

ROBERT VOLKMANN

(1815-1883)

By VIKTOR VON HERZFELD

THE stately Royal Musical Academy at Budapest is adorned with the effigies of its three patron-saints. Franz Liszt's mighty figure is enthroned in the middle, on a curule chair; on either side there are the portrait-medallions of Franz Erkel and Robert Volkmann. These three, though as different as three thoroughbred musicians can be; different, too, with regard to their reputation and the circulation of their works, have a common right to their places of honour. All three of them gave instruction at the Royal Academy. All three, though strangers to the Hungarian tongue, were bound by strong ties to Hungarian music, which they endeavoured to develop and propagate with untiring zeal and brilliant success. Franz Liszt is the only one of these three magi from the East who needs no special introduction. The world was his realm, and the glory of his crown has not begun to fade as yet. Tired of his wanderings and his triumphs, he returned to the home of his childhood, and in his modest school-room (the splendid edifice of the Royal Academy was built long after his death) he gathered his pupils about him, those pupils who were still granted the boon of hearing Liszt's playing, when it had become a myth to all the rest of the world. Franz Erkel, the Hungarian national composer *par excellence*, worked at his side as a teacher of the piano. His operas, all of which treat national subjects, were borne up by a mighty wave of political and national enthusiasm, and enjoyed an immense popularity, which still vibrates audibly today.

Now let us turn to Robert Volkmann. There is not the slightest romance in the life-story of the simple cantor's son from the heart of Germany, who ended by looking down in effigy as a patron-saint of Hungarian music, upon the sons of Árpád passing below; it all came about in the most prosaic way. Volkmann, born on April 6, 1815, at Lommatzsch in Saxony, was on the point of giving up the post of a music-teacher at Prague, when a Hungarian countess named Stainlein Gaalenstein summoned him to her country-seat, Szemeréd near Jpolyság, to instruct her two daughters in music and singing. Another teacher had offered his

services, but she preferred Volkmann, because the other was named "Langweil" (tedium, ennui). "Name ist Schall und Rauch," and yet a name decided an artist's career in this case.

Excepting an interruption of several years, the Hungarian soil that Volkmann first set foot on as the Countess of Stainlein's music-teacher did not release him again, and now encloses for ever all that was mortal of the artist. Volkmann was twenty-six years old when he entered the service of the Countess. As a musician he had learnt everything that education in a German cantor's house and the instruction of efficient experts can give a talented young man by way of viaticum. At the age of nine he had begun to compose, at thirteen he had written an aria for soprano which is still extant, and his Opus 1, "Phantasiestücke für Klavier," appeared in the year 1837. No resolution was needed for him to devote himself to music as a profession. His head and his heart were filled with music, and he had never doubted of his vocation. Like Schubert, he felt "that he had only come into the world in order to compose." He had never acquired a virtuoso's skill on any instrument, and it may be supposed that he, a man living his own life, and a stranger to the world and its ways, never strove for any such skill, as he would never have coveted any public post, not even that of a conductor. So he gained his modest sustenance by giving private lessons, and was happy, if he had time left to dream the dreams from which he fashioned his works of art.

Though the noble Hungarian lady's country-seat afforded him ample leisure, the fruits of which were several still unpublished compositions and the book of songs, Opus 2, yet it could not give what is indispensable to a young artist: the artistic inspiration of concerts and representations of operas that only a great city can supply. The young musician was on the verge of melancholy madness in the spring of the year 1841, when he made up his mind to bid farewell to Szemeréd. He took a friendly leave of his kind patroness and chose the Hungarian capital, Pest, for his future residence, because it was near and the Countess's letters of introduction gave him access to the most distinguished musical houses there.

At that time not one of the works that were to establish Volkmann's reputation was written. However, he succeeded in attracting the benevolent attention of the musical circles of Pest by some of the compositions completed at Szemeréd—a sonata for the violin and pianoforte, some songs, an overture for orchestra, all unpublished. Then followed years blessed with musical

production; masterpiece upon masterpiece sprang into existence. Volkmann's genius soared higher and higher, till at last, with the Trio in B flat minor it reached a towering pinnacle. But even this work, though bearing unmistakably the stamp of genius, only slowly succeeded in asserting itself. It appeared in print, thanks to some admiring friends, and Franz Liszt graciously accepted its dedication; but it found no favour either with the critics or the public. It was only through the enthusiastic and untiring propaganda of Hans von Bülow and other artists that the work, which is not easily understood, gained a wider circle of friends, and made its author's name popular in the musical world.

When Volkmann's compositions, and especially his string-quatuors had met with warm appreciation in Vienna, he thought the time had come for him to move to the town of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven. It took poor Volkmann about four years to gain the conviction that there was no chance for him to earn even a pittance in that ancient seat of music, which had allowed greater musicians than he to suffer want within its precincts. He turned his back on Vienna, a disappointed man, and returned to Pest for good. There he had true friends, one of whom was his publisher, Gustav Heckenast, the enthusiastic, self-sacrificing and truly art-loving protector of aspiring talent.¹ There he was again surrounded by the warmhearted, if rather humdrum, circle of admirers, so congenial to his simple nature. It was natural for a German musician to feel at home in the Pest of those days, which was more German than Hungarian. Volkmann was a member of the "Roastbeef Club," and as such had to take his turn in writing a journal for its social evenings. Some of the entries from his pen are still extant and give evidence of his quaint, pleasant humour, which sometimes rose to effective satire. In the year 1875 the composer, then almost an old man, was relieved from all further pecuniary embarrassment by having the post of professor of composition at the newly founded Royal Academy of Music conferred upon him.

He had his simple bachelor's quarters at Buda, the quaint, old-fashioned town on the hilly shore of the Danube, which had but recently been absorbed by the brilliant new metropolis Budapest. The joy and pride of the lonely artist was the glorious view from his windows on the broad, glittering river, the wide stretch of the city beyond it and the gentle slopes of his own lovely hills. Here the old man created works, fresh with the bloom of

¹Heckenast published among other works the first books of the Austrian authors Adalbert Stifter and Peter Rosegger.

youth. At the Academy of Pest he gave his lessons in an easy-going yet conscientious way, never knowing a day of illness until, suddenly and gently, without any previous warning, death came upon him, October 30th, 1883.

It is not easy to say briefly what Robert Volkmann did for music. His excellent biographer and nephew, Dr. Hans Volkmann, whose name has been made widely known by his valuable researches in the history of music, and from whose "Life of Robert Volkmann" we took the foregoing data, has characterized the master and his works with such delicate discrimination and at the same time so "objectively," to use a German expression, that we cannot deny ourself the pleasure of letting him speak in person. After remarking that the great variety of Volkmann's works makes a general characterization impossible, he continues as follows:

His works have only a very few qualities in common: the unflinching nobility of his artistic taste, a strange, almost ethereal sweetness of sound, the glamour of which is only too often discernible to the expert alone, and the severe logic in the development of ideas. He has sometimes been praised for keeping strictly to the pure classical forms. This can be said of a part of his works only; for, wherever the old forms did not suit him, he created new ones, that were all his own.

One virtue of Volkmann's was to write only when he had something to say. Hence the comparatively small number of his works, hence also the fact that there are very few failures among them. This may be considered an advantage, when comparing him to some composers who have so successfully managed to hide a few excellent productions in a legion of inane ones.

Strictly speaking, Volkmann cannot be ranged in any group of composers. He was neither exclusively a disciple of Beethoven, nor of Mozart, neither a classicist like Mendelssohn, nor a romanticist like Schumann—and yet he was all this at times. He absorbed all these influences and assimilated them completely to his own nature. A self-dependent personality, that cannot be compared to any other, speaks in his works.

He struck his roots deeply in the general development of music, and the tree that sprung from them stood firm in the rush and flow of his time.

From the vantage-ground he had gained, he influenced the great movement, especially through his orchestral music, and so became a link in the chain which binds the future to the past. An appearance, though not dazzling, yet important in its place, that will always be mentioned with honour in the annals of music.

I have some remarks to add to this final sentence. First of all, I must confess to somewhat heretical opinions with regard to the "annals of music." These annals mention with honour many a composer who has obtained undisputed fame, while his works are

shrouded in oblivion just as undisputed. The renown of such composers may be immortal, but their works are dead. The works of Volkmann, however, though no towering landmarks in the history of art, are still alive, and, if I may venture to prophesy in such a matter, will outlive our and future generations. This might be called a bold prediction, in view of the undeniable fact that Volkmann's music occupies no prominent place in the programmes of our concerts, and that his name is either unknown to the musical world of today or mentioned without due gratitude. However, the fault must be sought not in any inherent deficiency of his works, but in the general management of modern musical life, the blight of which is, or at least seems to be in my eyes, the enormous number of inwardly unmusical people who throng our opera-houses and concert-rooms. What I now purpose to say is meant to throw more light on this assertion.

The genius of Richard Wagner has given birth to a proud series of glorious masterpieces, containing a superabundance of inspiringly beautiful, highly original music. But it is not this *wealth* which has caused their boundless popularity, boundless because it reaches far beyond the circle of the truly musical. Wagner rejected in his musical dramas all those features of the opera which were repugnant to a vast number of people, cultured, but unmusical at the core: the rounded-off pieces of music, retarding the development of the plot, the repetition of words and sentences, the singing of several persons at a time. All this has been avoided as much as possible in Wagner's dramas. The music—eminently valuable as it is in itself—has been everywhere subordinated to the action.

People who find that Mozart's operas have nothing to say to them, and shake their heads at Wagner himself for admiring the dramatist Mozart, are interested, nay, enthusiastic admirers of Wagner's musical dramas. Snobs of all kinds, of literature, art, or general culture, think they know now why they would have nothing to do with the music of yesterday: not because they themselves lack the special taste for music, but because the older style of music, that has been surpassed by Wagner, was not the right sort. At the Wagner representations you can observe the same persons writhing in the excess of their own enthusiasm, to whom a string-quartet by Beethoven seems an unintelligible noise. This applies to symphonic music as well. Here the bridge for the unmusical is formed by the programme, often by the very title of our modern descriptive music. When hearing an Andante by Mozart or a Scherzo by Beethoven, the unmusical listener strives

in vain to find out the meaning of these sounds; an up-to-date symphonist saves him this trouble, by putting into his hand a programme carefully written in prose or in verse. Besides, the concert-guide, the annotated programme, the "thematische Leitfaden" tell even the least musical person of the audience what he ought to feel at every bar, which passage should claim his special admiration, and in what currents his emotions should flow. I believe these musical Baedekers to be superfluous and pernicious.

They are superfluous, for the genuine music-lover yields to the purely musical impressions and needs no hints and no suggestions for their enjoyment. They are pernicious, because, while pretending to popularize art, they create in thousands the delusion not only of musical enjoyment, but also of a right to criticise. It is true that without this crowd of outsiders the wholesale business representing the music of today would be impossible; and so, from the point of view of impresarios, proprietors of concert-halls, agents, in one word of business-men, it is justifiable to attract the multitude by fair means or foul. Among business-men we may count conductors and instrumentalists, inasmuch as they naturally practise their art, not from ideal motives only, but with an eye to their subsistence and profit.

Under such circumstances, music that offers no handle to clever or profound expositions, that does not support the weakness of the listener by far-fetched titles or detailed programmes, is in a sad plight. And this is the case with Volkmann's music. With a single exception, the overture to "Richard III," Volkmann wrote no descriptive music.

But there is another circumstance which prevents the appreciation of his music in wider circles. A new tendency is observable in the public, to think that good music must be dry, complicated and uncompromising, and to brand clearness, grace and natural feeling with the stigma of triviality. This explains the remarkable and lamentable fact that nowadays the dull production of an un-gifted constructor of music, that lumbers along heavily, pretending to carry a load of learning and profound thought, has more chance of general appreciation than the light and graceful work of the true artist, from whose warm heart the sweetest sounds and richest melodies flow as freely and gladly as the crystal spring flows from its mother earth. A great and influential part of the public, influenced through its numbers principally, which admires Brahms, not for his creative power, originality and sublime technique, but for a certain spiritual asceticism and proud reserve that distinguishes many of his works, is more inclined to

applaud the efficient but prosaic *disciple* of Brahms, than our Volkmann, whose technical mastership, an object of admiration to the expert, is frequently so discreet that it seems to form the mere scaffolding for a trim and well-proportioned, bright and cosy building.

And now I ask permission to quote one of the most original among our musical thinkers, Dr. Heinrich Schenker. He says in the essay entitled "Counterpoint":

The present generation has not even the faculty of grasping the technique of the masters, and yet this ought to be considered as the first and indispensable step towards any kind of progress. Measured by the works of our great masters, the compositions of today must be called too simple, far too simple and primitive! For all their mighty orchestration, noise and ado, for all their polyphony and cacophony, the proud musical poems of a Richard Strauss rank far, nay very far below a quatuor by Haydn, the complicated structure of which is hidden beneath a garment of grace and beauty, as the miracle of a flower's creation is veiled by colour and fragrance.

I should never dream of placing Volkmann beside Haydn with regard to superabundance of inspiration and playful lightness of technique, but it may be said of Volkmann's works, too, that colour and fragrance veil the miracle of their creation; as indeed must be the case with every true-born work of art. And that is why our musical business-men pass him by unnoticed, and why many of those true music-lovers who are now kept in the background hardly know his name.

We regret to state that the leading men in the musical world have not done as much for Volkmann as for inferior talents. Even an artist of such genius as Josef Joachim allowed the orthodoxy of his surroundings to influence him so much that he banished Volkmann's quartets from his programmes, because he considered them "too Italian."

Also Bülow, who had introduced Volkmann to the public with as much energy as success, abandoned him in later years, herein obeying the power of gravitation exercised by mightier stars. Brahms himself spoke of him with little warmth, a fact for which I can find no explanation. When I one day observed with regret that Volkmann had composed but little, and had not met with due appreciation for what he had written, Brahms said somewhat morosely: "Why should any one compose? Everything has been composed already." "Besides," he added, "there are no undervalued geniuses. The trio in B flat minor has had the success it deserves." "And the quartets?" I ventured to interpose. "I

do not know the quartets," he answered brusquely, and, noticing my surprise, he added: "I do not know the quartets, because no scores of them have been printed." This was a lamentable fact at that time, as the Hungarian publisher had thought it superfluous and maybe too expensive to print more than the separate parts of the quartets. This want has been supplied only quite recently by a German publisher. Also in other ways it was a serious disadvantage for Volkmann that most of his works appeared in Hungarian editions and could not profit by the rich means and widespread organizations through which German publishers are able to further the circulation of musical works.

I hope I have not tried the reader's patience too much with the foregoing disquisition, which I thought necessary as an explanation for the general neglect of Volkmann and his music. I feel I cannot celebrate the hundredth anniversary of his birthday in a better way than by leading all those who have a feeling for the musically beautiful, all those who are not the slaves of a tendency, or the mere echoes of a party-cry, to that source of noblest artistic enjoyment which flows so profusely in Volkmann's works. With this aim in view, I shall now give short characterizations of his most important creations.

The trio in B flat minor was the first revelation of the master's genius. After a gloomy introduction, shrouded in deep melancholy, follows a graceful allegretto, rippling with glimpses of bright humour; then an allegro rushes along in a whirl of passionate anguish, interrupted once by the sweet cantilene of an adagio, in which the voices of the violoncello and the violin are delicately interwoven. The gloom deepens again, as the theme of the introduction returns, the violin breaks into a recitative of heart-rending sweetness, and then all this sadness dies away in weary resignation. The themes and motives are plastic, original, and for all their kinship with Beethoven, highly personal, genuine Volkmanns, as is all the music originating from his pen. What is essential to perfection in music is there: severe unity of form, in spite of striking contrast, the connecting links wrought with the utmost delicacy, no inane passage, no senseless flourish in the whole trio; all this is the more admirable as the composer has here, as often elsewhere, abandoned the usual design. Possessing an absolutely unerring sense of form—an important part of the creative capacity—he was able to dispose freely of *forms* without infringing upon the *form*. Ever since some famous estheticians proved their misconception of Beethoven by extolling him for shattering the old forms, our young musical titans consider it

their first and foremost duty to continue this "shattering," for which indeed far less talent and industry are needed than for mastering the technique of form.

The trio in B flat minor requires efficient performers for the piano and the string-instruments, but the task it sets them is a grateful one and richly rewards their trouble.

When once a domestic string-quartet has a mind to play something beside the standard works of chamber-music, I recommend Volkmann's quartets. They are genuine music for the home: bright with fancy's loveliest flowers, tender and warm-hearted, dreamy and thoughtful, deep and true, now and again bubbling over with merry laughter, unfailingly original, unfailingly sweet of sound. Here, as elsewhere, we see an exalted and refined art of composition, and the free treatment of form, which is permitted to the master alone. The finale of the quartet in G minor will serve as an example. The defiant theme is twice replaced by a graceful melody, which first appears in B major, causing a feeling of glad surprise, and then after a repetition of the theme of the rondo, is brought in again, by a turn as natural as it is ingenious in C major, the second and yet sweeter surprise. This is true originality, because it reveals deep, harmonious connections; it contrasts with mere wit, which uses superficial, mechanical connecting links for modulations, and it contrasts yet more strongly with the modern fashion of baffling the listener by disconnected harmonies loosely threaded.

The quartet in E minor will please every impartial listener, with its delicate sentiment, only just bordering on sentimentality and its exquisite sounds. Its adagio in F sharp major is a gem: it is fraught with the deepest feelings, the tender harmonies melting into each other, and yet the melodious lines are clearly and elaborately drawn. Also the quartet in G major, with motives from popular songs, and the one in E flat major are sure to win friends. The latter is rhythmically interesting, but rather difficult to play.

Among Volkmann's most original creations we must place the Serenatas for string-orchestra. Tschaikowsky mentions them in a letter to a woman friend:

To-day I had much pleasure in playing some Serenatas by Volkmann. A sympathetic composer. *He has much simplicity and natural beauty.* [Farther on he says:] Do you know that Volkmann is a little old man living in reduced circumstances at Pest? Some time ago a collection was made for him at Moscow, the result of which was 300 rubles. To

show his gratitude he dedicated his second symphony to the Musical Society of Moscow. By the way, I have never been able to find out why he is so poor.

Volkmann could not be called poor in Tschaikowsky's sense of the word, since his habits were so simple and the post he held at the Academy secured him from want, but he *was* poor in fame and appreciation. And we know that he was so of necessity; because already, at this time, an artist was not valued for having "much simplicity and natural beauty." The following incident may serve as an illustration. A Hungarian conductor wished to perform at Madrid the very Serenata that Tschaikowsky admired. At the first rehearsal the whole orchestra refused unanimously to play such trivial music at a concert. The Serenata was not performed. Simplicity and natural beauty were mistaken for triviality, where orchestral noise, a chaos of parts, and bombastic pathos would have been admired as a revelation of genius. The delightful slow waltz in the serenata was probably regarded as the culmination of triviality. Nobody seems to have noticed that it is far more than just a pleasing piece of music, that the artist's own warm heart throbs in it, that it is wrought with unobtrusive but all the more exquisite workmanship. Another serenata, through which the solo of a violoncello runs like a golden thread, has been more fortunate, probably because this solo offers a welcome task to violoncellists, not because, unique in form and invention, it conjures up before our eyes the deep melancholy of the wide Hungarian puszta.

And now we must characterize Volkmann's relations to Hungarian national music. He has often profited by the suggestions it has given, without ever ceasing to be one of the most German of all German musicians. He sometimes consciously and intentionally utilized Magyar motives, as a German painter might represent Hungarian landscapes or scenes from Hungarian life. The last mentioned Serenata shows a vision of the Puszta, without using for this purpose a single specifically Hungarian theme. Where he does employ such, the titles of the pieces emphasize the subjects, as in the suite for pianoforte, entitled "Visegrád," or in the four-handed "Hungarian Sketches." The tunes and rhythms of these pieces are unmistakably Magyar, and stamp them as true-born children of the Hungarian earth. However, it is this very capability of grasping the essence of a foreign nationality which is so genuinely German.

Beside the charming suite "Visegrád," Volkmann wrote some other excellent and effective music for the piano. His variations

on a theme of Händel's, his sonatas and other pieces clearly show his marked personality; they show, on the other hand, that Volkmann himself was by no means a brilliant pianist, and, at heart, more of a stranger to this instrument than to any other. Still it is a great pity that these pieces are neglected by virtuosi. And the greatest pity is that his "Konzertstück" for the piano and the orchestra has been totally ignored, for it shows Volkmann at the summit of his inspiration and his mastership.

Volkmann has written two symphonies, one profoundly serious in D minor, the other bright and joyous, in B flat major. Even if we were richer than we are in full-weight post-classical symphonies, these two works ought to occupy a permanent place in our concert-programmes. Both are *conceived* symphonically, equally far from orchestral chamber-music and from poetizing, painting or would-be-philosophical programme-music. The one in D minor begins with weighty pathos. The first movement is built upon a theme so plastic, so impressive, that it need fear no comparison. A serious keynote prevails even in the Scherzo which differs widely from all the standard types. The absolutely original theme strides along, as if clad in an armour of steel, and is worked out with exquisite skill. Contrapuntal art, free from all artificialness, gives to the finale its grandiose character. The second symphony forms a contrast to the first. Since Haydn we have heard no symphony gushing forth in such ingenuous gladness of heart, never pretending to be monumental, yet great, and perfect in its proportions. The way in which the rhythmically tingling finale evolves from the musing adagio is entirely new. The theme of the second movement, with its naïve grace, is sure to give as much offence to all musical pharisees as pleasure to the truly expert. A perfect organization, in which all that is beautiful is necessary; all that is necessary, beautiful.

The overture of "Richard III" is worthy to rank with the symphonies. It is programme-music in the best, in the only true sense of the word; music that is inspired by a poetical work, yet would be intelligible and enjoyable without this relation. Even the illustration of a battle it contains, though inferior to no other battle-music in descriptiveness and suggestive power, never oversteps the boundary of the musically beautiful. There is a great uproar of all instruments, there are sharp dissonances, but there is no trace of those horrible cacophonies which in certain modern compositions form modes of expression as cheap as they are inartistic. Themes so different, that they seem to resist each other, are blended by a masterly polyphonic technique so as to

form a perfect whole; this is a proceeding as dissimilar as day is from night to the modern method of plastering several so-called melodies together, leaving it to their own discretion to get on with each other or not. A famous musical scholar tries to legitimize this proceeding by introducing the *terminus technicus* "heterophony." My translation of this term is "irresponsible bungling." For the comprehension of this new branch of technique other estheticians demand "horizontal hearing," instead of "vertical hearing," which, they pretend, has been in use till now. Or do they want it the other way round? I must own that I am not fully informed on this point, and that I believe both versions to be complete nonsense. One word more about the overture to "Richard III." It had no success in England. The composer wove into his battle-music a popular Scotch ballad, ("The Campbells are coming") under the mistaken impression that it was an old English war-song. This tune seems to have given offence to the British audience, for reasons unknown to me.

And now let us turn to Volkmann's instrumentation. His orchestra, though lacking the formidable array of modern innovations, is deficient neither in strength nor in richness and variety of colours. In this he must be ranked far above Schumann, whom he resembles in the chaste tenderness of his feelings and the character of his diction. The symphonist Volkmann *thinks* "orchestrally." He knows his instrument, the orchestra, so well, that he is able to attain his ends with the least possible waste. I could name modern composers, admired chiefly for their art of orchestration, from whose scores we could easily cancel a dozen parts without marring the effect. Volkmann's Serenatas for string-instruments are miracles of orchestration; in this narrow frame we have never heard sounds so full and so delicate, so varied and so sweet.

If we mention further his admirable Concerto for Violoncello, Op. 33, and his valuable compositions for chorus—sacred and profane, a cappella or with accompaniment—we have the work of Volkmann before us in its completeness. Strange to say, this artist, so eminently lyrical in the intensity and tenderness of his emotions, has not excelled in song. An opera he did not even attempt. We cannot now decide whether the libretti offered to him were really unsuitable, or whether he was too severe a critic, but we are inclined to accept the first explanation. That he was not deficient in dramatic talent is shown by his scene "Sappho" for soprano and orchestra. It is written in an elevated style, constructed with perfect musical logic and yet does

not fall short of dramatic expression. Music predominates, as indeed it must, the moment a musical note is struck, but full justice is done to poetry as well. There are signs that at no very distant period this principle, kept down by Wagner's paramount personality, will receive due honours again. Nay, even today the "Sprechgesang" is accepted only from him who created it, and was compelled to create it by his specific genius.

If I have tried in the foregoing lines to sketch a picture of the musician Robert Volkmann, it was not done with the purpose of pressing upon the world another hero, not even with the purpose of doing posthumous justice to an artist who has been misunderstood by his contemporaries. I myself do not consider Volkmann a hero, only a genuine, original and creative musician. And such a one finds his reward not in the appreciation of the multitude, which he is free to despise, but in the joy of creation, an exquisite happiness only granted to the chosen few. I do not pity Schubert, though his short term of musical production was so poor in appreciation and material reward. He alone among millions was allowed to stroll in a garden of bliss and to pluck fragrant blossoms and sweet fruits from the trees that bent their boughs to him as to their master. What meaning could the judgment of his own or a future age have for this wanderer in the fields of the blessed?

Neither is Volkmann—I do not compare him with Schubert, but I may mention him beside this singer of singers, because his was a talent by the grace of God—neither is Volkmann in need of pity or protection. However I thought, by pointing to Volkmann's works, to serve those true music-lovers who, among the turbulent wholesale-management of our musical life, have preserved a receptiveness for works of art which, if they cannot be called monumental, do not either come in for monumentality. In a letter of Volkmann's we find the following passage, which is not only characteristic of him, but generally valid and remarkably opportune at the present time:

You tell me of some works which have produced in you an effect of elementary power. If you mean material power, i. e. effect of the masses, I readily believe that the movement by Berlioz you mention has risen to the highest pitch. I will not question the value of this or other elementary pieces, as there really are works of this kind, producing an overwhelming effect, but, since you seem to regard the elementary effect or effect of masses as the greatest merit in a piece of music, I must own that I think many a quiet little *andante* has more poetical value than many of those elementary earthquake-pieces.

Of composers producing elementary or earthquake-pieces there is no lack, but to my knowledge there is not a single musician living

who could sing into our hearts the quiet little andante to which, according to Volkmann's and also to my opinion, must be awarded the higher poetical value.

In every other art the quiet little andantes are valued to-day in their own way, beside monumental creations. Painting has its intimate genre-pictures, its still-life pictures, its delicate water-colours and etchings. In poetry a graceful group of lyrical verses or a concise short story is admired no less than a voluminous pathetic work. Nay, we may say that the "grandes machines," the enormous battle-pictures have lost much of their prestige, and that modern man does not urge his poets to present him with heroic poetry, be it of the epic or dramatic kind. Why should the "grandes machines" prevail in the music of to-day? Why do we close our ears to the quiet little andante, that speaks to the soul? And may we hope that this will change within a measurable space of time? Perhaps it will, when the colossal, dazzling fireworks have expired, leaving smoke and ashes behind; perhaps it will, when all this uproar is hushed, and we are able to hear again the delicate yet penetrating tones of that "quiet little andante."

¹He alludes to the "Marche au Supplice" from the *Sinfonie fantastique*.