

POLONAISE

The Life of Chopin



FREDERICK CHOPIN
From a Portrait by Ary Scheffer

POLONAISE

The Life of Chopin

By GUY DE POURTALÈS

Author of "FRANZ LISZT" *etc.*

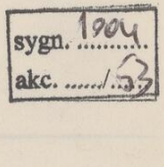


Translated from the French
by CHARLES BAYLY, JR.

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"He used his art only to give to himself his own tragedy."
LISZT.

DEDICATION

WHEN I suggested the example of Liszt to a soul stricken but still capable of enthusiasm, I thought also of offering him this story of Chopin. Not that this latter should serve to discount whatever slight exuberance there might be in the former. On the contrary: they complement and complete each other and show the two fold visage, the one concave and the other convex, of this symbolic being that we call the artist. Or, the sensitive man, the cognizant, —he, at any rate, whom we envy.

One of these masks portrays glory and passion: the other, sorrow and loneliness.

I quite realize the romantic sound of these four words in an age when they are so far outmoded. But if I agree that in our time every thing possible has been tried, indeed, to eliminate from our orchestra these harps, these tremolos, these rubatos, these great billows of harmony that transported three generations with the struggles between heaven and hell, it is nevertheless necessary only to open a news-

paper to the section on the courts of law, only to gaze into the show windows of the picture dealers, only to hear a saxophone, to convince myself that the themes of the human legend have in no degree changed. The rhythms are different, the harmonies, but our responsive vibrations are just the same as they were in the age of innocence.

The real disaccord between our ancestors and us is that the ugly—or what they called ugly—has been incorporated to-day in the beautiful—or what we call the beautiful. In other words, there is to-day no such thing as beauty or ugliness of harmony or discord, there is no longer any æsthetic prohibition. As Paul Valéry has written: "I see the modern man as a man with an idea of himself and of the world that is no longer fixed. . . . It has become impossible to be a man of a single viewpoint, to hold, really, to one language, to one nation, to one faith, to one physical type." Let us add: to one music.

Thanks to scientific method, it has become easy to believe everything, or nothing. To love every one, or no one. But do we gain other than in childishness and dotage? I ques-

tion whether this new abundance enriches us more than their apparent poverty fertilized our fathers. This mass of sensations and perceptions has not increased our lucidity any more than the steam siren and the typewriter have added new notes to our scale. And yet we should hardly consent to the loss of one of these recent contributions.

But if this very ironic, very cynical jazz enchants me, it in no way removes the pleasure I feel in hearing Chopin. I should be sorry not to be able to savor two such different forms of modern sadness, the one born in New Orleans and the other in the Warsaw garret. To pursue still further the little problem which the two parallel existences of Liszt and Chopin pose for our reflection, let us say that on certain days we are more apt for action, for youth, for expenditure in any form; on other days for reserve, for shrinking, for incertitude, for concentration, and—even though the word has lost its beauty—for mysticism.

The life of Liszt is an open book. He wrote it everywhere in ink and in adventure. Of the life of Chopin almost nothing remains. His nature protected him from needless experience,

and fate furthermore decreed that a great many of his letters and relics should be burned in a house in which his sister lived at Warsaw in 1863. We can discover him therefore only in his music, in a few scraps of correspondence, and in the memories of his friends. Meanwhile, his life was always so simple and so logical that a slight commentary is necessary to understand it, as an *appoggiatura* enhances the value of a note. Except for two or three journeys, the outside world had little chance to penetrate this imagination that ever turned inward. Such an imagination must seek solace in song if it is to endure the days of disallusionment. Badly served in love, in friendship, in everything that demanded blindness or excessive pedal, this clear-sighted sufferer saw himself in only one mirror: the ebony of his piano. "Piano, marvelous instrument," he said. Naturally, since the piano is an orchestra in itself. But it is something more: it is an instrument. Hence a soul. It was the only one Chopin ever saw; and he made his piano his sole legatee.

If Liszt has given you the daring to seize the joys of the moment and a little confidence in yourself, Chopin can become not less a broth-

erly companion. His life is that of your anxious shadow. His music is perhaps nothing but the risen song of your inner loneliness.

All art is rich above all in the measure of what you yourself bring to it. Every soul possesses you in the measure of the effort you make to receive it. Welcome this one as the purest expression, for which there are no words, of what there is in love that must remain forever inexpressible.

G. DE P.

INSTYTUT FRYDERYKA CHOPINA-NARODOWY BIBLIOTEKA

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I	"An Angel, with a Face as Beautiful as a Tall, Sad Woman"	19
II	The Childhood of Chopin	23
III	The Birth of the Poet	30
IV	*Sorrow* and *Ideal*	36
V	Revolution at Warsaw and Solitude at Vienna	53
VI	"There Is No City in the World Where More Pianists Are to be Found Than in Paris"	68
VII	Happy Years, Working Years	84
VIII	Marie Wodzinska and the Dusk	95
IX	First Sketch of George Sand	118
X	Letters of Two Novelists	129
XI	The Chartreuse of Valdemosa	159
XII	"If Music Be the Food of Love, Play On"	181
XIII	On Some Friendships of Chopin, and on His Æsthetics	200
XIV	Misunderstandings, Solitude	224
XV	Chagrin, Hate	244
XVI	The Story of a Rupture	261
XVII	Swan Song	291
XVIII	"The Cypresses Have Their Caprices"	316
XIX	The Death of Chopin	321
XX	An Epitaph for a Poet	328
	Sources	334
	Index	339

POLONAISE

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CHAPTER I

"AN ANGEL, BEAUTIFUL AS A TALL, SAD WOMAN"

"AN angel, beautiful as a tall, sad woman . . ."

This portrait of Chopin, penned by a hand he loved, should stand as the frontispiece of this study. Naïve painters in the Middle Ages —who also came to pray for pardon—hung their expiatory offerings in the shadows of the cathedrals. This once caressing woman's hand, now stilled, surely yielded, while writing these words, to the inner necessity of knowing absolution. She added: "There was never anything more pure and at the same time more exalted than his thoughts . . ."

And perhaps with faint trembling: ". . . but this man understood only that which was inherent within himself. One would have needed a microscope to peer into his soul, where so little light of the living ever penetrated."

A microscope has never helped to reveal a

soul. No optical instruments are necessary if we follow the teaching of Liszt: let us try to see with our hearts.

. . . . .

At the head of these pages must stand a name; a name that breathes life into the mortal of whom we write: Poland. Ever since 1795 this unhappy country had been completely dismembered, until Napoleon, that great poet of geography, after his first campaign in Prussia created the Duchy of Warsaw (1807). This was to last until the fall of the Emperor, that is, barely eight years. Yet these eight years were sufficient to endow the Poles with a singularly youthful hero worship for France.

Now in 1806, a certain M. Nicolas Chopin, professor of French entrusted with the education of the son of the Countess Skarbek, married in the village of Zelazowa Wola a Mlle. Justine Krzyzanowska. He was of French origin, a native of Marainville, a small village in that part of Lorraine whose history is so curiously interwoven with that of Poland. The fiancée of this one-time clerk who had become a teacher was a girl of twenty-four, of an impoverished noble family. She held in the

household of the countess, as did others of her class, the position of attendant and lady-in-waiting, according to the tradition of such proud, poor seigneurs.

Close to the *dwor*, or seigneurial dwelling, which was screened by a group of trees, stood a small house. A passage ran directly through the house, at the end of which could be seen the court, the stable and, at a distance, the fields of alfalfa and of colza. Here the young couple settled down. At the right of the entrance were three low rooms where one could touch the ceiling. After a time a girl was born, and was named Louise. This obscure event was rapidly succeeded by the French campaign in Prussia—Tilsit, Austerlitz, Jéna, Wagram, and the Polish eagles flying in the train of the Imperial eagles. Haydn died while the cannon of Napoleon thundered for the second time under the walls of Vienna. As four shells happened to fall close to him, the old composer said to his terrified servants, "Why this panic? Remember that wherever Haydn is no accident can happen." Stendhal, a commissioner in the army, was present at his obsequies. He afterwards made a note among

his papers: "Why is it that all Frenchmen who are really great in literature, La Fontaine, Corneille, Molière, Racine, Bossuet, should have met together about 1660? Why should all the great painters have appeared about 1510? Why, since these two happy periods, has nature been so sparing? Will music have the same fate?"

Yet Beethoven at this time was writing the *Quatuor serioso* and the sonata in E flat major, which is called *The Farewells*. He had already composed six of his symphonies, the *Kreutzer Sonata*, the *Appassionata*, *Fidélio*. Liszt, Schumann and Wagner were approaching. Goethe was flourishing; Byron publishing his first verses. Shelley and Keats were outlining theirs. Balzac, Hugo, Berlioz were warming the school benches. And on the 22nd of February, 1810, at six o'clock in the evening, in the little house in Zelazowa Wola, was born Frederick-François Chopin.

He came into a world of music, because exactly at that moment, under the windows, the rustic violins of the villagers, on the way to a wedding, were giving his mother a serenade.

CHAPTER II

THE CHILDHOOD OF CHOPIN

ON the first of October of that same year, Nicolas Chopin was made professor of French at the Warsaw High School and the whole family moved to the capital. They were immediately absorbed into the urban life and never returned to the country. Warsaw was indeed a fertile soil where one quickly took root among its Italian palaces and its wooden huts. Its swarming population mingled Asiatic pomp with the filth of Esquimaux. Here one encountered the bearded Jew, the nun, the young girl in a silken cloak, the mustachioed Pole, in caftan, belt, sword, and high red boots.

M. Chopin bestirred himself to increase his income, because his family had grown. After Louise and Frederick, Isabelle and then Emilie were born. In 1812 he became professor at the School of Artillery and Engineers and in 1815 obtained the same post in the Preparatory Military Academy. Finally he turned

his own home into a small boarding school for the children of the rich.

It is not difficult to imagine the surroundings, the manners, and the customs among which Frederick grew up in this busy, purposeful household. A somewhat rigid modesty and the domestic virtues of the family protected him from rough contacts with reality. It was thus, said Liszt, that "his imagination took on the velvety texture of plants which are never exposed to the dust of the highways."

Here then was a child, very gentle, very pale, sprightly, with the sensibilities of a little girl, and dominated by two passions: his love for his mother and his love for the piano. He had been placed before the keyboard at a very early age and had returned to it of his own accord, drawn by the keys. Music drew tears and cries from him. It became at once a necessary evil. He was also fond of his sisters and chose four friends among his father's pupils: Fontana, Titus Woyciechowski, and the Wodzinski brothers.

To celebrate his eighth birthday he played at an evening benefit concert for the aged poet,

Niemcewicz. He had been dressed in the English fashion, with a velvet coat and a large turn-over collar. And when his mother, afterwards, questioned him about his success, asking what the audience had liked best, he replied with pride, "My collar."

The Polish aristocracy, including the Grand Duke Constantin himself, the Governor of Warsaw, became interested in the child. He was commanded to appear before this redoubtable prince and played for him a march of his own composition.

"Child," asked the brother of the Czar, "why do you always look upwards?"

But is it not heavenward that poets look? Chopin was "neither an intellectual prodigy nor a little thinking animal," writes one of his biographers, "but a simple modest child who played the piano as naturally as the birds sing. . . ."

He had teachers. First Zywny, a venerable gentleman of over sixty, a native of Bohemia, a mediocre violinist but a good teacher. He was absorbed in the cult of Bach, a passion which he instilled in his pupil; and the depth of such childish enthusiasms is well known.

Then, in 1824, at the time when Frederick was sent to college, his father replaced Zywny by Elsner, a Silesian professor who taught him harmony and composition. Without being much of a musician, Elsner was something of a personage, a composer of operas, symphonies, masses, and a Director of the Conservatory. He had the virtue of never suppressing Chopin's personal gifts: "Let him alone," he said. "If he leaves the main road and the traditional methods it is because he has his own ways, and some day his work will show an originality that no one possesses to-day. He follows a unique path because his gifts are unique."

One can applaud this happy prophet. Elsner was a retiring man. He lived in two cells in an old monastery in the rue des Jésuites. His pupils saluted him on the right shoulder, according to the Polish fashion, and he responded by a kiss on each cheek. In his annual report to the Conservatory he writes: "Chopin, Frederick (3rd year pupil), astonishing capability, musical genius."

Chopin worked well at college also, and took prizes; in short, he was an adolescent both

facile, lovely, and gay to the point of clownishness, like many melancholics. His comrades adored him, above all because of his talent for mimicry and imitation, which showed to what a point he felt the grimaces of souls. He put on plays with his sisters, who wrote comedies for the children. He edited a paper.

These minor events enameled the surface of a life without scratches. Three facts alone should be remarked. In May and June, 1825, in two concerts at the Conservatory, Chopin played an *Allegro* of Moscheles' and improvised for the Emperor Alexander, who gave him a ring. During the course of the same year, he published his *Premier Rondo in C minor* (op. I), dedicated to Mme. Linde, the wife of the Head of the school. Then, the next summer, he was invited to the Château d'Antonin by Prince Radziwill.

Playing in public had already lost its novelty. On the other hand, he tasted with naïve ardor the new joy of publishing his music. And if the piece is neither very profound nor very scholarly it has at any rate his personal imprint. "A lady," said Schumann somewhat later in speaking of this little work, "would

find it most delicate, most charming . . ." Note how already they hasten the advent of the ladies! Such is the first fruit of his chaste soul.

The stay at the Château d'Antonin, in the summer of 1826, revealed to Chopin the pleasures that can come from material plenty and refinements of the spirit, when these are linked together by skilled hands. This was precisely what the young aristocrat needed to awaken his æsthetic response. It is a luxury which the strong scorn; but a sensitive heart would have difficulty in dispensing with a judicious distribution of these amenities, ranging from perfect food to works of art, from physical luxury to the subtleties of the mind, and reducing this heart, despite itself, to the domination of the delicious. I myself should think it very interesting to know all about not only the furnishings, the pictures, but the hosts, the conversations that he was able to see and hear during the summer of 1826 at Prince Radziwill's. Unfortunately, these details cannot be known with any degree of certainty. After all, it may be sufficiently enlightening that Chopin called Antonin "a paradise" and that he found

the young princesses "divine." But it is certain that from that time on his yearning for that perfect harmony, derived from the union of nature, a sumptuous dwelling and radiant youth, shattered his ambitions into invincible regrets.

CHAPTER III

THE BIRTH OF THE POET

WHEN he was asked, after one of his improvisations at the piano, improvisations that were compounded of a mixture of brilliance that was always slightly somber, and of tenderness that was at once poignant and dramatic, by what name this atavistic desolation that seemed too old for his young person should be called, he replied with the Polish word *zal*. It was a word that he repeated, that he loved, a word susceptible of varied meanings and which included sometimes every tenderness and all humility, and sometimes only rancor, revolt, and glacial vengeance. It is a word also that holds all at once connotations of inconsolable sorrow, and menace, or fruitless bitterness, which could, in short, be applied to all those cruel and dreamer Hamlets whom we call Slavs. From the time he was sixteen years old, the *zal* was the bright enemy of his fortune, an enemy armed each day anew when

one has a romantic heart and when the destruction of self seems the most brilliant solution of life. In knowing himself and then in cultivating himself without opposition, Chopin accomplished the rare miracle of becoming absolutely himself before life had taught him anything. Himself against life, in spite of life. The sum of knowledge that was necessary to him he possessed at sixteen. It was reduced to the seven notes of the scale, which were sufficient for the expression of all his thoughts. He was tortured by the need of no other nourishment than the search for his own style. That was his method of attaining the truth. Apart from his piano, the universe, indeed, was but literature.

Furthermore his father allowed him to leave school at seventeen to give himself up entirely to his music. Up under the roof a small work room was arranged for him and furnished with an old piano and a table. It was there that he wrote his first works. And it was at this time that, in testing his powers, he acquired the touch and the new style that was soon to astonish the artistic world. The next year he composed his *Variations* on the *la ci darem la*

mano of Mozart, of which Schumann said as he thumbed it over: "Eusèbe came in softly the other day. You know that ironic smile with which he tries to intrigue you. I was at the piano . . . Eusèbe put a piece of music before us, with these words, 'Hats off, gentlemen—a genius!' We were not to see the title. I turned over the pages mechanically. The obscure joy of music without sound is like something magical. And then, it has always seemed to me that each composer offers to the eyes a physiognomy of notes that is the essence of the man. Beethoven has a different look than Mozart, on paper. So here I found quite strange eyes, the eyes of a flower, the eyes of a basilisk, the eyes of a peacock, the eyes of a virgin marvelously regarding me. But what was the astonishment of the hearers on reading the title: opus 2 . . . Chopin? I had never heard the name."

Remember the almost prophetic tone of that surprise: "eyes of a flower, eyes of a basilisk, eyes of a peacock, eyes of a virgin." This splendid musical portrait paints in completely the Polish swan testing for the first time the flutter of his wings.

It was not long after, at the beginning of September, 1828, that he set out on his first journey. A friend of his father's, Professor Jaroçki, took him to Berlin, where he was to attend a scientific meeting. Frederick was in an ecstasy of enthusiasm. After five days of jolting in the diligence the travelers reached the Prussian capital and put up at the Hôtel du Kronprinz. Chopin's first visit was to the factory of the Kisting pianos, his second to the Academy of Singing, his third to the Opera, where they were giving *Ferdinand Cortez* of Spontini, and *The Secret Marriage* of Cimarosa. "I followed these operas with great pleasure," he wrote home, "but I must admit that the music of Handel is the closest approach to the musical idea I have set up for myself. . . To-morrow *Freyschutz;* that is exactly the music I need." He saw Spontini at a distance, and the young Mendelssohn. Meanwhile he dined at the Congress of Naturalists. "Yesterday, banquet in honor of the scholars. What caricatures! I rated them in three groups." At the table he sat beside a professor from Hamburg, who, talking to Jaroçki, so far forgot himself as to take Chopin's plate

for his own and to set to drumming on it. "A true scientist, eh? Nothing was lacking, not even the big deformed nose. I was on pins and needles during the drumming, and when it was finished had nothing better to do than to rub off the finger marks with a napkin." This incident was the object of a long report in which can be seen his stubborn disgust. Then there were the toilettes of the ladies. Details? None. That struck closer home than the necessary visits to the Geological Museum.

Finally, after a fortnight, they took the road for Warsaw again by *berline*. Arriving at Zullichau, between Frankfurt-am-Oder and Posen, they found a shortage of horses and were obliged to stop and wait for fresh ones. What should they do? By chance the postal relay station was also the tavern. Professor Jaroçki seized the opportunity to dine. Chopin spotted a piano. He opened it, sat down and began to let his fingers wander. An old traveler came to sit quietly near him, then another, then silently all the household, the postmaster, his wife, his daughters, the neighbors. What a surprise was this nightingale blown by the wind from fairyland! Sud-

denly the head of the postillion was framed in the window and he thundered out:

"All aboard! The horses are harnessed."

"Devil take the spoil-sport," replied the postmaster, furious.

They begged the young man, who had already arisen, to sit down again.

"Continue, pray do," from the ladies.

"I'll give you extra horses if necessary," added the postmaster.

And the old traveler said in his turn:

"Sir, I am an old-fashioned musician and I know what I am talking about. I, also, play the piano. If Mozart had heard you, sir, he would have taken your hand. I, a nobody, dare not. . . ."

When Chopin stopped, this curious audience seized him and carried him out in triumph.

A Schumann bowled over, an enthusiastic postmaster, a timid musicaster trembling with emotion, these were the signs that a new poet was born among men.

CHAPTER IV

SORROW AND *IDEAL*

BUT it was not until the following year that he was to find his voice. One evening at the Opera, he noticed a young singer with a clear tone, fair hair, and an attractive mouth. He learned that her name was Constance Gladkowska and that she was still a pupil at the Conservatory. The impression this girl produced on him was strong, but altogether pure and childlike. To get the ribbon that tied her hair, to die holding it hidden on his breast, would have made him happy. And so delicate was this sentiment that at first he confided it to no one. At bottom, another thought wrung him more: to leave Warsaw, because he well knew that he had exhausted its musical resources.

In the month of July, 1829, his father furnished him with a little money, which had been saved with difficulty, and the young composer, on whom from all sides so many hopes

were centered, was able to leave for Vienna. His first visit there was to Haslinger, the music publisher, a great patron who received him with open arms and already called him "the new star of the North." But Chopin, who was not yet twenty, was cautious and skeptical. He was presented to Count Gallenberg, the superintendent of the Imperial theaters; he was urged to give a concert. "What reassures Gallenberg," he wrote to his family, "is that I shall not tax his purse. I am going to play for nothing. I am acting the disinterested and the dilettante. I am a musician for love of the art."

The concert took place at the Imperial Theatre on the 11th of August, at seven in the evening. The orchestra played a Beethoven overture, some airs of Rossini. Then the delicate Chopin, already sickly looking, came onto the platform. An old lady sitting in the first row said in a whisper, "What a pity the young man doesn't make a better appearance!" But Chopin's whiteness was from rage rather than nervousness, because the orchestra, not having been able to decipher his *Variations*, had forced him to change the program. He therefore

improvised on a theme from *The White Lady*, then on the Polish air, *Chmiel.*

With the one exception of Liszt, no one has ever improvised like Chopin. Under his elegant hand there opened a new world of velvet tragedies, of ravishing sorrows, where each hearer trembled as he discovered a memory of his own griefs. And old men as well as young school girls followed with delight these exquisite whisperings. But the power of poets,—what is it, if not to make the soul sing, the secret of which it knows better than you?

The success of the first concert was so considerable that Chopin resolved to give another a week later. This time he played his *Krakoviak*, which the orchestra had rehearsed, and his *Variations* on the *la ci darem.* Count Lichnowsky, Beethoven's friend, was present and applauded wildly. The public, the musicians, and the critics could not retain their surprise, for everything was new about Chopin, both the substance and the form. "The public recognized a great artist in this young man . . . On the ground of the originality of his playing and of his compositions one could almost attribute genius to him," said the *Wiener Thea-*

terzeitung; and the *Allgemeine Musikalische:* "The exquisite delicacy of his touch, the indescribable dexterity of his technique, the finish of the nuances, which reflect the deepest sensitiveness, the clarity of his interpretation and of his compositions, which carry the marks of a great genius, all reveal a virtuoso favored by nature who has flashed above the horizon without previous heralding, like one of the most brilliant meteors." One single criticism, that Chopin made of himself: he plays too softly, he lacks brilliance and depth. "They are almost of one voice in saying I play too softly, too tenderly, rather, for this public," he writes to his family. "They are accustomed to the full loads of their virtuosos. But I should rather they would say that I played too softly than too brutally." And in another letter: "It is my way of playing, and I know it pleases the women and the artists greatly."

Thereupon he left for Prague, accompanied to the diligence by all the Viennese musicians, whom he had conquered in so short a time. Even Czerny, with whom Chopin had several times played duets, was there. Chopin thought

him "a fine man and more intelligent than his compositions." He visited Prague where he made the acquaintance of the famous violinist Pixis, and of Alexandre Klengel, the composer of forty-eight fugues that were supposed to be the most beautiful since Bach. Klengel interested him and they spent half a dozen hours together, at the piano and in conversation. Then Frederick left for Dresden, stopping at Teplitz, a watering place on the frontier of Bohemia and Saxony, where he passed the evening at the château of Prince Clary.

A small but "respectable" company were assembled there: the gentlemen of the house, an Austrian general, an English naval captain, a Saxon general sewed up in decorations, some young men and girls. After the tea, the Princess asked Chopin if he would "deign" to touch the piano. The artist replied that he would "deign" and asked for a subject for improvisation. The Prince's *maitre de music* proposed a theme from Rossini's *Moses*, and Chopin launched forth upon embroideries so lovely that he was obliged to return to the piano four times. They tried to keep him at Teplitz, but he would not consent. A rest-

lessness, a certain nervousness, pushed him on to continue his journey. Something was working deeply in him. Dresden hardly interested him. He stayed there a few days doing nothing, then left for Breslau, and returned at length to Warsaw on September 12th.

Three weeks later, while writing a waltz, he discovered the trouble. "I have, perhaps to my sorrow, found my ideal. For six months now I have dreamed of her each night, and I have never spoken a word to her. It was for her that I composed the *adagio* of my *Concerto* (in F minor, op. 21), as well as the *Waltz* (op. 70, no. 3), written only this morning and which I am sending to you. Notice the passage marked by a cross. No one, except you, will know the meaning of it. How happy I should be, my friend, if I could play my new composition to you. In the fifth measure of the trio, the bass carries the melody as far as the high E flat, in the key of G. I should not say it to you, as I know you would have felt it yourself."

This confidence was addressed to Titus, the friend beloved above all others because he too was a musician, and Chopin found for him at once the two words that were henceforth to

be the keys to his whole life: "sorrow" and "ideal." They give his atmosphere. Perhaps they give too much, but if they have since then lost something of their meaning, can we not give back to them in spirit a living poetical value? In this Europe which was open to romanticism and fervently breathed a too magnificent vocabulary there was a transcendental faith and candor which engendered deeds of love and of history. An evil age, "an age of fools and follies," said M. Charles Maurras. Perhaps. But an age when ideas and dreams have more than a rhetorical value puts a high price on art. And no one less than Chopin was paid with words. Those which he himself used translate exactly the accents of his piano. When he wrote that to his sorrow he had discovered his ideal, doubtless he did not suspect he had so nearly struck the truth. Here, fixed forever, is the musical theme in which, thanks to him, millions of beings were to discover the joys of hopelessness.

In this sorrow, in this ideal, he was of course thinking of Constance Gladkowska. He wrote again some time later: "You cannot imagine how sad Warsaw seems to me. If I

were not so happy being with my family I should not stick it here. Oh! it is hard to have no one with whom to share my pain and my joy. Oh! how bitter when the heart is constrained from unfolding itself to another heart! You know what I mean. Many times I pour into my piano what I should like to confide to you."

He heard a great deal of music and was much struck by the last of Beethoven's trios. Never had he heard anything greater, he said. He composed. He went to the Opera. Mlle. Gladkowska made her début in Paër's *Agnes* and he admired her playing, her beauty, the range of her voice. "Her phrasing and nuance are delicious. At first her voice trembled slightly, but she soon got over this. She was showered with applause." He made her acquaintance, accompanied her at the piano, felt that he should die of sadness and uncertainty. Should he leave? Must he stay? He decided to accept an invitation from Prince Radziwill and went to spend one autumn week at Antonin. He was received as a personage, played duets with the Prince, who was the author of an orchestration of *Faust*.

Two charming Eves graced this paradise—"I mean the two young princesses, pleasant, musical, and gentle creatures. As for the mother Princess, she knows that it is not birth that makes a man."

The young princesses knew it too, and they amused themselves by taking lessons from this artist with the complexion of a girl. Wanda allowed him to play with her fingers, which he was obliged to place in the correct position. Elise did his portrait. "Princess Wanda has a real musical instinct. There is no need of constantly saying to her: here, *crescendo*, there, *piano* . . . here more slowly, there faster . . . I had to promise to send her my *Polonaise in F minor*." He wrote another Polonaise, for piano and violoncello. "It is a brilliant bit for women to play." He did not forget Constance, even though Princess Elise was so ravishing. But he realized the possibility of being charmed in all innocence by two beings at once. Nor did he forget his dear Titus of the silent savage heart. In a moment of expansion he wrote to him: "I could anoint my body with the rarest perfumes of Byzantium and you would still refuse to embrace me

if I had not bound you by a kind of magnetic attraction. But in nature there are secret powers. . . ."

Returning to Warsaw, he decided to give a concert which Constance should attend. She could not fail to understand that it was to her alone that he dedicated his young fame. The concert actually took place on the 17th of March, 1830, when he had just reached his twentieth year. The event aroused an extraordinary amount of attention. The hall was crowded. The program, according to custom, was interspersed with music by Elsner, Kurpinski, a hunting horn solo, some singing. Chopin's part consisted of his *Concerto in F minor* and a potpourri of national airs. But the effect was not all that he had hoped. The connoisseurs alone had realized and appreciated his originality as an artist. But Constance, sitting in the front row, smiled at him and he was happy.

A second concert, several days after the first, was a more brilliant success and the *Rondo à la Krakoviak* aroused acclamations. From all over the house came cries: "A third concert! A third concert!" This time it really seemed

as though the critics, the crowd, and the musicians were of one accord in declaring Chopin the greatest pianist and composer in Poland. But the weeks slipped by without bringing him real happiness. His love for Titus and Constance upheld and strengthened him. He carried their letters over his heart. For them alone he composed and it seemed to him as long as they had not heard his most recent music that it was worth nothing. "Work obsesses me. I am forced to write. Often I turn night into day and day into night. I live in a dream and sleep while I am awake. Yes, worse still, it is as though I must sleep for ever, because I feel eternally the same thing. But instead of gathering strength from this somnolence I am tortured further and weaken myself the more. . . ." He worked on his *Adagio* in E major, which was to be "romantic, calm, melancholy," and to evoke "crowds of gentle memories. It should be like the reverie of a moonlit spring night . . . If it is bad, what difference? You will see in it the vice I have of doing badly against my will. But something has entered my heart through my eyes against

my will, also. This oppresses me, torments me, even while I cherish it."

An unexpected treat was given him by the arrival of a German singer, Sontag, who gave a series of six concerts. Chopin, who was undergoing a moment of enthusiasm, was presented to her by Prince Radziwill. She was not pretty, but charming beyond description, and she enchanted the circle in which she moved. Frederick was allowed the honor of seeing her in her peignoir in the morning, and brought Constance to her. But the transit of the singer was no more than a meteoric interlude and Chopin slid back into his uncertainties. Flight seemed more and more necessary for his musical development, and on the other hand the fear of losing his love paralyzed him. On September 4th he wrote to Titus:

"I have spells of rage. I still have not budged. I haven't courage enough to name a day for leaving. I have a presentiment that if I leave Warsaw I shall never see my home again. I imagine that I leave only to die. Ah! how sad it must be not to die where one has

always lived! How terrible it would be to see at my deathbed an indifferent doctor or servant instead of all my own people! I should like to stay with you for a few days; perhaps I might find some peace again. But as I cannot, I limit myself to roaming the streets, crushed by my sadness, and I come home,—but why? To follow my chimeras here. Man is rarely happy. If he is destined to only a few short hours of bliss, why should he renounce his illusions when, even they, are fugitive?"

More curious still is his letter of September 18th, where he makes this singular statement:

"You are mistaken in thinking like so many others that my heart is the reason for my prolonging my stay here. Be sure that I could rise above all if it were a question of my own self, and that, if I were in love, I could manage to dominate my sad and sterile passion for years yet. Be convinced of one thing, I beg, that is, that I too consider my own good and that I am ready to sacrifice everything for the world. For the world;—I mean, in the eyes of the world; so that this public opinion which has so much weight with us should never contribute to my sorrow . . . Not to that secret

suffering that we hide within ourselves, but to what I might call our outward pain . . . As long as I am in good health I shall work willingly all my life. But must I work more than my strength permits? If it is necessary, I can do twice what I do to-day. You may not be master of your own thoughts, but I am always. Nothing could make me drop them as the leaves from the trees. For me, even in winter, there is always verdure. Of course, I am speaking only of the head! In the heart, on the other hand . . . good Lord! there is tremendous heat! No wonder the vegetation there is luxurious. . . . Your letters rest over my heart, next to the ribbon (Constance's), because, even though they do not recognize each other, still, inanimate objects can feel that they come from friendly hands."

In short, this irresolute knew well that the very base of his nature was his musical instinct; that this instinct would conquer all, his desires, his comfort, his peace; that his "secret suffering," if it was inevitably necessary, amounted at any rate to less than that stubborn march towards a whole future of melody and solitude.

Coming out of church one day he saw Con-

stance. "My eyes caught her glance. I tore off into the street and it took a quarter of an hour to pull myself together. Sometimes I am so mad it is terrifying. But a week from Saturday I shall leave, come what may. I shall stuff my music into my valise, her ribbon into my soul, my soul under my arm and,—*en avant*, to the *diligence!*"

Finally, on October 11th, he gave a last concert, in which Mlle. Gladkowska assisted. Frederick played his whole *Concerto in E minor*, a work that he had just finished, and a *Fantasy of Polish Airs*. Mlle. Gladkowska, dressed in white with a wreath of roses, sang the cavatine from Rossini's *Lady of the Lake*. "You know the theme: *O quante lagrime per te versai*," wrote Chopin to Titus. "She rendered the *tutto detesto* to the G flat admirably. Zielinski said the G alone was worth a thousand ducats. After leading her off the stage I played my *Potpourri* on the setting of the moon. This time at least I understood myself, the orchestra understood itself and the audience understood us both. . . . Now nothing remains but to strap my trunk. My bag is bought, my outfit ready, my orchestrations recopied, my handkerchiefs hemmed,

my new trousers fitted." What was he still waiting for?

It was as though destiny offered him one final chance. He did not take it.

The 1st of November 1830 was the date set; he was to leave for Vienna. In the morning a whole troupe set forth. Elsner, friends, musicians, conducted him as far as Wola, the historic suburb where, in earlier times, the election of the kings had taken place. They held a banquet. They played a serenade in his honor. They sang:

"May your talent, native of our soil,
Display itself in all and everywhere,
Be you on the Danube's shores,
Or by the Sprée, the Tiber or the Seine.
Cherish the customs of your fathers,
And, on the wings of your music,
Spread our mazurkas and our Kracoviennes.
Sing the glory of your native land.
Yes, may your dreams come true.
Know always, Chopin, that you by song
Shall glorify your native land."

Chorus—

"To wander far is naught,
Because your soul remains with us.
We raise our prayers for your joy,
And cherish your memory in our hearts."

He is pale, the boy prince, when they present him with a silver cup full of Polish soil. And now he shakes with sobs.

As for Constance, she never saw him again. Two years later she married a country gentleman. Then, the blue eyes that the poet had loved,—by what strange trick of fate should they be deprived of light? Constance became blind. Sometimes, however, she sat again at the piano and sang that lovely song: *Quante lagrime per te versai.* . . . Some one who knew her late in her life told how her eyes which remained starry in spite of their darkness, filled then with tears.

CHAPTER V

REVOLUTION AT WARSAW AND SOLITUDE AT VIENNA

TITUS WOYCIECHOWSKI joined Chopin at Kalisz. Older than he by several years, he was in appearance and character just the opposite of Frederick; a tall strong youth with clear, determined features, speaking rarely, but with just as passionate a melomania. His huge hands, chiseled to grasp the sword of his ancestors, as soon as they rested on the keys of the piano developed an airy delicacy. Slender, deep-eyed Frederick, however, led him on a leash like a powerful submissive dog. They passed by Breslau, then went to Dresden, where a whole week evaporated in calls, in parties, and in the theatre.

Armed with letters of introduction, Chopin betook himself to pay his respects to Mme. Dobrzyçka, a Polish noblewoman, Grand Mistress of the Court of Princess Augusta. This lady occupied an apartment of the château royal. She received him graciously and invited

him to spend an evening with her in a little group of her friends. Chopin accepted, knowing very well that he would have to pay with his art, but he made it a rule never to refuse his compatriots. On the day set he made his entrance in the salons of the Grand Mistress, where he found only three or four people; some ladies and a man of some thirty years, clean shaven, whom he took to be a scholar or an abbé of the court. Mme. Dobrzyçka presented him to her guests: "one of our young compatriots, M. Frederick Chopin, an artist of great talent, who won't refuse to let us hear one of his mazurkas, an echo of our far-off country." Chopin sat down at the piano. He felt himself on edge, his head full of poetry, his heart with memories; Constance, his sisters, the ancient city of Warsaw floated before his eyes. In a dozen ways, he evoked them with that careless grace, that emotion stripped clean for which no one had ever given him a model. He was heard in the deepest silence. Then the Grand Mistress rose and came to him, with tears in her eyes. "Thank you. You have given a delightful hour to Her Majesty and Their Highnesses." With a deep bow she

designated the two ladies and the clean shaven gentleman. They were the Queen of Saxony, the Infante Augusta and Prince Jean, the future King of Saxony, whom he had taken for a doctor of theology. The next day they sent to him letters closed with the seals of Their Majesties the King and Queen of the Two Sicilies and of His Serene Highness the Prince de Lucques, recommending "Frederick Chopin, a superb artist for whom the most brilliant future is in store."

Under these happy auspices Frederick and Titus arrived in Vienna towards the end of November. They set out to find an apartment and, for 50 florins a month, rented three rooms in Kohlmarkt.

But this fickle city had already forgotten the artist it had once acclaimed. Haslinger, the publisher, refused to buy his works and Chopin would not consent to part with them for nothing. "Maybe he thinks," he said, "that if he treats them as bagatelles I shall take him seriously and give them to him for fun. He is wrong. My motto shall be: Pay, brute." But these small cares faded suddenly away when the events which were taking place in Poland

began to filter into the newspapers. On the 29th of November, indeed, the revolution had broken out in Warsaw. This ancient people, reduced to slavery, was attempting once again to regain its liberty. They got their news in crumbs: on November 29th, eighteen conspirators had set out for the Palais de Belvédère, where the Grand Duke Constantin resided, in order to seize him. They were too late. "The bird had flown" and, leading his Russian troops, had already withdrawn from the walls of Warsaw. Freed for the time, the entire town had arisen against its oppressors. The next day a new government was formed, the war of independence proclaimed, and everywhere thousands of volunteers had enlisted.

From the very first Titus and Frederick were wild with enthusiasm. Titus outfitted himself from head to foot and without further delay left to join his brothers at arms. Left alone, Chopin lamented his own inaction, but what could he do with those delicate hands of his, with his useless talent? In spite of all, on a gamble, without definite plan, he rented a post-chaise and struck out on the trail of Titus. But he was unable to overtake him and, in the som-

ber winter dusk, his warlike ardor seemed suddenly so futile that he had his driver turn about and go back to Vienna. There he found a letter from his father who, guessing the feelings of his son, besought Frederick not to allow himself to be turned from his career, prayed to him that all the sacrifices that had been made should be allowed to bear fruit. So Chopin stayed. But the burden was heavy to bear in this Austria of Metternich, altogether so unfriendly to Poland. The artists he knew avoided him, and more than once as he passed he overheard that God's only error was to have created the Poles. His mail reached him now only after long delays and he lived in anguish. He learned of the march of the Russian General Paskewitch on Warsaw. Already he saw the town in flames, his family and Constance massacred. He spent his time in writing, he who had such a horror of letter paper. "I seem to be dreaming that I am really still with you. The voices I hear which are unfamiliar to me are like carnival clackers. It would not matter to me to-day whether I were alive or dead. . . . Why am I left behind? Why am I not taking my share of the danger with you?" The Christmas holidays

only aggravated this drama of unrest. Dante was right when he said that a happy memory is the worst misery of unhappy days. That Christmas eve he went to the Church of St. Etienne and there, standing in the darkest corner under the dome, he leaned against a Gothic pillar and dreamed of the family Christmas tree, lighted with candles, of the modest presents he and his sisters gave each other, of the traditional supper where the whole family gathered about the table and broke the holy bread that the lay brothers of the convents had distributed during Advent.

He passed the holidays largely alone in his room, which he thus describes: "It is large and has three windows; the bed is across from them, my marvelous piano is at the right, the sofa at the left, between the windows a mirror and in the center of the room a big mahogany table. The floor is waxed. It is quiet. Every morning an unbearably idiotic servant awakens me. I get up and have my coffee, which is often cold, as I start playing and forget it. About nine o'clock my German teacher arrives. After that I play. Then Hummel, the son of the composer, comes to work on my

portrait while Nidecki studies my concerto. I stay in my warm dressing gown until noon. Then a funny little German, Herr Leidenfrost, arrives. If it is pleasant we go for a walk on the hill. Then I go to lunch wherever I may be invited or else at the *Café Zur Böhmischen Köchin*, which is frequented by all the University students. . . . Afterwards I make calls, come in at dusk, dress and fix my hair, and go to some party or other. About eleven or twelve o'clock, never later, I come home, play, cry, laugh, read, go to bed, and dream of you."

In this same letter to his friend Matuszynski, he adds on Christmas Day (1830):

"I wanted so desperately to have a letter from you. You know why. What joy I have from news of my angel of peace! How I should like to sound all the chords, not only those that evoke stormy feelings but those that sound the *lieder* whose half-stilled echoes yet hover on the shores of the Danube. . . . But I cannot live as I please. . . . You advise me to make a poet's choice. Don't you realize that I am the most irresolute being on earth, and that I have made only one single fortunate choice in my whole life? All these dinners, parties, con-

certs, balls, bore me. I am overwhelmed with them. I cannot do what I wish; I must be dressed, powdered, shod, have my hair dressed, and play the quiet man in the drawing room, only to return home and thunder on the piano. I have no confidant, I must simply be polite to all the world. Forgive these complaints, my dear Jean, they rest me and give me relief. One point in your letter made me very gloomy. Has there been any change? Has any one been ill? I could easily believe it of such a tender being. . . . Reassure her and tell her that as long as my strength permits, till death, I shall never stop adoring her. Yes, that even after my death my ashes shall be scattered under her feet. More . . . all this is not enough, and you may tell her much more. . . . I should have done it myself, but the world, what would it have said? Be my interpreter to her. Day before yesterday I dined at a Mme. Bayer's, a Pole whose name is Constance. I love her society because of this reminder. Her music, her handkerchiefs, her napkins are marked with *her* initial."

"January 1, 1831.—I received your letter. I do not know what is taking place in me. I

love you all more than my life. Write to me. So you are with the army? I live there with you. Our poor families! What are all our friends doing? I should like to die for you, for all of you. If you leave how can you deliver my message? Watch out for my family. One might believe evil. . . . How sadly the year begins for me. Perhaps I shall not see its end. Embrace me. You are leaving for the war. Return a colonel. Ah! that I cannot be even your drummer boy! If you think it unnecessary, do not give her my note. I don't even remember what I wrote. You may read it. It is perhaps the first and the last."

He notes in his little pocket diary: "This bed where I sleep . . . perhaps it has already held a corpse. Who was it? Was he as wicked as I? Had he parents, sisters, a mistress? Now all is peace for him. I am sure that to die is the noblest human deed. Or is to be born? . . ." Later a few scattered lines about Constance: "Does she love me or is she playing a part? How hard it is to guess. Yes, or no? Yes, no, yes, no? . . . Yes, surely. But God's will be done."

Thus Chopin stands self-revealed, nervous,

lonely, horribly sensitive. All the pains of the world are latent in him, and a few simple joys. But the *man* developed with extreme slowness. The poet clung to his youth, which had furnished the difficulties he needed. He had given himself over, as women do, wholly to suffering, and it was by that alone that he was to become adult.

Yet the two years since his first love for Constance had already produced admirable work. It was not without a certain pride that Chopin bound into his work such pages as the *Waltz in D flat major* (op. 70, no. 3), in which he had earlier called Titus's attention to a confidential passage, the sketches of his *Etudes*, the first of his *Nocturnes* and the two *Concertos* (in E minor, op. 11, and in F minor, op. 21). If in construction, in skeleton, they still owe much to Hummel, in their flesh and blood they are entirely Chopin. The orchestral parts are weak because he was not able to *think orchestrally*, but the piano parts have an originality and poetry that bear the stamp of eternity. Liszt later said of the *adagio* of the *Second Concerto*, for which Chopin had a marked predilection, that the whole piece had "an ideal perfection,"

that "his sentiment by turn radiant and full of pity, evoked a magnificent country bathed in light, some dowered valley of Tempe that one might have selected as the site of a tragic tale, a heartbreaking scene. It might be called an irreparable sorrow enfolding the human heart against a background of the incomparable splendor of nature."

There is truth in these somewhat florid words. But it is difficult to reduce to the average vocabulary what slips so swiftly out of ordinary experience and opens to our most complex senses an entirely new universe. An analysis of music is the most futile of intellectual exercises, because it can build on nothing but emotion. Look at concert audiences. They are made up for the most part of lovers and old people. It is that they understand, remember, and seek again this powerful inexpressible thing in which they find the best that is in themselves. Even Chopin still did not know what he was giving. He was hampered by classic forms. But he carried in him the joy of a growing knowledge, developed and assimilated in his first sorrows.

The winter dragged on as best it could, and

Chopin, with somewhat more pleasure than he admitted, went from party to party. He let his sideburns grow, or rather, one sideburn, "because I only show my right profile to the audience." He took a fancy for Dr. Malfatti, Court Physician and former doctor to Beethoven, a happy sybarite and philanthropist who lived in a smart villa surrounded by gardens. And then spring returned and the doctor's peach and cherry trees were covered with pink snow. There, on St. John's Day, they had a fête by moonlight. Out on the terrace, in the wedding air that rose from the orangerie, wafted by the fountain sprays, Chopin played, while the Viennese listened to the sad-eyed foreigner who in somber colors paraphrased a joyous waltz of Strauss.

He went to concerts, met plenty of musicians but, Slavik the violinist excepted (another Paganini, who played ninety-six staccato notes with a single sweep of his bow), none of them impressed him greatly. Everywhere he went they played only waltzes, and although they were laughed at, still the editors would publish nothing else. He was ill and admitted it to his friends, but forbade them all to inform his

family. Vienna offered him nothing to love and he planned to depart. He had his passport arranged without knowing very definitely whether he should name Italy, France, Germany, or England. He might have settled the matter by a throw of dice had that not been to tempt fate somewhat. He ended by deciding on London and, quite by chance, had added to the passport: "by way of Paris." For the moment he was pacified and furnished with a few landmarks on which to fasten his imagination. He packed his bags, made his good-by calls and reserved a seat in the diligence for July 20 (1831).

A few days before his departure he received a letter from his compatriot Witwicki, the writer, a family friend. It touched his most sensitive spot. ". . . the idea of nationality keep always in view, nationality and yet again nationality. It is a word that means little for an ordinary artist, but not for a talent like yours. There is national melody just as there is a national climate. The mountains, the forests, the waters, and the prairies have their national voice, hidden underneath so that not every soul perceives it. . . . Every time I

think of it, dear M. Frederick, I nurse the sweet hope that you shall be the first to be able to imbibe the vast treasures of Slav melody. Delve among the popular Slav melodies as the mineralogist digs among the stones and minerals of the mountains and the valleys. I hear that in Vienna you fret and languish. I can put myself in your place; no Pole could be happy when there is a question of life or death of his own country. But remember always, dear friend, that you left us not to languish but to perfect yourself in your art and to become the consolation and glory of your family and your country."

He left on July 20th and, by way of Salzburg, reached Munich, where he stayed for several weeks. Then he set out again, for Stuttgart. There, on the 8th of September, he learned of the capture of Warsaw by the Russians. Under the shock of this frightful news he turned to his piano and his grief burst into tortured improvisation. This was the first germ of the *Etude in C minor* (op. 10, no. 12) that is called *The Revolutionary*. "What a change! What a disaster! . . . Who could have foreseen it?" he wrote, several weeks later.

These words may sound somewhat feeble. But Chopin did not love great, strong words. In him emotion always took on a moderate accent. Nevertheless, in his pocket notebook he gave free rein to his feelings: "The suburbs burned! Matuszinski and Titus surely killed! Paskewitch and that dog Mohilew flee from the beloved town. Moscow commands the world! Oh, God, where are you? Are you there and do not venge yourself? Are you not surfeited with Russian massacres? Or else,—or else,—are even you, in fact, only a Muscovite?" The young exile little suspected that he was to be, according to Paderewski's beautiful metaphor, the ingenious smuggler who would allow the prohibited Polonism to escape across the frontiers in his portfolios of music, the priest who would carry to the scattered Poles the sacrament of nationalism.

CHAPTER VI

"THERE IS NO CITY IN THE WORLD WHERE MORE PIANISTS ARE TO BE FOUND THAN IN PARIS"

WHEN the stagecoach in which Chopin rode had passed the walls of Paris, the young musician climbed up on the seat beside the driver. He hardly knew where to look, at the monuments or at a crowd so thick it might be thought another revolution. However, it was only the joy of living again that had brought the people into the streets and forced the horses down to a walk. The driver felt impressively at home among all these symbolic costumes of the bourgeois gentlemen and was delighted to point them out to his passenger. Each political group had its own livery. The School of Medicine and the Young French parties were distinguished by their beards and cravats. The Carlists had green waistcoats, the Republicans red, and the Saint Simoniens blue. Many strutted about in tailed coats, called *à la*

propriétaire, which fell to their heels. There were artists dressed after Raphaël, with hair to their shoulders and wide-brimmed tam-o'-shanters. Others leaned towards the Middle Ages, —numbers of women dressed as pages, as musketeers, as hunters. And in this swarm were hawkers brandishing their pamphlets: "Ask for *The Art of Making Love and Keeping It;* ask for *The Loves of the Priests;* ask for *The Archbishop of Paris and the Mme. la Duchesse de Berry.*" Frederick was at first somewhat scandalized. Later he was agreeably surprised to see a group of youths march by crying: "Poland! Poland!" "That is in honor of General Ramorino, the Italian who is trying to save our Polish brothers from the Russian heel," explained the driver. They were obliged to stop the carriage for the crowd to pass. Eventually they reached the posting station, where Chopin dismounted, had his baggage loaded into a cabriolet, and betook himself to a renting agency, which furnished him with two rooms on the fifth floor at 27 Boulevard Poissonnière.

He liked it there because his windows gave on to a balcony from which he could see the

succession of boulevards. The endless perspective of trees hedged in between two rows of houses astonished him. "It is down there," he thought, "that the history of France is being written." Not far away, in the rue d'Enfer, M. de Chateaubriand was editing his memoirs and he too wrote: "What happenings have taken place before my very door! But after the trial of Louis XVI and the revolutionary uprisings, all trials and uprisings are insignificant." At this same time, a woman who dressed like a young man wrote novels in her garret which she signed with the name George Sand, and exclaimed: "To live, how sweet! How good it is, in spite of disappointments, husbands, boredom, debts, relatives, tittle-tattle, in spite of bitter grief and tedious annoyances. To live, how intoxicating! To love, to be loved! That is happiness, that is Heaven!"

The day after his arrival Frederick plunged into the crowd and exulted in his solitude. It was more complete here than in the depths of the German forest, and it at once stimulated and frightened him. He floated with the tide, until suddenly the crowd thickened, became

organized. Then he found himself carried along by a compact column who, with flags at their head, were marching to acclaim Ramorino. He was really terrified, broke away, returned home by back streets, and climbed to his balcony where he witnessed from above the great storm of enthusiasm. Stores were shut up, a squadron of hussars arrived at a gallop and swept away the populace, who whistled and jeered at the soldiers. Through half the night there was an uproar which approached a riot. And Chopin wrote to Titus: "I can't tell you what a disagreeable impression the horrible voices of this angry mob gave me." Decidedly he did not like noise, or crowds; politics were not in his line.

Music, music, his only escape, because it is the only way of thinking with the emotions. "Here alone can one know what singing is. With the exception of Pasta, I do not believe there is a greater singer in Europe than Malibran-Garcia." He spent his evenings at the Académie Royale or at the Italian Opera. Veron managed the Académie and Habeneck conducted. At the Italian Opera it was Rossini and Zamboni. He heard Lablache and

Malibran in *The Barber of Seville*, in *Othello*, and in *L'Italienne à Alger*. Under the stimulus of his pleasure he wrote again to Titus: "You can have no idea what Lablache is like. Some say that Pasta's voice is weakening, but I have never in my life heard one so divine. Malibran has a range of three octaves; in her own genre her singing is unique, uncanny. She plays Othello; Schroeder-Devrient, Desdemona. Malibran is small, the German larger. Sometimes you think Desdemona is going to strangle Othello."

Chopin had a letter of introduction to Paër, who put him in touch with Cherubini, Rossini, and the pianist then more famous than any of the others, Kalkbrenner. With beating heart Chopin went to see this supreme master at his house. He was a tall man, stiff and cold, with the bearing of a diplomat, and an unstable glance. He put on the airs of a gentleman, was too polite, and actually heavily pedantic. Marmontel says of him that his playing was smooth, sustained, harmonious, and perfectly even, and that it charmed more than it astonished; that his left hand had an unequaled dexterity and that he played, without moving

his head or body, with splendid style in the grand manner.

The master and the unknown played several pieces for each other. When Chopin had finished his *Concerto in E minor*, Kalkbrenner said to him: "You have the style of Cramer and the touch of Field," which was without doubt the greatest compliment he could find. Foreseeing in this unexpected disciple the great man of to-morrow, he explained his faults, trotted out again his lack of method, even penciled his concerto. He tried to decipher it. But if he succeeded in the first part, he was stopped at the beginning of the second by insurmountable difficulties, because its technique was entirely novel. Nevertheless, he stated with conviction that three years of study under his direction would make him master of a new piano school. Chopin was stunned. Three years more! What would his family say? "However, I should submit to it," he thought, "if I were sure of making a big advance." But, home again, he had no longer any doubt. "No, I shall never be a copy of Kalkbrenner. . . . No, he shan't destroy in me that hope, daring, I admit, but noble, *of creating a*

new world for myself." A quarter of a century earlier than Wagner, here in this young man of twenty years was the certainty of the same destiny.

We must be grateful to M. Nicolas Chopin for having upheld his son's faith. "But, my dear fellow," he wrote to him, "I cannot see how, with your capacities which he (Kalkbrenner) said he remarked, he can think that three more years of work under his eyes are necessary for you to become an artist and the head of a new school. You know that I have done everything I could to further your dispositions and develop your talent, that I have opposed you in nothing. You know also that the mechanics of playing took you only a short time to learn and that your spirit has been more occupied than your fingers. If others spent whole days in practicing scales, you rarely passed an hour on the works of others. Experts can distinguish genius from its earliest moments but they cannot prophesy the peak it will reach."

Even more remarkable was the letter from his sister Louise, who had run to Elsner to lay before him the dilemma in which the whole family was plunged. The aged teacher, like

the young sister, had soon found traces of a calculating self-interest in the proposal of the virtuoso. And they said so, they who had simple hearts, they who had faith. "Elsner was angry. He had cried 'Jealousy already,—three years, indeed!' and had tossed his head. Then he added: 'I know Frederick. He is good, but he has no pride, no ambition; he is easily swayed. I shall write him what I think of all this.' Sure enough, this morning he brought a letter which I am sending you. He went on talking to us about this business. We who judge men in the simplicity of our hearts thought Kalkbrenner the most honest man in the world; but Elsner was not altogether of this opinion. He said: 'They recognized a genius in Frederick and they are afraid of being supplanted by him. That is why they would like to have their hands on him for three years, so that they could stop the growth that nature would take care of if she were left alone.' Elsner does not want you to imitate and he expresses himself well when he says: 'No imitation is worthy of the original. As soon as you begin imitating you cease to be creative, and, although you are young, your own conceptions

may be better than those of many others. . . .' Then, M. Elsner does not only want to see in you a concert player, a famous virtuoso, which is easiest and least worth while, but he wants to see you attain the goal towards which nature is urging you and for which she designed you. What irritates him extremely is, as he says, 'the presumption and arrogance that after having run over your orchestration would pick up a pencil to mark out passages without ever having heard the concerto with the full effect of the orchestra.' He says that it would have been quite another thing to have advised you when you should write another concerto, to shorten the *allegro:* but to make you erase what was already written, that he cannot pardon. Elsner compared it to taking a seemingly unnecessary column away from a house that had already been built, with the result of spoiling everything in eliminating what was deemed bad. I think that Elsner is right in stating that to be superior it is necessary to excel not only one's teachers but also one's contemporaries. You can excel them by imitating them, but after all, that is following in their tracks. And he says that you, who already know what is good and

what is better, should now be making your own path. Your genius will guide you. One more thing, he said. 'Frederick has drawn from his native soil this distinguishing particularity: the rhythm—how better describe it?—which makes him as much more original and characteristically himself as his ideas are more noble than others.' He would like you to retain that. We do not understand these things as well as you do, my dear little Fritz, and we cannot advise you; we can only send you our comments."

It is beautiful, this letter. It is not literature, but it touches the depths. Frederick followed its councils and preferred to remain himself, even if it cost him a rapid success. Meanwhile, Kalkbrenner knew enough not to be annoyed at seeing this prize pupil refuse to allow himself to be convinced. Their friendship persisted. It was this same Kalkbrenner who presented him to the directors of the famous house of Pleyel. Chopin attached himself to other artists, particularly to Hiller, pianist, composer, and music critic, and to Franchomme, the celebrated violoncellist, both of whom aided him to organize his opening concert.

This took place on the 26th of February 1832, in the Salons Pleyel. Chopin had worked for it with the greatest care amid constantly renewed difficulties. He had recruited for the occasion five violinists (among them Urhan, Liszt's friend, and Baillot), who were to play Beethoven's *Quintette*. Mlles. Tomeoni and Isambert to sing. Kalkbrenner, Stamati, Hiller, Osborne, Sowinski and Chopin were to play a *Grande Polonaise* for six pianos, composed by Kalkbrenner himself; then Chopin was to play his *Concerto in F minor* and his *Variations on the "la ci darem"* of Mozart. The *Grande Polonaise* for six pianos disquieted him. "It is a mad idea, isn't it?" he wrote to Titus. "One of the grand pianos is very large, it is Kalkbrenner's; another is very small; that is mine." He never loved show. Besides, concerts for the general public were always odious to him. On this evening of February 26th, there stepped on the stage a very pale young man whose attitude betrayed a very sincere annoyance much more than it did a dramatic inspiration. The hall was only half-filled and that mostly with Poles, critics and musicians. In the front row could be seen the

handsome features of Liszt. A stunning silence descended when Chopin had slipped his first caresses over the keyboard.

Then there arose from the piano a voice such as no one, ever, had heard before. All at once each one perceived in it the cry of his most private innermost self. It was neither a tale, nor a brilliant commentary, but the simple song of life; a perfect confidence; the essential word of the heart. By means of a delicate rightness, which is the strength of the pure, Chopin transported these connoisseurs. Liszt himself, whose "doubled and redoubled applause was not sufficient to express his enthusiasm," saw here the revelation of "a new phase of poetic feeling side by side with innovations in the form of the art." From that evening he gave him his warm friendship. Fétis, the sharp but influential critic, declared: "Here is a young man who, abandoning himself to his natural feelings, and following no model, has discovered, if not a complete renovation of piano music, at least a part of what we have long been vainly seeking: an abundance of original ideas which fit into no earlier classification."

Chopin accepted these eulogies without pride

and without false modesty, because he totally lacked all vanity. The receipts were counted; they barely sufficed to cover expenses. But that was nothing in comparison to another disappointment: the French public had not attended. Therefore the prize that he had sought had slipped away. When, towards midnight, he returned to his room, Chopin believed that fate had pronounced an unfavorable verdict and he conceived the idea of leaving for America.

He had almost no money left. His friends were still few, being limited to a small number of artists and compatriots. Ah, how happy Meyerbeer must be, having just had produced his *Robert the Devil*, a mine both of gold and of glory. He confided to Titus: "Chance brought me here. Here one can breathe freely, it is true. But perhaps one can sigh as freely, too. Paris is everything that you want it to be. Here you can amuse yourself, hate yourself, laugh, cry, do whatever you like without having any one give you a glance. I doubt if there is a spot on earth where more pianists are to be found than in Paris, or more asses and virtuosos. Ah, how I wish you were with me. If you only knew how sad it is not to be able

to relieve one's soul. I like the society of people. I make friends easily, and am up to my ears in acquaintances; but there is no one, no one who can understand me. My heart, you might say, beats always in swoons, and I resent it and should like a pause,—solitude,—and that during the entire day not a single soul should see me or speak to me. Above all, I detest hearing my bell ring when I am writing to you."

However, it rang a good deal, this little bell, and mostly pulled by that worst of the bores, the deadly, the awful, the ridiculous Sowinski. "It was just coming in to see me. It is something big, and strong, and it wears a tiny mustache; it sits down at the piano and improvises without knowing why. It bangs, it knocks, it crosses its hands without rime or reason; for five minutes at a time it batters a defenseless key. It has enormous fingers made rather to hold the reins and the whip somewhere in the wilds of the Ukraine. It has no other virtues than a tiny mustache and a big heart. . . . When shall we ever see each other again? Maybe never, because I assure you that my health is very bad. On the surface, I am gay,

but within I am consumed. Dark forebodings, restlessness, insomnia, homesickness, indifference to everything. Pleasure in life, then immediately afterwards,—longing for death. . . ."

Other friends come and go through Chopin's little apartment: Albert Grzymala, Count Plater, Liszt, Berlioz, who arrives from Rome and has great plans, Polish refugees. But of money, none of these young people have any at all and Frederick, in spite of the "little reinforcements" that his father sends him, sees his resources vanish.

As for love, that is a luxury for which he dared not dream. The memory of Constance faded after Isabelle wrote to her brother: "Like you I marvel that any one could be so callous. It is easy to see that a fine château was a greater attraction. She had feeling only in her singing!" But chastity is the natural estate of the poor and pleasure a word that Chopin did not understand. Living just below him, however, was a fresh, pretty woman. They met sometimes on the stairs, smiled, occasionally exchanged a few words. She heard from his room the passionate harmonies that this hand-

some male angel invented . . . for whom? Once she said to him:

"Come see me some evening. I am so much alone and I adore music."

He refused, blushing. Yet a regret escaped him on paper, in his cold room: "I should have found a hearth, a fire. It would be nice to be warm."

CHAPTER VII

HAPPY YEARS, WORKING YEARS

"TO-MORROW," he wrote to his family, "to-morrow I cross the seas." He crossed the Boulevards and encountered Prince Valentin Radziwill.

This Radziwill family seems to have had a special influence on the life of Chopin. What beautiful analogies one could draw in comparing this encounter with those where some pope, king, lord or Fermier-général changed in one instant the fortunes of an artist apparently condemned to the abortion of his genius. It seems that there are between art and opulence secret and unconscious fructifications. François I never seemed to us more inspired than in paying the debts of Clément Marot or in welcoming Leonardo da Vinci on the terrace of Amboise, nor Jules II more sympathetic than when climbing the scaffoldings of Michelangelo. Never did Elizabeth of England seem more intelligent than in ordering *The Merry Wives of Windsor* from the pen of Shakespeare, and Fouquet,

Treasurer-General, is remembered only because he subsidized La Fontaine. Had they dictated their biographies themselves it is doubtful if these great princes would have mentioned such trivial gestures. In the same way, this Radziwill hardly imagined that he was adding a line of merit to his life when, meeting on the Boulevards a pitiful compatriot, he proposed to take him that very evening to see Baron de Rothschild. It is, however, from that casual proposal that the glory of Chopin dates.

Baron de Rothschild received the most exclusive society. They asked Chopin to play and he acceded with good grace. In a moment he captured the elegant world and on the morrow was bombarded with invitations and requests for lessons. The Maréchale Lannes, Princess de Vaudemont, Count Apponyi, and Prince Adam Czartoryski made themselves his protectors. The lessons he gave cost no less than twenty francs an hour. He changed his lodgings twice and finally installed himself at No. 5 on the Chaussée d'Antin. Here and there they began to talk of this poet who, in the evening, in the rare salons where he would consent to play, would people the darkness with a con-

clave of fairies. He called it "telling little musical stories." They were tales of infinite variety, since it was above all in improvising that he showed his boldness. The incompleteness of his sketches opened the avenues of the imagination wherein the spirit lost itself. Chopin possessed to a high degree this power of suggestion, the most precious gift of an artist. He talked to himself, did not finish, and left to his hearers the pleasure of having clothed with notes for an instant forms and feelings which then evaporated into nothingness. "Divine playfulness," said Berlioz in hearing them. "A cloud of love, winter roses," said Liszt. "By the wonderful gate," he added, "Chopin leads you into a world where everything is a delightful miracle, a mad surprise, a miracle come true. But you must be initiated to know how to cross the threshold." And Frederick confided once to his friend Franz:

"I am not at all the person to give concerts. The crowd intimidates me; I feel asphyxiated by their breaths, paralyzed by their curious stares, mute before these strange faces. But you, you are destined for it, because when you

don't win your public, you know how to knock them dead."

Chopin himself would not have had the strength. He only sought to win them. Furthermore, was it really this that he wanted? The public mattered so little to him. It was his own sorrow that he chanted and enchanted. He did not like to express himself through others and, Bach, Beethoven and Mozart aside, he interpreted only himself.

For Chopin, as later for Wagner, the superfluous was the only necessity. The money that was now coming in was spent in poetic pleasures; a smart cabriolet, beautifully cut clothes, white gloves, expensive suppers. He took great pains with the furnishing of his apartment, putting in crystal lusters, rugs, silver, and he wanted to be supplied with flowers in all seasons. When his new friends came . . . Countess Delphine Potoçka, Princess Marceline Radziwill, Mlle. O'Meara, Princess de Beauvau, the rule was that they should bring a rose or an orchid that the artist would put in a vase and endlessly contemplate, as a Japanese might become exalted by a unique print.

Happy years, working years. Chopin put be-

hind him a solid portion of his work. In 1833 he published five *Mazurkas*, the *Trio* for piano, violin and violoncello, three *Nocturnes*, the twelve great *Etudes* dedicated to Liszt, the *Concerto in E minor*, and in 1834 the *Grand Fantasy* on Polish airs, the *Krakoviak* for piano and orchestra, three more *Nocturnes*, the *Rondeau in E flat major* dedicated to Caroline Hartmann, four new *Mazurkas*, and the *Grand Waltz in E flat major*. His works were played by the greatest of the virtuosi at many concerts: Liszt, Moschelés, Field, Kalkbrenner and Clara Wieck. Liszt said of him: "A sick-room talent," and Auber: "All his life he slays himself." Because Chopin, in spite of his success, was still suffering from nostalgia, and one day when his friend and pupil Gutman was playing the third *Etude*, in E major, Chopin, who said he had never written a lovelier melody, cried suddenly, "Oh, my country!" Truly, for this young man of twenty-four, the mother country was always the strongest passion. He gave a Dantesque sadness to this name of Poland, more powerful on his heart than the call of a mistress. The evil must have been deep indeed for Orlowski, in writing to his people, to

take note of it as of a tubercular illness. "Chopin is well and vigorous," he says. "He turns all the women's heads. The men are jealous. He is the fashion. Doubtless we shall soon be wearing gloves *à la Chopin*. But homesickness is burning him up." It was only that Poland remained the living spring, the reflection of his dreams and his sentiments, the only effective rhythm,—in sum, the dynamo of his energies. Inspiration is chance caught on the wing. But art is not found hidden like the dove in the magician's hat. Perhaps it is only perfect knowledge of self, the true perception of one's own limitations, and the modulations that life brings to the fine enthusiasms of youth. The Marquis de Custine wrote to Chopin: "When I listen to you I always think myself alone with you, and even perhaps with greater than you! or certainly with all that is greatest in you."

In the spring of '34 Chopin and his friend Hiller went together to the Festival of Music at Aix-la-Chappelle. There they encountered Mendelssohn, who took a liking to the Pole and never tired of listening to him play. He called him the first among pianists and always

reproached him, as well as Hiller, for the Parisian habit of posing as a melancholic. "I look like a school master," he said, "while they resemble dandies and beaux."

They returned by Dusseldorf and Cologne to Paris, where Chopin had the pleasure of seeing and entertaining his friend Matuszynski, who had just been made professor at the Ecole de Medécine. This was a period of the greatest serenity because to his quiet fame Chopin could add the joy of daily companionship with one of his "brothers." He exerted himself, entertained guests, played in public more than he usually did. On the 7th of December, at the Théâtre Italien, he appeared at a concert organized by Berlioz in honor of Henrietta Smithson, the English actress he had just married. On Christmas day, at the Salle Pleyel, he played, with Liszt at the other piano, a duet by Liszt on a theme of Mendelssohn. On the 15th of February he took part in a concert at the Salle Erard, and on April 4th he played for the benefit of the Polish refugees. Berlioz wrote in the *Rénovateur*, "Chopin, as a player and as a composer, is an artist apart. He has no point of resemblance to any other musician I

know. Unhappily there is no one but Chopin himself who can play his music and give it his original turn, that impromptu that is one of its principal charms; his execution is veined with a thousand nuances of movement of which he alone has the secret, and which cannot be indicated . . . The detail in his mazurkas is unbelievable; then he has found a way to make them doubly interesting in playing them to the final degree of softness, with superlative *piano*, the hammers touching the strings so lightly that one is tempted to bend the ear over the instrument as one might at a concert of sylphs and pixies."

But the crowd always awards the palms to brilliance, and Chopin, believing that it had not given his *Concerto in E minor* the reception he expected, declared that he was neither understood nor made for concerts, and decided to abstain from appearing in public for a long time.

Nevertheless, he played once more in public, the 26th of April, 1835, at the Conservatory. This was the only time he ever appeared in that famous hall. He played his *Polonaise brillante*, preceded by an *Andante Spianato*.

He found compensation for these slight professional disappointments in the friendship of Bellini, the Italian towards whom he was drawn by a quick sympathy. He was further distracted by an interest in a celebrated beauty, Countess Delphine Potoçka.

She was twenty-five, of regal bearing, with a nose delicate of contour, a most passionate mouth, the high and pensive forehead of the true voluptuary. Her whole appearance evoked a subtle and puissant goddess, but whatever luxuriance she had was cooled by the severity of her glance.

Miçkiewicz said that she was "the greatest of all sinners," and Krasinski apostrophized her in a poem as Mephistopheles: "O thou, stay, because thou art true beauty." Chopin let himself float in the sensual *rayonnement* of this beautiful animal of love. For the first time his head was turned. The sumptuous voice of Delphine enchanted him. He accompanied her at the piano, strove to make her soul to be born again, to give it back its flower, watched for possible beautiful vibrations, but the soul was the servant of this imperial flesh. Once or twice, however, she seemed to come out of

her lethargy, to extend herself on an admirable note that sprang from the depths of her unconscious self, but immediately after, the shrieks, the laughter, the exigencies of this ravishing hysteric extinguished these gleams. And as the platonic love towards which Chopin wanted to direct her seemed to Delphine both comic and impossible, she gave herself before he had ever dreamed of asking her.

The adventure was of short duration. The countess had other lovers, and her husband, jealous, cut off her allowance, which obliged this lady of prodigal manners to make a prompt departure for Poland. But she retained a lasting affection for Chopin. The only lines from her to the artist that have been uncovered furnish discreet witness to the fact:

"I shall not annoy you with a long letter, but I do not want to remain longer without news of your health and your plans for the future. I am sad to think of you abandoned and alone . . . Here my time is passed in an annoying fashion and I hope not to have still more disagreements. But I am disgusted. Every one for whom I have done anything has repaid me with ingratitude. In the end, life is one long

dissonance. God bless you, dear Chopin. Good-by."

"One long dissonance," so had Liszt already spoken. There was in these tormented bodies an invincible straining towards the suavest harmonies. At least in these beings—male or female—in whom the feminine predominates. But this is not the case of Chopin, whose musical travail was always virile. He would have subscribed to the words of Beethoven: "Emotion is good only for women; for the man, music must draw the fire of his spirit." And even more, perhaps, to those quoted by Schumann from the German poet Johann-Paul Richter: "Love and friendship pass through this earth veiled and with closed lips. No human being can say to another how he loves; he knows only that he does love. The inner man has no tongue; he is mute."

CHAPTER VIII

MARIE WODZINSKA AND THE DUSK

IN the summer of 1835 Chopin learned that his parents were going to Carlsbad to take the cure and he decided on the spot to get there first. The sentiments that bound him to his own people remained the most vital that he knew. So he left, his heart melting with tenderness. When he saw them, after five years of separation, he wrote to his sisters, who had remained at Warsaw, with such transports that one might have thought him a happy lover.

"Our joy is indescribable. We do nothing but embrace one another . . . is there any greater happiness? What a pity we are not all together! How good God is to us! I am writing without any order; to-day it is better to think of nothing at all, to rejoice in the happiness we have attained. That is all I have to-day. Our parents have not changed; they are just the same; they have only grown a little older. We walk together, holding the arm of

our sweet little mother . . . We drink, we eat together. We tease and abuse each other. I am simply overflowing with happiness. These are the same habits, the same movements with which I grew up; it is the same hand that I have not kissed for so long . . . And here it has come true, this happiness, this happiness, this happiness!"

For their part the father and mother found their son not changed a bit. It was joy inexhaustible, but brief, and like a preface to still more profound emotions. Because Frederick was invited to Dresden, to his friends the Wodzinskis, and he already felt those annunciatory quiverings, that exquisite fear, those physiological presentiments which notify our inner beings of the imminent conception of love.

In his father's boarding school Chopin had had as comrades the three Wodzinski brothers, and since his childhood he had known their younger sister Marie. This great land-owning family had moved to Geneva for the education of the children and had remained there during the years of the Polish Revolution. They had lived at first in a house in the Place St.-Antoine, and later in a villa on the shore of the

lake, and they had not been long in grouping about them the flower of Genevese society and of the foreign colony. One found intimately at home in their drawing rooms Bonstetten, Sismondi, Mlle. Salandin de Crans, Prince Louis Napoleon, the future Napoleon III, and Queen Hortense.

Marie was nineteen years old. The trace of Italian blood which flowed in her veins (through the Orsettis, who had come from Milan with Bona Sforza, the fiancée of one of the last kings of the dynasty of Jagellons), this trace had made her dark haired, alive, with great black eyes and a thick mouth whose smile, a poet said, was passion incarnate. Some called her ugly, others ravishing. This means that in her face, half Slav, half Florentine, everything derived from the expression. "The brunette daughter of Euterpe," said Prince Napoleon, who liked to listen to her play the piano while he smoked his cigar in the Place St.-Antoine. For Marie practiced all sorts of minor talents; piano, singing, composing, embroidery, painting, without the will or the ability to fix her preference. What she practiced that was most pertinent, was her charm, the

profound reaction, possibly unconscious, of a rich personality. Ever since her fourteenth year she had been passionately loved. She willingly used her power over men, troubling them with coquetry. Her imagination was rapid her memory precise.

Such was the childhood companion that Chopin was to meet again at Dresden, where the Wodzinski family were settled for a time. Frederick was more curious than moved at seeing her again. He even wondered if it were not simply a matter of musical interest, Marie having at one time been one of his small pupils. She still occasionally sent him some of her compositions. Had he not only a few weeks before replied to one of these communications by sending her in turn a page of his own music? "Having had to improvise in a drawing room here the very evening that I received it, I took for a subject the lovely theme of a Marie with whom, years ago, I used to play hide-and-seek . . . To-day I take the liberty of offering to my honorable colleague, Mlle. Marie, a little waltz I have just written. May she find in it a hundredth part of the pleasure I derived from playing her *Variations*."

So he arrived at Dresden. He saw her once again. He was won. He loved her. This town that he had already visited twice seemed quite fresh and altogether enchanting. In the mornings Marie and Frederick went out together, filled with delicious melancholy. They walked along the terrace of Bruhl and watched the flow of the Elbe, sat under the chestnuts of the Grossgarten, or lingered in ecstasy in the Zwinger Museum before Raphaël's Madonna.

Together they paid a call on that Grand Mistress of the Court who had a few years before taken such pride in producing Chopin for Their Saxon Majesties. In the evening the family visited one of Marie's uncles, Palatin Wodzinski, who had presided at the last meeting of the Polish Senate before the fall of Warsaw. Exiled, having seen the greater part of his wealth confiscated, the old man was at present living at Dresden, the second capital of his ancient kings, surrounded by his prints, his books and his medals. He was an aristocratic little man with a smooth face and a white wig. In his day he had soldiered, had received Napoleon at Wilna, and had been taken prisoner at Leipzig, at the side of the dying

Poniatowski. His gravest fault was that he did not like music, and now that it took up all of his evenings, he spent his time observing, with a gleam of humor, his little niece turning her shining eyes on this maker of mazurkas. He still further disapproved of certain sighs and whisperings that came from a corner of the room where this inseparable couple isolated themselves under the very nose of the whole world. Then he coughed loudly, adjusted his toupee, and addressed his sister-in-law.

"An artist, a little artist without a future . . . Ah! that is not what I have dreamt for your daughter."

"Two children," replied the Countess, laughing. "An old friendship."

"You know where it leads . . ."

"But he is a child of the house, just as Antoine, Felix and Casimir were Professor Chopin's children. Why sadden the poor boy? He is so tender, so obliging."

And Frederick continued his love duets at the piano or on the terrace, in spite of the Palatin's fierce eyebrows and under the mother's indulgent eyes. A whole month slipped by in these passionate novelties. Then there came a

time to think of leaving. One September morning he went up for the last time to the salon where the girl waited for him. There was a bouquet of roses on the table. She took one and gave it to him. The hour of ten struck from the clock on the Frauenkirche. Chopin stood frozen before her, pale, his eyes fixed. Perhaps he was thinking of that little taste of death that parting always is, whatever it promises for the future. Or was he listening to the melodic rhythm of his pain? In any case the only expression of sorrow that welled to the surface was the theme of a waltz. He sat down at the piano, played it, hiding in it all the cries of his loneliness.

Later, Marie called it *La Valse de l'Adieu*. It is worth noting that Chopin, restrained by an insurmountable pride, never published it. He did write it out, however, recopied it, and gave it to his friend that last day with the very simple dedication: "For Mlle. Marie, Dresden, September, 1835." Fontana published it after the death of the composer (Posthumous Works, op. 69, no. 1, *Waltz in A flat major*). One tries to catch in it "the murmur of two lovers' voices, the repeated strokes of the clock, and

the rumble of wheels scorching the pavement, the noise of which covers that of repressed sobs." It is possible, after all, in spite of Schumann and his mute tongue. Whatever it was, Chopin kept the flower Marie gave him. We shall find it later, placed in marked envelope by him for whom sorrow and the ideal have always the scent of an autumn rose.

On his return, Chopin stopped at Leipzig, where he again saw Mendelssohn, who took him straight to Wieck, the father, Clara Wieck, the daughter, and Robert Schumann. The small house of the Wieck's that day sheltered the three greatest composers of the age.

After his arrival in Paris, Chopin closeted himself at home in order to live in close relationship with the loved face that now bloomed in his desert. He wrote. He received letters. These were, on both sides, a little flat because neither of them knew how to talk except through music. But what of it? A lover's pen is not necessarily literary nor abounding in sentiments. There are even those who, in their exigency, scorn the worn vocabulary of love. To the novices and the pure, the palest nuances

are enough to show the naked heart. Listen with Chopin's delicate ear to the gossamer letter of Marie Wodzinska:

"Though you do not like either to receive or to write letters, I nevertheless want to profit by the departure of M. Cichowski to send you news of Dresden since you left. So I am annoying you again, but no longer by my playing. Saturday, when you had gone, all of us went about sadly, with our eyes full of tears, in the room where only a few minutes before we had still had you with us. Father came in presently and was so sorry not to have been able to say good-by. Every minute or so Mother, in tears, would speak of some traits 'of her fourth son Frederick,' as she called you. Felix had a broken expression: Casimir tried to joke as usual but was not successful that day as he played the clown, half crying. Father teased us and laughed himself only to keep from crying. At eleven the singing master arrived; the lesson went very badly, we could not sing. You were the subject of all conversation. Felix keeps asking me for the *Waltz* (the last thing of yours we had received and heard). All of us

found pleasure in it, they in listening and I in playing, because it reminded us of the brother who had just left us. I took it to be bound; the German's eyes popped when he saw a single page (he did not know who had written it). No one to dinner; we kept staring at your place at the table, then too at 'Fritz's little corner.' The small chair is still in place and probably will be as long as we keep this apartment. In the evening we were taken to my aunt's to spare us the sadness of this first evening without you. Father came to fetch us saying that it was as impossible for him as it had been for us, to stay in the house that day. We experienced a great relief in leaving the spot that kept renewing our sorrow. Mother only talked to me of you and of Antoine. When my brother goes to Paris, think a little of him, I beg you. If you only knew what a devoted friend you have in him,—a friend such as one rarely finds. Antoine is good hearted, too much so, because he is always the dupe of others. And he is very careless; he never thinks of anything, or rarely, at least . . . When by some miracle you have an impulse to write: 'How are you? I am well. I have no time to write further,' add, I beg,

yes or *no* to the question I want to ask you: Did you compose '*If I were a little sun up there, for none but you would I want to shine*'? I received this a day or so ago and I have not the courage to sing it, because I fear, if it is yours, that it would be altogether changed, like *Wojak*, for instance. We continually regret that you are not named *Chopinski*, or at least that there is not some indication to show that you are Polish, because then the French would not be able to dispute with us the honor of being your compatriots. But this is too long. Your time is so precious that it is really a crime to make you spend it reading my scribbling. Besides, I know you will not read the whole thing. Little Marie's letter will be stuck away in a corner after you have read a few lines. So I need not reproach myself further about stealing your time.

"Good-by (simply). A childhood friend needs no fine phrases. Mother embraces you tenderly. Father and my brother embrace you sincerely (no, that is too little) fervently . . . I do not know how to say it myself. Josephine, not having been able to say good-by, asks me to express her regrets. I asked Thérèse: 'What

shall I say to Frederick for you?' She answered: 'to embrace him and give him my regards.'

"Good-by,

"MARIA."

"P.S. When you started out you left the pencil of your portfolio on the piano. This must have been inconvenient on the way; as for us, we are keeping it respectfully as a relic. Once again, thank you kindly for the little vase. Mlle. Wozinska came in this morning with a great discovery. 'Sister Maria, I know how they say Chopin in Polish,—Chopena!' "

Frederick replied, sent his music, and above all, composed. The year 1836 opened under the sign of Marie. He published the *Concerto in F minor* and the *Grande Polonaise* for piano and orchestra. He wrote the *Ballade in G minor*, which is the monument to his love.

It is not deliberately that an artist discovers and then fashions the residue of his amorous experiences. He receives his joys and sufferings within himself and leaves them to ferment. It is only after the rude labor of his conflicts with himself, after the corrosion of each of his

illusions, by the salt of his tears, that the costly fruit of which he bears the germ can be born. From this obscure chemistry, from the disillusionment which Marie's letters, little by little, brought to him, came the *Ballade in G minor* (op. 23) which Schumann called one of the most bitter and personal of Chopin's works. He might have added, the saddest, and thus the most passionate, for there is no passion without pain. Here we see passion itself crucified, and hear its cries.

How powerful is the instinct of the poet to submit his pain to the form of narrative, like a heroic tale! For in theory the ballad is a song with accompaniment. Into this form of legend he transfused the ancient ills of man, which had become for a second time his own. It is in this way, by what it tells us of him, involuntarily, that the *Ballade in G minor*, irresistible in its unique and unhappy sentiment, retains an accent that flatters us. It convinces us that we also are marked by the sign of love.

Schumann, who saw him again that summer at Leipzig, tells of the magical hours they spent together at the piano. To listen to the dreamer was to become oneself a part of the dream. But

nothing could be more exasperating than Chopin's habit of drawing his finger rapidly from one end of the keyboard to the other at the end of each piece, as though to break the dream he had created.

A curious detail: in the original edition of the *Ballade*, there appears in the last measure of the introduction a *D*, evidently written with an *E* and corrected later. Saint-Saëns writes on this subject: "This supposed *E* gives a dolorous accent which is quite in keeping with the character of the piece. Was it a misprint? Was it the original intention of the author? This note marks a dissonant accent, an effect of surprise. But dissonances, sought out today like truffles, were then distrusted. From Liszt, whom I questioned on the subject, I could obtain only this reply: 'I prefer the *E flat*. . . .' I concluded from this evasive response that Chopin, in playing the ballad, sounded the *D;* but I am still convinced that the *E flat* was his original idea and that cowardly and clumsy friends persuaded him to the D."

I reproduce this detail for the lovers of sources, for those who like to surprise in the

heart not the most perfect tones, but the most true. They will understand the distinction.

Thus Chopin worked, economized, and prepared another meeting with Marie. He refused an invitation from Mendelssohn, who wanted to get him to Düsseldorf for a music festival. He refused Schumann, although he had signed his invitation "with love and adoration." He reserved all his forces for a trip to Marienbad, which he finally took in the month of July, 1836.

On a radiant summer morning Chopin arrived before the wooded hills of the little Austrian watering place where his loved one awaited him. The effect was so powerful that he closed his eyes as from a shock of pain. In that instant, even before seeing her, he had the presentiment of touching the peak of his joy. He knew the unreasonable agony advanced by false joys, finished, experienced, emptied, almost before they had begun to exist. However, Marie's agitated face steadied him and gave him back his confidence. But a shade of uneasiness, a manner of Marie's and her moth-

er's, a little more ceremonious than that of the previous year, left him anxious.

Nevertheless, they resumed the intimate family life which he loved. The impression of shadows was dissipated. There were walks through this agreeable country, musical séances, evening conversations, stories of his Paris life, memories. Frederick shone with his talent for mimicry. He imitated famous artists, assaulted the keys with a great waving of arms and hands, went, as he said, "pigeon shooting." The Wodzinskis lived in a villa. In their garden spread a tall linden. During the hot hours of the afternoon Marie and Frederick took refuge in its shade and the girl sketched in charcoal the ever slightly grave features of this friend who was at once so childlike and so mature.

On August 24th they all returned to the beloved town of Dresden. There they spent two more weeks. Two weeks which were to lead fatally to the crisis. At dusk on the 7th of September, two days before Chopin's departure, he asked Marie to be his wife. She accepted. That is all we know, except that the Countess also gave her consent but imposed the condition

of secrecy. They were obliged to hide the decision from the father, whom they would without doubt persuade, but whose family pride made a rapid consent improbable. In addition, he thought Chopin in delicate health. Frederick departed, carrying with him his hopes and his fear. He knew that the presentiment of Marienbad had not deceived him, and already he had lost his faith in happiness.

However the Wodzinkis wrote to him,—especially the Countess. Marie added little postscripts.

"14 Sept. '36.

"Dear Frederick:

"As we agreed I am sending you a letter . . . I should have sent it two days ago except that I had a tooth which had to be extracted and from which I suffered greatly. I cannot regret enough that you should have left Saturday; I was ill that day and could not put my mind on *the dusk*. We spoke of it too little.

"The next day I should have been able to talk of it further. M. de Girardin says: 'Tomorrow is always a great day.' We have it still ahead of us. Do not think I retract what I said,—no. But we must discuss the path to

follow. I only ask you to keep the secret. Keep well, because everything depends on that . . . On October 15th I shall be at Warsaw. I shall see your parents and your sisters; I shall tell them that you are well and in excellent spirits: however, I shall say nothing of *the dusk*. . . . Good-by, go to bed at eleven o'clock and until January 7th drink *eau de gomme*. Good health, dear Fritz: I bless you with all my soul, like a loving mother.

"P.S. Marie sends you some slippers. They are a little big, but she says you are to wear woolen stockings. This is the judgment of Paris and I trust you will be obedient; haven't you promised? Anyway, remember that this is a period of probation."

The dusk, it was so, among themselves, that they called Chopin's love. No chance name was ever truer.

To a letter which her brother Casimir sent off the next day, Marie added these lines: "None of us can be consoled for your departure; the three days that have just passed have seemed like centuries; have they to you? Do you miss your friends a little? Yes,—I answer

for you, and I do not think I am mistaken; at least I need to believe not. I tell myself that this *yes* comes from you (because you would have said it, wouldn't you?).

"The slippers are finished; I am sending them to you. I am chagrined that they should be too large, in spite of the fact that I gave your shoe as a measure, *carissimo mæstro*, but the man is a common German. Dr. Paris consoles me by saying this is good for you as you should wear warm woolen stockings this winter.

"Mamma has had a tooth pulled, which has made her very weak. She has had to stay in bed ever since. In two weeks we leave for Poland. I shall see your family, which will be a joy for me, and that sweet Louise,—will she remember me? Good-by, *mio carissimo mæstro*. Do not forget Dresden for the present, or in a little while Poland. Good-by, *au revoir*. Ah, if it could be soon!

"MARIA.

"Casimir says that the Sluzewo piano is in such ramshackle condition that it cannot be used. So think about a Pleyel. In the happy days, not like to-day (as far as we are concerned), I hope to hear you play on the same

piano. *Au revoir, au revoir, au revoir!* That gives me hope."

That is the most passionate letter Chopin ever received from Marie Wodzinska. In October another letter from the Countess, another postscript from Marie.

"October 2nd—Dusk.

"Thank you ever so much for the autographs. Will you please send some more? (Mamma makes me write this.) Now we are leaving at once for Warsaw. How I shall rejoice to see all your family and next year *you!* . . . Good-by, till *May*, or *June* at the latest. I recommend to your memory your very faithful secretary. "MARIA."

In January, 1837, Countess Wodzinska was disturbed about a Pleyel piano Chopin had sent her. She thanked him for a new supply of autographs and adds this slightly ambiguous sentence at the end of her letter: "From now on we must inform ourselves still more prudently about our loved one." Marie put in her postscript, her extra task, one would like to say.

"Mother has been scolding. I thank you so

much,—so much. And when we see each other again I shall thank you even more kindly. You can see how lazy I am about writing because to put off my thanks till our next meeting spares me many words to-day. Mamma has described to you our way of life. There is nothing left for me to say, except that it is thawing; which is great news, isn't it? This tranquil life we lead here is good for us, so I like it,—for the present, I mean, because I should not like it to be always so. One takes what comes with as good grace as possible, when things cannot be different from what they are. I occupy myself a little to kill time. Just now I have Heine's *Germany*, which interests me enormously.

"But I must stop and leave you to God's grace. I hope I do not need to repeat to you the assurance of the sentiments of your faithful secretary.

"MARIA."

This time Chopin discovered in the colorless words not the least gleam of *the dusk*. The night had completely fallen. He took down the album Marie had given him the year before to write in it a page of music. For a

year the pages had remained virgin. Chopin said: "I could not have written anything at all in it, not if I had tried a hundred years."

Now he could fill it, because he realized that Marie's love was dead. So he wrote on the first page a *Lento con gran expressione* and eight other melodies to the words of Witwicki and Miçkiewicz. Soon after, he received in reply this letter, the last.

"*For Frederick Chopin*

"I can only write you a few words to thank you for the lovely notebook you sent. I shall not try to tell you with what pleasure I received it, as it would be in vain. Accept, I beg you, the assurance of the gratitude I owe you. Believe in the life-long attachment of our whole family for you and particularly of your naughtiest pupil and childhood friend. Good-by. Mamma sends her dearest love. Thérèse is always talking of her 'Chopena.'

"Good-by,—think of us,

"MARIA."

It is hard to say whether she lacked heart or intelligence. But,—it is not in the least im-

portant. Love is not the lot of all girls. No more than is happiness made for difficult souls. "Perhaps we are worth more than happiness," said Liszt to Mme. d'Agoult.

Chopin accepted the breaking of his engagement in silence. But neither his heart nor his body recovered, ever. His friend Camille Pleyel took him to London for a few days, to distract him. There he was very ill. His latent tuberculosis seems to have begun its ravages at that time.

The Marquis de Custine wrote him: "You have gained in sympathy, in poetry; the melancholy of your compositions goes deeper into the heart than ever before. One is alone with you even in the midst of the crowd. It is not a piano, it is a soul . . ."

Chopin gathered the notes of Marie Wodzinska and placed them, with the rose of Dresden, in an envelope on which he wrote these two Polish words: "*Moïa Biéda*," my pain. They found this poor packet, after his death, tied with a loving ribbon.

CHAPTER IX

FIRST SKETCH OF GEORGE SAND

SOME six years before this romance in such few words, we glimpsed the face of a woman bending over her paper watching her enthusiastic hand pen these words: "To live, how sweet! How good it is, in spite of disappointments, husbands, in spite of bitter grief. To live,—how intoxicating! To love, to be loved! That is happiness, that is Heaven!" During these six years neither this heart, nor this body, nor this hand had often slackened. To live, indeed, was the vital business of George Sand, short and dumpy, greedy, and so formidably endowed for all the extravagances of the spirit and the flesh. Nothing was too strong for this small woman, with her solid head and her solid body. And no one had bested her. In spite of her "bitter grief," her chagrin, for and against a boorish and rapacious husband, this great-granddaughter of the Maréchal de Saxe, this daughter of a daughter of the people had pretty well solved the double problem of the pain of

happiness that she had indicated for herself: love and fame. There is chance for suffering there, for exigent appetites. At twenty-seven, this provincial had fallen on Paris, written her first book and taken her first lover. At thirty she could have said, like her ancestor the Maréchal: "Life is a dream. Mine has been short, but it has been beautiful." Now, in her thirty-fourth year, this little pagan thought herself finished, and forever disgusted with pleasure. She had not yet learned that the malady of desire, once it has opened in a being its ever living wound, has but a feeble chance of healing. At least before the season of the great cold.

But, to this malady of desire, Aurore Dudevant added a taste for lengthy associations. Heart and head she was made for them,—and from them had contracted the habits of bed and of thought. Jules Sandeau had given her her pen name, her theories of "love free and divine," and her first adventure of love. The disillusionment that followed this trial plunged her into war against all yokes, even that of sentiment. Still, perhaps yoke is too heavy a word. Pressure is enough. To rid herself of memories, which are but rarely narcotic, she

chose an intelligent thaumaturgist, and from love, a marvelous antiseptic: Mérimée. She later confessed it in a curious letter: "On one of those days of trouble and despair I met a man of sublime self-confidence, a man who was calm and strong, who understood nothing of my nature and who laughed at my troubles. The vitality of his spirit completely fascinated me; for a week I thought he had the secret of happiness, that he would teach it to me, that his mocking apathy would cure me of my childish susceptibilities. I believed that he too had suffered and that he had triumphed over his natural feelings. I do not yet know if I was wrong, if this man has the strength of his greatness or of his poverty . . . At any rate, at the age of thirty I behaved as a girl of fifteen would not have done. The experience was a complete failure."

However, this woman, so smothered in words, sometimes found a phrase that plumbed the depths. She added a little farther on, in that same letter to Sainte-Beuve: "If Prosper Mérimée had understood me, he might perhaps have loved me, and if he had loved me he might have vanquished me, and if I had been

able to submit to a man I should have been saved, *because my liberty devours and kills me.*" Here is the real flaw in this gross temperament. It needed a master and sought it only among the weak. Her slight physiological inversion induced psychological aberrations from which sprang all the wrongs which this fine thinking animal committed against her own peace.

Thus, there was thenceforth in the life of George Sand an *absent being*. We can take those words to mean a kind of ideal lover, lord of her thought and slave of her flesh, this marvelous twin self who arouses our instincts but never satiates them, who invents our dearest pains and stirs up our devils, yet like an angel bears us up to the mystical union of souls. The difficulty is to find united in one being all the colors of our own neurosis. Each one joins the chase, nevertheless, giving each his own name to the pursuit. George Sand called it "the search for her truth." After all, why not? One might call truth the rhythm from which our engines derive the greatest potential power, whether this be for pleasure, for sorrow, for work, or for love. But we must do Sand this justice that next to her private ills the general

ill, "the suffering of the race, the view, the knowledge, the meditation of the destiny of man" impassioned her elastic soul, too. She often succeeded in forgetting herself for the understanding of others. She knew how to let her intelligence ripen, to give maturity to her thoughts. Yet in spite of the part she took in the idealistic battles of the century, in spite of the intellectual influence which at an early age she exerted on the minds of her time, this woman's profound lament was that of her *Lélia*: "For ten thousand years I have cried into the infinite,—'Truth, truth!' For ten thousand years the infinite has answered,—'Desire, desire!'"

But here is this *désenchantée*, after her period of despair in 1833, suddenly writing: "I think I have blasphemed Nature, and God perhaps, in *Lélia;* God, who is not wicked though he may wreak vengeance upon us, has sealed my mouth by giving me back my youthful heart and by forcing me to admit that he has endowed us with sublime joys." She had just dined at the side of a fair young man of twenty-three, with arrogant eyes and no eyelashes, with a slender waist and beautiful, aris-

tocratic hands, who scoffed loudly at all social idealism and bent over to breathe in the women's ears: "I am not gentle, I am excessive." He scoffed both at the "laboring classes" and at the "ruling," at St.-Simon and at the Abbé de Lamennais. He even said: "I am more interested in the way Napoleon wore his boots than in all the politics of Europe." Women knew that his real interest was love.

He paid immediate attention to his already celebrated neighbor with the olive skin, who sent him a few days later the two volumes of her *Lélia* with these inscriptions: the first: "To *Monsieur mon gamin d'Alfred;*" the second "To Monsieur the Viscount Alfred de Musset, respectful regards from his devoted servant, George Sand."

We know to-day in all its details the story of this liaison and its magnificent expenditure of sorrows. We shall retain only certain crystals, the bitter dregs left in their hearts by the excesses of two fierce and consummate imaginations. It can be said that they devoured each other. Of different tastes, the one more brutal, more ravenous, less merciful; the other evil, maniacal, but savoring in little bites the mar-

row of their mutual suffering. "Contract your heart, big George," he said. And she: "I no longer want you, but I cannot do without you." They departed for Venice, where these two sadists took vengeance on each other for their double impotence. And they continued nevertheless to desire and adore each other in spite of their outworn senses and spent joys. They soon had nothing left but the taste of their tears. Finally, in the very middle of the crisis, each of the two lovers sought refuge according to his own temperament: George in work and Alfred in sickness. Then the savior appeared in the form of a handsome Venetian doctor on whom, at the very bedside of the delirious poet, fell the brunt of the reillumined desires of the other victim. No more pity, when the beast is once more at large. And no more despair, when the dry scales fall from the old love to leave naked a new body that melts to softness at the first touch of unfamiliar lips.

Musset departed. The three of them cultivated a curious relationship. The following summer George wrote to Alfred: "Oh! that night of rapture, when, in spite of ourselves, you joined our hands and said: 'You love each

other and still you love me; you have saved me body and soul!' " And for his part Musset cried: "Poor George, poor dear child! You thought yourself my mistress,—you were only my mother. . . ." There the word is spoken. A little while ago, this physiological inversion we mentioned might have assumed another form. But the *mot juste* is really that of mother. Because Sand was above all maternal, protective, the mistress *genetrix*. She needed possessions that centered around childbirth. A few months later on, when everything was over between them, the shrieks she issued in her *Journal Intime* over this badly quenched love were again those of a mother deprived of her suckling. "I love you! I submit to every torture to be loved by you and you leave me! Ah! poor man, you are mad . . . It is your pride that leads you . . . Oh, my poor children, how unhappy your mother is! . . . I want to surround myself with pure and distinguished men. Away with the strong; I want to see the artists: Liszt, Delacroix, Berlioz, Meyerbeer. I shall be a man among them and we shall gossip and talk. Alfred shall hear our bad jokes . . . Alas, if I only had him to-

day! What haste I am in to see him again! If I had only a few lines from you once in a while, just a word, permission to send you sometimes a little four-penny picture bought on the *quai*, cigarettes I made myself, a bird, a toy . . . Oh, my blue eyes, you no longer see me! Lovely head, I shall never see you bend over me again, or wrap you in sweet languor. My little body, warm and supple, you will never stretch yourself out on it, as Elijah on the dead child, to quicken it!" "Ah! who will care for you, and for whom shall I care?"

This was the punishment for loving a man who was without passion. The depth of her being, when she stirred it well, sent up always the same hope: "I need to suffer for some one. I must nourish this maternal solicitude, which is accustomed to guard over a tired sufferer."

An effusion for a kind of tribune of the people intervened to heal the still live sore: she thought herself in love with Everard, he whom his contemporaries called Michel de Bourges. She rendered him the virginity of her intelligence. A cold love. The love of a slave who admires a handsome captain and a just legislator. But no giving, no suffering, nothing to blast deep caves of passion into the soul. Be-

sides, Michel de Bourges was anti-artist. She wanted to avenge art with irony. "Berlioz is an artist," she wrote to the master of rhetoric. "Perhaps he is even criminal enough to think secretly that all the people in the world are not worth a rightly placed chromatic scale, just as I have the insolence to prefer a white hyacinth to the crown of France. But rest assured that one can have follies in one's head and not be an enemy of the human race. You are for sumptuary laws, Berlioz is for demi-semi-quavers, I am for liliaceous plants."

This lawyer was nevertheless jealous underneath his coldness. He was even tiresome. George Sand saw Liszt, found him handsome, and received him at Nohant with his mistress, Marie d'Agoult. Even while envying their still-young love she noted in her diary: "What fearful calm in my heart! Can the torch be extinguished?" It was not the torch that was dying but the burned out candle lighted by the philosopher for whom she had pretended to be the pen hand. But still the old stubborn idea reappeared: "My sweetest dream . . . is in imagining the care I might give you in your feeble old age." One important service she received from this man was the winning of

her action for divorce from Casimir Dudevant.

In the summer of 1836 she shook off the lover's chain and broke the hobble of a husband. She was free. On the spot she turned over her two children, Maurice and Solange, to a young tutor by the name of Pelletan, whom, to know him better, she put to the test by becoming his mistress. Then she left for Geneva to join Liszt and the Countess d'Agoult. She returned in the early autumn and settled for a time in Paris with this couple, who were beginning to tire of solitude. All three of them went to the Hôtel de France in the rue Laffitte. This sedate bourgeois tavern became a communal dwelling of artists. On the stairs one met Eugène Sue, Miçkiewicz, the singer Nourrit, the Abbé de Lamennais, Heinrich Heine. The musical gentlemen, with Liszt at the head, spoke of nothing but Chopin.

"Bring him to me," demanded George.

He came one evening with Hiller. Mr. Sand and Miss Chopin saw each other for the first time.

Returning home, Chopin said to his friend: "What an antipathetic woman that Sand is! Is she really a woman? I'm ready to doubt it."

CHAPTER X

LETTERS FROM TWO NOVELISTS

WHILE Frederick Chopin, in the year 1837, was living out the slow decomposition of his love, George Sand was back at her little Château de Nohant. There she spent long months alone, with her children and her work. The summer brought her the Liszt-d'Agoult menage, music in the evening, new dreams of happiness. Then her mother died unexpectedly and she was obliged to return to Paris, while the Countess and Franz took the road for Italy. She planned to rejoin them there, but was prevented by a sudden inclination for the new tutor of her children, Félicien Mallefille. The rupture with Michel de Bourges still bled feebly, but Sand felt that she had finally "slain the dragon" and that this attachment, more stubborn than she had dreamed, would be cured by a gentle affection, "less enthusiastic, but also less sharp," and which she hoped would last. She was deceiving herself. Six months were

sufficient to exhaust this spring to the bottom. Nevertheless she had pity on her rather vapid lover who never interested her physically. For several months more she carted him around with her baggage between Paris, Fontainebleau, and Nohant.

In January of 1838, the great Balzac stumbled one fine evening into this country seat and stayed for several days. The two novelists passed the nights in gossip and confidences. Balzac set down his still warm impressions for Countess Hanska: "I reached the Château de Nohant on Holy Saturday, about half past seven in the evening, and I found comrade George Sand in her dressing gown, smoking an after dinner cigar, in front of her fire in an immense empty room. She had lovely yellow slippers ornamented with fringe, bewitching stockings and red trousers. So much for her state of mind. As to physique, she had doubled her chin like a monk. She has not a single white hair in spite of her frightful misfortunes; her swarthy complexion has not changed; her lovely eyes are as brilliant as ever; she has the same stupid air when she is thinking, because, as I told her after studying

her, her whole countenance is in her eye. She has been at Nohant for a year, very sad and working prodigiously. She leads about the same life that I do. She goes to bed at six in the morning and gets up at noon; I go to bed at six in the evening and get up at midnight. Naturally, I conformed to her habits, and for three days we have gossiped from five o'clock in the evening, after dinner, till five in the morning. The result is that I know her, and she knows me, better after these three days than during the whole of the preceding four years, when she used to visit me while she was in love with Jules Sandeau and when she was attached to Musset . . . It is a good thing that I should have seen her, for we exchanged mutual confidences regarding Jules Sandeau . . . However, she was even more unhappy with Musset, and now there she is, in her deep retreat, raging at once against both marriage and love, because in each she has found only disenchantment.

"Her sort of men were few, that is all. The less agreeable she was the more this would be true; consequently, loving her could only be beset with difficulties. She is a bachelor, she is an

artist, she is big, generous, loyal, chaste; she has the features of a man. *Ergo*, she is not a woman. While I was near her, even in talking heart to heart for three days, I felt no more than before the itch of that gooseflesh of gallantry that in France and in Poland one is supposed to display for any kind of female.

"It was to a friend I was talking. She has high virtues, virtues that society regards askance. We discussed the great questions of marriage and of freedom with a seriousness, a good faith, a candor, a conscience worthy of the great shepherds who guide the herds of men.

"As she said, with immense pride (I should not have dared think of it myself), since by our writings we are preparing a revolution of the customs of the future, I am not less struck by the inconvenience of the one state than of the other.

"We spent the whole night talking of this great problem. I am absolutely in favor of liberty for the young girl and slavery for the woman, that is, I want her to know before marriage what she is undertaking, that she should have considered everything; then, when she has signed the contract, after having weighed the

chances, that she should be faithful to it. I gained a great point in making Mme. Dudevant realize the necessity of marriage; but she will come to believe in it, I am sure, and I feel that I have done good in proving it to her.

"She is an excellent mother, adored by her children; but she dresses her daughter Solange as a little boy, and that is not right.

"She is like a man of twenty, *morally*, because she is chaste, modest, and only an artist on the outside. She smokes inordinately, she plays the princess perhaps a little too much and I am convinced that she portrayed herself faithfully as the princess in *Le Secrétaire Intime*. She knew and said of herself, before I told her, just what I think; that it is true that she has neither power of conception, nor the gift of constructing plots, nor the ability to see the truth, nor the art of pathos; but that, without knowing the French language, she has *style*. She takes fame, as I do, lightly enough, and has a profound scorn for the public, whom she calls *Jumento*.

"I shall tell you of the immense and secret devotion of this woman for these two men and you will say to yourself that there is nothing

in common between the angels and the devils. All the follies she has committed are titles of glory in the eyes of great and beautiful souls. . . .

"Anyway, it is a man she would like to be, so much so that she has left her womanhood, and is no longer a woman. A woman attracts and she repels, and, since I am very masculine, if she produces that effect on me, she must produce it on men who are like me. She will be unhappy always. And so,—she is now in love with a man who is her inferior, and in that covenant there is only deceit and disillusionment for a woman with a beautiful spirit. A woman must always love a man greater than she, or she must be so blinded that it is the same as though he were.

"I have not come from Nohant unscathed. I carried away one enormous vice; she made me smoke a *hooka* with *Lattakieh;* it has suddenly become a necessity to me . . ."

Balzac's eye and ear were not mistaken in their diagnosis. Yet not even he could either fully see or fully hear what passed behind the windows of this being who was more complex

than he knew. This spring of 1838 germinated once again the strong dark violet of a new love.

George Sand had been to Paris several times. She had seen Chopin again. And the game of pleasure, of difficulties, of pains, was joined between them. Both Sand and Chopin had come through too many sufferings to turn the new page of their book with anything but distrust and uncertainty. But with Chopin it had all been buried in silence and his music alone had received his queries and his secret enthusiasms. We may consult the four mazurkas of op. 30 (C minor, G minor, D flat major, and C sharp major), the three *Valses Brillantes* of op. 34, and three other mazurkas (op. 34) dedicated to Mlle. la Contesse Mostowska.

As for George, the first hint of her new passion is found in a letter to her friend, Mme. Marliani, dated the 23rd of May, where she says: "Pretty dear, I have received your letters and have delayed replying *fully*, because you know how *changeable* the weather is in the season of love. There is so much *yes* and *no*, *if* and *but*, and often in the morning one says: *This is absolutely intolerable*, only to add in the evening: *Truly, it is supreme happiness.* So I

am holding off until I may tell you definitely that my barometer registers something, if not stable, at least set fair for any length of time at all. I have not the slightest reproach to make, but that is no reason to be happy. . . ."

Yet it was not to Mme. Marliani that she showed the singular and interesting fluctuations of her barometer, but to Count Albert Grzymala, a close friend of Chopin. But here is what she wrote him at the beginning of that summer:

"Nothing could ever make me doubt the loyalty of your advice, dear friend; may you never have such a fear either. I believe in your gospel without knowing or examining it, because once it has a disciple like you it must be the most sublime of all the gospels. Bless you for your advice, and be at peace about my thoughts. Let us state the question clearly, for the last time, for on your final reply on this subject will depend my whole future conduct, and since it had to come to this I am vexed at not having conquered the repugnance I felt at questioning you in Paris. It seemed to me that what I was to hear would blanch *my poem*. And, indeed,

now it has browned, or rather it is paling enormously. But what difference! Your gospel is mine when it prescribes thinking of oneself last and not thinking at all when the happiness of those we love claims all our strength. Listen to me well and reply clearly, categorically, definitely. This person whom he wants, or to whom he is obligated, or whom he feels he should love, is she the one to bring him happiness? Or would she heighten his suffering and his sadness? I do not ask if he loves her, if he is loved, if she is more or less to him than I. I know, by what is taking place in me, about what is happening to him. I want to know which of *us two* he must forget and forsake for his own peace, for his happiness, for his very life, which seems to me too precarious and frail to withstand great sorrows. I do not want to play the part of a bad angel. I am not Meyerbeer's Bertram and I shall never fight against a childhood friend, providing she is a pure and lovely Alice. If I had known that there was a bond in the life of your child, a sentiment in his soul, I should never have stooped to inhale a perfume meant for another altar. Nevertheless, he would without doubt have drawn back

from my first kiss had he known I was the same as married. We have neither of us deceived one another. We gave ourselves to the wind that passed and for a few minutes it carried us both into another land. But we had, none the less, to come back down here, after this celestial combustion and this flight through the empyreum. Poor birds, we have wings, but our nest is on the ground, and when the song of the angels calls us on high, the cries of our family recall us below. I, I have no wish to abandon myself to passion, although there is in the depths of my heart a fire that still occasionally threatens. My children give me the strength to break with anything that would draw me away from them, or from the manner of life that is best for their education, their health, their well-being. . . . Thus I am unable to fix myself at Paris because of Maurice's illness, etc. . . . etc. . . . Then there is an excellent soul, *perfect*, in regard to heart and honor, whom I shall never leave, because he is the only man who, having been with me for a year, has never once, *for one single minute*, made me suffer by his fault. He is also the only man who has ever given himself absolutely and entirely to

me, without regret for the past, without regard to the future. Then, he has such a good and wise nature that I can in time teach him to understand everything, to know everything. He is soft wax on which I have put my seal. When I want to change the imprint, with some precaution and patience I shall succeed. But it cannot be done to-day, and his happiness is sacred to me.

"So much for me. Tied as I am, bound fairly tightly for years to come, I cannot wish that our *child* should on his side break the bonds that hold him. If he should come to lay his existence in my hands I should be indeed dismayed because, having already accepted another, I could not offer him a substitute for what he had sacrificed for me. I believe that our love could last only under the conditions under which it was born, that is, that sometimes, when a good wind blows us together, we should again make a tour among the stars and then leave each other to plod upon the ground, because we are earth children and God has not decreed that we should finish out our pilgrimage together. We may meet among the heavens, and the fleet moments we shall pass there

shall be so beautiful that they shall outweigh all our lives below.

"So my task is set. But I can, without ever relinquishing it, accomplish it in two different ways; the one, to hold myself as aloof as possible from C[hopin], to try not to allow myself to be alone with him; the other, on the contrary, to draw as close to him as possible without compromising the position of M[allefille], to insinuate myself gently into his hours of rest and happiness, to hold him chastely in my arms sometimes, when the wind of heaven sees fit to raise us and transport us up to the skies. The first way will be the one I shall adopt if you tell me that the *person* is fit to give him a pure, true happiness, to care for him, to arrange, regularize, and calm his life, if, in fact, he could be happy through her and I should be an impediment. If his spirit *really*, perhaps madly, perhaps wisely scrupulous, refuses to love two different beings, in two different ways, if the eight days I might pass with him in a whole season should keep him from inner happiness for the rest of the year,—then, yes, then I swear to you that I should try to make him forget me. I should adopt the second way if

you should say this of the two things: either that his domestic happiness could and should do with a few hours of chaste passion and of sweet poetry, or that domestic happiness is not possible to him, and that marriage or any union that resembled it would be the grave of this artist soul, that he must at any cost be saved from it and even helped to conquer his religious scruples. This may possibly be where my conjectures end. You shall tell me if I am mistaken; I believe the person charming, worthy of every love and all respect, because such a being as he could love only the pure and the beautiful. But I believe that you dread his marriage, the daily bond, real life, business, domestic cares, everything detrimental to the inspiration of his muse. I too should fear it for him; but on this point I can say nothing and decide nothing, because there are many aspects with which I am not acquainted. I have seen only the side of his being that is warmed by the sun. You shall therefore settle my ideas on this point. It is of the very greatest importance that I should know his position, so that I can attune my own. If it were left to me I should arrange our poem so that I should

know nothing, absolutely nothing of his *positive* life, so that he should follow his own ideas, religious, social, poetic, artistic, without question from me, and *vice versa*, but that always, in whatever place or at whatever moment of our lives we might meet, our souls should be at their apogee of happiness and goodness. Because, I am sure, one is better when one loves with a heavenly love, and, far from committing a sin, one comes near to God, the fountain-head of this love. It is perhaps this, as a last resort, that you must try to make him thoroughly understand, my friend, and without opposing his ideas of duty, of devotion and of religious sacrifice, you may put his heart more at ease. What I fear above anything in the world, what would be most painful to me, what would make me decide even to make myself *dead for him*, would be to see myself become a horror and a remorse in his *soul*. I cannot (unless quite apart from me she should be tragic for him), fight against the image and memory of some one else. I have too much respect for decency for that, or rather it is the only decency I respect. I will steal no one from no one, except captives from jailers and victims from exe-

cutioners and, consequently Poland from Russia. Tell me if it is a *Russia* whose portrait haunts our child. Then I should ask heaven to lend me all the seductions of Armide to keep him from throwing himself away on her. But if it is a Poland, let him be. There is nothing like a native land and when you have one you must not take another. In this case, I shall be an *Italy* to him, an Italy which one goes to see and where one enjoys the days of spring, but where one does not stay, because there is more sun than there are beds and tables,—the *comforts of life* are elsewhere. Poor Italy! The whole world dreams of her, desires her, and sorrows for her, but no one may live with her because she is unhappy and cannot give the happiness which she has not. There is a final supposition that I must tell you. It might be possible that he no longer loves the childhood friend at all and that he would have a real repugnance to contract any alliance, but that the feeling of duty, the honor of a family . . . how should I know? . . . demands a vital sacrifice of himself. In that case, my friend, be his good angel. I, I could not possibly meddle in it, but you should. Keep him from too-

sharp attacks of conscience, save him from his own virtues, do not let him sacrifice himself, because in this sort of thing (I mean marriage or those unions that, without the same publicity, have the same strength and duration), in this sort of thing, I say, the sacrifice of him who gives his future is not in proportion to what he has received in the past. The past is something appreciable and limited; the future is infinite, because it is unknown. The being who, for a certain known sum of devotion, demands in return a whole lifetime of devotion, asks too much, and if he on whom the demand is made is hard pressed to defend his rights and satisfy at the same time both generosity and justice, it is the part of friendship to save him and to be the sole judge of his rights and his duties. Be firm in this regard and believe that I, who detest seducers, I, who always take the part of outraged and deceived women, I who am thought the spokesman of my sex and who flatter myself that I am; I, when it has been necessary, have on my authority as a sister or mother or friend broken more than one engagement of this kind. I have always condemned the woman when she has wanted to be

happy at the expense of the man; I have always absolved the man when more is demanded of him than it is given to freedom and human dignity to sacrifice. A pledge of love and faithfulness is criminal or cowardly when the mouth speaks what the heart disavows, and one may ask anything of a man save a crime or a cowardice. Except in that case, my friend, except in case he should want to make too great a sacrifice, I believe we must not oppose his ideas, nor violate his instincts. If his heart can, like mine, hold two quite different loves, one which might be called the *body* of life, the other the soul, it would be best, because our situation will dominate our feelings and thoughts. Just as one is not always sublime, neither is one always happy. We shall not see each other every day, we shall not cherish the sacred fire every day, but there will be beautiful days, and heavenly flames.

"Perhaps we should also think of telling him my position regarding M[allefille]. It is to be feared that, not knowing it, he might conjure up a kind of duty towards me which would irk him and come to oppose *the other* sadly. I leave you absolutely to judge and decide about

this confidence; you may make it if you think the moment opportune, or delay it if you feel that it would add to his too recent sufferings. Possibly you have already made it. I approve of and confirm anything and everything you have or may do.

"As to the question of possession or non-possession, that seems secondary to the question we are now discussing. It is, however, an important question in itself, it is the whole of life to a woman, her dearest secret, her most pondered philosophy, her most mysterious coquetry. As for me, I shall tell you quite simply, you, my brother and my friend, this great mystery, about which every one who mentions my name makes such curious observations. I have no secrets about it, no theory, no doctrine, no definite opinion, no prejudice, no pretense of power, no spiritual monkey business . . . in fact, nothing studied and no set habit, and (I believe) no false principles, either of license or of restraint. I have trusted largely to my instincts, which have always been worthy; sometimes I have been deceived in people, never in myself. I reproach myself for many stupidities, but for no platitudes or wickedness. I

hear many things said on the question of human morality, of shame and of social virtue. All that is still not clear to me. Nor have I ever reached a conclusion. Yet I am not unmindful of the question; I admit to you that the desire to fit any philosophy at all to my own sentiments has been the great preoccupation and the great pain of my life. My sentiments have always been stronger than reason, and the limits I have wanted to set for myself have ever been useless. I have changed my ideas twenty times. Above everything I have believed in fidelity. I have preached it, practiced it, demanded it. It has failed and so have I. And yet I have felt no remorse, because in my infidelities I have always submitted to a kind of fatality, an instinct for the ideal which pushed me into leaving the imperfect for what seemed to me to come nearer to the perfect. I have known many kinds of love. The love of the artist, the love of the woman, the love of the sister, the love of the mother, the nun's love, the poet's love,—I know not what. Some have been born and dead in me within the same day without being revealed to the person who inspired them. Some have martyred my life and

have hurled me into despair, almost into madness. Some have held me cloistered for years in an excessive spiritualism. All of it has been perfectly sincere. My being passed through these different phases as the sun, as Sainte-Beuve said, passes through the signs of the zodiac. To one who watched my progress superficially I would have seemed mad or hypocrite; to one who watched, reading me deeply, I seemed just what I am, a lover of beauty, greedy for truth, sensitive of heart, very weak of judgment, often absurd, always sincere, never small or vindictive, hot tempered enough, and, thank God, perfectly forgetful of evil things and evil people.

"That is my life, dear friend. You see it is not much. There is nothing to admire, much to regret, nothing for good souls to condemn. I am sure that those who have accused me of being bad have lied, and it would be easy to prove it if I wished to take the trouble to remember and recount it; but that bores me, and I have no more memory than I have rancor.

"Thus far I have been faithful to what I loved, absolutely faithful, in the sense that I have never deceived any one, and that I have

never been unfaithful without very strong reasons, which, by the fault of others, have killed the love in me. I am not inconstant by nature. On the contrary I am so accustomed to loving him who loves me, so difficult to inflame, so habituated to living with men without consciousness of being a woman, that really I have been a little confused and astonished by the effect produced on me by this little being. I have not yet recovered from my astonishment and if I had a great deal of pride I should be greatly humiliated to have fallen full into an infidelity of the heart, at the very moment when I believed myself forever calm and settled. I think this would be wrong; if I had been able to foresee, to reason, and combat this inroad; but I was suddenly attacked, and it is not in my nature to govern myself by reason when love possesses me. So I am not reproaching myself, but I realize that I am still very impressionable and weaker than I thought. That matters little; I have small vanity. This proves to me that I should have none at all and should never boast of anything, by way of valiance or strength. This makes me sad, for here is my beautiful sincerity, that I had practiced

for so long and of which I was a little proud, bruised and compromised. I shall be forced to lie like the others. I assure you that this is more mortifying to my self-respect than a bad novel or whistled music. It hurts me a little; this hurt is perhaps the remains of self-respect; perhaps it is a voice from above that cried to me that I must guard more carefully my eyes and my ears, and above all my heart. But if heaven wishes us to remain faithful to our earthly affections, why does it sometimes allow the angels to stray among us and meet us on our path?

"So the great question of love is raised again in me! Not love without fidelity, I said only two words ago, and certainly, alas, I did not feel the same tenderness for poor M[allefille] when I saw him again. Certainly since he went back to Paris (you must have seen him), instead of awaiting his return with impatience and being sad while he is away, I suffer less and breathe more freely. If I believed that a frequent sight of C[hopin] would increase this chill, I would feel a *duty* to refrain.

"Here is what I wanted to arrive at, to talk to you on this question of possession, which in

certain spirits constitutes the whole question of faithfulness. This is, I believe, a false idea; one can be more unfaithful or less, but when one has allowed one's soul to be invaded, and has granted the simplest caress, with a feeling of love, then the infidelity is already consummated, and the rest is less serious; because whoever has lost his lover's heart has lost everything. It would be better to lose the body and keep the soul intact. So, *in principle*, I do not believe a complete consecration to the new bond would greatly increase the sin; but, in practice, it is possible that the attachment might become more human, more violent, more dominating, after possession. It is probable. It is even certain. That is why, when two people wish to live together, they must not outrage either nature or truth in recoiling from a complete union; but when they are forced to live apart, doubtless it is the part of prudence. Consequently, it is the part of duty and of true virtue (which is sacrifice) to abstain. I have not reflected seriously on this and, if he had asked me in Paris, I should have given in, because of this natural straightness that makes me hate precautions, restrictions, false distinctions and

subtleties of any kind. But your letter makes me think of running down that resolution to its end. Then, the trouble and sadness I have endured in again experiencing the caresses of M[allefille], the courage it has taken to hide it, is a warning to me. So I shall follow your advice, dear friend. May this sacrifice be a kind of expiation for the perjury I have committed.

"I say sacrifice, because it would be painful for me to see this angel suffer. So far he has had great strength; but I am not a child. I saw well that human passion was making rapid progress in him and that it was time we parted. That is why, the night before my departure, I did not wish to stay with him and why I almost sent you both home.

"And since I am telling you everything, I want to say to you that only one thing about him displeased me; that is, that he himself had bad reasons for abstaining. Until then I thought it fine that he should abstain out of respect for me, from timidity, even from fidelity, for some one else. All that was sacrifice, and consequently strength and chastity, of course. That is what charmed and attracted

me most in him. But at your house, just as he was leaving us, and as if he wished to conquer one last temptation, he said two or three words to me that did not jibe with my ideas. He seemed, after the fashion of devotees, to *distrust human* grossness and to redden at the temptations he had had, and to fear to soil our love by one more transport. This way of looking at the last embrace of love has always been repugnant to me. If the last embrace is not as sacred, as pure, as devoted as the rest, there is no virtue in abstaining from it. These words, physical love, by which we call what has no name under heaven, *displease* and *shock* me, like a sacrilege and at the same time like a wrong idea. Can there be, for lofty natures, a purely physical love, and for sincere natures a purely intellectual one? Is there ever love without a single kiss and a kiss of love without passion? *To distrust the flesh* cannot be good and useful except for those who are all *flesh;* with some one one loves, not the word *distrust*, but the word *respect* must serve when one abstains. Besides, these are not the words he used. I do not exactly remember them. He said, I think, that *certain deeds* could spoil a memory.

It is true, isn't it, that it was a stupid thing to say, and that he did not mean it? Who is the unhappy woman who left him with such ideas of physical love? Has he then had a mistress unworthy of him? Poor angel! They should hang all the women who degrade in men's eyes the most respectable and sacred thing in creation, the divine mystery, the most serious act of life and the most sublime in the whole universe. The magnet embraces the iron, the animals come together by the difference of sex. Plants obey love, and man, who alone on this earth has received from God the gift of feeling divinely what the animals, the plants and the metals feel only materially, man in whom the electric attraction is transformed into an attraction felt, understood, intelligent, man alone regards this miracle which takes place simultaneously in his soul and in his body as a miserable necessity, and he speaks of it with distrust, with irony or with shame! This is passing strange! The result of this fashion of separating the spirit from the flesh is that it has necessitated convents and bad places.

"This is a frightful letter. It will take you six weeks to decipher it. It is my *ultimatum.*

If he is happy or would be happy through *her*, *let him be.* If he would be unhappy, *prevent him.* If he could be happy through me, without ceasing to be through *her*, *I can for my part do as well.* If he cannot be happy through me without being unhappy with her, *we must not see each other and he must forget me.* There is no way of getting around these four points. I shall be strong about it, I promise you, because it is a question of *him*, and if I have no great virtue for myself I have great devotion for those I love. You are to tell me the truth frankly. I count on it and wait for it.

"It is absolutely unnecessary for you to write me a discreet letter I can show. We have not reached that point, M[allefille] and I. We respect each other too much to demand, even in thought, an accounting of the details of our lives. . . .

"There has been some question about my going to Paris, and it is still not impossible that if my business, which M[allefille] is now looking after, should be prolonged I should join him. Do not say anything about it to the *child.* If I go, I shall notify you and we can surprise him. In any case, since it takes time for you

to get permission to travel, begin your preparations now, because I want you at Nohant this summer, as soon and for as long as possible. You shall see how happy you will be. There is not a hint of what you fear. There is no spying, no gossip, no provincialism; it is an oasis in the desert. There is not a soul in the country who knows what a Chopin or a Grzymala is. No one knows what happens to us. I see no one but *intimate* friends, angels like you, who have never had an evil thought about those they love. You will come, my dear good friend, we shall talk at our ease and your battered soul will regenerate itself in the country. As for the *child*, he shall come if he likes; but in that case I should like to be forewarned, for I should send M[allefille] either to Paris or to Geneva. There is no lack of pretexts, and he will never suspect anything. If the *child* does not want to come, leave him to his ideas; he fears the world, he fears I know not what. I respect in those I love everything I do not understand. I shall go to Paris in September myself, before the final departure. I shall conduct myself with him according to your reply to this letter. If you have no solution for the

problems I put, try to draw one from him, ransack his soul; I must know what he feels.

"But now you know me through and through. This is such a letter as I do not write twice in ten years. I am too lazy and I hate so to talk of myself. But this will spare me from talking more. You know my heart now and you can *fire at sight on me* when you balance the accounts of the Trinity.

"Yours, dear good friend, yours with all my heart. Ostensibly I have not spoken of you in all this long chat. That is because it seemed as though I were talking of myself to another *me*, the better and the dearer of the two, I swear.

"GEORGE SAND."

Let us first admire the way the woman conducts her battle, in such fashion that she necessarily remains victorious, no matter what the attacks or shifts of the enemy. Everything is foreseen, arranged, admitted, except not to become the lover of George Sand. Besides, she must have known that the little "Russia" she pretended to fear had already surrendered her arms, that Chopin had torn her out of his proud

heart. But such a letter, such a rare psychological document deserves to be included as it stands in the history of this love. The being becomes clearly illuminated, even—perhaps above all—in what it tries to hide. One feels the intelligence; weighs the slightly heavy goodness, once more maternal, sacrificing for the nest, like the pelican, its own breast feathers. . . . One can wonder at the moist-lipped desire of a woman of thirty-four for the "child" of twenty-eight, who looked still younger and who by his very purity befuddled the voluptuary whom he inflamed. She called it "doing her duty." The whole thing is in choosing one's words. She admitted also: "I must love or die," which is less pretentious.

Say, in the end, that Chopin needed a fine, generous tenderness after the poor dried up little romance he had hidden in an envelope. Too, his health needed attention. George began by sending him to Doctor Gaubert, who put his ear to his chest and swore that he was not phthisic. But he needed air, walks, rest. The new lovers set out in quest of solitude.

Paris soon heard that the novelist had left with her three children: Maurice, Solange and Chopin, for the Balearic Isles.

CHAPTER XI

THE CHARTREUSE OF VALDEMOSA

AS a matter of fact, they had agreed to meet at Perpignan, because Chopin's decent soul stuck at publishing his departure. Perhaps, too, George wanted to smooth the pride of poor Mallefille. So the two left in their own way and came together at Perpignan in the last two days of October. George was happy, at peace. She had traveled slowly, visited friends on the way, passed through Lyons, Avignon, Vaucluse, le Pont du Gard. Furthermore, it was not so much a question with her of traveling as of getting away, of seeking, as she always said on such occasions, some nest in which to love or some hole in which to die. Doubtless she hardly remembered having made the same trip with Musset four years before, when they had encountered fat Stendhal-Beyle on the steamship. Chopin himself did not stop on the road; he had four days and four heroically borne nights by mail coach. Yet he descended "fresh as a rose but hardly as rosy as a turnip." Grzy-

mala, Dr. Matuszinski and Fontana alone knew of this voyage that he wanted to conceal even from his family in Poland. Fontana undertook to forward his mail. Chopin had a little money on hand because he had sold Pleyel his first *Preludes* for two thousand francs, a quarter of which had been paid.

They all embarked for Barcelona on board the *Phénicien*, on "the bluest sea, the purest, the smoothest; you might call it a Greek sea, or a Swiss lake on its loveliest day," wrote George to her friend Marliani just before they left. A few days' stop at Barcelona, where they visited the ruins of the Palace of the Inquisition.

Then a fresh embarkation on the *El Mallorquin*. The crossing was made on a mild and phosphorescent night. On board all slept, except Chopin, Sand and the helmsman, who sang, with a voice so sweet and so gentle that he too seemed to be half-asleep. Chopin listened to this rambling song that resembled his vague improvisations. "The voice of contemplation," said George. They landed at Palma, on Majorca, in the morning, under a precipitous coast whose summit is indented with palms and

aloes. Stupefied to learn that there was no hotel, nor even rooms where they could live, they went to locate the French Consul and, thanks to him, succeeded in discovering the house of a certain Señor Gomez. It was outside of the town, in a valley from which in the distance one could see the yellow walls of Palma and its cathedral. This uncomfortable oasis, which had to be furnished and equipped with all its accessories, was called *The House of the Wind*. The travelers were at first jubilant.

"The sky is turquoise," wrote Chopin to Fontana, "the sea lapis-lazuli, the mountains emerald. The air? The air is like heaven. It is sunny during the day, the world is in summer dress, and it is warm; at night, songs and guitars for hours on end. Enormous balconies hung with vines, walls dating from the Moors. . . . The town, like everything here, resembles Africa. In short, life is delicious. My dear Jules, go see Pleyel, because the piano has not yet arrived. How was it sent? You will soon receive the *Preludes*. I shall probably live in an enchanting monastery, in the most lovely country in the world; the sea, moun-

tains, palms, a cemetery, a crusaders' church, a ruined mosque, thousand-year-old olive trees. . . . At present I have a little more life; I touch on what is most beautiful in the world, I am a better man."

This *House of the Wind* rented for a hundred francs a month. But as it did not completely satisfy their appetite for isolation and as they wanted something more "artistic," more rare, they found three rooms and a garden full of oranges for thirty-five francs a year in the Chartreuse of Valdemosa itself, three leagues away. "It is poetry, it is solitude, it is everything that is most enchanting under the sky; and what sky! what country! We are in a dream of happiness," Sand wrote. This joy at once resolved itself into too long walks. Chopin wore himself out, tore his feet on the stones of the paths, caught cold in the first rain. He had hardly been there a few days when he was forced to take to his bed with bad bronchitis. The tuberculosis, momentarily checked, came on again, in spite of a temperature of 65 degrees, in spite of roses, lemons, palms, fig trees in bloom. "The three most celebrated doctors of the Island came together for a consultation.

One sniffed what I had expectorated, another tapped me where I had expectorated, the third listened while I expectorated. They treated me like an animal, and the first said I would die, the second said I was about to die, the third said I was already dead. But I go on living as I have always lived. . . . I cannot excuse Jeannot (Dr. Matuszinski) for not having given me any instructions about this acute bronchitis which he should have foreseen. I was barely able to escape their bleedings and cuppings and such like operations. Thank God, I am myself again. But my sickness delayed my *Preludes*, which you will receive God knows when. . . . In a few days I shall be living in the most beautiful spot in the world; sea, mountains, everything you could want. We are going to live in an enormous old ruined monastery, abandoned by the Carthusians, whom Mendizabal seems to have driven out just for me. It is quite close to Palma and marvelous beyond compare: cells, a most romantic graveyard. . . . In fact, I feel I shall be well off there. Only my piano is still lacking. I have written direct to Pleyel, rue Rochechouart. Ask him about it and tell him I was taken sick

the day after I arrived, but that I am already better. Do not say much in general about me or my manuscripts. . . . Do not tell any one I have been ill; they would only make a fuss about it."

Here was George in action. She had her hands full. She wrote, managed the household as well as her novels, explored the shops of the little town, gave their lessons to her two children and nursed the third, who claimed her every other moment. "He improves from day to day and I hope that he will be better than before. He is an angel of gentleness and goodness." But the material side of life became more and more difficult. They lacked everything, even mattresses, sheets, cooking pots. They had to buy expensive furnishings, write to Buloz, borrow. Soon *The House of the Wind* became uninhabitable. The walls were so thin that under the autumn rains the lime swelled like a sponge. No stove, of course, as in all so-called hot countries, and a coat of ice settled on the travelers' shoulders. They had to fall back on the asphyxiating warmth of braziers. The invalid began to suffer greatly, coughed incessantly, could hardly be nourished,

because he could not stand the native food, and George found herself obliged to do the cooking herself. "In fact," she wrote, again to her friend Marliani, "our trip here has been, in many ways, a frightful fiasco. But here we are. We cannot get out without exposing ourselves to the bad season and without encountering new expenses at every step. Besides it took a great deal of courage and effort to install myself here. If Providence is not too unkind, I think the worst is over and we shall gather the fruit of our difficulties. Spring will be delicious, Maurice will regain his health. . . . Solange is almost continually charming since she was seasick; Maurice pretends she lost all her venom."

Shortly they had great trouble in getting servants. The invalid, whom they hid at the back of the least damp room, became an object of horror and fear to the natives. Señor Gomez, learning that it was a matter of lung trouble, demanded the departure of his tenants after a complete replastering and whitewashing of the house at their expense and an auto-da-fé of the linen and furnishings. The consul intervened, and sheltered the miserable company

for a few days. At last, on the fifteenth of December, a beautiful day, they set out for their monastery. Just before they started Chopin wrote again to Fontana: "I shall work in a cell of some old monk who had perhaps in his soul a greater flame than I, but stifled and mortified it because he did not know what to do with it. . . . I think I can shortly send you my *Preludes* and *Ballade*."

As for George Sand: "I shall never forget," she wrote later on in her *Winter at Majorca*, "a certain bend in the gorge where, on turning back, one espies, at the top of a mountain, one of those lovely little Arab houses I have described, half-hidden among the flat branches of cactus, and a tall palm bending over the chasm and tracing its silhouette against the sky. When the sight of the mud and fog of Paris gives me the spleen, I close my eyes and see again as in a dream this green mountain, these tawny rocks, and this solitary palm tree, lost in the pink sky."

The Chartreuse of Valdemosa . . . the name alone, associated with those of Chopin and Sand in this African setting, makes a scene that is not only romantic and picturesque,

but poetic. Here is the scene of their sickly passion. We still love the picture, mingled with the music into which this Nordic consumptive threw his heart-rending sweetness. What indeed would Majorca be in the story of human dreams without this encampment of the rainy winter of 1838? This abandoned island has no other worth than its unhappy monastery, which for two months served as the prison of a hopeless love. Because no search, even between the lines of their letters, reveals any happiness. George tried in vain to blow the embers of her tired heart, and kindled but a tender pity, full of nostalgia, raising with each puff of smoke the memory of those terrible Venetian delights. And Chopin, bruised by a thousand little sufferings, too little and gloriously male, felt escaping from him day by day the strength for pleasures. In one way or another, nerves got the upper hand. Work alone was deliverance for them, and solitude, riveting them together, filled them with fraternity.

Valdemosa is an enormous pile of masonry. An army corps could be lodged in it. There are the quarters of the Superior, cells for the lay brothers, cells for the novices, and the three

cloisters that constitute the monastery proper. The oldest part is XVth Century, and is pierced by Gothic windows to which vines cling. In the center is the old Carthusian cemetery, without stones or inscriptions. A few cypresses frame a tall cross of white wood and an ogival well-head against which have grown up a pink laurel and a dwarf palm. All the cells were locked and a yellow sacristan jealously guarded the keys. Although he was extremely ugly, this fat satyr had wronged a girl who with her parents was spending a few months in its solitude. But he gave as an excuse that he was employed by the State to protect only the painted virgins.

The new cloisters, girded by evergreens, enclosed twelve chapels and a church decorated with wood carvings and paved with Hispano-Moresque majolica. A Saint Bruno in painted wood, provincial Spanish in style, is the only work of art in this temple. The design and color are curious and George Sand found in the head an expression of sublime faith, in the hands a heartbreaking and pious gesture of invocation. "I doubt," she said, "if this fanatic saint of Grenoble has ever been understood and

rendered with as profound and ardent a feeling. It is the personification of Christian asceticism." The church, alas, is without an organ, according to the Carthusian regulations.

Sand, Chopin, and the children occupied three spacious cells, vaulted, with walls three feet in thickness. The rooms looked out, towards the south, onto a terrace planted with pomegranates, lemon trees, orange trees. Brick alleys made patterns through this verdant, perfumed salon. On the threshold of this garden of silence Chopin wrote to Fontana three days after Christmas:

"Can you imagine me thus: between the sea and the mountains in a great abandoned Carthusian monastery, in a cell with doors higher than the porte-cochères in Paris, my hair uncurled, no white gloves, but pale, as usual? The room is shaped like a coffin; it is high, with a cobwebbed ceiling. The windows are small. . . . My bed faces them, under a filigreed Arabic rose-window. Beside the bed a square thing resembling a bureau, but whose use is problematic. Above, a heavy chandelier (this is a great luxury) with one tiny candle. The works of Bach, my own scrawls and some

manuscripts that are not mine,—there is my entire furniture. You can shout as loud as you like and no one will hear; in short, it is a strange place about which I am writing. . . . The moon is marvelous this evening. I have never seen it more beautiful. . . . Nature here is kind but the men are pirates. They never see strangers, which is the reason they do not know what they can charge. So they will give an orange for nothing and ask a fabulous price for a trouser button. Under this sky one feels permeated with a poetic sentiment that seems to emanate from all the surrounding objects. Eagles soar over our heads every day and no one bothers them."

But it was in vain that he sought to persuade himself that he liked it here; this rather lofty setting did not suit Chopin. He had too great a taste for intimate habits, for the *detail* of houses, for sophisticated surroundings, to feel at his ease in these unfurnished rooms where his mind had nothing on which to fasten. And then, unfortunately, they had fallen fair into the rainy season, which at Majorca is diluvian. The air is so relaxing in its humidity that one

drags heavily about. Maurice and Solange were perfectly well, "but little Chopin is very exhausted, and still coughs a great deal. Like him, I am impatient for the return of good weather, which should not be long now in coming." His piano at last arrived. Joy that carried with it forgiveness for everything. Chopin worked, composed, studied. "The very vaults of the monastery rejoice. And all this is not profaned by the admiration of fools. We do not even see a cat," aside from the natives of the country, a superstitious and inquisitive people, who climbed, one after another, up to this old monastery guarded by one ancient monk and a few devils from Paris. In order to get a look at them they came to have their beasts blessed. It became a holiday of mules, horses, donkeys, goats and pigs. "Real animals themselves," said George, "stinking, gross and cowardly, but some among them superb, nicely dressed, playing the guitar and dancing. . . . I am supposed to be sold to the devil because I do not go to mass, nor to the dances, and because I live alone in the mountains, teaching my children the rule of participles and other graces. . . . In the middle of this, the chirp of Cho-

pin, who goes his own pretty way, and to whom the walls of his cell listen with astonishment."

One evening they had an alarm and a ghost which made their hair stand on end. First there was a strange noise, like thousands of sacks of nuts being rolled across a parquet floor. They rushed out of their cells to investigate but the cloister was as deserted as ever. Yet the noise drew nearer. Soon a feeble light illuminated the vaulting, torches appeared, and there, enveloped in red smoke, came a whole battalion of horrendous beings; a horned leading devil, all in black, with a face the color of blood, little devils with birds' heads, lady devils and shepherdesses in pink and white robes. It was the villagers celebrating Mardi Gras who had arrived to hold their dance in one of the cells. The noise that accompanied their procession was that of the castanets that the youngsters clacked with a sustained and rolling rhythm. They stopped it suddenly to sing in unison a *coplita* on a musical phrase which kept recurring and seemed never to end.

This was a shock to poor Chopin's nerves. It was worse when Maurice and Solange disappeared in the echoing depths of the mon-

astery, or when George deserted him for excursions that lasted whole days. Then the deserted cloister seemed to him full of phantoms. Returning from one of her nocturnal explorations among the ruins, George surprised him at his piano, white, with haggard eyes, and it took him several minutes to recognize her. Yet it was then, during or after these spells of nervous exaltation, that he composed some of his most beautiful pages.

Sand affirms that several of the *Preludes* were conceived in these agonies. "There is one," she says, "which came to him one lugubrious rainy evening that weighted his soul with a frightful depression. We had left him that day feeling very well, Maurice and I, to go to Palma to buy some necessities for our camp. The rain came, torrents were unloosed; we made three leagues in six hours, coming back in the midst of the flood, and it was full night when we arrived, without shoes, abandoned by our driver in the midst of untold dangers. We had hurried on account of our patient's nervousness. It had indeed been lively; but he was as though stunned into a kind of resigned despair, and he was playing, in tears, his fine prel-

ude. He rose with a great cry on seeing us enter; then he said to us with a vague stare and in a strange voice: 'Ah, I knew you were dead!' When he had recovered himself and saw the state we were in, he was sick again at the retrospect of our dangers; but he later swore to us that while he was awaiting us, he had seen it all in a dream, and that, unable to tell what was dream and what was reality, he had become quiet and as though drugged in playing the piano, convinced that he was dead himself. He saw himself drowned in a lake; heavy drops of icy water fell with a regular beat on his chest, and when I made him listen to the sound of the drops that were really falling on the roof, he denied having heard them. He was even angry at what I meant by the words 'imitative harmony.' He protested with all his strength, and rightly, I think, at the puerility of these auditory imitations. His genius was full of the mysterious harmonies of nature, translated in his thoughts by sublime musical equivalents and not by a slavish mimicry of outside sounds. That evening's composition was full of the raindrops sounding on the resonant tiles of the monastery, but they were trans-

posed in his imagination and in his music into tears falling from heaven on his heart."

There has been a great deal of discussion as to what *Prelude* this might be. Some call it No. 6, in G minor, others No. 8, in F sharp minor, or the 15th, or the 17th, or the 19th. In my own opinion there is no possible doubt. It is certainly the 6th, where the drops of sorrow fall with a slow inexorable measure on the brain of man. But it makes little difference, after all. Each one will find it where he wants. Credit music with this unique power, that of adapting itself to us rather than us to it, of being the Ariel that serves our fancy. Here is the place to recall Beethoven's words: "You must create everything in yourself." Liszt, a tyro of psychology and æsthetics, said that Chopin contented himself, like a true musician, with extracting the *feeling* of pictures he saw, ignoring the drawing, the pictorial shell, which did not enter into the form of his art and did not belong to his more spiritual sphere. But, returning to that rainy twilight when his friend had composed so beautiful a melody, Liszt wondered if George Sand had been able to perceive in it Chopin's sensual

anguish, the fever of his over-excited spirit; if the genius of that masculine woman could attain "to the humblest grandeur of the heart, to this self-consuming flame of sacrifice," which has every right to be called devotion. Probably not. She never inspired a song in this miraculous bird. The only one that came to him through her was that moment of agony and grief.

The next day he rejoiced, he talked of nothing else, he put the finishing touches on this unique musical expression snatched from his depths, but she understood it no better. All the incompatibility of these two natures is revealed here. "His heart," said Liszt, "was torn and bruised at the thought of losing her who had just given him back to life, but her spirit saw nothing but an amusing pastime in the adventurous trip, the danger of which did not outweigh the charm of novelty. What wonder that this episode of his French life should be the only one of which his work showed the influence? After that he divided his life into two distinct parts. For a long time he continued to suffer in an environment that was too materialistic, almost gross, where his frail and

sensitive temperament was engulfed; then,—he escaped from the present into the impalpable regions of art, taking refuge among the memories of his earliest youth in his beloved Poland, which alone he immortalized in his songs."

Chopin soon achieved a horror of Majorca. He felt that he was seriously ill. In addition, he had little taste for the country, and less still for this Spanish monastery where his imagination failed to find the intimate warmth and urbanity in which alone it could unfold. His spirit was wounded to the quick; "the fold of a rose leaf, the shadow of a bee, made him bleed." He was dying of impatience to get away, and even Sand confessed that these poetic intervals which one voluntarily interpolates into life are but periods of transition, moments of repose granted to the spirit before it again undertakes the *exercise of the emotions*. Underline these words, so luminous in the analysis of their characters. For this deceived woman Valdemosa was a poetic interlude, a time of waiting, an intellectual vacation. Already she dreamed only of taking up again the exercise of the sensations, while for Chopin, his life was

done, his emotions exhausted. There was but one joy left for which he aspired: the great peace of work. "For the love of God, write," he enjoins Fontana. "I am sending you the *Preludes*. Re-copy them with Wolf. I think there are no mistakes. Give one copy to Probst (publisher) and the manuscript to Pleyel. Out of the 1500 francs he will give you, pay the rent on my apartment up to the first of January, that is, 450 francs. Give the place up if you think you can find another for April. . . ."

This smells of a return, an odor of Paris. The life at the monastery was becoming really unbearable. A servant left them swearing they were plague infested. They had all the trouble in the world to procure supplies, thanks to the bad grace of the peasants, who made them pay ten times what everything was worth. The skimmed goat's milk meant for Chopin was stolen from them. No one would consent to wait on the consumptive, whose health declined. Even their clothes mildewed on their backs. There was nothing but to flee this hard-hearted land.

They strapped their baggage at last, nailed up their boxes,—and found themselves refused

a carriage in which to descend to Palma. They were obliged to do the three leagues by *birlocho*, that is, by wheelbarrow, Chopin barely able to breathe. At Palma he had a terrific hemorrhage. Nevertheless they embarked on the one boat of the island, on which a hundred pigs were already grunting. The artist was given the most miserable cot, as they said it would have to be burned. The next day, at Barcelona, he lost a full bowl of blood and drooped like a ghost. But it was the end of their miseries. The consul and the commander of the French naval station took them in and had them put on board a sloop of war, *Le Méléagre*, whose doctor succeeded in arresting Chopin's hemorrhage.

They rested eight days at an inn. On the fifteenth of February, 1839, George wrote to Madame Marliani: "My sweet dear, here I am at Barcelona. God grant that I get out soon and never set foot in Spain again. It is a country I do not relish in any respect. . . . Read Grzymala the part about Chopin and warn him not to mention it, because after the good hope the doctor gives me, it is useless to alarm his family."

A few days later they landed at Marseilles. It was perfect happiness.

"At last, my dear, I am here in France. . . . A month more and we should have died in Spain, Chopin and I; he of melancholy and disgust; I of fury and indignation. They wounded me in the tenderest spot in my heart. They pricked a being who suffered before my eyes; I shall never forgive them, and if I write of them it shall be with gall."

To François Rollinat, the real confidant of her life: "Dear friend, I should not like to learn that you have suffered as much as I during my absence. . . ."

This was the brilliant return from the honeymoon.

CHAPTER XII

"IF MUSIC BE THE FOOD OF LOVE, PLAY ON"

NIETZSCHE, on a very dark day, wrote to a friend: "Isn't it a work of art: to hope?" In landing at Marseilles in the early spring of 1839, Chopin and George Sand built a work of art, because they hoped, because they were overflowing with that inexplicable enthusiasm that the most banal things inspire at certain predestined hours. Anything sufficed: an expected letter, a fine face, the shadow of a church on the street, the reassuring words of a doctor, to make them know that this was the dawn of a convalescence that would dry their almost rotted love and ripen it, transmute it into a peaceful and lasting friendship. Sometimes nothing more than a chance landscape is enough to change the rhythm of souls.

At Majorca it was easy to ask if the deserted monastery was not a sort of Dantesque Purgatory where Sand explored the Hells and the invalid felt himself already lifted toward Heaven. "This Chopin is an angel," George

had written. "At Majorca, while he was sick unto death, he wrote music that had the very smell of Heaven; but I am so used to seeing him in Heaven that neither his life nor his death would seem to me to prove anything about him. He does not know himself on which planet he exists."

At Marseilles, a good town of grocers, perfumers, soap sellers, their feet were once more on the ground. They settled at the Hôtel de Beauvau, saw a physician, and decided to await the summer in the south. This resolution was not carried out without a certain amount of boredom, but boredom itself contributes to rest, which was so necessary after their voyage of misbegotten love. They had, besides, to shut themselves up against the mistral and the pests who got in by all the doors. But they played dead. Dr. Cauvières examined regularly Chopin's lungs, made him wear cupping glasses, put him on a diet and pronounced him well on the way to recovery. He could begin to play again, to walk, to talk like anybody else, he whose voice for weeks had been nothing more than a breath. He slept a great deal. He attended to the publication of his works, wrote to Fontana

on the subject of their dedications and discussed with him the price of the new compositions. For he had to think of the future, about the Paris apartment he had decided to re-rent: "Take Schlesinger the 500 francs you will receive from Probst for the *Ballade*." "Schlesinger is trying to cheat me, but he makes enough off of me; be polite to him." "Tell him I shall sell the *Ballade* for France and England for 800 francs and the *Polonaises* for Germany, England and France for an average of 1500." He grew angry. He stood out against the publishers and would cede nothing. "As for money, you must make a clear contract and not turn over the manuscripts except for cash. . . ." "I should rather give my manuscripts as I did before, for a low price, than to bend to these. . . ." He returned to the charge in April: "Keep everything till I come back since they are such Jews. I have sold the *Preludes* to Pleyel and have so far received only 500 francs. He has the right to do as he pleases about them. As for the *Ballades* and the *Polonaises*, do not sell them either to Schlesinger or to Probst . . . get them back . . . Enough. Enough for you and for me. My

health improves but I am angry." "It is not my fault if I seem like a mushroom that poisons you when you dig it up and eat it. I know perfectly that I have never been of any use to any one, not even myself. Meanwhile they continue to regard me as not tubercular. I drink neither coffee nor beer, only milk. I keep warm and look like a young lady."

In the month of March the famous singer Nourrit died in Naples and it was rumored that he had committed suicide. His body was brought to Marseilles the following month and a funeral service was arranged at Notre-Dame-du-Mont. To honor the memory of a friend whom he had seen so often at Liszt's and had even entertained himself, Chopin agreed to take the organ during the Elevation. Although the instrument was squeaky and out of tune, he drew from it what music he could. He played *The Stars* of Schubert, which Nourrit had sung at Marseilles: and, renouncing effect, the artist played this melody with the softest stops. George was in the organ stall with a few friends and her fine eyes filled with tears. The public did not recognize the novelist in this little woman dressed in black.

In the month of May, Chopin was strong enough to take a short trip to Genoa with his mistress. It was a beautiful interlude. They visited the palaces, the terraced gardens, the galleries. Did she think of that voyage of almost four years before, when with Musset she first put foot on this Italian soil? Genoa is perhaps the only town where their love was not overcast. She has written that to see it again was a pleasure. I do not know if the word is sincere but it does not ring true. Something like a wrinkle of fatigue, however, can be seen in the statement which she made, on her return, to Mme. Marliani: "I no longer like voyages, *I am no longer in such condition that I am able to enjoy them.*" One hopes, too, that Chopin knew nothing of all that first Genoese visit, because, for a delicate heart, such a picture would have been terrific.

On May 22nd, they left Marseilles and started for Nohant, where they planned to spend the entire summer. After a week of jolting they at last reached the wide, well-cultivated district of Berry, studded with great round walnut trees and cut by shady roads that George remembered with affection. All at

once there was the modest village, the church with its tiled roof, and, bordering the square, the château. A country château that symbolized the double origin, royal and plebeian, of this woman of thirty-five years whom all Europe regarded with admiration, and who brought to the nest her *little one*, her new little one, a noble and diaphanous young man who seemed to fall into this ancient French countryside like a bird of far off seas.

Dear Woman, must we admire you for the period of rest you accorded to this beautiful weary soul? We know that you were bad for him, sometimes, because you were sound, ardent, and in spite of everything, curious about this inviolable mind, about these limbs without desire. But we have seen too that you knew your rôle of guardian. "Of whom shall I take care?" you cried, when your other invalid had left you because he could no longer bear the sufferings with which you seasoned your pleasure. Dear Woman, nevertheless. You cannot be judged by any common standards, you with your hot blood and your heart so quickly sated, in spite of its great hungers. The enormous labor you accomplished was but the result of

your own energies. They burdened you with work. They wore you down like a man. You never found these horrible chores too stupid, these tasks from which they feigned to derive an elastic and libertarian moral, when you were really made but for love and travail and the old human order. This is all a little amusing, and sad as truth. But we must thank you for having made Musset and broken this easy fop to healthy sorrows. We cannot blame you, as others do, for having finished Chopin. You fought for him a long time against his malady. If you bruised him further, it is because even your friendship was costly. But always, it was your best that you gave.

Now that we have seen you enter Nohant with this new prey to your tenderness, let us say with Shakespeare: "If music be the food of love, play on."

Chopin never liked the country. Yet he enjoyed Nohant. The house was comfortable. After Majorca and Marseilles it was a joy to have a large room, fine sheets, a carefully prepared table, a few beautiful pieces of furniture. Without being luxurious the big house had a

pleasant air. There was a sense of ease. He was spoiled, petted. An old friend of George, Dr. Papet, came running at once to examine the invalid thoroughly. His diagnosis was a chronic affection of the larynx: he ordered plenty of rest and a long stay in the country. Chopin submitted without difficulties to this program and adopted a perfectly regulated, wise way of living. While George went back to the education of her children and her job as a novelist, he corrected a new edition of Bach, finished his *Sonata in E flat minor*, the second *Nocturne* of op. 37 and three *Mazurkas* (op. 41). They dined out of doors, between five and six o'clock. Then a few neighbors dropped in, the Fleurys, the Duteils, Duvernet, Rollinat, and they talked and smoked. From the beginning they all showed a respectful sympathy for Chopin. Hippolyte Chatiron, George's half-brother, who lived with his wife in the immediate neighborhood, a kind of good-natured gentleman somewhat addicted to drink, formed a passionate friendship for him. When they had gone Chopin played the piano in the twilight, then at Solange's and Maurice's bedtime, he too went to bed and slept like a child. As for George, she took up the Encyclopedia

and prepared the lessons for the next day. Truly a family life, such, exactly, as Chopin understood best; such also as he needed during his working periods.

"I am composing here a *Sonata* in G flat minor," he wrote to Fontana, "in which the *Funeral March* you already have will be incorporated. There is an *allegro*, then a *scherzo* in E flat minor, the *March*, and a short *finale* of about three pages. After the *March* the left hand babbles along *unisono* with the right. I have a new *Nocturne* in G major to accompany the one in G minor, if you remember it. You know I have four new *Mazurkas;* one from Palma in E minor, three from here in G major, in A flat major, and C sharp minor. To me they seem as pretty as the youngest children seem to parents who are growing old. Otherwise I am doing nothing; I am correcting a Paris edition of Bach's works. There are not only misprints but, I believe, harmonic errors committed by those who think they understand Bach. I am not correcting them with the pretention of understanding him better than they, but with the conviction that I can sometimes divine how they ought to be."

Each evening during that hour of music

that Chopin dedicated to George alone, she listened and dreamed. She was a choice listener. Without doubt it was in those moments that the two souls, so impenetrable to each other, understood each other best. She fully realized that he was the extreme artist type; that it would never be possible to make him accept any jot of reality; that his continued dream was too far from the world, too little philosophic for her to be able to follow into these unpeopled regions. But it was nevertheless sweet to be the object of such a man's preference. Cruel also, because if Chopin kept usurious track of the least light given him, he did not take the trouble to hide his disappointment at the first darkness. His fantastic humor, his profound depressions, at once interested and worried the amateur of emotions in George. But a kind of terror gripped her heart at the thought of a new obligation she would assume if Frederick was definitely to install himself with her. She had no further illusions about passion. She was afraid of having some day to struggle against some other love that might conquer her and prove the death of this frail being she had torn from himself. Then

she stiffened. One more duty in a life already so burdened, would this not be precisely a defense against temptation—an even greater chance for her to attain to that austerity towards which she felt herself drawn by the old depths of religious enthusiasm of which she was never quit? How to decide? She compromised by leaving it for time to tell.

As for Chopin, his peaceful fortune was too perfectly fitted to the measure of his strength for him to dream of any change. He radiated all his gentleness, he created; this was the present beauty and the only possible future. While he improvised George opened a notebook and wrote: "The genius of Chopin is the most profound and pregnant of feeling and emotions that has ever existed. He makes a single instrument speak the language of the infinite. He knows how to gather into ten lines that even a child could play poems of immense elevation, dramas of unequaled power. He never has to have great material means. He needs neither saxophone nor bass horns to fill the soul with terror; neither Cathedral organs nor the human voice to give it faith and exultation. There must be great advances in taste and artistic in-

telligence if his work is ever to become popular. . . . Chopin knows his strength and his weakness. His weakness is an excess of that very strength, which he cannot control. His music is full of shades and of the unforeseen. Sometimes, rarely, it is bizarre, mysterious, and tormented. In spite of his horror of the ununderstandable, his over-powering emotions sometimes sweep him unconsciously into regions only he can know."

Towards the end of summer they all decided to return to Paris. Sand was persuaded that she could not manage to finish the education of her children without assistance. Maurice was eager to learn drawing; Solange was difficult, a little sullen, stubborn. George also had to see Buloz, her publisher, editor of the *Revue des Deux Mondes*. Chopin wanted to find his pupils and take up their lessons, the main source of his revenue. So they bombarded their friends with letters asking them to find two apartments not too far from each other. Grzymala, Arago and Fontana started a search. From Nohant, instructions rained on the heads of the three friends.

Chopin asked them to choose a *dove-like* wall paper, glowing and soft, for his rooms. Something else for the vestibule, but still *respectable*. If there was anything more beautiful, more fashionable, they were not to hesitate to get it.

"I prefer something simple, modest, elegant, to the loud, common colors the shopkeepers use. That is why I like pearl gray, because it is neither striking nor vulgar. Thank you for the servant's room, because it is really essential."

For George it was vital that the house should be quiet. There had to be three bedrooms, two next to each other, and one separated by the drawing room. Close to the third there must be a well-lighted workroom. Drawing and dining room contiguous. Two servants' rooms and a cellar. Inlaid floors in good condition if possible. But most of all, quiet,—"no blacksmith in the neighborhood." A decent staircase, windows facing south. "No young ladies, no smoke or unpleasant odors." Chopin even took the trouble to sketch the plan of the dream apartment.

Soon they had good news. Chopin was to

live at 5 rue Tronchet, while George was to have two small pavilions in a garden of 16 rue Pigalle. Nohant was in a state of joy and Frederick, always so particular about matters of elegance, now began to think of his clothes. He wrote again to Fontana: "I forgot to ask you to order a hat for me at Duport's, rue de la Chausée d'Antin. He has my measure and knows what I want. Show him this year's shape, not too exaggerated, because I don't know how you are dressing now. Also, drop in on Dautremont, my tailor, on the Boulevards, and tell him to make me a pair of gray trousers. Will you choose a dark shade, for winter trousers, something good, not striped, but plain and soft. You are English; besides, you know what I need. Dautremont will be glad to know that I am coming back. I also need a black velvet waistcoat, but one with very little ornament and not loud,—a waistcoat, simple but elegant. If he has no very fine velvet, have him make a waistcoat of fine wool, but not too open. . . ." In recompense for all these errands: ". . . I shall keep changing the second part of the *Polonaise* for you till the end of my life. Yesterday's version may not please you

either, though it put my brain on the rack for eighty-five seconds. I have copied out my manuscripts in good order. There are six with your *Polonaises*, not counting the seventh, an impromptu, which may be worthless. I cannot yet tell you anything about it, myself, because it is too new. Titus advises me to compose an oratorio. I replied by asking him why he was building a sugar mill rather than a Dominican monastery. As you are such a smart man, you can arrange so that neither black thoughts nor suffocating coughs shall bother me in my new rooms. Arrange for me to be good. Erase, if you can, many episodes of my past. And it would not be bad if I might set myself the task of several years' composition. Finally, you would oblige me by growing much younger, or in finding a way to fix it so that we should not yet be born.

"Your old FREDERICK."

Both Frederick and George settled in Paris in October of that year, 1839. But they were soon convinced that after a whole year of existence together it would be difficult to live apart. Chopin still had need of attentions, pre-

cautions. He gave up his lodging to Dr. Matuszinski and moved with his furnishings to the lower floor of one of the two pavilions of the rue Pigalle.

So these years, which were to be consecrated to some great work, unrolled themselves in about the desired rhythm. During the morning the professors for Maurice and Solange succeeded one another. In Chopin's part of the house it was a procession of pupils. His lessons lasted at least an hour, sometimes more. It often happened that the master would play a piece himself. Thus one time he played to one of his pupils fourteen *Etudes* and *Fugues* of Bach. And as the young girl expressed her admiration for this *tour de force*, "one can never forget them," he said, smiling. "For a year I have not studied a quarter of an hour at a time. I have no strength, no energy. I am always waiting for a little health to take all that up again, but—I am still waiting." Every effort exhausted him. He took a little opium in a glass of water, and rubbed his temples with *eau de Cologne*.

The afternoon was generally devoted to the personal work of the two artists. In the eve-

ning they met at George's, dined together, then some one or another of the intimates of the household came to see them. The salon was *café au lait* in color, decorated with very fine Chinese vases always filled with flowers in the Chopinesque mode. The furniture was green; there was a sideboard of oak filled with curiosities and, on the walls, the portrait of the hostess by Calamatta and several canvases by Delacroix. The piano was bare, square, ebony. Chopin almost always sat at it. At one side, George's bedroom could be seen, where two mattresses on the floor covered with a Persian rug served as a bed.

Sand arose late, because she was awake most of the night. Chopin polished and put the final touches in his works, the first versions of which had in general come to him during the summer. His creation was entirely spontaneous. It gushed forth during a walk, an hour of meditation, or it might develop suddenly and complete while he was sitting in front of the piano. He played it to himself, sang it, took it up again, modifying its accents. Then began the immense labor of searching for perfection, which is always, whatever one may say, the essen-

tial integrity of the artist. "He locked himself in his room for whole days at a time, weeping, walking up and down, repeating or changing a single measure a hundred times, writing it down and rubbing it out as many times again, and beginning all over again the next day with minute and despairing perseverance. He spent six weeks on one page, only to write it finally just as it had come to him in the first flush." In noting these things, George was exasperated with the genuine surprise of facile creators who are not tortured by any yearning for perfection. But, like Giotto, who when the Pope asked for a perfect example of his knowledge, wanted to send only a true circle, so Chopin, having filled one line with all the ornament of his thought, came back to exquisite nudity, the final and sufficient sign of the idea. So a poet works. So he squeezes the universe into the smallest possible limits, makes it as heavy as a crystal, but gleaming from a thousand facets. It is what made that great blackener of paper, Sand, say that Chopin could compress into a few measures "poems of immense elevation, dramas of unequaled power." Mozart alone, she thought, was superior to him, because he

had the calm of health, and so the fullness of life. But is it not a question to know what happy accidents illness may bring to art? It is certain that Chopin's breathlessness, his nervousness, brought to his virile inspiration those qualities of languor, those weary echoes by which he touches us most.

CHAPTER XIII

ON SOME FRIENDSHIPS OF CHOPIN AND ON HIS ÆSTHETICS

IT was not only furniture and habits that were held in common in the rue Pigalle, but friends as well. Sharing,—this was the great doctrine of Pierre Leroux, George's new director of conscience and "predicator of eternal Truth in its steady progress." According to this philosophic typographer it passed from people to people according to mysterious laws, becoming incarnate in one, then in another, and had just settled in Poland. The mission of the Poles was thus all equality, fraternity, love. Chopin smiled at this, without revealing his opinion. But he often invited his compatriots, who joined all of George's friends: Leroux, Delacroix, Pauline Viardot, the great singer, and Heinrich Heine at the head. Frederick introduced the Grzymala brothers, Prince Czartoryski, Franchomme, the violoncellist, Fontana, the poets Slowacki and Krasinski, the artist Kwiatkowsky, and above all Mickiewicz,

the author of *Dziady* (*The Feast of the Dead*), whom they thought profounder than Goethe and Byron.

He was an ecstatic, a visionary, inspired, at any rate, and, like Socrates, St. John, or Dante, occasionally falling from the "high intellectual evil." At such times he became fired with an eloquence that enraptured his listeners and sent them into veritable trances. George Sand, so sensitive to disturbances, either the highest or the lowest, found herself ravished to the point of ecstasy before the sublime abstractions of this dreamer, the whispers of his soul, by which she was led into the dangerous regions where reason and madness go hand in hand. The ecstasy was contagious. Assuredly it is an evil for simple souls; but with the great spirits, the Apolloniuses of Tyne, the Moseses, the Swedenborgs, the Pierre Lerouxs, the Miçkiewiczs, and, who knows, the George Sands, perhaps, is it not a sacred enthusiasm, a divine faculty of understanding the incomprehensible, "capable of producing the most noble results when inspired by a great moral and metaphysical cause"? This is the question George put to herself in her *Journal*. Meanwhile, this

Miçkiewicz lectured at the Collège de France in a course full of logic and clarity. He was great hearted, perfectly master of himself, and reasoned with superiority. But he was transported into exultation by the very nature of his beliefs, by the violence of his partially savage instincts, the momentum of his poetic faith, and the sentiment, so fecund in all these exiles, of the misfortunes of their fatherland.

Chopin also believed in the mystic aureole of this sainted bard. He did not know that Miçkiewicz on the other hand, overjoyed at his ability to win so great a convert as George, thought her lover "her evil genius, her moral vampire, her cross, who tortured and would possibly end by killing her." How surprising such a judgment from one who delves into secret reports from the other world! Fortunately Sainte-Beuve came along, lent his delicate ear to Miçkiewicz and declared that if he had eloquence his faults should be noticed as well. However delicate Chopin's perceptions, he no longer heard them because for him Miçkiewicz was the great bell that tolled the sorrows of Poland. Who could be more stimulating than this apostle prophesying the resur-

rection of his country? The redeemer was announced. The heavenly Savior was about to arise, and his coming must be hastened by deeds of faith and by repentance.

Sometimes in the evening the seer came to the rue Pigalle accompanied by several of his compatriots. He would retire into a dim corner of the little salon and read his *Infernal Comedy* or read from his *Ballades* some new poem filled with the odor of his forests. Or else, in a divine delirium, he would improvise. That great Slavic dismay, mute and inactive, soon descended on the face of the exiles and was prolonged in a silence loaded with memories. Then Chopin would rise and seat himself at the piano. The lamp would be still further lowered. He would begin with feathery arpeggios, stealing over the keys in his usual way, until he encountered the *blue note*, the pitch which seemed to correspond best to the general atmosphere. Then he would start one of his favorite pieces, the *Etude* in thirds from the second volume, for instance (G sharp minor). One of his compatriots called it *The Siberian* because it symbolized the journey of the deported Pole. The snow falls on the endless

plains. (An ascending and descending scale for each hand pictures this universal infinity in a striking manner). One hears the bells of the troïka that approaches, passes, and disappears towards the horizon. And each one of them sees a brother or a friend pass by, escorted by two Russian police who were taking him off forever. Or else a *scherzo* takes shape, crystallizes: an old popular refrain that Frederick has heard in his childhood at the doors of the village inn. All of them, recognizing it, follow with muted humming from between tightened lips, while tears cover their faces. And the artist varies it, scans it softly, throws it up and catches it again, neglects the coloring to search for the design. For him the design is the soul. In spite of effects of resonance, of cloudlike fluidity, it is the design he pursues, the pure line of his thought. One of the friends who heard him writes: "His eyes burned with a feverish animation, his lips were blood-red, his breath became short. He felt, we felt that part of his life was running out with the sounds." Suddenly a little dry cough, a quick organ point *pianissimo*, and in the dim light Chopin raises his fine white face with black-

circled eyes. But the evenings did not always end on this affecting scene. Sometimes, on the contrary, there would burst out from behind the piano the Emperor of Austria, an insolent old man, a phlegmatic Englishman, a sentimental and ridiculous Englishwoman, a sordid old Jew. It was again Chopin, past master of grimaces, who, after having drawn tears to all eyes, wrinkled their faces into fits of laughter.

Among George Sand's old friends was a delicate, pale, nervous little man, but with a will and a mind so strong that he stood out from his time like a bronze figure in an Olympus of plaster. Of his profession he was at once the most violent, the steadiest, the purest of creators. But, as in art everything is a matter of the soul, as he said, here is an opinion which coming from his pen has some weight. He wrote: "I have talked intimately to Chopin times without number, as I like him greatly and as he is a man of rare distinction. He is the truest artist I have encountered. He is of that small number that one can admire and esteem."

This man was named Eugène Delacroix. His very young friend, Baudelaire, said of him

that he loved the big, the national, the overwhelming, the universal, as is seen in his so-called decorative painting and in his *big machines*. What could be further from Chopin's whole æsthetics? But they had both a certain taste for the conventional, especially in the arts which were not their own. Delacroix, the powerful innovator, liked only the classic in literature, only Mozart in music. Chopin, in painting, greatly preferred Ingres to Delacroix. Opposite as they were in culture, in tendencies, in taste, yet Chopin and Delacroix understood each profoundly in their hearts. Delacroix, a great lover and connoisseur of music, soon placed Chopin directly after Mozart. As for Chopin, who loved and respected the man, he continued to detest his painting. It was above all by temperament that they were brothers. ". . . A mixture of skepticism, politeness, dandyism, of burning will, of finesse, of despotism, and finally of an especial kind of goodness, and of *restrained tenderness* that always goes with genius." Well now, who is the subject of this portrait that so resembles Chopin? It is still Baudelaire talking of Delacroix. A hater of crowds, a polished skeptic, a man of the

world entirely preoccupied in dissimulating the cholers of his heart,—such characteristics applied to either of them. Both violent, both concentrative, both modest, such were these aristocrats born of the people. Delacroix taking his old servant to the Louvre to explain the Assyrian sculpture to her, or Chopin playing the piano for his nurse,—these are pictures which give a better critical estimate than ten pages of abstractions. Let us add that both of them were invalids, both sufferers, both tubercular, and that the only revenge they could take upon life was to live by the spirit. I mean to say: in the emotional spirit. Exquisite judges of nuances, music furnished them with incomparable ones. Mozart was their God because his science naturally was equal to his inspiration. Of the works of Beethoven they said: "Vulgar passages side by side with sublime beauty." To the ears of Delacroix he was sometimes diffuse, tortuous; to those of Chopin too athletic, too Shakespearean, with a passion that always bordered on a cataclysm. Yet the painter admired him because he found him modern, entirely of his own times. That is precisely the reason that made him suspect Chopin, who before every-

thing demanded a delicately decanted wine, a liqueur from which rose the bouquet of memory. Nietzsche said later on: "All music begins to have its *magical* effect only from the moment when we hear the language of our past in it." But Chopin, the exile, never heard anything but the oldest voices in his memory. That was his poetry.

"When Beethoven is obscure," he said, "and seems to lack unity, the cause is not the rather savage, pretended originality, for which we honor him; it is that he turns his back on the eternal principles; Mozart never. Each of the parts has its own direction which, even while harmonizing with the others, forms a song and follows it perfectly. In that is the counterpoint, *punto contrapunto*. It's the custom to learn harmony before counterpoint, that is, the succession of notes that makes up the harmony. Berlioz pounds out the harmonies and fills up the intervals as best he can. In music, the purest logic is the *fugue*. To know the fugue thoroughly is to know the element of all reason and all consequence."

One day Sand came to Delacroix's studio to take him to dine at her house where Chopin

was asking for him. She found him at work, his neck wrapped in woolens, just like her "regular invalid," coughing like him, his voice husky, and raging in just the same fashion against Ingres and his Stratonice. They joined Chopin. He did not like the Stratonice either; he found the people mannered, but the "finish" of the painting pleased him. In everything he was a lover of the exact, of the finished.

"About color," he said, "I don't understand a thing."

They dined. At dessert Maurice asked his master to explain the phenomenon of reflections to him, and Delacroix drew a comparison between the tones of a painting and the sounds of music. Chopin was astonished.

"The harmony of music," explained the painter, "is not only in the construction of chords, but also in their relations, their logical sequence, their sweep, their auditory reflections. Well, painting is no different. The reflection of reflections . . ."

Chopin bursts out: "Let me breathe. One reflection is enough for the moment. It's ingenious, new, but it is alchemy to me."

"No, it's pure chemistry. The tones de-

compose and recompose themselves constantly, and the reflection is not separated from the *relief*."

Here is Delacroix well in the saddle. He explains color, line, flat tones; that all color is an exchange of reflections; that what M. Ingres lacks is half of painting, half of sight, half of light, that he is half a man of genius, the other half an imbecile.

But Chopin is not listening. He rises and goes to the piano. He improvises an instant, stops.

"But," cried Delacroix, "it's not finished."

"It's not begun. Nothing comes to me . . . Nothing but reflections, shadows, reliefs that won't become clear. I look for color, and don't even find design."

"You'll never find one without the other, and you are going to find both of them."

"But if I only find moonlight?"

"You will have found a reflection of a reflection."

Chopin started again without the air of rebeginning, so vague was his melody. Then the *blue note* sounded. Then they were trans-

ported into the heavens, straying with the clouds above the roofs of the square.

Several times already we have noticed this *blue note*. It did not alone proceed from the characteristic Chopin pitches. It was the song of his touch, the timbre of his hand. Like Liszt, Chopin had a distinct state of conscience in each of his fingers. He managed to disassociate their impressions, to make them transmit to his mind a harmony of infinitely varied manual sensations. It was a whole education in technique and observation which taught how to know oneself in a new way, how to think in a new way.

For him, a good technique had for its object not the ability to play everything with an equal tone but to acquire a beautiful quality of touch in order to bring out nuances perfectly. "For a long time," he said, "pianists have gone against nature in trying to give equal power to each finger. On the contrary, each finger should play its proper part. The thumb has the greatest strength because it is the largest and most independent of the fingers. After that

comes the little finger, at the other extreme. Then the index, the principal support of the hand. Then the middle finger, the weakest of all, and its Siamese twin, which some pianists try, by the exertion of main force, to make independent. This is impossible, and perfectly useless. So there are several kinds of tones, as there are several fingers. It is a matter of profiting by these differences. This, in other words, is the whole art of fingering."

Chopin worked a great deal on these questions of transcendental mechanics. In taking his hand, which was small, one was surprised by its bony resistance. One of his pupils has said that it was the frame of a soldier covered with the muscles of a woman. Another, on the contrary, thought it a boneless hand. Stephen Heller was stupefied to see him cover a third of the keyboard, and compared his hand to the jaw of a snake opening to swallow a whole rabbit in one mouthful.

He had invented a method of fingering all his own. His touch was, thanks to his care, softer than any other in the world, against all *effect*, and of a beauty that charmed from the first measure. In order to give the hand a cor-

rect position he had it placed lightly on the keyboard in such a way that the fingers struck the *E*, *F sharp*, *G sharp*, *A sharp*, and *B*. This was, to his mind, the normal position. Without changing it, he had his pupils do exercises designed to give independence and equality to the fingers. Then he put them at *staccato*, to give them lightness, then at *staccato-legato*, and finally at *accented-legato*. He taught a special system to keep the hand in its close and easy position while using the thumb in scales and in *arpeggio* passages. This perfect ease of the hand seemed to him a major virtue, and the only means of attaining exact and equalized playing, even when it was necessary to pass the thumb under the fourth or fifth finger. But these exercises explain also how Chopin executed his extremely difficult accompaniments (unknown until his time), which consist in striking notes that are very distant from each other. It is easily seen how much he shocked the pianists of the old school by his original fingering, which had always the object of keeping the hand in the same position, even while passing the third or fourth finger over the fifth. Sometimes he held it completely flat, and thus obtained effects of

velvet and of finesse that threw Berlioz, and even Liszt, into ecstasy. To acquire the independence of the fingers, he recommended letting them fall freely and lightly, of holding the hand as if suspended in the air without any pressure. He did not want his pupils to take the rapid movements too soon, and had them play all the passages very *forte* and very *piano*. In this way the qualities of sound were formed of themselves, and the hand was never tired. It is he who, always for the purpose which he held to be so important, of gaining the independence of the fingers, thought of having the scales played with an accent on each third or fourth note.

Reading these rapid technical indications ought not to bore you. In every art the technique and the material are the living joys of the intelligence. They are the beautiful secrets of the potter. Chopin did not leave a *method*. He dreamed of it, but it all remained in the state of a project. The big, the developed, the scholarly frightened him. He always inhabited closed regions where he did not much like to be accompanied. He never felt the strength to compose an opera. His teachers and his

friends pressed him to do it. "With your admirable ideas," demanded M. de Perthius, "why don't you do an opera for us?"

"Ah, Count," replied Chopin, "let me write only piano music. I do not know enough to do an opera."

He had a taste for the rare and the finished rather than for great applause. It was in the detail that he excelled. His most pregnant harmonic inventions are made of nothing, but of nothings essential to the character of his art. Professor Kleczynski, one of his compatriots to whom I am indebted for several of these details, has written: "Given the richness of his talent, he, like Schumann, disappointed us a little. But on the other hand, putting his whole soul into the little things, he finished and perfected them in an admirable manner." It is precisely in these "little things" that Chopin was big. Perhaps for him nothing was little. Indeed, where does the little end, and the big begin? Without doubt he put his soul into everything for which he wished a point of perfection.

"When I am ill-disposed," he said, "I play on an Erard piano, and easily find a tone already

made; but when I feel keyed up, and strong enough to discover *my own tone*, then I need a Pleyel piano."

Another friend of Chopin's was Liszt, a friend by heart and by profession. People often tried to oppose one against the other, to persuade each of them that the contrast of their methods, of their playing as of their characters, made them rivals. But this was not so, and if Chopin sometimes seemed a bit retiring, and even timid before the other great virtuoso of his time, it is because the women interfered. George Sand and Marie d'Agoult had known each other for a long time. Before the reign of Chopin, George had gone to Geneva where she had sojourned for a session in the intimacy of this pretty, romantic left-handed establishment. Then Franz and Marie had come to spend a summer at Nohant. On both sides there had been curiosity, admiration, but also secret jealousies. The Countess prided herself on her writing. She had a noble style, a skeptical but well-furnished mind, and, except in love, balance in everything. With George, her spontaneity carried her away. She had at first

a temperamental sympathy for this beautiful tall woman who threw her bonnet over the hotels of the Faubourg. It was a brilliant putting into practice of her theories on love and liberty. "You seem to me the only beautiful, estimable and truly noble thing that I have seen shine in the patrician sphere," she wrote to her. "You are to me the true type of a Princess, fantastic, artistic, loving and noble of manner, of language, and of adjustments, like the daughters of the Kings in heroic days." But this extravagant admiration was entirely literary. So also was it for Marie d'Agoult, who was much more interested in the almost illustrious novelist than in this strange descendant of a line of kings and of a daughter of a bird-seller. She soon decided to win Liszt to her own side, and it was with displeasure that she saw the arrival of Chopin, whose sweet and profound genius her lover prophesied. So they became cold. They separated. George sent the Countess to all the devils.

But Liszt continued to see Chopin because he loved him. No one played the Pole's compositions better than he, because no one knew them better, nor had sounded them more

deeply and played them more in his concerts. "I love my music when Liszt plays it," said Chopin. In the work which Liszt devoted to Chopin he compares the *Etudes*, the *Preludes*, and the *Nocturnes* to the masterpieces of La Fontaine. I do not know that any one has made a truer comparison. Two great poets, who tried to hold the very-big in the very-little, and who sugared with irony their daily-wounded hearts. This is the place to recall the words of Heine, who called Chopin "the Raphaël of the pianoforte." In his music each note is a syllable, each measure a word and each phrase a thought.

Chopin invented "those admirable harmonic progressions by which he dowered even the pages which, in view of the lightness of their subject, did not seem to pretend to such importance." It is by their sentiment that they excel, and on closer examination one recognizes, according to Liszt, these transitions that unite emotion and thought, these degrees of tone of which Delacroix speaks. Of the *classic* works of Chopin, Liszt admired above all the *adagio* of the *Second Concerto*, for which Chopin himself had a marked predilection. "The second-

ary melodies belonged to the author's most beautiful manner, the principal phrase is of admirable breadth: it alternates with a *recitative* that strikes the minor key and is like an antistrophe." In several of the *Etudes* and of the *Scherzos* Liszt discovers the concentrated exasperation, the proud and ironic despair of Fritz. Yet it takes a trained ear, because Chopin allowed hardly a suspicion of the "secret convulsions" which disturbed him. His character "was made up of a thousand nuances which, in overlapping, disguised each other in an indecipherable manner." And Liszt, whose intelligence always stands out so sharply, wrote this fine comment on the last works of Chopin: "He used his art only to give to himself his own tragedy." After having sung his feeling he set himself to tear it apart. But even then, the emotion that inspired these pages remains pure nobility, their expression rests within "the true limits of the language of art," without vulgarity, without wild shrieks, without contortion. "Far from being diminished, the quality of the harmonic stuff becomes only more interesting in itself, more curious to study."

It goes without saying that Chopin considered himself as a romantic, and yet he bowed to two masters: Bach and Mozart; Bach, whom he admired perfectly, without a single reserve, and Mozart, in whom he found "the laws of all the liberties of which he helped himself abundantly." And yet he would not admit that "one should demolish the Greek architrave for the Gothic tower," nor that "one should abolish the pure and exquisite grace of Italian architecture to the profit of the luxuriant fantasy of Moorish construction . . . He never lent the lightest approval to what he did not judge to be an effective conquest for art. His disinterestedness was his strength." (Liszt). We know that Beethoven, Michelangelo, Shakespeare, frightened him. It seems stranger that he should not have liked Schumann more. He would not willingly listen to certain works of Schubert, "whose contours were too sharp for his ear, where the feelings seemed to be stripped naked. All savage brutality filled him with shrinking. In music, as in literature, as in the habit of life, everything that approached melodrama was torture to him." Apropos of Schubert he said to Liszt one day:

"The sublime is defamed when the common and the trivial take its place."

Even in Mozart he found blemishes. He regretted certain passages of *Don Juan*, the work that he adored. "He managed," Liszt always said, "to forget what was repugnant to him, but to reconcile himself to it was always impossible." Romantic that he was, yet he never engaged in any of the controversies of the epoch. He stood apart from the battles in which Liszt and Berlioz threw themselves completely, but he brought to their group, nevertheless, convictions that were "absolute, stubborn, and inflexible." When his opinions had prevailed, like a true *grand Seigneur* and party leader, he kept himself from *over-winning* and returned to all his habits of art and of the spirit.

How often was Liszt bent over the keyboard at Chopin's side to surprise the inimitable touch of the sylph! He studied it with love and infinite care, and he was the only one who succeeded in imitating it. "He always made the melody undulate . . . ; or else he made it move, indecisive, like an airy apparition." This is the famous *rubato*. But the word means

nothing to those who know, and nothing to those who do not know. Chopin ceased to add this explanation to his music. If one has the intelligence it is impossible not to divine "this rule of irregularity." Liszt explained it thus to one of his pupils: "Look at the trees; the wind plays in their leaves and awakens life in them, yet they do not stir." Compositions should be played "with this kind of accented and prosodic balance, this *morbidezza* of which it is difficult to grasp the secret when one has not often heard Chopin himself play."

He etched them all in some nameless color, in some vague outline, in rhythms that seemed to vibrate, that had almost nothing material in them and, like imponderables, seemed to act upon the soul without passing through the senses. Chopin also liked to throw himself into burlesque fantasies; of his own accord he sometimes evoked a scene from Jacques Callot, with laughing, grimacing, gamboling caricatures, witty and malicious, full of musical flings, crackling with wit and English humor like a fire of green boughs. One of these piquant improvisations remains for us in the fifth *Etude*, where only the black keys are played,—just as

Chopin's gayety moved only on the higher keys of the spirit.

It was to his compatriots that he demonstrated it most willingly, to a few choice friends. It is said that even to-day the pupils of his pupils shine in the reflected glory of these preciously transmitted receipts. Doubtless there will always be born here or there a Chopinienne soul, but can the intangible be taught? Liszt said: "Chopin passed among us like a phantom."

CHAPTER XIV

MISUNDERSTANDINGS, SOLITUDE

IN the month of October 1839, King Louis-Philippe expressed a desire to hear Chopin play, and had him invited with Moschelés, the pianist, to Saint-Cloud. Count de Perthuis came to receive the two artists at the entrance of the castle. They had to cross a succession of rooms before arriving at the Salon Carré where the royal family were gathered informally. About the table were the Queen with her workbasket, Madame Adélaïde, the Duchess of Orleans and the ladies-in-waiting. The fat King filled up an armchair close by. Chopin and Moschelés were welcomed as old friends. They took turns at the piano. Chopin played his *Nocturnes* and *Etudes*, Moschelés his own *Etudes;* then they played a sonata for four hands by Mozart. At the end of the *andante* there was a shower of "delicious!" "divine!" and they were asked to repeat it. Chopin's fugue electrified the audience, so much so that he gave himself up to a real "mu-

sical delirium." Enthusiasm on all sides. Chopin received as a souvenir a cup of silver gilt, Moschelés a traveling case.

Such a rare evening was exactly what was needed to stimulate Chopin to work. The three years of the rue Pigalle (1839-1842) which opened under these royal auspices, were just such as he had wished; years of great and perfect labor. It was then that he published the famous *Sonata in G flat minor* of which Schumann said strangely: ". . . A certain pitiless genius blows in our face, strikes any one who tries to stand out against him with a heavy fist, and makes us listen to the end, fascinated and uncomplaining . . . but also without praise, because this is not music. The sonata ends as it should have begun, in a riddle, like a mocking Sphinx."

Following this, Chopin gave to the world in 1840 and 1841 four *Nocturnes*, the second and third *Ballade*, a *Scherzo*, three *Polonaises*, four *Mazurkas*, three new *Etudes*, a *Waltz*, the *Fantasy in E minor*, the *Tarantella*, and a *Concerto Allegro.*

In the spring of 1841 he consented to play again in public at Pleyel's. The hall was

crowded, naturally, because at that time it was Chopin and Liszt who were making the greatest sensation at Paris. It was Liszt himself, this enthusiastic heart, who claimed the honor of reporting it for the *Gazette Musicale*. Here are a few of the variations and cadenzas from the pen of the pianist:

"Monday last, at eight in the evening, the Salon Pleyel was magnificently lighted; at the foot of the carpeted and flower-covered stairway a limitless line of carriages discharged the most elegant women, the most fashionable young people, the most celebrated artists, the richest financiers, the most illustrious of the great Lords, the whole élite of society, the whole aristocracy of birth, of fortune, of talent, and of beauty.

"A large grand piano was open on a stage; they pressed about it; they sought the closest places, already they held their breaths; they greeted each other and whispered that they must not lose a chord, a note, an intention, a thought of him who was to be seated there, and they were right to be thus greedy, attentive, religiously stirred, because he whom they

awaited, whom they wanted to see, to hear, to admire, to applaud, was not only an accomplished virtuoso, a pianist expert in the art of making notes, was not only an artist of great renown; he was all that, and more than all that; he was Chopin.

". . . It is only rarely, at very long intervals, that Chopin is heard in public, but what would be a certain cause of obscurity and neglect for any one else was precisely what assures him an overwhelming renown in the whim of fashion, and what puts him beyond reach of rivalry, jealousy and injustice. Chopin, remaining aloof from the excessive turmoil which for the last several years has harried the playing artists of all points of the world, one on top of another, and one against the other, has remained constantly surrounded by faithful disciples, enthusiastic pupils, warm friends who, while protecting him from shameful quarrels and painful chills, have never ceased spreading his works and with them the admiration for his genius and the respect for his name. His exquisite celebrity in high places, extremely aristocratic, has been free from every attack. He has been surrounded by a complete

absence of criticism, as though posterity had rendered its verdict; and in the brilliant audience which flocked about the too long silent poet, there was not a reticence, not a restriction; there was but praise from every mouth."

Chopin was satisfied with his friend. Some weeks later he left for Nohant, full of ideas, but with no real pleasure. "I am not made for the country," he said, "although I do rejoice in the fresh air." That was nothing. For her part, Sand wrote: "He is always wanting Nohant, and can never stand Nohant." His rural appetite was soon sated. He walked a bit, sat under a tree, or picked a few flowers. Then he returned and shut himself in his room. He was reproached for loving the *artificial life*. What he really loved was his fever, his dimmed soul, his position as Madame Sand's "regular invalid." Without realizing it he cultivated the old leanings of his childhood, his irresolution, his most morbid sensibility, all the refinements of luxury and of the spirit. What he did not like he set himself, unthinkingly, to hate: the plebeian side of George's character, her humanitarian dreams, her friends who were democratic by feeling and by birth, especially this

Pierre Leroux, dirty, badly combed, with a collar powdered with dandruff and who was continually turning up to beg subsidy. Oh, how good it was to see Delacroix appear, the pure quintessence of dandyism! He and Frederick had the air of two princes strayed into evil company at the table where Leroux and Maurice's studio friends exaggerated their open collar garb. The two artists groaned to each other, with a sigh that George should tolerate such freedom. What would Liszt have said, so particular in this respect, and who called himself a *professor of good manners?* But Madame Sand was unwilling that one should judge by appearances. She overrode the bursts of coarse laughter, the shouts, the disputes of her guests, the familiarity of her servants, the drunkenness of her brother Hippolyte. She saw nothing but the *sincerity* of hearts, listened to nothing but ideas, and insisted that "flies should not be taken for elephants." She took the exasperation of Chopin as the petulance of a sick man, incomprehensible, and did not allow herself to read into it anything but the caprices of a sick child of genius. He retired into his room, pouted. He was not visible ex-

cept at meal times when he looked on the company with distrust, with disgust.

There was a rather painful incident during the summer of 1841 because of Mlle. de Rozières, a pupil of Chopin's, who was George's friend and the mistress of Antoine Wodzinski. Chopin thought her an intriguer, a parasite, and he was unhappy that she had been able to insinuate herself into intimacy with George. More than that, he thought her ostentatious, flighty, grandiloquent in the expression of her fancy. But what loosed his anger was that Antoine, inspired perhaps by Mlle. de Rozières, had sent to the Wodzinski family a replica of his, Chopin's, bust by the sculptor Dantan. What equivocal intention might they not read into such an action! What might Marie, his old fiancée, think? Frederick was aghast and complained to Fontana, who had given the statue to Antoine. "I gave Antoine no permission," he wrote to him. . . . "And how strange this will appear to the family. . . . They will never believe that it was not I who sent it to him. These are very delicate matters in which there should be no meddling touch. . . . Mlle. de Rozières is indiscreet,

loves to parade her intimacy, gladly interferes in other people's affairs. She will embellish all this, exaggerate it, and make a bull out of a bullfrog, and it won't be for the first time. She is (between ourselves) an insipid swine, who in an astonishing manner has dug into my private affairs, thrown up the dirt, and rooted around for truffles among the roses. She is a person that one must on no account touch, because when one has touched her the result is sure to be an indescribable indiscretion. In fact, she is an old maid! We old bachelors, we are worth a lot more!"

On her side, George carried the great man's irritation to this young lady. She unfolded on this friendly heart, because was she not attacked from below and pierced with pin pricks each time that she took sides against the judgments and opinions of her friend? "If I had not been a witness to these extravagant neurotic likes and dislikes for three years, I should understand nothing, but unfortunately I am too used to them," she wrote. "I tried to put him back in good spirits by telling him that W. was not coming here. He could count on that. He hit the ceiling, and said that if I was certain, ap-

parently it was because I had told W. the truth. Thereupon I said 'Yes.' I thought he would go mad. He wanted to leave. He said I would make him look like a fool, jealous, ridiculous, that I had made him lose his best friends, that it all came from the cackling we had done between us, you and I, etc., etc. . . . Anyway, as usual, he wanted no one to suffer from his jealousy but me." And further on: "I have never had any rest and I never shall have any with him. With his desperate constitution one can never know anything. The day before yesterday he passed the whole day without saying a syllable to any one at all. . . . I do not want him to think he is the master. He would be so much the more stormy in the future. Even in gaining a victory he would be in despair because he does not know what he wants, nor what he does not want."

Certainly Chopin was jealous, but a slightly different meaning than usual should be attached to the word. It was not the jealousy of a lover. His jealousy extended to all the influences, the desires, the curiosities, and the friendships of his mistress. It was the savage necessity of absolute possession. He had to know at each

moment that all of George's vital sources were born in his own heart, that if he was the child in fact, he was the father in spirit. He had to feel that his reign effaced preceding reigns, abolished them, and that in adopting him, in loving him, George was born anew. He should have liked for her not to know of the existence even of evil, that she should never think of it in speaking to him, that without ceasing to be good, tender, devoted, voluptuous, maternal, she should still be the pale, the innocent, the severe, the virginal wife of his soul. "He would have demanded but that of me, this poor lover of the impossible," noted Sand. And when he felt this universal propriety escaping him, which his love should have given him, he was through. He repulsed these feeble substitutes.

Assuredly he had some reason to be jealous of every one, of a too-forward servant, of the Doctor, of the great simpleton of a cousin, half bourgeois, half lout, who came to bring game to the mistress of Nohant, of a beggar, a poacher with a strong face,—because this invalid with sharpened nerves well understood what troubles, what desires these passers-by

aroused in a woman for whom the *exercise of the emotions* was the true law of knowledge; of a woman,—he knew well,—who had no fear, and no scruples before this kind of experience. So he found the wit to torment her. "He seemed to be gnawing softly to amuse himself, and the wound that he made penetrated clear into the entrails." Then he would leave her presence with a phrase that was perfectly polite, but freezing, and go back to close himself in his own room. During these nights of toil, George served as her own lay figure, stripped the shrinking soul of her lover, and good woman of letters that she was, traced their double portrait in her *Lucrezia Floriani*. Was it obtuseness, sadism, or an obscure vengeance that led her the next day to make Chopin read these pitiless reconstructions? But the artist saw nothing, or at least he seemed not to. He bent over the pages, he admired, he praised, but as always, he gave out nothing of his inner self, and if Lucrezia delivered herself in writing, Prince Karol returned to his room where the light sounds of the piano interpreted all of his suppressed misery. He, also, clung to his grief, and even to the outward signs of his

grief, "Take good care of my manuscripts," he advised Fontana. "Don't tear them, don't dirty them, don't spoil them. . . . I love my *written pain* so much that I always tremble for my papers."

"The *friendship* of Chopin . . ." wrote George. Or else: "Our own story had no romance in it." And even: "His piano was much more his torment than his joy." This shows to what a point beings who have mingled their lives can reserve their souls. Here are two of them, very penetrating, very greedy, and yet who would never be wedded.

In the fall of 1842 George Sand and Chopin left the rue Pigalle to move to Nos. 5 and 9 in the Square d'Orleans. Between them at No. 7 lived their great friend Mme. Marliani, the wife of an exiled Spanish politician. At one side lived Pauline Viardot and the sculptor Dantan. They established there a kind of commune which provided diversion for them, and where freedom was "guaranteed." Each one worked and lived at home. Their meals were taken at common expense at Mme. Marliani's. Chopin had a large salon for his pianos; Sand, a billiard room. His quarters were furnished

in the modern style of Louis-Philippe, with a clock and empire candelabra on the mantel. Back of one of the pianos was a painting by Frère of a caravan on the desert. Above the other a Coignet pastel of the Pyramids. During the day they never saw each other, but in the evening they dropped in on one another like good country neighbors. Chopin always cultivated elegant society, and received at his house his titled and amorous pupils. But he received only with a good deal of distaste the innumerable pianists and curious who now came to call on him and solicited his support.

One day Chopin's valet brought in the card of a M. W. de Lenz, a Russian virtuoso and writer on musical subjects. Chopin would not have received him (this enemy of his Poland still less than any one else) if the card had not carried in pencil the words "*Laissez passer:* Franz Liszt." He therefore decided to have this slightly importunate gentleman in, and begged him to be seated at the piano. Lenz played well. It was apparent that he was a pupil of Liszt. He outdid himself in one or two of Chopin's *Mazurkas*, and like his master, added a few embellishments of his own.

Chopin was both amused and a little irritated.

"He has to touch everything, this good Franz! But a recommendation from him is worth something; you are the first pupil who has come from him. I shall give you two lessons a week. Be punctual; with me everything runs on schedule. My house is a pigeon-cote."

As M. Lenz had expressed a lively desire to make the acquaintance of Mme. Sand, Chopin invited him to come back as a friend. He therefore arrived one evening and Chopin presented him to George, to Pauline Viardot, to Mme. Marliani. Sand, hostile and cold, did not say a word, because she detested Russians, but Lenz pointedly seated himself at her side. He noticed that Chopin darted all around them like a little frightened bird in a cage. In order to break the tenseness, Chopin asked Lenz to play the *Invitation to a Waltz*, an elegant specialty of the Russian who several years before had revealed it to Liszt himself. Lenz played it, slightly intimidated. On which George continued to remain silent. Chopin shook his hand amiably, then Lenz seated himself with some embarrassment behind the table on which a *Carcel* lamp was burning.

"Aren't you coming to St. Petersburg some time?" demanded the stranger, addressing Sand.

"I should never lower myself to a country of slaves!"

"You would be right not to come. You might find the door closed."

George, astonished, opened her big eyes which Lenz qualified in his notes as "beautiful big eyes of a heifer." Chopin, however, did not seem displeased, as he enjoyed having his mistress placed out of countenance. She arose and went to the fireplace where a log was flaming, and lighted a fat Havana cigar.

"Frederick, a spill," she cried. He rose and brought the light.

"At Petersburg," went on George, blowing out a cloud of smoke, "probably I could not smoke a cigar in a drawing room?"

"In no drawing room, Madam, have I ever seen a cigar smoked," replied this badly brought-up Lenz, looking at the pictures through his glasses.

In any case it must be supposed that these robust manners were not altogether displeasing, because the day after this visit while Chopin was giving him his lesson, he said to Lenz:

"Madame Sand thinks she has been rude to you. She can be so pleasant. She liked you."

One can divine what obscure attractions this sensualist obeyed. At times victories of the flesh are preceded by victories of wit. But it was something quite ill-fitted to Chopin, he who had so little muscle, so little breath, and such a delicate skin "that a prick of a gnat made a deep gash in him." The whole complication came about because he still loved with passion, while she had, for a long time, dwelt in affection. Her "little Chopin" she loved, she adored, but in the same way that she loved Maurice and Solange.

In the months during which they lived apart, she was constantly disturbed about his health. She knew that he did not take care of himself. She wrote to one person and another to ask them to keep a discreet watch. He did not forget to drink his chocolate in the morning? His bouillon at ten o'clock? She would be obliged if he would take care of himself, not go out without his muffler.

But, he had found a new way to still further exalt the sentiments of which the abnormal itself is an active stimulant to artistic pro-

duction; he did not want to worry her, he would leave her in ignorance of his moral and physical illness, of his agonies, of his hemorrhages, that she, at least, might have the peace necessary for her work. In every willing sacrifice to love there are humble joys, and the deeper in that they remain hidden, but it is the deepest buried love that nourishes the most.

George now passed part of her winters in the country, while Chopin wore himself out in Paris. It was a problem not to let her notice anything. His letters were gay, confiding. ". . . Sickness is far behind me, and I have only happiness ahead. I have never been so hopeful." Or else: "Your little garden (in the Square d'Orleans) is all snowballs, sugar, swans, ermine, cream cheese, Solange's hands, and Maurice's teeth. Take care of yourself. Don't tire yourself out too much with your tasks. Until another letter to-morrow, if you will permit. Your always older than ever, and very extremely, incredibly old

"CHOPIN."

Perhaps he had never felt more alone, this "little sufferer," as his maternal friend calls him. But he was a man of loneliness

From a distance of forty years I see another who resembles him, and who also feeds upon a terribly hard *me*, a me which, no more than that of Chopin, could expand over no other beings, bleed on them, because he was too high, too savage, too shamed; that is Nietzsche. It is not surprising that Nietzsche loved Chopin like a chosen brother. The work of both of them is a peak of solitude. And their love was too great for their hearts.

When I hear played the *Nocturne in C Minor* (op. 48), where under so much repressed suffering there still bursts forth, mingled with *sadness*, this *ideal* which is built only upon the creative joys of the spirit, I think of a page written by Nietzsche in a loggia which overlooks the Place Barberini at Rome, in the month of May, 1883. It is this beautiful *Night Song* through which pass the blue and black visions of Chopin, his flowerlike glance, his young girl's eyes, and his heart so "extremely, incredibly old." Some fragments of these strophes seem to me to furnish for the *Nocturne* of which I speak—and for the final solitudes into which the poet is now entering—a commentary worthy of him. Before calling them to mind I shall still say that a tradition

among the Polish artists has it that this piece was composed one stormy day when Chopin had taken refuge in the Church of St.-Germain des Pres. He listened to the Mass under the rolling thunder and, coming back home, improvised the fine choral that forms the center of that solemn Elevation. But that does not for a moment prevent me from associating this prayer with the pagan song of Nietzsche. Quite the contrary: both the one and the other have this flight, this point of enthusiasm, which draws the cry from the philosopher: "There is in me a desire for love which itself speaks the language of love."

THE NIGHT SONG

"It is night: now the voice of the trickling fountains rises higher. And my soul, also, is a trickling fountain.

"It is night: now all the songs of the lovers awake. And my soul, also, is a lovers' song.

"There is in me something unappeased, and unappeasable, that struggles to raise its voice. There is in me a desire for love which itself speaks the language of love.

"I am light: ah! if I were night! But this is my solitude, to be enveloped in light.

. . . . .

"My poverty is that my hand never rests from giving; my jealousy, to see eyes full of waiting and nights illuminated with desire.

"Oh, misery to all those who give! Oh, eclipse of my sun! Oh, desire of desiring! Oh, the devouring hunger in satiety!"

. . . . .

Thus spake Zarathustra.

CHAPTER XV

CHAGRIN, HATE

IT seems that it was about 1842 that life for Chopin began to lower its tone. For whom should he cultivate even the will to get well, now that love was no longer ahead, but behind him? Lovers who feel the power of suffering desiccating in them abandon themselves immediately to the soft call of Death. If they disappear they are reproached for having been weak; if they survive, for having been cynics. They themselves do not know that they are emptied of their substance like those hollow trees still full of leaves which a gust of wind will vanquish. Chopin, dying, thought himself eternal.

In the spring of 1842, his childhood friend, Matuszinski, succumbed to tuberculosis. In the month of May, 1844, his father passed away at Warsaw. It was the end of a just man. He closed his eyes looking at the portraits and the bust of his beloved son, and asked that after

death his body be opened because he feared being buried alive.

These two shocks were terrific for the artist, yet he wrote to his own people: "I have already survived so many younger and stronger people than I that it seems I am eternal. . . . You must never worry about me: God gives me His Grace." In the face of the persistence of his depression, George conceived the idea of inviting Frederick's oldest sister and her husband, the Jedrzeïewiczs, to Nohant. It was necessary to warn them of the great changes they were to see in their brother's health. George wrote to them:

"You are going to find my dear child very delicate and very changed since the time when you saw him, yet you must not be too fearful of his health. In general it has not changed during the last six years, when I have seen him every day. A strong paroxysm of coughing every morning and each winter two or three more considerable spells, each lasting only two or three days, a few neuralgic pains from time to time, that is his regular state. For the rest, his chest is healthy, and his delicate organism

has no lesion. I am always hoping that with time it will grow stronger, but at least I am sure that with a regulated life and care it will last as long as any other. The happiness of seeing you, even though it is mixed with deep and poignant emotions, which may perhaps wound him a little the first day, nevertheless will do him immense good, and I am so happy for him that I bless the decision you have made. . . . For a long time he has cared for nothing but the happiness of those whom he loves, instead of that which he can no longer share with them. For my part, I have done everything I could to soften this cruel loss, and though I have not made him forget it, I have at least the consolation of knowing that, after you, I have given and inspired as much affection as is possible."

George even wrote to Mme. Nicolas Chopin to assure her that henceforth she would consecrate her life to Frederick and regard him as her own son.

Thus Louise and her husband came in 1844 to spend part of the summer at Nohant, and the joy that Chopin experienced was translated

into a new feeling of gratitude for his friend. Some of the bitterness left his soul, left it stronger and more courageous. Even confidence returned for a time. And the friendship that he saw born between George and Louise created different bonds between them, which from that time forth reached out beyond love, toward his childhood and his country. The filial and family side of his tenderness found itself reënforced.

When they had gone Frederick clung even more tightly to his "beloveds," to these pieces of himself. He saw them again in dreams. He looked for their places on the sofa, preserved like a relic an embroidered slipper forgotten by his sister, suggesting the Marie Wodzinska of other days who had preserved the pencil from his portfolio. He sent them news of the autumn, of the garden. He entered into the most minute details, even to speaking of the tiny bear which went up and down on the barometer. How clearly one sees how short he fell, this mock lover!

When they went walking he followed the others on a little donkey so as to tire himself less. But the autumn was cold and rainy, and Cho-

pin passed more time before the piano than outside. He returned to Paris and reinstalled himself in the Square d'Orleans at the very beginning of November. George was seriously preoccupied this time about "her dear corpse," recommending him to friends while she stayed in the country. This period is marked in one way and another by a flame of affectionate solicitude. Chopin did not want her to worry and continued to hide the progress of his malady. In like manner George got information about him. "He must not know. . . ." "I cannot rid myself of these preoccupations which make up the happiness of my life. . . ." "Decidedly I cannot live without my little sufferer." She realized that "Chip's" constitution was attacked in a very serious way. He declined visibly. The bad winter, nerves, irritation, the persistent bronchitis were perhaps the causes. In any case love was still powerful. But love had apparently withdrawn into family feeling. ". . . Let him never have the least inquietude about any of you," wrote George to Louise, "because his heart is always with you, tormenting him at every moment and turning him toward his dear family."

During the winter of 1845, and the spring of 1846, he was ill with grippe, yet he made no other plans than the usual ones, and arranged a summer at Nohant. Before leaving he gave a little dinner. "Music, flowers, eats." For guests: Prince Czartoryski and his wife, Princess Sapieha, Delacroix, Louis Blanc, Pauline Viardot; in short, old friends. But on arriving at Nohant everything seemed strange to him, as in a house abandoned by life. He moved his piano around, changed the position of his table, his books of poetry, his music. "I have always one foot with you," he wrote to Louise and her husband, "and the other in the room next door where my hostess works, and none at all in my own home just now, *but always in foreign spheres.* These are without doubt imaginary spheres, but I don't blush for them."

His pleasure was in making Pauline Viardot sing the Spanish melodies that she had noted down herself. "I am very fond of these songs. She has promised me to sing them to you when she goes to Warsaw. This music will unite me with you. I have always listened to it with great enthusiasm."

But we must look below the surface, because in the depths of all these beings who lived in common a drama was preparing. One can say that it had been brewing for several years. And it was neither George nor Frederick who was the responsible author of its explosion, but the children.

First there was Maurice, the oldest, a young man of twenty-two adored by his mother and very spoiled by her, brought up any way at all, a painter at some hours, a litterateur at others, a collector of lepidoptera and of minerals who promised, in sum, to become a fairly complete type of the soured intellectual. He was not without talent, had charm, gayety, but it had a faintly sharp and grating timbre. Since the trip to Majorca he had had time to become accustomed to Chopin, having seen this friend of his mother every day, so to speak. But if there had been at first a certain sympathy between them, it was quickly relinquished and for several years now they had not gotten on. Without doubt this is easily explained. Maurice loved his mother above everything, and he saw clearly that her life was not easy, or smooth; he came upon disputes, he was exasperated by

the nervousness of the so-called great man, whom he saw beneath the features of a difficult invalid as sullen, and sometimes evil. Perhaps even he suffered from the sneering smiles that followed the passage of the two celebrated lovers. And then his father, the mediocre Dudevant, must occasionally have let fall great outrageous vulgarities when his son came to see him. He was chilled also by the character of Chopin, his noble manners, the often disdainful eye of this severe and encumbering parasite. But children never forgive a stranger who permits himself a criticism, much less if it is well founded. Chopin made one, severe enough, concerning Maurice and Augustine. This Augustine was a niece of Mme. Sand, daughter of her cousin, Adèle Brault, who belonged to the side of the family that was entirely bourgeois and who was nothing more than a lady of easy virtue. Out of pity for the girl, George had taken her into her home, where Augustine, charming and tender-hearted, had become the favorite of all the young people with one exception, Solange. Chopin did not like Augustine. He took Solange's side. As for Maurice, born enemy of his sister, he was *for*

Augustine to such a degree that he was suspected of having become her lover. George denied this vociferously, with authority, but Chopin willingly believed it, first because of his intuition, secondly because Solange tried, by every kind of means, to fix the idea in his head.

A strange child, this Solange. Physically she was the image of her great-grandmother, Marie-Aurore of Saxe, that is to say, blonde, fresh, beautifully built. In character she was cold, brilliant and alive, passionate, vain, very excitable, sullen, possibly false, certainly strong willed, vicious without any doubt, absolutely unbalanced. This neurotic, who might have developed in such a very interesting way, they always regarded as hard-hearted. They pestered her, they soured her, they made her ruthless. Pauline Viardot contended that she did wrong for the love of it. It was only that she was born ardent and unfortunate. A nature such as this has need of being loved deeply, and its trials come to it above all through jealousy. It is the offenses slowly branded on the heart that make it solitary and wicked. Her mother herself said: "She is nineteen years old, she is beautiful, she has a remarkable mind, she has

been brought up with love under conditions of happiness, growth, morality, which should have made of her a saint or a heroine. But this century is damned, and she is a child of this century. . . . Everything is passion with her, an *icy* passion, that is very deep, inexplicable and terrifying." Whose fault was that? It is only inside of families that one finds this kind of refinement of hate which is a sad kind of love.

For a long time the mystery of this soul had attracted Chopin. And above everything, Solange was a coquette. Ever since her puberty she had tried out the power of her troubled age on him, and this man of nerves had not seemed insensible. Did he not rediscover in her the seductions and even that free and animal grace that George must have had at fifteen? A lover loves, in the daughter of his mistress, the happiness that he has missed, and the rejuvenated memory of his sufferings. Solange was less frank than her mother; she was even somewhat perverse. She tried a few games that were not altogether innocent; first from choice, and also to appease this amorous rancor that she vowed against her own people. It would be fine to avenge her own spurned heart by stealing Cho-

pin's tenderness from her mother. Another of his attractions for Solange was his elegance, his distinction, his high worldly connections. For she was a snob, and it was delicious to flee to the great friend's salon which was filled with countesses, while that of her mother resounded with the roars of Maurice and his comrades, or the "great thoughts" of Pierre Leroux. Lately there were even to be found there a herd of poet-workmen to whom the novelist was stubbornly attached.

So there was a whole obscure drama daily averted but daily reawakened, sown with misunderstandings, and complicated by embarrassments. Because Sand, many times, wanted to talk it out with her lover, to force him to interfere, but he shied away, or even openly took Solange's part. George tried in vain to break her daughter. Rather she broke herself against these sharp edges of character, which in many ways were so like her own.

It was Chopin who suffered the most from these misunderstandings, because he could never relieve himself by words, by vain explanations. He could never express anything except in music. His nervousness increased.

He allowed himself to become exasperated to the point of tears by incidents affecting servants. He could not conceive that an old servant could be dismissed, and Mme. Sand, precisely, this good *communist*, would make a new house with the sweep of her arm. It was a calamity. Frederick's Polish *valet de chambre* was dismissed "because the children did not like him." (Read: "Maurice and Augustine".) Then it was the old gardener Pierre who was let go after forty years of service. The next in turn was Françoise, the chambermaid, to whom nevertheless George had dedicated one of her books. "God grant," wrote Frederick to his sister, "that the new ones will please the young man and his cousin more." He was tired. And, "when I am tired I am not gay. That reacts on every one's spirits, and the young people have no fun with me." He felt old.

George also felt old. She was forty-two. And even while she was editing a passage in her *Lucrezia Floriani* she was thinking so strongly of herself, and of her first lover, that she returned for the first time in fifteen years to the little wood she could see from her window

where she used to meet Jules Sandeau. It was in this *sacred wood* that her flight from the conjugal house had been decided, in 1831. There she searched, and there she found a tree under which her lover had been in the habit of waiting for her. Their initials cut into the bark were still faintly visible. She went over in her memory the details and the whole story of her first passion, and compared them to those of her last, not to establish a parallel between the two men, whom she did not dream of judging coldly, but to ask her own heart if it could still feel passion and bear suffering. . . . "Am I still capable of loving? Yes, more than ever, because it is the essence of my life, and I feel myself living with intensity through grief; if I could no longer love, I could no longer suffer. I suffer, therefore I love and I exist." And yet she felt that she must renounce something. What then? The hope of happiness? "At a certain age," she finished by thinking, "there is no other happiness than that which one gives; to look for any other is madness. . . . So La Floriani was seized with an immense sadness in saying an eternal farewell to

her cherished illusions. She rolled on the ground, drowned in tears."

This summer's end of 1846 was a trying period, a period of crises. The sky itself was full of storm, yet Chopin worked. He wrote to the loved ones at Warsaw. He told them all the stories which one must pack into a letter when one wishes to hide one's true feelings; the giraffe at the Jardin des Plantes was dead. The Italians had reopened in Paris. M. Le Verier had discovered a new planet. M. Faber of London, a Professor of Mathematics, had built a machine that sang an air of Haydn, and *God Save the Queen.* "I play a little, and write a little. I am one moment happy about my *Sonata* with the violoncello, and the next unhappy; I throw it in the corner and then take it up again. I have three new *Mazurkas.* (In G major, F minor, C sharp minor, dedicated to Countess Czosnowska, op. 63.) . . . When I am composing them I think they are good; otherwise one would never compose. Later on comes reflection, and one rejects or accepts. Time is the best judge and patience the best master. I hope to have a letter from you soon, yet I am not impatient, and I know

that with your large family it is difficult for each one to write me a word, especially as with us a pen is not enough. I don't know how many years we would have to talk to be at the end of our Latin, as they say here. So you must not be surprised or sad when you do not receive a letter from me, because there is no real reason, any more than there is with you. There is a certain sadness united with the pleasure of writing to you; it is the knowledge that between us there are no words, hardly even deeds. . . . The winter does not promise badly, and by taking care of myself a little it will pass like the last, and God willing, not worse. How many people are worse off than I! It is true that many are better but I do not think about them."

Have we noticed those words: "Especially as a pen is not enough for us . . . ?" There sounds the exquisite mute on Chopin's plaints. For George the pen was enough. Every one around Chopin, in default of being happy, was noisy. They played comedies. They got up tableaux vivants and charades. Pantomime, over which the whole world was soon to go crazy, was Chopin's invention. It was he who

held the piano and improvised while the young people danced comic ballets, with the assistance of a few guests: Arago, Louis Blanc. But no one suspected that between George and Frederick the break was made. Desires had been dead for a long time. And now tenderness, affection, the attachment of the soul, no longer existed but on one side. In weeping over her lost youth in the *sacred wood*, George had shed her last tears.

Thenceforth she was to be only a mother, pitilessly a mother, and only of her *two* children. She was busy now in marrying off Solange. Two or three aspirants succeeded each other at Nohant, one after the other, among them Victor de Laprade, then a young Berry lad, with whom Solange flirted gayly.

Then one fine day, a dispute burst out between Maurice and Chopin over some silly question. One of those grave, irreparable disputes. The two wounded each other savagely. A moment later they embraced, "but the grain of sand had fallen into the quiet lake, and little by little the stones fall in, one by one," wrote George. It soon began again. Maurice spoke of leaving the group and the house. His

mother took his side, naturally. So Chopin bowed his head. It was he who would go. No one said a word to restrain him.

He started out in the first days of November. Seven years and a half before, he had arrived at Nohant for the first time, his physique already much deteriorated. That is nothing, however, when the soul is strong. But on this late autumn day that, too, collapsed.

They saw the invalid, wrapped in blankets, mount into his calèche. With his hand, pale and dry, he made a sign of farewell. No one understood its meaning, not even he. He was entering into Death.

CHAPTER XVI

THE STORY OF A RUPTURE

THERE was a great deal of sickness in Paris. Grzymala had just spent seventeen days without sleeping; Delacroix, more ill than ever, dragged himself nevertheless to the Luxembourg. Chopin tried also to fight against his solitude, and to keep up appearances as he had done all these last years. But at length he was forced to admit that he had not the courage to leave his own hearth for an instant. New Year's Day of 1847 arrived. He sent George the customary bonbons, his best wishes, and, smothered in coats, had himself driven to the Hôtel Lambert, to his friends the Czartoryskis.

At Nohant they kept up the semblance of happiness. Pantomime raged. The scenery was brushed up, costumes sewn. This family, so *united*, played out its comedy also. But suddenly the baggage was packed for return to Paris early in January, leaving Solange's fiancé, M. des Préaulx, flat. And hardly had they been settled a month in the Square d'Or-

leans when everything was shifted about again by the entrance on the scene of a new actor, the sculptor Clésinger. He was a man of thirty-three, violent, sanguine, enthusiastic, who had just made a name in the expositions and achieved fame at the first stroke. He had asked to do a bust of Mme. Sand, came to call, saw Solange and was lost. She was almost as quickly inflamed. The projected marriage with M. des Préaulx was postponed in spite of the misgivings of George, who had gathered reports about the sculptor that were shameful. "A hot-tempered and disorderly gentleman, a one-time dragoon, become a great sculptor, everywhere conducting himself as though he were in the café of the regiment, or in the studio," said Arsène Houssaye. All decisions were postponed. The novelist took her daughter back to Nohant immediately after the first days of Holy Week, at the beginning of April.

Chopin at once had a very decided opinion about these events. First, regret to see the Berry union fall through, as it seemed to him a very sweet and proper one. Then, an instinctive dislike made him hostile to the "stone tailor," as he called Clésinger. He wrote to

his people: "Sol is not to be married yet. When they all arrived in Paris to sign the contract she no longer wanted it. I am sorry, and I pity the young man, who is very honest and very much in love; but it is better that it should have happened before the marriage than after. They say it is postponed till later on, but I know what that is." George, for her part, confided her difficulties to a friend: "Within six weeks she has broken off a love she had hardly felt, and she has begun on another which she takes very hard. She would marry one, she courts and marries another. It's odd, it's above all bold; but at that, it is her right and fortune smiles on her. She substitutes for a gentle and modest marriage a brilliant and burning one. She has seized everything in her own hands and is taking me to Paris at the end of April. . . . Work and emotion take up all my days and all my nights. . . . This wedding must take place suddenly, as though by surprise. Also, it is a very *deep* secret I am confiding to you, and one that even Maurice does not know. (He is in Holland.)"

Above all Chopin was not to know anything, —Chopin, who was now refused all intimate

participation in the family affairs. George really felt a master this time in this fierce Clésinger, who boasted that he would attain his ends at any cost. He appeared suddenly at La Châtre, he met Solange in the woods, he demanded a definite answer. Naturally she said yes, since she loved him. George was forced to give in, despite her apprehensions, her "terror." The 16th of April, she called her son to the rescue because she was afraid, she needed to be reassured. She added at the end of the letter: "Not a word of all this to Chopin; it does not concern him, and when the Rubicon is crossed, *ifs* and *buts* do only harm."

When the Rubicon is crossed. . . . One more time! How many times had she crossed it during her life, this old hand at ruptures? And yet she pretended not to see that this was the critical point of her long liaison. The marriage of Solange, this fact, indeed, entirely outside of her own love life, had here become the plank to which the hand of the pianist still clung, and she kicked it away with her heel.

Chopin heard gossip about the affair, but he said nothing, he questioned no one. He waited for a renewal of confidence. If all the

mystery astonished him, if he even guessed at the deliberate and childish side of the rupture of his friendship which was thus brought home to him, he showed nothing of it. As always, it was his health that paid for his muzzled grief. He was taken gravely ill. But it was no longer George who nursed him; it was Princess Marceline Czartoryska. She sent a bulletin of his health to Nohant. "One more trouble added to all the rest," replied George on May 7th. "Is he really seriously ill? Write me, I count on you to tell me the truth and to nurse him." Yet on that very day she wrote in her *Journal* with a very much calmer pen: "Here I am at the age of forty-three with a constitution of iron, streaked with painful indispositions, which give me, however, *only a few hours of spleen, dissipated the next day. . . . To-day my soul is well, and my body also.*" Was it that day that she was sincere, or the next, the 8th of May, when she said to Mlle. de Rozières: "I am sick with worry and have a vertigo in writing to you. I cannot leave my family at such a moment, when I have not even Maurice to save the proprieties and protect his sister from wicked insinuations. I suf-

fer a great deal, I assure you. Write me, I beg. Tell Chopin whatever you think best about me. Yet I dare not write him, I am afraid of disturbing him, I am afraid that the marriage of Solange displeases him greatly and that he has a disagreeable shock each time I speak to him about it. Yet I could not make a mystery of it to him and I have had to act as I have done. I cannot make Chopin the head and counselor of the family; my children would not accept him, and the dignity of my life would be lost."

Had it been a question of dignity she might better have thought of it earlier. If it was to help Chopin's health, then it was too late for that too. She did not even perceive the contradictions in her letter. The poor great artist remained firm in his determined silence, and fiercely proud. He responded on the 15th of May to his disoriented mistress:

"Need I tell you how much pleasure your good letter, which I have just received, has given me, and how much the excellent details of all that is now occupying your attention have interested me? No one more than I, among

all your friends, as you well know, wishes more sincerely for the happiness of your child. And please tell her this for me, I beg you. I am already well. God keep you always in your strength and your activity. Be at peace and happy.

"Your ever devoted, CHOPIN."

George did not feel relieved. Yet she had just published her *Lucrezia Floriani*, already the funeral trumpet of her love. But Chopin continued to see in it nothing but "beautiful characters of women and men, great naturalness and poetry." This would force her to confess differently, to explain herself further. Because there was always in her this impetuous need of justification which drove her, at the decisive moments of the beginning or of the end of a love affair, to acknowledge the forces that motivated her. Toward whom should she, this time, fire the commentaries of her sick brain, and expose the fatigue of a body which thenceforth would be able to demand but the briefest of gratifications? Eight years before she had written to Count Grzymala to show of what she was capable, and that a heart like hers could

pass through the most diverse phases of passion, "as the sun passes through the signs of the Zodiac." If the whole horizon of love had been traversed, it seemed right, even useful, to put a period at the threshold of beginning night. So she took a sheet of paper and wrote to the same confidant—he of the first and of the final hour—the following lines:

"12th May, 1847.

"Thank you, my dear friend, for your good letters. I knew in a vague and uncertain way that he was ill twenty-four hours before the letter from the good Princess. Thank this angel also for me. How I suffered during those twenty-four hours it is impossible to tell you. Whatever had happened I was in such a position that I could not have budged.

"Anyway, once again he is saved, but how dark the future is for me about him!

"I do not yet know if my daughter is to be married here in eight days, or at Paris in fifteen. In any case, I shall be in Paris for a few days at the end of the month, and if Chopin can be moved I shall bring him back here. My friend, I am as happy as can be over the mar-

riage of my daughter, as she is transported with love and joy, and as Clésinger seems to deserve it, loves her passionately, and will give her the life she wants. But it doesn't matter, one suffers a great deal in making such a decision.

"I feel that Chopin must for his part have suffered also at not knowing, at not understanding, and at not being able to advise anything, but it is impossible to take his advice into consideration on the real affairs of life. He has never seen facts truly, nor understood human nature on a single point; his soul is all poetry, and he cannot bear what is different from himself. Besides, his influence in my family affairs would mean for me the loss of all dignity and of all love for and from my children.

"Talk to him and try to make him understand in a general way that he should refrain from thinking about them. If I tell him that Clésinger (whom he does not like), deserves our affection, he will only hate him the more, and will bring on himself Solange's hatred. This is all very difficult and delicate, and I know of no way of calming and healing a sick soul who is irritated by efforts to make him get well. The evil that consumes this poor being,

both morally and physically, has been killing me for a long time, and I see him go away without ever having been able to do him any good, since it is the anxious, jealous and stormy affection he has for me that is the principal cause of his sadness. For seven years I have lived with him and with others like a virgin; I have grown old before my time, without effort or sacrifice even, so tired of passions and disillusions I was, and without cure. If any woman on earth should have inspired him with the most absolute confidence, it was I, and he never understood that; and I know that many people accused me, some with having used him up by the violence of my senses, others with having made him desperate with my extravagances. I believe you know the truth. He complains of me that I have killed him by privation, while I was certain that I should kill him if I had acted otherwise. See what a situation mine is in this funereal friendship, in which I have made myself his slave in every circumstance in which I could without showing an impossible and culpable preference for him over my children,—where the respect that I had to inspire in these children and in my friends has been so delicate and so necessary

to preserve. I have accomplished in this respect prodigies of patience of which I did not believe myself capable, I, who did not have the nature of a saint like the Princess. I have attained to martyrdom; but Heaven is inexorable against me, as though I had great sins to expiate, because in the midst of all these efforts and sacrifices, he whom I love with an absolutely chaste and maternal love dies a victim of the mad attachment he bears for me.

"May God will, in His Goodness, that, at least, my children shall be happy, that is to say, good, generous, and at peace with their consciences; because I do not believe in happiness in this world and the law of Heaven is so strict in this regard that it is almost an impious revolt to dream of not suffering from all external things. The only strength in which we can take refuge is in the wish to fulfill our duty.

"Remember me to our Anna, and tell her what is in the bottom of my heart, then burn my letter. I am sending you one for that dear Gutmann, whose address I do not know. Do not give it to him in the presence of Chopin, who does not yet know that I have been told

of his sickness, and who does not want me to know it. His worthy and generous heart has always a thousand exquisite delicacies about the cruel aberrations that kill him. Ah! If some day Anna could talk to him, and probe into his heart to heal it! But he has it hermetically sealed to his best friends. Good-by, my dear, I love you. Remember that I shall always have courage and perseverance and devotion, in spite of my suffering, and that I do not complain. Solange embraces you.

"GEORGE."

What contradictions again, and how this time each phrase rings false! The only truths that shine out here in spite of the author are the twitchings of her will in the affair of her daughter, and her decision to be finished with Chopin. She is, one more time, in the pangs of liberation, and a woman in prey to that ill surpasses everything. It is in spite of her also —and perhaps because there is in the laws of love as in those of art, a sort of symmetry, a secret equilibrium—that this last *association* was opened almost nine years ago and was closed to-day on a letter to the same man.

These nearly nine years rest completely between these two missives, of which the one expressed the initial desire to unite two opposite souls by forcing nature; the other to jilt the ill-assorted partner,—"All poetry, all music"—for whom the practice of existence and the realities of the flesh remain the true grounds of the illusion. It is vain to try to comment further on so perfectly legible a conflict. I am trying to be just in giving neither right nor wrong to either of the two parties. They had each brought their share to the establishment, and, as happens, the one who had eaten his first took from the other that in which he was more rich. George should have remained the strongest because she had nothing left to give. Chopin should have foundered because it was his wealth itself that ruined him.

On the 20th of May Solange was married in haste, almost by stealth, at Nohant. M. Dudevant was present at this curious wedding, where his daughter did not even sign his name on the register, but the pseudonym of her mother. The mother, having strained a muscle, had to be carried to the church.

"Never was a wedding less gay," she said. There were evil presentiments in the air. Then still another engagement,—that of Augustine, Maurice's friend, whom the young man wanted to marry to his friend Theodore Rousseau, the painter. Then certain strange events occurred. The engagement of Augustine was abruptly broken off on some absurd pretext. In reality it was the revenge of Solange. Out of her hate for her cousin and bitterness against her brother, she informed Rousseau of the relationship she assigned to them. They separated. George was outraged, complained with bitterness. Then the Clésinger family, two months married, returned to Nohant, raised the mask, and there took place between George and her son on the one side, and the sculptor and his wife on the other, scenes of unspeakable violence.

"We have just escaped cutting each other's throats here," wrote the unfortunate Sand to Mme. de Rozières. "My son-in-law raised a hammer against Maurice, and would perhaps have killed him if I had not placed myself between them, striking my son-in-law in the face, and receiving a blow of his fist in the chest. If the priest, who was present, and friends and a

servant, had not interfered by force, Maurice, who was armed with a pistol, would have killed him on the spot. Solange, fanning the flame with cold ferocity, and having caused these deplorable furies by backstairs gossip, lies, unimaginable slanders, without having had from Maurice or from anybody whatever the slightest shadow of teasing or the hint of a wrong. This diabolic couple left yesterday evening, riddled with debt, triumphant with insolence, and leaving a scandal in the countryside that they can never live down. Anyway, for three days I was in my house at the mercy of a murderer. I do not want ever to see them again, never again shall they put foot in my house. They have gone too far. My God! I have done nothing to deserve such a daughter.

"It was quite necessary for me to write part of this to Chopin; I was afraid he might arrive in the middle of a catastrophe and that he would die of pain and shock. Do not tell him how far things went; they are to be kept from him if possible. Do not tell him I wrote to you and if M. and Mme. Clésinger do not boast of their behavior, keep it secret for me. . . .

"I have a favor to ask of you, my child.

That is to take complete charge of the keys of my apartment, as soon as Chopin has left (if he has not already), and not to let Clésinger, or his wife, or any one connected with them put their foot in it. They are supreme robbers and with their unbeatable nerve they would leave me without a bed. They carried off everything here down to the counterpanes and light fixtures. . . ."

It is most important to note two things. In this first letter to Mlle. de Rozières, Sand supposes that Chopin has already left the Square d'Orleans, or is on the point of it. We shall see why later on. In the second letter—which I shall reprint below—notice the date: *July twenty-fifth.* These points will serve to shed a certain light on a situation that is at first glance obscure, but which unravels well enough if these two guide-posts are kept in sight.

"Nohant, 25 July.

"My friend, I am worried, frightened, I have had no news of Chopin for several days, because in the trouble that is crushing me I cannot keep track of the time. But it seems too long a time. He was about to leave and then

he does not arrive, he does not write. Did he start? Is he stopped, sick somewhere? If he were seriously ill wouldn't you have written me when you saw his state of illness prolonged? I should already have left myself if it had not been for my fear of passing him, and for the horror I have of going to Paris and exposing myself to the hate of her whom you think so good, so kind to me—

"Sometimes I think, to reassure myself, that Chopin loves her more than he does me, sulks and takes her part.

"I would rather that a hundred times than to know he was ill. Tell me frankly how matters stand. If Solange's frightful maliciousness, if her incredible lies sway him,—so be it! Nothing matters to me if he only gets well."

Chopin had already suffered too much, renounced too much to come from behind and let himself be recaptured by this despoiled mother, this hardened mistress. He did not want her pity. He did not even give her his. Solange came to him. She had little difficulty in convincing him that she was right, his distrust and suspicions had so crystallized. Did not all the

obscurity in which they tried to keep him hide still other breaches of faith, other liberations? His long docility had turned at one bound into bitter disgust. "The cypresses also have their caprices," he said. It was his only complaint. He wrote to George, but neither his letter, nor the one he received in reply has been preserved. Lovers who had given each other eight years of their lives could not consent to preserve in their archives the bulletin of their supreme defeat. On the other hand, if we do not know the terms in which they drew up the act of dissociation, we know the echo.

To Delacroix alone Chopin showed the letter of farewell he had received. "I must admit that it is atrocious," this friend wrote in his *Journal* under the date of *July twentieth*. "The cruel passions, the long-suppressed impatiences are having their day; and as a contrast which would be laughable if the subject were not so sad, the author from time to time takes the place of the woman and spreads herself in tirades that seem borrowed from a novel or a homily on philosophy." If I have underlined the date, July twenty-fifth, above, where George complains of having been abandoned, it

is to make the fact stand out more clearly that already, five days before, on the twentieth, Delacroix in his diary signals the existence of the letter of rupture, which he qualifies as *atrocious*. So the astonishment of George may be called astonishing. Furthermore, note her duplicity. There can be no doubt that she foresaw its effect too well to suppose for an instant that Chopin would come running to Nohant. Rather she counted on his moving out. Yet she still wanted to play a part, to pose as the victim. Once decided on the break, she feared the fame and the friends of Chopin, who, later on, could search out the truth in the name of history. So in her third letter to Mlle. de Rozières she wrote thus:

". . . Sick to death, I was about to go see why no one wrote to me. Finally I received by the morning post a letter from Chopin. I see that, as usual, I have been duped by my stupid heart, and that while I passed six white nights torturing myself about his health, he was engaged in talking and thinking ill of me with the Clésingers. Very well. His letter

has a ridiculous dignity and the sermons of this good *pater familias* shall serve as lessons to me. A man warned is worth two. From now on I shall be perfectly easy in that regard.

"There are many points about the affair that I can guess, and I know of what calumny my daughter is capable. I know of what the poor brain of Chopin is capable in the way of prejudice and credulity. . . . But my eyes are open at last! and I shall conduct myself accordingly; I shall no longer put my flesh and my blood to pasture for ingratitude and perversity. In the future here I am, peaceful and entrenched at Nohant, far from the bloodthirsty enemies that are after me. I shall know how to guard the gate of my fortress against the wicked and the fools. I know that meanwhile they will cut me to pieces. Well and good! When their hate is satisfied here, they will devour each other.

". . . I think it *magnificent* of Chopin to see, frequent, and approve Clèsinger, who *struck* me, because I tore from his hands a hammer he had raised against Maurice. Chopin, whom all the world told me was my most faithful and most devoted friend! It is

marvelous! My child, life is a bitter irony, and those who have the folly to love and believe must close their careers with a lugubrious laugh and a despairing sob, as I hope will happen to me soon. I believe in God and in the immortality of my soul. The more I suffer in this world, the more I believe. I shall quit this life of passage with a profound disgust, to enter into life eternal with a great confidence."

She took up her pen a fourth time, on August 14th:

"I am more seriously ill than they think. Thank God! because I have had enough of life, and I do up my bundle with great joy. I do not ask you for news of Solange; I have it indirectly. As for Chopin, I no longer hear him spoken of at all, and I beg you to tell me truthfully how he is; no more. The rest does not in the least interest me and I have no reason to miss his affection."

There is a strong dose of the "melo" that Chopin thought so hateful in several passages of these documents, and the evident desire to

draw out as much pathos as possible. But without doubt certain authentic accents are to be found as well. It is probably that she herself would not recognize them too well. George Sand had suffered from this rupture of which she was the cause, the agent and the victim. If the same cries are no longer to be heard as in the Venetian days, it is because thirteen years had passed since the Musset experience. But perhaps I am making her part too easy. Because what are years to passionate hearts? No, growing old is a poor reason. The only true one is that this woman no longer tears anything living from her soul. If she has not yet arrived at the time of the great cold, of which we have already spoken, at least she has come to that of the first serenities. A favorable epoch for her literature. She took advantage of it so well that she chose it precisely for *l'Histoire de ma Vie*, the best of her books.

As for Chopin, self-pity was not in his nature. Even in these mortal weeks all his pain had a beautiful discretion. As before, as always, it rose and fell within himself. No blame passed his lips. To Louis Viardot (the husband of the singer), who questioned him, he replied simply: "Solange's marriage is a

great misfortune for her, for her family, for her friends. Daughter and mother have been deceived, and the mistake was seen too late. But why blame only one for this mistake that was shared by both? The daughter wished, demanded, an ill-assorted marriage; but the mother, in consenting, has she not part of the blame? With her great spirit and her great experience, should she not have enlightened a girl who was led by spite even more than by love? If she had any illusion, we must not be without pity for an error that is shared. And I, pitying them both from the depths of my soul, I am trying to bring some consolation to the only one of them I am permitted to see."

He wanted to inform his sister about these happenings but could not at first manage to do it. To write certain words is sometimes so great a cruelty! At last, after having burned several sheets of paper, he succeeded in giving the essentials in his Christmas letter.

"25 December 1847

"Beloved children,

"I have not immediately replied to you because I have been so horribly busy. I am sending you, in the regular way, some New Year

pictures. . . . I spent Christmas eve in the most prosaic way, but I thought of you all. All my best wishes to you, as always. . . .

"Sol is with her father, in Gascony. She saw her mother on the way. She went to Nohant with the Duvernets, but her mother received her coldly and told her that if she would leave her husband she might return to Nohant. Sol saw her nuptial room turned into a theater, her boudoir into a costume closet for the actors, and she wrote me that her mother spoke only of money matters. Her brother was playing with his dog and all he found to say to her was: 'Will you have something to eat?' The mother now seems more angry at her son-in-law than at her daughter, though in her famous letter she wrote to me that her son-in-law was not bad, it was her daughter that made him so. One might think she had wanted to rid herself at one sweep of her daughter and of me, because we were in the way. She will correspond with her daughter; thus her maternal heart, which cannot completely do without news of her child, will be appeased for a moment and her conscience asleep. She will think herself right in proclaiming me her enemy, because I took the

part of the son-in-law she cannot tolerate, simply because he married her daughter, while I really opposed the marriage as much as I could. Singular creature, with all her intelligence! A frenzy seizes her, and she spoils her life, she spoils her daughter's life. It will end badly with her son, too, I predict and am certain. To excuse herself she would like to find wrong in those who wish her well, who believe in her, who have never insulted her, and whom she cannot bear near her because they are the mirror of her conscience. That is why she has not written me another word; it is why she is not coming to Paris this winter; it is why she has not said a word, so to speak, to her daughter. I do not regret having helped her to bear the eight most difficult years of her life, those in which her daughter was growing up, those in which she brought up her son; I do not regret all that I have suffered, but I do regret that her daughter, that perfectly tended plant, sheltered from so many storms, should be broken at her mother's hands by an imprudence and a laxity that one might allow in a woman of twenty years, but not in a woman of forty.

"That which has been and is no longer will

not be written in the annals. When, later on, she delves into her past, Mme. Sand will be able to find in her soul only a happy memory of me. For the moment she is in the strangest paroxysm of maternity, playing the rôle of a juster and a more perfect mother than she really is, and it is a fever for which there is no remedy, especially when it takes possession of an excitable imagination that is easily carried away.

". . . A new novel by Mme. Sand is appearing in the *Débats*, a novel in the manner of the Berry novels, like *La Mare Au Diable*, and it begins admirably. It is called *François Le Champi* . . . There is talk also of her *Mémoires;* but in a letter to Mme. Marliani, Mme. Sand wrote that this would be rather the thoughts she has had up until now on art, letters, etc . . . and not what is generally meant by memoirs. Indeed, it is too early for that, because dear Mme. Sand will have many more adventures in her life before she grows old, many beautiful things will still happen to her, and ugly ones too . . ."

The irony is hardly malicious, and "the enemy" who would "cut her in pieces" is very

gentle. Indeed one must admire the way the artist holds his temper in hand. The same day he wrote to Solange:

". . . How the story of your two visits to Nohant saddened me! Still, the first step is taken. You have shown heart and this was followed by a certain rapprochement, since he begged you to write. Time will do the rest. You know you must not take everything that is said at face value. If they no longer want to know a *stranger like me*, for instance, they cannot say the same thing about your husband, because he belongs to the family . . . I feel suffocated, have headaches, and beg you to excuse my mistakes and my French . . ."

Here it was January of 1848. February. Soon it would be ten months since George and Frederick had separated. But Chopin did not get well. Quite the contrary. His broken tenderness had not only killed his heart, it had dried up the one source of his consolation, music. Since 1847, the *bad year*, as he called it, Chopin composed nothing more.

"She has not written me another word, nor I her," he confided again to his sister on the

10th of February. "She has instructed the landlord to let her Paris apartment. . . . She plays comedies in the country, in her daughter's wedding-chamber; she forgets herself, acts as wildly as only she can, and will not rouse herself until her heart hurts too much, a heart that is now overburdened by the head. I make a cross above it. May God protect her, if she does not know how to discern the true value of flattery. Besides, it may be to me alone that the others seem flatterers, while her happiness really lies in that direction and I do not perceive it. For some time her friends and neighbors have been able to make nothing of what has been going on down there, but they are probably used to it already. Anyway, no one could ever follow the caprices of such a soul. Eight years of a half-good life were too much. God granted it that they should be the years when the children were growing up, and if it had not been for me I do not know how long ago they would have been with their father and no longer with her. And Maurice, at the first good chance, will run off to his father. But perhaps these are the conditions of her existence, of her talent as a writer, of her

happiness? Don't let it bother you,—it is already so far away! Time is a great healer. Up until now I have not gotten well; that is why I have not written to you. Everything I begin I burn the next moment. And I have so much to write to you! It is better to write nothing at all."

They saw each other one last time, on the fourth of March, 1848, quite by accident. Chopin was leaving Mme. Marliani's as Mme. Sand was going in. She pressed his trembling and icy hand. Chopin asked her if she had recently had news of her daughter.

"A week ago," she replied.

"Not yesterday, or the day before?"

"No."

"Then I inform you that you are a grandmother. Solange has a little girl, and I am very happy to be the first to give you the news."

Then he bowed and went down the stairs. At the bottom he had a pang of remorse, and wanted to go back. He had forgotten to add that Solange and the child were doing well. He begged a friend who was with him to give Mme. Sand this additional information, because going upstairs had become something fright-

fully painful for him. George came back immediately. She had wanted to speak further and ask about himself. He replied that he was well, and escaped. "There was bad blood between us," she said later in telling of this minute in the *Histoire de ma Vie.*

As for Chopin, he reported this fortuitous encounter with her mother to Mme. Clésinger and added, "She seemed to be in good health. I am sure that the triumph of the Republican idea makes her happy. . . ."

Eight days before, in fact, the Revolution had burst. It must have been singularly unpleasing to *Prince Karol.* He wrote to Solange: "The birth of your child gave me more joy, you may well believe, than the birth of the Republic."

CHAPTER XVII

SWAN SONG

FOR eight years Chopin had been playing hide-and-seek with revolutions. He had left Warsaw a few weeks before that of 1830. His projected trip to Italy in the spring of 1831 had been put off because of the insurrections at Bologna, Milan, Ancona, Rome. He had arrived in Paris a year after the "Three Glorious Days," but still he had been present from the height of his balcony on the Boulevard Poissonnière at the last showers of the storm. Louis-Philippe was then King of France. Now he was abdicating after a reign of little more than seventeen years, just the length of Chopin's stay at Paris. '48 promised to be a bad year for artists. Very bad for Chopin, with this great wound in his heart, and the phthisis against which he no longer even struggled. He decided to leave France for a time, and to undertake a tour in Great Britain that Miss Stirling, a Scotch lady whom he liked greatly, proposed organizing. She had been his pupil for four years. But his friends advised him

to give a last concert in Paris before leaving. He allowed himself to be persuaded. This was at the beginning of February.

In eight days all the tickets were sold, three hundred seats at 20 francs in the Salons Pleyel. "I shall have all Parisian society," he wrote to his family. "The King, the Queen, the Duke of Orleans, the Duke of Montpensier have each taken ten places, even though they are in mourning and none of them can come. Subscriptions are coming in for a second concert which I shall probably not give because the first one already bores me." And he adds the next day: "My friends tell me that I shall not have to bother with anything, only to sit down and play . . . They are writing to my publishers from Brest and Nantes to reserve places. Such enthusiasm astonishes me, and I must begin playing to-day, if only for the sake of my conscience, because I play less than I used to do. (Before his concerts Chopin always practiced on Bach.) I am going to play, as a curiosity, the Mozart trio with Franchomme and Allard. There will be neither free programs nor free tickets. The room will be comfortably arranged, and can hold three hundred people. Pleyel always jokes about my foolishness, and

to encourage me for this concert he is going to have the stairs banked with flowers. I shall be just as though I were at home, and my eyes shall see, so to speak, only familiar faces . . . I am giving a great many lessons. I am overwhelmed with all sorts of work, yet, with all that, I do nothing . . . If you leave I shall move too because I doubt if I could stomach another summer such as the last in Paris. If God gives us health we shall see each other again, and we shall talk, and embrace each other."

It is not only lassitude that this letter breathes; does one not read beneath the weary smiles the certainty of an approaching end? This gathering of friends, this atmosphere of flowers and wreaths has about it something funereal. One detects in the ardor of this élite of worldlings and of artists an anxiety, something like a presentiment of the twilight of a whole peaceful and elegant epoch. Poets and Kings decline. One hastens to catch the last perfume of the ancient lilies of France, and the young Polish rose. Sweeping closer was the triumph of George Sand, of the philosophers in dandruff, and of Barbès.

Frederick Chopin's supreme concert took

place on Wednesday, the 16th of February, 1848, one week before the abdication of Louis-Philippe. Everything about it was extraordinary. The room was decorated with flowers and carpets. The roster of the selected audience had been approved by Chopin himself. The letters of the program had been engraved in English script, and printed on beautiful paper. It read:

PART ONE

Trio of Mozart, for piano, violin and violoncello, by MM. Chopin, Allard and Franchomme.

Airs sung by Mlle. Antonia Molina di Mondi.

Nocturne, *Barcarolle* } composed and played by M. Chopin.

Air sung by Mlle. Antonia Molina di Mondi.

Etude, *Berceuse* } composed and played by M. Chopin.

PART TWO

Scherzo, Adagio and *Finale* of the *Sonata in G Minor for piano and violoncello*, composed by M. Chopin and played by the composer and M. Franchomme.

Air nouveau from *Robert the Devil*, by Meyerbeer, sung by M. Roger.

Preludes, *Mazurkas*, *Valses* } composed and played by M. Chopin.

Accompanists: MM. Aulary and de Garaudé.

The *Barcarolle* is that of 1846 (op. 60). The *Berceuse* (op. 57) dates from 1845. As for the *Nocturne* and the *Etude* that were announced, one can only guess. The *Sonata for piano and violoncello* is the last work he published. About the *Préludes* and the *Mazurkas* we are also at a loss. But it is known that the *Valse* chosen was that which is called "The Waltz of the Little Dog" (op. 64, no. 1.).

Chopin appeared. He was extremely weak, but straight. His face, though pale, did not seem to have changed. Neither did his playing betray any wear, and they were accustomed enough to the softness and surprises of his touch not to wonder that he played *pianissimo* the two *forte* passages at the end of his *Barcarolle*. One is glad to know that for that evening he chose this lovely plaint, the story of a lover's meeting in a countryside of Italy. Thirds and sixths, always distinct, make up a dialogue for two voices, for two souls, a very legible commentary on his own story. "One dreams of a mysterious apotheosis," Maurice Ravel has said of this piece. Perhaps, indeed, it is an inner climax, the glorification of his unexpressed tenderness.

The effort was so great that Chopin nearly

fainted in the foyer when he had finished. As for the enthusiasm of the public, it hardly needs to be mentioned. "The sylph has spoken," read the *Gazette Musicale*, a few days later, "and with what success, what enthusiasm! It is easier to tell of the welcome he received, the transports he excited, than to describe, analyze, open up the secrets of an execution that has no like in our earthly world. When we shall have in our possession the pen that traced the delicate marvels of Queen Mab, no bigger than the agate that shines on the finger of an alderman . . . it is the most that we can expect if we succeed in giving you an idea of a purely ideal talent in which the material hardly enters. No one can interpret Chopin's music, but Chopin: all of those who were present on Wednesday are as convinced of it as we."

Chopin arrived in London on the 20th of April, 1848, and settled in a comfortable room in Dover Street with his three pianos: a Pleyel, an Erard and a Broadwood. He did not arrive alone: England was invaded by a swarm of artists fleeing the Continent, where revolutions were breaking out on all sides. But Miss Stirling and her sister, Mrs. Erskine, had

thought of everything, and already they were talking of the visit of Chopin in society and in the papers.

At first the change of air and of life seemed favorable to his health. He breathed more easily and could make a few calls. He went to the theater, heard Jenny Lind sing, and the Philharmonic play, but "their orchestra is like their roast beef, or their turtle soup: energetic, serious, but nothing more." Its greatest trouble was the lack of all rehearsals, and Chopin, before giving a concert, always demanded rehearsals of the most minute details. For this reason he decided not to appear in public. In addition, his "morale" was low, because of the bad political news from Poland. Furthermore, he learned with pain of the complete misunderstandings of the Clésinger couple, of a possible separation, and he thought at once of George. If only this unhappy mother should have no new tears to shed!

Soon he was again bowed with fatigue. He was obliged to go out each evening very late, to give lessons all day long in order to pay his very heavy rent, his servant, and for his carriage. He began again to spit blood. Still he

was received with many attentions by some of the great lords and ladies: the Duke of Westminster, the Duchesses of Somerset and Sutherland, Lord Falmouth, Lady Gainsborough. Miss Stirling and her sister, who adored him, wanted to drag him about to all their friends "even though he was no longer alive." Finally he played in two or three drawing rooms for a fee of twenty guineas, a fee that Mme. Rothschild advised him to reduce a little "because at this season (June), it is necessary to set a more moderate price." The first evening took place at the Duchess of Sutherland's, at which were present the Queen, Prince Albert, the Prince of Prussia, and more than eighty of the aristocracy, among them the old Duke of Wellington. Stafford House, the ancient seat of the Sutherlands, struck the artist with admiration. He gave a marveling description of it: "All the royal palaces and old castles are splendid, but not decorated with such taste and elegance as Stafford House. The stairs are celebrated for their splendor, and it is a sight to see the Queen on these staircases in a glare of light, diamonds, ribbons, garters, descending with the most perfect elegance, conversing,

stopping on the different landings. In truth, it is regrettable that a Paul Veronese could not have seen such a spectacle so that he might have left one more masterpiece."

Dear Chopin, he did not dream that in looking at such a picture we should have hunted only for his poor bloodless face! What do this ephemeral glitter and all these tinsel grandeurs mean to us beside his little person, shrunken, but so master of our hearts! The magnificence of this gala evening is nowhere more apparent to us than in him, the obscure actor in a fête where nothing seems extraordinary to us save his feverish glance. "I suffer from an idiotic homesickness," he wrote, "and in spite of my absolute resignation, I am preoccupied, God knows why, with what is to become of me." He played at the Marquis of Douglas's, at Lady Gainsborough's, at Lord Falmouth's, in the midst of an affluence of titled personages. "You know they live on grandeur . . . Why cite these vain names again?" Yet he cites them a great deal. Among the celebrities, he was presented to Carlyle, to Lord Bulwer, to Dickens, to Hogarth, a friend of Walter Scott, who wrote a very beautiful article about him in

the *Daily News*. Among the "curiosities," Lady Byron. "We spoke together hardly hearing each other, she in English, I in French. I understand how she must have bored Byron." Mr. Broadwood, the piano manufacturer, was among the most attentive of his bourgeois friends. Occasionally he had a visit from him in the mornings. Chopin told him one day that he had slept badly. Coming in that evening he found on his bed a new spring mattress and pillows that his faithful protector had had placed there.

These different recitals brought Chopin about five thousand francs, not much, in sum. But what did money matter? What could he do with it? He had never been more sad. It had been a long time since he had experienced a real joy, he confided to Grzymala. "At bottom I already feel nothing more. I vegetate, simply, and patiently await my end."

On the 9th of August he left London for Scotland, where he delivered himself over to his friends the Stirlings and their brother-in-law, Lord Torphichen. The excellent Broadwood had reserved two places for him in the train so that he might have more room, and

had given him a Mr. Wood, a music seller, as a companion. He arrived in Edinburgh. His apartment was reserved in the best hotel, where he rested a day and a half. A tour of the city. A halt at a music store where he heard one of his *Mazurkas* played by a blind pianist. A new start in a carriage harnessed in the English fashion, with a postilion, for Calder House, twelve miles from Edinburgh. There Lord Torphichen received him in an old manor surrounded by an immense park. There was nothing in sight but lawns, trees, mountains and sky. "The walls of the castle are eight feet thick. There are galleries on all sides and somber corridors hung with an incalculable number of ancestral portraits of all colors, all costumes, some Scotch, others in armor, or again in panniers. There is nothing lacking to satisfy the imagination. There is even a little Red Riding Hood in the form of a ghost. But I have not yet seen her." As for his hosts, they were perfect, discreet and generous. "What splendid people my Scots are!" wrote Chopin. "There is nothing I can desire that I do not immediately receive. They even bring me the Paris papers every day. I am well. I have

peace and sleep, but I must leave in eight days."

These Stirlings of Keir were a very ancient family. They went back to the XIVth Century, and had gained wealth in the Indies. Jane and her older sister, Mrs. Erskine, had known Chopin in Paris. They were two noble women, older than Frederick, but the younger still very beautiful. Ary Scheffer has painted her several times, because she represented to his eyes an ideal type of beauty. It was said that she wanted to marry Chopin. To those who spoke to him about it, "as well marry her to Death," he said.

At Calder House Manor life was agreeable; quiet mornings, drives in the afternoon, and in the evening music. Chopin harmonized for the old lord the Scotch airs he sang to him. A picture that does not lack piquancy. But the poor swan was restless. He thought always of George, of whom he had just received news through Solange. It was bad. As the proclamations which had ignited Civil War, even in the provinces, were attributed to her, she was very badly received in her land of Nohant. Taking refuge at Tours, "she is stuck in a sea of mud," wrote Chopin to his sister, "and she

has dragged many others with her." A filthy lampoon was circulating about her, written by the father of that same Augustine that Chopin detested. This man complained that "she had corrupted his daughter, whom she had made the mistress of Maurice, and then married to the first comer . . . The father cites Mme. Sand's own letters. In one word, the dirtiest sensation that all Paris is interested in to-day. It is an outrage on the part of the father, *but it is the truth.* So there it is, this philanthropic deed she thought she was doing, and against which I fought with all my strength when the girl came into the house! She should have been left with her parents, instead of putting her in the head of this young man, who will never make anything but a marriage of money. She was dressed like Sol, and better groomed, because Maurice insisted . . . Solange saw the whole thing, which made them uncomfortable . . . The mother was embarrassed by her daughter who, unfortunately, saw everything. From this, lies, shame, embarrassment, and the rest."

All the rancors, all the bitternesses are seen coming to the surface again. And immense

regrets. "The English are so different from the French, to whom I am attached as to my own people," he wrote again in this same letter to his family. "They all weigh a pound sterling, and love art only because it is expensive. They are excellent people, but so original that I understand how one can become stiff one's self here: one changes into a machine."

He was obliged to leave Calder House to give several concerts. At Manchester the end of August; at Glasgow the end of September; at Edinburgh the beginning of October. And if everywhere he reaped the same success, the same admiring surprise, a kind of tempered enthusiasm, yet most of the criticisms noted that his playing was no more than a kind of murmur. "Chopin seemed about thirty years old," said the *Manchester Guardian*.. (He was thirty-eight.) "He is very frail of body, and in his walk. This impression vanishes when he seats himself at the piano, in which he seems completely absorbed. Chopin's music, and the style of his playing, have the same dominant characteristics; he has more refinement than vigor; he subtly elaborates the composition rather than seizing it simply; his touch is elegant and quick

without his striking the instrument with any joyful firmness. His music and his playing are the perfection of chamber music . . . but they need more breadth, more frankness of design, and more power in the execution to be felt in a large hall."

These are the same discreet reproaches that were made in Vienna in 1828. But only his friends knew how ill he was, and how he now had to be carried on the stairs. He remained chic, however, as refined in his appointments as a woman, exercised about his linen, his shoes, which he wished impeccable. His servant curled him every morning with an iron. The imperious side of his nature revealed itself. Everything weighed him down: attentions, even affection became heavy on his shoulders, like his great coat or even his cashmere shawl. These are the irritations of a very sick man: "People kill me with their useless solicitude. I feel alone, alone, alone, although I am surrounded . . . I grow weaker every day. I can compose nothing, not that the will is lacking, but rather the physical strength . . . My Scots will not leave me in peace; they smother me with politeness and out of polite-

ness I do not reproach them." These were his plaints to Grzymala. He was carried to Stirling, to Keir, from one castle to another, "from a Lord to a Duke." Everywhere he found sumptuous hospitality, excellent pianos, beautiful pictures, well-selected libraries, hunting, horses, dogs; but wherever he is, he "expires of coughing and irritation." What was he to do after dinner when the gentlemen settled down in the dining room around their whisky and when, not knowing their tongue, he was obliged "to watch them talk, and hear them drink"? A renewal of homesickness, of sickness for Nohant. While they talked of their family trees and, "as in the Gospel, cited names and names that went back to the Lord Jesus," he mapped out letters to his friends. "If Solange settles in Russia," he wrote to Mlle. de Rozières, "with whom will she speak of France? With whom can she talk in the Berry *patois?* Does that seem without importance to you? Very well, yet it is a great consolation in a strange country to have some one about you who, as soon as you see them, carries you back in thought to your own country."

He came back at last to London in the beginning of October, to go straight to bed, gagging; headaches, cold, bronchitis, all the regular symptoms. His Scots followed him, cared for him, as did also Princess Czartoryska, who constituted herself "his sick nurse." From that time on he thought of nothing but of going back to France. As before, on his return from Majorca, he charged Grzymala to find him a lodging near the Boulevards between the rue de la Paix and the Madeleine. He needed also a room for his valet. "Why I give you all this trouble, I don't know, because nothing gives me pleasure, but I've got to think of myself." And suddenly the old pain burst forth without apparent rhyme or reason in the very middle of these domestic affairs: "I have never damned any one, but at this moment everything is so insupportable to me that it would help, it seems to me, if I could damn Lucrezia! . . ." Three lines follow which he immediately effaced, and made indecipherable. Then coming back to himself, for having once more swallowed what he could never consent to express, he added: "But they suffer down there,

too, no doubt; they suffer so much the more in that they are growing old in their anger. This will be an eternal pity to me for Solange."

So the mystery of this soul rests. The limits in it to which love, distrust, and hatred reach can never be clearly distinguished. The only certain fact is that from the time of his break with George, the life of his body and that of his spirit were finished for Chopin. He was already condemned, one will object. Not more than at the return from Majorca. And his father did not succumb to the same illness until he was seventy-five years old. He had deliberately abandoned the fight where he had no further cause to wish to win. As indeed he says: "And why should I come back? Why does God not kill me at once instead of letting me die slowly of a fever of irresolution? And my Scots torture me more than I can bear. Mrs. Erskine, who is a very good Protestant, possibly wants to make a Protestant out of me, because she always brings me the Bible, talks to me of the soul, and marks Psalms for me to read. She is religious and good, but she is very much worried about my soul. She *saws* away all the time, telling me that the other world is better

than this, and I know that by heart. I reply by citations from the Scripture and tell her that is all an old story."

This dying man dragged himself again from London to Edinburgh, to a castle of the Duke of Hamilton, came back to London, gave a concert for the benefit of the Poles, wrote his will. Gutmann, his friend and his pupil, informed him that a rumor of his marriage was circulating in Paris. These unhappy Scots! "Friendship remains friendship," replied Chopin. "And even if I could take to myself a being who would love me as I should want to be loved, I should not marry even then, because I should have nothing to eat, and nowhere to lodge. Riches look for riches, and even if she loved a poor man, at least he needn't be crippled . . . No, I am not thinking of a woman; much rather of the family house, of my mother, of my sisters . . . And my art, where has that gone? And my heart, where have I squandered it? It is only with difficulty that I can still remember how they sing at home. The world fades about me in an altogether strange way—I lose myself—I have no strength at all . . . I am not complaining to

you, but you question and I reply: I am closer to the coffin than the nuptial bed. My soul is in peace—I am resigned."

He left at last at the beginning of the year 1849 to return to the Square d'Orleans, and he sent his last instructions to Grzymala, that he should buy pine cones for his fire. That the curtains and carpet should be in place. Also a Pleyel piano, a bouquet of violets in the salon, that the room might be perfumed. "On my return I want still to find a little poetry while I pass from the salon to my room where no doubt I shall be in bed for a long time."

With what joy he saw again his little apartment! Unhappily Dr. Molin, who alone had the secret of putting him back on his feet, had died not long before. He consulted Dr. Roth, Dr. Louis, Dr. Simon, a homeopath. They all prescribed the old inefficacious remedies: *l'eau de gomme*, rest, precautions. Chopin shrugged his shoulders. He saw death everywhere: Kalkbrenner was dead; Dr. Molin was dead; the son of the painter Delaroche was dead; a servant of Franchomme's was dead; the singer Catalani (who had given him his first watch at the age of ten) had just died also.

"On the other hand, Noailles is better," said one of his Scots.

"Yes, but the King of Spain is dead at Lisbon," replied Chopin.

All his friends visited him: Prince Czartoryski and his wife, Delphine Potoçka, Mme. de Rothschild, Legouvé, Jenny Lind, Delacroix, Franchomme, Gutmann.

And then,—not a cent in sight. Chopin, distrait and negligent, never knew the state of his finances very well. Presently they were at zero because he could no longer give a single lesson. Franchomme served as his banker, but he had to exercise his ingenuity, inventing stories to explain the origin of the funds that one or the other of his friends advanced. If he had suspected this state of things, Chopin would have flatly refused. The idea of such charity would have been insupportable to him. In this connection there came about a curious happening. The Stirling ladies, wishing to remove his worry, thought of sending to his concierge the sum of 25,000 francs in a sealed and anonymous envelope. Mme. Etienne received the envelope, slipped it behind the clock globe, and forgot it. When Mrs. Erskine perceived that

Chopin had not received this money she made her confession to the artist. He was very angry. "I must have told her a lot of truths," he told Grzymala, "such, for example, as this: 'that she would have to be the Queen of England to make me accept such princely presents.' " Meanwhile, as the money was not found, the postman who had delivered it to the concierge consulted a fortune teller. The man requested, in order to consult his oracles properly, a lock of Mme. Etienne's hair. Chopin obtained it by subterfuge, upon which the clairvoyant declared that the envelope was under the clock globe. And in truth it was discovered there intact. "Hein! What do you say to that? How do you find this fortune teller? My head is in a whirl with wonder."

Like very nervous people, Chopin's health was capricious. There were ups and downs. With the return of spring he could go out a little, by carriage, but he could not leave the carriage. His publisher, Schlesinger, came to the edge of the sidewalk to talk business to him. Delacroix often accompanied him. He consigned to his *Journal* the precious notes that remain to us.

January 29th. "In the evening to see Chopin; I stayed with him till ten o'clock. Dear man! We spoke of Mme. Sand, strangely destined, made up of so many qualities and vices. It was apropos of her *Mémoires*. He told me that it would be impossible for her to write them. She has forgotten it all; she has flashes of feeling, and forgets quickly. . . . I said that I predicted in advance an unhappy old age. He did not think so. . . . Her conscience does not reproach her for what her friends reproach her. She has good health, which may easily last; only one thing would affect her profoundly: the loss of Maurice or that he should turn out badly.

"As for Chopin, the illness prevents him from interesting himself in anything, and especially in work. I said to him that age and agitations would not be long in chilling me too. He replied that he thought I had strength to resist. 'In your talent,' he said, 'you rejoice in a sort of security that is a rare privilege, and which is better than this feverish chase after fame.' "

March 30th. "Saw in the evening at Chopin's the enchantress, Mme. Potocka. I

had heard her twice, I have hardly ever seen anything more perfect . . . Saw Mme. Kalerji. She played, but not very sympathetically; on the other hand, she is really extremely lovely when she raises her eyes in playing, like Guido's Madeleines, or Rubens."

April 14th. "In the evening to Chopin's: I found him very much weakened, hardly breathing. After a while my presence restored him. He told me that his cruelest torment was boredom. I asked him if he had not known in earlier times the insupportable emptiness that I sometimes feel again. He said that he had always known how to occupy himself with something; no matter how unimportant it may be, an occupation fills the moments, and keeps off these vapors. Chagrin is another thing."

April 22nd. "After dinner to see Chopin, a man of exquisite heart, and I need not say, spirit. He spoke to me of people we had known together . . . He had dragged himself to the first performance of *The Prophet.* His horror of this rhapsody!"

In the month of May Chopin burned his manuscripts. He tried to work up a method for

the piano, gave it up, burned it with the rest. Clearly the idea of the imperfect, of the unfinished, was insupportable to his spirit.

The doctors having recommend pure air, a quieter neighborhood, his friends rented an apartment in the rue de Chaillot, on the third floor of a new house, and they took him there. There was a beautiful view over Paris. He stayed there motionless behind his window, speaking very little. Toward the end of June he desired suddenly, and at any cost, to see his own people again. He sent a letter summoning them which took him two days to write.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE CYPRESSES HAVE THEIR CAPRICES

"TO Madame Louise Jedrzeïewicz.

"Paris, Monday, June 25, 1849.

"My dearly beloveds,

"If you can, come. I am ill, and no doctor can help me as you can. If you need money, borrow it; when I am better I can easily make it and return it to whoever lends it to you, but just now I am too broke to be able to send you anything. My Chaillot apartment is big enough to receive you, even with the two children. Little Louise will benefit in every way. Papa Calasante * shall run about all day long; we have the Agricultural Products Exposition close to us here; in a word, he will have much more time for himself than he did the other time, because I am weaker, and shall stay more in the house with Louise. My friends and everybody who wishes me well believe the best remedy for me would be the arrival of Louise, as she will learn surely by Mme.

* His brother-in-law.

Obreskow's letter, so get your passport. People whom Louise does not know, one from the North, and one from the South, told me to-day that it will be beneficial, not only for my health, but also for my sister's.

"So, mother Louise and daughter Louise, bring your thimbles and your needles. I'll give you handkerchiefs to monogram, socks to knit, and you shall spend your time for a few months in the fresh air with your old brother and uncle. The trip is now easier; also you don't need much baggage. We'll be happy with very little. You shall find food and shelter. And even if sometimes Calasante finds that it is far from the Champs Elysées to town, he can stay in my apartment in the Square d'Orleans. The omnibus goes right from the Square to my door here. I don't know myself why I want so much to have Louise, it's like the longing of a pregnant woman. I swear to you that it will be good for her too. I hope that the family council will send her to me: who knows whether I may not take her back when I am well! Then we could all rejoice and embrace each other, as I have already written, but without wigs and with our own teeth. The wife

always owes obedience to her husband; so it's the husband whom I beg to bring his wife; I beg it with my whole heart, and if he weighs it well he will see that he cannot give a greater pleasure either to her, or to me, nor can he do a greater service even to the children, if he should bring one of them. (About the little girl I do not know.) It will cost money, it is true, but it cannot be better spent nor could you travel to better purpose. Once here the roof will be found. Write me a little word. Mme. Obreskow, who had the kindness to want to write (I have given her Louise's address), will perhaps be more persuasive. Mlle. de Rozières is also to add a word, and Cochet, if he were here, would speak for me, because there is no doubt that he would find me no better. My Æsculapius has not shown himself for ten days because he has at last perceived that there is something in my sickness that passes his science. In spite of that, you must praise him to your tenant, and to all who know him, and say that he has done me a great deal of good; but my head is made that way: when I am a little bit better, that's enough for me. Say also that every one knows that he has cured a quan-

tity of people of cholera. The cholera is diminishing a great deal; it has almost disappeared. It is superb weather; I am sitting in the salon from where I can admire the whole panorama of Paris: the towers, the Tuileries, the Chambres, St.-Germaine l'Auxerrois, St. Etienne du Mont, Notre Dame, the Panthéon, St. Sulpice, Val de Grâce, the five windows of the Invalides, and between these buildings and me nothing but gardens. You will see it all when you come. Now get busy on the passport and the money, but do it quickly. Write me a word at once. You know that the cypresses have their caprices: my caprice to-day is to see you in my house. Maybe God will permit everything to go well: but if God does not wish it, act at least as though He did. I have great hope, because I never ask for very much, and I should have refrained *from this* also if I had not been urged on by all who love me. Bestir yourself, Monsieur Calasante. In return I shall give you *huge* and excellent cigars; I know some one who smokes marvelous ones; note well: in the garden. I hope the letter I wrote for Mamma's birthday arrived, and that I did not miss the date too far. I

don't want to think of all that because it makes me feverish, and thank God, I have no fever, which disconcerts and irritates the ordinary doctors.

"Your affectionate but very feeble brother,

"CHOPIN."

CHAPTER XIX

THE DEATH OF CHOPIN

SO "Mother Louise and daughter Louise" hurried to him at once. Calasante accompanied them. Chopin would have greatly liked to see again his childhood friend, Titus, who had just arrived at Ostend. But as he was a Russian subject, passport difficulties prevented him from entering France. "The doctors do not allow me to travel," wrote the invalid, who had hoped to be able to go to meet him. "I drink Pyrénées water in my room, but your presence would be more healing than all the medicines. Yours even in death, your Frederick." About six weeks rolled by without any improvement. Chopin hardly spoke any more and made himself understood by signs. A consultation took place between the Doctors Cruveillé, Louis and Blache. They decided that any change to the south of France was then useless, but that it would be preferable to take the dying man to quarters that could be heated,

were more convenient, and very airy. After long search, they found what they needed at No. 12 Place Vendôme. Chopin was carried there. One last time he took up his pen to write to Franchomme. "I shall see you next winter, being settled at last in a comfortable manner. My sister will remain with me unless they should call her back for something important. I love you, that is all that I can say for the moment because I am crushed with fatigue and weakness."

Charles Gavard, the young brother of one of his pupils, often came to see him and read to him. Chopin indicated his preferences. He came back most willingly to Voltaire's *Dictionnaire Philosophique*, in which he appreciated especially the form, conciseness, and the sureness of taste. It was precisely the chapter "The Different Tastes of Peoples" that Gavard read to him one of the last times.

His condition grew rapidly worse; yet he complained little. The thought of the end did not seem to affect him much. In the first days of October he had no longer strength enough to sit up. The spells of strangling grew worse. Gutmann, who was very tall and robust, knew

better than any how to hold him, to settle him in his pillows. Princess Marceline Czartoryska again took up her service as nurse, spending the greater part of her days at the Place Vendôme. Franchomme came back from the country. The family and friends assembled about the expiring man ready to help as they could. All of them waited in the room next to that in which Chopin lived his last days.

One of his childhood friends, Abbé Alexandre Jelowiçki, with whom he had been on cold terms, wanted to see him again when he learned of the gravity of his illness. Three times in succession they refused to receive him; but the Abbé succeeded in informing Chopin of his presence, and was admitted immediately. After that he came back every day. Chopin had great pleasure in retrieving this comrade of other days. "I should not want to die," he said, "without having received the sacraments, in order not to pain my mother, but I do not understand them as you wish. I can see nothing in confession other than the relief of a burdened heart on the heart of a friend."

The Abbé has told that on the 13th of October, in the morning, he found Chopin a little

better. "My friend," he said to him, "to-day is the birthday of my poor late brother. You must give me something for this day."

"What can I give you?"

"Your soul."

"Ah! I understand," cried Frederick. "Here it is. Take it."

Jelowiçki fell on his knees and presented the Crucifix to Chopin, who started to weep. He immediately confessed, received communion, and extreme unction. Then he said, embracing his friend on his two arms in the Polish fashion: "Thank you, dear friend. Thanks to you I shan't die like a pig." That day was calmer, but the crises of suffocation began again very shortly. As Gutmann was holding him in his arms during one of these wearing attacks, Chopin said after a long breathless silence:

"Now I begin my agony."

The doctor felt his pulse for a reassuring word, but Chopin went on with authority:

"It is a rare favor that God gives to a man in revealing the moment when his agony begins; this grace He has given to me. Do not disturb me."

It was that evening also that Franchomme

heard him murmur: "She told me that I should not die except in her arms."

On Sunday the 15th of October his friend Delphine Potoçka arrived from Nice, from where a telegram had recalled her. When Chopin knew that she was in his drawing room he said: "So that is why God has delayed calling me to Him. He wanted to leave me the pleasure of seeing her again."

She had hardly approached his bed when he expressed the desire to hear the voice that he had loved sing. They pushed the piano onto the threshold of the room. Smothering her sobs, the Countess sang. In the general emotion no one could remember later on, with certainty, what pieces she chose. Yet at the request of Chopin she sang twice.

Suddenly they heard the death rattle. The piano was pushed back and they all kneeled. Yet that was not the end, and he lived through that night, too. On the 16th his voice failed, and he lost consciousness for several hours, but he came to himself, made a sign that he wished to write, and placed on a sheet of paper his last wish:

"*As this Earth will smother me I conjure*

you to have my body opened so that I may not be buried alive."

Later he again recovered the feeble use of his voice. Then he made his farewells to each of them. Calling Princess Marceline and Mlle. Gavard, he said to them: "When you make music together, think of me, and I shall hear you." Addressing Franchomme: "Play Mozart in memory of me." During that whole night Abbé Jelowiçki recited the prayers for the dying, which they all repeated together. Chopin alone remained mute; life now revealed itself only by nervous spasms. Gutmann held his hand between his own, and from time to time gave him something to drink. "Dear friend," murmured Chopin once. His face became black and rigid. Dr. Cruveillé bent over him and asked if he suffered. "No more," replied Chopin. This was the last word. A few instants later they saw that he had ceased to live.

It was the 17th of October, 1849, at three o'clock in the morning.

They all went out to weep.

From the early morning hours the flowers

Chopin preferred were brought in quantities. Clésinger came to make the death mask. Kwiatkowski made several sketches. He said to Jane Stirling, because he understood how much she loved him: "He was as pure as a tear."

CHAPTER XX

AN EPITAPH FOR A POET

THE death of an artist is the moment of his transfiguration. There are many who are thought great, whose work yet returns at once to the dust. For others, on the contrary, the state of glory only begins with death. It is perhaps, as Delacroix said, "that in art everything is a matter of the soul." We have not yet arrived at an accord on the meaning and value of this little word. But if it were necessary to give a working idea of it, nothing would furnish it better than music. "A cry made manifest," Wagner called it. Doubtless that means: the most spontaneous expression of self. The artist is he who has need to give form to his cry.

Not each one will take it in the same way. To a life expended sumptuously like that of Liszt, contrast that of Chopin, entirely reserved, that no hand has been able to pluck, but so much the more filled with perfume. All that he did not give forth, his love which no

one could seize, his modesty and his timidity, his constant fever of perfection, his elegancies, his exile's homesickness, and even his moments of communication with the unknowable,—all that remains in power in his work. To-day that is still the secret of its strength; music received what men and women disdained. It is for music that he refused himself. How one understands the desolation of Schumann when he learned of the death of the swan, and this beautiful picture gushed spontaneously from his pen: "The soul of music has passed over the world."

It is just this that the crowds must have felt as they pressed to the Temple of the Madeleine on the 30th of October, 1849. Thirteen days had been required to prepare the funeral that they wished as solemn as the life of the dead had never been. He was not even a Chevalier of the *Légion d'Honneur*, this Monsieur Frederick Chopin. No matter. "Nature had a holiday air," reported the papers. Many lovely toilettes. (He would have been flattered.) All the heads of the musical and literary world with Meyerbeer as chief, Berlioz, Gautier, Janin. Only George Sand was missing. M.

Daguerry, the Curé of the Madeleine, put in two weeks in obtaining permission to have women sing in his church. It is to the obsequies of Chopin that we owe this tolerance. Without that, it would have been impossible to give Mozart's *Requiem*. It was played by the orchestra of the Conservatory, conducted by Giraud. The soloists were hidden by a black drapery behind the altar: Pauline Viardot and Mme. Castellan, Lablache and Alexis Dupont. Lefébure-Wély was at the organ. During the Offertory they played two *Preludes*, that in E minor (no. 4) and the 6th, in B minor, written at Majorca in that dusk when Chopin had *seen* death while the rain fell in torrents on the Chartreuse of Valdemosa. The coffin was lowered in the midst of a crowd, while the famous *Funeral March*, orchestrated by Reber, sounded for the first time. The cords of the pall were held by Prince Czartoryski, Franchomme, Delacroix and Gutmann. Meyerbeer walked behind the hearse. They started down the Boulevards for the cemetery of Père-Lachaise. It is there that the body of Chopin was buried, except the heart, which was sent to Warsaw, where it has since remained in

the Church of the Holy Cross. A beautiful symbol which goes with his faithful heart.

No eulogy was pronounced. In the moments of meditation that followed the descent of the bier "a friendly hand" was seen to throw on the coffin that Polish earth that had been given to Chopin the day he left his country. Exactly nineteen years had passed since then. During all those years the native dust had remained in the silver cup awaiting this supreme use. But now Poland no longer existed. Nowhere but in this fine handful of earth,— and the work of Chopin: a few score pages in which were to burn for three quarters of a century the mysticism of a Nation.

On the next 17th of October, in 1850, Miss Stirling went early in the morning to Michon, the florist, who had served Chopin, and bought all the violets she could find. Then she went to Père-Lachaise and placed them on the tomb with a wreath in the name of the family of the dead. At noon, Mass was celebrated in the chapel at the cemetery. Those who were present then went back to the tomb, where Clésinger's monument was unveiled. It is a medi-

ocre allegory, made by a man who hated Chopin. How could such a thing have been beautiful? Only the medallion has a little life. These words are engraved on the pedestal: "To Frederick Chopin, his friends." Deputy Wolowski tried to make a speech, but his throat tightened and nothing was heard. All those who were brought together there had been friends of the dead. They still heard his voice, his piano, his consumptive cough. One of them recalled one of his phrases: "None can take from me that which belongs to me."

To-day, these remains, pelted by the rain, this sorry Muse bent over its lyre with broken strings, merge well enough into the trees of Mont St.-Louis. There are strollers in this park of the dead. They stop before the bust of Musset, the lovely handsome boy who put such charming rhythms to his sorrows. They make a little pilgrimage to the tomb of Abélard and Héloïse, where a pious Abbess had had these words cut: "The love that had united their spirits during their life, and which is preserved during their absence by the most tender and spiritual of letters, has reunited their bodies in this tomb." This reassures the silent lov-

ers who come secretly to throw a flower at the foot of these two stone bodies sleeping side by side. But no one is seen in the narrow alley that leads from the central avenue to the grave of Chopin. It is because he did not have the career of a great lover, this musician of souls. None could be found that could attune itself to his. It had never found its lute-maker. This word makes me think of a letter he wrote to Fontana fourteen months before he died, and in which he throws some light on the depths of his being: "The only unhappiness," he wrote, "consists in this: that we issue from the workshop of a celebrated master, some *sui generis* Stradivarius, who is no longer there to mend us. Inexpert hands do not know the secret of drawing new tones from us, and we push back into our depths what no one has been able to evoke, for want of a lute-maker."

There is a beautiful epitaph for a poet: dead for want of a lute-maker. But where is he, this lute-maker of our lives?

Etoy, October 17, 1926.
77th Anniversary of the death of Chopin.

SOURCES

THE sources from which one can gather an authentic documentation of the life of Chopin are extremely scarce. During his life, few people took the trouble to preserve his letters, although he wrote but few. Some, doubtless, attached but little value to them. Others caused them to disappear because they exposed too intimate a part of their lives.

A historic anecdote has it that Alexandre Dumas fils, *in the course of a sentimental pilgrimage to Poland in the spring of 1851, fell by chance upon the complete file of letters written by George Sand to Chopin. Dumas brought the file back to France and, having restored it to the novelist, saw her re-read the letters and throw them into the fire. Doubtless she thus thought to cast forever into darkness the sad remains of a love whose raptures and whose pains alike would not return to her. The burning of the Warsaw house of Mme. Barcinska, Chopin's youngest sister, destroyed other precious relics in 1863.*

So there remain to us but a very small number of the composer's letters. Even these were altered at will by their first editor, Maurice Karasowski. Many biographers, however, have copied them slavishly, without taking the trouble to collate them with the original texts, or even with the faithful and unexpurgated German translation which M. B. Schar-

litt published at Leipzig in 1911. Karasowski's work is important, nevertheless, because the author, writing between 1860 and 1863, was intimately associated with Chopin's sisters and niece, and he gathered from their lips the family traditions. A part of this I have used, being convinced that the pious legend is based on fact.

The first complete and scholarly documented work on the life of Chopin was published by F. Niecks in London in 1888. Niecks too had known a number of friends and pupils of the master. There is on this account a singular flavor to his work which has not been replaced by later investigations. For the rest, a whole sheaf of works on the musician have been issued, particularly in Polish, German and English. I cite first of all the monumental Chopin *of Ferdynand Hoesick. But if we exclude the imaginative and erroneous testimonials published in France during the latter half of the XIXth century (and continuing up to the present), we must arrive at the work of M. E. Ganche to discover the first complete and serious study of the Polish musician published in French. The recent volume of M. H. Bidou rectifies certain mistakes in it and amplifies certain points. It is an indispensable work for those who wish to reach the depths of Chopin's music.*

As I lately attempted with Liszt, I have sought here only to discover a face and to replace it in its frame. I have scrupulously refrained from invention. *On the other hand, I have not hesitated to* interpret, *believing, as I have said several times elsewhere, that every fact draws its enduring value from*

artistic interpretation. My effort has been only to group events in a certain order, to disentangle the lines of the heart from the lines of the spirit without trying to explain that which, in the soul of Chopin, has remained always inexplicable; not to lift, indeed, from my subject that shadow that gives him his inner meaning and his nebulous beauty.

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Abélard, 332
Academy of Singing (Berlin), 33
Académie Royale (Paris), 71
Adagio in E major (Chopin), 46
Adagio of *Concerto in F minor* (op. 21) (Chopin), 41, 62, 218
Adélaïde, Madame, 224
Agnes (Paër), 43
Agoult, Countess Marie d', 117, 127-129, 216-217
Aix-la-Chappelle, 89
Albert, Prince, 298
Alexandre, Czar (Emperor), 27
Allard, Monsieur, 292, 294
Allegro (Moscheles), 27
Allgemeine Musikalisches (Vienna), 39
Amboise, 84
America, 80
Ancona, 291
Andante Spianato, 91
Antonin, Château d', 27-29, 43
Appassionata, The (Beethoven), 22
Apollonius of Tyne, 201
Apponyi, Count, 85
Arago, 192, 259
Archbishop of Paris, 69
Artillery and Engineers, School of (Warsaw), 23
Auber, Daniel François Esprit, 88
Augusta, Princess (Infante), 53-55
Augustine, 251-252, 274, 303
Aulary, Monsieur, 294
Austerlitz, battle of, 21
Avignon, 159

Bach, Johann Sebastian, 40, 87, 188, 189, 220, 292
Baillot, violinist, 78
Balearic Isles, *see also* Majorca, Palma, Valdemosa, 158-180
Ballade in G minor (op. 23) (Chopin), 106-109, 166, 183
Balzac, Honoré de, 22, 130-134
Barberini, Place (Rome), 241
Barber of Seville, The (Rossini), 72
Barbès, 293
Barcarolle (op. 60) (Chopin), 294-295
Barcelona, 160, 179
Baudelaire, Pierre-Charles, 205-206
Bayer, Mme. Constance, 60
Beauvau, Hôtel de (Marseilles), 182
Beethoven, Ludwig van, 22, 32, 37, 38, 43, 64, 78, 87, 94, 208, 220
Bellini, Vincenzo, 92
Belvédère, Palais de (Warsaw), 56
Berceuse (op. 57) (Chopin), 294-295
Berlin, 33
Berlioz, Hector, 22, 82, 86, 90, 127, 208, 221, 329
Berry (France), 185 *ad seq.,* 306
Berry, Mme. la Duchesse de, 69
Bertram (Meyerbeer), 137

Blache, Dr., 321 *ad seq.*
Blanc, Louis, 248, 259
Böhmischen Köchin, Café zur (Vienna), 59
Bologna, 291
Bona Sforza, 97
Bonstetten, Charles-Victor de, 97
Bossuet, Jaques Benigne, 22
Bourges, Michel de, 126-129
Brault, Adèle, 251
Breslau, 41, 53
Brest, 292
Broadwood, piano, 296
Broadwood, piano manufacturer, 300
Bruhl, 99
Buloz, publisher, 164, 192
Bulwer, Lord, 299
Byron, George Gordon, Lord, 22, 201, 300
Byron, Lady, 300

Calamatta, Louis, 197
Calder House (Scotland), 301
Callot, Jacques, 222
Carlist Party (Paris), 68
Carlsbad, 95
Carlyle, Thomas, 299
Carthusians, Order of, 163
Castellan, Mme., 330
Catalani, Angelica, 310
Cauvières, Dr., 182
Chaillot, rue de (Paris), 315
Chambres des Deputés (Paris), 319
Champs Elysées (Paris), 317
Chartreuse of Valdemosa, *See* Valdemosa
Chateaubriand, François-René, Vicomte de, 70
Chatiron, Hippolyte, 188, 229
Chaussée d'Antin (Paris), 85, 194
Cherubini, Marie-Louis-Charles-Zénobi-Salvador, 72
Chmiel, improvisation from (Chopin), 38
Chopin: Compositions, Pieces, Transcriptions, etc.
Adagio of Concerto in F minor (op. 21), 41, 62, 218
Adagio in G major, 46
Ballade in G minor (op. 23), 106-109, 166, 183
Barcarolle (op. 60), 294-295
Berceuse (op. 57), 294-295
Chmiel, improvisation from, 38
Concerto in E minor (op. 11), 50, 62, 73, 88, 91
Concerto in F minor (op. 21), 41, 45, 62, 78, 107
Etude (no. 5), 222
Etude in C minor (op. 10, no. 12), 66
Etude in E major (no. 3), 88
Etude in G sharp minor, 203
Fantasy in E minor, 225
Fantasy of Polish Airs, 50
Funeral March, 189, 330
Grand Fantasy of Polish Airs, 88
Grande Polonaise, 106
Grande Valse in E flat major, 88
Mazurkas (op. 41), 188
Mazurka in A flat major, 189
Muzurka in C minor (op. 30), 135
Mazurka in C sharp minor (op. 63), 189, 257
Mazurka in C sharp major (op. 30), 135
Mazurka in D flat major (op. 30), 135
Mazurka in E minor, 189
Mazurka in F minor (op. 63), 257
Mazurka in G major, 189

Chopin, *Cont.*
Mazurka in G Minor (op. 30), 135
Nocturne (op. 37, no. 2), 188
Nocturne in C minor (op. 48) 189, 241-242
Nocturne in G major, 189
Polonaise Brillante, 91
Polonaise in F minor, 44
Polonaise for piano and violoncello, 44
Potpourri on the setting moon, 50
Prelude in B minor (no. 6), 330
Prelude in E minor (no. 4), 330
Prelude in G minor (op. 6), 175
Premièr Rondo, in C minor (op. 1), 27
Revolutionary, The (*Etude in C minor,* op. 10, no. 12), 66
Rondeau in E flat major, 88
Rondo à la Krakoviak, 38, 45, 88
Siberian, The, 203
Sonata in E flat minor, 188
Sonata in G flat minor, 189, 225
Sonata in G minor, for piano and violoncello, 294
Sonata with violoncello, 257
Tarantella, 225
Three Mazurkas (op. 34), 135
Trio, for piano, violin, and violoncello, 88
Twelve Etudes (2nd vol., op. 25), 88
Valses Brillantes (op. 34), 135
Valse de l'Adieu, in A flat major (op. 69, no. 1), 101
Variations on the *la ci darem,* 31-32, 37, 38, 78
Waltz in D flat major (op. 70, no. 3), 41, 62
Chopin, *Cont.*
Waltz of the Little Dog, The (op. 64, no. 1), 295
White Lady, The, variations from, 38
Chopin, Emilie, 23
Chopin, Isabelle, 23, 82
Chopin, Louise, 20, 23, 74-77, 113. *See also* Jedrzeïewcz, Louise
Chopin, Nicolas, 20, 23, 26, 31, 36, 57, 74, 95-96, 100, 244-245
Chopin, Mme. Nicolas, 20, 22, 95-96, 246, 316-321. *See also* Krzyzanowska, Justine
Cichowski, Monsieur, 103
Cimarosa, Domenico, 33
Clary, Prince, 40
Clary, Princess, 40
Clésinger, Jean-Baptiste-Auguste-Stello, 262-290, 297, 327, 331 *ad seq.*
Clésinger, Mme., 273-290, 297, 303, 306, 308. *See also* Sand, Solange
Coignet, Jules-Louis-Philippe, 236
Cologne, 90
Concerto in E minor (op. 11) (Chopin), 50, 62, 73, 88, 91
Concerto in F minor (op. 21) (Chopin), 41, 45, 62, 78, 107
Congress of Naturalists (Berlin), 33
Conservatory of Music (Paris), 91, 330
Conservatory of Music (Warsaw), 26, 27, 36
Constantin, Grand Duke, Governor of Warsaw, 25, 56
Cramer, pianist, 73
Crans, Mlle. Saladin de, 97
Cruveillé, Dr., 321 *ad seq.*
Custine, Marquis de, 88, 117

Czartoryski, Prince Adam, 85, 200, 249, 261, 311, 330
Czartoryska, Princess Marceline, 249, 261, 265, 307, 311, 323-327
Czerny, Charles, 39-40
Czosnowska, Countess, 257

Daguerry, Monsieur, 330
Daily News (London), 300
Dantan, Jean-Pierre, 230, 235
Dante, Alighieri, 58, 201
Danube, The, 51
Dautremont, tailor (Paris), 194
da Vinci, Leonardo, 84
de Garaudé, Monsieur, 294
Delacroix, Eugene, 197, 200, 205-210, 218, 229, 249, 261, 278-279, 311-314, 328, 330
de Laprade, Victor, 259
Delaroche, Hippolyte-Paul, 310
Desdemona (*see also Othello*), 72
des Preaulx, M., 261-263
Dickens, Charles, 299
Dictionnaire Philosophique (Voltaire), 322
di Mondi, Mlle. Antonia Molina, 294
Dobrzycka, Mme., 53-55, 99
Don Juan (Mozart), 221
Douglas, Marquis of, 299
Dover Street (London), 295 *ad seq.*
Dresden, 40-41, 53, 96-101
Dudevant, Aurore. *See* Sand, George
Dudevant, Casimir, 128, 251, 273, 284
Dudevant, Maurice. *See* Sand, Maurice
Dudevant, Solange. *See* Sand, Solange
Dupont, Alexis, 330
Dupont, hatmaker (Paris), 194
Düsseldorf, 90, 109
Duteil, family of, 188
Duvernet, Théophile-Imarigeon, 188, 284
dwor, 21
Dziady (*The Feast of the Dead*) (Miçkiewicz), 200

Ecole de Medécine. *See* School of Medicine (Paris)
Edinburgh, 301, 304, 309
Elbe, 99
Elizabeth, Queen, 84
El Mallorquin, 160
Elsner, Joseph-Xavier, 26, 45, 51, 74-77
Enfer, rue d' (Paris), 70
Erard, piano, 215, 296
Erard, Salle, 90
Erskine, Mrs. *See also* Stirling, family, 296 *ad seq.*
Etienne, Mme, 311-312
Etude (no. 5) (Chopin), 222
Etude in C minor (op. 10, no. 12) (Chopin), 66
Etude in E major (no. 3) (Chopin), 88
Etude in G sharp minor (Chopin), 203
Eusèbe, 32
Euterpe, 97
Everard. *See* Bourges, Michel de

Faber, Monsieur, 257
Falmouth, Lord, 298-299
Fantasy in E minor (Chopin), 225
Fantasy of Polish Airs (Chopin), 50
Farewells, The (*Sonata in E flat major*) (Beethoven), 22
Faust (Gounod), 43
Ferdinand Cortez (Spontini), 33
Festival of Music (Aix-la-Chappelle), 89

Fétis, music critic, 79
Fidélio (Beethoven), 22
Field, pianist, 73, 88
Fleury, family of, 188
Fontana, Jules, 24, 160, 162, 166, 178, 182-184, 189, 192, 194-195, 200, 230-231, 235, 333
Fouquet, Nicolas, 84
France, Hôtel de (Paris), 128
Franchomme, violoncellist, 77, 200, 292, 294, 310-311, 322-326, 330
François I, 84
Françoise, the chambermaid, 255
François Le Champi (Sand), 286
Frankfurt-am-Oder, 34
Frauenkirche, The (Dresden), 101
Frère, Charles-Theodore, 236
Freyschutz Die (Handel), 33
Funeral March (Chopin), 189, 330

Gainsborough, Lady, 298-299
Gallenberg, Count, 37
Gaubert, Dr., 158
Gautier, Théophile, 329
Gavard, Charles, 322
Gavard, Mlle., 322, 326
Gazette Musicale (Paris), 226-227, 296
Geneva, 96-97, 128, 216
Genoa, 185
Geological Museum (Berlin), 34
Germany (Heine), 115
Giotto, Ambrogio, 198
Giraud, Monsieur, 330
Gladkowska, Constance, 36, 41-52, 54, 57, 59-62, 82
Glasgow, 304
Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von, 22, 201
Gomez, Señor, 161, 165
Grand Fantasy on Polish Airs (Chopin), 88
Grande Polonaise (Chopin), 106
Grande Polonaise (Kalkbrenner), 78
Grande Waltz in E flat major (Chopin), 88
Grenoble, 168
Grzymala, Count Albert, 82, 136-157, 159-160, 179, 192, 200, 261, 267-273, 300, 306-308, 310, 312
Gutman, Monsieur, 88, 309, 311, 322-326, 330

Habeneck, conductor, 71
Hamilton, Duke of, 309
Handel, George Friedrich, 33
Hanska, Countess, 131-134
Hartmann, Caroline, 88
Haslinger, music publisher (Vienna), 37, 55
Haydn, Joseph, 21, 257
Heine, Heinrich, 115, 128, 200, 218
Heller, Stephen, 212
Héloïse, 332
Hiller, Ferdinand, 77-78, 90, 128
Histoire de ma Vie (Sand), 282, 290
Hogarth, William, 299
Holy Cross, Church of (Warsaw), 331
Hortense, Queen, 97
House of the Wind, The (Majorca), 160-166
Houssaye, Arsène, 262
Hugo, Victor, 22
Hummel, Jean-Népomucène, 58, 62

Imperial Theatre (Vienna), 37
Infernal Comedy (Miçkiewicz), 202

Ingres, Jean-Auguste-Dominique, 206
Inquisition, Palace of (Barcelona), 160
Invalides, Hotel des (Paris), 319
Invitation to a Waltz (von Weber), 237
Isambert, Mlle., singer, 78
Italian Opera House (Paris), 71
Italienne à Alger, L' (Rossini), 72
Italy, 65, 291

Jagellous, dynasty of, 97
Janin, 329
Jardin des Plantes (Paris), 257
Jaroçki, Professor, 33-34
Jean, Prince de Lucques, future King of Saxony, 53-55
Jedrzeïewicz, Calasante, 245, 248-249, 316-320
Jedrzeïewicz, Louise, 245-249, 262-263, 302-303, 316-321. *See also* Chopin, Louise
Jelowiçki, Abbé Alexandre, 322-327
Jéna, battle of, 21
Jésuites, rue des (Warsaw), 26
Journal (Delacroix), 312-314
Journal des Débats (Paris), 286
Journal Intime (Sand), 125-126, 201, 265
Jules II, 84

Kalerji, Mme., 314
Kalisz, 53
Kalkbrenner, Frédéric-Guillaume, 72-78, 88, 310
Karol, Prince (Sand), 234, 290 *See also Lucrezia Floriani*
Keats, John, 22
Keir, The Stirlings of, 302, 306
Kisting, piano factory, 33
Kleczynski, Professor, 215
Klengel, Alexandre, composer, 40
Krakoviak. See Rondo à la Krakoviak (Chopin)
Krasinski, 200
Kreutzer Sonata (Beethoven), 22
Kronprinz, Hôtel du (Berlin), 33
Krzyzanowska, Justine, 20. *See also* Chopin, Mme. Nicolas
Kurpinski, 45
Kwiatkowsky, 200, 327

Lablache, Mme. Louis, 71, 330
La Châtre (France), 264
Lady of the Lake, The (Rossini), 50
Laffitte, rue (Paris), 128
La Fontaine, Jean de, 22, 85, 218
Lambert, Hôtel (Paris), 261
Lamennais, Abbé de, 123, 128
Lannes, Maréchale, 85
Lefébure-Wély, 330
Légion d'Honneur, La, 329
Legouvé, Monsieur, 311
Leipzig, 102, 107
Leipzig, battle of, 99
Lélia (Sand), 122
Le Meleagre, 179
Lenz, Monsieur W. de, 236-239
Le Phénicien, 160
Leroux, Pierre, 200-201, 229, 254
Le Verier, Monsieur, 257
Lichnowsky, Count, 38
Lind, Jenny, 297, 311
Linde, Mme., 27
Liszt, Franz, 22, 24, 38, 62, 78, 79, 82, 86, 88, 90, 94, 108, 117, 127-129, 176, 184, 211, 216-223, 225-226, 229, 236-237, 328
Lorraine (France), 20
Louis XVI, King, 70

Louis, Dr., 310, 321 *ad seq.*
Louis-Philippe, King, 224-225, 291-292, 294
Louvre, The (Paris), 207
Lucques, Prince de. *See* Jean.
Lucrezia Floriani (Sand), 234, 255-257, 267, 307
Luxembourg, Musée de (Paris), 261

Madeleine, Church of the (Paris), 307, 329
Majorca, 160-180, 187, 251, 307-308, 330. *See also* Balearic Isles, Palma, Valdemosa
Malfatti, Dr., 64
Malibran, Maria-Félicité Garcia, 71-72
Mallefille, Félicien, 129-130, 138-140, 145, 150, 152, 155-156, 159
Manchester, 304
Manchester Guardian, 304
Marainville (France), 20
Mardi Gras, 172
Mare Au Diable, La (Sand), 286
Marliani, Mme., 135-136, 160, 165, 179-180, 185, 235, 237, 289 [252
Marie-Aurore of Saxe, Queen,
Marienbad, 109-111
Marmontel, 72
Marot, Clément, 84
Marseilles, 180-185, 187
Matuszynski, Dr. Jean, 59-61 67, 90, 160, 163, 196, 244
Maurras, Charles, 42
Mazurkas (op. 41) (Chopin), 188
Mazurka in A flat major (Chopin), 189
Mazurka in C sharp major (op. 30) (Chopin), 135
Mazurka in C sharp minor (op. 63) (Chopin), 189, 257
Mazurka in C minor (op. 30) (Chopin), 135
Mazurka in D flat major (op. 30) (Chopin), 135
Mazurka in E minor (Chopin), 189
Mazurka in F minor (op. 63) (Chopin), 257
Mazurka in G major (Chopin), 189
Mazurka in G major (op. 63) (Chopin), 257
Mazurka in G minor (op. 30) (Chopin), 135
Mémoires (Sand), 286, 313
Mendelssohn, Bartholdy Felix, 33, 89, 90, 102, 109
Mendizabal, Don Juan Alvarez y, 163
Merimée, Prosper, 120-121
Merry Wives of Windsor, The (Shakespeare), 84
Meyerbeer, Giacomo, 80, 137, 294, 329-330
Michelangelo, Buomarroti, 84, 220
Miçkiewicz, 116, 128, 200-202
Milan, 97, 291
Mohilew, General, 67
Molière (Jean Baptiste Poquelin), 22
Molin, Dr., 310
Montpensier, Duke of, 292
Moschelés, Ignace, 27, 88, 224-225
Moscow, 67
Moses, 201
Moses (Rossini), 40
Mostowska, Countess, 135
Mozart, Wolfgang von, 32, 35, 87, 198, 206-208, 220-221, 224, 292, 294, 326, 330
Munich, 66
Musset, Viscount Alfred de, 122-126, 134, 159, 185, 187, 282, 332

Nantes, 292
Naples, 184
Napoleon I, Emperor, 20, 99
Napoleon III, Emperor. *See* Napoleon, Prince Louis
Napoleon, Prince Louis, 97, 123
Nidecki, 59
Niemcewicz, Julian-Orsin, 25
Nietzsche, Friedrich, 181, 208, 241-243
Night Song (Nietzsche), 241-243
Noailles, Duke of, 311
Nocturne (op. 37, no. 2) (Chopin), 188
Nocturne in C minor (op. 48) (Chopin), 189, 241-242
Nocturne in G major (Chopin), 189
Nohant, Château de, 127, 129-135, 185 *ad seq.*, 302, 306
Notre Dame de Paris, Church of (Paris), 319
Nourrit, Adolph, 128, 184

Obreskow, Mme., 316-318
O'Meara, Mlle., 87
Opera, The (Berlin), 33
Opera, The (Warsaw), 36, 43
Orleans, Duchess of, 224
Orleans, Duke of, 292
Orleans, Square d' (Paris), 235 *ad seq.*, 310, 317
Orlowski, 88-89
Orsetti, family of, 97
Osborne, pianist, 78
Ostend, 321
Othello (Rossini), 72

Paderewski, Ignace, 67
Paër, Fernando, 43, 72
Paganini, Nicolo, 64
Paix, rue de la, 307
Palma, 160-161, 179. *See also* Majorca, Balearic Isles, Valdemosa
Panthéon, The (Paris), 319
Papet, Dr., 188
Paskewitch, General, 57, 67
Pasta, Giuditta Negri, 71, 72
Pelletan, 128
Père-Lachaise, Cemetery of (Paris), 330 *ad seq.*
Perpignan, 159
Pertius, Count de, 215, 224
Philharmonic Orchestra (London), 297
Pierre, the gardener, 255
Pigalle, rue (Paris), 194 *ad seq.*
Pixis, violinist, 40
Plater, Count, 82
Pleyel, Camille, 77, 117, 160-161, 163, 178, 183, 292
Pleyel, piano, 113-114, 216, 296, 310
Pleyel, Salon, 78, 90, 225-227, 292-296
Poissonnière, Boulevard (Paris), 69 *ad seq.*, 291
Polonaise brillante (Chopin), 91
Polonaise in F minor (Chopin), 44
Polonaise for piano and violoncello (Chopin), 44
Poniatowski, Prince Joseph-Antoine, 100
Pont du Gard, 159
Posen, 34
Potoçka, Countess Delphine, 87, 92-94, 311, 313-314, 325-327
Potpourri on the setting moon (Chopin), 50
Prague, 39-40
Prelude in B minor (no. 6) (Chopin), 330
Prelude in E minor (no. 4) (Chopin), 330
Prelude in G minor (op. 6) (Chopin), 175
Premièr Rondo, in C minor (op. 1) (Chopin), 27

Preparatory Military Academy (Warsaw), 23
Probst, music publisher (Paris), 178, 183
Prophet, The (Meyerbeer), 314
Prussia, Napoleon's campaign in, 20, 21
Prussia, Prince of, 298

Quatuor Serioso (Beethoven), 22
Quintette (Beethoven), 78

Racine, Jean, 22
Radziwill, Prince Antoine, 27-28, 43, 47
Radziwill, Princess, 44
Radziwill, Princess Elise, 29, 44
Radziwill, Princess Marceline, 87
Radziwill, Prince Valentin, 84-85
Radziwill, Princess Wanda, 29, 44
Ramorino, General, 69
Ravel, Maurice, 295
Reber, Monsieur, 330
Rénovateur, Le (Paris), 90
Republication Party (Paris), 68
Requiem (Mozart), 330
Revolution of 1830 (Poland), 56, 96
Revolution of 1848 (France), 291
Revolutionary, The (*Etude in C minor*, op. 10, no. 12) (Chopin), 66
Revue des Deux Mondes (Paris), 192
Richter, Johann-Paul von, 94
Robert the Devil (Meyerbeer), 80, 294
Rochechouart, rue (Paris), 163
Roger, Monsieur, 294
Rollinat, François, 180, 188
Rome, 82, 291
Rondeau in E flat major (Chopin), 88
Rondo à la Krakoviak (Chopin), 38, 45, 88
Rossini, Gioachino, 37, 40, 50, 71, 72
Roth, Dr., 310
Rothschild, Baron James de, 85
Rothschild, Baroness, 298, 311
Rousseau, Theodore, 274
Rozières, Mlle. de, 230-232, 265, 274-277, 306

St.-Antoine, Place (Geneva), 96-97
Saint Bruno, 168-169 [58
St.-Etienne, Church of (Vienna),
Sainte-Beuve, Charles-Augustin de, 120-121, 148, 202
St.-Etienne du Mont, Church of (Paris), 319
St.-Germain des Pres, Church of (Paris), 242
St.-Germain l'Auxerrois, Church of (Paris), 319
St. John, 201
St.-Louis, Mont (Paris), 332
St. Petersburg, 238
Saint-Saëns, Charles-Camille, 108
St.-Simon, Henri-Jean-Victor de Rouvroy, Duc de, 123
St. Simonien Party (Paris), 68
St.-Sulpice, Church of (Paris), 319
Salzburg, 66
Sand, George, 70, 118 *ad seq.*
Sand, Maurice, 128, 138, 158, 165, 172-173, 188, 192, 196, 209-210, 229, 239-240, 250-252, 254-255, 259, 263, 265, 280, 303, 313
Sand, Solange, 128, 158, 165, 172, 188, 192, 196, 239-240, 251-255, 259, 261-290. *See also* Clésinger, Mme.

Sandeau, Jules, 119, 131, 256
Sapieha, Princess, 249
Saxe, Marèchal de, 118-119
Saxony, King of. *See* Jean, Prince de Lucques.
Saxony, Queen of, 54-55
Scheffer, Ary, 302
Schlesinger, publisher (Paris), 183, 312
School of Medicine (Paris), 68, 90
Schubert, Franz, 184, 220-221
Schumann, Robert, 22, 27, 32, 35, 94, 102, 107, 109, 215, 220, 225
Scott, Sir Walter, 299
Secret Marriage, The (Cimarosa), 33
Secrétaire Intime, Le (Sand), 133
Seine, The, 51
Shakespeare, William, 84, 187, 220
Shelley, Percy Bysshe, 22
Shroeder-Devrient, 72
Siberian, The (Chopin), 203
Simon, Dr., 310
Skarbeck, Countess, 20
Slavik, violinist, 64
Slowacki, 200
Smithson, Henrietta, 90
Socrates, 201
Somerset, Duchess of, 298
Sonata in E flat major (Beethoven), 22
Sonata in E flat minor (Chopin), 188
Sonata in G flat minor (Chopin), 189, 225
Sonata in G minor for piano and violoncello (Chopin), 294
Sonata with violoncello (Chopin), 257
Sontag, German singer, 47
Sowinski, pianist, 78, 81
Spain, King of, 311
Spontini, Gasparo Luigi Pacifico, 33
Sprée, The, 51
Stafford House (London), 298-299
Stamati, pianist, 78
Stars, The (Schubert), 184
Stendhal (Marie Henri Beyle), 21-22, 159
Stirling, Jane, 291 *ad seq.*, 327 *ad seq.*
Stradivarius, 333
Strauss, Johann, 64
Stuttgart, 66
Sue, Eugène, 128
Sutherland, Duchess of, 298
Swedenborg, Emmanuel, 201

Tarantella (Chopin), 225
Tempe, valley of, 63
Teplitz, 40
Théâtre Italien (Paris), 90
"Three Glorious Days" (Paris), 291
Three Mazurkas (op. 34) (Chopin), 135
Tiber, The, 51
Tilsit, battle of, 21
Titus. *See* Woyçieckowski, Titus
Tomeoni, Mlle., singer, 78
Torphichen, Lord, 300
Tours, 302
Trio for piano, violin and violoncello (Chopin), 88
Trio for piano, violin and violoncello (Mozart), 294
Tronchet, rue (Paris), 194
Tuileries, The (Paris), 319
Twelve Etudes (2nd vol., op. 25) (Chopin), 88

Ukraine, 81
Urhan, violinist, 78

Val de Grâce Hospital (Paris), 319

Valdemosa, Chartreuse of, 162, 166-178, 330. *See also* Palma, Majorca, Balearic Isles
"Valse de l'Adieu" in A flat major (op. 69, no. 1) (Chopin), 101
Valses Brillantes (op. 34) (Chopin), 135
Variations on the *la ci darem* (Chopin), 31-32, 37, 38, 78
Vaucluse, 159
Vaudemont, Princess de, 85
Vendôme Place (Paris), 322 *ad seq.*
Venice, 124
Veron, Louis-Désiré, 71
Veronese, Paul, 299
Viardot, Louis, 282-283
Viardot, Pauline, 200, 235, 237, 249, 330
Victoria, Queen, 298
Vienna, 37, 51, 57, 65, 304
Voltaire, François-Marie Aronet, 322

Wagner, Richard, 22, 74, 87, 328
Wagram, battle of, 21
Waltz in D flat major (op. 70, no. 3) (Chopin), 41, 62
"Waltz of the Little Dog" (op. 64, no. 1) (Chopin), 295
Warsaw, 23, 41, 42, 45, 47, 54 56-57, 66, 95, 112, 244, 291, 330-331
Warsaw, Duchy of, 20
Warsaw High School, 23
Wellington, Duke of, 298
Westminster, Duke of, 298
White Lady, The, improvisation from (Chopin), 38
Wieck, Clara, 88, 102
Wieck, Herr, 102
Wiener Theaterzeitung (Vienna), 38
Wilna, 99
Winter At Majorca (Sand), 166
Witwicki, Polish writer, 65
Wodzinski, Count Antoine, 104, 230
Wodzinski, Casimir, 100, 103, 113
Wodzinska, Countess, 100-118
Wodzinski, family, 24, 96-118, 230
Wodzinski, Felix, 100, 103
Wodzinska, Marie, 95-116, 230, 247
Wodzinski, Palatin, 99-100
Wodzinska, Mlle. Thérèse, 105-106, 116
Wola, suburb of Warsaw, 51
Wolowski, deputy, 332
Woyçieckowski, Titus, 24, 41, 44-49, 53-57, 62, 67, 70, 72, 80, 321

Young French Party (Paris), 68

zal, 30-31
Zamboni, conductor, 71
Zarathustra (Nietzsche), 242-243
Zelazowa, Wola, 20, 22
Zielinski, 50
Zullichau (Poland), 34
Zwinger Museum (Dresden), 99
Zywny, 25-26

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FREDERICK CHOPIN
From a Portrait by Ary Scheffer

POLONAISE

The Life of Chopin

By GUY DE POURTALÈS

Author of "FRANZ LISZT" *etc.*



Translated from the F
by CHARLES BAY

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HENRY HOLT AND

