

## WILLIAM STERNDALE BENNETT

1816-1875

*Nehme man ihn also wie er ist, nicht, was er gar nicht sein möchte, als Schöpfer einer neuen Epoche, oder als einen unzubändigenden Helden, sondern als innigen, wahrhaften Dichter, der unbekümmert um ein paar geschwenkte Hüte, mehr oder weniger seinen stillen Weg kingsht, an dessen Ausgange ihn wenn auch kein Triumphwagen erwartet, so doch von dankender Hand ein Veilchenkranz, den ihm Eusebius hiermit aufgesetzt haben will.<sup>1</sup>*

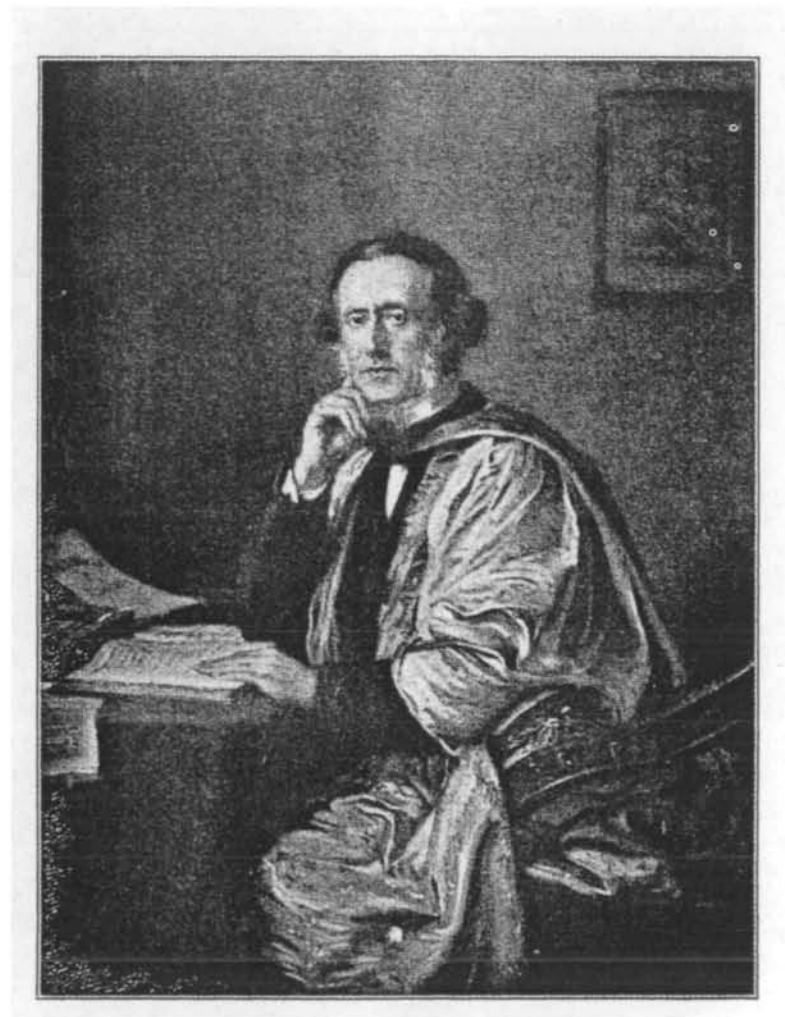
ROBERT SCHUMANN.

By SIR CHARLES VILLIERS STANFORD

**I**N the early seventies, when I was an undergraduate at Cambridge, I chanced one afternoon to pay a visit to a musical friend who lived in Trinity, and was one of the fellows of the College. While we were talking, there walked into the room a small figure of a man whose dignity of bearing made him look half as tall again as his stature warranted, with a well-proportioned and squarely built head, lovely and sympathetic eyes, and an expression of unmistakable kindness and charm, which captivated me before he opened his mouth. The dress was a little in the old style, recalling with its high collar and dark ample stock, the early drawings of Berlioz and Mendelssohn, and of the musical worthies whom John Ella collected to perform at his Musical Union Concerts and took care to immortalize by a collection of drawings. I was particularly struck by the character and refined beauty of the hands. I saw at a glance who it was,—Sterndale Bennett. I had made one pilgrimage to see him in 1870, but failed to find him at home. My father, who had one strong link with him in a great personal friend who was common to them both, Wyndham Goold, the member of Parliament for Limerick, was anxious to renew an acquaintance with him which began at the Birmingham Festival of 1846, where he had given a supper to Mendelssohn after the Elijah, at which Bennett was present. But the fates were against the meeting.

My first sight of Bennett brought many memories back to my mind. "Gentle Zephyr" was one of my first vocal efforts as

<sup>1</sup>Gesammelte Schriften von R. Schumann, ed. Jansen, II. 177 (Critique on "The Woodnymphs").



**SIR W. STERNDALE BENNETT, AET. 56**

From An Engraving By T. Oldham Barlow, A. R. A.  
Of A Portrait By Sir John E. Millais, Bart., P. R. A.



a small boy (and my favorite one): I had also earned my first golden sovereign for playing all the "Preludes and Lessons" from memory, and I was looking at the composer who had vicariously endowed me with my first big "tip." Over it all was the consciousness of a compelling artistic atmosphere which idealized the man from whom it emanated. It came not only from the many and great associations which his presence recalled, but from his own innate nobility. It was easy to see at a glance the qualities which endeared him to Schumann and to Mendelssohn, and also the modesty which prevented his powers from being acclaimed by the mass of the public, and even stood in the way of his own exercise of them. In the few short years which intervened before his premature death in 1875, I had several opportunities of seeing him, and getting to know him both as a man and as an artist. On one occasion when I dined with him ~~the day~~ we played pianoforte duets all the evening, and I was able to appreciate the great beauty of his touch and tone of which so many great musicians have spoken. We played the whole of his G minor Symphony, and others of the four-handed arrangements of his orchestral works. On another he came to Cambridge, when a much-needed revolution had succeeded (largely through his support) in substituting ladies for boys in the soprano department of the University Musical Society. We showed our gratitude to him by performing his "May Queen," and engaged a first-rate orchestra for the concert. He was invited to conduct, and, though in indifferent health, went out of his way to do so. Nothing, however, which I could say would induce him to believe in the efficiency of the band for accompanying the solos with enough delicacy, although the players were of the best: his memories of scratch local orchestras at the University town in old days were too painfully vivid: and he insisted upon my playing them on the pianoforte, characteristically veiling his mistrust of his forces under the euphemism, that the pianoforte would be a pleasant contrast to the orchestral accompaniments of the Chorus. His beat was clear and clean cut, but as a conductor he was the exact reverse of Hans von Bülow (as he was also in his pianoforte playing). His warmth was reserved for his pianoforte playing and was at a minimum with the bâton. In 1873 the appreciation of Brahms was beginning to make itself widely felt in England, and I made many attempts to interest him in the famous Requiem, in the chamber-works and pianoforte compositions of that master, thinking that their common friendship for Schumann and Schumann's warm championship of the younger

man would arouse interest and sympathy in Bennett. But he remained practically impervious to any appeal. This is the more curious, as in one respect at least, their methods, though varying fundamentally in style, were alike in principle. Passage writing for the pianoforte had before their time become mainly a medium for display, irrespective of any intrinsic merit or relevancy. To this snare even Mendelssohn, the then leader of musical fashion, had fallen a victim. With Bennett it became part and parcel of the musical idea and a natural development from it, a system which Brahms carried out with unvarying force throughout his life. Bennett's harmonic scheme was diatonic, but he was exceptionally chromatic in passage writing; another point of similarity. Finally he was very prone to *arpeggio* writing, as in "The Fountain," a form of ornament to which the German master was equally partial. But it was in the coördination of passages and the main musical idea which underlay them that Bennett showed the way, and was in this important respect a pioneer. The fact that his peculiar technique was somewhat crabbed in detail, and lacking in larger stretches and breadth of chord-presentation, does not detract from his merit in this advance. In these characteristics Brahms was the opposite pole to him, and is correspondingly easier to interpret. With the exception of Mozart, Bennett is perhaps of all pianoforte composers the most difficult to play. He unconsciously lays traps for the performer at the most unexpected moments, which spell disaster to the unwary. In view of this difficulty of interpretation, the exploit of Hans von Bülow on a famous occasion becomes almost uncanny. A short time after Bennett's death, George Osborne, the author of the "Pluie des Perles," and a close friend of his, was walking down Bond St., and opposite Lamborn Cock's music shop (Bennett's publisher) he met von Bülow, who told him that he was just going down to Brighton to give a recital that evening. Osborne remarked that as it was Bennett's birthday, he supposed that so great a lover of anniversaries as Bülow was going to play something of the English composer's. Bülow took fire, but said he knew nothing of Bennett's, and asked Osborne to tell him of something suitable. The genial Irishman took him into Cock's shop; they had out Bennett's works; Bülow chose three very difficult pieces "The Lake," "The Millstream" and "The Fountain," carried them off, learnt them in the train, and played them from memory in the evening. This I heard from two sources, from Osborne himself in London, and from a Brighton musician who heard the performance at Brighton. In

the case of an ordinary piece, this feat would be astonishing enough; in view of the unaccustomed style and technique, and the microscopic delicacy of detail, it sounds as an almost incredible *tour de force*.

When I was studying at Leipzig in 1874, I attended the revival performance of Spohr's opera, "Jessonda." Noticing that all eyes were staring in the direction of the dress circle, I turned and saw, for the first time, Richard Wagner; afterwards having a good opportunity of studying his appearance and bearing as he walked up and down the *foyer* during the entr'actes. To my great surprise he instantaneously recalled to me the figure and face of Sterndale Bennett. But it was a caricature. Though he held his head just as Bennett did, and closely resembled him in general build and in cast of features, everything was exaggerated, and there was an entire lack of the repose and dignity which was so distinguishing a mark of the Englishman. There was more force but less refinement. The one loved the limelight as much as the other loathed it. With this curious similarity of physiognomy, the likeness ended. It was not given to Bennett to be world-compelling, nor to Wagner to be the lovable and the beloved.

When Bennett appeared on the scene, chamber music of native origin had been dormant for nearly a century: there had been no outstanding composer of absolute music since Purcell. It is to Bennett's initiative that England owes the awakening which since his day has spread over the artistic life of the country. He was affected, it is true, by his intercourse with Germany and his close friendships with Germans, but he maintained his British characteristics throughout his life. In a former article which I contributed to this Review, I said: "The English take a kind of pride in concealing their feelings and emotions, and this is reflected in their folk-song. The Thames has no rapids and no falls; it winds along under its woods in a gentle stream, never dry and never halting; it is the type of the spirit of English folk-music. . . . England is as remote from Keltic fire and agony, as the Thames is from the Spey." Bennett was a typical specimen of this English characteristic. He was a poet, but of the school of Wordsworth rather than of Byron and Shelley. Brought up in the flats of Cambridgeshire, he idealised in the "Naiads" and the "Woodnymphs," the beauties of the plains and the sluggish streams, but left the painting of rushing salmon-rivers, misty mountains and storms to more fiery and vivid natures. But the poet of tranquillity has his uses as well as the poet of feverishness.

There are few travellers who do not welcome the rest, both to eyes and to mind, of a flat country after a prolonged stay in the Alps: and they experience in low countries what is denied to them in high altitudes,—the beauties of a sunset. To an audience on the prowl for startling effects and for new sensations, such music as Bennett's cannot appeal: but to those who like to sit still, and can forget temporarily the rush of trains, motors, telegrams and telephones, it will convey the soothing charm which was part and parcel of the man himself. Bennett's most famous contemporary, Samuel Sebastian Wesley, had a more powerful temperament, and a greater grasp of big climax and of choral effect; but he practically confined himself to church music, a form which Bennett rarely touched and with which he had little to do, except by request, and for occasional functions; and with pianoforte, chamber and orchestral works he had little active sympathy. Wesley was essentially an experimenter. Bennett was not. Wesley was more masterful than masterly, Bennett more masterly than masterful. But these two men together, albeit opposite poles both in nature and in style, were the first-fruits of the Renaissance of English music.

As a pianist Bennett had a great reputation, but it was confined to a circle of connoisseurs. He played too seldom in public to cover a wider field, and his activities as a performer lasted only some thirteen years. After 1848 he left the Concert platform, only returning to it as a Conductor. His playing, however, was undoubtedly remarkable, and had a fire and energy in it which does not appear on the gentle surface of his music. While yet a boy, he was called the "English Hummel" and earned the warm praise of John Field. When Mendelssohn sent the boy Joachim to him, he wrote in his letter of introduction: "I think the impression his performances made on me very much like the one I still have of your Concert in the Hanover Square Rooms, when you wore the green jacket." His studies at the Royal Academy had been under men of mark with great traditions behind them. Clementi, J. P. Cramer, and Cipriani Potter (who inherited the Mozart training through Woelfl, Leopold Mozart's pupil) were all interested in the Academy work. Bennett's immediate masters were Holmes (the biographer of Mozart) and Potter. His playing of Beethoven was rated as highly at Leipzig as in London. Schumann who (as Clara Schumann wrote) "spoke so often of him as one of the pianists whom he most admired," printed in 1837 a remarkable article comparing him as a pianist with Mendelssohn:



The Englishman's playing is perhaps more tender, more careful in detail; that of Mendelssohn is broader, more energetic. The former bestows fine shading on the lightest thing, the latter pours a new force into the most powerful passages; one overpowers us with the transfigured expression of a single form, the other showers forth hundreds of fascinating Cherub-heads as in a heaven of Raphael. Some of the same characteristics are evident in their compositions.

Ferdinand Hiller, when Bennett visited Leipzig in 1838-39, wrote of the "greatest astonishment which his playing excited" and of its perfection in mechanism, its extraordinary delicacy of nuance, its wealth of soul and fire. Ayrton, a very able critic, declared that the mantle of Cramer had fallen upon him. One who heard him play the principal movement of his "Maid of Orleans" Sonata at the end of his life, when he thought he was alone, writes: "I was quite taken aback with the force he displayed. Bulow, whom I heard play it more than once afterward, seemed by comparison to be half asleep."

\* \* \*

Bennett was born on April 13th, 1816, at Sheffield, where his father was organist of the parish church. In his fourth year, having lost both his parents, he was adopted by his grandfather, a Derbyshire singer who had settled in Cambridge in 1792 as a lay-clerk in the College Chapels. The child's musical faculties were sufficiently remarked, and before he was five years old his grandfather found him a capable instructress for the piano. Later, while passing two years in the choir of King's college, he escaped the notice of the Organist, but the closer observation of the Vice-Provost led to his being sent in his tenth year to be tested at the Royal Academy of Music. There he was at once retained as a resident pupil to enjoy the privilege, granted in his case for the first time, of free board and tuition. Among older companions selected after keen competition at the opening of the Academy three years before, he was unlikely to attract a notice for which he had by disposition no desire. But he was now living in a house which resounded with music; his violin, prescribed as his chief study, soon admitted him to the students' orchestra; and with a quick ear and a retentive memory to help him, he had within his reach the means of quietly acquiring knowledge beyond what came to him by direct instruction. Progress on the piano, as long as the instrument remained his second study in charge of an elder student, might well elude the observation of others. So when, as five years passed, his schoolfellows began to regard



him as "somewhat apathetic if not idle"; or a Professor would be heard saying, "Here is a boy who could do something if he chose"; or when his grandfather wrote, gently chiding him for indifference to distinction, the boy was ready with a practical reply. Sir George Macfarren, in late life, recalled a day when Bennett, aged fifteen, by his "singularly beautiful playing" of a new Concerto by Hummel, suddenly revealed himself to an Academy audience—John Field happened to be one of the guests—in his true vocation as a pianist. Soon afterwards, having as yet used very little music-paper, he surprised Dr. Crotch by producing a Symphony well-planned, well-orchestrated, and clearly showing the strong hold which the music of Mozart already had on his young mind. It is said that he early acquired the habit of taking Mozart's scores to bed with him that he might con them at the dawn of day. Then in 1832, when he was sixteen, he wrote a pianoforte concerto which brought him into wider notice. The Academy Directors arranged for its publication; Queen Adelaide sent for him to play it to her at Windsor; and a later performance of the same work in 1833 brought him his first introduction to Mendelssohn. He now continued to submit compositions to the judgment of Cipriani Potter, who had succeeded Dr. Crotch as Principal of the Academy, and to study pianoforte-playing under that learned and broad-minded musician. A Concerto, No. III in C mi., written in 1834, and an Overture "Parisina" dated March, 1835, suggest that on his nineteenth birthday in April, 1835, he had served his apprenticeship in composition, while his cordial reception at the Philharmonic Concerts in the following month gave him his "freedom as a pianist." He still lingered on at the Academy, till at length the prospect of a sum of money inherited from his mother allowed him to look further afield. His desire was to sojourn in Leipzig and possibly to pursue the study of composition under Mendelssohn. Partly with a view of taking advice on this subject he attended in the spring of 1836 a Festival which Mendelssohn was conducting at Düsseldorf. But Mendelssohn after examining his compositions wrote in letters to English friends: "I have told him [Bennett] that about teachers there is in his case no more to be said by anyone"; "I think him the most promising young musician I know, not only in your country, but also here"; "I am certain to gain as much pleasure and profit from his society as he from mine." (Letters written to Attwood and Klingemann). It was in this spirit of comradeship that Bennett was now to be received in Leipzig by musicians older than himself but still in the hey-day

of life. By a training completed in his own country he went out as a well-read scholar of German music. His character as an artist was already fixed and was the cause rather than the effect of the valued associations which he was now to enjoy.

In July, 1836, when he had spent more than ten years at the Academy, he took his leave by playing a fourth (never published) Concerto at the Prize Concert, and then during a holiday at a cottage in Grantchester near Cambridge wrote his Overture "The Naiads." In October he set out on the ten-days' journey to Leipzig, which he reached on the twenty-ninth. In the evening Mendelssohn took him to the Hotel de Bavière, where at that time certain musicians with their friends, as subscribers to the table-d'hôte, met from day to day. The impression which the newcomer made upon one of this group was given a fortnight later by Robert Schumann, who wrote to his home in Zwickau of "ein junger Engländer, William Bennett, in unsern täglichen Kreisen, Engländer durch und durch, ein herrlicher Künstler, eine poetisch schöne Seele." (R. Schumann's Briefe, ed. Jensen, p. 70).

Exempt, by Mendelssohn's interdict, from fixed musical studies, Bennett now had full freedom for observation and enjoyment, and to gain from foreign intercourse not only artistic but also, probably even to a greater degree, general advancement. Musical events, however, naturally fill space in the simple diary which he kept at the time. He found Leipzig in a ferment over "Israel in Egypt," no novelty to an Englishman, but then, in a few days to be heard for the first time in the Saxon town. He attended the rehearsals and performance in the Pauliner-Kirche, but could not agree with the Saxons' interpretation of their compatriot's music. His diary continues to show him critical. The native singers and the poor performances of operas could excite little but pity, though in exception to this he heard, later in his visit, Schroeder-Devrient and had the honour of accompanying her in "Adelaide" and other songs at the Gewandhaus, (Apr. 7, 1837). At the subscription-concerts, though he was already familiar with the best of the music given, he listened to the orchestral works of the great Masters rendered by players "rather more musicianlike," as he admitted, than his own countrymen, under a conductor to whom there was no parallel in England. Mendelssohn's own music was for the moment conspicuous by its almost entire absence from the programmes. As novelties Bennett now heard Symphonies and Overtures of contemporary German composers: Hetsch, Hiller, Lachner, Lindpainter, Molique, Müller, Reissiger, Rosenhain, Joseph Strauss. There can

indeed be little ground for thinking that the music thus presented to him gave any fresh direction to his own thought as a composer. What Germany as compared with England did show him, bringing him mixed feelings of pleasure and envy, was a more openly expressed musical sentiment, a higher respect on all sides and among all classes towards music as an art, and a more considerate attitude towards those who found in it their calling. Bennett's London friends, who are said to have noticed a change of style in his music when he returned from Germany, may have seen and demurred to a warmth of expression redolent of a foreign atmosphere, in the pianoforte pieces which he wrote in Leipzig at this time: a Sonata in F mi. (Op. 13); 3 Romances (Op. 14), and a Fantaisie in four movements (Op. 16); which do perhaps show a less guarded enthusiasm, or a more exuberant lyrical manner than is to be seen in his earlier or later works of the same class.

His diary tells of daily walks with Schumann, or with Walther von Goethe, grandson of the poet; of German lessons; of his welcome to the houses of the Saxon families whose names are so familiar to readers of the various memoirs of the time; of his reluctance to play in society, a duty apparently new to his experience. But he conquered his shyness sometimes and left behind him a special remembrance of his renderings of Beethoven's music. Schumann, too, had soon found out "wie er Händel auswendig weiss, wie er alle Mozartschen Opern auf dem Clavier spielt, als sähe man sie lebhaftig vor sich." (*Gesammelte Schriften*, II, 7.) When the New Year came his abilities were put to a severer test. Of his appearance at the Gewandhaus, Schumann has left a charming record, and Mendelssohn wrote to his sister: "Bennett played his C mi. Concerto amidst the triumphant applause of the Leipzigers whom he seems at one stroke to have made his friends and admirers, for you hear now on all sides nothing but 'Bennett'." The new Overture "The Naiads" was played in February at the annual concert given "for the Poor." At the close of the musical season in March, Mendelssohn left Leipzig. For twenty weeks Bennett had been daily meeting him, but chiefly in the society of others. He had not found or had not taken opportunity for that closer companionship to which in the near future he was to be admitted. He stayed in Leipzig for some months longer and the interest of the time turns upon the growing friendship between Schumann and himself. It will be understood that Schumann would first be represented to Bennett as the editor of a musical paper; there

was as yet little conception of him as a composer, still less of his possible success as such. But Bennett during months of daily intercourse made acquaintance with the pianoforte works which Schumann had already written. He quoted them when he afterwards wrote to his friend from England as if he knew them well. Moreover, it may be presumed that he played them in the privacy of Schumann's rooms with a degree of sympathy which satisfied their composer, himself unhappily a disabled pianist. Schumann seems to have recalled this a year or two later when he was leading a lonely life in Vienna, and wrote to his future wife: "Einen jüngerer Menschen, einen Bennett, habe ich noch nicht finden können, und ich muss meine besten Gedanken für mich behalten." (Gesammelte Schriften, ed. Jansen, II, 491.) Schumann has left a striking memento of his own esteem for Bennett in the dedication to him of the "Études Symphoniques." In the last movement comes a theme from Marschner's Opera "Der Templer und die Jüdin," where Ivanhoe calls on proud England to rejoice over her noble Knights. "It is an ingenious way"—writes one of Schumann's biographers—"of paying homage to his beloved English composer."

While still a young man Bennett went twice again to Germany. He spent the winter of 1838-39 in Leipzig, taking over with him a new Concerto in F minor which he had written just before starting, in the above-mentioned cottage at Grantchester; also a Caprice for pianoforte and orchestra which he had composed and played earlier in the same year in London. During this stay in Leipzig he wrote his Overture "The Wood-nymphs" and some pianoforte pieces to which belong "Three Diversions" for four hands, written in time to play them first with Mendelssohn on Christmas morning 1838. These "Diversions" have often been quoted as notable examples of Bennett's workmanship. It was when reviewing them that Schumann wrote (Gesammelte Schriften, II, 205): "Aber jener Engländer ist unter allen Fremden der deutschen Theilnahme am würdigsten, ein *geborener Künstler*, wie selbst Deutschland wenige aufzuweisen hat." Schumann was away in Vienna at this time, but Bennett was now much with Mendelssohn. "We would have more music together than the first time," Mendelssohn had written when urging Bennett to come over again. This promise was fulfilled, and the many hours thus spent in undisturbed companionship set the seal on a strong mutual attachment.

A third journey which Bennett made in the first month of 1842, when he was nearing his twenty-sixth birthday, brought

him into touch with Spohr, whose acquaintance he sought by staying a few days in Cassel, and who treated him during the time—to use the words of Bennett's diary—"just as if I were his son." While making Leipzig his head-quarters, he went twice to Berlin, also to Dresden, but though he had considered the question of making a professional tour in Germany he never did make any public appearances while abroad, save at the Gewandhaus.

A letter written some forty years later by a lady with whose family Mendelssohn was closely connected pictures Bennett by his side among their Leipzig friends:—

Sterndale Bennett was a frequent and welcome guest at our house, and I often met him with Mendelssohn together. Their relationship was one of surpassing friendliness. Each loved and respected the other and Mendelssohn felt the highest pleasure not only in the eminent gifts, but also in the characteristic and amiable nature of the young artist. . . . Their intercourse was most cordial and intimate. They were both given to pleasantry and Bennett in particular was as a rule in the mood for all manner of fun. . . . Within the circle of his most intimate friends his childlike merriment was irrepressible. He was fond of divers conjuring tricks and his anecdotes and comical stories were received with shouts of laughter. In large assemblies he was reserved and retiring but very popular, all considering themselves fortunate in counting him among their guests.

During the five or six years in which Bennett's three visits to Germany occurred, he had taken the first steps towards earning a livelihood in London and had by degrees become steadfast to that purpose. Thus from March, 1839, to December, 1841, *i. e.*, for nearly three years, only a single week passed, that being a Christmas week, in which he was not at his post ready to answer calls for his services—the more to his credit, perhaps, because those interested in him had anxiously mistrusted his capacity or inclination for mundane affairs. He took no holidays, gained no further inspiration from the meadows or millstream of Grantchester, but fixed himself in his chambers in Gt. Titchfield Street, in a city which could do little, and for nine months in each year nothing, to foster a musical spirit. Early correspondence with a trusted adviser assumed as a foregone conclusion that pianoforte-teaching was in his case the only side of his profession which could hold out hopes of security. Friends of his bachelor days afterwards recalled him as "a slave to the pianoforte," but surely only as the slave, or rather the devoted student of pianoforte music. The chances of playing in public would scarcely stimulate such

zeal. Within three years he was called to the front as a pianist, no oftener than four times, and this, though quite an enviable record for a London musician of those days, could not do much towards bread-winning. As a composer his extreme caution, which is clearly shown in his correspondence with Kistner, the Leipzig publisher, sufficiently explains how composition and money never met each other in his thoughts. The story of these years tells with reasonable certainty that he was not to be a prolific writer. He gave continuous attention to such work; a large portion of an Oratorio remains as one of the memories of the time; but even finished manuscripts he hesitated to surrender, and in spite of Kistner's urgent entreaties he parted with no music to a publisher between his twenty-third and twenty-sixth birthdays. Again, as a teacher, he found his road none too smooth. In England the ephemeral *Fantasia*, with its echoes of the Italian Opera, ruled the domain of the pianoforte alike on the concert-platform and in the schoolroom. To music of a severer sort, old or new, the word *classical* was applied in common parlance to denote a social bugbear. Its place has now been taken by the epithet *academic*, of which the true, but distasteful, definition is *a composer who knows his business*. Bennett wrote at the time of the professional circles where he heard Mozart and Beethoven freely referred to as "pedants." No wonder then, that a teacher who offered nothing but the works of great Masters attracted few pupils. There is no tale to be told about Bennett of starvation or garret-life, but his exceptional musicianship retarded rather than advanced his efforts to make ends meet.

In 1842, at the age of 26, he moved from his bachelor chambers to live with some friends who were able to give up their drawing-rooms to his use, thus enabling him to receive private pupils and also to start a scheme of Chamber-concerts. With this change of residence his circumstances began to improve. In 1844, when his income had reached £300 a year, he married Mary, daughter of Commander James Wood, R. N., who, though very young at the time, soon proved herself capable of assisting him in his progress. In 1845, he took a house in Russell Place, Fitzroy Square, where he stayed for many years and which in due course became a centre of some musical interest. While the cares of livelihood still pressed, it was perhaps inevitable that his work as a composer should lie somewhat in abeyance. Within the six years (1842-47) he published the "Suite de Pièces" (Op. 24)—the most important work for Pianoforte Solo that he had so far written, in which Schumann observed increased originality, and traced the



result of studying Bach and Scarlatti. He also published other less ambitious works, including the "Rondo Piacevole" (Op. 25) which had a long life and gave pleasure to many; a Chamber Trio for pianoforte, violin and violoncello (Op. 26); and a first set of six songs (Op. 23), the outcome of much selection and rejection. In 1843 he wrote to Kistner: "I have ready for the engraver my new Concerto which I performed last year at the Philharmonic Society and which I have since altered." But the engraver waited in vain. This Concerto (No. VI, in A mi.), written in a newer style than his earlier works of the same class, and finding much favour when he played it, might, one would imagine, have helped, on its publication, to keep interest alive in what he was doing. He revised it again in 1848 and played it for the second time in public, but he never published it though he always meant to do so, and had the score in his hands with the intention of putting finishing touches a few weeks before his death. Mendelssohn saw an Overture of his in 1844 and wished to play it in Leipzig, but Bennett hesitated and wrote in 1846:

I should have sent you my overture according to promise, but I really could not make up my mind to like the overture and to think it good enough for the Leipzig Public who have always been so kind to me and are certainly entitled to the best I can do, whatever that is; and I do not despair, if I have health and strength and more time to devote to composition than I have just now, but you know what England is and how we must work to keep up our houses, and living on the most economical scale.

Of Bennett's interest in the musical life of London in his earlier days there would indeed be little to say, had it not been for his close connection with the Philharmonic Society. Here, since his twentieth year, he had found the opportunity of taking some share in the more prominent musical movements of the time. Since 1835 the Society regularly produced his works. By his appearances for fourteen years in succession (save for one lapse when he was away in Leipzig) he enjoyed to an unprecedented extent the most envied honour which his country could then offer to a pianist. He had early been placed on the Board of Directors, where his knowledge of orchestral music was of use to older colleagues, few of whom had found in the England of their young days chances of studying that branch of their art. He acted as their agent in their negotiations with foreign musicians. The support which Spohr and Mendelssohn gave to the Society at a time of depression (1842-44) was due to his enterprise and to his acquaintance with these two eminent men. In this



way, too, he had for himself the gratification of keeping in touch with another interesting phase of his life, viz., his personal and musical association with Germany. It can, therefore, be realized how serious a crisis came in his career when these interests were suddenly shattered by two events, one bringing to him great sorrow and the other a sense of cruel injury.

Mendelssohn's visits to England in the later years of his life, and a continuous correspondence had served to maintain and strengthen the close bond which had united him to Bennett in Germany. Their association was no mere professional alliance. They shared, as Mendelssohn once wrote to Bennett on a serious occasion, "not only musical pleasures and sorrows but also the domestic ones on which life and happiness depend." In Mendelssohn, Bennett, no less by his personal qualities than by his musical gifts, had won a friend who was far the most remarkable, for his general attainments and his knowledge of men and matters, of any amongst whom he had yet moved. The "Brüderähnlichkeit" of their music, which Schumann regarded as springing from a common nature rather than as any result of influence or imitation, characterized their personal relations. There can be no doubt that Bennett owed much, at the outset of a career which his conscience made a hard one, to the fellow-feeling and encouragement of this brotherly friend, and that Mendelssohn's sudden death at the end of 1847 came to him as an irreparable loss.

This was followed, not many months afterwards, by another stroke of misfortune, though of a very different kind. In the season of 1848, a misunderstanding, trifling in itself, about the performance of one of Bennett's Overtures, arose between himself and Michael Costa, who then and for some years to come conducted the Philharmonic Concerts. Bennett, innocent of any intentional offence, unable to gain an interview with Costa at which he hoped explanations might be exchanged, and then unable to get satisfaction through the mediation of his colleagues on the Direction, whose support he looked for, felt himself terribly aggrieved. He saw but one course to take and resigned all connection with the affairs of the Society. This meant for him not only his withdrawal as a pianist and composer from the arena where high distinction could in his case most readily be gained, but also a severance of ties of the strongest kind, and of such musical interests as he highly prized. At the end of the London season he went for a short holiday with his family to the seaside. There he completely broke down. The death of Mendelssohn was still

an open wound, and at the time of the Philharmonic trouble he had lost the best friend in whom he could have confided and whose sympathy and advice would have been so helpful. His wife was seriously alarmed at the apparently utter collapse of his health and spirits, and though he soon returned to his work, he regained his usual health so slowly that her anxiety was of long duration.

Schumann once wrote of Bennett that he was "Clavierspieler vorzugsweise," and to others who held the same view it became a matter of regret that in his thirty-third year and in the fulness of his powers he should have discarded to a great extent that branch of his musicianship in which, maybe, his individuality was most pronounced. But the time must have come to him ere long when he could no longer tax himself with the maintenance of those powers for the sake of two or three exhibitions of it as a Concerto player in the course of the year. The Philharmonic incident having relieved him of his chief duty in this direction he may have construed it into a signal for a complete withdrawal. Since 1838 he had followed the old-fashioned plan of giving an annual concert of his own. On these occasions he always employed an orchestra and played Concertos. In 1849, a year after his rupture with the Philharmonic, he gave the last of these concerts, and gained wider patronage than usual. He handed the profit of £80 to the "Governesses' Benevolent Institution," a graceful act, it may be thought, on his retirement from the front-rank of pianists. The sum named was a tithe, almost exactly, of his income at the time.

If he found himself for the present rather in the shadow of the musical world, he had on the other hand by this time secured his footing as a teacher and was pressed by little further anxiety in respect to livelihood. With an easy mind he could renew his work as a composer, though he now pursued it in its smaller forms without thought of its public performance. He seems also to have kept in view as a paramount duty the advancement of the music of great composers, and he now looked for quiet spheres in which he might work to this end, according to the time and means at his disposal. In his younger days he had diligently studied Bach's music, certainly his clavier-music as far as he had been able to find it in print in England or Germany. The instrumental works of Bach had been appreciated in this country, as is well known, by an earlier generation of musicians; but Bennett merits remembrance as a pioneer in the introduction here, under great difficulties, of the composer's vocal masterpieces. In 1848 or 1849 he purchased a pianoforte score—printed in Paris!—of the

St. Matthew "Passions-Musik," was startled by the beauty and modern freshness of its opening bars, while on further reference he became convinced that in the great Church-compositions of Bach an entirely new region was accessible to an Oratorio-loving country. In October, 1849, he asked a few musicians to his house and proposed the formation of a Society for the collection of printed or manuscript works of Bach and for the private practice of his vocal music by the members. The difficulties of the undertaking were soon manifest. The first advertisement attracted six candidates for membership. In the course of three months prospects brightened, and though a proposed Festival of Bach's music, to inaugurate the Society on the anniversary of his birthday, had to be abandoned through the want of music to perform, the birthday was kept and thirty-five members with but four female voices among them made their first trial of the only vocal work of Bach's with English words which was then to be found in England, a motet, which was afterwards said to have been the product of some other composer. Copyists were now set to work. Two more motets were produced and a set of six were a little later printed for the use of the Society; then the members found that they could not sing the motets and many of them absconded. Bennett persevered, collected by degrees a nucleus of earnest workers, Academy students were called in, the children of the Chapel Royal came to the rescue, practices were continued during the winter months of each year and private concerts were arranged. A pupil of Bennett's, Miss Helen F. Johnston, who in her eighteenth year had been the first candidate for membership, well deserves to have her name coupled with that of her master in any record of the movement. She framed the course of her young life to suit the special work, studied German, the theory of music, the organ, and lithography, and gradually produced, consulting Bennett at every step, an English version of the St. Matthew "Passions-Musik." She set up a lithographic press in her house and prepared with her own hands the parts needed for the rehearsals of that great work. Bennett afterwards wrote about the preparation of this unfamiliar music: "Its introduction was effected *bit* by *bit*, one portion rehearsed over and over again until performers and listeners began to find their way in it, and then some other portions ventured on." A set of solo-singers and orchestral players, all giving voluntary assistance, in most cases as a personal tribute to Bennett rather than from any interest in the unknown or mysterious Bach, attended rehearsals for quite a year, finding as much difficulty if not more than the chorus

found. The first performances of the "Passions-Musik" took place in the Hanover Square Rooms in April and November, 1854, Bennett with a few friends guaranteeing the financial results. These performances were too imperfect to convert certain eminent musicians and critics who viewed the reception of such music in England as a chimera. But the ice was broken; and in the next eight years, while the Bach Society continued to work, a much higher standard in the performance both of this and of other choral works of Bach was reached. Bennett did not pass on the work to other hands till he had seen all doubt as to the future of this music in England finally dispelled.

Meanwhile he had done loyal service elsewhere to other great composers, more especially to Beethoven. He had started, in his drawing-rooms in Charlotte Street, concerts of that chamber music in which the pianoforte takes part, and this he had done at a time when little of such music had been publicly played. After a few years he took the concerts to the Hanover Square Rooms, and by degrees they met with much appreciation. In the course of the time he gave forty concerts, drew from a repertoire of forty-five concerted works, chiefly by Beethoven, very few of which, save those by Mendelssohn, had been played in public in England before he introduced them. The critic Davison has left a tribute to Bennett in this connection in an account he gave in 1852 of one of these concerts:

The Hanover Square Rooms was densely packed with such an audience of connoisseurs and professors as perhaps Sterndale Bennett is alone able to collect together. Sterndale Bennett was the originator (in 1842) of these performances of classical Chamber-music by the great composers for the pianoforte to which the art and its professors are so much indebted, and which of late years have been so greatly in vogue. The best pianist and the best composer for the pianoforte that this country has probably known, no one could be more fitted to set the example; and if works once confined to the student's library are now widely diffused and popular it is certainly due to Sterndale Bennett, who was not only the first to venture on producing them in public, but now that ten years have passed remains without a superior among the foreign and English pianists who have followed in his steps.

Bennett continued the Chamber concerts till the year 1856. Then new duties obliged him to abandon them, and he ceased altogether to play in public.

Since the completion of his thirtieth year his employments had assumed, both in nature and extent, the form from which in future they little varied. One year serves as the pattern of many that followed. In the first six months of 1848 he taught the piano

for 950 hours; gave four concerts of his own; took some share as conductor or pianist at eleven others; helped in the organization of the new Queen's College in Harley Street, where he delivered an Introductory Lecture on Harmony in the Spring, before taking classes in the College twice a week in that subject. Continuing to teach in July, and taking but a brief holiday in the middle of August between the close of the London season and the reopening of the schools after the early Midsummer holidays, he brought up the total hours of teaching to 1632, without counting his classes at Queen's College. These figures, however, do not at all represent the time entailed. Towns such as Maidstone, Ipswich, Brighton, in all of which he taught in turn, were not in those days easily accessible; while the villages in the neighbourhood of London could not yet be called suburban. But Bennett, scrupulous as to the music he taught, had to take his work wherever he could find it. On the Brighton day, a policeman on his beat rang the door-bell in Russell Place at 4 a. m., and continued his peal till Bennett from his bedroom window answered the signal. Then there came a long drive to London Bridge to catch the 6 a. m. train. He gave eight or nine lessons at one school at Brighton and did not reach home till 11 p. m. On ordinary days he left his home at 8.30 a. m. and returned at 9 or 10 in the evening. Charles Steggall, who was his pupil for pianoforte, harmony, counterpoint, and composition for four years (1847-1851), took many lessons from him at the Academy in Tenterden Street during the summer months at 7 a. m., and Steggall, on seeing whither his master next repaired, used to wonder how any inhabitant of Portland Place could be ready to take a lesson at so early an hour as eight. That such a life was possible, was largely due to his wife, who had worked conjointly with him since their marriage and had by degrees relieved him almost entirely of correspondence and business matters. He took great pride in showing his brother professors the time-table in her hand-writing of his day's work; then he would say: "I have nothing to do with it, I only have to give the lessons." Then, again, though for some time it remained necessary to work continuously throughout the year, it was not always at high pressure, and lastly the Sunday of those times was a day of absolute rest and stillness. The pianoforte in Bennett's house was not touched on Sunday; the only music he heard that day were the Chants and Hymns and a *Te Deum* of Jackson's (a permanent fixture) in the church which he regularly attended. Before his work reached its maximum, his wife insisted on the use of a small carriage—the so-called pill-box of the medical

profession—and in this shelter he spent a great part of his life. In the long drives to and from his work it served as a reading-room full of newspapers and books. Here he is known to have studied counterpoint; to have mentally practised the pianoforte; and to have composed or sifted his musical ideas probably as much, if not more, than in any other place. The carriage served him for a dining-room or a dressing-room. Foot-warmers, hot-plates and a bull's-eye lantern were constant accompaniments. The lantern was often used on his return from Miss Lowe's school at Southgate, which journey, in the foggy season, he took on foot by the side of his horse. At least half his week was spent in rural places, and this added to the brightness and healthfulness of his life. In Spring and Summer he came home with his carriage full of flowers, and the country schools vied with each other to be the first to present him with his favourite lilac-blooms.

And the teaching itself, to which in those days so many applied no other word than "drudgery," was to him a worthy calling. How mean the occupation was in the eyes of the world must at times have forced itself to his notice. But Bennett's work lay much in educational circles, while his other pupils came to him with some seriousness of intent, knew something of his value as a musician, so that they looked up to him and treated him with courtesy and respect. The strictness of views which at first retarded his progress brought him in the end a full reward. He spent his days, not only in the society of the countless pupils he influenced, but also in continuous association, through the medium of the music he taught, with the great masters of his art. He taught school-girls who were almost beginners, but as far as could be seen, he took the same interest in them and in the simple music he found for them as he did in the advanced pupils preparing their Concertos for public performance. His patience, a quality which even the youngest scholar can appraise, was proverbial amongst his pupils. He was found strict, at times even severe. Personally, he was thought by many to be rather difficult to approach. There is little recorded of any definite systems of instruction. Music, rather than the playing of it, seems to have dwelt in the memory of his pupils. "He taught me to like Beethoven" was an often-expressed and grateful reminiscence. Not a few went much further and, sinking music altogether, preferred to acknowledge the strong influence for good that their music-master had upon their lives.

In the season of 1853, came a sharp revival of the Philharmonic trouble. The young Arabella Goddard was to make her début



at one of the concerts. Costa, having already stipulated with the Directors that he might decline to conduct any work to which he might take exception, now refused to conduct Bennett's Concerto in C mi., which Miss Goddard had chosen for her performance. When the Directors asked her to name another work by one of the great Masters, she, thinking that such a change might be taken to imply some slur on Bennett's reputation, declined to alter her choice and submitted to the cancelling of her engagement. This incident caused much remark, and even reached the columns of "Punch," in which sixteen lines of caustic verse succinctly related not only this incident, but the circumstances of the old quarrel to which it was the sequel. If the matter pained Bennett, as emphasizing his banishment from the Philharmonic, a counterbalance was near to hand. A few weeks later, he received a letter from the Directors of the Gewandhaus concerts at Leipzig, written with delightful reference to old memories, asking him to accept their Conductorship—surely one of the highest appreciations ever up to that time offered to an English musician, and of extra significance to a man who had so far found no such position in his own country. Bennett was prepared to make any reasonable sacrifice in order to embrace the offer. But the letter reached him in August when he found himself unable to get into touch with clients, or with the only musician, Cipriani Potter, to whom he thought he might entrust his more important duties during five months' absence in the following winter. "I wish I could fully express"—he wrote to Leipzig—"how sorrowful it makes me to be compelled to decide so thoroughly against my own inclinations." The special object of the letters which both he and his wife wrote to German friends at the time was to show him not ungrateful for the recollection of him in his Leipzig days which this invitation implied. Among the lasting pleasures of his life the remembrances of Leipzig took a prominent place, and to the end he was never happier than when a letter of introduction from Germany brought to his doors some young foreigner to whom he could render service. After his death, Ferdinand Hiller refers to this when characterizing his English friend:—"As a man, Bennett was extremely simple, unaffected, open, honourable, good-tempered, cheerful and sociable. German musicians found with him a truly heart-felt welcome."

One of Bennett's attempts to return German kindness has special interest. In early life he had set his mind upon introducing, sooner or later, to this country, one of the most remarkable artistic personalities whom he met in Germany. That nearly



twenty years passed before this was done, furnishes some illustration of the state to which charlatans had degraded the use of the pianoforte in this country, a matter which had had no little effect upon Bennett's own early career. Within a week of his first arrival in Leipzig in 1836, he wrote in his diary:—"I have made my bow to Miss Clara Wieck, a very *clever* girl and plays capitally. . . . I wish all girls were like her." Five years later, when Clara Wieck had become Clara Schumann, Bennett met her again in Leipzig, wrote home of her as being one of the finest players he had ever heard, and added: "I want her to come to England and I have answered that she shall play at the Philharmonic, but I fear I shall not persuade her." Nor did he; for though, as a recently appointed Philharmonic Director, he might assure her of one engagement, a pianist of Madame Schumann's order would not in 1842 secure enough patronage in London to meet her travelling expenses. At any rate Bennett's own experiences would not at that time add much force to his persuasions. But nine years later Bennett, though at variance with the Philharmonic Society, was in a stronger position to issue invitations. He had mustered a good following of music-lovers; he had secured an income by steady work, so that he could indulge in such luxuries as a Bach Society or unremunerative Chamber concerts, or even to face the risks of starting a series of fortnightly orchestral concerts in the year of the Great Exhibition. So he wrote to Schumann, who had by this time achieved a great name as a composer in his own country, and asked him to bring his wife over in 1851, so that his compositions and her playing might be made known here. Schumann, in a long and appreciative reply, wrote:

We have the greatest desire to visit England and we shall probably come. . . . The question is, could we in so short a time earn enough to cover the cost of journey and living, which we estimate at £100 at least. If you think so, we should wish for nothing further.

Bennett's reply to this, though catalogued in Schumann's collection of letters, has disappeared. Possibly the short time that the Schumanns could devote to the plan, was a cause of its failure. Bennett did not give the concerts, the arrangement with the Schumanns was postponed to the next year when it again failed of accomplishment, perhaps from want of engagements from other quarters. However, in view of the attitude which Bennett was later supposed to assume towards Schumann's music, it is desirable to notice that he was the first if not the only

person to try to bring Schumann as a composer into personal touch with an English audience. In 1854, he was again urging Madame Schumann to come to England for the 1855 season.

I can tell you (he wrote), with the very greatest confidence, that you would be received with enthusiasm and I think you would in every way be satisfied that you had at last paid a visit to England. For my own part it would be a great pleasure to me to be of the least assistance to you in your previous arrangements, and to make your stay in England as comfortable as possible. . . . I should be glad if you would tell me when you would come and how long you would stay and if you would give me leave to accept engagements for you & how much for each concert, et cetera—then I would take care to have a good business prepared for you.

There seems something to admire in the fact of one pianist pressing another to come and enter his own preserves, while he merely asks for himself the privilege of acting as her agent. Madame Schumann agreed to come and accepted an invitation to stay with the Bennetts. When the time came, the illness of her husband prevented her leaving home, but the fulfilment of Bennett's wish was near at hand.

In 1856, at the age of forty, he was called to greater prominence under conditions grateful to his feelings. At Cambridge, the home of his boyhood, the whilom chorister was now elected Professor of Music in the University, and at the same time he was welcomed back to the Philharmonic Society as Conductor of the concerts. These positions made no improvement in his private circumstances, for the fees he received for the conductorship did not balance the sacrifice of time incident upon performing his honorary duties at Cambridge. For his livelihood, therefore, he still had to depend entirely upon teaching. Seventeen years had gone by since he had settled down to regular work in London, and during that time, which proved in the end to represent nearly half his professional life, there had certainly been little at hand to brighten and stimulate his musical spirit; but he now found himself as well placed in his profession as he could desire to be, and he might perhaps be deemed fortunate, seeing how few were the appointments, except for organists, which this country had to offer to its musicians, to have obtained preferment with its attendant encouragement, as soon as he did.

On the evening when he took up his duties at the Philharmonic Society, Madame Schumann, who was staying in his house at the time, made her first appearance in England. Again, a wish of Schumann's, expressed in his letter to Bennett in 1851, that

his "Paradise and the Peri" might be given in London with Madame Jenny Lind as the principal singer, was now carried out at the sixth concert of the season. There is, however, no need to give details of the music played during the eleven years of Bennett's conductorship. A few suggestions which he made to the Directors at the opening of his second season were coldly received, and he was courteously reminded that the Conductor had no part in the framing of programmes. Therefore the programmes, chosen by the Directors, have no special interest as regards Bennett, such as they might possibly have if they could be taken to illustrate his musical tendencies. Referring to him simply as a conductor, it would appear that tradition gives him no place on that side of his profession comparable to that which it grants him as a pianist. He was not called to the regular exercise of a conductor's skill till he was past middle life, and the six or eight Philharmonic concerts which he then annually conducted, even when the other isolated opportunities which occurred to him with more or less frequency throughout life are superadded, could not represent the amount of experience associated with the notion of a great *chef-d'orchestre*. But putting aside Costa, the great conductor of the day, no one else had more to do in this way than Bennett, and he went to the Philharmonic with knowledge and feeling for the music with which he had to deal of a higher order than could be claimed for either Costa, or for any of the men doing similar work in London at exactly the same time. This advantage may have lost its full effect, because a musician of high ideals, who aimed for the nicer subtleties of interpretation, had in those days a limited chance of riveting his refinements upon an orchestra which he only met once a fortnight for a few months of each year at rehearsals not much longer than the corresponding concerts, an orchestra, too, no doubt splendidly trained under the strictest discipline, but entirely on lines laid down at the Italian Opera. In any case, however, few denied Bennett high rank, while many assigned him the foremost place among contemporary conductors of classical music in this country.

He was elected Professor at Cambridge by a majority so overwhelming as to cause great surprise. Within the walls of the University and among the comparatively few of its members who noticed the proceedings, he found as much or perhaps more favour than the other candidates. He had on his side the support of his predecessor's intimate friends who well knew the value that Thomas Attwood Walmisley had placed on his general

musicianship. On the other hand, he could not claim, as a secular musician, the qualifications hitherto associated with the office. But the decision did not rest with the Cambridge residents alone. There was no organist on the spot at the time on whom the authorities could confer a title which to them had only a shadowy significance. They decided to make a choice by Poll of the Senate, thus giving a chance for an open competition which had previously occurred but once during at least a hundred years. The non-resident members thus had a voice in the matter and secured for Bennett his surprising majority. Dr. Whewell, the Vice-Chancellor, wrote from Trinity Lodge shortly before the polling-day: "It is wonderful what a stir this election makes in London." The "stir" took its rise from the writing-table of Bennett's wife. She left no stone unturned, in her quiet way, to help her husband, and it was chiefly to the influence exerted, at her request, by Bennett's past and present pupils that he owed his election, and gained thereby some return for his many years of conscientious work as a teacher. He approached his position at Cambridge with zeal tempered by caution. His only fixed duty was connected with degrees in Music. The decision on the merits of candidates for these degrees rested with the Professor, or, strictly speaking, he had to approve of an "Exercise" composed by the candidate, before such Exercise was performed in the hearing of the University authorities. The University, however, had laid down the conditions for granting the degrees in terms so vague, that a new Professor had no little difficulty and responsibility in the practical application of them. Nor was Cambridge willing at the time to follow an example lately set by Oxford of issuing new enactments on the subject. The authorities of the University met Bennett's enquiries and suggestions with courtesy, but were slow to agree with him or among themselves about the construction that might be given to antique and briefly expressed formulæ. Much of Bennett's anxiety, which the University was unlikely to share, sprang from the poor repute of these degrees in the musical profession, where the most unwarrantable suspicions were rife and libellously circulated in print as to the means by which they were obtained. After much correspondence some of the points at issue were settled. Bennett was to be allowed to examine the candidates, not privately in his own house as it had been suggested by the University Registry, but in Cambridge, as a test additional to his approval of their compositions; and it was conceded, after some demur, that he was within his rights in maintaining that the candidates must, as

a first step, enter their names on the books of a College, and not approach him in a private and unauthorized capacity. Within twelve months he issued a circular containing all needful information about entrance to a College, musical Exercises and their performance, and the expenses of graduation. This circular kept at bay the incompetent aspirants who had inundated him with letters during the first year of his Professorship. As to the relation between the two degrees of Bachelor and Doctor, the latest information at hand was in a Report, dated 1852, to the University Commissioners, which stated that the "conditions for both degrees are the same." The possibility of proceeding at once to the higher degree had naturally obliterated the value of the other; and when Bennett became Professor, the Bachelor's degree had not been taken for fourteen years. He determined to revive it and succeeded in doing so. His circular clearly stated that the higher degree could be taken independently of the other. But it lay within his province to control the standard of merit. When it became common knowledge that he was a difficult man to approach, the way in which he wished to be approached seemed also to be generally understood, and as it turned out, no one, during the nineteen years of his Professorship, proceeded to the Doctor's degree who had not previously taken that of Bachelor.

Work with successful and unsuccessful candidates for degrees, scarcely any of whom saw Cambridge for more than a few hours of their lives, could of itself bring Bennett, a non-resident Professor, into little touch with University life. He wished to identify himself with music in Cambridge itself, and he lost no time in starting to do so. It being the custom for resident members of the University, including the students reading for honours, to stay up for two months of the long vacation, Bennett took advantage of this, and in the year of his election spent his summer holidays in Cambridge. This involved some sacrifice of the needed rest and retirement which he could enjoy only at that time of year, but it served a useful purpose. In the course of some weeks he made many new acquaintances and laid the foundation of many close and life-long friendships. He conquered for the time being his usual reluctance to play in private society and readily assisted at musical parties designed for "lionizing" him. He collected undergraduates and choristers to practice Bach's music two or three times a week in a Trinity lecture-room. This was the beginning of the ready help which he gave for many years to the musical societies in Cambridge, of which the amateurs became duly appreciative. He was prepared to make sacrifices

in return for the honour and pleasure which his connection with the University brought him. He gave up on the average, for ten or eleven years, in each term, four of his regular working-days to Cambridge. The hours thus spent enabled him to do everything required, beyond what he did by correspondence, in the matter of musical degrees (for which there remained a continuous flow of candidates, though the number of degrees granted did not perhaps exceed or equal the number of years for which he held the Professorship); to assist or appear at concerts; and to be present at University functions, or at such social gatherings as he might be invited to in the Colleges. He certainly became as familiar a figure in Cambridge as any other non-resident official. After he had held the Professorship for eleven years, the Vice-Chancellor of the time wrote to him: "It has been pointed out to me to my great surprise that no pecuniary consideration was assigned by the University to the Professor of Music." A Syndicate was appointed to report on the "Proceedings in Music," and this report when issued recommended that a stipend of £100 a year should be assigned as long as Professor Bennett held the chair, it being thought "that his services could not with propriety remain any longer unrequited." At the same time the degree of M. A. was conferred upon him to give him the status of a member of the Senate. Bennett therefore lived to see the Professorship in a more promising condition than that in which he had found it. Striking changes or rapid developments in the musical life of the University cannot be claimed as a result of his régime, but the degrees came to be regarded in the musical world as desirable objects none too easy to obtain; and, again, at a time when respect for music itself among the members of a learned society was somewhat lacking no man could be better qualified than he to disarm prejudice, and attract deference to the art he professed.

His duties at the Philharmonic led him to give up his Chamber-concerts. He thus retired from public playing, and, possibly as a natural consequence, ceased for many years to write pianoforte-music. But his new positions furnished greater incentives to composition than had reached him since his young days, and his work as a composer found some new directions. After his election at Cambridge he was advised to take a degree, and the Vice-Chancellor wrote: "On your composing an Anthem for Commencement Sunday to be performed in St. Mary's Church, I have reason to believe that the University will grant you the degree of Doctor of Music." So Bennett wrote an Anthem for double choir in



several movements, and this was the first of a series of such works which he wrote for Cambridge or at the request of University friends. Being now in evidence as a Conductor, he was invited, in 1857-58, to conduct "Lancashire Festival Concerts" in Manchester, as also a Festival at Leeds for which he was asked to provide a new composition—the first instance of his receiving a commission to write specially for an important occasion. The notice was short but he responded with his Cantata "The May-Queen." The welcome given to this work did not induce him to court further success on the same lines. In the next three years he devoted holidays, and much other time of value to him in a mundane sense, to the study of German Hymnology, and, in partnership with Otto Goldschmidt, edited a "Chorale Book for England," the result of laborious research. In 1862 he was asked by the Commissioners of the second Great Exhibition to join Auber, Meyerbeer and Verdi in providing music representative of four countries for their opening ceremony. He accordingly set music to an Ode written for the occasion by the Poet Laureate. His treatment by the Commissioners and the conductor Costa while he was preparing the music, and the underhand plot to prevent its performance, were fully and indignantly exposed by the London Press. In the same year he set Charles Kingsley's Ode for the Installation of a new Chancellor at Cambridge and wrote a descriptive Overture, "Paradise and the Peri," for the Jubilee celebration of the Philharmonic Society (1862).

The death of his wife in the autumn of this year ended a partnership of eighteen years, which had brought him not only full domestic happiness, but also much of the success which he had been able to gain in his professional career.

In the summer of 1863 he was on the Rhine with his children, reviving remembrances and with his thoughts turning to Leipzig. A visit there would involve writing new music. He had never gone empty-handed. Soon after his return to London he began to play the opening section of an orchestral movement in G minor, the first phrase of which he called "the waves of life." This became the principal movement of a Symphony completed and played by the Philharmonic Society in 1864. At the close of the year he found himself once more in Leipzig as the guest of Ferdinand David. He conducted his new Symphony at a Gewandhaus concert, and in the course of seven days, all the time he could spare for this tribute to old memories, was treated with the tenderest regard by the friends who had not seen him for twenty-three years.



In 1865, at the end of the musical season, he wished to retire from his place at the Philharmonic which he had already held longer than any predecessor. The Directors persuaded him to continue for another season. "The Times," when reviewing the musical events of 1866, remarked that Schumann had been "the sensation composer" of that year with the Directors of Concerts. The Philharmonic took a part in this movement. The "Paradise and the Peri," which had been laid on the shelf since 1856, was again produced under Bennett's direction; and at the last concert of the season Alfred Jaell played the A mi. Concerto so delightfully that the audience was moved to an exceptional display of approval. This was the last Concerto that Bennett ever conducted. He was deaf to the further entreaties of the Directors that he would reconsider his retirement and, indeed, before the last concert took place, had already accepted an alternative appointment at the Royal Academy of Music.

At the age of fifty, with all family obligations near fulfilment, he fancied the approach of a time when he might reduce his work as a teacher, pass his remaining years with freer choice of pursuits and devote himself to composition or, as he would more expressly say 'to the *study* of music.' His farewell to public appearances on retirement from the Philharmonic was a sign of the desire for this greater freedom; but his hopes were never realized. In June, 1866, after eighteen months hesitation he yielded to pressure, and consented to return to the Royal Academy of Music in the office of Principal, though merely accepting conditions, established by precedent, which required his attendance for six hours a week to teach composition and arrange class-lists, with remuneration equivalent to the value of his time elsewhere. So limited a scheme threatened no disturbance to his present or future plans. But there were stronger reasons for hesitation. He had not been inside the Academy for eight years. In 1858 he had thrown up his post there as a Professor by way of protest against an action of the Directors who had invited the Staff of the Italian Opera to supply the music for an Academy concert which the Queen was to attend, thereby casting a grievous slight on the musical profession of this country, for the advancement of whose interests the Institution which they governed had been expressly founded. Owing to a long course of similar acts of tactless administration the Academy had lost all esprit-de-corps, had alienated its friends and ruined its prestige. It was now on the brink of ruin, and no other man of Bennett's rank would have run the risk of connecting himself with it. If he believed that he could improve its condition his faith was

not shared by others, and his friends regarded his return to the miserable place with silent wonder. He assumed his new office without the encouragement of a single word of congratulation. He gave no explanation of his decision, which could only be accounted for by others as the outcome of grateful remembrances and of pity for the house in which he had passed his boyhood.

It would be difficult to pay just tribute to the work of Bennett's latest years without reciting the details of a long and eventful period in the history of the Royal Academy of Music. Here it must suffice to tell:—how within eighteen months of his election as Principal the Directors passed a resolution to close the Academy and attempted to surrender the Charter; how Bennett then came to the rescue, defeated the Directors and saved his old school from annihilation; and how, when the Directors promptly deserted the place declaring its prospects hopeless, Bennett had no other course than to assume the Chairmanship of the Committee of Management, and thereby to become responsible for the chief control of the Academy in relation not only to education but also to general business. As principal, his musicianship, the simplicity and unselfishness of his aims and the graciousness of his personality readily attached the respect and won the hearts of colleagues and students, and under his headship the personnel of the place grew in numbers and became imbued with the spirit of common interest. As Chairman he succeeded, after the Government had withdrawn its annual grant, in winning it back, restored the financial credit of the house, and during seven years bore the harassing anxiety of complex negotiations with various public bodies of great influence who were discussing schemes for the advance of national musical education. Bennett could not disregard the great advantages which might accrue to the Academy if it were adopted as the basis of a more extended project, but he ultimately broke off the negotiations when he found good reason to fear that the Academy might lose its identity if he allowed it to become involved in schemes which were as yet immature and about which there was no one in an authorized position to give him his required pledges of security. By his devotion and self-sacrifice during these years he fully repaid the debt he owed to his Alma Mater. He gave up his time without stint at a loss of more than a quarter of his previously earned income, and when the change in his circumstances had to be reckoned with, he was quite willing, though not without a pang, to let his own house furnished, and find shelter for three years in a cottage in Porchester Terrace. This self-denial may be placed to the honour of his character. Nevertheless, there must

remain a shadow of regret, while thinking of him as a musician, that he should have become engrossed, during years which he had hoped to employ far differently, in duties which not only took heavy toll of his powers both of mind and of body, but also, for the most part, lay quite outside a musician's province.

Though his thoughts, even those of his spare time, were constantly given to the Academy, music still held its place in his mind, and during curtailed holidays and even at times of greatest pressure he wrote works of importance. Thus he contributed his Oratorio "The Woman of Samaria" to the Birmingham Festival in 1867. After many years of silence as a writer of pianoforte music he added a Sonata "The Maid of Orleans"; and for the orchestra, wrote a fine "Prelude" and a long Funeral March as the first installments of music to the "Ajax" of Sophocles, on which music he was engaged up to the time of his death.

During the last year of his life, his anxiety for the prospects of the Academy being by that time relieved, he passed months of an apparently happy contentment in a house with a pretty garden which he had taken in St. John's Wood. But his health was broken, and after a short illness he died on February 1st, 1875, within a few weeks of completing his fifty-ninth year.

It was characteristic of early Victorian England, overrun by the foreigner and oblivious of the native, that the first State recognition of music of the day was a knighthood bestowed upon the very man, whose hostility (Corsican in its vendetta) to Bennett had been so long a scandal in the artistic life of the day, Michael Costa. It was not until two years later (in 1871) that public opinion forced those in high places to give him the honour which he ought to have been the first to receive. But if the recognition by the State was slow in coming, other bodies had been more rapidly appreciative, and he cared but little for the trappings of a title. When he died in 1875, he received his due meed, a resting place in Westminster Abbey close by the tomb of Henry Purcell, and under the shadow of the organ on which he played. The writer of this article vividly recalls how the ceremony, to all appearances stately and proud as such functions are, was resolved, by the all-pervading affectionate spirit of the man it honoured, into a close, intimate and family-like gathering of sorrowing friends. It was a striking tribute to a great artist, but still more so to a spotless, noble-minded character.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>I am greatly indebted, in the compilation of this article, to the help and advice of Mr. J. B. Sterndale Bennett, the author of an admirable biography of his father. Without his active coöperation it would have been almost impossible to make the essay worthy of its subject and his environments.