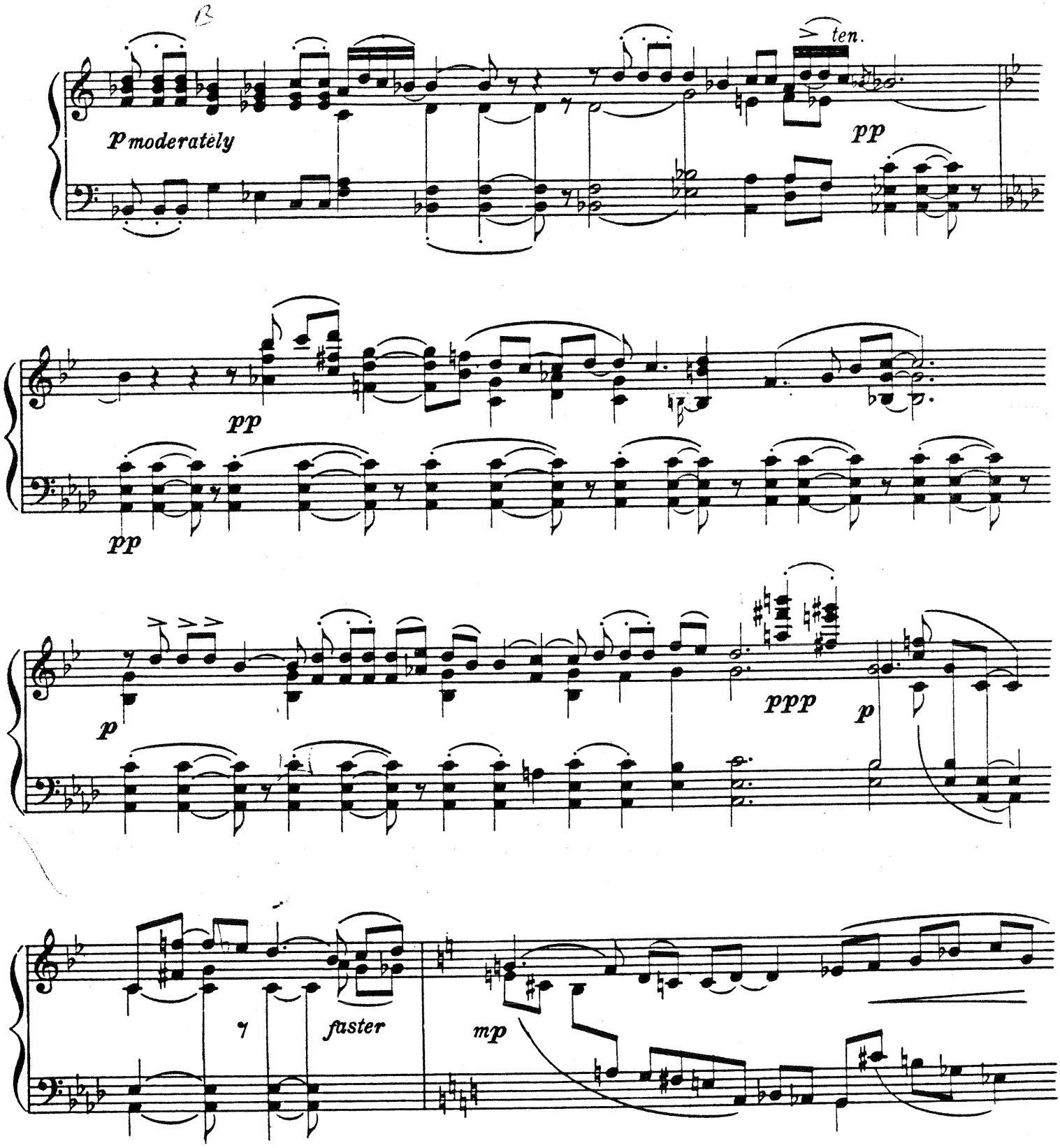
Charles Ives: PIANO SONATA NO. 2 - CONCORD SONATA
III. The Alcotts
(Arrow Music Press, New York, 1947)

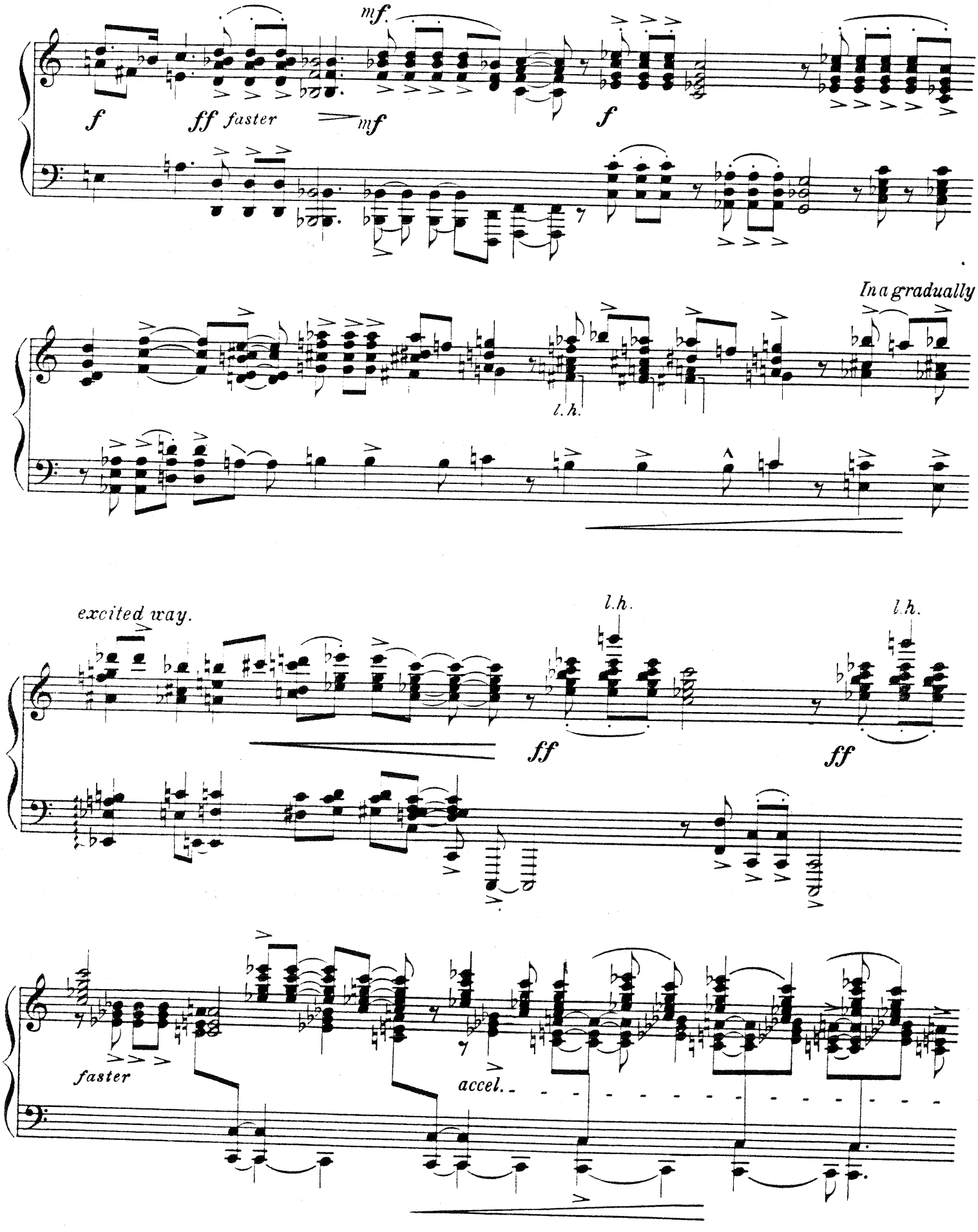
. . . Concord village, itself, reminds one of that common virtue lying at the height and root of all the Concord divinities. As one walks down the broad-arched street, passing the white house of Emerson—ascetic guard of a former prophetic beauty—he comes presently beneath the old elms overspreading the Alcott house. It seems to stand as a kind of homely but beautiful witness of Concord's common virtue—it seems to bear a consciousness that its past *is living,* that the "mosses of the Old Manse" and the hickories of Walden are not far away. Here is the home of the "Marches"—all pervaded with the trials and happiness of the family and telling, in a simple way, the story of "the richness of not having." Within the house, on every side, lie remembrances of what imagination can do for the better amusement of fortunate children who have to do for themselves—much-needed lessons in these days of automatic, ready-made, easy entertainment which deaden rather than stimulate the creative faculty. And there sits the little old spinet-piano Sophia Thoreau gave to the Alcott children, on which Beth played the old Scotch airs, and played at the *Fifth Symphony.*

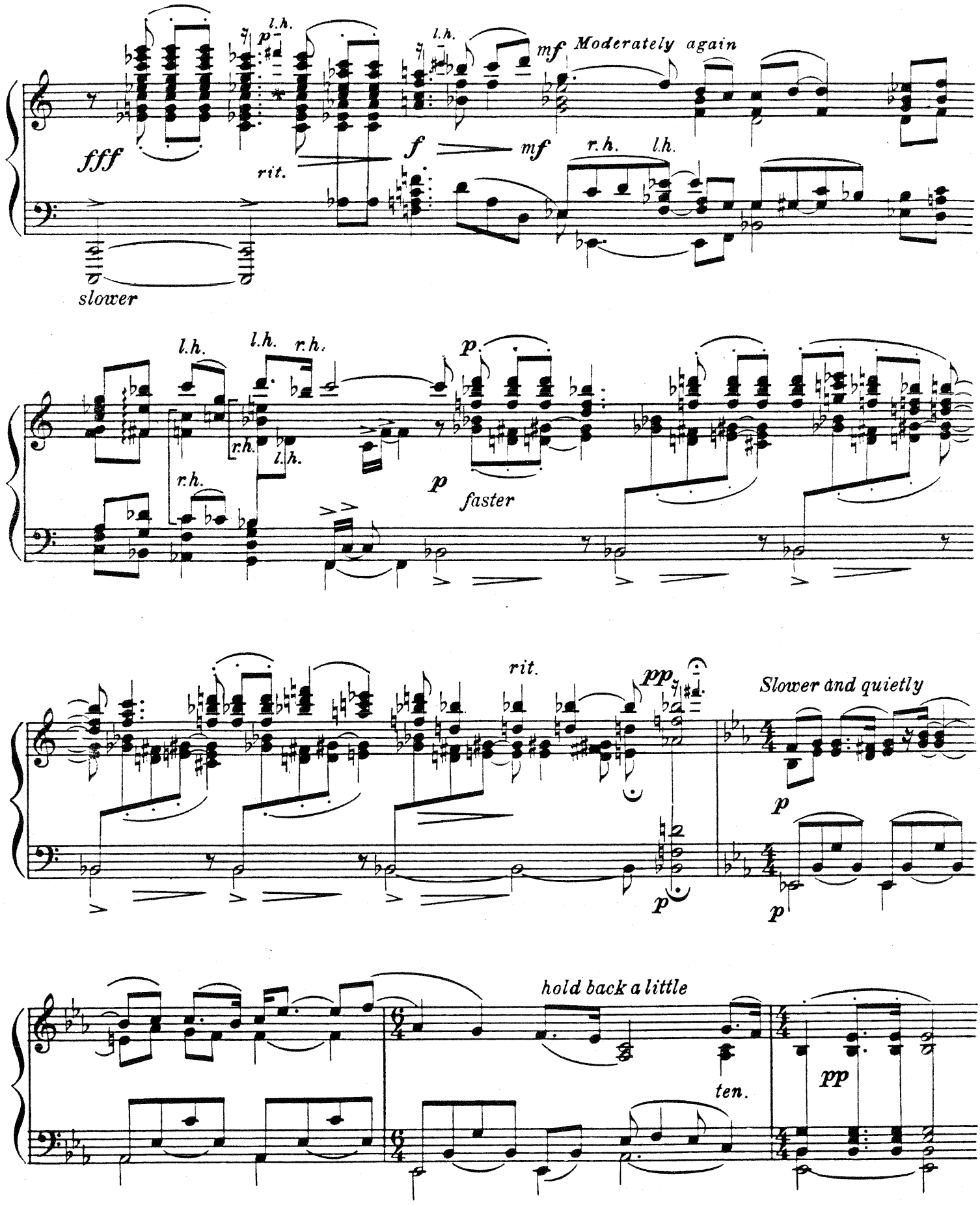
There is a commonplace beauty about "Orchard House"—a kind of spiritual sturdiness underlying its quaint picturesqueness—a kind of common triad of the New England homestead, whose overtones tell us that there must have been something æsthetic fibered in the Puritan severity—the self-sacrificing part of the ideal—a value that seems to stir a deeper feeling, a stronger sense of being nearer some perfect truth than a Gothic cathedral or an Etruscan villa. All around you, under the Concord sky, there still floats the influence of that human faith melody, transcendent and sentimental enough for the enthusiast or the cynic respectively, reflecting an innate hope—a common interest in common things and common men—a tune the Concord bards are ever playing, while they pound away at the immensities with a Beethovenlike sublimity, and with, may we say, a vehemence and perseverance—for that part of greatness is not so difficult to emulate.

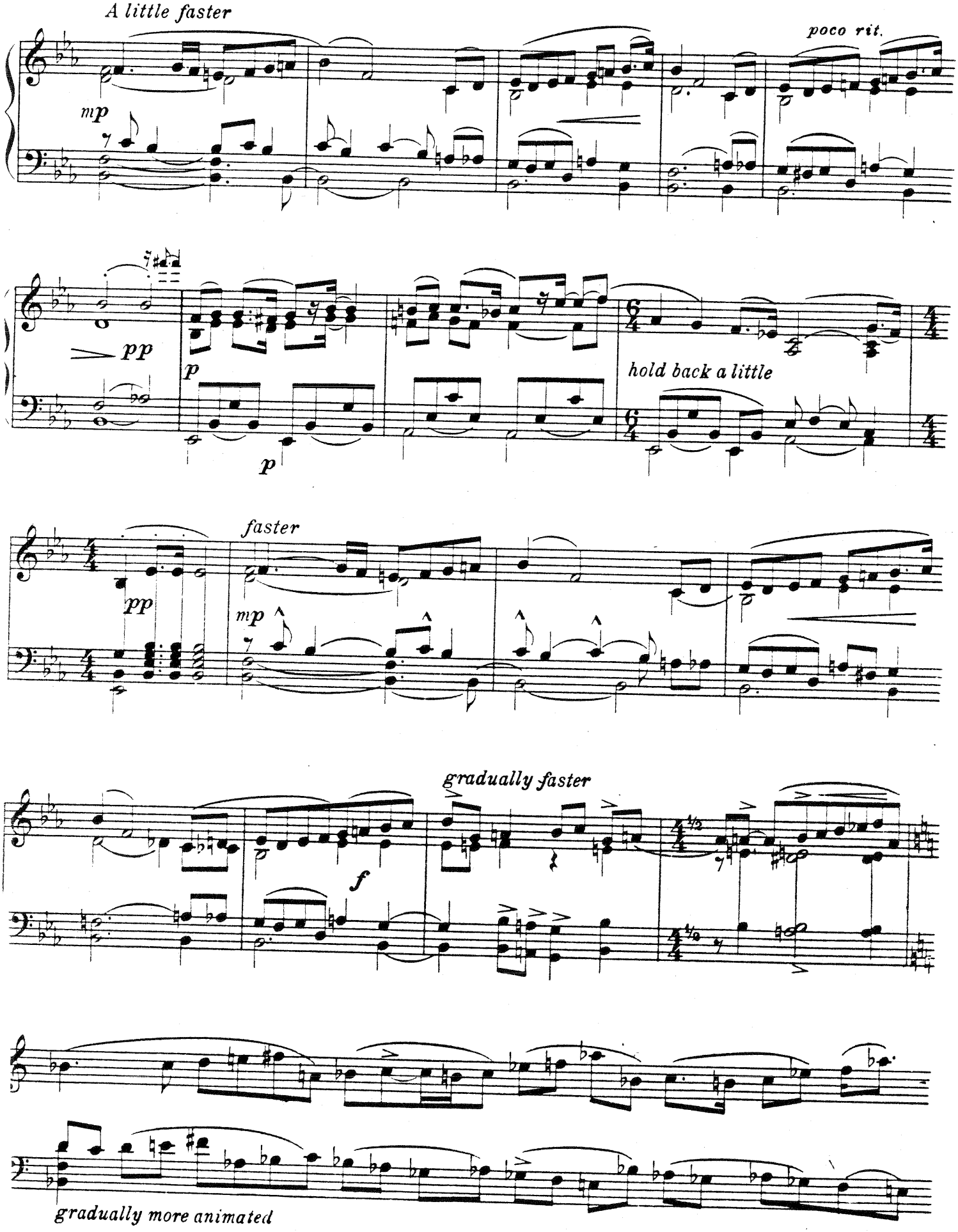
We dare not attempt to follow the philosophic raptures of Bronson Alcott—unless you will assume that his apotheosis will show how "practical" his vision in this world would be in the next. And so we won't try to reconcile the music sketch of the Alcotts with much besides the memory of that home under the elms—the Scotch songs and the family hymns that were sung at the end of each day—though there may be an attempt to catch something of that common sentiment (which we have tried to suggest above)—a strength of hope that never gives way to despair—a conviction in the power of the common soul which, when all is said and done, may be as typical as any theme of Concord and its transcendentalists.

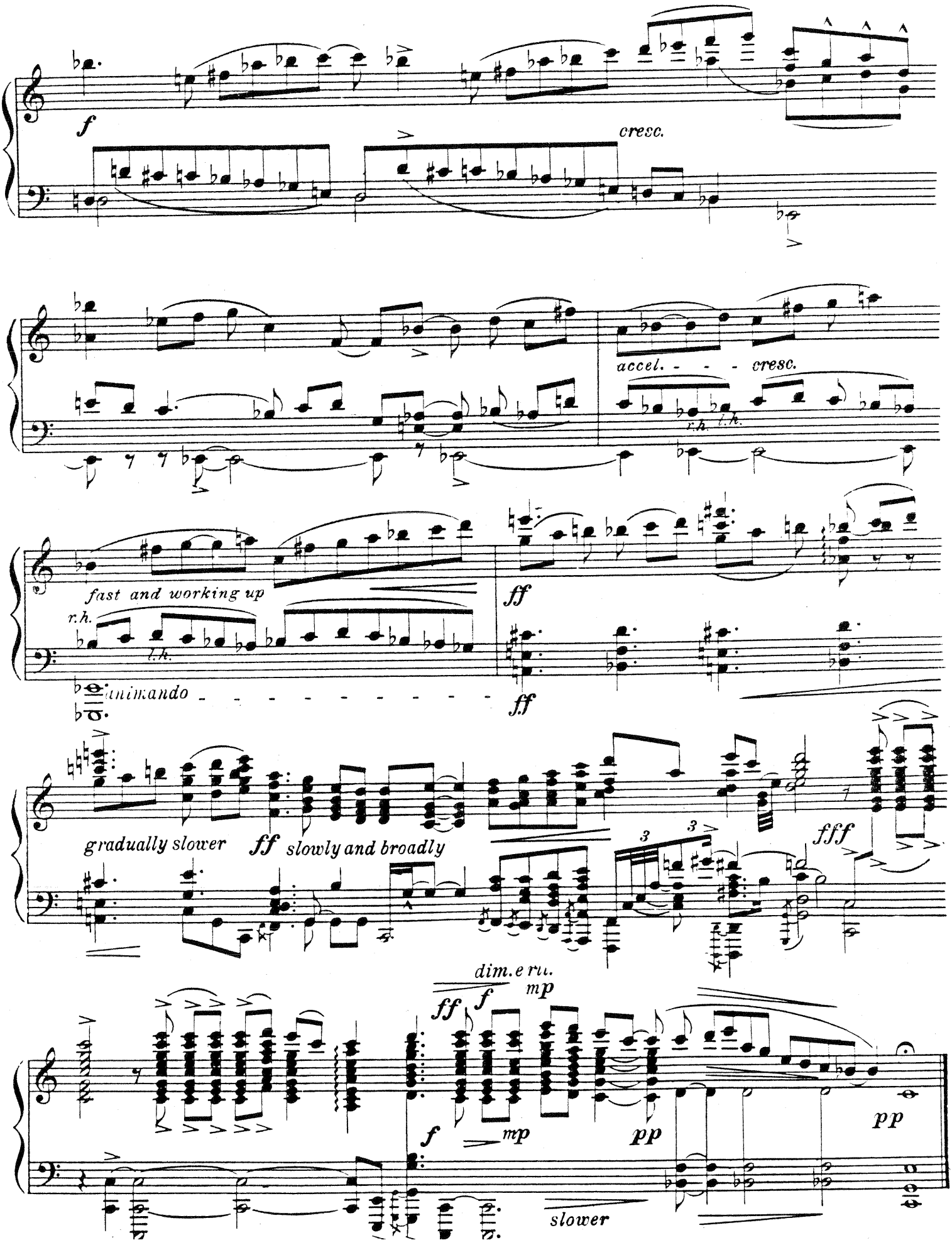
III. "The Alcotts"




mf
f
ff faster
mf
f
In a gradually
l.h.
excited way.
l.h.
ff
l.h.
ff
faster
accel.


fff
l.h.
p
l.h.
mf
Moderately again
rit.
f
mf
r.h.
l.h.
slower
l.h.
l.h.
r.h.
p
r.h.
l.h.
r.h.
p
faster
rit.
pp
Slower and quietly
p
p
p
hold back a little
ten.
pp


A little faster
poco rit.
mp
pp
p
p
hold back a little
faster
pp
mp
gradually faster
f
gradually more animated


f
cresc.
accel. - - - cresc.
r.h.
l.h.
fast and working up
r.h.
l.h.
ff
animando
ff
gradually slower
ff slowly and broadly
fff
dim. e rit.
ff
f
mp
f
mp
pp
pp
slower