GEO. C. DOBSON'S

BANJO GUIDE

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BOSTON NEW YORK CHICAGO

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CONTENTS.

Anby March	Dobson	66
Ada Polka	Goldby	48
A Merry Dance.	Dobson	82
Amusements and exercises in A major		31
Amusements in F sharp minor and E major		32
Amusements in D major, G major and A minor.		33
Barre, The		10
Bars, measures, etc.		14
Bennie Dobson's March. No. 1	Dobson	43
Bennie Dobson's March. No. 2	Dobson	44
Bennie Dobson's March. No. 3	Dobson	46
Bridal Rose Schottische	Young	62
Brigand, The	Dobson	88
Budding Rose Schottische.	Dobson	56
Carrie Waltz.	Armstrong	63
Chapter 1.		6
Chapter 2.		13
Chapter 3. The banjo illustrated.		24
Chapter 4.		34
Chapter 5. Miscellaneous compositions by the author and others.		43
Chromatic Clog.	Dobson	68
Collin's Schottische.	Collins	54
Dawn of Spring. (Quickstep.)	Young	64
Eighth, ninth, tenth and twelfth amusements		63
Electric Mazourka	Dobson	47
English Clog. No. 1	Arr. by Dobson	72
English Clog. No. 2	Arr. by Dobson	73
Eureka Clog Dance	Bodecker	87
Excelsior Clog	Dobson	59
Examples of the Barre		10
Exercise in the Key of A major, scale and chords		26
Exercise in the scale of E major, scale and chords.		27
Exercises in D major and G major, scale and chords		28
Exercises in F sharp minor and A minor, scale and chords		29
First and second amusements. (Exercises.)		34
Folio Schottische	Dobson	74
Gem Mazurka	Dobson	76
Harmonics, positions, etc..		10
Hay Seed	Dobson	55
Home Sweet Home. (Variation.)	Dobson	53
Irish Jig.		60
Jolly Moke, The. (Plantation Dance.)	Dobson	80
Jumbo Jig	Dobson	67
Lynn Clog Hornpipe	Young	65
Melody. (Tremolo on the third string.)	Dobson	95
Methods of playing, the stroke, guitar style, picking		9
Minna Waltz	Dobson	50
Minor Jig		48
Minor Jig	Dobson	68
Notes, and their relative values. (Table.)		14
Nymphs' Dance.	Armstrong	58
Percy Russ Polka	Dobson	52
Plate 1		8
Plate 2		11
Position of instrument, tuning, strings, etc.		7
Preliminary practice		12
Repairing, fretting and heading. Hints to students		6
Right hand fingering		34
R. N. C. Clog	Dobson	70
Romance	Dobson	79
Scale of A major, in sections		34
Scales. Chromatic scales		30
Sharps and flats.		16
Sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth amusements		38
Spanish Gazelle.	Dobson	49
Spurr Polka	Dobson	51
Starlight Waltz.	Dobson	59
Straight Jig	Arr. by Bennie Dobson	60
Sweet Marjoram Waltz. (For one or two banjos.).	Stephens	84
Syncopation		18
The clefs, staff.		13
The instrument and its principles		6
The scale		16
Third, fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh amusements		35
Thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth amusements		37
Transposition of the keys of a scale		22
Twentieth and twenty-first amusements		39
Twenty-second amusement		40
Twenty-third amusement		41
Twenty-fourth amusement		42
Uretta Schottische	Shepard	61
Use of notes and rests		14
"Victor" Grand March	Dobson	90
York, The. (Banjo Duett.)	Strauss	69

GEO. C. DOBSON.

A brief sketch of "The Banjo King," inventor of the "Victor Banjo," teacher, composer, etc.

GEO. C. DOBSON, "The Banjo King" has elevated the instrument with which his name is so prominently and honorably connected, until it has assumed a position scarcely second in importance to that of any other musical instrument now in use. He found the banjo a very crude and unformed creation, owing its existence to accident, and conceived only to fill a very humble sphere. Seeing its possibilities, he directed his musical skill, and inventive genius to its improvement, and the results are most marvellous. From the rude, unformed gourd of Jo Sweeny, step by step he has elaborated the four stringed gourd of the Virginia canal boat, until to-day, it appears in the "Victor" Banjo of the concert stage, and parlor, a triumphant demonstration of the principle of mechanical evolution. And the rude picking of the originator of the banjo, on the flat boat and levee, can scarcely be recognized in the marvellous execution of the Great Banjo Soloist of the Day, Geo. C. Dobson, in the concert room, or parlor. Mr. Dobson is accepting a few concert engagements of a high order, as none others can afford to pay his prices. He receives as much for a concert solo, as any other instrumentalist, and justly so, as "there is but one Geo. C. Dobson, and the banjo is his profit." He will play at Tremont Temple, Nov. 10th, and a crowd will go to hear him.—*Folio, November, 1889.*

PREFACE.

TO apologise for publishing a new book is to acknowledge the absence of any want for it, and that is not our condition at the present time. As "there is always room at the top," so is there always a place for a good book, the more particularly so if it be a text-book, which this unquestionably is. In view also of the constantly increasing popularity of the banjo as an element in our musical curriculum, and in answer to the daily augumenting demand for "something newer and better," as an instructor, this book has been prepared. Let us hope that it may prove eminently satisfactory and fill the required field of usefulness. In which event we will be peculiarly and eminently justified; and this is all that we ask or desire.

Nor do we propose in this place, to forestall the province of the book itself, either by a synopsis of its intents or any foreshadowing of its methods, till such instructions will be unfolded gradually and progressively as the pages increase. And thus will the pupil be led on and up the scale of advancement, subject only to the necessary incidents of all scholastic pursuits, the degrees of susceptibility of the individual learners and the aptitude of the various teachers who may essay its methods.

With no further explanation of our book and with no intent to apologise for its presentation, we confidently submit it to all who are interested in the study and practice of the banjo, as a work in every respect well worthy all those who are interested in its production.

GEORGE C. DOBSON.

A FEW BITS OF BANJO HISTORY.

THIS instrument which is known as the banjo today is vastly different from the crude type of its original. There is far more extensive disparity between the old box and strings, or the primeval gourd of the plantation negro of a half a century ago and the present perfected banjo, than there is between the crude spinet of the old masters of music and the massive concert grand piano of today. There is no doubt that the banjo is a product of natural evolution, owing its original conception to the accidentally discovered vibration of a tightened string or wire, either in some rude æolian harp or other similar construction. From the initial stage, progress and advancement are the sure products of experiment and accident, until the instrument appears in the perfect form of the present day

No doubt the "tom-tom" of the Chinese with its compeer as used by the Japanese and other similar rude constructions, had something to do with its first appearance among our plantation minstrels. From this crude type we have evolved the banjo of today and any person who sees one of the quaint oddities with which the typical darky of half a century ago made his popular music and the beautiful "Dobson Victor Banjo" of to-day the acme of instruments, cannot fail to be impressed with the immensity of the progress which has been made. Certainly there is but little left to be accomplished or desired in this direction.

The present growing interest in the banjo, though of recent conception, is genuine and lasting; owing to the fact that the instrument itself in its original type offered but slight scope for musical display and advancement, as also that, because of this, its use was almost entirely limited to negroes on plantations and flat-boats and later on, to their imitators of the original "minstrel" order of performers, its sphere was limited and somewhat proscribed. But as the instrument itself became judiciously developed, its construction improved, its capacities increased, its resources developed and its use extended to a higher and a better class. Lovers of music speedily learned to appreciate it as it deserved, and as a natural result, the banjo soon became an important factor in our musical problem.

Nor is it in the mere improvement in construction lies all the difference between the banjo of the past and present. It is the vast change of method in teaching these differences, and in the improved quality of the teachers themselves, and the superiority of the text-books, that the changed order of things have come. The old regime which included Briggs, Seymour, Unsworth, Morris and others of that ilk, has yielded place to another order of exponents, even as the banjo of the earlier days gave place to its far superior successor. The old order of players "twanged" the strings after their own sweet will, unchecked by any kind of rules, unswayed by no mere conventionalities and so they taught such pupils as came to them for instruction. The banjo artists of to-day "play" their instruments, their performances being subject to and controlled by rules as inflexible and exacting as any that control and regulate the piano, organ, violin or any other instrument And the text-books prepared for its instruction are found on the same model, governed by the same fixed, scientific principles.

Chapter One.

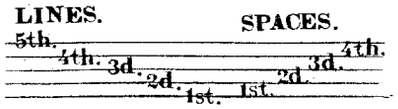
MUSICAL NOTATION.

Sounds are represented by characters called notes, whose relative length and pitch are described later on. These are written on what is known as

THE STAFF.

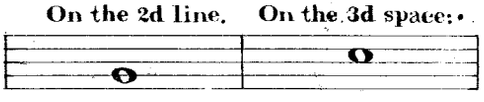
As every note has a definite *tone* or *pitch*, being either *high* or *low*, the sound is indicated by its position upon a *staff*, which consists of five parallel lines, and their intermediate spaces, the under line being called the first line, and the lowest space the first space.

THE STAFF.



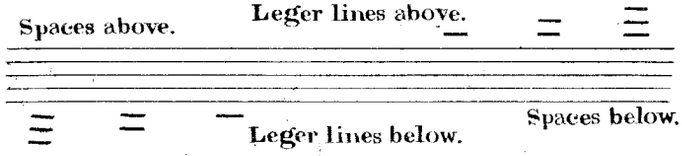
Each of these lines and spaces is called a degree.

A note is on the line when the line passes through it, and on the space when between the lines.



When more than five lines are required to designate any particular note that is too high or too low to be represented upon the staff, we use small lines both above and below the staff. These lines are called LEGER LINES, and are designated as the first leger line above, second leger line above, &c., or first leger line below, second leger line below, &c.

The first note above the staff is said to be upon the space above.



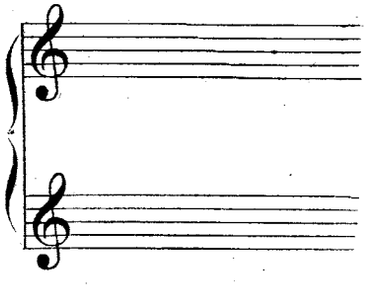
The first note below the staff is said to be upon the space below.

To determine the location of the letters upon the several degrees of the staff, a character called a CLEF is used.

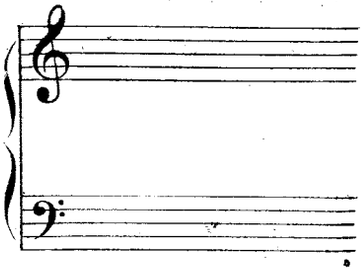
THE CLEFS.

There are two clefs in common use. THE TREBLE, or G CLEF, which is used for the *right hand* in Piano-Forte or Organ music, also for all music written for the Violin, Guitar, Flute, Banjo, Accordeon Flageolet, Fife and Clarionet. The BASS or F CLEF, is used for the *left hand* in Piano-Forte or Organ music, also for the Violoncello, Double Bass, &c. When music is written for two or more instruments or voices, the staves are connected by a BRACE.

A duet for two violins, or for Flute and Violin, would be connected thus:—



Music for the Piano-Forte or Organ, thus:—



BARS.

In order to make the necessary subdivisions of time in writing, a short line called a bar, is used.

MEASURES.

The space between any two bars is called a measure.

Measures are of several kinds, each one deriving its name from the number of parts in that particular kind of a measure. Thus a measure with two parts is called *double measure*, one with three parts, *triple measure*, four parts, *quadruple measure*, six parts, *sextuple measure*.

TABLE OF THE NOTES AND THEIR RELATIVE VALUES.

A Whole Note is equal to

2 Half Notes

or

4 Quarter Notes

or

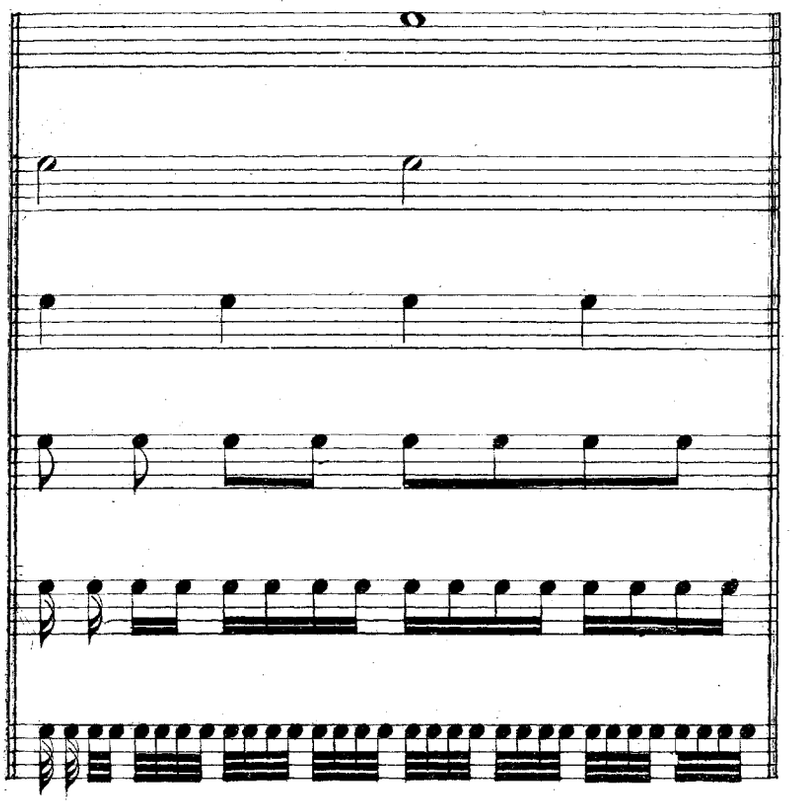
8 Eighth Notes

or

16 Sixteenth Notes

or

32 Thirty-Second Notes.

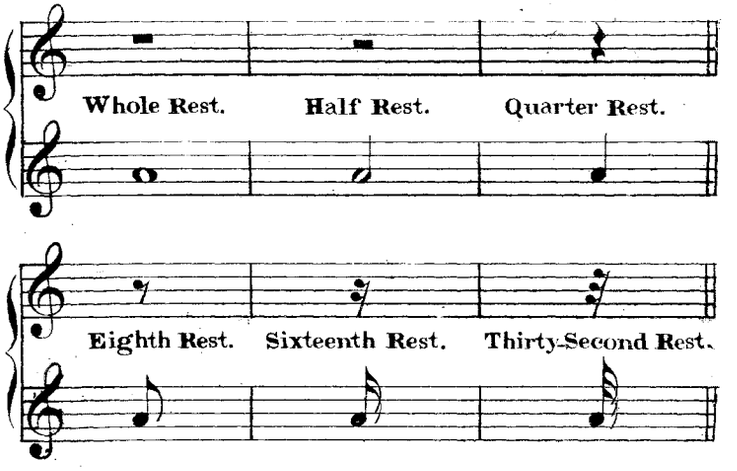


THE RESTS.

Every note has its corresponding REST, denoting silence or a stop. They are placed upon any particular line or space of the staff, but in such order as best accommodates the eye,—sometimes being above the staff and sometimes beneath, except the whole and half rests.

A whole rest, corresponding with the whole note in respect to time, is situated *under* the fourth line. A half rest is situated *above* the third line. A quarter rest turns to the *right*. An eighth rest turns to the *left*.

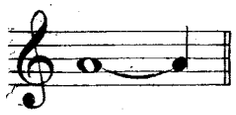
THE USE OF NOTES AND RESTS.



A TIE ⁀ above or below two or more notes that have the same situation upon the staff, shows that they are to be performed as one note, the duration of which is equal to the time of all combined.

is equivalent to one note, the time of which is eight beats.

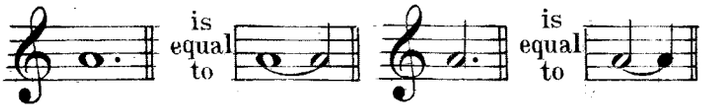
is equivalent to one note, the time of which is seven beats.

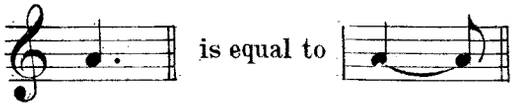

is equivalent to one note or five beats.

is equivalent to one note or six beats.

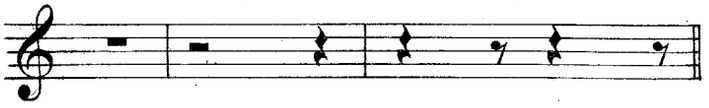
By combinations of this sort we can express a sound of any duration required.

A dot *following* a note or rest makes it half as long again.

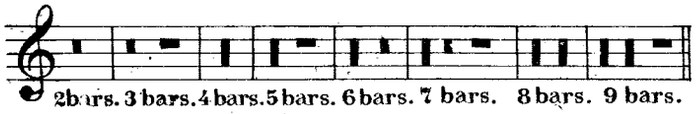



is equal to

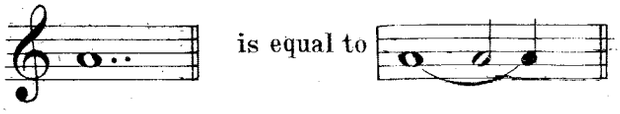
Rests are never tied, but are arranged one after the other until the required time is made up, thus: —

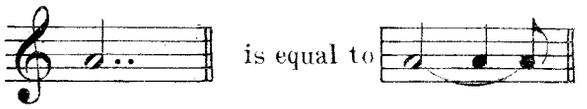


When more than one bar rest is required, it is indicated as follows: —

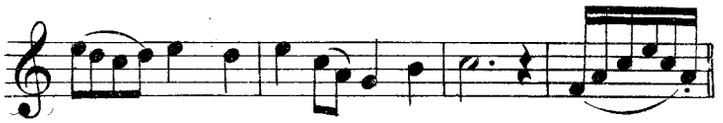


Two dots placed after a note or rest makes it three-fourths longer than its actual length thus: —

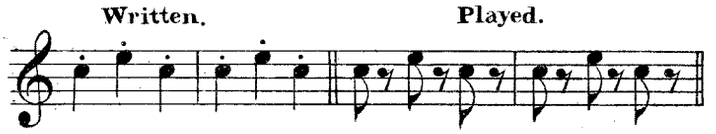




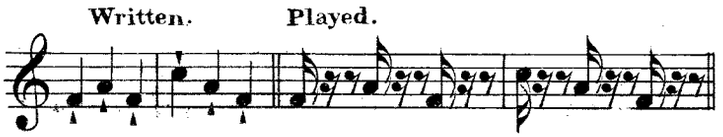
When the slur or tie is placed over or under any combination of notes that are on different lines and spaces, it signifies that they must be performed in a smooth and connected manner, which is called a Legato movement, and is written thus: —



Dots placed above or below any series of notes indicate the opposite style of playing, which is termed Staccato, signifying in a marked and distinct style, represented as follows: —



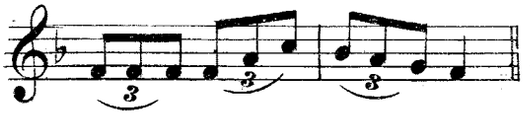
When marked in this manner, each note must be made particularly short, and very distinct.



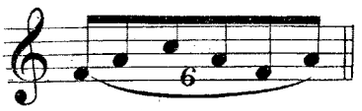
We frequently find the Legato and Staccato movements combined, which mostly occurs in music written for the violin, and is played by detaching the notes with the movement of the bow in one direction, either up or down.

A Triplet is a group of three notes played in the time of two.

A figure *3* is always placed over or under a triplet.

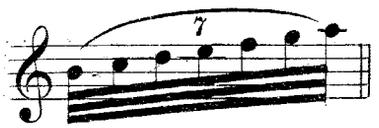


A figure **6** signifies that six notes are to be played in the time of four.



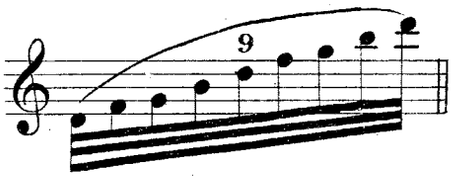
Other combinations of notes are made, and the number marked above them, thus: —

Seven to be played in the time of four.



Ten to be played in the time of eight.

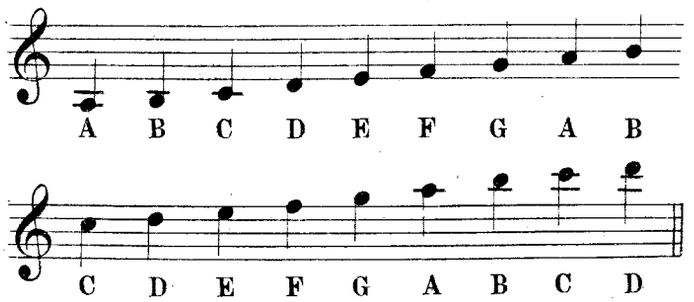
Nine to be played in the time of eight, &c.

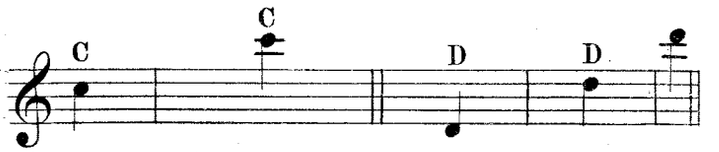


THE SCALE.

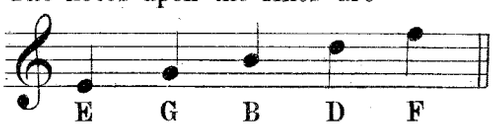
Notes are named after the first seven letters of the Alphabet, A, B, C, D, E, F, G. When these notes follow in regular succession, they form what is called a **SCALE**. It will be observed that notes of the same name or letter occur several times in a regular scale, but always in a different position on the staff.

THE SCALE.

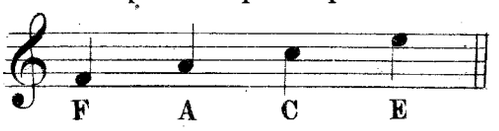




The notes upon the lines are

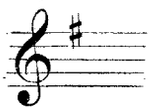


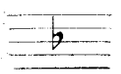
The notes upon the spaces spell the word *Face.*



SHARPS AND FLATS.

The pitch of any note may be changed by prefixing any of the following characters.

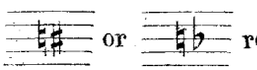
 A **SHARP** before a note raises it a Semitone.

 A **FLAT** before a note lowers it a Semitone.

A **DOUBLE SHARP** raises a note a whole tone.

A **DOUBLE FLAT** lowers a note a whole tone.

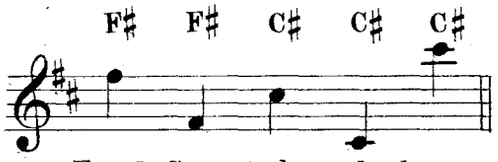
A **NATURAL** contradicts a flat or sharp.

 or restores the single flat or sharp.

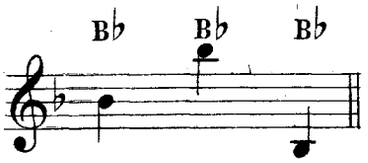
Flats or Sharps placed at the commencement of a piece of music affect every note throughout the piece

upon the lines and spaces where they are situated; also, any other notes of the same letter upon the staff.

Any flat or sharp that is not so situated is called an ACCIDENTAL.



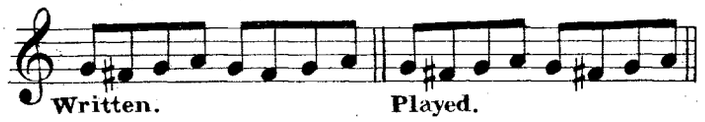
Here every F and C are to be made sharp, no matter what their situation upon the staff.



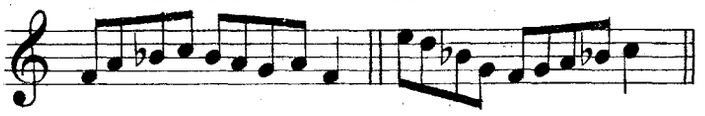
When flats are situated in the same position, the effect is the same as that of the sharps.

All music is divided into equal portions of time by perpendicular lines called BARS, and the music between any two bars is called a MEASURE. When an accidental sharp, flat or natural is prefixed to a note, all the following notes of the same name contained in the measure are affected by it, thus:—

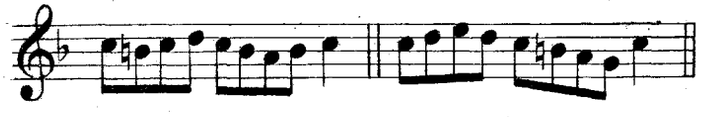
EXAMPLE OF THE SHARP.



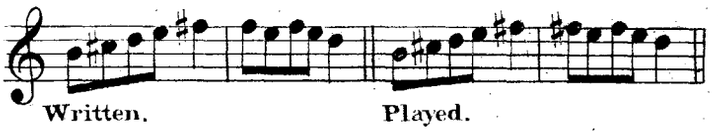
EXAMPLE OF THE FLAT.

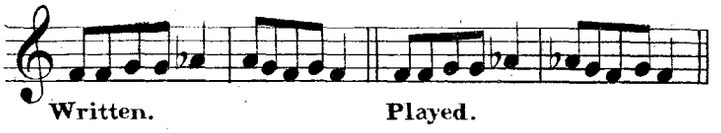


EXAMPLE OF THE NATURAL.

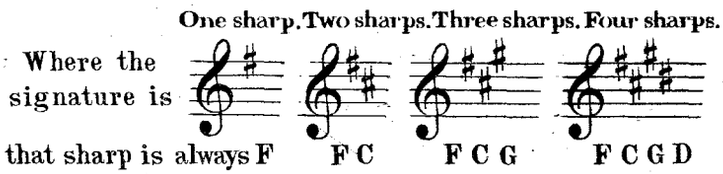


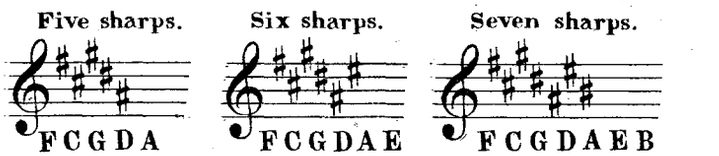
When the last note of a measure is influenced by an accidental flat, sharp or natural, if the next measure should commence with the same note it is also affected likewise, thus:—

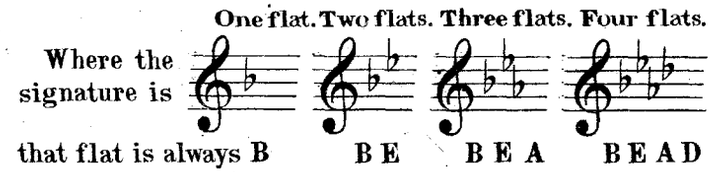


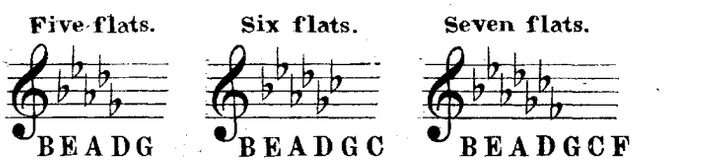


Sharps and flats before a piece of music are called the Signature.





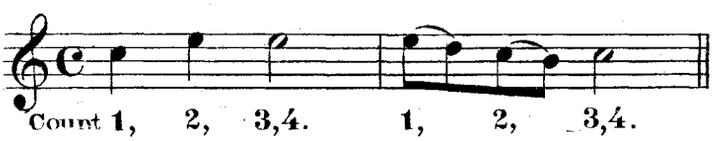


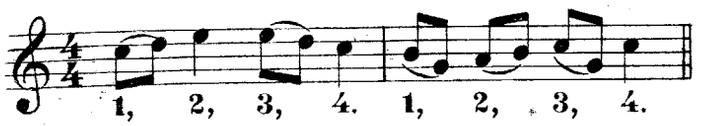


Thus it will be seen that every note can be made sharp or flat; and therefore the signature which determines a key, may contain seven sharps or flats.

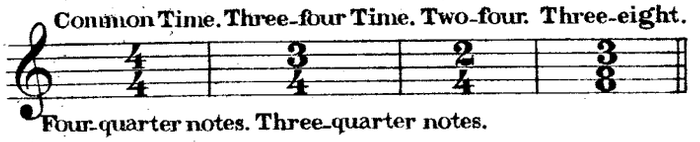
TIME.

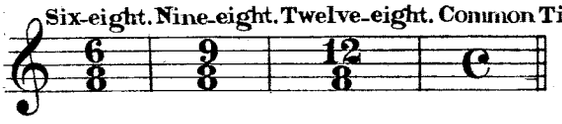
By COMMON TIME, which is expressed by these characters C and sometimes by the figures $\frac{4}{4}$ etc., we understand that each measure contains music to the value of four beats, or one semibreve, which is made up in time by any combination of notes or rests, thus:—



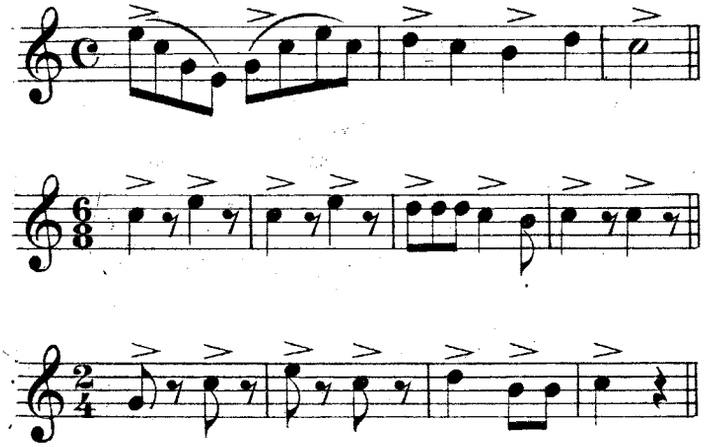


The various kinds of Time are indicated by the following figures. The upper figure indicates the *number* of notes to a measure, and the under one the *kind* of notes.

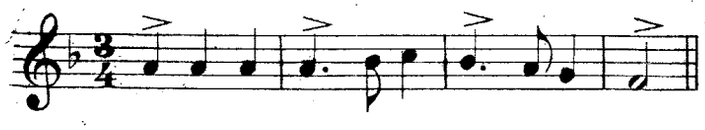


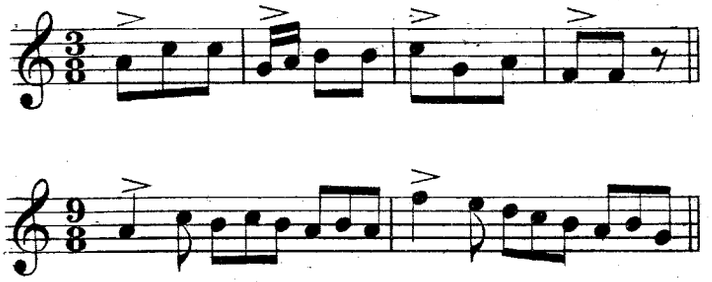


This mark > is used to indicate a particular accent, or stress upon a note. Common time, and all other kinds expressed by the even numbers $\frac{2}{4}$ $\frac{6}{8}$ $\frac{4}{4}$ &c., must be accented upon the beginning and middle of the measure, thus:—



These accents are not marked, but are to be understood; it is only when particular force or stress is required to be given to a note that it is indicated by the mark. In $\frac{3}{4}$ $\frac{3}{8}$ and $\frac{9}{8}$ time the accent occurs only upon the first note in the measure.

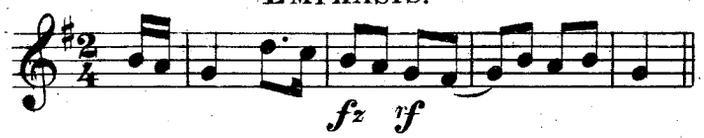




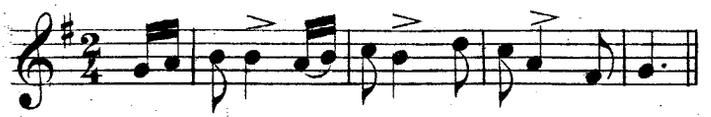
It will be observed in time indicated by the even numbers, that notes requiring bars across the stems are combined in groups. And in $\frac{3}{4}$ $\frac{3}{8}$ and $\frac{6}{8}$ they are tied together in groups of three. This is not always the case, but most generally so.

When the unaccented part of a measure is to receive a particular emphasis, it is shown by the characters *fz*, *rf*, or >, or ∧. When the weaker part of a measure is made of more importance than the strong, such deviation from the regular accent is called Syncopation.

EMPHASIS.

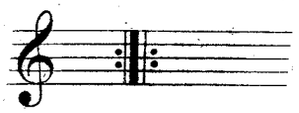


SYNCOPATION.



Double Bars indicate the end of a strain and the conclusion of a tune, thus:—

Dots before or after a double bar, signify repetition.

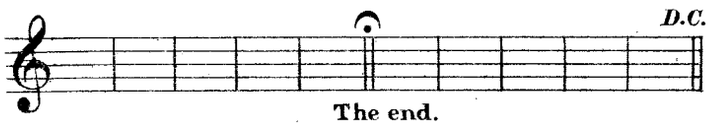


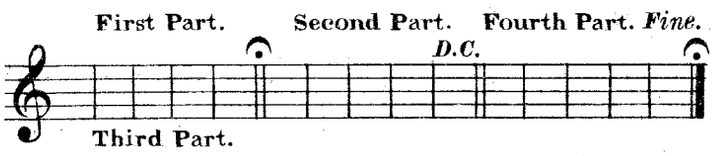
When the letters D. C.—which signifies Da Capo—are found over a double bar, it signifies that the first part of the piece must be played again before proceeding to finish the piece. When it is found at the last

strain, it implies that we must return and finish with the first strain: but, if we find this character, 𝄐, which is called a **PAUSE**, over any *double bar*, it signifies the end, or conclusion. The Pause is sometimes for another purpose: that is, when placed over a note or rest, the performer must dwell upon it, or can introduce an embellishment, such as he may think proper, for effect.

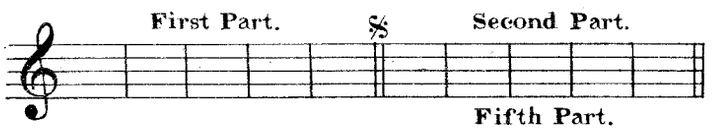
This mark is called a **SIGN** 𝄋. When it appears the *second* time, it signifies that we are to return to where it is first found, and finish at the pause which occurs over the first double bar after it.

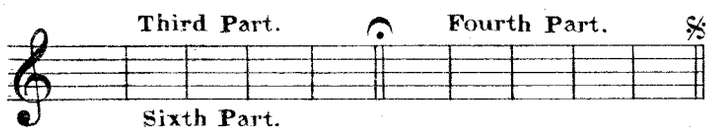
EXAMPLES.





Here we play the first and second strains when the D.C. directs us to play the first part again, which makes the third strain; then we skip the second part and proceed to the fourth strain, and finish at the pause.

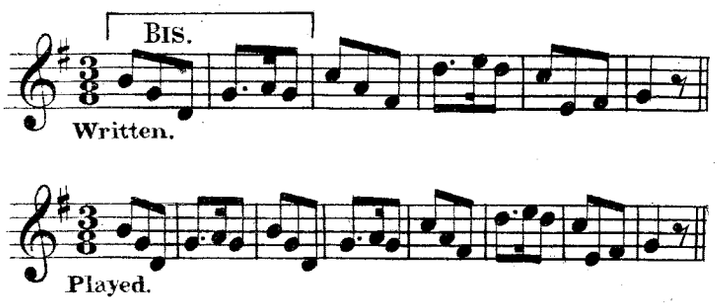




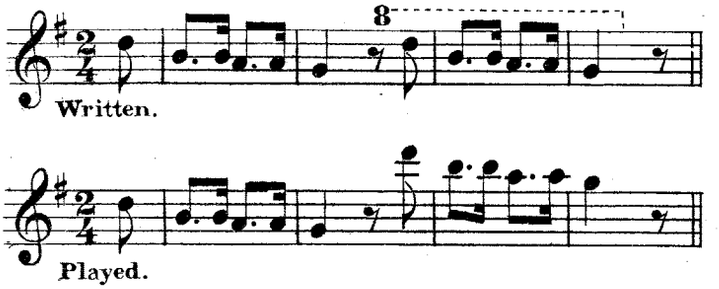
After playing the first four parts, the 𝄋 appearing the second time directs us to where it appeared at first, when we play on till we reach the 𝄐

The word **BIS** placed over one or more bars signifies repetition. It is sometimes accompanied with the dots for repetition, or detached lines to indicate the number of bars repeated.

EXAMPLE.



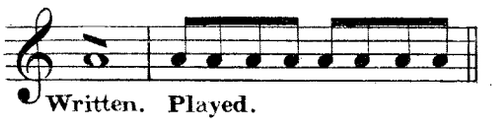
8- - - - - - - - written over any number of notes implies that they are to be played eight notes, or an *octave* higher, until the word **LOCO** appears, which signifies as written.



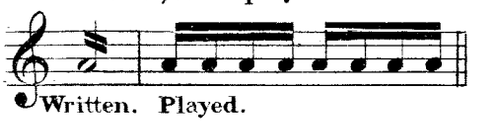
ABBREVIATIONS.

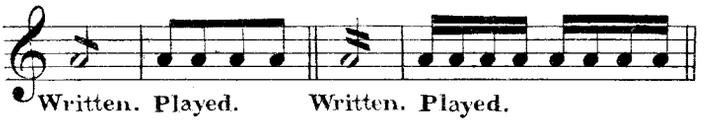
When a succession of similar notes is required, we sometimes use the following characters, which are termed abbreviations.

A whole note with a single dash signifies that it is to be played as eighth notes.

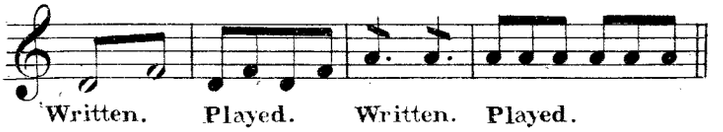


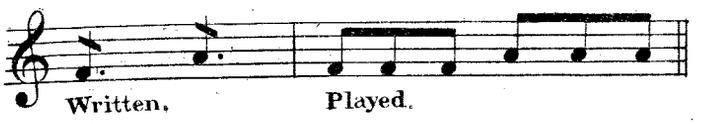
A double dash, to be played thus: —

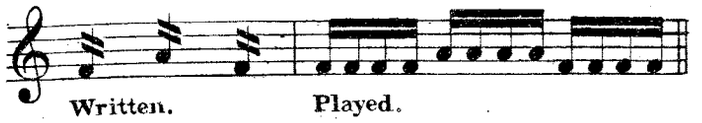




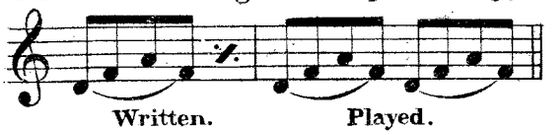
OTHER EXAMPLES OF ABBREVIATIONS.

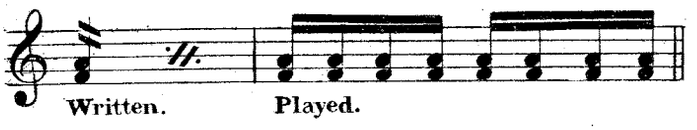






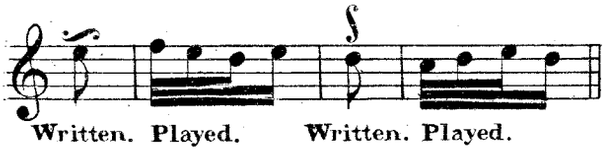
This character signifies repetition: 𝄇.



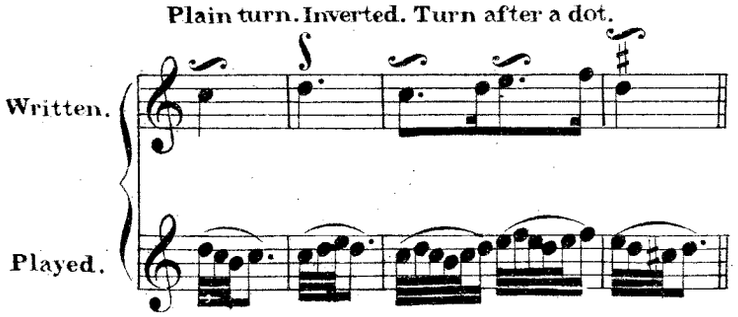


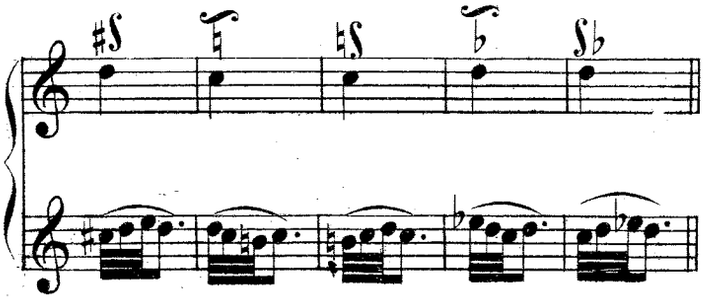
A SWELL and DIMINUENDO are often united, the first is executed by commencing the note gently, and gradually increasing the tone; the second, by commencing with force and gradually diminishing; and when united, it is executed by touching the note over which it is placed, at first gently, and by degrees increasing the tone, till it arrives at its full pitch, then diminishing it till it falls off to its first softness.

This character is called a TURN, and is executed in the following manner:—



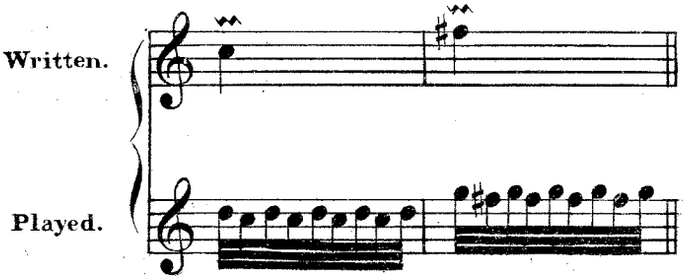
There are several kinds of turns: the plain turn , inverted turn , turn after a dot, &c., which are fully explained in the following examples:



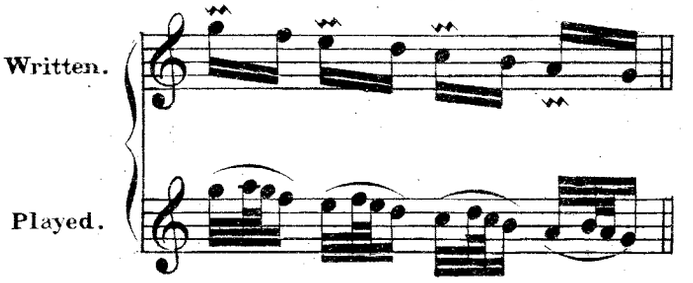


A SHAKE () is one of the principal embellishments of music, if well performed, but should not be so frequently and injudiciously used as is often the case. A plain shake is the sound of two notes put in equal motion. A turned shake is composed of three diatonic notes, the first of which is called the preparative note, and the last two its resolution. Shakes, and all other kinds of Graces, must be played in proper time.

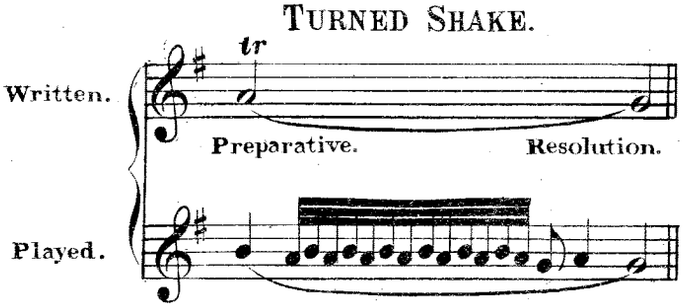
PLAIN SHAKE.

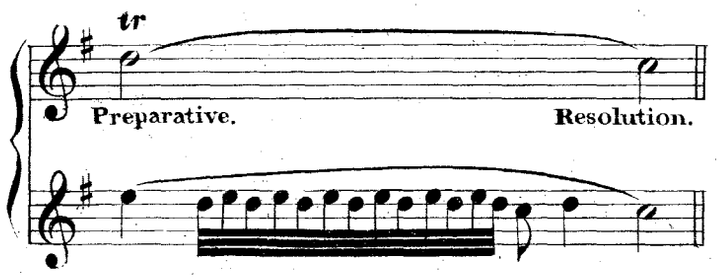


PASSING SHAKE.



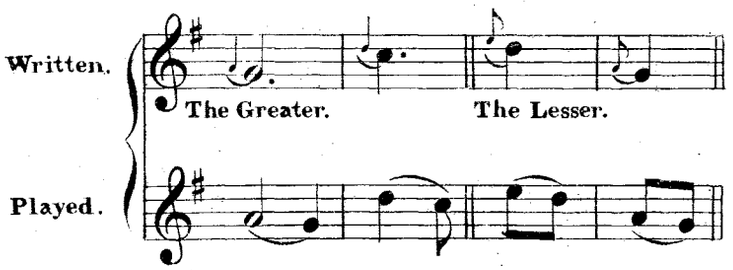
TURNED SHAKE.



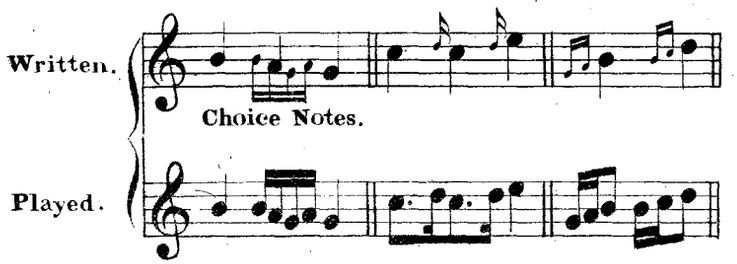


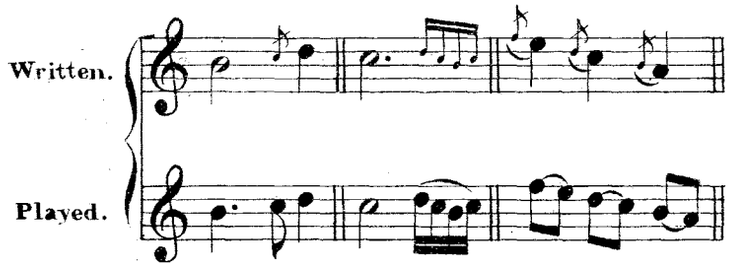
APPOGIATURA OR GRACE NOTE.

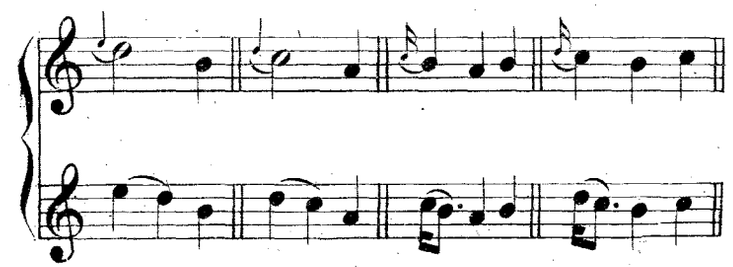
The Appogiatura, or Grace note, is a small note reversed and added to other notes for sake of expression. Whatever length is given to the small note must be taken out of the time of the principal note immediately after it. There are two kinds of Appogiaturas, the greater and the lesser.



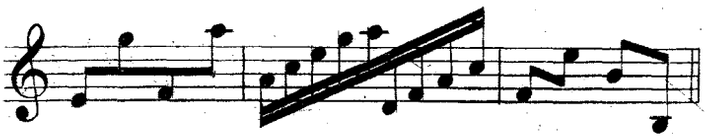
OTHER EXAMPLES.



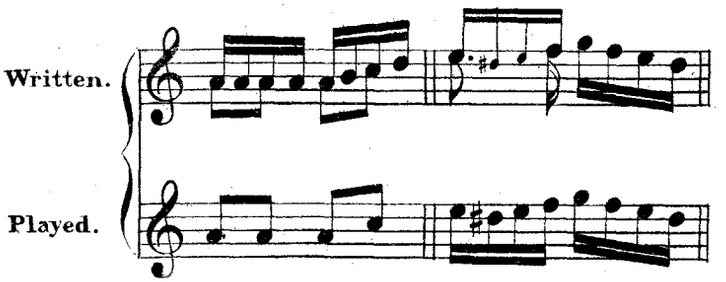




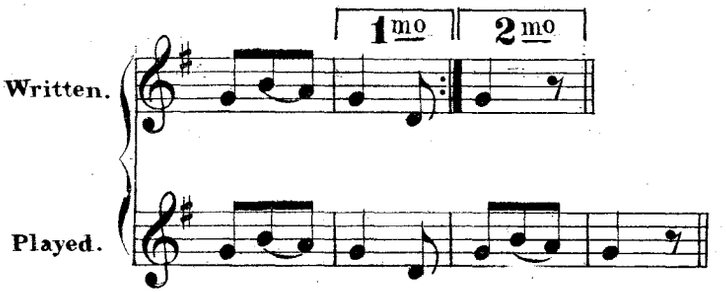
Notes are always connected in the most convenient form, for this reason we sometimes observe them in this manner:



CHOICE NOTES.



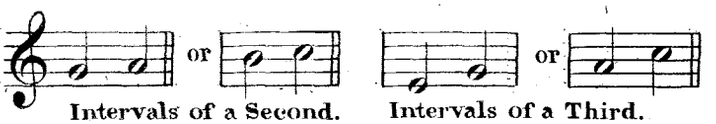
When the last two bars of a strain are marked 1mo and 2mo, (that is to be repeated,) it implies that when played the second time, the 2mo is to be substituted for the 1mo, which is of course omitted.



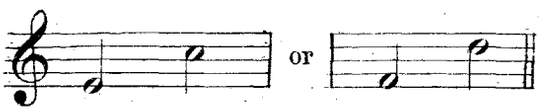
INTERVALS.

An Interval is the distance from any one tone or note to the following one. The smallest interval is that of a second. The first and last notes are included in counting the distance.

A second is the distance from any one note in the scale to the next following one.



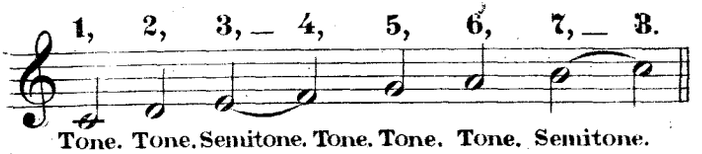
Intervals of a Second. Intervals of a Third.



Intervals of a Sixth.

It must be observed that the interval of a third is composed of three notes, E, F, G, or A, B, C, &c.; the intervals of a sixth, of six notes, E, F, G, A, B, C, or F, G, A, B, C, D, &c.

Some intervals are small, and others large. In the regular Major Scale we find tones and semitones in the following order:



Tone. Tone. Semitone. Tone. Tone. Tone. Semitone.

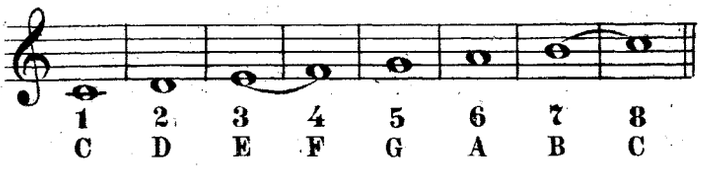
A Semitone always between E and F, also between B and C, which are the third and fourth, seventh and eighth notes of the scale; this is called the Natural Key, (because it has no signature of flats or sharps,) or the key of C, because the tones and semitones are calculated from the note C.

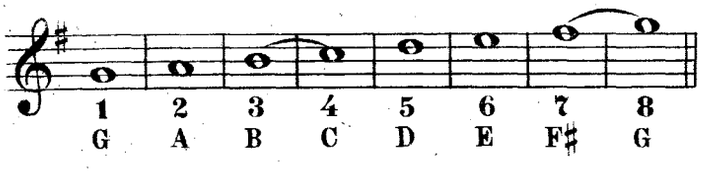
Transposition of the Keys, or Scale.

When C is taken as **1**, the scale is to be in its natural position; but either of the other letters may be taken as **1**, in which case the scale is said to be **Transposed**. As **1** is the basis of the scale, the foundation on which it rests, so the letter which is taken for this sound is called the **Key-Note**. Thus, if the scale be in its natural position, it is said to be in the key of C; if G be taken as **1**, the scale is in the key of G; if D be taken as **1**, the scale is in the key of D; and so on with the rest of the seven letters; whichever letter is taken as **1**, that letter becomes the key-note of the scale.

In transposing the scale, the order of the intervals, or tones and semitones, must be preserved. Thus, the interval must always be a *tone* from **1** to **2**, a *tone* from **2** to **3**, a *semitone* from **3** to **4**, a *tone* from **4** to **5**, a *tone* from **5** to **6**, a *tone* from **6** to **7**, and a *semitone* from **7** to **8**. The interval from one letter to another is always the same and cannot be changed,— thus, it is always a *tone* from C to D, and from D to E, a *semitone* from E to F, a *tone* from F to G, from G to A, from A to B, and a *semitone* from B to C. In the transposition of the scale, therefore, it becomes necessary to introduce sharps and flats, or to substitute sharped or flatted letters for the natural letters, so as to preserve the proper order of the intervals.

First transposition by sharps from C to G, a fifth higher, or a fourth lower.



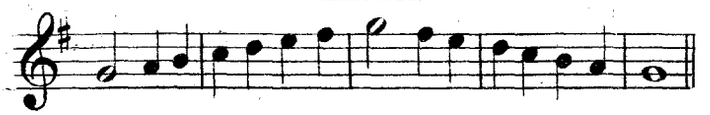


The same method is followed in all transpositions by sharps, viz., the fifth above or fourth below is taken as **1** of a new key, in every succeeding transposition, and an additional sharp will be required also in every succeeding transposition.

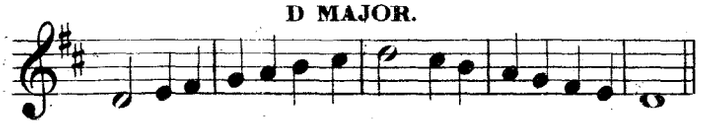
To transpose the scale by flats, we take the fourth (instead of the fifth) of every new scale. F is the fourth of C; hence it is **1** of the new scale (key of F.) The order of intervals must be the same in the flat keys as in the sharp; hence the B must be made flat.

The Sharp Keys.

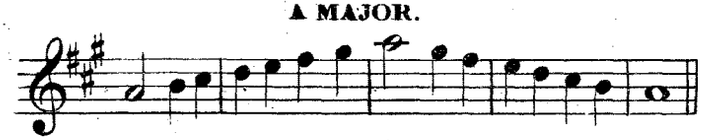
G MAJOR.



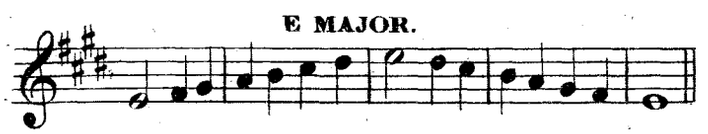
D MAJOR.



A MAJOR.

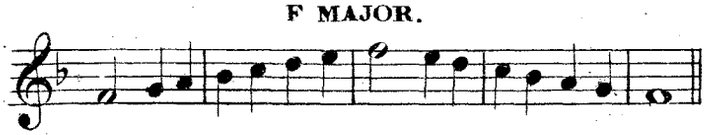


E MAJOR.

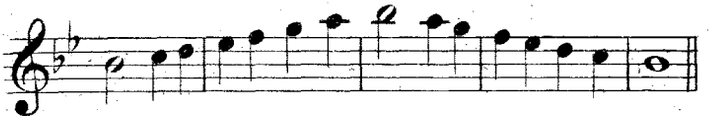


The Flat Keys.

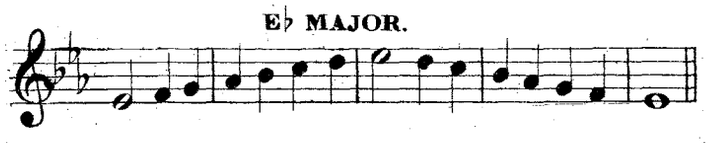
F MAJOR.



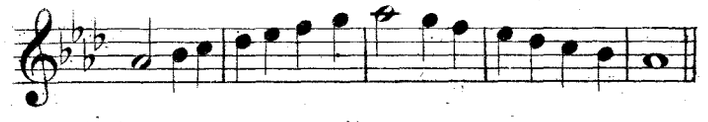
B♭ MAJOR.



E♭ MAJOR.



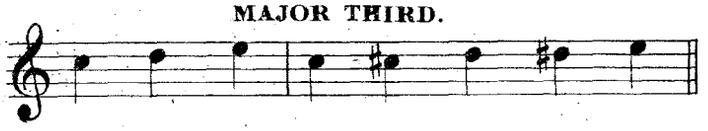
A♭ MAJOR.



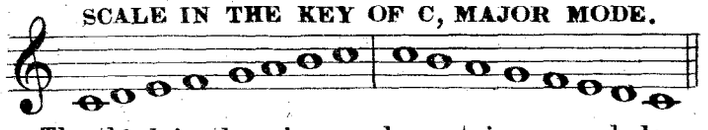
The difference between the major and minor key is a minor third, (three semitones.) The major third contains two whole tones, (four semitones.)

EXAMPLE.

MAJOR THIRD.

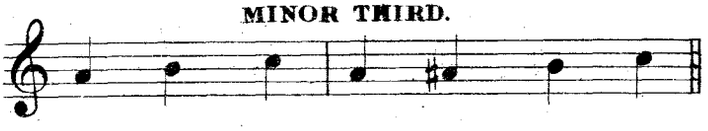


SCALE IN THE KEY OF C, MAJOR MODE.

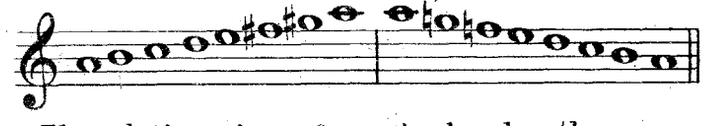


The third in the minor scale contains one whole tone and a semitone.

MINOR THIRD.



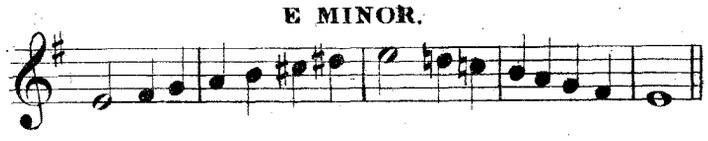
SCALE IN THE KEY OF A, MINOR MODE.



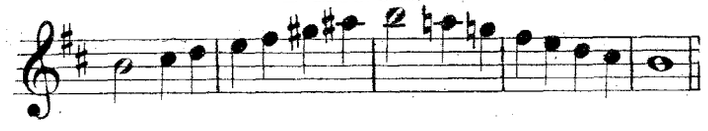
The relative minor of a major key has the same number of sharps or flats, and is found one minor third below the key note.

MINOR SCALES.

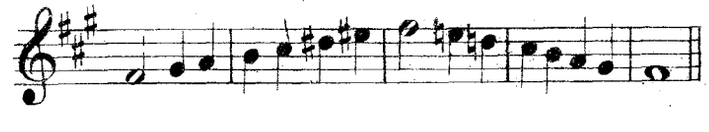
E MINOR.



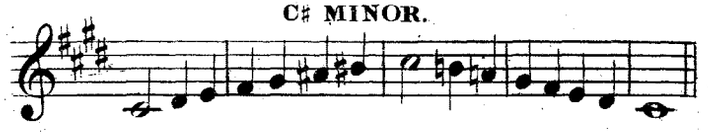
B MINOR.



F♯ MINOR.

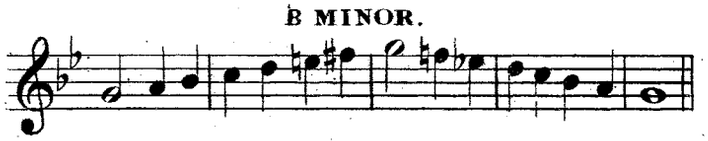


C♯ MINOR.



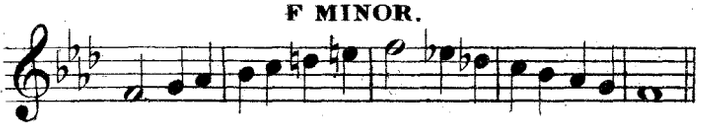
D MINOR.

B MINOR.



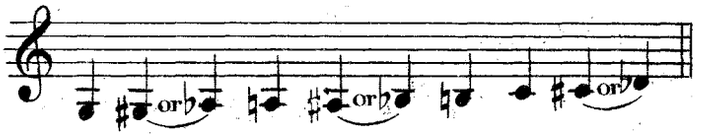
C MINOR.

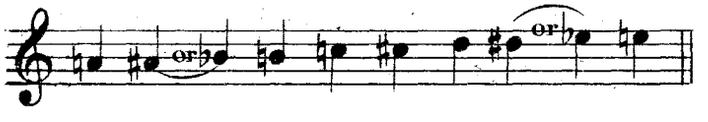
F MINOR.

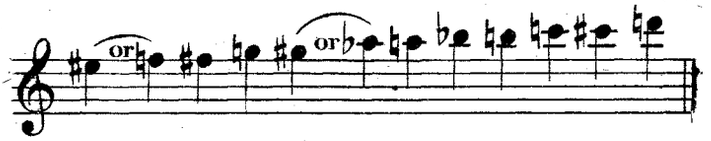


CHROMATIC SCALE.

This scale contains all the notes, natural, flat and sharp, to D above the second leger line.

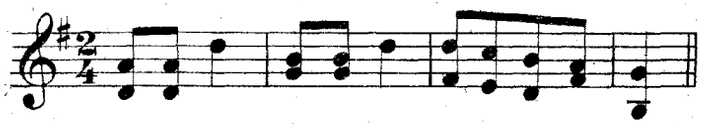






CHORDS.

CHORDS, or double notes, are written one above the other, and can be played upon the Banjo, Guitar, Violin, Piano, Organ, &c. In music for the Flute, Clarionet, Fife, &c., the upper note only must be played.



CHAPTER I.

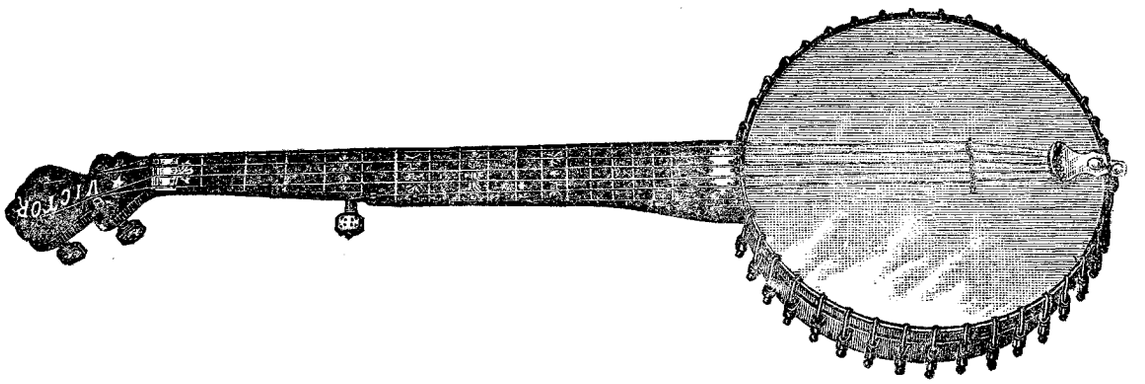
The Instrument and its Principles.

SOME USEFUL HINTS TO STUDENTS.

WE purpose in this work to begin at the beginning and work up; to start at the foot of the ladder and mount, round by round, until the top is reached. As the cook book begins its receipt, "first catch your hare," so we commence—"first select your instrument," and remember that "the best is none too good."

Get the Best Banjo.

There are many reasons why the student should do this, and they need no special enumeration. They will cost less in the end, as cheap instruments are always dear as they are constantly getting out of repair, a good one will be more exact in tone and above all, by its excellent qualities, it will bring to the drudgery of the rudimental detail that charm which alone can secure the interest of the pupil and ensure practice. **Get the Best**—and that, everybody will tell you, is "Dobson's Victor Banjo." It has no superior—in fact, it scarcely has a rival worthy being classed as such and is always reliable.



"Victor" Concert Banjo, No. 5. In numerous styles.

Repairing, Fretting and Heading.

It has been customary for text-books heretofore, to give a chapter of instruction to pupils about repairs, etc. This we believe, to be a rule that will be more "honored in the breach than the observance" We are not giving instructions to future banjo makers, but to prospective banjo players and the question of repairs does not fall within their province. If your instrument loses a fret, don't "fret" about it yourself—it will do no good. If it loses a head, don't lose your own, but take or send it to some man whose business it is to do such work and let him attend to it. He will do it far better than you possibly can, and at a less cost, thus saving all your time and patience for the study of the instrument. "Every man to his trade," you know, and certainly he who has devoted his time to this line of business, should be able to do a better job than you can.

The Strings.

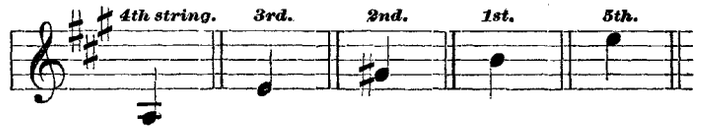
In buying strings, make a careful selection and be sure to get **good** ones—those of an inferior grade are dear at any price.

These are as follows:—1st, B. 2d G sharp. 3d, E. 4th, A. 5th, E.

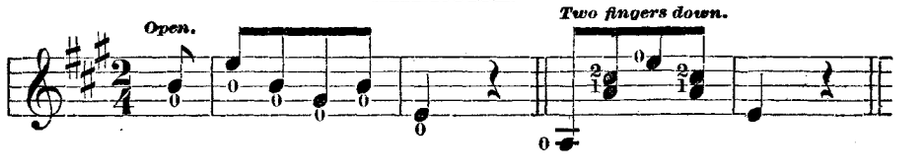
These strings are now manufactured expressly for the banjo and buyers have only to name the number of the string required.

Tuning.

This is a most essential thing, as accuracy of tone is of paramount importance. The slightest variation from the exact pitch is not only discordant and unpleasant to listen to, but if persisted in, has a tendency to deaden the susceptibility of the ear until it becomes inaccurate. Therefore the greatest care should always be used to ensure perfection in tuning. This should be done as follows: Use an A pitch-pipe or tuning-fork, and tune the fourth or A string. Then place the second finger on the seventh fret of the fourth string, and tune the third string in unison, thus making the string tuned to E. Place the second finger on the fourth fret of third string, and tune to unison or G sharp. Then place the finger, as before, on third fret of second string and tune first string to this, making the tone B. Place the finger on fifth fret of first string, the unison of which will be E, one octave above that string, to which tune the fifth string. Be very particular in these several tunings to get the tone **exactly** right. This is very important. Before tuning, the bridge should be carefully adjusted, by placing it on the head of the banjo directly in front of the tail-piece about one-third the distance from the edge of the hoop across the centre of the head This will be found to be a spot as far from the 12th fret as the 12th fret is from the nut. When the right spot has been determined, mark the place carefully in order that the bridge may always occupy precisely the same place, thus ensuring an even tension upon all the strings at all times. The following diagram gives the tones of open strings, with an exercise in same notes.



EXERCISE.



Position of Instrument.

Place the body in an easy position, the left foot resting flat on the floor, the right foot being slightly elevated on the ball. Rest the rim of the hoop lightly but firmly against the centre of the right thigh, holding it in position by pressing the head against the right breast. The handle should be inclined slightly toward the left shoulder, the neck resting easily in the hollow of the left hand, the thumb on the upper, or side next the body, so that the hand may run easily up and down the handle in changing positions. The first and second fingers should be poised naturally above the second and first strings, to ensure prompt and accurate stopping. Rest the right arm lightly on the rim, so that the hand will be immediately in front of the bridge, the little finger-tip resting on the head of the instrument near the bridge, the other fingers drooping easily over the several strings. Particular attention should be given these directions, as an easy position is all-important. See plate 1.

Benjamin Dobson.

Plate 1. Showing the perfect manner of holding the banjo in the first position.

Methods of Playing.

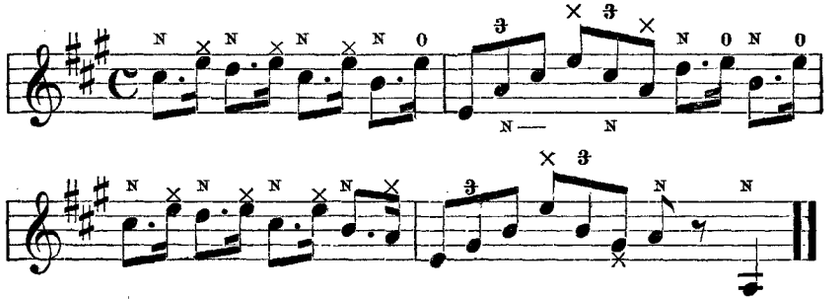
Upon this point whole volumes might be written and many learned treatises enumerated, leaving the student not further advanced perhaps, than at the outset. As a well-known musical authority once remarked "in order to arrive at any certain point it will be necessary to go there," and what is true in physical, is equally true of other ethics. Suffice it then, under this head, to merely allude to the several schools of banjo practice and briefly point out their characteristics.

It has been said that the difference between a fiddle and a violin is in the player—one "fiddles," while the other is a violinist. So with the banjo—one picks upon it and the other picks it. One "twangs," and the other "plays." The old school performers, of whom mention has been made, were the exponents of the first system; while the refined, modern school now in vogue finds its exponents among the class who "play." Picking the strings in the same manner used in playing the guitar, is the only school by which expression, feeling, sentiment, may be dynamically portrayed, while free hand stroke playing is well adapted to rollicking fun, power and general humor. In short, the first may be styled "the guitar style," adapted to the production of expressive, melodic compositions, while the other is "the banjo style," for compositions of a jollier, more free-and-easy order of work. A knowledge of both these schools is imperative, in order that the performer may be able to produce all needed expression and effects. We give instructions and exercises in both these.

The Stroke.

To effect "the stroke" the hand must be partially closed, the fore-finger near the palm (an inch and a half from the thumb,) each of the other fingers being gradually further from the palm. Notes to be made by the thumb are marked thus: **x**. those to be made by the nail of the fore-finger are described by the letter **N.**

AMUSEMENT EXERCISE IN THE STROKE.

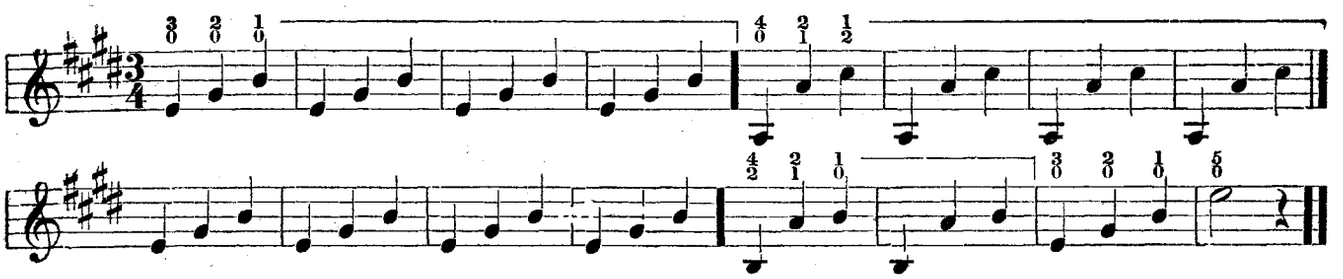


The Guitar Style. Picking.

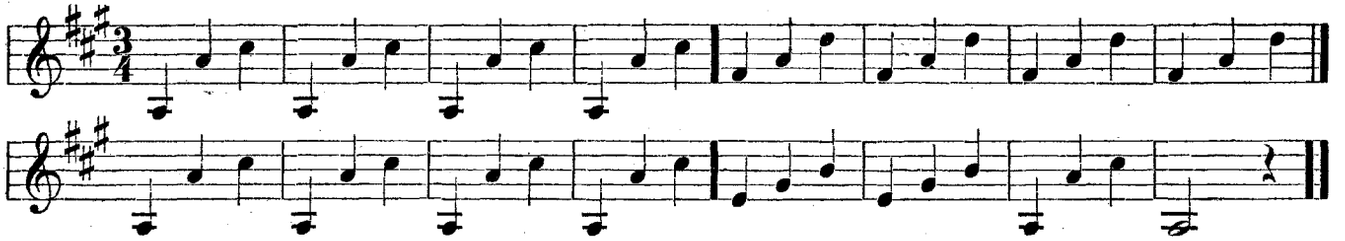
This is the style best adapted to the best in expression and since the great improvements introduced by Mr. Dobson, who fifteen years ago added raised frets to the banjo neck, is the school most commonly used by the best teachers. In using this style, the position is necessarily somewhat different from that required in "the stroke." Observe carefully the following directions

Rest the right hand lightly and naturally upon the parchment head as before instructed, the hand supported by the little finger. Pick the first string with the second finger, the second string with the first finger, while the thumb will be used for the remaining three strings. For chords, glide the thumb quickly over the fourth and third strings, at the same time picking the first and second strings with the proper fingers.

EXAMPLE 1.

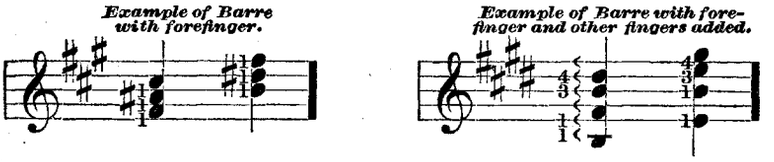


EXAMPLE 2.



The Barre.

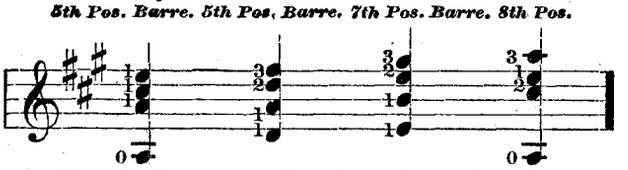
This term is used to express, not a principle, but a situation, or "position." It simply means the placing of the fore-finger across the finger-board at any required fret, the strings being firmly pressed against the board to guard against rattling and to ensure a strong, accurate tone. While making the barre the thumb is dropped under the neck of the instrument, while the elbow is carried away from the side. See plate 2.



The Positions.

This term relates to the arrangement of the fingers of the left hand while stopping. The positions receive their distinctive names from the fret at which the chord is held; thus, a chord held at the fifth fret, is called the fifth position; at the seventh fret, the seventh position, etc. In shifting positions the left hand is slipped quickly to the required fret and the stopping must be rapidly and accurately made as false or weak stopping is fatal to all melodic progression.

Examples of the Barre.



Note.—The last chord is not a Barre. but a Position, being used merely to complete the cadence.

Harmonics.

These are best made at certain frets, viz.—the fifth, seventh and twelfth, though they are possible elsewhere. But as these are far the clearest they are the ones most commonly used. Harmonics, to be successfully made, require great care. To ensure accuracy the utmost precision as to the proper place for the "open stopping" and the touch are required. The tones are made thus:—

Benjamin Dobson.

Plate 2. Showing the perfect manner of holding the banjo in making the barre chord.

Place the left fore-finger lightly on the string at the point where the stop would be made if the barre were desired, touch the string gently with the right hand and the stroke thus rendered, will produce a soft, sweet, singing tone, an octave above the tone actually belonging to the point where the stop is made. These tones are very clear and pleasing if accurately made, but should not be too commonly used or carelessly attempted.

Preliminary Finger Practice.

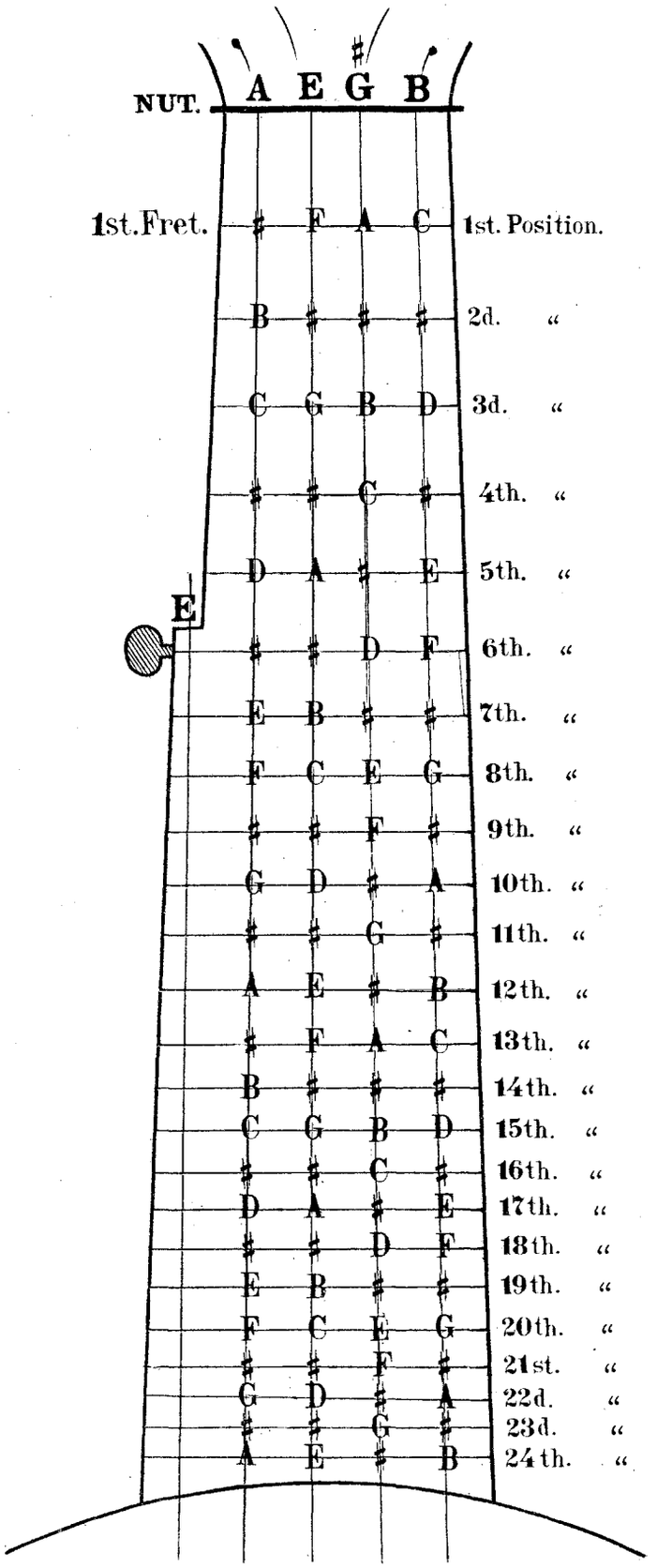
Often when the student desires or proposes to resume practice, he finds his fingers are naturally stiff and clumsy. To do away with this, a little preliminary working of the fingers and joints will be found very effective in producing the required limberness. But after practice has once commenced all these gyrations should stop, or the student will gradually work himself into an awkwardness in stopping that will be fatal to accuracy. **Make no motion with any finger until the required stop is to be made,** then place the fingers where it is desired, making but one motion, and that a quick, firm and accurate one.

To acquire facility in fingering and accuracy in stopping a silent exercise may be adopted—that is, use the fingers in stopping, but without vibrating the strings with the right hand. The result of this exercise will be, the left hand will become flexible, active and accurate, while the ear will not be offended by the wrong and imperfect tones inevitable to all beginners.

Chapter Three.

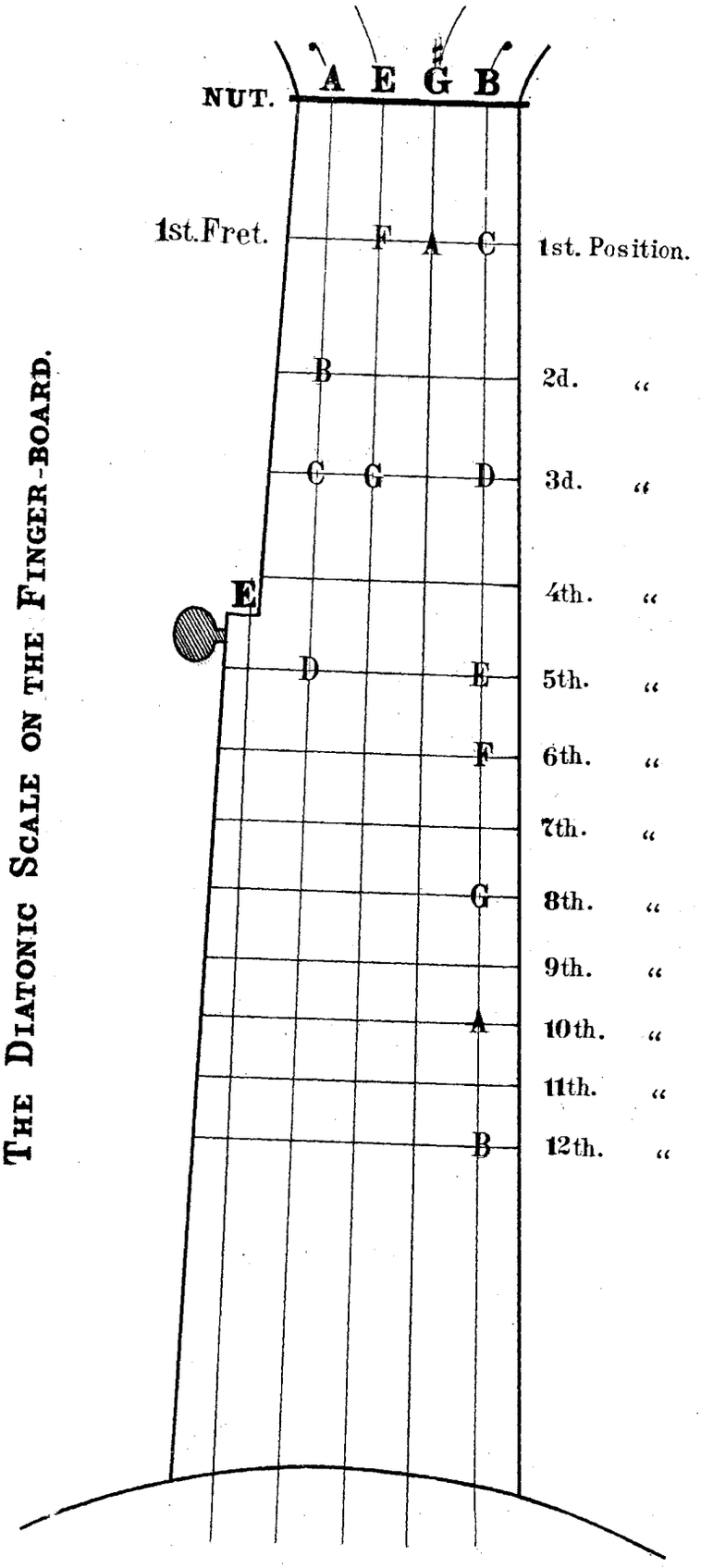
The Banjo Illustrated.

Scales, Chords etc. Shown in Diagrams.



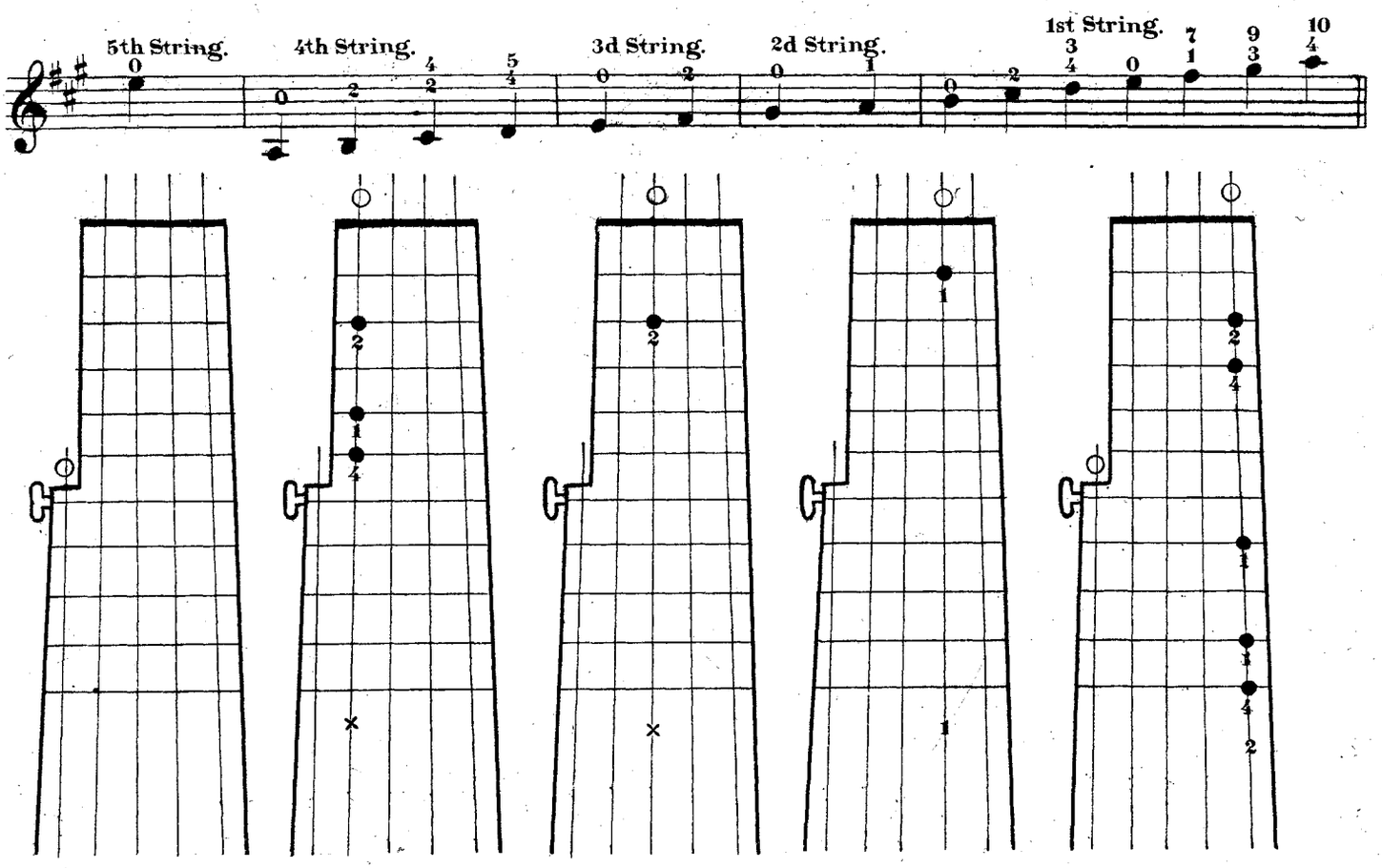
The Finger-board, showing the Chromatic Scale, Ascending with Sharps.

The Diatonic Scale on the Finger-Board.

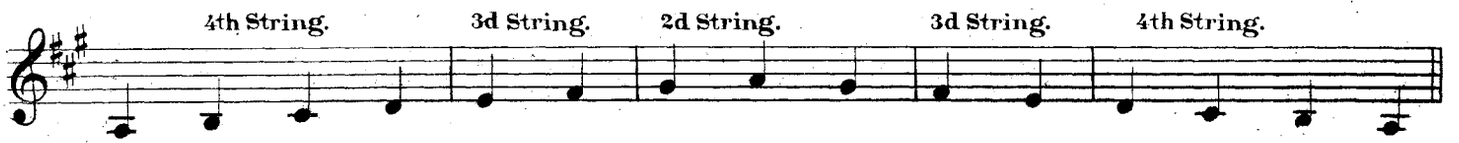


Scale in A Major, with Three Sharps.

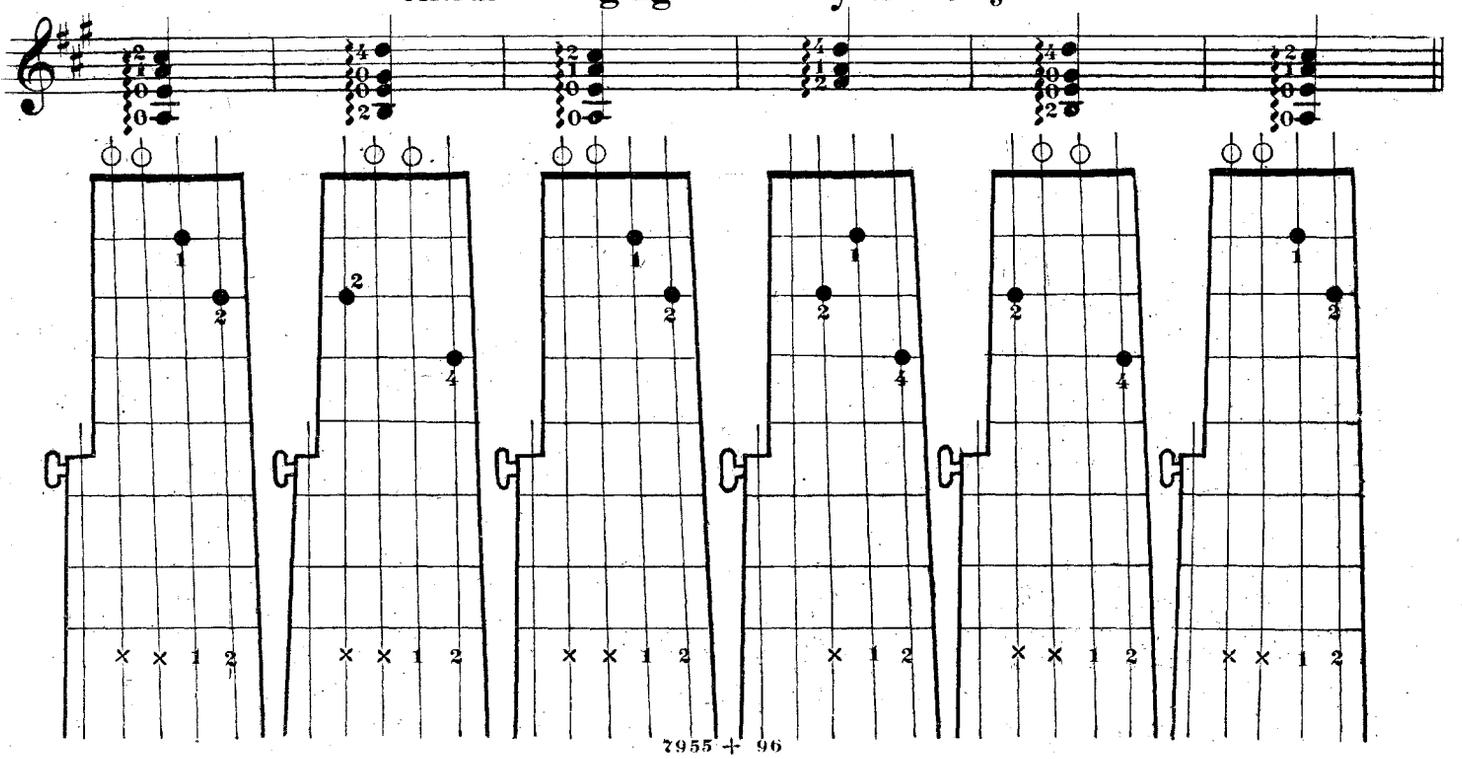
Showing the Positions of the Notes on the Finger-Board, marked for Right Hand fingering.



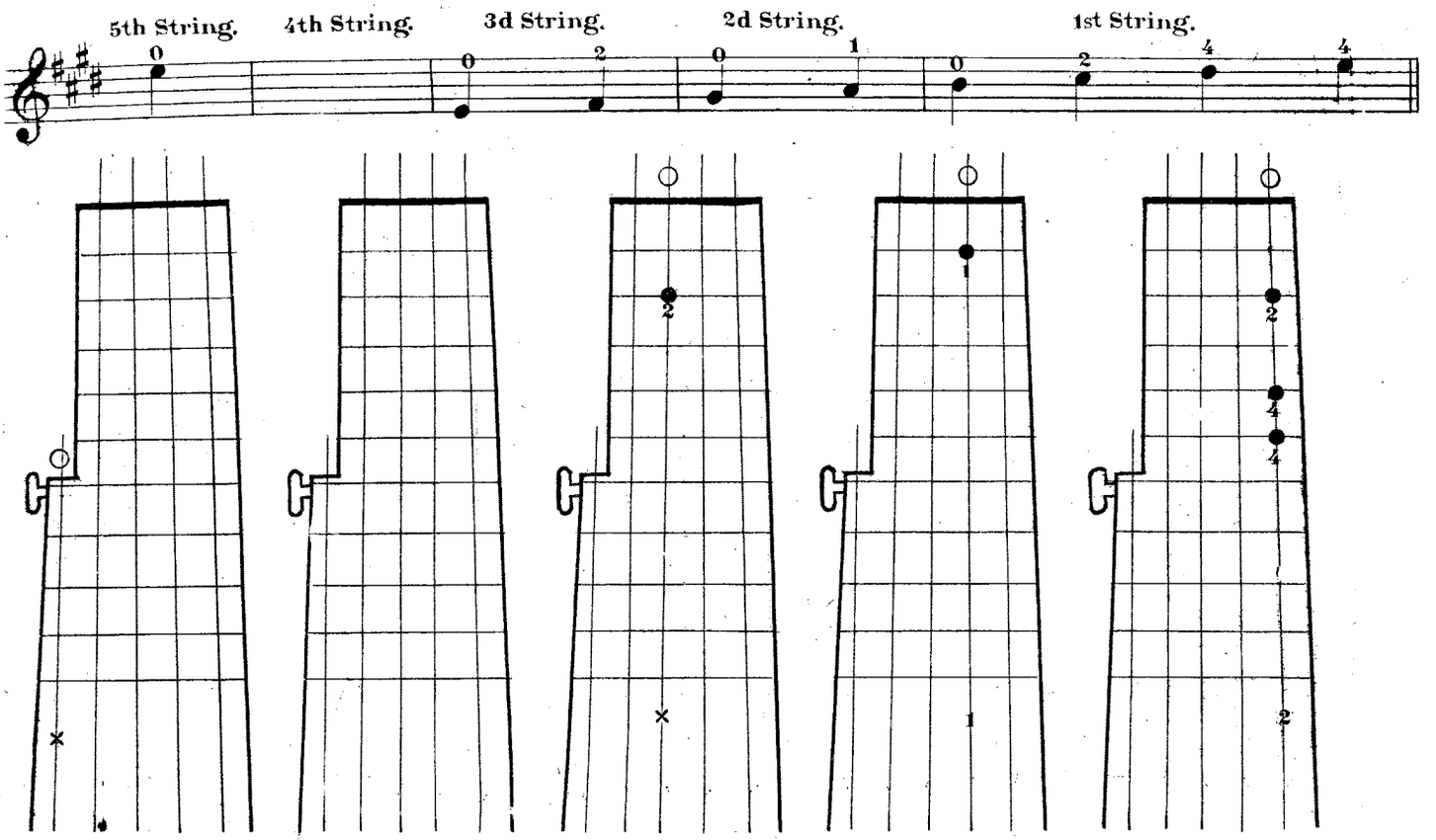
Exercises in the Key of A Major, Scale and Chords.



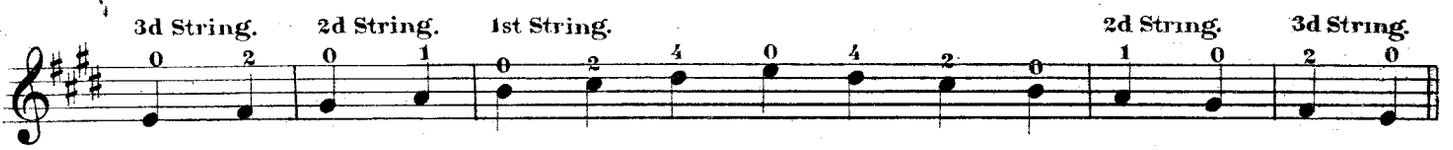
Chords belonging to the Key of A Major.



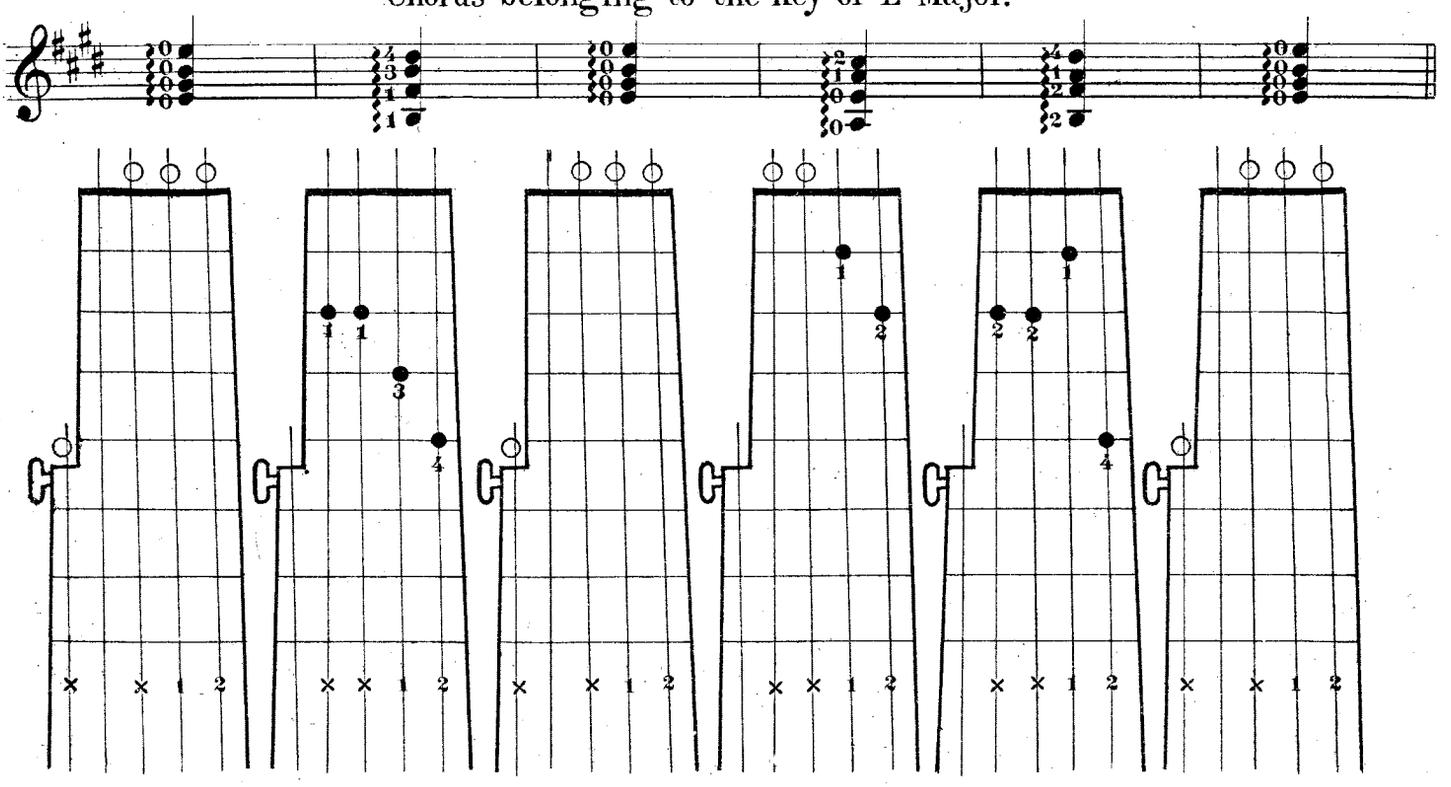
Scale in E Major. Four Sharps.



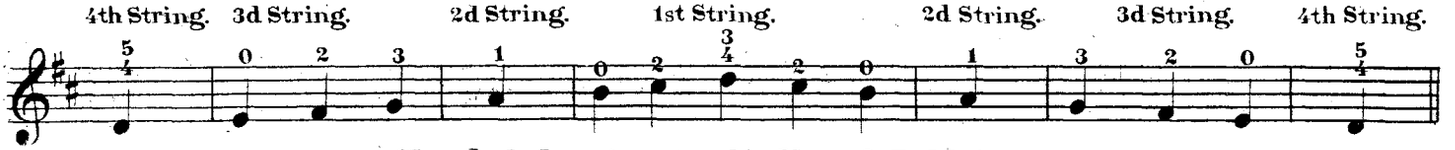
Exercises in the Key of E Major, Scale and Chords.



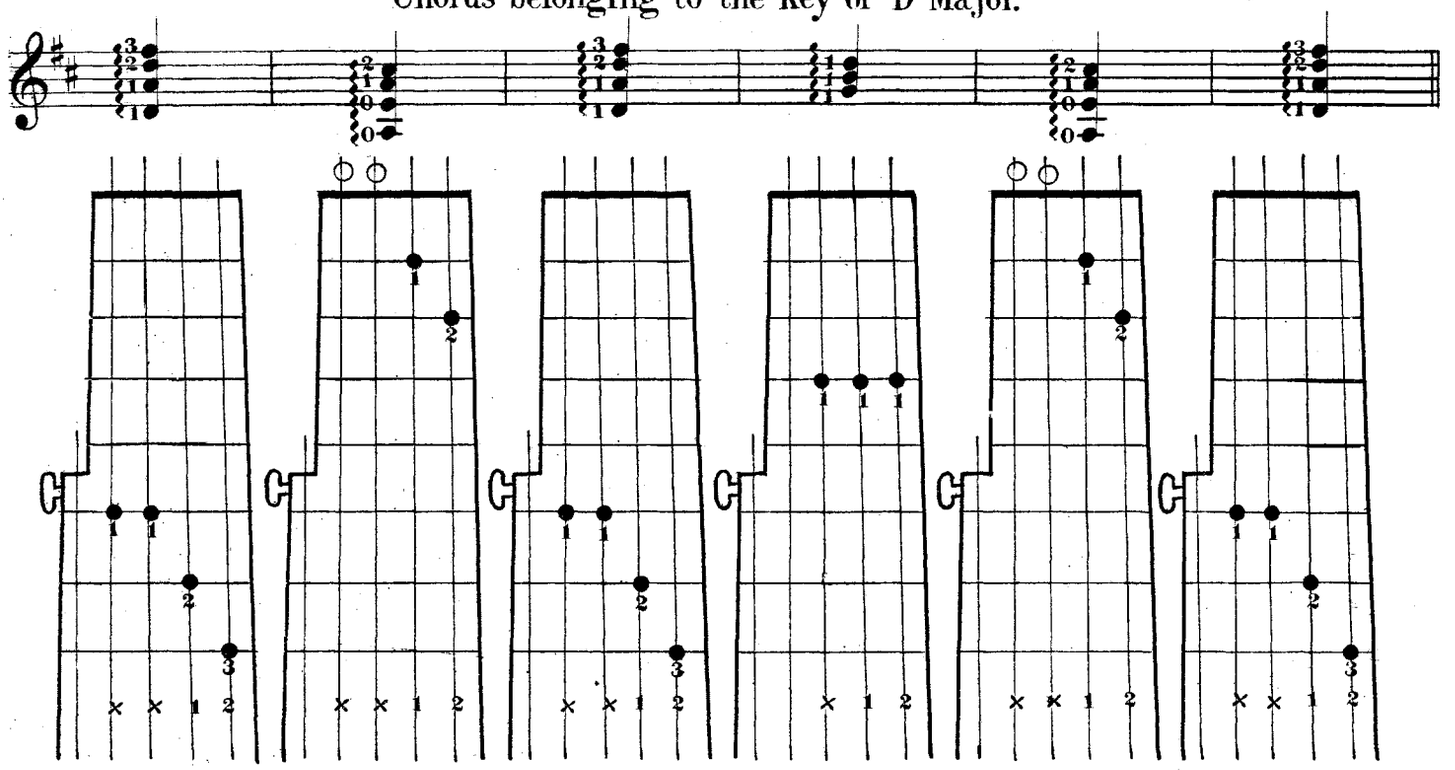
Chords belonging to the Key of E Major.



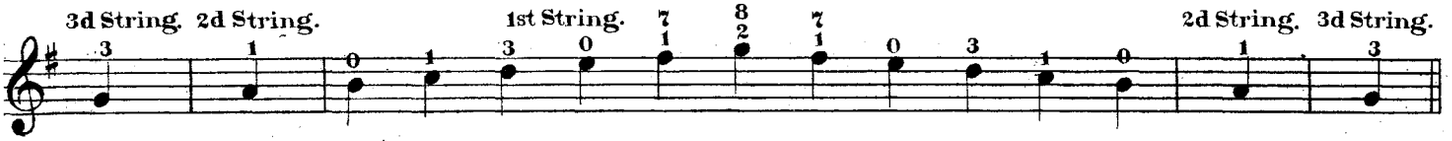
Exercises in the Key of D Major, Scale and Chords.



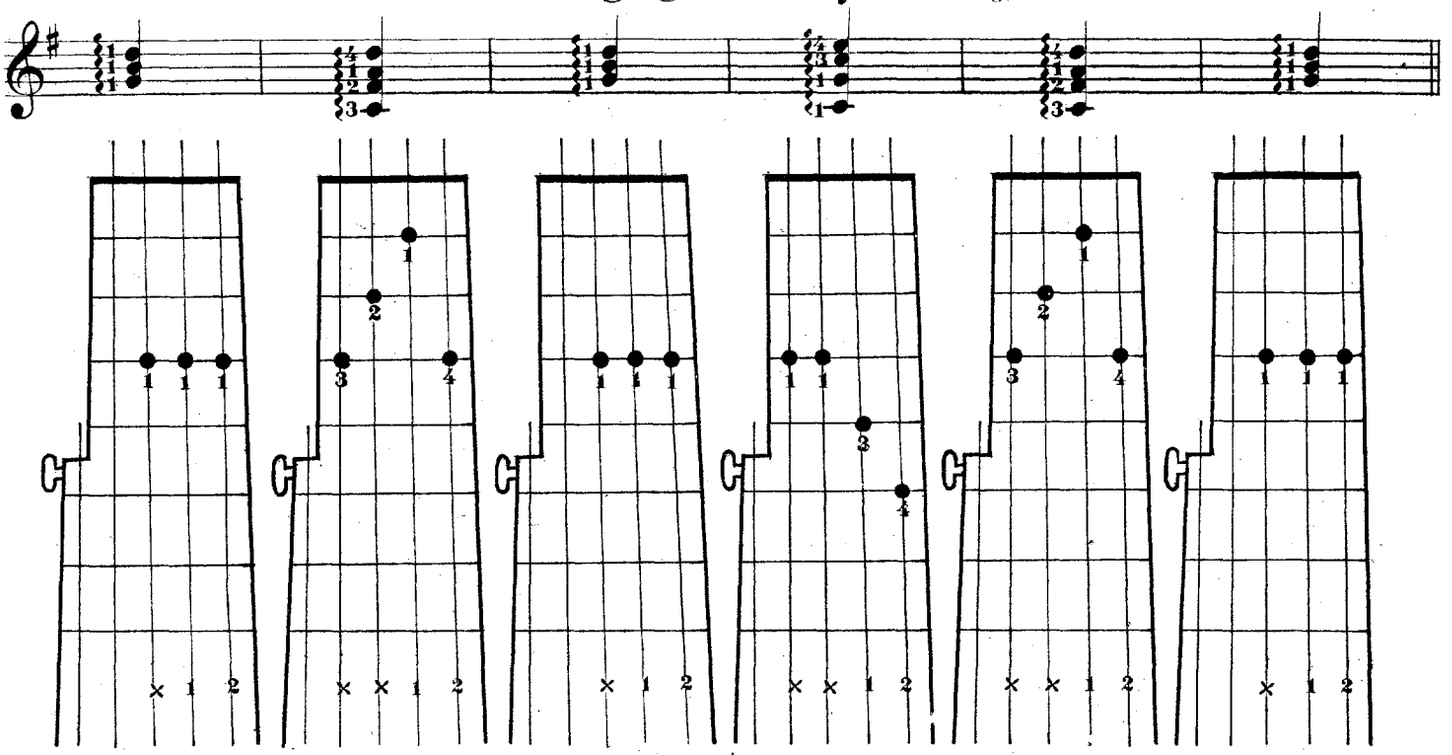
Chords belonging to the Key of D Major.



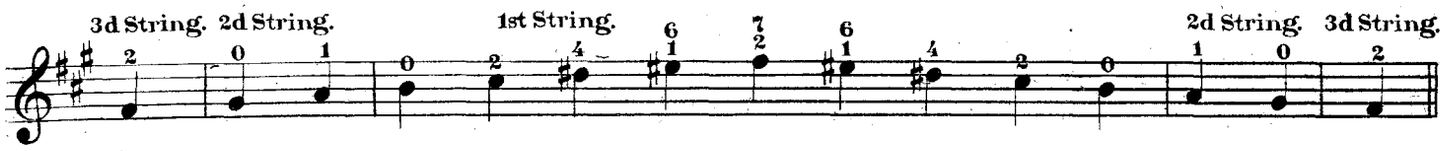
Exercises in the Key of G Major, Scale and Chords.



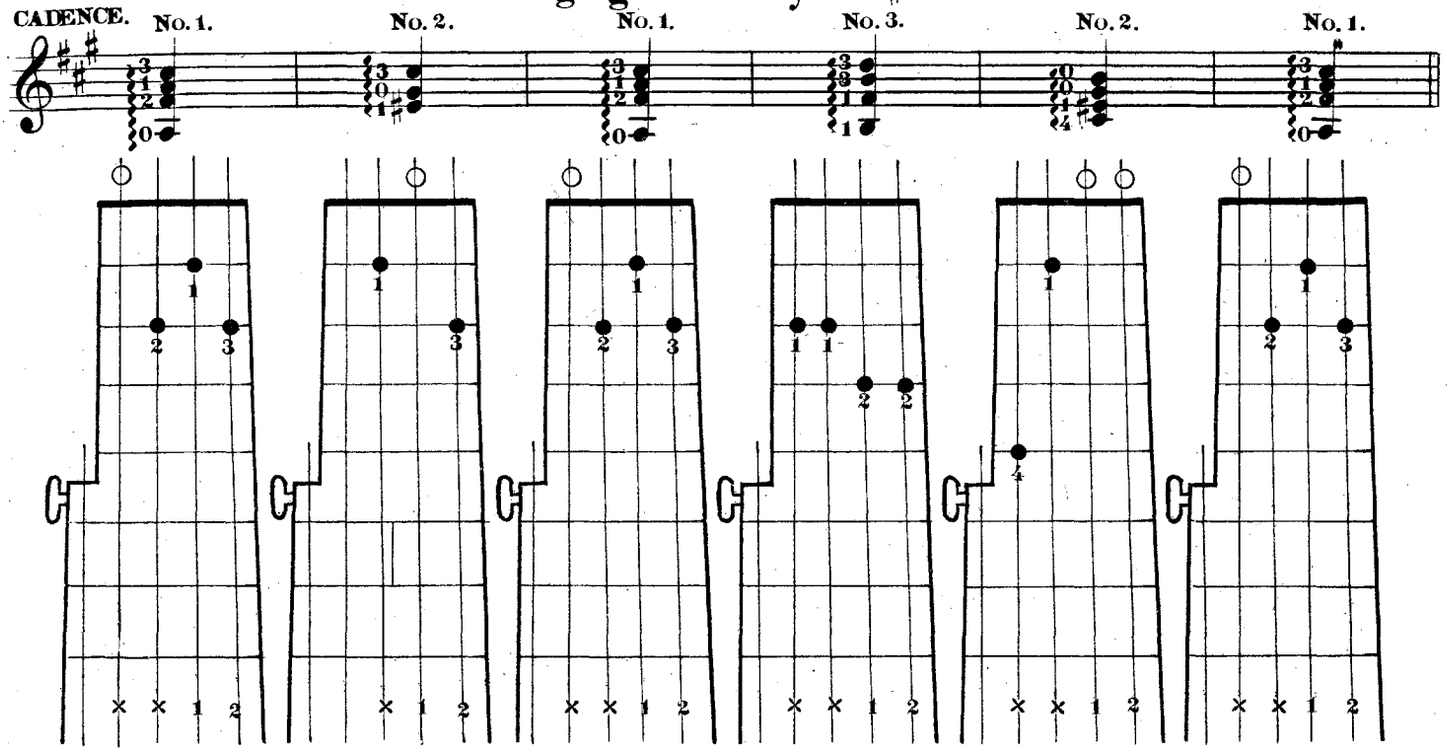
Chords belonging to the Key of G Major.



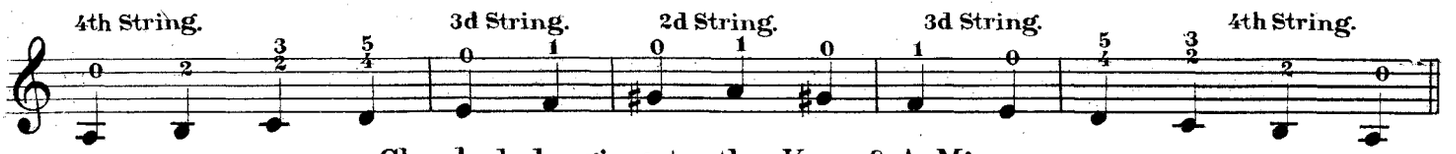
Exercises in the Key of F♯ Minor, Scale and Chords.



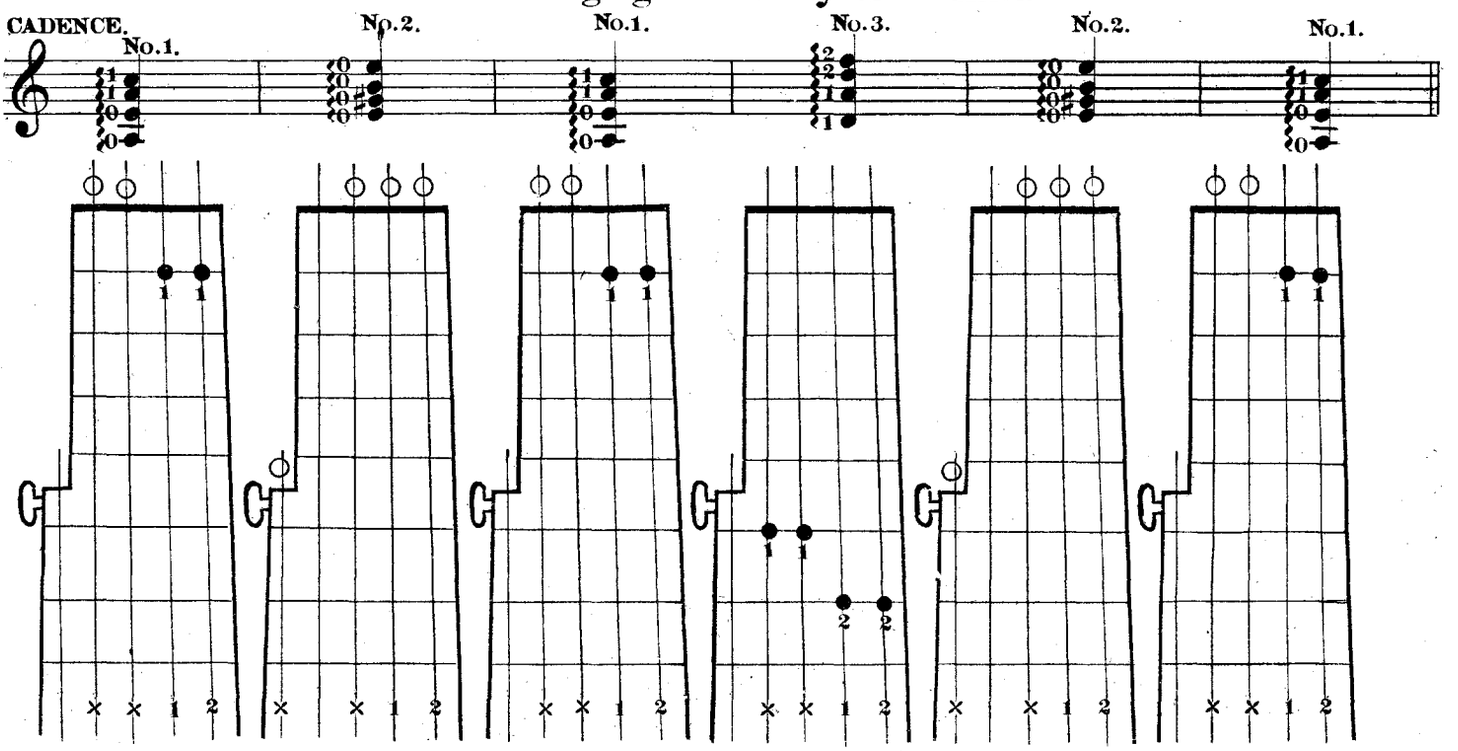
Chords belonging to the Key of F♯ Minor.



Exercises in the Key of A Minor, Scale and Chords.

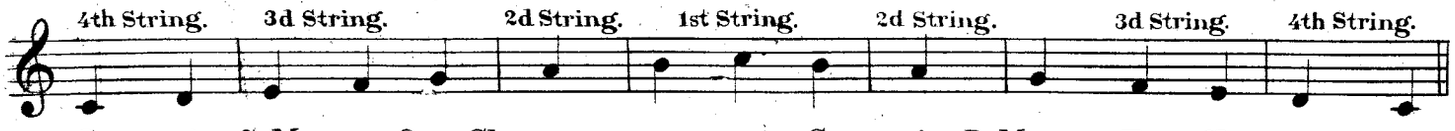


Chords belonging to the Key of A Minor.

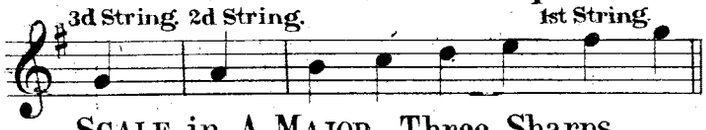


Scales.

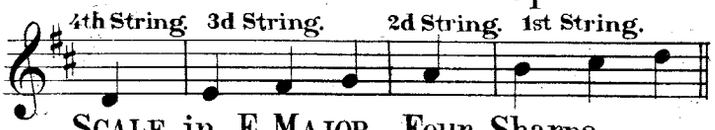
Scale in C Major. Natural.



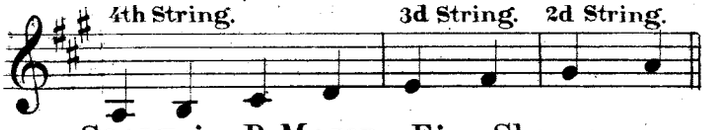
Scale in G Major. One Sharp.



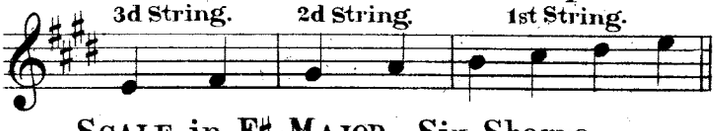
Scale in D Major. Two Sharps.



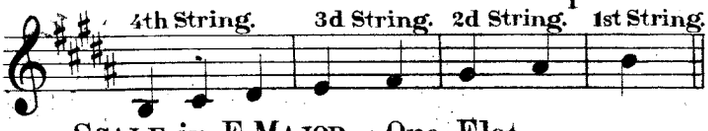
Scale in A Major. Three Sharps.



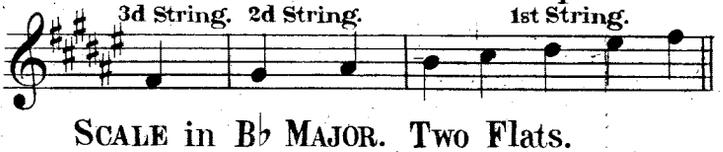
Scale in E Major. Four Sharps.



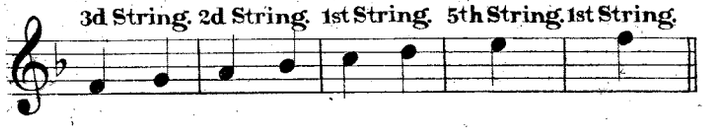
Scale in B Major. Five Sharps.



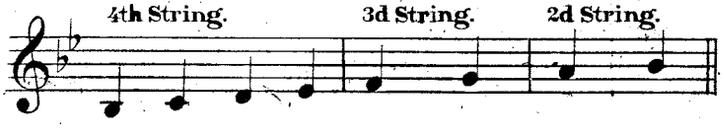
Scale in F♯ Major. Six Sharps.



Scale in F Major. One Flat.

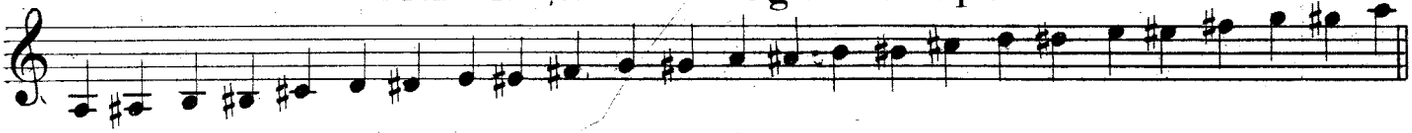


Scale in B♭ Major. Two Flats.

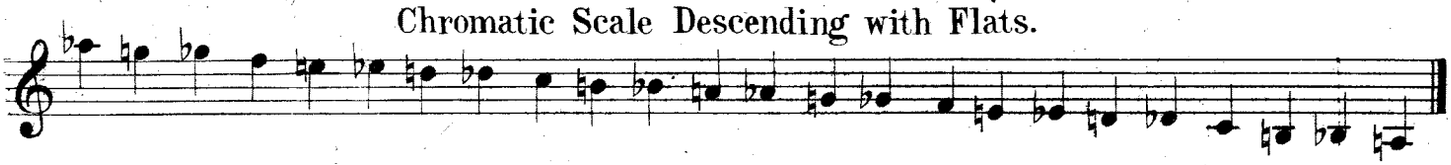


Chromatic Scale.

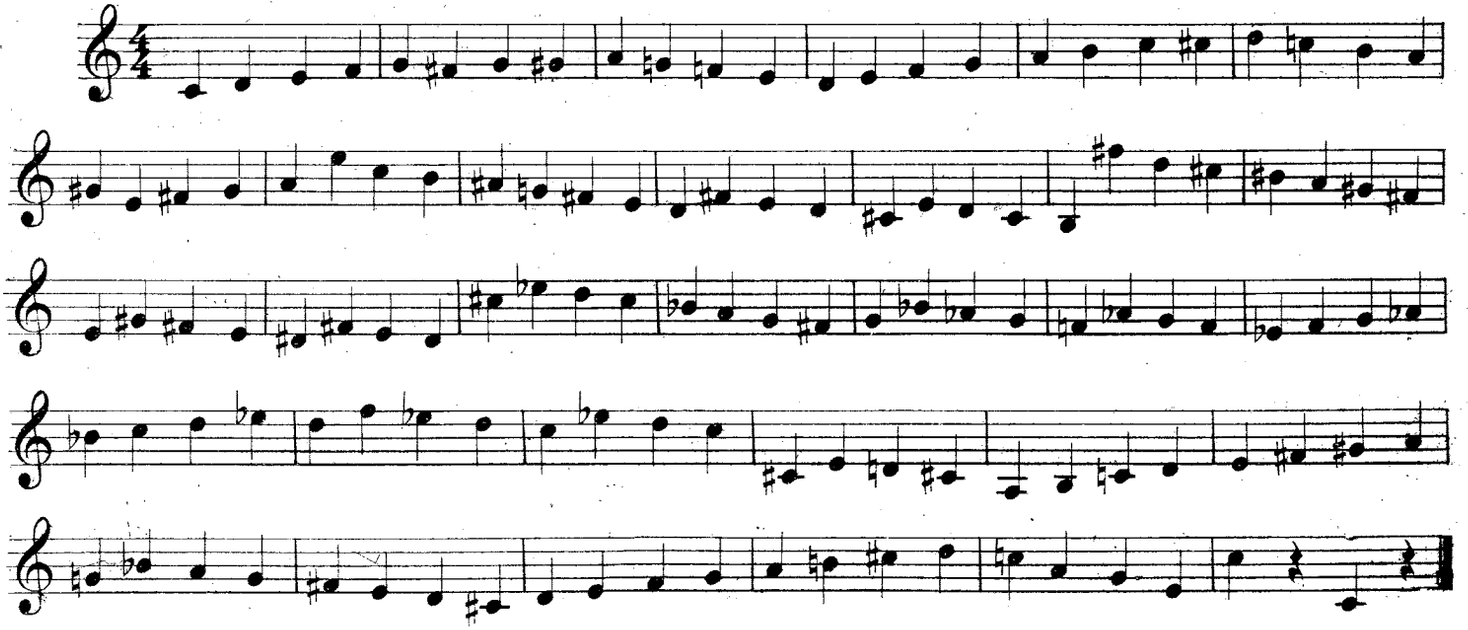
Chromatic Scale Ascending with Sharps.



Chromatic Scale Descending with Flats.



Exercises with Chromatics.



Exercises in A Major.

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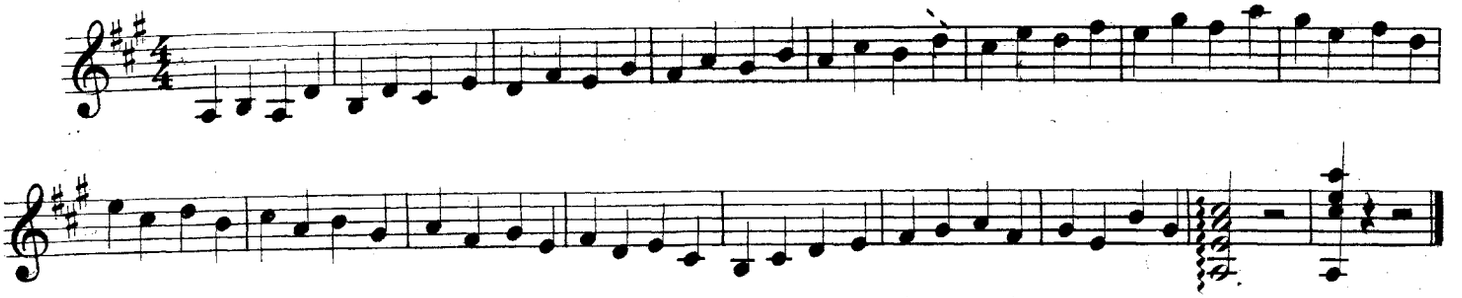

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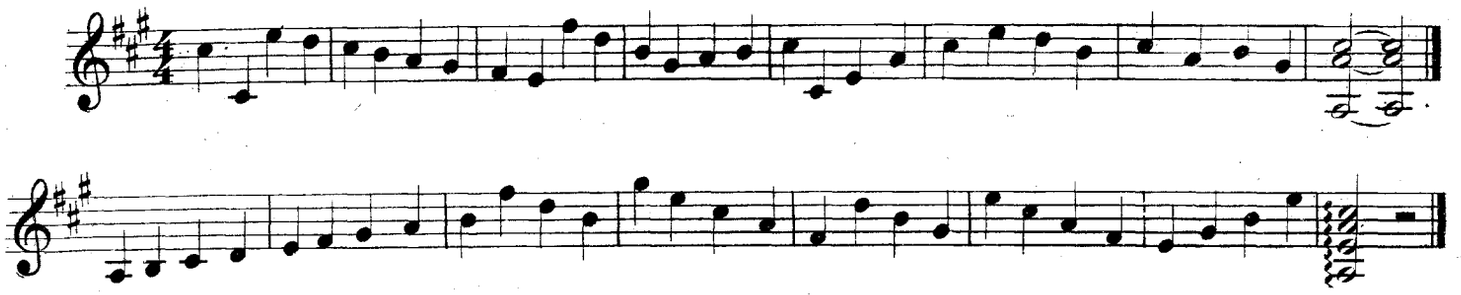

Amusements in A Major.

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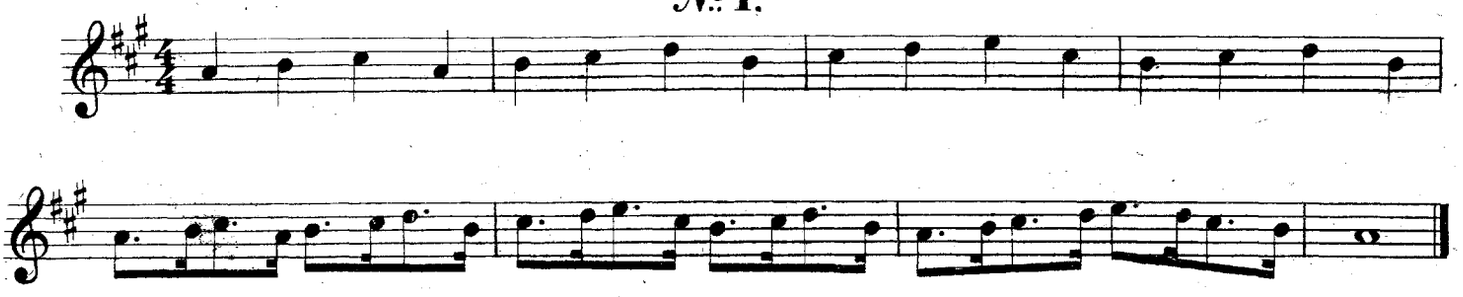

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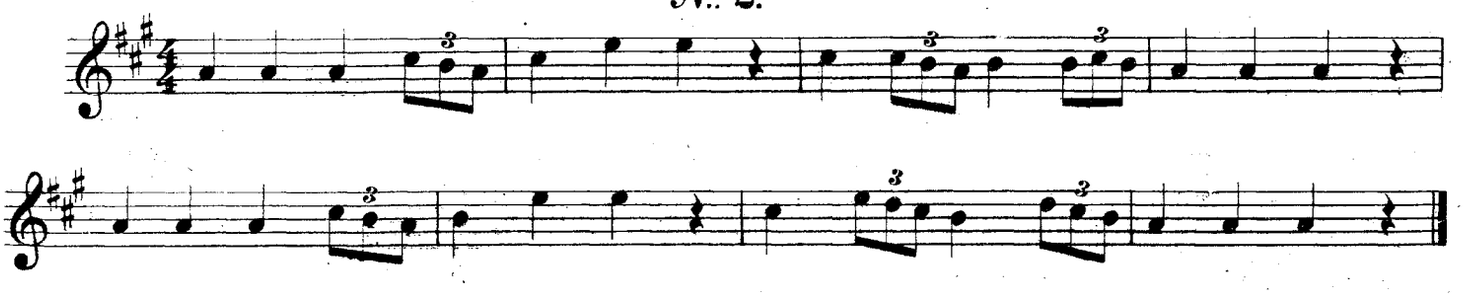

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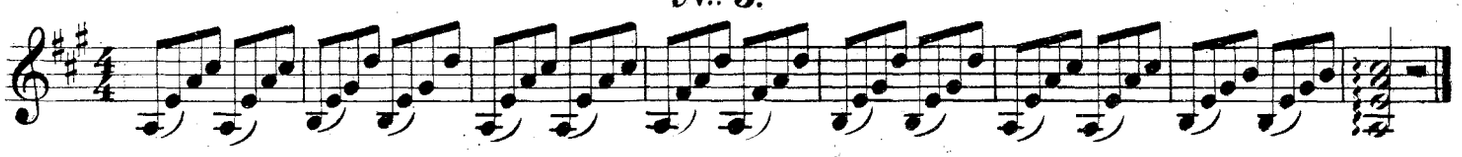

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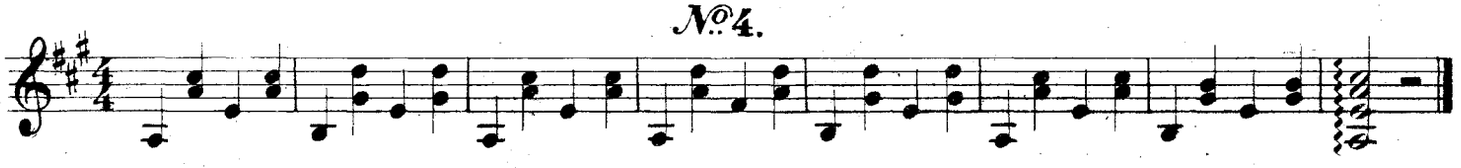

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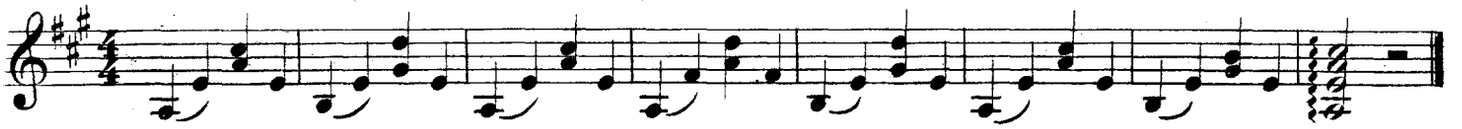

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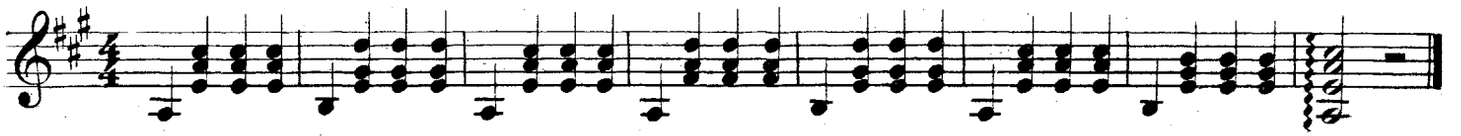

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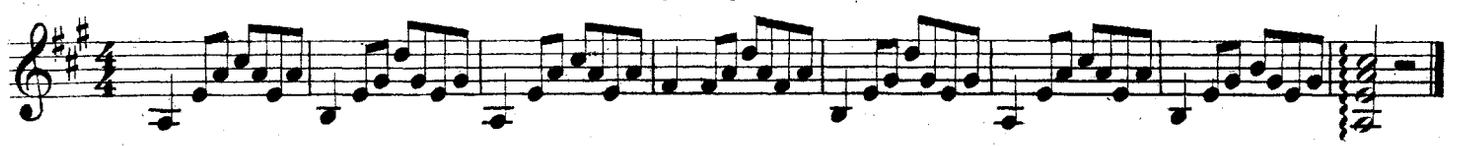

Amusements in F♯ Minor.

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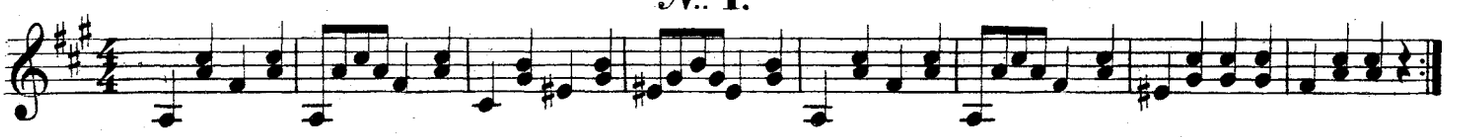

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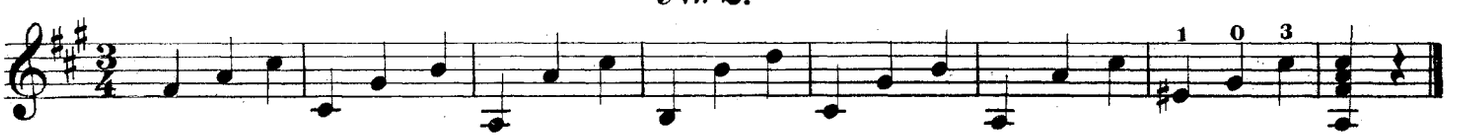

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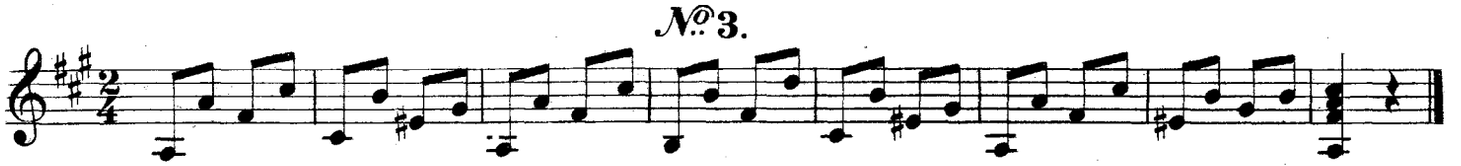

Amusements in E Major.

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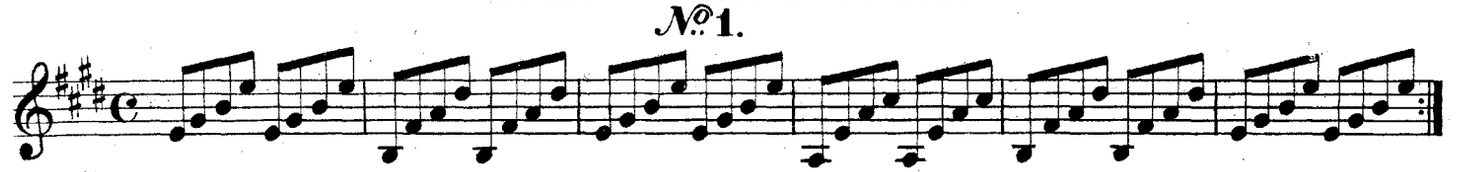

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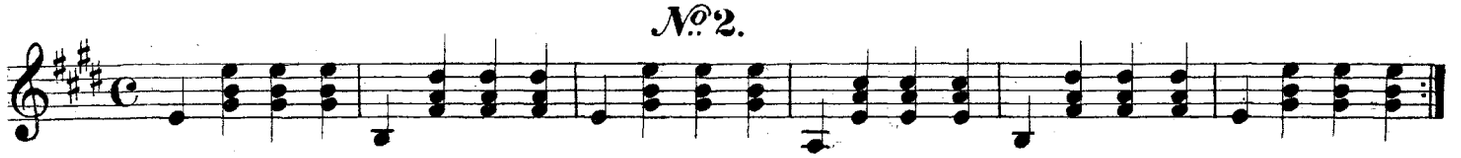

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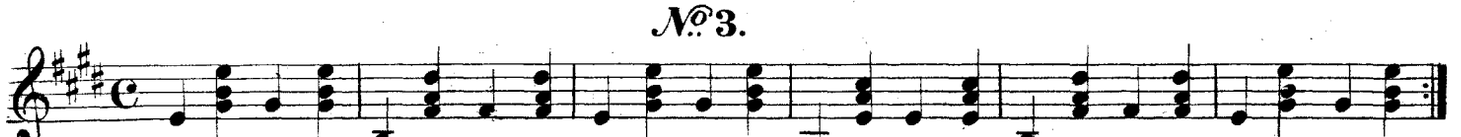
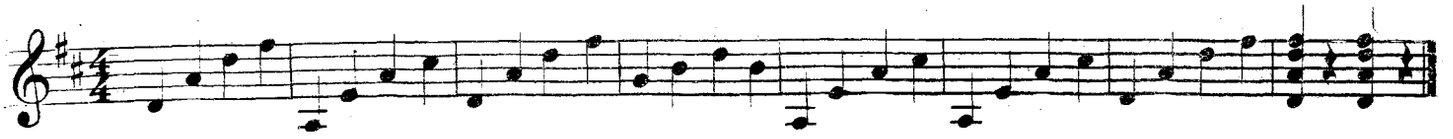


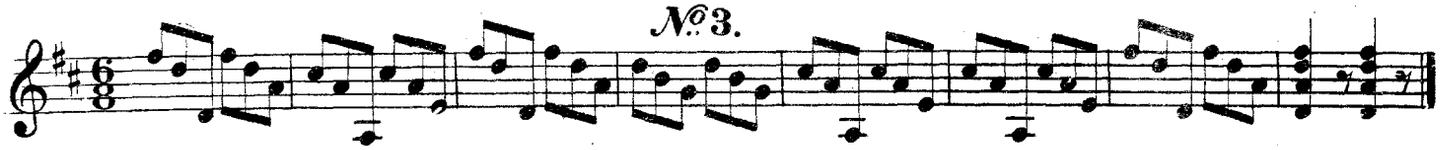
Amusements in D Major.

№ 1.



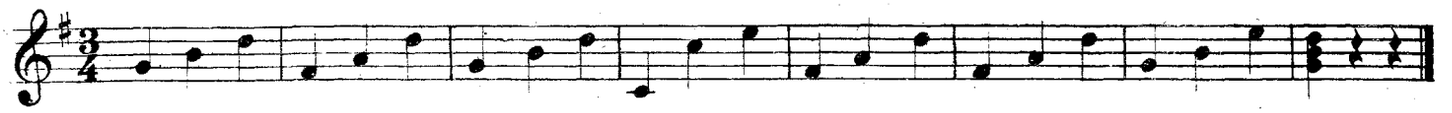
№ 2.

№ 3.

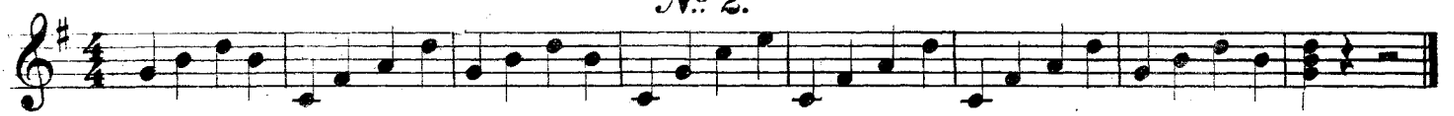


Amusements in G Major.

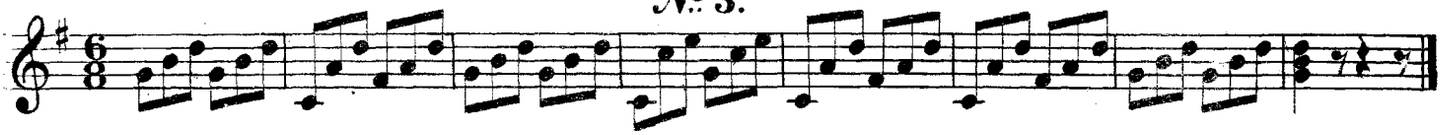
№ 1.



№ 2.

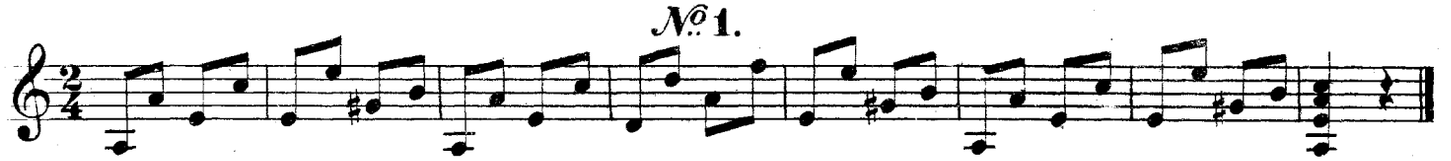


№ 3.

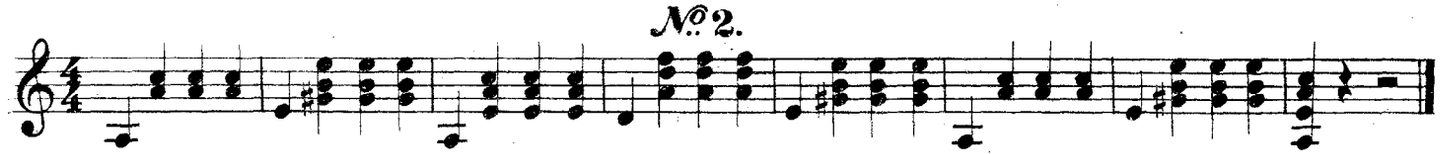


Amusements in A Minor.

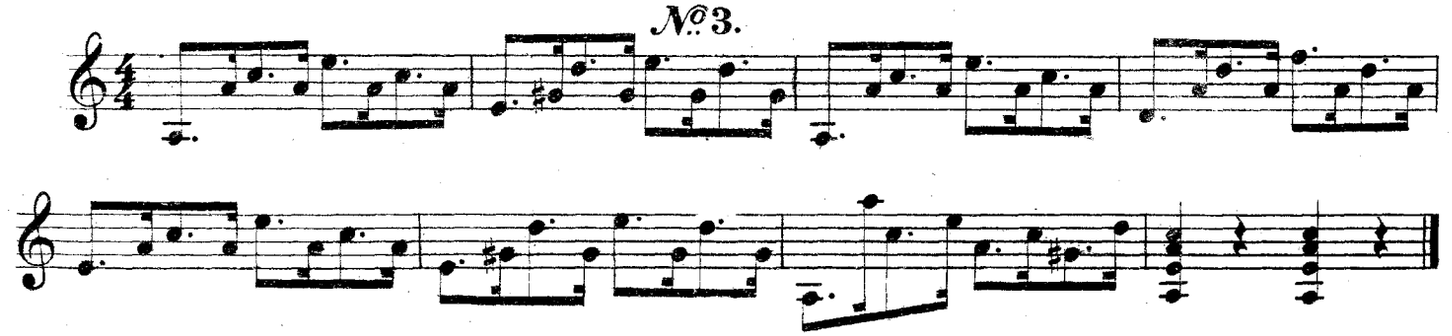
№ 1.



№ 2.



№ 3.



Chapter Four.

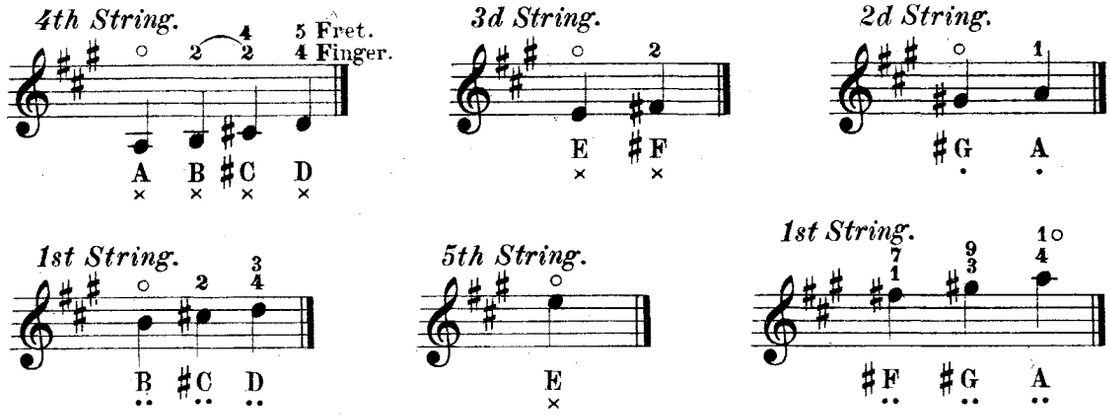
The Scale of A Major – the Natural Key of the Banjo. – Also a Collection of easy Exercises and Pieces for the Beginner.

THE SCALE OF A MAJOR, IN SECTIONS.

The first four notes of the scale are all made on the fourth string, and are represented below the staff. They are the only notes that cannot be duplicated on any other fret or position.

These four notes must be committed to memory, (before going to the next string,) the literal name, also, at what fret each note is made on the finger-board, also, the position of the note on the staff, and the fingers of the left hand that stops it, must be committed at one and the same time, practically and theoretically.

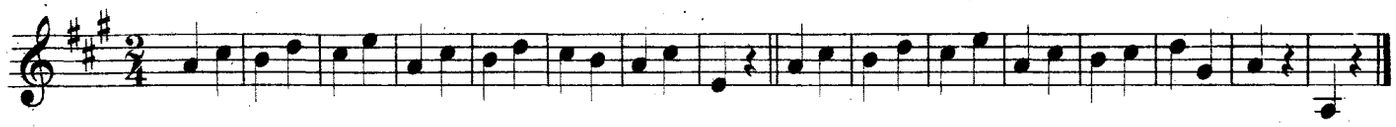
A zero above the note indicates an open string; a single figure indicates the finger of the left hand and fret at which it is stopped: of two figures the upper one indicates the fret, the lower one the finger of the left hand that stops the string.



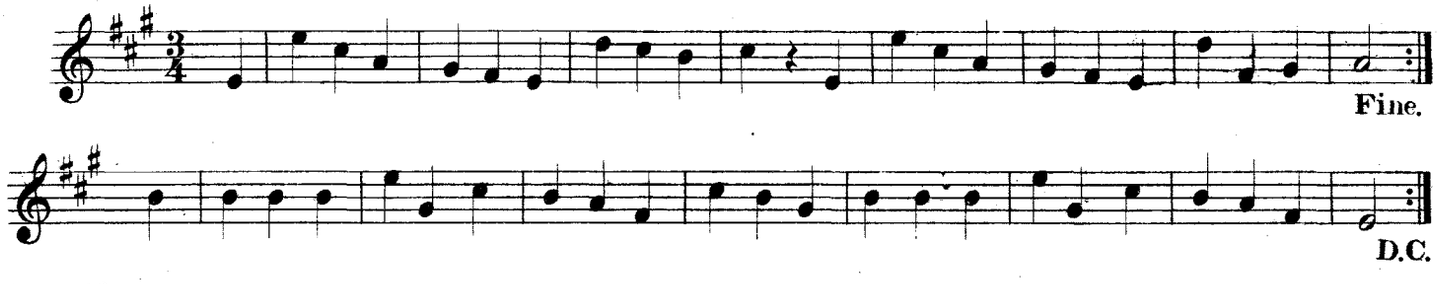
RIGHT HAND FINGERING.

The × indicates the thumb of the right hand – The dots indicate the fingers of the right hand – One dot, for the first finger, two dots for the second finger.

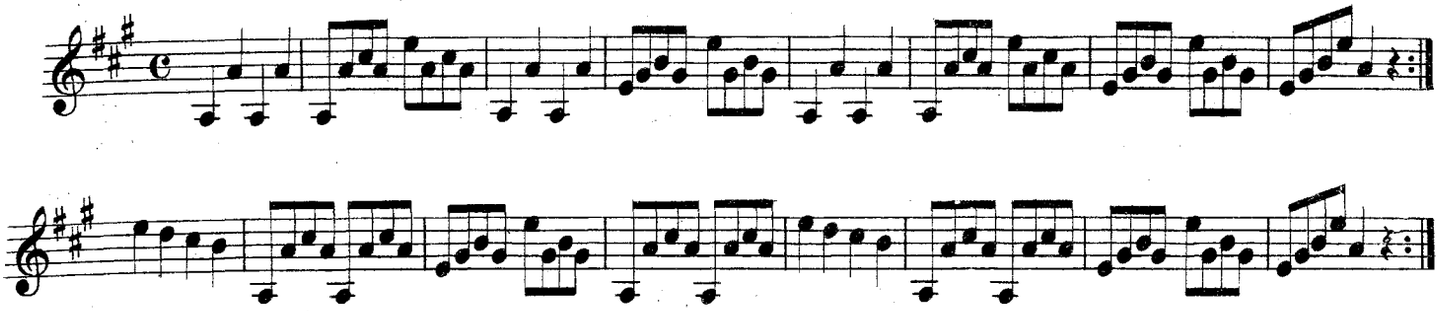
FIRST AMUSEMENT. (Exercise.)



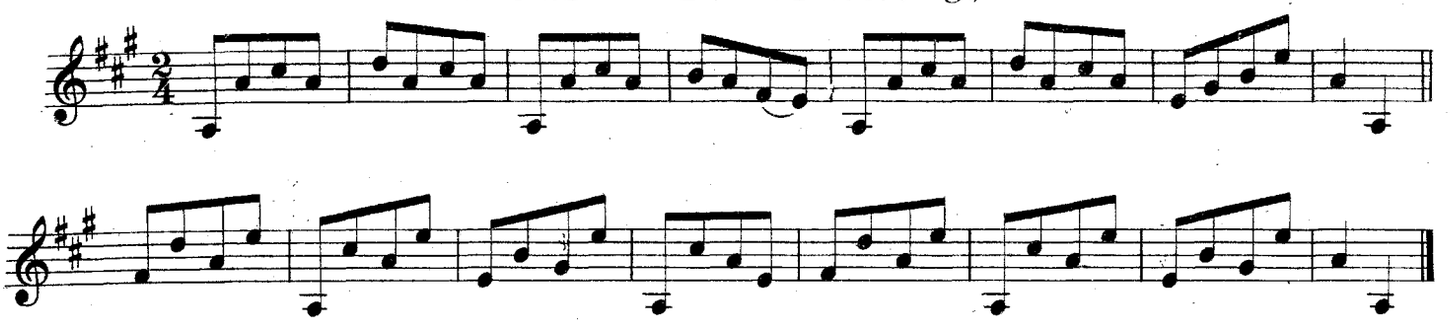
SECOND AMUSEMENT. (Exercise.)



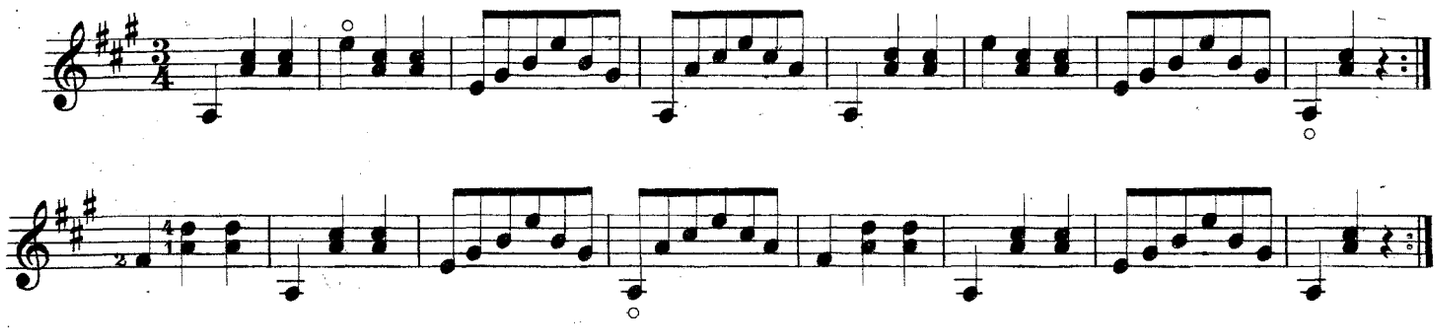
THIRD AMUSEMENT. (Jig.)



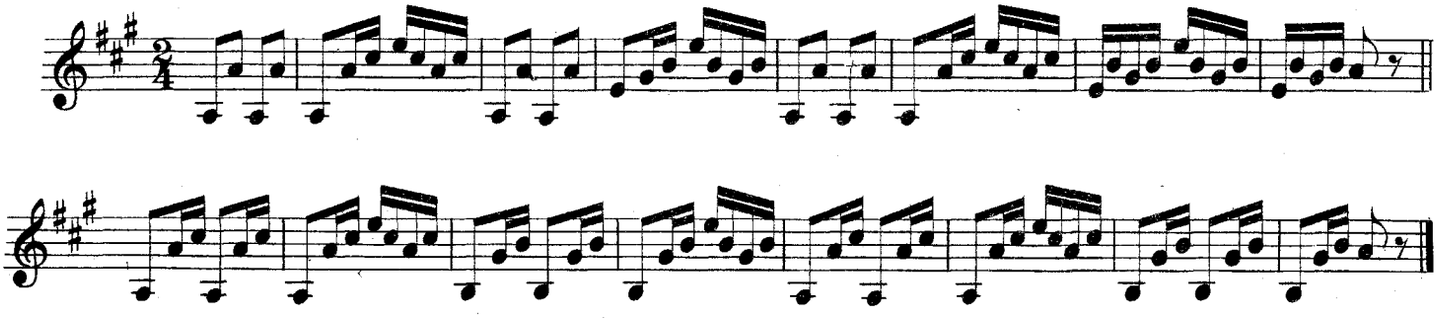
FOURTH AMUSEMENT. (Jig.)



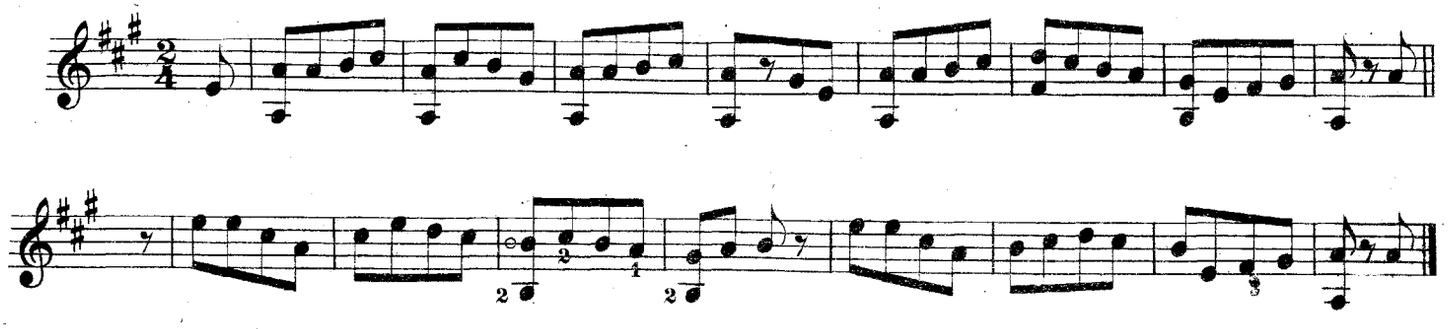
FIFTH AMUSEMENT. (Waltz.)



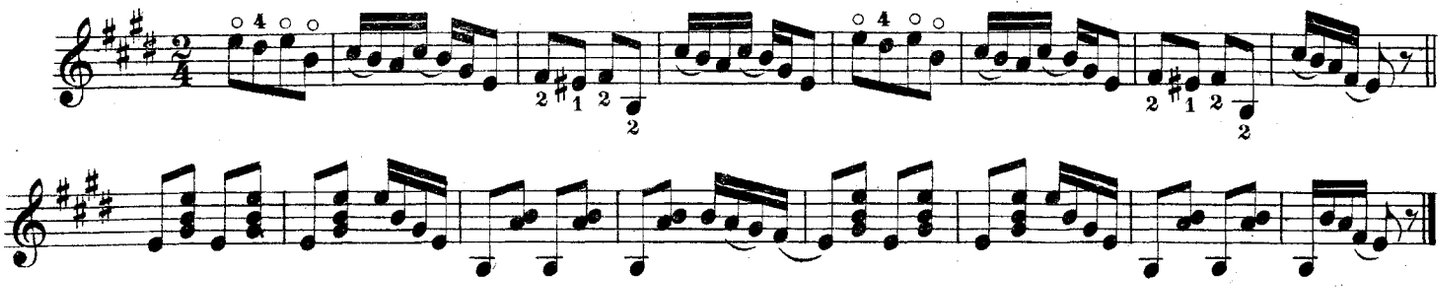
SIXTH AMUSEMENT. (Jig.)



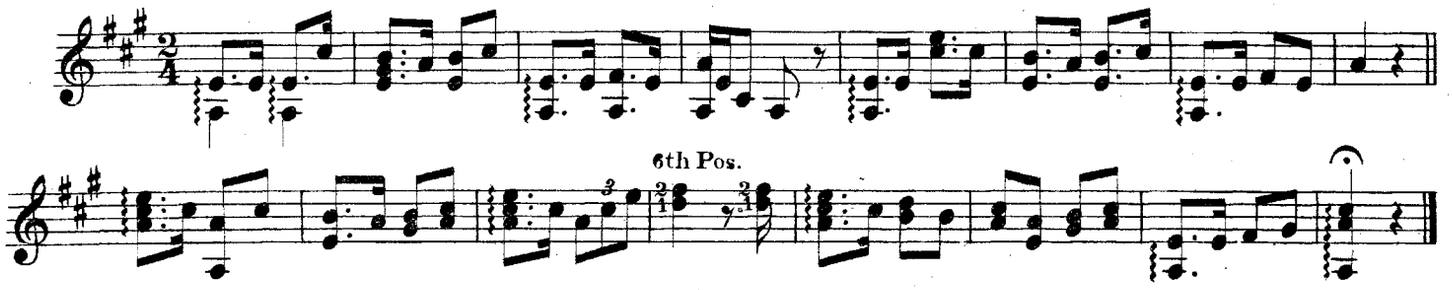
SEVENTH AMUSEMENT. (Yankee Doodle.)



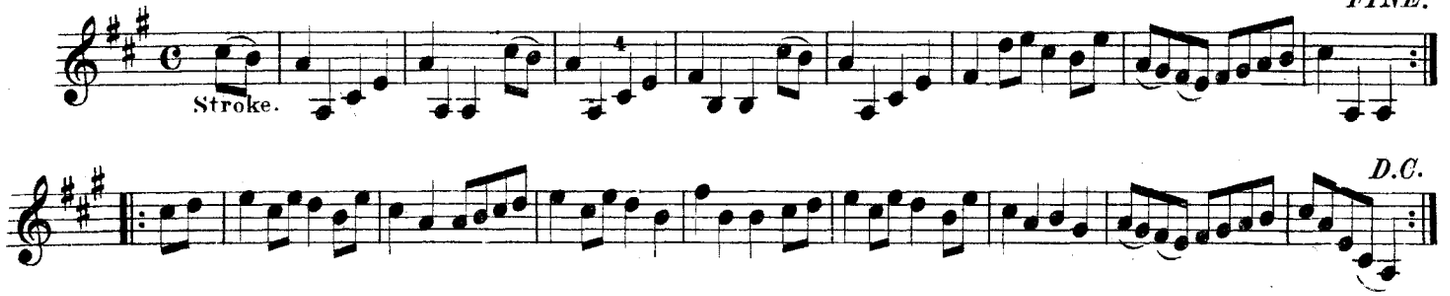
EIGHTH AMUSEMENT. (Foster's Jig.)



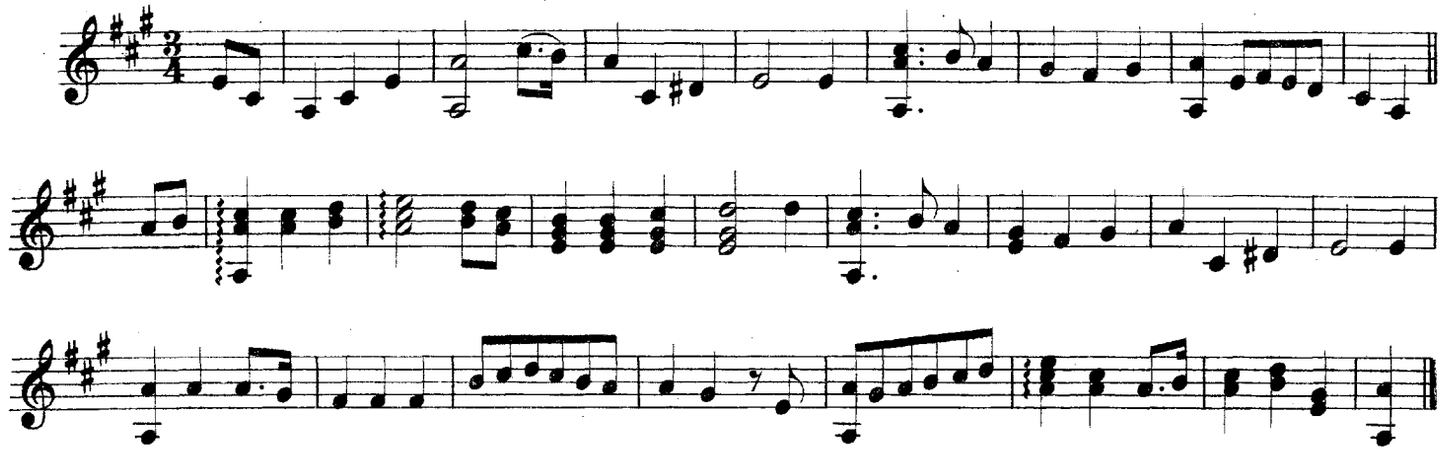
NINTH AMUSEMENT. (Comin' thro' the Rye.)



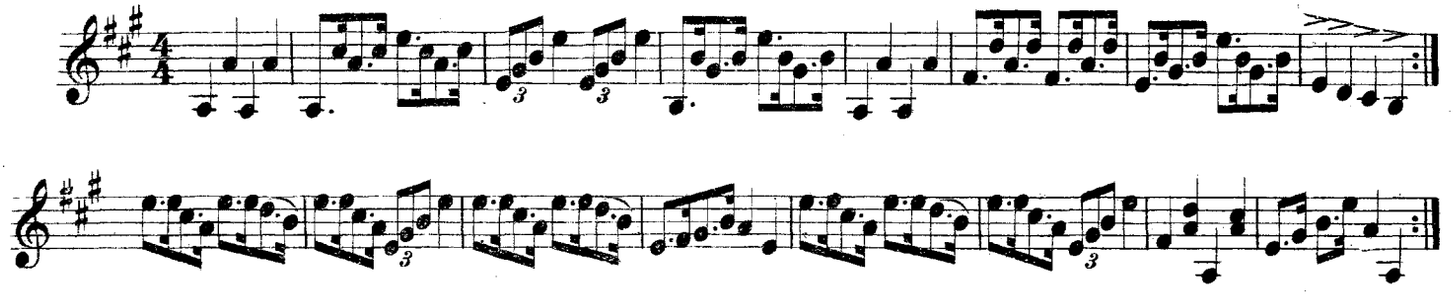
TENTH AMUSEMENT. (My Love she's but a Lassie yet.)



ELEVENTH AMUSEMENT. (Star Spangled Banner.)

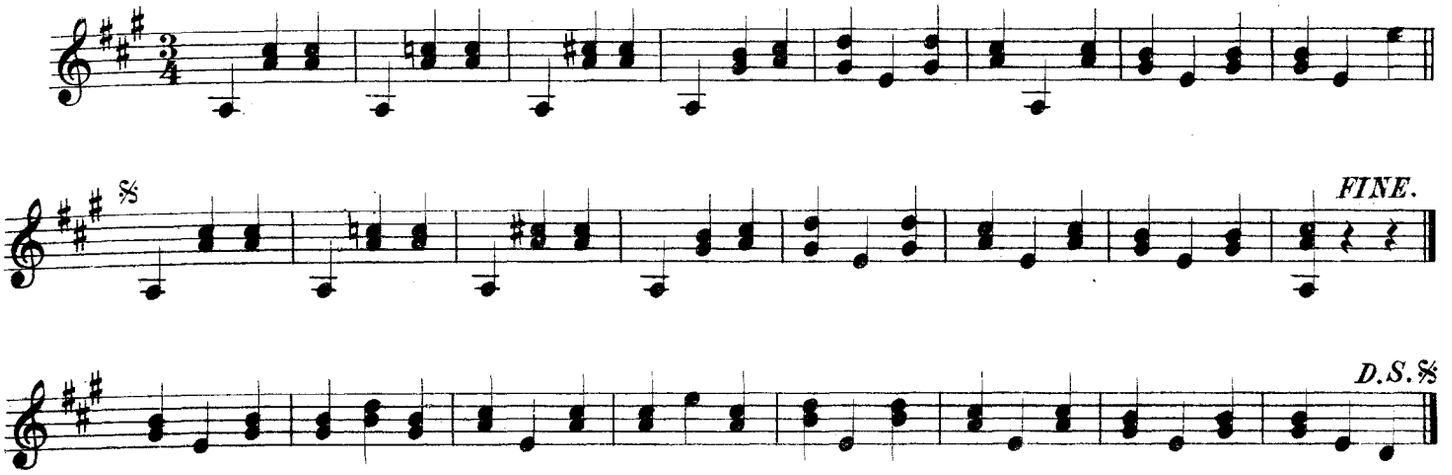


TWELFTH AMUSEMENT. (Jig.)



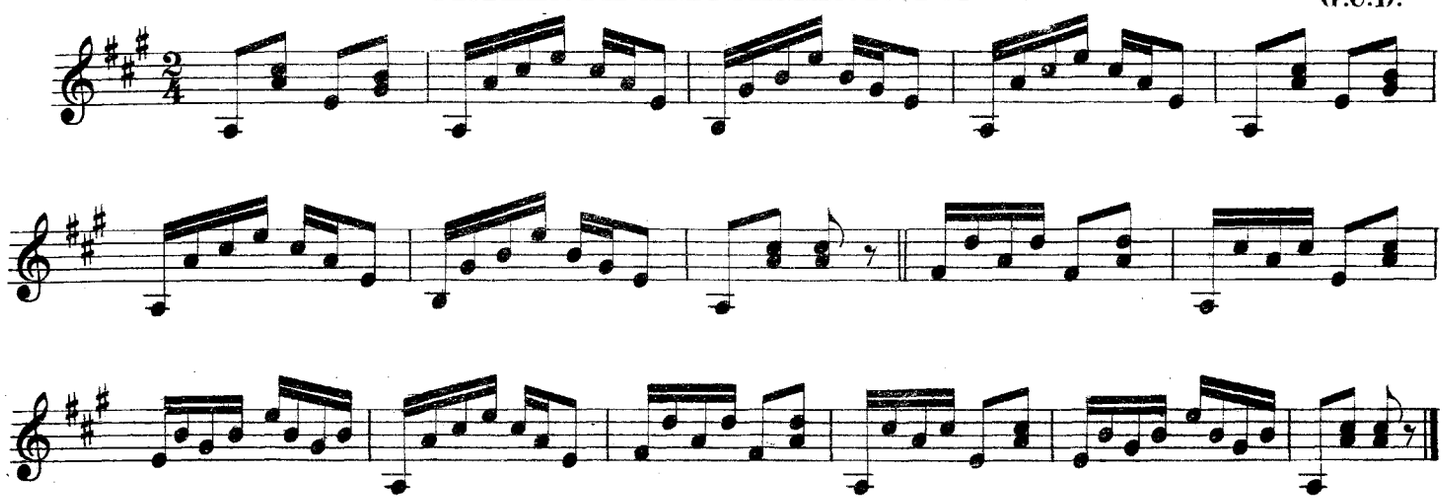
THIRTEENTH AMUSEMENT. (Waltz.)

G.C.D.



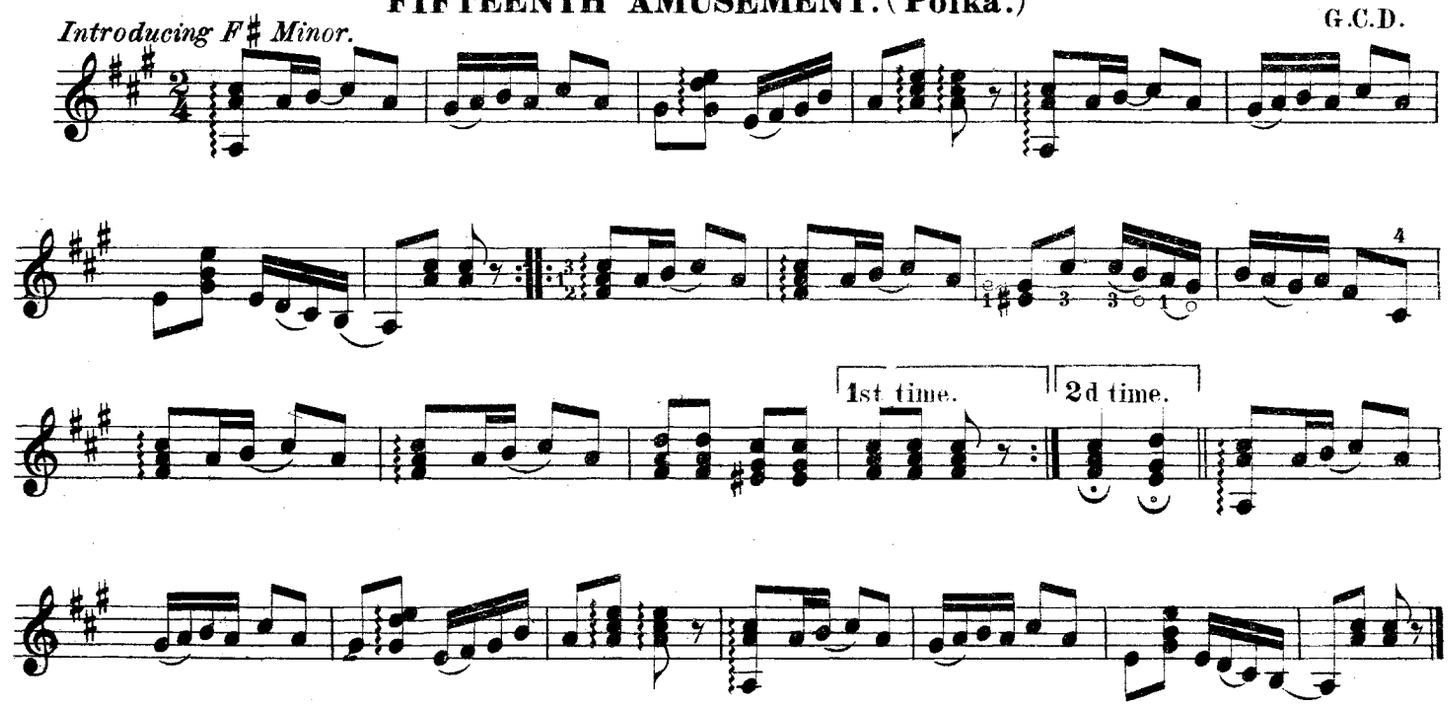
FOURTEENTH AMUSEMENT. (Polka.)

G.C.D.

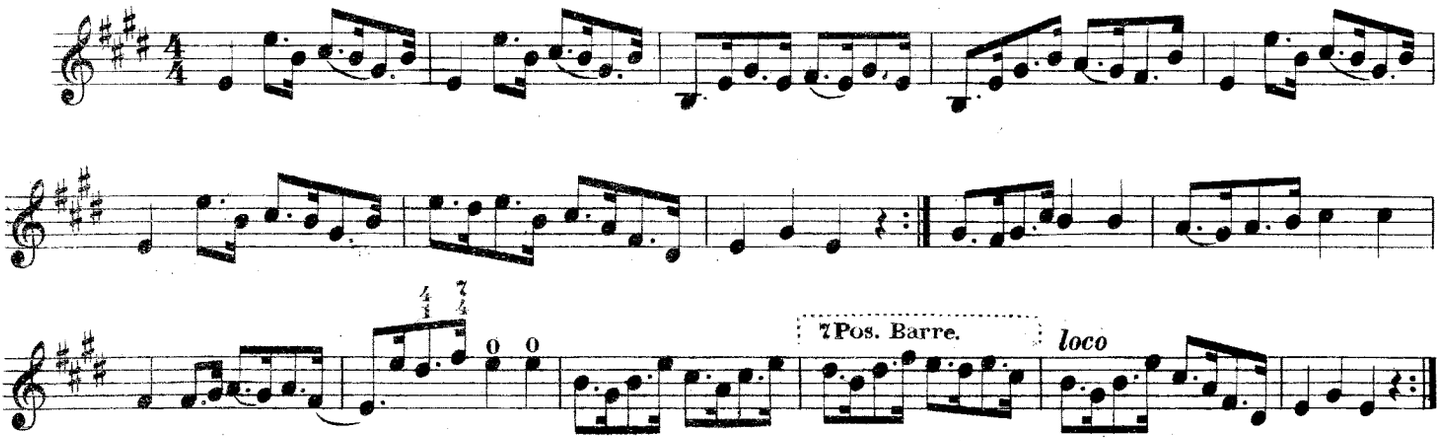


FIFTEENTH AMUSEMENT. (Polka.)

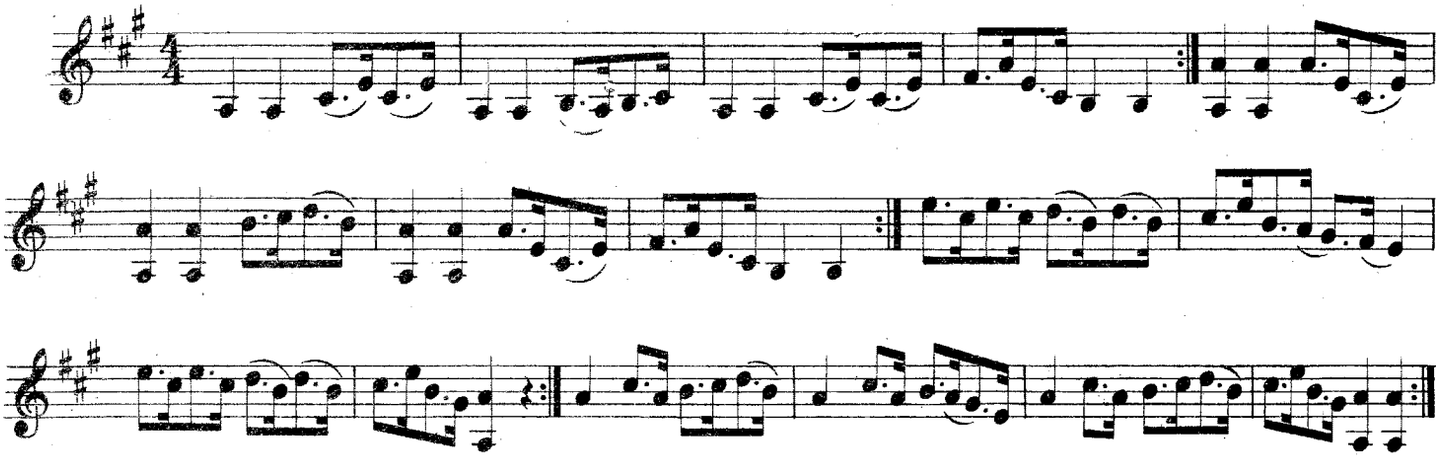
G.C.D.



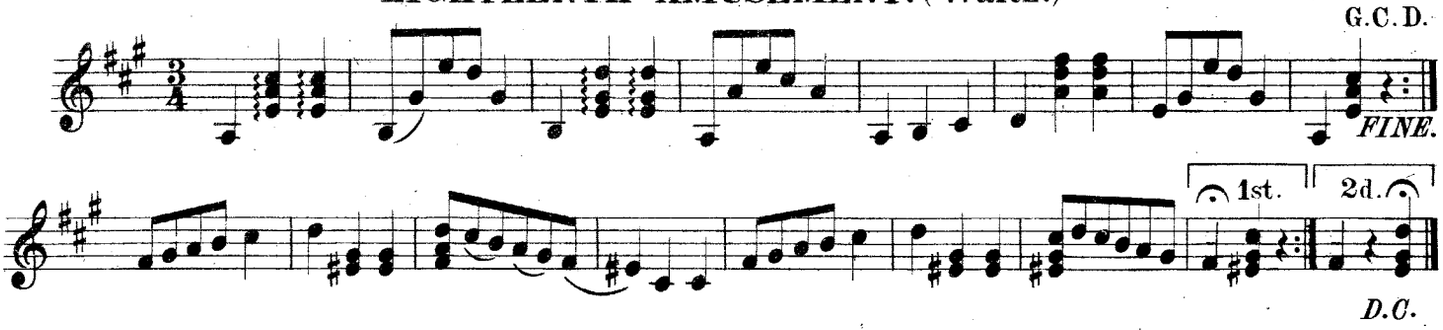
SIXTEENTH AMUSEMENT. (Clog Hornpipe.)



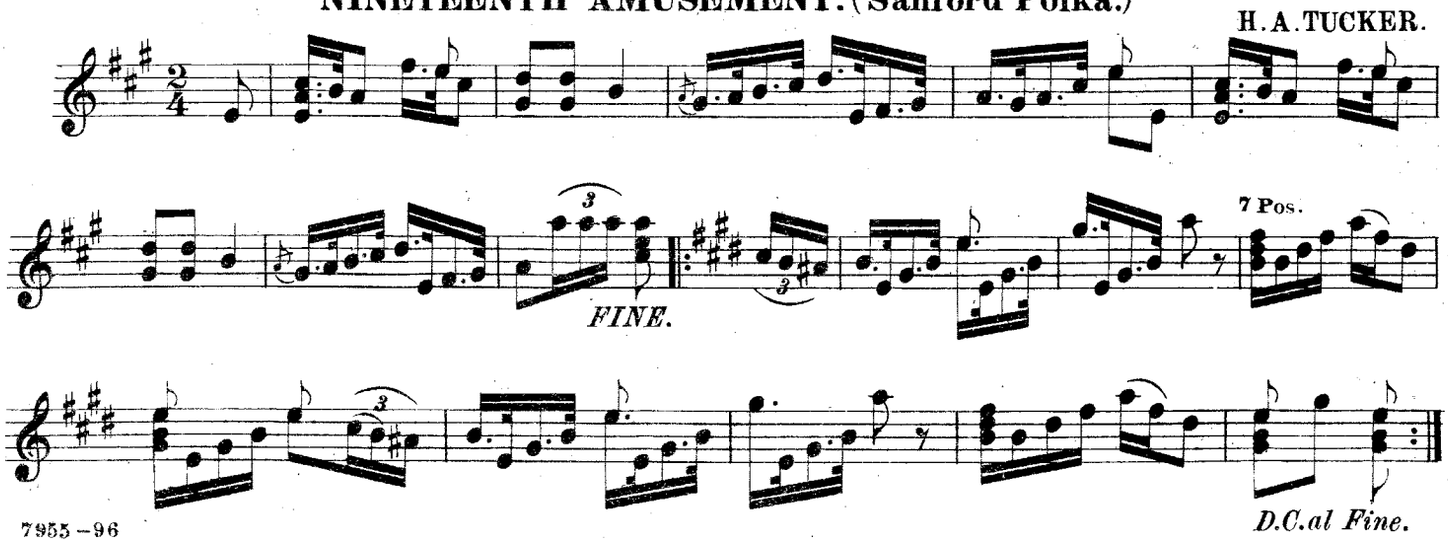
SEVENTEENTH AMUSEMENT. (Scotch Dance.)



EIGHTEENTH AMUSEMENT. (Waltz.)

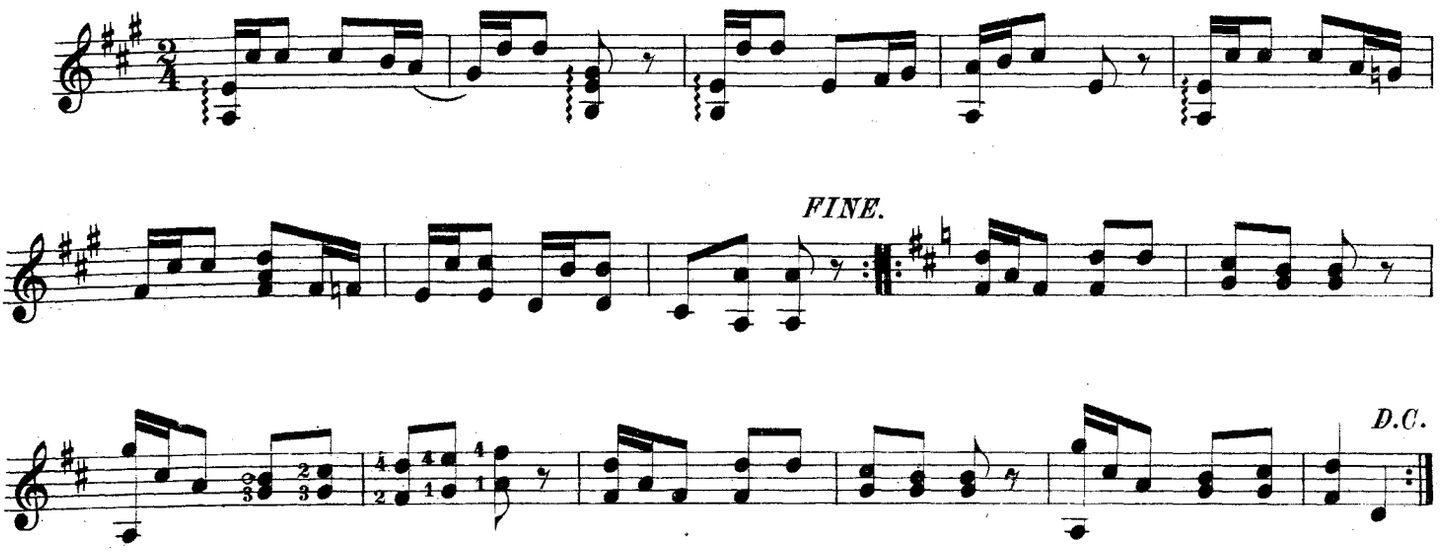


NINETEENTH AMUSEMENT. (Sanford Polka.)

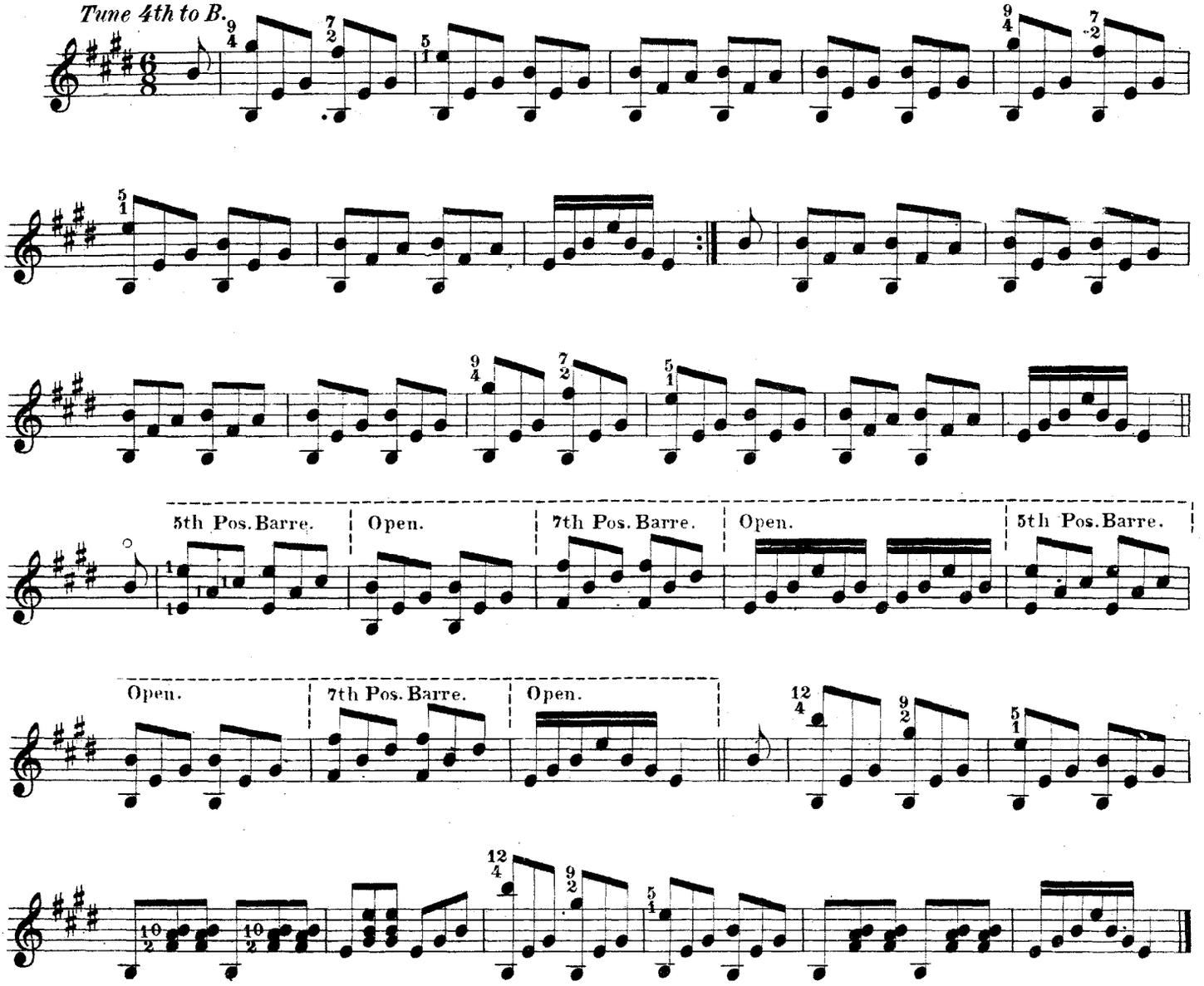


TWENTIETH AMUSEMENT. (Polka.)

G.C.D.

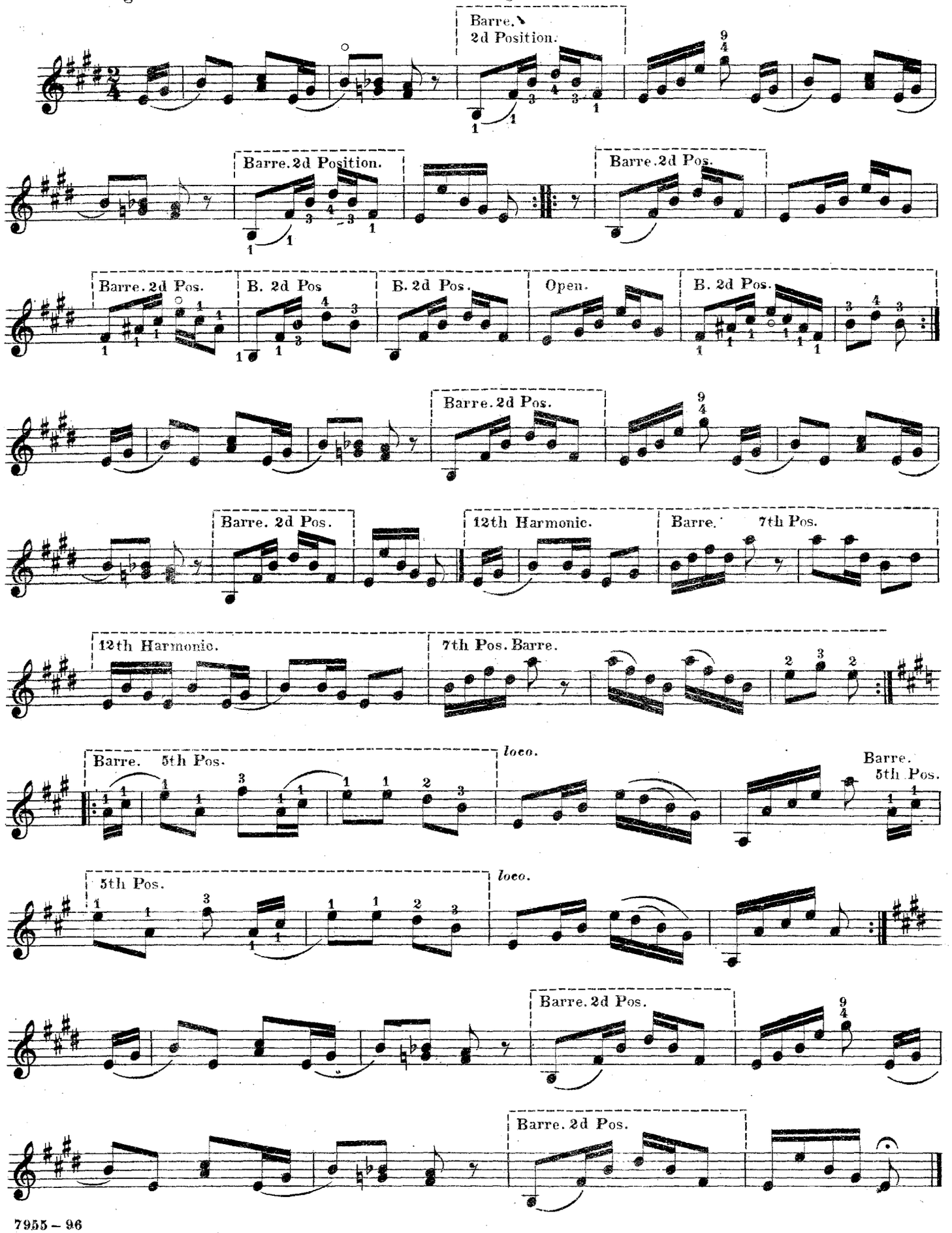


TWENTY-FIRST AMUSEMENT. (Fandango.)



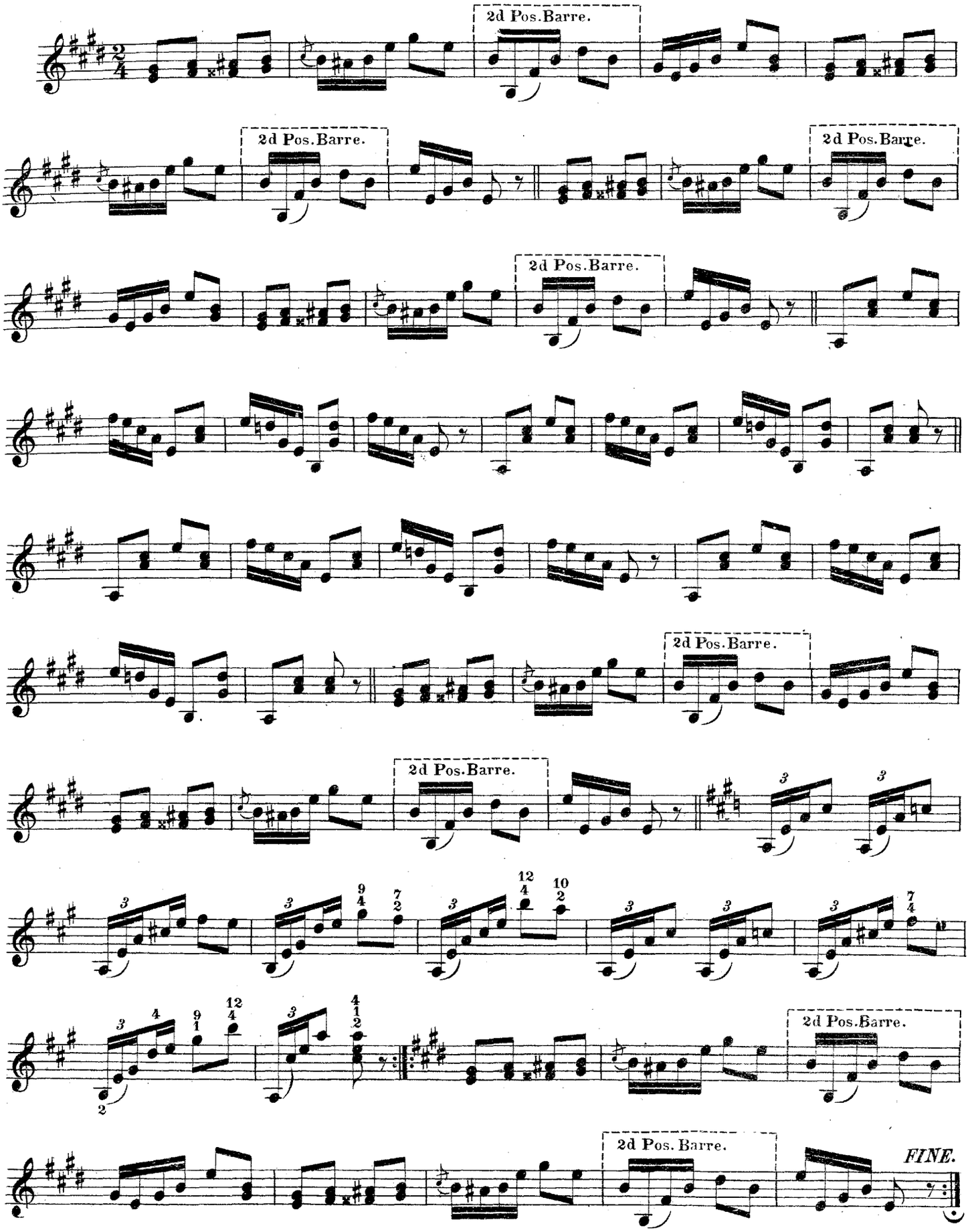
TWENTY- SECOND AMUSEMENT. (Polka.)

Introducing the Barres and Harmonics. See Plate 2, Page 11.



TWENTY-THIRD AMUSEMENT. (Polka.)

GEORGE C. DOBSON.



TWENTY-FOURTH AMUSEMENT. (Polka.)

GEORGE C. DOBSON.

INTRODUCTION.

POLKA.

1st.

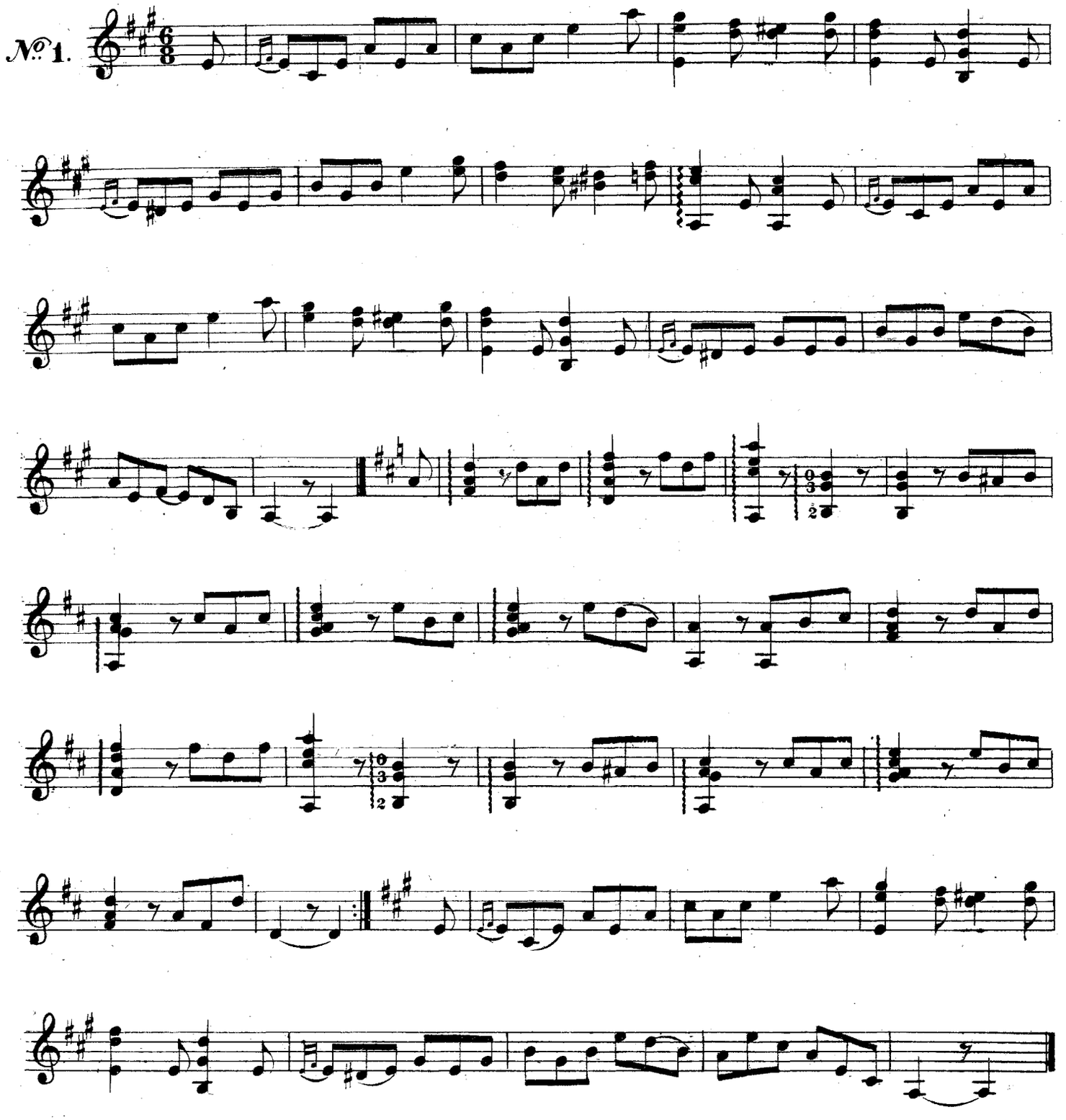
2d.

Chapter Five.

MISCELLANEOUS COMPOSITIONS BY THE AUTHOR AND OTHERS.

BENNIE DOBSON'S MARCH.

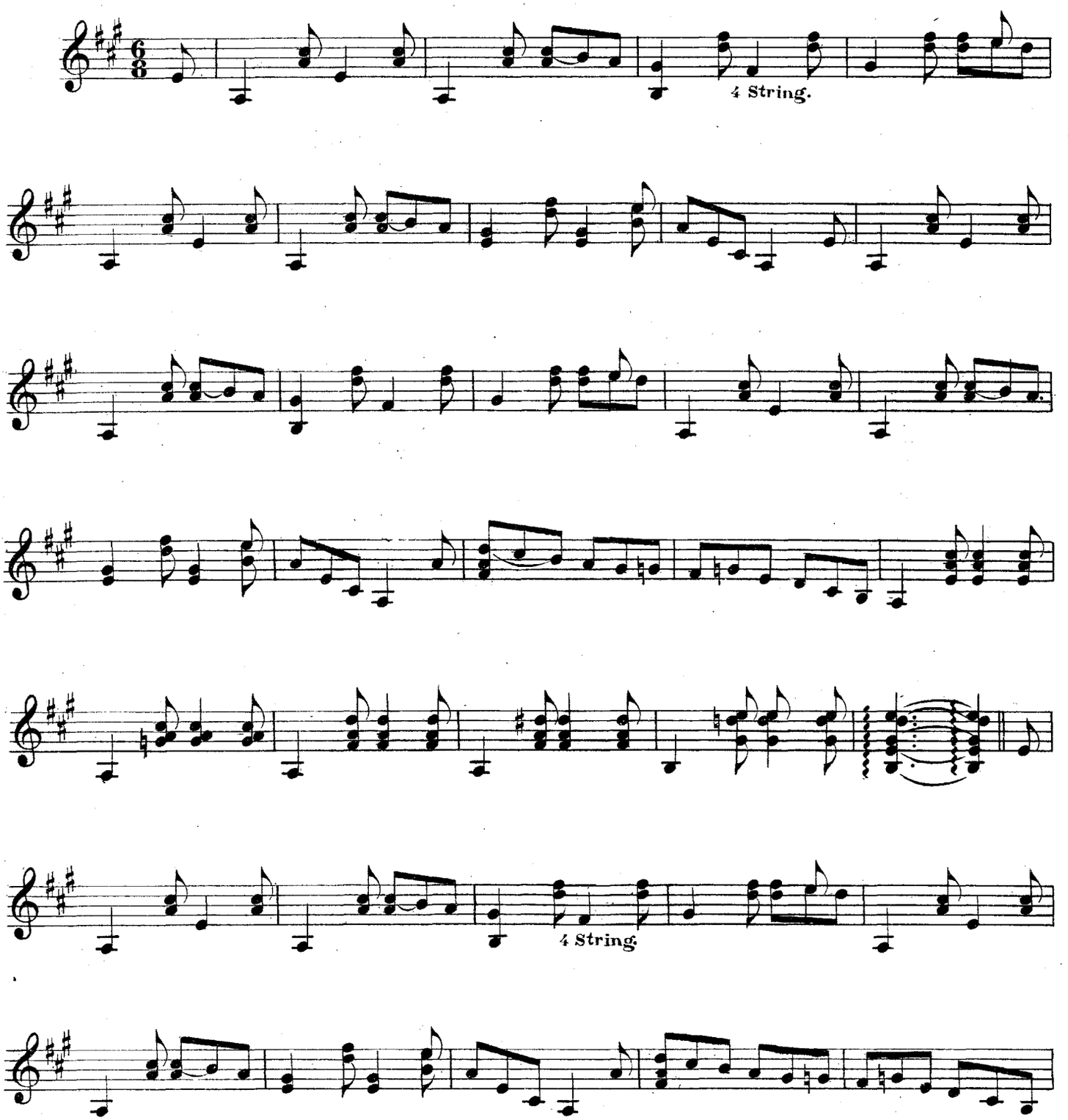
GEO. C. DOBSON.

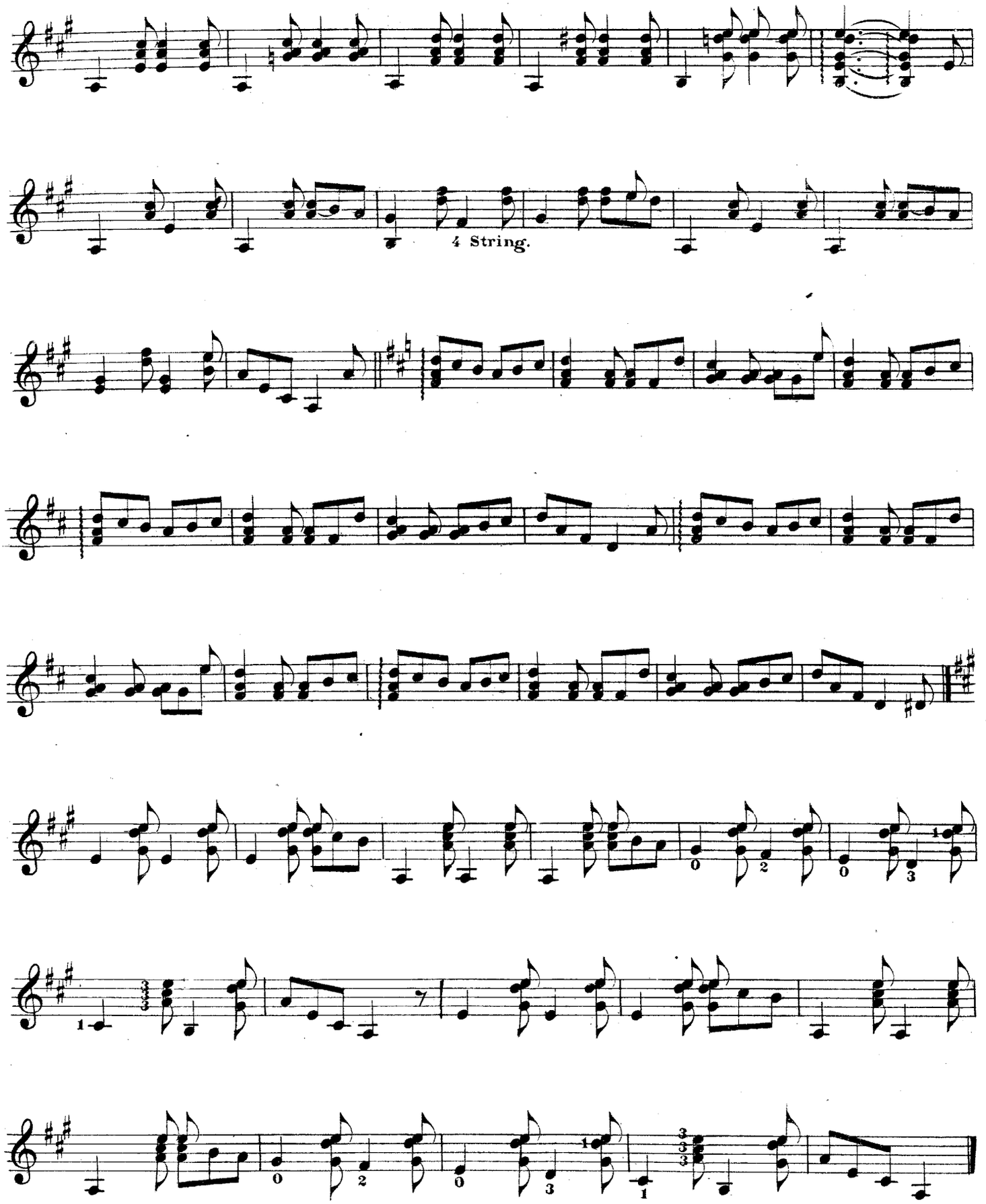


BENNIE DOBSON'S MARCH.

No 2.

GEO. C. DOBSON.

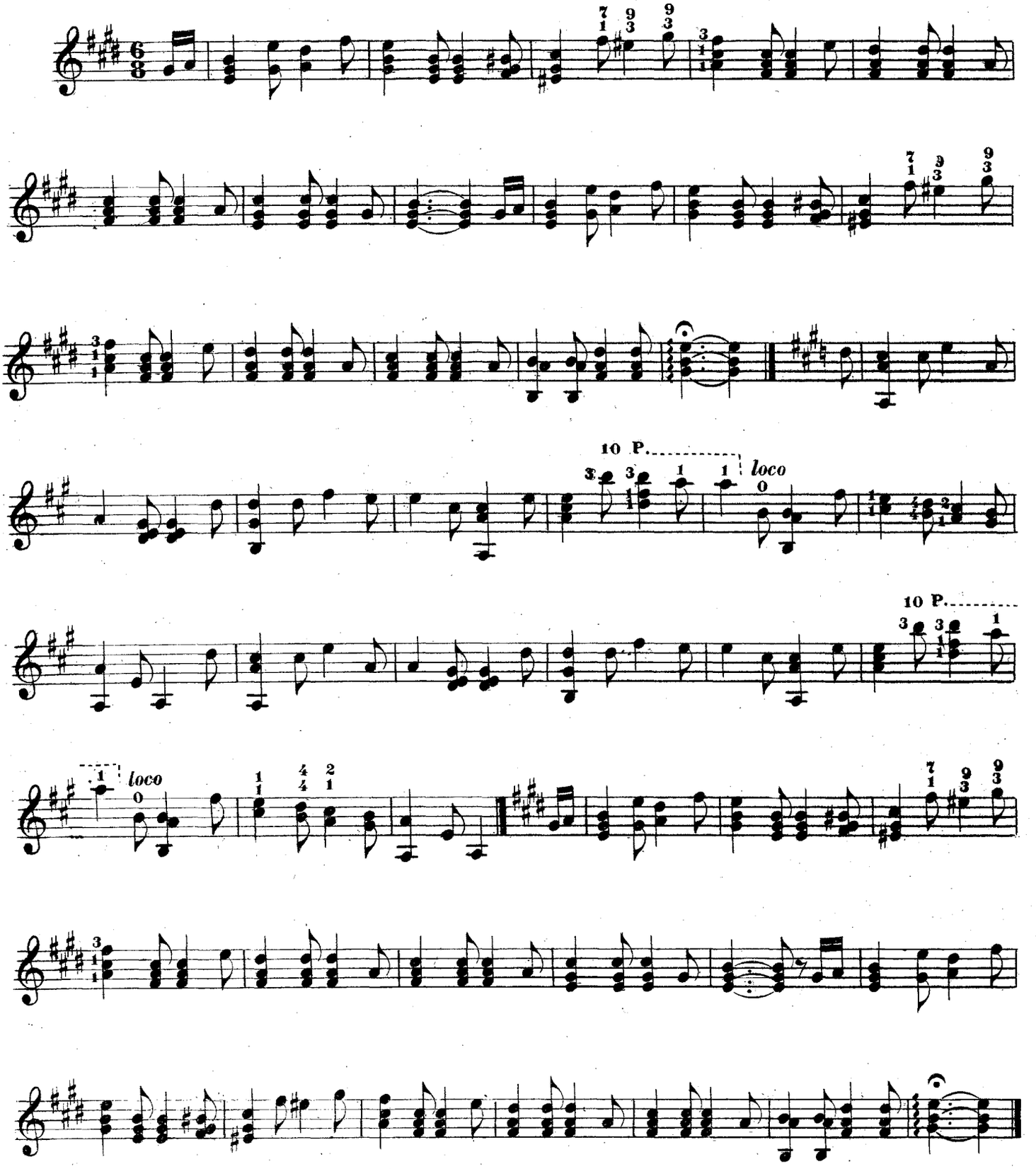



4 String.

BENNIE DOBSON'S MARCH.

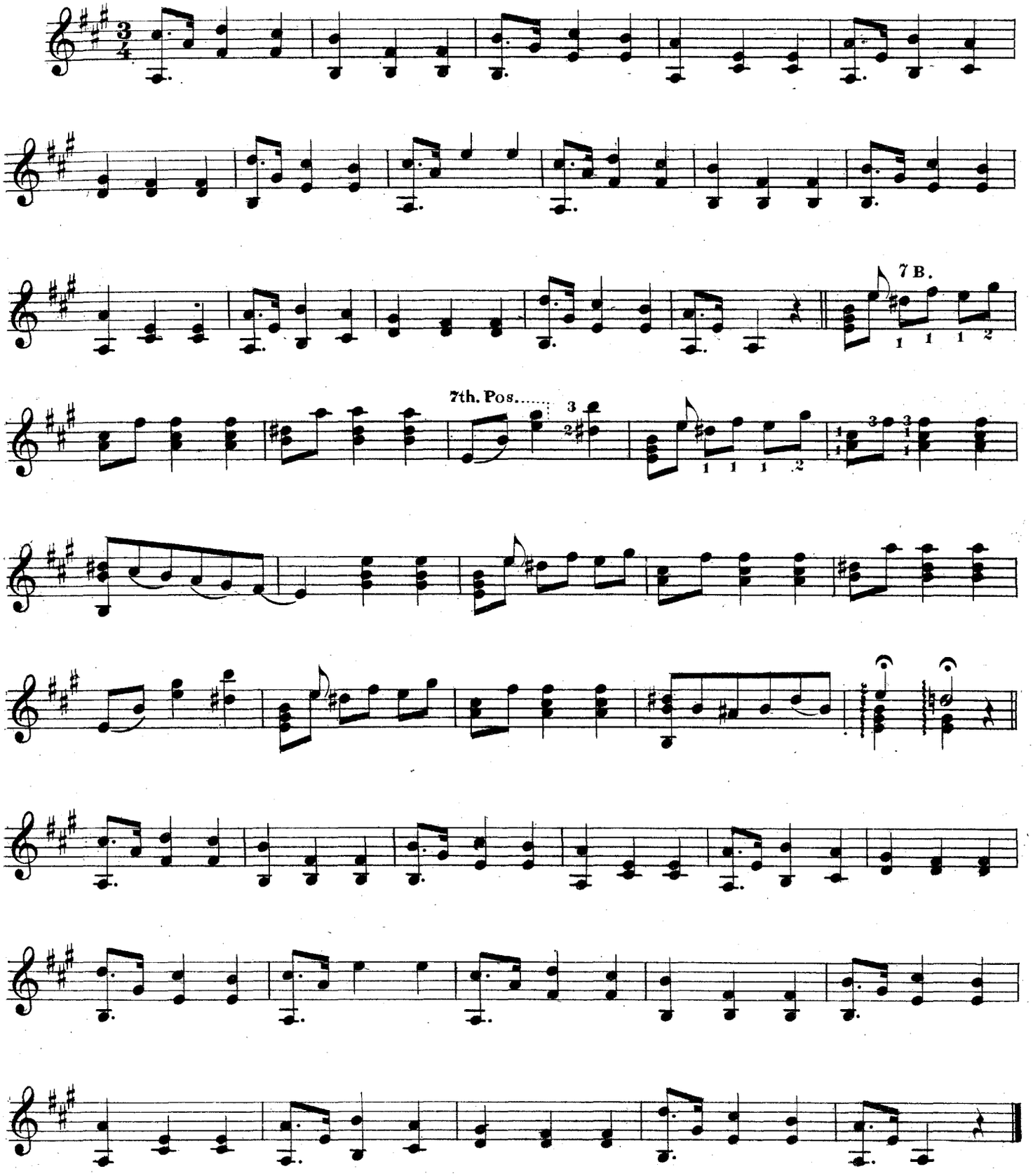
No. 3.

GEO. C. DOBSON.



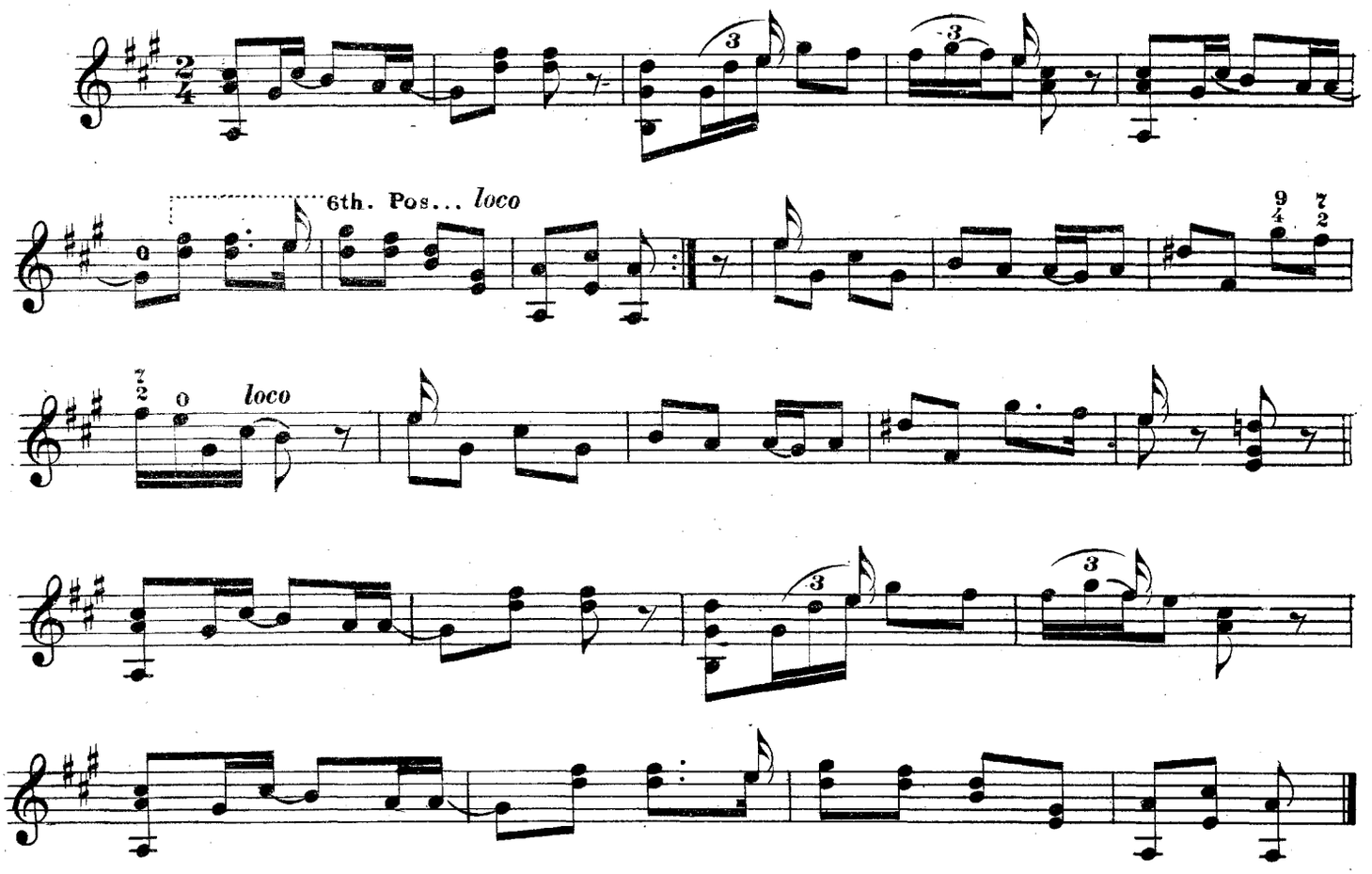
ELECTRIC MAZOURKA.

GEO. C. DOBSON.

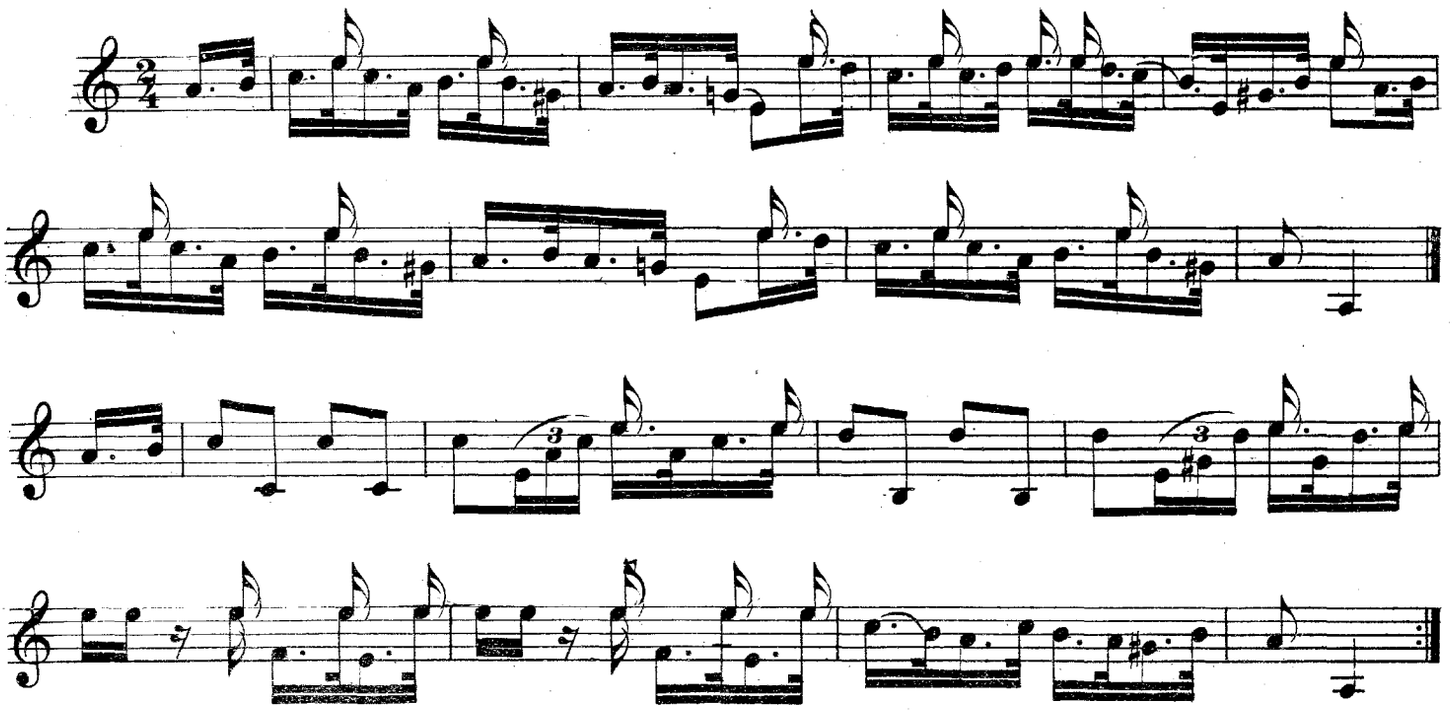


ADA POLKA.

E. D. GOLDBY.

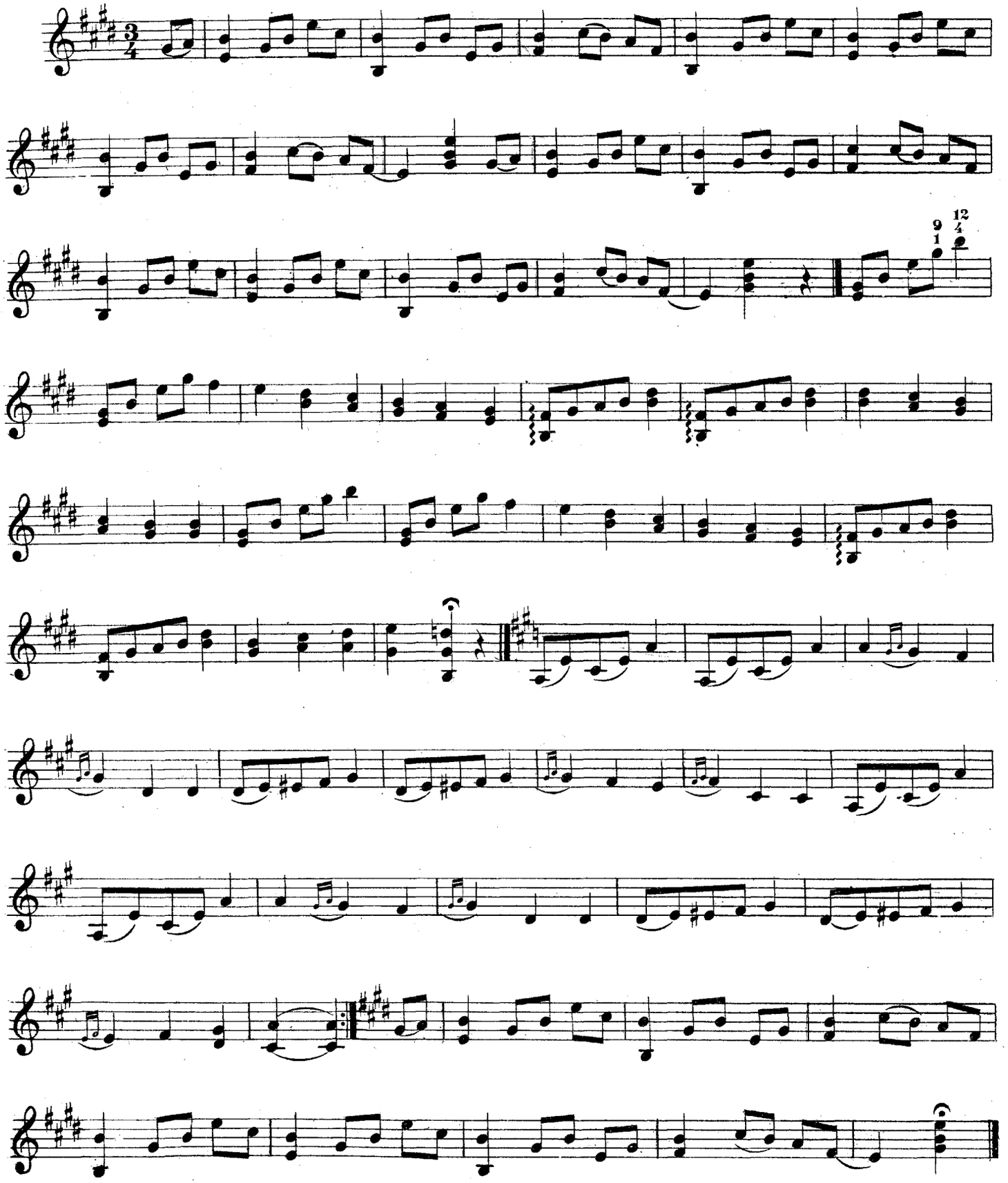


MINOR JIG.



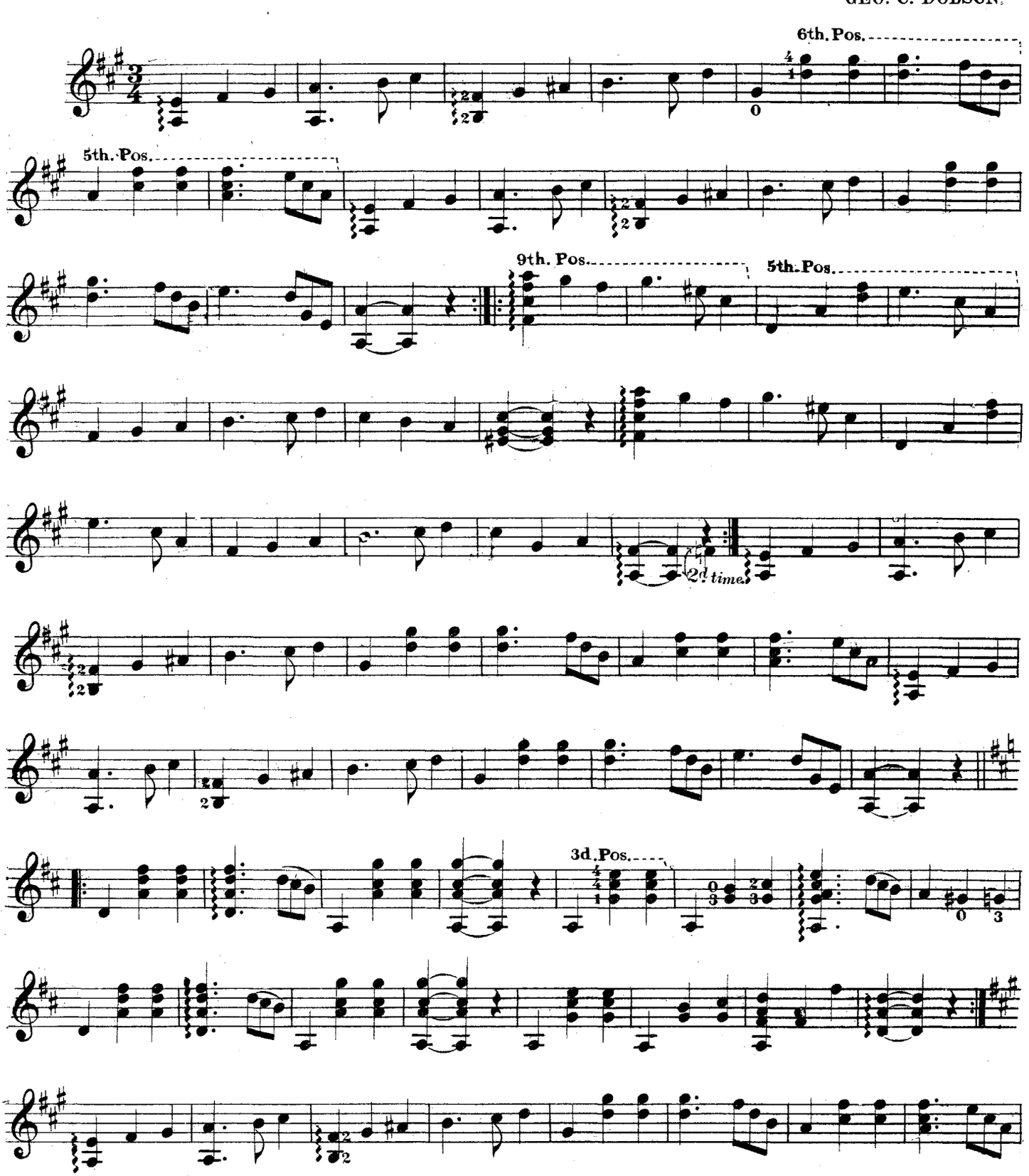
SPANISH GAZELLE.

GEO. C. DOBSON.



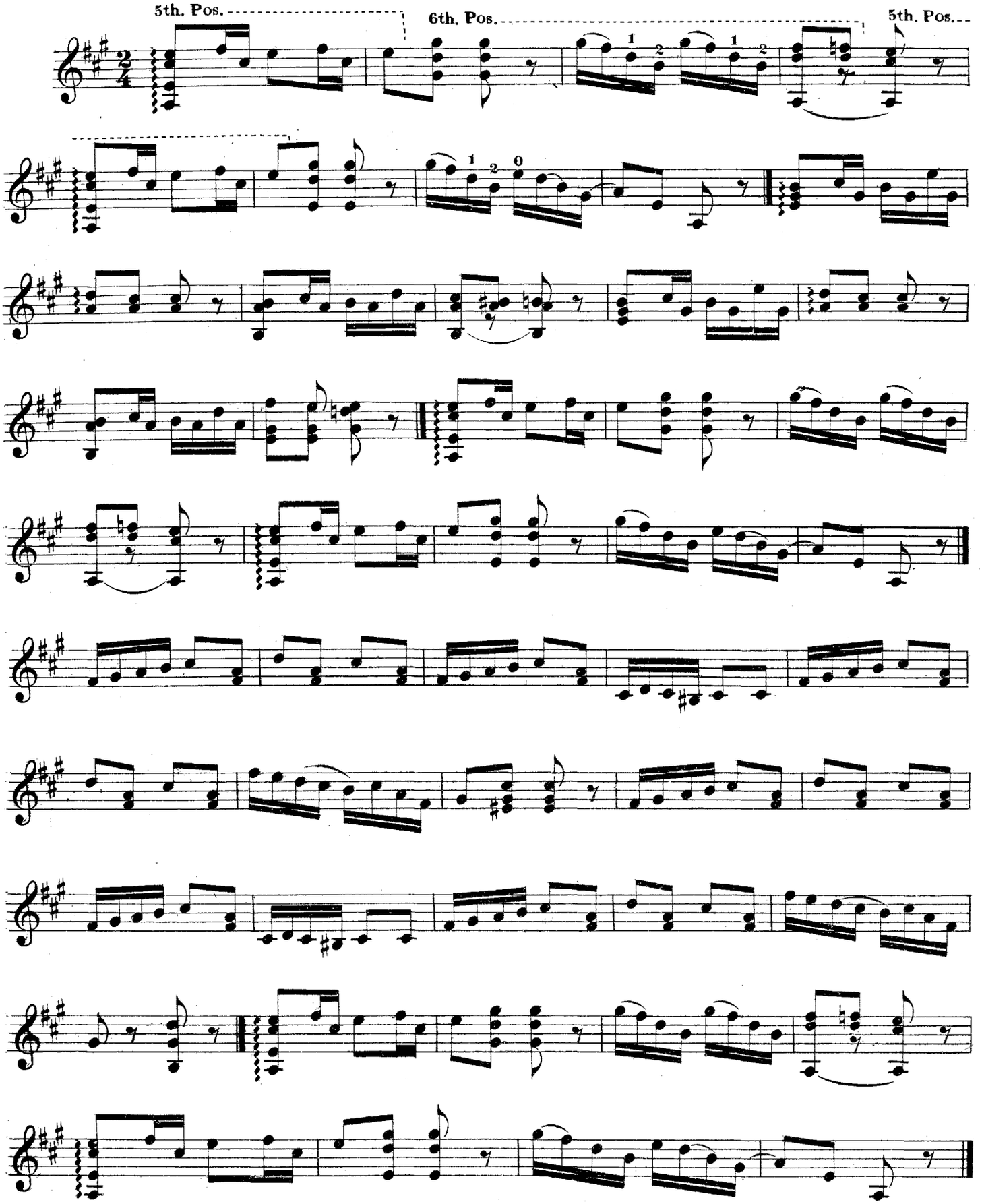
MINNA WALTZ.

GEO. C. DOBSON.



SPURR POLKA.

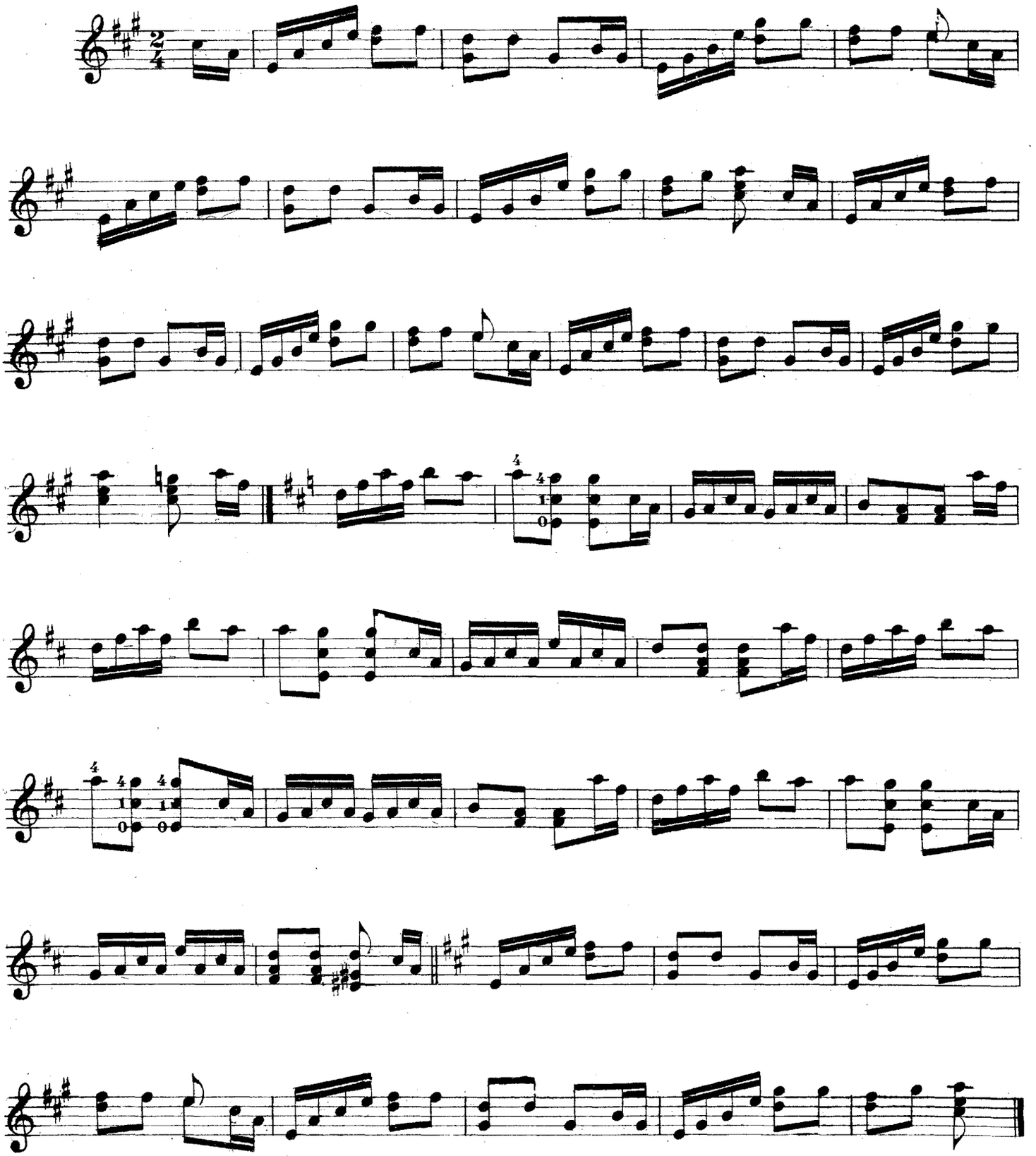
GEO. C. DOBSON.



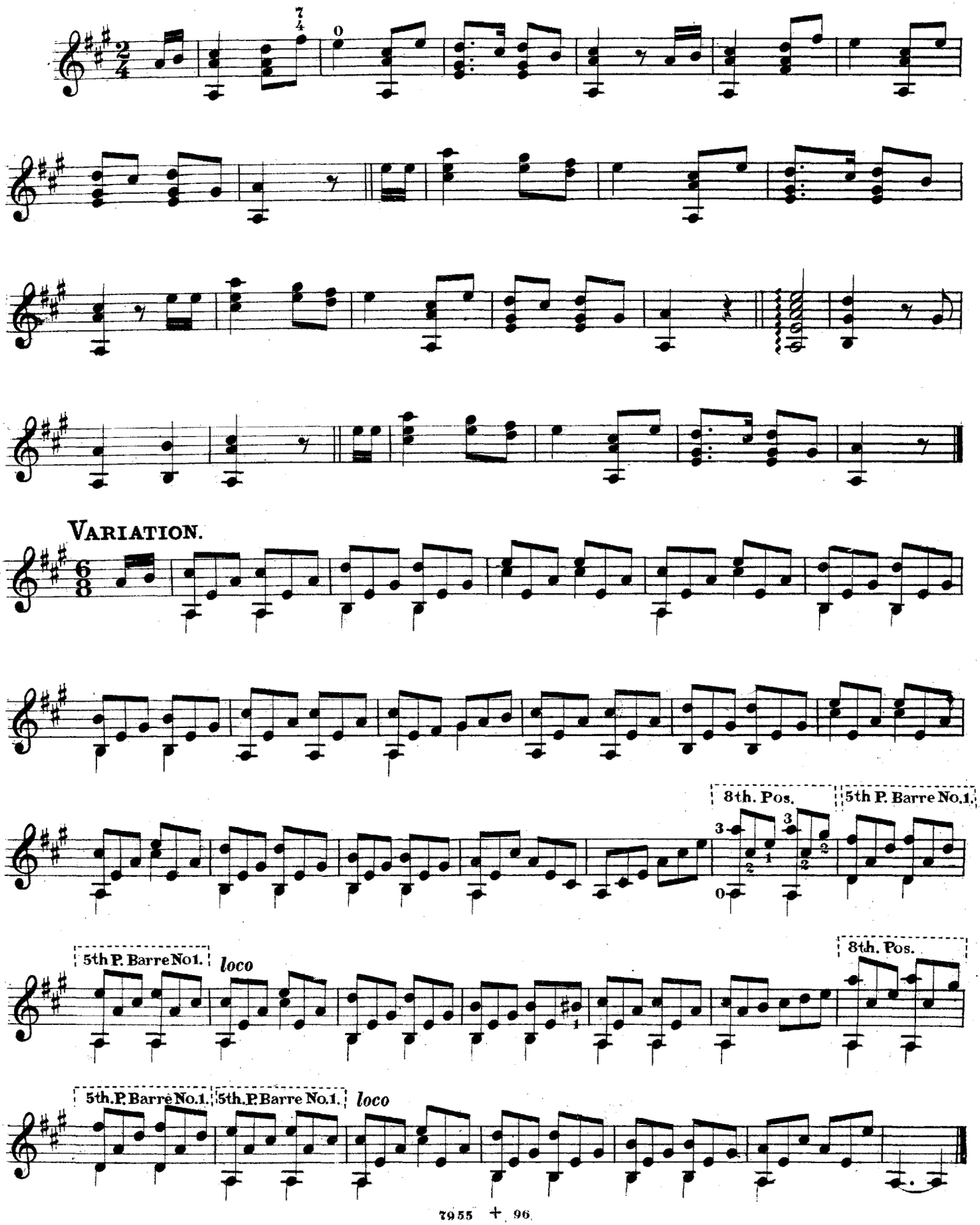
PERCY RUSS.

POLKA.

GEO. C. DOBSON.

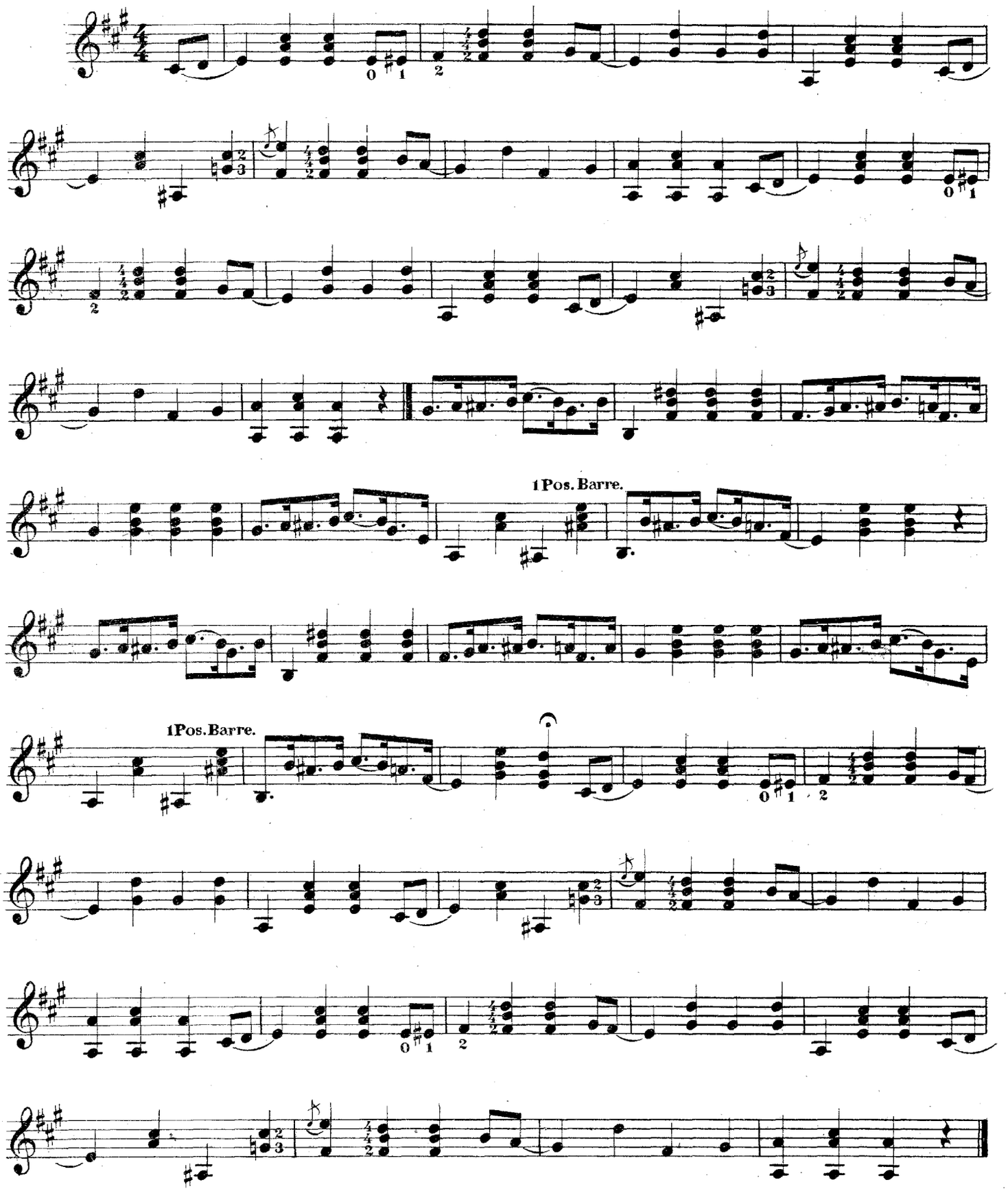


HOME SWEET HOME.



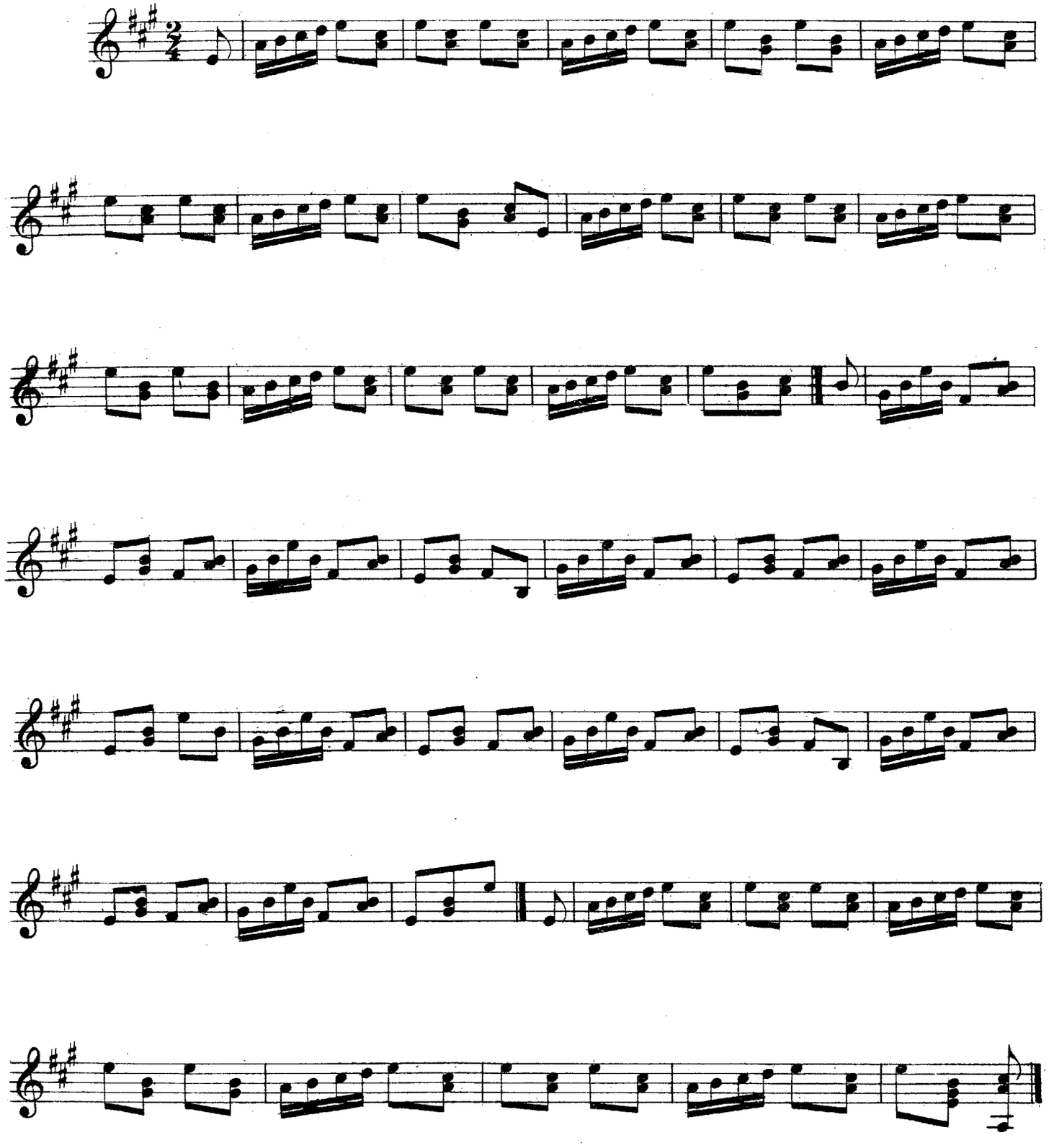
COLLIN'S SCHOTTISCHE.

W. G. COLLINS.



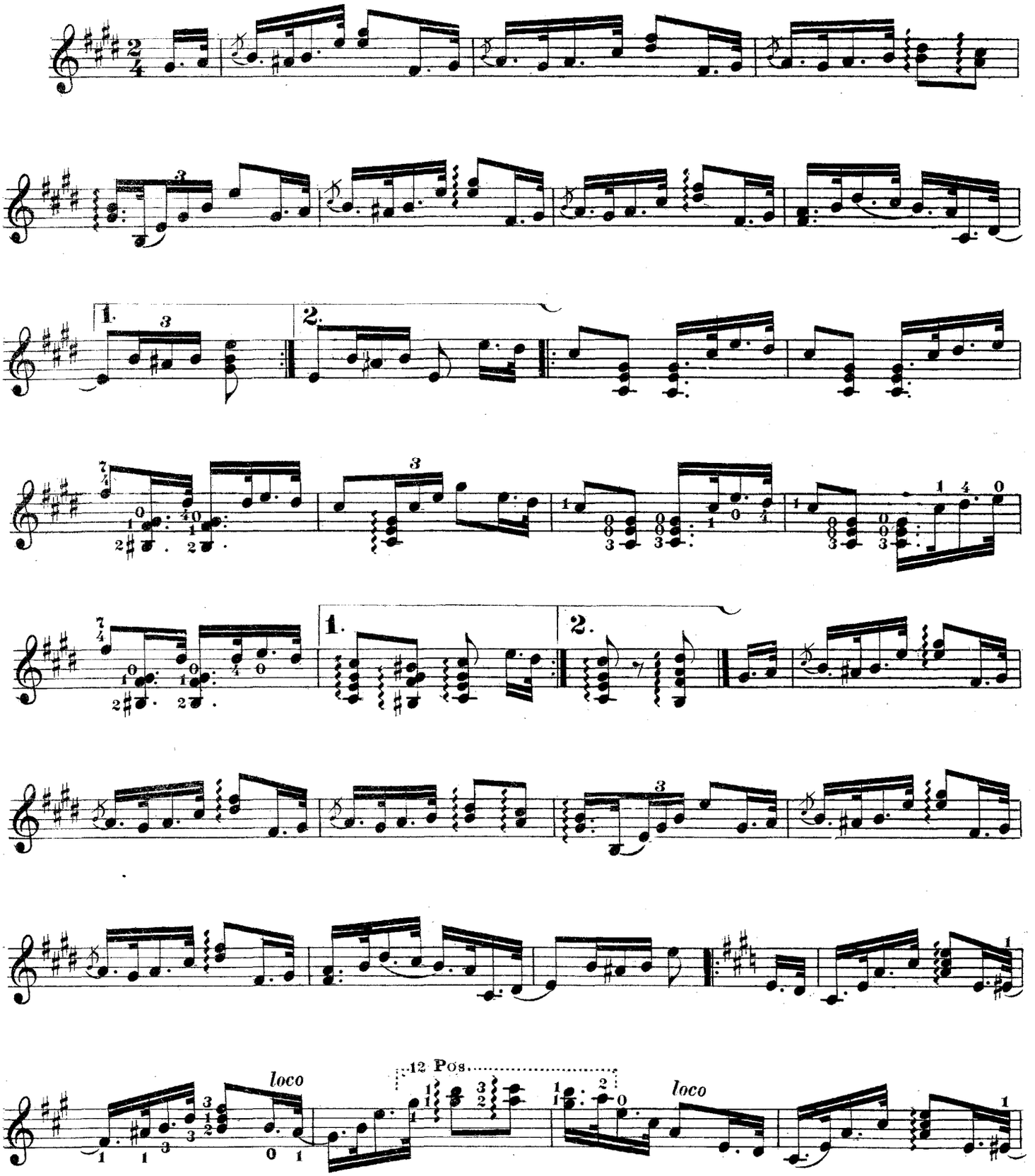
HAY SEED.

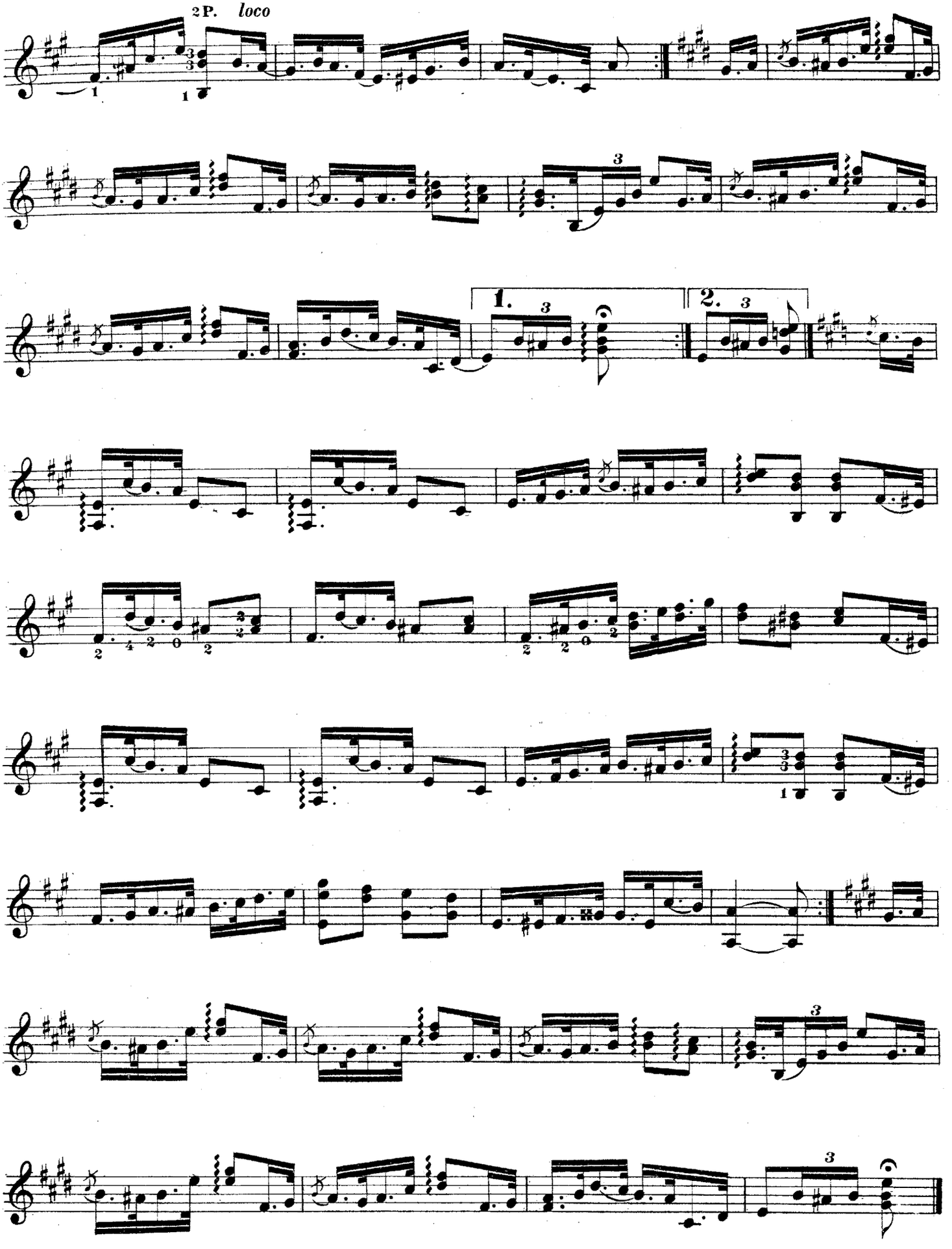
GEO. C. DOBSON.



BUDDING ROSE SCHOTTISCHE.

GEO. C. DOBSON.

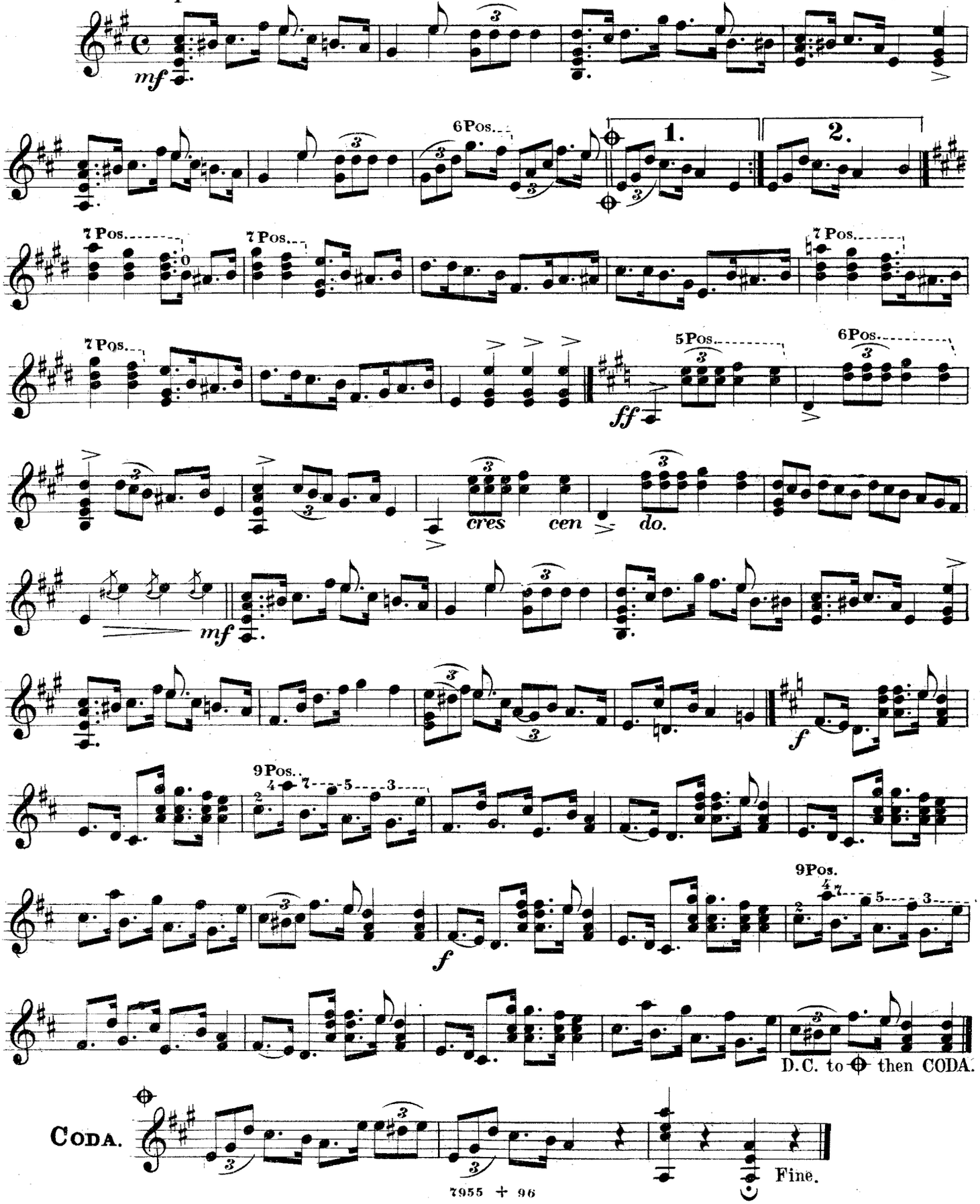



2 P. loco
1.
2.

NYMPHS' DANCE.

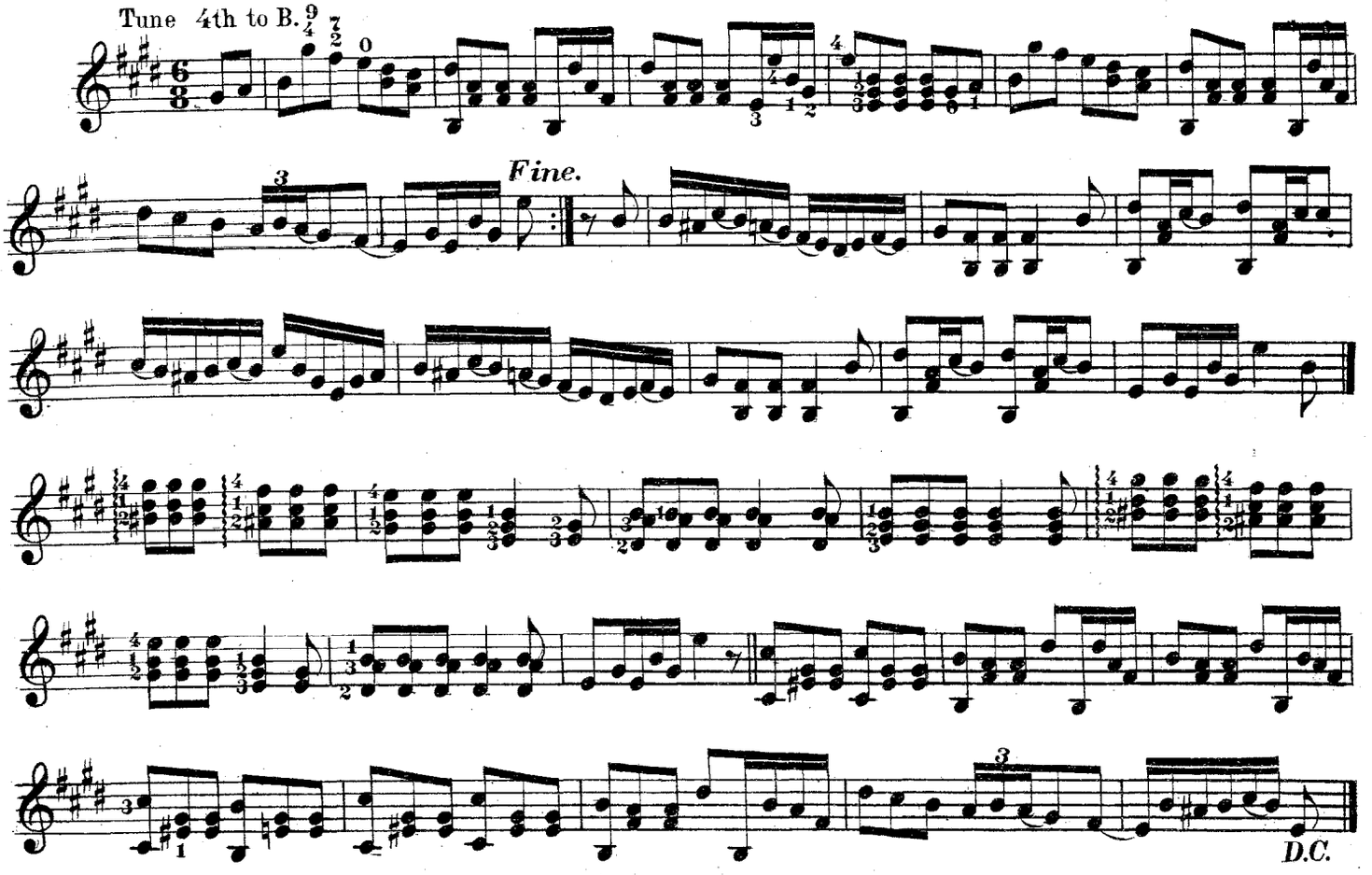
Tempo di Schottische.

THOS. J. ARMSTRONG.



STARLIGHT WALTZ.

GEO. C. DOBSON.



EXCELSIOR CLOG.

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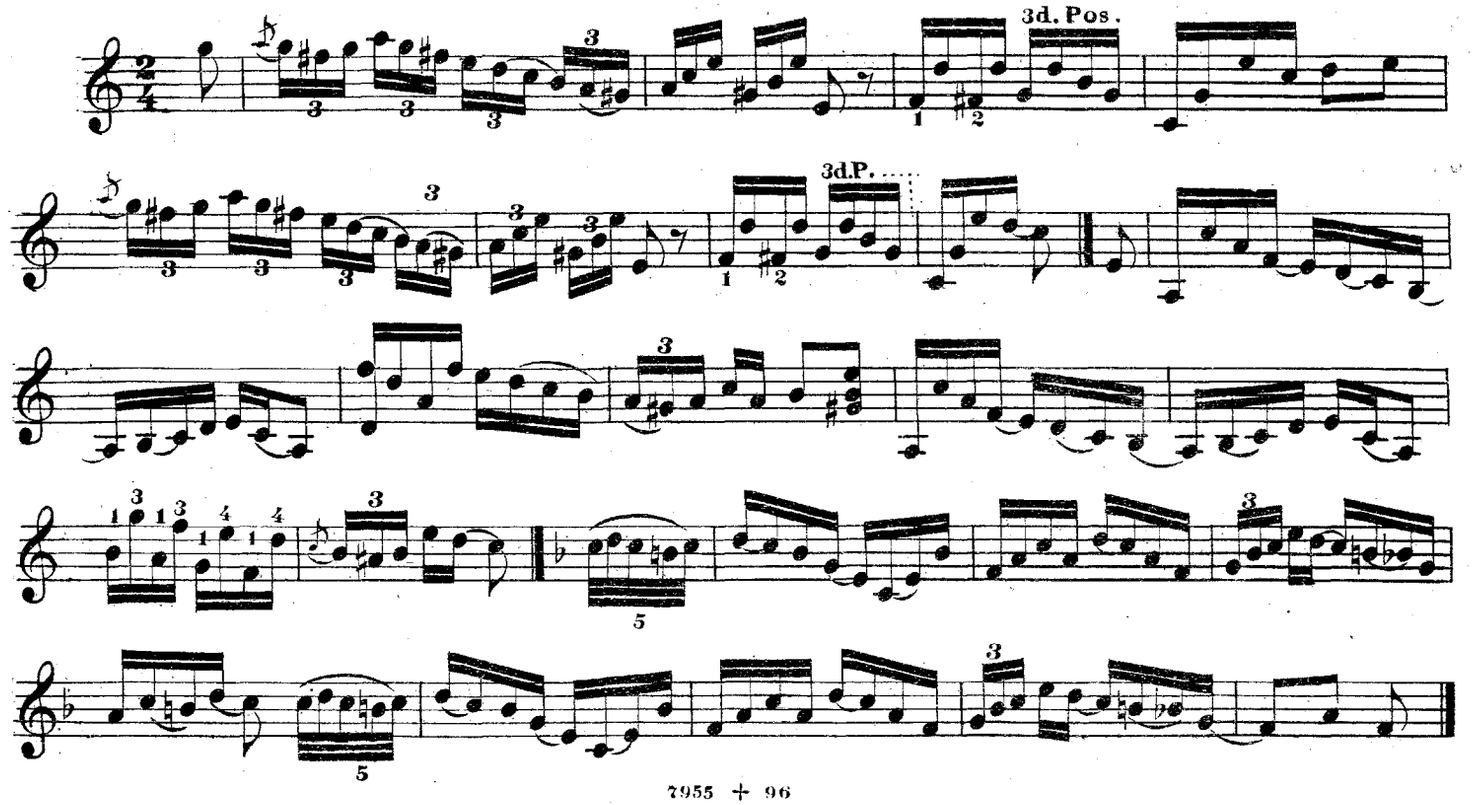
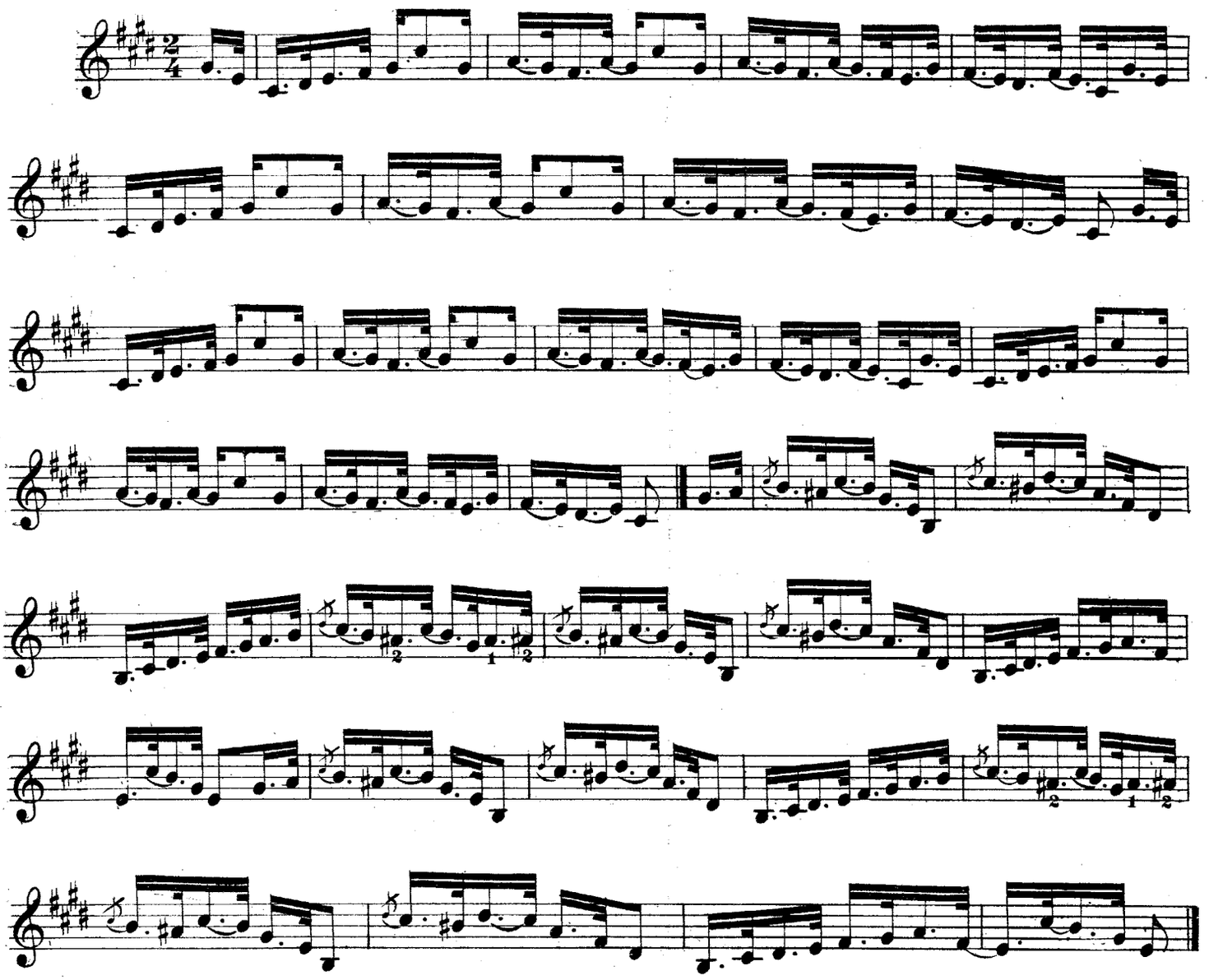
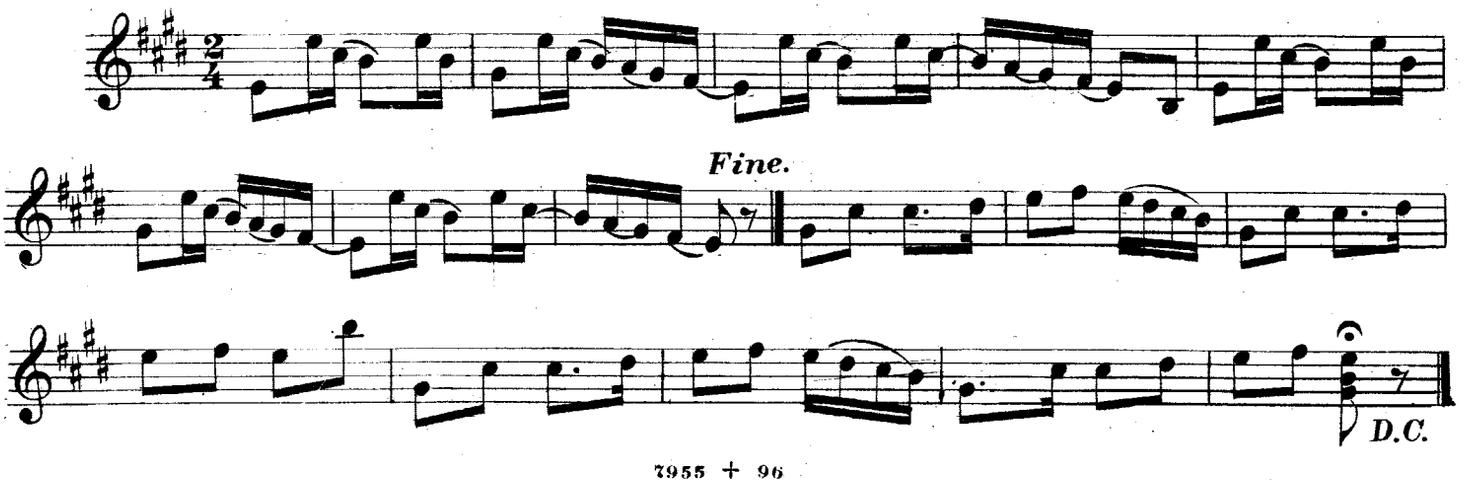


STRAIGHT JIG.

Arr. by BENNIE DOBSON.

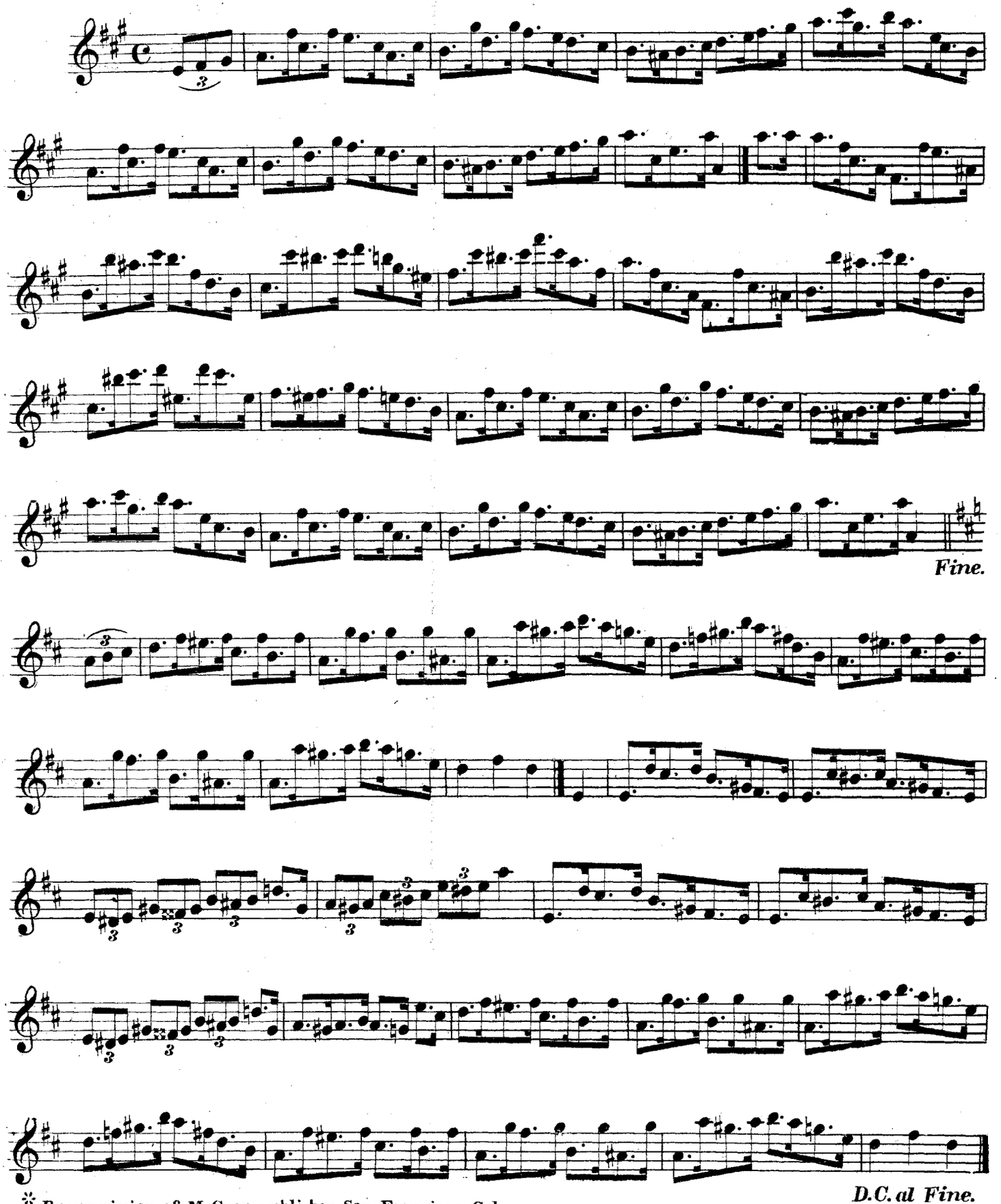


IRISH JIG.



* EUREKA CLOG DANCE.

LOUIS BODECKER.



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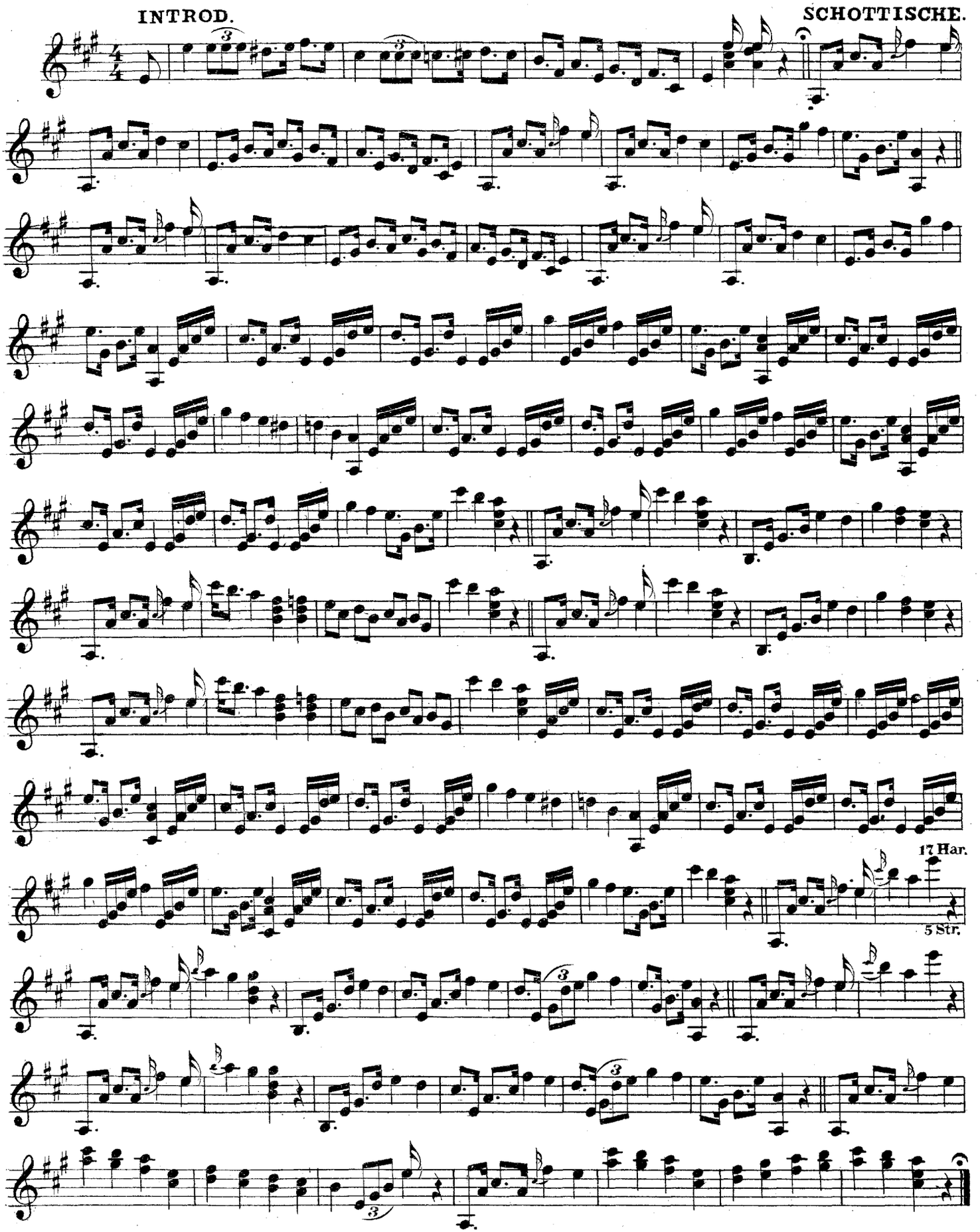
BRIDAL ROSE SCHOTTISCHE.

C.H. YOUNG.

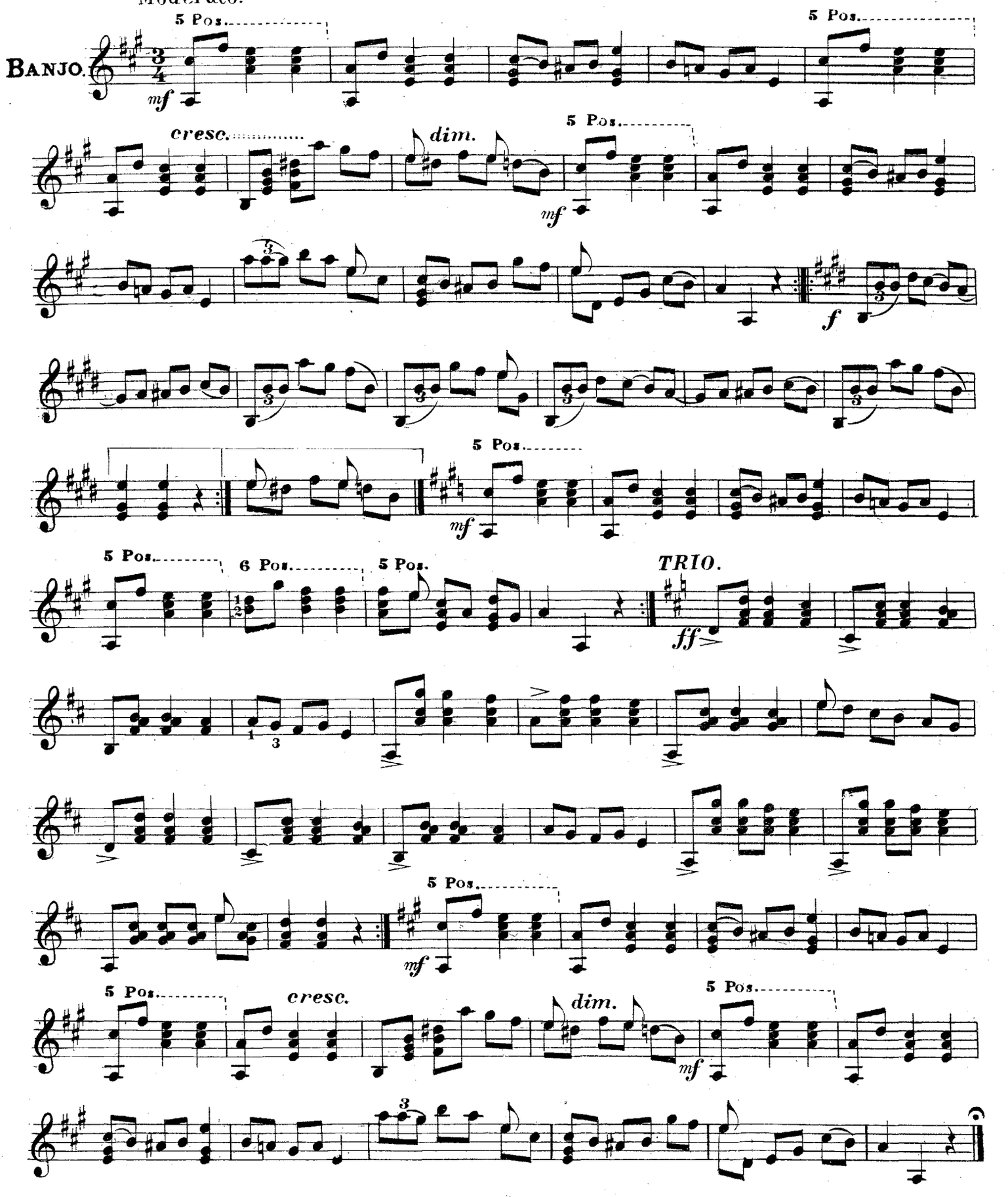


CARRIE WALTZ.

THOS. J. ARMSTRONG.

Moderato.

BANJO.

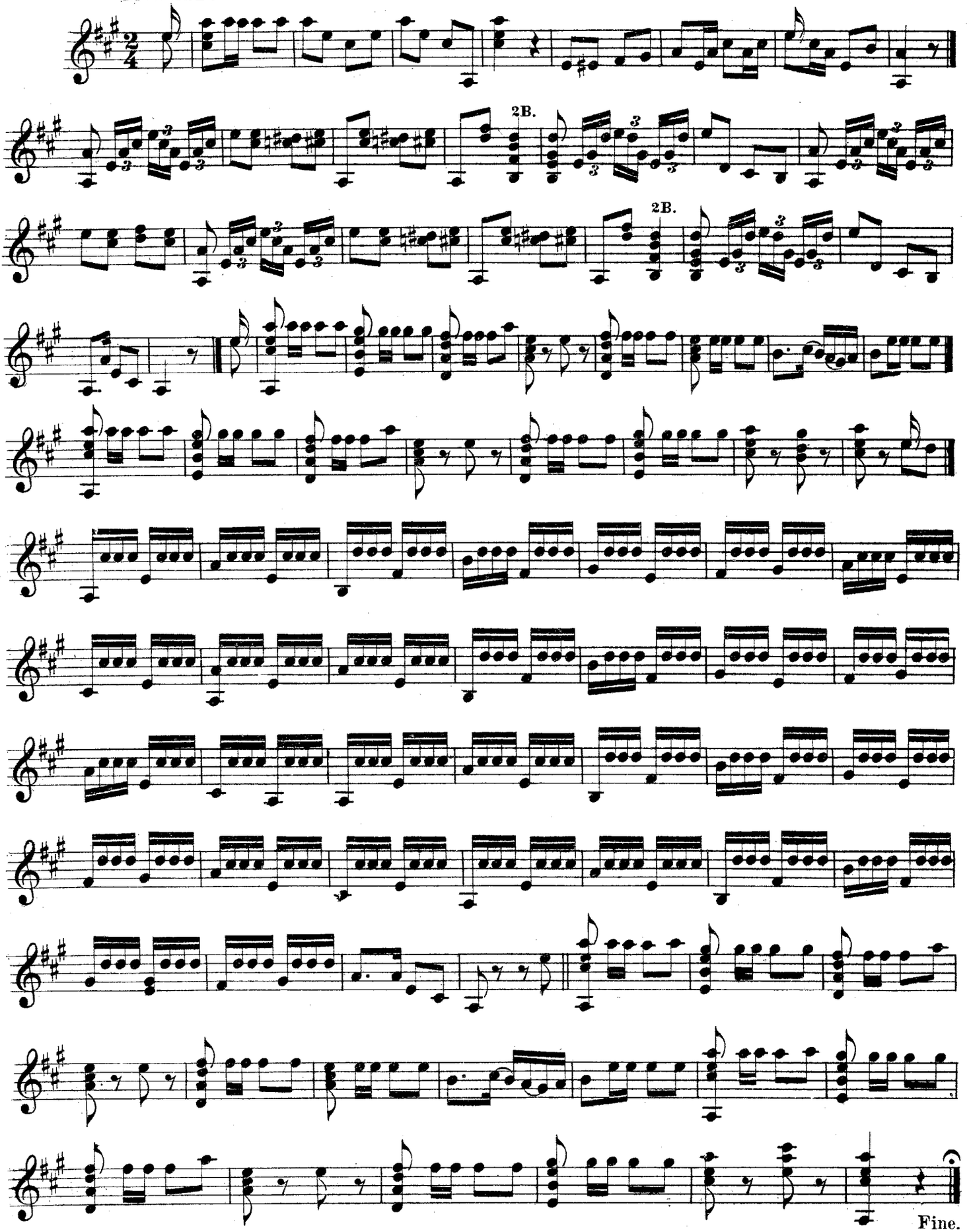


DAWN OF SPRING.

QUICKSTEP.

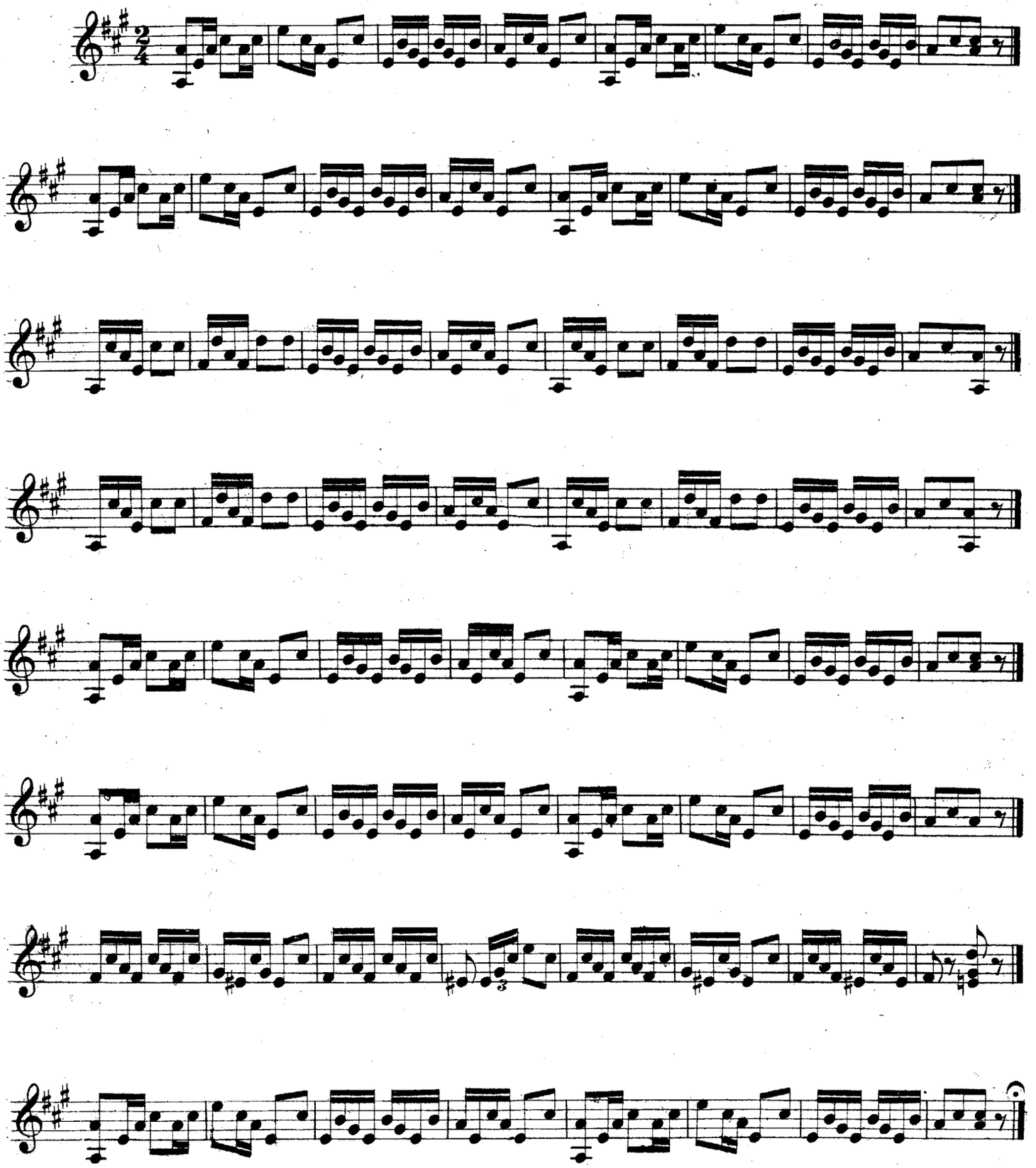
INTROD.

C. H. YOUNG.



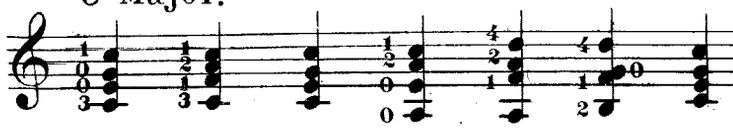
LYNN CLOG HORNPIPE.

C. H. YOUNG.

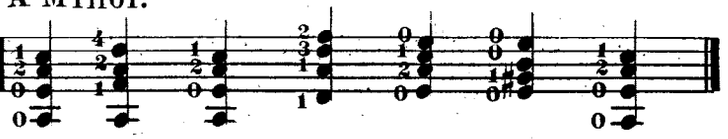


To play the following chords in C major and A minor, also the Abby March and Jumbo Jig, tune the 2d. Str. to G.

C Major.

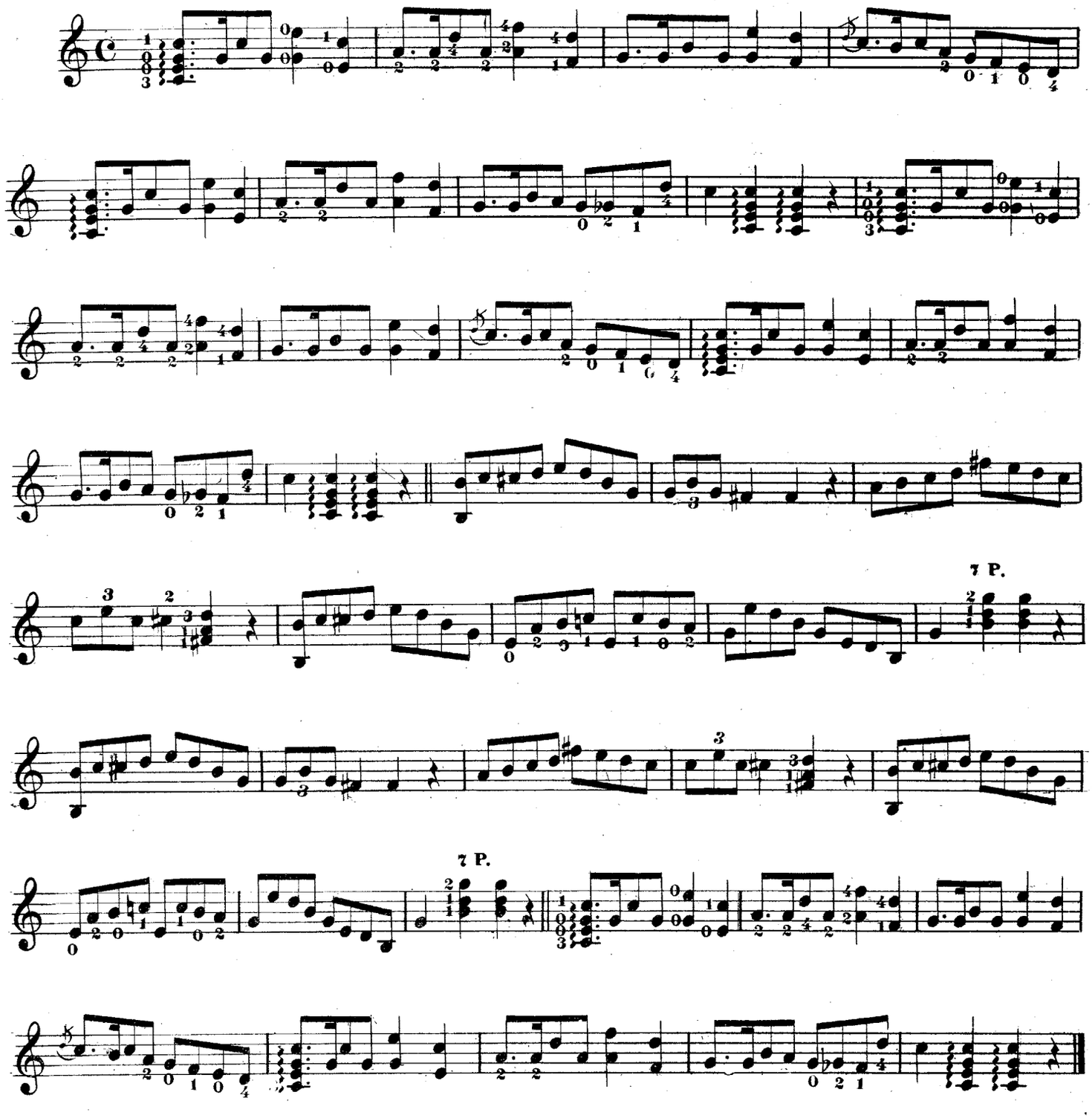


A Minor.



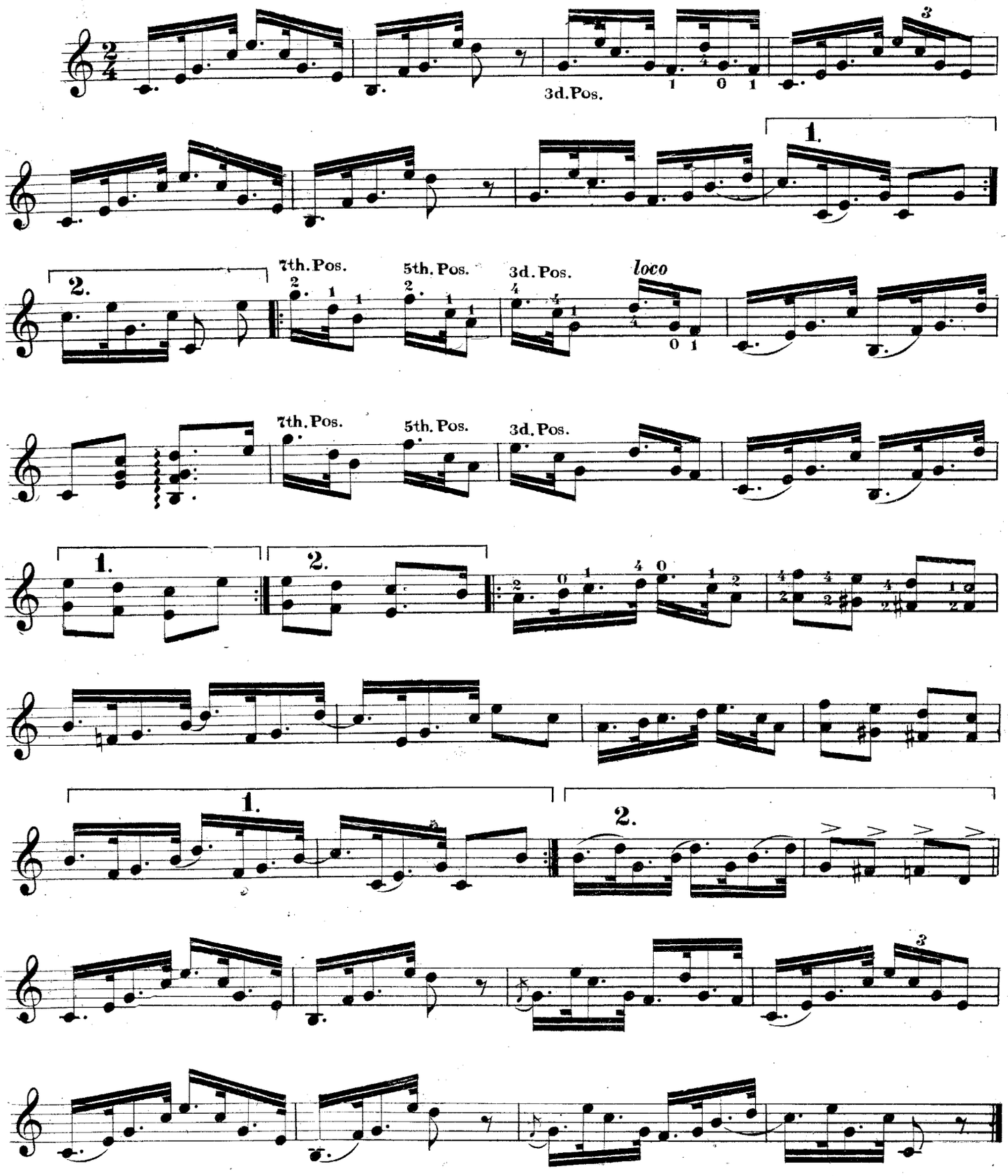
ABBY MARCH.

GEO. C. DOBSON.



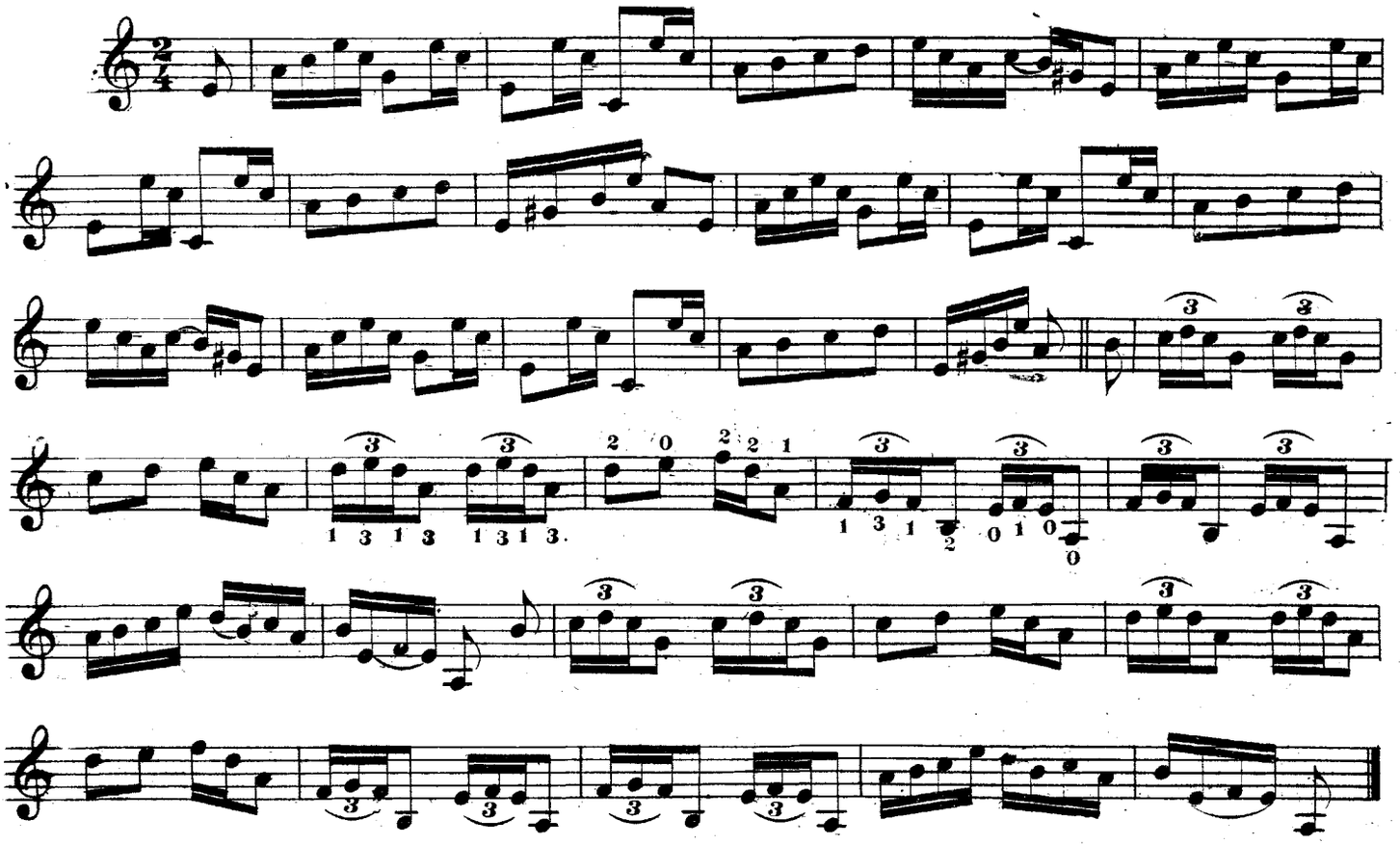
JUMBO JIG.

GEO. C. DOBSON.



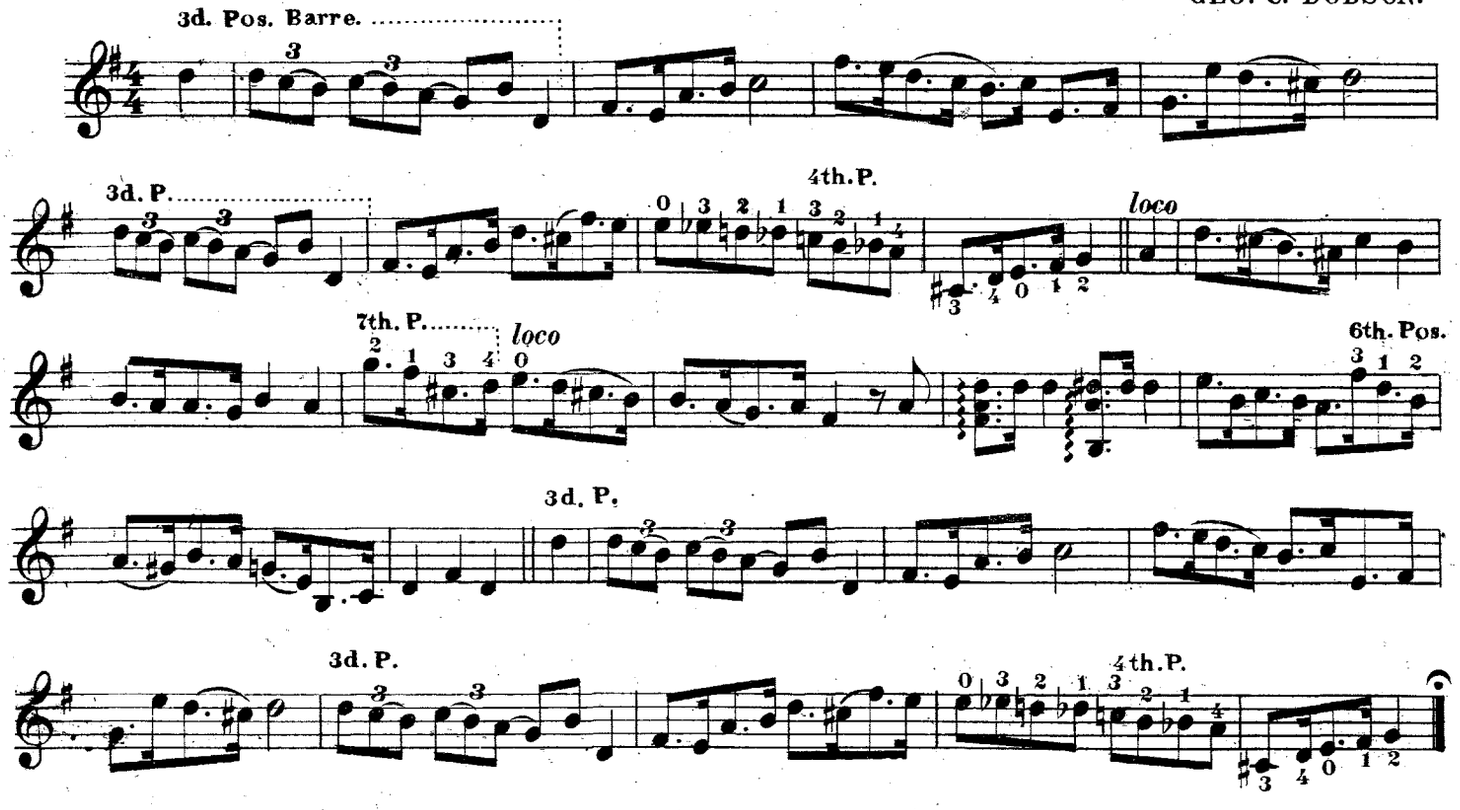
MINOR JIG.

GEO. C. DOBSON.



CHROMATIC CLOG.

GEO. C. DOBSON.



THE YORK, A NEW DANCE.

BANJO DUETT.

STRAUSS.

Polka Mazurka.

1st Banjo.

2d Banjo.

5 Pos. 6 Pos. 12 Pos.

1. 2.

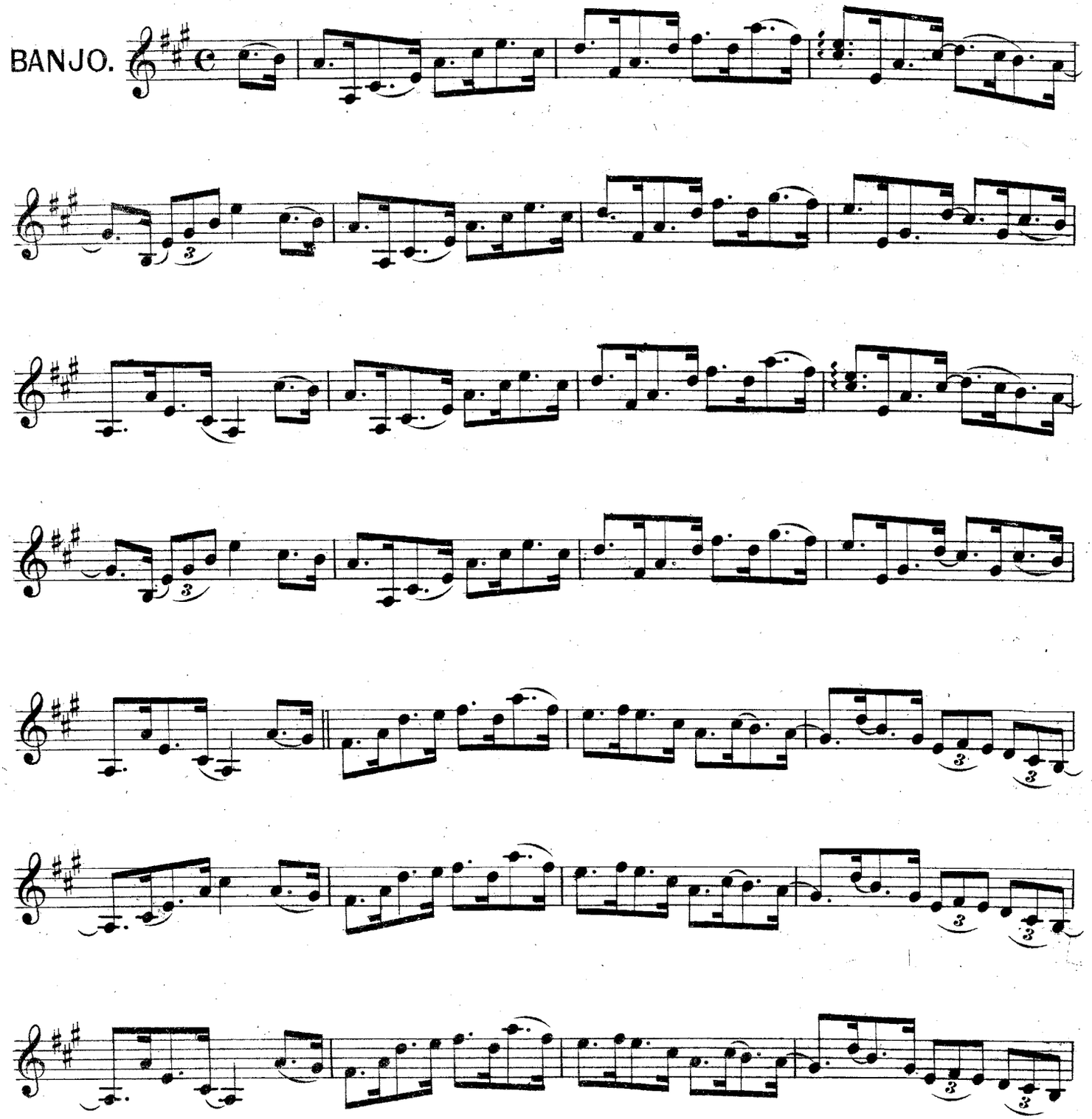
D.C. to ⊕ then to Coda.

Coda.

R. N. C. CLOG

GEO. C. DOBSON

BANJO.



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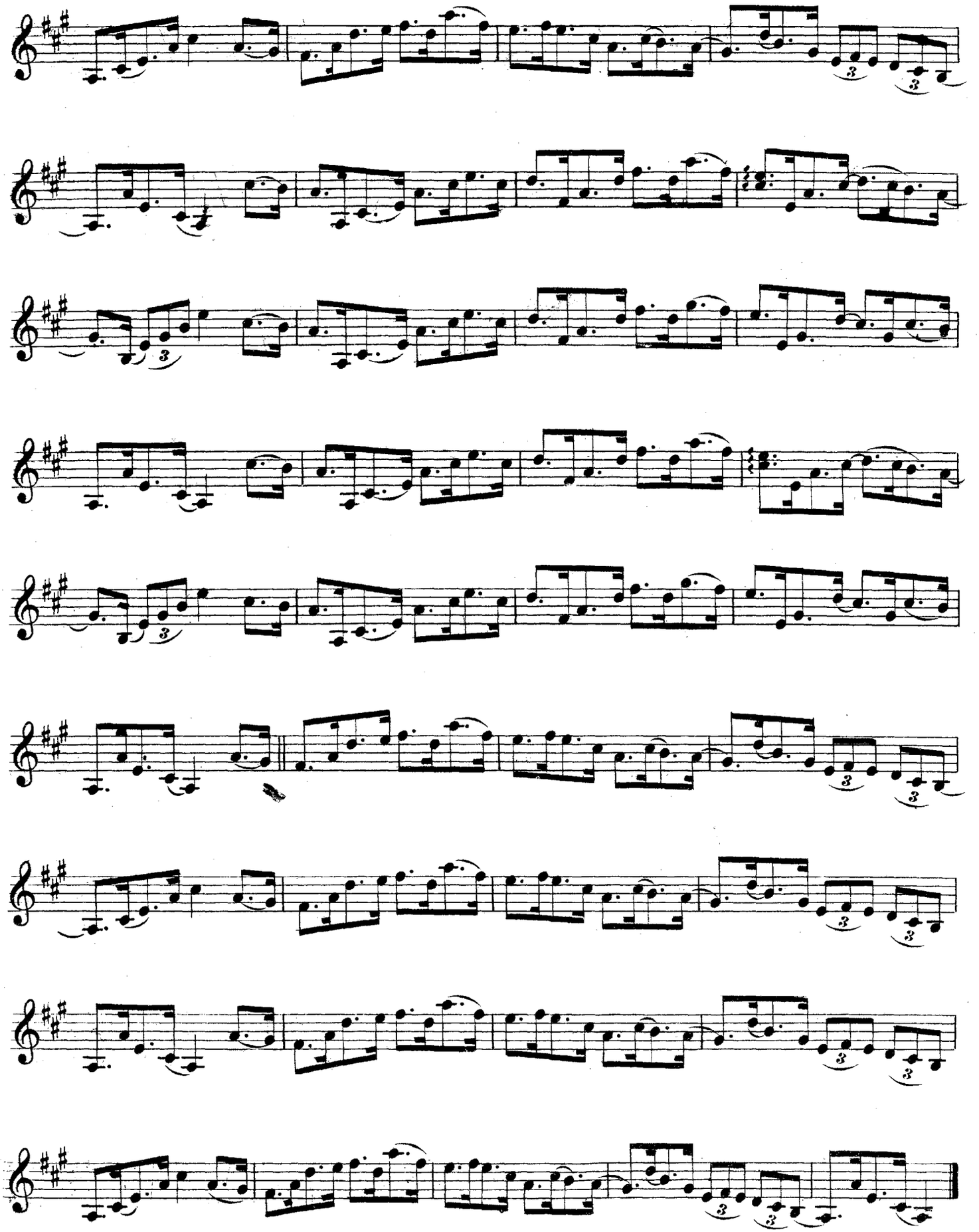
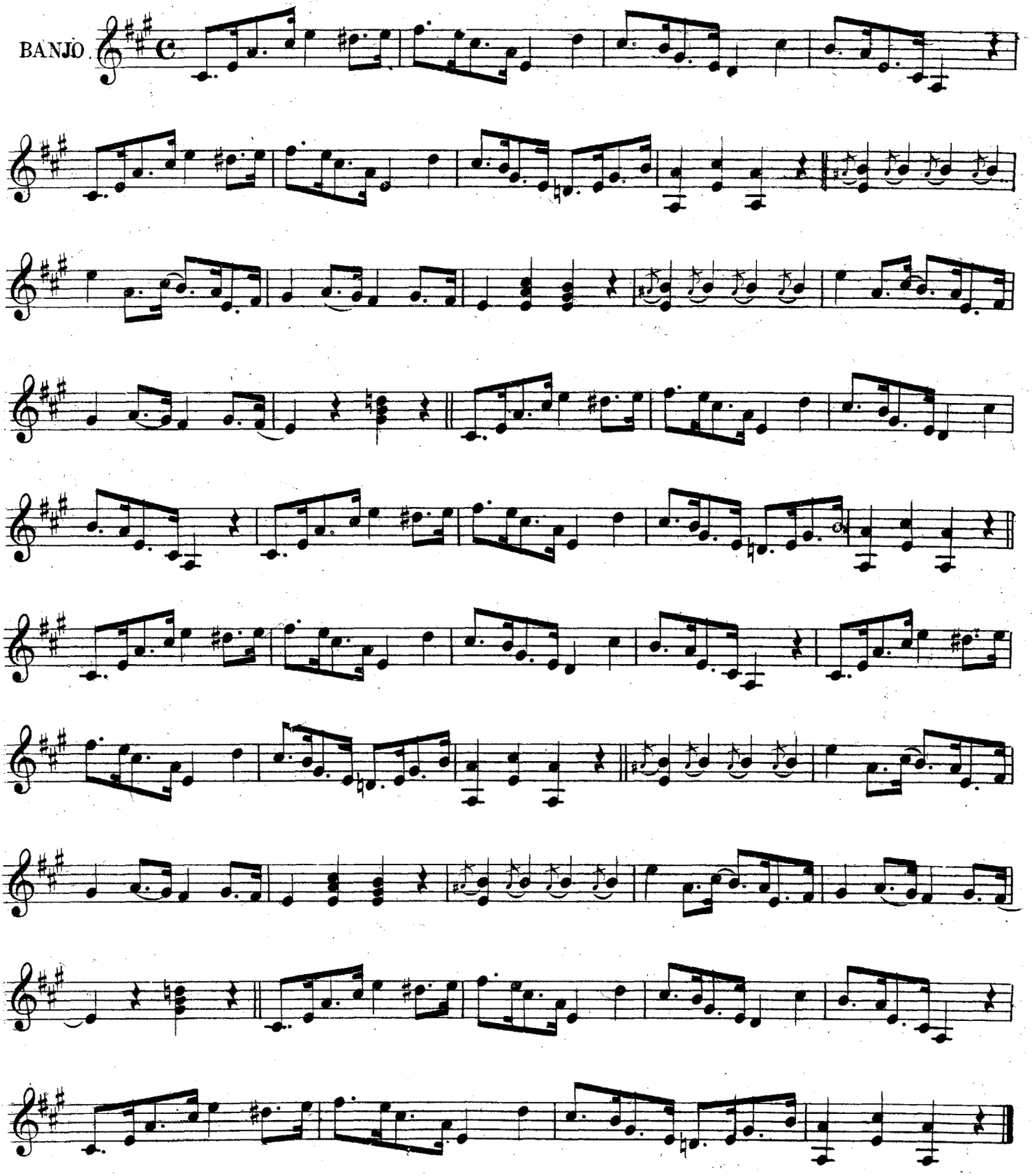


ENGLISH CLOG
No. I

Arr. by GEO. C. DOBSON

BANJO.



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No. 2

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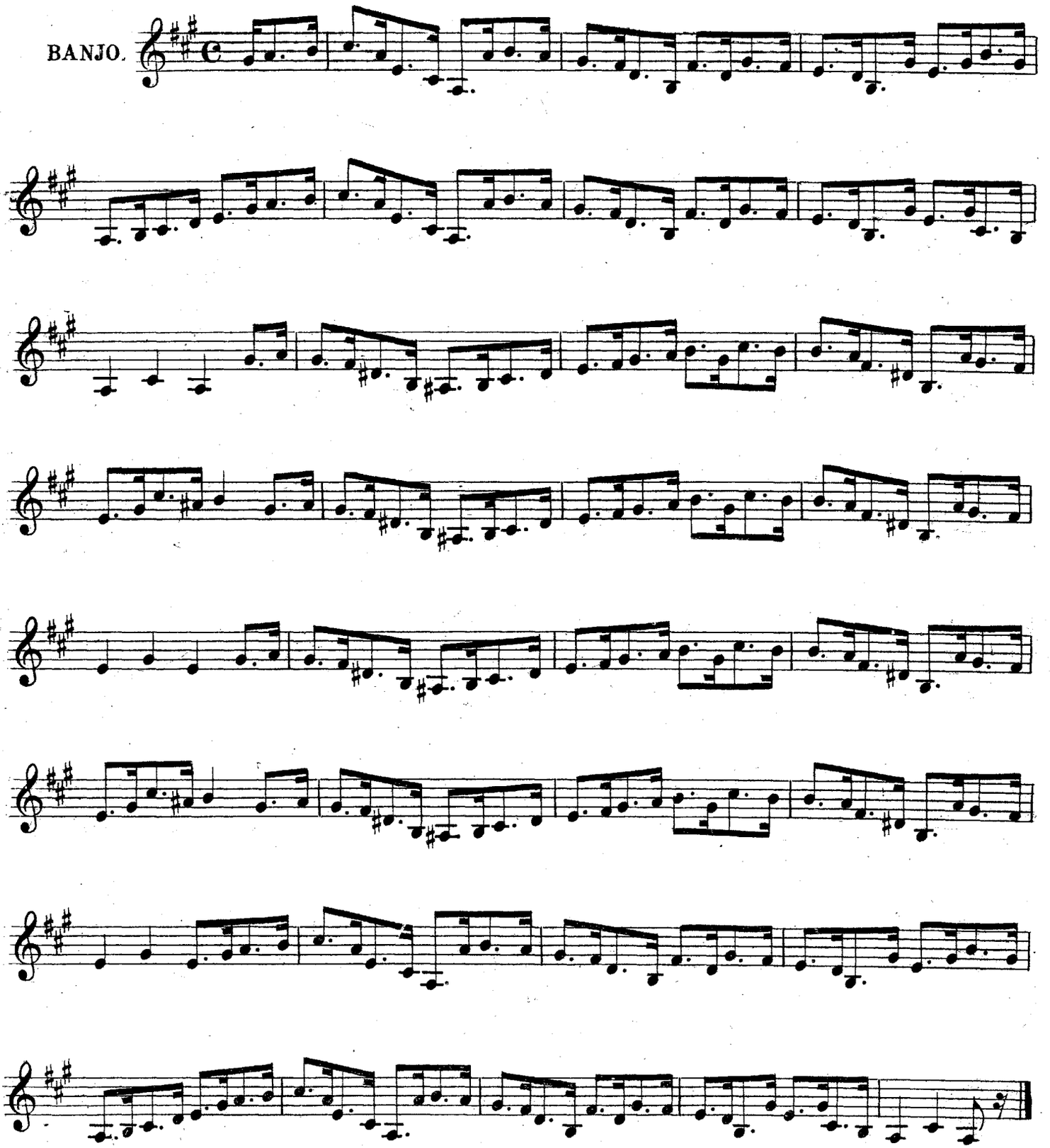

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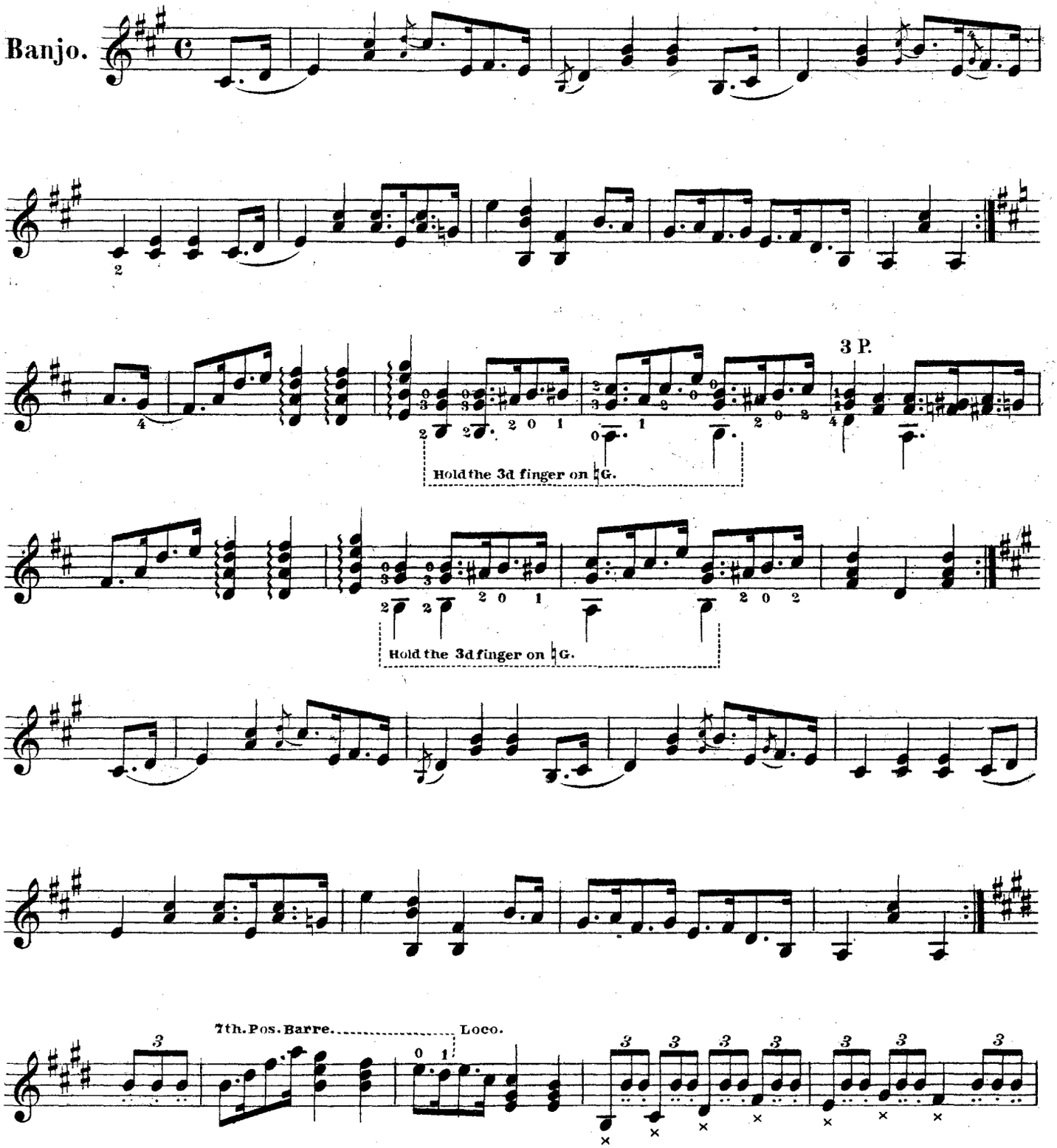
Composed for the "FOLIO"

By GEO. C. DOBSON.
Of Boston Mass. Mch.
1888.

Banjo.



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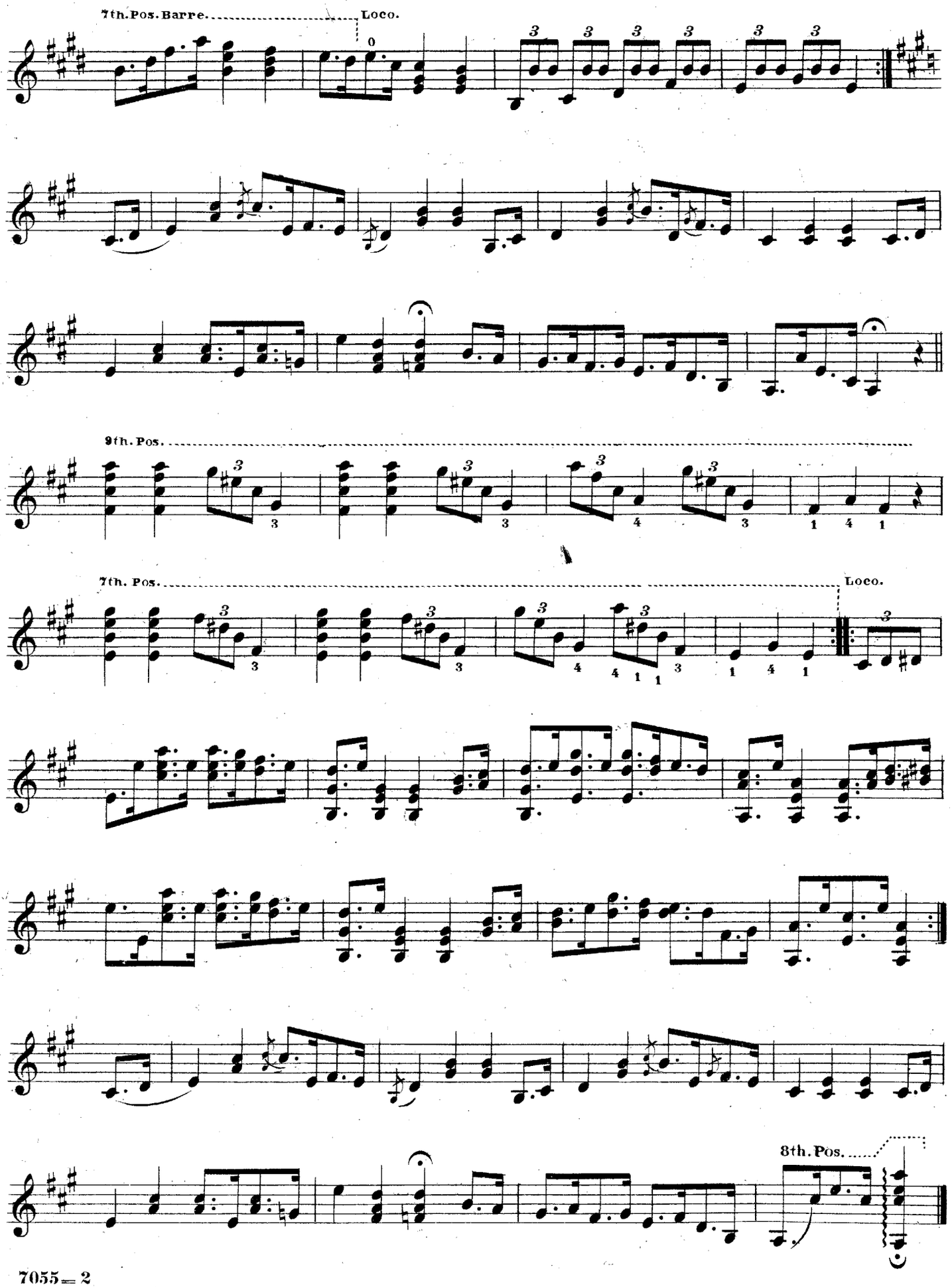
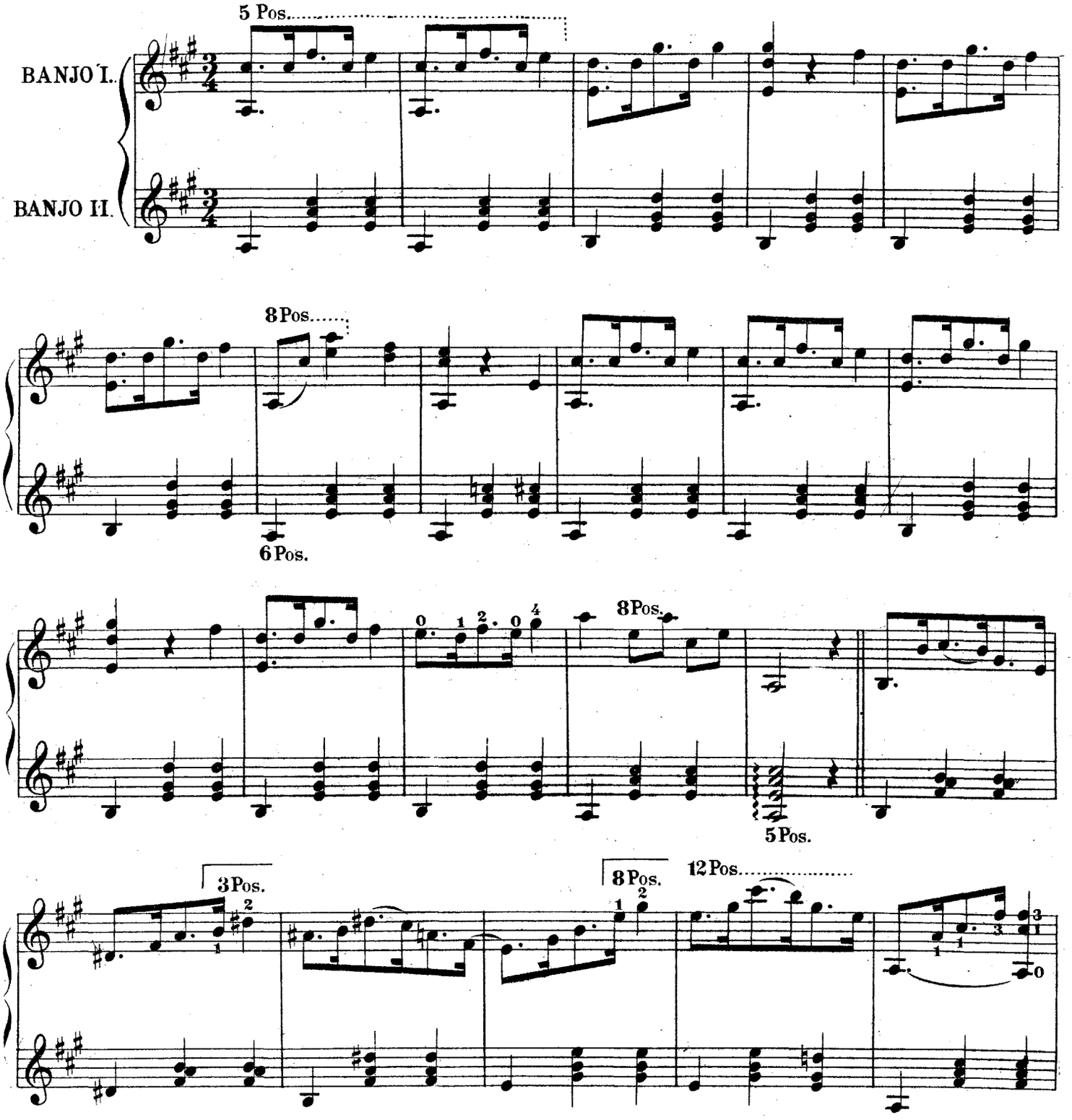

7th. Pos. Barre.
Loco.
9th. Pos.
7th. Pos.
Loco.
8th. Pos.

GEM MAZURKA

GEO. C. DOBSON



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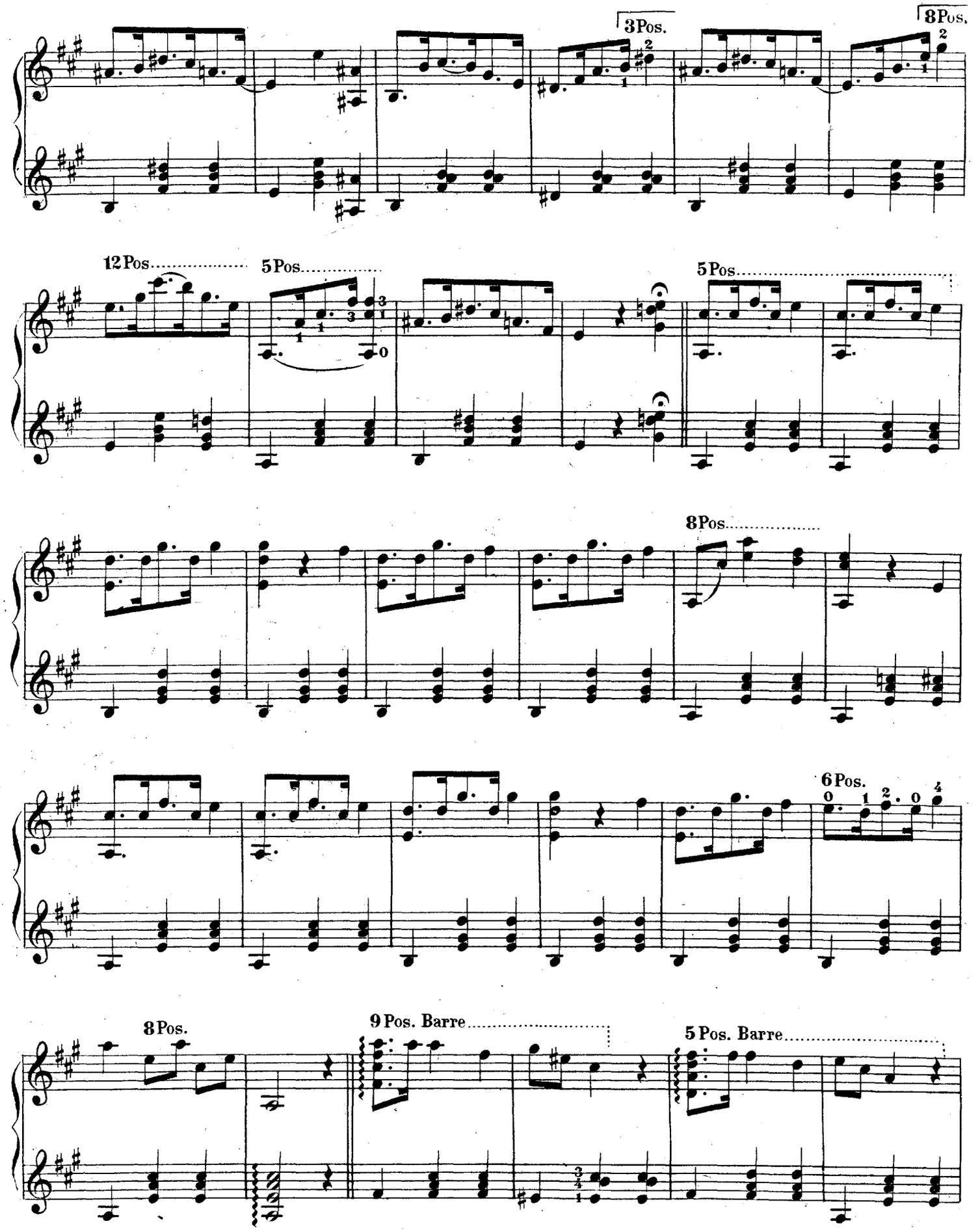
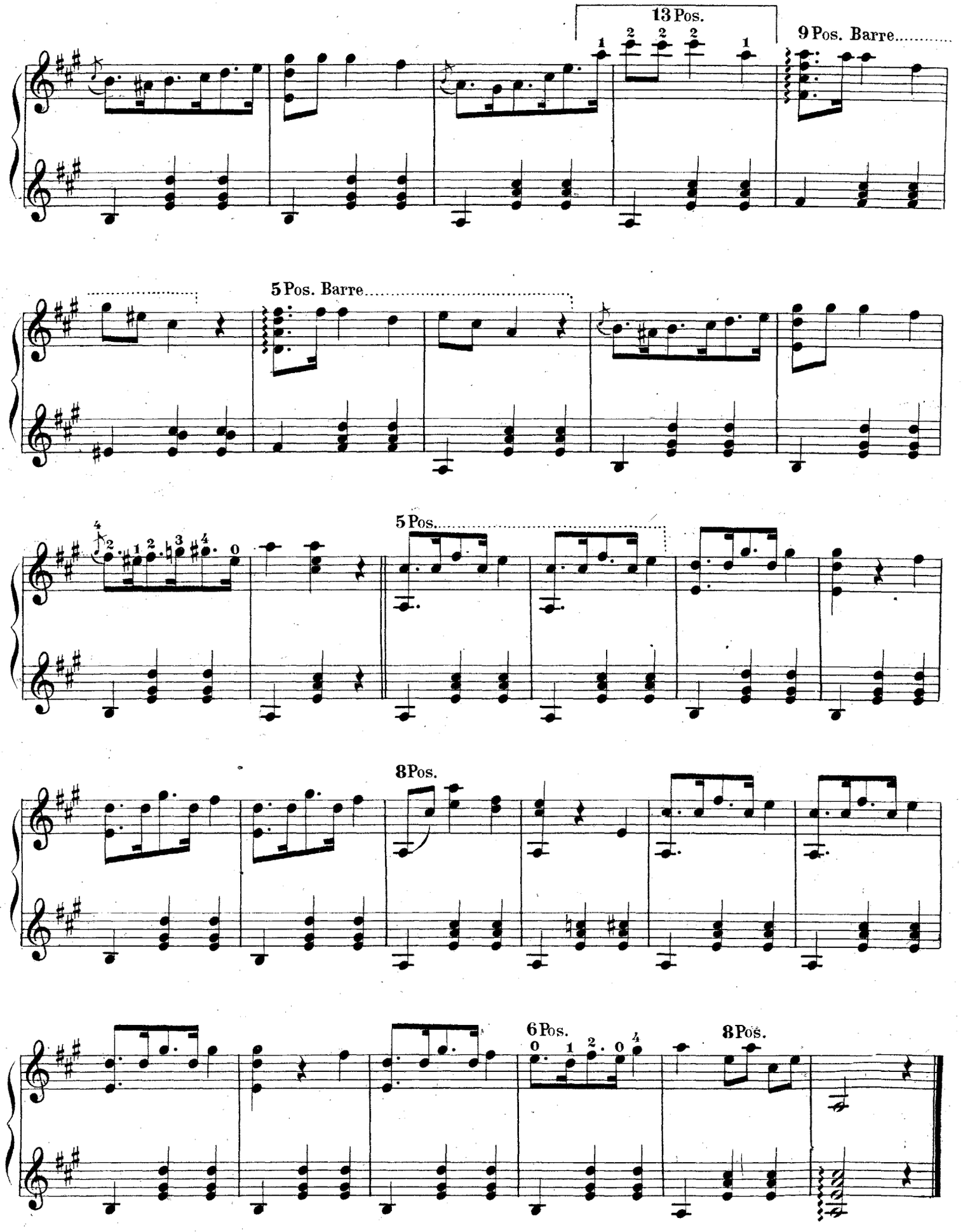
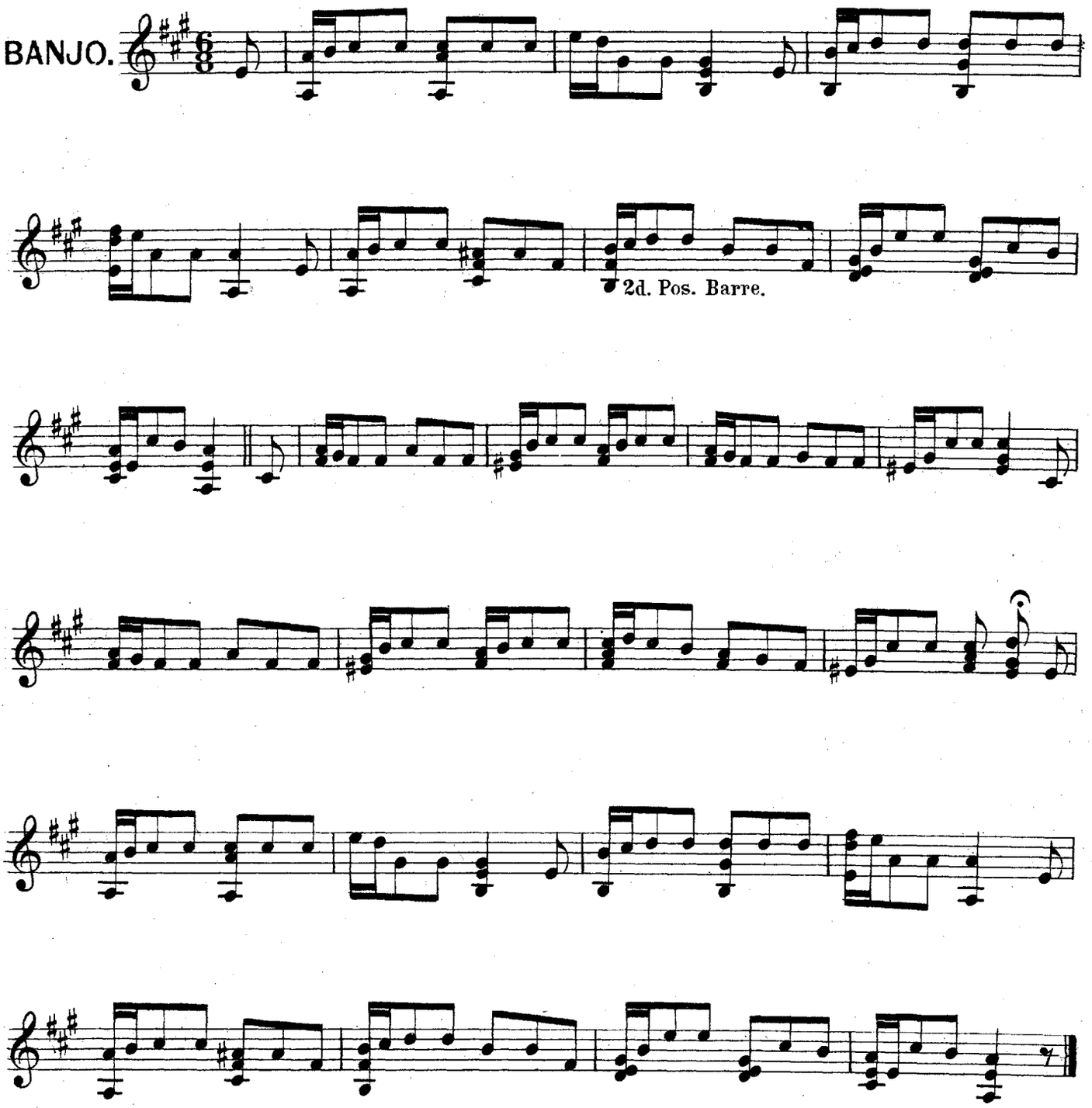

3 Pos.
8 Pos.
12 Pos.
5 Pos.
5 Pos.
8 Pos.
6 Pos.
8 Pos.
9 Pos. Barre
5 Pos. Barre


13 Pos.
9 Pos. Barre
5 Pos. Barre
5 Pos.
8 Pos.
6 Pos.
8 Pos.

ROMANCE.

GEO. C. DOBSON.

BANJO.



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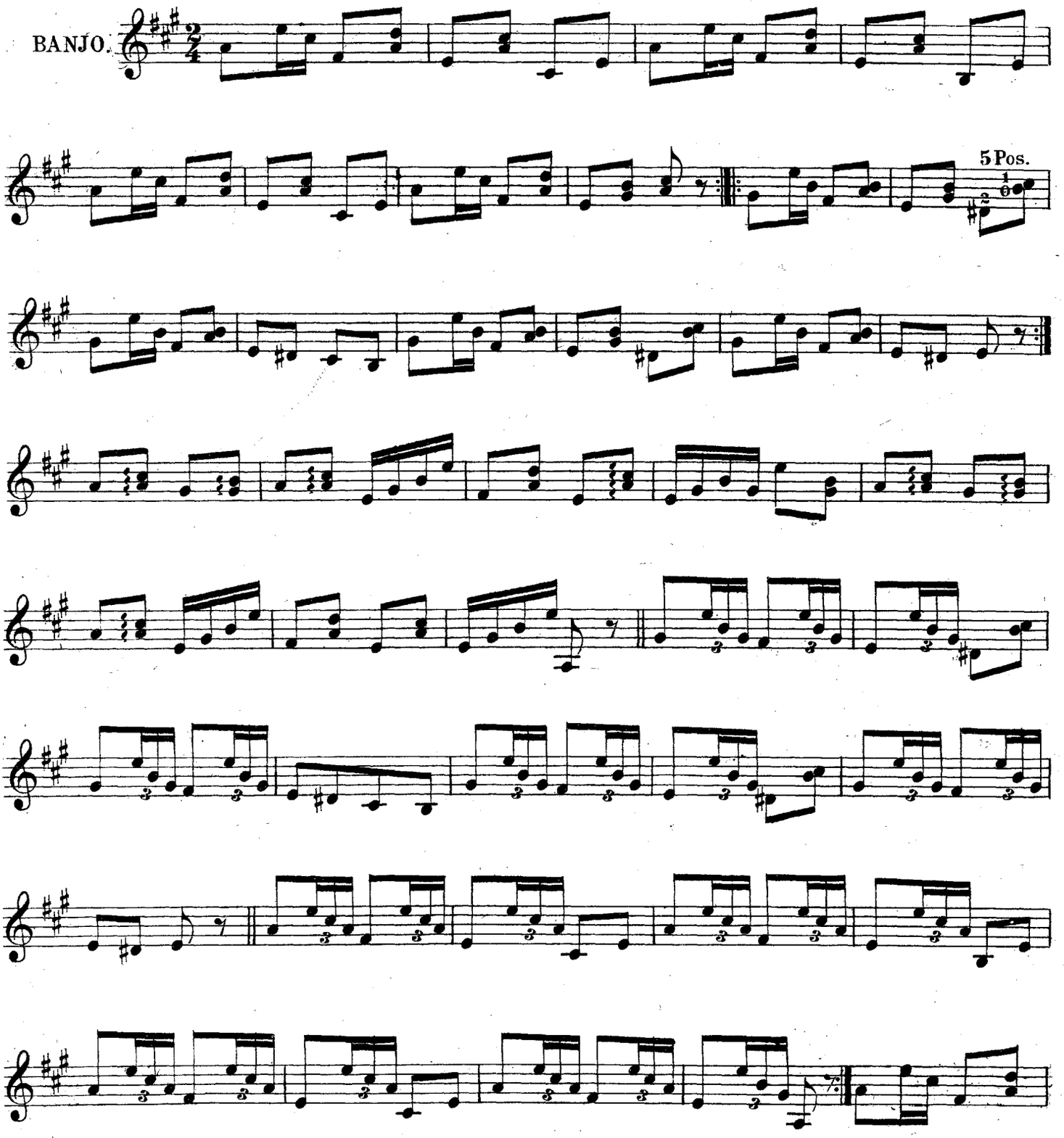
THE JOLLY MOKE

PLANTATION DANCE

GEO. C. DOBSON



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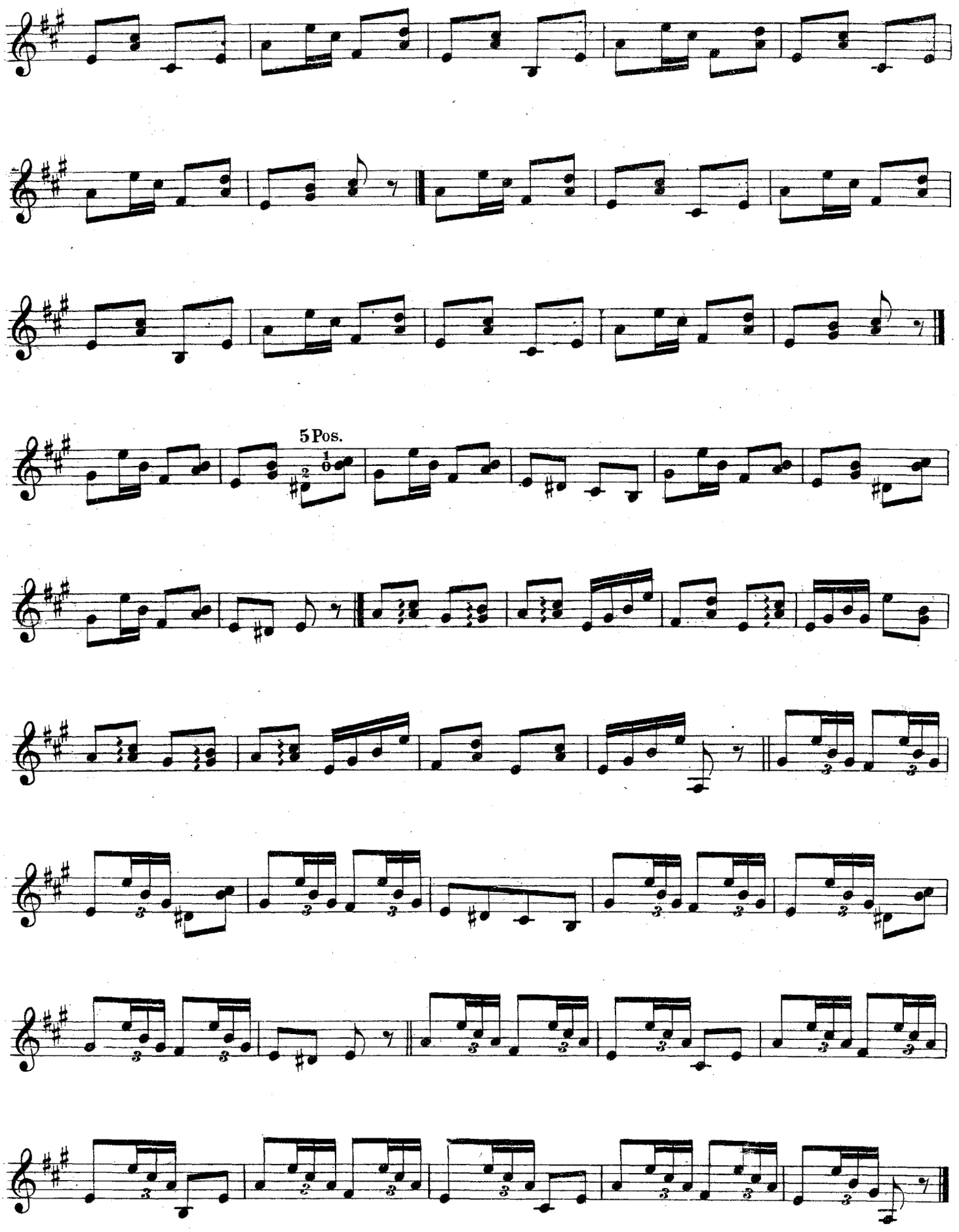
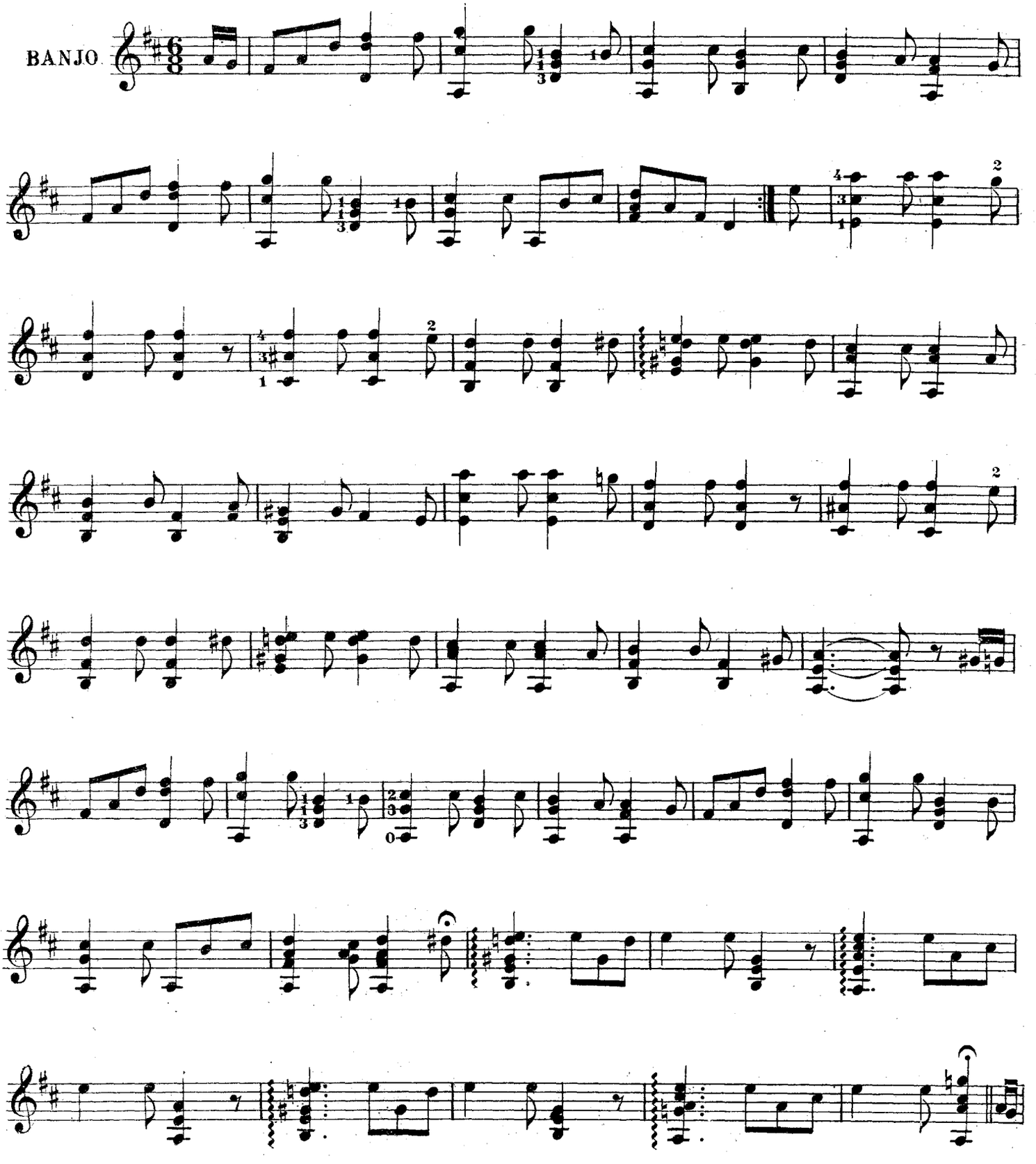

5 Pos.

A MERRY DANCE

GEO. C. DOBSON

BANJO



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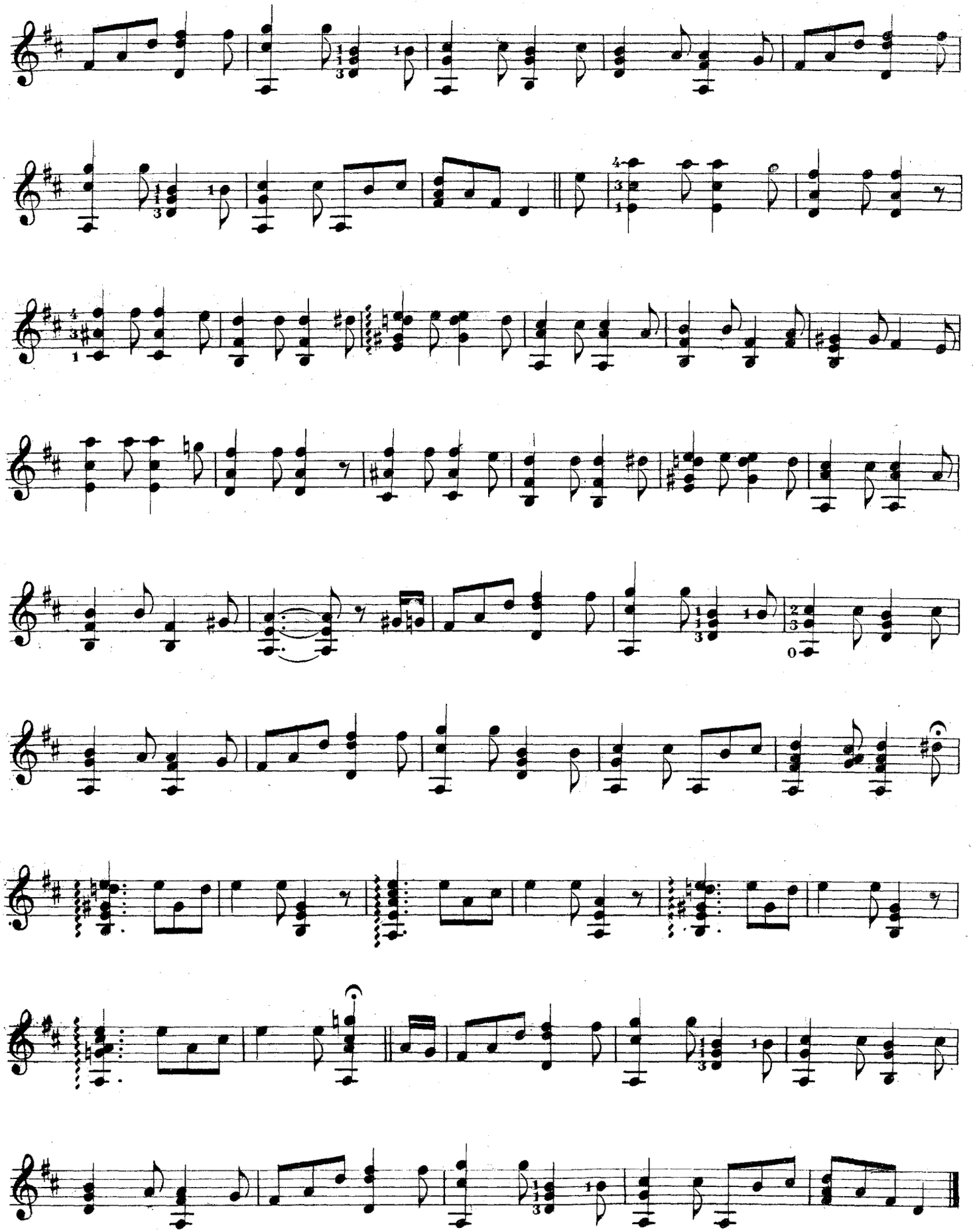
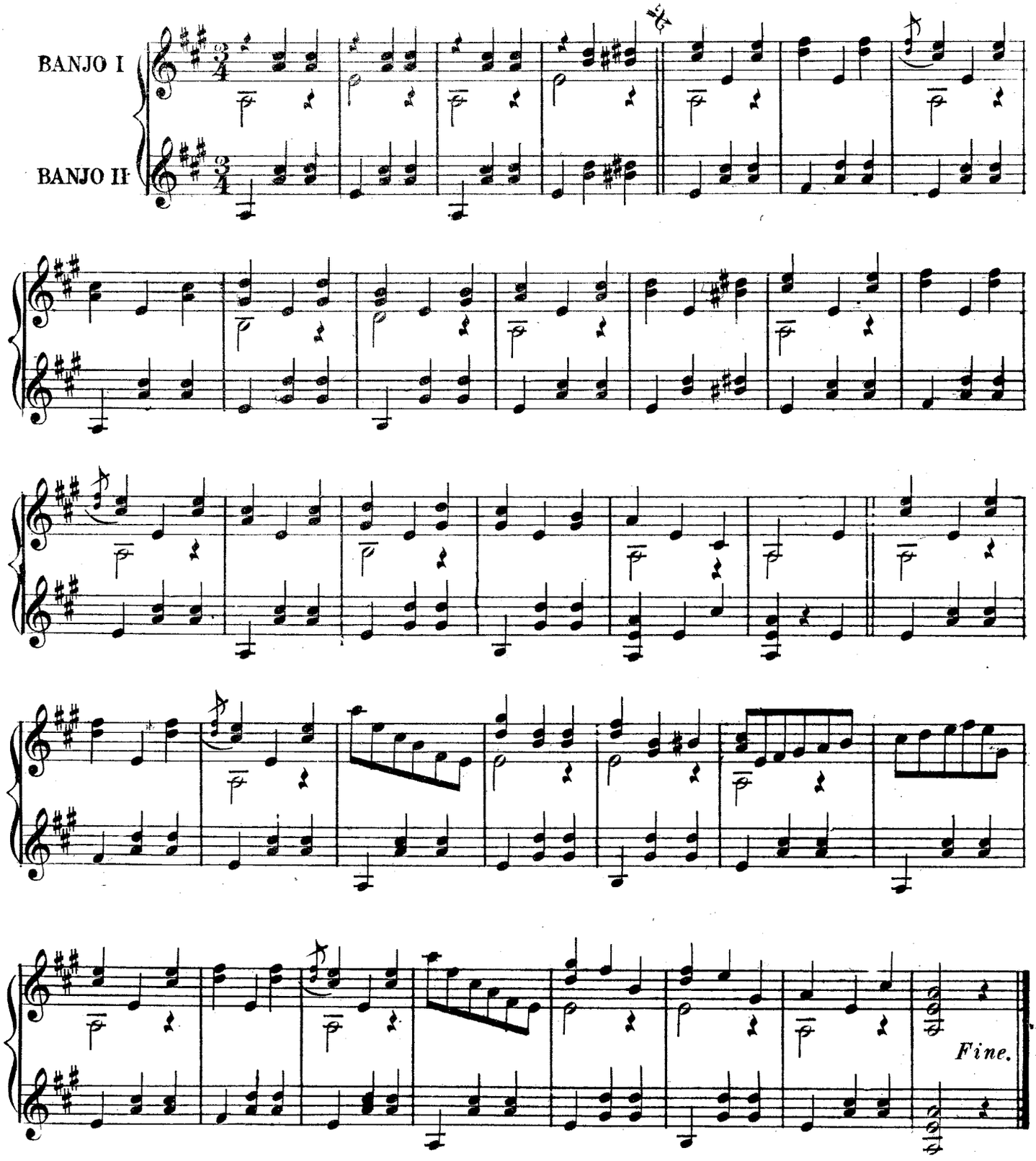


SWEET MARJORAM

WALTZ

FOR ONE OR TWO BANJOS

GEO. C. STEPHENS



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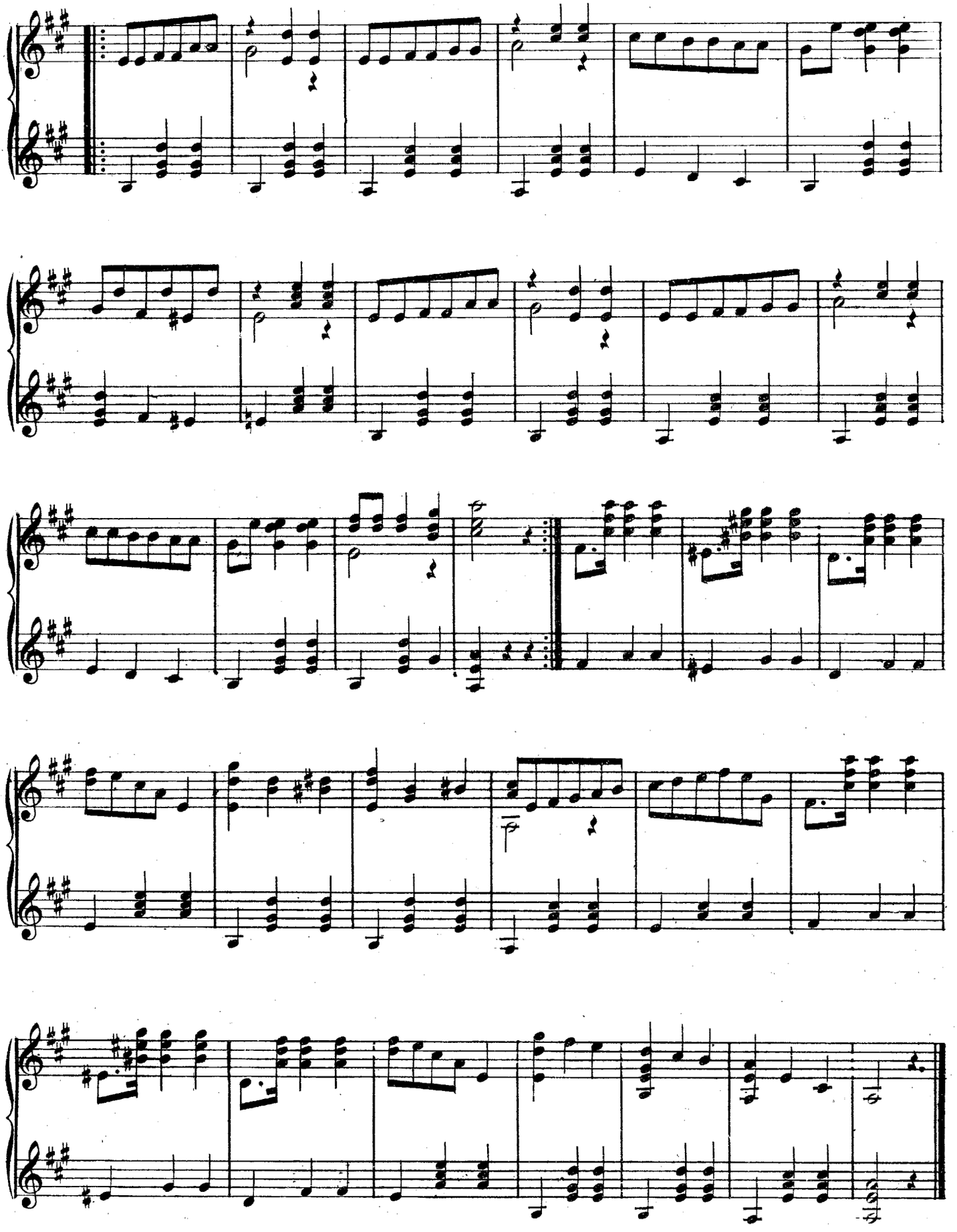
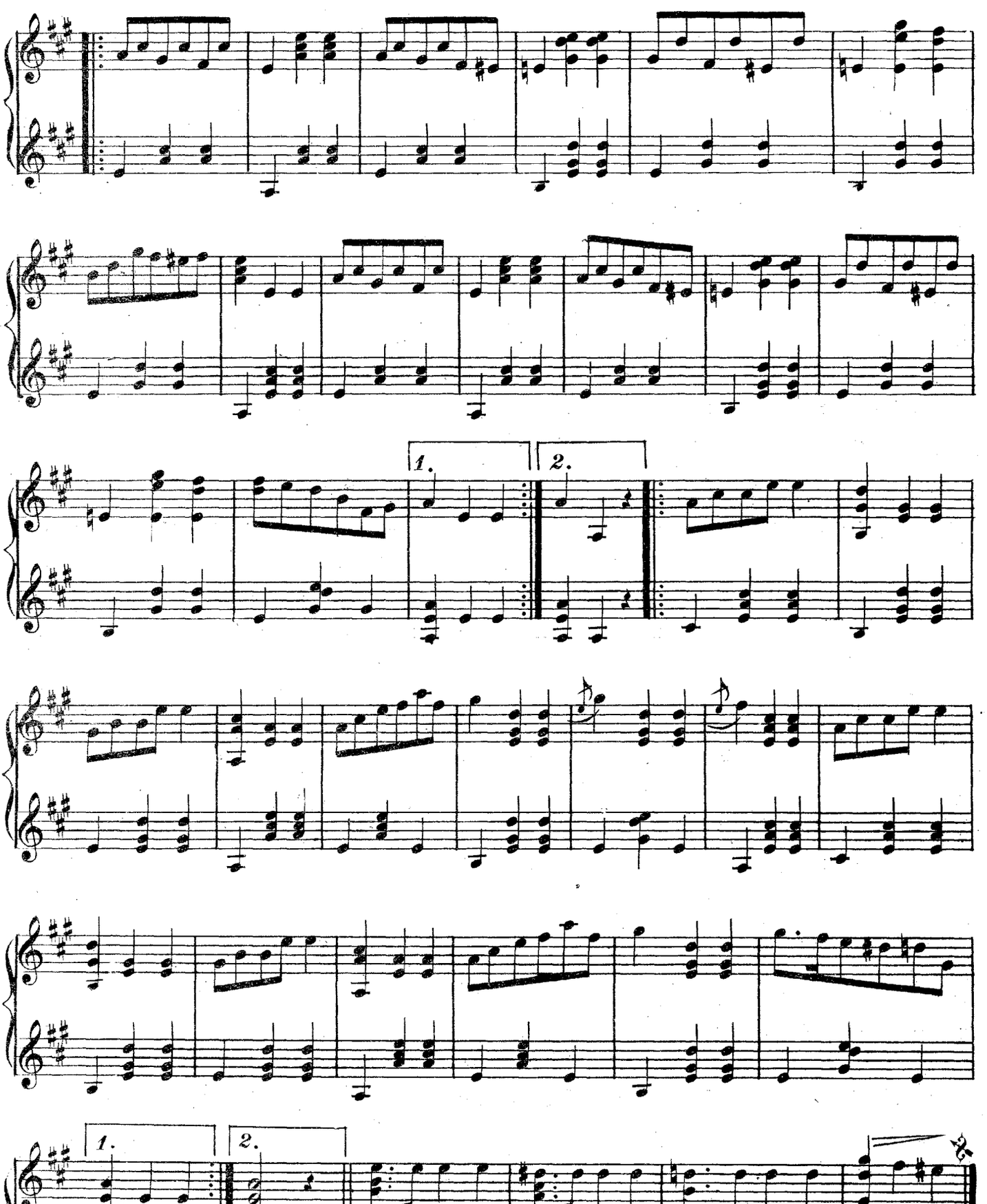
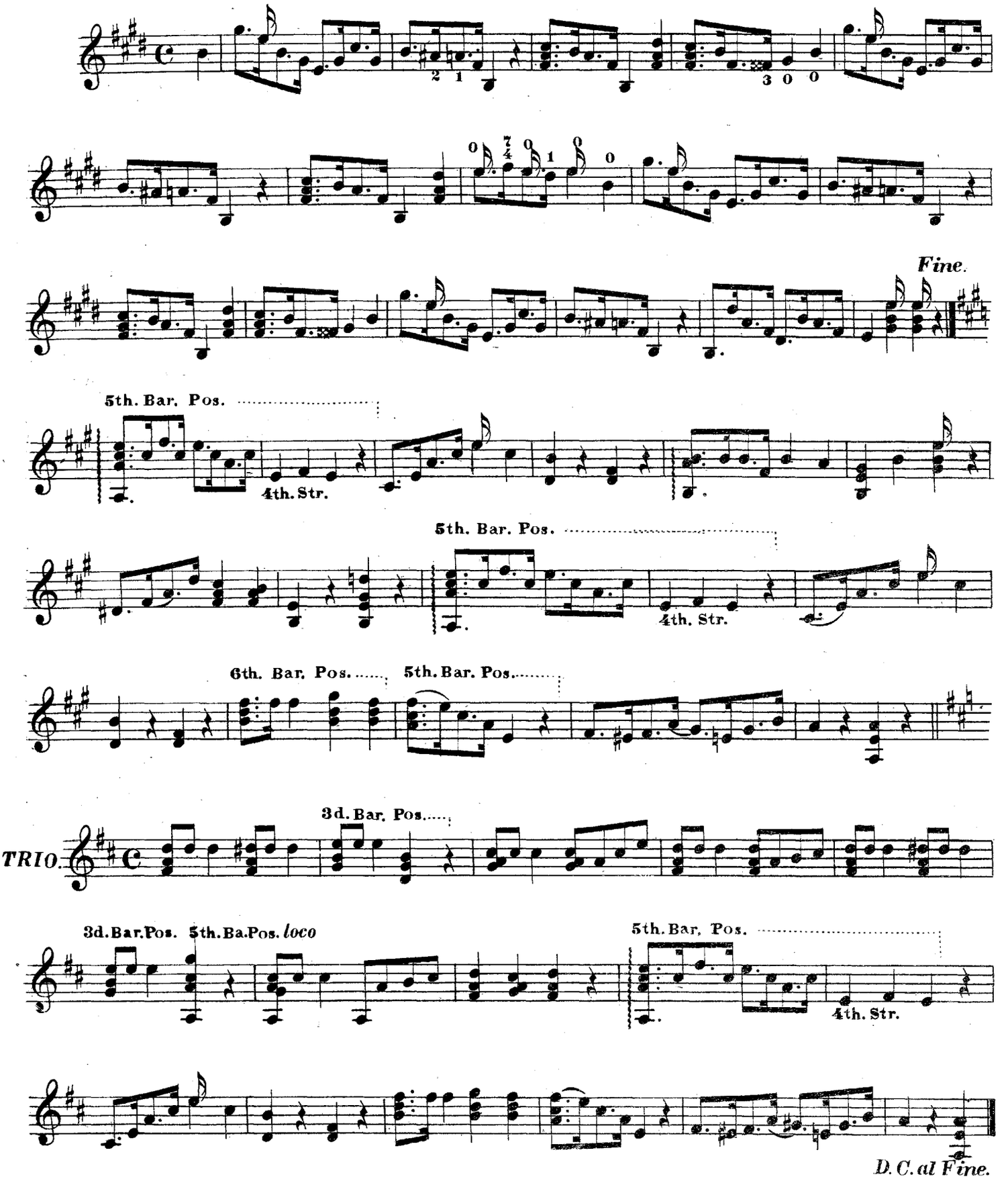


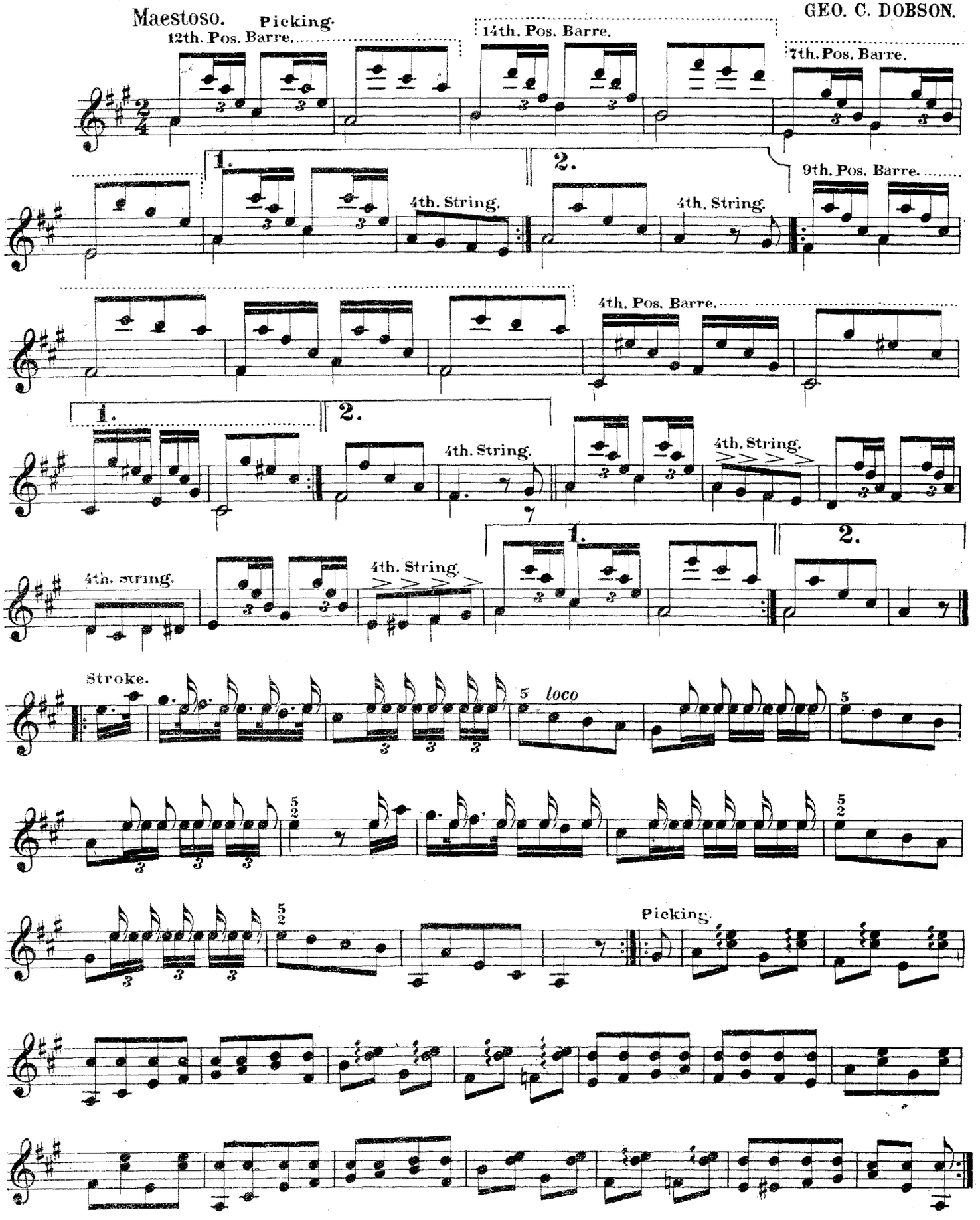

1.
2.
1.
2.
f
D.S. al Fine.
p

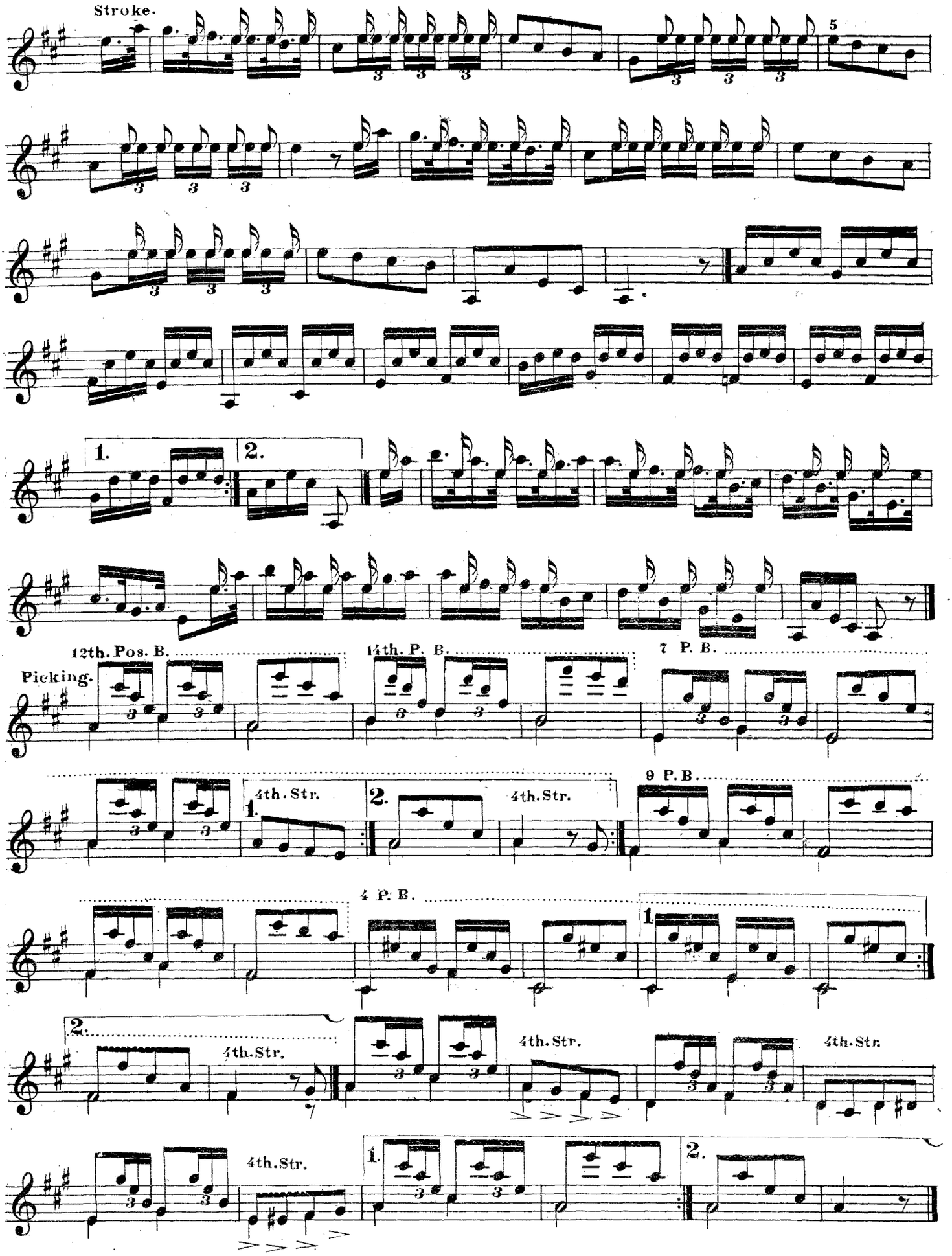
URETTA SCHOTTISCHE.

STEPHEN SHEPARD.



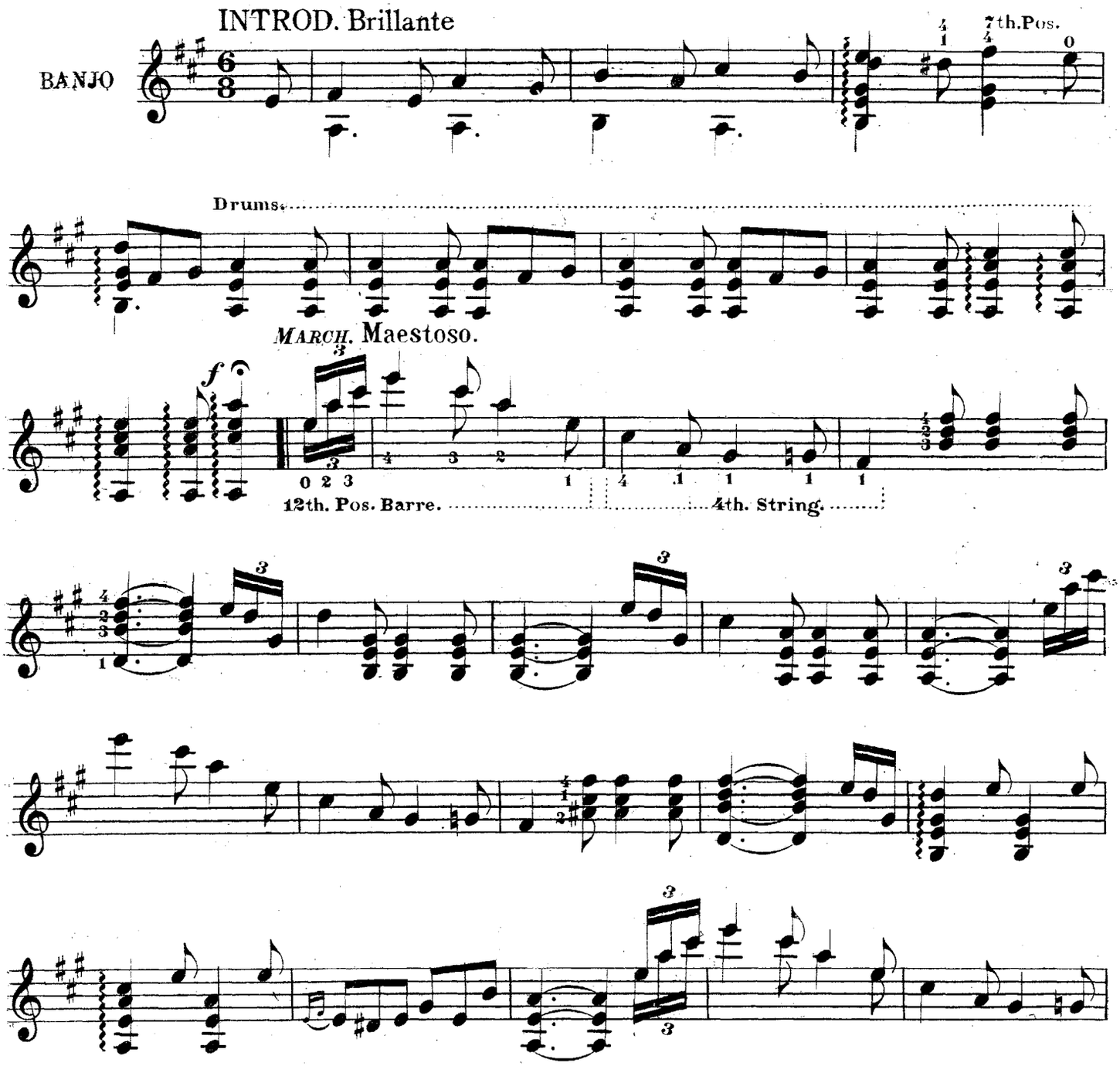
THE BRIGAND.


Maestoso.
Picking.
GEO. C. DOBSON.
12th. Pos. Barre.
14th. Pos. Barre.
7th. Pos. Barre.
1.
2.
4th. String.
4th. String.
9th. Pos. Barre.
4th. Pos. Barre.
1.
2.
4th. String.
4th. String.
4th. String.
4th. String.
1.
2.
Stroke.
5
loco
5
5
2
5
2
5
2
Picking.


Stroke.
5
1.
2.
12th. Pos. B.
Picking.
14th. P. B.
7 P. B.
9 P. B.
4th. Str.
4 P. B.

"VICTOR" GRAND MARCH

GEORGE C. DOBSON



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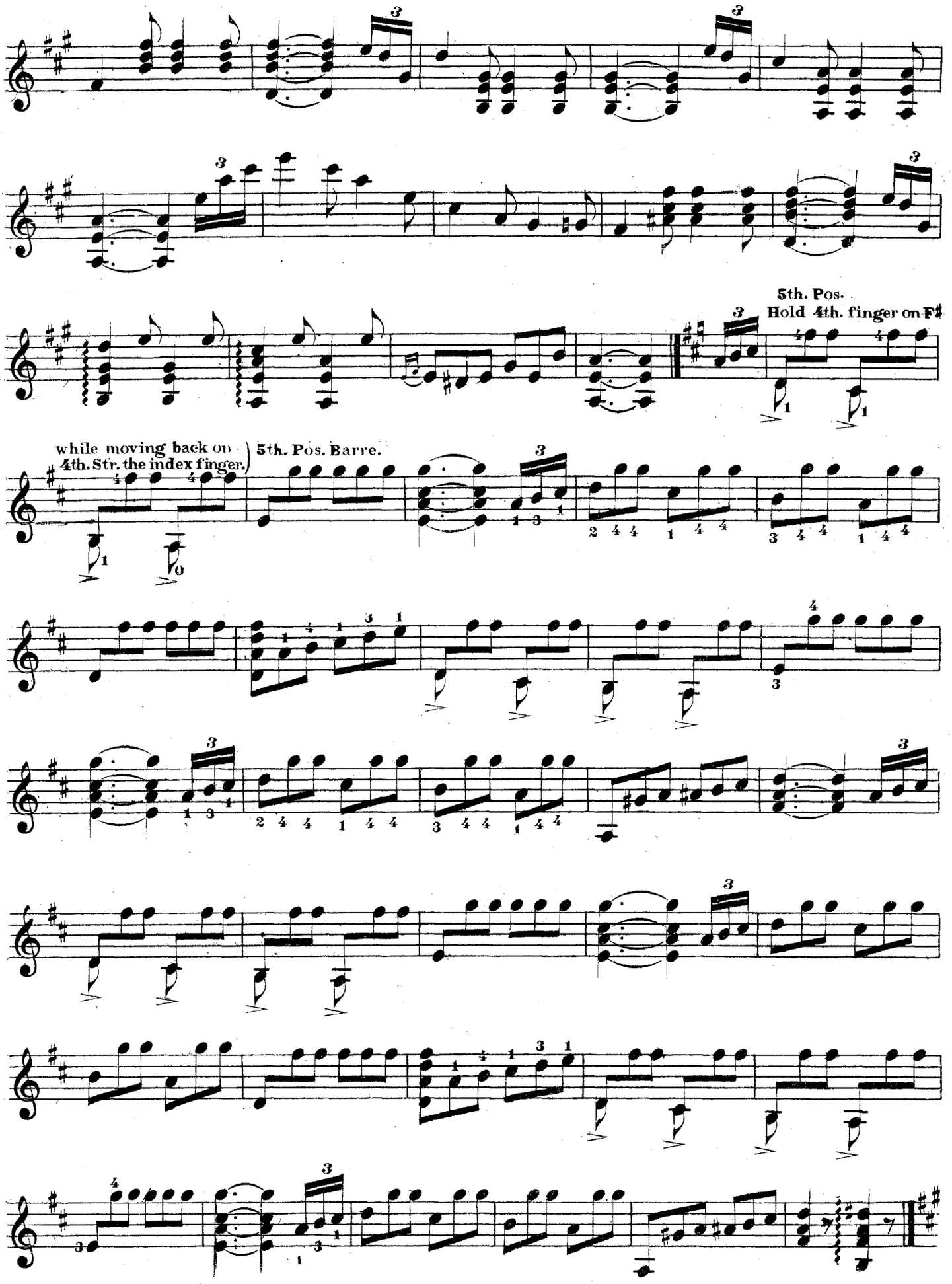
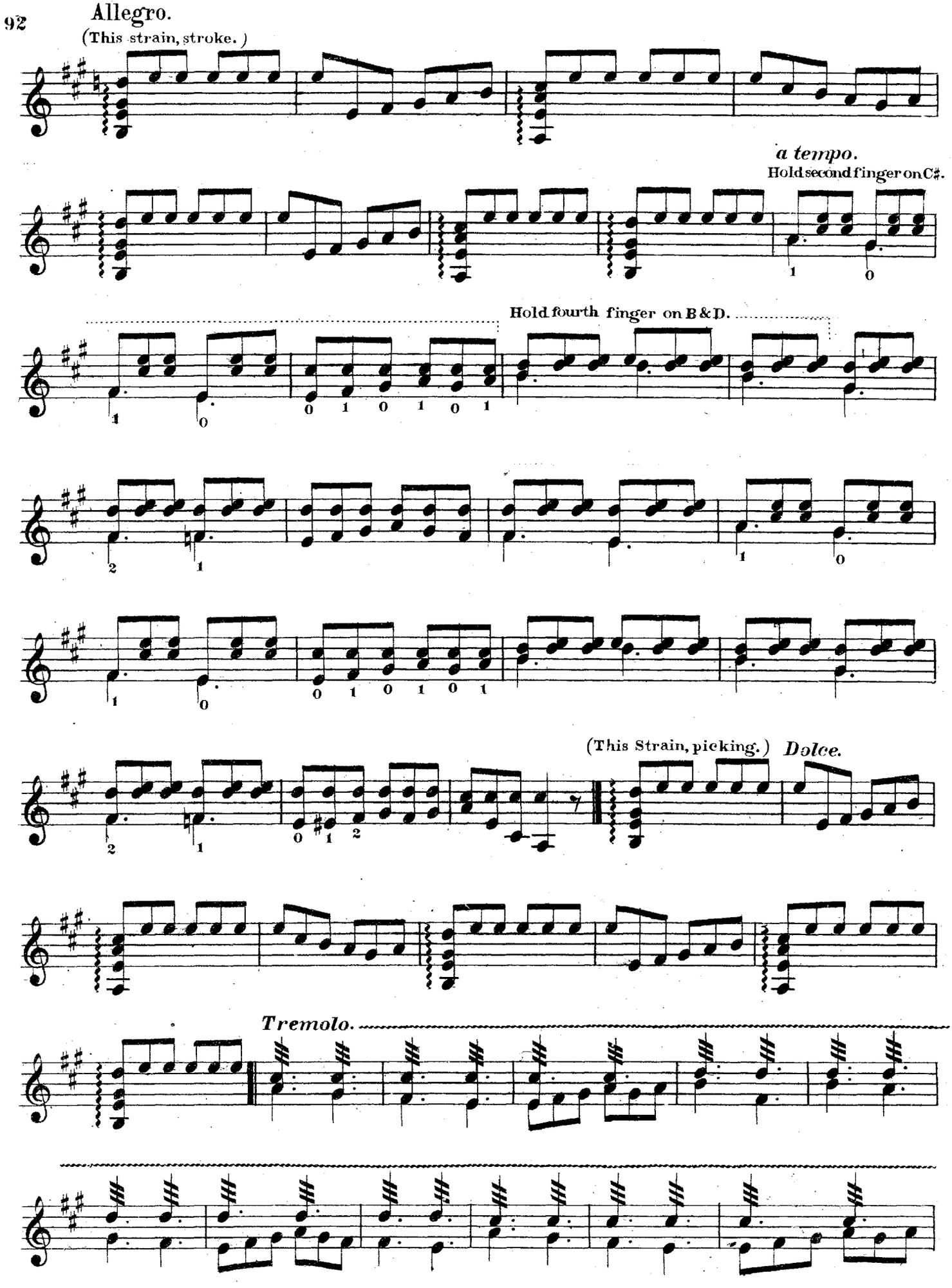
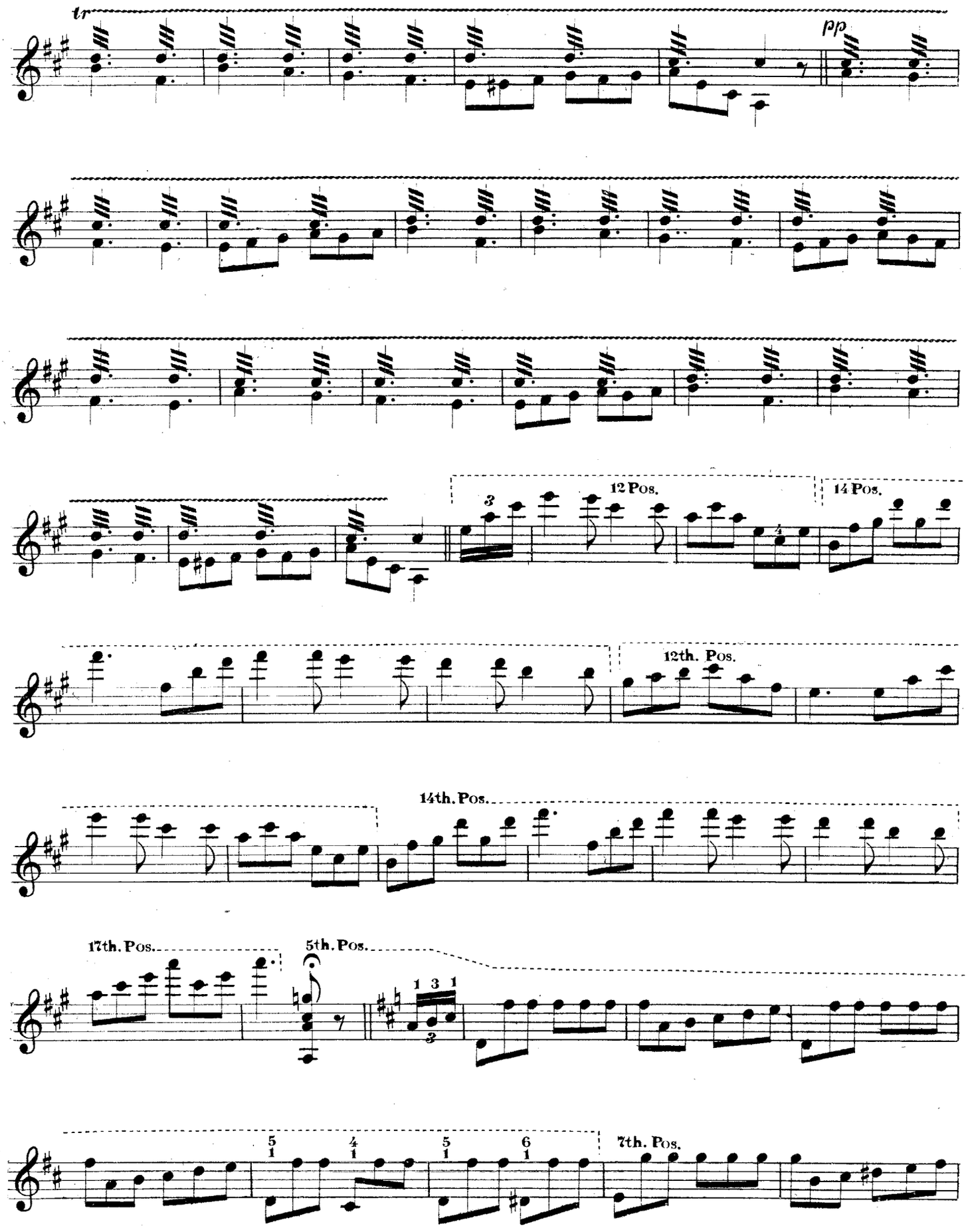
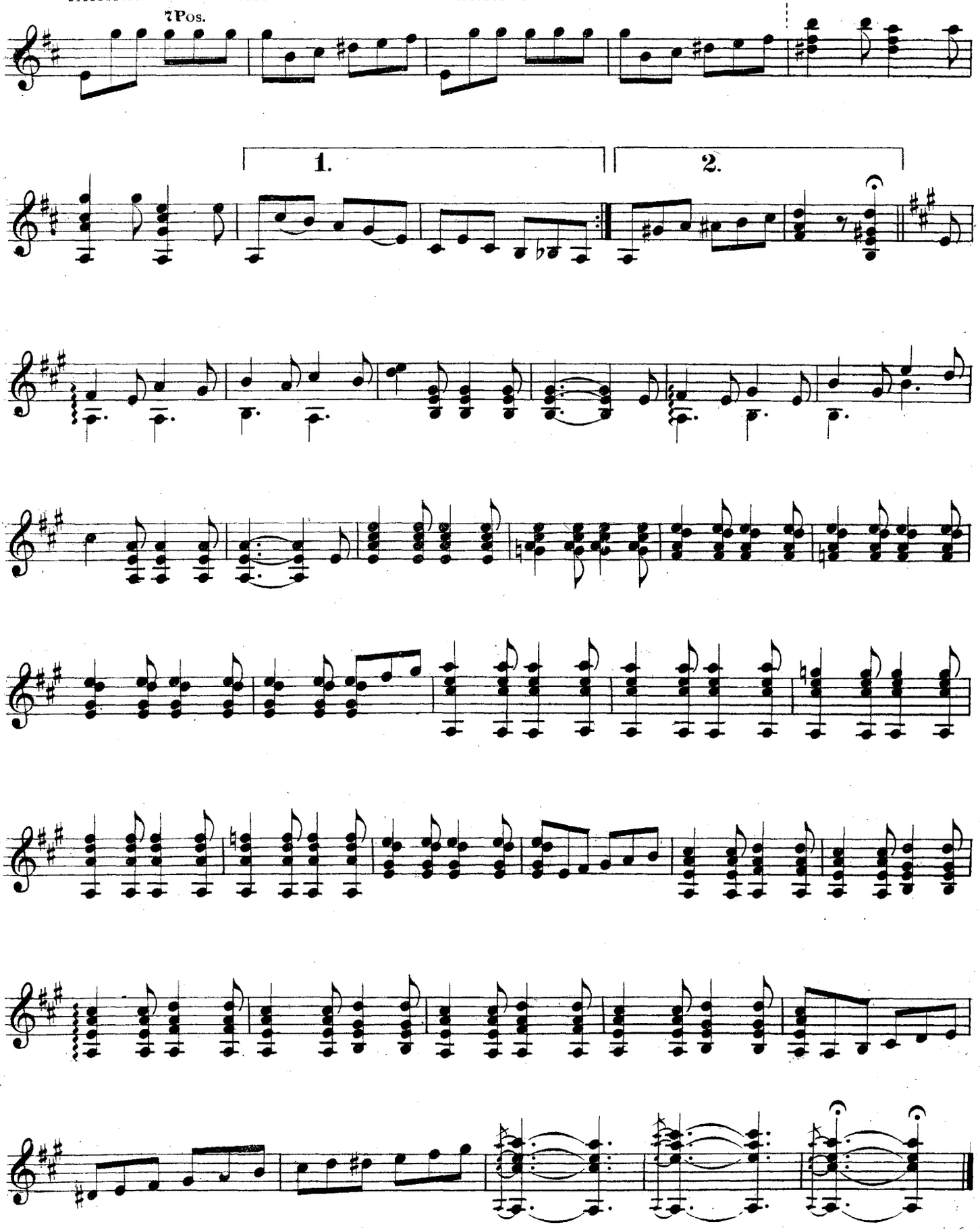

5th. Pos.
Hold 4th. finger on F♯
while moving back on
4th. Str. the index finger.
5th. Pos. Barre.


Allegro.
(This strain, stroke.)
a tempo.
Hold second finger on C♯.
Hold fourth finger on B & D.
(This Strain, picking.)
Dolce.
Tremolo.

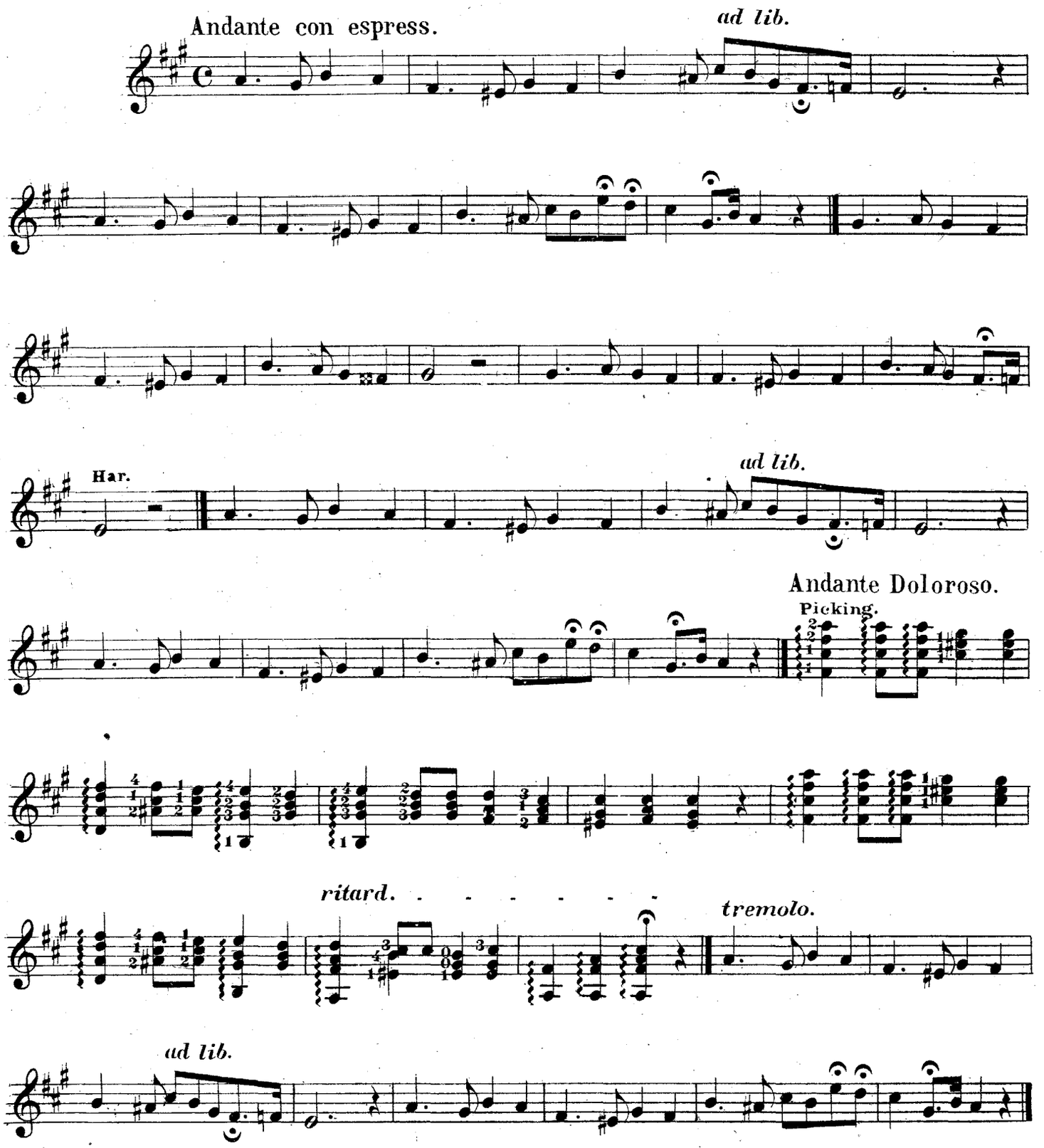

tr
pp
12 Pos.
14 Pos.
12th. Pos.
14th. Pos.
17th. Pos.
5th. Pos.
7th. Pos.


7 Pos.
1.
2.

MELODY.

(To be played by the tremolo all on the 3d. String.)

GEO. C. DOBSON.



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