THE PIANOFORTE AND ITS MUSIC

XIV.

Rise of the Romantic School—Romanticism as the Antithesis of Classicism—Attempt at Analysis and a Definition—Beethoven's Contemporaries—John Field and Carl Maria von Weber.

Thus Beethoven ended the old dispensation and ushered in the new. He was the last great classicist and the first great romanticist. The words are out and we are at once confronted by the need of further definition. We cannot go on without it, yet I despair of inventing one which shall be accepted as of general validity. The best that I can do is to set one down which shall be applicable to this study, and urge some arguments in its defence; let it be discarded by all who can find a better.

From every point of view the term Classic is more definite in its suggestion than Romantic, which in musical criticism is chiefly used for the purpose of conveying an idea of antithesis to Classic. In literary criticism this is not always the case. Classical poets and prose writers are those of all times whose works have been set down as of such excellence that all the world that knows them has accorded them a place apart, has put them in a class, out of which, so far as we can judge from the history of centuries, they will never be taken. Here the term, as Archbishop Trench pointed out, retains a relic of a significance derived from the political economy of ancient Rome, in which citizens were rated according to their income as *classici* or as being *infra classem*. (See, "How to Listen to Music," page 65).

When the term Romantic got into literary criticism it meant something different from, though not necessarily antithetic to, Classic, and this difference enters also into the term as used in musical criticism. Romantic writings in poetry and prose were those whose subject matter was drawn from the imaginative literature of the Middle Ages—the fantastical stories of chivalry and adventure which first made their appearance in the Romance languages. The principal elements in these tales were the marvellous and the supernatural. When these subjects were revived by some poets of Germany and France in the early part of the nineteenth century, they were clothed in a style of thought and expression different from that cultivated by the authors who thitherto had been looked upon as models. So not only subject matter but manner of expression also entered into the conception of the term Romantic which these writers affected.

We see Romanticism of the first kind in the subjects of the operas of Weber and Marschner; but this element cannot be said to enter significantly into purely instrumental music, least of all into music for the pianoforte, to which I am trying to confine myself. In a way it is influential, it is true in music which relies more or less upon suggestions derived from external sources—"programme music," as it is called. It would be incorrect, however, to classify all programme music as Romantic. Froberger's attempt to describe the incidents of an adventurous journey, Buxtchude's musical delineation of the celestial spheres, Kuhnau's Biblical sonatas, Bach's "Capriccio on the Departure of a Beloved Brother," Dittersdorf's descriptive symphonies, were all cast in classical forms; the titles in nowise affected the character or value of the music as such. No more did the titles which the virtuoso composers of a later date gave their sonatas and fantasias. They did no more than invite a pleasing play of fancy and an accompanying intellectual operation—the association of naturally musical ideas. By this I mean a correlation of certain attributes and properties of things with certain musical idioms which had come to have conventional significance, such as position in space and acuteness and gravity of tone; speed, lightness and ponderosity of movement and tempo; suffering or death and the minor mode; flux and reflux and alternating ascent and descent of musical figures, etc. Music of this kind may be only one degree higher in the æsthetic scale than that which is crudely imitative of natural sounds, like the whistling of the wind, the rolling crash of thunder, the roar of artillery, the rhythmical clatter of horses' hoofs, etc.

JOHN FIELD, 1782-1837.
After a steel engraving by C. Mayer.

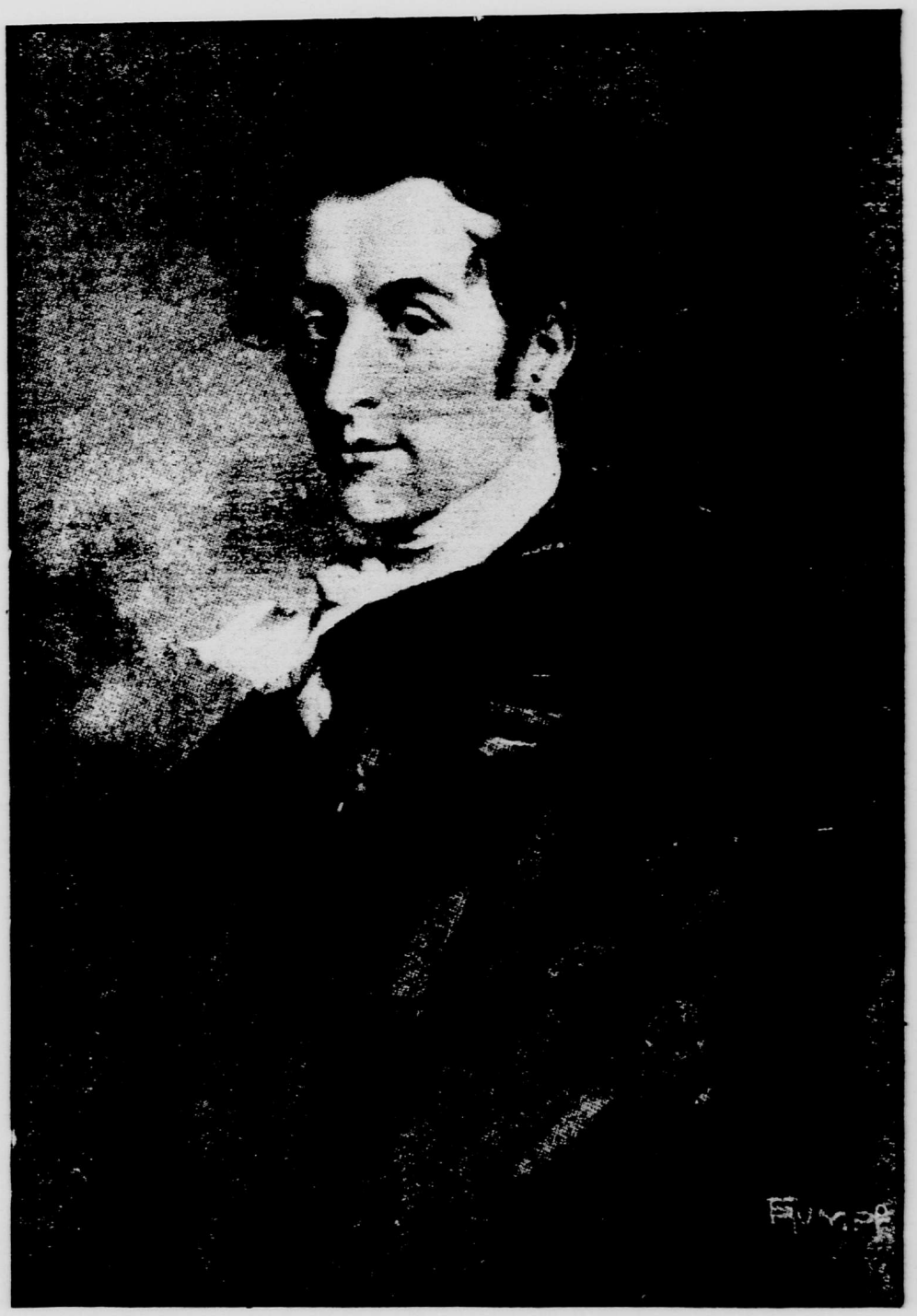
It is only when these things become stimuli of feeling and emotion, with their infinite phases, that they become associate elements, with melody, harmony and rhythm, in music. Now, we have programme music of a higher order, the order which, because it demanded freer vehicles of utterance than was offered by the classical forms (especially when they had degenerated into unyielding formulas), came to be looked upon as antithetical to the conception of Classicism, and therefore was called Romantic as the newer literature had been.

The composers whose names first spring into our minds when we think of the Romantic School are men like Mendelssohn and Schumann, who drew much of their inspiration from the young writers of their time who were making war on stilted rhetoric and conventionalism of phrase. Schumann touches hands with the Romantic poets in their strivings in two directions. His artistic conduct, especially in his early years, is inexplicable if Jean Paul be omitted from the equation. His music rebels against the formalism which had held despotic sway over the art, and also seeks to disclose the beauty which lies buried in the world of mystery in and around us, and gives expression to the multitude of emotions to which unyielding formalism had refused adequate utterance. ("How to Listen to Music," page 67.)

Now, I think, we are ready for the tentative definition of Romanticism; it is the quality in composition which strives to give expression to other ideals than mere sensuous beauty, and seeks them irrespective of the restrictions and limitations of form and the conventions of law; the quality which puts content, or matter, over manner. The striving cannot be restricted to the composers of any particular time or place. Evidences of it are to be found here and there in the works of the truly great composers of all times; but it became dominant in the creative life of the men who drew their inspiration from Beethoven. The chief of these are to be studied after a brief excursion demanded by historical integrity.

I have already called attention to the circumstance (not peculiar to music but shared with it by all other creations of the human mind) that there is no sharp line of demarcation between characteristic periods of development, but that they overlap each other. Every great artist, before he becomes the forward man who strikes a new path, first travels along the old and has company on his journey. It is only after posterity recognizes his puissance that his companions drop out of sight and he appears in his solitary grandeur. It is this that gives us the perspective of the great masters touching hands with each other in an isolated line, though their contemporaries may have walked with them, thought with them and worked with them along large stretches of their progressive journey. Beethoven looms a lonely figure before our fancy when we contemplate him amid the period which produced him, and he still stands alone as the preacher of his ultimate evangel; but there were brave men not a few who recognized his greatness and profited by his example, though they could not divorce themselves as completely from the spirit of their time as he did. Their feet, like those of the mortals, as the Hindu legend has it, were on the ground, while his, like those of the immortals, touched it only in seeming. The period which began with his youth and endured throughout his life and until his spirit bore its first vigorous fruit in the founders of the Romantic School was one of technical brilliancy. Its representatives, building on the foundations laid by Cramer and Clementi, developed pianoforte playing to a high degree of perfection and established pedagogical principles which have been transmitted without loss of vitality by a direct line of successors down to to-day; but, as composers, they created little which has withstood the tooth of time except instructive material. Most of them live in history merely as virtuosi and teachers. These shall receive attention in the final subdivision of these studies. Special considerations call for the mention of a few here.

Dr. Burney, in his "Present State," bears testimony to the extraordinary love for music cherished by the natives of Bohemia and their skill as practitioners. Among Bohemian musicians of the period which overlapped that of Beethoven there were several who deserve to be singled out because of their dignified position in musical history. J. L. Dussek has been discussed in connection with the development of the classical sonata up to Beethoven. A predecessor, J. B. Vanhall (1739-1813), composer of



CARL MARIA VON WEBER.
After a painting by F. Rumpf.

MOSCHELES IN HIS YOUTH.

church music, symphonies and chamber music, but most popular among the dilletanti for his pianoforte pieces, his sonatas challenging special interest, no doubt, by the titles which he gave to some of them, such as "Sonate Militaire," "The Celebration of Peace," "The Battle of Würzburg," "The Sea Fight at Trafalgar," etc. Louis Kozeluch (1748-1818) was a music master at the Austrian Court in Vienna, and received the appointment of court composer after Mozart's death. He composed voluminously in the large forms, instrumental and vocal, and wrote from forty to fifty pianoforte sonatas, three concertos for four hands and one concerto for two pianofortes.

Though Johann Wenzel Tomaschek (1774-1850) found as a teacher that his devotion to the æsthetic principles of his age was incompatible with the erraticism of Beethoven, the composer, we are yet indebted to him for an illuminative account of the effect produced by Beethoven's playing on impressionable hearers. He was a man of education and broad culture, one who, like Schumann, was trained to the law, but who abandoned jurisprudence for music when his pupil, Count Bouquoy, offered him a salaried place in his household. His compositions, of which twelve "eclogues" and the same number of "rhapsodies" were noteworthy, and caused one enthusiastic critic to call him the "Schiller of Music," enjoyed great popularity among his countrymen. Ignaz Pleyel (1757-1831) was a pupil of Vanhall and Haydn, with whom he lived for a space. When Haydn went to London in 1791 on the invitation of Salomon the managers of the professional concerts engaged Pleyel, whom they intended to play off against his old master. The rivalry between the two concert organizations was extremely bitter, and an inspired newspaper article which told that negotiations had been begun with Pleyel said that Haydn was too old, weak and exhausted to produce new music, wherefore he only repeated himself in his compositions. How little the two artists felt the rivalry is indicated in the memorandum which Haydn entered in his notebook:

"Pleyl came to London on the 23d of December. On the 24th I dined with him."

In 1783 Pleyel became musical director of the Cathedral at Strassburg, whence he went to Paris and founded a music publishing house and a pianoforte factory (1807), which still survives under his name. All of his sonatas and other compositions, except those intended for the purposes of instruction, were modelled after those of Haydn. Yet he cut a brave figure in the concert life of the eighteenth century. Ludwig Berger (1777-1839), who, among many other things, wrote a "Sonata Pathétique" and a "Marche pour les armées Angl-Espagn. dans les Pyrenées," deserves to be remembered as the teacher of Mendelssohn, Dorn and Taubert. A similar title is that of the Abbé G. J. Vogler (1749-1814), a Bavarian theoretician and organist, who taught Weber and Meyerbeer, and showed some appreciation of a tendency into which pianoforte music was later to fall in a piece for pianoforte with quartet accompaniment, entitled: "Polymelos, ou caractère de musique de différ. Nations." Louis Spohr (1784-1859), violinist, conductor, composer of operas, oratorios and symphonies, is more significant in the department of chamber music employing the pianoforte than as a writer for that instrument alone—a characterization which also fits George Onslow (1784-1853), who, although descended from a noble English family, was a native of France. However, two sonatas for four hands have received praise from modern critics.

A successor of Mozart, Hummel, Clementi and Beethoven was Ignaz Moscheles (1794-1870), whom Edward Dannreuther in Grove's "Dictionary of Music and Musicians" describes as "the foremost pianist after Hummel and before Chopin." Moscheles, who has many pupils among the older musicians of to-day, made the pianoforte score of Beethoven's "Fidelio" under

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