MY WORLD STORY BOOK

Central Europe / Russia

A Compilation of Historical
Biographies for the Young Reader

Compiled by Marlene Peterson

Libraries of Hope

My World Story Book
Book Ten: Central Europe / Russia

Cover Image: Astronomer Copernicus, or Conversations with God, by Jan Matejko (1872). In public domain, source Wikimedia Commons.

Libraries of Hope, Inc.
Appomattox, Virginia 24522

Website: www.librariesofhope.com
Email**:** librariesofhope@gmail.com

Printed in the United States of America

Contents

Chapter 1

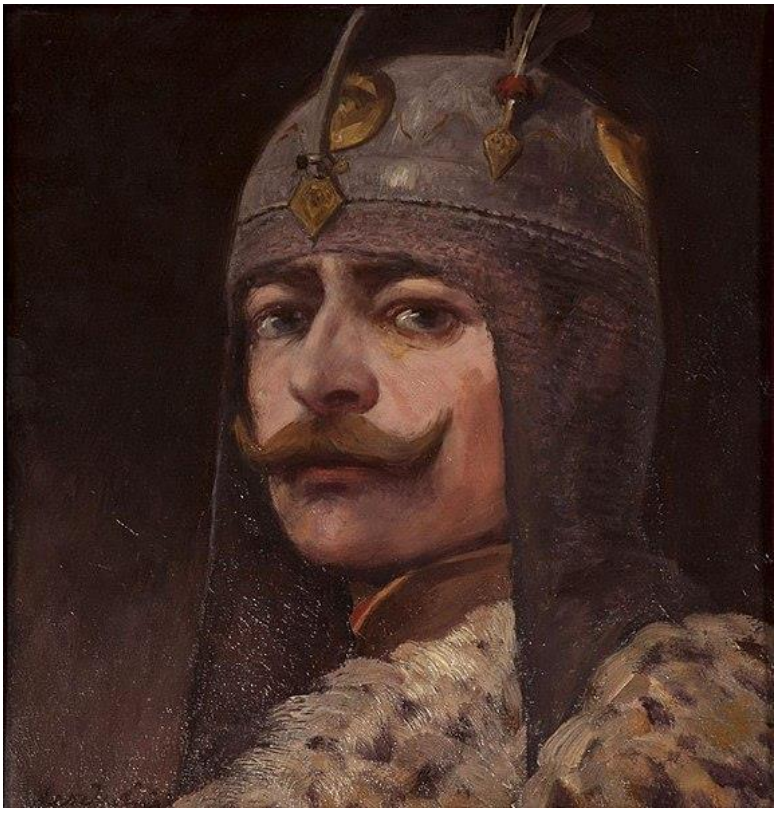
Árpád

Died 907 A.D., Hungary

There are heroes we can only see as through a glass, darkly, but whom we know to have been heroes by internal evidence, by the work they accomplished.

Such a hero was Arpád, the great Chief who brought the Hungarian people out of the East and conquered for them the land which for over a thousand years has been their home.

We have no certain knowledge of the exact spot where lay the cradle of the Hungarian race, but it is believed to be somewhere in the south-western region of present-day Siberia. Thence, urged by want, internal strife, or some other cause, a portion of these Magyars (as they were called later on) migrated westward, settling first by the borders of the Caspian Sea, later on the northern shores of the Black Sea, and still later in what was then known as Atelkuzu and is now Bessarabia. On their wanderings they lived, as all nomad people live, by hunting, fishing, and cattle-breeding. When a region ceased to yield them and their herds sufficient sustenance they sent forth their scouts to find fresh fields and pastures new.



Imaginary portrait of Árpád, Árpád Feszty

In this way the Magyars became a hardy, adventurous people, good horsemen, good fighters, steeled to every danger and disciplined to render implicit obedience to their tribal chiefs. There were seven of these chiefs, one for each tribe, and they were equal in standing and power except when the community was on the move, when one of the seven was chosen as supreme leader for the time being. The system answered so well that it was decided to make it permanent, and Lebéd, the old chief who had brought them out of Asia, was asked to retain the leadership.

But he answered that a younger, stronger man was needed to cope with the new perils and difficulties that confronted them in their new surroundings, and designated another chief, Almos, or failing him, his young and vigorous son Arpád, to succeed him. His advice was taken and, the choice having fallen on Arpád, he was declared High Chief or Prince of all the tribes and raised high on a shield, according to old-established custom, to be acclaimed by all his people.

Arpád must have been endowed with extraordinary qualities to make the other chiefs willing to set him, young as he was, above themselves. Little as we know of him we can safely assume this much.

He needed to be exceptionally brave and wise to save the young newly-formed nation whose welfare had been given into his hands. The Bulgars attacking them, Arpád cast about for some less exposed region on which to settle his people.

His scouts brought him tidings of a marvelous country to the north-west, where apparently boundless reaches of rich pasture land were guarded from hostile attack by mighty rivers and forest-clad mountain ranges. This land, which was sparsely populated by Bulgars, Turks, Slavs, he resolved to win for the Magyars.

It was not an easy enterprise. Great strategical skill and an extraordinary driving force as well as personal prowess were needed before the whole of the coveted land could be occupied, and the women, children, and livestock made to follow the conquering warriors across swamps and torrents,

Arrival of the Hungarians, Árpád Feszty

Conquest (The entry of the Hungarians in the Carpathian Basin), Mihály Munkácsy

precipitous passes, and all but impenetrable virgin forests. It was not till 902 A.D. that Arpád the Conqueror completed his self-imposed task of providing his wandering people with a country and a home in which they could live and thrive.

In the five years that followed he capped this great achievement by a work as great, if not greater: the stabilisation of the new empire by internal organisation and a judicious choice of allies. But for his wisdom and foresight the Magyars, newcomers in Europe and surrounded by alien and hostile races, must have vanished off the face of the Earth. Instead, they became recognized members of the great family of European nations. It is as founder no less than as conqueror that Arpád stands among the great figures of history.

When he died, and was buried "with great honour" in the bed of a brook near the old Roman settlement of Aquincum, his mourning people must have felt they owed to him much more than their prosperity of the moment, the very future of their race and all the wonders of the centuries to come.

Chapter 2

Johann Gutenberg

About 1397–1468 A.D., Germany

Portrait of Johann Gutenberg, unknown artist

About five hundred years ago, when the whole history of Europe seemed to be bound up in the doings of kings now buried in oblivion, something was happening of more moment than all the doings of kings since Europe came out of barbarism. A man in Germany was secretly working out an art which was destined to change the whole history of the world. Before this art of printing was discovered learning was in the hands of the monks, who had copies, and sometimes originals, of the ancient writings which summed up the knowledge of mankind. Ordinary people, knowing nothing, were the moral slaves of those who knew something. The man who was the main factor in discovering this stupendous secret had no doubt of its importance. He knew that once books were printed and sold as merchandise men would begin to think for themselves, and no longer blindly follow kings or priests. When Johann Gutenberg was an old man he was looking forward and inquiring what would come.

"I see the time coming (he said) when these little mobile letters which I have discovered will become living realities; like so many serpents, they will climb the walls of our cathedrals even up to the clock-towers, and they will be as gnawing worms to the old thrones of our Emperors. I have created, I have invented them, but they cannot be otherwise than destructive. I have lighted a torch, but let the wind and the storm arise and shake their wings, and I warn them that the flame will suddenly become a devouring fire, consuming everything around it.

There stands in the middle of the square in front of the Cathedral of Mainz a statue of Johann Gutenberg by Thorwaldsen. And on a building not far away we see an inscription which says that here Johann Gutenberg lived and worked. Few people think of the years of toil, the bitter losses, the secrets shrouded by a garret roof in old Mainz.

That was a Mainz as different from the present city on the Rhine, with its wharves and factories and many industries, as Elizabeth's London was from the capitol today. When Johann Gutenberg was born there Mainz was one of the most important cities of Germany, with ninety thousand people living inside her walls.

Young Johann ran about the narrow cobbled streets and stared up at the great cathedral, and watched brightly-clad princes ride by with their long retinue, looking as gay as peacocks when they passed over the old bridge and were reflected in the waters of the Rhine. He saw the aqueducts and the remains of the Roman fortress, and, like anybody else, thought Mainz was a grand and ancient city. Most of all he liked the fairs and great market days, for then he could see the kind of things he loved and one day hoped to make: the playing-cards printed from one rough block, the little rough wood-cut pictures of saints and Bible characters, the curiously carved images, the polished silver mirrors.

Johann had no desire to become a public man and help to rule the town, like the men of his family for a generation or two. We do not know just when he became apprenticed to a stone-cutter, for the records of his early years are scanty; but we do know that one day Johann rode out of the gallant city and turned his horse's head toward Strasbourg.

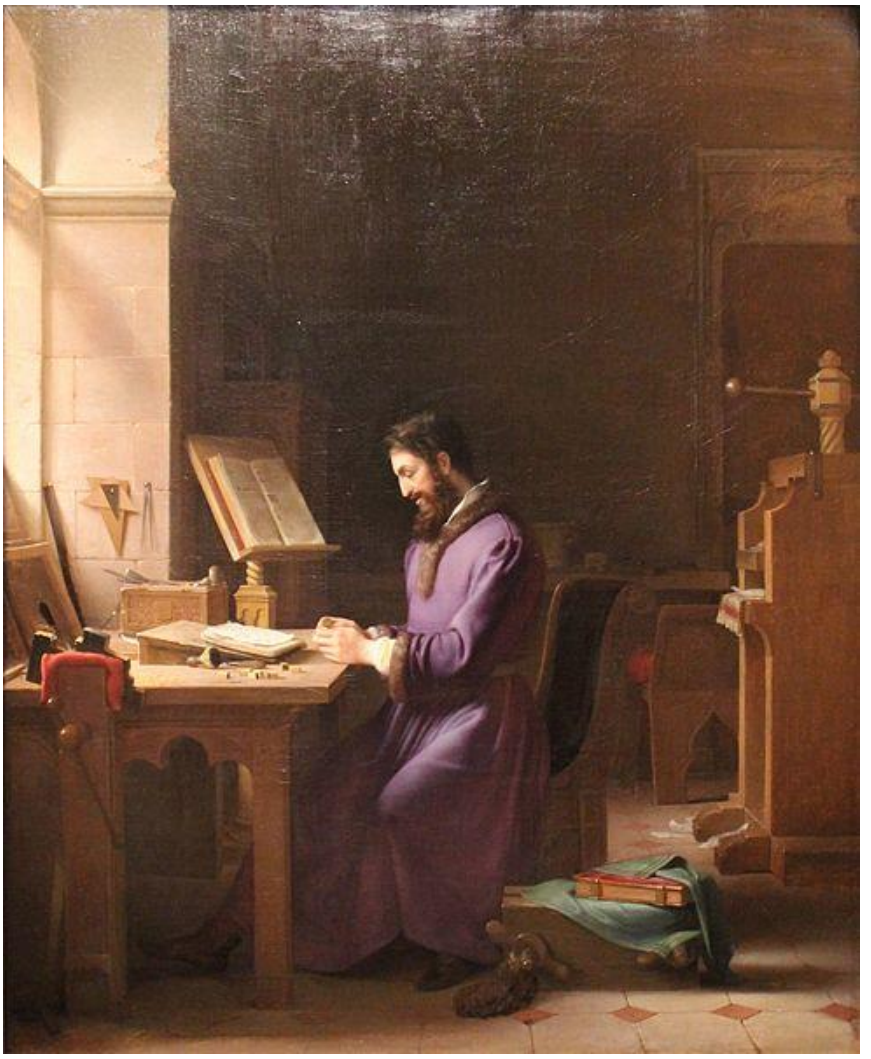
He was then a young man, a proud, gay figure with a feather floating from his velvet cap. With him was a youth, Laurenz Bildeck, who became a faithful friend and servant, and never left Gutenberg in all his changing fortunes. The two rode into Strasbourg Fair and sold some of the carvings and mirrors that Johann had made, and they settled down in Stasbourg for over ten years. Gutenberg presently married a noble lady called Anna, the last of her race, say the town chronicles, and that is all we hear of her.

While in Strasbourg Johann Gutenberg began working out in great secrecy some of the thoughts which had long been tormenting him. Twenty years were to pass before he brought his ideas to the stage of development, rude though it may seem to us, which ended his great achievement. It had seemed to him there ought to be other ways of making books then laboriously writing them by hand.

For many years Johann felt himself on the brink of discovery. One day he began cutting letters in wood and fixing them on a solid block. He hid his process as secretly as if it had been an element of witchcraft. It was the beginning of his printing press. The problems connected with it hardly occur to the minds of present-day people, who take printing machines and printer's ink for granted. While still at Strasbourg, working with two or three other men, Johann got to the first stage of the invention of the printing press, and this involved him in the first of the many lawsuits and quarrels that embittered his later years.

He was already stamped with the morose and irritable temper of the man who sets himself apart to brood constantly over a fixed idea. He could not bear to be crossed, was sure about his own opinion. Perhaps he knew he was not the only man in Northern Europe who was on the verge of a great discovery, and was on fire to be the first to bring the art in its perfection to the public eye.

Very rude printing of a certain kind was being worked out in Holland by Lourens Coster; there



Gutenberg Inventing the Printing Press, Jean-Antoine Laurent

were several men of certain trades in Strasbourg who had provided Johann with things he wanted for his invention, and these had more than an inkling of the idea. Gutenberg decided, about 1445, to return to Mainz, taking with him the faithful Bildeck, who had helped him to save parts of his possessions in the Strasbourg quarrel. Johann and his follower put their small possessions in packs on their backs and, taking the pilgrim staff, set out on the high road. Gutenberg was sour and bitter, and thought of the high hopes that had been his when he rode into Strasbourg years before, confident about the future.

"Ah," said he, "when the little Herr Gutenberg came into the world they did not sing the song they ought to have sung around his cradle that he would wander from town to town with a pack on his back, practising his poor trade!"

Bildeck tried to cheer him, but presently he saw that all words were useless; his companion had withdrawn himself into his own mind and was battling with the old tormenting idea of a printing press far beyond the rude kind which he had begun to fashion.

The two entered Mainz and sought a cheap lodging. Then Gutenberg resolved on a bold step. He must have money. All his savings, all his earnings, had gone. Although he himself was willing to live on the sparest diet and sleep on a pallet, the materials necessary for his invention were expensive. He cast about for a likely partner who could provide the necessary means, and his hopes alighted on a wealthy Mainz goldsmith called Johann Fust. After some parleying an agreement was made. Gutenberg was given a workshop and liberal funds for the carrying out of his invention.

The printing press thus evolved after years of strain and toil was of the most elementary character. A year or two went by, and then Gutenberg printed a book from solid type: letters cut in a solid block of wood, so that when that book was printed there could be no other use for the type.

We can scarcely imagine the patient toil that went to that endeavour of printing. Fust made advance after advance of money and received no return. Gutenberg was always careless about payments, sometimes forgetting and sometimes wilfully neglecting what seemed to him a mere trifle—the refunding of loans.

He was absorbed in his toil; indeed, he thought of nothing else, and grudged the flying years.

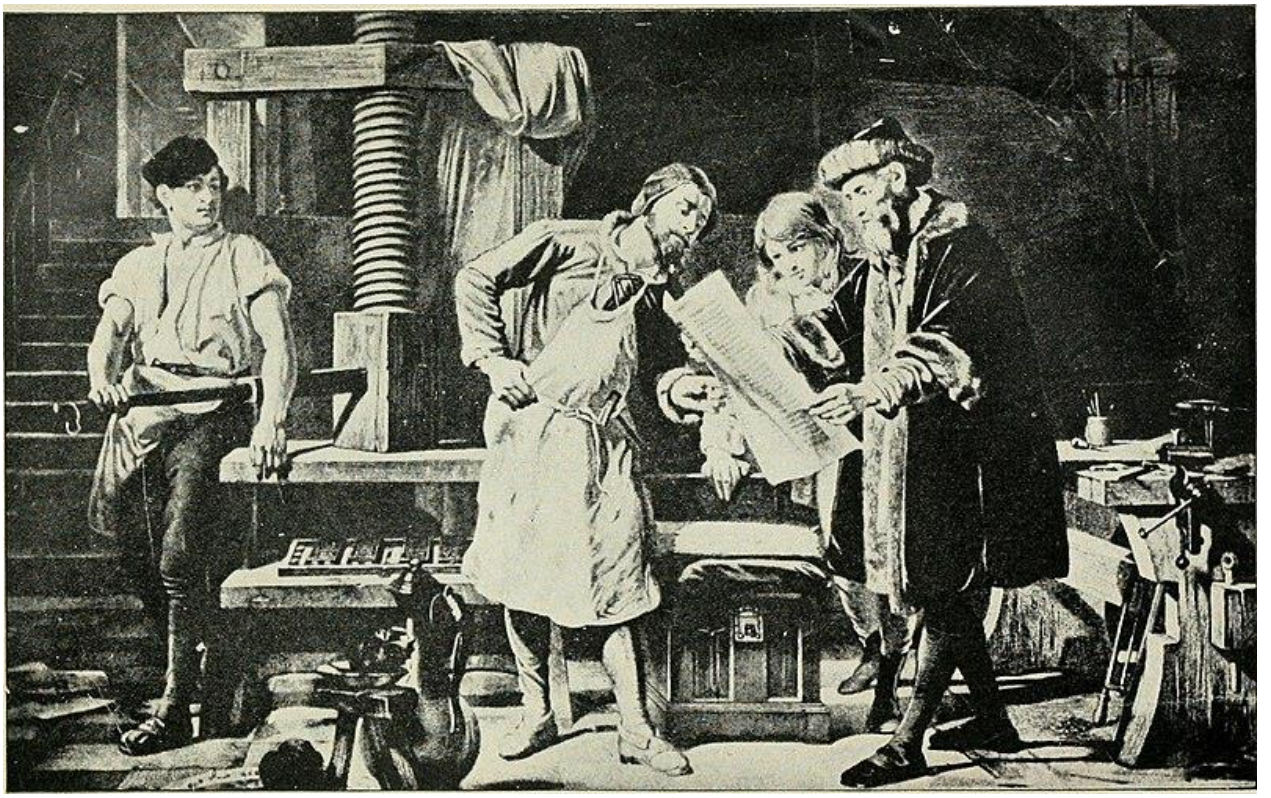
He knew that he had only arrived at the beginning of a stupendous invention, and his was the bitter fate to see another carry on the work. This, the usual lot of the inventor, was a tragic happening to Gutenberg. He gave out his secret ideas and another man pounced on them. Two generations later Mainz became a centre of "printery" and was famous for its books. Few troubled then to think of Gutenberg's lifetime of toil.

Fust had a partner of his own, Peter Schoeffer, a gifted young man, and it is said that he arrived at the next stage of the perfecting of the printing press. He invented moulds in which type could be made or cast.

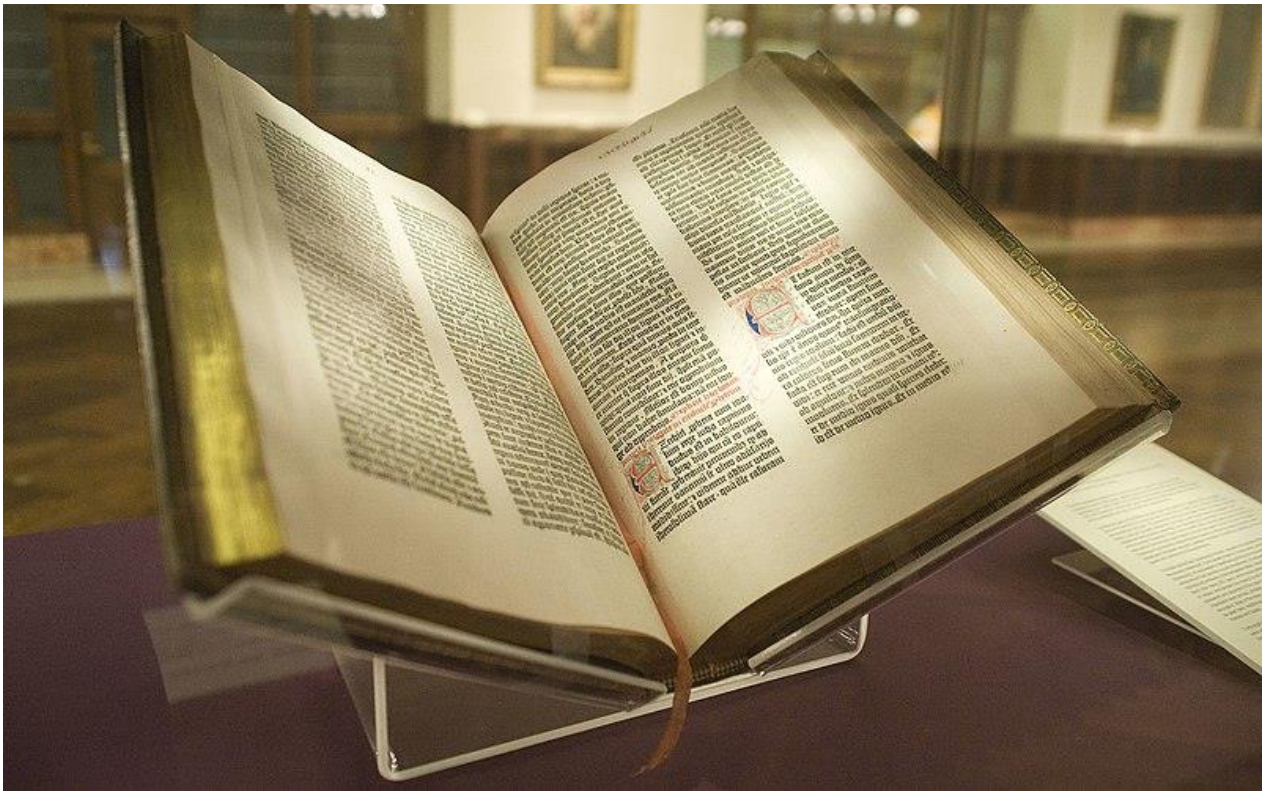
The next book in the Gutenberg-Fust workshops was to be printed, not from blocks, but from movable type.

Soon after this a quarrel arose between the partners, ostensibly on the vexed question of money. Perhaps Fust and Schoeffer felt that they had learned enough to carry on the work themselves and wanted to squeeze Johann out.

As a result of the dispute Gutenberg was soon involved in another lawsuit. He lost the case and



Gutenberg Taking an Impression, Illustration from *Printing and Writing Materials: their evolution* by Adele Millicent Smith, 1904



The Gutenberg Bible, Lenox Copy, New York Public Library

the partnership broke up, Fust retaining the printing presses and continuing the trade with Schoeffer. This was in 1455.

Gutenberg found himself once more stranded, penniless, with nothing left save his knowledge and his undying enthusiasm. After a little time he found another helper, an influential citizen of Mainz, Dr. Conrad Humery, who allowed him to set up a workshop in the back part of his own house and found him money to set up a press. Once more the first printer of Europe began to work, and the years passed by. Fust and Schoeffer were also carrying on the new printing trade, and Gutenberg saw with aching envy a book produced from the press he had set up and they had improved. He nevertheless continued in his own way, working secretly, a difficult old man, hard to cross, hard to work with, dismissing his assistants on the merest provocation. Only the faithful Bildeck clung to him through all his difficulties and anxieties.

In the meantime clouds were gathering over Mainz, unnoticed, of course, by the tireless worker in the printing shop. One day they burst. Two archbishops, who lived in the days when princes of the Church had powerful arms, were fighting for the see of Mainz, and the old town found herself at the mercy of armed bands. In 1462, as Gutenberg was finishing one of his famous books, the archbishops troops made their appearance at the gates.

Soldiers on guard were killed, houses set on fire, and a fearful ransack of the town followed, in which hundreds lost their lives and great stretches of buildings were reduced to ashes. In the terrible storm many fortunes were shipwrecked. Fust, it is said, was killed, and Gutenberg himself narrowly

escaped disaster. People fled to safer places, among them the apprentices to Fust's printing house. It is interesting to note that to this upheaval at Mainz the growth of printing in many European towns can be traced. Three years later, when Gutenberg was weary, ill, and almost hopeless, there came a bewildering light on his dark days.

The archbishop who had won the day was interested in the work of the old man and it pleased him to send a fine servant to the printer's door bearing a scroll with dangling seals. The good Bildeck took it to his master. The document, written with many flourishes, was to the effect that the archbishop, being pleased with "the services rendered to us by our dear and faithful Johann Gutenberg," placed him under Court protection, with vestments after the fashion of gentlemen, food and drink for his household. The old, unconquerable man who had fought through a hard lifetime found himself honoured and looked up to.

He became the court printer, and doubtless wished that this warlike prince of the Church had become lord of Mainz ten years earlier.

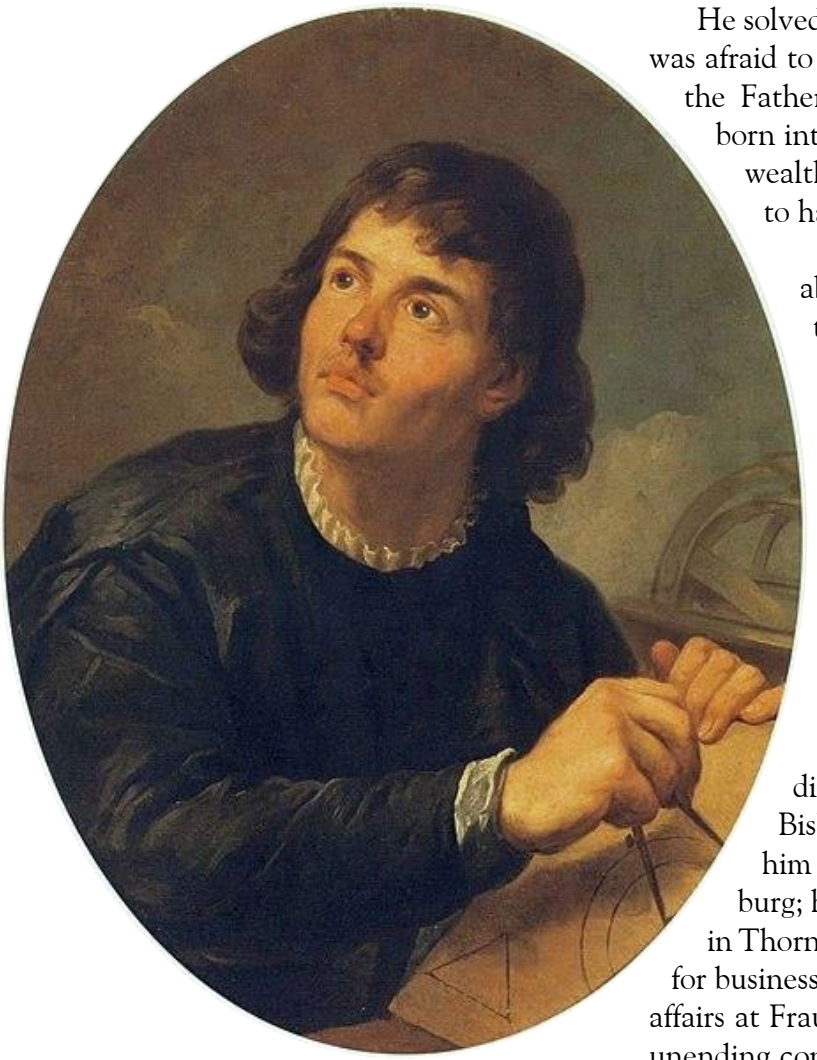
He only bore his honours a little time; a few years after he died.

The books he printed, alone and in partnership, have become the world's treasures. Not long ago a Gutenberg Bible sold for over twenty thousand pounds; it is said to be a copy of the first book ever printed. In the joy of princely collections ordinary men and women can have no share save to be glad that something which is beautiful is considered worthy of so great a price. But we must not forget that we are, nevertheless, inheritors of a wealth that has no measure.

Chapter 3

Nicolas Copernicus

1473-1543 A.D., Poland



Nicolaus Copernicus, Marcello Bacciarelli

He solved one of the miracles of Nature and was afraid to announce it to the world. He was the Father of Modem Astronomy. He was born into a family living on the estate of a wealthy Pole, to whom his father seems to have acted as a sort of surgeon.

There was scholarship enough about the establishment for Nicolas to receive a sufficiently good education at home to qualify him for admittance to Cracow University, where he studied with a view to a medical career, but at the same time applied himself with zest to mathematics and astronomy. His university course ended, he soon renounced medicine and, going to Italy, studied and taught mathematics at Bologna and Rome.

But his career did not lie in this direction. He had an uncle who was Bishop of Ermeland and appointed him a canon in the chapter of Frauenburg; he was also archdeacon of a church in Thorn. His travels and abilities fitted him for business, so he was given charge of secular affairs at Frauenburg, where he was engaged in unending contests with the truculent Teutonic Knights, who sought incessantly to trespass on the rights of the bishopric.

He showed courage and ability in these disputes. But he had also the care of the sick and suffering of the parish on his hands, for it was not forgotten that he was a doctor; hence his life was

Astronomer Copernicus, or *Conversations with God,* Jan Matejko

full of care and labour. But all the while his heart was in the heavens, his imagination was striving to plumb their mystery and to make plain the fact that for fourteen hundred years the civilised world had laboured under a delusion, foisted on it by the brilliant but misguided Ptolemy.

Ptolemy, the great Egyptian-born Greek scientist, taught that the Earth is an immovable body, poised in the centre of an immense solid sphere, in which the Sun and stars are fixed. In order to give us night and day, winter and summer, this sphere had to revolve completely round us once every 24 hours, like slaves circling about the person of an omnipotent sovereign. It was a fine lordly idea, making the Earth and those who dwelled on it the unchallengeable monarchs of Creation.

But the logical mind of Copernicus, aided by study in every available moment of leisure, detected fallacies in the system. He saw that the supposed movement of the heavens round the Earth was only apparent, not real. He came to the tremendous conclusion that the rising of the Sun in the East and its setting in the West result, not from the Sun's travelling round the Earth, but from the Earth rotating upon its own axis every 24 hours.

The thought was terrible in an age whose religion was bound up with the belief in a fixed Earth, with the heavens reverently revolving round it. But that was not all; another terrifying hypothesis had to be grappled with: not only did the Earth rotate daily, it must revolve yearly round the Sun,

if his calculations were correct.

A commonplace even to children today, the theory was so revolutionary then as to shake the very soul of the great thinker. He was not well equipped for controversy. There were no such things as telescopes in his day. His observatory was the monkish house that his office gave him at Frauenburg, and in the walls he pierced holes so that he might observe the transit of the planets. He would have all the world against him if he declared his theory.

Naturally as a pioneer he could not grasp all the meanings of the immense truth that had irresistibly possessed his mind. He inherited the old conception of the perfection of the sphere. All things perfect were circular, he thought; therefore perfect motion implied that the Earth and the rest of the planets moved in circles; he never dreamed that the course of the Earth and her sisters through space is elliptical.

This belief in the perfection of the sphere led him to curious mistakes in other directions. A whole is perfect, he argued; a part is imperfect. Therefore a planet, being a whole and perfect, would have perfect motion and travel in a circle, whereas a stone, being only a part and imperfect, would be denied perfect motion, and therefore must fall in a straight line.

Science in its first footings from the cradle makes many false steps, and the case of Copernicus was no exception. Still he had reached the first rough sketch of a sublime truth. Ptolemy's system, which it was a dangerous heresy to deny, was crazily wrong. Ptolemy taught that the heavens, travelling round the Earth every day, had to reverse their motion and travel in the opposite direction once in every 250 centuries. Copernicus, with his discovery of the imaginary axis of the Earth tilting slightly in the course of the ages, would bring about the apparent altered position of the celestial bodies amid which the solar system moves.

Another triumph of his mind was to reveal the solution of the mystery that makes Mars, for example, while advancing from West to East among the stars, appear to pause, to go backward, and then resume its normal path. Copernicus showed that when the Earth and Mars are moving, each in its own orbit, in the same direction, at certain times we, travelling faster than our neighbour, at first seem to overtake it and then passing it cause it to appear to go backward, as happens when objects on the side of a river on which we are travelling appear to advance and then to recede.

The Ptolemaic system, with its closed Universe and stars fixed immovably in it, demands that each star shall be the same distance from the Earth, as every tiny eminence on the skin of an orange must be the same distance from the centre of the orange. Our revolutionary saw that with an open Universe, through which the Earth was moving, the visible stars might vary enormously in size and in distance from us and each other. That in itself proved to him that it would be impossible for the entire vault of heaven to revolve daily about the Earth; the velocity required to carry these vast distant worlds made such a diurnal revolution incredible.

All this time he was working secretly, or as secretly as possible, letting only a few scholars know of his conclusions. He kept the authorities of the bishopric in good humour by battling with their rapacious enemies and by inventing a hydraulic pump for them by which they could raise water for the monastery.

But, to let the Pope know of his theories was a thought too terrible to be con-templated for many years. His theories, however, became bruited abroad and with an unlooked-for consequence.

Martin Luther, busy with the Reformation, heard of Copernicus's revolutionary ideas, and in

1526 signed an indignant edict against him! The Roman Catholic Church, whose teachings Copernicus flatly contradicted as to the lordship of the Earth, was silent. Perhaps the opposition of Luther helped, rather than harmed, the astronomer. Copernicus's own diocese, valuing a man who could make a good pump and battle with the Teutons, smiled at his wild imaginings about the Universe, and was the last in the country to believe him or to embrace the Reformation.

But the world was really stirring. Columbus discovered the New World just as Copernicus set about his discoveries concerning the Universe. More and more the astronomer's secret leaked abroad, and two enlightened cardinals urged him to publish. They did not quite grasp what they were doing; they did not realise that seventy years after the death of Copernicus his book would be banned, and that anyone reading it or believing what he taught might be burned as a heretic!

With such distinguished supplicants, Copernicus at last agreed to let the printers have his manuscript. He knew, however, how dangerous was the course he was pursuing. Luther was not the first or last to raise the cry of heresy against him. So after many years he went about his task with extreme caution. There was talk of reforming the calendar and he had been invited to lend his aid. That, he explained, had necessitated his studying astronomy with a view to determining the length

Copernicus, Recording the Orbits of the Stars, Eduard Ender

of the year and the month.

He dedicated his great book to the Pope himself, and sought to allay alarm by saying "it is not necessary that these hypotheses should be true or even probable; only one thing is necessary, that they show the calculus in accordance with observation." He pays a prodigious compliment to the Pope, and adds the hope that one so distinguished by rank and love of learning and mathematics "will repress the virulence of slander, notwithstanding the proverb that there is no remedy against the wound of a sycophant."

Detail of Painting of Nicolaus Copernicus Teaching,
Courtesy of the Museum of Warmia & Masuria

But what about the conflict of his views with scriptural teaching? As to that he tells the Pope:

"Should there be any babblers who, ignorant of mathematics, presume to judge of these things, on account of some passage of Scripture wrested to their own purpose, and dare to blame and cavil at my work, I shall not scruple to hold their judgment in contempt. Mathematics are for mathematicians; and I am much mistaken if such men will not regard my labours as conducive to the prosperity of the ecclesiastical republic over which your Holiness presides."

Thus diplomatically was a world-shaking theory prefaced. What would have happened had he lived to see the full results of his teaching examined and judged it is impossible to imagine, although we have the later barbarities practised on Galileo to hint the probability.

The first printed copy of the book reached him as he lay dying. He had suffered long, and now paralysis had struck him down. The great testament of knowledge was brought in haste by the printer and taken to the sick room. Its author received it and died with it in his hands, in the little

monastic house at Frauenburg where all his work had been done.

He was buried in the cathedral he had served so long.

Copernicus on His Deathbed, Aleksander Lesser

Chapter 4

Martin Luther

1483–1546 A.D., Germany

The most vital human force of German Protestantism, he was and is one of the most controversial of the world's personalities; but when "the tumult and the shouting dies" he stands forth as one of the greatest of men.

He was far from being an ideal man. That must be admitted at once, for he lived in a crude age of thought, belief, and inherited superstition, and, battling his way through it all with honest vehemence, he never lost some of the marks of its imperfections. His parents were of the peasant class, poor and with a large family; but his father, Hans Luther, by joining in the copper mining and smelting business in a small way, gradually improved the family prospects and entertained some ambition for his clever and naturally forceful son Martin.

Martin was born at Eisleben in Saxony. After some education at the village school he was sent first to the "free school" at Eisenach. There he lived rent-free in the hospice, but, as was common with the poor students, begged his bread from the house-holders by singing in the streets.

At 17, his father now being more prosperous, he went on to the University of Erfurt, which then was the most distinguished centre of culture in Germany, giving much attention to the revival of

Luther as a choir pupil in Eisenach, Ferdinand Pauwels

Religious Talk on Marburg (Dispute between Martin Luther and the Swiss reformer Ulrich Zwingli), Christian Karl August Noack

classical learning. But Luther did not take any special interest in the Renaissance movement. His father's wish was that his son should study law, which often proved an avenue to worldly success, but the son's mind turned to philosophy and religion. As a student he was brilliantly successful, and took both the bachelor's and master's when he was 21. Then he suddenly surprised everybody by becoming an Augustinian monk.

Luther had been brought up as a faithful adherent of the Roman Catholic Church accepting its

creeds, teachings, traditions, and practices as a matter of course; but still he was not at rest, and he determined to probe religion to its foundations by a thorough study of theology. This led him to a discovery of the Bible, which hitherto he had known quite inadequately. On his study of it, and of early Christian writings, he began to base his own Christian faith, but without any idea of antagonism to the Church. The religious atmosphere of his early life had been one of gloom and fear. His conception of God was that of a stern and watchful Deity dispensing punishments for sin in purgatory after death and requiring painful penalties during life. The revelation of God by our Lord had not reached him effectually, and Christ Himself was felt to be a reluctant helper of suffering mankind.

Popular religion led simple people to pray to the mother of Jesus to plead for them with Him to be merciful, and Luther had imbibed these feelings from his early surroundings. But he found no warrant for such beliefs in the Bible, and he came to see Jesus as the very embodiment of tenderness and His revelation of the Eternal as "most wonderfully kind." In that faith he found rest, and he made it the very core of his teaching. It led him to devote his life to religious service, and he became ordained as a priest.

It is rather curious that while he escaped from his early misreading of the love of God he never relinquished some of his crude misconceptions. He persistently believed (and was tormented by his belief) in the actuality of evil spirits personifying unworthy impulses and led by Satan.

When he was 24 Luther was invited by Frederick the Wise, Elector of Saxony, to become professor of philosophy in the University at Wittenberg. There Luther at degree once attracted attention by his teaching, his preaching, and his personality. Presently he was sent by the Augustinians to Rome on a mission connected with the business of the Order. He entered Rome with reverence and left it with disgust. His disgust was not with the Church, but with the desecrations of it which he had witnessed. Returning he continued his study of theology, qualified as Doctor, and began to deliver lectures at Wittenberg on the Scriptures so fresh and stimulating that students were attracted in large numbers. There was no suspicion of him as holding heretical views, and the Pope spoke of him as a man of genius. The clash came when he began to denounce certain Church practices as unworthy of the Church, scandalous, and unscriptural.

The starting point was the sale of Indulgences by the Pope. An Indulgence was "a purchased remission of punishment for sin." It was a practice that had gradually grown in the Church till it became notorious; and at a later period, when the Church began its own purification, the sale of Indulgences was stopped. But in Luther's time it was in full swing.

The Pope, Leo the Tenth, had proclaimed an Indulgence, which was farmed by the Archbishop of Mainz, in the neighbourhood of Wittenberg, through a Dominican monk named Tetzel. Tetzel was not allowed in Saxony, but sold his pardons across the frontier. Luther resolved to challenge this spiritual traffic. All Saints Church in Wittenberg was closely associated with the University, and the door of the church was used to display University notices.

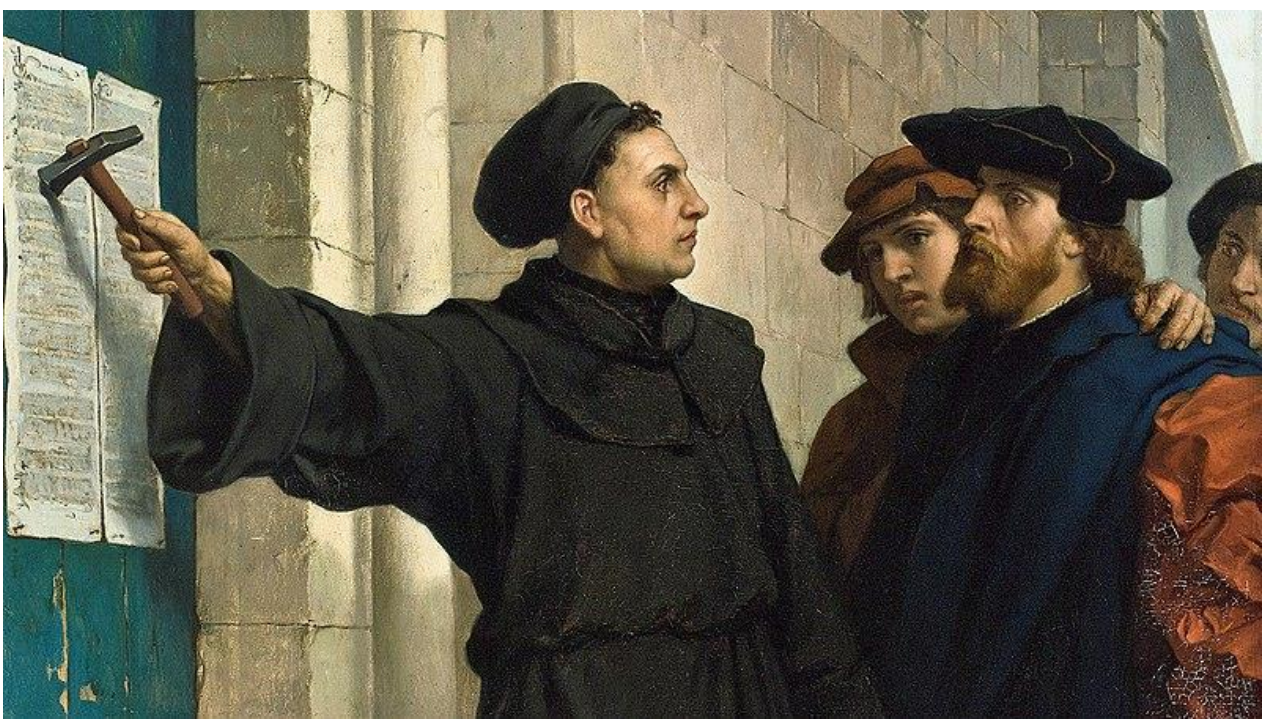
On All Saints Day, when the people would be coming to the church from all the country round, Luther nailed on the church door 95 objections to the sale of Indulgences. They were plain appeals to the commonsense of plain people, and made a sensation in all the country round. Not only was Luther's courage in making this challenge admired, but his case against the Indulgences was generally regarded as proved. Luther did not object to penances that had been imposed by the Church

being withdrawn by the Church, but he objected to their being sold, and he issued a challenge to debate the question publicly.

The effect on the public was that the sale of Indulgences greatly decreased, and the Archbishop of Mainz appealed to the Pope to protect his bargain. Keen controversy arose throughout Germany, Luther's opponents trying to represent the issue as a presumptuous attack on the powers of the Pope. The Pope was disinclined to interfere, but as the income from Indulgences shrank the Pope's advisers pressed him to silence Luther, who was boldly answering his opponents. So the Pope summoned him to Rome.

This, however, brought other supporters to Luther's aid. The Elector Frederick and the Emperor Maximilian, both good Catholics, remonstrated with the Pope, and he withdrew his summons and instead sent his legate to interview Luther. The legate was a stupid man who did not understand Luther or the situation that had arisen. He ordered Luther to recant and be silent. But Luther was not the man to do either. Instead of obeying he published broadcast an account of his interview with the legate and challenged the unfairness of silencing him on a question that all the world was discussing. This appeal redoubled his public influence; he was regarded as a misused hero, and the University of Wittenberg shared his popularity.

Then the Pope tried another device. One of the Pope's chamberlains, Charles von Miltitz, was also the Elector Frederick's private agent in Rome. He was young, bright, and sympathetic, with an ingratiating style of address. Him the Pope chose to take a sacred decoration to Luther's patron the Elector, and to find out how best Luther could be managed. He carried letters describing the obstinate and impudent monk as "a child of the devil," but also he had freedom to be conciliatory with Luther if he thought it advisable.



Luther Hammers his 95 Theses to the Door, Ferdinand Pauwels

Miltitz came nearer managing Luther than anyone else who tried. He visited the legate who had not been able to make anything of Luther, and Tetzel the pardoner, and he gathered opinions as he travelled. His estimate was that Luther's following was in the proportion of three to one throughout Germany, and his advice to the Pope was that Luther should be placated. So he met him friendlily, admitted that Luther was in the right about Tetzel, and suggested that contention should cease. Luther should not be asked to recant, but he should write a letter to the Pope showing his loyalty to him and the Church, and another letter to the German people counselling peace. Luther agreed, and wrote these letters. He was not yet prepared to desert the Church of his fathers, however strong his feeling might be about Indulgences, which he regarded as bad practices rather than involving vital doctrines.

This was the nearest Luther ever went toward compromise. Some have thought it might have worked. It would not have worked, Luther being what he was—a man founding his faith not on a Church but on the Bible. However, it was not tried. Rome objected to the Miltitz compromise.

The Pope's advisers wanted to dispose of Luther by victory over him, and they felt sure they had the man who could vanquish him. It was Dr. Eck, who, like Luther, was a theological doctor. A disputation was arranged at Leipzig, in Luther's thirty-sixth year, and in a sense Eck won. Luther wanted to argue on the demerits of Indulgences and other abuses, and so far as these Indulgences were concerned he more than held his own.

But Eck's object was to entrap Luther into dealing with questions on which he might slip into undoubted heresy. In this Eck succeeded. He led Luther to express the view that the powers of the Pope were limited; that the Romish Church was not necessarily predominant over all Christianity; and that the decisions of the Church's General Councils might not be right. Also Luther admitted that in some respects he agreed with John Huss, whom the Council of Constance had burned at the stake as a heretic. In short, Eck enlarged the disputation till he left the impression that Luther was not a sound Romanist, and he did it by introducing subjects that Luther had not studied specially.

That discussion was the real turning point in Luther's life. The most salient features of his character were boldness and honesty. His faithfulness to the Church had led him to try to reform its imperfections, but now he was accused of disloyalty to the Church on fundamental grounds.

This led him to return to Wittenberg and undertake an examination of the foundations of the Roman Catholic Church, the ancient records which showed the growth of the power of the Popes throughout the ages, and the remarkable accumulation of accounts of the Church's Councils and papal decrees, some valid some spurious. The outcome of it all was that he stood forward boldly as a direct opponent of the whole papal system.

In 1520 he published three treatises that were an open challenge to the Romish Church as opposed to the Church of God, which he claimed included all Christian men. He was appealing to his countrymen to free themselves from bondage to the Popes of Rome.

Rome responded at once by a Bull, or edict, excommunicating Luther and denouncing him. It was sent to the University at Witten-berg. By this time all Germany was seething with excitement. It was a case of religious strife, open and understood. Luther's reply intensified the excitement. He called the University together, publicly burned the Pope's edict and denunciation before the Elster Gate of the town, amid tumultuous signs of general approval. Then he took full responsibility on himself. The Pope, he said, is a God on Earth, above all things, heavenly and earthly, spiritual and

temporal, and everything is his since no one durst say: What doest thou? But, he added, my spirit, by God's grace, has been roused to the necessary courage. After that there could be no quarter, and the Pope took steps to secure his outlawry in all Christendom.

The next, and most exciting, chapter in Luther's story was brief. In October 1520 Charles the Fifth was crowned Emperor of Germany in succession to his grandfather Maximilian. Charles was already King of Spain and of the Netherlands. He was strongly Roman Catholic. In December of the same year Luther burned the Pope's Bull at Wittenberg, and six weeks later the Emperor summoned his first imperial Diet to meet him at Worms. Already in the Netherlands he had carried out the Pope's injunction to burn all books by Dr. Martin Luther in the Kingdom. The Pope hurried on arrangements for outlawing Luther by the Diet, and the Emperor summoned him to appear. All Europe was waiting breathlessly to hear what the Emperor and his Estates would decide to do with the monk.

A decision was not easy to make. Charles was a staunch Catholic, but the Pope was not a personal friend. Indeed he had opposed the election of Charles as Emperor, whereas the Elector of Saxony, Luther's friend, had been one of his strongest supporters. Besides, popular feeling ran high

Luther burns the Papal bull in the square of Wittenberg, Karl Aspelin

in favour of Luther. Charles hesitated. He did not want Luther to come to Worms. But the Diet did, and Luther himself saw that facing the tribunal gathered there was a great opportunity for upholding his cause, even if it cost him his life. He would go, he said, if there were as many devils in Worms as there were tiles on its roofs, and he preached his way there from town to town through encouraging crowds.

When he finally appeared before the Diet it was arranged that, to prevent him from making a speech, he should be restricted to answering two questions: Had he written a list of books, the names of which were read? And would he recant what he had written in those books?

He replied that he had written the books, but his arguments had all been based on the Scriptures; let them be answered from the Scriptures. Popes and Councils had often erred and contradicted themselves, as he would pledge himself to prove. He was bound by his conscience to adhere to the Word of God. He would not retract anything that was not proved against him by the Scriptures. And he concluded with the bold defiance: Here I take my stand. I can do no otherwise. So help me God.

The speech was felt by all to mark a crisis in human history. Evening had come and the Emperor closed the meeting. Some of the Spaniards were hostile to Luther, but the Germans closed round him. Later there was much discussion as to what should be done. The general feeling was against molestation. At a small meeting of the Diet, when many of his friends were absent, he was outlawed, but not arrested. The time during which the Emperor had guaranteed his safety was nearly expiring when suddenly Luther disappeared. He had been seized by his friend the Elector and hidden in Wartburg Castle, and there was quietly translating the Bible into the German language.

Meantime a wave of feeling swept over the country accompanied by signs of disorder. Even Wittenberg was distracted without his leadership, and at last he left Wartburg and went to the

Luther at the Diet of Worms, Anton von Werner

Martin Luther Translating the Bible, Eugène Siberdt

University town to control the excitement. For the rest of his life he remained free from persecution though the ban of outlawry was not removed. A number of the German nobility accepted his leadership and advice.

He married happily a nun who had read his writings and had withdrawn from convent. Divisions arose among the Protestant Reformers on details of belief and religious forms, and on such matters his tone of mind was conservative. A Peasants War broke out, and he threw his influence into the scale against violence on their part and tyranny on the part of the landowners; but his own exhortations had a violence that put a blemish on his reputation. The movement for liberty of conscience spread, and it was acknowledged that his was the masterful character and outspoken courage that had launched it. The strength of the papal system and of the reforming impulse were so balanced that actual warfare between them was avoided by some degree of a live-and-let-live spirit.

Through this period Luther was sorely troubled by ill-health, but he remained a frequent and powerful preacher, His death was dramatic. He was preaching in Eisleben, the village where he was born, and finished with the words "There is much more to be said about the Gospel, but I am too weak." Two days afterwards he had passed on.

There was only one place where Martin Luther could be suitably buried. All Germany felt it was so. He was taken in a procession that was national in its character from his birthplace to the church at Wittenberg where he found his own soul, where he nailed his denunciations of Indulgence to the church door, and where he burned the document that excommunicated him; and there he lies.

He was a great man of the thrustful German type, one of those who, as Bunyan said, "fight their way in." Undoubtedly he was cast in the heroic mould, but his forcefulness was not accompanied by the breadth of view that sees life steadily and sees it whole. Brave and honest, he played a manly part in a great religious crisis, but his lack of the gift of graciousness bars him from a place among the supremely great.

Luther Making Music in the Circle of His Family, Gustav Spangenberg

Chapter 5

Hans Sachs

1494–1576 A.D., Germany

Never was there a merrier, wiser, wittier cobbler than the old mastersinger of Nuremberg. There is no figure better loved in all the works of Wagner than he, and the maker of the opera in which he figures does not overstate his virtues, his rich, kindly humour, his human sanity.

When he entered the world Germany was a musical nation, but system, order, rigid rules had taken the place of that magic inspiration in which the untrammelled heart makes song. She had been for more than a century brigading her poets and musicians into Guilds. It was a lovely idea in origin, for it assured a fellowship of melody stretching across the land; but the Guilds had degenerated into formality, forbidding development and the rapture that attends spontaneous creation of melody. Music in Hans Sachs's youth had become wooden, just as in our own day the plague of jazz has made it a stream of stressed noises in which sweetness and melody have no part.

Hans Sachs

Hans was a cobbler of Nuremberg, where Guild rules were as stiff as his last, stiff in relation to music and to the type of poems that must be chosen for musical setting. He learned his Latin at school and his cobbling in his father's shop, a merry rebel, loving poetry and melody, but not satisfied with the fare provided.

His apprenticeship ended, he wandered over Germany, cobbling his way, attending all the Guild concerts possible,

Hans Sachs, Illustration based on an oil painting by Karl Otto

storing his capacious mind with knowledge and tunes and his pockets with a fair store of earnings.

Then he went back to Nuremberg, a youth of 19 or 20, set up shop, cobbled his neighbour's shoes, joined the mastersingers, and began one of the most astonishing literary careers on record.

The beauty which was instinct in the troubadour's songs had been strangled by the drastic rules of the Guilds and mastersingers, and there remained only the dead, dry bones of song. Hans had the audacity to set at nought a century of grim convention, to make music dance and frisk, and poetry to laugh and garb itself again with beauty like a bride.

The art and mystery of the mastersingers underwent a revolution at this masterful cobbler's hands. He preached no particular doctrine, but he sat down and wrote his treasures, and men could not deny their charm or their wit, or be uninfluenced by their wisdom. There was nothing to do but accept them and thankfully give them performance.

He could write anything: prize songs such as Wagner gives us; he set down the folk songs, native to the soil, that he had picked up in his wanderings; he wrote tragedies, religious and secular, comedies, over two hundred plays in all, more than 1500 tales, some of them unsurpassable in humour, and we see him through Longfellow's eyes:

> Here Hans Sachs, the cobbler-poet, laureate of the gentle craft,
> Wisest of the Twelve Wise Masters, in huge folios sang and laughed.

Success did not spoil him or sorrows daunt; if he had songs and tales to ease the heart with mirth

he had noble purpose too, and took his stand by Luther in his Nightingale of Wittenberg, a rallying song of religious freedom that ran like a melodious fire through Europe to help the Protestant cause.

He was a laureate of the Reformation, for his great hymn and his poetical pamphlets were literary ammunition for a cause that needed all the support that song could give to nerve the hearts of those who dared the sword and the fire to worship in accordance with conscientious conviction.

In all this delightful cobbler composed over six thousand works; he was, in fact, a library in himself, much of his work remaining as vivid and living after three centuries as when he put down his hammer to take up the pen and write it.

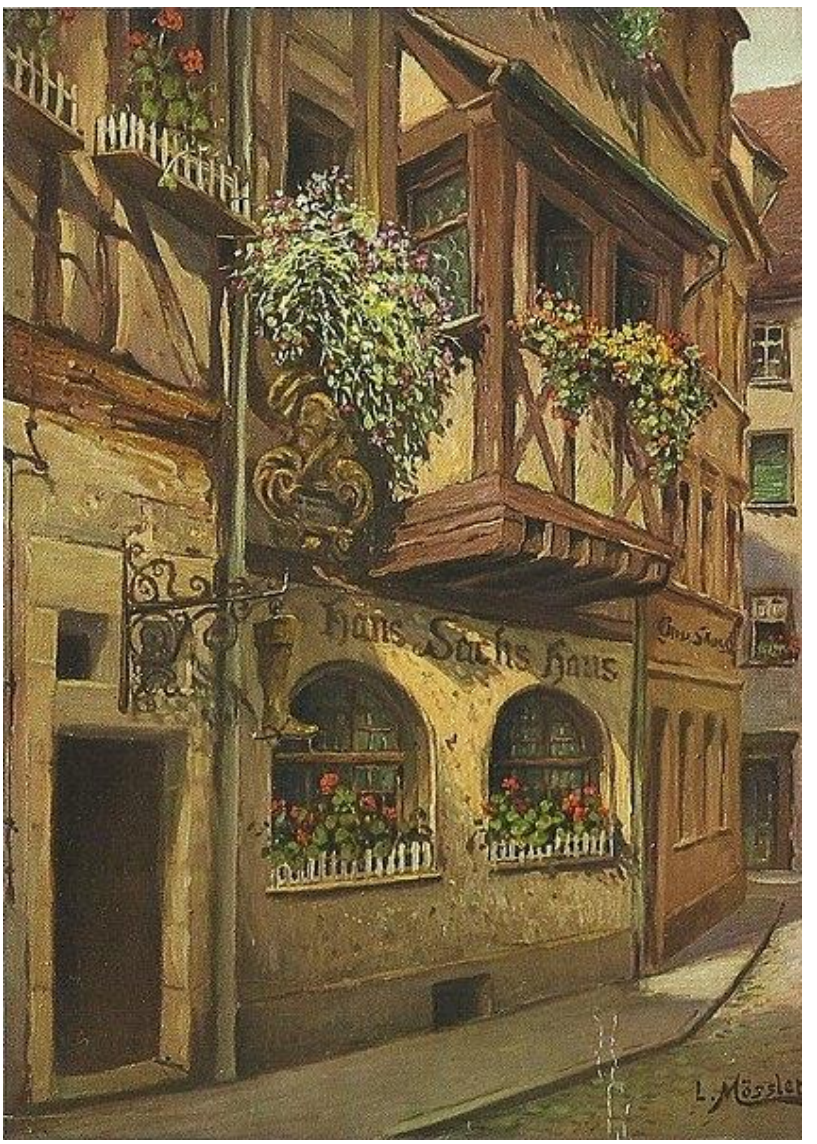
But for all that he did not forsake his first love, the Guild of mastersingers whom his genius galvanised into new life. As soon as he could afford it he presented the mastersingers of Nuremberg with a great gold medal bearing a figure of David, and so called the David medal. It was for competition, and men strove half a lifetime to earn it. The winner had to be not only a fine cultured singer, but a sound scholar; to be not only a master of his art but capable and willing to teach.

Above all, the precious medal, most dearly sought of all such rewards in Europe, was accompanied by the stipulation that the winner of it must give his services without money and without price!

Worthy, musical, learned, laughing Hans lived until he was 82, a great figure in the artistic life of old Europe, a German to be proud of:

> Not thy Councils, not thy Kaisers, win for thee the world's regard,
> But thy painter Albrecht Durer and Hans Sachs thy cobbler-bard.

That is how he impresses posterity. A world resounding with great melody, happy laughter, freedom to worship according to the faith of one's choice, and goodwill everywhere: that was the aim of hearty, scholarly old Hans,



Nuremberg, Hans Sachs House, Ludwig Mößler

a hero in the cause of humanity and loving-kindness, with a song to sing for every occasion, a play to fit every honest stage, and a book to accord with every mood.

We love Wagner's great opera Die Meistersinger all the more for knowing what the grand old cobbler Hans Sachs was like in his daily doings in a world that he helped to better and brighten.

Chapter 6

George Frederick Handel

1685–1759 A.D., Germany

He was one of the greatest composers the world has ever known, and, though born a German, he belongs essentially to us. His father, a poor barber, rose to be surgeon to the Duke of Saxony. Late in life he married again, set up house at Halle in Saxony. When he was 63 his son George Frederick was born. The surgeon had one great ambition, that his little son should rise in the social scale and be a gentleman. The best short cut to this grandeur, thought the surgeon, would be to make his boy a lawyer.

The Child Handel, Margaret Dicksee

But the child of so much planning turned out to be what the father most despised—a born musician. Many are the stories of his thwarted childhood. One day he was found in the nursery surrounded by a whole orchestra of drums, trumpets, and musical toys. His father angrily threw the whole lot on the fire and ordered the child a course of serious study. George was then only five, and fretted so much about his lost "music" that an aunt intervened and managed to smuggle into an attic a dumb spinet—that is to say, a small instrument in which the strings were bound with strips of cloth so that their sound was deadened. On this little George Frederick taught himself to play without his father's knowledge.

One day two years later the surgeon set off on a visit to a town some forty miles away, to visit a relative who was valet to another Duke, and see the great man himself. Naturally George wanted to go with him, scenting music from afar. The father refused. George said nothing more, but he chose his moment, got out of the house, and ran after the carriage. Not till he knew it was too late to be turned back did he show himself. The surgeon had to make the best of a bad job and take the child with him.

Little George made friends with the Duke's musicians, and one afternoon, when service was over, they let him try his hand at the organ. The child who had taught himself to play on a spinet played the organ so remarkably that the Duke, who happened to overhear, told the surgeon his child was a genius and should be encouraged to study music. Much against his will the elder Handel yielded to persuasion and allowed the child to become a pupil of the organist of Halle Cathedral; but he insisted he should go on with his lessons.

George did not care what he did so long as he was allowed to play. For three years he worked at the theory of music, practised on the organ, harpsichord, violin, and hautboy. Every week he had a composition to write. At the end of the three years the organist said he could teach him no more. George was sent to Berlin—the goal of any industrious music student of Germany. There he obtained favour in sight of King, Queen, and Court; and had he been a smaller character would have been spoiled. The King wanted to send him to Italy to study, promising him afterward a place as Court musician; but the obstinate old surgeon insisted on having his boy back at home to go on with his education at once.

George studied with the cathedral organist again, composing, copying, studying the science of music in his spare time. In 1697 the old surgeon died, and George and his two little sisters were dependent on their mother. It seemed that the lad might have to turn lawyer after all, in order to support his family by and by. He went on with his studies, and in 1702 entered Halle University as a law student. The same year he became organist of a small church in Halle and got together a choir of university students for whom he wrote many pieces.

This double life he bore for a year, then one summer day went off to Hamburg and got a place as second fiddle in the opera orchestra. He also played the theatre harpsichord. With the burden of the law thrown off his shoulders he felt that at last he was really living. His tremendous vitality and passion for music sent him here and there learning, listening, making friends, composing. His development was rapid and great. In 1704 he produced his first Passion Music, the next year his first Opera, gave innumerable lessons, played the harpsichord, composed freely. From this time on it is hard to keep pace with him. The strength of his intellect, the vigour of his imagination, were such that while an ordinary man would have been toying with the idea of a cantata or opera, making

notes, Handel had written it.

In 1707 he went south, and for three years lived in Italy, where he was much feted and lauded. He was constantly working, of course: that was the only meaning life had for him. In the meantime he had not been forgotten in his native land. The Elector of Hanover (who became George the First of England) wanted this genius at home, and offered him a grand position. But other people were wanting him too. Handel had received very pressing invitations to come to England, and he could afford to dictate to the Elector, whose offer he accepted with a good salary, on condition he should be allowed to travel.

Sure enough, in 1710 he was in England, and in the following year the English public were thrilled by the opera Rinaldo, which Handel wrote in 14 days and was an amazing success. Handel took all the praises very calmly. He was too big to be spoiled, too engrossed in what he was doing to hear what people said about it.

George Frederick Handel, Philippe Mercier

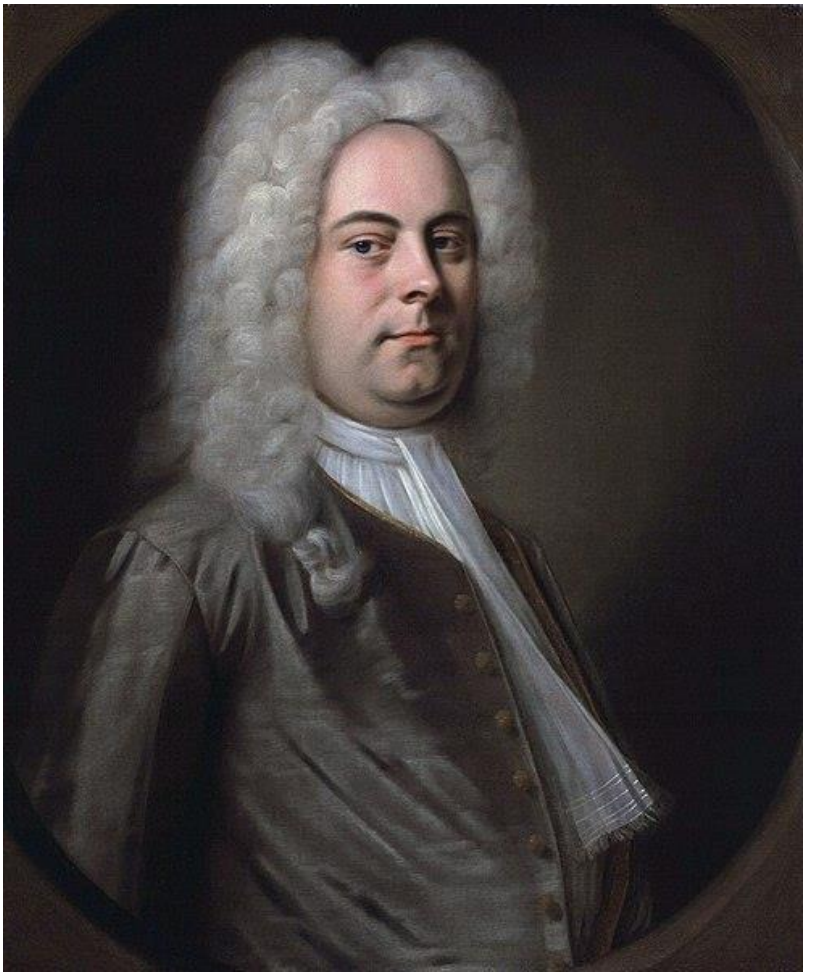
At the end of the season he was obliged to go back to Hanover. But he found so much akin to his own temper and spirit in the English character that as soon as possible he was back again, living with Lord Burlington in his Piccadilly house. He was in London when Queen Anne died, and while he was wondering what he would do the English crown had been offered to the Elector, whom Handel had deeply offended by his neglect. However, not only was the breach healed but the new king granted him an annuity of £200; which was presently increased to £600.

In 1720 he was made director of Italian opera at the Royal Academy newly founded in the Haymarket. He had previously gone to Dresden looking for singers and did not know that that other great genius Bach, hearing he was there, travelled a great way to see him and missed him by one

day. The Opera House landed Handel in a peck of trouble which lasted many a year. Jealousy and intrigue were the causes. Amid the general strife Handel worked on unmoved, and presently, with another man, took the King's Theatre and started writing harder than ever, composing operas. In eight years, apart from other labours and compositions, he wrote fourteen.

But no one, even with Handel's driving power and genius, could hold out for years working like a slave, struggling with business affairs, and battling with quarrels and rivalries. In a year or two things looked really dark. A day came when all the opera-going public of London were divided into two camps, one shouting for Handel and one for a rival theatre company which contained many noblemen and all the other composers and singers available. Things went from bad to worse for Handel, and at last, one morning in 1737, he woke up to find £10,000 of his savings gone and bankruptcy staring him in the face. Under the strain his health gave way completely, and he was obliged to go away to a watering-place to recover, from an attack of paralysis and severe mental disorder. Then he had to face the problem of pulling his life together again.

There could not have been a finer example of the powerful vitality and character of this man than the way he began, at 52, to shape a new career out of the ruins of the old. He was aware that he had suffered a staggering blow: life could never be the same again. His interest in opera was gone, composing must take a more serious course for him in future.



George Frideric Handel, Balthasar Denner

Thus it appears that what was apparently Handel's loss became the world's gain, for now he began the series of oratorios that are associated with his name for ever. It is odd, when we come to think of it, that for millions of people Handel is the man who wrote the Messiah and other oratorios which, like Israel in Egypt, contain colossal chorus work, and some pleasant bits like the Largo and the Harmonious Blacksmith. The sum total of his compositions, in the most compressed form, makes 98 considerable volumes. But these are forgotten. The Messiah is immortal. Handel wrote it in 24 days, and perhaps something deep was touched in him at the time, for he said when he began the Hallelujah Chorus "I did look up

George I of Great Britain with George Frideric Handel, Edouard Jean Conrad Hamman

and saw all heaven opening before me and the Great God himself."

Handel as a writer of oratorios took a greater hold on the public than ever Handel the opera writer did. The English spirit responded to the austere beauty of the Bible words mixed with such noble and moving music. Nothing like it had ever been heard before.

Perhaps the consciousness of the different spirit of the work he was now doing helped to cast a glow on his later years and atone for weakening health. He was very popular, his organ recitals were eagerly followed. Bach kept an eye on him from afar—again tried to see him when Handel went abroad in 1750, and again missed him by a day. In the meantime a tragic calamity was threatening. In 1752 cataracts were removed from his eyes; but in spite of all care the sight gradually weakened. He played the organ just the same—a pathetic sight. He had written his last oratorio, Jephthah, just before he went blind. He died quietly, at Eastertime, in his house in Brook Street, and was buried in the Poet's Corner in Westminster Abbey.

Chapter 7

Thaddeus Kosciusko

1746–1817 A.D., Poland

Thaddeus Kosciusko, Kazimierz Wojniakowski

Freedom shrieked when Kosciusko fell, says our poet. His hill, Kosciusko Hill, stands on the outskirts of Cracow, the ancient capital of Poland and still the chief centre of her intellectual life. It owes not only its name but its existence to the memory of the great Polish patriot who led the despairing revolt of 1794. The memory of other men have been enshrined in lofty obelisks, in stately cathedrals, even in great cities, but to the memory of Kosciusko his countrymen have built a little mountain. Kosciusko Hill is a terraced mound of earth a hundred feet high, standing on another hill, itself a thousand feet above the sea. It took three years to build, and its builders were the peasants of Poland.

In place of a foundation-stone there rests at its centre an urn containing earth from the battlefield of Raclawice, the scene of the first great victory against Russia in the struggle known to history as the Rising of Kosciusko. Around it is earth brought from other battlefields, and on these foundations the hill was slowly raised with soil brought by the peasants from their own homes. Men, women, and children from far and near brought their tributes in shovels, in wheelbarrows, and in sacks and baskets, till the great cone was built up.

It was the greatest tribute they could devise, for the Polish peasant loves the soil as he loves his mother. During the generations of oppression which followed the rising the peasants emigrated by

The Kosciusko Mound, Kraków, Poland

hundreds of thousands, and the most precious possession in the bundle each carried on his back was a handful of soil from home. When he died it was placed above his heart in his exile's grave. What nobler tribute, then, could the people pay to Poland 's noblest son than to carry earth from their homes to the spot made sacred to his memory?

Kosciusko Hill was not the first tribute of the Kind; there are two other hills not far away, smaller, but a thousand years older. One was raised to Prince Krak, the founder of the city, and the other to his daughter, Princess Vanda, who chose death to prevent the crown of Poland going to a foreign knight. So tradition supplied the idea of Kosciusko Hill; but its inspiration came from the love of the peasants for the man who loved them.

In Poland's long roll of heroes are many who gave their lives for Poland and loved her with a consuming love; but Kosciusko was the first to make the peasants feel that the Poland whose soil they tilled was their own. In the long wars for freedom before his time no one thought of freedom for the peasants. No one thought even of asking them to fight for Poland. This was the privilege of the nobles and gentry, and later of the townsmen.

From the 10th century Poland had grown in power until, in the middle of the 16th century, she became the dominant country of Eastern Europe. But the great nobles forming the Diet had more power than the king; indeed, they elected their kings, who became puppets in their hands. In the 17th and 18th centuries there were constant quarrels among the nobles, while religious persecution

weakened the country. One party relied on Russian influence, and the reforming party, though carrying out improvements, persecuted the Protestants.

In 1768 a group of Polish patriots declared war on Russia and were defeated. Then Prussian Frederick made an arrangement with Russia and Austria to seize 80,000 square miles of Poland—the First Partition. This led the whole nation to realise its peril. Reforms were introduced, townsmen being given the privilege of sending deputies to the Diet, while the serfs were relieved and the Protestants were granted toleration.

In the end, however, Russia and Prussia forced the Diet to agree to the surrender of another 100,000 miles of Poland. This is known in history as the Second Partition.

It was now that Kosciusko came forward and was made Dictator. With his vivid personality he rallied to Poland's aid the great multitude of peasants. In Kosciusko's Rising they fought for the first time side by side with the nobles; and side by side with the nobles the peasants signed a manifesto, the historic Act of the Rising, with which the Polish nation took the field against Russia.

In the first battle, at Raclawice, they were present two thousand strong, armed with pikes and scythes, forming the famous corps of the Reapers of Death. The Russians were in greatly superior numbers, and there was a moment when it seemed as if Kosciusko's little army would be annihilated. It was the peasants who turned the tide of battle. “Peasants,” cried their leader, “take those cannon

Kosciusko Home, Albert Žamet

Tadeusz Kościuszko takes oath as leader of Kościuszko Uprising in Kraków market square, Wojciech Kossak

for me"; and with Kosciusko at their head they swept up to the battery and took eleven guns. That night, on the stricken field, Kosciusko exalted as nobleman the first peasant to reach the battery, and in the presence of the whole army stripped himself of his uniform and put on the peasant's coat. He wore the long, loose sukman with its girdle throughout the rising.

Side by side with peasant Barto in the memory of their countrymen stands the shoemaker Kilinski. It was he who led the rising in Warsaw when a drunken soldier had divulged the Russian plan for disarming the citizens on Holy Saturday. The fight raged all through Maundy Thursday and Good Friday in the streets of the capital, and the Easter bells rang out on a city freed from the foreign yoke.

It was not only because they knew him as their friend that the common people joined thus eagerly in Kosciusko's Rising, but because of the lofty patriotism of his appeal. It was essentially a spiritual force on which he relied in his fight against the military power of Russia. He knew the brooding idealism in the hearts of the humblest of his countrymen; and it was his confident appeal to it, and the glorious words in which he clothed it, that brought them to his banner and inspired them to fight on to the last desperate stand.

Detail from *Battle of Raclawice,* Jan Matejko

Not once did they falter, not even when Kosciusko himself was seized and carried off, desperately wounded and unconscious, to the grim fortress of Peter and Paul. It was not till five weeks after that crowning catastrophe that the last Polish army corps laid down its arms, and Poland was cut into three provinces by Russia, Prussia, and Austria.

No doubt the rising was foredoomed to failure. Poland was surrounded by a ring of military empires whose jealousies prolonged her life for a time, but whose agreement was her death warrant. Yet it may well be doubted whether they could have had their way with her if Europe had not been occupied with the French Revolution and what followed it. And Poland herself should have proved stronger than she was. She had immense territories; her people were sturdy and self-reliant; but her ruling classes were ruined by great wealth and divided by ancient feuds and jealousies. They could not or would not put their house in order; and when the crisis came the people were unready for defence.

Kosciusko, who had fought in the American War of Independence, knew what a nation of farmers and farm workers could do under the driving force of freedom, but the Polish nobles never learned the lesson. The common people learned it, and no man ever had a more devoted following than Kosciusko found in them. Taught by his prowess, they knew him as the man who could lead them to victory if victory were possible. They put their lives, their homes, their country, in his hands. They made him dictator, leaving him the free choice of his counsellors and commanders. Of course he made mistakes, if only in allowing himself to be rushed into the rising with inadequate preparation; but his chief handicap was in the quarrelling and jealousy of the nobles. Poland was still Poland, with all her greatness, but with all her weakness too.

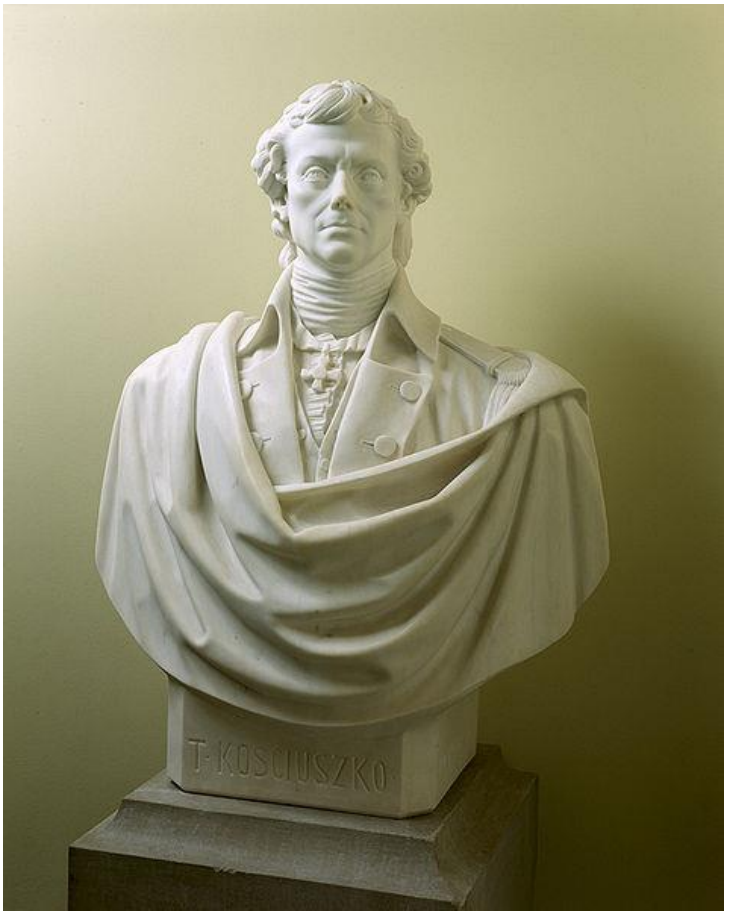
Kosciusko himself was entirely self-forgetful. Never did he forget for a moment that he held his power as a sacred trust.

"Let no man who prizes virtue desire power," he wrote.

"They have laid it in my hands at this critical moment. I know not if I have merited this confidence, but I do know that for me this power is only a weapon for the defence of my country,

and I confess that I long for its termination as sincerely as for the salvation of the nation."

The weapon of defence was used nobly to the end, and it was not for lack of loyalty in those who bestowed it that it failed. Kosciusko lived 23 years after the collapse of the rising, but wounds and imprisonment had wrecked his health. First Napoleon and then the Tsar of Russia tried hard to win his support, but he distrusted them, and rightly. Yet he never lost his faith in his country's future. "We, her devoted soldiers, are mortal," he cried; "but Poland is immortal!" and it was by the inspiration of Poland's immortal spirit that the peasants reared Kosciusko Hill. The Austrians turned the hill into a fort, but the Austrians have passed, and Poland is herself again, outliving the three emperors. Where are their three empires now? They have had their day and ceased to be. But Poland lives a nation once again.

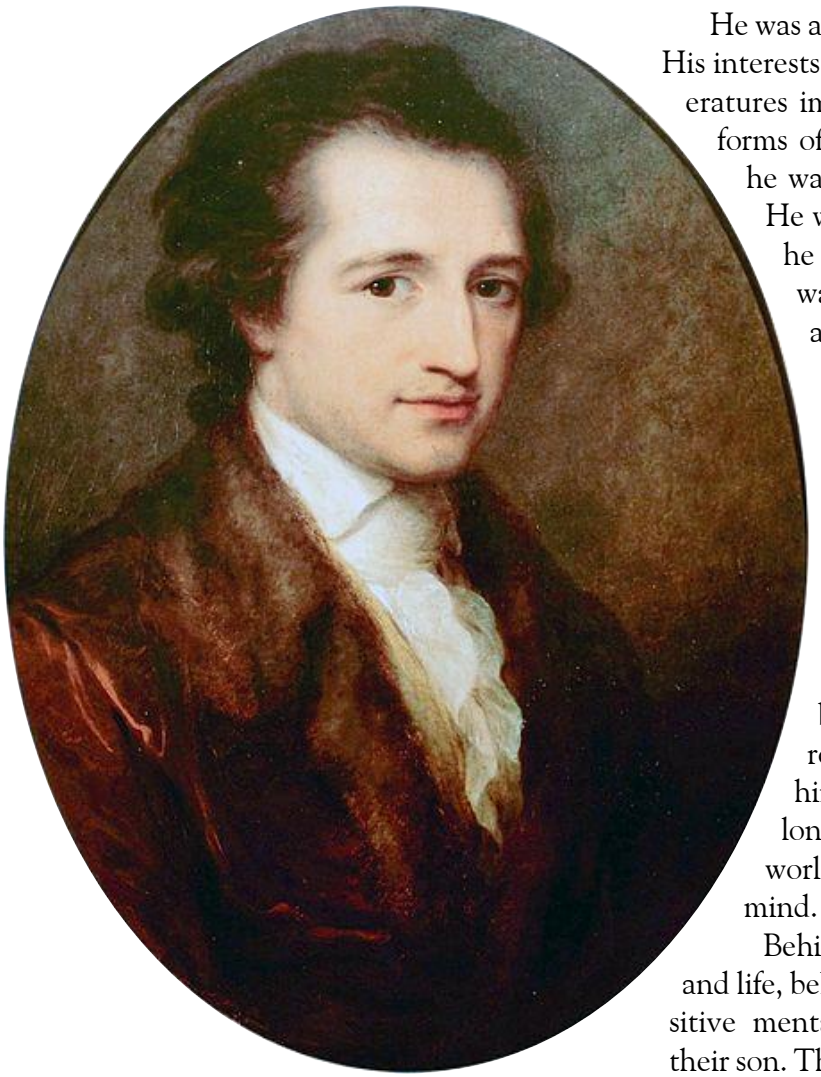


Bust of Thaddeus Kosciusko, unknown location

Chapter 8

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

1749–1832 A.D., Germany



Portrait of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe,
Angelica Kauffmann

He was as broadminded a man as ever lived. His interests were universal. He sampled all literatures impartially. He was attracted by all forms of wit. Science fascinated him, and he was one of the earliest evolutionists. He was a confirmed sentimentalist, yet he could be practical in business. His was the culture that tried to take in all, allow for all, and weigh things justly. Intellectually he was the greatest member of the German race; its finest literary figure.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe was the only son and eldest child of the house. He was sent to no school. His father supplied the lack in his own grave, deliberate way, talking and giving the boy books rather than instructing him, rousing his thoughts and making him reach out and think and wonder, long to travel far, both in the actual world and in the vast continents of the mind.

Behind the father's manner of thought and life, behind his mother's brilliant and sensitive mentality, lay a definite ambition for their son. They wanted him to take a university degree, become a lawyer, and marry well.

In the meantime the boy throve happily enough. His father was fond of poetry and much interested in art, and the son mixed freely with the guests of the house and heard their conversations. The Seven Years War, in which Frederick the Great and his allies were set against

the rest of Europe, was raging and its excitements and perils cast a glamour over the mind of the imaginative boy.

A number of French soldiers were quartered in Frankfort, and an officer, Count Thoranc, was billeted on the Goethe household. He was a man of culture, and brought the influence of French literature into the German home. Wolfgang knew nothing of language, but the sounds of French verse fell on his ear like music. Count Thoranc taught him much of Racine.

Later he acquired a perfect mastery of the French tongue, and drew much of his inspiration from that source. Meanwhile he dabbled in poetry, wrote essays, and imagined himself a genius.

At 16 he was sent to Leipzig to study law, but he told his professor that he intended to be an essay-writer. A youth called Schlosser, who became his brother-in-law was his chief companion, and another friend whose influence was strong was Adam Oeser, art master of the Leipzig Academy of Art.

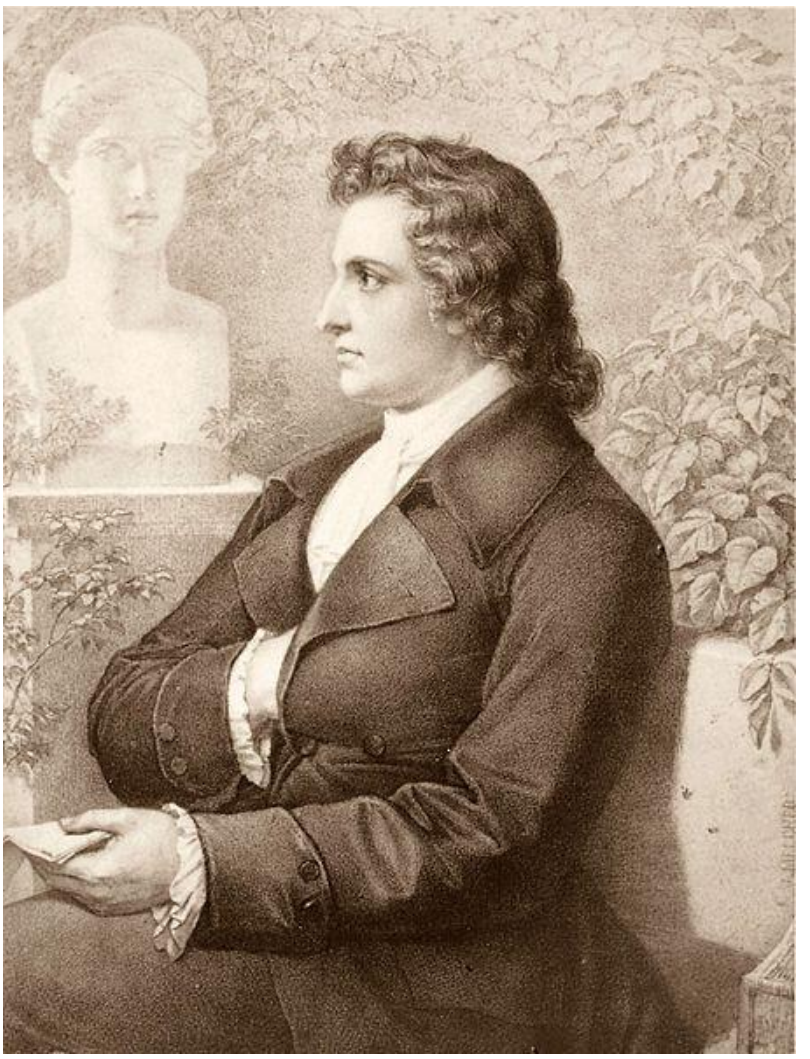
The years at Leipzig had an unhappy ending. Wolfgang fell seriously ill, and for the first year and a half after his return to Frankfort he had poor health. His father did not approve of the boy's determination to be a writer and insisted that he should take a legal degree.

In the spring of 1770 he went to Strasburg University, and passed there 16 eventful months, mixing with men of all kinds of mental calibre, studying many things, chiefly science, and learning to play the violocello.

Someone introduced him to Shakespeare. He was much impressed by the beauty, the magnificence, of the great poet; his ideas changed and broadened.

After taking his degree as a doctor of law Goethe went to Wetzlar, where the courts of justice were held. It was then that, stirred by an experience of hopeless love, he wrote the famous Werther, an extraordinary production which had an extraordinary reception.

It was enthusiastically praised or sternly condemned. It was printed, imitated, translated into every language of Europe, criticised in every periodical with the fullest



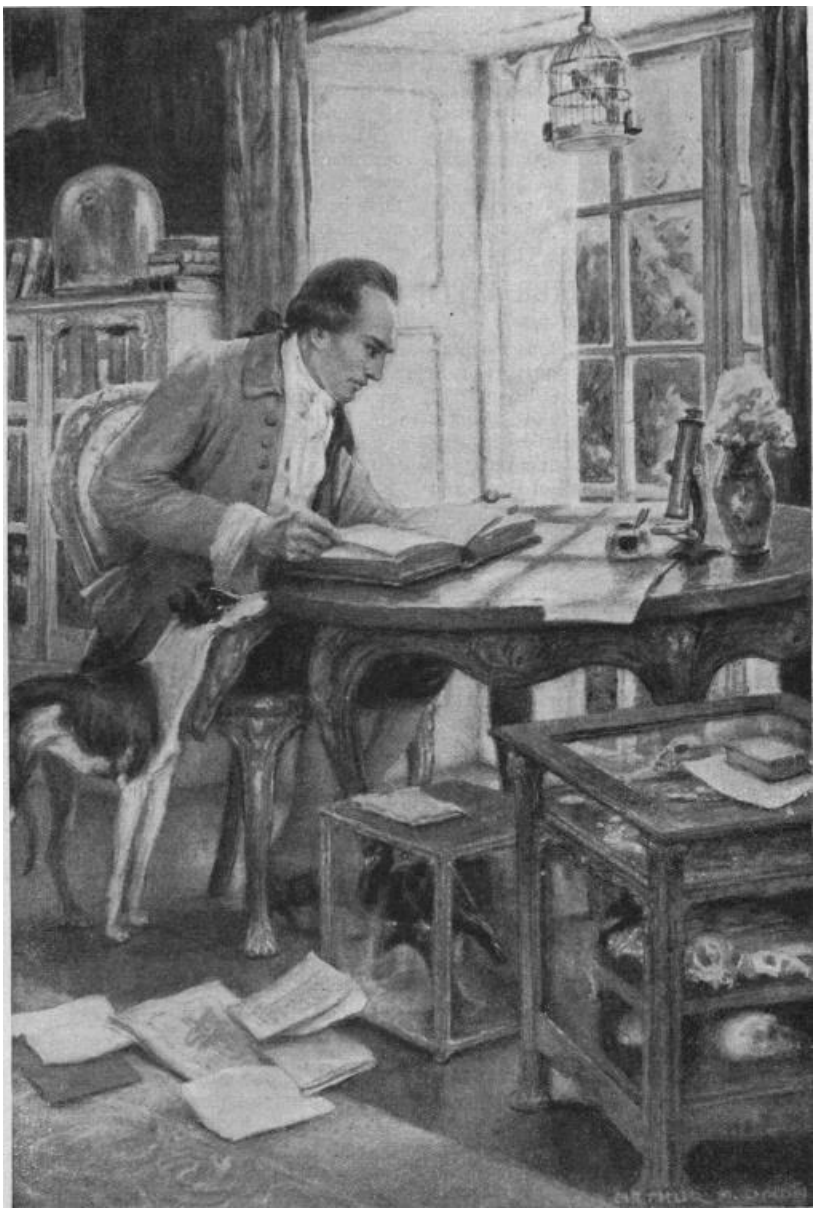
Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, After a painting by Jakob Melcher

meed of praise or scorn. It made the round of the world and penetrated even to China. The Werther fever wrung the hearts of men and women with imaginary sorrows; it opened the flood-gates of pent-up sentimentalism.

In the face of this success the father relented a little; there was more happiness at the family hearth, and Goethe wrote unceasingly.

One day Duke Karl August of Saxe-Weimar, a youth of 17, travelling through to France with his tutor, stopped at Frankfort to visit the new genius. As a result of this visit he invited Goethe to stay in his house at Weimar.

The duke's house was the centre of a delightful and cultured society. Goethe was at once at home there. He received from the duke a little house in a garden by the side of the Ilm, and, being also given a place in the Privy Council and a small income, became bound to Weimar for the rest of his life.



Goethe, the Heroic Figure of the German People, at Home with his Books,
Illustration from *Arthur Mee's 1000 Heroes* by Arthur Mee, 1934

Goethe left no corner of his master's territory unexplored, no detail unattended to. By his influence mines were opened, education was furthered, and the tiny army improved. Various delightful seasons of travel marked the first ten years at Weimar. Goethe's style was strengthened. But it became impossible for him to write seriously amid the distractions of the Court.

In 1786 the duke gave him leave of absence. Goethe disguised himself as a German merchant, assumed the name of Muller, and drove alone across Europe into Italy. He was away two years.

The effect of Italy upon him was miraculous. His sensitive soul was enraptured by a beauty undreamed of; he fell headlong into the arms of classic art, dreamed of old Rome, and in Sicily dreamed of Homer and old Greece. He returned to Weimar, strengthened immeasurably in spirit and purpose. "From this time on (says Oscar Browning) his life takes on a new colour. He had learned

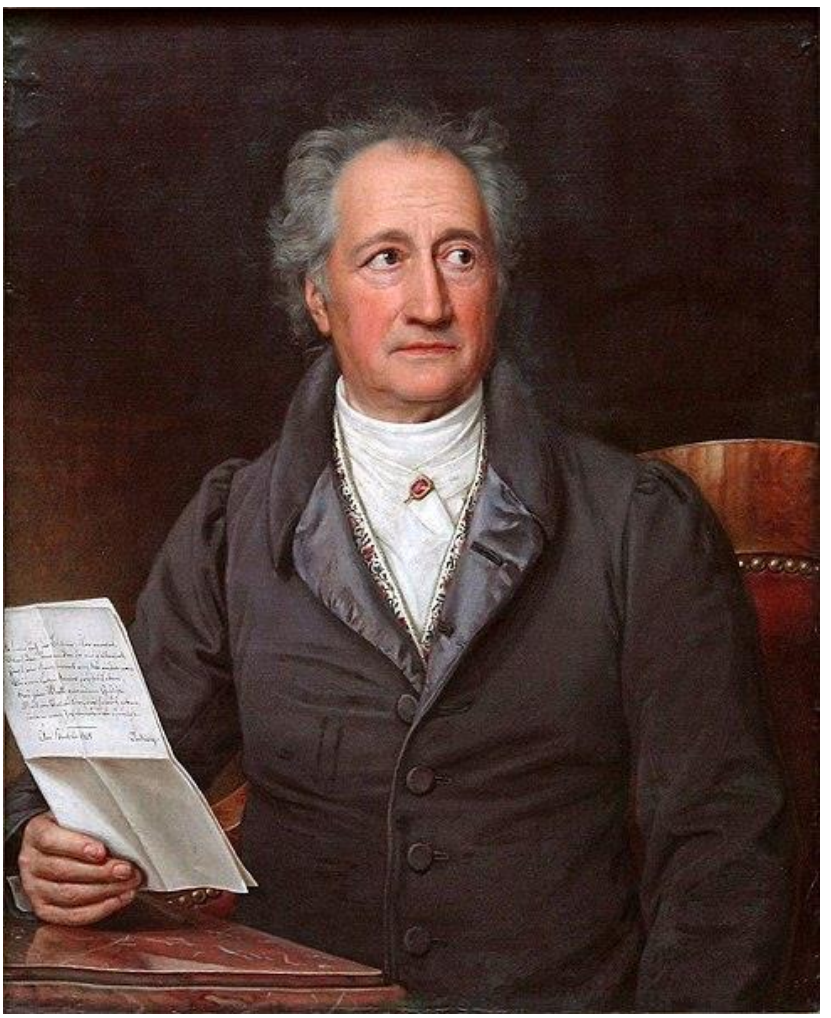
in Italy not only new principles of art but that life itself should be a work of art."

In 1788 he fell in love and married Christiane Vulpius. She was a girl of humble birth and little education, but she made a good wife and an excellent mother, and possessed enough intelligence and natural good sense to be the companion of one of the most brilliant men in Europe.

Further interests came to Goethe's life with his friendship with Schiller and the planning and organizing of the new theatre at Weimar. Schiller was ten years younger than Goethe, and the friendship that existed between the two created golden streaks in the greying years of life. Goethe now produced his finest work. He translated a large part of the autobiography of Benvenuto Cellini and worked at his masterpiece Faust.

The friends were faithful and inseparable till Schiller's death in 1805. Goethe was himself ill at the time, and it seemed that a great part of his vitality was buried in his friend's grave. As soon as he recovered Goethe arranged a public performance of Schiller's wonderful poem The Bell, for which he wrote an epilogue.

War and rumours of war cast a dark cloud over much of Goethe's life. The Battle of Jena in 1806 swept a tide of the Napoleonic wars up to his door. The duke's household fled. Weimar was in disorder. Panic reigned. Happily Goethe's wife seemed to be one of the few who retained their senses. Her good wits saved Goethe's possessions and probably his life. Two years later Goethe and Napoleon met, Goethe, at the command of Duke August, being present at the Congress of Erfurt. Later on he was invited to an audience with Napoleon, and the scene of their meeting has been thus described:



Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Karl Joseph Stieler

"The emperor sat at a large round table eating his breakfast. He beckoned Goethe to approach, and said to him, *Vous êtes un homme!* He asked how old he was, and expressed his wonder at the freshness of his appearance, said that he had read Werther through seven times, and made some acute remarks on the management of the plot.

"He invited Goethe to Paris; that was the centre of great movements; there he would find

subjects worthy of his skill. They parted with mutual admiration."

The same year Faust was finished. In his old age Goethe wrote a tale of himself, his autobiography. In it is given a clear picture of this man whose writings on science, history, and on the human mind in all possible crises have found such a monumental place in European literature. He did not grow old as other men do; his intellectual life remained marvellously vigorous. At 70 he was acclaimed the literary dictator of Germany and of Europe.

In the meantime death had been busy among his dear ones. He paid the penalty that all men do who live to an extreme old age; he was left with memories where living forms had been. Wife, parents, friends fell out of the ranks, one after the other. The saddest blow was the sudden death of Duke Karl August. When the news of this bereavement was brought to him the solitary great man turned his face to the wall like one of old, and said, "Now it is all over."

Four more years passed. The aged man fell ill, but could not believe he was going to die. There was still work to be done, and he refused to stay in bed. He sat in his armchair; and even when death was approaching, one dark March morning, he turned and asked that the shutters might be thrown open.

"More light, more light!" he said.

When the light of his own heart flickered out something passed away which in itself was more than all works of genius—there passed away a presence, an indomitable ideal, a will to persevere, a mind ceaselessly working, a great human soul.

Chapter 9

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

1756–1791 A.D., Austria

Born in the picturesque little mountain town of Salzburg, then the centre of a small German principality ruled by a prince-archbishop, he was the son of a musician in the service of the archbishop—a painstaking, learned, and sensible man, passionately fond of all forms of musical art. He had a pretty daughter, Maria Anne, who was five years older than Wolfgang, and when she was eight he began to teach her the harpsichord. Naturally little Wolfgang came into the room to listen. When his sister left the instrument he climbed on the music stool and struck the notes at hazard. But, instead of tiring of this new game, he found he could strike two notes at the same time, and that some of the notes sounded harsh, while others were pleasant to hear.

After this discovery Mozart would sit at the instrument for hours at a time. His father thought it was only child's play, and to keep him in good humour began to give him lessons in playing some simple dances. But the child was more curious about music than his sister; he learned his pieces more quickly than she did, and then went on searching out notes and chords for himself. At five he was inventing his own melodies, putting harmonies to them in the manner of a real composer.

Wolfgang Amadeus and his sister Maria Anna Mozart, Eusebius Johann Alphen

The child knew nothing of the technique of music. He merely made up his airs to satisfy and delight his own ear; but his inborn sense of intricate and exquisite design in melody was finer than his father's. He was all feeling. His heart was in everything he did.

The intensity of his emotions does not seem to have interfered with his health, but it made him very delicate in his tastes. He could not bear to listen to the archbishop's band when the players were not perfect in their parts. His ear could detect the slightest mistake, and a discord

The Young Mozart Playing the Organ, Heinrich Lossow

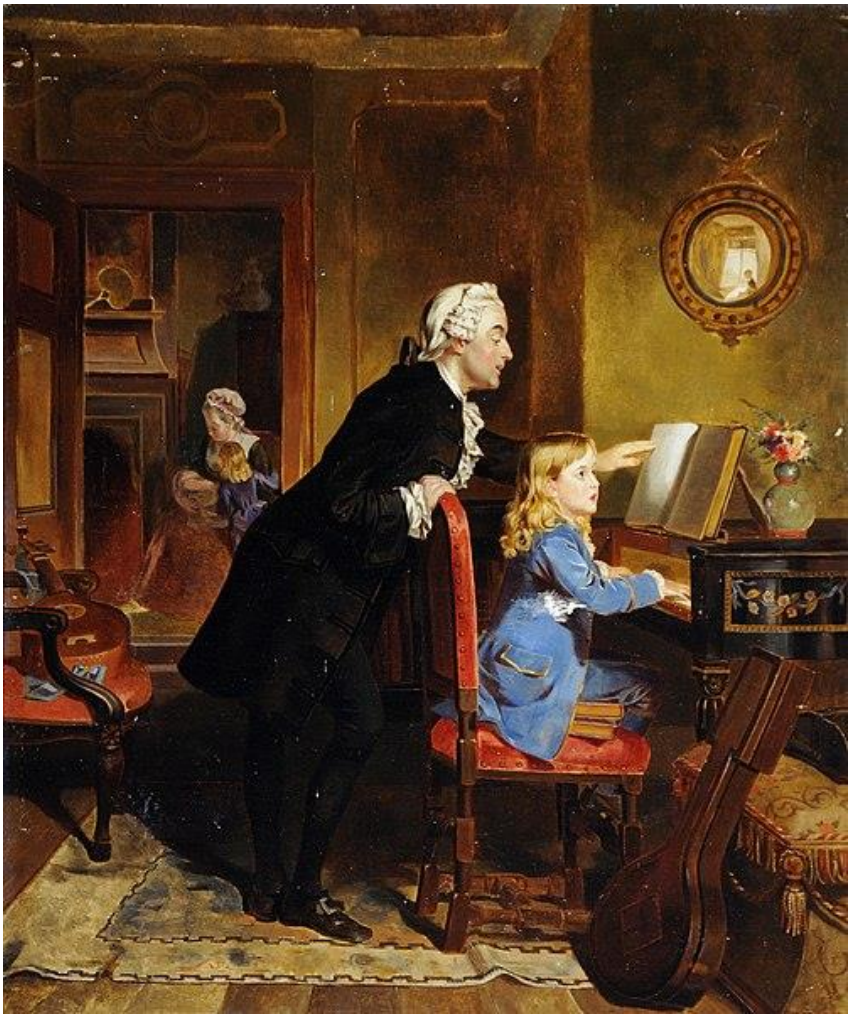
hurt him like a blow. Not till he was ten was he able to bear the sound of the trumpet, which he said should only be used as an accompaniment to sweeter-sounding instruments.

At the age of six he set out with his sister and father on a musical tour, and after playing at Munich the party went on to Vienna, where they received a glorious welcome. They were invited to the palace of the Emperor of Austria, who was amazed at "the little magician," and ordered a hundred ducats to be paid to the boy's father.

The Empress gave young Mozart a costly Court dress, and he became the playmate of the princes and princesses of Austria. He was very fond of Marie Antoinette, who became Queen of France and perished in the Revolution. "You are good. I will marry you," he said one day, when she helped him up after he had tumbled on the polished floor of the palace.

From Vienna Mozart was taken to Paris. On the journey the carriage broke down, and a day was needed to repair it. To while away the time the elder Mozart took his son to a neighboring church, where there was a fine organ, and began to tell him how the pedal was worked. "I can see how it goes," said the child, and, standing at the organ, he began to play the great instrument as though he were a practised organist with long experience.

So the father, during the rest of the tour exhibited his boy as an organ player as well as a composer and performer on the harpsichord. The King and Queen of France were as delighted with the Mozarts as the Austrians had been. At table in the palace of Versailles the boy was placed by the Queen; she fed him and played with him, and he composed for her, and then went to the Royal



The Boyhood of Mozart, Ebenezer Crawford

Chapel and played for an hour on the organ before King Louis and his courtiers.

The French people took a great interest in the little musician, but his supreme triumph was England. George the Third was very fond of music, and so was his Queen, and they went into raptures over the playing and compositions of this wonderful child. The Queen sang to the accompaniment of the lad's playing, and the King looked out the hardest pieces of music he could find and set them before him.

When he left England, at the age of nine, he gave a farewell concert at which all the symphonies were composed by himself. Four years after he travelled to Italy, and captivated the music-loving people of that sunny land.

In Rome he was treated like a prince, but in Naples his audience thought his wonderful playing could only be done by witchcraft. Rising from their seats, they shouted, "Take that ring off your finger!" Nor would they be quiet until he took off the supposed magic ring and played the piece again.

He left Italy in a blaze of glory, having composed for the people of Milan the opera Mithridates, which was received with a storm of applause.

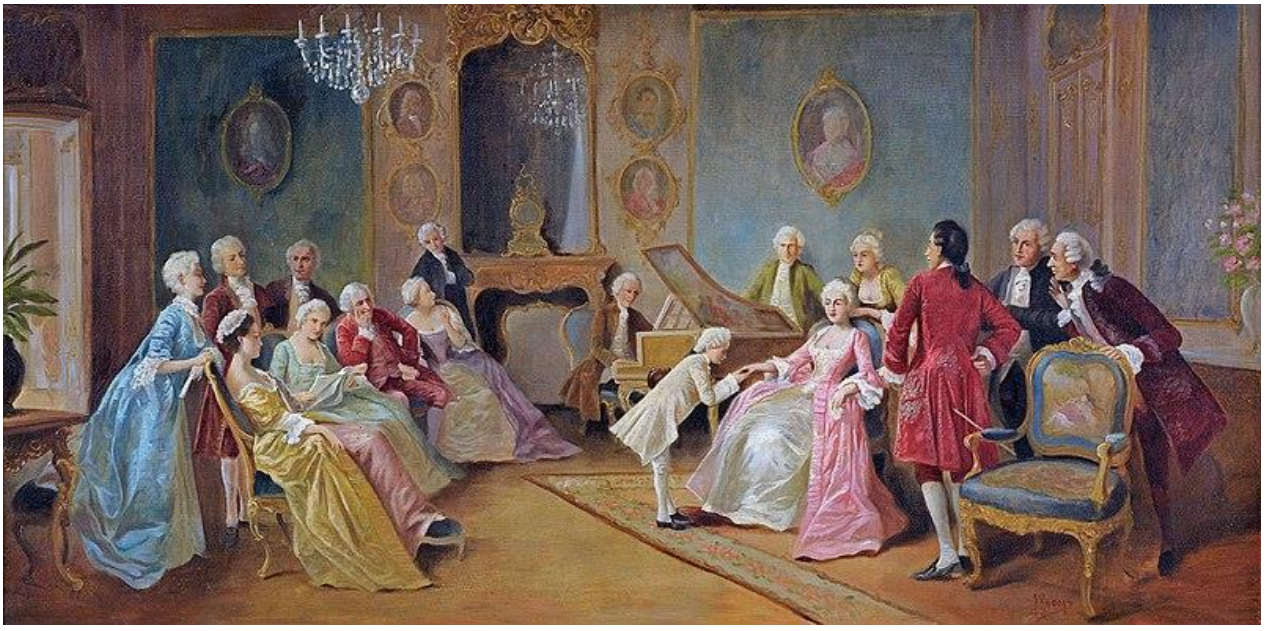
From every country through which he passed he took some golden spoil—from France its new dramatic music; from England, the grandeur and solidity of structure of Handel; from Italy, the emotional melody of the song-writers and the severe, scientific composition of the learned school of composers of that time.

Out of the golden memories of his early days the great musician wove—in the sorrow, poverty, neglect, and suffering of his manhood—the lovely melodies that have won him immortality. For Mozart soon fell on evil days. He wished to settle in his native town, where, when nearly twelve, he had been made court-master to the prince-archbishop; but the old ruler of Salzburg, who had been proud of the honours the boy had gained, died, and his successor treated him very harshly. This

Mozart's audience with Emperor Francis I and Maria Theresa, Eduard Ember

man, though he paid young Mozart only £1 1s 6d a month, would not let him give a public concert at Vienna, though he exacted new compositions from him on every occasion.

When Mozart was 24 he was asked to write an opera for the Munich carnival, and produced one of the finest works of the age. "No music has had such an effect on me; it is magnificent," said



The Young Mozart, August Friedrich Knoop

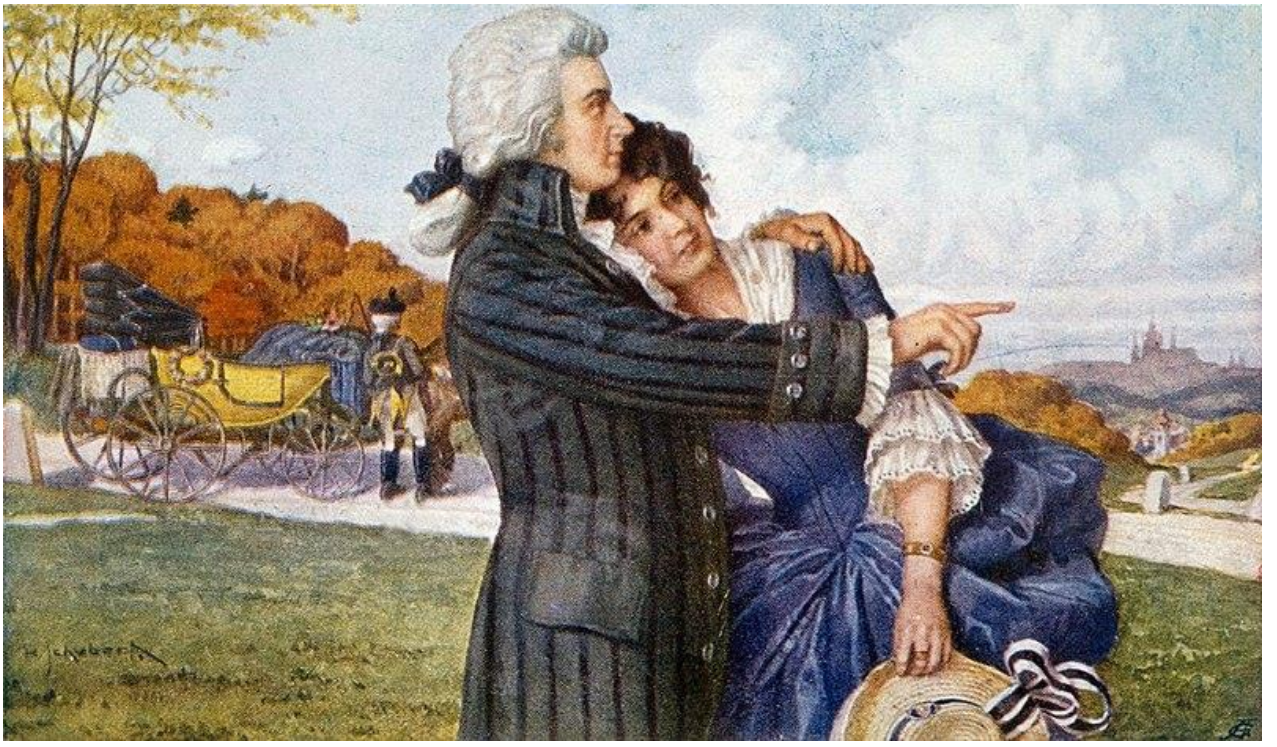
the ruler of Munich, and he treated Mozart as a friend.

Mozart's master summoned him to accompany him to Vienna, where he made him take his meals with the house servants. Unfortunately Mozart was invited out to play before the Emperor of Austria, and he pleased the great man, while the archbishop was disappointed over some matter he had come to urge at court. The archbishop then roughly told Mozart to return at once to Salzburg, and when he came to his palace had him kicked from the door.

Mozart returned to Vienna and set up as a teacher of music, but in spite of his fame he remained poor. He was one of the first to break away from the system of being dependent upon some noble patron, and the people of Vienna began to look on him with disfavour. Even the Emperor, though still admiring his work, was slow to help him. To add to Mozart's difficulties, about this time he married a girl who was as poor as himself. But, though they were often in want, Mozart and his wife were not unhappy. A friend called one winter night and found them dancing together, keeping themselves warm, they said, by waltzing.

Mozart was always in a good humour, and nothing could disturb him. He could work in the most disturbing conditions. His mind seemed to be divided into two parts: the workaday part that worked for the most part carelessly, and the musical part, a large serene region of high imaginative beauty and deep splendour.

What money he made he gave away to whomsoever asked for it. His great operas made the fortunes of other men; but he was too busy over some new work to care about the value of anything he had finished and done with. But gradually his privations undermined his strength, and the fury with which he worked, under his wonderfully continuous inspiration, further weakened his frame.



Mozart with Constanze on Their Honeymoon, Hugo Schubert

One day, when he was feeling ill and depressed, a tall, haggard stranger asked him in a mysterious manner to write a funeral service. Mozart started to compose the work—the greatest piece of music he produced—and the strange thought came to him that he was composing for his own funeral. Perhaps this was why he poured out the full force of his soul in this sublime Requiem. A terrible fever attacked him, and, with his masterpiece unfinished, one of the purest musical geniuses who ever lived died, at 35, and was laid in his last resting-place in a pauper's grave.

The Death of Mozart, Charles E. Chambers

Chapter 10

Heinrich Friedrich Karl vom Stein

1757–1831 A.D., Germany

He is little known to this generation but should be known to all the world. He saved Germany in a crisis of her fate.

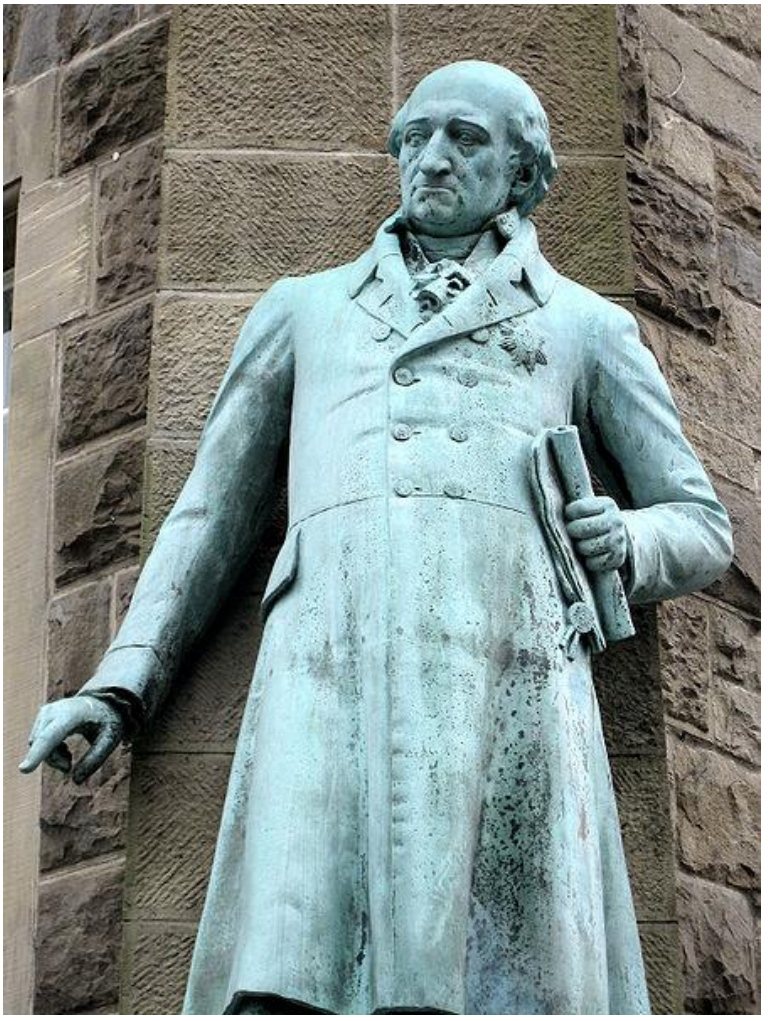
Henry vom Stein started Germany on the road to democracy. He made evident to all the world the evils wrought by emperors who governed and waged war against their people's will. He saw in Napoleon the arch-enemy of the peoples of every nation, and was destined to have a great share in that man's overthrow.

But reaction followed the overthrow of Napoleon, as it nearly always follows a war, and in the end Stein died a broken-hearted man.

A landowner in a small way, he grew up to feel himself no man's inferior. He claimed the right to speak plainly to everybody, king or peasant, and he expected a plain reply. He did not know what it was to be afraid. Whether men liked him or not, all thought him an entirely honest man.

Portrait of Baron Karl vom und zum Stein as Prussian Minister,
Johann Christoph Rincklake

After much reading and travel Stein became convinced that the English system was the best system of government because it interested the people themselves in the welfare of their country and created such a public opinion as can never exist where a nation is ruled from above. He joined what we should now call the Civil



Statue of Baron vom Stein, Wetter, Germany

Service of Prussia, hoping to help the people to be free.

At that time the people of Prussia had no part in its government. Men were divided into three classes—the nobility, the citizens, and the peasants. No citizen could be an officer; no member of the nobility could engage in trade; no peasant could change his condition.

Prussia had at that time lost the respect of Europe by the callous selfishness of her dealings with other nations. When Napoleon emerged from revolutionary France as a conquering emperor Prussia truckled to him by remaining neutral, accepted Hanover and part of Poland as a bribe, and allowed all his Continental opponents to be overthrown.

Thus, while nearly all Europe was at war trying to curb Napoleon's over-mastering ambition, Prussia had eleven years of peace; on the other hand, however, she stood isolated and distrusted.

Her foolish policy was recommended to the king, Frederick William the Third, by his circle of friends; but at last, when troubles were gathering with Napoleon outside and discontent within, he called Stein to Berlin and made him a Minister. Stein drew up a memorandum telling the king plainly how badly the kingdom was governed, and warning him of the dangers ahead. But Frederick took no heed.

War came, and fifteen days after the first shot was fired the French were in Berlin, having defeated and dispersed the main Prussian Army in the two great battles of Jena and Auerstädt. The only civilian who scored a success was Stein, who, as Minister of Finance, managed to save the Treasury funds.

The king now offered Stein the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but he declined to take the position unless the king would dismiss the irresponsible courtiers who surrounded him. Frederick replied that Stein was a "refractory, insolent, obstinate, and disobedient official," and Stein accepted this as his dismissal after over a quarter of a century of faithful service.

By the Peace of Tilsit, which soon followed, Prussia lost half of her territory. Napoleon demanded from her also an indemnity; he placed French garrisons in her fortresses, and suggested that

Stein should be chief minister.

Napoleon had an eye for the man. He wanted Prussia to be a vassal State of his own, and he knew that if anyone could govern Prussia vigorously it was Stein. He hoped that Stein's energy would make Prussia strong enough to pay a large part of the paralysing indemnity. So Stein came back to power in Prussia at the bidding of her enemy, this man whose power Stein was to break.

Cast out like a criminal at the beginning of 1807, at the end of the year Stein came back like a king. King he was in all but name, for he was dictator of Prussia, with Frederick William afraid of Napoleon and ready to do his bidding. But Stein was to become once more a fugitive, a hunted man escaping for his life over the Prussian frontier.

After fifteen months of his dictatorship a private letter written by Stein to stimulate patriotic feeling was intercepted and sent to Napoleon, who forthwith issued a proclamation ordering that "the person called Stein" should be seized. In those fifteen months Stein had done work that transformed the nation.

For three years the world heard nothing of Stein, but during those years the changes he had made in Prussia were quietly working. National feeling was reviving through the greater sense of freedom he had introduced. Though the French still garrisoned the land, when the final invasion of Russia began the Prussian people as a whole were shaking their chains ominously. The Russian Tsar was a man of wavering purpose. What he needed was a man at his right hand who never changed or flinched and had the power to inspire confidence and enthusiasm. At that critical time, in 1812, the Tsar asked Stein to go to Russia as his confidential adviser. The hunted statesman, driven out of Prussia by Napoleon, was free to work Napoleon's doom in Russia. The die of fate was cast. Henceforward on the Continent there was a stern man wielding powerful influence who would never rest or pause till the disturber of the world's peace was disarmed.

When the French were compelled to retreat, with winter overtaking them, it was Stein who stimulated the Russians to pursue Napoleon into Prussia, where Stein declared that the people would rise in a body against the French, though the king in Berlin was still in alliance with Napoleon. The Tsar relied on Stein; the Russians crossed into Prussia, and Stein was made governor of any Prussian districts occupied by the Russian troops. Events justified him abundantly. The Prussian Army, under General Yorck, changed sides. Stein called an Assembly in East Prussia and persuaded it to vote for war.

Prussia at last had found its soul and become a nation, and her king was forced to declare war, though this royal poltroon never forgave Stein, who had brought the Russians to his rescue.

And then Napoleon fell.

At the Congress of the Powers after Waterloo Stein strove with passionate earnestness to bring about a union of German States under one central authority, instead of allowing a relapse into a number of petty sovereignties. But the influence of Austria was too much for him, and he withdrew from the Congress in despair. Retiring into private life, he spent his later years in studying history.

A man of strong views, straight of speech, confident, impatient, eager, with wide and deep aims, he could not but be disappointed with his life's work, for it remained a fragment. He found Prussia soulless, slavish, ignorant, under a rigid tyranny; he gave it a glimpse of freedom and the beginning of hopeful institutions.

He saw Prussia rise from a condition of serfdom into nationhood.

Chapter 11

Ludwig van Beethoven

1770–1827 A.D., Germany

He is an event in the world's history, beginning in a poor cottage at Bonn, with a Court singer for a father and a mother who was a cook's daughter. Ludwig adored her, and it was she who brought him any happiness his childhood knew, for his father was stern and egotistical, a man who, discovering the genius of his infant son very early, set him studying music when he should have been playing with a ball.

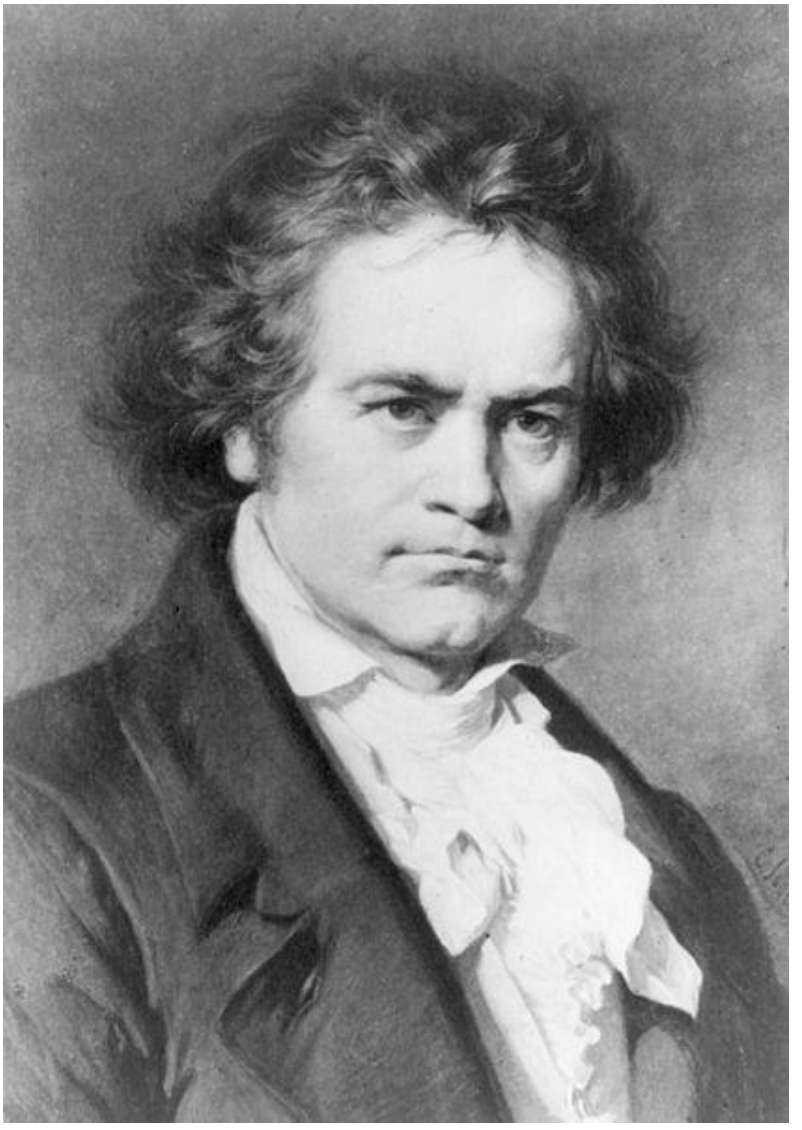
For hours at a time the little Ludwig, aged four, was set at the harpsichord (which is much more difficult to play than the piano), or was given a fiddle. If he rebelled stern measures were taken. Before he was eight he had gauged the meaning of life—hard work and little fun, more kicks than halfpence. He was given the merest smattering of an education; knew something about the three Rs and enough Latin, as someone has said, to fill a postcard. Temperament and early hardships made the boy shy and quiet, and even at school he did not get the fun out of games and his fellow scholars that most boys get.

Thirteen-year-old Beethoven, unknown artist

The father had a certain reward, from his own point of view, for the severe training given his son. When Ludwig was nine the father said: "He knows all of music that can be learned." In later years Beethoven did not agree with this and lamented his incomplete musical education. He also took the first opportunity to rub up his Latin and learn a little French as well as Italian from a scholar whom he chanced to meet.

Presently there was published a piece of music, Nine variations on

Dressler's March in C Minor, composed by a young amateur: Ludwig van Beethoven, aged ten years. At eleven Ludwig was deputy organist to the Court; a year later he was conducting rehearsals in the theatre, both tasks at first unpaid. In the meantime trouble was brewing in the humble house in Bonn. One of Ludwig's brothers died, the father's voice had long since passed its prime, and his career became uncertain. There was never enough money in the home, and, to drown his misery, Herr Beethoven began to drink. Ludwig saw that he would soon be the sole support of the family.



Portrait of Ludwig van Beethoven, Karl Jäger

Lovers of Beethoven have nearly wept at the thought of the hardships of his youth; it is bitter to reflect that this tender soul, sensitive to the music of the spheres, should have been bound down to drudgery. Any ordinary boy would have been forgiven for throwing aside dreams and hopes and settling down to some humdrum work which would bring him money. But Ludwig's ambitions were growing, the sense of power was beginning to haunt him. He was vaguely aware that for him life was an opportunity to create great things.

The boy found peace unspeakable in the beautiful scenes surrounding the town. Nature the great mother took the child upon her knee, and to the end of his life Beethoven felt the purest joy in woods and hills and the swiftly gliding river. Who knows what thoughts passed through his mind, what tormenting music whispered in his ears, when he stood gazing at the Rhine flowing through the flowered meadows, past ranks of tremulous poplars, backed by the eternal hills? When he was old he remembered his Rhineland mountains, and spoke of them with tears.

When Ludwig was 17 he lost his mother and became practically the head of the family, with a drunken father and several brothers and sisters to care for. There was more than one occasion when he had to take his father from the hands of the police. But before this trial came upon him something had happened which made almost all things bearable.

Beethoven Composing the Pastoral Symphony,
Illustration from the *Music Society Almanac,* Zurich, 1834

He had paid a first visit to Vienna and had played to Mozart. Ludwig was in an agony to please the great master. He knew that he had only been asked to play out of courtesy to the man who had introduced him. At first Mozart scarcely listened. Then he quietly drew the attention of his friends, and said, "Pay attention to him; he will make a noise in the world someday."

The young Beethoven was still assistant organist, and held the post four more years. He was working hard, giving lessons, and writing music of all kinds. He met most of the intellectual people of Bonn, and if any great strangers were passing through the old university town, as Haydn did, Ludwig was sure to meet them.

When he was 22 the Elector of Cologne, who had wakened up to the fact that he had a genius among his Court musicians at Bonn, sent Beethoven to Vienna, then the great music centre of Europe, where he would meet masters like Haydn. Some kind of stipend was arranged for him to begin with, but it was never enough, for the young man took the family with him. To the end he never shirked his duties.

Beethoven left Bonn just as the French Revolution touched the district. He met the armies of Hesse marching out against France. Then he cared little enough for the tumult. Later he became a vigorous upholder of the Republic and an ardent admirer of Napoleon. He even went to the length of composing a symphony for the man who was striding across Europe like a Colossus. It was described as a Heroic Symphony, and on the original manuscript the name of Napoleon is written large. In the first part Beethoven painted a grand portrait of Napoleon. It conjures up to the mind

a stern and heroic force which Beethoven conceived as being the backbone of the Revolution—Napoleon.

While the symphony, now known as the Eroica, was in the making the composer heard that Napoleon had become Emperor of the French. Beethoven's dreams of a superb republic guided by a superb First Consul were rudely broken.

Why, he exclaimed bitterly in an outburst of rage, this was nothing but an ordinary man after all; he had consented to become an emperor!

Beethoven tore up the dedication to his work and rewrote it thus: "Heroic Symphony, composed to celebrate the memory of a great man."

When Napoleon died on St. Helena Beethoven remarked, "I composed the music for that sad event 17 years ago."

We have some measure of what the great composer expected of others in the demands he set upon himself. In 1796 he writes in his notebook: "Courage! In spite of all my bodily weakness my genius shall yet shine forth. Twenty-five years! That is the age I have now reached. This very year the man I am must reveal himself in his entirety."

He was not on the surface an attractive person. There was nothing of the politeness of Court life about this Court musician. His manners left much to be desired and his speech was uncultured. When anyone interrupted him in his work he gave way to terrible outbursts of rage.

Alas, two years after entering on that year which was to test his powers Beethoven began to be conscious of the tragedy that was looming ahead. There was in his ears night and day a humming that would not be dispelled. He marched up and down his room, frenzied; he thought, perhaps, it was a chill or nervous disorder; he was aware of this humming even in his sleep. He said nothing about it; he was too miserable, too proud, to admit that the most bitter enemy to any musician was at his gates.

As the suspicion of the truth dawned on him he became a complete recluse. Two years passed by filled with intensely hard work and loneliness. The iron force of his character, intent on musical creation of a superb order, crushed anything so soft as self-pity. At last, in 1801 he gave up the farce of pretending that the enemy had not entered his gates, and he wrote to a friend in those cruel days:

"What a wretched life is mine! For the past two years I have avoided society of any kind, for I cannot talk with people. *I am deaf.* Had I some other occupation I might become reconciled to my fate; as it is my situation is a terrible one, for what would my enemies say if they knew, and they are many!

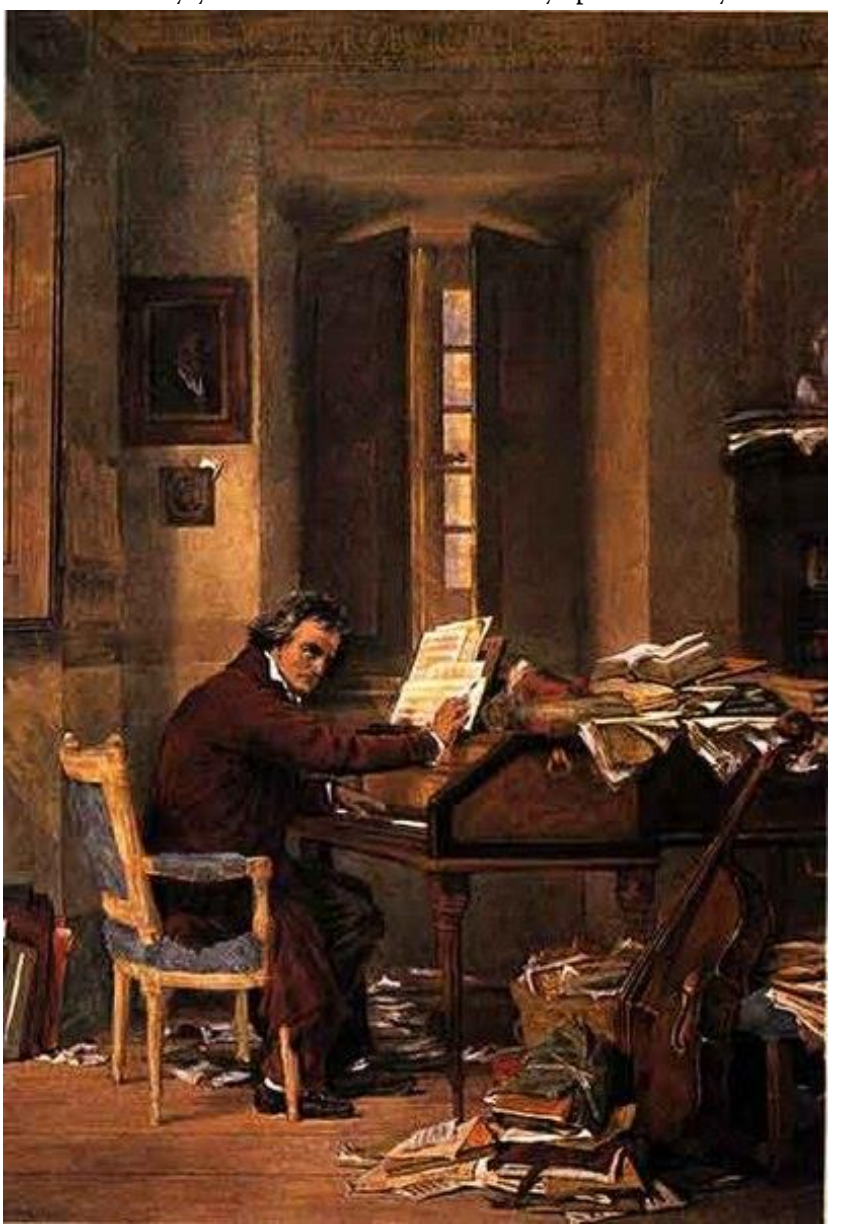
"At the theatre I am obliged to take a seat quite close to the orchestra in order to understand the actor. I cannot hear the high notes of either instruments or voices if I am a little distance away. When people speak softly I scarcely hear anything; on the other hand, I find it intolerable to hear them scream.

"Often I have cursed my very existence. If possible I will courageously bear with what fate may have in store for me, but there are moments in my life when I am the most wretched creature under Heaven. Resignation! Sorry refuge, and yet the only one left to me."

This misery found its way into some of his work, like the Pathetic Sonata, which is so unbearably sad; but for the most part the soul of the creator rose above the tragedy of the man. He was never free from sordid money troubles, having no fixed appointment and many family responsibilities. The

chief trouble he had was his nephew Karl, the son of the brother who died in Beethoven's boyhood. Karl, a graceless, idle, dissolute lad, became the musician's greatest trial and helped to make his last years intensely unhappy. There seemed to be no chance for this man, harassed by anxieties without and within, to sun himself in any of life's pleasant places. Yet he had a great genius for friendship. Once a man or woman penetrated his rough exterior they found a heart of gold and the loving nature of a child. No one seemed to care that he was ugly and that, as the years went by, he was careless of his personal appearance.

Beethoven, who of all men ought most to have conserved his strength, allowed much of his energy to be nibbled at by love affairs. For many years he seemed to be always passionately in love with someone, and withal was the purest of men, so that the women of his devotion have always been as remote as angels. After some years he settled down and managed to avoid these outbursts, but his attachments made him all the more sensitive about his infirmities. With his poverty, deafness, and the burden of his family, the dice were loaded against a happy marriage for Beethoven. He took an unfortunate love affair, like that with the coquettish Giulietta, who jilted him in 1803 to marry a title, most desperately to heart, and said he did not see how, with this trouble added to others he had to bear, that he could go on living. He wrote bitterly about these things to those who had his confidence. But one letter penned about this time pulls far more at the heartstrings than a lover's moan:



Ludwig van Beethoven in His Study, Carl Bernhard Schloesser

"My strength of body and intellect are growing. It is as if youth is just beginning. Every day draws me nearer my goal in life, a goal I can just catch a glimpse of without being able to

define it. If only I were rid of my deafness I would clasp the whole world in my arms…. No rest! No repose; none that I know of except sleep. If only my deafness were half so bad as it is!"

So the years passed by for this man who had been marked out by the gods for a miraculous accomplishment.

But in 1806 it seemed that even Beethoven was to be happy. An idyll came into his life. He became betrothed to a delightful woman who had loved him for years, ever since he gave her piano lessons—Thérèse von Brunswick. Her brother, a count, was already a friend of Beethoven.

It was to him that the composer dedicated the famous Sonata Appassionata, which he began to write one day after reading Shakespeare's Tempest and being haunted by wondrous images of sound.

For a time Beethoven was very happy, and so was Thérèse. But something, no one quite knows what (probably an attack of pride), got in the way, and the engagement was broken. These two were faithful to each other's memory, nevertheless, to the end. Years later someone coming into Beethoven's room saw him with Thérèse's photograph in his hand, talking aloud, as deaf people do. "Thou wert so lovely and great, so like an angel," said the lonely man.

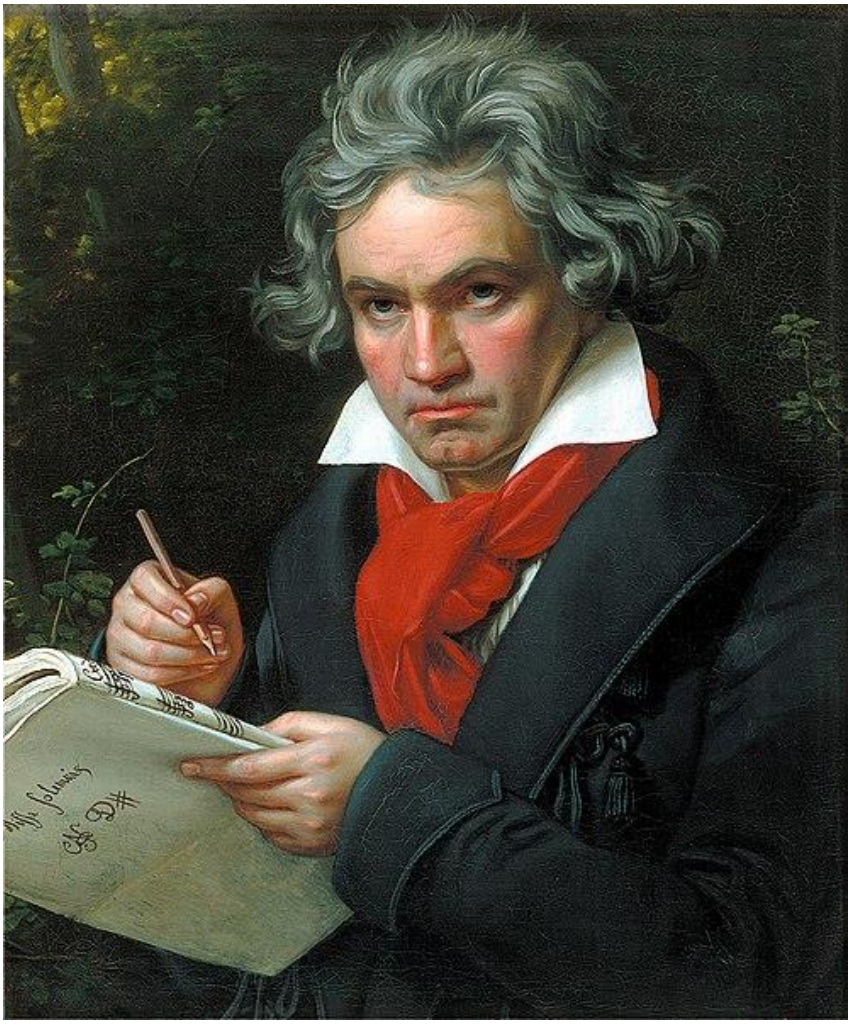
When Beethoven was about forty a curious change came over him. He was no longer sensitive about himself, no longer troubled about what anyone thought of him. His position and his appearance alike became of no moment whatever. His character and his work, two enormous forces, had triumphed over all the rest of the influences of his life. He was conscious of his strength as a king is conscious of royalty. He had earned the right to homage. "I recognise no other sign of superiority than goodness," he said. This was a magnificent statement coming from a man who was recognised as the greatest musician the world had ever known and had every reason to be vain and proud of his superiority in musical genius over all his rivals.

But no one could live Beethoven's hard life for him. And he did not in any measure get his deserts. Three princes of Austria agreed to give him a pension so that he could write in peace; but the money did not come regularly, and his scapegrace nephew was always writing begging letters. Somewhere about the time of Waterloo the great silence closed on him absolutely. He became totally deaf, and had to use a conversation notebook. When he was aware that anyone wished to speak to him he passed the notebook, and questions and replies were jotted down in pencil.

His life went on as if nothing had happened until disease sapped his vitality. Ten more years passed; the winters in Vienna, the summers in the country. Nature became his only solace. He had an intense love for all that he saw once the city was left behind, and he spent hours dreaming of the shapes of clouds, flowers in the hedges, the trees bending under the wind. He went about hatless, a queer, uncouth figure, the face marred by suffering and made beautiful by the changeless force of an upright character. All his walks were taken alone; that is to say, outwardly alone, for Nature, who had taken the child upon her knee, took the bruised and tired spirit in her arms.

His last years were made needlessly unhappy by his wretched nephew. In 1824 this young man entered the university as a student of philology. He failed in every way and, deciding that literature was not his business, took up trade. In order to follow the trade he had chosen it was necessary to pass an examination, and even that he failed to do. Then he tried to shoot himself, and could not, but he was arrested and ordered out of Vienna by the police. In the end the ne'er-do-well joined the army.

This disaster was a terrible blow to the uncle, who had an unshakable love for the scapegrace.



Ludwig Van Beethoven, Joseph Karl Stieler

Beethoven would never admit to himself that the young man was cheating him; he always forgave him, and always hoped that things would mend.

Nothing is finer in Beethoven's life than the spectacle of his last few working years. He himself is a curious figure. A servant recorded his day's work:

"At half-past five he was up and at his table, beating time with hands and feet, singing, humming, writing. At half-past seven was the family breakfast, and directly after it he hurried out of doors, and would saunter in the fields, calling out, waving his hands, now going very slowly, now very fast, and then suddenly standing still and writing in a kind of pocket-book. At midday he came in to dinner, and then to his room till about three; then again in the fields till sunset. At half-past seven was supper, and then he wrote till ten, and then to bed.

He had to the end the humility and the disappointment of great genius. He felt that he had done nothing, and that his work lay before him. "I feel," he said, "as if I had scarcely written more than a few notes." His last work, a new ending to the B flat quartette, was dated November 1826. An unfortunate journey in an open chaise brought on a severe chill, inflammation of the lungs, and then dropsy. For four months he lay ill, writing and dictating letters, looking at Handel's works in 40 volumes which rested near his bed, dipping for the first time into Schubert's songs, delighted with them, and saying, "Truly Schubert has the divine fire." As for himself, he felt that he would have liked to face all his life again, misery and all, deafness and all, for then he might have written the music he had always been trying to reach, always out of sight and touch, round the corner of his mind.

From his bed he planned a wonderful Tenth Symphony, to be quite different from anything else he had written. He had no idea, nor had most of his friends, that this sick bed was to be his deathbed. Then he weakened rapidly, and now no one had any doubt, and the news spread through Germany

that the great Beethoven was at his last. When he was dying Schubert came to see him, and could not understand the motions of the gaunt weak hands. Beethoven had an unhappy death, a long and painful struggle. He died at last during a violent thunderstorm.

He was only 56, and he left behind him a mass of work which those who know best say it would take many lifetimes to understand. But his greatest symphony, his finest sonata, was his own character, his indomitable fight against adversity.

Chapter 12

Franz Schubert

1797–1828 A.D., Austria

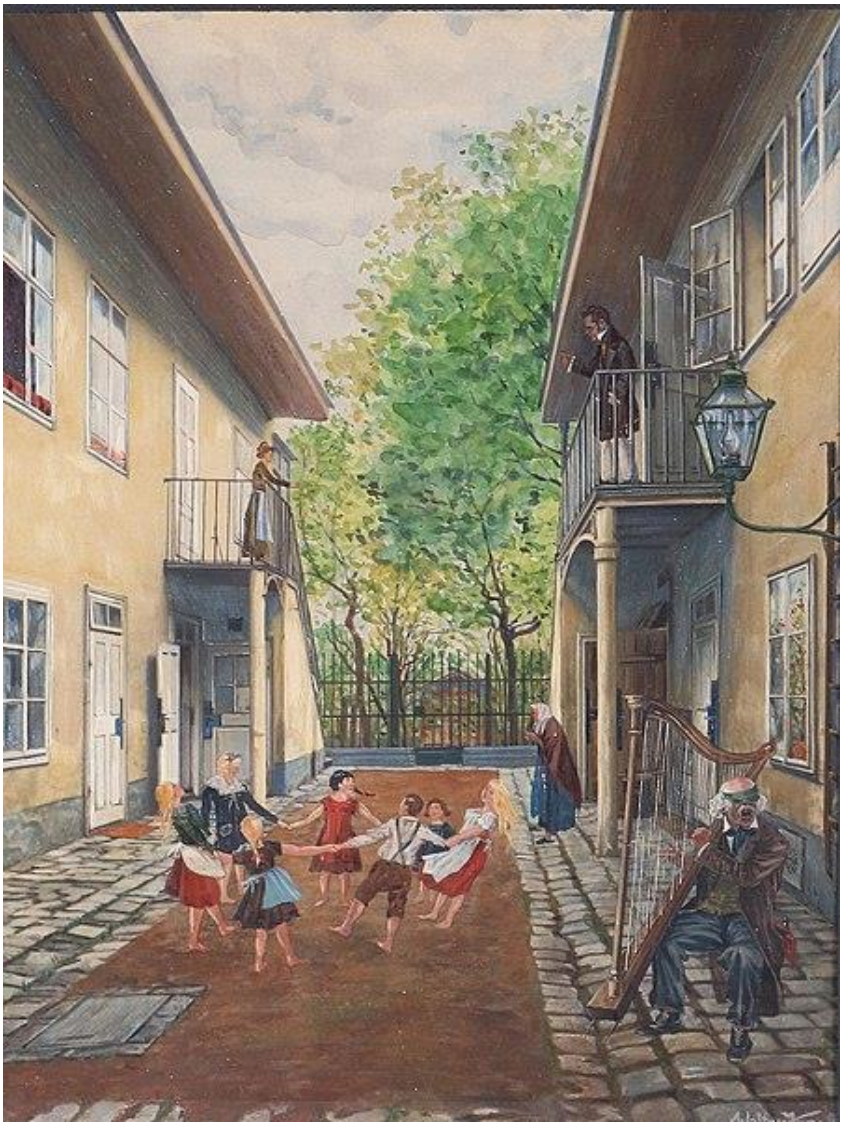
The young Schubert, Josef Abel

He lived a short and struggling life, and he put into the lives of generations that were yet unborn more joy than perhaps he himself knew.

He was the only great musician really native to Vienna, born there in 1797; and the great capital which has seen and measured much genius has always loved the memory of her gifted son.

But it was not "roses, roses, all the way" for poor Schubert. Many would have allowed themselves to be crushed by the hard conditions of his early life. His father, the son of a Moravian peasant, had worked himself up to the position of village schoolmaster, and Franz was but one of a very large family. The story of his development is much that of gifted people the world over. He was taught to play the fiddle by his father (the Schuberts were a musical family), but when he was only a child his elder brothers found that they could teach him nothing.

A great day came when little Franz, aged 11, was sent up as a candidate for the choir school attached to the Court chapel. A good many other boys went up at the same time, and while waiting their turn to be examined they amused themselves with jokes about the small boy in a rough grey



Schubert Birthplace with Playing Children, a Harp Player and Schubert on the Balcony, Walter Kopsa

suit, saying it was clear he was nothing but a miller. A few days later Franz changed his despised grey suit for the gold-laced uniform of the imperial choristers, and the boys who had laughed at him were sent back home.

This school was a fine place for study. The boys were an orchestra in themselves, and they practised daily. The first time Franz took his place among them (all boys much older than himself) he played so well that the leader of the orchestra, a lad called Spaun, turned round to see who it was, and found "a small boy in spectacles named Franz Schubert."

These two became great friends, and one day Franz confessed that he had already made compositions, and would do more but he had no money for music paper. The elder boy provided the money and the musician's career began. For five years, until his voice broke, he studied in conditions which schoolboys nowadays would find very trying.

The practice-room was cruelly cold in winter and the boys had not enough to eat, with a poor dinner at noon and nothing more till a poor supper at eight.

During these student years Franz wrote a good deal of music which would have been better if he had been taught more Theory in his childhood years. Schubert's genius was of an individual nature, and he was inclined to overlook the recognised laws of composition.

Nor did he receive much discipline at school, where he was allowed to compose as he liked. The result was he was never able to mould sufficiently his free and swiftly-moving genius in the forms necessary for heavier styles of composition. Before his development was complete he had become shaped as a song writer; and, though in that field he has no peer, people who love his work cannot help regretting that his masters did not discipline him more and develop his genius more fully.

When, at 17, he took lessons from Salieri, a very gifted musician, his style was already formed.

In the meantime, Franz was passing through a difficult time. He went home when his chorister years were over, and for three years endured the drudgery of teaching the lowest classes in his father's little village school.

There is no more unhappy person in the world than a teacher who was not born to teach. Schubert bore it as best he might, and was not more irritable than most geniuses would have been. He was loyal and conscientious; he got through the school day, and then flew home for the hours when he might shut himself up in his room and do his own work.

At home he threw off his burden and became himself, a young man with a genius for music and a genius for friendship. He had made many friends during his student years, and for a long time his friends made a golden ring which shut out the hardships and discontents of his daily work.

He was not quite 18 when his first Mass was written and performed in church. A little later there was a second performance, when Franz himself conducted, his brother played the organ, an old music-master of his childhood led the choir, and a friend sang the chief parts. We can imagine the joy and pride of the father of this young genius. To show his appreciation he spent some of his hard-earned savings in buying a five-octave piano for Franz—a great thing in those days.

Schubert's first great disappointment came when he was 19. A Government music school opened in a neighbouring town, and he applied for the post of director. The salary was only £21 a year but Franz felt that anything was better than teaching at school. When he was not appointed he sank into black despair.

But he was learning that life has compensations. On the heels of this sorrow came delight, a new friendship with a young man called Schober, and a new life. Schober had heard some of Franz's songs at Spaun's house, and, coming one day to see Schubert after school hours, he found him at a table heavily piled with music manuscripts. At this time Franz's father, poor man, was wishing that his son, with all his genius, had enough genius to teach the alphabet properly in the infant class. It was not an easy position. Schober came again, and begged Franz to give up trying to teach the alphabet and come and share his rooms in Vienna. With over-whelming delight and a gratitude that never died Schubert accepted this offer and went to live in Vienna.

Schubert's friendships grew, and work went on apace with this glorious liberty. He never had much money, for he was naturally a spend-thrift and his success with publishers was irregular and uncertain.

At one bad time he sold songs for tenpence each. But he and his comrades had all things in common, even to hats and coats.

This kind of life, with intervals of holidays in the Hungarian mountains, he lived to the end. There were chances from time to time of posts as organist, but he wisely refrained from taking them, knowing that he was incapable of routine work.

In his own labours he never flagged. He set to work the minute he got up: sometimes, so eager was he, he would seize a paper and write in bed.

Life buffeted him hard but did not change him. To the end he was reckless, improvident, of a feverish brain, a most lovable friend. He was always humble, caring nothing for social success. He had neither good stature nor good looks; all his life he was just "little Franz Schubert in spectacles."

The year before he died he arranged a concert at Vienna of his own music. The hall was

crowded, and the result for Schubert was £32—a fortune. A few days later Paganini came to play in Vienna for the first time, and Schubert, in a lordly way, went to an expensive seat—had he not got what was still left of £32? He went again, and took a friend who was too poor to buy a ticket. Soon they were all without money again, but they were happy.

Franz Schubert, Wilhelm August Rieder

Franz never married; when anyone asked him he said he was married to his music. From the age of 18 he had been composing at a rate that would astonish an ordinary musician, to whom an inspiration comes only once in a way, and is humbly and thankfully set down. He wrote eight operas in one year. He had a passion for poetry, and when he came across verses that pleased him he would read them once, seizing their very inmost beauty and purpose. Snatching a piece of paper, he would fling down his song like a shower of bird's notes.

It happened that on a Sunday afternoon, coming home from a walk, he saw a friend in the garden of a village inn and stopped to chat with him. The friend laid down the volume of Shakespeare he was reading and Schubert picked it up. He came on the lines "Hark, hark, the lark," read them, and exclaimed, "Why haven't I some music paper?"

The friend quickly drew some lines on the back of the bill of fare, and there and then, in the crowded and noisy place, Schubert wrote that famous song. Later in the same evening he wrote music to a song from Antony and Cleopatra, and the lovely, haunting "Who is Silvia?" No one could stop him from composing. Good verse and bad it did not matter, almost anything would set him singing. Schumann said he could have set a street advertisement to music; anything he touched turned to song. Liszt said he was the most poetical musician who ever lived. His biographers call him the king of song-writers—he composed nearly six hundred songs in the course of his short life.

He locked a great deal of his work up and in time forgot all about it. Once he forgot his own music in a fortnight. He sent a batch of new songs in manuscript to a friend, and it happened that a fortnight later, at his house, he heard him play and hum through a song.

"I say," said Franz, coming up to the piano, "that's not bad; whose is it?"

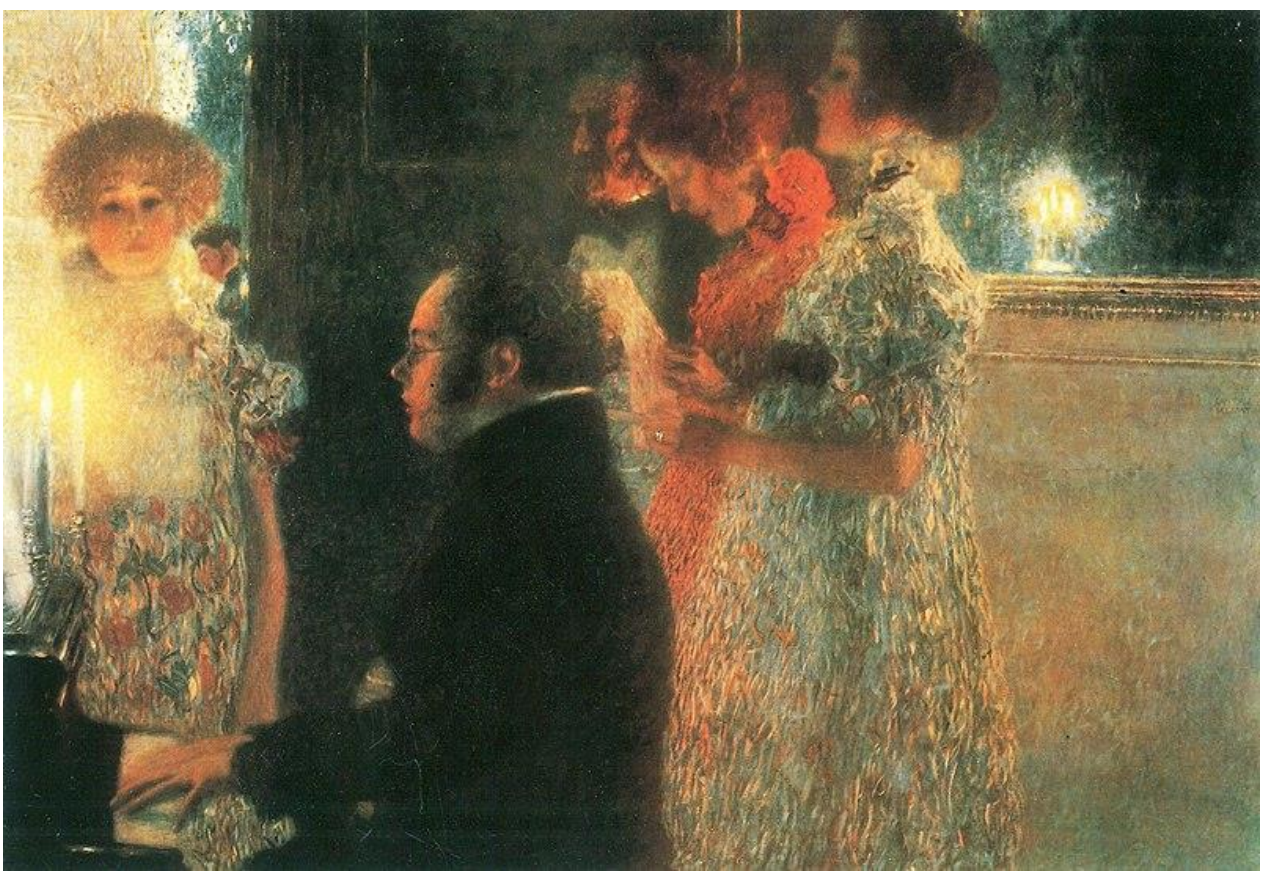
"Your own," replied the friend.

Boys who love Fenimore Cooper's stories will read with intense interest the last letter Schubert wrote to his friend Schober. Here it is:

> Dear Schober, I am ill. I have eaten and drunk nothing for eleven days. In this distressing condition be so kind as to help me to some reading. Of Cooper's I have read *The Last of the Mohicans, The Spy, The Pilot,* and *The Pioneers.* If you have anything else of his I entreat you to leave it.
>
> Your friend, Schubert.

People who want to do something in the world find an unfailing inspiration in Schubert. He is a continual example to get up and go on again. His little room was always cluttered with music manuscripts. He knew no rest; as soon as one thing was finished he put it aside and began to work on another, as if this new work, be it song, or mass, or sonata, or opera, were the only thing he had been born to do. It is idle to imagine what Schubert would have finally most excelled in had he lived to a good age. He died when he was only 31.

When we think of his short life, and his singing, and his end we are reminded of what he himself said in his diary of Mozart:



Schubert at the Piano II, Gustav Klimt

Schubertiade, Julius Schmid

"Gently, as if out of the distance, did the magic tones of Mozart's music strike my ears. Such lovely impressions remain on the soul, there to work for good, past all power of time or circumstance."

As with Mozart so was it with Schubert, the man who lived for the thing he loved above everything in the world—his music.

Chapter 13

Louis Kossuth

1802-1894 A.D., Hungary

Louis Kossuth, Franz Mezner

"I told you so," he would say today if he were back. He strove and risked his life for the redemption of a Hungary that was 126,000 square miles in area with a population of 21 millions; today it is reduced to a beggarly 36,000 square miles, and to little more than a third of its former population. Was all his superb eloquence spent in vain, his suffering profitless? At least his prophecies have been realised sadly to the full.

He was born at Monok, son of a lawyer who owned a little vineyard, the last vestige of the estates of an ancient family. The Kossuths were lovers of liberty, generation after generation, and Louis used to say "My family tree is like a gallows: there is an ancestor hanging from every branch." Seventeen of them, striving for the human rights of their fellows, met the fate of those whom a tyrannous Government convicts of what it is pleased to term high treason. But the flame of patriotic ardour and love of justice burned as brightly in Louis Kossuth as in any of whose who had died for it.

The boy was father to the man. Punished in error by his father, he was urged by his mother to seek forgiveness. "I would rather die of starvation than ask forgiveness for a fault I have not committed," he proudly answered. And he never asked his Government's forgiveness, but lived more than half his life in exile. The events leading to that melancholy term seem to belong to the Dark Ages

rather than to times in which our grandparents lived.

Louis Kossuth's Hungary was annexed to Austria, which at the same time had a large part of Italy in bondage. The backbone of the population were peasants of a fine type, whom the Emperor delighted to keep from even the rudest scholarship. "I want obedient subjects, not men of learning," he told a gathering of professors. The peasants were little better than serfs. They had to pay all the taxes; the nobles, who had the wealth of the country, escaping liability. They had to work free of charge for as many as a hundred days a year for the landowners, and give up a ninth part of all they grew to the same greedy masters.

There was no free press, no right of public meeting, no right of association. Not until Louis was nearly 25 was the language of the country spoken in the Diet, or parliament; since the year 1000 Latin had been compulsory. Secret police and domestic spies were everywhere; tyranny was rampant. Kossuth took his life in his hands to remedy these abuses. A brilliant scholar and lawyer and a man of spotless life, he ranged himself with the peasants against the magnates and the Emperor, although fortune beckoned him to the other side.

Elected to the Diet, he began the publication of the debates. He had no machine such as we know, but one copy was written, and duplicates were lithographed from it and broadcast throughout the country. This device was quickly denounced, so he had recourse to reports which enthusiastic assistants copied by hand. The Diet was contemptuously dismissed and the Emperor was lawgiver and tyrant. There remained the local councils, and Kossuth published reports of these by the same means as before, and his essays were read aloud in secret by scholars to the unlettered, who gathered under cover of darkness to hear what was happening in the local councils of their fatherland.

Portrait of Lajos Kossuth, György Vastagh

But this was an offence beyond endurance by the Emperor and his creatures. The young editor was seized and thrown into prison. For two years he was kept in solitary confinement without being brought to trial. He was refused the use of

books, of writing materials, left to his burning thoughts in a solitary dismal cell. At last he was brought to trial and sentenced to a four-years imprisonment in a fortress—simply for having reported the commonplace proceedings of the local bodies who discharged such petty duties as tyranny left to them.

Already a fine linguist, Kossuth now desired to extend his knowledge of languages, and asked that he might be permitted the use of books. For months he had lain in a damp cell, seeing neither the sky nor the Earth, as he said, without a single consolation. When he now pleaded once more for books his gaolers answered, "Well, nothing political!"

"Then give me Shakespeare, with an English grammar and a dictionary; that you will take, I trust, not to be political," he responded.

They brought him his Shakespeare. For months it was a sealed book to him as the hieroglyphics of the Egyptian monuments once were to the modern world. "But at last the light spread over me, and I drank in deep draughts from that limpid source of delightful instruction and instructive delight," so he told us later. The Anglo-Saxon world marvelled at his noble English, but were puzzled by his obsolete expressions; he had learned Shakespeare's English and knew no other.

When he came to England, a refugee, this story was remembered, and thousands of people subscribed a penny each to present to him the works of Shakespeare in the noblest of bindings of gold and crimson silk, decorated with his armorial bearings. But there were heavy seas of trouble for Louis Kossuth to negotiate before that happy day dawned.

His cruel imprisonment fired popular indignation; the dynasty seemed threatened. Several of the abuses against which he had raised his voice were abated to appease the nation, and at 38 he was liberated, apparently at the point of death. Freedom restored him, and he married, started another newspaper in Budapest, and outlined a scheme of reform that might have wrought wonders for Austria-Hungary and for Europe had it been adopted.

Kossuth advocated revolution by sensible reform. He hated violence; he sought get the aristocracy to join with the peasantry in redressing wrongs and establishing education and commerce under the existing dynasty. This was too much for the Government, so they bought up Kossuth's proprietor and left him without a paper. The editorial chair having failed him, he went out into the highways and byways to do with his voice what he was not permitted to attempt with his pen.

Quietly and peacefully he brought about a series of splendid improvements in the life of the people. He established popular banks, he formed cooperative associations for the promotion of commerce, he stimulated the extension of railways; he carried Hungary forward on his own shoulders and at his own cost. There never was more disinterested or enlightened patriot. But he could not effect the changes necessary to the political and economic salvation of his countrymen; the Crown and the aristocratic interests were bitterly opposed to all his dearest ideals.

When 1848 came, that year of revolution that shook the thrones of Europe, Kossuth found himself by general acclaim the leading figure of his fatherland. Revolution broke out there too, as well as in Austria, from which the Emperor had to flee. He returned to Vienna to meet Kossuth, who took with him a scheme of reforms that were revolutionary to a Hapsburg but commonplaces to law-abiding Britain. The patriot was informed that the claims would be conceded if only Vienna could be kept quiet and that it did not appear as if the Emperor was compelled to yield.

It was one of those curious vicissitudes of human life (Kossuth afterwards wrote) in which

myself, a humble son of modest Hungary, was in a position to hold the destinies of the House of Hapsburg and all its crowns in these hands. I said: Be just to my Fatherland, and I will give peace and tranquillity to Vienna. They promised to be just and before 24 hours I gave peace and tranquillity to Vienna; and I have a right to say that the House of Hapsburg owes its existence as a dynasty to me.

The promise solemnly made was lightly broken and Austria made war on Hungary by encouraging the Ban of Croatia with 30,000 men to attack her defenceless possessions.

All her neighbours were incited to attack her, but the scholar-statesman, who knew nothing of war, raised a valiant army and threw back invasion after invasion. He became the Dictator of Hungary, the one man who could have saved her and made her a free and noble nation had he been in the least ably supported. But he had a chemist for his commander-in-chief, and a traitor at that, and amid the enthusiasts who backed him there was no character strong enough to lend the support necessary in so desperate a crisis. The Hungarians were prepared to fight and die to the last man, but they had no leader.

"Magyars," he said to the army when the pressure of enemies on all hands was intolerable, "there is the road to your peaceful homes and firesides. Yonder is the path that leads to death; but it is the

Lajos Kossuth's recruiting speech in Cegléd, Franz Kollarž

Kossuth in Wien Illustration from *History of the Wiener Revolution,* volume 1 by Band von H. Reschauer and Band von M. Smets, 1872

path to duty. Which will you take?" He was answered with a great shout, "Liberty or death!"

Again and again his valorous encouragement enabled the devoted Hungarians to hurl back the forces sent against them, but that tyrant, the Tsar Nicholas the First, seeing a brave people about to free itself from bondage on his own borders, entered the fight on the side of Austria against poor smitten little Hungary. This was too much. Kossuth's commander-in-chief sold the war to Russia, and in the wake of the Russian armies came Austrian executioners, with wholesale hangings of men, floggings of women, and general imprisonment of untried suspects.

All hope for Kossuth's schemes of reform and regeneration were now at an end. He fled into Turkey with a handful of Poles and others who had stood by him. Austria and Russia demanded their instant surrender, and the Sultan of Turkey, of all people, championed them and refused to deliver them to the Imperial wolves. What strange changes time brings! The Turks for 161 years owned the greater part of Hungary and ruled in its capital; yet here was the Sultan of the defeated Turks standing between Kossuth, who once might have been his slave, and the two Emperors who desired his judicial murder.

England and France backed the Sultan in his bold humanitarian mood, and they stood side by side with him against Russia in the Crimean War, which became inevitable after this extraordinary incident. The fidelity of Kossuth to his religion was tested during this time of trial.

The Sultan at first made it a condition of his saving the refugees that they should forsake Christianity and embrace Mohammedanism "For my part," answered Kossuth, "when I am asked to abjure the faith of my forefathers, through terror of the executioner, welcome rather the gibbet and the block." Even the Sultan of Turkey respected that.

For two years Kossuth was a prisoner in Turkey, but on the intercession of England and America he was at last released and allowed to go aboard an American vessel, on which, passage across France being refused him, he travelled to England, and, in spite of Queen Victoria's hostility, was the hero of the day. He made magnificent speeches to immense audiences, and, going on to

America, was received with honours such as were accorded to emperors and conquerors in classical times. He was unmoved by his honours; he thought only of his beloved Hungary, only of stirring the free nations to go to the help of the fatherland that he had left to the oppression of the Hapsburg regime. To attain that object he would have plunged the whole world into what would have seemed to him a holy war.

In the end he retired to Italy, a botanising philosopher and philanthropist, with magic still flowing from his pen when he wrote of Hungary. But he foresaw the doom of the Hapsburgs, the break-up of the Austrian Empire, and the dismemberment of the land for which he had risked his life.

For no fewer than fifty years he was an exile, living mostly in Turin, where he died at the age of 92, a heartbroken man.

Dead, he was no longer dangerous, and his body was taken for burial to Budapest. He achieved nothing, but he sowed seeds that have led to the emancipation of peoples in a wider field than that in which he toiled, for mankind has profited greatly by his devoted labours.

Chapter 14

Felix Mendelssohn

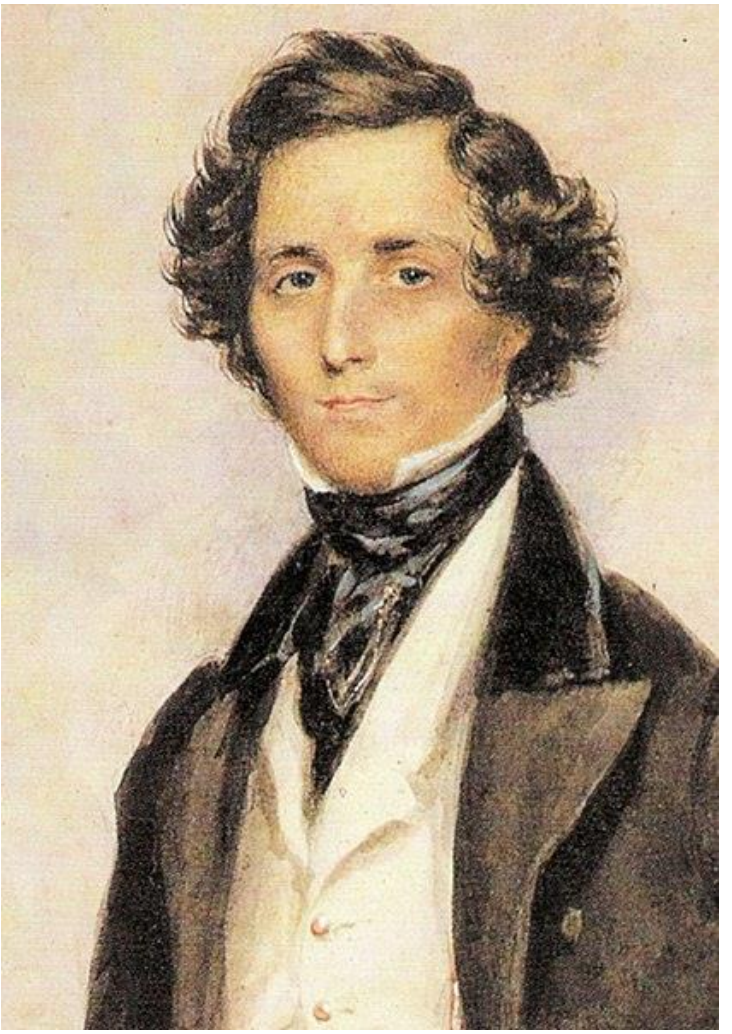
1809–1847 A.D., Germany

In the forest of his life there were storms, but no tragedy. Morning by morning his hymn of praise arose to greet the day. To many lovers of his music he is singing yet. He brought to England a revelation of simple song, and he is loved by thousands of the people to whom the new music, like the new art, is rather wearying and formless.

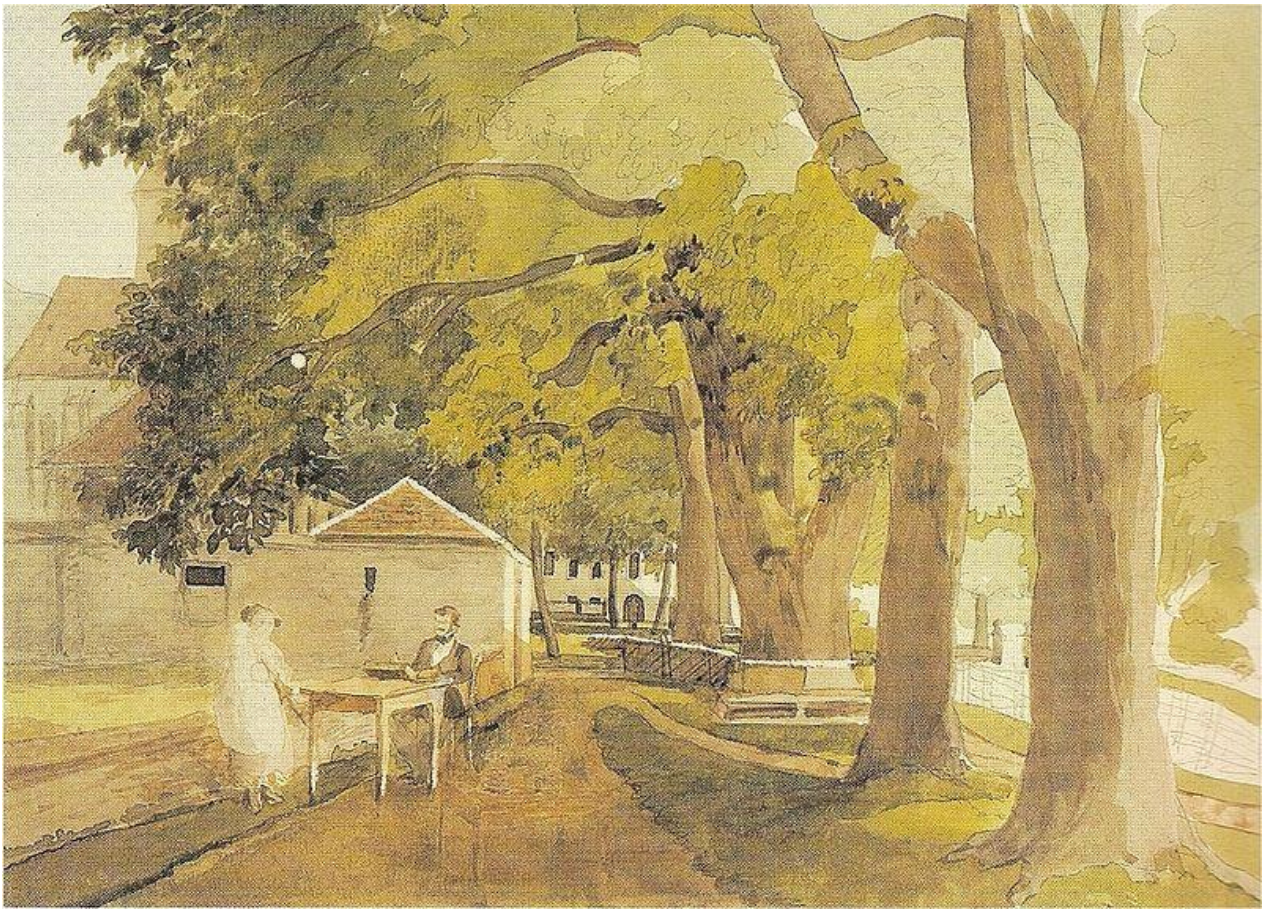
Jakob Ludwig Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy was born in Hamburg, but soon afterward the family moved to Berlin. The Mendelssohns were already famous because of the boy's grandfather, a learned writer of philosophy, who produced, among other things, a treatise on immortality which carried his name into every country in Europe.

His father, Abraham Mendelssohn, a banker, was a man of interesting character; in the picture one gets of the family he is always there, sympathetic, loyal, of a fair and sound judgment. Without any great gifts in music, letters, or art, he was at home in gifted circles. He had a way of saying, with a humorous glance, that his fate had been first to be the son of a famous father, and then the father of a famous son—a hyphen, a dash between two sentences, a mere connecting link.

Felix was among the people who saw the Duke of Wellington and Blucher ride into Paris after Waterloo. The small boy of seven wandered round with his elders, noting little things and appearances as only children can, listening to conversation, and carrying pictures of Paris in



Portrait of Felix Mendelssohn, James Warren Childe



Picture from Interlaken, Felix Mendelssohn

his mind that later years could never wipe away.

On the return from Paris life started seriously for him. It was characteristic of Abraham Mendelssohn that he should arrange for a thorough education for his children. They had tutors for all subjects and were up as early as five o'clock each morning to do their lessons.

Felix soon became that uncomfortable thing, a musical prodigy, a child gifted beyond his years. There are very few children who can pass successfully through this most trying ordeal; fortunately Felix never saw himself as a little wonder. And his parents, fearful lest their son, like so many precocious children, should become just an ordinary musician, treated him with greatest wisdom. At nine he made his bow at a public concert. When he was ten he entered the Academy as an alto. The next year he began to compose, and his parents and tutors allowed him to go his own way. Professor Zelter, his composition tutor, predicted a great future, and was mightily proud of his eleven-year-old composer of sonatas and trios, organ pieces, cantatas, and songs.

Zelter took him to Weimar, where his friend Goethe lived, and little Felix lived in Goethe's house for a fortnight. He played there to many people, but always looked for the poet's approval.

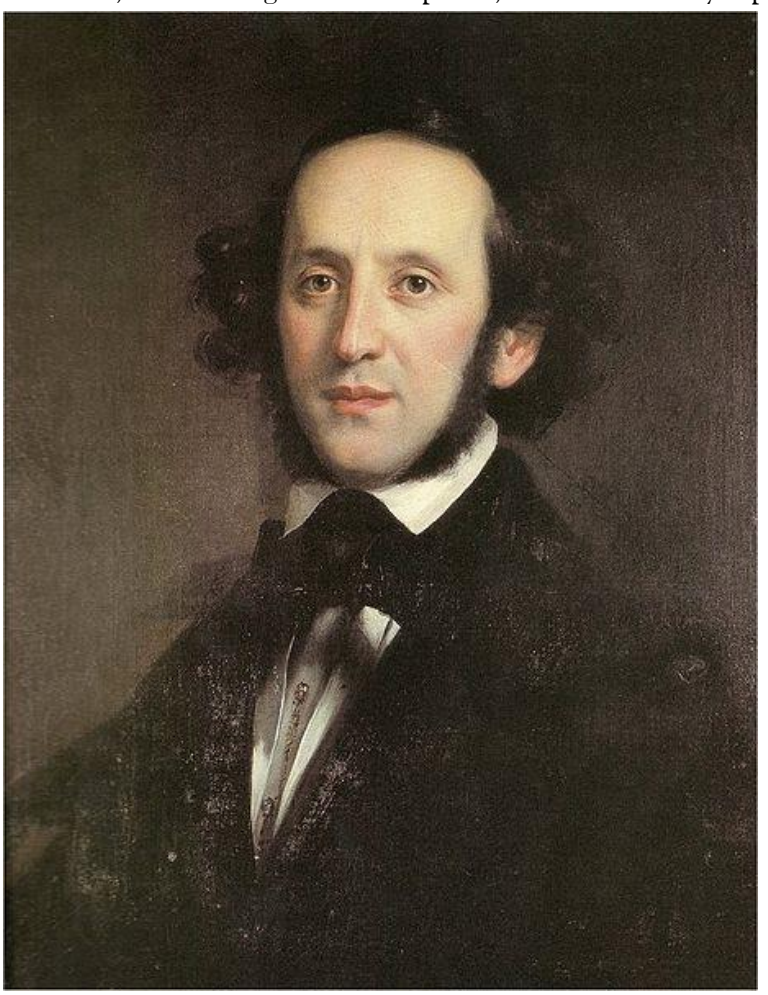
Two more years of hard work and development passed, Felix composing more and more. When he was 13 he made his second serious appearance in public and people began to talk of this amazing boy.

His greatest good fortune lay in his home. The house was becoming more and more the haunt of a brilliant and witty circle, with his mother, serene and unself-conscious and delightful, its central figure. The chief interest, of course, lay in music. Every night there was music of some sort, and on alternate Sunday mornings there was a kind of concert in the Mendelssohn's house, with an orchestra composed of the family and their friends.

In his own home Felix heard his compositions played. We get a pleasant glimpse of the family in the Sunday musical party collected in the dining-room, with Felix standing on a stool to conduct his own compositions. These Mendelssohn Sundays became famous, and many noted musicians, passing through Berlin, spent a morning in Felix's home.

The Mendelssohns found the house too small for them, and in 1825 they moved to a larger one. It was in a remote part of Berlin where there were few houses, and as it was set in about ten acres of lovely grounds, half cultivated, half wild, it was almost to the Mendelssohns as if they were living in the country. There was a large hall in the house well suited to concerts, and in the garden another kind of hall which could be used for the same purpose.

Here, in this delightful atmosphere, in a house always open to educated and musical people and in a garden where one could easily be lost from sight, Felix passed into his early manhood. The youth loved this home with a passionate love, loved it perhaps all the more because he hated the busy parts of Berlin. One of the first fruits of his life there was his Midsummer Night's Dream Overture.



Portrait of Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, Eduard Magnus

In the meantime, as a musician he had come of age. There was no doubt of his quality and the continuance of the genius that had made his childhood remarkable. He became the darling of his society, was flattered and made much of, but not in the least spoiled. Travel again, of an interesting kind, opened doors into new dream lands for him.

In 1827 he formed a small choir of sixteen voices solely in order to practise the Passion music of Bach, one of his most beloved composers.

From these little choir practices great things grew. A number of people begged young Mendelssohn to take a choir of three or four hundred voices through a public performance of this

grand music. Bach was not thought much of then in Berlin. There was trouble and opposition, but in the end the project was carried through, and with Mendelssohn conducting the Berlin Singakademie gave the first public rendering of the Passion music since the death of Bach in 1750. The concert hall was crowded; we are told that a thousand people were turned away.

Felix had triumphed, but he had become more and more at variance with the musical powers of Berlin, who were opposed to the Mendelssohn clique. Many little troubles were making their way into the musician's life; he was beginning to worry too much about public opinion, and at the same time he was, by his youthful impetuousness, alienating older men. Wise Abraham Mendelssohn sent his son travelling.

So Felix landed in England. It is pleasant to think of the welcome London gave him, and pleasanter still to think of the love Mendelssohn gave to London for her own sake. He loved the silver-gray of London's spring, the changing lights, the parks; he was never tired of watching the coaches and people in Piccadilly.

Felix was taken into society, and, as usual, his great personal charm acted like a magnet. The London Philharmonic Concerts were then held in Regent Street, and there Mendelssohn made his bow to the English public on May 25, 1829, conducting his own Symphony in C minor. Old John Cramer led him on to the platform, somebody wrote, as if he had been a young lady. The wholehearted appreciation and applause of the London audience were very comforting to Mendelssohn, and he never forgot it. In later years he said London had lifted a stone from his heart.

This was the first of ten visits which during his short life Felix paid to the home of the English. He became a dear and familiar figure, the friend of royalty and the humblest musicians alike. Many stories are told of him—as on that occasion when he went early to try a new piano he had to play on at a concert, found it locked, sent for the key, and, while it was coming, sat down at the old piano, lost himself in improvisations, and played on and on, until with a start he realised that people were entering the hall for the concert.

Another time, one Sunday afternoon, he was playing the organ in St Paul's when two vergers, becoming desperate because no one would leave the Cathedral and Mendelssohn would not stop playing, let the wind out of the organ.

From England Mendelssohn went on to Italy, and lost himself in dreams about artists and the old world. But his English friendships and his Italian dreams did not stop him from working. All the time he was composing at a great rate, and a number of his compositions were being performed in public. He took a post in Düsseldorf for some time, and hated it. In 1835 he was appointed conductor of the great concerts in Leipzig, and here began the happy years, packed with work, which associate the name of Mendelssohn for ever with the City of Leipzig.

When he was 28 an idyll entered his life in the shape of Cécile Jeanrenaud, a young lady of Frankfort, who became his wife and his unchanging happiness. Still it was silver and roses for this man of music to whom Fate was so kind. But after four more years, during which a son and daughter were born to Mendelssohn, the silver and roses began slowly to fade. The troubles which most geniuses have to battle with began to cast shadows across his life. In 1841 Frederick William of Prussia invited Mendelssohn to become Director of the musical class of a proposed academy in Berlin. His new post was not easy, hedged about by official difficulties. Very soon public cares were wearing off the fine edge of his genius. At home his troubles increased. The King of Prussia wanted

View at Lucerne, Felix Mendelssohn

him here, the King of Saxony there, and officialdom cast every difficulty in his path. In 1843 his mother died. Some of the elasticity was going out of life. But his work went on, and also some public projects, like that Monument to Bach which, before he died, he succeeded in getting put up, and the famous Leipzig Conservatorium, which he lived to see founded. The house and garden in the Leipzig Road, Berlin, were now his own property.

Had Mendelssohn been content to be a music professor the rest of his life might have been easier and it might have been a long life. But not only was he a most faithful teacher, but his days were crowded with incredible labours in connection with his compositions and their performances. The eager, ardent musician, ever tormented by dreams of compositions still waiting to be worked out, was wearing down his strength. In 1845, having managed to extricate himself from officialdom and Berlin, he was back in Leipzig, chief professor in the Conservatorium there. The following year saw him on his ninth visit to England—to Birmingham, where Elijah, with which he had been struggling in season and out, was first publicly performed. It was conducted by himself.

In the spring of 1847 he crossed the Channel for the last time. His stay in England, like all his

visits here, was happy, crowded with work and friendships. He was loaded with honours and the highest success. Who could have dreamed he would never see London and his "dear smoky nest" again?

On his return to Leipzig it was plain that Mendelssohn was worn out. He looked an old man. For some time he rested, but exhaustion and a sudden illness wiped out the last specks of his vitality. He died, still a young man not yet 39.

London and Leipzig, Mendelssohn's two dearest towns, were stunned. It seemed impossible that he should be dead, that so much life and laughter and beauty, all those crowded years, should have ended so. The greatest people in the world of letters, art, and music in Europe had called him friend —people as different as Goethe and Thorwaldsen, Dickens and Jenny Lind and Joachim. However long he had lived he would have died too soon, for his genius was in life as well as music. He had the art of seizing the passing hour and taking all its joy, and paying this back in his own happiness with his friends. He could forget himself easily and think only of others.

To the end he was simple and honest; something in his character was akin to his songs, that move clearly and tunefully through their few, grouped bars. And it is of his life now that we think when we hear his sweet airs. On Song's Bright Pinions he comes back, and tells us that love and brave thoughts have no death, but reach back across the years.

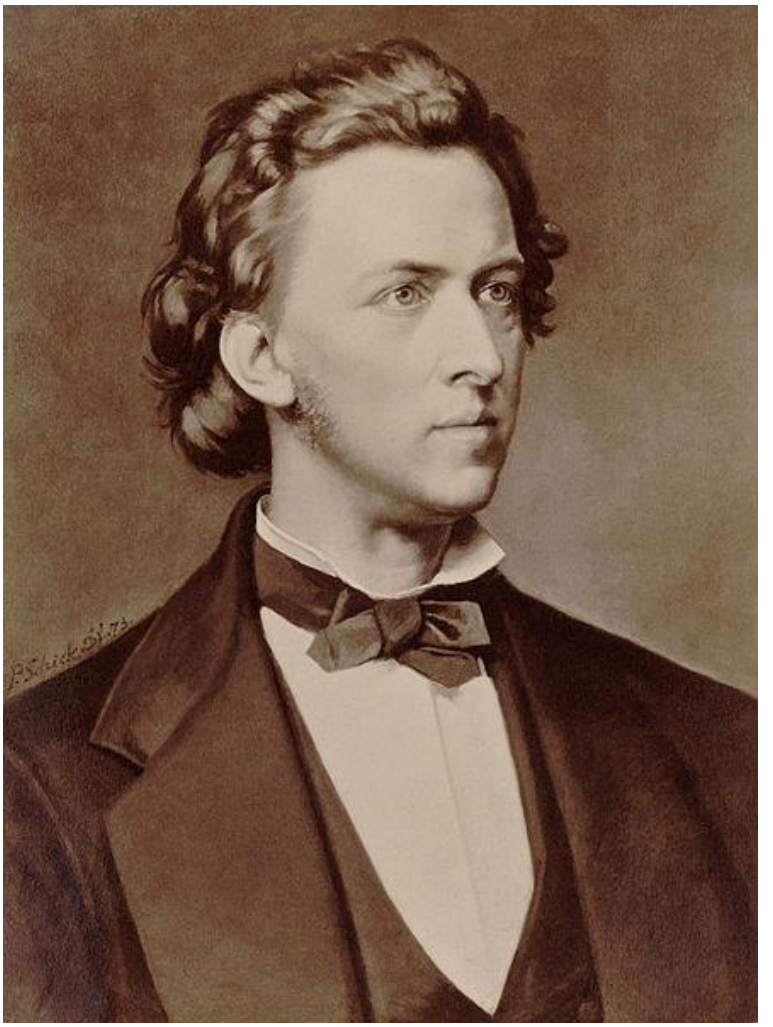
Chapter 15

Frederic Chopin

1809-1849 A.D., Poland

His strange, stirring music has something of his own sadness as well as his rare charm and burning patriotism.

The world pictures him, not in his beloved Poland, but in the streets of Paris, a pale, delicate young man whom folk turned round to look at twice; a proud, refined, sensitive man. He lived here and there, spoke two or three languages, played the piano as no one else could, and then left his frail body for a few friends to bury. But his music will live for ever.



Frederic Chopin, P. Schick

Born in a village about 28 miles from Warsaw he was the only son in a poor family. His father was a Frenchman, but had fought in the National Guard for Poland and had married a Polish lady. Their home was a very happy one. With his clever father, delightful sisters, and charming mother, Frederic grew up in an atmosphere of warm affection. Even as a very small child he showed that extreme sensitiveness which was characteristic of his whole life. The sound of music brought tears to his eyes, and music came to him in the gentle rain, from the pictures of a book, from a beautiful face.

He was an accomplished pianist when he was seven, and there is a lovely story of how he played at a party and thought that everyone was charmed, not by his enthralling performance, but by the beautiful lace collar he was wearing.

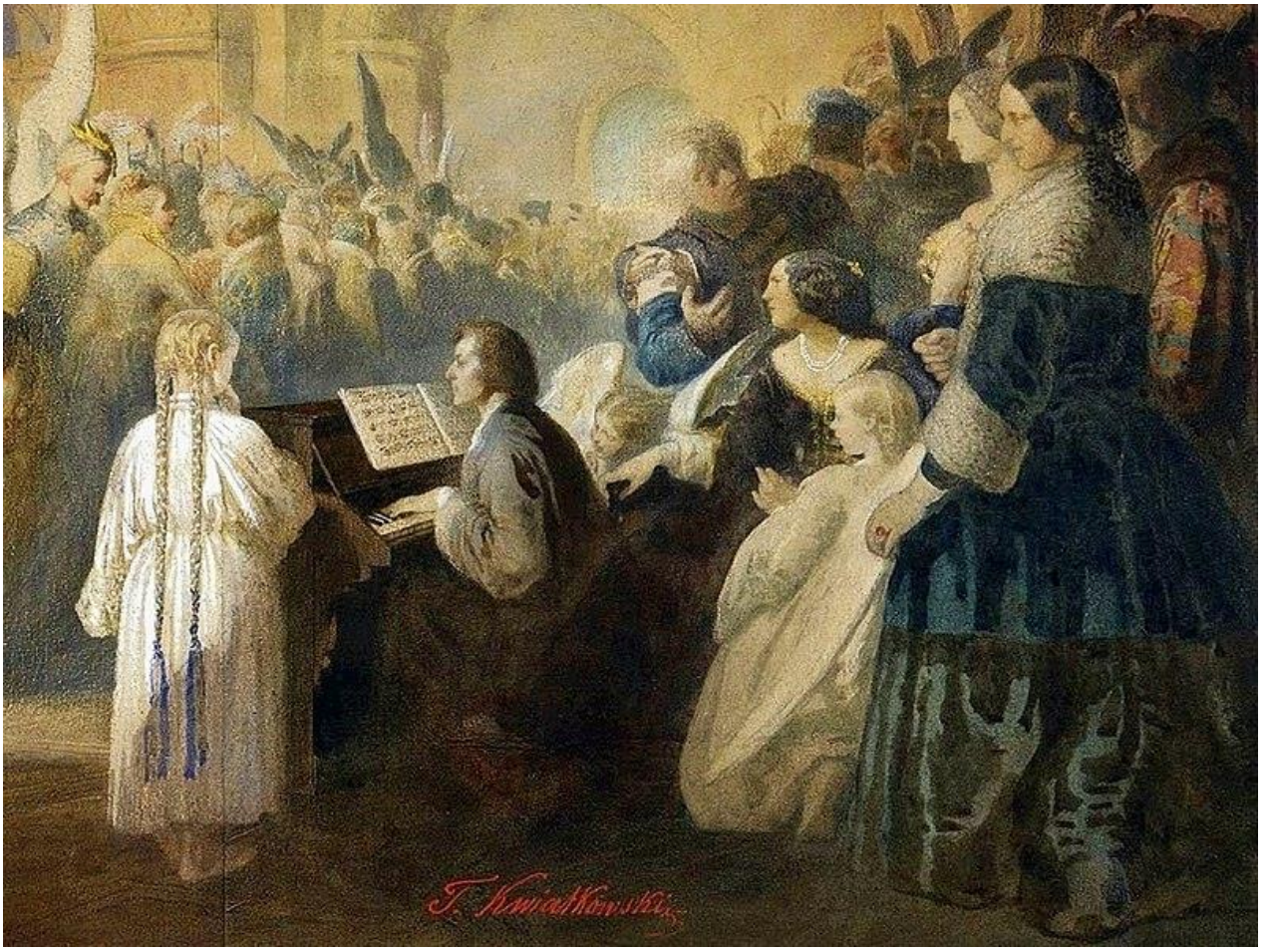
By the time he was twelve he had learned everything his music-master could teach him. He was already a favourite with all the great families of Warsaw, and the carriages of the nobility often stopped at his door. At school he was a mischievous imp with a genius for mimicking everyone who interested him. His schooldays were over when he was 18, but even then he had played before kings and queens.

A loveable, shy, pensive boy, he was full of good humour and had gracious ways. He would go about in a rather dreamy fashion, and often would get up in the night to play a phrase that had struck him and might be lost before morning. He had the culture and polish of a Frenchman, but he was at heart a Pole. The tragic beauty of his music has often the air of Polish songs and dances running through it.

There were few things he loved more than listening to the peasants singing and watching them dance; and from the villages of his country he gathered a harvest of sweet airs which afterwards enriched his ballads, polonaises, and his numerous mazurkas.

In 1828 he was in Berlin. It was a rare experience, for he saw many of the great folk, and made notes about them. After a fortnight he was in great haste to be home again to tell his mother what he had seen. At Posen, on the way home, he had to wait an hour while the horses were changed, and wandering about the inn he found an unused room with an old piano. He sat down and forgot the world as he improvised a fantasia on a Polish air. Presently the guests crept down the dark passage and into the room. One of the most famous men in Germany let his pipe go out. The ladies found tears in their eyes. Then the spell was broken by someone calling out, "Gentlemen, the horses are in."

Chopin concert, Henryk Siemiradzki



Chopin's Polonaise - a Ball in Hôtel Lambert in Paris, Teofil Kwiatkowski

Chopin stopped. He was astonished to find he had an audience, but was persuaded to finish his fantasia. When it was finished an old musician in the company said, "If Mozart had heard you he would have shaken hands with you. A nobody like me dare not do it."

His dream was to bring Paris and, after that, London to his feet. But first he must go to Vienna, and Vienna made him great. It thrilled and exalted him, but it left him quite unspoiled. He astonished everyone by his playing, it was so light, so different from anything they had ever known. He met all the celebrities of his day, Czerny among them.

He was 21 when he returned to Warsaw and gave his first public concert there. Someone who heard him play said every note sounded like a bell. He was acclaimed a genius. When he left Poland in 1830 his friends went with him to the first village that lay beyond Warsaw; here all the musical students of the town were waiting for him. They sang a cantata specially composed for the occasion, and after a supper they gave him a silver goblet filled with Polish earth.

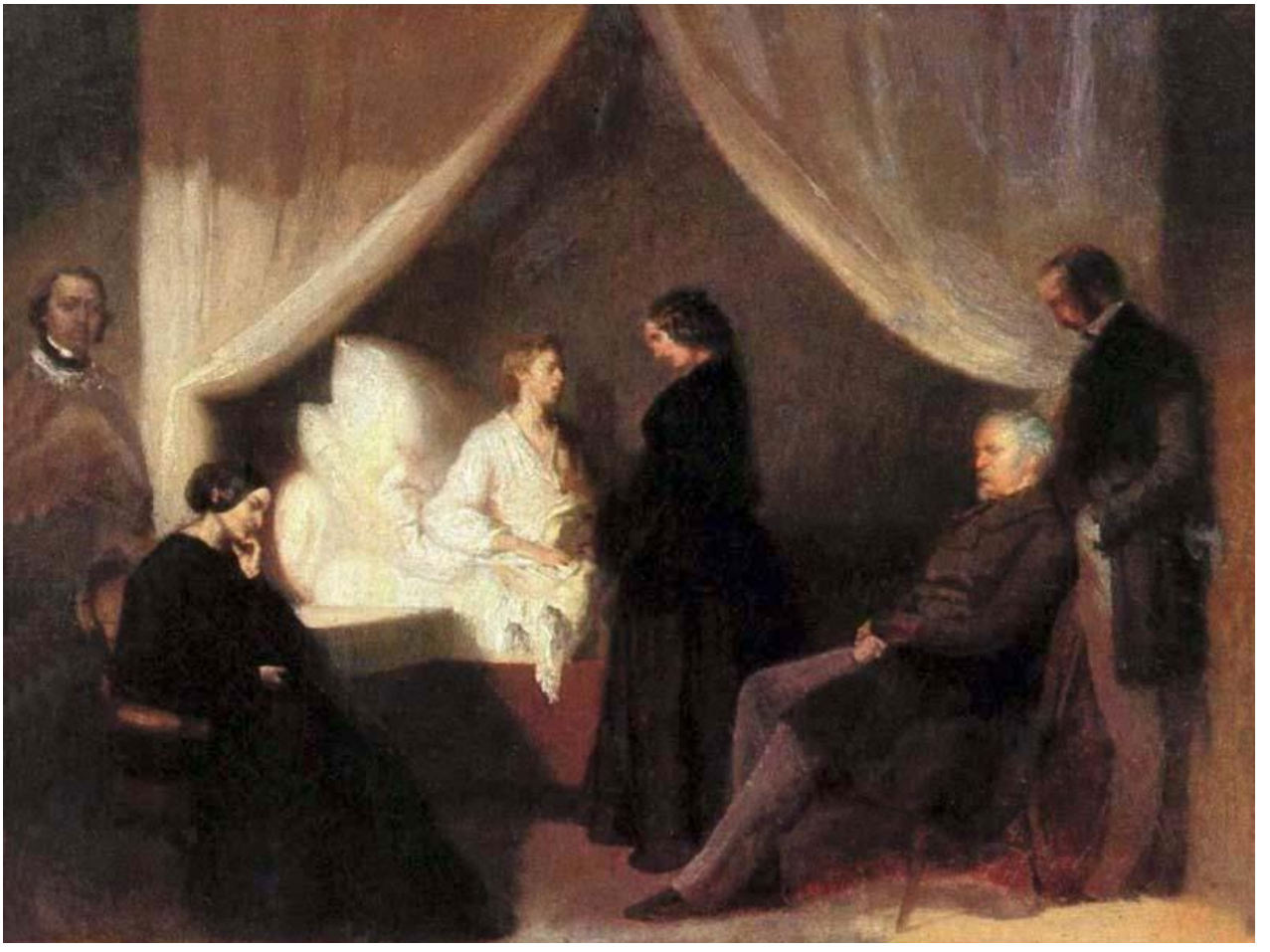
It was hard to leave them, but he had to go. He went a roundabout way to Paris, seeing much and leaving the echo of his Polish music behind. When war broke out in Poland in 1830 he was plunged into deep misery. He dare not go back; he hesitated to go on to Paris. There crept into his

letters home that little phrase, *Do advise me,* the phrase of an irresolute man. Should he go on to London—the goal of his ambition? Should he go to Paris? At last he went to Paris, where he forgot some of his trouble till 1831 brought news that the Russians had taken Warsaw. Then he sat down at his piano and played his grief into his famous C Minor Etude.

And not only was the enemy on his beloved soil, disease was in his body. Paris captivated him, and he gave it a rapture it had never known. He was hailed as a romantic genius. He made friends with Mendelssohn, who affectionately called him My Chopinette—thereby unconsciously picturing the man who could not grow up, the dreamy boy, delicate, listless, sublimely musical, but frail in body and sad in spirit.

The shadow darkened over his life. He had not strength enough to play as much as he had done in his younger days, but he composed a great deal. He had a sweet hour of triumph one day in Leipzig when Mendelssohn took him by the arm and the two walked down the street.

Another happy time he had in Paris when his mother and father visited him. They all loved each other dearly, and would walk out together, Chopin between the two. Another enrichment of his life was his friendship with George Sand, who carried him off to the sunny island of Majorca during the winter of 1838.



Last moments of Frédéric Chopin, Teofil Kwiatkowski

The sunshine healed the sore in his lungs, at any rate for a time, and returning to Paris he threw himself into composing and teaching. The months and the years went by, and still he had not taken London by storm. That would come presently. Perhaps very soon. Not this month, but perhaps it would be the next.

Always, as he said, he was "passing through Paris," and always he remained there. His music was all joy and tears, strange and passionate, different from all other music, haunting, wonderful. Chopin himself was in it, Chopin with his laughter, and the shadow which never left him.

In February of 1848 the second French Revolution broke out. Chopin hated revolutions. He was nervous, ill, unhappy. By April he could bear it all no longer, and one day he crossed the Channel and came to London.

His coming did not make the stir he had expected. The visit was not a failure, and in many ways it was a success; but it was not quite the success he had dreamed of, not as complete as he knew it should have been; for, modest though he was, he knew his work was great.

England was content with Mendelssohn and Beethoven; and Chopin, now so weak that he could not walk upstairs, had not the strength of body nor the commanding personality to arrest attention. Jenny Lind sang at one of his concerts. Queen Victoria was present, and the old Duke of Wellington. Steadily weakening, he went on to Scotland, came back to London, grew weaker and poorer, became sadder and more petulant, and after nine months went back to Paris to die. He had dreamed of a mighty triumph in London. His dream was shattered.

He had known joy and sorrow; he had made many friends; he had written immortal music, and now, still young, he was dying. It was a pathetic end to a brilliant career. His friends stood by him to the end. They lent and gave him money when he had none of his own. They found him strange, irresponsible, moody. One day he was reported to be dead. The next he was seen walking in the boulevard in a thin coat. His 39 years were almost finished.

Knowing that death was very near he had gathered his friends round him, and his last words were spoken to one of them. "You will play and I shall listen," he said. So passed poor Chopin, leaving the world a legacy of imperishable music.

Chapter 16

Ignatz Philipp Semmelweiss

1818–1865 A.D., Eastern Europe

Ignác Semmelweis, Unknown artist

Twenty years before our immortal Lister began the study of antiseptic surgery. Semmelweiss was practising it in Vienna; he was buried in an unhonoured grave a quarter of a century before his great and eclipsing successor heard of him. There are few such tragedies in the modern story of science as that of the unacknowledged father of one of the greatest gifts to humanity.

Born at Budapest in 1818 Semmelweiss had a brilliant career as a university student. Abandoning his idea of following law, he turned to medicine, qualified at 26, and was appointed professor at a great maternity hospital under Johann Klein.

In all the departments of hospital practice the mortality rate was terribly high, and the young Hungarian raised a hornets' nest about his ears by refusing to regard these deadly figures as an act of God. He saw that the deaths were relatively few in the wards in which the nurses were trained, but terrifying in the wards to which students were admitted and allowed to treat the patients; in these never a day passed without the bell ringing for the last Sacrament for some poor dying mother.

He made elaborate notes of his cases; he tried various treatments; he even employed subterfuges to keep away Klein, whose methods he profoundly distrusted. Still the deaths continued and he was

Semmelweis and his wife Mária Weidenhoffer, Ágost Canzi

baffled until one day he was called on to perform an examination of the dead body of one of his own friends, a student at the hospital. At once he saw that death had resulted from the same form of blood-poisoning that was killing the women.

Then he realised that the nurses whose wards were so successful did not dissect, while the students in his own wards came straight in from the dissecting theatre, bringing contagion with them to infect the patients. He ordered that in future no one should treat a patient who had not first washed his hands in a solution of chloride of lime. The death-rate dropped from over 12 per cent to little more than one per cent, and antiseptic surgery was born, prematurely, and doomed to an early death.

Led by Klein, his rivals fiercely assailed his methods. It was the calamitous year of 1848 with its bitter international conflicts. He was a Hungarian in Austria, and that sufficed to doom him. He was hounded out of Vienna, and retired to his native Budapest; but although a few enlightened minds lent him support, the profession as a whole, egged on by his enemies in Austria, was against him. His marvellous results were there for all the world to examine, but his critics said there was much more in the matter than he understood.

They were more right than they knew. Poor Semmelweiss never heard of the putrefactive bacteria that had been fatally poisoning the wounds of civilised mankind. He had discovered a cure without dreaming of the cause; he was vanquishing an enemy of whose existence he had no knowledge; he had brought antiseptic surgery to birth without grasping the reason for its necessity.

Opposition, envy, and contumely pursued him without mercy; he grew embittered, morose, and frantic, and one day in July 1865, at a meeting of the hostile professors of Budapest, his mind suddenly gave way. He had a wound on his head at the time. A similar wound had occasioned the death of his friend and led to his discovery. In the asylum to which he was removed there was no one to apply his methods to his hurt; and of that wound, for the prevention of whose fatal consequence he had sacrificed fortune, health, and sanity, he died.

His teachings were buried with him. All had to be relearned. It was Lister who spread the glad tidings afresh, and it was Hungary and Austria that most enthusiastically honoured him. Then it was that one of Semmelweiss's countrymen remembered him and wrote the story of his life.

He sent a copy of his book to Lister, who read it marvelling, and with the noble generosity that characterised him publicly declared that the despised genius of Vienna and Budapest was his forerunner. The difference between the two masters was that the Hungarian died too soon to profit by Pasteur's discoveries, whereas Lister incorporated them in a system informed by complete knowledge of the subject, and so armed the medical faculty as to banish preventible disease.

Ignaz Philipp Semmelweis, Photograph after a frieze in the Social Hygiene Museum, Budapest, Hungary

Chapter 17

Gregor Johann Mendel

1822-1884 A.D., Czech

At his birth he was given the name of Johann Mendel, but on entering a monastery he adopted the name of Gregor. His father was a poor peasant farmer in Bohemia, and there at Heinzendorf his famous son was born. In his teaching Mendel stressed the significance of surroundings and nurture, and both were important in his own intellectual development.

His father was a fruit-grower, and the boy from an early was instructed in the work, taught how blossoms are fertilised, and how trees may be budded and grafted. He was an apt pupil in the schoolroom as in the orchard. There was no school in the village, so Mendel's uncle started one, with his nephew as one of his scholars. The self-denial of his parents enabled them to secure advanced teaching for Johann and so to gain the goodwill of a monk, through whom the boy was admitted to the monastery at Brunn.

Photo of Gregor Mendel

Such promise did he show there that the monks sent him to Vienna University, where his bent for science was encouraged, befitting him to return to Brunn and teach natural history in the school from which he had gone forth a pupil. He was a successful teacher and in due course, when he was 46, he was appointed abbot of the monastery. Although nobody could imagine it possible Mendel had at this time already secured immortal fame.

To the simple monks he was the greatest man of their Order because he

View of the courtyard of Mendel's birthplace in Heinzendorf

was head of the monastery, but the world would never have heard of him as the mere abbot of Brunn. Before succeeding to that office he had won his crown as a scientist. Attached to the monastery was a beautiful old cloistered garden and there Mendel, son of the peasant fruit-grower, found his heart's delight.

He devoted himself assiduously for eight years to the cultivation of peas, and after that to experiments with hawkweed. Many men devoted longer time to the cultivation of peas without result or consequence, but this inspired monk used his peas as a means whereby to examine and reveal some of the most mysterious and fascinating secrets of Nature.

While Darwin was labouring in Kent on the thousand problems from which he wove his great fabric of the evolution of species Mendel concentrated on a single study and by laborious trial and observation grasped the heart of a mystery that eluded our great philosopher.

We have seen in the life of Darwin how he sought to account for the astounding changes that have taken place to fashion the botanical and animal life about us from the few simple forms in the world's ancient cradles; how he arrived at a conclusion that by process of natural selection, by the continuance of forms adapted to changing conditions and surroundings, and the gradual extinction of those less fit to survive, the primitive has developed into the complex and highly organised, and the few forms into a multitude of forms.

But all those brilliant speculations, none of them wasted, none of them fruitless, seemed to leave

something to chance, without any master law to govern the process of change and development. The key to the solution was being quietly forged in the monastery garden by Brother Gregor. Mendel grew generation after generation of peas under the strictest observation and control.

He chose peas because they are easy to grow, because they are annuals which, sown in the spring, produce their blooms and their pods of seed and complete their life cycle all in a short summer. They are so formed as to fertilise themselves without the interference of insects, and therefore like succeeds to like, unless there is some artificial interference. Mendel furnished that artificial interference.

He conveyed the pollen of one sort to another sort. He cross-fertilised green with yellow, and tall with short, jealously noting every result. From the seed of these cross-fertilised peas he grew other peas, carefully avoiding contact with peas of a different kind. From their seed in turn he grew more. Then he cross-fertilised the later generations in various ways, and gradually built up a schedule of results from which he was able to shape clear scientific formulas that are now known throughout the civilized world as Mendel's law.

His great discovery was that the characters of the seed, formed after the application of pollen from one pea differing from that to which the pollen is conveyed, do not blend entirely to produce a haphazard mixed result, as had always been thought. On the contrary, with the mingling of the two strains there remains in the one seed a separate identity of characters.

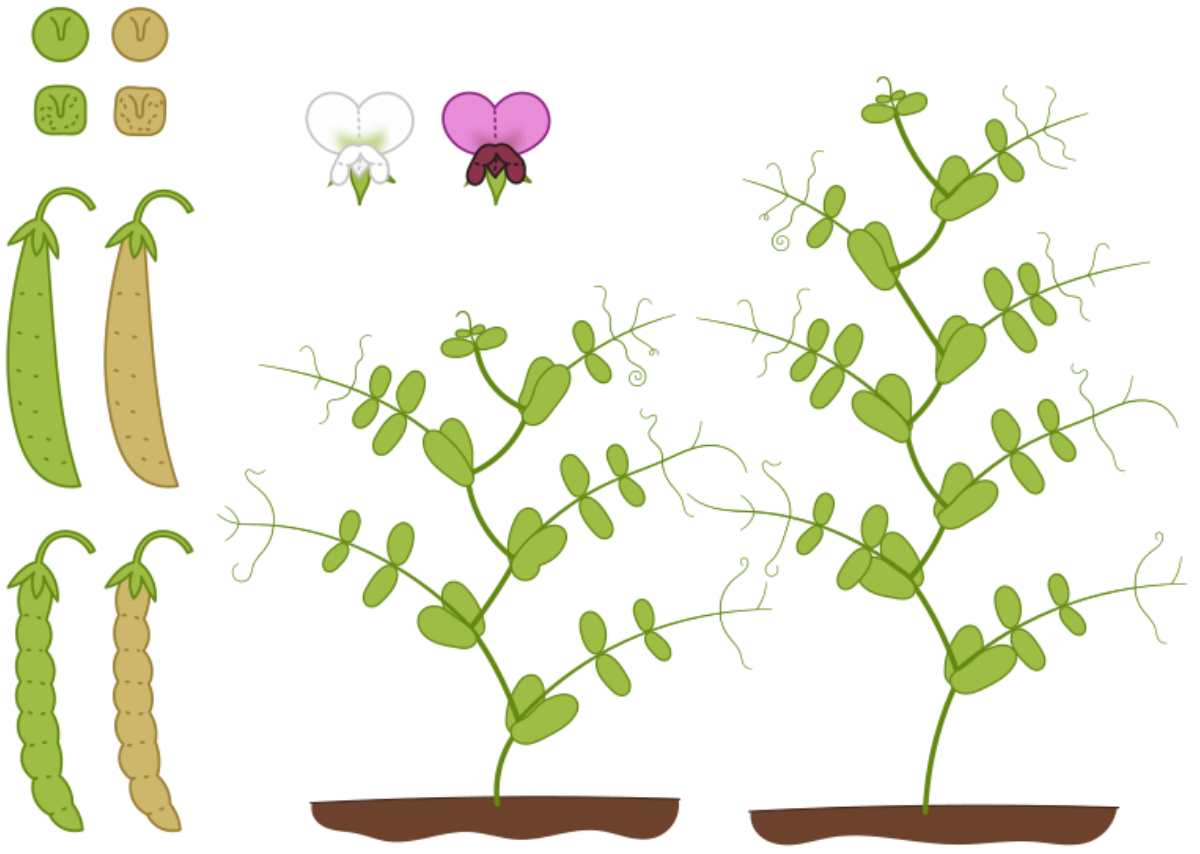
These separate characters lie dormant in the seed as it were. Some of the characters are dominant, the other are what is called recessive. The recessive are there as potent as the dominant, and with suitable nurture and fertilisation will themselves become the dominant in a later generation. When yellow and green peas were crossed the offspring were all yellow, without a single green pea, although these peas, the product of two colours, were hybrids.

When these seeds grew and in turn produced other seed their progeny was found to include yellow peas and green peas side by side in the same pod. The green peas, self-fertilised, produced only green peas for generation after generation. The yellow peas of the second generation, that is the offspring of the hybrids, when they were self-fertilised produced yellow peas and green peas in the same pod.

Of these the yellows produced successive generations of yellows, but the remainder, which were not yellow, became the parents, some of yellow peas, some of green peas, and some of hybrids from which either green or yellow peas resulted.

By repeated experiment Mendel discovered that from his crossing of yellow seed predominated to the extent of three to one. His patient and long researches in the monastery garden yielded him results from which he was able to draw up a table showing how the offspring of his plants would be grouped, how many yellows, how many greens, and how many of their respective descendants would appear in a given succession. The subject is too complicated for exposition in a brief article, but when extended to other growths and to animal life it proves the missing guide to the laws of heredity.

Mendel toiled at his task with delighted ardour and published his results in a paper read before the Philosophical Society of Brunn in 1865. Copies of the epoch-making treatise were forwarded to all the learned societies of Europe, including the Royal Society and the Linnaean Society of London. He knew that he had made an immense discovery, but nobody paid heed to it. The paper was lost sight of for 35 years.



Monogenetic traits Gregor Johann Mendel investigated in his pea experiments

Darwin heard nothing of it. How delighted he would have been to receive a copy! What letters he would have written to the author! How it would have illuminated his own labours! Mendel did know of Darwin and read him, but like other conservative thinkers of his day he was a little offended at what he wrongly imagined to be Darwin's divergence from the Bible story of the Creation. So he ignored Darwin in a huff and Darwin went to his grave ignorant of Mendel.

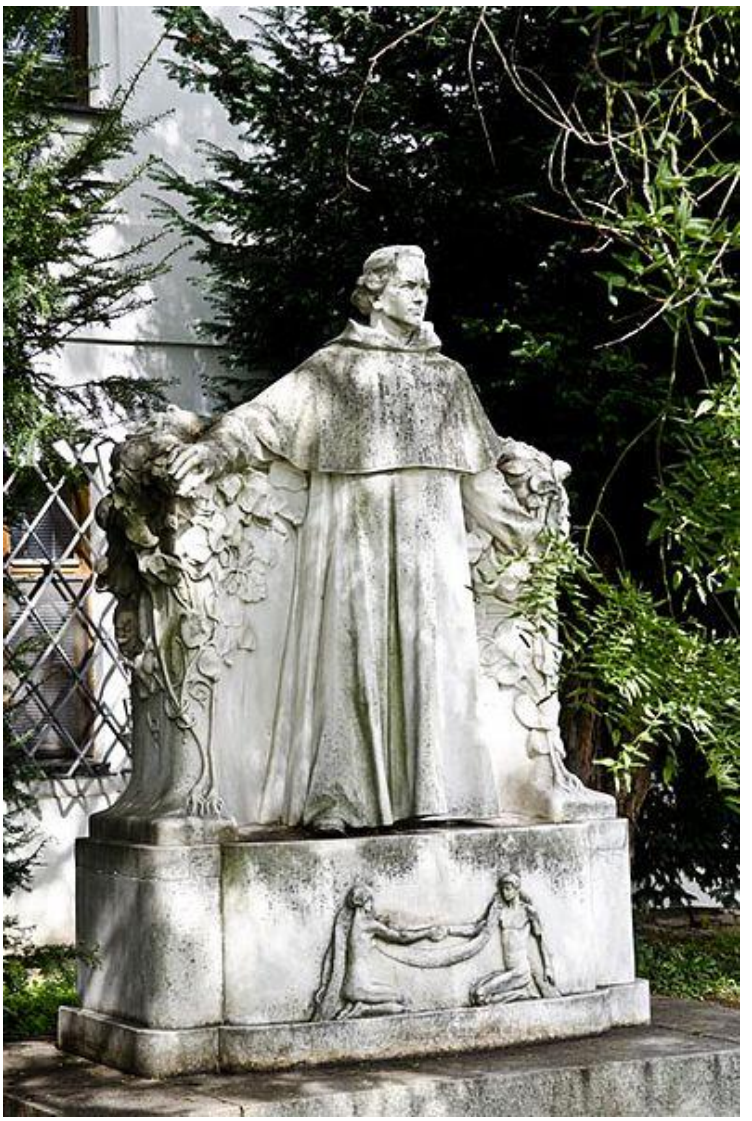
With his appointment as abbot Mendel closed his book of plant research. He experimented with bees, obtained queens from many parts and watched results from his tests with them as from plants; but if he wrote anything on his labours he destroyed it. His closing years were fretted with disputes with his Government over what he thought was an unfair taxation of his monastery. He resisted payment and saw the bailiffs in, and went to his grave a sad and greatly disappointed man. In 1900 what was mere chance brought copies of his paper at the same time to two men, one a scientist in Germany. Both took up the dead abbot's studies with delight, repeated his experiments, and found that his Law was established on immovable foundations.

A new school of learning has grown up on that simple treatise, a school that has invented new wheats and other grain, new flowers and new fruits. By following Mendel the botanist can increase the number of grains in an ear of corn, can produce long straw of short straw, make wheat hard or

soft, render it impervious to disease, and, by hastening the period of its ripening, enlarge the boundary of the world's cornfields.

By the application of Mendel's laws we can hasten maturity by days; and a single day means the extension of the wheat area in Canada by some sixty miles to the North. Results as astonishing are being brought about in the improvement of domestic animals and poultry.

The old monk in his quiet garden wrought a revolution in science from which the whole civilised world benefits.



Statue of Gregor Mendel outside of
St. Thomas Abbey in Brno, Czech Republic

Chapter 18

Heinrich Schliemann

1822–1890 A.D., Germany

He was the grocer's boy who lived to find the scene of one of the most memorable of all adventures, the Siege of Troy.

Poor as a boy could be short of actual starvation, equipped only with such scanty education as he could gain in five years at school, broken in health, Heinrich Schliemann resolved to carry out a work which could only be accomplished by a learned classical scholar and a millionaire rolled into one; and carry it out he did. Thirty years of business life made him a millionaire, and thus the first condition of the fulfilment of his ambition was realised. At forty he set himself to the study of Greek, and eight years later he began what he had throughout regarded as his life-work, the excavation of the scene of that greatest of all adventure stories, the Siege of Troy.

Portrait of G. Schliemann, Sydney Hodges

His first excavations were viewed with amusement by the learned world, for this self-taught archaeologist, instead of starting his digging on the spot which all classical scholars of the day declared to be the site of ancient Troy, started on a site of his own choosing. Schliemann proved to be right and all the scholars wrong. Searching for one city, he uncovered nine, and in the uncovering he found the most valuable treasure-trove that ever rewarded a seeker: gold and silver and diamonds worth 250 thousand pounds, and, what was far more important, he made the most valuable contribution to our knowledge of ancient Greece ever made by any man.

Heinrich Schliemann was born in

the little German town of Neu Buckow, in Mecklenburg-Schwerin. His father was a Lutheran pastor, and when Heinrich was a year old the family moved to the little village of Ankershagen. Here our hero spent the first eight years of his life. He must have been a strange, lonely little fellow, but he had one of the greatest blessings a boy can have, a father who could tell stories, and Heinrich listened breathlessly to thrilling tales of the Siege of Troy.

It was a real grief to Heinrich when his father assured him that Troy had long since disappeared and that no trace remained of its existence.

Judge of his joy, then, when the morning of his eighth birthday brought him a history book in which he found a picture of Troy. Even the assurance that the picture was fanciful did not depress him, for his father admitted that Troy had indeed had the giant walls shown in the picture. "If there were such walls the ruins of them must still be there, and when I am a man I am going to dig them up!" said Heinrich.

Such a hold did Troy take of the boy's imagination that the discovery of the buried city was the subject of all his dreams. He communicated it to his little playmate, Minna Meincke, and they made a solemn compact that when they grew up they would marry and sail away to dig up Troy.

When Heinrich was nine his mother died, and at ten, having already learned some Latin from his father, he was sent to his uncle, pastor of the village of Kalkhorst, and here he studied with a good tutor. The following Christmas he was able to present his father with a Latin essay on the principal events of the Trojan War. At eleven Heinrich went to the grammar school at Neu-Strelitz, but he had only been there three months when his father lost his money, and Heinrich was moved to the higher grade school, so that he might learn subjects which would fit him to earn his living.

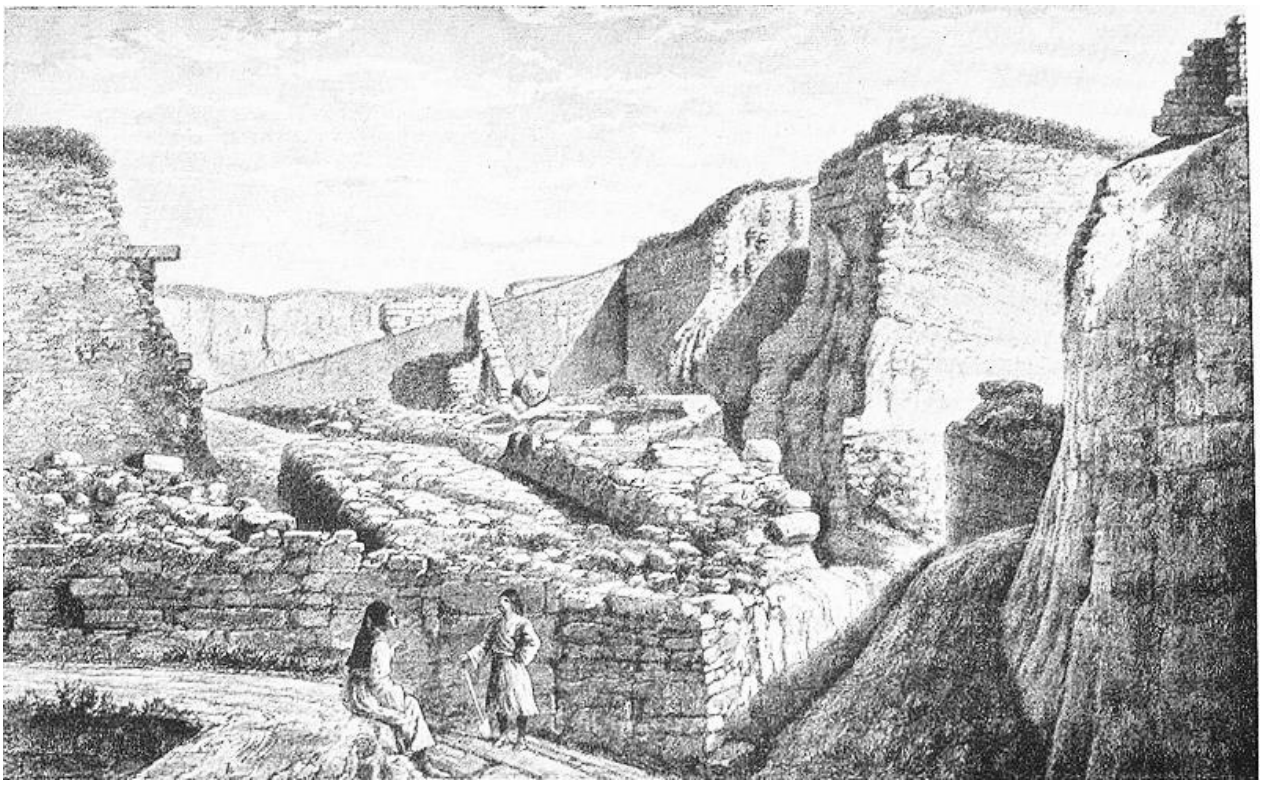
At 14 Heinrich left school for good, and was apprenticed to a grocer. Just before leaving Neu-Strelitz he met Minna Meincke, whom he had not seen for years. They had only a moment together, but it was sufficient to assure the boy that his little friend still loved him, and he faced his drudgery in the grocer's shop fired with a resolve to make himself rich, so that he could marry her.

For five years, from five in the morning till eleven at night, he slaved away in the shop, with never a moment's leisure to read the books he longed for. One day, in lifting a heavy cask, he strained himself, and was no longer able to work. In despair he went to Hamburg and obtained work at a grocer's there; but he was obliged to give it up, and, hoping the sea air would do him good, he signed on as cabin boy aboard the little brig Dorothea bound for Venezuela.

He had only been 14 days at sea when the ship was wrecked in a fearful storm off the island of Texel. The crew managed to lower a boat and climb in, and after being battered and beaten by the waves for nine hours they were wrecked on the island. By great good luck Schliemann's trunk was saved from the wreck, the only thing salvaged. The German Consul at Texel would have sent him back to Germany with the rest of the crew, but he preferred to go on to Holland, and so begged his fare to Amsterdam.

After being reduced to actual starvation Schliemann managed to get a post as office boy. His wages were thirteen shillings a week, and half of that he spent on books and lessons. He lived in a garret, shivering with cold in winter and scorching with heat in summer; but with the picture of Minna and Troy ever before him he forgot his misery in study. He learned many languages, and after a few years he became a foreign correspondent to a business firm at a salary of £80 a year.

It so happened that a knowledge of Russian was helpful to Schliemann in his work, and so he



Heinrich Schliemann's Troy Excavations, Illustration from *Schliemann; History of a gold prospector* by Emil Ludwig, 1932

began to study it, but he could not obtain adequate books or find a teacher. He therefore managed as well as he could by himself, and after a time he decided that he could make better progress if he could get someone to whom he could read aloud. He hired a poor Jew for four francs a week to come to him every evening for two hours and listen to his recitations. It is not surprising to learn that his neighbours took exception to this arrangement and that he had to change his lodgings.

Schliemann was soon conducting the Russian correspondence for the firm, and two years after joining the staff he was sent to Russia as agent. Here he soon felt his position sufficiently assured to justify his writing to a friend of the Meincke family, requesting him to beg Minna's father to consent to their marriage. The reply was that Minna was married.

This dashing to the ground of his dearest dreams was a great shock to Schliemann, and he became so ill that he had to give up work. Even Troy lost its glamour. Had not his fancy always pictured the discovery of it with Minna at his side? Happily, however, he was too great a soul for even so big a disappointment to wreck his life and, though he mourned the loss of Minna for years, he worked on. So successful was he in his first year in Russia that he set up in business for himself and made steady progress; and during the Crimean War he built up a great fortune.

Up to the end of the war Schliemann had never ventured to learn Greek, for he feared that its fascination would lure him from his work, and he never lost sight of the fact that to uncover Troy he must first have money at his command. But now that he was not far from being a millionaire he set out to realise his great ambition. He learned Greek in six week and in 1858 he decided that he

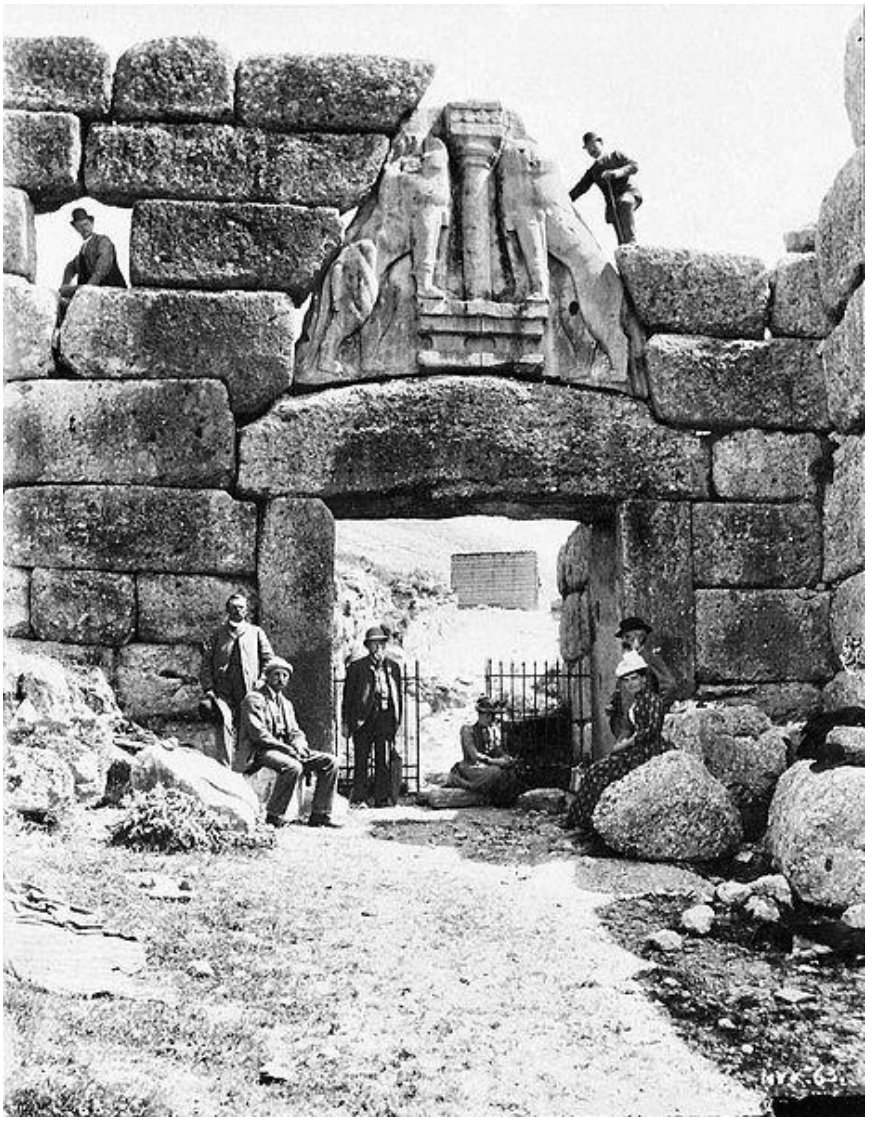
would give up commerce and devote himself entirely to the study of Troy.

But such a task called for a better general education than Schliemann modestly believed himself to possess, and so he spent a whole year in travel. He was on the point of starting for Greece when he was recalled to Russia to deal with an important law suit, and as it was clear that the case would take at least three or four years he again took up business to employ his time.

By 1863 he had won his case and added largely to his fortune, and at last he was free to set out for Troy. But even then he thought it advisable to see more of the world before beginning his great search, so he travelled in the East until 1866, and then went to Paris to study archaeology. In 1868 he went to the Dardanelles, and a last found himself on what all the classical scholars declared to be the site of Troy, the village of Bunarbashi. The chief-reason for this popular, belief seems to have been the springs at the foot of the village, which were considered to be identical with the two springs, one warm, and one cold, mentioned by Homer. But instead of two springs Schliemann found 34, and the other details of the site did not fit in with Homer's story.

Further survey convinced Schliemann that the Hill of Hissarlik was the actual site of ancient Troy, an opinion actually suggested by one or two classical scholars but not generally accepted. In April 1870 he began digging there, but was only able to go just far enough with the work to assure himself that it was worth while going on. In September of the following year he managed to extract from the Turkish authorities permission to excavate, and accompanied by his Greek wife (for by this time he had married), he took up his quarters in the village of Chiblak.

Schliemann's method of excavation has been severely criticised, but it was very much in keeping with his character. He wanted to find



Heinrich Schliemann and Wilhelm Dörpfeld at the Lion Gate at Mycene

Troy, and he considered that the quickest way to do it was to cut a wide trench right into Hissarlik Hill. As the digging proved, Hissarlik hid the secrets not of one city but of many, and Schliemann's rough-and-ready method destroyed the upper strata, which would have yielded a complete Hellenic city.

Hissarlik proved indeed a hill of history, and Schliemann flung back the veil and disclosed with his spade an entire chapter of human progress. Not only did he find Troy: he revealed to the world a great European civilisation which flourished when Egypt herself was young.

In 1873 his permit from the Turkish authorities expired, and a dispute arose as to the great treasure he had found, of which the Turks claimed the larger share. The case was taken to court and Schliemann was ordered to pay the Turkish Government £400; but to prove that treasure-trove was not the object of his search and with a view to further excavation he paid £2000.

In 1874 he obtained permission from the Greek Government to excavate at the ancient city of Mycenae. Here again his views differed from those of the classical scholars of his time, and once more the spade proved that he was right. He seemed, indeed, to have an uncanny instinct for striking the exact spot. He fixed on the island of Crete as the centre and home of Mycenean civilisation, and, though he was not privileged to carry out the work himself, excavations by Sir Arthur Evans and others after the death of Schliemann proved his view to be correct.

Schliemann died of fever at Naples, and with him passed one of the most courageous souls of his age.

His work as an indefatigable pioneer in the realms of knowledge will live for ever but the world owes him most as a shining example of the power of enthusiasm and devotion to a great purpose. He believed that anything can be done if we want to do it; and the extent of his achievement justified the faith that was in him.

Chapter 19

Prascovie Lopouloff

19th Century A.D., Russia

Prascovie was a girl of about 15, who lived in the early years of the 19th century. She was the child of Jean Lopouloff, a former Russian Court officer exiled in Siberia, and what she planned to do was to see the Emperor and beg him to pardon her father.

Prascovie and her father and mother were exiled at Ischim. She knew that nothing could make her father happy except the permission to return to the capital, then called St. Petersburg, and as he could not return without the Emperor's permission she must get it.

Coloured lithograph of St. Isaac's Bridge, St. Petersburg, Russia

Statue of Peter the Great, St. Petersburg, Russia

When she told her parents of her intention they thought it ridiculous. The distance was over 2000 miles, and she was too poor to go by sledge. *She would walk.* And, even supposing she reached the capital, her parents asked her, how was she to see the Emperor?

Prascovie, however, talked of nothing else, and at last she had her own way. A passport was obtained, the neighbors gave her a little money and many blessings, and brave Prascovie set off.

At the end of the day she found shelter with some kindly peasants, and the next day she set out again. Everywhere she received great kindness, but she always insisted on washing or mending some clothes as payment for her lodging. What she was attempting to do was to cross the great Siberian desert without a guide, and that was said to be impossible.

When the winter set in she made up her mind to spend a few months in one of the big towns, and going bravely to an inn she told the proprietress that she could pay for her lodgings. Then she searched for her purse, but it had gone. The proprietress never doubted her honesty and, liking her, kept her for many weeks, teaching her to read and write and helping her to earn enough money to pay for a passage on a cargo boat.

The boat trip was to have lasted several days and to have made her journey shorter, but the craft capsized, and, though Prascovie was rescued, she caught a chill, developed pneumonia, and was taken to a convent.

She was so long getting well again that summer and winter came round before she was able to leave; but when she was strong enough the Mother Superior had a surprise for her. She had arranged for Prascovie to travel direct to St. Petersburg.

So half her great task was finished, but the other half seemed hopeless. Friendless in the great capital, she did not know how to begin to find the Emperor. She learned that a petition had to be presented to a Senator in writing, and day after day she stood at the door of the Senators' Palace holding out her petition.

Someone who passed her put five roubles in her hand. But no one would stop to read her petition.

One evening she was returning to her lodgings when she looked up at a bronze statue of Peter the Great, and into her head came the idea of putting her letter into the hand of the statue. As she was trying to do it one of the great ladies of the Court who was crossing the Neva Bridge saw her, and sent her servant to fetch her.

"Why are you doing that, child?" the Princess asked.

"Madam," replied Prascovie, "I trust in God, who has the power to make the Emperor come down to me if I am not able to reach him."

Then she told the Princess what she was trying to do.

The next day the Emperor (Alexander the First) heard the extraordinary story of brave Prascovie, and was so moved by it that he sent for her to the Imperial Palace that he himself might give her her father's pardon.

So Prascovie accomplished what was thought to have been the impossible.

Her father was reinstated, and word was sent to him that he and his wife could return to St. Petersburg.

Alexander I, Emperor of Russia, Domenico Bossi

It is sad to think that Prascovie passed away before her parents reached the city. She was just 17, but she had proved what love could do.

Chapter 20

Kate Marsden

1859–1931 A.D., Siberia

Kate Marsden, Illustration from *Die Gartenlaube,* Liepzig, 1893

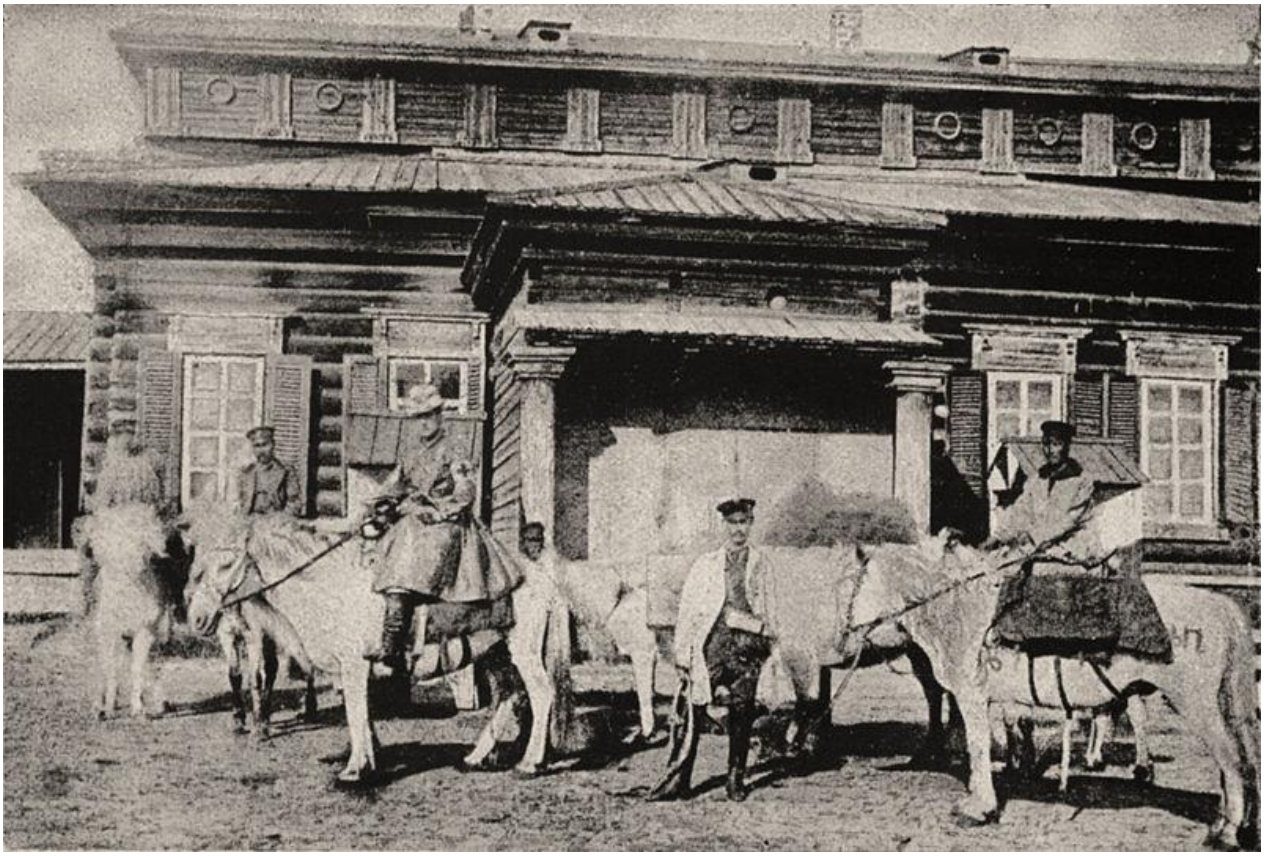
A year or two after Father Damien made the last great sacrifice, Kate Marsden was inspired to visit the lepers of Siberia. Since John Howard made his tour of the Russian prisons there have been few exploits more noteworthy than this journey of a heroic woman to the icy wastes of the Siberian wilderness.

Scattered throughout the vast forests which cover a large part of the barren country wandered human outcasts, lepers, lingering out a painful existence in an isolation perhaps more terrible than any other. Cut off from friends and kindred, even medical aid was denied them.

The sad condition of these poor creatures filled Kate Marsden's tender heart with pity, and she determined to go there to see if anything could be done to help them.

The region chosen for this first pioneering expedition was the great forest region between Yakutsk and Villinsk, a dreary stretch of two thousand miles. A supply of provisions sufficient for three months was gathered together, horses were obtained, and an escort of fifteen men. Then, in June 1891, the party set out on the hazardous journey.

For weary miles they journeyed through the trackless forest, the horses continually stumbling



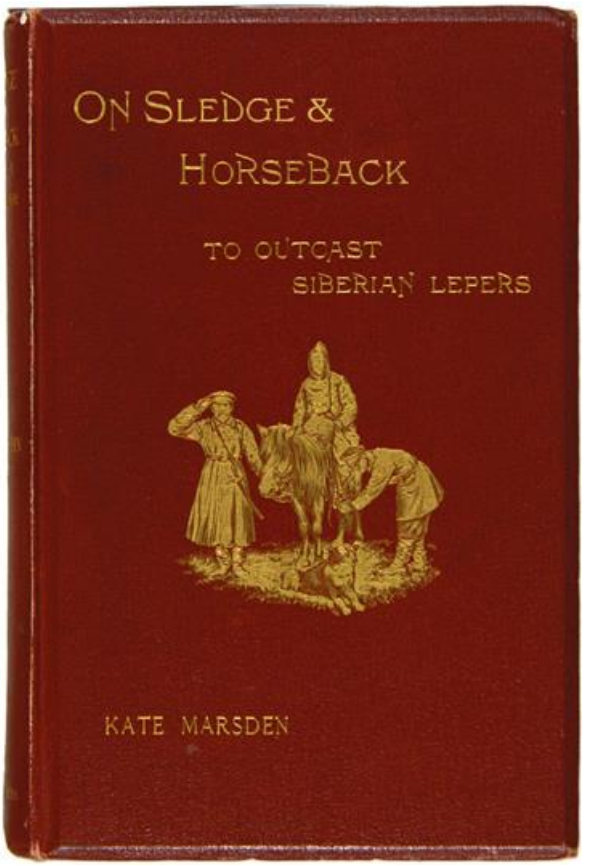
Kate Marsden leaving Yakutsk after visiting Siberian lepers, Wikimedia Commons

over half-hidden roots and fallen trees. Sometimes the way lay through huge marshes in which the horses sank until the riders' feet touched the surface. The travellers had to be constantly on the alert for bears and wolves, and even when the party could not actually see these enemies they were a source of danger, for the horses, quick to scent their presence, would rear and rush off through the thick, tangled forest ways, driven mad with fear. When Miss Marsden reached the leper regions she found that the terrible conditions of the outcasts had not been exaggerated. When anyone, man, woman, or child, was found to be suffering from the dread affliction they were at once banished from the village. A small hut was built in the forest, and there the leper was sent, forbidden ever to revisit his home or communicate in any way with his friends.

No doubt this was a wise precaution, but it was hard on the poor lepers thus set adrift in the unfriendly forest, at the mercy of the elements and of wild beasts, with roots and berries as their only food, growing ever weaker and more pain-racked every day.

Sometimes Miss Marsden would come across solitary lepers whose sole companion and defender against the bears was a dog. For food they ate rotten fish and the bark of trees. When two or more banded together the huts they occupied were always filthy, many of their occupants being smitten with smallpox as well as leprosy.

Most people would endure pain and hardship rather than look on anything physically loathsome; but if Kate Marsden was sickened at what she saw her sympathy was stronger than her



Kate Marsden in full travelling dress with a map of her route through Siberia,
Illustration from *On Sledge and Horseback to Outcast Siberian Lepers,* Kate Marsden, 1892

repugnance. She gained a clear idea of what ought to be done, and set out on her return journey determined to found a settlement where the lepers could receive medical treatment and at least be cared for as human beings.

When she returned to Moscow she was publicly honoured, and the medical association thanked her for the service she had given to suffering humanity. Great interest was shown in her proposed settlement and money was sent generously to further its establishment. Kate Marsden also discovered a herb which was found to be beneficial in the treatment of leprosy.

She lived and died the leper's friend.

Chapter 21

Major Schroeder

1920 A.D., America

It was a signal honour for a man to hold the most dangerous job in the United States Air Service, as Major Schroeder did. Machine after machine came to his hands. He looked them over, tested the controls tried out the engines, and found what they could do. Then he jumped into the cockpit and flew the new machine, testing it with unusual strains to see if anything was likely to give way. He noted everything, how fast it climbed, what petrol and oil it used and how the machine responded to control.

Always he had to bear in mind his own rare ability—that the next man to fly this machine might not have his great experience, and that where a test pilot could extricate himself from difficulties the ordinary pilot night be unequal to the situation and crash.

In January 1920 a biplane was wheeled out of the hangar at the air depot at Dayton, Ohio, the town where Wilbur and Orville Wright worked out their ideas and built the plane which ushered in the Flying Age.

Major Schroeder took his seat in the cockpit, a passenger heaved himself aboard, and they went away with a mighty roar, climbing up. The pilot, finding conditions just right for his purpose, was able to carry his passenger higher than any passenger had been before, though the record has been beaten since.

Photo of Schroeder, Illustration from
Arthur Mee's 1000 Heroes, by Arthur Mee, 1934

As the biplane was able to win the record with a passenger there seemed nothing to stop it from winning the record without a passenger. Efforts were accordingly concentrated on achieving this aim. The major fixed his mark at 40,000 feet.

The average engine, which will work all right at a mile or two high, would simply refuse to work at seven miles high. The air pressure is so much reduced that the engine cannot function, and the consequence is that the engine has to be fitted with a supercharger for compressing the air exploded in the cylinders. Also the lungs of a man, also working on air, would cease to work without scientific help, and he would die instantly before he could reach this height. For him use is made of pure oxygen compressed into steel cylinders, and the pilot, wearing a mask, breathes this in order to survive. There is also at these great heights intense cold with which the pilot has to contend; it would freeze him to death if he were not protected against it, and he must wear a suit which can be heated by electricity.

One February day in 1920 Major Schroeder donned his electric suit and walked out to his machine. He chatted to one or two of the officers standing by, got aboard, looked round the cockpit, saw that the barograph for measuring the height was right, and that the stopcock on the cylinder of oxygen was working. He opened the throttle of the engine, and the answering roar told him the motor was going to perfection. He throttled down, slipped on his oxygen mask, saw that the switches for his suit were ready to plug home, and gave the signal to pull the chocks from in front of the wheels.

The plane rushed forward and shot up into the air at a steep angle. In twelve minutes it was a mile high; a little longer and it had topped the two-mile mark.

He plugged home the switches for his suit and watched the Earth dropping away. The engine was perfectly attuned, and he sat well back, watching the speedometer ticking off the miles. He rose three miles, then four. He felt quite comfortable. The cold did not affect him. His suit kept him warm. The oxygen came from the cylinder and he felt no ill effects. He glanced a moment over the side of the cockpit. The Earth was now five miles below. His eyes roved over his instruments and he saw that all was well.

Up to 28,000 feet he went, to 30,000. Things were going smoothly. He saw the six-mile mark slip by.

Suddenly something seemed to grip him by the throat. He felt that he was choking. He gasped painfully as his brain registered the thought—The oxygen!

Quicker than his senses could desert him, his wonderful brain and muscles did his bidding. He knew he must get down or die.

He pulled on the joystick and the biplane started to spin down as he lost consciousness. Round and round it spun as it shot earthward. One mile, two miles, three miles it dropped, with a helpless, insensible pilot on board.

The rush through the air and the rapidly increasing pressure of the atmosphere had their effect on him. The air forced its way into his empty lungs, and his brain began to work again. He realised where he was, and what was happening. He looked at the engine controls. They were opened wide for climbing, but the engine was switched off. He must have cut it out before he became unconscious.

He could not remember touching it, yet his sensitive nerves and muscles, which made him so superb a pilot, did the right thing when death was overtaking him.

Now he automatically did the right thing again. Switching on the engine, he pulled the machine out of the spin and sent it speeding down to the aerodrome where the watching men, seeing the

spinning machine, merely thought it was the Major's way of coming down again. They were very amazed when they heard what had happened, and told Schroeder he was a lucky man.

For a man to drop three miles in an unconscious state is as nerve-racking an experience as anyone would care to have. Such an ordeal would have cured most men of their desire to fly and would have kept them on the ground for the rest of their lives. Major Schroeder did not deny that he was lucky. He realised it only too well. But if he was lucky he was brave, and prepared to try again.

The difficulty which nearly brought about his death was that his oxygen supply had failed. He knew how quickly he could climb a thousand feet, but conditions up there were very different, and he could not be sure how long the machine would take to climb a thousand feet when approaching its maximum height. Working on the time he had taken to reach 31,000 feet, he made an estimate of the time he should take to climb the remaining 8000, and he arrange for oxygen accordingly. He did more. He decided to take an emergency supply in bottle and link it up with his mask by rubber tube, with a tap through which the supply could be regulated.

He was not foolhardy. His keen, analytical mind went over all the risks and made allowances for them. With implicit faith in his machine, he would go over ever part to make sure that nothing of the smallest importance had been overlooked.

He did not wish to throw away his life yet he would not let fear stop him from carrying out his plan. He hoped he might learn something new by climbing 40,000 feet, that what he proposed to do would help the progress of aviation as well as win high honour for his country. He had no fear when he stepped into his machine on February 26, 1920; and he had few doubts as to what the result would be. The biplane sped away and up. Conditions seemed even more favourable than 20 days before.

The pilot watched everything with hawklike eye. In an hour he was flying at 20,000 feet, a

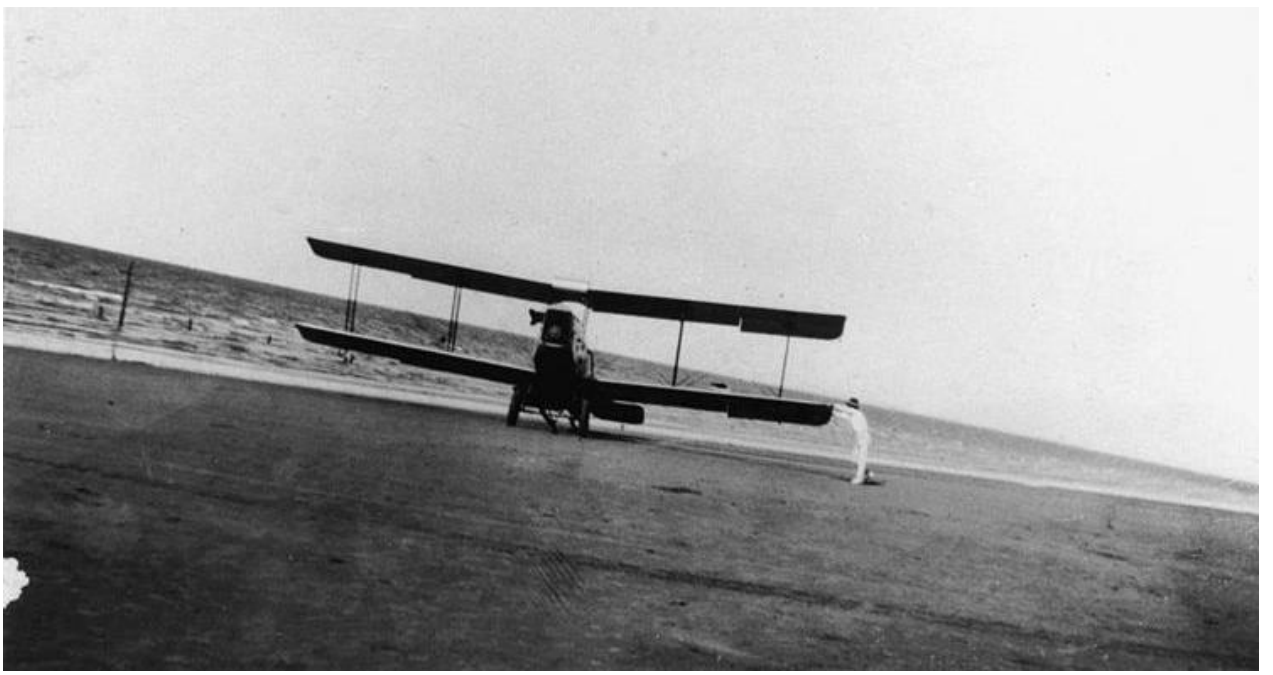


Photo of a biplane on the beach, Courtesy of John Oxley Library, Queensland, Australia

remarkable performance for machines of that day. In 35 minutes more he had forced the machine up to 30,000 feet. He was warm and comfortable, the oxygen was flowing well, the supercharger was compressing the air to enable the engine to deliver its full power. Apparently all he had to do was to sit and wait until he reached his goal.

The temperature of the air dropped as he rose. He could hardly believe the air was so cold, so warm he was in his electric suit, yet his instruments could not lie and saw them register 30, 40, 50 degrees of frost. His goggles were coated with ice inside and out. Still the temperature dropped until it was 50 degrees below zero, degrees of frost.

He was almost at the height where he began to feel queer before when he now felt faint again. He was at 31,100 feet when the emergency oxygen ceased to flow. He tried with his fingers to make sure the tap was open; then he tried to see the tap, but the ice on his goggles prevented him. He pushed up his goggles. Instantly came an explosion. He felt as if his head had burst. There was sudden blackness. But he could still think, he strove to open his eyes, and was horrified to find that he could not.

Actually when he lifted his goggles the temperature of the air was 67 degrees below zero, and the intense cold, striking on his eyeballs, froze them solid and blinded him; he sank into unconsciousness.

With his hand removed from the controls, the machine plunged madly down, doing astounding things on its way. In three minutes it dropped six miles. The terrific friction scoured the dope from the wings as with a file. Three empty petrol tanks were crushed in one after another by the rapid increase in the air pressure. Often the machine was upside-down; then it would lurch the right way up again.

Two thousand feet from the Earth the Major began to come round. He was within ten seconds of death. A glint of an aerodrome impressed itself on his waking brain, and instantly, automatically, he straightened out the machine to land.

The men at the aerodrome watched the biplane make a perfect landing, but they found the pilot rigid in his seat, with his eyelids frozen solid.

He recovered, and he is the only man in the world who has fallen senseless for six miles and lived to tell the tale.

References

Mee, Arthur. 1934. *Arthur Mee's 1000 Heroes: Immortal Men & Women of Every Age & Every Land.* London; Amalgamated Press.