A Letter of Beethoven's

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music examples, is devoted. Between the composition of this and the Eighth Symphony there was a gap of not less than eleven years, the historical particulars of which are fully accounted for. It is to be regretted, perhaps, that Sir George has not drawn upon Wagner's wondrous explanatory programme of the poetical drift of this Symphony by reference to Goethe's "Faust." To some extent the conclusion he comes to agrees with that of Wagner. Incidentally he regards the first movement as a picture of Beethoven's misery, arising from the fact that "his heart, morbid no doubt, was torn almost beyond endurance by the unseemly, squalid disorder which attended his home life, and the unavailing anxieties and privations which he endured for his nephew." With the *Scherzo* we are again brought face to face with Nature. The *Trio*, it is suggested, possibly reproduces "the feeling of some sunrise which Beethoven had 'seen through the mist' on the hills above his beloved 'Bruhl' at Mödling, or at Baden—occasions which seem to have awakened all his religion and all his poetry." The *Adagio*, which is spoken of as "a beautiful dream," Sir George maintains "is absolutely original in form; and in effect more calmly, purely, nobly beautiful than anything that ever this great master—who knows so well how to search the heart, and try the spirit, and elevate the soul—has accomplished elsewhere in his Symphonies."

We are warned that, "no connection need be looked for between the first three movements of the Choral Symphony and the 'Ode to Joy' which inspired its *Finale*. The very title of the work—Beethoven's own—is conclusive on this point. It is not a Symphony on Schiller's 'Ode to Joy,' but it is a Symphony with Final Chorus on Schiller's 'Ode to Joy'—Sinfonie mit Schluss-Chor über Schiller's Ode an die Freude." Later on, when speaking of the manner in which Beethoven has connected the instrumental movements with the vocal portion of the work, we are told that "hitherto, in the three orchestral movements, Beethoven has been depicting 'Joy' in his own proper character: first, as part of the complex life of the individual; secondly, for the world at large; thirdly, in all the ideal hues that art can throw over it." Surely there is no "joy" depicted in the first movement, unless we except the joy of resignation or of determination in overcoming all obstacles.

We have thus endeavoured, as briefly as possible and very imperfectly, to reproduce Sir George's characterisations of Beethoven's Symphonies from a poetical point of view. What he says is full of interest and thoroughly convincing. At the same time, it seems impossible to divine exactly what is the standpoint which he takes in regard to so-called "programme" music. He quotes Mendelssohn's saying that "music is far more definite than words," which, curiously enough,

seems to agree with Wagner's assertion that "where human speech ends, musical utterance begins"; he never tires of impressing upon us Beethoven's "more an expression of feeling than a painting" and that "all painting in instrumental music, if pushed too far, is a failure," as canons of art; but, at the same time, he expresses regret that Beethoven did not give the clue to the poetic meaning of all his Symphonies, as he did to the "*Eroica*" and the "*Pastoral*." Had he done so, it would have added much, he thinks, to the pleasure of listening to the Symphonies. Perhaps so, but it should not be forgotten that the artistic endowment of the man who cannot listen to a musical work for its own sake, and cannot absorb its beauty quietly and enjoy it until he has made a picture out of it or translated it into words, is likely to be literary rather than musical.

Space fails us to do more than very lightly touch upon three specially interesting points of Sir George's book. Beethoven's sketch-books are largely drawn upon, and thus we are allowed many a peep into Beethoven's workshop, where we are enabled, as it were, to follow his process of creation from its earliest beginnings. Where they are not his own, full reference is given in foot-notes to the source of his researches, so that really earnest students may have no difficulty in going to the fountain-head for confirmation of the information and abundant anecdotes related. Many examples are given of the stupidities of Beethoven's early critics, including such eminent musicians as Spohr and Weber, &c. In their behalf it may be said that, as Beethoven's scores were not published till many years after their first performances, they had nothing to go upon but a first hearing of music which introduced them to an entirely new world. Happy we of the present day, that we are not in a like position!

A LETTER OF BEETHOVEN'S.

A PART of this letter has appeared in a free translation by Lady Wallace, from "*Neue Briefe Beethoven's*," collected and given to the public by Ludwig Nohl, in 1867. The present owner of the letter, Mr. A. J. Hipkins, regards it as of sufficient value and importance to place it before musical students in a complete form, and to that end he has enlisted the sympathetic collaboration of Miss Geisler Schubert, the grand-niece of another great composer, to decipher the almost illegible text and present it in an almost literal English form. To admirers of Beethoven in England the letter is of particular interest, inasmuch as the subject-matter concerns the corrections for a London publisher of the great Pianoforte Sonata in B flat (Op. 106). But there are personal allusions, from which Sir George Grove has quoted in his biography of

Beethoven in the "Dictionary of Music and Musicians," referring to anxieties arising from an unsettled income, so that to secure the English edition of the Sonata the composer was induced to suggest another sequence of the movements, and even the suppression of the *Largo* and *Fugue*. Two or three words have been effaced in the letter by the sealing, as indicated in the translation. The italics are from his own underlining. Beethoven also touches upon a visit to London which unfortunately never came to pass. The letter was addressed to his friend and former pupil, Ferdinand Ries, from whom it passed to a younger brother, Joseph Ries, for many years connected with the house of Broadwood. To Joseph Ries the possession of it became as a sacred treasure, and as such he bequeathed it, together with a complete collection of Ferdinand Ries's compositions, to Mr. Hipkins. It was shown in the memorable Loan Collection at the Royal Albert Hall, Kensington, in connection with the Inventions and Music Exhibition of 1885.

The letter is addressed to "Monsieur Ferdinand Ries, 57, Upper Norton Street, Fitzroy Square, Londres."

London Postmark (April 6, 1819).

Dear R.,—Forgive me again and again for the trouble I cause you. It is to me inconceivable how so many mistakes should have occurred in copying the Sonata. The fault may rest with haste, the copyist having entrusted it to another instead of doing it himself. By playing through first the examples copied out here the mistakes will be found; many are, perhaps, already corrected. Be good enough to count and note down the bars from 10 to 20, to 100, 200, &c. It will then soon be easy to improve all this. You must write me what it costs. My me^e onome is broken, through which not yet the *tempos*; I shall get it back in a few days. The incorrect copying proceeds from *my no longer being able to keep a copyist of my own*. Circumstances have brought this about, and may God mend it! Until the Archduke R. comes to a better position this may yet last a *whole year*. It is really dreadful how these things have come about, and what has become of my salary, and what it will be until the aforesaid year has gone by? If the Sonata is not right for London I could send another, or you might leave out the *Largo* and begin the last movement at once with the *Fugue*—

or the first movement, then the *Adagio*, and for the 3rd, the *Scherzo*, and No. 4 comes the *Largo*, and *Allegro Risoluto* left out altogether . . . or only the first movement and *Scherzo* . . . I leave it to you as you find best. For the moment it would constrain me very much to write a new one, as I am very busy with other things. This Sonata has been written in harassing circumstances, it is hard to write almost for bread, and I have *only* got so far. We will write again about coming to London. It would certainly be the only deliverance for me out of this wretched embarrassed state, in which I am neither well, nor can produce that which, under more favourable circumstances, might be possible. I will wait here for the publication of the Sonata until you write to me. I beg of you to let it be soon, so that you can send me the money, and at the same time indicate *when it will come out in London*, that I may arrange here. It is of consequence the Sonata should be published as soon as possible there, so that the publisher here should not have too long to wait. I will, at

the same time, send the English publisher the copyright document *for England*. The Quintet is already engraved. In haste, your friend,

BEETHOVEN.

The corrections enclosed in the letter are as follows:

Allo. risoluto, 7th bar—The notes must stand as here

37th bar—Take out B (flat)

50th bar—b before G

53rd bar—b before A

59th bar—b before D

68th bar—b before

b before G

69th bar—b before C

b before C

b before D

71st bar—b before C

72nd bar—b before the trill

73rd bar—b before C

85th bar—* F, dot. before

92nd bar—b before D

95 bar—b before A

103rd bar—The turns are wanting to both shakes

105th bar—if to the E flat, here is also B flat, the latter must be left out

108th bar— $\flat$ before E etc.

110th bar— $\flat$ before E

107th bar— $\flat$ before E $\bullet$

108th bar— $\flat$ before E
" " $\flat$ before E

108th and 109th bars

111th and 112th bars

114th bar—yet continuous *tr.*

115th bar—turn to shake

116th bar— $\flat$ before G

" " $\flat$ before G

153rd bar— $\flat$ before E

184th bar—the semiquavers here must be stroked below and above, and the rests for the B $\flat$ —G (?)

188th bar— . before B $\flat$ (?) .
 . before D (?)

189th bar— $\flat$ before A

195th bar— $\flat$ before C
" " * under D

214th bar— $\sharp$ before G

219th bar— $\flat$ before A
" " $\flat$ — B

25th and 26th bars (should be 235th and 236th)—
Here, I think, the signature is wanting, and the right distribution of the notes

262nd bar— $\flat$ before D

276th bar— $\flat$ before E

273rd bar— $\flat$ before B

295th bar—Here is wanting the .
behind F

299th bar— $\sharp$ before F

305th bar— $\flat$ before E etc.

306th bar— $\flat$ before E

323rd bar— $\flat$ before E

* Turn beneath to be engraved

334th bar—Instead of A, * B flat

Supplementary. In the last movement, *Allo risoluto*, 28th bar—[208th] the γ rest is wanting here

In the 2nd movement, *Adagio*,
115th bar—Instead of $\flat$ it must be $\sharp$

In the 1st movement, *Allegro*, 381st and 382nd bars—the two slurs are wanting, and a $\flat$ must stand before. [The first G takes the $\flat$ which Beethoven has omitted in the quotation]

Third movement, *Scherzo*,
93rd bar— $\flat$ before G
" " $\flat$ before G

If the 4th movement is to be the *Largo* a direction must then be added.

N.B.—Per la Misura si conta nel largo sempre quattro semicome cioè $\text{♩} \text{♩} \text{♩} \text{♩}$ (*sic*).

Immediately after the *Allegro* must stand *Tempo Primo*, which has been left out.

Here the $\flat$ is wanting before D.

THE PIANOFORTE AND ITS ENEMIES.

THE number of expert performers on the pianoforte is probably even greater than that of minor poets or lady novelists. Add to this category all those individuals who are perfectly ready to oblige at an evening party, and the aggregate will run into hundreds of thousands. Furthermore, when one takes into account the pianistic activities of the Board Schools, the unthinking observer may be pardoned for anticipating the speedy advent of a musical millennium—at least, so far as quantity is concerned. But in music, as in everything else, the great law of compensation holds good. And just as wars and pestilences act as a check on population, so tendencies are already observable which bid fair to counteract the unbridled tyranny of the domestic virtuoso. We have the greatest admiration for the pianoforte in its proper place and at the proper time. When played by a musician it is a most delightful instrument. Unfortunately the pianoforte exerts a fatal fascination upon those who have not the slightest claim to that title, and so it has come about that many of the greatest musicians of the century have come to hold it in something like abhorrence. Wagner, it is true, was a mere bungler at the keyboard, and Berlioz, who despised it, was even less expert; but his successor on the staff of the *Débats*, the distinguished critic and composer, M. Reyher, is noted for the vehement animosity he has always displayed against the instrument. Instances might easily be multiplied, but enough has been said to show that hostility to the pianoforte is by no means a sign of an unmusical temperament, but rather the reverse. Against public performers it is easy to protect yourself—so long as you are not a musical critic—by the simple process of abstention. The pianoforte on the hearth—so to speak—is a more serious matter, though here it can be dodged, repressed, or even suppressed. But the pianoforte next door is the real grievance. A Scottish authority has recently informed the Gaelic Society that the bagpipes can be heard for eight miles. Many of us would be content to hear the pianoforte at a distance of even a quarter of a mile. But that is impossible, nor does it mitigate the sufferings of the pianophobe to learn that New York is even worse off than London in this respect. Here we may

appropriately transcribe the experiences of a writer in the *New York Critic* which, *mutatis mutandis*, may be paralleled by many of the dwellers in flat-land over here:—

Someone asked me the other day how I should like to hear a certain Etude in A flat. I answered that person that if there was anything in this world that I despised it was to hear music in a flat, and if my friend had had my experience, he would never have asked me such a question. Below a flat in which I recently lived there was a young man who thought he had a gift for music. If a gift for music is the same as a gift for breaking stones with one's fists, then I should say that this young man had it, and had it to the verge of genius. I have heard all the famous pianists who have played in this country in the last quarter of the century and I have never heard one—with, perhaps, the exception of the Cowboy Pianist—who had his wrist power. . . . He had no intention of taking up music as a profession; indeed, I heard that he proposed to study for the ministry, and the thought now occurs to me that, perhaps, he was practising pulpit pounding. He was a young man, as I have said, but he played the most old-fashioned music. I do not mean Palestrina and the Gregorian chants, but the sort of music that was fashionable in country drawing-rooms thirty or forty years ago. His *pièce de résistance* was a song called "Beautiful dreamer wake unto me," which has been arranged as a pianoforte "morceau"! It has a rich, rumbling bass, which, I am sure, is played with crossed hands. That peculiar richness can be produced in no other way. You have no idea of the havoc that such a piece can make with one's nerves. You wish that you had never been born, or that, having been born, your lines might have been cast in some place where pianos were unknown. I wonder if one has absolutely no protection against pianos? I doubt whether he has, for was it not here in New York that a man who lay dying, last winter, sent word to a woman who was pounding a piano in a room on the other side of his party-wall, asking her if she would not stop for a few moments and let him die in peace, to which she replied that she didn't care how he died, and that she was going to play as long and as loud as she liked, as it was her own house. And, being as good as her word, she played on, and the man died to her music. Why can't we have a Raines Piano Bill? [This refers to the new Liquor Law.] I am sure it would be popular, and would help the cause of temperance, too, for I believe that many a man has been driven out of his home at night by the playing of a piano in some other house than his own.

There is a touch of American extravagance about the foregoing, but it will none the less appeal to many really musical readers of these columns. For we also know that young man, or his English double, who develops his muscle on the keyboard at the expense of his neighbour's equanimity. And that moves us to express our surprise that Mr. Edison has never turned his attention to what, if he could achieve it, would be one of the humanest and most beatific inventions of the age—we mean some simple but absolutely efficacious method of shutting off external sounds. Think of the bliss of the brainworker who could thus defy the ravages of the organ-grinder, the news-boy, *et hoc genus omne*!

The pianoforte, as we have seen, has to contend, first of all, with overt enemies like M. Reyher, and secondly, with injudicious devotees. The worst wounds are proverbially those which are received in the house of our friends, and this is eminently true where the pianoforte is concerned. The misdeeds of one section of these wrong-doers have already been commented upon above. Even more prejudicial to