



M. PADEREWSKI.



PADEREWSKI* AS A COMPOSER.

THE "happy medium" people (with whom perhaps the world is chiefly populated) are spared the deepest phases of sorrow certainly, but they are also debarred from feeling pleasure so exquisite as to be almost akin to pain, for humanity is so constituted that the power of experiencing the keenest joy is always found side by side with the greatest capacity for suffering; by the latter is meant of course something entirely different from the self-centred pessimism which finds exponents in the literature, painting or music of every age. It is a capacity born of qualities widely opposed to egoism, a power indeed of "caring deeply," to be summed up in the one word—sympathy, and surely it is one of the highest attributes which either man or woman can possess. No one devoid of this dual gift of sorrow and joy, can ever adequately gauge the beauties of any branch of art, and no truly great artist, who is able to touch the very hearts of his fellow-beings is without it, the deeper its roots, the higher the inspiration. Job, the Hebraic poet, possessed it in a marvellous degree; it drew him down almost to the depths of hell, but it raised him again to the very gates of heaven; it belonged to Shakspeare, else how could he have created a Hamlet and a Puck? It pervades the writings of Goethe—we feel it in the music of Beethoven and Chopin, whose moments of happiness though fleeting, were yet intensely real, and it strikes us in the works of the greatest masters of painting. As examples in the modern school, the pictures of George Watts may be aptly cited, where tears and laughter so often meet, and in the realms of contemporary music it is wonderfully expressed by the compositions of Paderewski. Such pieces as his "Elegie" or his "Nocturne" reveal a depth of sorrow and regret before which the listener shrinks; his "Dans le Désert," if considered as something more than a mere virtuosity study, contains the elements of a tragedy; underlying the tenderness of his "Chant d'Amour" is a vein of deep sadness, and more than one number of his "Chants du voyageur" suggests that their composer has had a heavy price to pay for his impressions of the journey of life.

But in contrast to all these, he has written other pieces instinct with happiness, such as the "Humoresques de Concert," amongst which the well-known minuet in G cannot quite lose its charm of gladness even when caricatured by aspiring amateurs and enthusiastic school girls; the "Scherzino," Op. 10, is like a little ode to a sunbeam, and a "Valse caprice" has caught all the gaiety of youthful dancers. Nor is there anything sad about the brilliant "Polish Fantasia;" through all its hurrying clash and tumult of piano and orchestra run themes of irresistible triumph, it seems as if Poland had nothing less than her own again.

In all Paderewski's music, whether grave or gay, there are very marked characteristics; it

is first and foremost thoroughly national, its impetuosity and flashing changes of accent and rhythm, its waywardness and pride (beneath which there is nevertheless always a certain gentleness), all reveal Poland. It has moreover features peculiar to its composer individually.

Tonkünstler is a well-known German word applicable to no one more justly than to Paderewski. One of his greatest beauties as a player lies in his gift of graduating his tone; he is veritably an artist in tone, and it is particularly noticeable that all his compositions are primarily tone studies; for this reason they are not easy of artistic interpretation, and many of them present technical difficulties only within the grasp of an accomplished performer. But here again, just as he often touches us most at the piano by the simplicity of a Mendelssohn "Lied ohne Worte" rendered with exquisite charm, so some of his simplest music pleases best; as instances of this, may be taken the beautiful "Mélodie" (Op. 16, No. 2), or "Au soir," a sketch worthy to have found favour with that lover of the night, Schumann. Paderewski is one of the few who can either play or write a little piece, and herein perhaps lies his chief claim to the title of a consummate artist.

Nor is there any drawing-room atmosphere about this music; that it may be seriously studied without weariness is as good a test as any of its worth: it is pervaded with a certain manly earnestness, and it always bears evidence of careful writing, for never, either as performer or composer, does Paderewski offer his public anything slovenly or unfinished.

Amongst the national dances and Volk-lieder of his native country, the Polonaise, the Mazourka, or the Crakoviak, he is thoroughly in his element, much more so than when he deals with fugues and variations. Like Chopin, he has written a number of these presumably peasant dances, yet singularly aristocratic and graceful, now melancholy, now gay, and withal passionate and fiery; all those who are interested in Poland and things Polish should know them, particularly the Polonaise, Op. 9, the Cracovienne Fantastique, Op. 14, and the Tatra Album, Books I. and II., which latter, as well as his Mazourkas, lend themselves extremely well to various arrangements for stringed instruments, and form delightful pianoforte duets.

As may be readily imagined, such compositions as his two "Légendes" also illustrate him quite at his best; they are steeped in all the weird romance that enshrines the early history of every country, and as he presents them to our ears, seated at his Erard, their charm is enhanced by the fascination of a 19th century *raconteur*, who fully perceives the poetry of his native folklore, and enters thoroughly into all its mystery; it strikes the listener, moreover, that Paderewski must have a warm corner in his heart for the children; were he to interpret his legends in words

instead of music, it is easy to picture the young people, as well as their elders clustering round to hear these tales of some ancient superstition, in the telling of which, human emotions and mystic imagery are quaintly combined, with here a sigh, or anon a laugh, or a wild outburst of warring elements—symbolic doubtless of that conflict between good and evil, at the root of all legendary lore—followed again by calmer phrases, till the story waxes soft and faint, gradually dying away, as if hushed into silence by some enchanter's spell.

Several books of songs are full of an originality altogether out of the common run, and display a knowledge of the powers of the human voice, though English and German translations of various poems by Mickiewicz and others by no means do justice to the beautiful Polish language, so strong yet supple, still spoken and written by some ten millions of people. A more recent composition, "Dans la forêt," magnificently sung by Maurel, has the advantage of the untranslated words of Théophile Gautier, whose mood of autumnal sadness has been fitly wedded to music.

With the exception of his concerto for piano and orchestra, the "Polish fantasia," his songs, and a sonata for violin and piano dedicated to Sarasate, Paderewski has so far only composed for his own instrument, and the superlative greatness which he has attained as a performer has greatly tended to overshadow his worth as a composer; but it must be remembered that he did not suddenly jump to his present unrivalled eminence amongst pianists. He was never, in his earliest days, weak or commonplace, but evinced intensely interesting possibilities of something greater in the future; his would appear to be a never stationary ideal, always leading him to something higher, though the time is not so very remote when he only just hinted at his actual grandeur. How immeasurably nobler are his conceptions of all the great masters, but of Beethoven in particular, now, than they were only five years ago, and how much he has gained in control of himself and his audience, those alone can fully realise who have carefully followed Paderewski's triumphant yet gradual progress; and much the same may be said about his compositions, for beautiful as they are they constantly impress one with the idea that he has by no means reached the complete measure of what he can achieve in this direction; of his two most important works, the concerto in A minor and the Polish Fantasia, the latter *opus* is in every respect the most *bedeutend* (to borrow an expressive German word), and judging from what he has already accomplished, it is quite evident that should his ambitions lead him still further—rumour suggests an opera—the results will always merit respect and interest, and never prove unworthy of the art to which Paderewski devotes his life.

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* Pronounced Padereffski.