

LIFE OF CHOPIN

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Life of Chopin by Franz Liszt

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FRANZ LISZT

LIFE OF CHOPIN

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BY

F. LISZT.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH

BY

MARTHA WALKER COOK.

"He was a mighty Poet—and
A subtle-souled Psychologist."

FOURTH EDITION REVISED.



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Dedication of the Translation to Jan Pyczboski.

WITHOUT your consent or knowledge, I have ventured to dedicate this translation to you!

As the countryman of Chopin, and filled with the same earnest patriotism which distinguished him; as an impassioned and perfect Pianist, capable of reproducing his difficult compositions in all the subtle tenderness, fire, energy, melancholy, despair, caprice, hope, delicacy and startling vigor which they imperiously exact; as thorough master of the complicated instrument to which he devoted his best powers; as an erudite and experienced possessor of that abstruse and difficult science, music; as a composer of true, deep, and highly original genius,—this dedication is justly made to you!

Even though I may have wounded your characteristically haughty, shrinking and Sclavic susceptibili-

ties in rendering so public a tribute to your artistic skill, forgive me! The high moral worth and manly rectitude which distinguish you, and which alone render even the most sublime genius truly illustrious in the eyes of woman, almost force these inadequate and imperfect words from the heart of the translator.

M. W. C.

P R E F A C E .

To a people, always prompt in its recognition of genius, and ready to sympathize in the joys and woes of a truly great artist, this work will be one of exceeding interest. It is a short, glowing, and generous sketch, from the hand of Franz Liszt, (who, considered in the double light of composer and performer, has no living equal,) of the original and romantic Chopin ; the most ethereal, subtle, and delicate among our modern tone-poets. It is a rare thing for a great artist to write on art, to leave the passionate worlds of sounds or colors for the colder realm of words ; rarer still for him to abdicate, even temporarily, his own throne, to stand patiently and hold aloft the blazing torch of his own genius, to illumine the gloomy grave of another : yet this has Liszt done through love for Chopin.

It is a matter of considerable interest to note how the nervous and agile fingers, accustomed to sovereign rule over the keys, handle the pen ; how the musician feels as a man ; how he estimates art and artists.

Liszt is a man of extensive culture, vivid imagination, and great knowledge of the world; and, in addition to their high artistic value, his lines glow with poetic fervor, with impassioned eloquence. His musical criticisms are refined and acute, but without repulsive technicalities or scientific terms, ever sparkling with the poetic ardor of the generous soul through which the discriminating, yet appreciative awards were poured. Ah! in these days of degenerate rivalries and bitter jealousies, let us welcome a proof of affection so tender as his "Life of Chopin"!

It would be impossible for the reader of this book to remain ignorant of the exactions of art. While, through its eloquence and subtle analysis of character, it appeals to the cultivated literary tastes of our people, it opens for them a dazzling perspective into that strange world of tones, of whose magical realm they know, comparatively speaking, so little. It is intelligible to all who think or feel; requiring no knowledge of music for its comprehension.

The compositions of Chopin are now the mode, the rage. Every one asks for them, every one tries to play them. We have, however, but few remarks upon the peculiarities of his style, or the proper manner of producing his works. His compositions, generally perfect in form, are never abstract conceptions, but