

A BRIEF SKETCH OF THE WORK
OF
MRS. CROSBY ADAMS
AND A LIST
OF
HER MUSICAL WRITINGS



MRS. CROSBY ADAMS

[In response to a request from the editor of "The Asheville Times," Asheville, North Carolina, the following article was prepared for that paper. It is now reproduced in this more convenient and permanent form.]

MRS. CROSBY ADAMS

BY CLEO BENEDICT

Among Asheville's great possibilities is the prospect of its becoming the musical center of the eastern north and south of the United States. Its close proximity to the largest and most important cities, north and south, verify this. The Biennial meeting of the National Federation of Music Clubs, to be held here in 1923, will be a very important factor in Asheville's development, not only musically but in every way, and will doubtless rouse each individual to the realization of what such a gathering means to any city.

Among the gifted and remarkable women who have adopted North Carolina for their home is Mrs. Crosby Adams, who lives in Montreat, in the picturesque "House in the Woods." Mr. and Mrs. Adams left Chicago, where they were actively engaged for twenty-one years in teaching, to find in Montreat a quiet spot where Mrs. Adams could give undivided attention to her creative art in her special work.

She is not only a teacher and composer, but she is also a lecturer, musical critic, a splendid pianist and organist and a writer of literary merit. Ernest Hutcheson, pianist and teacher of note in the musical world, states that he considers Mrs. Adams the foremost composer of music for children in the United States.

A woman of great versatility, Mrs. Adams has a charming personality and is an excellent housekeeper, refuting the somewhat erroneous idea that women artists are not good home-makers.

Mrs. Crosby Adams, whose maiden name was Juliette A. Graves, was born and spent the first twenty-one years of her life at Niagara Falls, New York. To her early impressions and love for the majestic scenery of that place she attributes much of the development of her musical sensibilities.

BECOMES TEACHER

After some study with local teachers, she came under the direction of Mrs. C. S. P. Cary, a noted teacher of Rochester, New York. At twenty-one she accepted a position as teacher in Ingham University, Le Roy, New York, and there also continued her studies under Professor Claude Crittenden, a pupil of Kiel, Kullak and Liszt. After four years' experience as a teacher in this school she married Mr. Crosby Adams, and their first home was in Buffalo, New York, where both Mr. and Mrs. Adams became prominently identified with musical interests of the city. Later they moved to Kansas City, where Mrs. Adams' talents won recognition and secured for her a large student and artistic following. She was also organist of one of the largest churches in the city.

In 1892, Mr. and Mrs. Adams moved to Chicago, and Mrs. Adams at once entered upon an active musical life in that city. Her success there was most pronounced, which was only natural, as she is essentially a student. It was her keen observation of that element in music which proved most attractive to the child that prompted the material she has prepared. While providing musical

instruction for the child, she was constantly studying the child nature, thereby schooling herself to become better qualified to furnish instruction, both as to the manner of presenting it and the character of the material used.

CHILDREN'S WORK

Mrs. Adams has made a specialty of children's work. Thus she has chosen for her special branch of musical composition that of preparing music for little children, which, while at once instructive and well constructed, is also interesting to them. Through her long experience as a teacher and through her observance of child nature she discovered the fact that the study of music in its foundation as to the material presented to the child was often not only uninteresting but trivial and not suited to his needs.

Mrs. Adams' theory was to enter into the child's work, adopt words and melodies which, without being childish, were childlike and quite within his easy grasp and understanding and which nevertheless appeared to him to be essentially grown-up work.

Her ideals were revolutionary and it required a great deal of foresight and courage to pursue a path which was not the accepted and known traditional one. These principal theories which are being practically carried out today with great success, are the following:

First, she presents to the child at the very beginning, a view of several octaves, teaching him to begin the study of notation with A instead of the commonly used middle C; second, to the delight of the child's exploring tendencies, the five-finger province and the treble clef monopoly are abandoned; the notes of the bass clef are learned with those of the treble and the left hand has as much play on the keyboard as the right from the very beginning; third, the scale is presented with attractive words and with a clear idea of the scale-pattern or composition, namely the number of whole steps and half steps by which he will be prepared to build all of the different major scales on the staff degrees, and thus become acquainted in the very beginning with all technicalities.

TEACHING READING

Fourth, transposition forms part of these early lessons in that the child may sooner become a ready reader. To that end some of the little studies are to be written out and played in various keys by the pupil. This does away with the difficulty and fear of transposition that many a pupil has experienced when taught in the old methods.

Fifth, the use of the pedal is taught much sooner than has formerly been the custom, together with the constant and refining influence of ear-training. Mrs. Adams' book of Pedal Studies is unique in that there are no pedal markings. Says the author: "This development of the ear and the artistic use of the pedals cannot be begun too young. . . . The student should from the first be led to listen to the tones his fingers make, to paint his music with tone colors . . . and to set in vibration the musical overtones by his tactile-sense and his ear-sense rather than put in motion those dissonating, jarring sounds produced by an inelastic and unyielding touch, without the listening ear. To emphasize again: The ear has everything to do with the manipulation of the pedals."

With these ideas in view, Mrs. Adams in 1902 proceeded to compose for the earliest beginners a set of Five Tone-Sketches with the following names: "Singing and Swinging, In the Rocking Chair, Dance of the Marionettes, Lullaby, and What the Bells Say." After accomplishing this, she realized that these little selections were too difficult for the beginners, they would be better for

the second grade work, and so she prepared the "Primary Tone Pictures," of which was written by a critic who reviewed them: "These little pieces are incomparably above the usual level of children's music. They belong to something entirely higher and finer, melodically and contrapuntally considered. . . . If the composer has more of the same class of material, she owes it to the public to make it known."

VERY FIRST LESSONS

However, Mrs. Adams believed it a mistake to have named them primary as it made the child too conscious of the fact that he was just a beginner, so she produced another book entitled, "The Very First Lessons at the Piano," which is now nearing the one-hundred-thousand mark. The following criticism has been made of it: "It has been considered a revolutionary work in that it employs nine major tonalities with a hint of the minors, thus being a concrete evidence of Mrs. Adams' belief that a child could encompass more than is usually expected of him while still a little beginner." As some one has aptly expressed it, "Mrs. Adams makes grown-up-looking and sounding music possible for very young children—like dressing up in mother's dresses." One conservative critic says of the book: "Mrs. Crosby Adams has succeeded in combining scientific simplicity with a degree of melody that will make the piano exercises interesting to children." She has the knowledge which transforms the much dreaded practice hour into a childhood's delight.

Then followed in this series the Preliminary Studies for the Piano, the children delighted with this high-sounding word. This book is used in conjunction with the Home Study Books, Part 1 and Part 2, which are "So deftly and scientifically arranged that a careful study of them will develop not only rudimental points of nomenclature, etc., but will also surely evolve rhythmic feeling and correct technical principles."

After these fundamental books are studied, the teacher begins the "Graded Studies," a series of seven books for two hands and three books for four hands. These are compiled from many sources and bring to light interesting examples of music writing from composers who have understood the technical and musical needs of young students irrespective of age. These Graded Studies lead up to fifth grade and help prepare the way to a better appreciation of the choice literature of the world. The entire set constitutes a system of piano instruction which is unique in the annals of such publications and is the result of serious study extending over many years and reinforced by an artistic thought and coupled with a wide knowledge of the best teaching material for each grade in sequence. From a copy of "Music News" of 1911 is written the following: "Every teacher should examine these books, and it is a foregone conclusion that the examination will lead to continual use, for nothing better is on the market; in fact there are many thousands who will claim that there is nothing half so good."

EXAMINATION QUESTIONS

After a study of each book in turn has been accomplished, the author has prepared a set of examination questions which enable the teacher to see exactly what amount of work the pupil has entirely digested. These books, called "Graded Studies," are now used as text-books for school credits in intermediate and high school classes.

A very conservative Chicago critic has voiced his opinion by writing that "Mrs. Adams belongs to that class of writers who have regarded the educational value as of first importance, having the faculty for expression that has

enabled her to say something worth while and to say it attractively and interestingly. She was one of the first to anticipate a less restricted ability as to what the child could do, and has had the courage to write things that broke down certain of those limitations. The success of her things proves that she was right."

Besides this wonderful system of instruction, Mr. and Mrs. Adams conduct an Annual Summer Class at their studio in Montreat, North Carolina, the purpose of which is "To afford teachers of piano of whatever creed or method and of all degrees of experience an opportunity to come together in class and listen to Mrs. Adams' presentation and interpretation of a critically proven collection of exercises, etudes and pieces, together with vital hints and directions as to ensemble playing in duets, duos, trios, quartettes, etc., etc., all of these the best, for their technical or musical value, that the classic and modern writers of the different countries have produced and which she has classified and tabulated for the different grades. This course is unique in that it presents music, not a method, not a system, but *music*."

As a lecturer, Mrs. Adams has addressed many audiences throughout the land, giving helpful educational talks on various topics. To revert again to her musical writings, her "Thirty Improvisations," in all the major and minor keys, have attracted wide attention. They can be used as productive sight reading material also. These studies afford an acquaintance with tonalities and enable the student to acquire a freedom of musical expression.

Her four love songs, Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter, the poems of which were composed by Edith Hope Kinney, have a musical setting, artistic, graceful, and becomingly simple. These are often used before the wedding ceremony when a short musical program is given.

DOLLS' MUSIC FESTIVALS

As proof of the great versatility of Mrs. Adams' talent, the story of "The Dolls' Music Festival" shows the unique originality of her work. She has woven into this story the actual happenings of some musicales, the programs for which were made up entirely of Dolls' music. To make the festivals all the more realistic, many dolls were included in the audience. Her latest book is entitled "Six Dolls Alive," the inspiration was furnished by the fact that six dollies were left by their mothers at her home. The object of the book is to help emphasize the simple joys of childhood and make children happier and better by its doll lore.

Would that time and space permitted the enumeration of the criticisms, praise and high estimation of musicians, critics and publishers concerning the work of this wonderfully gifted woman. Through loyalty to her publisher, Clayton F. Summy of Chicago, who had the foresight and wisdom to recognize Mrs. Adams' musical compositions, she has refused her work time and again to many famous publishing houses. The only exception is a Boston firm, and that because her parents were of New England ancestry.

Mention must be made of Mrs. Adams' book, "Christmas-Time Songs and Carols." One of the pleasant recognitions of this work is the word that some of her Christmas carols have been translated into Arabic and were sung in Bethlehem and Nazareth by the pupils in one of the training schools for young girls in that far distant land. These Christmas songs are so a part of the season that hundreds of children know and love them and ask to sing them even at other times of the year.

1 *Those Five Fingers Part I* .50
 " " " " II .50
Work & Play book .75

The following is a complete list of Mrs. Adams' writings:

METHODS AND STUDIES

- / The Music Student's Spelling Book. .60
- / Preliminary Studies for the Piano. .20
- 2 The Very First Lessons at the Piano. .90
- 2 Home Study Book. Parts I and II. .70
- / Music Reading Book for Piano Beginners.
 Pedal Studies. 1.00
- Graded Studies for the Piano. Books I, II, III, IV, V,
 VI, VII. 2

PIANO SOLOS

- / Primary Tone Pictures. .60
- Six Small Gems.
- 2 Five Tone-Sketches. .50
- A Five-Way Sketch.
- Aeolian Harp.
- Shepherd's Song.
- Trumpet Flowers.
- The Fairy Ring.
- Children's Anthem.
- Pussy Willow March.
- Circling the Christmas Tree.
- Barcarolle.
- Giant Steps.
- Elfland Horns.
- Doll's Miniature Suite.
- The Doll's Music Box.
- Four Little Wrist Studies.
- Two Left-Hand Studies.
- Finger Solfeggio.
- Bourree Antique.
- Outline Melodies.
- Miniature Waltz.
- Doll's Reverie.
- A Little Requiem.
- Church Music.
- Tone Stories.
- The Angelus.
- Thirty Improvisations in all the Major and Minor Keys.

PIANO DUETS

- Barcarolle.
- Four Duets for Two Beginners.
- Three Piano Duets.
- Graded Studies. Books I, II, III.

SONGS

- Four Lullabies for Voice and Piano.
- Love's Lullaby.
- Indian Lullaby.
- Hush-a-bye Song.
- Slumber Song.

Four Love Songs for Voice and Piano.
Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter.
Our Shepherd.
At Parting.

FOR ORGAN

Our Shepherd (a transcription).

OCTAVO EDITIONS

Seven Sentences.
A Child's Morning Prayer.
A Benediction.
Easter Carol.
Processional.
Hymn of Consecration.
Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem.
Christmas-Time Songs and Carols.
The Birth of Christ.

BOOKLETS

The Dolls' Music Festivals.

MRS. CROSBY ADAMS' EDUCATIONAL BOOKLETS

- I. What the Piano Writings of Edward MacDowell
Mean to the Piano Student.
- II. Some Recent Developments in Teaching Children
to Play the Piano.

These can all be secured from the
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