LA FILEUSE.

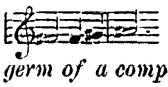
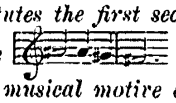
(THE SPINNING-GIRL.)

A Hypothetical Elucidation, designed as an Aid to a Characteristic and Impressive Delivery of RAFF'S TONE-POEM.

—BY—

A. R. PARSONS.

"Many things occur in music which we must imagine, though we may not actually hear them What is not heard, intelligent listeners supply by means of their imaginative power It is such listeners whom chiefly we musicians should seek to please."—PH. EM. BACH · *On the True Art of Playing the Pianoforte*

The tones  (*measure* 16) *impressed the composer's mind as the germ of a composition. This simple tone-group became the model for the structure of a four-measure musical phrase, of which it constitutes the first section. Of this section, the exact antithesis would be* 

Every musical motive or model, however, shows three characteristics, viz. : its traits of melody, harmony and rhythm. Of these traits any two may be modified or altered, for variety's sake, if for no other reason, in the repetition, the retention of one trait sufficing to preserve the resemblance to the original. Accordingly, in constructing the antithesis (*measure* 18), *the composer changes the* harmony *and the* melodic order, *while retaining the original characteristic* rhythm *of the thesis. By this means, within the short space of four measures, a completely rounded thought is expressed. He next proceeds to repeat this thought, preserving its melodic and rhythmic traits unchanged, excepting the addition of a prefatory tone* (*last quarter of measure* 19), *while avoiding monotony in the repetition by a material change of harmony.*

With this the composer has exhausted, for present purposes, all possibilities of interest in the three tones in which he has hitherto worked. He now constructs a third phrase (*beginning at measure* 24) *by transposing the first one. This is followed by a fourth, which is the duplicate of the third, only with the change of mode at the outset* (*measure* 28) *from major to minor, and a modulation at the close into the major mode of the key of three sharps* (*measure* 31), *in which mode lies the entire middle or contrasting part of the composition. In this middle part, the composer's fancy still plays with the original model, subjecting it to continually novel transformations, going so far* (*in measures* 36 *and* 38) *as to modify the main element of similarity—the original rhythm—which he does by breaking up the half-note of the original model into two quarter-notes. The middle part climaxes* (*measure* 50) *in a brilliant passage* (*cadenza*), *and then gradually subsides from animation toward repose.*

Now follow a few modulatory phrases, leading back to the return of the principal part (*measure* 75), *which occurs—not literally, but—enriched with new traits, showing that the composer's fancy does not lame in its flight toward the close, but soars higher and higher, so that the interest, instead of subsiding, climaxes as the piece nears its end. Thus—to mention some of these traits—the principal theme is set an octave higher than at the outset ; and, instead of repeating the transpositions* (*to different staff-degrees*) *which occur in the first part* (*measure* 24), *here* (*measure* 83), *a new turn is given, with a repetition an octave lower. The model, as a whole, having thus been exhaustively repeated, even its last note now comes in for special treatment,* (*measures* 99–100), *being set, first above,* forte, *then below,* piano ; *this is repeated in octaves, when, with a closing run or passage* (*measure* 104), piano, *the piece concludes.*

With this a coherent melody, a song without words, is completed. What use has the composer intended to make of it? His intention is disclosed by the title which he prefixes. Conformably to this purpose, a descriptive accompaniment-figure must be invented. This, too, has been happily devised, perhaps from the very outset, purely mechanical skill being alone required to apply it throughout to the melody and harmony.

The question then arises, Shall the piece have an introduction? If so, of what character shall this be? The composer decides in favor of an introduction, and its nature throws light on the meaning of the piece.

The introduction opens with the spinning-wheel figure, but in no sunny mood—with weird, suspensive and uncanny harmony, ending with the effect of an interrogation. Now comes (*measure* 5) *the first intimation of the theme of the piece. It is significant, that the original model, instead of being treated cheerfully* (*in the major mode*) *and serenely, here appears in* minor, *with a solemnity and an impressiveness heightened by breadth of harmonies, whose very dimensions compel a measured delivery by the player. This first appearance of the model ends with dubious harmony and a figural passage equally disturbed in tone, and thus suggestive of unrest.*

Now (*measure* 14) *all clears away, the curtain rises, as it were, and the theme steps forth like the heroine of a play, seemingly unconscious of the fate in store for her. The opening phrase of the melody* (*measures* 16–19) *discloses only a quiet dignity of mood, earnest, yet free from care. With the repetition of this phrase, however, a trace of unrest* (*measure* 22) *is manifest. Corresponding to this, in measures* 24–30, *the melody seems to reach out with a rising ardor as toward the object of a desire. This object it appears to contemplate, in measures* 32–35, *with a rapture of feeling which passes over into passionate longing, gradually mounting higher and higher, from measure* 36 *on, till it culminates in intensity at measure* 50. *Upon the subsidence of this storm of agitation the critical moment for the melody is reached : F♯ and G♯ are proposed in the left hand* (*3d quarter of measure* 57 *and 1st quarter of measure* 58), *as if in these tones the future of the melody were bound up : to them the right hand sternly opposes, as with, or impelled by, the voice of Fate—the jarring contradiction F♮ and G♮. The left hand makes yet another effort, this time offering to waive F♯ and accept F♮ instead, if only G♯ may thereby be gained : the right hand is inexorable, reiterating unmoved its fiat of F♮ and G♮. The melody is now silent for two measures, during which only the sound of the spinning-wheel figure is heard, and then the melody turns away sorrowful and comfortless. A cadenza intervenes, whereupon the melody returns, but changed, as if its* pianissimo *whisperings would intimate that thenceforth no joy existed for it in the future, and that the retrospect of past hopes were all that remained to it. This impression is intensified at measures* 83–98, *where the tones seem to reiterate, refrain-like, a pathetic "What might have been." In measures* 99–102 *the knell of vanished hopes is tolled : then all is over, and with a final cadenza the curtain falls to the sounds of the tonic harmony, swiftly vibrating and gradually receding, till they float away in space.*

"*Hold this sea-shell to your ear,*
And you shall hear,
Not the andante of the sea,
Not the wild wind's symphony,
But your own heart's minstrelsy.

"*You do poets and their song*
A grievous wrong,
If your own heart does not bring
To their deep imagining
As much beauty as they sing."—T. B. ALDRICH.

THE SPINNING GIRL.

(LA FILEUSE.)

Étude.

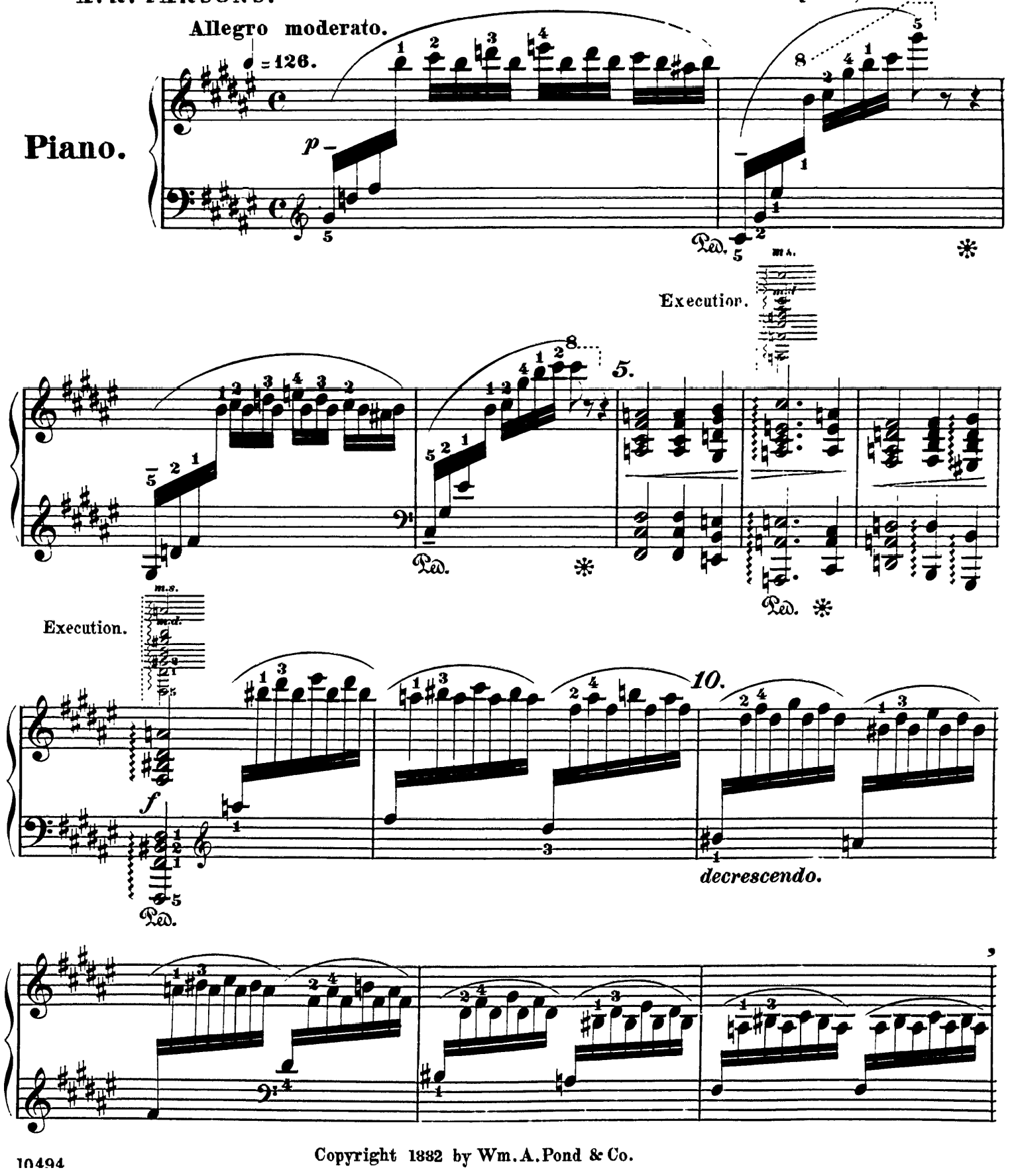
Revised, fingered, and edited by
A. R. PARSONS.

JOACHIM RAFF,
Op. 157, No. 2.

Allegro moderato.

♩ = 126.

Piano.



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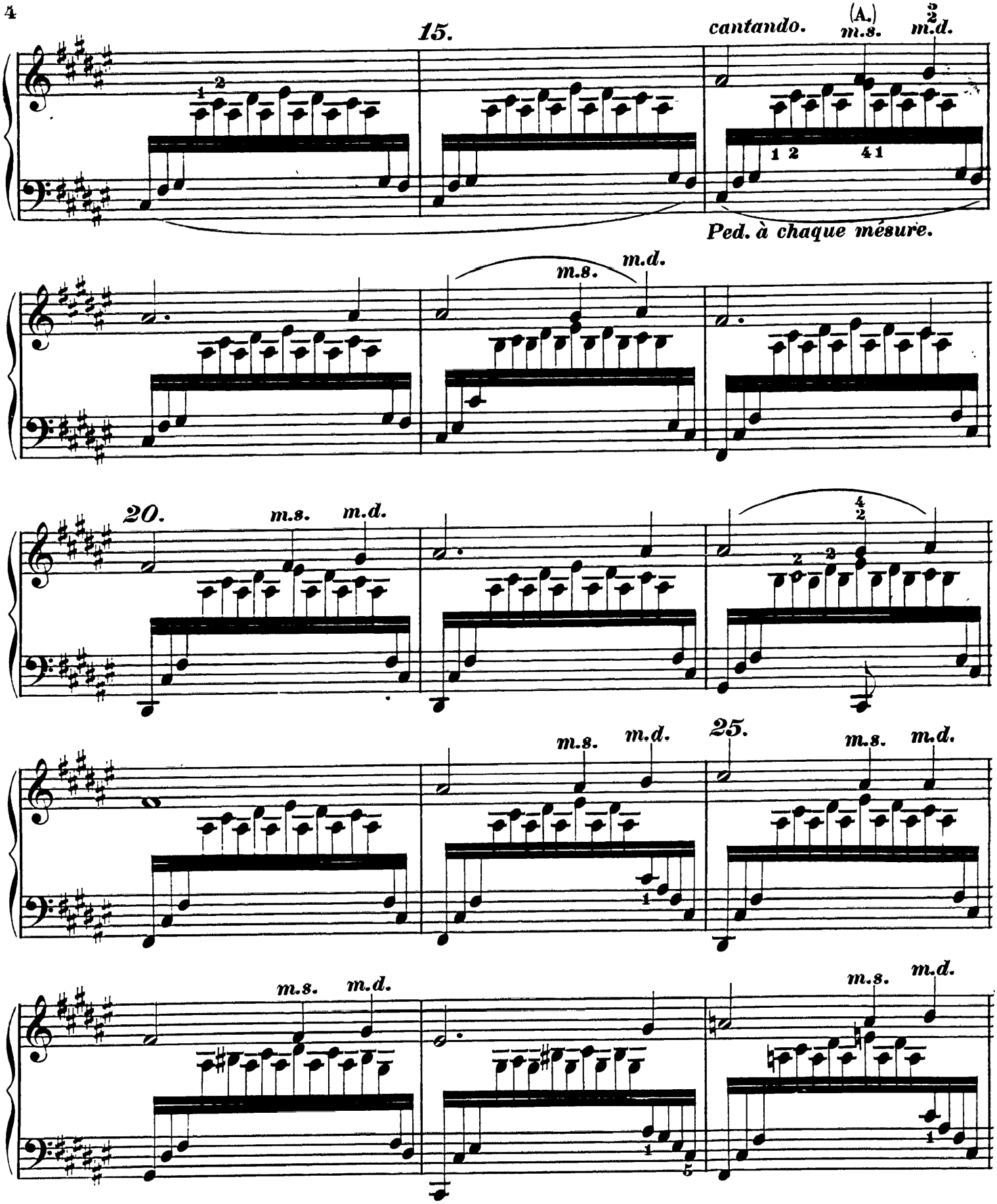
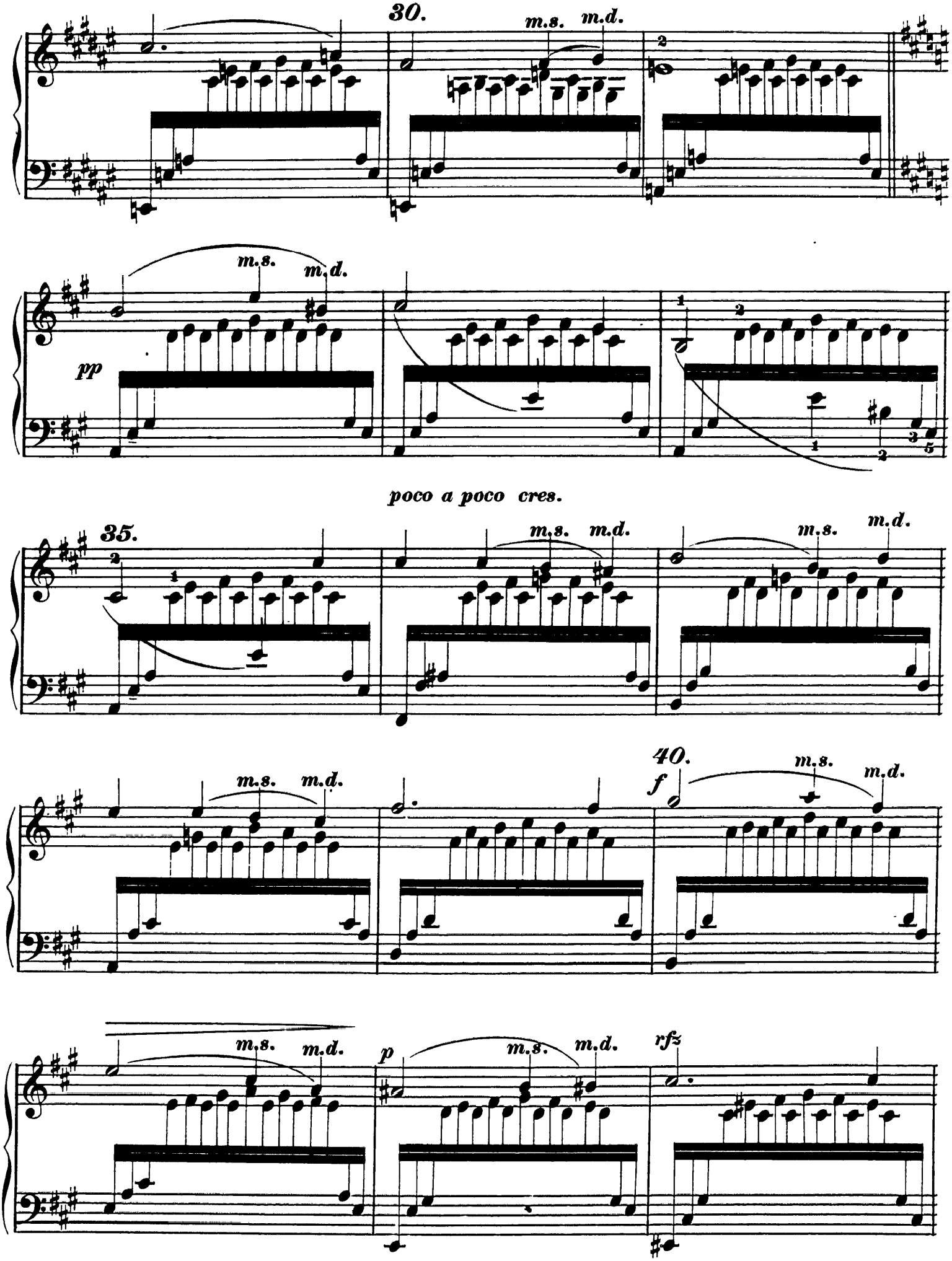
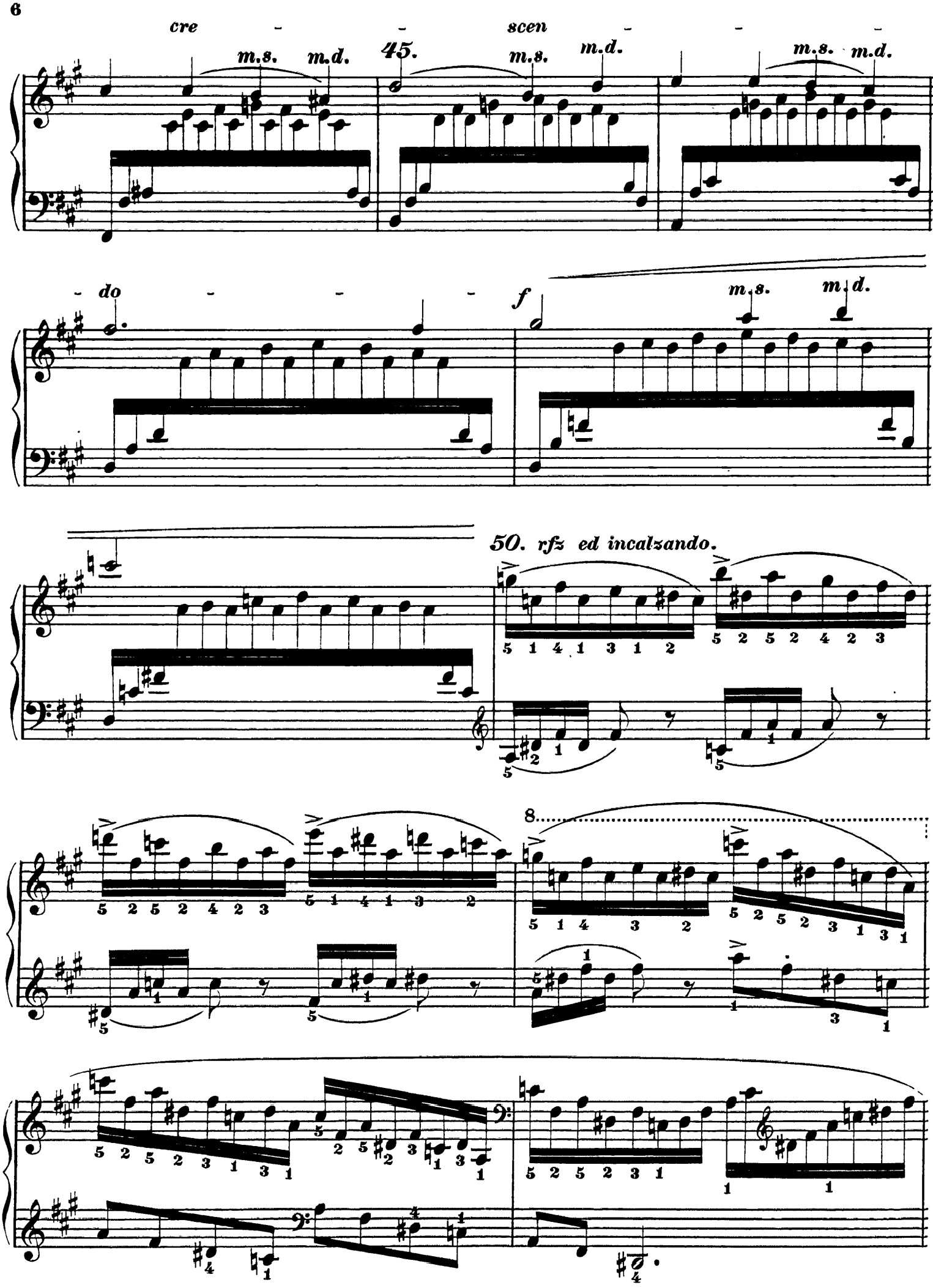
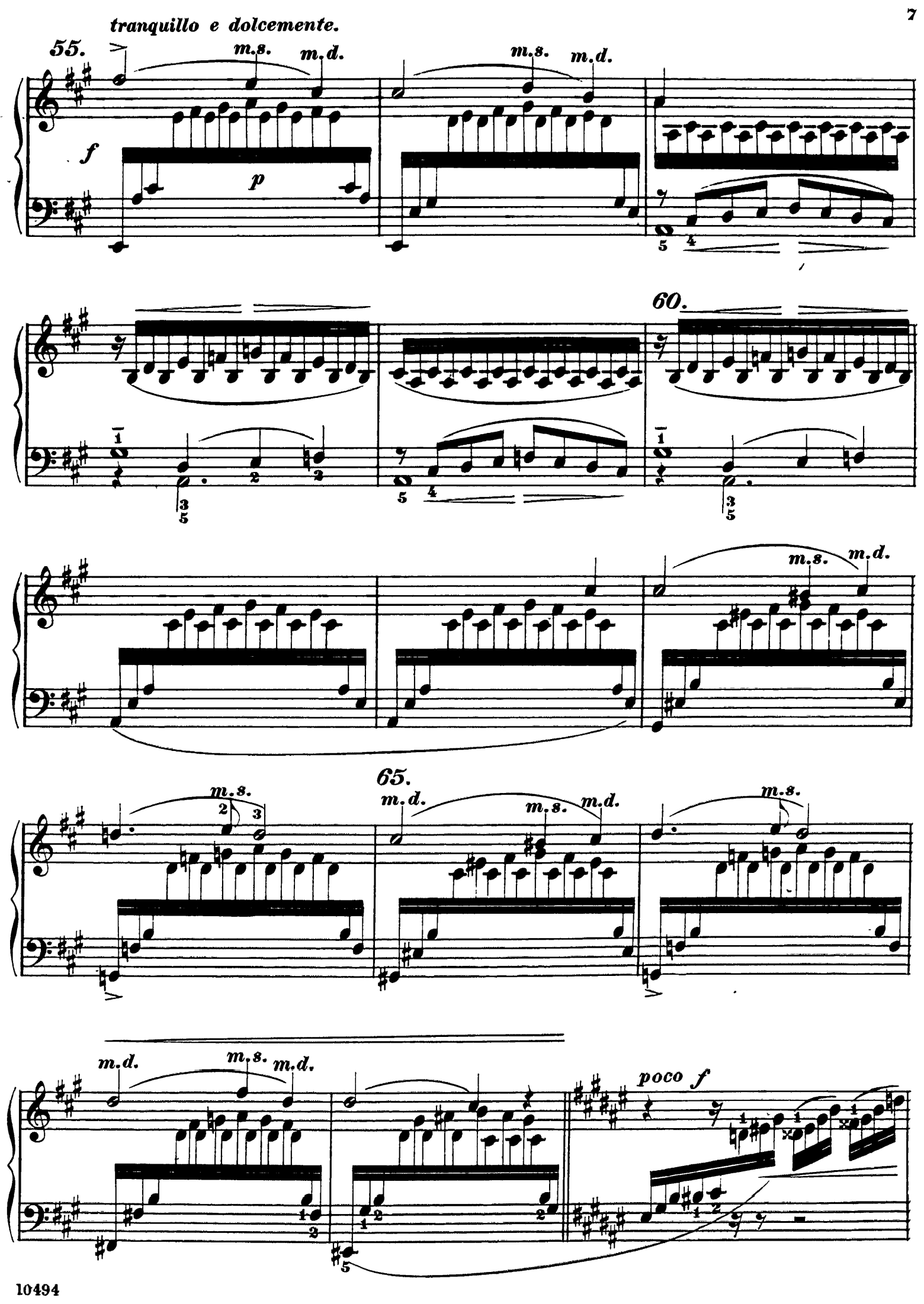
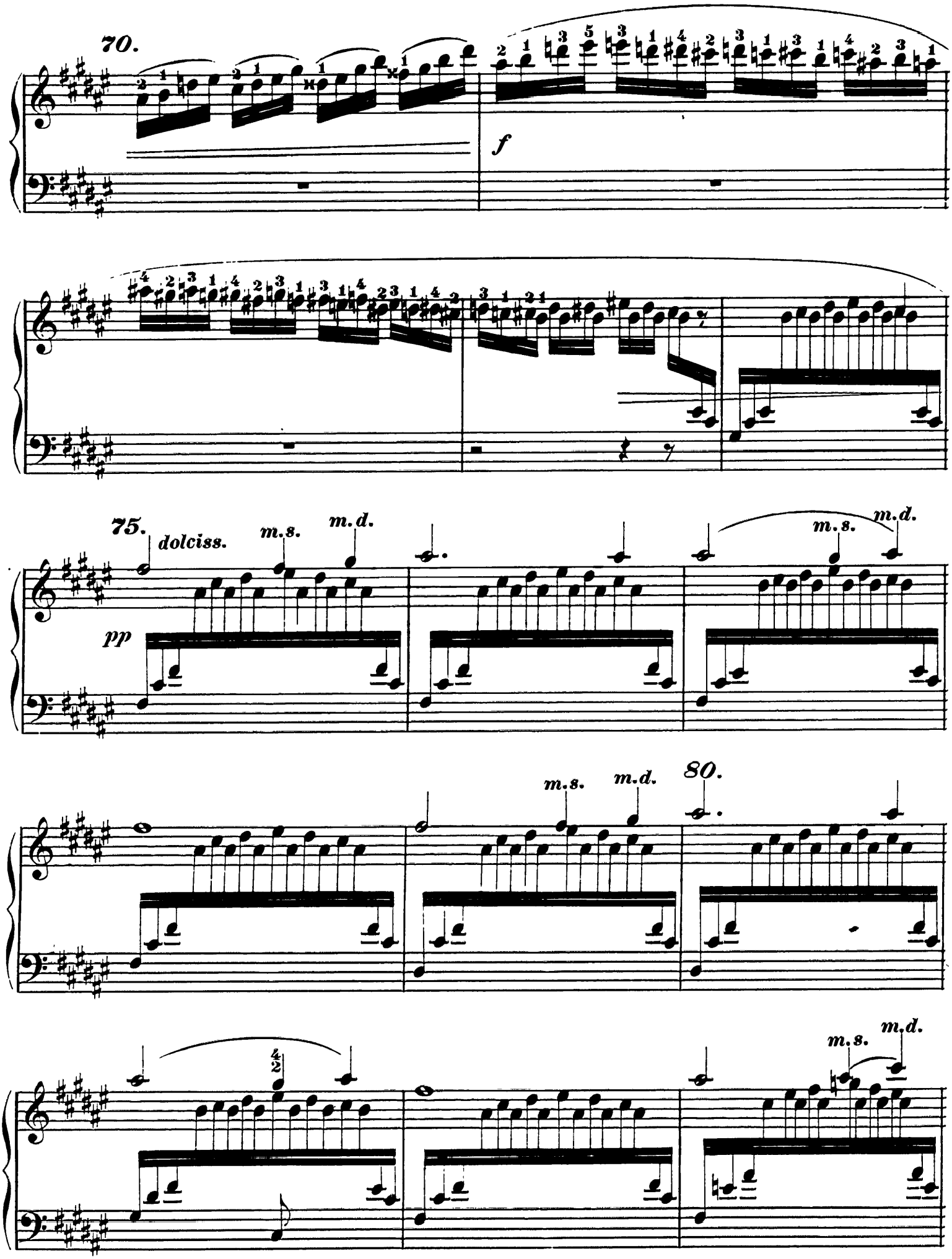


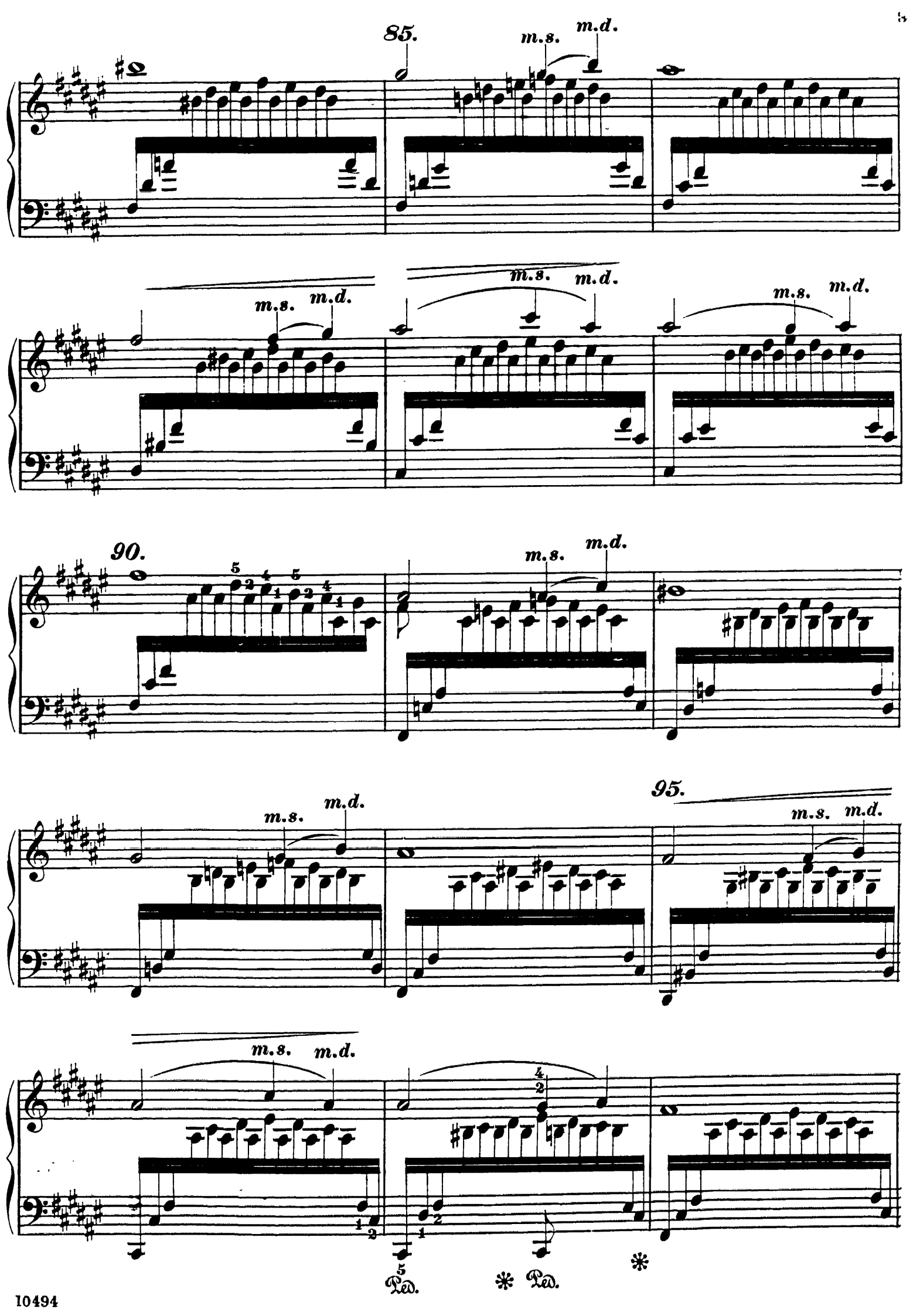
(A.) The original version does not indicate this use of the left hand in the delivery of the melody. The pedagogic experiences of the editor, however, induce him to recommend it throughout the piece, as affording additional occupation for that hand, and also because it greatly facilitates an independent and characteristic treatment of the melody and accompaniment, respectively.

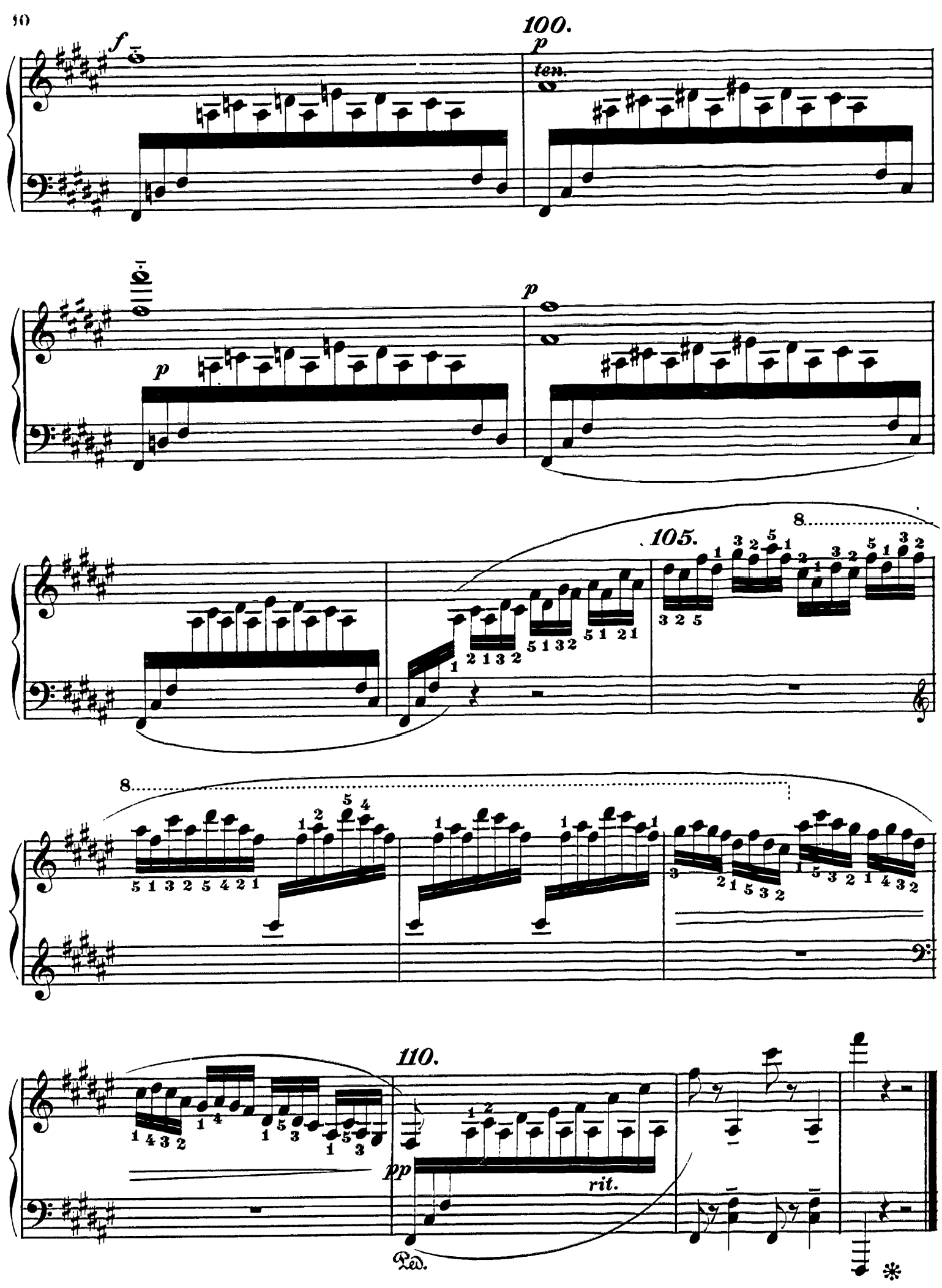

30.
m.s. m.d.
pp
poco a poco cres.
35.
40.
f
p
rfz


cre - - - scen - - -
m.s. m.d.
45.
m.s. m.d.
m.s. m.d.
- do - - -
f
m.s. m.d.
50. rfz ed incalzando.
8


tranquillo e dolcemente.
55.
m.s.
m.d.
m.s.
m.d.
f
p
60.
65.
m.s.
m.d.
m.s.
m.d.
m.s.
m.d.
m.s.
m.d.
poco f


70.
f
75.
dolciss.
m.s.
m.d.
pp
80.


85.
m.s.
m.d.
90.
95.
Ped.
Ped.



Hounslow, Eng'r. N.Y.