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Author(s): Carl Maria von Weber and Joseph Bennett

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THE MUSICAL TIMES

AND SINGING-CLASS CIRCULAR.

OCTOBER 1, 1877.

THE GREAT COMPOSERS, SKETCHED BY THEMSELVES.

BY JOSEPH BENNETT.

No. II.—WEBER.

It is to be regretted that Herr Ludwig Nohl's collection of Weber's letters contains but a few out of the many worthy of publication which the composer of "Der Freischütz" must have written. The reasons for this are, however, not difficult to imagine. In the biography of his illustrious father, written by Baron Max von Weber, no more than sparing use is made of the voluminous correspondence available, and the insertion of which would so materially have augmented the value and importance of the work. It may be assumed therefore that the representatives of the composer feel some delicacy about giving the bulk of his letters to the world at a time when many persons are living to whom perhaps reference is made. But those which have seen the light are far from valueless. Indeed, it may be questioned whether any still unpublished are of greater interest than the series addressed to Gänsbacher. The friendship between Weber and his fellow-student was of that peculiarly sentimental sort in which the German nature is prone to indulge. Gänsbacher was the dear brother of the master's heart, and into his ear he poured all his thoughts and feelings with an unreservedness and confidence more suggestive of the bond between man and woman than between man and man. In the Gänsbacher letters therefore Weber lays himself open to us. Never thinking that his words would be printed for all to read, the composer had no inducement to be other than perfectly honest and unaffected. He showed himself to his friend as that friend knew him to be, and it is our privilege now to look on at the revelation, and to gather therefrom all the lessons of which it is capable.

The correspondence published by Herr Nohl begins in 1810, while Weber was still with his master, "Papa" Vogler, and at a time when he entered upon the most feverishly active years of his life. It is easy to divine from the earlier epistles the impressionable and somewhat desponding nature of the man. Thus, for example, he is always imagining himself the victim of specially adverse circumstances. Referring to a professional visit to Baden, he says, "I delivered Nägeli's letter to the Crown Prince of Bavaria, by whom I was graciously received; I fixed the probable date of my concert, and anxiously awaited the arrival of Berger, and the music that Archer was to send, for an orchestra was out of the question; so I was obliged to do my best with the slender means at my command. But neither music nor Berger arrived, and, to complete my annoyance, neither in Baden nor its environs could I find a piano that it was possible to play on. I was told of one in Rastadt; so I went off there, and arrived just as the owner of the instrument had left the place. Meanwhile time passed, Princess Stephanie went on a journey, the Crown Prince talked of leaving; so I became provoked and gave it up altogether. I recognised in all this my evil genius, which had too long allowed things to go on pleasantly not to play me some vile prank on this occasion." On Weber's

own showing he was persistently dogged by this evil genius; for which, indeed, he seems to have been always on the look out and always ready to make the most of having discovered signs of its existence. He was, he said to Gänsbacher, "the ball of Fate, who rolls me about the world according to her will and pleasure." But, to tell the truth, the master was very often unfortunate in these, his struggling years. Here is an instance related by himself: "I long delayed the concert I intended to give at Frankfort, waiting till the colder season set in, when at last a favourable time arrived; my acquaintances, and also the circumstance that no concert had been given there for a very long period, all seemed to promise me good receipts on the 22nd. Therefore I drove off from Darmstadt to Frankfort; but imagine my horror when the French entered the town at the same moment with myself, and confiscated all English wares and groceries in the town for their own use. The alarm and universal lamentations were so great that it was utterly useless to think of giving a concert." In the same letter Weber dwells ruefully upon another disappointment: "Princess Stephanie . . . took such a fancy to me that she proposed on the spot that I should remain at Mannheim. Every one congratulated me, and seemed delighted to keep me with them. . . . The affair was now daily spoken of, the Oberhofmeisterin of the Princess arranged the whole, and I was offered at once 1,000 florins, lodging, and firewood, and the thing was considered settled, when one day (after I had been repeatedly with the Duchess, playing and singing), the Oberhofmeisterin informed me that the Princess had spoken to her treasurer, and she regretted much that the state of her finances would not admit of engaging me at present. I was not told this till after I had been paraded about for a fortnight, having lost much precious time, and not even received a present." A third example of fortune's "cursed spite" will suffice to indicate the character of many others. Having given a successful concert at Carlsruhe, Weber went to Mannheim (December 1811), and was there "besieged" to give another. "I requested the co-operation of the musicians, which they all promised. I advertised the concert, had a capital subscription, and every prospect of first-rate receipts, when the orchestra all of a sudden changed their minds (owing to a cabal of Herr Ritter), and informed me in writing that, so long as their own concerts were going on, they had a law which prohibited their assisting strangers. I did not let the matter rest, but inserted in the papers a delicate hint that the gentlemen in question had broken their promise, which caused a great sensation. But what good did that do me? I was cheated of good profits." It may be said that awkward events like these happen to all, no matter in what sphere of life. That is true enough, but their special significance as regards Weber lay in the effect they had upon his sensitive organisation—an effect indicated by the frequency and length with which he dwells upon them. How much he felt such ordinary worries of the artist-life appears in a letter addressed to Gänsbacher from Würzburg (1811). After referring to a proposed tour, he says, "God knows how it may turn out. I am often obliged to call reason to the rescue, to prevent my becoming careless and morose; for can anything be more wretched than to run about from one stranger to another, and to play by snatches to each in turn, just to show one can do something, and, out of thirty, scarcely to light upon one who feels either sympathy or zeal in your cause?" In the light of extracts such as these it is possible to under-

stand the remarkable paper now in the Imperial Library of Vienna, purporting to be a "Reverie," though it should be called a Rhapsody, written by Weber at 11 o'clock p.m., January 18, 1811. The sensitive artist-nature does strange things sometimes, and none more strange than with the pen at those moments of extreme exaltation or depression to which it is subject. Readers of Beethoven's biography will have in mind the extravagant outburst of feeling he more than once left on record; nor can the equally extravagant entries in the existing fragment of Schubert's diary be forgotten. Weber's Reverie might well go to keep these company. It begins, "Escaped from the social circle, I take refuge in my quiet retired chamber, the solitude of which acts with soothing influence on my feelings, and at least enables me to cast aside self-imposed restraint, and to exclude the world from my inmost thoughts. Weighed down by struggling against adverse circumstances, I have attained so much apparent calmness that few under my cheerful, nay, even gay, exterior are likely to discover the grief that consumes me, oppressing and irritating both body and soul." Weber then goes on to ask whether unfavourable circumstances and conditions have alone given birth to great men. If so, his destiny, he thinks, ought to be great indeed, for "never could any poor mortal boast of circumstances more adverse and oppressive, or more unpropitious to all talent," than himself. From this general indictment against fate he goes on to particulars. From the hour of his birth the path of his life was rough and thorny. No gay frolicsome childhood for him, and no glad uncontrolled youth. Even love was denied him, for he says, "all those by whom I foolishly fancied I was beloved were only trifling with me from the most pitiful motives." So, as in Hamlet's case, man delighted him not, nor woman either. He exclaims, in fact, "I adore woman, and yet I hate and despise her." From this the poor morbid master goes on to complain that even other love was almost wholly denied him. "I never knew the tender ties of fraternal affection; my mother died early, my father cherished me but too fondly, and in spite of all the love and esteem I bear him this deprived him of my confidence, for I often felt how weak he was towards me, and love of this kind is seldom forgiven. I thought I had found friends. The familiarity of daily intercourse had linked them to me; we parted, and I—was forgotten. I threw myself into the arms of art, worshipped great artists with idolatry, and, at length, after attaining the intimacy I sought, found them, with all their godlike qualities, nearly on as low a level as myself." But even art itself was his enemy. Apostrophising it, the master exclaims, "And yet thou, my sole resource, my all, thou canst stand in hostility before me, and while I passionately embrace thee, though conscious of my nothingness, thou, even thou, canst strike me to the earth at thy feet. The overwhelming force of events—the Hercules' garment of humanity—it is ye who estrange me from my beloved art and from God. While yielding to your power I destroy myself; while I laugh I perish, and in a *bon mot* I pronounce my own death-sentence." Summing up the whole matter, he says, "Misery is the lot of man; never attaining to perfection, always discontented, at war with himself, he is yearning personified; unstable, yet ever moving on, devoid of strength, volition, or repose, the fleeting impressions on his mind vanishing as soon as made, of which even these utterances from the depths of my heart are proofs." It may be said that this jeremiad was caused by some temporary depression arising from indigestion per-

haps, or a sluggish liver, or a love "tiff." But, even so, it is a revelation of the nature of the man, and one, within its scope, almost complete to those who have eyes to see. Where there is smoke there must be fire, and the Reverie joins with a hundred other evidences of the same sort to prove the sensitiveness, the tendency to melancholy, and the readiness to be cast down which haunted Weber through life.

But it must not be supposed that Weber indulged his despondency, as Schubert did, by letting the world run by him and taking no steps to attract its attention. On the contrary, while grumbling at events like an Englishman, he never ceased his efforts to control them, some of the means adopted to that end being uncommonly astute. It is well known that he, anticipating Schumann, not only wrote music but wrote about it, and it was perfectly natural that even a casual journalist should recognise the importance of having the press on his side. Hence his letters to Gänsbacher contain frequent reference to measures having that end in view. Here are a few extracts: "If you find anything about it ["Silvana"] in the *Morgenblatt*, pray see that an extract from it is inserted in one of your papers." "If the Vienna papers contain a notice of you, send it here at once, that the Alliance may circulate it." "Do try to get us some good correspondents in Vienna, for Weber [Gottfried] and I will probably publish a musical paper, of which you shall have the prospectus in my next letter, and you must endeavour to procure subscribers for us. Above all write regularly about every novelty, and the various concerts, operas, &c., in Vienna, that we may furnish the information in our paper. Strive to acquire some influence with any important journal in Vienna; for instance, the one that Schlegel edits. These are all positive duties." "It is in one sense disagreeable that there is no Austrian newspaper in which you can be employed, but on the other hand not so, as then our fame will come to us from other countries. Let me know at once what are the most popular and independent papers in Vienna." "I devolve on you the duty of establishing a connection with some popular paper in Vienna, which is necessary, as we have as yet obtained no influence there." "I intend to leave this to-morrow for Auran, where I mean to engage in our interests a very popular paper, *Miscellany of the Latest News*." "You will see from the accompanying newspaper the result of my concert here; I beg you will insert an extract from it in the Prague journals. A certain Herr C. R. André edits a weekly paper in Prague, the *Hesperus*—apply to him also." "The editors of newspapers now sprawl at my feet, and I hope that, in spite of my short stay here, much has been done to make me known in Austria." These extracts might be continued, but enough have been given to show that Weber was by no means deficient in keenness of perception and adroitness of action with a view to his own interests. But the most remarkable proof appears in the scheme of a Composers' Trades Union—it was styled "Harmonic Union"—of which he, Weber, was the presiding spirit. A document setting forth the object and machinery of this society still exists. Thus it begins: "The perpetual one-sided verdicts and party-feeling connected with art, the work of men bribed by publishers to praise everything they publish, and the difficulty of procuring for what is truly good (unless a great name is attached to it) distinction and a place in the world, have induced Carl Maria von Weber, Gottfried Weber, and Alexander von Dusck, to form an Harmonic Society, which, by mutual and energetic support, may act

and work for the benefit of art." What the three gentlemen really meant was no doubt the benefit of themselves, since every musician holds the interests of art to be identical with his own. Now let us see how this crusade against injustice and corruption was to be carried on. In the first place, by secret action. Rule 1 lays down that "the strictest secrecy as to the existence of the union is a duty which springs from the very nature of the case. All its good effects would be rendered null and void were it to be made known, for the public would scarcely give credit to such a union for impartiality and truth." Exactly; the wisdom of this can no more be denied than its shrewd perception of facts. The rules go on to enact that "members of the union must be composers, or men who, without being composers, combine knowledge of music with literary talent, and, by their poems and other literary works, are useful to the science of music." The brothers must be chosen with extreme caution, and the proposed initiate is not before his election to know even that such a society exists. The whole body is to work together for mutual support. Good works are to be praised, bad ones censured. Every member is expected to submit his publications to the director, who will tell off other brothers to review it. As to this, Rule 16 says, "The circulation and due praise of the works of the brothers will form an agreeable duty." But "if one of the brothers should compose something really bad, the director must tell him so candidly, and persuade him to take back his composition. If the author objects to the verdict of the director, the latter must then appeal to the judgment of two brothers; and if one of the two concurs with the director, and advises the composer to withdraw his work, and yet the latter still objects to do so, then Rule 15 is to be put in force against him." And Rule 15 decrees that it is a duty to warn the public against bad productions wherever they may be found. How far the working of this secret association satisfied its founders does not appear, but there are frequent references to it in Weber's letters; and in one place he speaks of the institution as going on swimmingly. As the members got older, however, they no doubt saw the hopelessness of the task they had set themselves. At any rate, the master, in his later epistles, is altogether silent on the subject; while we know that not long after the society was started Gottfried Weber devoted himself to law at Mayence, and treated his namesake in a decidedly non-fraternal manner. One of Carl Maria's letters contains a complaint of this: "Yearning once more to see at least one member of our triad, I hastened to Gottfried in Mayence. This was, however, the saddest moment of my journey, for I met him with all the old heartfelt love, and—he was no longer the same. I do not wish, however, to be unjust, having arrived at an unfavourable moment, when he had daily criminal cases, had just changed his quarters, &c.; and perhaps such was the origin of his no longer taking any interest except in his own affairs. He is also become rather dogmatical and dictatorial. In short, it caused me the utmost sorrow. I had so rejoiced in the thoughts of seeing him; indeed, this was the chief object of my journey. Well, all joys cannot be realised."

The extract just made directs attention to another trait in Weber's character, and one which his letters, as a whole, place in a very conspicuous light. I refer to his thorough affectionateness, and the warm sympathies, which, while they made him crave, so to speak, the love of others, compelled him to love in return with a depth and intensity out of the common.

It would be easy to bring forward here the touching quotations from Weber's letters to his wife, which are given in his biography. But while none can refuse a generous appreciation of the fondness these display, of the delight in home and family with which every sentence is instinct, it may be said that most men love a good wife. The Gänsbacher letters are, from this point of view, better testimony to the fidelity and strength of Weber's friendship. They show, indeed, a beautiful affection extending with undiminished force over years of time, and distinguished by a devotion that has in it something of romance. On one occasion he writes, "Your letter was true balsam to me, and I eagerly drank in the heartfelt love that shone forth in it. . . . Yes, dear brother, we do indeed stand alone; let us heartily clasp hands and form an enduring bond." In another place: "Your loving confidence touches me to the heart. Yes, by heaven! you are not mistaken in me, and the breast which has already withstood so many conflicts will gladly also bear the sorrows of a friend." Again he writes to his "most beloved and dear old Hans," "Scold, rage, abuse me, call me a dog, what you will, only spare one thing: do not think that I could even for a moment cease to be devoted to you with the heartfelt love of old, for that can only end with my life." The letter which begins thus ends in like manner: "O brother, I cannot realise all my delight in once more being able to have a right good talk with you. I press you warmly to my heart in thought, and stretch out a brother's hand to you from afar, until fate once more reunites you with your ever-loving and unchangeable brother." At one time Gänsbacher, who had been acting as chapel-master to some noble patron, held a commission in a Tyrolean regiment, but soon wearied of military life, and consulted Weber as to his next step. The master's faithful friendship shines in every line of his reply: "Poor fellow, so your present life no longer contents you! That I can well believe, but tell me any one thing that has not as many drawbacks. Is not an artist the most oppressed and persecuted of human beings? What do you mean to do? Earn a livelihood by your compositions, or become an artistic beast of burden and daily turn the mill-wheel of children's training and give lessons? In the former case, what with the bad payment of publishers, and your not choosing to write for them by the ell at random, you would fare badly enough; and in the latter you would be seized with the same disgust you now feel, and be more dissatisfied than ever." But, after this and more plain-speaking, all the tenderness of the man wells up and overflows: "Whatever you turn to or engage in, you well know that your faithful brother's hand and heart are equally at your service, and that to his latest breath he will stand by you and beside you." How zealously and constantly Weber worked to promote the interests of his friend by "pushing" his music there are scores of passages in the letters to show. But these I pass to note how, when the composer had settled at Dresden, he tried to find an opening for Gänsbacher also. Writing from the Saxon capital, he says, "Would that I could have the happiness of procuring for you a quiet little place in our Capelle as church composer. But so many lie in ambush for it, and the gentlemen whose names end in *ini* and *elli* know so well how to put every iron in the fire, and to take steps so long before, that my wish will probably only remain among the *pia desideria*." But it came very near being gratified. Herr Schubert, the actual church composer, fell ill, and Weber feared that his days were drawing to an end. He wrote therefore to Gäns-

bäcker, "I cannot renounce the plan, so essential to my happiness, of your living with me. If God would only grant me that joy, I should be at the height of my felicity." But the dear friend was not to be sanguine: "At a court like this innumerable people are on the watch for such a post, and they do not scruple to use any means. Go on therefore quietly with your Innsbruck affairs, and do not throw away any other chance. . . . You must always be prepared for many things and many annoyances which would never occur to the mind of a straightforward Tyrolese who has lived far from courts. But the man who steadily goes on his way animated by pure zeal will find himself respected here as elsewhere, and content. Besides in me you have a friend who knows the depth of the stream and who will be your faithful pilot." Shortly afterwards Weber exultingly wrote, "Now, thanks be to God and to my excellent chief, I have the intense joy of procuring for my King a faithful servant and admirable artist, an ornament to our artistic establishment; for you an honourable sphere of work; and for myself an attached comrade in joy and sorrow. I congratulate both you and ourselves from the depths of my heart, and rejoice unspeakably in the hope of soon embracing you." With this letter went 200 gulden to pay the expenses of Gänsbacher's journey, &c. But the union was, after all, not to take place; the Capellmeistership of St. Stephen's, Vienna, fell vacant, and Gänsbacher succeeded in obtaining the appointment, whereupon his faithful Weber wrote, "Beloved brother and colleague, in heaven at last! God be praised, who in the end does all things well. My most heartfelt good wishes attend you and your beloved wife. You have everything that can contribute to the happiness of life: an existence free from care, a sphere for work; a faithful, prudent wife by your side, and loving friends; now do not fail to prize all these blessings and to enjoy them with gladness of heart. This is the greatest boon that I can wish for you and yours; for though God has bestowed so many rich bounties upon me beyond what most enjoy, I do not possess a cheerful spirit to elevate these gifts to pure earthly felicity, and therefore I best know that, without such a boon from the Almighty, you may persuade yourself by force of reason to be happy, but—the heart feels there is something wanting." With this my notice of the pure and touching friendship of Weber for Gänsbacher may well end. As to the light that it reflects upon the master not another word need be said.

Did space permit, Weber's letters might be quoted to show his modesty, conspicuously lacking as they are in self-glorification, his pious thankfulness for worldly benefits, and the earnestness with which he pursued his art. But the extracts I have made suffice to throw a flood of light upon a nature which, when properly studied, seems in marvellous accord with the music Weber's genius produced. Noting the master's keenness of sympathy, the energy of his spirit, and the romanticism of his friendship, the mingled spirituality and power of his artistic creations seem the most natural thing in the world.

DUSSEK'S PIANOFORTE SONATAS.

By EBENEZER PROUT, B.A.

(Concluded from page 424.)

THE Sonata in E flat, Op. 44 (commonly known as "Les Adieux"), is the longest of the whole series, containing four movements, and an Introduction, in E flat minor, to the first Allegro. Of the thirty-two Sonatas included in Breitkopf's edition there are

only three which contain a Minuet and Trio—the present work, the "Retour à Paris" (Op. 70), and "L'Invocation" (Op. 77). In this respect Dussek resembles Mozart, who in all his pianoforte works shows a decided preference for the three-movement over the four-movement form. It was left to Beethoven to assert the true importance of the Minuet, which he developed into the Scherzo; but it is somewhat strange that Mozart and Dussek, and it may be added Clementi also, should, comparatively speaking, neglect this form, which had been so frequently and so charmingly employed by Haydn. In the Introduction to the present Sonata we meet with the organist Dussek again, the sustained harmonies and suspensions which abound in the music being quite appropriate to the "king of instruments." The succeeding Allegro, in E flat major, $\frac{3}{4}$ time, is one of its author's best movements; both the principal subjects are of great beauty, and the developments of the middle portion are of unusual interest. The *Molto adagio sostenuto*, in B major, has much affinity of style with the better-known slow movement of the "Retour à Paris" ("Plus Ultra"). Though very beautiful, it suffers somewhat from diffuseness—a rare fault with the composer. The Minuet, in G sharp minor, with a Trio in its enharmonic key of A flat, is so good, especially the Trio, as to increase our surprise that Dussek should have written so few movements in this form. A very graceful, though rather long, Rondo forms a worthy conclusion to this admirable Sonata, which must rank as among the very best of its author's works. It is too difficult for any but very advanced pupils, and is indeed best suited for concert purposes. It has been played once, I believe, by Madame Goddard, at the Monday Popular Concerts, and would certainly be heard there again with pleasure.

Of the three Sonatas, Op. 45, the first and second (in B flat and G major) are gems of the first water. That in B flat is especially enjoyable. It is much less difficult than the Sonatas last noticed, being well within the reach of fair amateur players. What chiefly distinguishes it is its essentially melodious character. The *Allegro cantabile* is worthy of its name, being nearly throughout one long song; and the *Adagio patetico* is also in its composer's best manner. Both, however, are surpassed by the sparkling Rondo entitled "Allegro di Ballo." Speaking from an intimate acquaintance of many years with all these Sonatas, I am inclined to call the present movement the most perfect specimen of the Rondo which Dussek has left. It is impossible on paper to give any idea of the indescribable charm, or of the irresistible "go" of the music; I can only recommend all pianists to make its acquaintance. The second Sonata, though less striking than the first, is also a work of true inspiration. It is somewhat unusual in its form, as it commences with an Introduction, almost long enough to be called a slow movement, and of too much importance in its subjects to be considered a mere Prelude. To this succeeds an Allegro, the principal theme of which is in two parts only, and written in double counterpoint. This movement is more scientific, in form and treatment, than any other in the Sonatas, the nearest approach to it in this respect being the Allegro of the Sonata, Op. 35, No. 2. In spite of the strictness of its imitations in many parts, the composer's vein of melody never seems to fail; the music is throughout as tuneful as if it made not the slightest pretension to science. The *Finale* of this work is a Rondo in slow time, *andantino con moto*, the subjects and treatment of which are alike fresh and original. One is so accustomed to associate the idea of a Rondo