

## LOVE STORIES BY FAMOUS JEWS.

Anton Rubinstein and M-lle de  
Tschikonanoff by JOSEPH KAYE.

When Rubinstein was a handsome leonine young genius of twenty-three his first opera, "Dmitri Donski" was produced. This work was heard by the Grand Duchess Helene, sister of the Tzar. The opera, the presentation, the presence of this high royalty changed the course of the pianist-composer's life.

The Duchess was a distinguished representative of those women of Europe who established the institution known as the salon, where heads were crowned and the crowns put in pawn; where reputations were made, broken and repaired; where great men came to conquer frail women and were led out by the nose.

The celebrated salon leaders were ageless; twenty-five or fifty, it made little difference to the throngs that came their drawing rooms. There was something about their magnetic personality, set against a background of intellectual brilliance, that intoxicated men and confused their normal judgement. Such a woman was the Grand Duchess Helene. In Russia she was the supreme being of her sex and time; upon whom she cast an eye of favour thought himself honoured beyond common hopes.

When Helene heard "Dmitri Donskoi" and learned that its composer was in his early twenties an extraordinary pianist and as picturesque a type of manhood as is found in the most romantic novels she became interested in him. She summoned the musician to her presence. She saw for herself that reports had belied reality, if anything; that he exceeded her expectations. She then made him her court musician.

Rubinstein, in turn, was fascinated. He had achieved a reputation by this time and though he had not yet begun his famous tours which were to bring him fortunes, he managed to subsist comfortably by teaching and occasional concerts. But to be taken under the patronage of such a great person as Helene was unthinkable, a blessing from

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Heaven. He began to see the Duchess on a pedestal; in time he worshipped her, first with his head and then with his heart. He could not sing enough praises of her.

"I have never in my life met her equal," he wrote, in after life, but still under her influence. "To a royal dignity of manner she united the perfection of tact. She knew how to put herself in sympathy with everyone who entered her presence... She was an extraordinary woman—an extraordinary woman."

For the Grand Duchess he wrote the two compositions by which he is today remembered by the average public, the famous "Melody in F" and the equally famous "Kamenoi Ostrov," the latter piece named after the resort on the Neva where the Duchess had her palace in which Rubinstein lived during the time he was with her. Helene also made him write three operas, "Thomas the Fool", "Vengeance" and "The Siberian Hunter" and he wrote them under her inspiration. Only the first was produced; the other two were burned in manuscript when the opera house was destroyed by fire.

In the first flush of life at the palace, within the constant presence of the Duchess, Rubinstein could dream. Then the dreams cooled upon surveying the situation in which he found himself. And as he once more began to see clearly he observed that there was a certain maid of honour attached to the royal court who looked upon him much in the same way as he regarded the Duchess. This young woman was M-lle de Tschikonanoff. She was pretty, vivacious and cultured. Rubinstein met her often during rehearsals for the masques, balls and other performances that the court indulged in and gradually there grew up a bond of sympathy between them. Both were on approximately the same level in a place where the levels were uniformly high.

From all this orchid atmosphere of royalty there eventually blossomed one tender love and not long afterward the future king of all the pianists except Liszt forgot the court and married the maid-of-honour.

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It is a curious fact to record of Rubinstein that he is classed as Russian where in reality he was actually a Roumanian, being born in Jassy. Both his parents were Jewish, which removes him still further from the absolute

claim of the Russians. However he spent a great many years of his life in Russia, founded the celebrated Moscow Conservatory, and considered himself a Russian.

Another peculiar thing to note about Rubinstein is that though he adopted Christianity he always took great pride in his Jewish parentage. He never tired talking about the wisdom of the rabbis and his intimate personal belongings were stamped with his name spelled in Hebrew characters. Another manifestation of his Jewish partisanship was his hatred of Richard Wagner, who devoted so much of his spare time to anti-Semitic railings that he was popularly supposed to be an apostate.

Another paradox that attaches itself to his genius is that while all critics agree that among his numerous compositions there is music the equal of Beethoven and Mendelssohn, only a few pieces are ever performed. No one can give a specific reason why.

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