



BACH'S BIRTHPLACE.

Buxtehude, and, lost in the wonder of this music, outstayed his holiday by several months, dissatisfaction was very openly expressed. Soon, however, he obtained a better engagement, as organist at Mühlhausen, and now he thought he was in a position to marry. The wife he had chosen was his cousin, Maria Barbara, and the following is the quaint entry of the marriage in the church register:—

"On October 17, 1707, the respectable Herr Johann Sebastian Bach, a bachelor, and organist to the church of St. Blasius at Mühlhausen, the surviving lawful son of the late most respectable Herr Ambrosius Bach, the famous town organist and musician of Eisenach, was married to the virtuous maiden, Maria Barbara Bach, the youngest surviving daughter of the late very respectable and famous artist, Herr Johann Michael Bach, organist at Gehren; here in our house of God, by the favour of our gracious ruler, after their banns had been read in Arnstadt."*

After staying one year at Mühlhausen, Sebastian and his wife moved to Weimar, where he was now appointed organist of the Castle chapel. There he remained for several years, and there he composed some of his finest cantatas. But in 1717 he was again on the wing. The Prince of Köthen, who was a passionate lover of music, offered such advantageous terms to the Weimar organist that an arrangement was speedily made, and the Bach family removed to Köthen. Three years later the Prince, accompanied by Sebastian, paid a visit to Carlsbad. It was a sad visit for the musician, for on returning to his home he found

that his wife, the good and faithful Maria Barbara, had died during his absence and was already laid to rest in the green churchyard. She left seven children, the eldest two of whom became famous musicians. After a year and a half of widowhood, Sebastian Bach married again. He was only thirty-six, and a houseful of unruly boys must have been hard to manage without a mother's help. His choice now fell on Anna Magdalena, the twenty-one year old daughter of a musician named Wülkens. During his stay at Köthen, Bach composed a number of instrumental pieces for solo and duet, amongst them being his *Inventions* and the first part of his *Wohltemperirte Clavier*, that book of Preludes and Fugues which has delighted musicians from his day to ours.

Shortly after his second marriage Bach moved to Leipzig, where he had been appointed Cantor (Precentor) at the Thomasschule, and there he remained for the rest of his life. His work was unceasing. Thirteen more children were added to Maria Barbara's seven, so that at the end there should have been twenty of them had they all lived!

All of them were more or less musical, and Frau Anna Magdalena was an excellent singer.

During this Leipzig period the two glorious *Passion Musics*, according to St. John and according to St. Matthew, were composed. The second of these is much the finer; it was composed expressly for St. Thomas's Church, in which there were two organs, and for the musical service in which Bach was responsible.

The words are taken partly from the 26th and 27th chapters of St. Matthew's Gospel, and partly from hymns by Picander. The instrumental parts are for two organs and a

double orchestra, but no brass instruments or drums were used, as these were considered out of keeping with the sacredness of the subject.

The first performance of this wonderful music was given on Good Friday, 1729, the sermon being preached between the two parts. It was received with respectful attention, but Bach was not encouraged to repeat it. Next day it was consigned to a cupboard in which it remained for one hundred years; then it was found by Mendelssohn, who persuaded the Berlin Academy to give it a hearing. On the 1st March, 1829, the *Passion Music* once more was heard. The master had long lain in his quiet, unknown grave, somewhere in the cemetery at Leipzig, but the seed he had sown had borne good fruit. People no longer regarded his music as eccentric and far-fetched, but listened, entranced by its beauty and power.

To the efforts of Mendelssohn and Schumann the Bach-Renaissance, which began with that performance of the *Passion Music*, is due. Since then, every musical society in the world has performed the works of the great Leipzig Cantor, who composed, not for fame or glory, but for love of God and of the art through which he hoped to serve Him best.

Sebastian Bach lived long enough to see several of his sons in prominent positions. The eldest, Wilhelm Friedemann, should have had a splendid career; he had immense talent, but through the irregularities of his life, he destroyed his prospects and his powers.

The second son, Carl Philip Emanuel, won a distinguished position at the Court of Frederick the Great. In the year 1747 his royal master desired him to invite his father to Potsdam, and one evening, when the king,

* Spitta's *Life of Bach*. Translated by Clara Bell and J. Fuller-Maitland.