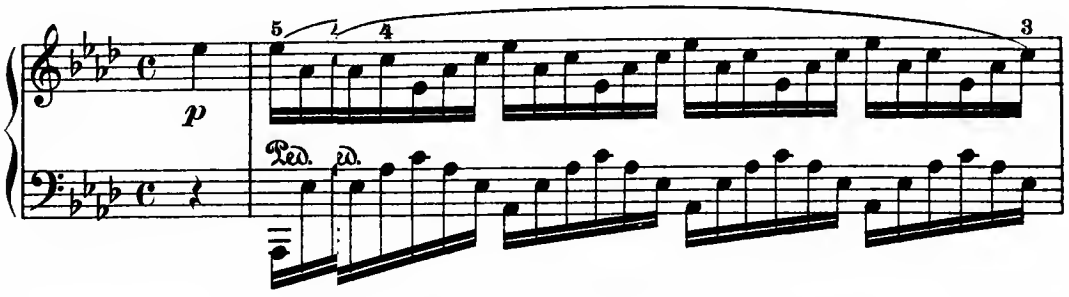
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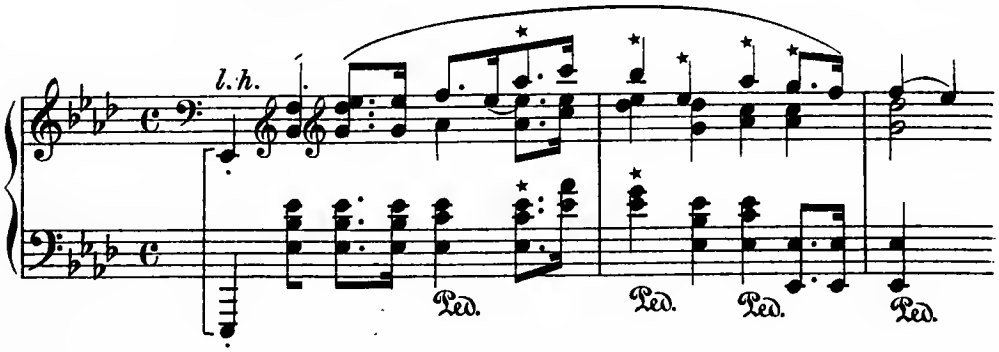
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