

STRUGGLES WHICH LED TO SUCCESS**Distinguished Musicians Tell of Their Battles for
Fame and Prosperity****Miss Maud Powell
America's Most Distinguished Violinist****Published in *The Etude*
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The earliest fiddleistic struggles I seem to remember nothing whatever about. To get up at six-thirty, practice an hour before breakfast or to come home after school to practice another hour before supper seemed perfectly natural and right because the habit had been formed – mother's word was law. To play with my teacher was a joy; to play in the local orchestra of sixteen or more pieces was an ecstasy of delight. To play in an occasional concert was interesting, except that I hated the grand clothes necessary for those occasions. When I went abroad I fell right into the foreign way, loving the new impressions and sensing the artistic atmosphere at once.

Conscious nervousness overcame me first when I rehearsed the first time with an orchestral accompaniment. This was at the Gewandhaus in Leipsig when I was thirteen. I broke down, wept, went home in disgrace, but came back the next day to pull through triumphantly. Since that time I have always suffered more or less from the torments of nervousness. Fortunately the worst moments of nightmare are those immediately preceding the first entrance upon the stage, for, once lost in the music, nervousness readily turns to inspiration.

The unhappiest period of my life was perhaps after I returned from my studies abroad. I missed the student life, the sound of music all about me, the talk of music and comparing of ideas with fellow-students. I missed the architecture, the parks, the organized life of well-governed cities. In fact I was miserably homesick. I felt lost and was like a rudderless ship. I was only sixteen [seventeen], but had made my bow as a professional violinist with some distinction under Theodore Thomas' baton at the New York Philharmonic, so must henceforth stand on my own feet artistically.

Many were the times when I longed to seek advice in both a musical and a business way, but I was morbidly shy and foolishly proud, so I pegged away alone, often wondering if I were on the right track. These years of uncertainty were six or eight. I practiced and studied a good deal. All the time I tried to keep a level head. I sought inspiration wherever I could find it and tried to cultivate taste.

I read more than I have ever had the time to read since. People thought me cold. But despair was in my heart, and I wondered constantly if I was a fool to keep on. I doubted my talent (at times), I doubted my strength and endurance, I doubted the ultimate reward of my labors. Yet I kept on, simply because of the “something” within that drove me on. I had a reverence for art – instilled into me in Germany – and I had the real artist’s yearning for self-expression. And so I passed through the dark years and gradually came into my own.

I believe the successful outcome was a matter as much of character as of talent. Through all, in spite of praise or censure, whether just or unjust, I kept a certain poise of self-judgment and self-criticism. I have ever sought artistic truth according to the light that has been given me. Whatever conviction carries with my work is because it has been developed and *is* myself.

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