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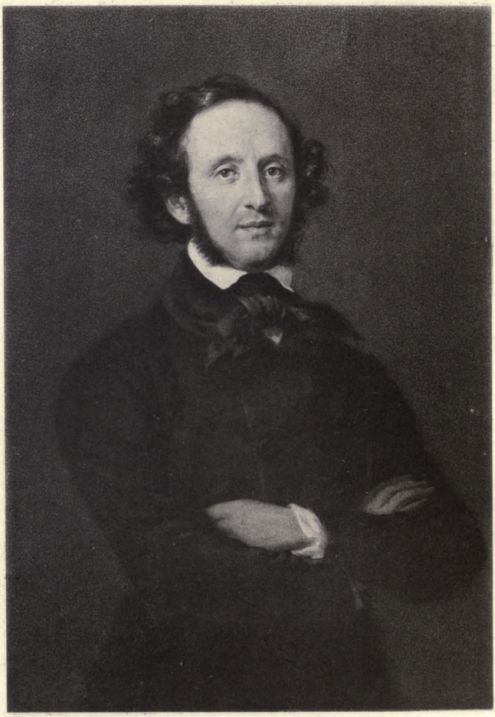


SELECTED LETTERS

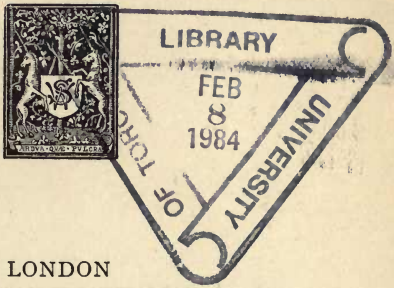
OF

MENDELSSOHN

EDITED BY

W. F. ALEXANDER M.A.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY SIR GEORGE GROVE
AND A PORTRAIT OF MENDELSSOHN



LONDON
SWAN SONNENSCHEIN & CO.
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1894

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE OF EVENTS.

Jacob Ludwig Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, born, Hamburg	*February 3rd*, 1809.
Overture to "A Midsummer Night's Dream" completed,	*August 6th*, 1826.
Reformation Symphony composed,	*Winter of* 1829-30.
Journey to Italy commences,	*August*, 1830.
Return from Italy and Switzerland to Munich,	*October*, 1831.
Settles at Düsseldorf as Intendant of Church and Secular Music,	*September 27th*, 1833.
Commences "St. Paul,"	*March*, 1834.
Leaves Düsseldorf to become Conductor of the Gewandhaus concerts at Leipsic,	*Commencement of* 1835.
His father, Abraham Mendelssohn, dies,	*November 19th*, 1835.
First performance of "St. Paul,"	*May*, 1836.
Married to Cécile Jeanrenaud,	*March 28th*, 1837.

The Lobgesang, first performed, .	*June* 25*th*, 1840.
His Mother dies, . . .	*December* 12*th*, 1842.
"Elijah" completed, . .	*July*, 1846.
Mendelssohn conducts "Elijah" at Birmingham, . . .	*April* 26*th*, 1847.
Death of his Sister, Fanny Hensel, .	*May* 14*th*, 1847.
Mendelssohn dies, . . .	*November* 4*th*, 1847.

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PREFACE.

I HAVE been asked to say a few words to introduce this new translation of a selection from the letters of Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy to the public. Mendelssohn is so well-known and so much beloved in England that to some this may seem unnecessary. But there are still many who, much as they enjoy his music, do not know him in his almost equally attractive character of a letter-writer, and to these the present volume may be heartily recommended. At any rate the task is a very pleasant one to me, and I think that I am not without justification in attempting it. I believed that I knew these very letters well; and yet, on reading them over again in Mr. Alexander's version, they come upon me almost as freshly

as they did in 1861, when I first made their acquaintance on the deck of the Austrian-Lloyd steamer between Jaffa and Alexandria. Not only had Mendelssohn the keenest insight into the scenes, events, and persons that came before him, but few writers have ever had a happier knack of expression; in this even Dean Stanley, the prince of letter-writers, hardly exceeds him.

To convey such happy expressions — free and gay, but never tinctured with *slang*—into equivalent English is a very difficult task. The reader must judge for himself how far Mr. Alexander has succeeded. It appears to me that he has been unusually fortunate.

G. GROVE.

Christmas, 1893.

SELECTED
LETTERS OF MENDELSSOHN.

TO HIS FAMILY.

WEIMAR, *21st May*, 1830.

SINCE my travels began I can't remember such a bright and fresh day's journeying as yesterday. Early in the morning the sky was grey and clouded, but later on the sun came out; the air was cool; it was Ascension Day, so the people all had their best clothes on, and I saw them in one village going into church, in the next coming out, in another they were all playing bowls. The gardens were full of brilliant tulips, and there was I driving fast through it all, getting a view of everything. At Weissenfels they gave me a little basket-carriage, and at Naumburg a regular open drosky; the luggage was piled up behind, hat and cloak along with them; and then I bought myself a pair of May nosegays, and so dashed through the country in perfect holiday fashion.

Just past Naumburg, there appeared a party of upper form boys from Pforta, who must perforce look at me with envy; then we drove by President G., mounted in a trap which only just carried him, and his daughters, or his wives—the two ladies, at all events, who were with him, envied me likewise. We trotted up the Kösener Hills, for the horses scarcely needed to pull, and then we overhauled a procession of overloaded waggoners, and they envied me, too, for, indeed, I was worthy of envy. The country-side looked so full of the spring and its brilliancy, all bright and glad; and then the sun went down solemnly behind the hills. Then there came the Russian ambassador, proceeding along with two great four-horse chaises in a sombre, business-like style, and I flew past him in my drosky like a hare, and in the evening I got government horses again, so that a slight vexation should not be wanting (it is essential to pleasure by my theory), and all day I composed nothing, but merely enjoyed myself. It was a noble day, that is the truth, and one not to be forgotten. I close this description with the remark that the children of Eckartsberge play "Ringe, Rosenkranz," just as they do with us, and did not let the strange gentleman's presence disturb them, though he looked very imposing. I should have liked nothing better than to play with them myself.

May 24th.

This I wrote before I went to Goethe after walking in the park early in the morning; now I am still here,

and have never been able to get further with the letter. Very likely I shall remain here two days longer, and I shall lose nothing by doing so, for I have never yet found the old man so cheerful and amiable as now, nor so sympathetic and full of talk. But the real reason for my stopping is a fine one, and makes me almost vain, I should rather say, proud; I will not conceal it from you. Goethe sent me yesterday a letter addressed to a painter here, which I was to deliver myself, and Ottilie told me in confidence it contained a commission to paint my portrait, which Goethe wished to add to a collection of portraits of his acquaintance which he has long been making. The thing rejoiced my heart (almost in the Biblical sense); but as I have not yet encountered my kindly painter, nor he me, it is clear that I must stop till the day after to-morrow; I don't regret it, as I said before, for I am having a glorious time here, and feel such delight in being near my old hero. I have dined with him every day till now, and my presence is required again to-morrow morning. This evening he gives a party, at which I am to play; he talks about everything, asks questions about everything; it is a delight to hear him. But now I must give you a reasonable and orderly account of my proceedings, so that you may know all I have to tell.

The first morning I went to visit Ottilie, whom I found indeed still in weak health, and complaining sometimes, but just as amiable and charming to me as ever. We have been together almost perpetu-

ally ever since, and it has been a great pleasure to me thus coming to know her more intimately.

Ulrica I find even more winning and sweet than before. She has gained a seriousness that seems to pervade her whole being, and the depth and unfailing truth of her feeling make her one of the most beautiful spirits I have ever met with. The two boys, Walter and Wolff, are lively, industrious and affectionate; it is delightful to hear them talking about "grandpapa's Faust." To come back to my narrative. I sent Zelter's letter in to Goethe, who invited me to dinner. I found him outwardly unchanged, but at first somewhat silent and reserved; I fancy he must have wanted to observe me, but at the moment I felt disappointed, and thought to myself, "Now he is always like that." But then by good fortune the conversation happened to turn on the Weimar "Women's Association" and the *Chaos*, a fantastic newspaper, which circulates among the ladies, and to the staff of which I have just been promoted myself.

The old man all at once became jovial, and began to quiz the two ladies about their philanthropy and their intellect, also about the subscriptions and their visitation of the sick, which seemed particularly to move his wrath. He appealed to me to join him in a revolt against these things, and, when I would not, he returned to his former indifference, but at last he became more friendly and intimate than I had ever known him before. It was beyond everything! Talking about the "Robber's Bride," by Ries, he said it contained everything a writer nowadays wanted to

make him happy, namely, a robber and a bride. Then he railed against the universal sentimentality of young people, and their perpetual melancholy. He told us stories about a young lady whom he had courted once, and who also had taken a certain interest in him. Then came the turn of the bazaar for the benefit of the unfortunate, at which the Weimar ladies acted as saleswomen, and where he maintained it was impossible to buy a single thing, because the young people arranged beforehand between themselves who everything was to go to, and then it was hidden away till the right buyer appeared; and so forth. After dinner, he all at once began to hum, "Gute Kinder—hübsche Kinder muss immer lustig sein—tolles Volk," and his eyes grew like those of an old lion just falling asleep. Presently I had to play to him, and he said it was very strange to him to think how long it was since he had heard any music, and meanwhile great advances had been made and he knew nothing of them. There were many things I must explain to him, "some time we must have a reasonable talk together." Then he said to Ottilie, "No doubt you have made all your wise arrangements, but that doesn't avail against my commands, which are, that you are to make tea here to-day, so that we may keep each other company." She asked if it would not be too late, as Riemer would be coming and expect to work with him; but he replied: "You gave your children a holiday from their Latin this morning to hear Felix play, so you can let me off my work too." Then he invited me to dinner to-day, and I played to him for a long time in the evening. My three Welsh

pieces [1] succeed admirably here, and I am practising my English again. I had asked Goethe to say "du" when he spoke to me, so the next day I received a sort of message through Ottilie that then I should have to stop longer than two days, as I had intended, or else he would not have time to get used to it. He said the same thing to me himself, and let me feel I should be losing nothing by stopping rather longer; besides, he asked me to dine with him whenever I had no other engagement, so I have been there daily till now. Yesterday I had to tell him everything about Scotland, Hengstenberg, Spontini and Hegel's æsthetics; then he sent me out to Tiefurt with the ladies, but forbade me to go to Berke, because a very pretty girl lives there, and he would not let me fall into misfortune; and to crown it all, I think to myself this is indeed the very Goethe about whom people used to affirm that he was not one person at all, but had been formed by the blending together of many smaller "Goethides!"—truly I should be mad if I regretted the loss of my time. To-day I am to play him some things by Bach, Haydn and Mozart, and conduct him down to the present time, as he says. Besides, I have gone through the regular duties of the visitor, and have seen the library and Iphigenia in Aulis.

FELIX.

[1] Opus 16

TO HIS FAMILY.

WEIMAR, *25th May*, 1830.

I HAVE just received your very welcome letter written on Ascension Day, and must yield to the temptation to send you another answer from here. To you, dear Fanny, I am just about to send the copy of my symphony, which I am having copied here and sent to Leipsic (where, perhaps, it will be performed), with strict injunctions that one copy shall be forwarded you as soon as possible. Please collect votes for a title to it, which I have to choose. "Reformation Symphony," "Confession Symphony," "Symphony for a Church Festival," "Child's Symphony," or what you like; only write to me, and, in place of all these dull suggestions, give me a bright one; still I should like to hear the stupid ones that are brought to light by the occasion. Yesterday evening I was at a party at Goethe's, and played alone the whole evening: a concert piece, "Aufforderung," and "Polonaise" in C by Weber, three foreign pieces, Scotch sonatas. At ten o'clock came the end, but, of course, I stopped for the frivolities, dancing, singing, and so on, till twelve. I am living like a very pagan. The old man always goes to his room at nine, and when he has gone we dance

furiously, and as yet have never broken up before midnight.

To-morrow my portrait will be ready; it will be a large dark drawing in chalks, and a very good likeness, only it makes me look very bearish. " Goethe is so friendly and affectionate with me that I know not how to thank him or how to deserve his kindness. In the morning I have to play the piano to him for an hour, pieces from all the great composers arranged in the order of dates, and then explain to him how music has progressed in their hands; meanwhile he sits in a dark corner, like a Jupiter Tonans, and his old eyes flash fire. About Beethoven he was indifferent. But I said he must endure some, and played him the first movement of the symphony in C minor. It affected him very strangely. First he said, "That does not touch one at all, it only astonishes one." Then he murmured to himself, and said presently, "It is very great, it is wild; it seems as though the house were falling; what must it be with the whole orchestra!" And at dinner, in the middle of a conversation about something else, he began again on the same theme. You know already I dine with him every day, and at those times he asks me searching questions, and after dinner grows so gay and sympathetic that we generally sit together for an hour alone in the room, while he talks without a pause. It is a very especial joy when he shows me his engravings and talks critically about them, or pronounces judgment on Hernani or Lamartine's Elegies, or on theatrical matters, or on pretty girls. On several evenings he

has invited guests, which is very rare with him now, so that it is long since most of the people have seen him. Then I have to play a good deal, and he makes me compliments before the company, "stupendous" being his favourite expression. To-day he invited a bevy of Weimar beauties for my delight, for "I ought to live with young people." If I meet him in such company he says to me, "Dear heart, you must go to the ladies and behave prettily." I displayed my *savoir vivre* by asking yesterday if, perhaps, I did not come there too often? Then he growled rather to Ottilie, who put the question, and said, on the contrary, he wanted more talk with me, for I quite understood my business, and he had a great deal to learn from me. I felt twice my height when Ottilie repeated that to me, and when he said it again himself, and told me there was much in his spirit that I must light up for him. I said just, "Oh, yes," and thought to myself: "this is an honour never to be forgotten." More often it is the other way about!

FELIX.

TO HIS FAMILY.

ROME, *8th November*, 1830.

TO-DAY I must give you an account of my first eight days in Rome, how I have arranged my life here, what my prospects are for the winter, and how these divine places affected me at first; to describe all which is hard. I seem to myself to have changed since my arrival; before that I tried to repress my impatience to move forwards and push on fast with the journey, putting it down simply to my own natural hastiness, but here I recognise clearly that it was only the keen desire to reach this great centre of things that made me so. Now I have attained it, and my feeling has grown quiet and glad and earnest in a way I cannot describe, nor can I define what it is that produces this effect; the awful Colosseum and the brilliant Vatican alike contribute to it, so does the soft spring weather and the kindly people, my pleasant room and everything. Things somehow are different. I feel happy and well as I have not been for ages, and have such a pleasure in work and desire of it that I hope to accomplish far more here than ever I proposed. I have made some way already. If Heaven will only grant me an endurance of this good fortune I look forward to a splendidly fruitful winter.

Picture a little house two windows broad, number 5 in the Piazza di Spagna, that catches the sun all day, then the room on its first floor in which there stands a good Viennese piano, on the table lie portraits of Palestrina, Allegri, and so on, and the scores of their music, also a Latin psalm book out of which to compose *Non nobis*; this is my personal residence. It was too far off by the Capitol, and I had my fears of the coldness of the air, which gives no trouble here, when I look out over the square in the morning and everything stands out so clear cut on the blue sky in the sunshine. My host was formerly a captain in the French service; the maid has the most magnificent contralto voice I know. Above me there lives a Prussian officer, with whom I exchange courtesies; altogether, my surroundings are excellent. When I come into the room early in the morning and the sun is shining so brightly on my breakfast things—you see I am throwing myself away on poetry—an amazing cheerfulness takes possession of me, and then I think it is really late in the autumn, and who could make sure of warmth, bright skies or grapes and flowers at home? After breakfast my work goes forward, and I play, sing, and compose till about noon.

Then all the measureless delight of Rome lies as a free gift before me; I proceed with it very leisurely, and every day pick out afresh some great historic object; one day a ramble about the ruins of the ancient city, another day the Borghese Gallery or the Capitol, or else St. Peter's or the Vatican, so each day is one never to be forgotten, and this sort of

dallying leaves each impression firmer and stronger. Sometimes working in the morning, I should like not to leave off but to write steadily on, but I say to myself, "Now there is the Vatican to see," and once there I only leave it in turn with reluctance, so each occupation becomes a pure delight, and one pleasure is a foil to another. If Venice seemed like the gravestone of its own past, its ruinous, modern palaces and the enduring remembrance of a bygone supremacy giving it a disquieting, mournful impression, the past of Rome strikes one as history itself; its monuments ennoble, and make one at the same moment serious and joyful, for there is joy in feeling how human creations may survive a thousand years and yet possess their quickening restoring influence. Each day some new image of that past imprints itself on my mind, and then comes the twilight, and the day is at an end. Then I seek out my acquaintances and friends; we exchange news of what each has done, or, what is the same thing here, enjoyed, and these meetings are very pleasurable. The evenings I spend mostly at Bendemann's and Hübner's, who get together a number of German artists; every now and then I go to Schadow's as well. One valuable acquaintance I have made is that of the Abbé Santini, who has a very complete collection of old Italian music, and gladly lends or gives me anything I want. He is the embodiment of kindness. At night, however, he is obliged to have Ahlborn or myself to accompany him home, for to be alone in the streets at a late hour would bring an abbé into ill repute. For fellows like Ahlborn and myself to be

serving an ecclesiastic aged 60 in the capacity of duenna is piquant enough. Countess —— had given me a list of pieces of old music that she wished to have copies of if possible; Santini had all the originals, and I owe him my best thanks for giving me copies of them, so that I can go through them together and thus come to know them. I beg you will send the six cantatas of Sebastian Bach which Marx has had published by Simrock, or else some of the organ pieces, to serve as tokens of my gratitude. I should much prefer the cantatas; he has already the Magnificat, the Motets, and so forth.

He has adapted "Singet dem Herrn ein neues Lied," and is going to produce it at Naples; we owe him something for that. I am writing at length to Zelter about the papal choir which I have heard three times, twice at the Quirinal on the Monte Cavallo, and once at San Carlo. One person I delight in is Bunsen. We shall have a great deal of talking to do together; sometimes it even strikes me that this will be the starting-point of some of my future work; and I am sure that anything I can try at with a good conscience shall be done joyfully, and with all the power I have. It helps me beside to feel at home and read Goethe's Italian Journey for the first time, and I must confess it was a great joy to discover that he arrived in Rome precisely the same day that I did. Further, that he also went first to the Quirinal and heard a requiem there; he says too that at Florence and Bologna a sort of impatience took possession of him, and on arrival here he felt calm again, and, as he calls

it, well-knit together in mind; so I have experienced all he describes, a reflection which pleases me. But he writes at length about a great picture by Titian in the Vatican, thinking it impossible to see any meaning in it, and leads one to suppose that the figures are only arranged elegantly side by side. I flatter myself, however, that I have found a deep significance in this picture, and maintain that he is right who sees most in a Titian, for the man was simply divine. He, indeed, found no opportunity to display the whole breadth of his inspiration, as Raphael did here in the Vatican; yet one can never forget his three pictures at Venice, and this of the Vatican, which I first saw this morning, stands in line with them. If a child could enter the world with perceptions fully developed, things would everywhere break on him with the same joyful, vivid effect as the pictures here do on oneself. The school of Athens, the Disputa, and the St. Peter one feels to be the exact realisation of what the artist's mind conceived.

How delightful is the entrance past the luminous open arches when one sees the unbroken view into the place of St. Peter's, and over Rome to the blue Alban mountains, while above one are the figures from the Old Testament, and a thousand bright, little angels amid arabesques of fruits and garlanded flowers. It is thus one enters the gallery for the first time!

But, dear Hensel, all hail to you, for your copy of the Transfiguration is wonderful. It was not to-day that I first felt the delightful shudder which seizes one

on first looking at an eternal work of art, and feeling its significance or its peculiar impressiveness, not to-day, but before your picture. My first look at the original only gave me what I had already got through you, and it was only after studying it long and minutely that I discovered things which were new to me. On the other hand, the Madonna of Foligno struck me with all the glow of its loveliness. I had a happy morning among all those splendours. As yet I have not seen the statues, and keep a first impression of them for another day.

The *9th.*—So every morning brings me new expectations, and every day fulfills them. The sun has just been shining on my breakfast again, and now I am setting to work. At the first opportunity I will send you, my dear Fanny, the Viennese things, and what else is ready, and you, Rebecca, my sketch-book. But this does not satisfy me very well at present, and I want to see a number of sketches by the landscape painters here, and if it may be, get hold of a new manner. I thought of originating one for myself, but no! To-day I am for the Lateran and the ruins of ancient Rome. This evening I am going to a very friendly English family whose acquaintance I have made here. Please send me many letters of introduction. I want to know an endless number of people, especially Italians. So I go on my way gladly and think of you in every moment of enjoyment. Be happy and share with me in the pleasant days that seem to be opening up here. FELIX M. B.

TO HIS SISTERS.

ROME, *22nd November*, 1830.

DEAR SISTERS,—You know how much I hate giving good advice to people a thousand miles and fourteen days away, but for once I will do it. It is because I think you are making the same mistake that I did once. I never in my life knew our father write in such an irritable tone as since I have been in Rome, and I want to ask you if you couldn't find some household medicine to cure this a little? I mean just that sort of concession by which you might put the side of things that father likes to see more in the front than the other;—keep silent on topics which vex him, say "unpleasant" instead of "shameful," or "pretty good" instead of "delightful." It's sometimes a wonderful help, and I should like to whisper to you it might be useful just now. For, apart from the great affairs of politics, his ill-humour seems to me to come from much the same source as it did before, when I began to be a musician on my own account, and father's temper became very troubled so that he used to rail against Beethoven and fantastical people, often disturbing and setting me in revolt. And just at that time something fresh happened which put him out, and, if I remem-

ber right, made him really anxious; and so long as I stood up for Beethoven and exalted him above everybody the trouble only grew worse, and once, I believe, I was sent out of the room. But presently it struck me that it was possible to say a great many true things, and yet not precisely those which father could not endure to hear, and then things went on better and came quite right in the end. Perhaps you, too, have forgotten a little how needful it is to give way now and then. Father thinks himself older and more excitable than, thank God, he really is, and it is our part to make concessions to him, be the right ever so much on our side, just as he has so often yielded to us. So praise a little the things he likes, and don't find fault with the old-fashioned established things that are rooted in his heart. And only praise novelties when they have acquired some sort of acceptance in the world, for till then it can only be a question of taste. I should like to see you draw father prettily into your circle and amuse him; in short, try to smooth away the difficulties, and remember that, after all, travelled man of the world as I am, of course, I have never yet found a family that, taking account of all our weaknesses and vexations and faults, has been so happy as we have up till now.

Don't answer this, for your letter would not reach me for four weeks, and then something else would have happened. Finally, if it is stupid of me to write this, I don't intend to take a scolding from you; and if I am right, you had better follow my good advice.

The other day we young people went to Albano. We set out early in the brightest of weather; the road went beneath the great aqueduct with its dark-brown masses sharply defined against the clear sky, so to Fraseati, from there to the monastery of Grottaferrata, where there are beautiful frescoes by Domenichino, then to Marino which lies very picturesquely on a hillside, and so we came to Castel Gandolfo on the lake. All these landscapes repeat the first impression I had of Italy, not so much of something striking or startlingly beautiful, as one imagines them, but with a wonderful beneficent and calming effect. They are pictures in which the gentle outlines make a very charming whole full of fine points of shading and light. And here I must sing the praises of my monks who are always there to accentuate the picture and give it tone with all their various draperies, their quiet devotional carriage and their shadowlike look. From Castel Gandolfo to Albano there goes a charming shady alley of evergreen oaks sloping down to the lake, and along it goes a perpetual fluttering of all sorts of monks, who enliven the scene, or perhaps bring out its loneliness. By the town a pair of begging friars were marching along, then came a troop of young Jesuits, presently we spied a young and elegant ecclesiastic lying among the bushes with a book, and next it was a pair of monks in the forest frightening off the birds with their flintlocks, and then we arrived at a monastery encircled by a crowd of small chapels. Here all was quiet for a time, but there came out a stupid-looking, dirty Capuchin loaded with heavy bouquets of

flowers, which he proceeded to hang on the crucifixes all about, kneeling to each before adorning it. Going further, we met two aged prelates deep in an exciting conversation, and soon we heard the vesper bell sounding at Albano. Here on the highest point of the mountains there stands a convent of the Passionists. Here they are only allowed to speak during one hour of the day, and are bound to employ their thoughts perpetually with the story of the Passion.

It was a curious sight in Albano to meet among all the girls with pitchers on their heads and people selling flowers and vegetables, one of these coal-black silent monks, who was turning his steps back to Mont Cavo. They have taken all the beautiful region in possession, and add a strange melancholy ground-tone to all the brilliancy and freedom and the perpetual blitheness there is in Nature here. It is as though the people required a sort of counterpoise to all that. But it is no affair of mine, and indeed, I need no contrast myself to enjoy what one has here.

TO HIS FATHER.

ROME, *10th December*, 1830.

DEAR FATHER,—It is a year to-day since we kept your birthday at the Hensels; let me keep a sort of celebration of it now and relate you something from Rome, as then from London. To-morrow I hope to finish writing down my old overture to the "Lonely Island"[1] for a present, and when I date it "December 11th" it will seem as if I was going to lay it actually in your hands. You may say that you cannot read it, but I give you the best I can create, and though indeed one has to do one's best every day, still a birthday stands by itself; I wish only I could be with you. About my wishes for you let me be silent. You know it all and know how we all feel ourselves bound up with your happiness and contentment, and that I can wish you nothing which would not so return to us twofold. It is a festival to-day; I rejoice in thinking how gladsome everything must look with you; and, in telling you how pleasant my life is here. I have a sense that this also is to send you a felicitation. A time like this in which seriousness and pleasure unite does indeed strengthen and refresh one.

[1] "Overture to the Hebrides."

Every day when I enter my room I feel delighted afresh at the thought of not having to travel on to-morrow—that so much can be quietly postponed—that I am in Rome. Everything that my time of travel put into my head was soon driven out by something else, and my impressions chased each other through my mind, but here everything has time to expand calmly. Never, I think, was my work so much a pleasure; and to accomplish all the plans I have now, I must stick close to them the whole winter. To be sure, I must do without the great satisfaction of communicating what one has done to others who could appreciate and take part in it, but just that drives me to work again, because it all pleases me more than it could another, as long, that is, as I am in the thick of it.

. . . . . .

I wish you would lecture P. It makes me angry at heart to see men of no vocation take on themselves the office of judging men who have aims of their own, even the most limited, and to the best of my capacity I lately did a musical person here the service of making that clear. He began talking about Mozart, and as Bunsen and his sister admire Palestrina, he sought to ingratiate himself with them; among other things, by asking me what I thought of the good Mozart and his various offences. But I replied that for my part I would gladly throw my virtues overboard and take Mozart's sins in their place, at all events, it was not for me to measure his virtues. The people around us were a good deal amused. What a thing it is that such fellows should not hesi-

tate before the greatest names. Still, it is a consolation that it is the same with all the arts. The painters here are no better; it is terrible to see them at their Café Greco. I seldom go there, for I am rather afraid of them and the place they haunt. It is a small dark room about eight paces wide; on one side it is permitted to smoke tobacco, on the other not. They sit round on the benches with their brigand-hats and their big bloodhounds; their throats, chins, and faces are entirely covered with hair, and they pour out dense volumes of smoke and exchange incivilities with one another while the dogs are exchanging their insects. A necktie or a frock-coat would be a modern weakness; all the face that's left by the beard is concealed by their spectacles; they swill their coffee and discourse of Titian and Pordenone as though these persons were sitting there with beards and brigand-hats like themselves. Their business is to paint sickly madonnas, rickety saints and effeminate knights, things one longs to dash one's fist through. As for Titian's picture in the Vatican, which you ask about, these infernal critics have no respect for it. According to them it has neither subject nor conception, and it never occurs to one of them that a master who gave laborious days of love and reverence to a picture, may still have seen as far as they can through their glistening spectacles, and if all my life I never contrive to do anything else, I am resolved, at least, to be as rude as I can to people who have no respect for the great masters; that will be one good work accom-

plished. Then they stand before all the wonderful visions of which they have no true inkling, and pretend to criticise them." In this picture there are three zones or planes, whatever you please to call them, much as there are in the "Transfiguration." Below stand saints and martyrs, with figures expressing suffering and weariness; pain, despair almost, is stamped upon their features; one, clad in the richly-coloured robes of a bishop, gazes upward with a keen, bitter longing; he seems almost to weep, yet he cannot see the presence actually hovering above him. The spectator may see it, however—in the cloud above is seated the Madonna with the Child; her countenance is bright, and round her are angels carrying many crowns; the Child holds one of these, and seems about to crown the saints below, but the mother holds it back for a moment. The contrast between the sorrowful region below, where St. Sebastian gazes with a stern almost indifferent expression before him, and the radiant calm above where the crowns stand ready in the clouds, is indeed very noble. High again above the group of the Madonna hovers the Paraclete, with brilliant light radiating from his form; and this is the key-stone to the arch. It just occurs to me that Goethe, during his first stay in Rome, admired this picture and describes it, but I have not the book by me, and so cannot consult it to see how far he concurs with my description. He speaks of it at length. Then it was in the Quirinal, and was afterwards brought to the Vatican. Whether it was painted by commission, as these people say, or not, makes no difference; he has

put his own feeling and poetry in it, and therefore it is his own. Schadow, whom I am often glad to spend my time with, a truly modest artist with a clear, calm understanding of great work, lately said to me that Titian had never painted a meaningless or dull picture, and I believe he is right, for all the master's works speak of life and inspiration and the power of health; where these are is great art.

To-day I was in St. Peter's, where the ceremonies of the "Absolution" at the Pope's death have begun. They last till Tuesday, and then the Cardinals will enter the conclave. The edifice is beyond all conception. It seems to me like some great wonder of Nature, a forest, or a mountain of rock; one loses sight of the human contrivance. It seems to tax the sight to look up to the roof; it is like looking up to the sky. You start on a journey in the interior and soon find yourself tired of walking. The services are being said and sung in one part, and one only becomes aware of it on arriving there. The angels of the font are uncouth giants, the doves huge as eagles; one forgets all the relations of perspective, yet it is a grand sensation to stand beneath the dome and let the eye pierce the unbroken height above. At present a monstrous catafalque stands in the nave, shaped something like the drawing I send. The coffin is placed in the centre beneath the pillars, a tasteless arrangement, but with a weird effect. The two biers and their decorations are thickly studded with lights, an altar lamp hangs above the bier, and beneath the statues again are countless tapers. The whole

pile is a hundred feet high, and rears itself in front of you on going in. The guard of honour and the Swiss are formed about it in a square, at each angle of which is stationed a cardinal in deep mourning with his attendants, holding vast flaming torches; then begins the chant with the monotonous responses. This is the only occasion on which they sing in the centre of the church, and the effect is very wonderful.

It is very striking to stand among the choir, as I am allowed to do, and watch them all grouped round the colossal book they sing from. An enormous taper throws its light upon the page, and it is most interesting to see how they all press round in their vestments to read the music, Baini, with his monastic face, beating time with his hand, and at intervals coming in with his deep sonorous voice, and to observe all the play of the strongly-marked Italian faces. One passes from one spectacle to another in Rome, and so it is in St. Peter's; one takes a few steps and the whole scene is changed. I went to the farther end, and there it was a wonderful picture to look down between the twisted pillars of the high altar, which one knows to be equal in height to the Schloss at Berlin, to see across the floor of the dome the catafalque with its crowded lights, strangely diminished by the distance, and the throng of people about it like so many dwarfs.

If the music begins when one is at this distance, the notes only reach one after a long interval, then re-echo and obliterate each other so that one catches the strangest indefinable harmonies. Changing position again, so as to stand in face of the catafalque, one

sees, beyond the glow of the many lights and the flashing splendour, the great twilight of the dome filled with purple vapour; and that is the most indescribable thing of all. That is, precisely, Rome!

This letter has got too long. I will end it now, and it will arrive just at Christmas. A happy festival to you all! I am sending some presents too, which will get off to-morrow morning, and reach you for the silver wedding. We are having many great days together, and I cannot tell whether to think of you to-day and wish you all happiness, or to let myself travel with the letter and come to you for Christmas, and then mother will refuse to let me through into your study. Well, at least I send my thoughts. Farewell, with all good wishes. FELIX.

Your letter has just come with the news of Goethe's illness. I cannot describe what I feel about it. All the evening I seemed to hear his last words, "I will do my best to keep up till your return;" they blot out all other thoughts from my mind. If he is gone, Germany will have another aspect for all artists. I have never thought of our country but with delight and pride in the knowledge that it contained Goethe; all else that has grown up there seems so weak and ineffectual that one's heart is saddened. He is the last, and closes our fortunate era. The year ends heavily.

TO REBECCA DIRICHLET IN BERLIN.

NAPLES, 13*th April*, 1831.

DEAR REBECCA,—This is by way of a birthday letter. May it be a pleasant one; it comes late, but it means well, and as for the festival itself, I kept it this year in a very curious way, though a delightful one. Writing was out of the question. I had neither table nor ink; in fact, I was stuck fast in the Pontine Marshes. May there be a happy year before you, and may it bring about our meeting; if you thought of me on the day, our thoughts must have met somewhere on the Brenner, or perhaps in Innsbruck, for all mine travelled towards you. If you have not noticed the date of this, you will see from its tone that I am at Naples. I can't get back to a reasonable state of mind just yet; things round one are too seductive, and compel one to do nothing and think of nothing—the example set by the whole population is irresistible; and though I intend to alter all that, it must be so during these first days. So I stand on my balcony for hours, and stare at Vesuvius and the bay.

But I shall have to fall back on my old strain of description, or with all this crowding in on me, I shall get confused, and you won't be able to follow me

A mass of new experiences is again storming my mind, but I have only to send you my diary for you to understand. And so I must begin with the confession that leaving Rome went very hard. Life there was so quiet and yet so full. I had made so many delightful acquaintances, and had grown so used to it, that the last days, with their disquietude and running up and down, were doubly unwelcome.

The last evening I went to see Vernet, to say goodbye and thank him for the portrait which was quite finished. Then we had some music, chattered about politics and played chess. Late in the evening I went down the Monte Pincio to my house, threw my things together, and next morning started off with my companions.

I sat in the post-chaise looking out at the country, and could dream my full. When we had taken up our quarters in the evening we all strolled about. The two days were more like a ramble than a journey. The country from Rome to Naples is the richest I know, and the fashion in which one travels very pleasant. One flies over the level plains; for a little drink money the postilions will go at a furious gallop, which is quite what is wanted on the marshes, and if one wants to see the country, it is only necessary to refuse the drink money, and the pace falls off at once. From Albano through Ariccia, and Gengano to Velletri the road goes all the way between hills that are deeply shaded with all sorts of trees, up-hill and down-hill, through long avenues of elms, past monasteries and roadside images of the virgin. On the one hand,

there is still the Campagna with its wild brilliant vegetation, beyond lies the sea glistening in the sun, and above the brightest of skies, for since Sunday the weather has been glorious. So we came into Velletri, our first sleeping-place; there we found it was a great feast-day of the Church. Charming women with pretty, piquant faces were going in groups up and down the alleys, men with mantles on their shoulders stood grouped about the streets, the churches were hung with garlands of fresh leaves, and as we went by one of them we heard a serpent and several fiddles being played inside. A piece of fireworks had been prepared on the piazza. Then there was a clear, quiet sunset, and over the Pontine Marshes, now glowing with many tints, we could see our route of to-morrow stretching to the lonely points of rock that stand up on the horizon. After supper it occurred to me to go out again, and I discovered a sort of illumination; the streets were all alive, and when at last coming near the church I turned the corner, all of a sudden I saw the whole street lighted up on both sides with flaming torches, and a stream of people going along the middle of it closely packed together and quite delighted to see each other so clearly at night-time. I cannot describe how pleasant it was. The press was at its height in front of the church. I made my way inside, and found the little building full of people kneeling, all adoring the host exposed on the altar; no one said a word, and there was no music; the silence, the church flaming with light, the crowds of white-hooded women on their knees, all made an admirable picture.

When I got outside, an Italian boy, who was wonderfully pretty and clever as well, explained everything to me, and added that the festival would have been much finer if the disturbances had not broken out; they had stopped the horse races and the bonfires, and so it was a misfortune that the Austrians had not arrived sooner. The next morning at six, we continued our journey across the Pontine Marshes. It is a sort of mountain road, which goes through an avenue lying straight as a thread on the level; on one side there runs a chain of hills, on the other the marshes spread away without limit. They are covered with innumerable flowers, and a sweet odour pervades them; after a time, however, it is depressing, and I could feel the heaviness of the air in spite of the happy weather. Along the high road goes a canal which Pius VI. had made for the drainage, and a herd of buffaloes lay wallowing in this, with only their heads out of the water, and enjoyed themselves immensely. The absolute straightness of the road has a curious effect; at the first halting-place one sees the mountains closing the vista of the lines of trees on either side, and just the same at the second and third places, only taller as they get nearer. Terracina, which lies immediately at the end of this road, one does not see till one comes straight on it. Then the road turns suddenly leftwards on a rocky shoulder, and discloses a view of the whole sea lying before you; on the hills sloping down from the walls are citron groves and palm trees, and all sorts of growths of the South. The towers rise above the branches, below is the harbour standing

out into the water. The sea is always the most beautiful thing in the world to me; perhaps I love it even better than the sky. In all Naples it is the sea that gives me most pleasure; everything seems delightful if I can only see the broad expanse of waters before me. At Terracina is the real beginning of the South. It is another country, and every plant, every bit of bush makes one aware of it. Two great masses of mountain specially pleased me, not a tree or a shadow was to be seen on them, but they were covered with little blossoms like gold dust, so that they looked all yellow and the smell was almost overpowering. There is great lack of tall trees and grass. Fondi and Itri are perched up like robbers' nests on the rocks, to which the houses seem to cling desperately; great mediæval towers stand between them; on the height were numbers of sentinels and pickets, but we got through without adventure. That evening we stopped at Mola di Gaeta, where there is the famous balcony, from which one looks over the garden of citron and orange to the purple sea, with Vesuvius and its islands in the far distance. That was the eleventh of April; all day I had been keeping the festival privately, and in the evening I was able to confide to the company that it was your birthday, and your health was drunk with acclamation, indeed an old English gentleman who was there joined in and wished me "a happy return to my sister." I emptied my glass and thought of you. Do not be changed when we meet again.

TO HIS FAMILY.

ROME, *4th April*, 1831.

THE first of the offices was on Palm Sunday. The crush was so great that I could not make my way into the interior to my accustomed seat on the so-called bench of the prelates, but had to remain standing among the guard of honour. I could see the ceremony well enough, but could not follow the music completely, for they pronounced the words indistinctly, and I had no book. So, this first day, all the different antiphones, the chanting of the gospels and psalms, and the reading in recitative, all which exist here in their primitive form, gave me the strangest, most confusing impression; I had no definite idea by what rule the various cadences were adjusted. My efforts to get a grasp of these rules were, however, gradually successful, and at the last I could have taken a part in the singing. They helped me also to escape the ennui which everybody complains of during the endless psalms which come before the Miserere; I could catch the differences in the monotony, and by writing down any cadence I was sure of, at last, as I deserved, secured eight psalm chants, noted down the antiphones and so forth, and thus

kept myself throughout busy and intent. But as I said, the first Sunday I could not find my way in the music, and only know that the choir sang "Hosanna in exelsis" and intoned several hymns while the plaited palms were being given to the Pope and divided by him among the cardinals. They are long staves adorned with fretted points, crosses and crowns, but all made of dried palm leaves, which make them look as though they were gold. The cardinals who are seated in a square in the inner chapel with their abbés at their feet, advance singly and receive each a palm staff, with which they retire; then come the bishops, monks, abbots, all the remaining ecclesiastics, then the choirmen, the cavaliers of honour and every-one else. They all receive olive branches bound with palm leaves; this makes a long procession, and meanwhile the choir continues to sing. The abbés hold the tall palms of their cardinals, looking like so many sentinels' lances, and then lay them in front on the ground; just then the pomp of colour in the chapel was beyond what I ever saw in any other ceremonial. There are the cardinals in vestments worked in gold with red caps, before them the violet-robed abbés holding the golden palms, further off the brilliant dresses of the Pope's attendants, then the Greek priests and the patriarchs in all their splendour, the Capuchins with their white beards and all the other monks; on another side one sees the Swiss guards with their uniforms as gay as the plumage of paro-quets; all have olive branches in their hands, and the music goes on perpetually. One scarcely took in what

they were singing, but only felt the melody of it; then the Pope has his throne brought to him, that is, the chair on which he is carried in state in all processions, and on which I saw Pius VIII. enthroned the day of my arrival in Rome; the cardinals, two and two, bearing palms, commence the procession; the sweeping doors of the chapel are thrown back, and the train proceeds slowly out.

The chant, which till now has seemed to fill the atmosphere about one, now grows fainter and fainter, for the choristers retire in the procession, and at last one is just aware of a faint murmur reaching the chapel from without. Then a choir stationed within commences a chant very loud, the other sends back the response from a great distance, and this continues for a time, till, as the procession draws nearer again, the two choirs unite. Here, too, it does not matter so much how and what they sing; the effect is splendid, and though, it is true, that the chants are very uniform, indeed formless, in simple unison without real construction and sung *fortissimo* throughout, still nobody could deny their power. The procession is followed by the recitation of the Gospel with the most peculiar intonation, then comes the mass. What charmed me in this was the creed. Now for the first time the priest stands immediately before the altar and intones Seb. Bach's Creed in his hoarse, aged voice; as he concludes, all the ecclesiastics rise, the cardinals leave their seats, and advancing to the centre of the chapel, form a circle, and altogether repeat aloud the continuation "patrem omnipotentem," and so on At

once the choir strikes in and sings the same words. When I first heard my well-known

"Cre-do in un-um De-um,"

and all the monastic voices round me took up the words with a sort of eager resonance, the result was fairly startling; it is still always my special moment. After the service Santini presented me with his olive branch, and I walked about with it in my hand all day, for the weather was charming. The Stabat Mater, which they placed after the creeds, impressed me little, the singing was uncertain, sometimes false, and they cut it short; our academy sings it better beyond comparison.

TO PROFESSOR ZELTER OF BERLIN.

ROME, *16th June*, 1831.

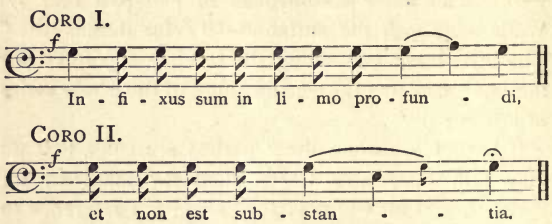
MY DEAR PROFESSOR,—I have been wanting to write to you for a long time to give you an account of the music of Holy Week, but my journey to Naples came between, and then, as I wandered here and there on the mountains or gave myself up to looking at the sea, there was no reasonable time for writing at all. That was the cause of my delay, which I must beg you to excuse. Since Holy Week I have heard nothing that impressed me. In Naples it was the most ordinary stuff; so I have nothing to write to you of the last few months but of that Holy Week alone, and of that I think I have forgotten nothing, nor ever shall. I have already written something to my parents of the effect it produced on me as a whole, and they will have told you of it. It was well that I set myself to listen to it all quite quietly and critically, and also well that, in spite of this, even while awaiting the commencement of the service, a sense of solemnity and reverence came over me. Such a mood, I believe, is essential if one is really to enter into anything new, and, indeed, I lost nothing of the effect of the whole, though I

forced myself to attend to all the individual parts as well. The office commenced at half-past four on Wednesday with the antiphon—"Zelus domus tuae." The little book containing the services appointed for the week explains the true meaning of the whole series of offices :—

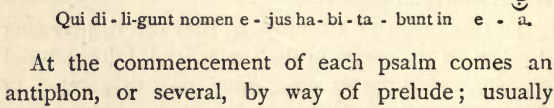
"At that evensong three psalms are sung, that we may remember how Christ died for maidens, for matrons, and for widows; they also have reference to the three divisions of law, the natural law, the written law, and the law of the Gospel. The 'Domine labia mea' and the 'Deus in adjutorium' are not sung, since the wicked have robbed us of our one Head and Source. The fifteen candles symbolise the twelve apostles and the three Maries," and so forth. The book contains great treasures of this kind, and I will bring it back with me. The psalms are sung fortissimo by all the male voices divided into two choirs, each verse being divided into two parts, as question and answer, or say simply *a* and *b*, so that one choir sings *a*, and the other responds with *b*. The whole sentence except the last word, is sung very fast on one note, and at the last word there comes a brief inflexion, which differs in each verse.

To this chant or "tonus," as they call it, they sing through all the verses of the psalm, and I have noted down seven different ones, from one to another of which they changed during the three days. You cannot imagine how wearisome and monotonous this comes to sound, how coarse and mechanical is their way of getting through with it.

For example, the first "tonus" they sang was :—



And in that way the whole psalm with the forty-two verses continues, one half verse always ending on G A G, the other on G E G. They sing without variety of expression, and it sounds as if a number of people were earnestly and fiercely disputing, and each side doggedly repeating the same reply over and over again. In the last verse of each psalm they sing the closing words more slowly, and with greater emphasis, and, instead of the inflexion, end with a sustained chord of three notes sung piano, for example, in the first :—



At the commencement of each psalm comes an antiphon, or several, by way of prelude; usually these in "canto fermo" are sung by two altos very coarsely and harshly, so, too, is the first half verse of the psalm itself, and at the second the system of responses by the male choirs comes into play. I am

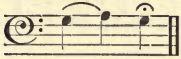
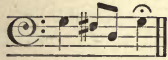
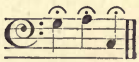
keeping by me the separate antiphons, etc., which I have noted down, so as to show them to you, and let you see them in their connection with the book. On the Wednesday evening the first psalm sung was the 68th, and then the 69th and 70th. The dividing of the verses and their partition between the two choirs is, by the way, one of the arrangements that Bunsen has made for the Protestant church here, and in the same way he has every chorale preluded by an antiphon. The latter are composed by Giorgio, a native musician; they are written in the style of the "canto fermo," and are commenced by a few voices, the chorale with the full choir coming in later, *e.g.*, "Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott." In the Quirinal the 70th psalm is followed by a "Pater Noster sub silentio," that is to say, all assisting at the office stand up, and a short interval of silence takes place. Then the first "Lamentation of Jeremiah" is commenced very softly and quietly in G major. It is a beautiful and solemn composition of Palestrina; following on that clamour of psalms, itself without bass parts, and including only high solo voices and tenor, with the tenderest of swells and falls almost dropping into silence and always slowly drawing out its harmony from one scale and chord to another, one can, indeed, only call it heavenly.

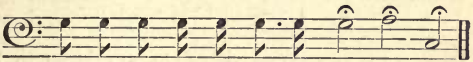
It is a misfortune, to be sure, that the passages which they sing with the most appealing devotion, and which it is also clear the composer himself dwelt on most affectionately, are of necessity the mere headings of the chapters or verses—Aleph, Beth,

Gimel, etc., and that the beautiful opening which one would think the very echo of heaven, falls on the words, "Incipit Lamentatio Jeremiae Prophetae Lectio I." This is bound to stir up some hostile feeling in a Protestant, and would make almost an insuperable objection to introducing these compositions into our churches; when some one sings the words, "first chapter," one cannot feel reverential however exquisite the music may be. My little volume says, indeed, "Having sung with deep anguish the prophecy of the crucifixion, we yet sing very mournfully 'Aleph,' and other such words, which are the letters of the Hebrew alphabet, since they are customarily received in every chant in place of sorrowful exclamations. Each letter contains in itself the sentiment of the following verse as though it were its argument and epitome." But that does not mend matters. After the "Lamentatio" they sang the 71st, 72nd, and 73rd psalms, in the same manner as the preceding, with antiphons. The latter were divided among the different voices quite arbitrarily, so that, in one instance, the sopranos begin, "In Monte Oliveti," then the basses come in forte, "Oravit ad Patrem; Pater," etc. Then follow extracts from the writings of St. Augustine on the Psalms. The peculiar manner in which these are sung impressed me indescribably on Palm Sunday, when I first heard them without knowing what they were.

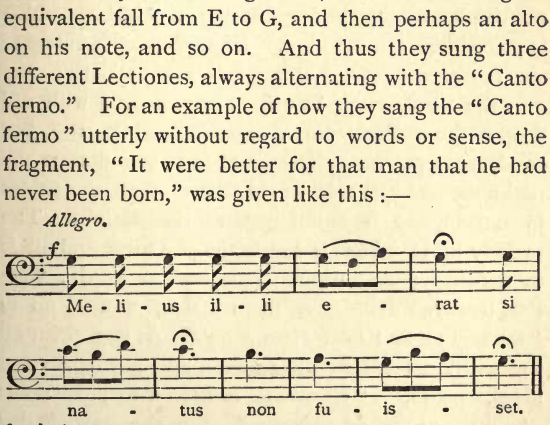
A single voice takes up the chant in recitative on one note, not, however, as in the psalms, but slowly, and with emphasis, and giving the note its full value.

For the punctuations, comma, query, and full stop, there are different musical intonations. Possibly these are known to you already; to me they were new, and seemed quite wonderful. The first piece, for example, was begun by a fine bass voice in G, then coming to a comma he sings:—

On the last word  at a question  At a full stop, however, 

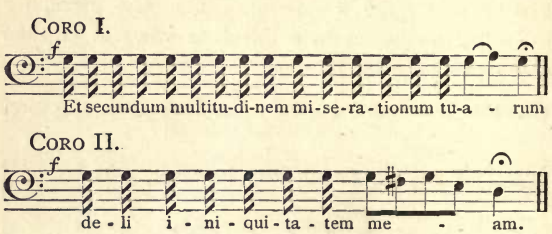
as *e.g.*, 

How singular the fall from A to C sounds is more than I can describe, especially when after the bass comes a soprano starting on D, and then making an equivalent fall from E to G, and then perhaps an alto on his note, and so on. And thus they sung three different Lectiones, always alternating with the "Canto fermo." For an example of how they sang the "Canto fermo" utterly without regard to words or sense, the fragment, "It were better for that man that he had never been born," was given like this:—



fortissimo, without any variety of tone.

Then came psalms 74, 75, and 76. Then again three Lectiones. Then the Miserere, but in the same style as the preceding psalms—thus :—



You must pound your ears in a mortar to beat it! Then come psalms 8, 62, and 66, then the "Canticun Moysi" in a key of its own, and psalms 148, 149, and 150. Then follow more antiphons, and meanwhile all the candles on the altar are extinguished but one which is placed beneath the altar. High above the entrance six tapers are still burning, all else is dark; and now the whole choir in unison commences with full power the "Canticum Zachariae" while the last candles are put out. The great forte sounding in the darkness, and the solemn resonance of all the voices in unison, are beautiful beyond description. The melody in D minor is lovely too. At the end all is in darkness; an antiphon falls on the words: "He that betrayed Him gave them a sign," and so on to "take Him and lead Him away." At this point all the assistants fall on their knees, and a single voice sings, piano, "Christus factus est pro nobis bediens usque ad mortem." On the second day

they add the words, "mortem autem crucis," and on Good Friday, "Propter quod et Deus exaltavit illum et dedit illi Nomen quod est super omne Nomen." Again there is a pause, while everyone repeats the Pater Noster to himself; there is a death-like stillness in the chapel, and now the Miserere rises, at first soft-toned and then caught up by both choirs. It was this commencement with its first penetrating notes that made the deepest impression of all on me. For an hour and a half one had listened to unison singing without variety; and now after the silence comes this beautifully arranged harmony. The effect is splendid, and the hearer feels the power of music in his heart of hearts. It is this piece which is most peculiarly striking. They reserve the best voices for the "Miserere," and render it with very great variation, swelling and falling from the lightest piano to the whole power of the voices. It is no wonder that everyone is captivated by it.

It is important, too, that they never forget their principle of contrast, and have each alternative verse sung by all the male voices in unison, forte, and without expression. Then at the commencement of the next comes the beautiful soft and full harmony of the part singing, always lasting a very short time, and then interrupted again by the chorus of male voices. During the monotone verse one has the presentiment of this lovely alternation; then it breaks forth again and again too briefly, and before one is well aware of it, it is gone.

For example, on the first day when they had Baini's

Miserere, the keynote was B minor, and they sang "Miserere mei Deus" down to the "Misericordiam tuam" in unison, the solo voices and the two choirs joining in with all their vocal resources; then came in the basses "tutti forte" in F sharp, and on this single note gave as recitative the "et secundum multitudinem" down to "iniquitatem meam." Immediately after that the soft harmony in B minor returns, and so it goes to the last verse, which is always sung with all the power possible. Another brief interval of mental prayer follows, and then all the cardinals scrape their feet loudly on the floor, with which the ceremony closes. My little volume says, "The noise signifies how the Jews took our Lord captive with great tumult." That may be so, but it sounds precisely like the drumming of feet in the pit when the play is delayed or fails to win favour. The single taper is now brought from beneath the altar, and by its light the congregation silently departs. I must say it is a marvellous effect when one steps from the chapel into the ante-chapel where a noble chandelier is burning, and the cardinals with their attendant priests pass between ranks of the Swiss guard through the blazing Quirinal. The Miserere given the first day was by Baini, and, like all his compositions, without a touch of life or power.

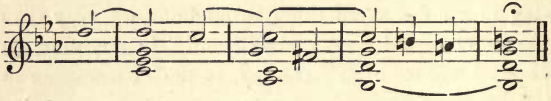
However, it had good harmony, and the quality of music which always makes an impression. On the second day they gave some pieces of Allegri's Miserere, the other days pieces from Bai, and on Good Friday the whole was Bai's.

As Allegri has only composed a single verse, to which all the verses are sung, I have really heard the whole of the three compositions. However, they sing much the same thing throughout, for they give the same variations, "embellimenti," in any case, an especial one for each harmony, so the composition in itself is not very apparent.

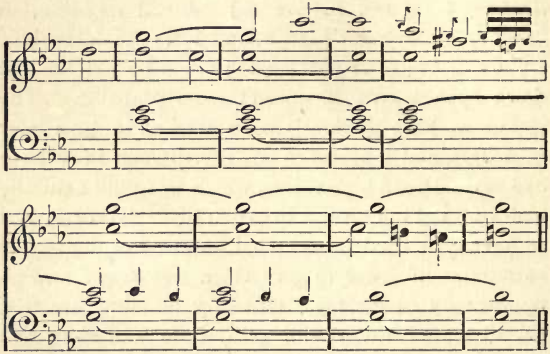
How these "embellimenti" found their way in, they decline to say, maintaining that they are traditional. I do not believe it; musical tradition, in general, is a dubious matter, and I do not know how a piece of five-voice part-singing could be well handed down by hearsay; it doesn't seem probable. The variations have obviously been worked in by a later composer, and it seems to me the director must have had several good high voices, which he would naturally wish to bring out on the occasion of Holy Week, and so have composed these embellishments of the simple harmonies in order to give them free scope and an opportunity of display. Old they certainly are not, but they are written with great taste and skill, and produce an admirable effect.

There is one in particular which often recurs and is the most impressive of all, so much so that when it commences a slight movement passes through the auditory, whatever sort of people compose it; and in conversation whenever this style of music is spoken of, and you hear people talk of how the voices ring out as though less human than angelic, or of a harmony that one can hear but once, it is always this particular variation that is meant. Thus in the Miserere,

whether Bai's or Allegri's (the same "embellimento" occur in either), the original is :—



instead of which they sing :—



The way in which the soprano takes that high C quite clearly and softly, making it resound at length, and then dropping slowly down, while the alto all the time maintains his own C, so that at first I was deceived, and fancied the high C had been sustained ; that and all the gradual development of the harmony from itself is truly glorious. The other variations are worked into the original in the same way, but this one is by far the most beautiful.

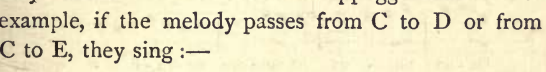
I did not observe any other peculiarities of style. Certainly what I once read of an acoustic arrangement to multiply the sound is a mere fable, and so is the assertion that they sing everything by sheer tradition, and without direction, taking the time from one another, for beyond doubt, I saw the shadow of Baini's long arm moving up and down, and every now and then he struck very audibly on the woodwork of his stall.

There is, indeed, a good deal of uncertainty on various points, spread about by the singers themselves as well as by other people. They never say beforehand what Miserere will be sung; it is decided at the very moment, etc. Besides this, the way in which they sing it depends on the condition of the voices. The first day it was B minor, the second and third E minor, but on each occasion they ended up nearly in B flat minor. The leading soprano, Mariano, had come expressly from the mountains to Rome to join the choir, and to him I owe my hearing the "embellimenti" with their high notes.

But however much they brace themselves up for the great effort, the neglect and the bad habits of the rest of the year still take their revenge, and appalling discords sometimes break out. I must tell you, also, how on the Thursday I climbed upon a ladder that was leaning against the wall just as the Miserere commenced, and so, getting up close to the roof, had the music and the priests and all the auditory far beneath me in the darkness. Sitting up there alone, with none of those wearisome strangers round one,

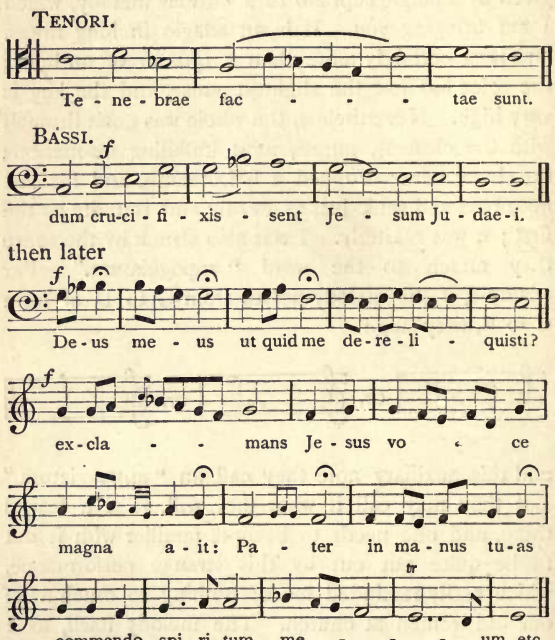
I was more impressed than ever. And now to continue! You will have enough Miserere on this page and a half, and some particular points I can tell you when I get back or let you see my notes. At half-past ten on Thursday there was High Mass. They sang a composition for eight voices by Fazzini, which had just nothing remarkable in it. I am keeping by me several "cante fermi" and antiphons which I wrote down at the time, and the little book contains the order of the office and explanations of its meaning. At the "Gloria in excelsis" all the bells in Rome are sounded, and after that are silent till Good Friday is over. The hours are announced from the churches by the striking together of pieces of wood. It was very beautiful that the words of the "Gloria," which were the signal for all the wild uproar, should be chanted from the altar by the aged Cardinal Pacca in a weak quavering voice, which ceased and was succeeded by the crash of the choir and all the bells of Rome. After the "Credo," they put the "Fratres ego enim" of Palestrina, but sang it with no sort of attention and very coarsely. I have already sent a description to my father and mother of the washing of the pilgrim's feet, which comes next, and the procession, in which the choir also walks, with Baini beating time out of a great book which is carried before him, and signalling now to one, now to another of the singers, who walk bent over their notes, halting at times, and then moving on again, and in the procession goes the Holy Father himself, carried on his throne of state. In the evening the Psalms, Lamenta-

tions, Lections, and Miserere were as on the previous day, with only slight differences. One Lection was given by a single soprano to a curious melody, which I am bringing you. It is an adagio in long notes, and lasts certainly more than a quarter of an hour; the voice has not the slightest pause, and the key is very high. Nevertheless, the whole was gone through with the clearest, purest, most unfailing intonation; the singer never dropped a hairbreadth, and his last note rose and sank just as evenly and roundly as the first; it was masterly. I was also struck by the sense they attach to the word "appoggiatura." For example, if the melody passes from C to D or from C to E, they sing :—



and this auxiliary note they call an "appoggiatura." But they may call it what they will, it is a fearful thing, and one needs to become familiar with it not to be quite put out by this strange performance, which really reminded me of nothing so much as of our old women at church. The melody itself, as I said before, was a different matter. However, I saw beforehand from my book that the "Tenebrae" would form part of the service, and thinking it would interest you to know how it was sung in the papal chapel, I remained on the watch with my pencil sharpened till it came, and now set down for you the leading passages. (Again they sang it quite fast, forte all the

way through without the least exception.) The commencement was :—



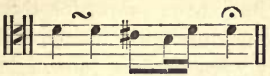
I cannot help it. It drives me beside myself to hear the holiest and loveliest of words sung in such a casual, humdrum style. They say it is plain song; it is Gregorian,—that makes no difference. If, indeed, in those times men had no deeper feelings or no finer resources, still we are in no such case, and truly there

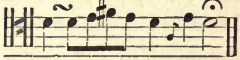
is, in the words of the Bible, no motive at all for this monotonous formula. Everything there is fresh and true, and the expression always as good and natural as it can be; why, then, should it be made to sound so formal? And really, there is nothing in such a style of music. How can one give the name of church-music to that "Pater" with the little flourish, the "Meum" with a quaver, the "ut quid me?" To be sure, there is no false expression in it, for there is no expression at all; but is that not just the utter desecration of the words? A hundred times during the ceremony I felt furious; and when people came to me quite in ecstasy about the beauty of it all, it seemed to me like a bad joke, and yet they were quite in earnest!

At early Mass on Good Friday the chapel was stripped of all ornament, the altar bare, the pope and cardinals in mourning. The "Passio secundum Johannem," a composition by Vittoria, was now sung. But only the words of the chorus of the people are really his; the rest was arranged in a way which I will describe later. From time to time I felt keenly how petty and constrained it was. I became deeply irritated, and indeed the entire work quite failed to please me. Really, there are only two methods possible; either the Passion must be calmly laid before us as a narrative by the priest, as in the record of St. John, and in that case there is no need of any choir to strike in, "Crucifige eum," or of an alto to represent Pilate. Or else, the Passion itself must be made present to me, so that I may feel myself a witness of

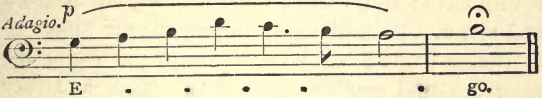
it all. The Pilate must sing as he may have spoken, the choir must shriek "Crucifige," and that in no ecclesiastical accents. But then, in its inward truth and in virtue of the story it would make present to us, that music would be truly religious music. Then I should need no "associations" with the music, for the music would be no longer an "instrument to raise the mind to devotion," as these people conceive it, but it would be a language that spoke to me, and the meaning be expressed only by the words themselves, embodied only in them. Thus it is with Sebastian Bach's Passion music; but even this, as they sing it here, is only a sort of compromise, neither simple narration nor great dramatic, passionate truth. The choir sings "Barabbam" in just the same devotional accents as "Et in terra pax." Pilate is made to speak in the same tone as the evangelist. The words of Jesus are always commenced piano, to give them a sort of distinction, while the choir is strenuously shouting its ecclesiastical phrases. One really fails to see what it is all about. But pardon my comments, and I will go on at once with my description.

The evangelist is a tenor, and the style of recitation is the same as in the Lections, with special cadences for comma, query, and full stop. The evangelist recites on D, and at a full stop changes thus :—

At a comma  and at the end

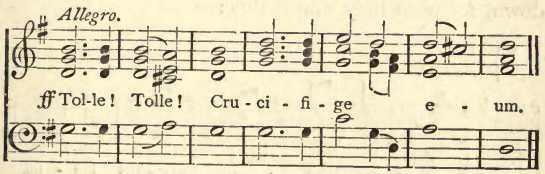
when another person comes in 

Christ is represented by a bass, and always begins :—



I could not get hold of the scheme, but I have noted down several passages, which I can show you, among others the words from the Cross. All the other speakers, Pilate, Peter, the maid, and the high priest, are now represented by the alto in G.

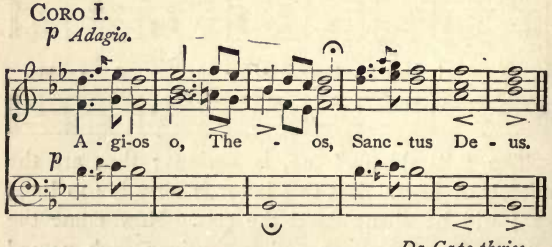
The words of the People are sung by the choir above, all the rest from the altar. I must set down for you the "Crucifige" as I noted it, for the sake of its strangeness.



The "Barabbam," too, is curious; they are the mildest of Jews. But this letter is already too long, so I will be silent about the rest. Now come the prayers for all nations and institutions, each named

individually. But at the prayer for the Jews no one kneels as is done during the others, and no amen is said; they pray "pro perfidis Judaeis," and the little book has its explanation for this too. Then comes the adoration of the Cross. A small crucifix is placed in the middle of the chapel, and all the assistants approach it with naked feet, that is, without shoes, fall before it and kiss it. Meanwhile the Improperia are sung.

After a single hearing this seems to me one of the most beautiful compositions of Palestrina, and they sing it with especial appreciation. The treatment of this piece by the choir brings out a marvellous tenderness and great precision; they succeed in placing every minute detail in its true light and its true relief, without the least over-emphasis; each chord melts quite softly into the next. And the ceremony is truly solemn and worthy of the occasion. The deepest silence reigns in the chapel, and the ever returning Greek "Sanctus" is very beautifully sung, also with the same softness and the same expression. They would be surprised, however, to see it written down, for what they sing is this :—



Points like the commencement of this, where all the voices unite in one grace-note, occur very often, and one becomes accustomed to them. The whole, however, is really noble. I wish you could hear the tenor of the first choir take the high A on Theos. The way in which they bring out the tone is so penetrating and yet so gentle, that the effect is most touching. This passage they repeated till all in the chapel had knelt before the crucifix, and as it happened that there was no great crowd, I unluckily did not hear it so often as I would have wished. But I can well understand why the Improperia made the greatest impression on Goethe; it is really the most complete of rituals, music and ceremonial meeting there in their fullest measure. There follows now a procession of the host which on the evening before had been placed in another chapel of the Quirinal and adored there by the light of many hundred tapers. After that the office for the morning came to an end about half-past one with a hymn in plain song. At half-past four the first "nocturnum," commenced with psalms, lections, etc., and I took notes of several things. I heard Baini's Miserere, and about seven we took our way behind the cardinals through the lighted vestibule homewards. And thus it all came to an end. I wished to give you an exact description of the Holy Week, dear professor, for to me those were beautiful days, and every hour brought something I had long waited for, and made it mine. I was especially pleased that in spite of the strain and all the comments from this side or that, praising or

blaming, the whole made just as fresh and living an impression on me as though I had come independently and without prepossession, and I saw it once more established that whatever is perfect, even though it be in the sphere most distant from one's own, still has the power of perfection. And so may you read this long letter with half the joy it has given me to recall my Holy Week in Rome!

Your faithful

FELIX MENDELSSOHN BARTHOLDY.

FROM A LETTER TO HIS FAMILY.

ISOLA BELLA, 14*th July*, 1831.

—— PEOPLE have tried to persuade me that my imagination had exaggerated the vastness of the Swiss mountains, the unearthly forms of which hover among the recollections of my childhood, and that a snow mountain was not so imposing as I fancied. I was almost afraid to find myself disillusioned, but when I reached the Lake of Como, and saw the outposts of the Alps covered with cloud, with brilliant white snow and precipitous black peaks showing here and there, and their steep descent to the water, the trees and villages at their feet, then the mossy slopes and the cold barren rocks above furrowed with snowy clefts, the old feeling came back as at first, and I saw my memory had exaggerated nothing of it." I have just come back from visiting the gardens of the castle in a downpour of rain. I wanted to have it like Albano,[1] and sent for a barber to bleed me; but he did not understand, and shaved me instead, which no doubt was a very excusable mistake. Boats are arriving at the island from all sides, as there is a

[1] In Richter's Titan.

great festival, which is to be honoured by musicians and singers from Milan. The gardiner asked me if I knew what a wind instrument was. I assured him with a good conscience that I did, and then he said I must imagine thirty of them together with fiddles and bass viols as well, but indeed, he went on, I couldn't imagine it, one must hear a thing like that before one could believe it. It was sound that seemed to descend from heaven, and all brought about by "Philharmonics." What he understood by this I cannot tell, but it had made more impression on him than the best orchestra would make on many musical critics. . . .

Another very pleasant acquaintance I made at Milan was that of Herr Mozart, who is an official there, but a musician at heart. He must have a great resemblance to his father, especially in character, for the things, he says, continually recall to one's mind the naïveté and frankness of his father's letters, and one's heart goes out to him at once. I very much admire his jealousy for his father's reputation, as though he was now commencing his career. One evening at the Ertmann's, after we had played a great deal of Beethoven, the baroness whispered to me that it was time to have something by Mozart, otherwise the son would be unhappy, and when I had played the overture to Don Juan, he thawed completely, and begged to hear "his father's Zauberflöte." At this last he was as pleased as a child; one could not but like him. He gave me letters to his friends about Como. So I have caught a glimpse

of Italian provincial life, and have found much entertainment with the doctor, the apothecary, the magistrate, and other of the inhabitants. There were lively discussions about Sand, and some admired him greatly. It seemed curious to me, for the story is somewhat old, and people have almost left off disputing about it. They talked also of Shakespere's plays, which are now translated into Italian. The doctor affirmed that the tragedies were good, but there were certain tales of magic among them, and these were very childish. One especially, "The Midsummer Night Dream." This introduced the antiquated subject of a rehearsal for the stage, and the whole of it was full of anachronisms and puerile ideas. All the company agreed it was very inane. I should do better not to read it! I was mournfully silent, and attempted no defence.[1]

[1] Mendelssohn's Overture to "A Midsummer Night Dream" is dated 1826.

TO HIS FAMILY.

MILAN, 14*th July*, 1831.

. . . . . .

IN the evenings I was always in society, owing to a mad idea of mine, which, like some others, succeeded admirably. I believe I have discovered this sort of eccentricity, and must take out a patent for it, for I have always made the most charming acquaintances, without letters, introductions, or anything of the sort. On arriving I chanced to ask the names of the officers commanding in the garrison, and among those of various generals occurred General Ertmann's. This recalled to me Beethoven's sonata in A major and its dedication. And as I had heard from everybody the most charming accounts of Frau Ertmann, who is said to have fascinated Beethoven, and to be an exquisite pianist, I attired myself in a frock-coat at the proper hour for visiting, inquired my way to the palace, and, composing a fine speech for Madame General *en route*, went boldly to call on her.

It is not to be denied that I was alarmed on hearing that the general resided on the first floor in the front, and as I reached the magnificent vaulted vestibule, I felt in a perfect panic, and would gladly have

turned back. But it seemed too provincial to be disconcerted by a vaulted ceiling. So I advanced straight on a knot of military men who stood there, and asked an old person in an undress jacket if General Ertmann lived there, as I wished to call on Madame Ertmann. Unfortunately, he replied, "I am General Ertmann, at your service." This was very unpleasant, and I had to bring out my whole speech in an abridgment. He did not seem particularly edified, and begged to know whom he had the honour of addressing. This was not pleasant either, but, fortunately, he knew my name, and became very courteous; his wife, he said, was not at home. I should find her at two, if I was then free, or at another hour. I was delighted that it had turned out so well in the end, and spent the intervening time at the Brera, looked at Raphael's Sposalizio, and at two made the acquaintance of Freifrau Dorothea *v.* Ertmann.

She received me in a very friendly manner, and was so obliging as to play me Beethoven's sonata in C sharp minor, and then the one in D minor. The old general, who now appeared in his grey full-dress uniform with many decorations, was highly pleased, and shed tears of joy. He had not heard his wife play for so long. There was no one in Milan who cared to listen to that style of music. She spoke of the trio in B flat, which she could not well recall. I played it and sang the voice parts; this gave the old couple great joy, and so our acquaintance became complete. Since then they have shown me a friendliness which makes me quite ashamed. The old general shows me the points

of interest in Milan. In the afternoon his wife calls for me in her carriage to drive on the Corso, and in the evenings we have music till one o'clock. Yesterday morning they took me an excursion in the country, and made me come to dinner at midday. In the evening they had a reception. Besides, they are the most delightful and cultivated people one can wish for, and as much in love with one another as though they had been married the other day, instead of four and thirty years ago. Yesterday he was speaking of his profession and military life, and about personal courage and kindred matters, with a clearness and a fine freedom of view such as I have scarcely heard except from father. He has already been an officer for forty-six years, and you should see him riding beside his wife's carriage in the park, such a brisk and noble style the old gentleman has still. She plays Beethoven's things very beautifully, though it is long since she studied them. Often she exaggerates the expression a little, lingering too much, and then hurrying on, yet she renders some pieces grandly. And I think I have learnt something from her. At times she can draw out no more expression from the piano, and then she throws in her voice, that seems to come straight from her innermost heart; at those times she often reminds me of you, my Fanny, though, indeed, you far surpass her. As I reached the end of the adagio on the trio in B major, she exclaimed, "It is too expressive to be played," and that is really true of the passage. The next day I was there again, and played the symphony in C minor; she insisted on my taking

off my coat on account of the heat. Now and then the general throws in the most wonderful stories about Beethoven, how one evening, when she was playing, he used the candle-snuffers for a tooth-pick, etc.

She told me how, when she lost her last child, Beethoven at first could not bring himself to come to the house. At last he begged her to visit him, and when she got there he sat down at the piano, and said only, "We will talk in music." Then he played on for an hour, and as she expressed it, "He said everything to me, and in the end brought me consolation."

TO HIS SISTERS.

CHARNEY, *6th August*, 1831.

MY DEAR SISTERS,—You have read all through Ritter's Africa of course, but I don't fancy you know the whereabouts of Charney. Then fetch the old atlas up from the cellar, for you must be prepared to give me your company on my travels. Go with your finger from Vevay to Clarens, and then on to the peak of Jaman, straight as a string. This string is a footpath, and where you must go with your fingers I have come this morning on my feet. (It is now half-past seven, and I am still fasting.) I am going to have breakfast here, and am now writing in a clean wooden-walled room till the milk is hot.

From outside comes in the gleam of the bright, blue lake. I am beginning my diary here, and will go on with it while I travel on foot as well as I can.

After breakfast.—Great heaven! consider my misfortune. The hostess has come in with a face full of trouble to say there is no one in the village to be my guide to Jaman and carry my bundle except a young girl; the men are all at their work. You must know I always set out alone in the morning with my bundle

and cloak on my back; the guides from the inns are too dear and too tedious for me. The first honest-looking young fellow whom I find after two hours gets hired, and so I get on better on foot. How charming the lake and the path hither were is more than I can say. Fancy all the beauties you have ever delighted in—it is that. The footpath is always sloping upwards under the shade of nut trees, past country houses and castles; on all the slope down to the glittering lake lie villages scattered here and there, and the villages are full of the sound of streams and fountains splashing at every corner; most beautiful it was, and one felt so free and bright! Now comes the village-girl with her straw hat; she is wonderfully pretty, and her name is Pauline. She puts my baggage in the basket on her shoulder, and so we march for the mountains. Adieu!

Evening at Chateau d'Oex.—I have had the most charming journey. Could I get you such a day, I would give much for it, but then you would first have to turn into two young men, and be able to climb vigorously, drink milk when you had the chance, make little of a great deal of heat, a great many stones, also of many holes in the path, and still more holes in your boots. I fear you are much too tender for that. But it was wonderfully beautiful. Never shall I forget the walk with Pauline, who was one of the jolliest girls I ever met in my life, so pretty and healthy and full of natural cleverness. She told me stories about her village, and I told her stories about

Italy, but I know which of us amused the other most. Last Sunday all the young people of distinction in her village were taken to a place far across the mountains for a dance that was to happen at noon. They started a little after midnight, were on the mountains while it was still dark, and there made a great fire and cooked coffee. About dawn the men had a leaping match before the ladies—we went by the broken fence that marked the spot—then they had the dance, and by Sunday evening were all home again. Early on Monday the work began again in the vineyards. By heaven! I was taken with a vast desire to be a peasant of the Canton de Vaud as I heard her stories, and she showed me villages down below where the people dance when the cherries are ripe, and others where they dance when the cows go up to the pastures and there is fresh milk again. To-morrow there is a dance at St. Gingolph; they row across the lake, and those skilled in music take their instruments with them. Pauline, though, does not go with them, as her mother does not permit her for fear of the broad lake; and a number of other girls do not go either, because they always keep together. Then she asked my permission to go and say good-day to her cousin, and went down to a charming house on the meadow-land. Presently the two girls came out and sat chattering on the seat; above, on the Col de Jaman, I could see their kinsmen, who were mowing and pasturing the cows; they called and screamed to them, and were answered with jodels from above; then everybody laughed. I understood no word of the *patois* but the first, and

that was "Adieu, Pierrot." All the time there went on a jovial mocking echo, that sent back all the shoutings and laughter and jödeling. About midday we got to Allières. After a little rest, I took my bundle again on my own shoulders, for I didn't take to a certain sturdy old porter who wanted to carry it for me, and shaking hands with Pauline took leave of her and descended through the Alpine meadow. If the peasant girl fails to please you, or, indeed, has bored you, I cannot help it, you must put the blame on my description, for in reality she was delightful, and so was my journey on. I came on a group of people eating fruit under a cherry tree, lay down with them in the grass, and ate fruit, too, for a while. Then I took a midday rest at La Tine in a cleanly house all built of wood. The carpenter, who had built it for himself, gave me his company to a dish of roast lamb, and proudly pointed out to me the tables, chairs, and cupboards.

And to conclude, I reached here this evening through dazzling green meadows, where the houses stand all about between pine trees and waterfalls. The church here stands on a knoll, all one mass of green. Far away the houses are dotted about, and beyond them are huts among the crags, while in a gorge above the meadows a little snow is still lying. It is an idyllic place, like the one we saw together in Wattwyl, only the village is smaller and the mountains broader and greener. But to-day I must close with a pæan in honour of the Canton de Vaud. Of all the countries that I know it is the most beautiful.

and the one where I should best like to live when I am downright old. The people are so contented and look so healthy, and the country is the same. Coming from Italy, one is profoundly touched by the honesty that still exists in the world, by the happy faces here, and then by the absence of beggars and bad-tempered officials, such a wonderful contrast there is between one people and another. I thank God for making many things so beautiful, and may He give us all in Berlin and England and Chateau d'Oex a pleasant evening and a good night!

BOLTIGEN, *7th August.*

Evening.—Outside there is terrible thunder and lightning, and heavy rain as well. In the mountains one learns to treat the weather with respect. I did not go on from here, for it would have been a pity to travel down the lovely Simmenthal beneath an umbrella. It was a grey day, but beautifully cool for walking in the forenoon. The valley about Saanen and the whole route is indescribably fresh and delightful. I can never see too much green; if I were to stare all my life long at a sloping meadow-land with a couple of reddish-brown houses, I should always find the same pleasure in it. And the road winds among such meadows all the way up and down along the streamlets.

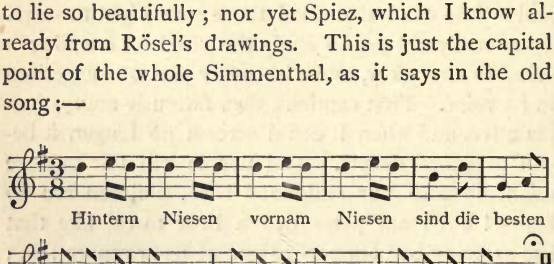
At midday, I was at Zweisimmen in one of the monstrous Bernese houses where everything shines so; all order and cleanliness, all polished down

to the very smallest detail. From there I sent my bundle by the post to Interlaken, and am now regularly marching through the country, with my night-shirt in my pocket, together with brush, comb, and guide-book. There is nothing further that I want. However, I am very tired—if only it would be fine weather to-morrow.

WEISSENBURG, *8th August.*

I had breakfast at this place. I had to draw it for you with a pen, so do not laugh at my ingenuous water. At Boltigen I had a terrible night. There was no room in the inn on account of the fair, so I had to take refuge in a neighbouring house. There one had all sorts of nuisances, like in Italy—a loud, harsh clock that struck all the hours immensely loud, and a little child that cried the entire night through. I was really obliged to study the child for a while; it cried in every key, and with every sort of suggestion in its voice. First captious, then furiously angry, then plaintive, and when it could scream no longer, it began to snore deeply. And people will tell one we ought to wish our childhood back, children are so happy! but I am persuaded a little rascal like that has as many bad tempers as one of us grown-up folk; its sleepless nights, too, its passions, and all the rest of it. This philosophic reflection occurred to me this morning while I was sketching Weissenburg, and I was going to give it you all hot, but I found a copy of the "Constitutional," in which I read that Casimir Perrier insists on resigning, and much other matter

for thought. Among other things was a remarkable article on the cholera, that one ought to copy for the sake of its foolishness. The whole thing is denied; only one Jew had it at Dantzic, and he got well again. On the heels of that came a string of abstract reflections as bad as Hegel, and in French!—then the election of deputies—oh, the world! As soon as I had got through my reading, I couldn't help going out in the rain across the meadows; and, indeed, in no dream could one see such a charming country as this. In the worst of weathers the churches, the groups of houses, bushes and streams, are delightful. And the green, too; that was in its element to-day. Now it is pouring outside long after the midday dinner. This evening I shall get no further than Spiez. I am disappointed not to see the country here, which seems to lie so beautifully; nor yet Spiez, which I know already from Rösel's drawings. This is just the capital point of the whole Simmenthal, as it says in the old song:—



I was singing that all to-day along the road. But the Siebethal did not thank me for the compliment, but went raining on.

UNTERSEEN.

Evening of the 9th.—My joke is turned to bitter earnest as may easily happen nowadays. The frightful weather has done great damage, and the country is half devastated. The people cannot remember such a furious storm and rain for many years. And all that happens with such incredible rapidity! Early this morning it was only uncomfort able bad weather, and this afternoon all the bridges are swept away, the routes blocked for the time. Landslips are happening on the Lake of Brientz, everything is upside down. And now I hear that war is declared in Europe as well, so things are going wildly in the world, and one may be glad to have a warm room and a decent roof over one's head for the moment, as I have here. The rain ceased for a while this morning, and I thought the clouds had drained themselves out. So I started from Wyler, and soon found the road pretty well destroyed; the weather played me a trick as well. The rain began again softly, then about nine dashed down with such fury that one saw something uncommon was going on. I crept into a half-built hut where there was a great bundle of hay, and made a bed for myself in the sweet smelling stuff. A soldier of the canton going to Thun, crept in from the opposite side as well. After an hour, as things got no better, we went on, each in his own direction. At Leisingen I had to get under a roof again and wait a long time, but as my things were at Interlaken, only two hours off, I

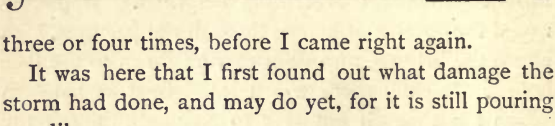
thought I could manage it, and set off about one. There was nothing to see except the grey mirror of the lake, no mountains, seldom the outline of the opposite shore.

The streams which, as you remember, often run down the footpaths, had turned into torrents, along which one had to wade, and when the path was level for a little, the water stood still and formed a lake. Then I had to get through the wet hedges into the squelchy meadows, for all the tree-trunks, by which one is supposed to cross the streams, lay under water. Once I came between two brooks that had overflowed into one another, and had to wade up against the current with water up to my chin. All this water was black or chocolate coloured. It looked as if streams of liquid earth were flowing down and leaping one above the other. From above the rain streamed down, and the wind every now and then shook the water from the dripping walnut-trees, and the waterfalls that pour themselves into the lake roared with a terrible sound on either shore. One's eye could follow the brown streaks they made far down till they fell plashing into the clear lake, which remained all the time quite calm, and quietly received all the wild seething that rushed down on it.

Then I met a man wading with shoes and stockings off, and his breeches turned up. By this time I was getting rather depressed. Two women came along, who told me I could not get through the village, all the bridges were down. I asked them how far it was to Interlaken. "A good hour," was the answer.

Turning back was not to be thought of, so I pushed on into the village. Then the people shouted to me out of the windows that I could go no further, the water was coming down from the mountains too strong, and there was indeed a terrible business going on in the middle of the village. The earth-coloured torrent had swept everything before it. It poured round the corners of houses through the pastures, high above the bridges, and went roaring down to the lake below. Luckily there was a small boat at hand, in which I got myself put over to Neuhaus, though the passage in this sort of open punt in the furious rain was by no means pleasant. My condition when I reached Neuhaus was fairly wretched; I looked as if I had top-boots on. Shoes, stockings and everything up to the knees were dark brown, then came the real white colour, then a soft blue overcoat; even my sketch-book that I had tucked under my waistcoat was moist. In this fashion I reached Interlaken, and was received with small hospitality; the people either could not or would not find me a room, and so I had to find my way back to Unterseen, where I am now comfortably housed. It was very curious how I had felt pleased all the time at the idea of getting back to my inn at Interlaken, where so many recollections would be waiting me, and when I actually drove on to the square with the walnut-trees, in the little trap I had hired at Neuhaus, and saw my well-remembered glass gallery and met the fair hostess, changed and aged indeed, at the door, really all the bad weather and discomfort I had gone through did not vex me so

much as that I couldn't stop there. For the first time since leaving Vevey I was out of humour for half an hour, and had to sing Beethoven, E flat major,



three or four times, before I came right again.

It was here that I first found out what damage the storm had done, and may do yet, for it is still pouring steadily.

9.30 in the evening.—The bridge at Zweilütchinen has been swept away. The coach-drivers for Brienz and Grindelwald refuse to go for fear of getting a rock or two on their head. Here the water is a foot and a half under the bridge on the Aar, and the gloominess of the sky is beyond description. Still I can wait to see it out here, for one wants nothing from circumstances to call back old memories. They have even put me in a room where there is a piano. It dates from 1794, and its tone is rather like the little old Silbermann in my study, so, at the first note I felt friendly towards it, and while playing I can think of you. It has lived through a great deal this piano, and doubtless never had an idea that I, who was only born in 1809, would come to compose on it. I am twenty-two years old, and the piano is already thirty-seven, and good for a while yet. There are going to be some new songs, my sisters! You don't know as yet my great "Travellers' Song" in E major. It is wonderfully sentimental. Now I am

composing one that I am afraid will not turn out much, but it will do for us three; it is very well meant. The words are Goethe's, but I won't say what; it is too foolish to compose on just that theme. Besides, it doesn't really suit the music, but I think it so heavenly that I must always be singing it. And that is the end for to-day. Good-night, my loves!

FELIX.

LAUTERBRUNNEN, 13*th August*, 1831.

I have just got in from a walk to the Schmadri-Bach and towards the Breithorn. All that one imagines of the mass and sweep of the mountains is very poor compared to the reality. That Goethe contrived to write nothing from Switzerland, but a couple of feeble poems, and some still more feeble letters, is just as unintelligible to me as a great many other things in the world. The road up to here was again all topsy-turvey. Where was an admirable road a week ago is now a wild heap of rocks, great boulders in piles, gravel and sand everywhere, no trace of human labour to be seen. The water has gone down, indeed, but the streams are not quiet yet; now and then one hears the grinding of stones that are hurled together at the bottom, and the waterfalls sweep down pieces of black rock in their white foam. My guide showed me a handsome new house standing in the midst of the furious current. He said it belonged to his brother-in-law, and that there had been a fine meadow all round it, that used to bring in a great deal.

The man had been compelled to fly from the house during the night; the meadow had disappeared for ever, nothing but gravel and stones there now! "He was never rich, but now he is poor," so ended the story of misfortune.

It was curious in the middle of this desolate scene, where the Lutschine had overflowed the entire breadth of the valley, to see a char-a-banc standing among the swamped meadows and blocks of stones, where no ghost of a road remained. There it is likely to stand for some time to come. Some people wanted to drive through right in the middle of the storm, but the tempest came down on them, and they had to leave trap and all in the mud, so there it stands waiting events. It was an ugly sight when we reached a place where the entire valley with the road and the dams on each side of the stream were covered with a mere sea of rocks. My guide, who was going on in front, kept murmuring to himself, "Awful work." In the middle of the stream the water had whirled down two great tree trunks, and caught them on the sudden between two rocks, which pinned them in so as to leave the naked stems standing half upright. "I could never get to an end of telling you all the shapes of devastation that one sees coming up here from Unterseen. But nevertheless the beauty of the valley made a greater impression on me than I can tell you. It was most unlucky that you never went up further than the Staubbach, the point where the real Lauterbrunnen valley begins. As you go up the Schwarze Mönch, with all the snows behind, it rises grander and grander;

on every side flashing torrents fall like dust into the valley; one sees the snow mountains and glaciers quite near through the woods of pine, oak and maple, and the wet meadows are strewn with innumerable bright flowers. On one side the Lutschine was hurling down the boulders one over another. As my guide said, it had brought down rocks "bigger than a stove." But it is beautiful beyond everything. Unfortunately, we could not get up to the Smadribach, because all the bridges and pathways were destroyed. Still I shall never forget that walk. I made an attempt at a sketch of the Mönch, but what use is one's little pencil? I know Hegel says that every human thought is something more sublime than the whole of nature, but here that strikes me as hardly modest. It is a fine idea, but a confounded paradox. For once I will be on the side of the whole of nature, which, indeed, is likely to be the safe side.

You know the position of the inn here, or if you have forgotten take my old Swiss sketch-book, where I have drawn it from every point of view, with the footpath in front, and which still makes me laugh privately. I am looking out of the self-same window now, getting a peep at the dark outlines of the mountains, for it is late in the evening, a quarter to eight, in fact. And I have an idea which is higher than the whole of nature, namely, that I will go to bed. So good-night, my loves.

GRINDELWALD.

The 14th, evening.—It went hard to leave the Jungfrau behind, but what a day it has been for me!

Since we were here together I have always wanted to see the Lesser Scheideck again. So I woke early this morning almost in a state of fear, so many things might happen to spoil my chance, bad weather, clouds, rain, or mist. But no, it was a day that might have been made solely for me to cross the Wengernalp. The sky was flecked with light clouds, that swept clear of the highest peaks; there was no mist on any of the mountains, every summit sparkling in the clear air with every point and mass on it clear cut—how am I to describe it? You know the Wengernalp, but then we saw it in bad weather. To-day all the mountains were arrayed as for a feast, nothing was wanting, from the thundering avalanches to the people in their Sunday clothes going to church, just as they were doing then. I really remembered little of the mountains except the wild jagged outline of them high up against the sky; but to-day I felt overpowered by their measureless breadth, the mass of the white expanses, the harmonious placing of all these monstrous towers, the way in which they enfold each other and join hands, as it were, round one. Fancy besides all the glaciers, all the snow fields, all the crags lit up to a dazzling whiteness, and flashing in it, and then the distant summits of other chains struggling up to peep into the landscape. I have a feeling that God's own thoughts must look something like that. Whoever does not know God may find Him here, and the nature He has made, clear before his very eyes. And through it all there is the dear fresh air that rouses you when you are tired, and

cools you when you are overheated. And then the waterfalls! I have quite a treatise to write to you still on the nature of waterfalls, but to-day there is no time, for now I have a different sort of story to tell. Now, you think, he is just going to descend and find the country below very pleasant. No, that isn't it; but when I reached the Sennhütte, I heard that in a meadow, right up among the mountains, there was going to be a festival, and now and then one saw people in the distance climbing up. I wasn't in the least tired, and an Alpine village festival is not to be seen every day. The good weather said, "Yes," and my guide was immensely pleased at the prospect, so I said then, let us make for Itramen. The old cowherd pushed on, so we had to take manfully to climbing again, for Itramen is a good thousand feet above the Lesser Scheideck. The cowherd was a sort of wild man of the mountains; he rushed on in front of us like a cat. Presently, however, he took pity on my guide, and relieved him of the bundle and cloak; and even with these he still ran ahead so fast that we had no chance of catching him. The path was horribly steep, but he said it was good, and that formerly he used to take a steeper and shorter one. He was about sixty years old, and yet when my young guide and I had struggled up to a hill-top, we invariably saw him disappearing over the next. For two hours we went over the hardest bit of mountain I ever attempted, now high up, now far down again, over loose stones and streams and crevasses, across two snow fields, all in the utmost loneliness without a

path or the least trace of human labour. Now and again one heard the avalanches on the Jungfrau; otherwise all was quiet, and not a tree near us. But in the middle of all this silence and solitude, on reaching the top of a little grassy hill, we suddenly came in sight of a great crowd of people standing in a circle, all talking and laughing and calling to one another. All were dressed in their finery, with flowers in their hats; there were many girls among them. Two tables with butts of wine were in the middle—all round the vast stillness and the awful mountains. It was curious that while climbing I could think of nothing but the rocks and stones, or else the snow and the track we had to follow; but from the moment I saw the people all that went out of my mind, and I thought only of them and their jovial festival. It was delightful there; the broad green meadow far above the clouds served for a stage. Straight in front the snow mountains lifted themselves in the sky, the mighty spire of the Eiger, with the Schreckhorn, the Wetterhorn and all the rest, away to the Blumlisalp. In the misty depth below lay the Lauterbrunnen valley looking quite small, and down there we could see all the route we had been the day before with its waterfalls marked like threads, the houses just little points, and the trees showing like tufts of grass. Behind, one now and then caught a glimpse of the Lake of Thun through the dimness. Among the crowd of good, stalwart, hearty peasants it was all leaping and singing, drinking and laughing. I saw the leaping for the first time with great interest. When it was over,

the girls handed the men cherry brandy and schnaps; the bottles passed round from hand to hand, and I drank with the company. Then I treated three little children to cakes, and made them very happy. An old peasant who was extremely drunk sang me several songs; then they all sang, and my guide gave us quite a modern song in the finest of styles, and presently two small boys began to fight. Everything seemed delightful on that mountain. I lay on the grass till towards evening, and made myself at home. Then we went leaping down to the meadows, and soon came in sight of our well-known inn with its windows flashing in the sunset. A fresh wind blew from the glaciers and cooled us. Now it is late, and from time to time one hears the avalanches. That was my Sunday; it was a festival indeed!

TO HIS FAMILY.

MUNICH, *6th October*, 1831.

IT is a delightful feeling to wake in the morning with a long allegro to instrument with any number of hautboys and trumpets, and with the brightest of weather outside as well, promising a long stretch in the fresh country for the afternoon. I have been like this for an entire week, and the friendliness of Munich, as I felt it the first time, is now more apparent than ever. I scarcely know any place where I feel so much at home, so much a regular, a burgher of the city, as I do here. It is so charming to be among absolutely cheerful faces, and to look cheerful oneself in company, and then to know everybody in the streets besides. Now I have my concert before me, which is a handful, not to mention the friends who break in on me at every moment, nor the lovely weather which entices one out of doors, nor the copyists who compel one to stay at home—it is all a most pleasurable and most stormy existence. My concert has had to be put off on account of the October festival, which begins on Sunday and lasts all the week. There is the theatre and a ball every evening, no chance of an orchestra or a hall to play in.

So on Monday the 17th, about half-past six in the evening, think of me and the thirty fiddlers and the wind instruments striking up. The C minor symphony starts the first part, the "Midsummer Night's Dream" the second. The first closes with my new piece in G minor. Then, alas! at the close of the second I have to improvise, a thing you will believe I don't look forward to, but these people insist on it. Bärmann has decided to play again; Breiting, the Vials, Loehle, Beyer and Pellegrini are the singers and share the part-music. The place will be the Odeon, and the proceeds go to the Munich charities.

Every morning I have to write and correct and instrument in preparation for the great event; then comes one o'clock, and I depart for Scheidel's coffee-house in the Kausingergasse, where I know all the faces already by heart, and find their owners every day in precisely the same positions, two playing chess, three looking on, five reading the newspapers, six dining, and myself the seventh. After dinner Bärmann generally comes and carries me off. We talk about concert business, or else go for a walk to a beer and coffee-house, then back home and to work again. For the evenings I have rigorously refused all invitations, but there are so many delightful houses where I can walk in uninvited that I am seldom in my study after eight. The place I live in is a room flush with the ground, which was formerly a shop, so that everybody who passes looks in and says good morning. Near me there lives a Greek, who is learning the piano; he is abominable, but my landlord's daughter, who is very

slender and wears a silver band to keep her curls in order, is all the more charming by comparison. Three days in the week I have music at four o'clock, to wit, Bärmann, Breiting, Standacher, young Poissl, and various others come in, and we hold a sort of musical picnic. In this way I come to know operas which, to my discredit, I have neither heard nor seen before, as "Lodoiska," "Faniska," "Medea;" also "Preciosa," "Abu Hassan," etc.—the scores being lent us from the theatre. But on Wednesday evening we had a great joke. We had lost several wagers which we were all supposed to share in, so after many proposals we at last resolved to hold a musical soirée in my room, and invite all our creditors. This brought up the list to about thirty persons; divers came uninvited and had themselves presented to us. There was a woeful lack of space; we had to put several on my bed, and a flock of patient sheep were conducted into my little room. The affair was incredibly lively and a great success. E. also was there, sweet as never was, melting with admiration and poetic fervour, and grey stockings, in short infinitely tedious. First I played my old quartette in E flat minor, then Breiting sang "Adelaide," then Herr S. played variations on the violin—with many apologies. Bärmann played Beethoven's first quartette (F major), which he had arranged for two clarinets, basset-horn and bassoon; then came an air from Euryanthe, furiously demanded over again *da capo*, and for a finale I had to improvise—would not—but the uproar became so violent that I had to set to it

against my will, though I had nothing in my mind but wine glasses, chairs, and cold meat. Close at hand, just by my landlord and his family, sat the Cornelius girls; the Schauroths were making a call on the first floor with the same object; inside there was a crowd, and outside in the street another. What with the heat in the room, the uproarious noise, the very various guests scattered about confusedly, and, at last, refreshments and drinkables, the whole thing became perfectly insane, all manner of sentiments and health were drunk with acclamation, while the people of quality sat in the middle of the swarm and held themselves erect with severe countenances. It was half-past one before we broke up. Next evening was the antipodes of all that. I had to play before the Queen and Court. It was all very proper and dressed up and polished; one's elbow continually ran against an "Excellency." The finest flattering speeches flew about the room, and there was I, the roturier, with my citizen-like good-fellowship and my last night's headache. I got out of it, however, somehow, not without having to improvise on a theme set by royalty, and getting much applauded. The most charming thing was the Queen remarking that I really carried one away, so that one could think of nothing else during my music, and after that I prayed to be excused.

Such, you see, are my days at Munich. But I have forgotten that every day at twelve I have been giving little[1] L. a lesson in double counterpoint and

[1] Fräulein Lang.

four-part composition, and so on, which makes me think again how confused and stupid most teachers and most books are on these points, and how clear the whole thing is when one presents it clearly.

She is a delightful vision to me. Imagine a delicate little pale maiden with noble, though not beautiful, features, so interesting and rare that it is hard to look away from her, and with all her movements and words full of a sort of geniality. She has the gift of composing songs and then singing them in a way I have never heard the like of; it is the most complete musical delight that ever yet fell to my lot. When she sits down at the piano and begins one of these songs of hers, the notes acquire a strange, new tone; all the music seems wonderfully swayed hither and thither, and in every note there is the finest and profoundest feeling. Then, when she sings the first bar in her tender voice, every hearer grows perfectly still and wrapt, and each in his own fashion feels himself penetrated through and through. I wish you could only hear her voice! It is so innocently and unconsciously beautiful; it comes from her inmost heart, and yet is so tranquil! Last year all this was perfectly recognisable. In every song she had written her talent was as clear as noonday, yet Marx and I sounded the tocsin about her among all the musicians here, and no man heeded us. But since then she has made a very remarkable advance. Anyone whom her present songs do not touch must be utterly insensible. So, unfortunately, it has become the fashion to ask the little maid for songs, to take the lights away from the piano

when she sings, and to be interested in her melancholy. It is an unpleasant contrast; sometimes when I have been wanted to play something after her, I could not bring myself to it, and let the people go away. Very possibly all this talk will spoil her, for she has no friend to understand or direct her. Besides, she is curiously without musical training, knows little, can scarcely discriminate good music from bad, and, left to herself, thinks everything outside her own songs wonderfully fine. If she once comes to an understanding with herself, it will go well. Meanwhile I have done all I can, that is, most earnestly entreated her parents and herself to avoid soirées and so forth, and not to let anything so divine be wasted. Heaven grant my advice may do some good. Perhaps I may send you some of her songs, things she wrote for me out of gratitude for my teaching her what she already knew naturally, and because I have done a little to attach her to good and serious music.

Besides this, I play the organ for an hour every day; but, unluckily, I can't get the practice I want, because the pedals are without the five high notes, so that one can't play a single passage of Seb. Bach's with it. But there are marvellously fine stops in it, with which one can embellish chorales; and especially, my Fanny, I have found the stops which are wanted for Bach's "Schmücke dich o liebe Seele." They seem made for the purpose, and the tone is so thrilling that a kind of shudder runs all through me when I begin. For the florid accompaniment I have an eight-foot flute, and a perfectly soft four-foot, which

continues floating above the chorale itself. That you remember in Berlin. But there is one row of keys that has nothing but reed-stops, and of these I use a soft oboe, a clarion, very light, a four-foot, and a viola. That brings out the chorale so quick and penetrating; it sounds like human voices, full of emotion, singing in the distance.

Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday, when you will be in possession of this letter, I shall be in the Theresien Park with eighty thousand others. Think of me there, and be good enough to be well, and remain so.

FELIX.

TO HIS FAMILY.

LONDON, 11*th May*, 1832.

I MUST just describe to you one very delightful morning last week. It was the pleasantest and most touching instance of public recognition that has ever yet happened to me, and I perpetually recur to it with satisfaction. On Saturday morning there was a rehearsal at the Philharmonic, at which, however, nothing of my own was performed, for my overture was not yet completed. I was in a box during Beethoven's Pastoral Symphony and then went down to the floor of the hall to speak to some old acquaintances. Just as I got down, some one in the orchestra exclaimed: "There is Mendelssohn!" and on that they all began to shout and clap with such vehemence that for a time I was at a loss what to do; then as they were leaving off, some one else cried out: "Welcome to him!" and then the uproar began over again, and I was obliged to make my way down the hall and climb up into the orchestra, whence I conveyed my thanks to them. I shall never forget it, for that pleased me more than any distinction. It shows that the musical people like me, and are glad of my coming; altogether, it was a greater joy than I can tell you. FELIX.

TO PASTOR JULIUS SCHUBRING, DESSAU.

COBLENTZ, *6th September*, 1833.

DEAR SCHUBRING,—Your letter with the enclosed contribution came to hand while I was beginning to arrange the sheets of my oratorio,[1] and thinking much at the same time of the music I am going to write next winter. It struck me so much that I have copied out the whole text, as far as it has got, and now send it, hoping that you will do what you did before, and give me the benefit of all your comments and suggestions. You will see in the margin some notes of things that are still wanting, and of places which I want to fill with passages from the Bible and hymn book. But what I chiefly want is your opinion (1) about the form of the whole work, particularly of the narrative parts. Do you think it can be left as it is, with the narrative and the dramatic elements side by side? I can't venture on Bach's method of personified narrative, and this combination strikes me as the most natural thing, and only laborious at certain places, as the "Ananias," where the lengthy inter-connected recitals make it so.

[1] The "St. Paul."

(2) Do you think there are any leading features of the story, or of the character and teaching of Paul, either omitted or set in a false light?

(3) Where would you make the divisions of the first and second parts?

(4) Do you think I could bring in the chorale. Some people have objected to it very strongly, and yet I cannot bring myself to give it up altogether, for it seems to me it must have a natural place in every oratorio taken from the New Testament. If you agree to this, please let me hear what chorales you would put in, and where. You see I ask a great deal, but then I shall have to work hard enough when I begin the music, and, besides, I know you take an interest in the matter.

If you can oblige me in all this, just send a few words to Berlin, where I must be for two or three days after to-morrow; it is to take care of my father, who was with me in England, and became seriously ill there. He is well again now, thank God! but I have had so much anxiety all this time that I want to do everything possible till I can feel he is safe at home. Then off again, and back to Düsseldorf. You know that I was director of the musical festival there, and have opportunely got settled there for two or three years to manage the church music and the singing association, and probably a new theatre that is to be founded there as well; my private reason, however, is to get an opportunity of composing in peace and for myself. I find the country and the people charming, and the "St. Paul" is to be brought

out in the winter. I also had my new symphony produced in England, and people were pleased with it. It will be printed after "The Hebrides," which is now in hand. That is all very good, but I am thinking one's real work should come first, and so I hope it will turn out. It is very wrong of me to write you a dull, impersonal, and entirely serious letter like this, but things have gone that way with me lately, and so I am becoming more serious myself,—Yours,

FELIX M. B.

TO J. MOSCHELES IN LONDON.

DÜSSELDORF, *7th February*, 1834.

—— My special weakness in new passages for the piano has again struck me forcibly in the "rondo brillant" which I want to adapt to your style. It is at these points that I always stick fast and get in distress; I fear you cannot but remark it. Otherwise, there is much in it that I like, and certain passages please me decidedly, but how I am to set about composing something quiet and uneccentric (I remember well that was your advice last spring), is more than I can tell. All that I have in my head for the piano is about as quiet as Cheapside, and when I sit down quite calmly to improvise, that sort of thing always comes gradually in again. On the other hand, the piece which I am now writing for the Philharmonic I am afraid will be far too tame. However, I must not criticise myself so much. I am hard at work, which is as good as saying that I am well and contented.

But when you, my dear Madame Moscheles, order me to take no account of public or critics, I must beg to state that my business is to write music in despite of the public, and in despite of the critics as well.

What's Hecuba to me, or criticism besides, the printed sort I mean? So if an overture to "Lord Eldon" in the form of a reversible canon should happen to occur to me, or a double fugue with a canto fermo, I will write them, though they would be sure to be unpopular. Still more a beautiful Melusine, though that is another matter. It would be horrible if one could never get a chance of having one's things performed; still, as you think that there is no reason to fear it, I say long live the public and the critics, only I mean to live myself, and, if possible, come to England next year. . . . . .

TO PASTOR SCHUBRING AT DESSAU.

DÜSSELDORF, 15*th July*, 1834.

DEAR SCHUBRING,—I have owed you a letter for almost a year. It is no use to begin with excuses; I am too hopelessly in the wrong, and should never get to the end of my apologies. Indeed, I couldn't explain how the delay came about. On establishing myself here last autumn I got your letter with your notes for the "St. Paul;" they were the best contributions I had received, and that same afternoon I set to and thought it over seriously. I took a Bible, and sitting down amid all the confusion of my study, soon got so deep in it that I could hardly force myself to go on with other work which was bound to be completed first. I was on the point of writing then to give you my heartiest thanks, but then it struck me it would be pleasanter if I could say the thing had been already commenced, and when I really did begin it in the spring the manifold cares of composition sprang up to distract me. But now I cannot content myself with thinking of you, but must write to ask about yourself and your family. That the latter has increased I know, only was it quite right of you not

to let me have a word on the subject, or even a bit of paste-board, but to leave me to the chance of a round-about piece of information? Though I confess, indeed, I deserved this thoroughly, yet a preacher, as you are, is the last person who should exact vengeance, or bear malice against his enemy. Please don't do so now, but let me hear from you again.

Your notes for the "St. Paul" were admirable; I have made use of them all without exception. It is a curious thing, and a good one, that in all the passages I formerly wanted to invert or alter for the sake of the composition, I have time after time had to restore the precise text of the Bible; it is the best in the end. Half the first part is now ready; I hope to end it by Autumn and to complete the whole about February. But how are things going at Dessau? It would be pleasant to hear they remained just as they were. I do hope you still keep your cheerfulness and love of life, still play the piano, and delight in Sebastian Bach, and so are the same old fellow you were. I should not doubt it, but here one is surrounded with such direful examples of preachers who do their best to freeze up every pleasure for themselves and others; dry prosaic pedagogues, who regard a concert as sinful, and a country dance as a pernicious dissipation, think a theatre the lake of brimstone itself, and denounce the spring with its blossoms and sweet weather as a pit of corruption.

You will have heard of the Elberfeld breed. But in these parts it is still worse, and its result is abominable. Worst of all is the arrogance with which

these folk look down on others, just as if no good thing could exist out of their own range.

Our music advances slowly, but it does advance. This summer we performed one of Bach's masses in church, an Ave Maria out of "*Verleih uns Frieden*," and next month we are giving Handel's Te Deum (*Dettingen*). Of course there is a great deal to be desired, but one hears the things, and the performance and the performers gradually improve. Hauser at Leipsic has scored a cantata of Bach's in E flat, by Seb. Bach from the manuscript of the voice parts, one of the strongest of his pieces that I know. When I can find time I will send you a copy. But now my paper and this letter are both at an end. Farewell, dear friend, and write to me shortly. Yours,

FELIX MENDELSSOHN BARTHOLDY.

TO HIS MOTHER.

DÜSSELDORF, *4th Nov.*, 1834.

DEAR MOTHER,—At last I have a chance of thanking you for your dear letter. You know how much your lines rejoice me, and I hope you do not find writing troublesome, for your hand is as small and clear and classical at the end as at the beginning, and as it always was; so I beg you, let me have the joy of seeing it often; you know how grateful I am. You take me home so completely; I am there while I read your letter, enjoying the summer in our garden, visit the exhibition, tease Ganz about his satisfaction at an invitation from Metternich, and almost renew my flirtations with the fair Russian ladies. These flittings home are better than ever these last weeks, during which I have been absorbed in thunderings and disputations about Düsseldorf, art, the rising glory of the Rhineland, and other new marvels. This place has brought me into a fearful state of heat and confusion, and things go harder than in my busiest time in London. When I set to work in the morning there comes a pull at the bell at every bar; a procession of singers with grievances to assail me, or incompetent singers whom I have to instruct, or else they are

shabby players whom I have to engage; and when that has gone on all day, and I say to myself, it is all for the Düsseldorf theatre and its salvation, my temper becomes terribly bad. At the day before yesterday I made up my mind, shook myself free of the whole business, and now I am a man again. It was, indeed, a difficult matter to inform our theatrical autocrat, *alias* stage-mufti, of this resolution. He bit his lip at me as if he was going to devour me whole, but I delivered him a short, impressive speech, and informed him that my own work concerned me more than the future of the Düsseldorf theatre, so in spite of the utmost desire, etc. etc. In short, they let me go under the sole condition that I should, from time to time, act as conductor, and this I promised and will observe.

. . . . . .

With "St. Paul" I have now reached a point at which I should like to play it to someone, only I can't find the right person. My friends here are quite delighted with it, but that does not prove very much. I miss the cantor [1] with her thick eyebrows and her critical sense. I have almost got the second part into shape in my mind up to the place where they imagine St. Paul to be Jupiter, and want to sacrifice to him; several great choruses will have to come in here, but I have no notion of them yet—it is hard. You ask if I have made any arrangements for publishing at Leipsic. Breitkopf and Hartel, however, give me to understand

[1] Fanny.

they are ready to publish everything, and this for the sake of a future issue of my collected works (doesn't that sound vastly imposing?). They say they feel much injured at the production of anything of mine by another publisher. The good people shall be saved such troubles in future. But apart from them I have had letters from six musical publishers in different places asking for things to bring out. This sounds rather like vain-glory, but I know you will be glad to hear it, and will excuse me.

TO SECRETARY HIRTE AT COLOGNE.

DÜSSELDORF, 18*th May*, 1835.

HONOURED SIR,—Accept my thanks for your friendly lines which have given me great pleasure. The idea which you communicate in them does me honour, but I must admit that I have a certain shyness about it, which I have been unable to get rid of for a considerable time. It is now so much the vogue for unknown or ordinary people to have their likenesses published so as to become a little better known, or else they do it to get a reputation without earning one, that I have always hesitated to do this too early myself. I should like to avoid it till I had accomplished something which I could be persuaded really deserved this honour. That is, however, not the case at present, and I should be happy to see such a recognition postponed till, in my own conviction, I am worthier of it. But I owe you many thanks for the friendship and kindness which prompted your proposal. I am, etc., etc.,

FELIX MENDELSSOHN BARTHOLDY.

TO PASTOR SCHUBRING AT DESSAU.

LEIPSIC, *6th December*, 1835.[1]

DEAR SCHUBRING,—You no doubt know already what a heavy blow has fallen on the happiness of my life and on all who belong to me. It is the greatest misfortune possible; I must either endure it or sink under it. I say this now after three weeks; the keen pain of the first days is over, but I feel it only more assuredly; a new life must begin for me from this time, or all come to an end; the old life is torn away. It is our comfort and example that mother should be able to bear the loss with a wonderful quiet and steadfastness. She finds joy in her children and grandchildren, and thus tries to conceal from herself the blank which nothing can fill up. My sisters are doing everything to repay our debt to her, and give themselves up to this the more because it is so hard. I was ten days in Berlin, so that with my presence our mother might be surrounded by all that remains of our family, but what days those were I need not tell you. You understand well, and, I

[1] After his father's death.

doubt not, have thought of me in this time of darkness. God granted my father's often repeated petition; his end was as tranquil and gentle, and as unexpected in its rapidity as he had desired. On Wednesday, the 18th, we were all of us round him; late in the evening he went to bed; the next morning he complained a little; at half-past ten his life was ended. The doctors could give no name to his illness. My uncle says that my grandfather, Moses Mendelssohn died precisely in the same way, at the same age, and without illness, his mind bright and tranquil. I cannot say if you knew how especially good my father was to me of late years, how like a friend, so that my whole soul hung on him, and scarcely an hour of my long absence passed without bringing the thought of him into my mind. But you knew him in his own circle and knew how lovable was his character; you will realise what my feelings are. All that remains is duty, and I seek to do it with all my power, for that is what he would desire were he still present with us, and I shall not cease to struggle after what would content him, though the sight of his contentment is granted me no longer. In postponing a reply to your letter, I never thought I should have to answer thus: accept my thanks for it and for all your friendship. One passage for "St. Paul" is admirable: "Der Du der rechte Vater bist." A chorus for it has been in my mind, and I shall write it very shortly. My especial aim is now to set about the completion of the "St. Paul" with double zeal, for my father's last letter urged me to it. He awaited the finishing of this work with

impatience, so it is to me as though I must throw myself into making the "St. Paul" as perfect as I can, and thus think he has still a share in it. If suggestions occur to you, pray continue to send them. You know how the work has shaped itself. To-day I have been writing at it again for the first time, and shall now do so daily. When it is finished, Heaven direct my further steps. Farewell, dear Schubring, and remember me.

Yours,

FELIX MENDELSSOHN BARTHOLDY.

TO HERR ADVOCAT CONRAD SCHLEINITZ AT LEIPSIC.

BERLIN, *1st August*, 1838.

DEAR SCHLEINITZ,—What you say of your increased occupation gives me great pleasure. You know how often we have talked over the question, but still "I cannot admit your opinion that one profession is to be preferred to another." I persist in thinking that anything which the ordinary right sort of man can put his heart into and get well hold of is in itself a noble calling. "The only things I could not feel a very strong interest in are precisely those in which there is no personal element, in which the individual disappears, such as the military career in times of peace, and of that Berlin has sufficient examples. But your whole contention is more or less untrue." In comparing one profession to another, people generally take the naked reality of one, and the most imposing ideal of the other, so, naturally, the decision is easy. And how easy it is for an artist to feel the bare realities of his trade, and then perhaps to envy practical men who have the chance of observing all the relations of life, and knowing all the diversities there are among men, to envy them especially when

one considers all the actual, useful, beneficent things they may accomplish. And then, just because the man of honour has the hardest task in dealing with a public which is more concerned about appearances than realities, therefore one cannot suffer the needs of the moment to guide or perturb one's conscience, but above all external considerations must always maintain in one's heart a something that can raise and sustain it. This tells very directly for my view, for that higher impulse is the best thing in every calling, and it is common to all—shared equally by yours and mine and every other. After all, what is the beauty you find in a quartette or a symphony that I have worked into shape? Surely it is nothing but the piece of myself that I have put into it, given voice to in that fashion. You do the same in your defence of a pickpocket or a claim for damages, or whatever it may be that makes you exert yourself, just in the same measure that any man can do it, and that is the great point of concern. If only what is within a man can get issue and declare itself, and if this inward part of him can become more and more worthy of declaration, that is all; the rest is indifferent. With many thanks for news of all your doings.

Yours,

FELIX MENDELSSOHN BARTHOLDY.

TO PASTOR JULIUS SCHUBRING AT DESSAU.

LEIPSIC, *2nd November*, 1838.

DEAR SCHUBRING,—Many thanks indeed for your letter and the packet that followed it. You offer me a most essential service, for which I am very grateful; yet you ask if I desire it! I should have told you that the notes I sent were not designed for a completed plan, but only for a collection of material; however, when you have put them together, you leave me nothing to do but only to add the music. I agree that the passage about the widow should go out, also the raven, and that all the beginning should be brought more together so as to expand in the chief passages as one wants it to do. I earnestly beg you, if your time and convenience permit, to continue the first part and send it me—(it will have to be very long)—starting from the point at which your last contribution stopped; do so and you will earn my truest gratitude.

You say that at first you saw nothing to cut out, but then a light suddenly broke on you. For my own part, what struck me was to make Elijah a prophet through and through, the man we may really

need to-day—a man strong and zealous, full of bitterness and scorn, the antagonist of the rabble, whether of courtiers or populace, well nigh the antagonist of all the world, yet borne aloft as on the wings of angels. Did that strike you also, and how came you to think of it? My object is to make the story dramatic; as you say, the epic style of narrative cannot come into it. That you look for the universal significance which goes to one's heart in the Biblical words pleases me much: one thing I might say, which is that the dramatic element should here and there be very pregnantly and forcibly apparent. Speech and retort, question and answer, interruption of one speaker by another, all these and similar points are wanted. It is not that I object to Elijah being made first to speak of the assembly of the people, then immediately to the assembly; such a freedom is, of course, among the privileges of the oratorio; but in this mode of presentation I would gladly see as much naturalness as possible. Thus it puts me out that Elijah should only answer in 'number 18' to Ahab's words in '16' with several speeches and a chorus placed between. I would have liked a vigorous piece of dialogue there, etc. But on these points we shall very soon agree, only remember this if you can, in working further. With many thanks for your kindness.—Always yours,

FELIX M. B.

TO PROFESSOR SCHIRMER AT DÜSSELDORF.

BERLIN, *21st November*, 1838.

. . . . . It is said I have become pious! If by this is meant what I understand by pious, and what you from your way of speaking appear to understand too, then I can only say that, unhappily, I have not become so, but I strive towards it every day with what power I have, and seek to become so more and more. Frankly, I know it will never succeed with me outright, but to get nearer is something. But if people mean I have turned into a Pietist, one of those who folds his hands on his bosom and waits for God to accomplish all things for him, or one who, instead of struggling after perfection in his earthly calling, talks of a heavenly calling which is incompatible with mundane efforts, or one who cannot truly love any person or anything in this world—such a one I have not become, thank Heaven! nor will, I trust, all my life long. And for the very reason that I so much desire to be soundly and sanely pious, I need care, I hope, very little about that species of piety. But it is curious that people should pitch upon this special time for saying things of the

sort, now that I am so happy inwardly and outwardly, both through my new home-like and also through busy work, that I never know how to set about being sufficiently thankful. And since you wish me on the way to quiet and peace, let me say I never hoped for so peaceful a life as has now fallen to my lot. Receive my best of thanks for your good wishes, and do not be troubled for my tranquillity.

What you write me of yourself and your work pleases me very much, especially your sharing the opinion that what people usually term fame and glory is a wretched business; while another higher spiritual glory is as needful as it is rare. One sees this most clearly with those who possess all conceivable distinctions, yet never have a moment's joy in them, but hunger continually for more; this first became perfectly apparent to me in Paris. Yet I am glad that you do not speak so contemptuously of the French painters, for I have long taken great delight in the best men they have at present, and I cannot in the least imagine how people can be sincere who find a great poetic stimulus in your pictures and then look down on Horace Vernet from a critical altitude —it seems to me if one finds pleasure in one sort of beauty, another sort cannot remain quite indifferent; or at least such is the case with me.

TO R. SIMROCK AT BONN.

LEIPSIC, *4th March*, 1839.

. . . . . The manuscripts I meant to send you last year are still incomplete. I want them to be good work, and for that good humour and leisure are necessary, things which these endless concerts often deprive me of. Now I hope soon to make an end of them, and discharge my debt.

But they are not "songs without words." Indeed, I have no intention of producing any more of that species, let the Hamburgers say what they will. There are too many crawling between earth and heaven already, and in the end they grow insipid. There is too great a mass of music for the piano composed in that style. It is time to strike another note, say I. With most sincere respect.

FELIX MENDELSSOHN BARTHOLDY.

TO J. MOSCHELES, LONDON.

LEIPSIC, 30*th November*, 1839.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I have not given Pott any musical assistance in his undertaking. If you could only see how abominably this business of monuments is carried on here, you would not do so either. People speculate on our great men to make themselves a name out of their names, send up a peal of trumpets in the newspapers, and make atrocious noises with real trumpets. "Unrefreshing as the winter wind." If only they would found a decent orchestra at Halle for Handel, at Saltzburg for Mozart, at Bonn for Beethoven, and so on, so that their works might be well interpreted, I should be with them; but I will have nothing to do with their stones, while my musicians have stones for bread, nor with their conservatoires, where there is nothing to conserve. My present hobby-horse is the poverty of our orchestra and the remedy for it. By dint of unspeakable running about, writing letters, and tormenting people, I have managed to secure them an extra 500 thalers, and before I go away from here they must have as much again. If the town will do that then they may go further and erect a monument to

Sebastian Bach. But the extra salaries first." You see I am quite a raving Leipsicer. But it would move you, too, if you could see it all for yourself, and had also the witness of your own ears for the efforts of my poor musicians to produce something good.

FROM A LETTER TO MINISTER VON FALKENSTEIN (proposing the foundation of an Academy of Music in Leipsic).

LEIPSIC, *8th April*, 1840.

. . . . . Music has long been peculiarly a native growth of this country, and it is just that tendency in it which lies nearest the heart of every thoughtful and receptive lover of art, the tendency, I mean, towards the expression of true and profound feeling, which has struck the deepest root among us from the beginning. This wide-spread sympathy in our nation is certainly no matter of accident, nor has it been without weighty result for our general culture. And thus music has been a most vital power among us, not only as affording momentary pleasures, but working for our higher and spiritual growth. Whoever is really interested in this art must also feel keenly the desire to see it established for the future on the firmest possible basis.

The dominant tendency of our time, however, is towards the positive and the mechanical; and in face of this the development and propagation of true artistic sense is doubly needful, but also doubly

difficult. The attainment of this end seems only possible if we begin at the foundation. And good grounding is the surest method in every sort of education, certainly it is so in music. We need a good school of music which would include all the various branches of the art, subjecting each in turn to that higher aim towards which they all serve as means, and leading on its scholars as far as possible to that aim; such a school would be able to combat the practical or material tendency which, unhappily, has many influential adherents among artists themselves, and would, I believe, even yet be strong enough to overcome it.

Simple, private teaching, which in former days bore such admirable fruit, and that, too, for the community at large, is for many reasons no longer adequate to our needs. Masters capable of teaching any musical instrument were formerly to be found in all classes of society, but this has more and more declined in our day, and is now to a great extent confined to a single instrument—the piano.

The scholars who desire instruction in other directions are almost entirely limited to those who devote themselves to music as a profession, and to these people the means of paying for good private teaching are generally wanting. It is the fact that among these one often finds the most brilliant talents; but unfortunately teachers of music are on their side seldom in a position to devote their time to the development of even the greatest talent without remuneration, and thus scholars and teachers alike lose, the first the in-

struction they long for, the second the opportunity of spreading abroad their knowledge and making it live. Thus a public academy would at the present day be a great advantage to both masters and scholars. It would put within reach of the latter the means of developing capacities which without such help must often go to waste. And for teachers of music it would be most valuable to have a centre whence their energies could be directed from a single point of view, and to a single object, and thus be preserved from indifference and isolation, and from the resulting sterility of which we are too well aware. . . .

TO HIS MOTHER.

LEIPSIC, *27th October*, 1840.

DEAR MOTHER,—A thousand thanks for the dear letter I received yesterday, which delighted me, except for that little—well-deserved—thrust at the beginning of it. Indeed, I ought to have written long ago, but you cannot conceive how much I have to be Jack-of-all-work in every corner these winter months. The trifling imperceptible fragments of business, notes, and so forth, that arise every day, and seem to me so burthensome, and such useless lumber in one's existence, like the dust upon one's books persist in accumulating and become unmanageable if one does not make a clear sweep of them daily. And then there is the strong pressure I feel on me, whenever my spirits are right, to make my regular work result in something, so altogether my weeks and months fleet by like the wind.

You will have seen in the newspapers that we arranged a special concert for the visit of the King of Saxony, and gave a second performance of the hymn in his honour, which went off admirably. All the music went so well that it was a delight to listen. During the interval the king sent to fetch me, and I was obliged to make my way somehow through

a double row of ladies—you know the arrangement of our hall—to arrive at the spot where his majesty and suite were seated. He conversed with me a long time very kindly and pleasantly, and spoke with discrimination about musical topics. In the second part came the "hymn," and at its conclusion, just as I had moved from my desk, I suddenly heard the people about me exclaiming, "Now the King is coming to him," and true enough, he passed through the rows of ladies, came to my desk—you may fancy what a general jubilation there was—and spoke to me with so much feeling and cordiality that I felt in the highest degree delighted and honoured. He mentioned the particular passages which had pleased him best, thanked the singers, and so went away, both orchestra and audience making him the finest bows and courtesies they could contrive. There was altogether an uproar and confusion like Noah's Ark. Now, perhaps, he will give us the 20,000 thalers I have long been endeavouring to get for our musical institutions here, and then I could truly say I had done some service to Leipsic music. . . .

I say nothing of the "silver wedding" of the Leipsic Liedertafel; indeed, I have not quite recovered from it as yet. Heaven help us, what a bore our German fatherland is, when one looks at it from that side! I have a vivid recollection of father's extreme repugnance to these institutions, and everything that has any sort of connection with "Cousin Michael." I feel something similar in myself. Farewell, dearest mother.

Yours ever, FELIX.

TO THE MUSICAL DIRECTOR, JULIUS RIETZ, DÜSSELDORF.

LEIPSIC, *23rd April*, 1841.

DEAR RIETZ,—Yesterday evening we performed your overture to Hero and Leander and also the battle-song; both met with general acclamation, and with the unanimous approval of musicians and public. During the rehearsal, when we reached the passage in D major at the end of the overture, I saw already smiling faces and nodding heads among the players, which pleases me much when the piece is yours. They were all greatly struck with it, and the audience, who sat yesterday still as mice and without a murmur, broke out at the end in the most vigorous applause, and abundantly confirmed their judgment.

Both rehearsals and performance have afforded me great satisfaction; there is something so genuinely artistic, so really musical in your management of the orchestra, that I felt at home from the first bar, and it riveted my interest till the last.

But since you insist on my putting on my critical spectacles, I may say that both pieces suggested to me one desire, namely, that you would write much and continuously. My reason I need not give,

at least the chief one; that lies on the surface. But there is another. Especially in the overture there is apparent to me a certain tendency which I am only too well acquainted with, for, as I believe, it ruined my own Reformation symphony, and which can yet be unfailingly overcome by repeated and varied composition. Just as the French attempt to make their ideas appear elevated and interesting by much tormenting and juggling with them, so, I believe, a natural distaste for this sort of thing may lead one to the opposite extreme of complete timidity at everything piquant and flashing, so that, in the end, the bare musical idea lacks boldness and interest. Leanness takes the place of corruption; it is the contrast of the Jesuit churches sparkling with tinsel to the four white walls of the Calvinists; true piety may be in either, but the true path is between them. Heavens! excuse my sermonising tone, but how is one to explain one's meaning on such matters? The leading ideas both in your overture and in my Reformation symphony, which, I think, resemble each other precisely in this, are interesting rather for what they signify, than simply in themselves. Naturally, I don't mean they should be exclusively the latter, for that would bring us back to the French style, but neither should they be the former alone, for the two should be welded together and interpenetrate each other.

To give a theme real musical interest in and for itself, as you can do it down to every second hautboy and trumpet in your instrumentation, that, I take it, is the chief point to concern oneself with. In your

next works I look to see you steer a clear course in this direction, and that without your admirable command of outline, or your masterly control of instruments, etc., in detail, suffering in the least from an increased polish or sharpness of musical ideas. And as ideas are not things to polish or to sharpen, but to be taken and used as they come, and as God sends them, so labour is the single thing that remains to desiderate in an artist like yourself and in creative work like yours; only the direction in which it is applied may here and there be a point of discussion. . . . .

TO HIS MOTHER.

INTERLAKEN, 18*th August*, 1842.

DEAR LITTLE MOTHER,—Do you still remember our living here twenty years ago in the pleasant inn under the great walnut-trees with the fair young hostess? Ten years back I was here again, and they refused me quarters. I looked too disreputable after my journey on foot, and that, I think, was the only annoyance I had on all that journey. Now we are living here again, this time as people who are settled in life. The Jungfrau with its silver horns still shapes itself as steeply and delicately as ever in the air; the mountain looks fresh still, but the hostess is grown quite old, and it was only by her unchanged deportment I could recognise her. I have been sketching the walnut-trees, far better than before, no doubt, but far worse than I know it really ought to be. The Unterseen post brings us the letters as it used; but there are many new houses. The Aar ripples and murmurs as quickly and quietly; and the water is as green as ever; "time is, time was, time is passed." Really, I have little more to write; description, of Swiss journeyings are neither here nor there, and instead of my old diary, I now fall to sketching like one pos-

sessed. All day long I sit down before a mountain and try to copy its outlines, and never leave off till the drawing is hopelessly spoilt; my great idea is to get at least one landscape daily into my book. . . . It is a strange thing with the mountains here as the greatest books, they seem to change with oneself, and display a new aspect of themselves to one's own altered temperament, and always rise above one in the same glory. Now that I come to see them with my wife, my whole impression is quite different from what it was; then I cared for nothing but to rush up every craggy peak and green meadow-slope, and now I should like to stop in every place, and live there quietly for months. I can give no assurance that some fine spring I won't pack off here with all my household goods, and never return to the North till the very last leaves are off the trees. . . . .

TO MARE ANDRE SOUCHAY, LUBECK.[1]

BERLIN, 15*th October*, 1842.

THERE is a great deal of talking about music, and very little said to the purpose. My own belief is that words are inadequate to express it, and if it were otherwise I should end by leaving off composing music altogether. One constantly hears people complain that the meaning of music is so indefinite, it leaves them in so much doubt as to the significance intended to be conveyed in it; and yet they imply that language is intelligible to everybody. With me it's exactly the opposite. And that not only with complete sentences, and so on, but single words also seem to me vague, indefinite, and very open to misunderstanding in comparison with real music, the music that fills one's heart with a thousand things finer than any language. What any music I care for means to me is not an indefinite feeling which one might render definite by translating it into words, but something perfectly clear. And, therefore, all at-

[1] This letter was written in reply to Herr Souchay's question as to the meaning of some of Mendelssohn's "Songs without Words."

tempts to express these ideas strike me as accurate, perhaps, but always as unsatisfying, and that is the impression I gain from your own. Not that that is your fault; it is the fault of language itself which, indeed, must fall short here. If you ask me what was in my mind while composing a particular song, I answer, the song itself precisely as it stands. And if, indeed, there was in any case some particular word or particular sentence in my thoughts, I can tell no one what it was, precisely because that word does not carry the same significance to one person that it does to another, and it is only the song itself that can express the same meaning, or suggest the same emotion, to one as to the other.

Resignation, melancholy, worship, a hunting call; these words do not call up the same feeling in two different persons; what is resignation to one is melancholy to another, while a third person attaches no definite significance to either. If one were a downright keen hunter by nature, perhaps the hunting call would come to signify to one pretty much the same thing as worship, and the notes of a horn be veritably a sort of anthem. We should hear nothing in it but the hunting call, and however much we might discuss it with the huntsman we should never come to an agreement. The word would still be many-sensed, and yet we should both understand the music.

Will you let that pass for an answer to your question? It is, at least, the only answer I know how to make, and it is nothing itself but words of doubtful significance.

TO PAUL MENDELSSOHN BARTHOLDY.

BIRMINGHAM, *26th August*, 1846.

MY DEAR BROTHER,—You have taken so kind an interest in my "Elijah" from the beginning, and your encouragement has helped me so much to its completion, that I feel bound to write to you at once after the first performance yesterday, and tell you how things went. "Never did the first production of any piece of mine succeed so admirably, or call out such enthusiastic sympathy from musicians and public as this oratorio. At the first rehearsal in London it was evident that it won favour, and that the performers played and sang the music with pleasure, but I confess that the swing and zest of the first performance were far beyond what I expected. I only wish you could have been there! Through the whole two and a half hours that it lasted, the great hall filled with 2,000 people, and the great orchestra all strained to the utmost and concentrated on the music, not a single whisper among the audience; I could control absolutely the crowd of instruments and the great volume of choir and organ, leading them precisely as I wanted. How often did I think of you!

No less than four choruses and four airs had to be repeated, and in the whole of the first part there was not a single mistake. In the second there were one or two, but these very insignificant. A young English tenor sang the last air most beautifully, so much so that I had to pull myself together not to let my feelings hinder me from beating time decently. "As I said before, would you had been there! To-morrow is my return. Nowadays one does not, like Goethe, see the carriage-pole pointed homewards, but I still have always the same feeling when I am starting back to my own country. In October I hope to see you in Berlin, and will bring the scene, either to perform in public or to play it in secret to you and Fanny and Rebecca, the first probably, but by all means the second also. Farewell, my dear brother, and excuse this letter if it is stupid. I am often much distracted, and all I have really to say is to thank you for your interest in my "Elijah" and the help you have given me.

Yours, FELIX.

TO CARL KLINGEMANN, LONDON.

LEIPSIC, *6th December*, 1846.

. . . . .

FOR several days I have been straining all my powers on the "Elijah," and am hoping to make a good end of most of the things I disliked on the first performance. I have quite done one of the hardest portions—the widow—and you will certainly be content with the alteration, yes, I will say with the improvement.

The "Elijah" has gained much in significance and mystery in this passage. It was the want of these things which troubled me, the sort of want I discover, alas! after the festival, and can only define when I have mended it. But in the other passages we have talked about as well I hope to refine somewhat. I am very seriously going through again everything that satisfied me before, so that in a few weeks I hope to be ready with the whole, and then turn to something new. But the pieces I have already worked over afresh do show me clearly that it is well not to rest with such a work till it is as perfect as ever I can make it, even though a very small number of people indeed hear or know anything of these refinements. And though a prodigious time is taken up in making

them, when a passage is really made better, its effect, both by itself and on the rest of the piece, is, indeed, vastly different. You see I am vastly contented with the "widow," the passage I completed to-day; therefore, I think one dare not rest satisfied, and conscience, too, gives me a hint now and then to the same effect.

. . . . .

TO GENERAL VON WEBER, BERLIN.

FRANKFORT, *24th May*, 1847.[1]

EVEN in the depth of my grief your letter has done me good. Your very handwriting first and your nearness to me at this moment is helpful, and then so also is every single word you write. Take my thanks for it, dear and faithful friend. Truly, one who has ever known my sister can never again forget her in a lifetime. But to us, and perhaps most of all to myself, to whom she was present with all her sweetness and affection at every moment, who could have no joy alone but only with the thought of her partaking in it, whom she from the first so helped and spoiled with all the richness of her sisterly love, and who always dreamed that this could never fail, it is a loss which we cannot yet measure at all, and even now I cannot help instinctively believing that our sorrow will be suddenly revoked. Yet I know it is all true, and the certainty is there, but now I cannot accustom myself to it, nor ever shall. It is beautiful to think of that noble, harmonious being, and how she is freed from the weariness of age and the decline of life, but it is

[1] After the death of Fanny Hensel.

hard for us to go on our way with true humility and endurance.

Pardon me that I can write so little, but, thank you, I must. My family are well, their happy children's faces with the unbroken gladness on them, are what has done me good in these days. I cannot think of music; if I turn my thoughts to it, it all seems waste and hollow. But when my children come in, a brightness comes with them, and then I can listen to them and watch them for hours.

The best of thanks for your letter. Heaven keep you and yours. FELIX M. B.

TO HIS NEPHEW, SEBASTIAN HENSEL.

BADEN-BADEN, *13th June*, 1847.

DEAR SEBASTIAN,—I must wish you happiness for your birthday. It is the most solemn you have yet seen. To look back at this day last year is now a great sorrow for you, for then your mother stood by your side; but may the looking forward at your years to come give you strength and courage, for then also will your mother be with you in all your life and all your actions. May it all be good and worthy, and every step of yours be directed to the goal that she looks forward to for you, and to which her example and her spirit have accompanied you and ever will, so long as you are faithful to her. And, in other words, that means indeed all your life long. "Whatever branch of life and knowledge and activity you devote yourself to, it is essential to will, not to wish for, mind, but to will, something useful and noble, and that is enough. Everywhere there is now a want, and ever will be a want, of good, stout-hearted workers. It is not true what people say about it being harder to accomplish anything now than it was formerly. On the contrary, it is and remains, in a sense, easy, or else it

is impossible. All that is wanted is true inward courage, real love, real unconquerable will,' and all these you should not want for, for you have the sweetest, loveliest pattern of them unchangeably before you. "If you follow that, and accomplish it all, well; yet nothing can be attained without the accomplishment of that inward desire I have for you to-day. God be with you.

In this lies comfort and strength, and joy for the future is in it also. I often long to be able to pass these days with you and your Aunt Rebecca. We expect your father in ten or twelve days from now, but I wish you were coming with him, and then we could sketch from nature together. Lately I have "composed" several pictures—an old castle perched on a rock amid the forest with a perspective stretching away to the plain, then a terrace with an old linden tree and an image of the Virgin beneath it, and last, a solitary mountain lake, with high rocks all round it, and boats is the foreground. Wouldn't you like to try these subjects, and let us compare our skill? Do it, dear Sebastian, and show me when we meet again—very soon, I hope. And God be with you.—Always yours, FELIX M. B.

THE END.

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Letter of M.

Moses Mendelsohn (translation) 'Phädon 1767
(review by Mirabeau)

Abraham M. (Felix's great respect for)
1820 composing Symphonie-Cantate.