SECOND PIANOFORTE SONATA

"CONCORD, MASS., 1840-60"

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The reading-matter throughout is taken from the composer's "Essays Before a Sonata," *written primarily as a preface or reason for this [second pianoforte] Sonata—"Concord, Mass., 1840-60" a group of four pieces, called a sonata for want of a more exact name, as the form, perhaps substance, does not justify it. The music and prefaces were intended to be printed together, but as it was found that this would make a cumbersome volume they are separate. The whole is an attempt to present [one person's] impression of the spirit of transcendentalism that is associated in the minds of many with Concord, Mass., of over a half century ago. This is undertaken in impressionistic pictures of Emerson and Thoreau, a sketch of the Alcotts, and a Scherzo supposed to reflect a lighter quality which is often found in the fantastic side of Hawthorne. The first and last movements do not aim to give any programs of the life or of any particular work of either Emerson or Thoreau but rather composite pictures or impressions. They are, however, so general in outline that, from some viewpoints, they may be as far from accepted impressions (from true conceptions, for that matter) as the valuation which they purport to be of the influence of the life, thought, and character of Emerson and Thoreau is inadequate.

*Knickerbocker Press
N. Y.

How far is anyone justified, be he an authority or a layman, in expressing or trying to express in terms of music (in sounds, if you like) the value of anything, material, moral, intellectual, or spiritual, which is usually expressed in terms other than music? How far afield can music go and keep honest as well as reasonable or artistic? Is it a matter limited only by the composer's power of expressing what lies in his subjective or objective consciousness? Or is it limited by any limitations of the composer? . . . . . .

. . . If one is willing to go no further than to accept the theory that music is the language of the emotions and *only* that,—the matter is perhaps an insoluble problem; but one becoming more interesting, perhaps more possible of solution, if instead of accepting the term "emotion" only as an "expression of" itself, it is received in a deeper sense—that is, that it is a feeling influenced by some experience perhaps of a spiritual nature in the expression of which the intellect has some part. "The nearer we get to the mere expression of emotion," says Professor Sturt in his *Philosophy of Art and Personality*, "as in the antics of boys who have been promised a holiday, the further we get away from art." . . . . . .

. . . Whence comes the desire for expression? What is the source of instinctive feelings, these vague intuitions and introspective sensations? The more we try to analyze them the more vague they become. To pull them apart and classify them as "subjective" or "objective" or as this or as that, means, that they may be well classified and that is about all; it leaves us as far from the origin as ever. What does it all mean? What is behind it all? The "voice of God," says the artist, "the voice of the devil," says the man in the front row. . . . .

. . . Why try to trace any stream that flows through the garden of consciousness to its source only to be confronted by another problem of tracing this source to its source? Perhaps Emerson in the *Rhodora* answers by not trying to explain

> That if eyes were made for seeing
> Then beauty is its own excuse for being:
> Why thou wert there, O, rival of the rose!
> I never thought to ask, I never knew;
> But, in my simple ignorance, suppose
> The self-same Power that brought me there brought you.

Perhaps Sturt answers by substitution: "We cannot explain the origin of an artistic intuition any more than the origin of any other primary function of our nature. But if as I believe civilization is mainly founded on those kinds of unselfish human interests which we call knowledge and morality it is easily intelligible that we should have a parallel interest which we call art closely akin and lending powerful support to the other two. It is intelligible too that moral goodness, intellectual power, high vitality, and strength should be approved by the intuition." This reduces, or rather brings the problem back to a tangible basis namely:—the translation of an artistic intuition into musical sounds approving and reflecting, or endeavoring to approve and reflect, a "moral goodness," a "high vitality," etc., or any other human attribute mental, moral, or spiritual.

Can music do *more* than this? Can it *do* this? and if so who and what is to determine the degree of its failure or success? The composer the performer (if there be any), or those who have to listen? One hearing or a century of hearings?—and if it isn't successful or if it doesn't fail what matters it? A theme that the composer sets up as "moral goodness" may sound like "high vitality," to his friend and but like a "stagnant pool" to those not even his enemies. Expression to a great extent is a matter of terms and terms are anyone's. The meaning of "God" may have a billion interpretations if there be that many souls in the world.

There is a moral in the "Nominalist and Realist" that will prove all sums. It runs something like this: No matter how sincere and confidential men are in trying to know or assuming that they do know each other's mood and habits of thought, the net result leaves a feeling that all is left unsaid; for the reason of their incapacity to know each other, though they use the same words. They go on from one explanation to another but things seem to stand about as they did in the beginning "because of that vicious assumption." But we would rather believe that music is beyond any analogy to word language and that the time is coming, but not in our lifetime, when it will develop possibilities inconceivable now,—a language, so transcendent, that its heights and depths will be common to all mankind.

(From "*Prologue.*")

EMERSON

It has seemed to the writer, that Emerson is greater—his identity more complete perhaps—in the realms or revelation—natural disclosure—than in those of poetry, philosophy, or prophecy. Though a great poet and prophet, he is greater, possibly, as an invader of the unknown,—America's deepest explorer of the spiritual immensities,—a seer painting his discoveries in masses and with any color that may lie at hand—cosmic, religious, human, even sensuous; a recorder, freely describing the inevitable struggle in the soul's uprise—perceiving from this inward source alone, that every "ultimate fact is only the first of a new series"; a discoverer, whose heart knows, with Voltaire, "that man seriously reflects when left alone," and would then discover, if he can, that "wondrous chain which links the heavens with earth—the world of beings subject to one law." In *his* reflections Emerson, unlike Plato, is not afraid to ride Arion's Dolphin, and to go wherever he is carried—to Parnassus or to "Musketaquid."

We see him standing on a summit, at the door of the infinite where many men do not care to climb, peering into the mysteries of life, contemplating the eternities, hurling back whatever he discovers there,—now, thunderbolts for us to grasp, if we can, and translate—now placing quietly, even tenderly, in our hands, things that we may see without effort—if we won't see them, so much the worse for us. . .

. . . Emerson wrings the neck of any law, that would become exclusive and arrogant, whether a definite one of metaphysics or an indefinite one of mechanics. He hacks his way up and down, as near as he can to the absolute, the oneness of all nature both human and spiritual, and to God's benevolence. To him the ultimate of a conception is its vastness, and it is probably this, rather than the "blind-spots" in his expression that makes us incline to go with him but half-way, and then stand and build dogmas. But if we can not follow all the way—if we do not always clearly perceive the whole picture, we are at least free to imagine it—he makes us feel that we are free to do so; perhaps that is the most he asks. For he is but reaching out through and beyond mankind, trying to see what he can of the infinite and its immensities—throwing back to us whatever he can—but ever conscious that he but occasionally catches a glimpse; conscious that if he would contemplate the greater, he must wrestle with the lesser, even though it dims an outline; that he must struggle if he would hurl back anything—even a broken fragment for men to examine and perchance in it find a germ of some part of truth; conscious at times, of the futility of his effort and its message, conscious of its vagueness, but ever hopeful for it, and confident that its foundation, if not its medium is somewhere near the eventual and "absolute good"—the divine truth underlying all life. If Emerson must be dubbed an optimist—then an optimist fighting pessimism, but not wallowing in it; an optimist, who does not study pessimism by learning to enjoy it, whose imagination is greater than his curiosity, who seeing the sign-post to Erebus, is strong enough to go the other way. This strength of optimism, indeed the strength we find always underlying his tolerance, his radicalism, his searches, prophecies, and revelations, is heightened and made efficient by "imagination-penetrative," a thing concerned not with the combining but the apprehending of things. A possession, akin to the power, Ruskin says, all great pictures have, which "depends on the penetration of the imagination into the true nature of the thing represented, and on the scorn of the imagination for all shackles and fetters of mere external fact that stand in the way of its suggestiveness"—a possession which gives the strength of distance to his eyes, and the strength of muscle to his soul. . . . . .

. . . A devotion to an end tends to undervalue the means. A power of revelation may make one more concerned about his perceptions of the soul's nature than the way of their disclosure. Emerson is more interested in what he perceives than in his expression of it. He is a creator whose intensity is consumed more with the substance of his creation than with the manner by which he shows it to others. Like Petrarch he seems more a discoverer of Beauty than an imparter of it. But these discoveries, these devotions to aims, these struggles toward the absolute, do not these in themselves impart something, if not all, of their own unity and coherence—which is not received, as such, at first, nor is foremost in their expression. It must be remembered that "truth" was what Emerson was after—not strength of outline, or even beauty except in so far as they might reveal themselves, naturally, in his explorations towards the infinite. To think hard and deeply and to say what is thought, regardless of consequences, may produce a first impression, either of great translucence, or of great muddiness, but in the latter there may be hidden possibilities. Some accuse Brahms' orchestration of being muddy. This may be a good name for a first impression of it. But if it should seem less so, he might not be saying what he thought. The mud may be a form of sincerity which demands that the heart be translated, rather than handed around through the pit. A clearer scoring might have lowered the thought. Carlyle told Emerson that some of his paragraphs didn't cohere. Emerson wrote by sentences or phrases, rather than by logical sequence. His underlying plan of work seems based on the large unity of a series of particular aspects of a subject, rather than on the continuity of its expression. As thoughts surge to his mind, he fills the heavens with them, crowds them in, if necessary, but seldom arranges them, along the ground first. . . . . .

. . . A working woman after coming from one of his lectures said: "I love to go to hear Emerson, not because I understand him, but because he looks as though he thought everybody was as good as he was." Is it not the courage—the spiritual hopefulness in his humility that makes this story possible and true? Is it not this trait in his character that sets him above all creeds—that gives him inspired belief in the common mind and soul? Is it not this courageous universalism that gives conviction to his prophecy and that makes his symphonies of revelation begin and end with nothing but the strength and beauty of innate goodness in man, in Nature and in God, the greatest and most inspiring theme of Concord Transcendental Philosophy, as we hear it.

And it is from such a world-compelling theme and from such vantage ground, that Emerson rises to almost perfect freedom of action, of thought and of soul, in any direction and to any height. . . .

. . . Let us place the transcendent Emerson where he, himself, places Milton, in Wordsworth's apostrophe: "Pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free, so didst thou travel on life's common way in cheerful Godliness."

The Godliness of spiritual courage and hopefulness—these fathers of faith rise to a glorified peace in the depth of his greater perorations. There is an "oracle" at the beginning of the *Fifth Symphony*—in those four notes lies one of Beethoven's greatest messages. We would place its translation above the relentlessness of fate knocking at the door, above the greater human-message of destiny, and strive to bring it towards the spiritual message of Emerson's revelations—even to the "common heart" of Concord—the Soul of humanity knocking at the door of the Divine mysteries, radiant in the faith that it *will* be opened—and that the human will become the Divine!

I. "Emerson"

Slowly (♩ = about 76-72)

l.h. *r.h.* 3

f (Prose)

r.h. *l.h.* 3 *l.h.*

f *faster* *r.h.* *l.h.*

Note:— As a general rule, the notes are natural, unless otherwise marked, except those immediately following a note with an accidental, — natural signs are thus used more as a convenience than of necessity.

(a little faster but firmly)

p

(♪ = ♩)

r. h.

r. h.

5

5

8

ff

3

3

3

8

3

p

f

p *l.h.* *r.h.*

slower *l.h.*

p *r.h.* *r.h.*

l.h. *l.h.* *mf* *r.h.*

l.h.

Solo

cresc.

(*a little faster, broadly but not heavily*)

mf *ff* *mp*

mp *mp*

f *mp*

l.h.

pp

p

mf

mp

f

mp

rit.

Moderately and quietly

pp (verse)

p

rit.

p

mf

accel.

f (prose)

hold back a little

ff *a tempo*

l.h.

r.h. l.h. r.h.

r.h.

l.h.

l.h.

ff

mf

*(Throughout this and the other movements, there are many chords, the notes of which obviously cannot be struck together, though the roll or arpeggio mark is not used.)

faster

f

l.h.

r.h.

3

r.h.

l.h.

r.h.

r.h.

p more quietly

l.h.

r.h.

l.h.

l.h.

l.h.

l.h.

Allegro

mp quite fast

(verse)

a little slower

f faster

ff

gradually more animated

rit.

p

faster but brightly and freely

più rit.

hold back a little

a tempo

ten.

ritard.

SOLO

ten.

(rather slowly and as a song) but not too evenly

p (prose)

pp

faster and with more animation

f

con moto

mp

l.h.

faster

cresc.

più rit.

(♩ = about 112 - 116)

f *somewhat faster but more evenly*

l.h. l.h. r.h. r.h. l.h. l.h.

rit. a tempo more decisively and freely

l.h. l.h. r.h. p mf

l.h.

more broadly and slower

f

I V

l.h.

l.h. l.h. l.h. l.h. r.h.

moderately and easily

p verse

pp

8

with more motion
(prose)

a little faster and with more and more action

ff broadly and slowly
(♩ = about 72 - 69)

ff maestoso

3

8

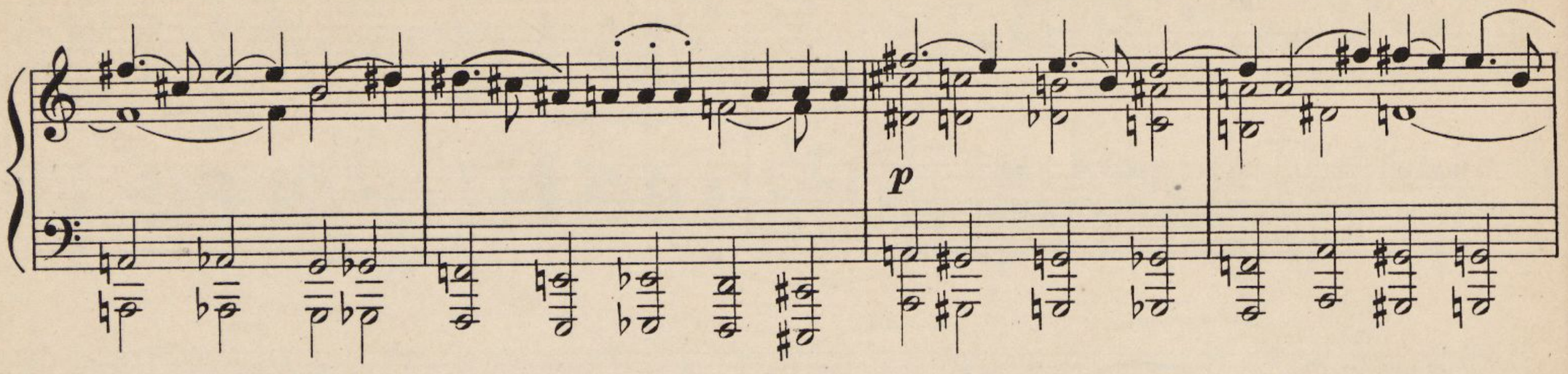
Faster

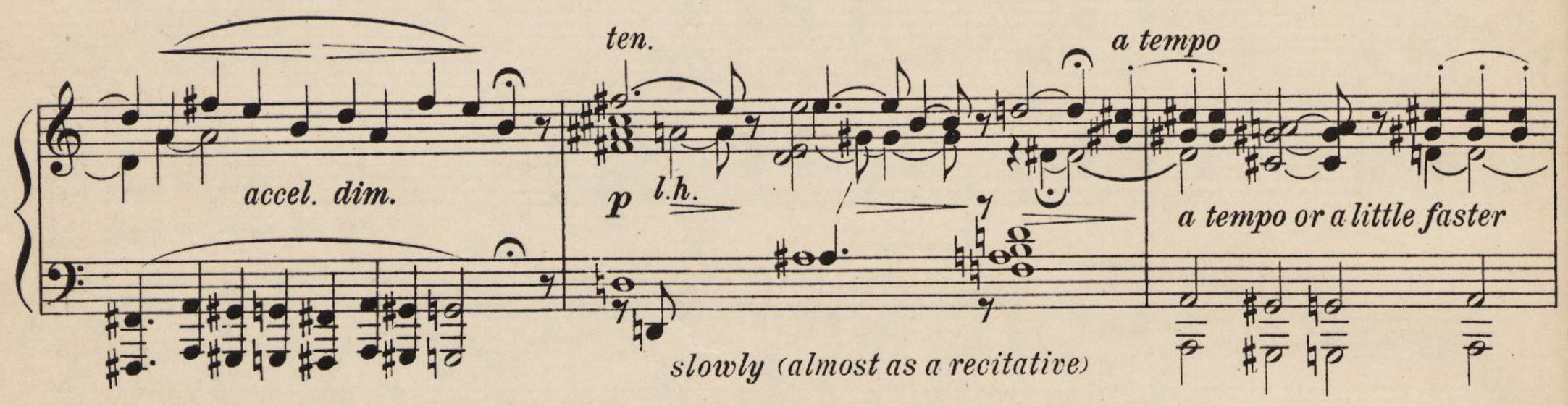
fff

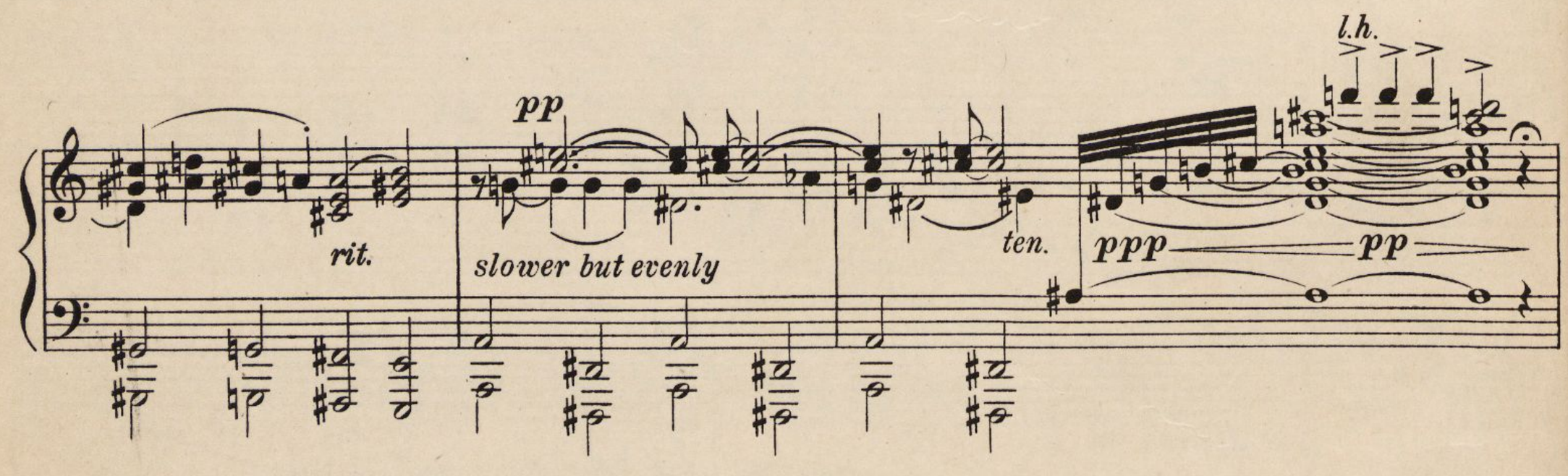
più decresc.

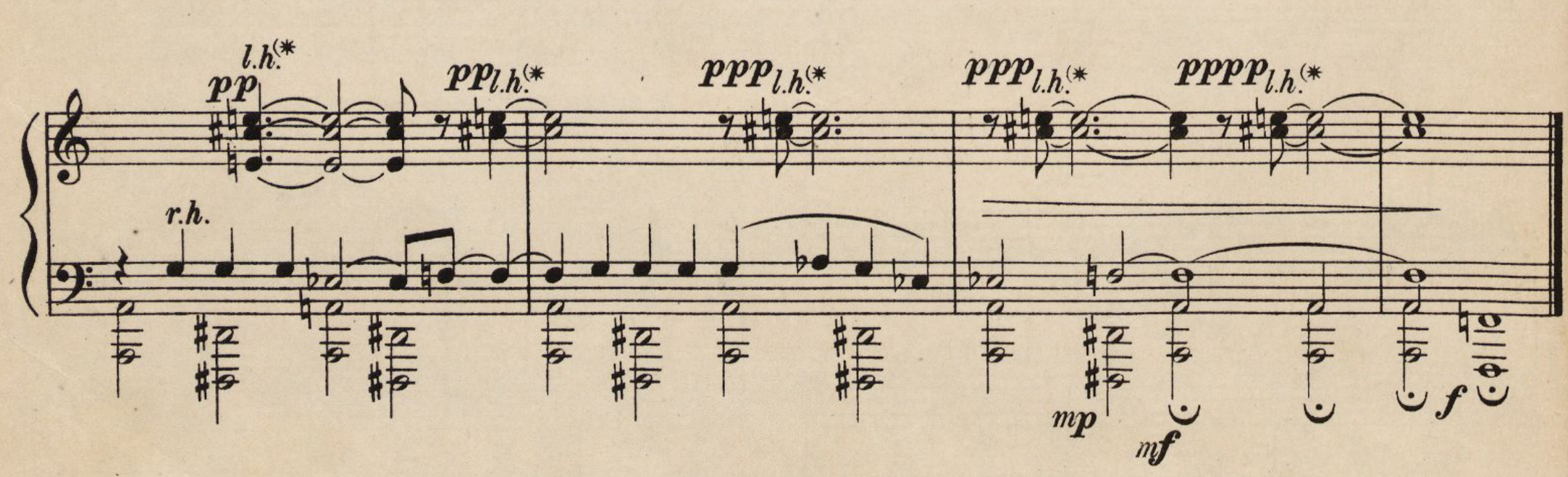
mp

broadly, sustained but only a little slower









*) To be heard as a kind of an overtone