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Bell's Miniature Series of Musicians

CHOPIN

BY

ERNEST J. OLDMEADOW



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1913



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LIFE OF CHOPIN

THE BOY

FATE has sported ironically with the memory of Frederick Francis Chopin. The musician who never swore and never smoked, who hated politics and every other kind of wrangling, who loved good clothes and fine linen and warm drawing-rooms and violets and pretty countesses, has been dead for little more than half a century; yet the short and quiet life which he lived almost entirely among public men and public women in capital cities has become a bear-garden of angry biographers. There is hardly a date or a fact in Chopin's history, hardly a quality or a defect in his character, hardly a beauty or a truth in his compositions, upon which some industrious body does not pop up from time to time with a so-called new light. Thus we have it, on the honour of ever so many scholars and gentlemen on both sides, that Chopin was manly and effeminate; that he knew very little of counterpoint and very much of it; that he was brave and a coward;

that he was a saint and a libertine; that a Prince defrayed the costs of his tour in Italy, a country which he never visited in his life; that his music meant everything and meant nothing. The strife begins at his baptismal font, and rages fiercely round the respective claims of February 22 and March 1 to be honoured as his birthday, and of 1809 and 1810 to be recorded as his birth-year. Through all the changing scenes of Chopin's life the battle goes on, until one side scores a clear victory at the composer's death-bed with proofs that he died supported by his pupil Gutman, as against the other side's more picturesque claim on behalf of one of the countesses. More: there is even a squabble as to whether the dying man did or did not ask to be buried in his concert dress. And the combatants close for a final scrimmage at the very graveside, one host claiming that Chopin was buried near Bellini at his own request, while the other ascribes the choice of soil to some third party.

In so small a volume as the present it is manifestly impossible, even if it were desirable, to go over all this thorny ground. The reader must therefore take the writer's word for it at the outset that, although space does not suffice save in one or two instances for a transcription of the processes by which they are reached, the conclusions embodied in the following narrative have been separately formed on the pure merits of the evidence in nearly every case. It is only when the two sides seem to balance one another exactly that the writer's general notion of Chopin

as a man and as an artist has been allowed to turn the scale. Hence this little biography is marked by the contradictions of actual life rather than by the forced unity of a life squared to a preconceived theory. As for the student who wishes to explore all the recesses of the subject, he may find a year's unprofitable employment in ploughing through the hundreds of volumes and articles to which the Chopin controversies have given rise. But it is only common kindness to forewarn him that for every little bright and fragrant patch of genuine wit or pathos or ingenuity he will meet an acre of scurrility, folly, envy, malice, and all uncharitableness.

Nicholas Chopin, the composer's father, was about forty years old when his only son was born. He was a native of Nancy, in Lorraine, but was, perhaps, only half a Frenchman. One of Frederick Chopin's Polish biographers states that Nicholas Chopin was the son of a Polish nobleman who went with Duke Stanislaus to Lorraine and remained there, changing Szopen into the common French name Chopin. Nicholas left Nancy for Warsaw in 1787, drawn thither, according to some writers, by the glorious unrest which led to Kosciusko's revolution, according to others by the offer of a post in a tobacco factory. As it is certain that he kept the tobacco factor's books, and equally certain that he joined the National Guard and struck more than one good blow for Poland, either account, or both, may be true. From book-keeping and soldiering the young

man passed on to the profession of a tutor, and eked out a living by teaching the Poles French. At length he gained a post in the family of the Countess Skarbek, at Zelazowa Wola, a village near Warsaw, where he met and admired and married Justina Krzyanowska, "the daughter of poor but noble parents." These claims to noble blood on behalf of both the tobacconist's clerk and the poor Justina must be borne in mind, as must also the aristocratic environment provided by the Countess Skarbek, if the reader is to make fair allowance for what Wagner called "the Ladies' Chopin"—that is to say, for the scented, over-groomed lapdog Chopin, who looks out from more than one of the nocturnes.

A few years ago Miss Janotha, having read upon the monument in the Church of the Holy Cross, Warsaw, that Chopin was born on March 2, 1809; having read also, in Karakowski's authoritative biography, that the birth did indeed take place in 1809, but on March 1; and having read lastly, in Liszt's and other books, that the year was 1810, took the sensible course of hunting through the Zelazowa Wola church registers. Here is an English translation of the Latin entry which Miss Janotha found:

"I, the above, have performed the ceremony of baptizing in water a boy with the double name Frederick Francis, on the 22nd day of February, son of Nicolai Choppen, a Frenchman, and Justina de Krzyanowska, his lawful spouse. God-parents: Francis Grembeki and Lady Anna Skarbekowa, Countess of Zelazowa Wola."

In the Latin original the names of the parents and god-parents are preceded by the abbreviation "Maf.," which somehow got itself rendered in the first English versions of Miss Janotha's discovery by the word "musician," so that the champions of 1809, knowing that papa was merely a teacher of French, and that mamma was no more than papa's "lawful spouse," had a great innings against Miss Janotha and the inaccurate Polish clergy. "Maf.," of course, is short for "Magnificus" or "Magnifica," a conventional prefix of honour recalling that resounding superscription, "To the Very Magnificent and Most Religious Lady Doña Teresa d'Ahumada," which even the simplicity-loving St. Peter of Alcantara wrote by force of custom on his letters to St. Teresa when she was in full quest of perfect humility. That the parish priest of Zelazowa Wola wrote down Nicholas and Justina Chopin as "Maff." no more accredits them as veritable aristocrats than the dubbing of a shopkeeper "Esquire" makes him one whit less a huckster. But it is another straw showing that the wind was blowing from the old quarter of aristocratic pretension; while the correct translation of it demolishes the strongest objection to Miss Janotha's date. As the wording of the entry is obscure on this point, it should be added that "the 22nd day of February" refers to the child's birth; for the christening entry is dated April 23. These, however, are only a few of the arguments which compel the writer to agree with Miss Janotha, and to suggest that his

young-lady readers should so correct their Musicians' Birthday Books as to give February 22, 1810, the honour of having first shown the sunlight to Frederick Chopin.

Frederick was the third-born in a family of four. The other children were all girls, who further contributed to the making of the Ladies' Chopin by petting and adoring their only brother. Later in the year of Frederick's birth, Nicholas Chopin went back to Warsaw, and filled a scantily-paid position as Professor of the French Language at the new Lyceum. At first the times were anxious and funds were low; but after the creation of a so-called kingdom of Poland by the Congress of Vienna in 1814 Warsaw plucked up courage and began to thrive again. Many of the great families returned to their country, and Nicholas had the wit to perceive that this was the moment for setting up a high-class boarding-school. The boarding-school was started, and the high classes were not slow in stocking it with noble children. This bit of good luck, together with a windfall or two in the shape of professorships at the Artillery School and other institutions, filled the Chopin purse so pleasantly that Frederick and his sisters enjoyed a happy childhood. Working on the belief that every composer who has been neither thrashed by his father for strumming a spinet nor starved by a widowed mother must be a fraud and a humbug, the romancers used to set it about that Frederick's boyhood was a dreary spell of want and suffering, and that the sensitive, exquisite child was, as

silly school-girls say, "misunderstood." The truth is that the little Chopins had a fine time of it. They were fond one of another. Their father was a genial and clever man; and, seeing that he was both a linguist and a link with the Lorraine over which a Polish Duke had ruled, it was natural that he should attract to his house many of the most interesting people who found their way to Warsaw. Their mother was one in a hundred: affectionate, competent, sunny, and always ready with some rural lore of fairies, or of cordials, or of conserves, or of homely remedies. On red-letter days the children attempted little plays, and it is on record that Frederick and his sister Emily even wrote a comedy. By some oversight, not a single biographer has so far protested that it was a tragedy.

The tradition that Frederick "wept whenever he heard music, and was restrained with difficulty," is probably a distortion and exaggeration of a few stray and unmeaning little facts. But it is certain that the boy's musical hankerings were strong enough to move his parents, who found him a pianoforte teacher in the person of Adalbert Zywny, a fiddler from Bohemia. It is said that Zywny knew hardly anything about the pianoforte, and that he was no more qualified to give instruction outside the province of his own instrument than is the average third-rate organist in a present-day British townlet to make good his pretensions in respect of "organ, pianoforte, violin, and 'cello; voice-production and singing; harmony, counterpoint, and musical theory."

Some writers have gone so far as to hint that Zywny never even taught his pupil to play a scale, a belief which it is well-nigh impossible to reconcile with Chopin's so early acquirement of a supreme technique, especially when one remembers that early vices in the fingering of keyed instruments are hardly ever wholly eradicable. Indeed, it is more probable that his parents' choice of Zywny was a stroke of good fortune for Chopin. Either from common-sense or from slackness, Zywny undertaught this child whom overteaching would have blunted, and even allowed him to indulge freely in improvisation. And who knows that the violinist did not exert his natural influence upon Chopin's fine sense of *cantabile*?

Only two days after his eighth birthday the little man, vested for the occasion in a new jacket with a lace collar, made his first appearance in public. Somebody had organized a charity concert, and had hit on the happy idea of setting an infant prodigy to play the pianoforte in a concerto by Gyrowetz. Gyrowetz, by the way, is forgotten now, but in his lifetime many people so confidently placed him in the bright succession of great composers that to take the solo part in a Gyrowetz concerto was to be bathed in reflected glory. The charitable mood of the audience and the up-to-date complacency with which they heard Gyrowetz combined with the youthfulness and cleverness of Frederick to gain him an ovation. But the child was deceived neither as to Gyrowetz as composer nor as to

himself as virtuoso, and when his mother asked him what the people had liked best, his answer was: "Oh, everyone was looking at my new lace collar." This story is generally told as if it were no more than an engaging anecdote of a naïf boy's laughable ingenuousness, but the sharp ear detects a note in it which became one of the strongest and clearest in Chopin's life. He was the quickest of all the virtuosi of whom we have records to divine that the professedly artistic public is far too often looking at a lace collar, a lily-white brow, a pale hand, or a shock of hair, and he was so genuine an artist that this preoccupation of so many listeners with the dancing-master prettiness of the musician under a sham of love for the music soon disgusted him. He had hardly reached twenty—the age at which a virtuoso of to-day insists upon adorning the programme with his most sweetly melancholy photograph—when he curtly refused a publisher his portrait, saying that he did not choose to see his face on packets of butter and cheese. In later life he detested the crowd, and could only be dragged into the concert-room when a depleted pocket cried urgently to be refurnished.

While Zywny was happily giving the lad his own way in the matter of pianoforte-playing, Joseph Elsner, his new tutor in harmony and counterpoint, was showing almost incredible wisdom in teaching Frederick to love Bach, and in consciously allowing him to pick and choose among the rules of musical grammar as it suited him. There would have been nothing very

remarkable in this flexibility if Elsner had known that his pupil was to become by common consent the greatest master of the pianoforte who has ever written down his ideas. Pressing on from the point to which Elsner led him, Chopin became one of the boldest and richest of all harmonists. His mastering of counterpoint has been called into question; but it is a sufficient answer that he had all the counterpoint he wanted. In respect of orchestration and of high musical form, he was little better off than a beggar; but for all the practical purposes of his destiny he not only possessed himself in a surprisingly short time of all that his predecessors had handed down to him, but also amply developed the inheritance. Chopin's influence upon musical grammar is, however, a point to which it will be necessary to return. Meanwhile it should be noted that Elsner, the careful nurse who reared so jealously the genius which another might have overlaid, was not a Pole, but a Silesian. That those who claim Chopin as a French musician are in the wrong goes without saying. He was a Pole, and nearly everything that is most valuable in his music is essentially Polish. But if there had been no French blood in his veins, and if cosmopolitan forces, of which Bohemia and Silesia and Paris were only a few, had not played upon him, it is questionable whether his works could so easily have found a place among the classics.

Anecdotage flourishes luxuriantly round Chopin's early doings in music. Among the

fictions stands a silly story of his sending some rowdy schoolmates to sleep by improvising a description of Night on the pianoforte. Among the facts is his editorship of a manuscript newspaper called the *Szafarnia Courier* and containing musical jottings in the best county-reporter style. Szafarnia was a village where he spent his holidays, and it is generally agreed that without these frequent escapes from his polyglot home in Warsaw, Chopin, who left Poland before he came of age never to return, must have entered upon life very poorly equipped for his work as a Polish national composer. At harvest-homes and on village greens and in country houses he heard the songs and watched the dances which were to reappear all glorified and transformed in his mazurkas and polonaises. It is also true that in his bedroom at Warsaw he had a piano on which he would practise exercises or try harmonies in the middle of the night, with effects upon the rest of the household concerning which tradition is silent; that at the age of nine he literally laid at the feet of the Grand-Duke Constantine himself a march for a military band; that at fourteen he played before the Emperor Alexander, who gave him a diamond ring; and that during the very year which was jewelled by this Imperial favour he attained the still prouder height of publication. The composition first to be printed was the Rondo in C minor, which stands at the head of Chopin's list of works in all the dignity of an opus number; and despite its diffuseness and its sins against proportion, it was a worthy herald

of better things to come. But although the rondo was the first piece of Chopin's to be printed, it was by no means the first to be written. A boy whose improvisations had won him the caresses of nearly all the titled amateurs in Warsaw was not likely to keep his hands away from music-paper, and the rondo is said to have been preceded by a set of variations, two polonaises, and the mazurkas in G major and B flat major, published without opus number after Chopin's death.

The Tsar's diamond ring and the printer's proofs of the Rondo in C minor came to Frederick in 1825. The next year was less rosy. Under too much work the boy's health failed him, and along with his youngest and best-beloved sister Emily, the Emily who had collaborated with him in the scribbling of a comedy, he was bundled off to Reinerz, in Silesia, for the whey-cure. Reinerz and its whey did little for poor Emily, who died of consumption in the following year. According to his own account, it made Frederick 'stout and lazy"; but, according to accounts equally credible, it also drew out a good trait of his character. Among the unhappy clients of the whey were two children whose mother died, as the spa-doctors oddly say, in the midst of her cure, without leaving so much as would pay for the orphans' journey home. Whereupon the sixteen-year-old Frederick came forward, organized a concert, and raised the money; and although it is true that concert-giving was an art he had learned long before in Warsaw, the

episode serves none the less to bring out the occasional efficiency, initiative, and unselfishness of a character which is too often represented as unbrokenly hesitant, dependent, and self-indulgent.

On the way home from Reinerz, the party made a short stay at the house of Prince Radziwill, who was both a commendable musician and an amiable human being. Liszt would have it, in the teeth of old friends of the family who knew better, that the Prince paid both for Chopin's education and for his tour in Italy; but as all that Chopin ever saw of Italy in all his life was a bit of Genoa in 1839, it is clear that what Liszt says of this matter must not be taken for granted.

In his final examination at the Warsaw Lyceum in 1827, Frederick did not shine. But his sagacious father understood that the root of the lad's comparative failure at the Lyceum was one which might shoot and blossom into triumphs such as Warsaw and its Lyceum had never imagined. That is to say, Nicholas Chopin discerned in the musical preoccupations which had retarded Frederick's literary progress the true business of the boy's life, and heartily approved his choice of a musical career. Better still, he bestirred himself to arrange for the *Wanderjähre*, which are deemed as essential to a young artist on the Continent as was the old Grand Tour to a young gentleman in England.

The *Wanderjähre* of Frederick Chopin were decorous and young-gentlemanlike. Indeed, when one takes note of the fact that he was in his

nineteenth year when the diligence rumbled out of Warsaw bearing himself and Dr. Jarocki, his Mentor, on the first stage of their journey to Berlin, it is hard to clear him of the character which lusty and barbaric lads fasten upon a more delicate school-fellow with the stinging phrase "mamma's own boy." Thus, the first home-letter from Berlin begins

"My dearly beloved Parents and Sisters,

"We arrived safely in this big, big city on Sunday afternoon, and went direct from the post to the hotel 'Zum Kronprinz,' where we are now,"

and, after a dutiful account of the sight-seeing, interrupted by an occasional "dearest papa," ends with "Your ever fondly loving FREDERICK."

At Berlin Chopin enjoyed his usual luck in the way of easy entrance to great company. He dined with men of science who bored him, "sat quite close to the Crown Prince" at a meeting where he also saw Spontini and Mendelssohn, heard a few operas, including Spontini's "Ferdinand Cortez" and Cimarosa's "Secret Marriage," and was "quite carried away" by a performance of Handel's "Ode on St. Cecilia's Day." At last the hour struck for saying good-bye to the "big, big city," and the post was taken towards Posen on the invitation of the Archbishop of Posen himself. Inside the coach were two great rude men who so completely failed to divine the honourableness of their fellow-passenger as to smoke pipes and to talk politics until the ruffled little ladies' man climbed up to a seat on the



roof. But at Züllichau, the halfway house, his feelings were soothed, for not only did the inn boast a grand piano but the thing was actually in tune. Chopin began to play some Polish airs with embellishments, and so warmed to his pleasure that the room quickly filled with inn-people and travellers, whose delight was so great that the fresh horses outside had to paw the ground and chafe their bits till the recital came to an end. According to some historians, what Chopin played was his *Fantasia on Polish Airs*, which he had written earlier in the year. But, whatever may have been the music, to the casual audience at Züllichau it was every bit as good as a Polish "Home, Sweet Home, with Variations," and the performer, loaded with sugary cakes, was hoisted in the landlord's arms to his place in the coach. Had it been spun round a Chopin of ten years younger, all this might have been a pleasant enough story; but most people will feel that even sweet nineteen is a trifle too old for petting and confectionery and carrying-in-arms.

Dr. Jarocki and his charge had left Warsaw on September 9, and they were back again on October 6, or in rather less than four weeks. But *Wanderjähre* are not to be measured off into twelvemonths of three hundred and sixty-five days each. Besides, there were more to follow.

THE YOUTH

'HATS off, gentlemen—a genius!" So cried the young Robert Schumann from the brand-new editorial chair of the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* after he had perused the young Frederick Chopin's *Variations for Pianoforte, with Orchestral Accompaniment, on "La ci darem la mano."* The *Variations* appeared in 1830 with the opus number 2, but they had been written in 1829, along with a nocturne, a sonata, a rondo for two pianos, the *Krakowiak*, a pianoforte trio, and two or three other works which were not published until after Chopin's death. In a superficial way the *Variations* are not bad: yet one needs to realize the cheapness of his typical contemporaries' efforts in this field if one is to acquit Schumann of uncritical warmth and kindliness. As for the orchestral accompaniment, it is enough to say that the *Variations* can get on very well without it.

In the foregoing chapter it was noted that the Rondo in C minor came forth from the press in 1825. Five years make a wide gap between an opus 1 and an opus 2, especially when the composer has begun life as an infant prodigy. But



FRÉDÉRIC CHOPIN.

(From a portrait by Ary Scheffer.)

the cause lay not in the author's indolence so much as in the procrastination of the publishers, who have long been a notoriously wicked class. Visits of Hummel and Paganini to Warsaw had whetted the youth's appetite for a less provincial centre of artistic life. He is said to have been "influenced by Hummel as a composer," which is the nicest compliment Hummel has ever received, and to have honoured Paganini by composing a Souvenir in A major, which has never been reprinted save as a curiosity, and is declared by Mr. Paderewski to be worthless. But receiving influences from Hummel and paying homage to Paganini were hardly good enough for Chopin. He yearned to exchange Warsaw, where the meteors flashed just once and again, for some great city set full in the orbit of the musical stars. It was a publisher who unconsciously settled which city should first be stormed. At Vienna —Haydn's, Mozart's, Beethoven's Vienna—throve the publisher Haslinger; and in Haslinger's pigeon-holes some of Chopin's manuscripts, including the *Variations on "La ci darem la mano"* had lain unprinted, and even unacknowledged, for a considerable time longer than was reasonable. So Vienna became the scene of Frederick's second instalment of *Wanderjähre.*

He set out in July, 1829, and, after stirring up his Polish soul in famous Cracow, reached Vienna on the last day of the month. This time the efficient Chopin, who had delivered the orphans at Reinerz, was uppermost, and the pretty boy of the Züllichau sugar-plums was hardly at all in

evidence. For example, the youth had not been in Vienna a week before he sought out Haslinger and marched boldly into the Presence. Here is his own account of the matter in a letter sent home:

"I am well and in good spirits. Why, I do not know, but the people here are astonished at me, and I wonder at them for finding anything to wonder at in me. I am indebted to good Elsner's letter of recommendation for my exceedingly friendly reception by Herr Haslinger. He did not know how to make me sufficiently welcome; he showed me all the musical novelties he had, made his son play to me, and apologized for not introducing his wife, who had just gone out. In spite of all his politeness, he has not yet printed my compositions. I did not ask him about them, but he said, when showing me one of his finest editions, that my variations on *La ci darem la mano*, were to appear next week, in the same style, in *Odeon*. This I certainly had not expected. He strongly advised me to play in public, although it is summer, and therefore not a favourable time for concerts."

It is plain that Publisher Haslinger knew his business, and that he was not dealing with the unexpected advent of an indignant author for the first time. His "next week" was especially well uttered, seeing that the *Variations on "La ci darem la mano"* did not leave the press until the following year.

Vienna as a whole was as effusive as Haslinger, and for the most part its acts were as good as its words. Haslinger's suggestion as to a public appearance was warmly taken up. Count Gallenberg lent the Kärnthnerthor Theatre, Graff and Stein competed for the honour of lending the piano, some other kind body took in hand the

advertisements and placards, while the journalist Blahetka buoyed up the young musician with prophecies of a triumph, and went so far as to affirm that Chopin was "an artist of the first rank, and worthy to be placed beside Moscheles, Herz, and Kalkbrenner." Thus the unaffected modesty which had held the youth back from thrusting himself upon audiences who had heard the great Viennese masters was gradually overcome, and the concert duly came off. There were some empty seats, but those who sat in the others were enthusiastic, the pit even beginning a regular dance when Chopin altered the programme by bringing in an improvisation on a Polish marriage-song. The hero himself wrote to a friend: "I sat down to play on a splendid instrument of Graff's, perhaps the best in Vienna. A painted young man who prided himself upon having performed the same service for Moscheles, Hummel, and Herz, turned over the leaves for me in the *Variations*." In the same letter he assures his friend both that he was "not in the least excited," and that he was "in a desperate mood," a contradiction which nevertheless conveys a meaning.

Vienna's opinion was favourable, though with one reservation, which Chopin himself expresses thus:

"There is an almost unanimous opinion that I play too softly, or, rather, too delicately for the public here. That is to say, they are accustomed to the drum-beating of their own piano virtuosi. I am afraid the newspapers will say the same thing, especially as the daughter of one of the editors drums dreadfully; but never mind if it be so: I would much rather they said I played too gently than too roughly."

Without meaning to poke fun at himself, he added: "My manner of playing pleases the ladies so much." In the course of his life a good deal was said and printed against this mildness of habit at the keyboard. Some of it, such as the comment that Chopin's playing was "more piano than forte," was polite; the rest of it, such as Thalberg's sudden shout in the street, on the ground that after an unbroken session of pianissimo one must really have a forte, was so ill-natured that it could only have come from a fellow-musician. But the gentleness of Chopin the pianist was all in tune with Chopin the man; and at least one modern concert-goer has yearned for an hour of him after the piano-smashing feats of the burly school which nowadays has things all its own way.

Not out of vanity, but for the prudential reason that the Warsaw folk might otherwise say, "He could not have been thought much of in Vienna, seeing he only gave one concert there," Chopin gave a second recital a week after the first. The next day he wrote of it:

"The profession praise my rondo, one and all, from the bandmaster, Lackner, to the piano-tuner. I know I have pleased the ladies and the musicians. Gyrowetz, who sat next Celinski, called 'Bravo!' and made a tremendous noise. The only people not satisfied were the out-and-out Germans. Yesterday one of them, who had just come from the theatre, sat down to eat at the table I was sitting at. His acquaintance asked him how he had liked the performance. 'The ballet is pretty,' was his answer. 'But the concert, what of that?' they asked. Instead of replying, he began to talk of something else, from which I conclude that he recognised me, although my back was toward him. I felt bound to relieve him from the restraint of my presence, and went to bed, saying to myself: 'The man has not been born yet who does everything right.'"

By way of Prague, Teplitz, and Dresden, he worked his way back to Warsaw. At Prague he would not play, despite strong pressure; for the critics of Prague had tried to mend Paganini, and Chopin did not choose to run the gauntlet. At Teplitz he fell among Princes, and at Dresden even spent an evening with a Crown Prince, a Princess, and a Queen. Indeed, crowned heads became so commonplace with him as life slipped by that Chopin at last attained to something of the sly humour of a hardened courtier. In 1839, for instance, after Chopin and Moscheles had played Moscheles' sonata for four hands in E flat before the Court at St. Cloud, Louis Philippe gave to Chopin a gold cup and saucer, and to Moscheles a travelling-case; whereupon Chopin said to his friends: "The King gave him this to be the sooner rid of him."

Home was regained on September 12, 1829. But by this time the gentle reader, who has been wont to conceive Chopin as the musician of sentiment, and who cares less for harmony and counterpoint than for the flutterings of the human heart, is no doubt becoming conscious of a grievance. Over twenty pages of this book have been filled with notes on Chopin's parents, Chopin's teachers, Chopin's journeys, Chopin's writings, Chopin's concerts, but with never a word about his heart.

The truth seems to be that Chopin was never in love in his life. Even calf-love did not bother him till he was close on twenty, and although he mooned and posed a great deal over his first infatuation, not one of his letters to women has half the fervour of the correspondence with his boyhood's friends—Titus Woyciechowski and John Matuszynski. The explanation is that this slight, delicate, petted creature never grew up to a clear adult consciousness and confidence. One meets his like in our own day—boys of thirty, of forty, even of fifty and sixty, who sometimes become giants in knowledge without ever losing the stripling's rawness and diffidence towards the broader facts of life. "I always knew I should never rear him," said a wiry dame of ninety when her son of seventy was bed-ridden with bronchitis; and the old child whimpered on his pillow at the pitiful thought of his young life quenched at rosy dawn. The most devoted champions of Mendelssohn's music would hardly contend that Mendelssohn himself was a full-sized, full-blooded instance of masculinity; yet even Mendelssohn could call Chopin his Chopinetto without offence. And if Chopinetto hardly took himself seriously as an all-round, grown-up man, why should his biographers set themselves superfluous puzzles?

This reading of Chopin's so-called loves will not be endorsed all in a moment; but if the experiment be tried of holding it as a clue, even through the mazes of the George Sand episode, it will not be found contemptible. Indeed, one may go still further, and claim that it is as much

a clue to Chopin's music as to his life. The general sense of the deliciousness of well-born, lovely ladies, like a warm and perfumed garment, so enwrapped and enervated Chopin that his faint heart never won a fair lady, and he shrank from the true lover's resolute deeds of pursuit and capture. But even as the Milky Way gathers here and there into intense points of light and wears them like gems upon a robe, so this long-drawn softness of Chopin's emotional life jewelled itself with a thousand fierce little stars of lyrical intensity. Just as he turned back from his half-start to bleed for dying Poland on the battle-field, and diverted all his patriotism into the wonderful *Study in C minor*, so he was for ever losing love in the broad spaces of real life, and finding it again in the scented byways of a nocturne or a prelude or a mazurka. Love brims over his compositions, and this clue to his history and to his art is, finally, a clue to the interpretration of his works. Played healthily, they are full of blood and fire. But mooned over and spooned over, nearly all of them become sugary, mawkish, anæmic: the love in them degenerates into amourousness and sentimentality, the patriotism thins down to bravado.

At Vienna there had been a passing softness towards Leopoldine Blahetka, a pretty young thing who dabbled in composition. But Leopoldine does not count. Chopin's first conqueror was Constantia Gladowska, a maiden who was learning to sing at the Warsaw Conservatoire. According to Liszt, she was "sweet and beauti-

ful"; but Liszt was a kind of Mr. Clement Scott in his way of making all men brave and all women lovely. The best proof that Constantia was handsome is Chopin's infatuation. The pet of Grand-Duchesses and Queens was fastidious in these things, which, by the way, is another clue to keep in readiness for the affair of George Sand.

It would almost appear as if Chopin, having served a short and snug time of *Wanderjähre*, deliberately worked up a mild spell of *Sturm und Drang*. He pondered desperate resolves of a flight from the Warsaw which had become hateful as the background of unrequited passion, and wrote thus to Woyciechowski:

"Do not think for one moment that, when I urge the advantage of a stay in Vienna, I am thinking of Miss Blahetka, of whom I have already written to you; for I have—perhaps to my misfortune—already found my ideal, which I worship faithfully and sincerely. Six months have now passed, and I have not yet exchanged a word with her of whom I nightly dream. Whilst thinking of her I composed the adagio of my concerto, and early this morning she inspired the waltz which I send you with this letter."

And later:

"It is bitter to have no one with whom one can share joy or sorrow; to feel one's heart oppressed; and to be unable to express one's complaints to any human soul."

Meanwhile Miss Gladowska was trotting forwards and backwards from and to the Consertoire nearly every day of the six months, as good as gold. Through his numerous acquaintances

in Warsaw, Chopin could have secured an introduction in five minutes; but he preferred to hug his beautiful sorrow. After the approved Romantic fashion, he drank deep draughts of imaginary woe. He will fly! But no! To fly will be only to die amongst heartless menials in a foreign land. At last he decides to die more comfortably at home and bids his friend carry to Constantia the message: "Even after death my ashes shall be strewn beneath her feet."

The details of this Gladowska incident, the point of which some writers have so completely missed as to call it an episode, are only scrappily and uncertainly recorded. But there is a significant fact which seems to be well established, albeit the interpretation of it may be open to dispute. Constantia Gladowska gave Frederick Francis Chopin a ring. This was after her adorer had soared into ecstasies at her first appearance in opera, and after she had worn—at a concert of Chopin's own—a white dress and a wreath of roses, and had brought out "her low B so magnificently that Zielinski declared that this one note was alone worth a thousand ducats." Of couse Constantia knew of Chopin's devotion: they always do. It is, therefore, at least conceivable that the ring was bestowed to help the bashful lover out a little. But poor Constantia had yet to understand the deadly work of the Byrons and the Goethes. Chopin was no more to be allured out of his dreams into realities than is a fox to be coaxed out of his earth into the midst of hounds. He went right on with his

rôle, wanderings, despairs, music-makings, and all. For examples, there was a run to Antonin, Prince Radziwill's place, where the name of Constantia so feebly suggested constancy that Chopin confessed he would like the Princess Wanda, who was "only seventeen years old, and very beautiful," to practise his new *Alla Polacca*, as "it would be delightful to have the pleasure of placing her pretty fingers upon the keys"; and also that, on the day he left Antonin for home, the Princess Wanda had two portraits of him in her album.

During the autumn and winter there was work done, including the writing of the Concerto in F minor. And in the early spring of 1830 two concerts brought Chopin both the praises and the florins of Warsaw in bountiful measure. The Revolution was in the air, and Warsaw was so alive that artistic interests were quickened, and many of the greatest singers and players of all countries were drawn to Poland as by a magnet. Chopin heard and relished all the fine things without relaxing his attitude of hapless, hopeless love. Here is an abridgment of another letter to Woyciechowski:

"I have no special attraction anywhere, but, in any event, I shall not remain in Warsaw. If you think that it is some beloved object that keeps me here, you are wrong, like a good many other people. I can assure you that, so far as I myself am concerned, I am ready for any sacrifice. I love, but I must keep my unhappy passion locked in my own breast for some years longer. . . . Instead of commencing a performance of chamber music at a friend's at seven o'clock, we did not begin until eleven. You are doubtless surprised that I was not fast asleep. But there was a very good reason why I should keep awake, for among the guests was a very beautiful girl, who vividly reminded me of my ideal. Just fancy! I stayed till 3 a.m. I intended to have started for Vienna this day week, but finally gave up the idea—perhaps you can guess why."

After this, instead of contriving so much as one little chat with Constantia herself, he developed the policy of dallying with such ladies as "reminded him of his ideal." There was one dame, for instance, with whom he loved to dine simply because she, too, was a Constantia, and had the "inexpressibly dear name" embroidered on her pocket-handkerchiefs.

Upon this little round of calf-loves and laces and scent-bottles, the Revolution burst like a war-horse among beribboned baa-lambs. But by the time Warsaw rose in full revolt against Russia, Frederick Chopin was safe in Vienna. Not that he ran away. His resolution to break out from Warsaw had long been taken, and when he gave his farewell concert there few people divined how soon blood must be shed. The proof is that, instead of slipping out of Poland like a fugitive coward, Chopin departed amidst the applause and good wishes of Poles who knew that his genius would regild their country's fame throughout the world. At Wola, his own Zelazowa Wola, Elsner and the pupils of the Conservatoire waylaid the coach, and sang a new cantata in the young man's honour. Also they gave him a silver cup full of Polish earth. This was the earth which was strewn, less than twenty

years later, on Chopin's coffin in Paris; and it was the last Polish earth he was fated to see.

This time Vienna was unkind. Along with the inevitable Woyciechowski, Chopin sauntered thither, with pleasant breaks at Breslau, Dresden, and Prague. Breslau, Dresden, and Prague were each and all attentive; but Vienna was sulky. Publisher Haslinger was barely polite, and went back not only on his reader's opinion, but also upon his own word. The concert-goers did not happen to be in a mood for Chopin, and the only recital he gave during six months failed to recoup expenses. Worse still, the pretty Leopoldine had gone to Stuttgart.

Only a week after the two young Poles reached Vienna, the city was startled by news from Warsaw. The rebellion had begun, and Poland was in the heat of another struggle to be free. The generous Woyciechowski heard the distant trumpets as if they were blaring at his ear, and tore off to the field. But Chopin tarried. Too slight and frail to be fairly dubbed a coward, and not enough of a pure-blooded Pole to be called upon for the highest sacrifices of a patriot, his letters at this time are, nevertheless, a trial to his biographer. When drums are rolling and guns are booming, one can with difficulty admire such sentences as these, written to Matuszynski:

"I would not willingly be a burden on my father; were I not in fear of that, I should at once return to Warsaw. . . .

"Since Titus went away, too much has suddenly fallen upon me. The numerous dinners, soirées, concerts, and balls, which I am obliged to attend only weary me. I am very melancholy, and feel so lonely and deserted here. . . .

"Shall I go to Paris? Shall I return home? Shall I stay here? Shall I kill myself?"

Or this, written to his home:

"I do not know whether I ought to go soon to Italy, or wait a little longer. Please, dearest father, let me know your own and my good mother's wish in this matter."

At Warsaw it was becoming less a question of trips to Italy than of keeping one's skin whole, and Frederick, none too handsomely, had to pass word that his ring in Warsaw—the Tsar's, not Constantia's—might be sold.

From heartless Vienna he moved on towards Stuttgart, where at least there would be Leopoldine. But at Munich there was a delay for want of funds, which led to a successful concert. Stuttgart was entered at last, but only to the strains of a dead-march for Poland. Warsaw had fallen.

Two documents are extant which claim to record the young exile's grief at the downfall of his country. The first is an extract from a diary vouched for as Chopin's by Count Tarnowski, but disputed, on grounds mainly internal, by Chopinists whose general notion of their hero it offends. The other document is the superb *Study in C minor* (Opus 10, No. 12), often called the "Revolutionary Study," and is said to be the mould into which Chopin poured his red-hot hatred and wrath and anguish when he heard that Russia had triumphed. Below are parts of the diary:

"My poor father! My dearest ones! Perhaps they hunger? Maybe he has not anything to buy bread for
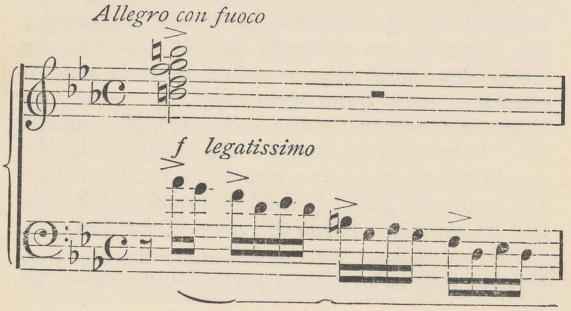
mother? Perhaps my sisters have fallen victims to the fury of the Muscovite soldiers? Oh, father, is this the consolation of your old age? Mother, poor suffering mother, is it for this you outlived your daughter? And I here unoccupied! And I here with empty hands! Sometimes I groan, suffer, and despair at the piano! O God, move the earth, that it may swallow the humanity of this century! May the most cruel fortune fall upon the French, that they did not come to our aid!"
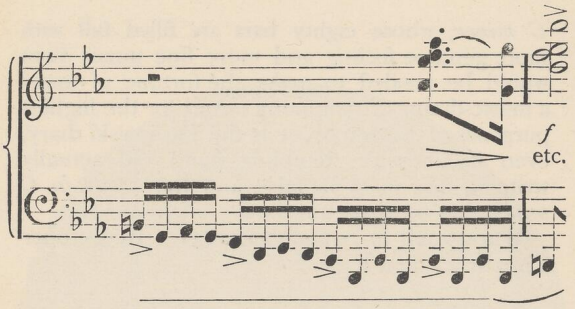
As to Constantia:

"What happened to her? Where is she? Poverty-stricken, perhaps, in the hands of the Muscovites; a Muscovite strangles her, murders her. Ah, my life! Here am I, alone. Come to me. I will wipe away your tears; will heal your wounds of the present by recalling the past."
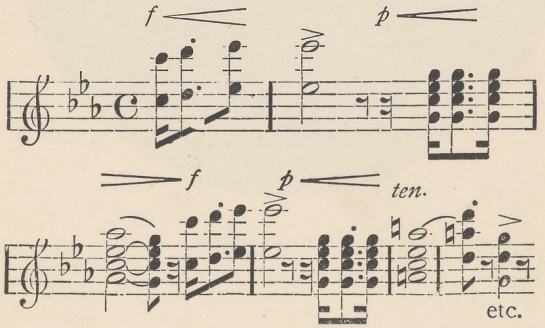
Happily, Frederick's parents were not hungry, nor had his sisters "fallen victims to the fury of the Muscovite soldiers." As for Constantia, she was neither strangled nor murdered, for the year following she married a Warsaw merchant.

On the other hand, here is the opening of the *Study in C minor*, with its discord like a flash of lightning and its background like a thunder-cloud:





After a shriller repetition of this discord, cut short by a fiery unison passage, the following theme enters, the left hand continuing to rage under it, and is worked with a breadth and force that Wagner himself could not surpass:



Had Chopin marched off to be shot, the world would have been spared the Tarnowski diary. But the world would also have lost the *Study in*

C minor, whose eighty bars are filled full with more genuine feeling and more fine music than would be needed to make the fortune of many a music-drama or symphony. And for the highest purposes of biography, it is the Tarnowski diary, even if Chopin's trembling hand did actually write it, that must be false, and the *Study in C minor* that must be true.

Warsaw fell in September, 1831. In October Chopin reached Paris.



FRÉDÉRIC CHOPIN.

(*From a medallion by Bovy.*)

THE EXILE

THE Revolution, which was crushed in Poland, had fared better in France. A year before Frederick Chopin first set his foot in Paris, the older Bourbons were overthrown, and Charles X., with his claims to rule by Divine Right, made way for Louis Philippe, King, not "of France," but "of the French," and reigning by the will of the sovereign people. After so great a triumph over monarchical reaction, it was natural that Paris should become the headquarters of the restless spirits from every country who had gospels of liberty or license to preach in politics, literature, painting, music, religion; and among these the fugitive Poles were not the smallest company. Nor were they the least welcome. The Frenchman has an unfailing enthusiasm for other people's liberty, and when Chopin arrived in the French capital it was as pleasant to be a Pole as it was, in the first flush of the Russo-French alliance, to be a Russian. In the streets the Parisians of 1831 cried "Long live the Poles!" in the theatres they acclaimed gory dramas dealing with the Polish fight for freedom. And this general goodwill naturally moved with

particular warmth towards Polish artists. Once more Chopin was in luck.

But, modest as ever, the young Pole's first concern was to perfect himself in his art. Instead of looking about him for a concert-room and an audience, he sought out Kalkbrenner, and asked to be admitted as his pupil. For a space the old Classicist and the young Romanticist puzzled one another; but at last the great man, taking it for granted that what the youngster wanted was, not to become the best possible Chopin, but to shine as an imitation Kalkbrenner, consented on condition that Chopin would study with him for at least three years. Fortunately, the counsels of old Elsner were besought, and in due course the post brought a wise letter from Warsaw, reminding Chopin that piano-playing was not the whole of music, or even the better part; that composition, and not virtuosity, was the glory of the great masters; that chamber music, symphony, and, most emphatically, opera, were generally above music for the pianoforte; and that, even if supreme virtuosity on the piano were a big enough goal for Chopin's ambition, Kalkbrenner would rob him of much more in the way of originality than he could possibly give him in the way of technical dexterity. It was good advice, and Elsner's old pupil took it. Fortunately, Kalkbrenner was not offended, and his virtue had its reward at Chopin's first concert in Paris, when the programme included a terrifying composition by Kalkbrenner for six pianos, of which Chopin played one, and Kalkbrenner another.

This first concert pleased Paris exceedingly Mendelssohn was present and "applauded furiously." The critics were delighted and the ladies were enchanted. On the monetary side, however, things were getting so desperate that more than once Chopin seriously considered a voyage to America. But something mysterious and good happened, which tradition connects both with the fairy godfather, Prince Radziwill, and with the Paris Rothschilds, and America was mentioned no more. Pupils multiplied, at twenty francs the lesson, and all these francs, together with the bank-notes of concert directors and music publishers, enabled the lucky young master to establish himself in fine and richly-furnished chambers. This is how he reported himself in January, 1833:

"I move in the highest circles, and I don't know how I got there. But you are credited with more talent if you have been heard at a soirée of the English or Austrian Ambassador. Among the Paris artists I enjoy general esteem and friendship; men of reputation dedicate their compositions to me even before I have paid them the same compliment. Pupils from the Conservatoire—even private pupils of Moscheles, Herz, and Kalkbrenner—come to me to take lessons. Really, if I were more silly than I am, I might imagine myself a finished artist; but I feel daily how much I have still to learn. Don't imagine that I am making a fortune: my carriage and my white gloves eat up most of the earnings. However, I am a revolutionary, and don't care for money."

In 1834 a run with Hiller to Aix-la-Chapelle and to Düsseldorf broke the monotony of life in

Paris. At Düsseldorf there were acceptable meetings with Mendelssohn, who condescended to be much better pleased with the Pole than he was with his own compatriot Schumann. During another holiday, spent at Carlsbad and Dresden in 1835, Chopin, who had changed his mind about the strewing of his ashes under Constantia Gladowska's feet, met his old friends the Wodzinskis, and soon imagined himself to be deeply in love with their sister Maria. One early biographer affirms that Maria was equally touched, and that the formal betrothal which followed was with the consent of the lady's parents. On the other hand, Count Wodzinski, Maria's brother, protests that his father objected, and that there was no engagement at all. There was, however, a little music in the shape of the Waltz in A flat (Opus 69, No. 1), "improvised at the moment of parting," and inscribed "Pour Mademoiselle Marie." And so ended the second of Chopin's three romances. In questionable taste, Count Wodzinski eked out with what he knew of the matter his book called "The Three Romances of Frederick Chopin"; and, when one thinks of this and of the immeasurable Sand controversy, one cannot help noting the irony of fate in thus causing rivers of ink to flow round the most intimate amours of the delicate creature who shrank more than any other musician from the stare of the crowd.

After Dresden in this 1835 trip came Leipsic, and a meeting with Schumann and Mendelssohn at the house of old Wieck, the pianist. One would

like to feel certain that the future will be able to furnish many more such reunions of musicians as was this—Mendelssohn, Chopin, Schumann, and Clara Wieck. But considering Schumann's "Hats off, gentlemen," and many other good services, Chopin was not excessively kind to his patron, in this respect probably taking a leaf out of Mendelssohn's book. It is true that in the old sense of the word Schumann was the least musical of the party; but in his own way, which was a way whereon a good deal of great music is following, he was the brainy, strong man, and his friends were brilliant striplings. As for Clara, who at this time was sixteen years old, it does not appear that she drove out the image of Maria Wodzinski; but Chopin at least acknowledged that there was "one lady in Germany who could play his compositions."

The holidays of the following year were divided between Marienbad and London; but of the London visit little is known. For some reason, probably connected with his health, he travelled to England incognito, and, until he touched the pianoforte, deceived the Broadwoods into taking him for one Monsieur Fritz.

With the considerable exception of his friendship with George Sand, Chopin's life from this point does not contain the making of many readable pages. A faithful record of journeys, of changes of residence in Paris, of recitals, of illnesses, of the names and dates and opus numbers of compositions, would be as easy to write as it would be tiresome to read. But

before the pace is quickened one pause must be made; for he would be a bold biographer who, at this stage, could cheat his expectant readers of the Liszt Rhapsody on the Chopin soirées in the Chaussée d'Antin. The following is a version of it which enjoys great favour on both sides of the Atlantic:

"His room, taken by surprise, is all in darkness, except the luminous ring thrown off by the candles on the piano and the flashes flickering from the fireplace. The guests gather round informally as the piano sighs, moans, murmurs, or dreams under the fingers of the player. Heinrich Heine, the most poetic of humorists, leans on the instrument, and asks, as he listens to the music and watches the firelight, "if the roses always glowed with a flame so triumphant? if the trees at moonlight sang always so harmoniously?" Meyerbeer, one of the musical giants, sits near at hand, lost in reverie; for he forgets his own great harmonies, forged with hammer of Cyclops, listening to the dreamy passion and poetry woven into such quaint fabrics of sound. Adolphe Nourrit, passionate and ascetic, with the spirit of some medieval monastic painter, an enthusiastic servant of Art in its purest, severest form, a combination of poet and anchorite, is also there; for he loves the gentle musician, who seems to be a visitor from the world of spirits. Eugène Delacroix, one of the greatest of modern painters—his keen eyes half closed in meditation—absorbs the vague mystery of colour which imagination translates from the harmony, and attains new insight and inspiration through the bright links of suggestion by which one art lends itself to another. The two great Polish poets, Niemcewicz and Mickiewicz (the latter the Dante of the Slavic race), exiles from their unhappy land, feed their sombre sorrow, and find in the wild, Oriental rhythms of the player only melancholy memories of the past. Perhaps Victor Hugo, Balzac, Lamartine, or the aged Châteaubriand, also drop in by-and-by, to recognise in the music echoes of the daring Romanticism which they opposed to the classic and formal pedantry of the time.

"Buried in a fauteuil, with her arms resting upon a table, sits Madame George Sand (that name so tragically mixed with Chopin's life), curiously attentive, gracefully subdued. . . ."

Nearly all true as to its details, nearly all false as to its general effect, this long extract is serviceable, partly because it brings in many persons who ought to be noted as Chopin's contemporaries in Paris, partly because it is an example, by no means extreme, of the gush which has too often delivered Chopin, bound hand and foot, to the sentimentalists. It is because this sort of thing has got itself printed by the rod, pole, or perch, that the hack novelist always makes his maidens in white and pink and his young widows in black and yellow "dream over one of Chopin's nocturnes" in the fragrant twilight, with the result that many people mistake the less for the greater, and cannot hear the bigger and stronger works of Chopin without feeling that something is wrong.

But to push on with the history. The more he was adored in private, the less Chopin could endure the public. After 1835, four years passed without his giving a public concert. The reasons were many. Bad health was one, chagrin at the occasional coldness of an audience was another; but the chief was a constitutional meagreness of vitality which made him dread a mass of healthy people, as if it were about to engulf him like a tidal wave. Besides, the

publishers, after pressure, paid him his royalties, and the pupils at twenty francs a time sufficed for many things besides white gloves.

Most of the recitals he gave during the last ten or twelve years of his life were half-private functions of society rather than concerts in the ordinary sense. Thus, a recital at Pleyel's rooms in 1841 was attended, according to Liszt, by "the most eloquent women, the most fashionable men, the most renowned artists, the most wealthy financiers—a whole aristocracy of birth, fortune, talent, and beauty"; while, according to a musical journal of the time, the rooms were "peopled with adorable smiles, delicate and rosy faces, small and well-formed white hands." In other words, the Ladies' Chopin was at his zenith, for "the ugly black hats" of men were "very few in number," and instead were to be seen "gilded ribbons, delicate blue gauze, chaplets of trembling pearls, the freshest roses and mignonette," adorning "the perfumed heads and snowy shoulders of the most charming women for whom the princely salons contend." It is magnificent, but it is not music. And it is to Chopin's credit that he did not like it. Playing to perfumed heads and snowy shoulders was well as far as it went, but it had not turned the player's head away from Elsner and his doctrine of the superiority of the composer to the executant. Accordingly, at the time of the perfumed and snowy concert Chopin had written the greater part of his best works, and had published them as far as Opus 42. That

is to say, Europe was already in possession of the two books of studies, the twenty-four preludes, the two concerti, two of the ballades, three of the scherzi, the great "Funeral March" sonata, and hundreds of pages of polonaises, waltzes, mazurkas, and nocturnes. He was little more than thirty years old, but most of his work was done.

GEORGE SAND

"I DO not like her face. There is something in it which repels me." So Chopin wrote in a letter to Warsaw soon after his first meeting with George Sand. And to Ferdinand Hiller he said: "What a repellent woman that Sand is!" This was in 1837, and in 1838 Chopin was living with George Sand in the island of Majorca. It follows that here we have to do with something different from the sighs over little Princess Wanda's white hands, or the strewing of Constantia Gladowska's path with the ashes of a broken heart, or the penning of a Last Waltz "pour Mademoiselle Marie." What was it?

A common answer is that Aurore Dudevant, born Dupin, alias George Sand, deserter of the country squire her husband, faithless mistress of De Musset, Amazon and Messalina of the empire of letters, fastened upon Frederick Chopin, poet, dreamer, and dandy, a basilisk stare of ambition and longing; that the poor soft rabbit at length yielded to the boa-constrictor's spell; and that when he was cast forth again, dazed and bleeding, he crawled into a quiet nook and died.



MADAME "GEORGE SAND."
(*From a lithograph by Thierry frères.*)

A rarer answer is that George Sand, descending through her father from Kings and through her mother from the people, independent and intellectual, yet a good mother and a noble woman, romancer, reformer, patroness of art and artists, began with a playful impulse of conquest and warmed into a close relationship of mingled comradeship and pity with a frail and heart-sick exile who, in body and soul and knowledge of the world, was young enough to be her son; that the invalid became exacting, wearing, querulous; and that at last health and sickness, decision and vacillation, blood and water, could keep house and hearth together no more.

In treating of this matter, it is better that a writer should credit a few of his readers with too little knowledge than the bulk of them with too much. To the majority of British people George Sand is merely vague hearsay, just as Jane Austen and the Brontës are vague hearsay to people in France. To a minority, who have read her works and life, she is one of the greatest writers, and certainly not one of the meanest characters, of the nineteenth century. But, unhappily, there is a class between, which has reached its opinion of George Sand viâ a curiously wrong-headed comparison with George Eliot.

The truth about George Sand seems to be that she was driven, as the modern jargon goes, to "realize" herself and to live her life by a curiosity which was more of the spirit than of the flesh; that after her bargain with her clownish husband, and her fight with poverty in Paris, she too easily

allowed the unrest of the times to suggest reliefs from the unnaturalness of single life; and that she indulged herself, to an extent that detracts from her artistic excellence, in a habit of regarding human life as so much grist for her literary mill. This is the worst it seems just to say about her.

Of course, the moths who fluttered round Chopin's unworldly flame have darkened counsel by their tawdry anecdotage. Mostly living irregular lives themselves, Chopin's Parisian friends have daubed on the violet and scarlet; for it suits your libertine finely to believe that every man at bottom is as sad a rake as himself. Accordingly, the first encounters of George Sand with Chopin, at which this masterful woman naturally tried her skill upon the young lion who had found her "repellent," have been worked up, after the fashion of penny novelettes, into the breathless meetings of predestined lovers. Thus, Chopin, climbing the stairs of a Marquis, "imagined himself followed by a shadow, exhaling an odour of violets," and duly had a presentiment. Later on, as he sat improvising, he saw "leaning on the pianoforte a lady." The lady "fixed her sombre and passionate eyes upon him." As for Chopin, "others might listen to him: he played only for her." At last he "retired behind a group of camelias (!), and heard the rustling of a dress," and smelt violets.

All these things may have happened. But they happened, or at least continued, in a spirit very different from that which inspires the sensational biographers. George Sand's "kind of maternal

adoration, very warm, very real," to which she confesses in her autobiography, has been scoffed at excessively; but it fits in both with her words and with her conduct. "Tell Chopin," she wrote to Liszt from her country place at Nohant, "to come with you: that Marie cannot live without him, and that I adore him." The kind of adoring with which George Sand has been charged towards Chopin hardly confesses itself so gaily and easily as this. Above all, it does not willingly go shares with Marie.

The popular imagination has long delighted in the visit to the island of Majorca in 1838-39. Everybody has heard of the ruined monastery in which George Sand and Chopin lived, and has usually jumped to the conclusion that the trip was a naughty honeymoon spent by the sighing lovers to the music of guitars and mandolines amidst the scent of orange-blossoms. Indeed, the following letter from Chopin to his friend Fontana has been thought to point that way, though in truth it is all about the stage-properties of the supposed romantic tragedy:

"I am at Palma, among palms, cedars, cactuses, aloes, and olive, orange, lemon, fig, and pomegranate trees, etc. The sky is like a turquoise, the sea is like lazuli, and the mountains are like emeralds. The air? The air is just as in heaven. During the day there is sunshine, and consequently it is warm. Everybody wears summer clothes. During the night guitars and songs are heard everywhere and at all hours. In one word, a charming life. I shall probably take up my quarters in a delightful monastery in one of the most beautiful sites in the world: sea, mountains, palm-trees,

cemetery, church of the Knights of the Cross, ruins of mosques, thousand-year-old olive-trees! Ah, my dear friend! I am now enjoying life a little more; I am near what is most beautiful. I am a better man."

The voyage to Majorca fell out on this wise: The courts had at last entrusted Madame Dudevant with the custody of her only son Maurice, now well in his teens, and she resolved to take him, along with her only daughter Solange, to a warmer country in order that he might be rid of a rheumatism contracted during his years at Nohant. About the same time Chopin was ordered by the physicians to arrest his growing chest trouble by a winter in the South. Whether it was Chopin or Madame Dudevant who suggested that the two expeditions should combine forces cannot be decided. But in either case the affair wears pretty much the same complexion. No single phrase can fairly hit off the arrangement; but full light may be thrown from the facets of two or three. To George Sand, who could not be expected to find in her children an adequate substitute for her crowded and adult life in Paris, Chopin was a travelling companion; a gentleman companion it is true, but as lady-like as any reasonable body could desire. To Chopin George Sand was a sort of parent and guardian, albeit she amiably deceived the little great man, and even herself, by dissembling a slightly ridiculous position under the white veil of one rare artist's platonic need of another. Indeed, this supposed flight of tender lovers was probably preceded by as many exercises

of anxious foresight for the portmanteau of Master Frederick as for the trunk of Miss Solange and the box of Master Maurice.

Majorca soon became an island of horrors. At Palma there was neither an hotel nor a decent lodging. A villa in which the little band established itself made Chopin so ill that the landlord turned him out, even as a modern innkeeper indignantly thrusts forth the unhappy traveller who has caught typhoid through his bad drains. At last winter-quarters were found in an abandoned monastery of the Carthusians, where the native servant was "a brute," where Chopin was ill after nearly every meal, and where George Sand had "almost to cook." But George Sand had better be heard on her own account:

"The poor, great artist was a detestable patient. What I had feared, but, unfortunately, not enough, happened. He became completely demoralized. Bearing pain courageously enough, he could not overcome the disquietude of his imagination. The monastery was for him full of terrors and phantoms, even when he was well. He did not say so, and I had to guess it. On returning from my nocturnal explorations in the ruins with my children, I found him at ten o'clock at night before his piano, his face pale, his eyes wild, and his hair almost standing on end. It was some minutes before he could recognise us. He then made an attempt to laugh, and played to us sublime things that he had just composed; or, rather, to be more accurate, terrible and heart-rending ideas which had taken possession of him, as it were without his knowledge, in that hour of solitude, sadness, and terror. It was then that he composed the most beautiful of those short pieces he modestly entitled *Preludes*. They are masterpieces. Several present to the mind visions of the dead and the

sounds of the funeral chants which beset his imagination; others are melancholy and sweet. They occurred to him in the hours of sunshine and health, with the noise of the children's laughter under the window, the distant sound of guitars, the warbling of the birds among the humid foliage, and the sight of the pale little full-blown roses on the snow."

The form is literary, but the matter savours of truth. In the end, Chopin, frightfully ill, was borne back to the mainland in a ship malodorous with a load of a hundred pigs; and, after a pause at Genoa, the party returned in May, 1839, to France. This, according to George Sand, was the fatal year, for Chopin fretted at having to live alone, and "took to heart his exclusion from our family life." It was unthinkable that so busy a woman as George Sand should "pass life in impossible journeyings to and fro"; yet the only alternatives were to throw the invalid over or to receive him into her own home. Although they are beneath the notice of high-flown romancers, probably the advantages of a common purse had a little weight, and George Sand at last let a part of her house, where he received friends and gave lessons, to Frederick Chopin. The summers Chopin generally spent at Nohant, George Sand's place in the country, but it must be noted that he was only one of the artists who flocked during the fine months to that famous open house, where life was so robustly and intently lived that Chopin was to some extent shaken out of his spruceness, and stirred up to produce some of his broadest and sincerest works.

Hundreds of pages have been written to explain why, in 1847, this strange relationship came to an end. The astounding marvel and inscrutable mystery is, rather, that it lasted so long. One of Chopin's lady pupils, who visited Nohant, has thus described the pair's progress in the art of getting one upon the other's nerves:

"Love is no longer here, at any rate on one side; but there is tenderness and devotion, mingled, according to the days, with regrets, gloom, ennui, by all sorts of causes, and especially by the jar of their dispositions, the divergence of their tastes, their opposed opinions. . . . She speaks to him sometimes too plainly, and that hurts him. On his side, he has his crazes, his vivacities, his antipathies, his exigencies, and he evidently has to give way, because she is she, and he hasn't the strength to fight."

And she adds some stories of Madame Dudevant's drunken lout of a brother, whose noise and coarseness were constantly putting Chopin on the rack. As for Madame herself, she says "Chopin calls her his angel, but the angel has big wings that sometimes hurt you." Of course, the angelic rôle was Chopin's own, and he only hastened his fall by trying to transfer it.

No one knows certainly how the end came, nor need one greatly care. But it seems that Chopin, who did not like derangements, pouted when George Sand generously adopted a remote cousin, a poor thing named Augustine Brault. Again, he took up a paterfamilias attitude towards Solange Sand's choice of a husband, and thus roused the wrath of Maurice. Mamma tried to

pour oil into the stormy teacup, and was rewarded with the first bitter words Chopin had ever spoken to her. The rupture was complete. And given the personages and their states of health, it was simply the expected that happened. There is, therefore, no need to thresh out at length the question of George Sand's book "Lucrezia Floriani," with its so-called portrait of Chopin under the guise of Prince Karol. That the Majorca sojourn suggested to George Sand a theme for a novel, and that she freely worked up a good deal of her own experience for the book's backgrounds and subordinate interests, was in accordance with her method as a novelist; but it is only the shallow reader who will fail to see the world of difference between a warmed-up diary and fiction nourished by fact. Had Chopin sat for Karol, his gentleman's pride would have told him so, as the book was read to him, bit by bit, during its composition in 1846. Yet the breach was not made till after many friendly letters and visits had intervened. No doubt there are awkward facts on the other side. It is true, for example, that in 1848 Chopin called George Sand "Lucrezia" in a letter to a friend. But it is one thing to believe that George Sand had the bad taste and third-rate artistry to photograph herself and Chopin in an alleged romance, and quite another to assert, as many writers have done, that she fiendishly threw broadcast a sneering caricature, so as to trump up a quarrel with a man to whom she dared not honestly and openly confess a change of heart.

It is said that Chopin did not forgive George Sand. She made an advance and was repelled. Indeed, on the occasion of their only meeting after the rupture, Chopin slipped away without a word. Then came the Revolution of 1848, and the Pole, doubly exiled, had to snap his moorings and almost begin life afresh in England. Health, love, fortune, home, were lost, and in his bitterness, it is no wonder he cried out to Grzymala, "Alas! everything goes wrong with the world."

THE END

ENGLAND and Scotland are shivery names when the story is one of a consumptive suddenly driven North by the blasts of Revolution, his heart still bleeding from the fracture of its fondest ties. As regards his boyhood and young manhood, the foregoing chapters have disproved the common belief that Chopin was a man of griefs and sorrows; but it would be hard to exaggerate the sadness which darkened the last two years of his life. Torn up by the roots from the sunny plot he had made his own, blown hither and thither among scenes and people he could hardly endure, it was inevitable that he should quickly wither and die.

England and Scotland tried to be kind to Chopin; and this was part of his trouble. The ladies of Scotland—although it is true that one of them, Miss Stirling, showed a heart of gold—so tried him that he cried: "A day longer here, and I shall go mad or die! My Scots ladies are good, but so tedious that—God have mercy on us, they have fastened themselves on to me so that I can't get rid of them!" Besides, that blind force which is often called the British

Climate struck hard blows at him. He was a week in London before he saw the sun shining; and when he was at the Stirlings' place in Scotland, he could see "no post, no carriage, no boat, not even a dog." It was "all desolate, desolate." Worse still, a mist brooded over everything. And worst of all, it was a Sunday.

In London, despite the competition of the innumerable stars whom the Revolution had serried in our midst, Chopin was duly lionized by Society. He was presented to the Queen; he played at the Duchess of Sutherland's; he gave a recital at Lord Falmouth's. But he was already bent double by sickness, coughed incessantly, and had to be carried upstairs. In Scotland, where he found the people ugly and the home-grown food at the country houses excellent, he was much more of a private than of a public success. Indeed, the admirable Miss Stirling, the lady who is said to have sent Chopin a thousand pounds anonymously when he was nearing the bitter end in Paris, saved the Edinburgh concert by herself buying fifty pounds' worth of tickets. The last straw was laid on the poor bent back in London, at the Guildhall, when, through some blundering, Chopin was turned into a side-show at a ball in aid of refugees from Poland. The side-show was a failure. And it was London and November.

Not Poland, but Paris, was appointed for the end. His last home in the city of his destiny was in the Place Vendôme. Woyciechowski was urged to come, but the two friends were to meet

no more. Gutman, his pupil, nursed him night and day; and as soon as she heard of his peril the Countess Delphine Potacka hastened to his side. This was the countess who sang to the dying man: some say "the Canticle to the Blessed Virgin which saved Stradella from the assassins"; others, an air by Pergolesi; others, again, a song of Bellini's. George Sand came to the door, desperately trusting that the misunderstandings of life must fade to nothingness in the holy shadows of death. She was right; for only a day or two before Chopin had said to Franchomme, the 'cellist, "She told me I would die in no arms but hers." But the small and fussy and jealous folk in possession denied the last sacrament of love and reconciliation to these great ones; Gutman barred her entrance, and George Sand went quietly away.

The Abbé Jelowicki, whose narrative is discredited chiefly by writers who have so misread the history of art as to take it for granted that a great artist can only realize himself by means of free living and free thinking, was almost constantly with Chopin during the last days. A few months earlier the musician had said: "Not to offend my mother, I will not die without the Sacraments: yet I do not regard them in the sense you desire." But on his last day save four there was a change. He received at his own request, and most devoutly, the Viaticum and Extreme Unction, and refreshed by these consolations of that faith which was the same on his death-bed as in his cradle, in France as in far-off

Poland, he declared that he loved God and man, and that he was happy so to die. On October 17, 1849, he passed away in the arms of Gutman.

France, who claimed him as half her own in virtue of blood, and more than half in virtue of life lived and duty done, laid him among her most famous sons in Père La Chaise. But he had treasured Warsaw's goblet of Polish earth, and this was the dust that they flung into his open grave.

THE MUSIC

AS the publications of Chopin, with the negligible exception of the orchestral portions of his least satisfactory compositions, consist entirely of works for the pianoforte and are accessible at a low price, there is no need to describe and discuss them with the fulness which one properly devotes to the costly and popularly unreadable scores of symphonies and music-dramas. Europe and America have produced far too many books in which Chopin is interpreted to death. For example, a New York writer has lately told the world that in the great Fantasia in F minor, "Oracular octaves quake the cellarage of the palace, the warriors hurry by . . . the triplets obscure their retreat with chromatic vapours." Then, "after billowing A flat arpeggios, soft great hummocks of tone, two giant chords are sounded, and the Ballade of Love and War is over." Whereupon he asks, "Who conquers? Is the Lady with the Green Eyes and Moon-White Face rescued?" In the C sharp minor Nocturne (Opus 27, No. 1), the unquenchable Kleczynski sees "a description of a calm night at Venice, where, after a scene of murder, the sea closes
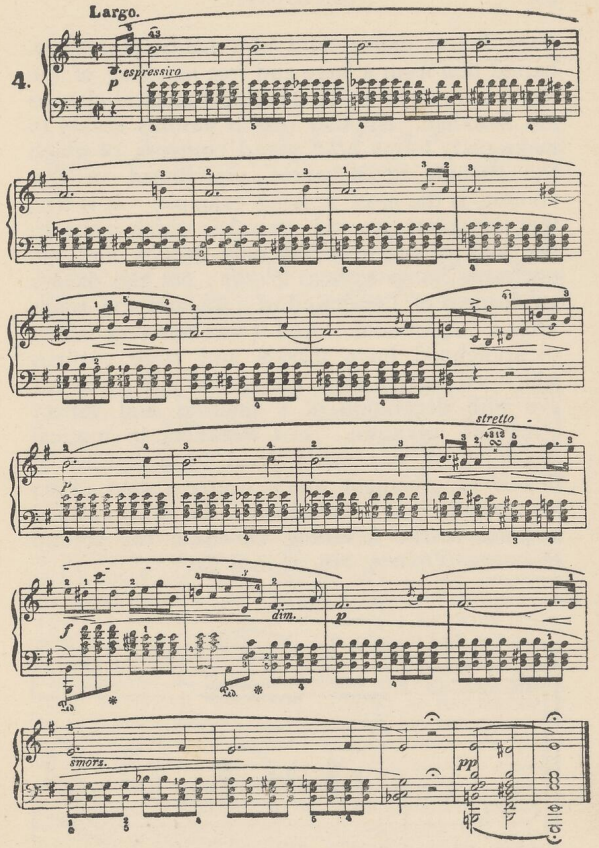
over a corpse and continues to serve as a mirror to the moonlight." Indeed, this book could be filled fifty times over with the preposterous word-pictures which have been put forward as the Authorized and Revised Versions of Chopin's Music. It must be admitted that the composer himself is said to have been guilty of some indiscreet speeches in this direction; but as nearly all of them have been handed down by parasites, or by too-ready writers with a literary view of music, or by rhapsodists, or by sentimentalists, the student should hesitate before he puzzles himself to explain how lyrics apparently so direct and so purely musical could have been forged by the deliberate and roundabout methods of programme music. Chopin's works can only be grasped entire when they are regarded as the musical expression of feeling, without the interposition of literary conjectures as to the situation by which the feeling is provoked.

But although Chopin is pre-eminently music's Man of Feeling, he must be protected from the blunder so common in Britain which regards the Man of Feeling in art as necessarily an amateur. There is a notion that Bach, Handel, and their giant peers, were hardened professionals, and that Chopin kept his tender heart because he stuck to the intimate pianoforte, and would not be decoyed into those resounding fields where opera and oratorio and the rest of the huge forms demand ample science and professional skill. Hence a discussion of Chopin's musicianship, his technical accomplishment as a composer, excites in popular

circles surprise, and almost resentment; indeed, to argue about his knowledge of harmony and counterpoint and form is thought not less absurd than to pick holes in the grammar of lovers' cooings or in the pronunciation of a mother's baby-talk. What had this Man of Feeling, who cared only to give beautiful utterance to beautiful moods and emotions, to do with harmony or counterpoint or any other such dry, theoretical subject? And these impatient objections are generally rounded off with a snub at "mere technique"—a phrase which assumes that you can arrive somewhere without going there.
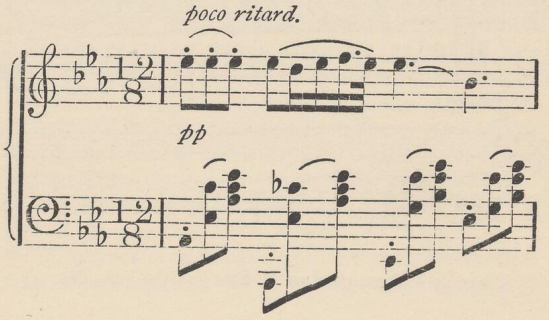
The truth is that Frederick Chopin, pianoforte-teacher, pianoforte-player and pianoforte-composer, who wrote no Mass, no opera, no symphony, and not even a good sonata (for even the B flat minor is a bad whole made of good parts), is entitled to be named among the ten or twelve apostles who have done most to increase the range and flexibility of musical expression. Rising up from a perusal of his pianoforte music, composers on the grander scale have been enabled to make their own scores more finely eloquent. Two of the greatest gifts offered by the nineteenth century towards the progress of music were the protraction of discords before resolution, and the emancipation of counterpoint; and—directly in the one case, indirectly in the other—these gifts were the more swiftly and richly granted through the work of Frederick Chopin.

In respect of musical form he was small-minded and short-sighted, his disability mainly arising
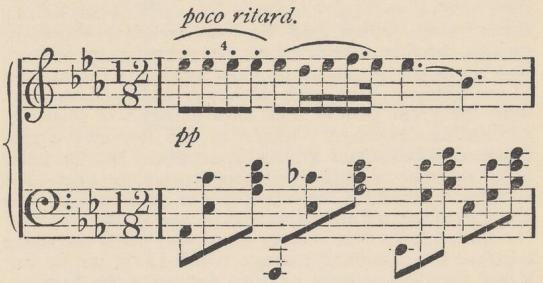


CHOPIN'S PRELUDE IN E MINOR (OP. 28, NO. 4).

from Polish conceptions of tonality, which debarred him from a large and free handling of the key-system upon which the bigger musical classics are founded. Another reason was his ability to make petty forms hold grand contents, of which the Prelude in E minor, reproduced in this volume, is the most striking example. It is true that the polonaises and mazurkas which make up the bulk of his work are only dances, and the nocturnes Songs without Words; but the dances are Dances of Death and of Life, and the songs utter a human soul. And it was this very failure to apprehend huge masses and large outlines which led him to jewel the spaces just below his eye with decoration of a fineness and variety elsewhere unknown. His weakness in musical development was made good by a fertility of device in ornament which nearly always clears his repetitions of tiresomeness. An easily grasped instance is the following bar from the second Nocturne (Opus 9, No. 2) in E flat:



which reappears eight bars later as:



Of notation he was a master, though it must be owned that here something is due to his editors. For the rest, the writer takes leave to reprint a paragraph which he wrote for general readers some years ago in another place:

"As for harmony and counterpoint, he had assimilated so perfectly everything in the practice of his forerunners which could ever be of any use to him, that he never staggered under a load of science, but went straight and surely to his mark. It is still thought by many otherwise intelligent people that a composer first invents a melody (possibly with one finger on the piano), then 'harmonizes' it, with a watchful eye on consecutive fifths, or sets it, according to what he has learnt of an imaginary, heaven-born counterpoint, against other melodies separately devised; and that after this, if he be a writer of orchestral music, he arranges it for a band. Even trained musicians sometimes fall into this error, though not, of course, into the more ludicrous depths of it. There are those who will gravely say that this or that is good or bad harmony or counterpoint, careless whether the composition in question is an allegro for

the piano or an adagio religioso for the organ. They would seem to believe that composers painfully square their work to musical grammar, like a school-boy writing Latin verses, rather than that they freely produce the musical literature from which the grammar is derived. But the great musician no more works by the method of belarding a tune with harmony and orchestration, than the great painter adds after-thoughts of colour to an outline drawing. Chopin is not the most signal instance of full-orbed musical conception, but the unity of his thought or feeling with his expression is complete enough to produce developments of counterpoint rich and varied beyond all the text-books and all the theorists. He understands that certain notes may clash and clang together in a headlong passage which could not be sustained together without causing torture to the hearers; just as the fleet feet of persecuted Innocence in fairy stories glance unscathed over the red-hot upturned knives which punish with a hundred burns and gashes the heavy tread of guilt."

Probably the credit for these contributions to the science of harmony should be given to his early habit of improvisation. In himself Chopin was not a bold spirit, and it is hardly likely that he would have dared to make his innovations had he taken himself seriously from the first as a composer. In other words, it is excessive to praise him, as some writers have done, for a deliberate revision of the text-book rules. The truth seems to be that in his solitary extemporisations he observed that certain things which, as he discovered afterwards, the text-books cursed were true and beautiful expressions of his meaning; and that when he came to write them down he had the courage of his idiom as against the grammarians who would have blunted his syntax

and abridged his vocabulary. Had his courage been feebler and his respect for the grammarians stronger, it would have been a loss to the world. For Chopin dreamed dreams and saw visions of sorrowful vales and bright waters to which it was meet that he should lead women and men. He leads them thither by his own paths; and most of them are good paths, lit by a round moon and a thousand little stars, and fragrant all the way with roses.

CHOPIN'S WORKS

[To economize space, the separately-issued works, or small groups of works in any one form—*e.g.*, the mazurkas—are massed together with their opus numbers. The list does not include the posthumous publications, which were nearly all issued in defiance of Chopin's own intentions.]

FOR PIANOFORTE AND ORCHESTRA.

Variations on "La ci darem la mano" (Op. 2).
—Concerto in E minor (Op. 11).
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Trio for pianoforte, violin and 'cello (Op. 8).
Duet Concertante for piano and 'cello on a theme from "Robert the Devil" (no opus number).
Sonata for pianoforte and 'cello (Op. 65).

FOR PIANOFORTE.

Rondo (Op. 1).
Rondo à la Mazurka (Op. 5).
Mazurkas (Op. 6, 7, 17, 24, 30, 33, 41, 50, 56, 59, and 63).
Nocturnes (Op. 9, 15, 27, 32, 37, 48, 55, and 62).
Twelve Studies (Op. 10).
Variations on "Je vends des Scapulaires" (Op. 12).
Rondo (Op. 16).
Waltzes (Op. 18, 34, 42, and 64).
Scherzos (Op. 20, 31, 39, and 54).
Polonaises (Op. 22, 26, 40, 44, 53, and 61).
Ballades (Op. 23, 38, 47, and 52).
Twelve Studies (Op. 25).
Impromptus (Op. 29, 36, and 51).
Sonata, with Funeral March (Op. 35).
Bolero (Op. 19).
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Tarantella (Op. 43).
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