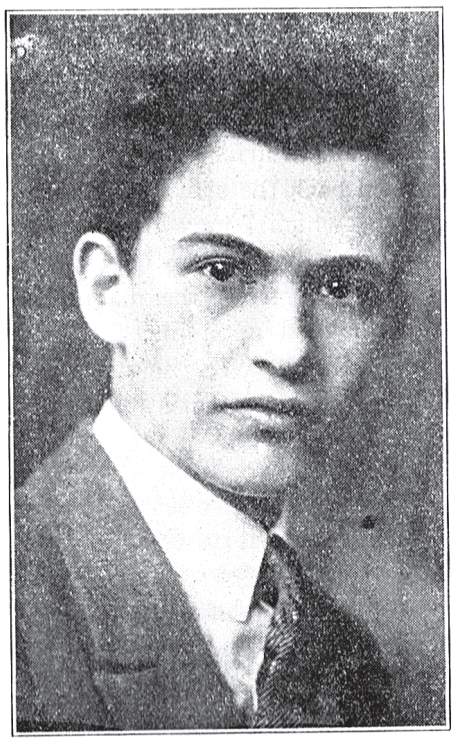
Ralph Oppenheim



THE author of "The Love-Life of George Sand" is nineteen years old. Here is one of America's future authors already at work, beginning to express himself with freshness and vigor, with finish and style; an artist to the tips of his fingers. It is one of the purposes of the Quarterly to bring out the best work of young America, and in accepting Ralph Oppenheim's study we believe we are giving space to material of first-rate significance. This essay compares favorably with the best work we have ever accepted from mature, experienced writers.

We did not take Ralph Oppenheim's manuscript because he happens to be only a boy in years; rather were we influenced by the sureness of his touch. His age came up for comment only after we were satisfied that his work was well done. . . The Quarterly boasts that all in America is not jazz, noise and fury; a minority speaks vigorously and clearly, with intelligence, understanding, humor and craftsmanship. Ralph's essay helps prove this assertion. Read young Oppenheim's study and you will realize how important it is for the United States to have a magazine the purpose of which will be to go out and seek for the best from the talented and intelligent minority, bringing out new gifts, fresh viewpoints and sound work. First credit must, of necessity, go to Ralph himself; second credit must go to his artist-mother, Gertrude Oppenheim, and his poet father, James Oppenheim; third credit, in all fairness, must go to the Quarterly for opening its columns to a new voice. America will hear much from Ralph Oppenheim. He has something to say; he knows how to say it; he is a civilized human being, a complete answer to the charge that all of America has been reduced to stifling mediocrity, to unimaginative standardization. There is enough to complain about, in all truth, without crying that all is lost. Let us protest against the viciousness and stupidity of the superstitious majority, the hypocrisy and cowardice of its leaders, the mawkishness of our bunk-ridden millions—yes, let us aim our spitballs at our shams and fakirs, but let us, by all means, recognize worthy talent when we see it and lend an ear to the emerging youngsters who are breaking away from the herd and learning to stand as free individuals. Turn now to Ralph's essay. At first you will marvel that it was written by a boy, but after a few paragraphs you will forget its author and fly along with his tonic and captivating work. . . . The portrait of George Sand was drawn especially for the Quarterly by Mrs. James Oppenheim, Ralph's mother.

The Love-Life of George Sand

An Appropriate Study on the Fiftieth Anniversary of Her Death

By Ralph Oppenheim

GEORGE SAND, with the possible exception of Sappho, is undoubtedly the most extraordinary woman in the history of literature. Perhaps as a writer she cannot be given first rank, although many eminent critics consider her unapproached among French authoresses; but as the forerunner of the modern feminist, as the freethinking woman who bravely abandoned the superficial garments of traditional womanhood, who placed herself on an equal plane with men and demanded the same right to freedom, who, in short, "lived her own life" (an expression that originated with her)—she has earned a special place among the foremost men and women of the world.

But she did not care what the world thought of her: "the good opinion of the world," she said scornfully, "is a prostitute who gives herself to the highest bidder." Conventionality could never prevent her from remaining true to her ideals; she did as she pleased, regardless of whether or not it was genteel and correct, regardless of the storm of criticism she aroused. She smoked cigars because she enjoyed cigars; she wore men's clothes whenever the idea appealed to her; and above all, she demanded full liberty in love. Illicit love to her was sinless, the pure and natural union of he sexes; she not only glorified it in her writings, but let it dominate her life. She was a maker and an enthusiastic supporter of the great French Romantic Movement, which reached its height in her day (1804-1876).

FAR from feeling ashamed of her wild love-affairs, she took infinite pains to preserve their stories for the future, cataloguing all amorous letters and composing long detailed journals of her most intimate relationships. As Francis Gribble, her capable biographer, says, "Her feeling aparently was that, when she loved, she was making history and she took pains that the future historian should not find the records incomplete."

Although there are many who do not agree with her point of view, few will deny that she possessed astounding courage. Even in this age of feminine independence, of woman suffrage, when it is no feat of bravery for a woman to dress in breeches, cut off her hair and smoke—although only the late Amy Lowell dared the cigar—we are still amazed at the fearlessness and strength of character displayed by George Sand. In her time, the greatest men paid tribute to her, and not a few fell ardently in love with her. Her list of intimate male friends, many of them her lovers, reads like a page from a dictionary of the famous. It includes such names as Balzac, Sandeau, De Musset, Merimee, the Dumas, Heine, Liszt, Chopin and Flaubert.

Her forceful personality was not her only attraction; we are told, though not by her portrait, that she was also beautiful. Her beauty, like her character, was exceptional—so exceptional that at first glance it was rarely apparent. It lay, for the most part, in her eyes and hair—large, dark, expressive eyes in which could be seen the deep soul of the artist, and thick, dark hair which fell in ringlets about her head and shoulders. Her features were r a t h e r blunt, but astonishingly strong; her body was not supple or graceful, but firm. Perhaps hers was a masculine beauty, signifying immense vitality and unbending will. Best evidence of this is found in the type of men she attracted. With the exception of one or two, all her lovers were young, sensitive and fragile, and morally or physically dependent—in a word, feminine. Strong domineering men could marvel at her but, as she was not a woman to submit to a male conqueror, they could seldom love her. Balzac, who belongs to this category, looked upon her as a "comrade," a "good fellow," rather than a sweetheart. "She is a female bachelor," he observes in one of his letters, "she is an artist, she is great, she is generous, she is devoted, she is *chaste*. Her dominant characteristics are those of a man. *Therefore*," he concludes, "she is not to be regarded as a woman."

She loved with the fierce and persuasive passion of a man, a passion which froze to humiliating indifference. As Franz Liszt, the famous pianist-composer and her loyal friend (but never her lover), ingeniously expressed it: "George Sand catches her butterfly and tames it in her cage by feeding it flowers and nectar—this is the love period. Then she sticks her pin into it as soon as it struggles—that is the *conge*, and it always comes from her. Afterwards she vivisects it, stuffs it and adds it to her collection of heroes for her novels." The rule, like every other, had its notable exceptions—one of them being the affair with Chopin—but it generally held.

During the period which we shall call her love-life, George Sand put all her radical theories into practice. She conducted "experiments" (as she frankly termed them) with love

GEORGE SAND

Amantine Lucile Aurore Dupin Dudevant (1804-1876), the French novelist who wrote under the pen-name of "George Sand," as she is now known to the world. Two of her most famous novels are "Indiana" and "Consuelo." In this, the fiftieth anniversary of her death, an account of her life, with its many and splendid love-relationships with outstanding men of her time, is especially interesting. She was on either friendly or intimate terms with such men as Chopin, Liszt, Balzac, Flaubert, Dumas fils, Gautier, Turgenev, Matthew Arnold, Merimee, etc. Balzac noted her great dark eyes, which, with her striking hair, were characteristics of her beauty which have often been mentioned in descriptions of her—both of which have been effectively brought out in this original portrait, drawn especially for the Quarterly by Gertude Oppenheim

as her test tube, her true object being to prove that a woman could live and love successfully on the same independent basis as a man.

I.

CHILDHOOD AND MARRIAGE.

THE life of George Sand was romantic from its very start. She was born Amantine Lucile Aurore Dupin, in Paris, July 1, 1804, exactly one month after her parents' marriage. Her father was Maurice Dupin, a retired lieutenant of the army of the Republic, who was descended indirectly from a line of French kings. George Sand always laid great stress on this royal affinity, which she claimed was responsible for her exceptional nature.

Maurice Dupin had fallen passionately in love with his best friend's mistress, Sophie Delaborde, the daughter of a Paris bird-fancier. She was a *grisette* with a shady past, extremely stupid and coarse. The two were married despite the strenuous objections of Dupin's mother, Madame Dupin de Francueil, a true representative of the old French regime whose aristocratic and refined nature was repelled by this common "woman of the people." The fact that Sophie was with a child did not serve to justify the marriage in her eyes. She was already taking care of a natural child of Dupin's, a son Hippolyte, and she was perfectly willing to accommodate another. But she could not tolerate the thought of having Sophie as a daughter-in-law.

Nevertheless, Maurice and Sophie were wedded, and a month later were able to celebrate the event at a party given in honor of the betrothal of Sophie's sister. It was a gay affair; there were wine, women, and song aplenty. Maurice Dupin drank a sufficient quantity to make him oblivious of his wife's sudden absence. Sophie, indisposed, had left the room hurriedly, followed by her alarmed sister. Dupin continued to enjoy himself. He was in the midst of a dance when his sister-in-law called down to him:

"Come Maurice! You have a daughter! She will be happy. She has been born among roses and within the sound of music."

"She shall be called Aurore," shouted Dupin promptly, "after my mother, who will give her her blessing someday."

And so she was called, but the world was to know her as George Sand.

Aurore soon found out what an exciting life was in store for her. When she was only three years old, she crossed the Pyrenees with her mother to join Dupin, who was then serving on General Murat's staff. The little girl, plump, pretty, and good-natured, was immediately adopted as the child of the regiment. She was fondled by rough soldiers and, to please Murat, dressed in a complete military uniform. This was the first, but not the last time she wore masculine attire.

After Dupin's retirement, the three returned to France and resided with Dupin's mother, at the chateau of Nohant, in Berri. It soon became evident that Madame de Francueil and Sophie could not live under the same roof. Their social enmity had now become personal; they were fighting a fierce battle over little Aurore, each feeling that she had a right to the child's affections. Aurore herself seemed to prefer her refined grandmother to her coarse mother, and Sophie became furiously jealous. It was a strange duel; Madame de Francueil took an attitude of subtle and ironic condescension, while Sophie vented her anger in rancorous and sarcastic outbursts.

At the age of five, Aurore knew her first sorrow. Her father, one dark, rainy night, was thrown from his horse and killed instantly.

Dupin's sudden death served to bring the duel between Madame de Francueil and Sophie to an open and unrestrained encounter over the possession of Aurore. Sophie was perfectly willing to leave Nohant, but not without her daughter. Madame de Francueil insisted that the girl had a right to a decent upbringing, and that the companionship of Hippolyte, Dupin's natural son, would be of great benefit to her. They fought for two years, with ever-increasing vehemence. Then Sophie gave in and left for Paris, Aurore remaining at Nohant with the triumphant grandmother.

Here, in the peaceful country environment, the character and mind of George Sand were shaped. Here she acquired the love of country life and scenes which was later to show itself in her refreshing pastoral novels. Here she learned the simple ways and thoughts of the peasants, who furnished her with so much character and plot.

But Madame de Francueil soon began to worry about her education, and when Aurore was thirteen, she sent her to study at the Convent of English Augustines at Paris.

She remained here for three years, and never once did she venture beyond the great walls. Her religious zeal increased year by year, until she resolved to become a nun! It is hard to believe that George Sand who broke all religious bonds in her fight for freedom was determined at one time to accept the permanent restraint of a convent.

However, when Madame de Francueil heard that her granddaughter was about to don the pious robes, she went straight to Paris and removed her from the convent. She herself was a devoted woman, but the thought of having a nun in the family gave her chills. So Aurore, now sixteen, went back to the free life of Nohant.

As a reaction to her former decision, she now went to the other extreme. She dressed like a man, rode untrained horses, went shooting with her half-brother, Hippolyte, flirted with every man who looked at her, and acquired the habit of smoking. Her grandmother was ill at this time, and her fine mind was rapidly deteriorating; she could only listen in pained astonishment to reports of Aurore's conduct.

Gossip began to spread—most of the townsfolk were eager to have something to talk about, and Aurore was delighted to furnish it. She continued her wild life with fresh enthusiasm. The church dignitaries admonished her; her enthusiasm increased. People shook their heads. There was no hope for Aurore, they said; in spite of her upbringing it was apparent that she had inherited her mother's coarseness.

This joyful period was brought to a sudden and tragic close. As had long been expected, Madame de Francueil, on Christmas Day, 1821, breathed her last, leaving her entire

estate and some $100,000 to her grandchild.

Aurore, only seventeen, felt lonely and helpless. Despite the fact that there was nothing she desired more than independence, she did not yet feel capable of supporting herself. So, with no small reluctance, she went to Paris to reside with her mother who made plans immediately for putting the large inheritance to use.

Life became a torture. Aurore, brought up among refined people and now highly cultured, could not bear her mother's coarse stupidity, much less the rowdy friends who came to visit them. She fell into a state of morbid depression, and once more considered entering a convent. This seemed the only escape from a life that was loathsome to her, until friends suggested marriage.

There had been plenty of suitors. They were attracted by her youthful beauty or her fortune, or both. Among them was Casimir Dudevant, a young Baron who had retired from the army at an early age (he was only twenty-seven now) to become what he termed "a gentleman farmer." He had neither money nor brains, and he never did a stroke of work; but he was handsome, good-natured, and not yet addicted to the habits which were soon to render him utterly worthless. The innocent Aurore, who saw marriage and motherhood through a misty veil of sentimentality was fascinated by him from the very start. Urged on by her friends, she accepted his proposal, and on December 11, 1822, Aurore Dupin became Baronne Dudevant, thus passing from childhood to womanhood.

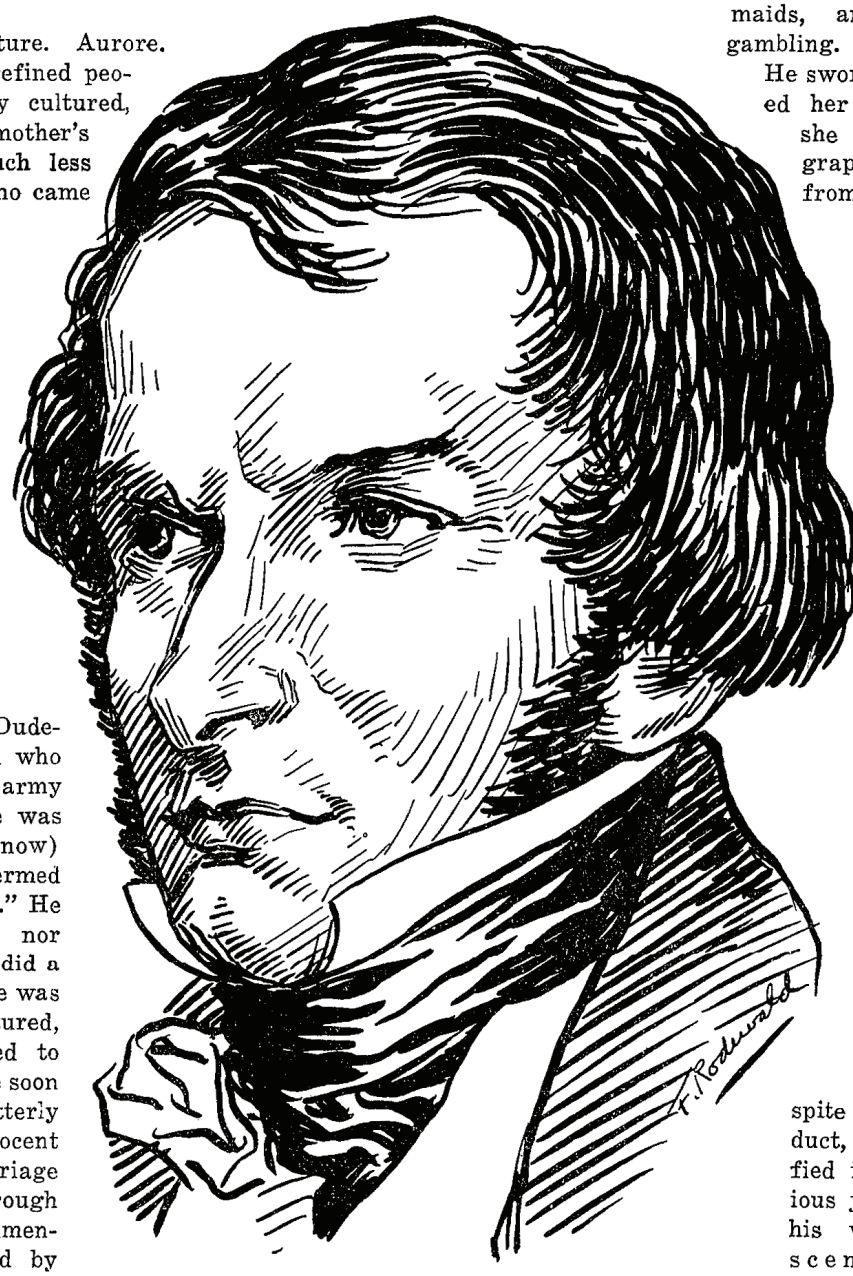
It was a ridiculous and unfortunate union. Dudevant was totally unfit as a husband for a woman of genius. He soon discovered that he was intellectually inferior to his wife, refused to admit it, and sought defense by holding her up as a fool at every opportunity. Madame Dudevant, on her part, was presently disillusioned about marriage and revolted against the chains which kept her from independence. There were two children, Maurice and Solange, who helped delay their inevitable separation.

For the first two years they were bored to death. They traveled, they visited, they entertained, but life remained dull and monotonous. Dudevant was the first to seek diversion. He sought it among chambermaids, and in drinking and gambling. His wife objected. He swore at her and then boxed her ears. "After that," she says in her Autobiography, "things proceeded from bad to worse."

She yearned for intellectual companionship, for someone who could foster her mental development. And she found such a person in Aurelien de Seze, Advocate General of Bourdeau, whom she met in 1825.

"I was in continual correspondence," she says, "with an absent person to whom I told all my thoughts, all my dreams, who knew all my humble virtues, and who heard all my spiritual enthusiasm. . . . . I only saw this man for a few days, and sometimes only a few hours, in the course of a year."

The friendship was wholly platonic, but Dudevant despite his own shameful conduct, thought himself justified in succumbing to furious jealousy. He spied on his wife, shouted out obscene accusations, and treated her with all the vehemence and brutality imaginable. As a matter of fact, this short-lived friendship with de Seze was one of the things that enabled her to remain with her husband. When it was broken,



PROSPER MERIMEE

The French novelist and historian (1803-1870), famous for all time as the author of the great short story, "Carmen." When George Sand met Merimee, she wrote: "I met a man who was free from all doubts and questionings—a calm and strong man who understood nothing of my nature and only laughed at my troubles." And yet she was his mistress—for exactly one week

she knew she could no longer bear Dudevant's cruel treatment. "He began to get on my nerves," is her euphemistic comment on the subject.

One day she discovered a packet on his desk, addressed to her but marked, "Not to be opened until after my death."

"I did not have the patience to await my widowhood," she said, in a letter to a close friend. "No one with such health as mine can count on surviving anybody (this was before she had developed her robust physique). I assumed my husband's death and was glad to learn what he thought of me during his life. The packet being addressed to me, I could open it without indiscretion, and my husband being in good health, I could read his last will and testament in cold blood. . . . . Ye gods! What a will! His maledictions on me, nothing more! Here were all his bad tempers, all his furious passions, all his reflections on my *perversity,* all his expressions of contempt for my character!"

Her mind was made up. She went to her husband and told him that this was the last straw. He was taken aback, then frightened. "He grumbled, he argued, he entreated. I remained unmoved: 'I must have an allowance,' I said. 'I intend to go to Paris.'" Her children, she went on, would be placed in the hands of a tutor until she was able to send for them.

They quarreled bitterly on the subject, but at last they came to an agreement. Madame Dudevant was to spend every alternate three months in Paris, and received about five thousand dollars a year. As a matter of fact, Dudevant soon got into such heavy debt that his wife had to send *him* an allowance.

She set out for her first matrimonial vacation in December, 1830. She had no particular plans for the future except that, during the three-month periods, she would live her own life and regain her self-respect. Although she intended to do some writing on the side—she always had made it a hobby—she did not know that it was to become her profession, and she did not even dream that, in less than a year, she would be George Sand, one of France's most famous novelists.

And perhaps she did not know either that the next twenty years of her life would be devoted to love, and that she was to have a series of affairs with some of the greatest living geniuses.

II.

PARIS: THE AFFAIR WITH SANDEAU.

DURING her sojourns in Paris she did not want to stay with her mother, nor did she want to live in solitude. She had some friends in the Latin Quarter, so, despite her husband's protests, she rented a small apartment there.

She began at once to celebrate her independence. In order to do exactly as she pleased and to gain access to the best parts of art galleries and theaters, she boldly masqueraded as a male student, to whom few privileges could be denied.

She had brought along some manuscripts—written mainly to kill time during the monotonous years of domestic life. With timid reluctance, then with modest apologies, she showed them to literary friends. They recognized immediately the remarkable talent beneath the surface of these crude, immature compositions, and told her that she must adopt a literary career. She scorned the suggestion until she realized that here was a possible opportunity to gain real liberty, to earn her own living. At least it would do no harm to try, and try she did.

She obtained introductions and went to see M. de Keraty, the famous author of *Le Dernier des Beaumanair.* He glanced skeptically at her manuscripts.

"Make babies instead of books," he advised her.

"Make them yourself if you can!" was her prompt retort; whereupon she stamped out of the room, slamming the door behind her.

Next she went to Delatouche, editor of the *Figaro.* He, too, was skeptical about the compositions.

"They lack common sense," he said dryly. Nevertheless he consented to take her on his staff.

She wrote *a la diable.* She filled reams and reams of paper with stories, articles, jokes, poems, features, and fashion notes. Delatouche discarded practically everything and blue-penciled most of the rest. At the end of a month Madame Dudevant discovered to her dismay that her net earnings amounted to a miserable fifteen francs. Quite disillusioned, she decided that writing was not her profession after all.

And then she met Jules Sandeau. Through him she knew her first real love, and through him also she became George Sand.

Today we think of Jules Sandeau as the first novelist to be admitted to the French Academy, but at the time he met Madame Dudevant he was a struggling young lawyer—a mere boy of twenty (she was twenty-seven), thin, awkward, timid, and ambitious.

They met in the Bohemian home of a joint friend and fell in love immediately. It is believed that Madame Dudevant, being the more manly of the two, made the first approaches, although she tells us that she "resisted him for six months" (half of which were spent with her husband at Nohant) before she permitted herself to "live with him in an unconventional manner."

Their liaison was extremely happy while it lasted. "When I first knew him," she wrote, "I was disillusioned about everything and no longer believed in those things which make us happy. He has warmed my frozen heart and restored the life that was dying in me."

They helped each other with their work. Sandeau graciously agreed to lend her his name, in order to do away with the prejudice against women writers. Under his signature they collaborated on several novels. Presently, when Madame Dudevant was doing most of the writing, the name was changed to "Jules Sand." Then she wrote a novel independently and, as their joint surname had already become famous, signed it "George Sand," the George merely connoting that she was a Berrichon.

When the reviews began fighting for her serials, she knew at last the full joy of independence. Her fame was certain, for her books came right in the midst of the vogue for romantic and sentimental fiction.

George Sand (for so we may now call her) felt that henceforth her path would be free of all sorrow

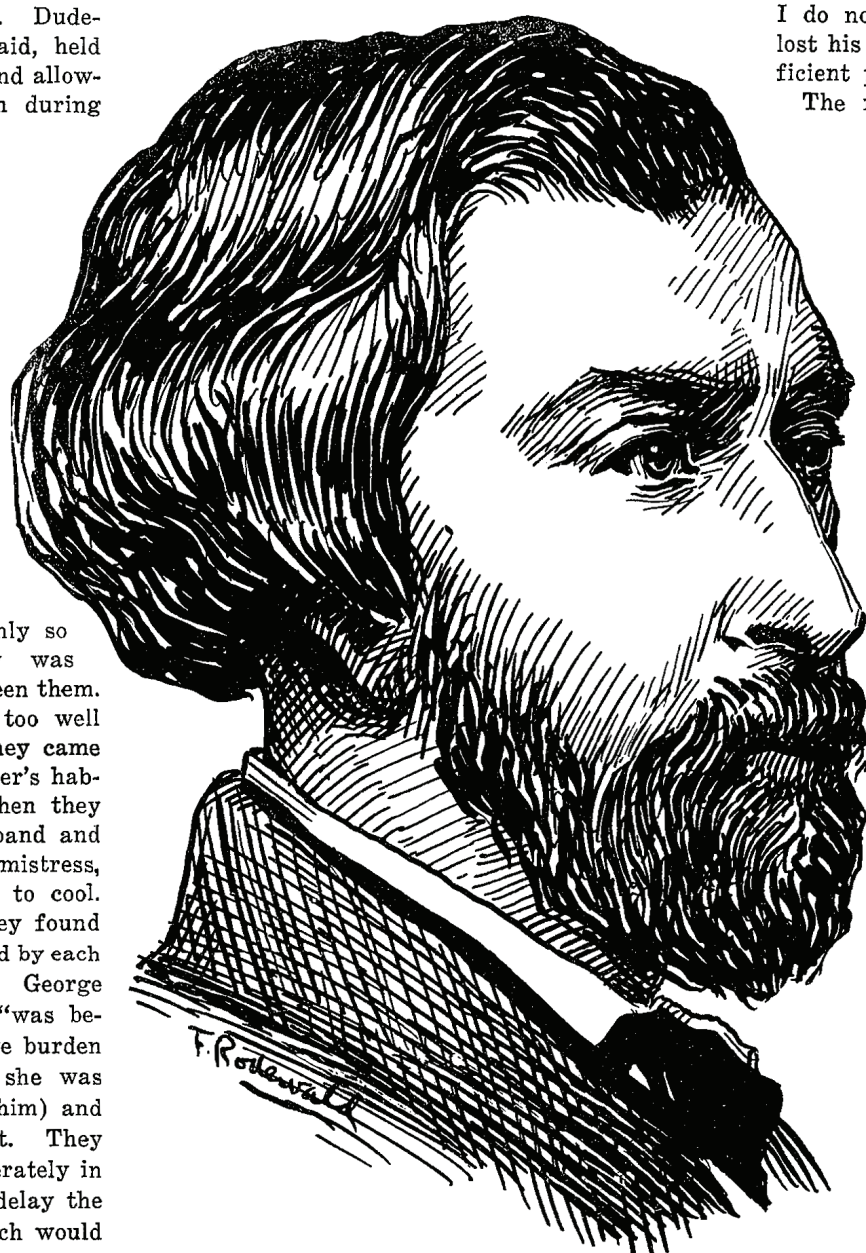
and oppression. Her relationship with Sandeau was light and jubilant; they played at living; they loved with all the gaiety of youth. Every evening she awaited his coming at her window, giving a whoop of joy when she espied his familiar red-corded hat. "To love and be loved!" she wrote. "It's happiness! It's heaven!"

She continued to divide her time between her lover at Paris and her husband at Nohant. Dudevant, it must be said, held to their agreement and allowed her full freedom during the three-month separations, and she granted him the same concession. Their relationship remained cordial for several years, despite the fact that George Sand, in *Indiana,* drew a malicious caricature of the worthless Dudevant.

However, the ultra-ideal relationship with Sandeau could last only so long as familiarity was not established between them. When they became too well acquainted, when they came to know all each other's habits and manners, when they were more like husband and wife than lover and mistress, their passion began to cool. To their dismay, they found that they were bored by each other's company. George Sand felt that she "was becoming an oppressive burden to him" (although she was actually supporting him) and he did not deny it. They clung together desperately in a vain attempt to delay the inevitable crisis which would bring their beautiful romance to a close.

The curtain fell suddenly and dramatically. George Sand, during one of her visits at Nohant, decided to leave a few days earlier to surprise her lover. He was surprised indeed, but not very pleasantly, for she found him making love to *une quelque blanchisseuse* (as she has always been called) in their Bohemian apartment.

A few days later she wrote Emile Regnault, a close friend of Sandeau's and her present confidant: "I have just written M. Desparanges to give notice to terminate the tenancy of Jules' apartment, and ask him for a receipt of rent due, which I shall pay. I have been too deeply wounded by the discoveries which I have made about his conduct to preserve for him any other sentiment than friendly pity. Do all that is necessary to make him understand that nothing can reunite us in the future. If that is unnecessary—if Jules, I mean, already understands the situation—spare him the pains of being told that he has lost even my esteem. I do not doubt that he has lost his own, and that is sufficient punishment for him."



ALFRED de MUSSET

The French poet, novelist, and dramatist (1810-1857), author of "The Two Mistresses" and "One Does Not Trifle With Love." George Sand became acquainted with him, and "he loved her with increasing passion, but for many weeks was afraid to say so; at last he summoned all the courage he possessed and wrote—"

The moment their liaison was broken, they felt their old passion return. But though Sandeau, who soon regretted his rash behavior, humbled himself before her tearfully begging her to forgive him and to take him back, she remained as mute and cold as an iceberg.

Among her friends, however, she broke down and bemoaned her fate. She even sought consolation from the great Balzac, from him she received only furious reproach, for he laid all the blame on her and pitied the young and innocent Sandeau. In his *Lettres a l'Etrangere* (to Madame de Hanska), he continually poured his wrath upon George Sand, and it was not until many years later that he reversed his opinion and became her close friend.

She was desolate. It was only her "self-respect" (the word had become her leitmotif) that prevented her from returning to Sandeau. Later, she expressed her sorrowful

regrets in her *Lettres d'un Voyageur.*

As for Sandeau, he never got over his first *amour.* It is said that until the end of his life, the mention of her name brought tears to his eyes. He, too, expressed his regrets in his writings, and more than once.

In truth, they were both unhappy whenever they thought of their past happiness:

"My heart is a cemetery," sighed George Sand, some years later.

"It's a necropolis," Jules Sandeau corrected, when a friend quoted the phrase.

III.

MERIMEE; ALFRED DE MUSSET

GEORGE SAND decided that she could not live without love. It had become her essential diet, the sole inspiration of her novels. But though there were many men whom she could easily have won, none of them seemed to meet the necessary ideals until—

"On one of my days of ennui and depression I met a man who was free from all doubts and questionings —a calm and strong man who understood nothing of my nature and only laughed at my troubles. The force of his character fascinated me, and for a week I believed that I had acquired the secret of happiness—that he would teach it to me, and that his scornful attitude would relieve me of my childish susceptibilities."

This man was Prosper Merimee, best known as the author of *Carmen.*

She met the great writer at the office of the *Revue des deux Mondes,* through Sainte-Beuve, the critic, and became his mistress for exactly one week.

Merimee, as she said, was calm, strong, and scornful. He was also cold-blooded and seemingly unemotional—whatever emotions he had went into his writings, not into his life. His attitude toward women was one of sneering condescension, for women had always yielded to him without resistance. In George Sand, however, he found a nature almost as powerful and masculine as his own, and it did not please him. George Sand was soon equally displeased, so they decided to part.

Neither cared at all. Merimee looked upon the affair as a young man's adventure; George Sand regarded it as a humorous experiment. Some years later the two met by chance at a formal dinner, and throughout the entire evening stared at one another with cool contempt.

But now once more George Sand felt the need of love. Sainte-Beuve, who at this period was privileged to know her innermost secrets, offered to introduce Alfred de Musset, the remarkable and handsome young poet. At first she was eager to meet him, but then, as if she had some apprehensive foreboding of the tragic future, she wrote the critic: "On second thought I do not want you to bring Alfred de Musset. He is a great dandy. We should not suit each other, and I was really more curious to see him than interested in him." With a frankness and outspokenness that is appalling, she suggested that he bring Alexander Dumas (*pere*) instead! Dumas was exhibited, but she dismissed him on the grounds that he was "a common traveling man." As a matter of fact, she resented him because his attitude was as domineering as Merimee's.

Fate now took a hand. One evening George Sand found herself sitting next to Alfred de Musset at a dinner. They surveyed each other appraisingly. They talked impersonally, and then personally. The outcome of it all was that George Sand invited him to call on her.

He called—several times. They showed each other their work and talked over their plans for the future. The melancholy poet of twenty-three found cheerful support in his efflorescent and energetic companion of twenty-nine. He loved her with increasing passion, but for weeks was afraid to say so. At last he summoned all the courage he possessed and wrote, with a trembling hand:

"*My Dear George.* I have something silly and ridiculous to tell you. I am foolishly writing, instead of telling you, as I should have done after our walk. I am broken-hearted tonight that I did not tell you. You will laugh at me and you will take me for a man who simply talks nonsense. You will show me the door and fancy that I am not speaking the truth. . . . . I am in love with you."

Instead of laughing or showing him the door, she welcomed him with open arms. A few days later she was writing Sainte-Beuve: "I have fallen in love—very seriously this time—with Alfred de Musset."

It was serious indeed. George Sand completely disregarded her matrimonial agreement, and planned to spend the rest of her years with her ardent lover. Dudevant did not object; for a long time now he resigned himself to his fate, allowing his wife to go her own way.

The couple resolved to go to Venice. Here, in this beautiful and romantic environment, they planned to spend an endless honeymoon. They made no secret of their love; they shouted their intentions to the world, asking it to witness a liaison that was to make history. "Posterity will repeat our names," wrote George Sand, "like those immortal lovers whose two names are only one at present, like Romeo and Juliet, like Heloise and Abelard. People will never speak of one of us without speaking of the other."

They were brought down to earth again when De Musset's mother objected strenuously to her son's proposed trip to Venice. The young poet had always placed his mother on a pedestal, far above everything else, and he never dreamed of disobeying her. Despite his own feelings, he promptly told George Sand that their plans must be altered. But she was not so easily discouraged. She went straight to Madame de Musset and brazenly demanded permission to take charge of her son, promising that she "would be more than a mother to him." Madame de Musset, perhaps because she was so utterly astounded at the very audacity of this visit, could only bring herself to offer a few meek protests. Before the close of the interview, she had smilingly given her consent.

And so, all parties concerned being satisfied, the two lovers, radiant and optimistic, left Paris on December 12, 1833.

IV.

VENICE; DR. PAGELLO.

EVEN before they reached Venice, the affair that was to be

added to the great list of historic romances had been slightly marred by external and prosaic elements.

The long journey had exhausted them, all the more since the last days at sea had been rough and chilly. When they arrived their nerves were on edge. George Sand had a severe cold and De Musset was depressed and irritable.

Their rooms at the hotel were drab and uncomfortable; the atmosphere was anything but romantic. Although they exerted every effort to cheer each other, it was not until they moved into a private and picturesque cottage that their dreams of a perfect love-life were revived.

Revived, but only for a brief moment. George Sand, being a practical woman, soon annoyed the idealistic poet by worrying over their future livelihood. She annoyed him still more when she actually took measures in that direction, sitting up until dawn, a huge cigar in her mouth, and scrawling away with nervous rapidity.

Biographers are inclined to agree that this was the chief cause of their quarrel. At any rate, De Musset finally lost his patience. With a restraint and studied irony that must have come near costing him a blood-vessel, he said:

"I was mistaken, George, and I beg your pardon, for I do not love you."

She was humiliated and grief-stricken.

"We do not love each other any longer," she said, "because we have never really loved each other."

No sooner, however, had they resolved to part than an unexpected emergency arose and kept them together.

For several weeks, De Musset had been drowning his fury and depression in drink. As a result of frequent and lengthy debauches, he now contracted a serious illness. It may have been typhoid; it may have been delirium tremens; or it may have been both. Whatever it was, it forced him to take to his bed, and forced George Sand to play the loving nurse. She did, and willingly, for the situation served to recreate the old romantic illusion. But the illusion, as usual, soon faded.

Although she nursed her lover with tender compassion, his condition only grew worse. So she called in a young Italian doctor named Pietro Pagello.

Dr. Pagello was extremely stupid and slow, but that did not prevent

HONORE de BALZAC
The French novelist (1799-1850) who led the realistic school and wrote his famous "Human Comedy." He was a good friend of George Sand's, saying, "Our roads lie together—"

George Sand from falling immediately in love with him. It is hard to believe that such a commonplace man could have won her (and without the slightest effort on his part) from a genius like De Musset, yet that is precisely what happened. While her lover lay ill and helpless she inconsiderately made amorous approaches toward the young doctor.

The doctor himself, although he was attracted by George Sand, was not at all anxious to be drawn into an affair which would doubtless lead to gossip detrimental to his reputation. Besides, he was, if nothing else, a gentleman, and his conscience forbade him to take such unscrupulous advantage of the sick De Musset. But his conscience had little to say in the matter, for George Sand, having decided that she loved him, literally seized him by the hand and forced him to follow her. When gentle hints failed to draw him from his aloofness, she adopted more extreme measures. One evening, in his presence, she took out paper and pen and commenced to write with her usual ferocity. Placing the manuscript in an envelope, she handed it to Dr. Pagello. He did not understand.

"To whom shall I deliver it?" he asked innocently.

She snatched back the envelope and scribbled upon it: "For the dense Pagello." Then she cheerfully bade him goodnight.

He went home, he tells us in his diary, and read the document with wide-eyed astonishment. No timid confession of a woman's heart, this, no reluctant plea for affection, but a simple and straightforward *demand* for his love. The poor doctor felt absolutely helpless. He says that he took out a picture of his mother and prayed to her for guidance, shedding tears as he resigned himself to "sinful temptation."

Few people could say No to George Sand.

It was only natural that De Musset, ill though he was, should soon take note that something was going on, especially since it was going on in his very house. Despite the fact that George Sand and her doctor took all measures of precaution, there were plenty of little outward manifestations—a glance exchanged, an expression, a few words—which furnished ample grounds for suspicion. De Musset made inquiries. He was told very calmly by George Sand that he was a victim of hallucinations, one of the unfortunate symptoms of his disease.

For a while, he believed her, but when he was nearing recovery and the "hallucinations" not only continued, but grew constantly more alarming, he decided that he would find out the true state of affairs.

He watched the two with close scrutiny, waiting silently and patiently for the first piece of convincing evidence.

One evening, when he was well enough to be up and dressed, he went into George Sand's room and surprised her as she crouched over the bed, evidently writing a letter. He

loudly accused her of writing to Pagello.

"She flew into a terrible passion," says De Musset, "and said I should never leave Venice if I went on like that. I asked her how she would prevent me. 'By locking you up in a lunatic asylum,' was her reply." He admits he was frightened, and he returned to his room without daring to answer her.

From there he heard her open and close a window. He surmised that she had thrown the letter away, and went downstairs to see. He found her outside, searching desperately for the lost scraps. He seized her by the shoulder and repeated his accusations. She told him that she would prevent him from sleeping in his bed that very night—she would have him arrested at once. She began to run. He followed. She reached the canal and jumped into a gondola, calling the gondolier to take her to Lido (where Dr. Pagello resided). De Musset jumped in beside her, and they set off together. "She did not open her mouth all the time we were on the water," he says. At Lido she climbed out and dashed through a Jewish cemetery, "leaping from tomb to tomb. I followed, leaping as she did." At last, from sheer exhaustion, she sat down on a tombstone and wept bitterly. Here, De Musset claims, she confessed her love for Pagello and begged forgiveness. However, knowing her nature, biographers are more inclined to accept Tattet's* version of the confession, which is calmer and colder. According to him, Dr. Pagello and George Sand were standing beside De Musset's bed—

"Doctor," said George Sand casually, "do you think Alfred is strong enough to stand a shock?"

"I beg your pardon. What did you say?" asked Pagello, confusedly.

"Very well. I am going to speak frankly. My dear Alfred, I am no longer your mistress. I love Dr. Pagello."

De Musset, surprising as it may sound, was very nice about the whole matter. Perhaps what had infuriated him previously were their barefaced denials, and now that they confessed openly, he was appeased. He wept a little, told them it might ruin him, but finally joined their hands together and said, with much sentiment: "You love each other and yet you even love me, for you have saved me, body and soul."

A. DUMAS pere

Alexander Dumas pere (1802-1870), also known as "the Elder," French novelist and dramatist, who, when presented to George Sand, was dismissed as "a common traveling man."

Then, it being the decorous thing to do, he announced that he would go away immediately, leaving them in sole possession of the cottage. George Sand, however, begged him to remain a few days longer, until his health was completely restored. She was quite reluctant to give him up altogether because, while she thought she loved Pagello, she really loved De Musset. He stayed, and his sentimental attitude began to approach the ludicrous. He suffered with all the bliss of a martyr. He wept copiously over their sacred friendship and swore that the joy of this sacrifice was the greatest he had ever experienced. Finally he left them, but he continued his sentimental ravings. When George Sand mentioned in a letter that Pagello sent his regards, De Musset replied: "He is a fine fellow. Tell him how much I like him and that my eyes fill with tears when I think of him."

With his rival out of the way, Pagello felt more self-confident. He began to make plans for settling down to the new life. Like a good Italian, he immediately invited all his neighboring relatives for prolonged visits. They came in enormous contingents—fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, aunts, nieces, nephews—and took noisy and complete possession of the cottage. George Sand nearly went out of her mind, and could accomplish nothing in the way of writing. She had not objected to Pagello's wishes, but then she had not foreseen the bedlam into which her house would be turned. Finally, when she could stand it no longer, she told the doctor that he must accompany her to Paris, where they would settle permanently.

Pagello hesitated to consent, for, stupid though he was, he saw that their relationship, which was already beginning to cool, could never survive with George Sand among her Paris friends. Once more he took out his deceased mother's picture for guidance and inspiration; and once more he yielded to George Sand's stubborn will.

So the two set out for Paris, George Sand having spent a little over three months in the place she had planned so earnestly to make her permanent home.

V.

ALFRED DE MUSSET AGAIN.

GEORGE SAND began to drift away from Pagello even sooner than the doctor had anticipated.

"The farther we went," he says, in his diary, of the journey to Paris, "the more cold and circumspect our relations became. My sufferings were great, but I tried my best to hide them. George Sand was a shade melancholy, but much more independent of my society. To my sorrow I perceived in her an actress accustomed to playing parts in comedies of this kind, and I began to see clearly through the veil that covered my eyes."

George Sand also began to see clearly. "From the moment Pagelle landed in France," she wrote, "he could not understand anything." The criticism was quite unjust, for the

*Tattet was a close friend of De Musset's who was visiting the couple at this time. Unknown to them he was an eye witness of many intimate scenes.

poor doctor could hardly have been expected to shine in the brilliant society forced upon him; he was so overwhelmed that he could only follow his mistress about like a clumsy dog, smiling dazedly and replying to questions in low monosyllables. Constant recourse to the much-used picture of his mother gave him courage but, alas, not brains.

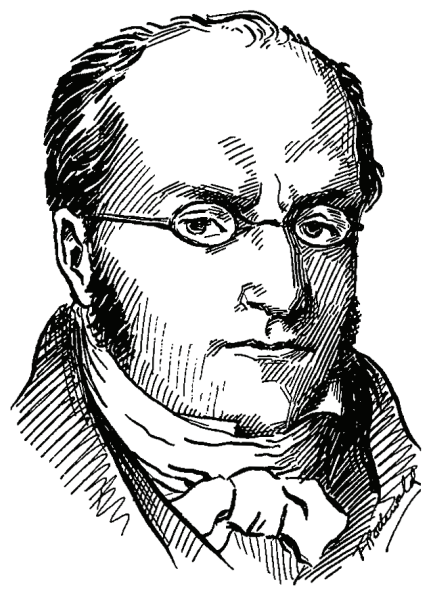
After a few miserable weeks in Paris, George Sand took Pagello to Nohant to exhibit him before her husband. Dudevant, despite his rather embarrassing position as host to his wife's lover, was far more amiable to the doctor than was George Sand at this time. The two men, one as stupid as the other, got on famously; Dudevant took his guest hunting and showed him the natural beauty of the country. But George Sand was soon bored, and dragged Pagello back to Paris.

Here the breach between them grew wider, for in spite of all that had happened, George Sand felt her overpowering passion for De Musset returning, and she was furious at herself for sacrificing her former lover. She began to write the poet humble and affectionate letters. As a mark of penitence she cut off her hair and sent it to him. He was so touched that his reply was a confused welter of emotional incoherence. To prove his faithfulness, he promptly dismissed his new mistress and opened his heart to the old. "I am a good-for-nothing," he said bitterly. "I do not know whether I am alive, whether I eat, drink, or breathe, but I do know that I am in love."

Each tried to outdo the other in humble and sentimental penitence. George Sand, in a *Journal Intime* to De Musset, declared that for his sake she would once more earn her "self-respect." If the Holy Ghost would give her back her lover, she promised Him that she would go to church in the future and wear out the altar steps with her knees (a promise that was not kept).

As yet, they had not seen each other, for they knew that the first meeting would force them to resume their relationship, and both were reluctant to try the experiment again. At last George Sand could bear his absence no longer. "I do not love you," she wrote, "but I still adore you. I do not want you any more, but I cannot live without you." So she took measures to win him back.

First she coldly told Pagello that he was no longer needed. The doctor accepted the long-expected *conge* in good grace. He returned to relatives in Venice, convinced that he deserved his punishment. A final glimpse of this unfortunate victim discloses him tearfully promising his mother's picture that he would never again, under any circumstances, succumb to such evil temptation.



MICHEL de BOURGES
This French lawyer, Louis Chrysostom Michel, better known as Michel de Bourges, was George Sand's legal advocate when she was bringing suit against her husband for divorce. She had met him previously, but now he began to talk incessantly on long walks with her—and while he talked, she fell in love with him

George Sand now wrote De Musset, imploring him to call at her home the following evening. But the suffering he had undergone enabled him to hesitate a little longer than she, and though she waited up until midnight, "starting every time the doorbell rang," he did not appear.

She was too miserable to suffer in silence. She went to the office of the *Revue des deux Mondes*, to which she was now a contributor, and sobbed her story to the entire staff (many of whom were practically strangers). All pitied her, all sought to console her, but it was to no avail.

"Oh my God!" she cried desperately. "Please advise me to kill myself! That is all there is left for me to do!"

Soon after this De Musset surrendered to his passion and went to see her. They embraced in ecstasy and despair, promising one another that they would never part again. And once more they shouted to the world that they would live an ideal love-life.

It was a short and bitter reunion. The hideous past came up like a wall between them. They knew that they were not meant for each other even though they loved with a fierce and consuming passion. This was their tragedy, and they were forced to accept it.

After several dismal attempts to live together, they separated for the last time in March, 1835.

They never forgot each other; their tragic experiences were a powerful influence on all their future writings. Two books, George Sand's *Elle et lui* and De Musset's *Confessions d'un enfant du siecle*, are based directly upon the ill-fated Venice honeymoon.

VI.

SEPARATION FROM DUDEVANT; MICHEL DE BOURGES.

EVER after their compromise of 1831, the relationship between George Sand and her husband had remained on a friendly and agreeable basis. They cheerfully allowed each other absolute freedom, and their visits, though usually brief, were so cordial that friends began to anticipate a full reconciliation. But, all the while, the dark clouds had been gathering overhead, and the storm was now ready to break.

To begin with, Dudevant, carrying his habits to an excess, was getting constantly into heavy debt. George Sand helped him out several times, but when he only continued to fall deeper into the hole, she warned him that she would have to stop the advances. This irritated him, for, spoiled by his wife's kindness, he had come to the opinion that it was

her duty to support him, and consequently did not show the slightest gratitude.

The climax came when he contracted an enormous debt which threatened his entire estate. George Sand was in Nohant at the time (it was shortly after her rupture with De Musset) and Dudevant promptly asked her for another advance. She told him that he had been living on her income long enough, and that she would help him for this last time only under condition that he sign an agreement to separate. He was furious, and shouted that he was the victim of a cruel stratagem, but, there being no other course open to him, he could not hesitate to concede. So the paper was signed.

George Sand remained with him another month to arrange all terms of the separation. He was as insolent and bullying as he could be; he not only vented his wrath upon his wife, but even upon their two children, Maurice and Solange.

The last domestic scene took place one evening when the family and some guests were seated at the dinner table. Dudevant gruffly ordered Maurice to fetch the cream. Instead of obeying, the boy went over and sulked by his mother. Dudevant flew into a rage, and reproached George Sand for failing to discipline their children. She remained very calm, told Maurice he should have obeyed, and then advised the boy to leave the room.

"Get out of the room yourself!" yelled Dudevant, his face crimson. He seized her roughly and tried to strike her, and when guests intervened, he got a gun and threatened to shoot her. George Sand did not bat an eyelash; she merely reminded him that, since they would soon be separated, all this excitement was unnecessary. His fury increased. He took the signed agreement and tore it into a hundred pieces, swearing that for once he would have his way. His wife turned calmly to her guests and told them that they were witnesses.

A month later she brought suit against him, first in Paris and then in Bourges. After a fierce legal battle, the court granted her separation and the custody of her two children, although she had to turn over a huge sum of money to Dudevant.

Her legal advocate at Bourges was none other than Louis Chrysostom Michel, better known as Michel de Bourges, who was now at the height of his career as a statesman. And this brings us to the next phase of George Sand's love-life.

She had met Michel previously. After reading her novel, *Lelia*, he had written her a long letter, praising her craftmanship in the highest terms. She asked to be introduced, and one evening a friend took her to see him in his room at his hotel.

As soon as they arrived, Michel began to talk. He talked incessantly from seven to midnight, never giving his guests a chance to put in a word. Finally he broke off to ask George Sand to go for a walk, but as soon as they set out his indefatigable tongue started wagging again. He talked all the way to the Tuileries, where he paused to deliver an oration on politics and, in his excitement, broke a brand new walking stick over the iron rail.

"Talking," he stopped to explain, on the way home, "is thinking aloud. By thinking aloud in this way I advance more quickly than if I thought to myself."

In this brief speech we can see clearly his astounding egotism, his total lack of consideration for others; but for a long time George Sand, who heard many more speeches, was blind to it. While he talked, she fell in love. She took the bigoted little man for an apostle and devoured every word he uttered (and it required a remarkable appetite!). She placed a halo around his bald head and announced that at last she had found a man who could meet her high ideals.

"I love you," she wrote Michel, later, "because whenever I think of grandeur, wisdom, strength, and beauty, your image rises before me."

It is hard to visualize Michel's image rising to the call of these qualities. He was a slight, stoop-shouldered, short-sighted individual, who was thirty years old and looked sixty. But George Sand did not notice these shortcomings, for it was his enormous head that fascinated her. At this period she was devoting her spare time to the study of phrenology, and she had an eye for craniums. Michel's, which was bald, sent her into ecstasies. "It seems as though he has two craniums," she observed joyfully, "one soldered to the other." And Michel took special care of his cranium. During the entire winter, while he was indoors, he wrapped it in three woolen mufflers as a precaution against colds.

Michel de Bourges was the *Everard* of George Sand's *Lettres d'un Voyageur*, which were now running in the *Revue des deux Mondes*. In these published epistles, she openly poured forth her love for him and demanded reciprocation. He hesitated until she had obtained her separation from Dudevant, and then became her lover.

As in the case of Merimee, their strong natures clashed immediately. George Sand had known that Michel was of the domineering type, but then she had thought that her "unfettered mind needed guidance." The need was more than satisfied. The egotistic Michel treated her like a child. He ordered her about, preached to her all day long, and even locked her in a room once to meditate on his lectures.

"Alas! My God!" cried George Sand, in her *Lettres d'un Voyageur*. "It is a yoke of iron that I have endured. When it was imposed upon me in the name of love, and with the persuasiveness of true affection, I submitted blindly to a lover's hand. But when my lover tired of persuading and wished to command—when he claimed my submission no longer in the name of love and friendship but in virtue of some right or power over me—then I recovered the strength of which my blindness had deprived me."

But she did not recover this strength completely, for no sooner had they parted than she implored Michel to resume the relationship, regardless of what had happened.

"Oh my lover," she cried, "return, and like the earth on the return of May sunshine, I should be reanimated and would fling off my shroud of ice and thrill with love."

Although these sentiments were extremely poetic, they did not stir Michel's prosaic heart (as a matter

of fact he held the seven arts in scorn), and he went his own way, completely ignoring George Sand.

Again she was left desolate and starved for love. This time, however, she resolved not to have any more affairs with geniuses:

"I have had my fill of great men (excuse the expression)," she wrote a friend. "I prefer to see them all in Plutarch, as they would not then cause me any suffering on the human side. May they all be carved in marble or cast in bronze, but may I hear no more about them."

So she promptly had some unimportant affairs with some unimportant men—such as her son's tutor. Then, despite her resolution, she fell in love with a genius greater than them all and clung to him nearly nine years.

This was Frederic Francois Chopin, the great Polish pianist-composer.

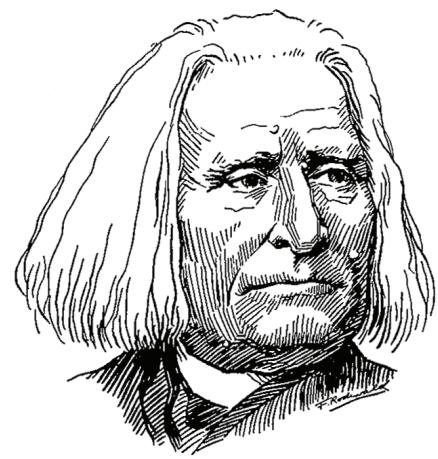
VII.

CHOPIN.

THEY first met in Switzerland, in 1837. George Sand, following her break with Michel, had gone there to join her two famous friends, Franz Liszt and his mistress, the Comtesse Marie D'Agoult (Daniel Stern). George Sand had met the composer through De Musset, and they had immediately become close friends. Their relations were long the subject of malicious gossip, but the assertion that they had a secret love-affair is wholly unfounded.

The two young lovers welcomed their older friend warmly, and at once insisted that she take a room close to theirs. She did, and they there lived in the loose and joyful Bohemian fashion. They gave scores of informal receptions, to which came the cream of literary and musical circles, men like Mickiewicz, Delacroix, Meyerbeer, Heine, and, with great reluctance, Chopin.

Heine's name, like Liszt's, has long been linked with that of George Sand. Their relationship, until recently, has remained more or less of an enigma to students and biographers. It was evident that Heine and George Sand were extremely close friends, judging from the intimacy of the letters, but were they lovers? Authorities are now inclined to agree that they were not, that it was only George Sand's deliberately misleading behavior that gave things such a doubtful outward significance. She secretly loved the poet, we are told, and spared no efforts to give the world the impression that he loved her. He did not love her, however, and took measures just as extreme to destroy the impression. At any rate their association, whether or not it was intimate, was brought to an immediate close by the appearance of Chopin, who reluctantly but finally came to one of the Bohemian receptions.



FRANZ LISZT

The Hungarian composer, pianist, and abbe (1811-1886), musical director for a time at Weimar, Germany, famous for his Hungarian Rhapsodies. He was a lifelong friend of George Sand; it was while she was visiting Liszt in Switzerland that she met Frederic Chopin

Frederic Chopin was at the height of his career as a virtuoso (as a composer he had not quite reached full maturity), the favorite of Parisian salons. He was, in every way, the exact opposite of the expansive and domineering George Sand. He was twenty-seven, but looked even younger, was fragile, sensitive, timid, reserved, and, true to a feminine nature, over-refined in both manners and dress. Despite his keen desire for fame, he had a morbid terror of crowds, and suffered agonies when forced to perform or attend receptions. Thus he was in a constant state of melancholy, all the more so since the woman he loved, Marie Wodinska, had proven untrue.

His friend Liszt was certain that the company of George Sand would have a cheering effect upon Chopin. But Chopin broke into a cold sweat at the very thought of meeting this terrible, manlike woman. "He avoided her and postponed the introduction," says Liszt. "Madame Sand had no idea that she was feared as a sylph." At length the timid young composer was dragged into her presence and introduced. He stood before her, trembling from head to foot and blushing furiously, mumbled an incoherent sentence, bowed, and then retreated hastily to an obscure corner where he hid from her during the entire evening.

But in that brief moment they had both fallen in love. It had been one of those immediate attractions of opposites.

George Sand, before she had an opportunity to see him again (and he spared no efforts to prevent her from doing so), had to go back to Nohant to visit her son Maurice, who was ill.

From Nohant, she wrote Liszt, who was planning to visit her in the near future, "Tell Chopin that I hope he will come with you. . . . I adore him." And again, to Marie D'Agoult, "Tell Chopin that I idolize him." The ultra-refined Comtesse was slightly irritated by her friend's lack of delicacy, and replied, "Chopin coughs with infinite grace. He is an irresolute man. The only thing about him that is permanent is his cough."

Liszt commenced to make arrangements for the trip, and spent hours trying to persuade Chopin to go with him. Poor Chopin was extremely anxious to go, but his fear far overshadowed his desire. At last he yielded, for he was highly subject to suggestion and easily dominated by those stronger than himself.

In the meantime, George Sand was entertaining no less a celebrity than Balzac. The great novelist had completely reversed his opinion of her, and had come to offer his respects and apologies. In his *Lettres a l'Etrangere* (to Madame de Hanska), he has left us a brief but excellent picture of George Sand at this time (she was thirty-four).

"I found our comrade George Sand

in her dressing gown," he says, smoking her after dinner cigar by the fireside in an immense and lovely room. She was wearing pretty yellow slippers ornamented with fringe, neat stockings, and red pantaloons. That was her moral aspect; physically she had a double chin like an ecclesiastic. In spite of her fearful misfortunes she has not a white hair on her head; her dark complexion remains unaltered." He goes on, telling how, during the visit, he adopted her peculiar habits of rising and retiring at strange hours, in order to be with her as much as possible. Later he mentions her "great, dark eyes, which look foolish and vacant when she is contemplating."

She showed him her latest works—among them *Consuelo* (considered the greatest of her romantic novels)—and he was impressed deeply by her lucidly simple style and wonderful insight into her characters.

"Our two roads lie together," he told her, but, in the eyes of the world, Balzac's road (in the realm of art) was much longer and wider.

The visit meant more to him than he had anticipated for she gave him an excellent plot for a novel. It was to concern the relationship between Liszt and the Comtesse D'Agoult*, and naturally George Sand could not write it herself on account of her intimacy with the couple. So she cheerfully handed it to Balzac, who announced that he would use it immediately. Today the world knows it as *Beatrix*. The main characters, Beatrix and the composer Conti are, of course, Marie D'Agoult and Liszt, but Felicite des Touches, who also plays a prominent part, is George Sand. In the novel we are told that Felicite, whose pen-name is Camille Maupin, "is an artist, she has genius, and she leads an exceptional life such as could not be judged in the same way as an ordinary existence." And that, perhaps, is the wisest and truest thing that can be said of George Sand.

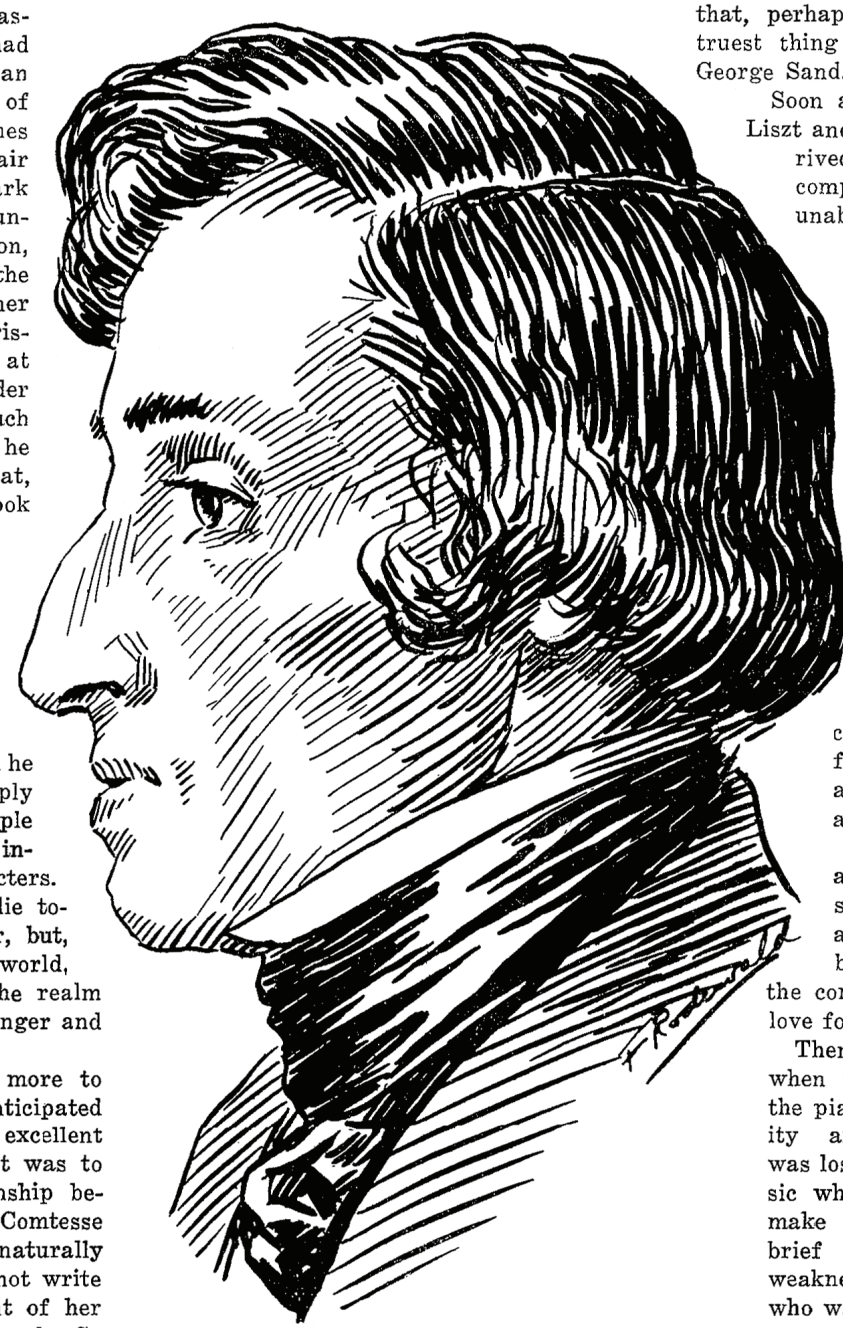
Soon after Balzac departed, Liszt and the timid Chopin arrived. The melancholy composer found himself unable to hide from George Sand in her own home; she was seeking him out constantly and trying to divert him.

She loved him all the more because his health was delicate (as a matter of fact he was already showing symptoms of consumption). Ever since De Musset's illness, she had been looking for someone to nurse—she felt that she could love most successfully on that basis—and she saw in Chopin a permanent patient.

In her usual frank and outspoken manner, she began to make amorous approaches, but she so frightened the composer that, out of very love for him, she had to stop.

Then she discovered that when Chopin was seated at the piano much of his timidity and self-consciousness was lost in the depths of music whose magic alone could make him forget, for one brief moment, his pitiful weaknesses. George Sand, who was willing to take any measure to capture the men she loved, used this to her (and his) advantage.

One day she begged him to play her his latest piece. He blushed as usual, then followed her obediently to the piano. They were alone, and he was in greatest terror. For a while he paused reluc-



FREDERIC FRANCOIS CHOPIN

The Polish composer and pianist (1809-1849) who settled in Paris in 1832. He met George Sand in Switzerland in 1837, where she was staying with Liszt and his mistress. Chopin was at the height of his career, and the exact opposite of the expansive and domineering George Sand, so that at first he avoided her, but finally the inevitable occurred—for nine years he yielded to her wishes in a remarkable love affair

*The situation was extremely romantic, for the young Comtesse, despite all her refinement and dignity, left husband and daughter without a moment's notice or hesitation, to join her beloved composer.

tantly, but his slender, supple fingers could not long resist the temptation of caressing the keys; a moment later the room was filled with the haunting, searching chords of his music, played as only he could play them.

George Sand stood beside him in silent ecstasy, her shining eyes fixed upon him. "Music expresses everything!" she had once written, and now she was at least sure that it expressed love.

At last he finished and, still intoxicated by his own music, looked up at her with unconcealed passion. And she leaned over and kissed him.

In a trembling voice, he told her that he loved her, but that he was ill and frightened. She replied that he need have no fear, that she would take good care of him and be his mother hereafter (the promise was kept more faithfully than the one she had made to the mother of De Musset.)

As her son Maurice was sick, she intended to make a journey with him and her daughter to the Balearic Isles, and now she announced that she would take Chopin along, since he was in bad health also. He was unable to refuse because she had already gained complete control over him, and for the next nine years he was forced to yield to her wishes.

VIII.

UN HIVER A MAJORQUE.

THEY set out—Chopin, George Sand, and her two children—in November, 1838. Chopin, who was extremely self-conscious about his intimate relationship, spared no efforts to keep it secret, even among his closest friends. But if he thought that anything concerning George Sand could remain unknown to the world, he was sadly mistaken. The expansive, open-hearted woman had already taken everybody into her confidence, from guests to servants, and there were but few people who did not know her entire plans.

The trip, during which she seized every opportunity to exhibit the famous Chopin, almost killed the timid composer. It was a relief to him when they arrived on the lonely, desolate island of Majorca, although the relief was short.

They found lodgings in a dilapidated house, whose only virtue was its situation; it commanded a wonderful view of the surrounding country, and for a while the climate was ideal.

"Here I am," wrote Chopin—and one can feel the satiric pessimism of

GUSTAVE FLAUBERT
The French novelist (1821-1880), author of "Madame Bovary," with whom George Sand carried on an intimate correspondence for a time

his words, "in the midst of palms and cedars and cactuses and olives and oranges and lemons and figs and pomegranates."

Then it began to rain, and it rained for weeks. The decaying walls of the house absorbed the moisture like a sponge; the atmosphere became cold and cheerless. Chopin hated the odor of the fires, which they had to make of damp wood. His health continued to decline until, one day, he coughed blood. He knew what it meant and wept bitterly, while George Sand petted him like a little child.

As soon as their landlord heard that Chopin had consumption, he ordered them to move at once. George Sand luckily found lodgings in a Carthusian monastery in the mountains, long deserted by the brethren, and then the home of a political refugee who was only too glad to sublet it. On a dismal day in December, the four travelers left their miserable rooms and moved into the large, but even more uncomfortable residence.

They had to rough it. As no servant would remain with them, George Sand had to add the duties of housework to those of writing, giving lessons to her children, and nursing Chopin.

As for Chopin, he had a miserable time of it. His refined nature shrank from this rough living, and he would certainly have fled, had it not been for the fact that the only boat running between the island and the mainland was a filthy barge used for conveying pigs.

"Fast between the rocks and the sea," he wrote mournfully, to a friend, 'in an immense deserted convent of the Carthusians, confined in a cell, the one door of which is larger than the gates of Paris, you may picture your Frederic with his hair all out of curl, deprived of his white gloves, and as pale as ever. My cell is about as large as a fair-sized coffin, a vault thick with dust serving as a lid. . . . Close to my bed is a small table, and on this table—God, what a luxury!—stand a metal candlestick, holding a miserable candle, the works of Bach, and my own compositions in manuscript."

His intense suffering—both physical and mental—poured itself out into poignant music. Here it was he wrote that group of short masterpieces, his *Preludes*, whose surging cadences express so vividly the dark and gloomy depths of inner despair, the futile searching and striving for warmth and light, for shelter from the terrific storms of an artist's soul.

"When I returned from my nocturnal explorations of the ruins with my children," says George Sand, to whom these pieces were dedicated, "I used to find him, at ten o'clock at night, sitting at his piano, pallid, with haggard eyes and hair standing on end. It was always a moment or two before he could recognize us."

She was soon convinced, however, that he was becoming "demoralized" for, though an artist herself, her inspiration came always from without and she was totally unable to comprehend those deepest emotions

caused by creative power from within.

One evening she and the children lost their way, and did not return home until late. Chopin was at the piano, his eyes staring vacantly before him, his face ashen gray. When they entered he jumped up in terror and uttered a piercing scream.

"Oh yes!" he sighed bitterly, "I knew you were all dead." Then he fainted.

When demonstrations like this grew more and more frequent, George Sand resolved to remove her lover immediately from the environment which had "demoralized him." Chopin, only too glad to leave, begged her to take him to Nohant.

She consented, and in March, 1839 they braved a trip in the filthy, foul-smelling pig barge—on which Chopin nearly had one of his fainting spells—and, reaching the mainland, set out for France.

The whole miserable sojourn has been related by George Sand, though impersonally, in *Un hiver a Majorque*, considered one of the finest books of travel ever written.

IX.

BREAK WITH CHOPIN.

DURING the following years, they spent the summers at Nohant and the winters at Paris. George Sand nursed her lover with motherly compassion, addressing him as her "invalid" or "dear skeleton." His condition, as a matter of fact, was extremely serious, and it was evident that he did not have much longer to live.

The composer had taken a fatherly interest in Solange, George Sand's daughter. He spent many hours amusing the girl, taking her for long walks, telling her stories or playing her his compositions. At last he was beginning to know happiness, for it gave him strength and self-confidence to act the father.

But it was this innocent relationship that led eventually to the break between Chopin and George Sand. The latter, who always demanded full possession of her lovers, fell into increasing jealousy as she saw her young daughter monopolizing Chopin's company. She was annoyed particularly that Chopin never objected when Solange burst in upon his creative work, whereas if she (George Sand) interrupted him, he became furious and sulked for days.

Things came to a head in 1847. Solange, now grown up, was being courted by a gentleman named Ferdinand de Praeuex, and George Sand favored and encouraged the match. But Solange suddenly eloped with one Clesinger, a coarse, stupid fellow of low rank with whom she had had a serious love-affair. George Sand, despite her personal objections, was very agreeable about the matter; she even presented the couple with an apartment in Paris. However, Clesinger was so disorderly and loud-mouthed that she was forced to prohibit him from visiting Nohant. This, of course, led to quarrels between mother and daughter which grew more and more violent.

Chopin, entering the room by chance during one of these scenes, immediately took side with Solange; he had grown so fond of her that, thinking her wronged, he forgot all his timidity and rose to defend her. George Sand was furious, especially since Chopin was totally ignorant of the true state of affairs, and she reproached him bitterly. The composer, otherwise so meek, could be terrible and ferocious when his temper was aroused; he flew into a rage and declared that he would leave George Sand at once. She hardly believed him, but the very next morning he rushed away without a word, resolved never to see her again. Although George Sand did not know it, he was already a dying man.

As the break had been long in coming, George Sand accepted it without her usual demonstration of grief. She was deeply wounded, mainly because she felt that Chopin had shown her cruel ingratitude.

"If any woman on earth could inspire him with absolute confidence," she wrote, "I am that woman, but he has never understood."

It was many years before her overwhelming love for him left her entirely, and she poured it into her next book, *Lucrezia Floriani*. Though she always denied it, the hero of this novel, Prince Karol, was really Chopin—her description of him reveals it fully—while she herself was Lucrezia. Her former attitude toward Chopin is expressed when Lucrezia says of her Prince, "I shall love him, but it will be as his mother loved him, just as fervently, and just as faithfully. It will be a case of maternal affection."

Less than two years after their separation the news that Chopin was on his deathbed reached George Sand. All the love she had felt for him, all the compassionate affection, rose instantly within her and, in a tragic outburst, she said fiercely, "He shall die in no other arms but mine."

But Chopin died in the arms of his devoted sister, while the grief-stricken George Sand, at his own wishes, was turned away from his room.

X.

EPILOGUE.

THE termination of Chopin's life was the termination of George Sand's love-life. That forceful vitality which had won so many men was deserting her; she was now a "fat old Muse" (as Matthew Arnold described her) of forty-five, with a nearly triple chin and a "mummified expression." At first she fought vigorously against old age. As an outlet for her intense emotional energy, she threw herself body and soul into the revolutions of 1848-1849, employing her pen to champion freedom and serving for a time as secretary to Rollin. However, finding her strength exhausted, she was forced at last to abandon an active life and settle down in her estate at Nohant, where she changed her leitmotif from "I must gain my self-respect" to "My heart is a cemetery."

And as her life changed, so changed her writings. She turned from wildly sentimental romances to restrained pastoral novels, at which she was her very best. In her retirement she wrote two books a year, a few plays, and various articles for magazines and newspapers.

Her last years, once she resigned herself to a life of peaceful simplicity, were extremely happy. They were not lonely years, for, in addition to taking care of two grandchildren, she was constantly hostess

to the greatest writers of the day. Alexandre Dumas fils, Theophile Gautier, Turgenev, Matthew Arnold, the Brothers de Goncourt, and Flaubert (with whom she carried on an intimate correspondence) were among those who came from far and wide to see this exceptional and remarkable woman.

Why did they find her exceptional and remarkable? It is obvious that her writings alone could hardly have brought these far superior writers all the way to Nohant; it is obvious likewise that they did not come merely to gaze upon a woman who had been through a lengthy series of love affairs. In such respects, she was no more than a talented woman with a stormy past, and did not stand out from others of her sex as a distinct and amazing personality, whose life, to paraphrase Balzac, "could not be judged in the same way as an ordinary existence."

In truth, what made her so exceptional and interesting were not her activities, but her *attitude* toward them. As has been mentioned, her chief purpose was to "live her own life," which meant that she was willing to defy precedent and conventionality and set herself up as her own standard, with her own morals, her own ideas of right and wrong. This attitude, and its successful enforcement, serves to raise everything she did or said from a merely commonplace level to a point where it is worth recording and studying.

What kind of a woman was she? It is evident that her nature was jumping constantly from one extreme to the other. She could be either plastic or stubborn, weak or forceful, compassionate or merciless, sensitive or callous. At one moment we see her, all tenderness and devotion, nursing the sick De Musset, while at the very next she is casting him aside feelinglessly in order to gain Pagello's affections. We see her, again, as an aggressive fighter, defying Merimee and Michel de Bourges, while still another glance reveals her as a yielding mother, spoiling her own children or petting the fragile Chopin.

If we reduce all this to the simplest terms, we might say that she was guided by her feelings, not her thoughts—that she reacted to persons and things according to their sensuous effect upon her. Her view was entirely objective; she never looked for depth and had no understanding or appreciation of inner values.

How characteristic, then, are her last words, uttered as she lay dying in Nohant, on June 8, 1876. Turning to her daughter, she said softly, "*Ne detruisez pas la verdure,*" ("Do not step on the grass"), and Solange knew that she referred to the grass that was to grow over her grave.

[Ralph Oppenheim has written another striking study of a French genius—"The Romance that Balzac Lived"—which will be published complete in the next number of the Quarterly.]