Mozart's Illness

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how I may turn this or that morsel to account, so as to make a good dish of it—that is to say, agreeably to the rules of counterpoint, to the peculiarities of the various instruments, &c. All this fires my soul, and provided I am not disturbed, my subject enlarges itself, becomes methodized and defined, and the whole, though it be long, stands almost finished and complete in my mind, so that I can survey it, like a fine picture or a beautiful statue, at a glance; nor do I hear in my imagination the parts *successively*, but I hear them, as it were, all at once (*gleich alles zusammen*). What a delight this is I cannot tell! All this inventing, this producing, takes place, as it were, in a lively dream. Still the actual hearing, the *tout ensemble*, is, after all, the best. What has been thus produced I do not easily forget, and this is, perhaps, the best gift I have my Divine Master to thank for.

When I proceed to write down my ideas, I take out of the bag of my memory—if I may use the phrase—what has previously been collected into it, in the way I have mentioned. For this reason, the committing to paper is done quickly enough, for everything is, as I said before, already finished; and it rarely differs on paper from what it was in my imagination. At this occupation I can therefore suffer myself to be disturbed; for whatever may be going on around me, still I write, and even talk, but only of fowls and geese, or of *Gretel* and *Bärbel*,* or some such matters. But why my productions take from my hand that particular form and style which makes them *Mozartish*, and different from the works of other composers, is probably owing to the same cause which renders my nose so-or-so large, so aquiline, or, in short, makes it *Mozartish*, and different from those of other people. For I do really not study or aim at any originality: I should, in fact, not be able to describe in what mine consists, though I think it quite natural that persons who have really an individual appearance of their own, are also differently organized from others, both externally and internally. At least, I know that I have constituted myself neither one way nor the other.

May this suffice, and never, my best friend, never trouble me again with such subjects. I also beg you will not believe that I break off from any other reason but because I have nothing further to say on that point. To others I should not have answered, but have thought: “*Mutschi, buschi quitte. Etche molape newing!*”

“I HAVE always accounted myself one of Mozart's greatest admirers, and shall continue to be so to my last breath.”—BEETHOVEN.

* *Gretel* and *Bärbel* are diminutives for *Margarethe* and *Barbara*.

MOZART'S ILLNESS.*

“It is with great pleasure, sir, that I hasten to communicate to you all I know relative to the illness and death of the great Mozart. In the autumn of 1791 he fell ill of an inflammatory fever, which at that season was so prevalent that few persons entirely escaped its influence. I was not applied to till some days after he had been labouring under the disorder; but I had received information of it from Dr. Closset, who daily attended him. He considered Mozart's case as dangerous, and said that from the first appearance of the complaint he had feared a fatal result—*viz.*, a determination to the head. One day he met Dr. Sallaba, and observed to him that it was all over with Mozart—that it was not possible to prevent the determination to the head. Sallaba instantly acquainted me with this; and in fact Mozart died some days after with the usual symptoms.

“His death excited very general interest, but never did it once occur to the mind of any one to suspect, even distantly, that his death had been occasioned by poison. Numerous were the persons who saw him during his illness, and unremitting were the attentions shown him by his family; above all, so scrupulous was the watchfulness and care bestowed upon him by the worthy and experienced Dr. Closset, who, during the whole of this painful period, displayed rather the solicitude of a friend than the attention of a medical man, that it is impossible the slightest trace of anything violent, of anything like poison, could have escaped him. The disorder had its usual course and its ordinary term of duration. Dr. Closset had watched its progress with so much attention that he predicted the result to the very hour. A great number of the inhabitants of Vienna were at this time labouring under the same complaint, and the number of cases which terminated fatally, like that of Mozart's, was considerable. I saw the body after death, and it exhibited no appearances beyond those usual in such cases.

“Such is the substance of what I have to adduce relative to the death of Mozart. Nothing would prove more gratifying, or more satisfactory to my mind, than to know that the testimony I give is, in some degree at least, available to counteract this horrid imputation against the memory of the excellent Salieri.†

“You will pardon me, sir, for not having returned so early an answer to your application as I should have wished; nothing but a severe indisposition could have prevented me.”

The foregoing letter was written in reply to Neukomm's anxious enquiries regarding the criminality absurdly charged against Salieri by that master's German rivals.

* A letter from Dr. Guldner to Neukomm.

† It had been maliciously hinted that Salieri had poisoned Mozart.