The Great Composers, Sketched by Themselves No. I. Haydn

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the dogmas of a too microscopic "scientification" more easily reduced to their probable value than in musical theory. We say "probable value" because the value of a scientific dogma is what it will fetch in another generation, when tested by other facts and newer discoveries.

THE GREAT COMPOSERS, SKETCHED BY THEMSELVES.

By JOSEPH BENNETT.

No. I.—HAYDN.

It was a saying of Roger l'Estrange that "men are not to be judged by their looks, habits, and appearances, but by the character of their lives and conversations, and by their works." The philosopher might have added, "and most of all by their letters." On the fair white surface which receives the impression of hopes and fears, loves and hates, desires and repudiations, do men leave the true stamp of themselves; and this is why I propose devoting a series of articles to the letters of the great composers. There can be no need for the worker in this case to apologise for his work, inasmuch as the danger of a false issue arises only from misinterpretation, the means of correcting which are close to every reader's hand. I begin with Joseph Haydn, simply premising that I shall say as little, and allow Haydn himself to say as much as possible.

We must await the further course of Herr Pohl's exhaustive biography in order to know the precise conditions under which Haydn passed so many years of his life as chapel-master to the Esterhazys. But his correspondence gives reason to believe that he had a fair share of the small personal worries which, because they touch so closely, are in their effects great. For instance, take this passage in a letter to Artaria, dated Estoras, September 29, 1782: "Now I beg you will put the 25 ducats, full weight, into a little box, seal it up, and wrap or sew it into an oil-cloth cover, and write nothing on it except 'à M. Haydn,' for I do not desire that any of the family here should know of my transactions. You can deliver the box to the prince's porter, and only tell him that it contains money, and then I shall receive it quite safely from him." Driven to such an expedient in order, as is too probable, to protect his hard-earned cash from extravagant feminine hands, the master is worthy of pity; but this was not all. He could not keep even his correspondence safe from the prying eyes which ought to have looked upon that simple honest nature with entire trustfulness. In a letter to Frau von Genzinger (Estoras, May 13, 1790) we read, "My highly esteemed benefactress, this is not the first time that some of my letters, and of others also, have been lost, inasmuch as our letter-bag on its way to Dedenberg (in order to have letters put into it) is always opened by the steward there, which has frequently been the cause of mistakes and other disagreeable occurrences. For greater security, however, and to defeat such disgraceful curiosity, I will henceforth inclose all my letters in a separate envelope to the porter. This trick annoys me the more because you might justly reproach me with procrastination, from which may Heaven defend me? At all events the prying person, whether male or female, cannot either in this last letter or in any of the others, have discovered anything in the least inconsistent with propriety." But it would appear that Haydn unjustly suspected the folk at Dedenberg. The "prying person" was nearer home, and the master writes to his fair friend a little later (May 30), "Such curiosity can do me no harm, far less your-

self, as the whole contents of the letter were an account of my opera 'La Vera Costanza,' performed in the new theatre in the Landstrasse, and about the French teacher who was to have come at that time to Estoras. You need therefore be under no uneasiness, dear lady, either as regards the past or the future, for my friendship and esteem for you (tender as they are) can never become reprehensible, having always before my eyes respect for your elevated virtues, which not only I but all who know you must reverence. Do not let this deter you from consoling me sometimes by your agreeable letters, as they are so highly necessary to cheer me in this wilderness and to soothe my deeply wounded heart. Oh that I could be with you, dear lady, even for one quarter of an hour, to pour forth all my sorrows and to receive comfort from you!" The master's letters give indications that in other respects than those connected with domestic relationships his life at Estoras was not the calm content generally pictured. As regards personal liberty he was little better off than a slave. In the letter last quoted we read, "I trust therefore you will not be displeased with your Haydn, who, often as his prince absents himself from Estoras, never can obtain leave, even for four and twenty hours, to go to Vienna. It is scarcely credible, and yet the refusal is always couched in such polite terms and in such a manner as to render it utterly impossible for me to urge my request for leave of absence. Well, as God pleases." Again, writing to Frau von Genzinger (June 27, 1790), he says, "I am doomed to stay at home. What I lose by so doing you can well imagine: it is indeed sad always to be a slave; but Providence wills it so. I am a poor creature, plagued perpetually by hard work, and with few hours for recreation. Friends? What do I say? *One* true friend; there are no longer any true friends save one female friend. Oh yes! no doubt I still have one, but she is far away. Ah well! I take refuge in my thoughts. May God bless her and may she never forget me." Once more writing from London to the same correspondent, Haydn exclaims, "Oh, my dear good lady, how sweet is some degree of liberty! I had a kind prince, but was obliged at times to be dependent on base souls. I often sighed for release, and now I have it in some measure. I am quite sensible of this benefit, though my mind is burdened with more work. The consciousness of being no longer a bond-servant sweetens all my toils." How different a state of things do these extracts suggest than that fondly imagined in view of the almost uniform serenity or cheerfulness of the master's music! But I have not quoted them to prove that Haydn shared the troubled inheritance of humanity so much as to point out the meekness and gentleness with which he endured. He could pour his cares and sorrows into the heart of a faithful friend, but with regard to those from whom they came he knew how to be silent, never returning evil for evil nor railing for railing. It is a remarkable fact, for example, that his published letters contain only two references to the woman who made his married life so unhappy. In the first instance he begs Frau von Genzinger from London to advance 150 florins to Frau Haydn, and adds with characteristic caution, "To insure the safety of the money, Herr Hamberger, a good friend of mine, a man of tall stature, our landlord, will bring you this letter himself, and you can with impunity intrust him with the money; but I beg you will take a receipt both from him and from my wife." The italics are mine. In the second case he identifies Frau Haydn with a malicious report the very sending of which to the absent composer reveals the woman's nature: "My wife wrote

to me that Mozart depreciates me very much, but this I will never believe. If true, I forgive him." The delicacy which restrained him, under great provocation, from making domestic circumstances a matter of discussion even with his friends is here worthy of note, but was quite in keeping with the master's general behaviour. During his first visit to London a rival enterprise to that of Salomon brought over Haydn's pupil Pleyel as a counter-attraction, and the advent of the younger musician is found thus noted in the diary of the elder: "Pleyel came to London on December 23, and I dined with him on the 24th." Moreover Haydn wrote to Frau von Genzinger (January 17, 1792), "Our rivals of the Professional Society have sent for my pupil Pleyel from Strasburg to direct their concerts. So a bloody harmonious war will now begin between teacher and scholar. . . . Pleyel on his arrival showed so much modesty towards me that he gained my goodwill afresh. We are very often together, which is much to his credit, and he knows how to appreciate his 'father;' we will share our laurels fairly, and each go home satisfied." On March 2 he writes, "My labours are augmented by the arrival of my pupil Pleyel, who has been summoned here by the Professional Society to direct their concerts. He brought with him a number of new compositions, which were, however, written long ago. He accordingly promised to give a new piece every evening. On seeing this I could easily perceive that there was a dead set against me, so I also announced publicly that I would give twelve different new pieces; so, in order to keep my promise, and to support poor Salomon, I must be the victim and work perpetually. I do feel it, however, very much. My eyes suffer most, and my nights are very sleepless, but with God's help I will overcome it all. . . . Pleyel's presumption is everywhere criticised, and yet I love him, and have gone to his concert each time, and been the first to applaud him." The perfectly amiable nature of Haydn, as exhibited in these and a host of other instances, draws us to him with irresistible force, and compels us to accept without shadow of question the honesty of his very beautiful and touching reply to an address from a Musical Society in Bergen. Writing on September 22, 1802, the old master said, "You give me the pleasing conviction (which cannot fail to be the most fruitful consolation of my declining years) that I am often the enviable source from which you, and so many families susceptible of true feeling, derive pleasure and enjoyment in domestic life. What happiness this thought causes me! Often, when contending with obstacles of every sort opposed to my works—often when my powers both of body and mind failed, and I felt it a hard matter to persevere in the course I had entered on—a secret feeling within me whispered, 'There are but few contented and happy men here below, everywhere grief and care prevail: perhaps your labours may one day be the source whence the weary and worn, or the man burdened with cares, may derive a few moments' rest and refreshment.' What a powerful motive to press onwards!"

How Haydn carried this kindness and gentleness of disposition even into the troubled region of artistic life, where such qualities are seldom found, let his outspoken admiration for Mozart testify. Writing to Herr Roth, in December 1787, he used expressions concerning his young rival that redound to his eternal honour: "I only wish I could impress on every friend of music, and on great men in particular, the same depth of musical sympathy, and profound appreciation of Mozart's inimitable works, that I myself feel

and enjoy; then nations would vie with each other to possess such a jewel within their frontiers. Prague ought to strive to retain this precious man; but also to remunerate him, for without this the history of a great genius is sad indeed, and gives very little encouragement to posterity to further exertions; and it is on this account so many promising geniuses are ruined. It enrages me to think that the unparalleled Mozart is not engaged by some imperial or royal Court. Forgive my excitement, but I love the man so dearly." No higher or more significant testimony to the beauty of Haydn's personal character need be asked for than this; none other, assuredly, will be demanded by those who know the tendencies and temptations of artistic life.

It must not be thought, however, that Haydn was wholly wanting in spirit. There were times, as his letters show, when he could give as well as take, and at such times we always discover that somebody has either been trying to "do" him in matters of business, or criticising his music with, in the composer's estimation, undue severity. In business concerns Haydn, with all his simplicity of character, was both sharp and shrewd; attempts to take advantage of him, therefore, not only aroused his indignation, but were promptly exposed. Thus Artaria, having announced the publication of certain quartets before Haydn had distributed copies to his subscribers, heard from Estoras (June 4, 1782) to this effect: "Such a proceeding redounds very little to my credit, and is most injurious to me, and it is certainly a very Jewish step on your part. . . . By heavens! you have wronged me to the extent of more than fifty ducats, not having yet fulfilled my engagements with many of my subscribers. This step must cause the cessation of all transactions between us." It is true that Haydn wrote a few weeks later, "I regret having written my last letter to you in a moment of hasty passion, and I do hope that, in spite of it, we shall remain good friends;" but though his anger was "as the crackling of thorns under a pot," it was anger all the same. One more example of it will suffice, the cause being again Artaria, who neglected to answer some business proposition: "I have been much provoked by the delay, inasmuch as I could have got forty ducats from another publisher for these five pieces, and you make too many difficulties about a matter by which, in such short compositions, you have at least a thirty-fold profit. The sixth piece has long had its companion; so pray make an end of the affair, and send me either my music or my money." We scarcely recognise our gentle Haydn in these fierce little notes; but where profit was concerned he could hold his own with the best, and his business letters, which would not disgrace a man in the "City," surprise us as coming from a recluse.

In the matter of criticism Haydn appears to have been so sensitive that he could not refrain from showing his irritation even in a brief autobiography written at the request of a lady: "I had the good fortune to please almost all nations (except, indeed, the Berliners) in chamber-music, as testified by the public papers, and by letters addressed to myself; I only marvel that those judicious Berlin gentlemen preserved no *medium* in their criticism of my works, as in one weekly paper they laud me to the skies, and in another bury me sixty fathoms deep in the earth, and without any valid reason; but I know why it is—because they are unable to perform these pieces of mine, and are too conceited to give themselves the trouble to understand them properly; and from other causes which, God willing, I will bring forward at the right time. Capellmeister von Dittersdorff, in

Silesia, recently wrote entreating me to defend myself against their cruel attacks, but I replied that one swallow does not make a summer; that perhaps one of these days some impartial authority would stop their tongues, which happened to them once before when they had accused me of *monotony*." Passages like these more suggest Herr Wagner girding at his censors than the meek and long-suffering Haydn. In another case he prints a note on the title-page of one of his works, with reference to the peculiar treatment of a certain passage, in order, as he says, "to anticipate the criticisms of any wittlings," and that "the whole work may not be exposed to blame on account of this well-weighed passage, which the critics, and above all my enemies, might pervert." The key to this sensitiveness we of course find in the extreme complacency with which Haydn regarded his own music, a complacency often expressed in a matter-of-fact way nothing short of funny. Thus (February 8, 1780) he despatched a Sonata to Artaria with a note which said, "It is only those who are envious (and there are many such) who will find fault with it." Referring to transactions with the Directors of the Paris Concerts spirituels, he wrote (May 27, 1781), "They made me an offer to engrave all my future works, on very advantageous terms, and are much surprised that my compositions for the voice are so singularly pleasing; I, however, am not in the least surprised, for as yet they have heard nothing. If they could only hear my Operetta 'L' Isola disabitata,' and my last Shrovetide Opera, 'La Fedeltà premiata'! I do assure you that no such work has hitherto been heard in Paris, nor perhaps in Vienna either." Again, writing to Artaria (July 20, 1781) about a setting of three songs by Frieber, the master, while indulging his own self-complacency, makes a—for him—perfectly vicious attack upon a certain Capellmeister Hofmann: "The same three songs have (between ourselves) been set to music wretchedly by Capellmeister Hofmann; and just because this braggart thinks that he alone has climbed to the summit of Mount Parnassus, and tries in every case to run me down with certain circles of the great world, I have composed these same three songs, to show this *pretended* great world the difference." He adds further on, "They are indeed merely songs, but not *street songs*, like those of Hofmann, devoid of ideas, expression, and above all of melody." In another case he recommends to Artaria his new Capriccio as one which, "from its taste, singularity, and elaborate finish, cannot fail to be received with approbation by learned and unlearned." And there is a later reference to "twelve new and very charming Minuets and Trios," offered to Artaria for as many ducats. Yet in all these, and other instances, the simple good faith of the man is evident and removes every cause of offence. His words read like the utterances of a self-respect too unconscious of vanity to dread the charge of conceit and arrogance, "from which," the master piously says in a letter to Breitkopf and Härtel, "my heavenly Father has preserved me all my life long."

The pious remark just quoted reminds us of a phase in Haydn's character which his letters put in the clearest possible light. The master was of an intensely religious nature, not given to vague sentimentalism, as is often the case with religious natures, but living and acting as though in the presence and under the government of a personal God, whom he regarded as infinitely kind, and as overruling all things for good. Proofs of this abound throughout his correspondence and other writings. Thus he concludes the autobiographical sketch already men-

tioned with the following words: "I offer up to Almighty God all eulogiums, for to Him alone do I owe them. My sole wish is neither to offend against my neighbour nor my gracious prince, but above all not against our merciful God." Referring to his expected dismissal by Prince Esterhazy for remaining so long in London, he writes, "But I hope even in that case that God will be gracious to me, and enable me in some degree to remedy the loss by my own industry." In a subsequent letter he says, "May God only vouchsafe to grant me the health that I have hitherto enjoyed, and may I preserve it by good conduct and out of gratitude to the Almighty." *A propos* to his earnings in London, we read, "I daily thank my Creator for this boon." And again, with reference to exhaustion from overwork, "Providence alone can repair the deficiency in my powers, and to Him I daily pray for aid, for without His support I should indeed be a poor creature." Finally, for such quotations need not be multiplied, he begins an appendix to his will with the words, "Should God call me away suddenly," and goes on, "In the name of the Trinity. The uncertainty of the period when it may please my Creator, in His infinite wisdom, to call me from time into eternity has caused me, being in sound health, to make my last will with regard to my little remaining property." The whole tenour of Haydn's character forbids the uncharitable assumption that these repeated evidences of religious feeling were other than genuine. It is clear, indeed, that Haydn had a childlike trust in his God, and looked upon himself as directed in all his ways by infinite Power conjoined with infinite Benevolence. Here we have the clue to many of the chief phases of his disposition. The man who feels as Haydn felt can be no other than cheerful, patient, and resigned, for though the Being in whom he confides often "moves in a mysterious way" He may be trusted even where He cannot be traced.

All the goodness and beauty of Haydn's character is epitomised in the will of which mention has just been made. Not only are his relatives of every grade considered by the disposition of his property, but also a host of people having no sort of claim upon him. Priests, schoolmasters, and schoolchildren are thought of; "poor blind Adam in Eisenstadt" gets 24 florins; Fräulein Anna Buchholz receives 100, "inasmuch as in my youth her grandfather lent me 150 florins, when I greatly needed them, which, however, I repaid fifty years ago;" to "the old gardener Michel" are bequeathed 24 florins, and 100 to "the blind daughter of Herr Graus, leader of the choir in Eisenstadt;" while the "four sisters Sommerfeld, daughters of the wigmaker in Presburg," receive 200. So the good old man runs on through sixty-three bequests; and at this characteristic task I should leave him but for the temptation to show how, in one respect at least, he enjoyed the life thus made more easy to others. Musical artists are not, as a rule, insensible to creature comforts, and to that rule Haydn presents no exception. In plain words, he thought a good deal about his dinner, and relished it with the zest of the typical alderman. Writing to Artaria from Estoras (1788) he says, "By-the-bye I am very much obliged to you for the capital cheese you sent me, and also the sausages, for which I am your debtor, but shall not fail when an opportunity offers to return the obligation." In a subsequent letter to Frau von Genzinger he comically laments the change from Vienna to Estoras: "I lost 20 lbs. in weight in three days, for the effect of my good fare at Vienna disappeared on the journey. 'Alas! alas!' thought I, when forced to eat at the *restaurateurs*, 'instead of

capital beef, a slice of a cow fifty years old; instead of a ragout with little balls of forced meat, an old sheep with yellow carrots; instead of a Bohemian pheasant, a tough grill; instead of pastry, dry apple fritters and hazelnuts, &c.' Alas! alas! would that I now had many a morsel I despised in Vienna! Here in Estoras no one asks me, 'Would you like some chocolate, with milk or without?' 'Will you take some coffee, with or without cream?' 'What can I offer you, my good Haydn?' 'Will you have vanille ice or pineapple?' If I had only a piece of good Parmesan cheese, particularly in Lent, to enable me to swallow more easily the black dumplings and puffs! I gave our porter this very day a commission to send me a couple of pounds." A month later he writes to his fair friend, who it is clear took pity on his distress, "You must now permit me to kiss your hands gratefully for the ruskus you sent me, which, however, I did not receive till last Tuesday; but they came exactly at the right moment, having just finished the last of the others." From London even, where his Italian landlord gave him "four excellent dishes" at every dinner, and where he was invited out six times per week, we find him exclaiming to Frau von Genzinger, "Oh! how often do I long to be beside you at the piano, even for a quarter of an hour, and then to have some good German soup. But," he resignedly adds, "we cannot have everything in this world." Dear old master! let us take our last look at him in a position described by himself with charming and characteristic *naïveté*; the scene is an amateur concert-hall: "After the concert I was taken into a very handsome adjoining room, where tables were laid for all the amateurs, to the number of 200. It was proposed that I should take a seat near the top; but, as it so happened, I had dined out that very day and eat more than usual. But, in spite of this, I could not get off drinking the health, in Burgundy, of the harmonious gentlemen present. All responded to it, but at last allowed me to go home." Haydn was "allowed to go home" in a very definite sense eighteen years later; but, while his letters endure, the remembrance of his gentleness, amiability, and piety will never fade.

DUSSEK'S PIANOFORTE SONATAS.

By EBENEZER PROUT, B.A.

It is a frequent subject of complaint with those pianoforte teachers who are conscientious in the selection of music for their pupils that they find it difficult to get good classical pieces of only moderate technical difficulty. Until a player is fairly advanced it is worse than useless to give Beethoven's Sonatas, and one cannot be always teaching Mozart. It is a curious thing that these teachers frequently ignore altogether—indeed are often themselves unacquainted with—the pianoforte works of Haydn, Clementi, and Dussek. With the object of directing their attention to a perfect mine of musical beauty, I propose to make some remarks on the Sonatas of the last-named of these three composers.

Comparatively few, even among educated musicians, know how much Dussek did toward developing the technical resources of the piano. The contemporary of Mozart, and a great pianist, he composed more than fifty Sonatas, twelve Concertos for the piano with orchestra, a Quintett, Quartett, and Trio for piano and strings, and a literally countless number of small pieces, Variations, Rondos, &c. Of this enormous mass of music how much is known by the average teacher

of the present day? The Sonata dedicated to Mrs. Chinnery (Op. 24), the "Plus Ultra" Sonata, "La Consolation," and perhaps the little Rondo "La Matinée," to which may occasionally be added the "Invocation," and even "Les Adieux" and the "Élégie harmonique." That these are on the whole fairly representative of their composer there is no doubt; but there are many other works equally, if not more beautiful, which, so far as general appreciation is concerned, might as well never have been published. That Dussek published many things unworthy of his reputation is indisputable: he was at one time a partner in a music business, and doubtless wrote a good deal for the "shop;" but these ephemeral pieces are mostly in smaller forms (Variations, Rondos, &c.), and among the Sonatas it is rare indeed to find works without some special features of interest.

As a composer Dussek has both strong and weak points. He was a great melodist—no more absolutely tuneful music than his exists; and, even when trivial, he never ceases to be graceful and pleasing. In addition he had the power of inventing "new passages," in the technical sense of the word. In this respect his Sonatas show an advance on those of Mozart, and approach more nearly to the style of Hummel, who owed more to his great predecessor than is generally known or acknowledged. On the other hand, Dussek seems to have been deficient in strict scientific training. Harmonic crudities are not uncommon in his pieces, while absolute faults are occasionally to be met with. His thematic developments, also, are frequently weak, sometimes consisting of little more than repetitions of previously heard passages, though the constant flow of melody in the music frequently hides the deficiency in great part, if not entirely.

The best edition of Dussek's Sonatas is that published at Leipzig by Breitkopf and Härtel, which has been reprinted in a cheaper form by Litolf. It does not contain the whole of the Sonatas, only thirty-two out of about fifty being given; but as it includes most of the best, and many of the others are out of print, I shall confine my remarks to those comprised in this collection, and take them in the order in which they appear in the volumes, that of their opus-numbers.

The three Sonatas, Op. 9, which begin the series are all admirable specimens of their composer. They were formerly among the most esteemed of his works; and age has robbed them of but little of their freshness. The first, in B flat, is decidedly the easiest, and will be found very useful as a teaching piece. The second subject of the first movement affords an illustration of what was said above as to Dussek's weakness in composition. He gives us consecutive octaves between extreme parts of very bad effect. Their correction is so easy that, were it not establishing a dangerous precedent to tamper on any pretence with the text of the old masters, one would feel much inclined to change the passage. The Sonata contains only two movements; the final Rondo, in $\sharp$ time, is a favourable specimen of a form in which Dussek is almost invariably happy. The second Sonata, in C major, is a more elaborate and brilliant work than the first. The opening Allegro is very showy, and by no means easy to play well; it will be noticed that, even in the most brilliant passages, the music never loses its melodious character. The plaintive slow movement, in A minor, is an excellent study for the practice of un-even groups of notes (four against three, &c.) in the two hands; while the final Presto is one of its composer's most sparkling movements. The third Sonata, in D, is the most brilliant and difficult of the set; perhaps, on the whole, also the most beautiful. The first movement abounds in