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## FRANZ SCHUBERT.

"I heard how one of Schubert spake, and cried

In accents that 'twas dolorful to hear:—

'This is that hungry nightingale that died,  
Singing his song to the world's pitiless  
ear!'—*Elsa D'Esterre-Keeling.*

In a suburb of Vienna, called Lichtenthal, there is a street which, at one time, bore the picturesque name of Himmelfortgrund (Heaven's Gateway).

It was at "Heaven's Gateway" that Franz Schubert, the inventor of the modern song, was born. His father was the village school-master, and his mother, like the mother of Haydn and of Beethoven, was a cook. Her name was Elizabeth Vitz, and Franz was her thirteenth child. After him a little girl was born, but of the fourteen children only five lived to grow up.

Franz was taught music at his father's school, and at eight years old he began to learn the violin. As his voice was remarkably beautiful he was sent to the village choir-master, Michael Holzner, for singing lessons, but his new teacher was unable to keep pace with so rarely gifted a pupil.

"Whenever I wished to teach him anything," exclaimed the master, "I found he knew it already. In consequence I cannot be said to have given him lessons at all. I only amused myself, and regarded him with astonishment."

At eleven Franz was so far advanced that influential friends tried to obtain admission for him to the great Viennese school called the Stadt-Convict, which was in connection with the Imperial Chapel, and which had been founded for the education of Imperial choristers. The greatest, or rather the most popular, musicians of the day were at the head of this institution, and it was no easy task for the son of an obscure village school-master to win their approbation.

One October morning Father Schubert presented himself before this august company, and begged a hearing for his son. While the father was pleading his cause, Franz was consigned to the tender mercies of the schoolboys in an outer hall. He was dressed in a curious little suit of grey, and as boys, from that day to this, can stand no originality in the matter of costume, poor Franz had a bad quarter of an hour. At first his tormentors were satisfied with nudgings and smothered laughter, but as their victim seemed to be quite impervious to their taunts, they gained courage, and very soon shouts of "Miller's boy! Miller's boy!"

echoed through the hall. From this awkward position the child at last was rescued; and now he was brought before the great Salieri, to whom, in turn with other candidates, he had to sing.

High and pure soared the sweet treble voice. Even the mocking scholars were abashed as they listened to the wonderful tones, and the song was followed by a tremendous burst of

applause, in which masters and boys joined indiscriminately.

Franz Schubert's entrance to the Stadt-Convict was won. The queer grey suit was changed for the gold-laced uniform of the Imperial chorister, and before a week was over he was the most popular boy in the school.

An orchestra composed entirely of the Convict scholars had been arranged, and



SCHUBERT.

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Franz was given the seat behind the leader, a boy much older than himself, called Joseph Spaun. When the first rehearsal began Spaun turned round to see who was playing so beautifully, and afterwards expressed his surprise on seeing "a queer little boy in spectacles." He seems to have made friends with the queer little boy, and to have won his shy confidence, for on Franz' telling him that he had already composed a number of pieces, but that he could not write down all his thoughts owing to want of paper, Spaun promised to supply this want, and for the rest of his time at the Convict a liberal supply of music-paper was always forthcoming.

The first composition of which we know anything was a Fantasia for pianoforte duett, called, after a poem by Schiller, "*Leichen-Fantasia*." This was written in 1810, and was followed, in the succeeding year, by a number of instrumental pieces, and by, what is much more interesting for us, Schubert's first songs. Of these, "Hagar's Lament" appears to have been the principal one. Salieri was so much impressed by it that he sent the young composer to a musician called Ruczizka for harmony lessons, but Ruczizka's experience of his new scholar seems to have proved the same as Michael Holzer's. "He knows everything," exclaimed the Viennese master; "and God has been his teacher."

After five years of happy school-life, the boy's beautiful soprano voice began to break, and he had to leave the Imperial choir. His professors wished him to continue his studies at the Convict, but Franz had no heart for anything but music. He was now in his seventeenth year. His good mother was dead, his father had married again, and was weighed down by the responsibility of providing for a second family. The only course open to Franz was to accept the vacant position of assistant teacher in his father's school, and for three weary years he taught the alphabet and elementary arithmetic to a class of small, unruy children.

These years were not wasted, however, for in 1814 he composed his Mass in F, an extraordinarily beautiful work, which was performed at the centenary festival of the parish church at Lichtenthal. The seventeen-year-old composer conducted, and the mass was subsequently repeated at the Church of St. Augustine. But though the great Salieri applauded his young pupil enthusiastically, the exquisite composition was not given to the world until 1856—twenty-eight years after its composer's death. This is not surprising when we consider how very little recognition Schubert received during his lifetime. In the year 1815, when he was eighteen, he composed no less than one hundred and twenty-seven songs, among them being his dainty setting of Goethe's "*Haidenröslein*," the wonderful "*Wanderers Nachtlied*," and the still more wonderful "*Rastlose Liebe*." The following year brought ninety-seven more songs, of which the "*Erlkönig*" and "*Der Wanderer*" are the most remarkable. Such an inexhaustible well-spring of melody seems absolutely incredible, but Schubert must have

poured out his soul in song like the nightingale described by Coleridge.

"That crowds, and hurries, and precipitates,  
With thick fast warble his delicious notes,  
As he were fearful that an April night  
Would be too short for him to utter forth  
His love chant, and disburthen his full soul  
Of all its music."

Well for us that he did so, for what was his short life but an April night, into which was crowded the ordinary work of decades?

Schubert's songs were composed in the most unlikely places, and often under the most unlikely circumstances. The one called "*Der Zwerg*" was written in a music shop, while he was holding an animated conversation with a friend. Another was jotted down in a garden restaurant on the back of his dinner bill, while the famous cycle, known as the "*Müllertieder*," had an equally remarkable origin. Having been desired to call on the secretary of a great nobleman, and having been left waiting a short time in an ante-room, he took up a volume of Müller's poems which chanced to be lying on the table. He read a few lines, then put the volume in his pocket and walked off, without any further thought of the impending interview.

The next day the secretary called at Schubert's rooms to inquire for his book and received with it the first song. This happened in the year 1823, and Schubert was now twenty-six.

It must not be imagined that up to this time he had devoted himself exclusively to song composition. There is scarcely a form which he had not tried—operas, symphonies, sonatas, trios, quartettes, besides innumerable smaller works, had flowed from his inexhaustible brain in one ceaseless stream. But though he had several good friends who were anxious to serve him, he never succeeded in making his name known to the world. Publishers refused his scores, or gave him scant shillings for the copyright of works of deathless fame, and the composer of nine glorious symphonies, of over four hundred songs, and of chamber music that will be heard as long as men have ears to hear, never at any time enjoyed an income which exceeded £100 a year.

The squalid existence which he was thus forced to lead was not even the worst part of his cruel fate. The cold indifference of the world caused him much deeper anguish. In his diary, March 27th, 1823, there is the following entry:—"My musical compositions are the product of the understanding and spring from my sorrow. Those which are the product of pain alone please the great world."

It was Heine who penned the couplet—

"Out of my great sorrows  
I make the little songs,"

but Heine's great sorrows were little ones in comparison with Schubert's.

The only public recognition the Viennese

composer ever received, was an address accompanying a purse of one hundred guildens (about £10), which was sent to him in 1826 by the *Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde*—the principal musical society of Vienna—"as a token of gratitude and esteem."

He repaid the compliment in princely style—with the manuscript of his greatest work, the glorious Symphony in C. This composition is now held to be the grandest orchestral tone-poem since Beethoven's ninth symphony, and it, too, was its composer's ninth. Most readers of this paper will have heard it, but should there be one to whom this joy has been denied, let her buy the arrangement for pianoforte duet in Peters' edition and play it with her most musical friend. Then, when she has filled her heart with its beauty, let her remember—he never heard it. The nightingale drooped his wings and died, died with the song pent up in his breast which was to delight a world. Alas, the pity of it!

The Society of Music Friends returned the gift to the donor. It was too long, too difficult, and the master was too unknown for them to waste their precious time rehearsing a composition so elaborate. The bundle of manuscript lay in a cupboard until 1840, when Schumann, the most appreciative of music lovers, making a pilgrimage to Vienna, discovered it at the house of the composer's brother, Ferdinand. The notes danced and whirled before the eyes of the delighted finder, and the treasure was forthwith despatched to Mendelssohn, then at the head of the Gewandhaus at Leipzig.

The ninth symphony had found its voice at last.

In 1826 Beethoven died, and amongst the thirty-eight torch-bearers who stood round the grave was Franz Schubert. After the funeral he adjourned with some friends to a neighbouring inn, where he filled two glasses with wine; the first glass he drank to the memory of Beethoven, the second to the memory of him who should follow Beethoven to the grave. In less than two years he was himself laid in the grave next but one to the master whom he had so passionately loved. He was only thirty-one years old, and on his tomb this epitaph was engraved:—

"Music buries here a rich treasure but still fairer hopes."

A small circle of friends wept for him, but outside Vienna no one knew Franz Schubert. He never married, and the only love story in which he plays a part is connected with his pupil, the beautiful young Countess Caroline von Esterhazy. With her a marriage was impossible, and her lover told his love only in music.

"Why do you never dedicate anything to me?" she asked, one day.

"Why should I?" he answered. "Is not everything I write dedicated to you?"

The pretty *Impromptus* and *Moments Musicaux*, which every young girl loves to play, were all written for this young girl, to whom the composer sent up all his heart in music which can never die.

ELEONORE D'ESTERRE-KEELING.

