

CHOPIN: THE MAN AND HIS MUSIC. By James Huneker. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.) Within a few years, the writing, as a musical specialist, of Mr. James Huneker has begun to win that notice which its attractive and forceful individuality deserves. The temperamental style is a somewhat perilous equation in criticism—at least in English musical criticism. Mr. Huneker is emphatically a temperamentalist in his best and freest literary manner. But in the instance of the author of "Mezzotints in Modern Music," a volume of essays which appeared about a year ago, and in this new particular and complete study, Mr. Huneker shows not merely that vivacity of imagination and dexterity of phrase that, from the first, were traits of his essayistic side; but proves to us the insight into things as they are, the care to obtain the right viewpoints, the esthetic and literary balance which go toward making the kind of biography responsible as well as readable. The present book is more a manual, a guide, an exquisitely sympathetic and suggestive work on Chopin's music itself, form by form and phase by phase, than an extended personal review. The biographic First Part of the volume, dealing with the personality and history of Chopin, the man, is subordinate to a Second Part in which the Polish composer's works are analyzed from the standpoint of a pianistic interpreter—a poetical one ever. But in the biography of five chapters is embodied the most definitive story of the Polish composer yet published in English. The sketch, indeed, has only one rival in any other tongue. It is a masterly little delivery of all of Chopin's identity that the world at large, or even the world of musicians at large, has yet met. Mr. Huneker has made Chopin live before our eyes and minds as he was; not as he has seemed to one or another careless, fanciful, unperceiving or disingenuous Chopinist, of whom there have been so many. The history is told truthfully, with perfect charm as a narrative and with all essential completeness. Not less valuable and of inexhaustible suggestion is Mr. Huneker's review of the musician quite as a musician. The most poetical of modern composers for the pianoforte has found here a com-

mentator, poetical, and yet virile. The discussion of what is hidden in a ballade or a polonaise is made vivid and probable with a brilliancy of the sentimental argument that captivates even if it does not always convince. In short, Mr. Huneker has written a remarkable, characteristic and valuable book—in point of view and literary finish quite the musical book of the hour; and when the hour passes, it must needs be an altogether exceptional successor in the same field who, in studying Chopin's life, character and unique, bisexual place in his art, will make Mr. Huneker's work seem pale in color and less appealing in design. Chopin is a type, a flower of music quite by himself; and here his biographer and psychologist has won golden honors indeed.