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CHOPIN.

Chopin's Greater Works

(Preludes, Ballads, Nocturnes, Polonaises Mazurkas.)

HOW THEY SHOULD BE UNDERSTOOD.

BY

JEAN KLECZYNSKI.

INCLUDING

CHOPIN'S NOTES FOR A "METHOD OF METHODS."

TRANSLATED WITH ADDITIONS BY

NATALIE JANOTHA.

WITH 3 PORTRAITS AND FACSIMILE.

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BY SPECIAL PERMISSION

TO

H.R.H. THE PRINCESS BEATRICE,

PRINCESS HENRY OF BATTENBERG

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ILLUSTRATIONS.

Portrait of Chopin from an oil painting.

Fac-simile of Mazurka in C.

Portrait of Princess Czartoryska.

Portrait of Chopin from a sketch.

THE RT. HON. W. E. GLADSTONE TO HIS DAUGHTER MRS. DREW.

"I am extremely glad to hear that Miss Janotha is giving her aid to the Interpretation of Chopin, whom she so deeply venerates, for I feel sure that no one living is more competent to do it."



PREFACE.

All musical students will be interested by the publication of Kleczynski's last lectures which, delivered at Warsaw in 1883, are highly esteemed in the author's native land.

The following letter was addressed by the Princess Marceline Czartoryska, the illustrious friend and pupil of Chopin to the author of these lectures on the occasion of the publication of an earlier series of lectures*; which, full of appreciation, is sufficient introduction to any work concerning Chopin.—

"Monsieur Kleczynski, Vos belles pages sur l'Œuvre de Chopin m'ont vivement intéressée et, non moins vivement charmée, elles seront, je n'en doute pas,

* The Works of Chopin and their proper Interpretation translated by A. Whittingham (London: W. Reeves, New Yor: C. Scribner's Sons).



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un très utile complément à l'étude d'un maître admirable, dont la connaissance se répand chaque jour d'avantage; à vous Monsieur le grand mérite d'en faire jaillir la compréhension. Veuillez recevoir l'expression de mes sentiments les meilleurs.—Princesse M. C."

The frontispiece portrait is from an oil-colour painting of Chopin, painted from life in 1847-1848 at Paris by Anthony Kolberg, a Polish portrait painter and a friend of Chopin. The correct date of Chopin's birth, erroneously stated by all his biographers, is February 22nd, 1810, 28th April, 1810, is the date of his christening.

The MS. of the Mazurka in C has a different ending from the ordinary published one. The Polish words mean "end with a shake."

The MS. of Chopin's *Méthode des Méthodes* for which the Trois Nouvelles Etudes were composed was given to the Princess M. Czartoryska by Chopin's sister, after his death.

Mr. Sutherland Edwards has most kindly edited this translation.

Notes for a "Method of Methods."

NOTES FOR A "METHOD OF METHODS."

It must be well understood that there is here no question of musical feeling or style, but simply of technical execution—mechanism, as I call it. The study of this mechanism I divide into three parts. To learn to play the notes with both hands, at one key's distance from one another; distant, that is to say, a tone or half a tone. This includes the diatonic and chromatic scales, and the shakes.

As no abstract method for pursuing this study exists, all that one can do, in order to play the notes at a half-tone or whole tone distance will be to employ combinations or fractions of scales or to

practice shakes. It is unnecessary to begin the study of the scales with that of C, which is the easiest to read, but the most difficult to play, as it lacks the support afforded by the black notes. It will be well to play, first of all, the scale of G flat, which places the hand regularly, utilizing the long fingers for the black keys.

The student will arrive progressively at the scale of C, using each time one finger less on the black keys. The shake should be played with three fingers ; or with four as an exercise. The chromatic scale should be practised with the thumb, the fore-finger and middle finger, also with the little finger, the third, and the middle fingers.

In thirds, as in sixths and octaves, use always the same fingers.

Words were born of sounds ; sounds existed before words. A word is a certain modification of sound. Sounds are used to make music, just as words are used to form a language. Thought is expressed through sounds.

An undefined human utterance is mere sound ; the art of manipulating sounds is music. An

INSTYTUT FRYDERYKA CHOPINA-WARSZAWA BIBLIOTEKA
Zbiory Stowarzyszenia I.F.C.

abstract sound does not make music, as one word does not make a language. For the production of music many sounds are required. The action of the wrist is analagous to taking breath in singing.

N.B. No one notices inequality in the power of the notes of a scale when it is played very fast and equally, as regards time. In a good mechanism the aim is, not to play everything with an equal sound but to acquire a beautiful quality of sound and a perfect shading. For a long time players have acted against nature in seeking to give an equal power to each finger. On the contrary, each finger should have an appropriate part assigned to it. The thumb has the greatest power, being the thickest finger and the freest. Then comes the little finger, at the other extremity of the hand. The middle finger is the main support of the hand, and is assisted by the first. Finally comes the third, the weakest one. As to this Siamese twin of the middle finger—bound by one and the same ligament—some players try to force it with all their might to become independent. A thing impossible, and most likely unnecessary. There are, then,

many different qualities of sound, just as there are several fingers. The point is to utilize the differences; and this, in other words, is the art of fingering.



CHOPIN.

I. LECTURE.

IN my former Lectures on Chopin* I mentioned the desirability of making a special analysis of each work of that master. These analyses taken as a distinct course, and particularly as a private study, would be very profitable. In the present work it is not here intended to analyse every one of Chopin's compositions; but we will occupy ourselves with the most important and most characteristic of his masterpieces, and try to point out

* The Works of Chopin and their proper Interpretation.

the peculiarities which are common to them all. In this manner we may be of some use to the admirers, and also to the authoritative judges of the genius of Chopin, and if we may use the expression, add a new brick to the tower of his glory. In some of the former lectures the endeavour was made to point out the remarkable characteristics of the works of Chopin, such as their melodiousness, their constant legato, their simplicity, which by no means excludes rich fantasy, their graceful rubato, their sentiment and passion restrained within due limits; while in regard to the technical part of Chopin's works, we remarked that interpreters of this composer, more perhaps than those of any other, require a touch of exquisite beauty. It is only a happy combination of the qualities previously named, which can form that ideal executant whom we have not hitherto encountered. The use of the pedal moreover, or rather both pedals, is in this case a point of the greatest importance.

As a whole, the works of Chopin represent to us the pianoforte in its noble grandeur as an instrument full of poetry, and clearness of tone, with a melody

which includes that of the human voice. The marvellous variety of the qualities of Chopin's Muse is well exemplified in his etude in A flat (Op. 25, No. 1).

The fluent legato in the first place so thoroughly vocal, brought out by gliding fingers, and the almost continuous, that is to say, constantly changing use of the pedal, the softness of the cantilena, of which the tones, at first delicate, then more and more clearly marked with a rippling murmur move on and on; all these are striking peculiar characteristics in the works of Chopin.

It is said that Chopin explained to one of his pupils the manner in which this study should be executed. "Imagine," he said, "a little shepherd who takes refuge in a peaceful grotto from approaching storm. In the distance rushes the wind and the rain, while the shepherd gently plays a melody on his flute."

Everyone knows that a beautiful legato cannot be attained without a graceful and practised touch. That noble roundness of tone which the singer acquires by soft breathing through the throat, and

the violinist by a skilfully gentle pressure of the bow, is reached by the pianist through a pressure of the fingers which is soft and not forced; and in the case of a stronger note, through the elasticity of the arm, as distinguished from violence or heaviness.*

It might at first seem that this observation on pianoforte-playing in general could have been dispensed with here. Not so, however. No author loses so much through the want of a beautiful tone on the part of the executant as Chopin, who using, not often, sudden accents and being particularly fluent and equal, requires in his performer a greater perfection of nuances, a greater poetizing of each note. In this respect, Schumann is the only composer who somewhat resembles him.

On the use of the pedal in Chopin's compositions, as in those of other composers, a separate lecture might be delivered. Hans Schmidt of the Vienna Conservatorium has specially discoursed on this subject in a series of lectures afterwards published

* For a study on the subject of tone see the second of the formerly published lectures.

in book form. A perusal of this work alone will quite suffice to show that the theory of the pedal is very imperfectly dealt with even in many of the best works on musical execution. The pianoforte pedal, so important an agent in elucidating the composer's thought and rendering the tone plastic, becomes, through improper use, as Schmidt himself expresses it, like a wet sponge rudely passed over a beautiful picture. It then suggests the saying of Talleyrand about language having been given to man to conceal his thoughts, for the pedal seems to have been given precisely for that purpose to a great number of pianists.
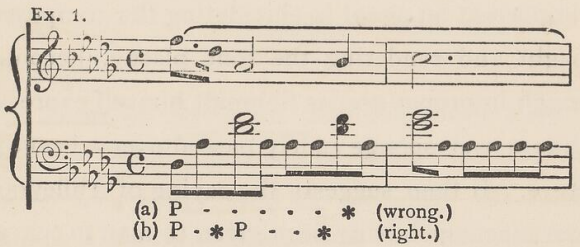
Some remarks, therefore, on the subject of the pedal, first in general, and then in particular, will not, we think, at this point, be out of place.

Let us observe that not only are two different harmonies on two different keys dissonant, but that, as a matter of fact, two sounds belonging to one and the same chord ought not to be joined in pedal if they produce melody in the single note; for in this case the sounds, heard together, would make a

momentary duet, which a third sound would convert into a tiercet, and so forth.
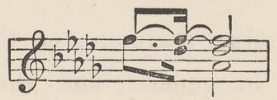
For example we will take the beginning of the well-known prelude in D flat.

Ex. 1.
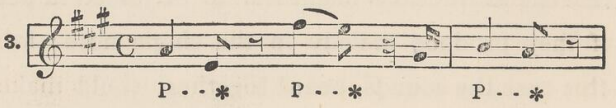


In the first case (a) the impression produced on the ear would be as follows :

Ex. 2.
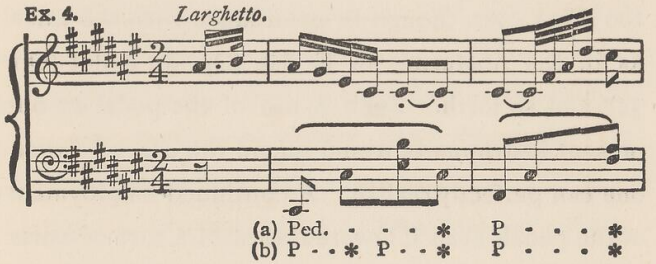


which, certainly, is in accordance neither with the intention of the composer nor with good taste. It ought to be played as at (b). Similarly, in the fourth Nocture of Field (in A major) the pedal should be changed as follows :—

Ex. 3.



In Chopin's works, as in those of almost all other composers, we meet with many pedal marks entirely false. The beginning of the nocturne in F sharp is a case in point.

Ex. 4.



If we wish to give effect to the melody, or, as the phrase goes, to the painting of the picture, we ought to play according to (b).

In marking the pedal thus, the composers showed inadvertence ; though they were perhaps, at the same time, influenced by the imperfect construction of the pianos of those days, which, being weaker in tone, required their tone to be strengthened and prolonged by means of the pedal more frequently than our modern instruments. It is certain that fifty years ago that bar of the nocturne in which the pedal was employed as shown in (a) could have

sounded agreeable to the ear; whereas in our day such an execution would rob the wonderful melody of all its grace. The same thing may be said concerning every composition where the pedal is used too often, even though in accordance with the rules, as in the nocturnes in E flat (Op. 9), A flat (Op. 32), and so forth. Such a use of the pedal on our present instruments would offend the ear, as everyone can perfectly realise. A continued employment of the pedal, even if lowered, creates a sort of noise or, more precisely, crash, which, as it increases in force, surrounds the melody under execution with a certain atmosphere of triviality. This triviality lies in the monotonous rumour of the pedal, which, even although increasing force may not be applied to it, will still prove fatiguing as well as obscuring to the theme, which, in this case, bears resemblance to a boat tossed on some tempestuous wave. In proof of the truth of this opinion it should be noticed that the pedal, used on proper occasions, produces a colossal effect, if accompanied by a skilful crescendo,*

* Hans Schmidt on the Pianoforte Pedal, p. 57.

and renders the whole passage more majestic and richer in colour.

The constant use of the pedal introduces a powerful crescendo into the middle of the Mazurka in A minor (Op. 17); and towards the end the pedal is even employed through a number of bars in succession, the same effect is obtained in the middle part of the Prelude in D flat, and in the octave part of the Polonaise (Op. 53).

All those effects of pedal, of phrasings, of rubato, with the distinctive forms given to them, combine to produce in Chopin's compositions, such a happy whole that a particular analysis of them is practically indispensable here.

To begin with the nocturnes. The first composer who introduced this musical form was, as is well-known, John Field; but it was Chopin who carried it to perfection, and lent to it a deeper significance. By a thorough and correct comprehension of the nocturnes, one can acquire a key to unlock the mysteries of the other and more magnificent works of the master. The manner in which he conducts a *cantilena* with so delicate a perception

of the effects of the instrument, is a peculiar characteristic of Chopin's. We do not propose, however, to analyse each of the nocturnes in this place; but shall confine our attention to some more typical, more difficult, and consequently more important ones.

The nocturne in F sharp (Op. 15, No. 2), exhibits a type remarkably characteristic of the first youth of Chopin; the nocturne in D flat (Op. 27), shows us the composer in the full development of his youthful dreams and enchantments; and the nocturne in C minor (Op. 48), depicts exalted sufferings and a deep anguish of soul, the outcome of a longer and acuter life. In the F sharp nocturne the performer has an opportunity for the display of his intelligence by the manner in which he takes the first A sharp. Chopin here enters suddenly into the middle of his theme, without any introduction; as in A sharp in that nocturne so also in the opening note, E flat, which occurs in the A flat study which we have recently mentioned, each note requires a certain accent, a certain pressure of the fingers, showing that it is the commencement

of an expressive thought, and suggesting a burst of sentiment akin to the overflowing of a cup charged beyond the brim. A short time ago a well-known artist, J. Wieniawski, simply by hearing one note at the beginning taken with its proper accent, instantly guessed which composition was thought of. This first phrase of the nocturne is indeed wonderful, from the upper note, to which we ascend by a crescendo,

Ex. 5. 
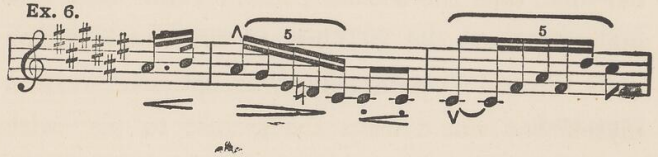
falling pensively as far as C sharp. In the second half of the bar upon the two further C sharps



its strength grows until it rests upon the sufficiently strong accent of the first C sharp in the following bar. Afterwards it finishes with a soft passage which winds gracefully upwards. This whole phrase is like the cup of a flower which on one side descends in a beautiful curve and, on the other,

rears its petals with a still softer grace. It is not without an object that we particularly describe this phrase, for the description will soon be necessary to our study. For indeed, immediately afterwards the same thought is presented though in a richer form.

Ex. 6.



In this shape, it must be observed, the general lines of the thought remains the same, though more warmth of feeling and even more power must be employed; for the repetition we have met with is one that does not finish with diminished power but develops the inspiration; this same phrase appearing, again, a third time, in a higher degree of the scale,

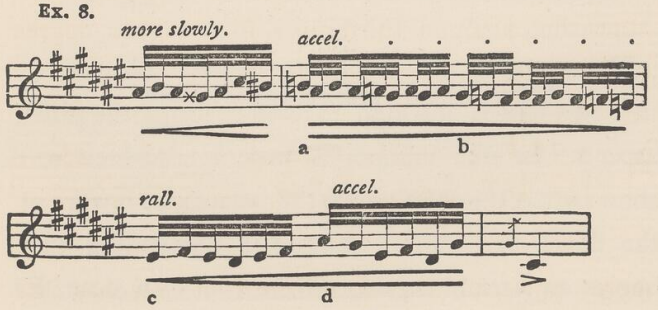
Ex. 7.



more powerful, therefore, until it reaches its
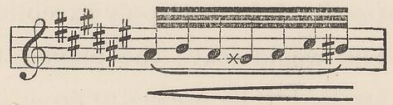
culminating point with an intensity of feeling on F sharp in the sixth bar, and it is only from this point that it falls, through the two succeeding bars, to the first *piano* in a manner both graceful and logical. Some pianists in repeating the theme at bar nine, take the second pedal, for the sake of a much greater *piano*. This, to my mind, seems quite rational; I do not apply exceptional pressure myself but would leave the pianist to play with greater strength if he prefers to do so. Here, however, in repeating the theme, we perceive how necessary it is thoroughly to study its character, for otherwise we shall be unable adequately to render the charming ornamentation which adorns he eleventh bar.

Ex. 8.



One glance at the bars extending from the 9th to 16th suffices to show that they are only a repetition of bars 1—8. In the 11th bar, therefore, the said passage is nothing but the third bar immensely enriched. Logic therefore, directs us to play it similarly. Then the group

Ex. 9.



requires the same crescendo to be employed as in connection with the short note.
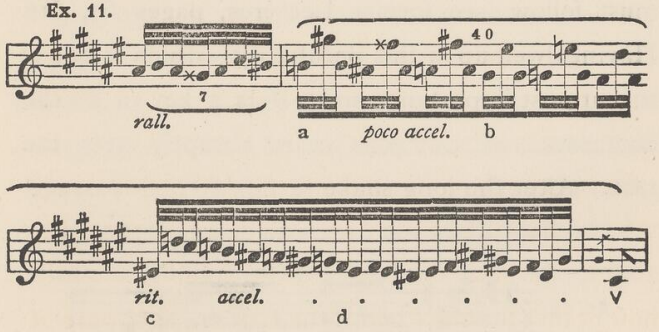
Ex. 10.



Consequently we must divide the said little passage into two halves of which one will descend, the other ascend. In like manner a little intelligence will show us that the chief point (the bottom, as it were of the flower-cup) from which the descending line begins to ascend again, will be the 19th note, E

sharp. Thus, in the first half, the descending one, we shall have eighteen notes, in the second half, the ascending one, twelve. It must not surprise us if, as we have said formerly, the two lines on the two sides of the flower-cup had rather different curves. This division will at the same time indicate to us the point at which the bass is to be taken, as four notes (semiquavers) in the bass accompaniment will take this order—a, b, c, d. The same simple logical view will enable us to attain a perfect interpretation of the same passage when it appears in a still richer form at the end of the nocturne,

Ex. 11.
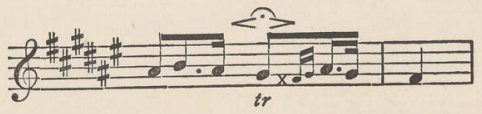


of which 40 notes are taken in the following manner

—9, 9, 10 and 12—as the letters a, b, c, d, express it.

This method must sometimes be used in passages of Chopin's music, their importance is an organic and not an accidental one: they exhibit an enriched melody and not mere trifles.

Moreover we must bear in mind that the characteristic features of Chopin genius is such that an equality of executions in playing these passages would be incorrect. It is therefore necessary, besides strengthening and silencing, to vary the passages by alternate delays and hurryings; while we must remember that in ending, an acceleration must follow (see former Lectures, pages 60, 61). Having dwelt upon this peculiarity—which is one of the utmost importance since it is a key to all the nocturnes—we can pass more abruptly over the rest. After the long shake
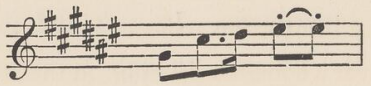
Ex. 12.



which can be lengthened even to *fermato*, according
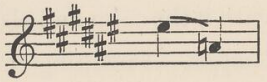
to will, it begins with comparative slowness, then hurries forward, and slowly sinks again at the end of the first part. In the second part the melody takes a reverse direction. It slowly rises

Ex. 13.



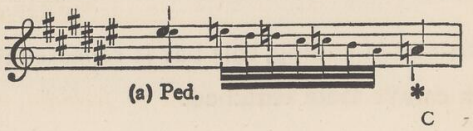
and then suddenly descends

Ex. 14.



Then the small chromatic scale renders the fall of the voice easy, and excellently imitates the vocal portamento or the gliding of the finger along the strings of a violin. In my opinion the charm and fantasy is greater still if, at the time when the scale is being descended, we retain the higher note

Ex. 15.



and leave the upper key only at the last note of the fall. The holding of the pedal, shown at (a) still further elevates the beauty of this effect, so entirely original. As to the middle part of the nocturne, characterized as that is by such unrest, comment would be superfluous. Its soft and passionate beginning, its forcible though brief crescendo, its sudden fall to the pianissimo cause it to resemble some tempestuous episode in the expansive and peaceful life of a youthful soul. The first theme returns, and with it the calm and elegance, peculiar to the refined Chopin. Finishing the phrase of 8 bars in the returning theme we meet with a peculiarity worthy of note.

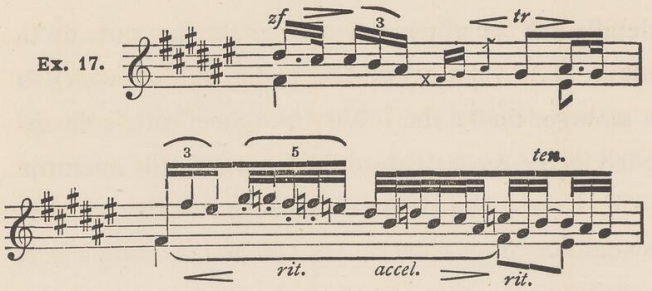
The ending has the form previously employed

Ex. 16.



but instead of ending, this bar is repeated twice in a shape always more enriched.

Ex. 17.



The expression, therefore, with small variations must be the same; and this fact will particularly facilitate the pianist's execution of the last bar, which should not be extended, but of which the first part should be played tenderly and *rubato*, the second part in hurried fashion, so as the more quickly to reach the B natural upon which a rest is to be made, as formerly upon the shake.

The end of the nocturne is now easy. We spoke in our preceding lectures about those rules which are to be observed in the greater part of Chopin's ornamentation, especially in their frequently representing a phrase formerly used but now exhibited in a richer form. For this last named reason the composer does not like us to linger too long over the
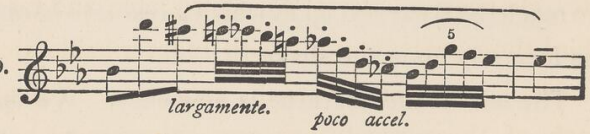
details but usually hurries us on at the end of the movement to the main destination object, which is a stronger final note. We have seen this rule applied in the recently described runs of the nocturne in F sharp. We shall perceive the rule also in other places where, in view of producing the same effect, a similar execution is required: for example in the E flat nocturne, Op. 9, First Phrase.

Ex. 18.
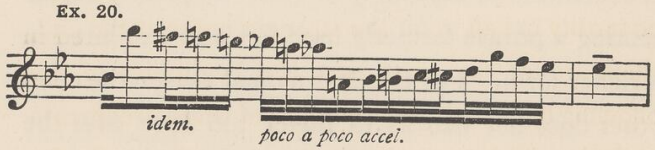


For the second time thus:—

Ex. 19.
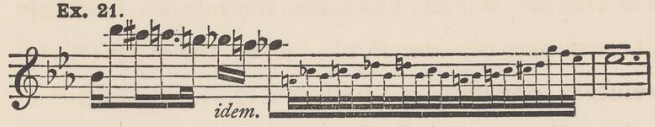


For the third time thus:—

Ex. 20.



a variant often added by Chopin and indicated to me by Mr. Makomaski, a pupil of Telefsen,

Ex. 21.



follows the same rule and leads to the same destination, halts, that is to say, on the best note, without a previous *ritenuto*.

Similar to this is the larghetto of the F minor Concerto. The original form, in bars 7, 8, 9, 10, etc., changes in bars 26, 27, 28, 29, etc., and for the third time presents itself with indescribable riches of detail, at the end, after the recitative. Yet after each of these repetitions any enlargement of the details or any sentimentalism would spoil the beautiful ornamentations. They must not move too tardily to halt upon the stronger notes at the end, which are for the most part, the beginning of the following bars. A great number of these ornaments might be cited from the nocturne in G minor, the

Andante Spianato, the first Concerto, etc., but we judge that an intelligent performer, if he is familiar with our former lectures, will be able to see how the most characteristic examples here given illustrate all instances of the kind. After these episodical remarks, therefore, we may return to our task.
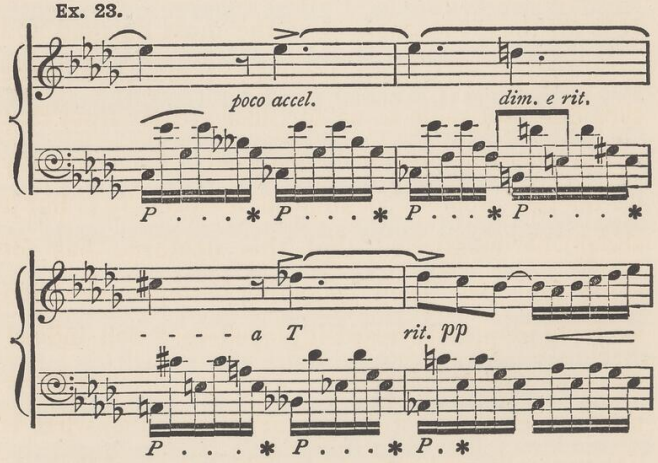
The Nocturne in D flat (Op. 27) is an immensely rich composition, and possesses distinction of form, independently of the nobility of its main conception. It is for these reasons one of the most finished and most typical of Chopin's compositions, though the type does not seem to us to differ greatly from that of the Nocturne previously analyzed. Consequently we do not propose to analyze it specially; but it should be mentioned that this nocturne has for some time past been becoming better known, and we have frequently heard it played very well indeed on the concert platform. The one circumstance upon which we must direct our attention is, what is not generally understood, that the principal themes,

Ex. 22.



which according to Chopin's intention, occurs, as everyone is aware, three times, should each time appear with a different strength and a different shade of expression. The first time, for instance, it should be given *piano*, with softness and simplicity; the second time, *pianissimo*, assisted by the second pedal, which is perfectly justified by the character and the modulation which prepares it

Ex. 23.

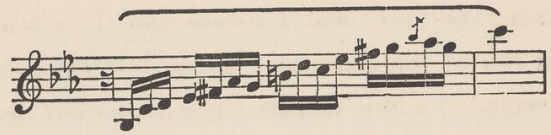


and the third time *forte* and *entirely* contrary to the pointing of the text, which directs that it is to be

taken *delicately and diminuendo*. This was once specially demonstrated to me by the late Julius Fontana; and it is very logical, for after the entire middle part, which develops itself *crescendo*, the theme resumed for the third time in a feeble manner produces no effect. Why the faulty marking was never rectified in Chopin's lifetime, and why the long passage which occurs at bar 7 after the return of the theme, has been directed to be played *con forza* instead of *con delicatezza*, I am at a loss to understand.

If the nocturne in D flat is performed frequently and well, since it is easier to understand, the case is far different with the great nocturne in C minor (Op. 48, No. 1). This dignified and expressive work is very often played coldly and phrased colourlessly or falsely. Yet every note in this composition is full of meaning. I do not know if the legend be true that this nocturne represents the contrition of a sinner. The reproaches of conscience are according to this idea followed in the middle part by heavenly harps and angelic choirs, and later on, by a growing disquietude, ending with death and a yearning flight to heaven, (last passage).

Ex. 24.



In any case such an idea would very well explain the different phases of this most poetic work.

The beginning, with a hushed tone in the treble, requires for the two first notes G and A flat, a light pressure, but at the same time a lifting action to indicate, as it were, sighs. A flat is stronger than G. In the second bar the accent falls upon G, the remainder to be played tenderly and with expression, and moreover with a regulated shading of melody alternately upwards and downwards.

We will here mention the chief practical directions as to expression which Chopin often repeated to his pupils: "A long note is stronger, as is also a high note. A dissonant is likewise stronger, and equally so a syncope. The ending of a phrase, before a comma, or a stop, is always *weak*. If the melody ascends, one plays crescendo, if it descends, decrescendo. Moreover, notice must be taken of *natural* accents. For instance, in a bar of

two, the first note is strong, the second weak, in a bar of three the first strong and the two others weak. To the smaller parts of the bar the same direction will apply. Such then are the rules: the exceptions are always indicated by the authors themselves."

The ending of the whole half phrase in the 4th bar, a little rubato and crescendo, is played in a sufficiently dramatic manner, the last C being somewhat drawn out by the pedal. The pedal, taken generally twice in a bar, is held only through the first and third parts of the bar. The other four bars are played similarly, but with a softer termination, in G minor by way of contrast. In bars 11, 13 and 14 the bass,

Ex. 25.



taken dramatically and with expression, ought to paint the soul's disquietude. In the 15th bar the music ought deeply to affect the soul of the

listener. Yet out of this momentary calm, we are led again by a dramatic crescendo back to the chief theme beginning at the 16th bar, growing in sound and power, until in the 21st bar, the culminating point of power and expression is reached on the high C. (Such culminating points we must seek in every composition; this will facilitate our understanding of the whole.) Two triplets end this first part; and like the last tossing of a stormy wave, show the disquietude of the soul. The chords of the middle part, at first soft, grow to a powerful fortissimo. The same may be said of the finale where the inequality of the bass perfectly depicts the returning agony. We need not enlarge upon this subject. If the introduction is understood the interpretation of the other parts of the work is an easier matter. I shall end with a few remarks concerning a melodious rubato and the style of recitative which we meet with in the first part of the nocturne—as well as frequently elsewhere in Chopin's music—and of which the execution is seemingly difficult. We say *seemingly* difficult. Not that, in our opinion

any real difficulties exist, but that many pianists, not placing themselves on the right standpoint, magnify to themselves the difficulties of these parts, and frequently cannot cope with them at all. One reason, amongst others, of this failure is that in our age, after Chopin, the unformed style assumes some very strange shapes, breaking away from all rules of *tempo*, and even all æsthetical principles. We are accordingly now accustomed to those fantastic flights which are by no means absent from Liszt, but which are only occasionally appropriate to the works of Chopin. Yet I have read, in a recently started German periodical, that to make the performance of Chopin's works pleasing it is sufficient to play them with less precision of rhythm than the music of other composers. I, on the contrary, do not know a single phrase of Chopin's works (including even the freest amongst them) in which the balloon of inspiration, as it moves through the air, is not checked by an anchor of rhythm and symmetry. Such passages as occur in the F minor ballad, the B flat scherzo (the middle part), the F minor prelude, and even the A flat impromptu are not devoid

of rhythm. The most crooked recitative of the F minor concerto, as can easily be proved, has a fundamental rhythm which is not at all fantastic, and which cannot be dispensed with when playing with orchestra.

If only we well understand and thoroughly impress ourselves with this rule, namely, that Chopin never overdoes fantasy, and is always restrained by a pronounced æsthetical instinct we shall have a hint as to the style in which his most difficult works should be played, such as the C sharp study, the ballads in F major and G, etc. Everywhere the simplicity of his poetical inspiration, and his sobriety will save us from extravagance and false pathos. On this point we must briefly add some observations in regard to certain other nocturnes.

The nocturne in B flat minor ought not to be played too slowly. There should, as it were, be very unfrequent breathing on the part of the performer so as not to interrupt the thought. The passages, bars 2, 3, 10, 11, etc., should be executed somewhat rubato, with a slight significance on the three last notes. The middle of the nocturne, slow and heavy,

though piano. Finally concerning the use of the pedal, etc., the pianist should keep to the directions given in the edition revised by me of Chopin's works (Gebethner and Wolff).

Nocturne (2) E flat, with simplicity and naturalness; the time not too slow. The passages contained in bars 16-24 are hurried towards the end.

Nocturne (4) F, there is scarcely any use of the pedal, and the playing should be characterised by simplicity and correct time. Precision should be observed in the first part, in the middle there should be restlessness and fire.

As regards Nocturne (6) G minor, it was originally intended to be called "After a representation of the tragedy of *Hamlet*." Afterwards Chopin abandoned this notion, saying: "Let them guess for themselves."

For the Nocturne 7 in C sharp minor the instructions contained in the former lectures will suffice.

In Nocturne 9 in B, the pedal should likewise be used seldom, and a simplicity equal to that of Mozart should be observed.

In the A flat Nocturne a more drawing-room style should be employed, and overstraining in rubato avoided in the middle part.

As to Nocturne 11, G minor, see the previous lectures.

Of Nocturne 12 G, it is very likely that the middle theme is taken from the motive of a French song, sung in Normandy. Nocturne 15 F minor, has been thoroughly described in the previous lectures.

In Nocturne 16, E flat, the style is somewhat grandiose, by reason of an extended phrasing. Here we will stop, though we ought to add to the best of the Nocturnes the Berceuse. It is known that in this work the bass ought to keep in rhythm while the right hand plays rubato.

To the Nocturnes we must likewise add the Preludes.

We have a few preludes to mention. The Prelude in C must be played twice the first time with less, the second with greater haste in the middle part, the speed becoming slower towards the end.

Prelude 2 ought not to be played, as it is bizarre.

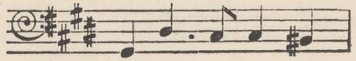
No. 3 (G), is quick and flying. No. 4 (E minor,) very slowly. No. 13 (F sharp), is played almost in religious style, the middle part (C sharp) a little rubato. In a few bars at the end there is such a construction of the chord played by the right hand that above some of the notes in this chord a single note in the high octave and piano must be taken. To my mind this produces the effect of flageolets and violins, and the execution should be without arpeggio, just as described here (first the chord and then the single note quite gently). It gives a new and beautiful effect.

As to Prelude 15, the student should remember what Liebelt has said in his Aesthetics, viz., that one single note, repeated can give the idea of a row of columns, erected in one line into infinity. To convey this impression it is here essential to play equally in *tempo;* and the playing should be at no distance from equality in such bars as the fourth, etc.

Prelude 16, is one which Rubinstein plays famously, with quickness and fire. No. 17, A flat, is a beautiful romance. One can say the same of No. 21,

B flat. No. 24, D minor, is played with great dramatic force and fire, the last three strokes being made with the entire strength.
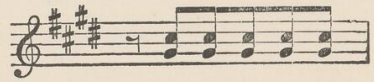
Perhaps there is no more poetical adagio than what Chopin modestly calls the Etude in C Sharp (Op. 25, No. 7), which we may class with the nocturnes. What a noble and elevated simplicity is observable in this duo; what melancholy, what exquisite form in the melodious turns! That this work is often played badly and with mannerism is not astonishing. To those who are not specially acquainted with Chopin's style it is very difficult. It requires deep perception, and, notwithstanding its powerful dramatic character must not be rendered with undue roughness or sharpness. In the introductory Recitative according to the later edition by Mikuli, two notes, C sharp and B sharp.

Ex. 26. 

which were formerly semi-quavers must be regarded as quavers. Moreover, beyond the opinion of

Mikuli on this point, I have seen the same notation in a score corrected by Chopin's own hand, and still in the possession of his family. One must here consider the bass to be the chief melody. The right hand, in this duo, usually answers with a degree of discretion though at the same time very expressively. It must be played very slowly with much sadness and great simplicity. The execution of the accompaniment in the repeated chords
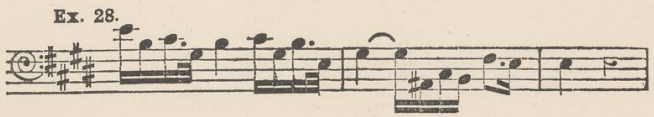
Ex. 27.



should be extremely soft and poetical.

At the end of the first part

Ex. 28.



the performer must avoid affectation into which he can easily fall on account of the beautiful turns of

melody. It is extremely important that he should not caress these beautiful thoughts too much but that he should play with naturalness and simplicity. As regards Chopin's expressive melodies of this description, one cannot too strongly recommend a close observance of those general rules previously set forth: which are particularly essential for finding out the strongest notes and giving them their proper accentuation, as well as for making duly restricted pauses between the musical phrases. This will prove of especial necessity in the second part where the musical richness of the runs introduce greater difficulties into the execution, already formidable enough by reason of their difficulties of a mechanical kind.





LECTURE II.

BALLADS.

A WORK is called classical when it is a model of beauty and when the forms in which its substance is developed are perfect. In a romantic work, on the other hand, the form is freer, and it is permitted to the composer to astonish his audience with a greater number of unexpected turns. Moreover a classical work tends to tranquilize the soul, whereas a romantic one tends to sway it to and fro. Nevertheless, these two definitions of the classical and the romantic are

subject at times to such marked exceptions that the distinction between them must not always be looked for. A work which ten years ago was romantic we perhaps rank to-day as classical; and in analyzing its beauty we wonder at it indeed, but are not astonished as our ancestors were, who never thought it possible that anyone could accustom himself to such adventurous music. It was so with Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Chopin and Schumann. It will be the same with Wagner a certain time after his death. The strife on the subject of his ideas will cease, what is good in him be accepted and what is disagreeable refused. Then mankind will feel bored and look out for new wonder-creators.

In the ballads Chopin shows almost to the fullest extent the originality and at the same time the perfection of his forms, besides an uncommon poetical substance. In the first one (F) the contrast of the quiet first motive with the stormy passages continuing the second motive exhibits the chief foundation of the poetic whole. In the last part just as the music attains the culminating point of agony, the tempest is suddenly hushed and a calm follows after which

a remnant of the former theme, in a strain of sad musing, returns, the composition ending sadly in A minor.

The form in the second ballad in G minor is more elaborate; and here the author follows more particularly the model of the first allegro of a sonata. The exposition preceded by an introduction gives us two clear themes. In the middle part the motive is passionate and energetic, and shortly afterwards there is a return to the first thought. The finale is stormy and ends with powerful chords.

The ballad in A flat exhibits, perhaps, greater unity in the expansion of the principal thought, of which we will speak particularly later on.

The 4th ballad in F minor has a structure like the second one, and if it fails in anything it is that the final passages are less happily thought out, containing as they do, more ostentation of difficulties than organic development of the idea. Thus much as regards the whole shape and structure of these works.

As to the details we shall direct our attention upon one, in preference to all others, which plays an important part in Chopin's ballads.

This detail clearly exhibits the difference between the romantic and the classical school, and justifies their distinctive names. It is the tendency of more modern composers towards rubato, and the introduction of vocal forms in pianoforte music that necessitates a greater freedom in the execution. As a matter of fact rubato existed even in Bach: we meet with it at all moments in the A Rondo of Mozart as also in the trio in B flat and the last sonatas of Beethoven, though it occurs exceptionally and more rarely than in Chopin, who employs it very frequently. For this reason some of Chopin's themes are very difficult to perform and easily lend themselves to exaggeration. To this class belong the introductory themes to the first ballad (G minor), and in the second (F). This continual wavering of the theme (especially in the last-named ballad), which, though it is based on the one hand on rhythm, but on the other on fantasy, is unquestionably a new principle compared with the usually strict forms of Beethoven's sonatas. To show how such parts ought to be performed is not precisely easy, for here the individuality of the

executant has much to do with the rendering. There is in this case, an inspiration, a fantasy, in one word a creative power without whose verifying principles these parts of the music will always look like moonlit silhouettes, devoid of independent life. But what we call punctuation and musical phrasing have a very appropriate office here and render great assistance. To know where the phrase begins, where it ends, to know which notes are strong and which are weak, not to lengthen the phrases too much if they extend over several bars, and, what is very important, not to play any musical theme in the same way twice—these are points on which a competent knowledge, though it will not replace fantasy and individuality, will serve as guardian angel or as righthand to them. It will be a foundation on which, when the executant has obtained a firm footing, he can venture to take flights freely.

Ballad in G.

There is probably not an atom of truth in the legend concerning this ballad which is contained in

a little book entitled *Chopin's Adventure*. According to this pamphlet Chopin, during the first years of his success in Paris, was haunted all the year round by a certain obstinate Englishman, who, if at a concert or in a drawing-room, would sit immediately opposite him and listen to his playing with rivetted attention, as though he wished to appropriate all the master's mysteries; and Chopin felt himself always transfixed by that gaze and conceived a settled dread of the Englishman. When one evening at the Countess d'Agoult's, Chopin was prevailed on by the entreaties of the hostess to play the Ballad in G, that lady allowed him to be approached by the mysterious Englishman, who introduced himself to the artist and after brief ceremonies avowed that he wished to take lessons from Chopin. "And are you already an accomplished player?" the artist inquired, "I do not know a single note," was the calm reply, "but notwithstanding that I *must* take lessons from you and play that ballad as you play it." "But, sir, what you demand is an impossibility." "Yet it must be as I say," said the Englishman with decision, as
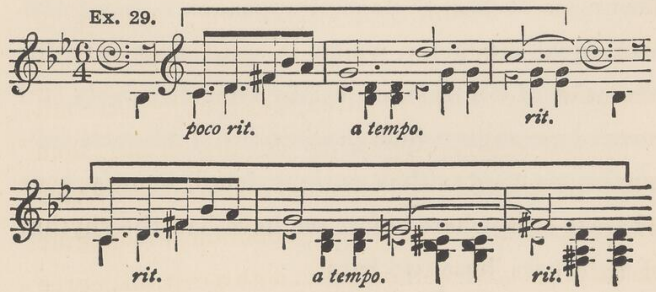
he pierced the artist with a strange look. Chopin shuddered but refused the lessons with firmness. The Englishman saluted coldly and went out. Chopin felt relieved and was seized with a fit of such good humour that he improvised wonderfully until one o'clock in the morning. Returning home, however, at an advanced hour, he parted from the friends who had been accompanying him, and, turning into a side-street, was suddenly surrounded, blindfolded, placed in a carriage and carried away to a neighbourhood to which he was a stranger. There, in a secluded villa near Paris, its rooms gorgeously furnished, appeared the ever-courteous Englishman who told Chopin decisively that he would remain a prisoner until he had taught him the ballad in G—adding that he would pay a princely fee for the instruction. There was no help for it. The unconventional lessons began and the pupil made extremely rapid progress, though he proved very exacting as he wished not only to play well, but to catch and copy all the most poetical accents of the master's execution—in fact to play as he did. This *truthful* little pamphlet declares that after one month of study the Englishman

already knew the whole of that part which we will proceed to analyse; that is to say, the first passages. Then Chopin's imprisonment ended, as the Englishman, having been released by his fiancée from any further proof of his affection, decided to release Chopin too. The most fantastic feature of this legend is not the mysterious seizure, with the circumstances surrounding it, but the possibility which it alleges of an unmusical person's learning the part in question, so difficult as it is to phrase. For let us consider that the opening melody of this ballad has not the calm and equal rhythm which develops classically in Mozart's sonatas nor even the dramatic tendency of Beethoven's *Pathetic Sonata*, where the flight of the composer's spirit is regulated throughout by the principle of a strongly and strictly accentuated rhythm. In the opening melody of Chopin the fantastic, from the first, entwines its wonderful wings, and requires that the rhythm shall waver gracefully, appearing at the front, then stepping back and producing incessantly new forms and contrasts. Would it be possible to imagine this theme played methodically, with a certain degree

of equal rhythm, in imitation of the introduction to the *Pathetic*? In the ballad, the introduction itself, grand as it is, and really pathetic, prepares us in a different manner; we feel that here will be the plot of a mysterious and fantastic novel.

In the new edition of Chopin which is being prepared for publication, we have endeavoured to point out as far as possible the changes of rhythm and phrasing especially in the introductory part; but the most precise hints on this subject (taking it for granted that they meet with the approval of the performers) will not suffice if the executant has not imbued himself with the same spirit which animated the composer at the time of creation. We will here give the sketch of the opening
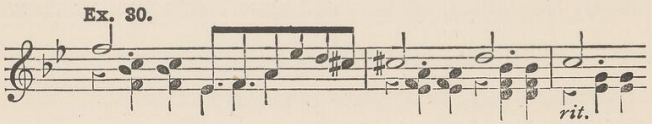
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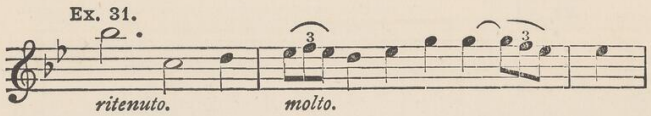




(More in tempo than previously, but always in the same style).

Ex. 30.



In the further development of the theme, a more rhythmical form may be adopted, but when a few pages later the same idea is repeated the same rubato style may return, and by the aid of it we shall move on to a powerful and passionate crescendo, leading to the second theme in A. This second theme, in E flat at its first appearance, has a soft and equal character, which is most necessary for the sake of contrast, especially after the lively and hurried passages which precede it. Just at its conclusion we meet with a curious detail, namely, that whereas everywhere before we have had the rhythm of eight bars, here two bars
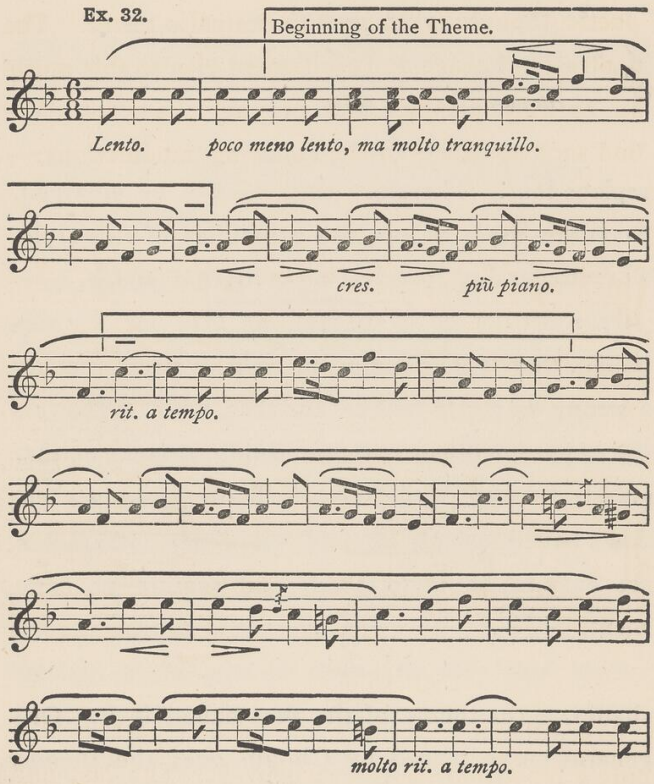
Ex. 31.



replace four. Therefore they need to be enlarged. Such are, more or less, the principles of this style. Notwithstanding its wavering in rhythm (which, however, must not be overdone), we may see, by this ballad, that it sometimes, in case of need, reaches a strong dramatic pathos, and that, while it answers the requirements of æsthetic beauty, it lacks neither grandeur nor seriousness. Those passages in this ballad which are of a lively character are easy to be understood and require no comment.

Not less difficult, even in the more delicate shades, is the theme of the first ballad in F. One general curve placed by Chopin over the themes does not mean that the phrasing is to be colourless. It shows only that entire breaks or sharp pauses are to be avoided. Here is a sketch of the phrasing of the part in question :—
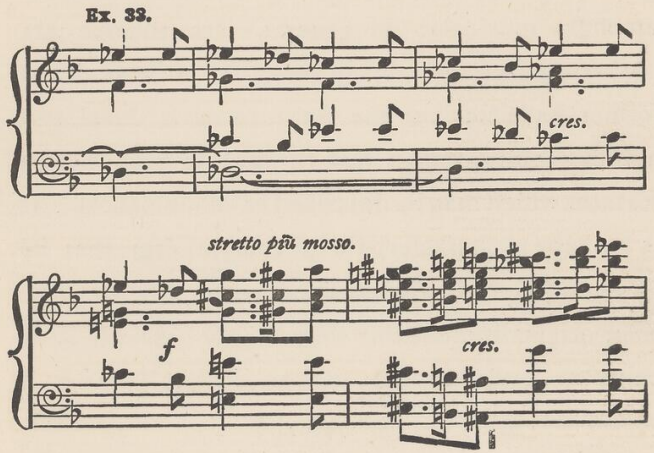
Ex. 32.



The passages themselves are here easy to understand, but, on the other hand, the subsequent return with a change of the first theme presents many difficulties of style. A delicate wavering of a

poetic thought is changed to dramatic terror. The contrasts of peace and excitement give to this music an entirely peculiar and original character. We find such contrasts in the following modulations:—

Ex. 33.
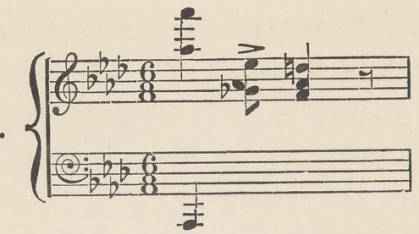


We will not reproduce the second part as it is only a repetition of this one in F. The last and culminating contrast of this beautiful work is produced by the long pause after the final, sudden crescendo in the ever-rising passages. After that pause comes the melancholy end of the "story" in the sad A minor.

The third ballad in A flat has incomparably more of the "classical" character. The simplicity and unity of thought which so strikingly pervade it are certainly the cause of its greater popularity, and the particular approbation which it has obtained amongst musicians in general. Its themes are perhaps not so remarkably beautiful as those of the former ballads; but the form is more developed and more in a model fashion, and invests it with features which may be described as monumental. It is perhaps a characteristic of romanticism that its ideas are particularly beautiful and enchanting by their originality, but this very beauty prevents their being so well worked out as a simpler and, I would say, more natural thought.
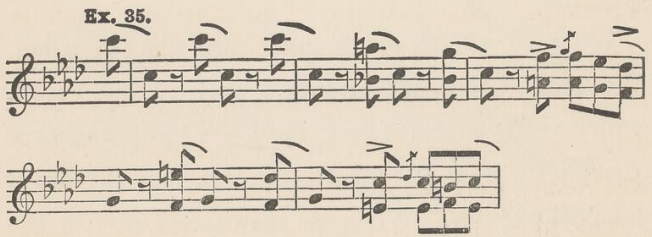
The first eight bars of the ballad are, as it were, the introduction to some "story." One ought to play them calmly, with tunefulness and fulness of sound, to part the middle notes well after the 4th bar and somewhat to silence the two last bars. In the 9th bar we already find the rhythm which is to characterize the whole work. This is the accent on the 3rd quaver.

Ex. 34.



This accent continually recurs and soon passes also on to the 6th part of the bar, to introduce, in this graceful form, the beginning of the theme.

Ex. 35.



The whole ballad makes the utmost use of this rhythm, rendering it poetical. From tender it becomes passionate and powerful, and receives, especially in C sharp minor, an entirely dramatic development. On the last two pages it apparently grows silent, but only to exhibit, with a stormy bass
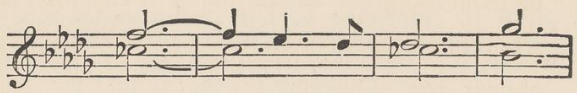
accompaniment, a picture of dark horror, increasing in intensity, suggestive of a whirlpool and exploding at the end of the composition with all the dramatic power of the first theme. There is no doubt that the impulse to create the ballads was given to Chopin by the ballads of Mickiewicz; and the third ballad is evidently inspired by Undine. That passionate theme is in the spirit of the song "Rusalka." The ending vividly depicts the ultimate drowning, in some abyss, of the fated youth in question.

We need not say much concerning the 4th ballad. We shall direct our attention only to one detail, which tends enormously to facilitate the phrasing of Chopin's works. It concerns the eight-bar rhythm of musical phrases. When we mentioned this in the lectures a certain critic charged it upon Chopin as a fault. Yet not only Chopin, but all composers, take the 8 bar cycle as a measure for their creative work. If Beethoven sometimes quits this rhythm, adding, now only a few bars, now only one, and if the later composers make more exceptions still, such facts do not weaken the rule itself. If we emphasize this

point in reference to the performance of Chopin's works, it is because, irrespectively of the simplicity of his style of composition, we have often heard virtuosi who seem to forget the rule in question, not putting in rests where they ought, or mannerizing the rhythm whereby a comprehension of the 8 bar rhythm is made more difficult. These points must above all be observed in executing those works, so full of fire, to which Chopin, one knows not why, gave the title of scherzi. The first scherzo does not offer many difficulties; for everyone understands its passionate, stormy first figures, the tranquil charm of the middle theme, exhaling an idyllic breath, the thunderous ending with that chromatic conclusion which virtuosi change (this time correctly) into octaves. But in the second and sometimes in the third scherzo we often meet with that false interpretation. In the B flat minor scherzo the first page ought to be played in a manner unusually rhythmical, so that the listener may precisely understand that in the 22nd bar, G flat, and in the 45th bar F, is placed on the second part of the quick rhythm.

How perfectly the wonderful melody

Ex. 36.



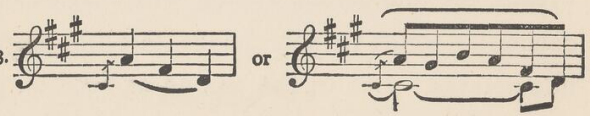
moves in cycles of 8 bars we have shown in the lectures of 1879. The middle part

Ex. 37.



has in a few places one bar added to the original rhythm. It is in this bar that occurs—

Ex. 38.

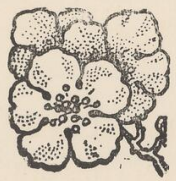


which is absent the first time.

Finally, everywhere this order prevails and lights up all the corners of the fiery poem. We can say the same of the scherzo, C sharp minor and E. In the first one, as we play the middle part (D flat) the necessity of phrasing clearly will successfully restrain

us from too great an inequality of rhythm; a matter wherein virtuosi sin so often, playing as they do, the chords too slow and the subsequent passages too quick.

Having more particularly described the ballads we need not dwell so long on the scherzi nor on those other works of the composer which are more cosmopolitan in their character, as concertos and sonatas. To the understanding of these, sufficient hints will probably be found in the new edition. The same hints will apply to the Fantasia in F, Allegro de Concert, etc.







LECTURE III.

POLONAISES.

CHOPIN exhibited in the polonaises and in the mazurkas the greatest attributes of his mind and by these compositions certainly made his greatest claim to immortality. Whatever German æsthetics may say, I am of opinion that it is not a *mistake* but a *merit* on the part of an author if he familiarizes the world with the peculiar characteristics of his nation by transporting them into the domain of art. Whatever is a *type* thereby commands an uncontradicted right to a

place in art, though the type in question must never betray art into trivialities. This last named danger need never be feared where Chopin's works are concerned: his type is always æsthetical in the highest degree and his method of exhibiting it not in the least uncouth. As for us, who understand and appreciate Chopin so well—and certainly better than foreigners—we admire the manifestation of this type as a new phase of art, seeing that all the slavonic world spoke for the first time through this type, which is still eagerly spreading its wings. It is not at all extraordinary that at the appearance of a type so new, so special, the western world of art felt a strong shock and took up a hostile attitude. The striking exhibition of such a type would inevitably be condemned by conservative critics. This antagonism, especially between the German and the Polish-slavonic in art, exists to this day in a certain degree, though it is already shaken. Only a more complete development of our individuality, together with other slavonic individualities can conquer a thorough approbation for the type itself, and likewise for the highly artistic

forms with which Chopin—and Moniuszko, to some extent also—adorned that type.

Nobody will deny that the characteristic of the Polish type is a certain "knighthood" which we find perfectly expressed in the gorgeous appearances and warlike personalities of our own nobility, as well as in its loud and somewhat brusque conversation, in the dance and so forth. This rather rough feature of the type is not harmful if it is mitigated æsthetically. It gives to all the dances of Chopin the warm colour, the fire which glows in them and gives them a mysterious dignity of beauty. In the private life of the Poles the sharpness of the type is smoothed by inborn *goodness* accompanied by *courtesy;* not the spurious kind, consisting in externals, but the delicate one in sympathy with the pangs and sufferings of a neighbour whose misfortunes it compassionates, and in whose prosperity it delights. Let us add to this type *righteousness* and truth, *heartiness*, social simplicity, good-humour, and we shall get a type purely Polish and strictly æsthetic, which, reflected in art, will be in the highest degree a sympathetic type. It is such as we

are. People may laugh at our impracticability and complain of our want of political instinct; but they must love us for our *nobility*, whereby we glow for great ideas, our *disinterestedness*, so rare in nations, and also our *probity* and *goodness*, in virtue of which we are ready to render to everyone his due. As we are, such is our type in music. It does not wish to rise above others or to despise them, as is the strong tendency of the German type. We are ready to be brethren to all.

The peculiarities of the Polish character in particular good-heartedness, expansiveness, and a certain buoyancy and elegance, are strongly exhibited in Chopin's works, especially the works of his youth. A more advanced age deepened these characteristics, and added to them a hue of suffering and agony such as all hearts experience which feel for mankind. But nowhere are the lineaments of the type so brightly drawn as in the dances, where the energetic rhythm is of such great assistance.

The Polonaise, as a court-dance, seems to have first appeared in Poland in the 16th century. It is a sort of procession in which all the company pass
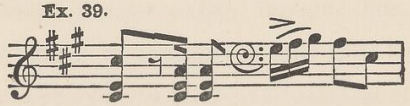
along in a stream and then defile in pairs with movements full of fancy and chivalrous charm, almost boasting of its beauty and animation. It seems true that the primitive aim of this dance, as history asserts, was a procession of the whole nobility before a newly chosen monarch. The polonaise, then, is not a dance but a march, whose music ought, though not by a coupling of bars, to preserve the martial character. Accordingly we understand that the movement of a polonaise must be strongly weighed and that each note is of importance; and our advice is that in Chopin's polonaises, without exception the counting should be not in threes but in sixes.

The most beautiful Polonaises before Chopin wrote were those of Oginski. They possess in bud that character which Chopin developed so fully. Their best example is perhaps No. 1 (F), so elegant and serious, yet redolent of mystery and charm. After him came Kurpinski, who continued this form very well though he did not create a new type. But the appearance of the A polonaise (Op. 40, ded. to Fontana) was for the time being an

epoch. Liszt, so far as we know, played it at all his concerts. In this dance which may be called glorious in the full significance of the word, the Polish type appears in all its sumptuousness, and with a splendour somewhat theatrical. Each note, each accent, glows with life and power.

We will point to the accent on the triplet in the second bar

Ex. 39.



often paid scant attention to, yet indispensable. The sudden modulation to C sharp (on the four-six chord) in the fifth bar is gorgeous. The two last of the eight bars, first part, exhibit the robust characteristic of a polonaise.

Ex. 40.



There each of the six quavers has a solid weight of its own, an accent, a significance. As regards the

strong accent on the quaver B in the last bar, this accent, though not uncommon (Kaminski, Elsner, Kurpinski, Oginski) is nevertheless, through the two previous accents on the same note—which are however, feebler—prepared splendidly and effectively. Already the short analogy we have made shows us what the tempo of this "March" ought to be—buoyant, indeed, but never too fast or too flying as we should then entirely lose the accents in the two last bars.

The second part is a further development of the idea of the first and therefore requires no close consideration here. There is the same accent on the triplets, the same weightiness of chords in the 3rd and 4th bars, and also on the return to the first theme, where one may make a ritenuto.

In the third part trumpets are heard and the music in general deceives the ear. The piano seems to change into an orchestra (it is curious that this part arranged for an actual orchestra, shows to least advantage). The touch ought now to be sharp and spontaneous. The player must give equal energy and a greater power and accent to the shakes in the

4th bar of the bass which imitates the roll of a drum. The whole must get slower towards the end, to supply the want of a Coda—the only deficiency which can be found in the composition.

We have halted a little over this polonaise so as also to discover elsewhere the model, the type which it presented. This type is splendidly exhibited, too, though with other details, and upon another foundation, so to say, in the following polonaise in C minor. A more particular analysis will be here in place, by way of preparation for our study of an earlier polonaise, in C sharp (Op. 26, dedicated to Dessauer). If we assume that it was composed earlier than the other we shall be obliged to admire all the more the perfection of the type it exhibits, though contained in such fantastic and poetical forms. Such polonaises as those in B flat, F minor, D minor (Op. 71), G sharp minor, G flat etc., preceded it by a long space of time and we know these works as the products of Chopin's youth, which include also the charming and incomparably elegant Polonaise in E flat, (Op. 22). It is a pyrotechnic display of wonderful passages and daring

changes, as though created for the concert platform. The ending of the first part is wonderful.

Ex. 41.



The Polonaise in C sharp is in quite a different manner. There the dancing character disappears entirely. The whole work, highly original, is a poem full of fantasy in which, although the rhythm of a polonaise is perfectly preserved, the author finds scope for the liveliest contrasts. After the introduction of 4 bars, strong and energetic, comes the first part, in which are represented, in the form of questions and answers, two opposite ideas. The four opening bars are passionate and full of fire, and ought to be played with great force. Suddenly we stop on the dominant, and take the other four bars *piano*, in a rhythm full of charm and wavering; and the end

Ex. 42.



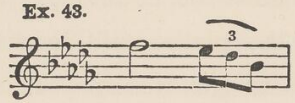
finally regulates the rhythm and justifies the title of

polonaise. We find similar contrast in the second part. It begins with an extremely rhythmical figure (which must be counted in study, as six quavers, and the place well denoted where the bass falls in with the treble). This part always develops in a continual crescendo until the ff; then stops on the chord in G sharp and develops to the new part on the dominant of the scale in E, which is so soft and so full of simplicity that we recommend it to be marked *senza espressione*. A return to the first part follows; a repetition; and then the Trio in D flat.

Simplicity and *exquisiteness* are combined in this Trio in a really Chopinesque and characteristic way. Besides a certain degree of intention, indispensable in such cases to a good execution, the player should also bring to his task a consideration of the details on the basis already mentioned, of *strong* and *weak* notes. The phrase is eminently a 4 bar one, and therefore gets rapidly weaker in the 4th bar. The note F which begins it is the most difficult to take, as it is long, and, opening the descending phrase, should be sufficiently loud though
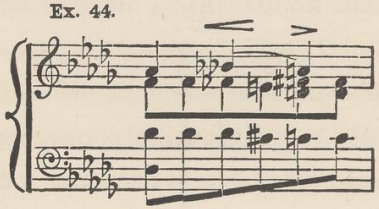
not in the least harsh—on the contrary, noble and soft. The gracefully falling Triplet

Ex. 43.



likewise presents no slight difficulties. It should be regular and yet not taken mechanically or indifferently. In this triplet, as in the whole phrase, there should be a certain blending of pride and elegance, a certain *distinction*, to use a word which is foreign, it is true, but which often expresses the character of Chopin's phrases. The more lively second half of the phrase needs no particular comment. In the second change of 8 bars in this half, the tempo rubato, which occurs, after a few bars have been played, is a point worthy of consideration. After striking the stronger B flat, a sudden turn follows, full of charm.

Ex. 44.
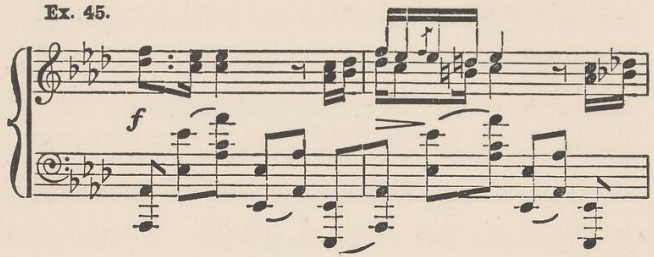


We are transported into another world by the enharmonic change, which, although pianissimo and without strictness of touch, develops freely, *suspending* for the time being, all musical rules. After this ingenious and charming turn the rhythm returns gracefully in the last two bars, and reminds us that this wonderful fantasia is nothing else but a polonaise. The last part is charming, and also clearer, notwithstanding its duo. Just two points might be mentioned in connection with it; the turn to piano by the modulation to E flat, and the powerful crescendo and ritenuto before returning to the theme of the trio, which by this construction is obliged to appear with all its power in the first four bars, then to grow calm again and to end as before. This Polonaise has no very definite ending. The second polonaise in E flat minor, of the same opus, excels by an equally rich fantasy. Some of its turns are even more beautiful and noble than those in the preceding polonaise. The trio in which the phrase of 8 bars repeats itself even to the fourth time is curious. The difficulty which this causes the player, especially as *simplicity* is indispensable, is extreme. As regards

this peculiar kind of turn which results from an imitation of popular form, we shall say more under the head of "Mazurkas." We do not propose any further analysis of the polonaises—not even the beautiful Polonaise in C minor, where we find such original turns in rubato, nor even indeed the Polonaise in F sharp, where it thunders, and in the middle suggests the distant echo of a battle, with guns firing, veiled, later on, by the flowers of a mazurka. But we must speak of the great Polonaise in A flat, Op. 53, which, even among Chopin's compositions, is like a culminating point, and exhibits a most majestic and finished style. In this beautiful work, what first strikes us is the great plan, the exalted idea, the powerful and effective inspiration. This polonaise is such a glorious apotheosis of the past, that it led the master, as is well known, into hallucinations, and caused him to fly from the solitary tower of the Castle at Nohant, where he fancied he heard the footsteps of ancestors in their rattling armour and saw their figures gliding towards him in majestic procession. The dignity of

this procession is perfectly reflected by that ponderousness of rhythm, in consequence of which each sixth of the three-four bars has an accent

Ex. 45.



and a value. Let us but try and we shall readily convince ourselves that this cannot be played differently.

These basses strengthen the impression with each bar. The dignified train seems to increase from moment to moment, and a vast concourse is conjured up in an apotheosis before us. In view of the main idea it must be observed that the quick tempo, which the majority of players (even the most celebrated ones) give to this work, is entirely inappropriate. It is true that, through a quick tempo, the octaves of the third part, those for the left hand, apparently gain.

But what a superficial view this is! To produce an effect which will scarcely astonish anyone [as the difficulties are not so colossal] they sacrifice the character of the most beautiful part. In truth, however, the tempo ought not to depend on the figure of the accompaniment, which, though very beautiful, is not of the first importance, but on the theme for the right hand. And that theme, which is as if it were played on wind instruments, has such a clear decided rhythm in itself that it is only with great difficulty that one can err as to the real tempo. It may indeed be *somewhat* quicker than the first part, but this *somewhat* ought never to carry us too far away from the main idea and sacrifice the *Polonaise* to the octaves. If these octaves are to express the cantering of horses, or some such thing, that is a subordinate question which does not enter into a good performance. After these octaves we pass to a further development of the composition which, continuing for several more bars in the same energetic mood suddenly stops and gives place to strange and most charming passages, whose connection with the main

idea is not easily perceptible and which presents no little difficulty of style to the performer.

To explain the significance of this part and to give at least a certain hint thereto, we must be permitted to turn aside for a moment from the immediate subject.

In the course and development of many compositions, especially those of Chopin (and generally those of the romantic school) we sometimes meet with parts, of which the union with the entire work is by no means easy to perceive at a glance. The reason is, that as a rule their basis is on an entirely new idea of which the meaning can only be revealed to us by imagination. It is imagination which must create in our soul a certain whole which will bring into harmony the various contrasts, a whole with which the parts are sometimes connected only obliquely, by a combination of sounds only. To put it more clearly, modern music often follows in the steps of programme-music, and can be explained only from the same standpoint. We must say beforehand that we are sufficiently pronounced foes to programme-music. Music, with a pro-

gramme before it, not unfrequently enters into the domain of painting and can fulfil its purpose only with the aid of the listener's imagination. If, therefore, strictly musical forms are neglected for the programme, or, if for its explanation too great an effort is required on the part of the listener, then the programme is out of place. But to forbid to one art (no matter which) all entrance, even for a moment, into the domain of another art, would be often to deprive that art of one of its most beautiful ornaments. Such expressions as "a rivulet *murmurs*," a distant landscape "*fades* from the view," or a "star *looks down upon us*"—almost every historical figure in the language is already a kind of picture. A *musical* harmony is necessary to verse, an imitation of rhythm renders services to it, and, moreover, we find harmony in the very structure of every *language*. Why, then, should not music also be allowed to borrow some of its effects from other arts; or from certain analogies already so much popularised as to be comprehensible to everyone?

Sunrise, or clear, bright colour, was long since depicted with success by the tremolo of violins.

The ever comical bassoon sometimes (as in the tomb scene from *Robert*) makes, with its veiled sound, a terrific impression. The low sounds of the clarinet have in themselves something infernal, though this same instrument has, in its middle notes, a pastoral effect, while in the upper notes it may become even trivial. The horn suggests war, the chase, etc. One instrument (the piano) sometimes imitates another (horn, drum, etc.), as we have seen in the polonaises. The orchestra, as a whole, has a diversified province, its palette being furnished with thousands of colours and shades. Beethoven did not hesitate to use those *nuances* in a picturesque way. He was really prompted by *impression* and *feeling* when he wrote the pastoral symphony.* He nevertheless introduces into it a nightingale, a cuckoo, and a lark, as well as a storm, a subsequent clearing of the sky, etc.

It is particularly where words and action step in, to assist the music that its programme-character is more facilitated, and a new enrichment of resource and a new incitement to creation occurs. Operatic

* "More feeling than painting."

music, for instance, by all composers, contains a number of picturesque scenes, which scenes we understand perfectly because the text and the action give us a key to their comprehension. By accustoming himself to these forms, the listener's mind becomes furnished with a store of impressions and similarities; and thus dramatic effects may be transported into instrumental music, without any commentator. It is for this reason that so many *dramatic* overtures are written—so many parts of a greater musical whole—which produce an impression within us, whether it be by means of picturesque suggestion, such as the murmur of a rivulet, storms, the cantering of horses, or whether by indicating a dramatic tale in which the soul is impressed by the picture of some strange murder by threatenings, bewitchings, oaths, treasons or what-not.

In analyzing the A flat ballad we could not allow our observations not to be influenced by the programme character of the music.

We see, then, that the programme plan is, *to a certain extent*, acceptable in music; so far as its design is purely *musical*, its developments con-

trolled throughout by rule and the attention paid to detail not too great. The information given by such a programme not only interests but facilitates the comprehension of the work. The most classical composers often use this programme method in the very process of their creation, though they only use it momentarily, by way of spur. Thus Haydn often arrayed in his own mind the plots of tales while he was creating his symphonies—which, at a later date, he did not leave to posterity. He did right, for several reasons; for certainly his music speaks to us with unusual clearness. Yet if we were to obtain possession of one of his little diaries in which these plans were noted, we should unquestionably find it a precious aid towards the lights and shades of the execution.

Sometimes such an explanation of a musical picture savours too greatly of freedom to effect the aim. Yet one good hint, to which all will agree, the very title of a composition may often be an admirable explanation, and even great composers do not shrink from such titles as "The battle of Vittoria" (Beethoven),

"Forest Scenes" with subordinate titles, also "Children's Scenes" (Schumann), etc. One may or may not be a friend to Wagner's music but all must agree that the magnificently instrumented "Ride of the Valkyries" is quite differently understood when the title is known, and would be much less interesting if we were only acquainted with it under the name of "Character piece for Orchestra." Some titles of overtures, such as "King Lear" and "Manfred," need not suggest to us any plastic picture; but they are already useful enough as a general hint as to what prompted the composer to write.

From what we have said it appears that the idea of a certain picturesqueness in music, as far as concerns main conception, must not be hastily condemned, as it affords composers no small faculties for varying their works. Moreover, we must observe that there are constantly varying descriptions of that picturesqueness. First, we have a *dramatic* picturesqueness, specially united with words, which conveys the strongest possible plastic images. Then come those standard works whose picturesque titles paint some movement in nature or in life (as

Berceuse, Ruisseau, Matinée and others above mentioned) while, finally, come the most ideal forms of the picturesque which receive only their general colour from the theme, as clearly appears from the title (*King Lear*, *Faust*, etc.). We do not desire to speak of a proper use of these means nor of the terrible *abuse* made of them by some composers, especially those of modern times. We wish only to derive some profit from considering them with an eye to practical execution.

The polonaise, then, may be assigned to the second category, especially when we recognise in it that middle picturesqueness which is not so entirely plastic, as representations of thunder and lightning sometimes used in the orchestra, nor so entirely objective as the titles of the overtures, *King Lear* and *Manfred*. It is a species of picturesqueness like that which dominates in Mendelssohn's *Midsummer Night's Dream*. What are the particular principles of this phrase of the Polonaise? On the right hand a creeping passage, sufficiently representing quiet and monotonous movement—on the left hand the rhythm of the polonaise constantly asserts

itself and does not stop for a moment. Moreover, the movement of the right hand becomes gradually more and more silent, as though dying in the distance; while in the last few bars, with a kind of assault and in a very rapid crescendo, it returns and bursts out with the principal theme. What then? . . .

To speak precisely, we have here already, without a commentary, a part joined logically to the whole through the rhythm in the bass, contrasting so well with it, as after a prolonged forte follows a passage, soft and asthetically rounded, through the poetical diminuendo, and through the return by means of a crescendo to the chief thought. But what is this part doing in the whole picture? Imagine a gorgeous castle, of ancient structure, with many towers, halls, passages, bridges. In it, in the centre ball-room, a fine band plays, a majestic polonaise. The couples in national dress, warlike with swords, glide dignified, accentuating with the step the rhythm (as given by the basses (E flat, A flat). In the middle part (E), we may see the approach of a calvacade, maybe after a triumph; no matter, we shall only give our attention to that

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part of the polonaise, where all the buoyant arch, following the first couple, passes gaily into adjacent halls, then glides over the distant bridges, enters the park, and only after such an excursion, when they all seemed lost, do we hear them approaching by another entrance and with them the strains of triumphal music plaudits and vivats—a real tone picture of "Pan Thaddeus" (Mickiewicz's masterpiece). Does not this explanation, although we do not obtrude it, help us to play the piece? Do we not feel more sure of our way in consequence of it? Shall we not shade the pianissimo passages, with a more charming delicacy, knowing the significance of the music, and will not the fortissimo phrases appear afterwards with greater splendour? Shall we not perceive more clearly a need of accentuating the bass and that obstinate C in the treble when we thus understand the plan of the whole? These observations certainly cannot be contested; and, inasmuch as every art in life, and all arts whatsoever, require suitable analogies applied to them, the like analogies should not be ignored in connection with

music, though they should only be employed in moderation; it being never forgotten that plastic musical *pictures* develop themselves most readily on the basis of feeling, and of a plan well-worked out, lending itself particularly to musical treatment.

Painting, for the sake of painting, is not the aim of music. To create a thesis, however poetical, in one's own soul, and not to express it in a form sufficiently pleasing or precise is scarcely a worthy operation. The beautiful in music ought to speak out to us; and behind it may then be hidden a deeper symbolism taken from the analogies of life. The last proof that the legend itself is not sufficient to enable the musical work to carry us away is to be found in the last polonaise—called by the author "Fantaisie-Polonaise." We cannot deny that the structure of this work is good: many a detail testifies to the masterly hand that sculptured this monument; but the general ideas are somewhat indistinct, their working out is lost in complications, not well adapted to Chopin's muse, and certainly no great impression is made upon the hearer. Yet Chopin, in writing this polonaise, was haunted by a most

beautiful legend. The past and the future ought perfectly to reflect each other in this composition. Unfortunately, a certain musical stiffness paralyzes the impression, and the work remains one of Chopin's less happy creations. The symbolism is insufficient. The golden sun of inspiration does not illumine the work, proceeding more from fantasy and from the head than from the heart.*

Let us here, however, conclude our observations on the Polonaises and turn our attention at last to the Mazurkas.

MAZURKAS.

Welcome gems of the purest water! Welcome most precious jewels in our master's crown! Not great in extent, but rich in contents; true diamonds in which the sun of genius is sparklingly reflected in a thousand hues. Welcome bewitching mazurkas! There are indeed, many wonderful works from the pen of Chopin, but I am sure that not one of his worshippers will deny that

* The patriotic idea was to assume the form of Byron's *Dream*.—(*Translator*)

if all his compositions were lost and the mazurkas alone saved, he would rise out of them as grand as he appears at present. The book of mazurkas is an inexhaustible well of poetry. Nearly every one of these works is a masterpiece.
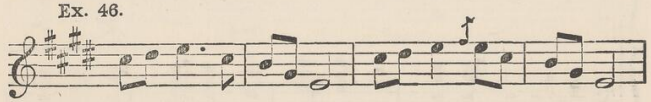
We are not speaking, at this moment, of the posthumous mazurkas. With the exception of that one, which, as everyone knows, was written on the composer's deathbed, they were all youthful essays, which Chopin did not intend to publish. Strangely logical and clever master as he was, he felt, when a child, what he was destined soon to become, and therefore did not give to the world works of a kind in which a new composer is invariably trying to change the forms of his predecessors. In Chopin's first rondo the influence exerted upon him by a study of Hummel is still visible, but its form is diligently wrought out, and the originality and newness of detail which distinguishes it justifies its publication. In the concerto he also followed the traces of Hummel, but how magnificently he expanded his model! In the nocturnes, moreover, he overdistanced Field by a whole heaven, as he did likewise

in his published mazurkas (Op. 6 and 7). He instantly attained a standpoint of high originality and artistic finish, casting away all previous essays which might have been calculated to assist him. The publication of Chopin's youthful productions may be interesting in a physiological and pathological sense, but to art this point of view is quite of an indifferent order.

In the first mazurkas at once appears that national life from which, as from an inexhaustible treasury, Chopin drew his inspirations. Where, when and how he obtained so much material it is almost impossible to say. All we know is that he went sometimes into the country for his holidays. He was never a collector of songs—as yet no one thought of collecting them—nor did he devote himself to a special study of national airs. He was an Æolian harp which resounded at the smallest breath of wind. To him the slightest waft was sufficient. He discovered inexhaustible treasures where no one before him had even thought of them. This is sufficiently exemplified in his mazurkas, Nos. 2 and 3 from Op. 6, each of them equally picturesque and peasant-
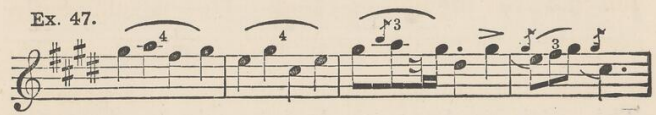
like, yet each in quite a different style. In the first of these (C sharp) you hear, at the commencement the bass murmur in lowly strains, while the violinist, preserving a firm tone on the second chord *purrs* silently to himself, and wavers somewhat roughly, in the rhythm of the melody (the first 8 bars at the beginning). Then follows a song, so sad, heartfelt, naïve, diversified and caressing, and so wonderfully constructed upon the two contrasts of piano and forte that one cannot listen long enough to it—after which the middle is so gay and village-like that it sets one's feet moving as though to a dance.

Ex. 46.



Then the former bass passages return and the first motive follows them, with the wonderful change in tempo rubato,
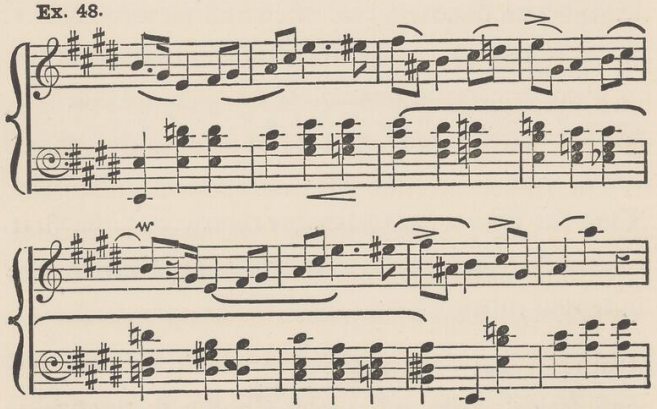
Ex. 47.



in which one sees the real ideal peasant with his rather intoxicated fantasy and an eagerness to expand the impulses of his soul.

Let us now take the succeeding mazurka, (Op. 6, No. 3) in which, from a distance, one at first hears only the sound of the basses. Then the music comes steadily nearer and the whole calvacade of a wedding hurries on the scene in leaps and noisy merriment. How true this is to life, how natural, yet how largely endowed with musical riches even if we refer only to the harmony of the third part.

Ex. 48.

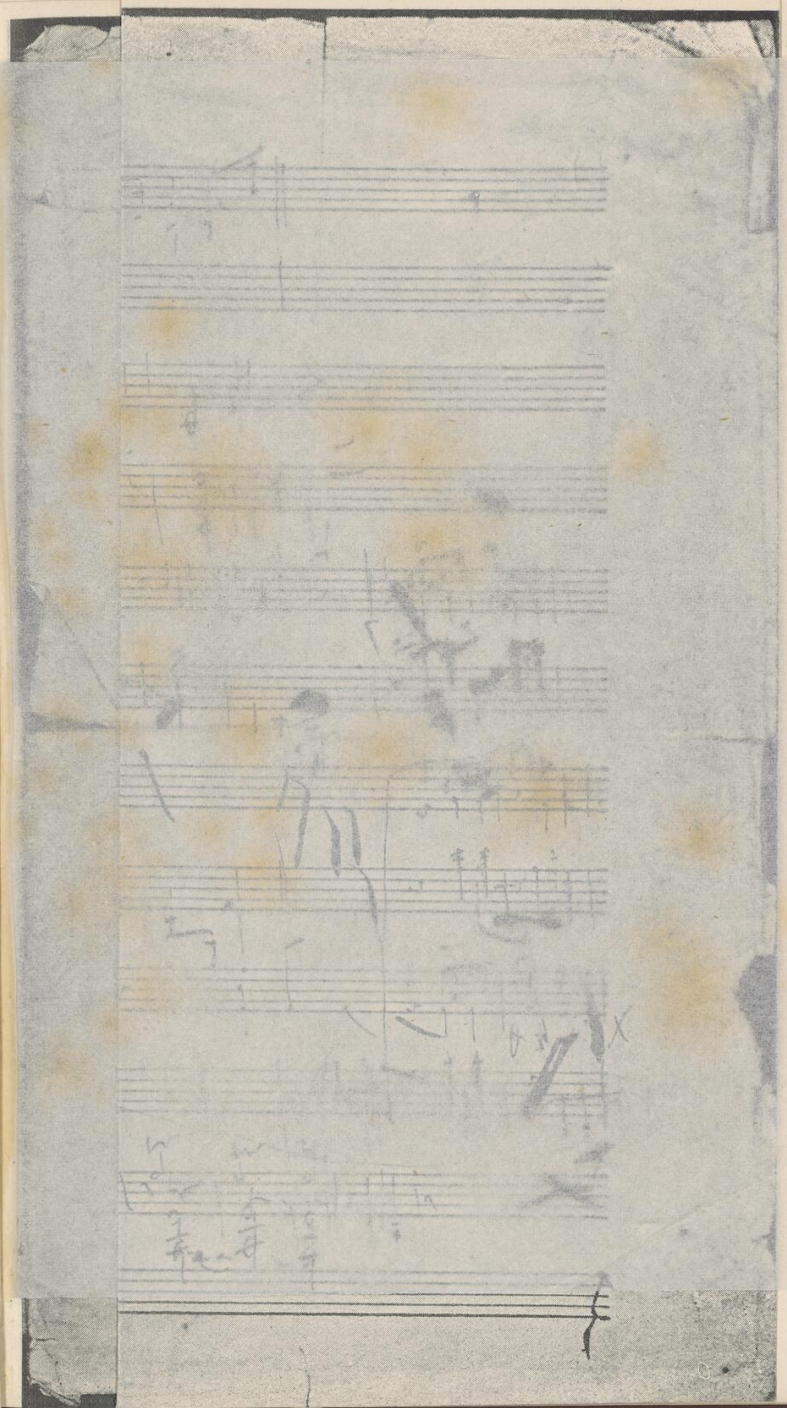


This, with its chromatic harmony is so character-

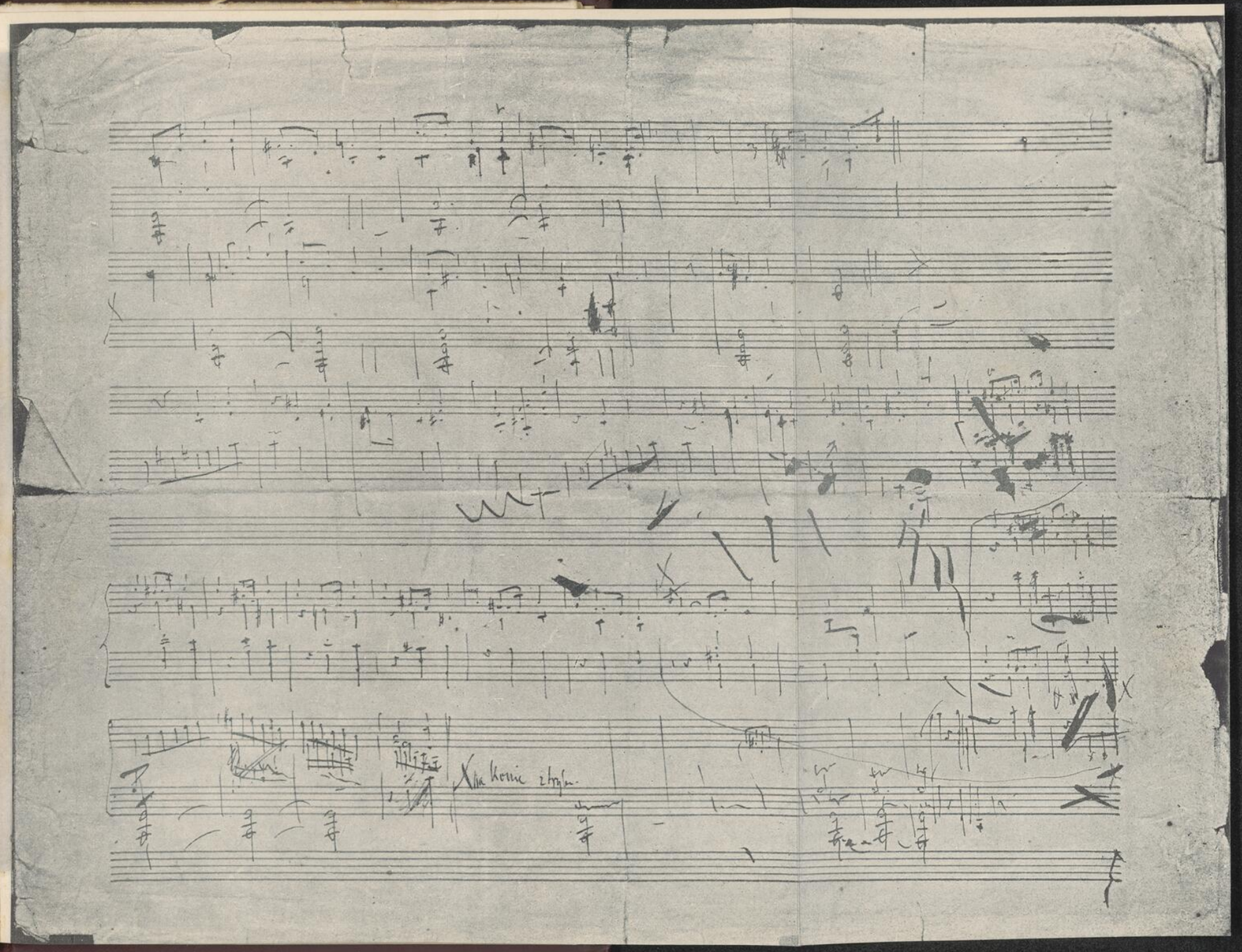
istic that it becomes a real model, followed inevitably by all Chopin's imitators from sheer necessity. An exquisite mazurka, buoyant and full of elegance, found its highest development in the B flat mazurka (Op. 7, No. 1). What movement, what enthusiasm in its opening, what grace and noble charm in the later short notes. In the third part we hear the popular note again, in a characteristically monotonous bass, and with it the never-to-be ignored rubato, which, whatever else it may be, is purely Polish-Slavonic, and entirely *peasant-like*. It is curious that in the mazurkas this rubato should be found so often and play so great a part. It has the effect upon the auditor which we have already mentioned—it is festively peasant-like and gay, and has a certain air of intoxication about it. In these wavering strains one recognizes the whole soul of a Slav, with its free impulses and its expansion under emotion.

Those sparkling characteristics of the peasant, as of other types—characteristics which no one else could seize—were seized by Chopin instinctively, and idealized to the dignity of real poems. We are

already acquainted with some of his improvisations in this direction; we know from his biography that he could imitate not only the peasants but the Jews dance perfectly; and when he was in the country staying at a friend's mansion the Jews, assembled in the place for the purpose of trading in corn, acknowledged that he played "Majufes" like a born Jew. Nothing therefore, is more comic than the mazurka, Op. 17, No. 9, concerning which Mr. M. A. Szulc sent me from Posen a truthful testimony in which he says it used to be called the "Little Jew." His story is as follows: "Chopin did not care for programme-music, though more than one of his compositions, full of expression and character, may be included under that name. Who does not know mazurka, No. 4, part 7, of a book dedicated to Lena Freppa? It was already known in our country, before the departure of our artist abroad, as the "Little Jew." It is one of those works of Chopin which are characterized by distinct humour. A Jew in slippers and a long robe comes out of his inn and seeing an unfortunate peasant, who had been his customer just before, intoxicated



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FAC-SIMILE
OF
CHOPIN'S
MAZURKA
IN C.

tumbling about the road and uttering complaints, exclaims from his threshold, "What is this?" Then, as if by way of contrast to this scene the gay wedding party of a rich burgess comes along on its way from church, with shouts of various kinds, which are accompanied in a lively manner by the violins and the bagpipes. The train passes by, and the tipsy peasant re-commences his complaints, and emphasizes his misery which he had endeavoured to drown in the glass. The Jew returns indoors from his threshold, shaking his head and saying "What was this?"
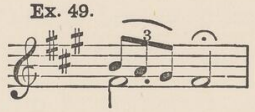
One purely technical and characteristic detail in Chopin's mazurkas, a detail which has since been copied in all the mazurkas of other composers, is the oft repeating Triplet.



It is to be observed that this must not be played too quickly, or it will thereby lose its characteristic. The first mazurka in F sharp minor begins with it and we
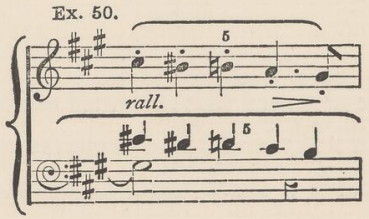
find it likewise in Chopin's youthful mazurkas. It is, as we see from the mazurka in F sharp minor, almost invariably used in expressing feelings and exhibiting different shades. Simple and natural in the opening of the mazurka it bends, immediately from the fifth bar, into various effective shapes, permitting a free execution. Later on, as if fatigued by so much repetition, it begins again slowly. At the end of the first part, again, it smiles pleasingly, passing quietly by and resting itself with a country-like air of stupidity on the last note.

Ex. 49.
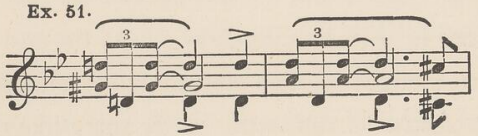


Then, further on, after the energetic second part and that *fifth*, so full of fire

Ex. 50.



triplet assumes a passionate and fiery character. And how many characters does it not take in the following mazurkas? In the D (Op. 33) mazurka we must notice that part where the same bar is repeated sixteen times.

Ex. 51.
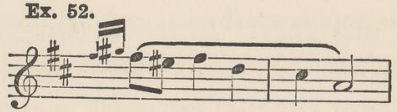


Such a repetition, as we have already remarked in our previous lectures, has a character of determined enjoyment—dancing—notwithstanding misery and trouble, or of childlike naïveté with constant returning to, and moving round one idea.

Those critics, and especially foreigners, who have passed judgment on the piece in question, forgot that similar impulses of simplicity may be found in other composers, that in Haydn and Mozart, and generally in naïve themes, we often find repetitions of one note or phrase, just as here. A second instance of this kind we find in the

mazurka, Op. 30, No. 2, where the following passage
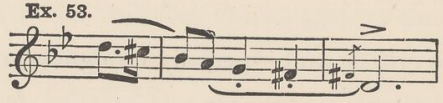
Ex. 52.



perfectly realized the character of Ujejski in his little poem " The Cuckoo."

Chopin wrote all this when, as we have said, no one had hitherto dreamed about the *peasantry* and when their particular phase of life had not been dealt with at all. What a wonderful poem is the mazurka G (Op. 24, No. 1) in its simplicity and with its characteristic scale.

Ex. 53.



ending the phrase of eight bars. Now, after the lapse of so many years, not only can no fault whatever be found with this characteristic of Chopin, but the ever multiplying number of popular songs

testify more and more to the wonderful nature of the genius which knew how to copy a type with such photographic truth.

Every one of Chopin's Mazurkas deserves not to be forgotten. The very beautiful one in F (Op. 7 No. 3), where, to a sort of sad theme of violins, the bass supports the rhythm so cheerfully and where the middle part is so original and full of energetic fantasy.

Ex. 54.



or the following one, A flat, where we find the wonderful modulation to A and the ritenuto

Ex. 55.



of a religious nature, so beautiful and so unexpected!

What is besides inexpressibly interesting, is the
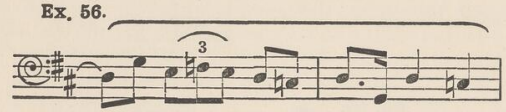
variety of ideas. One mazurka laughs, another weeps, one is thoughtful, another dances; after the tender one (Op 33, No. 1) follows the celebrated lively one in D. One developed into a masterpiece, like No. 4, Op. 24, and another only sketched like the C major mazurka (Op. 7, No. 5), without even an end.

With the mazurkas it is the same as with other works of Chopin, that the performers, instead of the simplicity and naturalness reigning in them, try to find an artificial pathos, and thereby spoil the proper characteristic of the work. And to no other works is it so harmful as to the mazurkas. The mazurka (Op. 33, No. 4), has two commentaries. The poem of Ujejski, "The Dragoon," says, that a soldier pays compliments and flatteries to a girl in an hostelry. She takes to flight, and her lover, believing she has deceived him, drowns himself in despair.

On the other hand a humoristic poem written by Zelenski entirely explains this mazurka by a domestic scene between a peasant and his wife. In the first part the intoxicated peasant sings "Oj
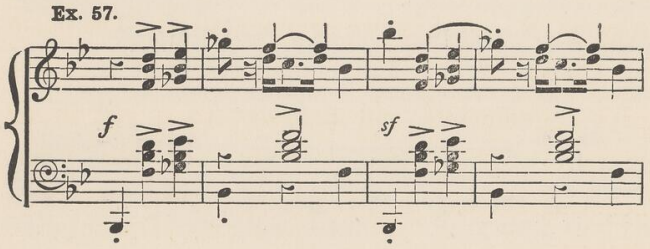
ta dana"! (Oh dear me!) as he returns home; and when his head is sufficiently turned he growls unintelligibly, as imitated by the bass.

Ex. 56.
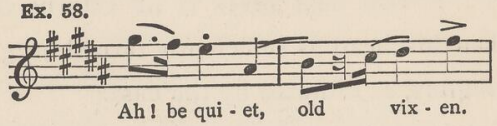


When the wife reproaches him the peasant thrown into a passion, strikes her.

Ex. 57.



The woman sighs and complains (melody B), "O Lord, O Lord!" the peasant returns to strike her again, shouting "Be quiet, you old vixen!"

Ex. 58.
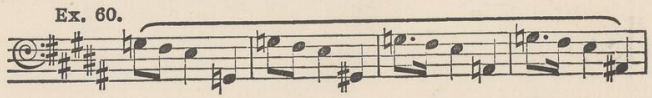


"Shan't be quiet, shan't be quiet!

Ex. 59.
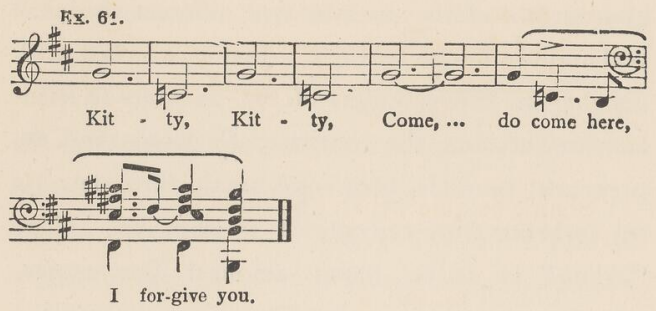


answers she. But the peasant already fatigued, begins to grow calm. He goes away, grumbling in a more subdued tone (solo for the left hand).

Ex. 60.



At last he falls asleep. The first melody returns as if by way of reminder. The peasant shortly wakes, remembers what has happened and feels sorry for his good wife. He calls her.

Ex. 61.



We cite this tale not for the purpose of actual criticism, for the author himself does not consider it in that light, but to show how much this *naturalistic* scene is nearer the truth. Perhaps in the B melody one might prefer to see a certain expression of a girlish soul rather than the groans of a peasant wife; but the whole gains much charm from the comic interpretation.

For instance, how different is the ending in Ujejski. Those fifths mean: "Ring ring, ring the bell there! Horse, carry me to the depths!" Here it is "O, Kitty, Kitty, do come here, I forgive you." If we call these mazurkas "poems" it is not that certain dramatic tales are necessarily hidden by them but that they point to us on the

groundwork of the peasant type different shades of real and not forced feelings. Just as we read with delight the conversations of the peasants in Sienkiewicz catching the characteristic words and expressions, so it is here—one small turn delights us, as being truly typical; it satisfies us. That "crime" is to be found amongst the people, we do not deny; but it is an exception and not a leading characteristic of their nature. Chopin, the first interpreter of popular character, certainly took that view. Let it here be remarked that another of his mazurkas was supposed to represent a "terrific night" depicted by Ujejski! Listening to that hearty and if I may be allowed the expression, honest melody, we shall never discover any such terrors. Musically speaking neither the flow of the melody, so full of simplicity and charm, nor the harmony which in all its wealth, exhibits no sudden or empathetic changes, justifiies such an interpretation.

The last Mazurkas, some of them especially, offer us a representation of the type developed into longer poems, and show how much wealth

future composers should be able to extract from it.

Having, in our previous work shown Chopin in his general features, we have here made a nearer, closer inspection of his principal compositions. Notwithstanding the ever widening admiration which the works of our master are exciting it has not seemed to us that the hints and observations we have made were at the present time uncalled for. May the day soon come when all such commentary will be unnecessary!

END.



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