



Mozart.

(See Steel Engraving.)

JOHANNES WOLFGANG AMODEUS VON MOZART, the son of a German musician and composer, was born in Salzburg, January 27th, 1756, and died in Vienna, December 5th, 1791. In his third year he showed a decided inclination for music, an anecdote being on record of his striking chords upon the harpsichord with his baby fingers.

At the age of four his father began to teach him short pieces, and in his fifth year he even composed little melodies, which his father wrote out. When he was eight and his sister twelve, the elder Mozart took the children on a concert tour, extending to Paris and London.

The children played concertos—the little girl performing those of the most difficult nature by the great masters, while Wolfgang played the violin, organ, and harpsichord, sometimes covering the keys of the latter, and playing as if they were in sight. He extemporized also, and could designate any note or chord struck at a distance upon any instrument, or upon bells, glasses, or musical clocks.

About this time his first work was published consisting of four sonatas for harpsichord and violin. At twelve he composed and conducted a mass, at the request of Maria Theresa, and also an operetta, "Bastien and Bastienne." His opera "Mitridate" was written and performed successfully when he was only fourteen years of age, he presiding at the harpsichord at the twenty presentations.

When Wolfgang was of age, he was the first pianist, one of the first organists, and in the highest rank of violinists in Europe. He was the author of more than two hundred works, consisting of operas, symphonies, sonatas, with lighter compositions. In 1782 Mozart married Constanza Weber, and in the following year produced "The Marriage of Figaro" in Vienna with triumphant success.

His next great production was "Don Giovanni," performed in Prague, the overture being played without rehearsal, from parts just from the pens of the copyists, it not having been finished until the night before its public performance. In 1788, Mozart was appointed Director of the great Oratorio, in which position he re-arranged four of Handel's oratorios for the orchestra. Among them were the "Messiah" and "Ode for St. Cecilia's Day."

On the 30th of September, 1791, the "Magic Flute," of which Goethe wrote the second part, was performed, Mozart directing. But he was poor, sick, and discouraged. About this time he was also engaged on a Requiem, the order for which had come to him anonymously, but being on his death-bed not long after, he made it his own. It was never quite finished by him, but Süßmaier, a favorite pupil, completed it after his death. Inflammation of the lungs was the cause of Mozart's death, which occurred in the prime of his manhood, when only thirty-five years of age.

"Haydn considered him the greatest composer of whom he had ever heard."

Two institutions bear his name, the Mozarteum in Salzburg, and the Mozartstiftung in Frankfort. In appearance he was short, but prepossessing, very quick in his movements, and extremely sensitive to discord. Though he worked with remarkable perseverance to the day of his death, he left no property.

Winter Entertainments.

ONE of the most successful forms of entertainment adopted this season consists of theatricals, or musical operettas, the parts being, of course, all sustained by amateurs. A Christmas variation is an original play, one scene of which introduces a Christmas tree, in the distribution of the contents of which, all the children present are requested to join. Of course there is great fun, which the spectators share, for they consist mainly of the fathers and mothers, the uncles and aunts, the cousins, and other relatives of the little folks. After this distribution, which includes oranges, cakes, and perhaps boxes or bags of sweetmeats, candy, and the like, the juveniles are sent home, leaving the older people to finish out the play, which, of course, ends with a supper and a dance. Amateur dramatists are almost as thick as amateur actors and actresses, and there is no difficulty in getting a play, or a musical extravaganza written, which, if not of the highest literary character, makes up by plenty of fun, and local allusions, which are sure to be highly appreciated.

"Literary" Christmas parties are very new, and may be made exceedingly interesting. They are very suitable for an annual entertainment for reading or other societies, as they require a certain amount of co-operation among the participants.

The lady at whose house it is to be given has a right to select the author from whom the characters are to be taken, and the more the period or area is narrowed down, the more complete and characteristic will probably be the result. The dressing must either be taken from printed description, or from the best idea which can be formed of the dress of a person of the class and time, and the point is to keep up the illusion, and make conversation and the like accord with it. In short, it is acting an unwritten play.

The "Phantom" parties, or balls, are another form of marked entertainments. Over the evening dress, each person throws an ample winding sheet, which is draped ghost-like around the body. A white mask covers the face, or part of it, the lips are painted a bloodless hue, and the company walk about like a congregation of specters in a graveyard, until the clock strikes twelve, when presto! the disguise is cast aside, the brilliant costumes stand revealed, and also their owners, and all goes merry as a marriage bell. A Phantom party is a favorite form of entertainment for New Year's eve.

Charade and "Mother-Goose" parties are too well known to need description. Messrs. Lee & Shepard, of Boston, published last year a "Mother-Goose" play, specially adapted to a children's entertainment of that kind, with directions as to scenery, dresses, and the like. A doll's wedding, or christening, may also be made a basis for a very pretty and enjoyable merry-making for boys and girls. Of course it is the dolls that are invited, their mistresses, or mothers only take them to witness the ceremony of marriage between the young lady and gentleman doll, owned by some one of their friends. It is necessary that the misses who give the party should have quite an array of elegantly dressed dolls. Besides the bride and groom, there must be the mother and father of the bride, an old nurse, a minister, the groom's best man, and sisters, or bridesmaids for the bride. The dolls who are invited are the spectators, still some of them may be invited as "best man," and as bridesmaids. After the ceremony, a wedding-cake is cut, with a tiny ring in it, and lemonade is served with more cake, and, perhaps, ice cream. A very important part of the fun is the presentation of presents; but it is all lost if these are made costly, or of large size. Tiny bits of imitation jewelry, doll china, cut-out pictures, and miniature bouquets, are the proper articles, and add enormously to the jollity of the occasion.

A Happy New-Year.

WE all desire something that we hope the future will bring us, that is the reason why we anticipate with pleasure the advent of a new year, for it always seems possible that the time that is coming holds that which we most want within its grasp. We do not stop to think whether we are working toward that desirable end, or away from it. We forget that though some of our possibilities lie without, our attainment of them lies within ourselves, and that while longing, and, as we believe, working toward the realization of our wishes, we may by some weak indulgence, some neglect of positive duty, be laying the foundation for the destruction of our own hopes. If wisdom was only born with us, if we could only "withstand the beginning," after remedies would not be needed. This inquiry presses close home to us at the beginning of a new year, and it is all the more important, as well as pertinent, because a strict adherence to the injunction would lay the surest foundation for many happy years.

"Withstand the beginning"—the beginning of whatever is doubtful, as well as that which we know to be positively wrong. Always give ourselves the benefit of the doubt; if we find out afterward, that the course we would have pursued, or the act we would have committed, is free from all injurious tendencies, why, we shall feel all the more satisfaction in having acquired the certainty, before the acquirement of what might have proved a habit hard to break, an association difficult to get rid of.

It is singular, but most true, that life holds so much more for those who exercise restraint, than for those who give themselves to self-indulgence.

This is one of the lessons we learn by experience, and it is fortunate for us if we learn it in time, for the same writer who warns us to withstand the beginning, says, "for after-remedies come too late." This is the great difficulty; our wisdom dies with us, for it is rarely that the experience of one, no matter how dearly bought, can be made fruitful of good for another. But it is not born with us, the most of us have to buy it at a high price for ourselves.

The ways in which we have to guard ourselves are very numerous and varied. Some arise from inherited traits and tendencies, and there are persons who consider that fact justification for wrongdoing. But it is not so. Our business is the improvement of ourselves, and the race. Progress is the law of our being, and if we are hindered by some of our hereditary qualities, we are helped by others, and are responsible for the use to which we put such natural gifts as we have. The pleasure in conquering obstacles in the achievement of victory, is just as great when we obtain it over ourselves as over others. Sometimes, indeed, it is much greater, for triumph over others is often painful to ourselves, and is the cause of more real sorrow than defeat would have been. There is no discount, however, upon the victory gained over ourselves; the pleasure is unalloyed, and leaves us stronger and better armed for another encounter.

May the New Year come laden with blessings to us all; and that it may so come, let us meet it with such courage, and honest purpose, as will enable us to get the best out of whatever it brings. Blessings come in disguise sometimes, not always crowned with their intent; but they are blessings, and if our New Year should bring us such as these, do not let us meet them churlishly, but accept them silently, if not thankfully, and wait with patience and hope for their unfolding.