

## "THE FATHER OF THE SYMPHONY": JOSEPH HAYDN.



THE eighteenth century has been called the "Genius Period" of musical history. It greeted the fifteen-year-old Bach and Haendel, and witnessed the development of their powers. It

gave us, in its thirty-second year, Joseph Haydn; in its fifty-sixth year, Mozart; in its seventieth year, Beethoven, and just three years before its close it lent us Schubert.

Truly a noble record!

Of these six masters, three were Germans—Bach, Haendel and Beethoven; the remaining three—Haydn, Mozart and Schubert—were Austrians. The Germans are thinkers, and the music which they have produced appeals primarily to the intellect. The Austrians, while less profound, are more graceful, and while less learned are more gay. Their music is lighter than that of their northern colleagues, and the gaiety which is so marked a characteristic of their lives, finds utterance in the brilliant harmonies and dancing rhythms of their compositions.

A true child of Austria we find in Joseph Haydn. Listen to one of his symphonies and, be you ever so sad, ever so sulky, it will tease you and coax you till all your ill-humour disperses like mist in the morning sunshine. When he was an old man a friend commented upon the peculiar cheerfulness of his church music. "I cannot help myself," answered the aged musician, "what I have, I give. But when I think of God, my heart jumps so for joy, that the notes run as if off a reel. And as God has given me a joyous nature, He will surely forgive me if I serve Him joyfully!"

It has been claimed for Haydn that he is the father of humour in music. This keen sense of humour must have served him well in his checkered life, for domestic happiness he had none. He was the second of twelve children. His father, who was a wheelwright, had built the little house at the end of the principal street in the village of Rohrau, which is still standing, and into it he moved on his marriage with the cook from a neighbouring mansion. Mathias Haydn and his wife had musical tastes. He played the harp by ear and they sang together. Little Joseph sat on a bench in the corner and took part in the performance, pretending to play on an imaginary violin, consisting of two pieces of wood with which he imitated exactly the gestures of the village schoolmaster. A distant relative, named Frankh, who was music director at the small neighbouring town, Hainburg, happened to hear him one day when he was six years old, and, pleased with the child's pure intonation, offered to undertake his musical education. The mother was strongly opposed to the idea, as she would have preferred to see her son a priest or a schoolmaster, but her prejudices were finally overcome, and master Joseph, or Sepperl as he was called in the Austrian dialect, was soon established at school at Hainburg. Frankh was a good teacher and Joseph an apt pupil. As he said himself, "learning came easy" to him. He became a good singer and learnt to play most of the instruments then in use, even including the drum,

for, on one occasion a drummer being wanted for a procession, Frankh pushed young Sepperl into the place, and showed him how to beat. A funny little figure he must have looked, for he was so small that the drum had to be slung on the back of a school-fellow of his own height, who happened to be a hunchback, and thus the curious procession moved on. Haydn always retained a fancy for the drum, which plays an important part in his "Surprise" and other symphonies, and he greatly astonished the band which he was engaged to conduct in London, when quite an old man, by a display of his skill in this branch of musical art.

Two years after his removal to Hainburg Sepperl was heard by Reutter, the music-director of the famous cathedral at Vienna, who, pleased with his "weak, sweet voice," and finding that he could sing a shake, proposed to take him back with him and finish his education. The little village lad could scarcely realise his good fortune, and happy indeed was he when he found himself among the scholars in the cloisters beneath the beautiful spire of St. Stephen's. Here he learnt singing and violin and piano-playing from good masters, as well as Latin and other subjects, but he received no instruction in harmony. Reutter only gave him two lessons during all the time that he was with him, but, as Haydn himself said, he had the gift, and by dint of hard work he managed to get on.

In 1745 his brother Michael joined him as chorister. Michael was the sixth of the twelve children and was very musical, though he does not seem to have gained much success. Some of his compositions are still occasionally performed, but there was as much difference between him and his brother Joseph as there was between Sebastian Bach and the best of his sons.

After Joseph and Michael had been at St. Stephen's for some years the elder boy's voice began to break. This angered Reutter most unreasonably, and he only waited for an excuse to expel the unhappy boy. An opportunity soon presented itself. Joseph, with that love of fun which distinguished him through life, was, as a lad, addicted to practical jokes, and seeing one day a little comrade's pig-tail bobbing in front of him and a pair of brand new scissors gleaming beneath his hand he could not resist the temptation to introduce them to one another. The pig-tail fell, and master Joseph was sentenced to a caning. In vain he begged to be let off and declared that he would rather leave than suffer such an indignity. He was told the thrashing was to come first and after that he could march.

It was on a cold, wet evening that he found himself turned into the streets of Vienna, without home or friends, but after wandering about half the night he met a poor actor who had pity on his forlorn condition and took him home to his humble lodging.

Joseph was now sixteen. He succeeded in getting a few pupils, and a kind Viennese having lent him a hundred and fifty guildens, he rented an attic, got an old, worm-eaten piano and set to work to study composition from books and from the Sonatas of Emanuel Bach, which he mastered completely. His friend, the actor, obtained a commission for him to compose a comic opera, for which he was fairly well paid and, having plenty of courage and perseverance, he managed to keep himself afloat.

In Germany and Austria most people live in flats, and thus it happens that a millionaire and a mechanic may be living beneath the same roof—only the mechanic will have rather

more of the roof. In the house which was topped by Haydn's attic there lived Metastasio, the greatest opera-librettist of the day, and the author of the clever but severe lines—

"Between a singer and musician  
Wide is the difference of condition,  
The one repeats, the other knows  
The sounds which harmony compose,  
And he who acts without a plan  
May be esteemed more beast than man."

Metastasio was very wealthy and he had the guardianship of a rich, young Spanish girl. He was not long in discovering the genius up in his sky-light, and he engaged Haydn to teach music to his ward, who had singing lessons from the celebrated Porpora. In this way Haydn gained the friendship of the Italian *maestro*, who engaged him as accompanist to his pupils, and who took him with him to the baths of Mannersdorf in Hungary, where he gave him lessons in composition, in return for which Haydn had to act as valet as well as accompanist. In consequence of this connection with Porpora he became acquainted with the principal musicians of his time, including Gluck, who advised him to go to Italy. This, however, there was no possibility of his doing. He was also introduced to a very wealthy amateur named Fürnberg, who invited him to his house and who encouraged him to compose his first string quartet—a style of composition in which he was destined to excel and to earn for himself the name of Father of the Quartet as well as of the Symphony.

The first quartet was soon followed by others, and Haydn's prospects began to brighten. He raised his terms for lessons from two guildens a month to five, and somewhat later Fürnberg introduced him to the Bohemian Count, Ferdinand Morzin, who engaged him as music director and composer. The Count had a small but well-chosen orchestra, and Haydn, with his salary of twenty pounds a year, now bethought him of taking a wife. An old school-fellow at St. Stephen's had introduced him to his family, and Joseph's choice had fallen upon the youngest sister. As, however, she had determined to become a nun, and the father—a wig-maker—was unwilling to lose so hopeful a son-in-law, good-natured Haydn was easily persuaded to transfer his affections, or at least his attentions, to the elder sister, who was three years older than he. The wedding took place in 1760 at St. Stephen's, and a sorry marriage it proved for the bridegroom.

Disagreeable, bigoted, extravagant and bad-tempered, Maria Anna seems to have had scarcely any redeeming quality, and Haydn, whose nature was too kindly and too joyous to be warped or soured, soon made up his mind that domestic bliss was not his portion and that he must find happiness in himself. Not long after this marriage Count Morzin dismissed his band, but Haydn was immediately engaged by Prince Esterhazy, one of the richest princes in Austria and one whose family had been known for generations as devoted lovers of art and music.

This prince had a good orchestra at Eisenstadt, and Haydn was appointed second conductor, the first being an old man, Werner, who died a few years later. To please his prince, Joseph taught himself the baryton, an instrument on which his patron performed, and which was something like the violoncello, but, finding that this plan was quite unsuccessful, Prince Nicholas not at all appreciating the skill of his rival, Haydn quietly forgot his new accomplishment and confined himself