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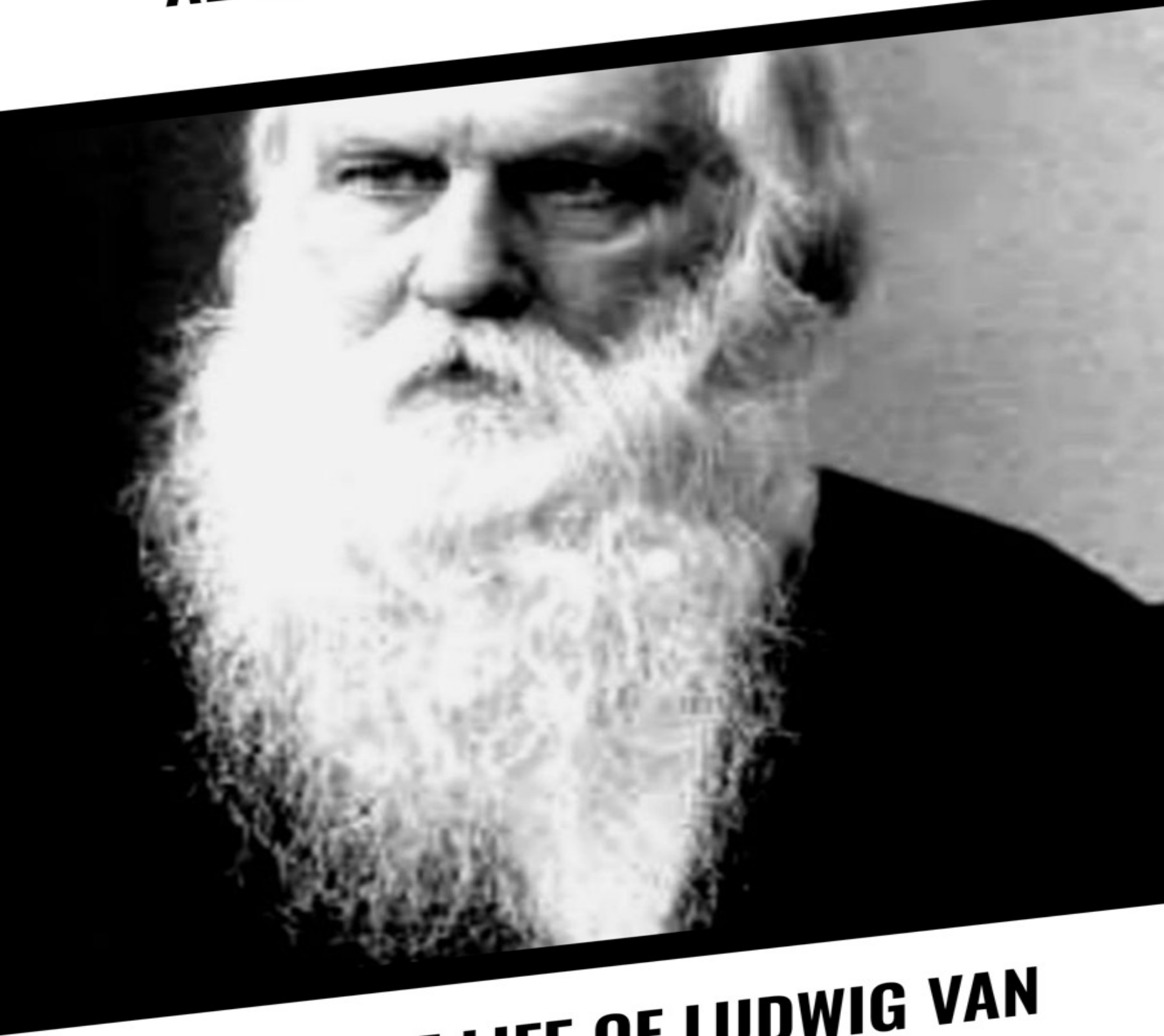
ALEXANDER WHEELOCK THAYER



THE LIFE OF LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Alexander Wheelock Thayer

The Life of Ludwig van Beethoven

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Introduction

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If for no other reasons than because of the long time and monumental patience expended upon its preparation, the vicissitudes through which it has passed and the varied and arduous labors bestowed upon it by the author and his editors, the history of Alexander Wheelock Thayer's Life of Beethoven deserves to be set forth as an introduction to this work. His work it is, and his monument, though others have labored long and painstakingly upon it. There has been no considerable time since the middle of the last century when it has not occupied the minds of the author and those who have been associated with him in its creation. Between the conception of its plan and its execution there lies a period of more than two generations. Four men have labored zealously and affectionately upon its pages, and the fruits of more than four score men, stimulated to investigation by the first revelations made by the author, have been conserved in the ultimate form of the biography. It was seventeen years after Mr. Thayer entered upon what proved to be his life-task before he gave the first volume to the world—and then in a foreign tongue; it was thirteen more before the third volume came from the press. This volume, moreover, left the work unfinished, and thirty-two years more had to elapse before it was completed. When this was done the patient and self-sacrificing investigator was dead; he did not live to finish it himself nor to see it finished by his faithful collaborator of many years, Dr. Deiters; neither did he live to look upon a single printed page in the language in which he had written that portion of the work published in his lifetime. It was left for another hand to prepare the English edition of an American writer's history of Germany's

greatest tone-poet, and to write its concluding chapters, as he believes, in the spirit of the original author.

Under these circumstances there can be no vainglory in asserting that the appearance of this edition of Thayer's Life of Beethoven deserves to be set down as a significant occurrence in musical history. In it is told for the first time in the language of the great biographer the true story of the man Beethoven—his history stripped of the silly sentimental romance with which early writers and their later imitators and copyists invested it so thickly that the real humanity, the humanliness, of the composer has never been presented to the world. In this biography there appears the veritable Beethoven set down in his true environment of men and things—the man as he actually was, the man as he himself, like Cromwell, asked to be shown for the information of posterity. It is doubtful if any other great man's history has been so encrusted with fiction as Beethoven's. Except Thayer's, no biography of him has been written which presents him in his true light. The majority of the books which have been written of late years repeat many of the errors and falsehoods made current in the first books which were written about him. A great many of these errors and falsehoods are in the account of the composer's last sickness and death, and were either inventions or exaggerations designed by their utterers to add pathos to a narrative which in unadorned truth is a hundredfold more pathetic than any tale of fiction could possibly be. Other errors have concealed the truth in the story of Beethoven's guardianship of his nephew, his relations with his brothers, the origin and nature of his fatal illness, his dealings with his publishers and patrons, the generous attempt of the Philharmonic Society of London to extend help to him when upon his deathbed.

In many details the story of Beethoven's life as told here will be new to English and American readers; in a few cases the

details will be new to the world, for the English edition of Thayer's biography is not a translation of the German work but a presentation of the original manuscript, so far as the discoveries made after the writing did not mar its integrity, supplemented by the knowledge acquired since the publication of the first German edition, and placed at the service of the present editor by the German revisers of the second edition. The editor of this English edition was not only in communication with Mr. Thayer during the last ten years of his life, but was also associated to some extent with his continuator and translator, Dr. Deiters. Not only the fruits of the labors of the German editors but the original manuscript of Thayer and the mass of material which he accumulated came into the hands of this writer, and they form the foundation on which the English "Thayer's Beethoven" rests. The work is a vastly different one from that which Thayer dreamed of when he first conceived the idea of bringing order and consistency into the fragmentary and highly colored accounts of the composer's life upon which he fed his mind and fancy as a student at college; but it is, even in that part of the story which he did not write, true to the conception of what Beethoven's biography should be. Knowledge of the composer's life has greatly increased since the time when Thayer set out upon his task. The first publication of some of the results of his investigations in his "Chronologisches Verzeichniss" in 1865, and the first volume of the biography which appeared a year later, stirred the critical historians into activity throughout Europe. For them he had opened up a hundred avenues of research, pointed out a hundred subjects for special study. At once collectors of autographs brought forth their treasures, old men opened up the books of their memories, librarians gave eager searchers access to their shelves, churches produced their archives, and hieroglyphic sketches which had been scattered all over Europe were deciphered by scholars and yielded up chronological information of

inestimable value. To all these activities Thayer had pointed the way, and thus a great mass of facts was added to the already great mass which Thayer had accumulated. Nor did Thayer's labors in the field end with the first publication of his volumes. So long as he lived he gathered, ordered and sifted the new material which came under his observation and prepared it for incorporation into later editions and later volumes. After he was dead his editors continued the work.

Alexander Wheelock Thayer was born in South Natick, Massachusetts, on October 22nd, 1817, and received a liberal education at Harvard College, whence he was graduated in 1843. He probably felt that he was cut out for a literary career, for his first work after graduation was done in the library of his *Alma Mater*. There interest in the life of Beethoven took hold of him. With the plan in his mind of writing an account of that life on the basis of Schindler's biography as paraphrased by Moscheles, and bringing its statements and those contained in the "Biographische Notizen" of Wegeler and Ries and a few English accounts into harmony, he went to Europe in 1849 and spent two years in making researches in Bonn, Berlin, Prague and Vienna. He then returned to America and in 1852 became attached to the editorial staff of "The New York Tribune." It was in a double sense an attachment; illness compelled him to abandon journalism and sever his connection with the newspaper within two years, but he never gave up his interest in it. He read it until the day of his death, and his acquaintance with the member of the Tribune's staff who was destined to have a part in the completion of his lifework began when, a little more than a generation after he had gone to Europe for the second time, he opened a correspondence with him on a topic suggested by one of this writer's criticisms. In 1854 he went to Europe again, still fired with the ambition to rid the life-history of Beethoven of the defects which marred it as told in the current books.

Schindler had sold the *memorabilia* which he had received from Beethoven and Beethoven's friend Stephan von Breuning to the Prussian Government, and the precious documents were safely housed in the Royal Library at Berlin. It was probably in studying them that Thayer realized fully that it was necessary to do more than rectify and harmonize current accounts of Beethoven's life if it were correctly to be told. He had already unearthed much precious ore at Bonn, but he lacked the money which alone would enable him to do the long and large work which now loomed before him. In 1856 he again came back to America and sought employment, finding it this time in South Orange, New Jersey, where Lowell Mason employed him to catalogue his musical library. Meanwhile Dr. Mason had become interested in his great project, and Mrs. Mehetabel Adams, of Cambridge, Massachusetts, also. Together they provided the funds which enabled him again to go to Europe, where he now took up a permanent residence. At first he spent his time in research-travels, visiting Berlin, Bonn, Cologne, Düsseldorf (where he found material of great value in the archives of the old Electoral Courts of Bonn and Cologne), Frankfort, Paris, Linz, Graz, Salzburg, London and Vienna. To support himself he took a small post in the Legation of the United States at Vienna, but exchanged this after a space for the U. S. Consulship at Trieste, to which office he was appointed by President Lincoln on the recommendation of Senator Sumner. In Trieste he remained till his death, although out of office after October 1st, 1882. To Sir George Grove he wrote under date June 1st, 1895: "I was compelled to resign my office because of utter inability longer to continue Beethoven work and official labor together." From Trieste, when his duties permitted, he went out on occasional exploring tours, and there he weighed his accumulations of evidence and wrote his volumes.

In his travels Thayer visited every person of importance then living who had been in any way associated with Beethoven or had personal recollection of him—Schindler, the composer's factotum and biographer; Anselm Hüttenbrenner, in whose arms he died; Caroline van Beethoven, widow of Nephew Karl; Charles Neate and Cipriani Potter, the English musicians who had been his pupils; Sir George Smart, who had visited him to learn the proper interpretation of the Ninth Symphony; Moscheles, who had been a professional associate in Vienna; Otto Jahn, who had undertaken a like task with his own, but abandoned it and turned over his gathered material to him; Mähler, an artist who had painted Beethoven's portrait; Gerhard von Breuning, son of Beethoven's most intimate friend, who as a lad of fourteen had been a cheery companion of the great man when he lay upon his fatal bed of sickness;—with all these and many others he talked, carefully recording their testimony in his note-books and piling up information with which to test the correctness of traditions and printed accounts and to amplify the veracious story of Beethoven's life. His industry, zeal, keen power of analysis, candor and fairmindedness won the confidence and help of all with whom he came in contact except the literary charlatans whose romances he was bent on destroying in the interest of the verities of history. The Royal Library at Berlin sent the books in which many of Beethoven's visitors had written down their part of the conversations which the composer could not hear, to him at Trieste so that he might transcribe and study them at his leisure.

In 1865, Thayer was ready with the manuscript for Volume I of the work, which contained a sketch of the Courts of the Electors of Cologne at Cologne and Bonn for over a century, told of the music cultivated at them and recorded the ancestry of Beethoven so far as it had been discovered. It also carried the history of the composer down to the year

1796. In Bonn, Thayer had made the acquaintance of Dr. Hermann Deiters, Court Councillor and enthusiastic musical littérateur, and to him he confided the task of editing and revising his manuscript and translating it into German. The reason which Thayer gave for not at once publishing his work in English was that he was unable to oversee the printing in his native land, where, moreover, it was not the custom to publish such works serially. He urged upon his collaborator that he practise literalness of translation in respect of his own utterances, but gave him full liberty to proceed according to his judgment in the presentation of documentary evidence. All of the material in the volume except the draughts from Wegeler, Ries and Schindler, with which he was frequently in conflict, was original discovery, the result of the labors begun in Bonn in 1849. His principles he set forth in these words: “I fight for no theories, and cherish no prejudices; my sole point of view is the truth.… I have resisted the temptation to discuss the character of his (Beethoven’s) works and to make such a discussion the foundation of historical speculation, preferring to leave such matters to those who have a greater predilection for them. It appears to me that Beethoven the *composer* is amply known through his works and in this assumption the long and wearisome labors of so many years were devoted to Beethoven the *man*.” The plan to publish his work in German enabled Thayer to turn over all his documentary evidence to Deiters in its original shape, a circumstance which saved him great labor, but left it for his American editor and continuator. The first German volume appeared in 1866; its stimulative effect upon musical Europe has been indicated. Volume II came from the press in 1872, Volume III in 1879, both translated and annotated by Deiters. They brought the story of Beethoven’s life down to the end of the year 1816, leaving a little more than a decade still to be discussed.

The health of Thayer had never been robust, and the long and unintermittent application to the work of gathering and weighing evidence had greatly taxed his brain. He became subject to severe headaches and after the appearance of the third volume he found it impossible to apply himself for even a short time to work upon the biography. In July, 1890, he wrote a letter to Sir George Grove which the latter forwarded to this writer. In it he tells in words of pathetic gratitude of the unexpected honors showered upon him at Bonn when at the invitation of the Beethoven-Haus Verein he attended the exhibition and festival given in Beethoven's birthplace a short time before. Then he proceeds: "Of course the great question was on the lips of all: When will the fourth volume appear? I could only say: When the condition of my head allows it. No one could see or have from my general appearance the least suspicion that I was not in mental equal to my physical vigor. In fact, the extreme excitement of these three weeks took off for the time twenty years of my age and made me young again; but afterwards in Hamburg and in Berlin the reaction came. Spite of the delightful musical parties at Joachim's, Hausmann's, Mendelssohn's… my head broke down more and more, and since my return hither, July 3rd, has as yet shown small signs of recuperation. The extreme importance of working out my fourth volume is more than ever impressed upon my mind and weighs upon me like an incubus. But as yet it is still utterly impossible for me to really work. Of course I only live for that great purpose and do not despair. My general health is such that I think the brain must in time recover something of its vigor and power of labor. What astonishes me and almost creates envy is to see this wonderful power of labor as exemplified by you and my neighbor, Burton. But from boyhood I have had head troubles, and what I went through with for thirty years in supporting myself and working on Beethoven is not to be described and excites my wonder that I did not succumb.

Well, I will not yet despair.” Thayer’s mind, active enough in some things, refused to occupy itself with the Beethoven material; it needed distraction, and to give it that he turned to literary work of another character. He wrote a book against the Baconian authorship of Shakespeare’s works; another on the Hebrews in Egypt and their Exodus (which Mr. E. S. Willcox, a friend of many years, published at his request in Peoria, Illinois). He also wrote essays and children’s tales. Such writing he could do and also attend to his consular duties; but an hour or two of thought devoted to Beethoven, as he said in a letter to the present writer, brought on a racking headache and unfitted him for labor of any kind.

Meanwhile year after year passed by and the final volume of the biography was no nearer its completion than in 1880. In fact, beyond the selection and ordination of its material, it was scarcely begun. His friends and the lovers of Beethoven the world over grew seriously concerned at the prospect that it would never be completed. Sharing in this concern, the editor of the present edition developed a plan which he thought would enable Thayer to complete the work notwithstanding the disabilities under which he was laboring. He asked the coöperation of Novello, Ewer & Co., of London, and got them to promise to send a capable person to Trieste to act as a sort of literary secretary to Thayer. It was thought that, having all the material for the concluding volume on hand chronologically arranged, he might talk it over with the secretary, but without giving care to the manner of literary presentation. The secretary was then to give the material a proper setting and submit it to Thayer for leisurely revision. Very hopefully, and with feelings of deep gratitude to his friends, the English publishers, the American editor submitted his plan; but Thayer would have none of it. Though unable to work upon the biography for an hour continuously, he yet clung to the

notion that some day he would not only finish it but also rewrite the whole for English and American readers. From one of the letters placed at my disposal by Sir George Grove, it appears that subsequently (in 1892) there was some correspondence between an English publisher and Mr. Thayer touching an English edition. The letter was written to Sir George on June 1st, 1895. In it he says: “I then hoped to be able to revise and prepare it (the Beethoven MS.) for publication myself, and was able to begin the labor and arrange with a typewriting woman to make the clean copy. How sadly I failed I wrote you. Since that time the subject has not been renewed between us. I am now compelled to relinquish all hope of ever being able to do the work. There are two great difficulties to be overcome: the one is that all letters and citations are in the original German as they were sent to Dr. Deiters; the other, there is much to be condensed, as I always intended should be for this reason: From the very first chapter to the end of Vol. III, I am continually in conflict with all previous writers and was compelled, therefore, to show in my text that I was right by so using my materials that the reader should be taken along step by step and compelled to see the truth for himself. Had all my arguments been given in notes nine readers out of ten would hardly have read them, and I should have been involved in numberless and endless controversies. Now the case is changed. A. W. T’s novelties are now, with few if any exceptions, accepted as facts and can, in the English edition, be used as such. Besides this, there is much new matter to be inserted and some corrections to be made from the appendices of the three German volumes. The prospect now is that I may be able to do some of this work, or, at all events, go through my MS. page by page and do much to facilitate its preparation for publication in English. I have no expectation of ever receiving any pecuniary recompense for my 40 years of labor, for my many years of poverty arising from the costs of my extensive researches, for my—but

enough of this also.” In explanation of the final sentence in this letter it may be added that Thayer told the present writer that he had never received a penny from his publisher for the three German volumes; nothing more, in fact, than a few books which he had ordered and for which the publisher made no charge.

Thus matters rested when Thayer died on July 15th, 1897. The thought that the fruits of his labor and great sacrifices should be lost to the world even in part was intolerable. Dr. Deiters, with undiminished zeal and enthusiasm, announced his willingness to revise the three published volumes for a second edition and write the concluding volume. Meanwhile all of Thayer’s papers had been sent to Mrs. Jabez Fox of Cambridge, Massachusetts, the author’s niece and one of his heirs. There was a large mass of material, and it became necessary to sift it in order that all that was needful for the work of revision and completion might be placed in the hands of Dr. Deiters. This work was done, at Mrs. Fox’s request, by the present writer, who, also at Mrs. Fox’s request, undertook the task of preparing this English edition. Dr. Deiters accomplished the work of revising Volume I, which was published by Weber, the original publisher of the German volumes, in 1891. He then decided that before taking up the revision of Volumes II and III he would bring the biography to a conclusion. He wrote, not the one volume which Thayer had hoped would suffice him, but two volumes, the mass of material bearing on the last decade of Beethoven’s life having grown so large that it could not conveniently be comprehended in a single tome, especially since Dr. Deiters had determined to incorporate critical discussions of the composer’s principal works in the new edition. The advance sheets of Volume IV were in Dr. Deiters’s hands when, full of years and honors, he died on May 1st, 1907. Breitkopf and Härtel had meanwhile purchased the German copyright from Weber, and they

chose Dr. Hugo Riemann to complete the work of revision. Under Dr. Riemann's supervision Volumes IV and V were brought out in 1908, and Volumes II and III in 1910–1911.

Not until this had been accomplished could the American collaborator go systematically to work on his difficult and voluminous task, for he had determined to use as much as possible of Thayer's original manuscript and adhere to Thayer's original purpose and that expressed in his letter to Sir George Grove. He also thought it wise to condense the work so as to bring it within three volumes and to seek to enhance its readableness in other ways. To this end he abolished the many appendices which swell the German volumes, and put their significant portions into the body of the narrative; he omitted many of the hundreds of foot-notes, especially the references to the works of the earlier biographers, believing that the special student would easily find the sources if he wished to do so, and the general reader would not care to verify the statements of one who has been accepted as the court of last resort in all matters of fact pertaining to Beethoven, the man; he also omitted many letters and presented the substance of others in his own words for the reason that they can all be consulted in the special volumes which contain the composer's correspondence; of the letters and other documents used in the pages which follow, he made translations for the sake of accuracy as well as to avoid conflict with the copyright privileges of the publishers of English versions. Being as free as the German editors in respect of the portion of the biography which did not come directly from the pen of Thayer, the editor of this English edition chose his own method of presentation touching the story of the last decade of Beethoven's life, keeping in view the greater clearness and rapidity of narrative which, he believed, would result from a grouping of material different from that

followed by the German editors in their adherence to the strict chronological method established by Thayer.

A large number of variations from the text of the original German edition are explained in the body of this work or in foot-notes. In cases where the German editors were found to be in disagreement with the English manuscript in matters of opinion merely, the editor has chosen to let Mr. Thayer's arguments stand, though, as a rule, he has noted the adverse opinions of the German revisers also. A prominent instance of this kind is presented by the mysterious love-letter found secreted in Beethoven's desk after his death. Though a considerable literature has grown up around the "Immortal Beloved" since Thayer advanced the hypothesis that the lady was the Countess Therese Brunswick, the question touching her identity and the dates of the letters is still as much an open one as it was when Thayer, in his characteristic manner, subjected it to examination. This editor has, therefore, permitted Thayer not only to present his case in his own words, but helped him by bringing his scattered pleadings and briefs into sequence. He has also outlined in part the discussion which followed the promulgation of Thayer's theory, and advanced a few fugitive reflections of his own. The related incident of Beethoven's vain matrimonial project has been put into a different category by new evidence which came to light while Dr. Riemann was engaged in his revisory work. It became necessary, therefore, that the date of that incident be changed from 1807, where Thayer had put it, to 1810. By this important change Beethoven's relations to Therese Malfatti were made to take on a more serious attitude than Thayer was willing to accord them.

In this edition, finally, more importance is attached to the so-called Fischer Manuscript than Thayer was inclined to give it, although he, somewhat grudgingly we fear, consented that Dr. Deiters should print it with critical

comments in the Appendix of his Vol. I. The manuscript, though known to Thayer, had come to the attention of Dr. Deiters too late for use in the narrative portion of the volume, though it was thus used in the second edition. The story of the manuscript, which is now preserved in the museum of the Beethoven-Haus Verein in Bonn, is a curious one. Its author was Gottfried Fischer, whose ancestors for four generations had lived in the house in the Rheingasse which only a few years ago was still, though mendaciously, pointed out to strangers as the house in which Beethoven was born. Fischer, who lived till 1864, was born in the house which formerly stood on the site of the present building known as No. 934, ten years after Beethoven's eyes opened to the light in the Bonngasse. At the time of Fischer's birth the Beethoven family occupied a portion of the house and Fischer's father and the composer's father were friends and companions. There, too, had lived the composer's grandfather. Gottfried Fischer had a sister, Cäcilia Fischer, who was born eight years before Beethoven; she remained unmarried and lived to be 85 years old, dying on May 23rd, 1845. The festivities attending the unveiling of the Beethoven monument in 1838 brought many visitors to Bonn and a natural curiosity concerning the relics of the composer. Inquirers were referred to the house in the Rheingasse, then supposed to be the birthplace of the composer, where the Fischers, brother and sister, still lived. They told their story and were urged by eager listeners to put it into writing. This Gottfried did the same year, but, keeping the manuscript in hand, he added to it at intervals down to the year 1857 at least. He came to attach great value to his revelations and as time went on embellished his recital with a mass of notes, many of no value, many consisting of iterations and reiterations of incidents already recorded, and also with excerpts from books to which, in his simplicity, he thought that nobody but himself had access. He was an uneducated man, ignorant even of the correct

use of the German language; it is, therefore, not surprising that much of his record is utterly worthless; but mixed with the dross there is much precious metal, especially in the spinster's recollection of the composer's father and grandfather, for while Gottfried grew senile his sister remained mentally vigorous to the end. Thayer examined the document and offered to buy it, but was dissuaded by the seemingly exorbitant price which the old man set upon it. It was finally purchased for the city's archives by the Oberbürgermeister and thus came to the notice of Dr. Deiters. His use of it has been followed by the present editor.

HENRY EDWARD KREHBIEL.

Blue Hill, Maine, U. S. A.
July, 1914.

Postscript

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The breaking out, in August, 1914, of the war between Austria and Servia which eventually involved nearly all the civilized nations of the world, led the publishers, who had originally undertaken to print this Work as brought to a conclusion by the American Editor, indefinitely to postpone its publication. In the spring of 1920 the Beethoven Association, composed of musicians of high rank, who had given a remarkably successful series of concerts of Beethoven's chamber-music in New York in the season 1919–20, at the suggestion of O. G. Sonneck and Harold Bauer resolved to devote the proceeds of the concerts to promoting the publication of Thayer's biography. To this act of artistic philanthropy the appearance of the work is due.

H. E. K.

Blue Hill, Maine, U. S. A.
September, 1920.

ALEXANDER WHEELOCK THAYER
January 1888

Chapter I

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Introductory—The Electors of Cologne in the Eighteenth Century—Joseph Clemens, Clemens August and Max Friedrich—The Electoral Courts and Their Music—Musical Culture in Bonn at the Time of Beethoven's Birth—Appearance of the City in 1770.

One of the compensations for the horrors of the French Revolution was the sweeping away of many of the petty sovereignties into which Germany was divided, thereby rendering in our day a union of the German People and the rise of a German Nation possible. The first to fall were the numerous ecclesiastical-civil members of the old, loose confederation, some of which had played no ignoble nor unimportant part in the advance of civilization; but their day was past. The people of these states had in divers respects enjoyed a better lot than those who were subjects of hereditary rulers, and the old German saying: "It is good to dwell under the crook," had a basis of fact. At the least, they were not sold as mercenary troops; their blood was not shed on foreign fields to support their princes' ostentatious splendor, to enable mistresses and ill-begotten children to live in luxury and riot. But the antiquated ideas to which the ecclesiastical rulers held with bigoted tenacity had become a barrier to progress, the exceptions being too few to render their farther existence desirable. These members of the empire, greatly differing in extent, population, wealth and political influence, were ruled with few or no exceptions by men who owed their positions to election by chapters or other church corporations, whose numbers were so limited

as to give full play to every sort of intrigue; but they could not assume their functions until their titles were confirmed by the Pope as head of the church, and by the Emperor as head of the confederation. Thus the subject had no voice in the matter, and it hardly need be said that his welfare and prosperity were never included among the motives and considerations on which the elections turned.

The sees, by their charters and statutes, we think without exception, were bestowed upon men of noble birth. They were benefices and sinecures for younger sons of princely houses; estates set apart and consecrated to the use, emolument and enjoyment of German John Lacklands. In the long list of their incumbents, a name here and there appears, that calls up historic associations;—a man of letters who aided in the increase or diffusion of the cumbrous learning of his time; a warrior who exchanged his robes for a coat of mail; a politician who played a part more or less honorable or the reverse in the affairs and intrigues of the empire, and, very rarely, one whose daily walk and conversation reflected, in some measure, the life and principles of the founder of Christianity. In general, as they owed their places wholly to political and family influences, so they assumed the vows and garb of churchmen as necessary steps to the enjoyment of lives of affluence and pleasure. So late as far into the eighteenth century, travelling was slow, laborious and expensive. Hence, save for the few more wealthy and powerful, journeys, at long intervals, to a council, an imperial coronation or a diet of the empire, were the rare interruptions to the monotony of their daily existence. Not having the power to transmit their sees to their children, these ecclesiastics had the less inducement to rule with an eye to the welfare of their subjects: on the other hand, the temptation was very strong to augment their revenues for the benefit of relatives and dependents, and especially for the gratification of their own

tastes and inclinations, among which the love of splendor and ostentatious display was a fruitful source of waste and extravagance.

Confined so largely to their own small capitals, with little intercourse except with their immediate neighbors, they were far more dependent upon their own resources for amusement than the hereditary princes: and what so obvious, so easily obtained and so satisfactory as music, the theatre and the dance! Thus every little court became a conservatory of these arts, and for generations most of the great names in them may be found recorded in the court calendars. One is therefore not surprised to learn how many of the more distinguished musical composers began life as singing boys in cathedral choirs of England and Germany. The secular princes, especially those of high rank, had, besides their civil administration, the stirring events of war, questions of public policy, schemes and intrigues for the advancement of family interests and the like, to engage their attention; but the ecclesiastic, leaving the civil administration, as a rule, in the hands of ministers, had little to occupy him officially but a tedious routine of religious forms and ceremonies; to him therefore the theatre, and music for the mass, the opera, the ball-room, and the salon, were matters of great moment—they filled a wide void and were cherished accordingly.

Cologne and Its Electors

The three German ecclesiastical princes who possessed the greatest power and influence were the Archbishops of Mayence, Trèves and Cologne—Electors of the Empire and rulers of the fairest regions of the Rhine. Peace appears hardly to have been known between the city of Cologne and its earlier archbishops; and, in the thirteenth century, a long-continued and even bloody quarrel resulted in the victory of the city. It remained a free imperial town. The

archbishops retained no civil or political power within its walls, not even the right to remain there more than three days at any one time. Thus it happened, that in the year 1257 Archbishop Engelbert selected Bonn for his residence, and formally made it the capital of the electorate, as it remained until elector and court were swept away in 1794.

Of the last four Electors of Cologne, the first was Joseph Clemens, a Bavarian prince, nephew of his predecessor Maximilian Heinrich. The choice of the chapter by a vote of thirteen to nine had been Cardinal Fürstenberg; but his known, or supposed, devotion to the interests of the French king had prevented the ratification of the election by either the Emperor or the Pope. A new one being ordered, resulted in favor of the Bavarian, then a youth of eighteen years. The Pope had ratified his election and appointed a bishop to perform his ecclesiastical functions *ad interim*, and the Emperor invested him with the electoral dignity December 1, 1689. Vehse says of him:

> Like two of his predecessors he was the incumbent of five sees; he was Archbishop of Cologne, Bishop of Hildesheim, Liège, Ratisbon and Freisingen. His love for pomp and splendor was a passion which he gratified in the magnificence of his court. He delighted to draw thither beautiful and intellectual women. Madame de Raysbeck, and Countess Fugger, wife of his chief equerry, were his declared favorites. For seventeen years, that is, until the disastrous year 1706, when Fénelon consecrated him, he delayed assuming his vows. He held the opinion, universal in the courts of those days, that he might with a clear conscience enjoy life after the manner of secular princes. In pleasing the ladies, he was utterly regardless of expense, and for their amusement gave magnificent balls,

splendid masquerades, musical and dramatic entertainments, and hunting parties.

St. Simon relates that several years of his exile were passed at Valenciennes, where, though a fugitive, he followed the same round of costly pleasures and amusements. He also records one of the Elector's jests which in effrontery surpasses anything related of his contemporary, Dean Swift. Some time after his consecration, he caused public notice to be given, that on the approaching first of April he would preach. At the appointed time he mounted the pulpit, bowed gravely, made the sign of the cross, shouted "Zum April!" (April fool!), and retired amid a flourish of trumpets and the rolling of drums.

Dr. Ennen labors energetically to prove that Joseph Clemens's fondness in later years for joining in all grand church ceremonies rested upon higher motives than the mere pleasure of displaying himself in his magnificent robes; and affirms that after assuming his priestly vows he led a life devoted to the church and worthy of his order; thenceforth never seeing Madame de Raysbeck, mother of his illegitimate children, except in the presence of a third person. It seems proper to say this much concerning a prince whose electorship is the point of departure for notices of music and musicians in Bonn during the eighteenth century; a prince whose fondness for the art led him at home and in exile to support both vocal and instrumental bands on a scale generous for that age; and who, moreover, made some pretensions to the title of composer himself, as we learn from a letter which under date of July 20, 1720, he wrote to a court councillor Rauch to accompany eleven of his motets. It is an amusingly frank letter, beginning with a confession that he was an *Ignorant* who knew nothing about notes and had absolutely no knowledge of *musique*, wherefore he admits that his manner of composing is "very odd," being compelled to sing

anything that came into his head to a composer whose duty it was to bring the ideas to paper. Nevertheless he is quite satisfied with himself, “At all events I must have a good ear and *gusto*, for the public that has heard has always approved. But the *methodum* which I have adopted is that of the bees that draw and collect the honey from the sweetest flowers; so, also, I have taken all that I have composed from good masters whose *Musikalien* pleased me. Thus I freely confess my pilfering, which others deny and try to appropriate what they have taken from others. Let no one, therefore, get angry if he hears old arias in it, for, as they are beautiful, the old is not deprived of its praise.… I ascribe everything to the grace of God who enlightened me, the unknowing, to do these things.” Not all “composers,” royal or mean, are as honest as the old Elector!

It is fortunate for the present purpose, that the portion of the electoral archives discovered after a lapse of nearly seventy years and now preserved at Düsseldorf, consists so largely of documents relating to the musical establishment of the court at Bonn during the last century of its existence. They rarely afford information upon the character of the music performed, but are sufficiently complete, when supplemented by the annual Court Calendars, to determine with reasonable correctness the number, character, position and condition of its members. The few petitions and decrees hereafter to be given in full because of their connection with the Beethovens, suffice for specimens of the long series of similar documents, uniform in character and generally of too little interest to be worth transcription.

In 1695 a decree issued at Liège by Joseph Clemens, then in that city as titular bishop, though not consecrated, adds three new names to the “Hoff-Musici,” one of which, Van den Eeden, constantly reappears in the documents and calendars down to the year 1782. From a list of payments at

Liège in the second quarter of 1696, we find that Henri Vandeneden (Heinrich Van den Eeden) was a bass singer, and that the aggregate of vocalists, instrumentists, with the organ-blower (*calcant*), was eighteen persons.

Returned to Bonn, Joseph Clemens resumed his plan of improving his music, and for those days of small orchestras and niggardly salaries he set it upon a rather generous foundation. A decree of April 1, 1698, put in force the next month, names 22 persons with salaries aggregating 8,890 florins.

Political Vicissitudes of the Electorate

After the death of Maximilian Heinrich the government passed into the hands of Cardinal Fürstenberg, his coadjutor, who owed the position to the intrigues of Louis XIV, and now used it by all possible means to promote French interests. The king’s troops under French commanders, he admitted into the principal towns of the electorate, and, for his own protection, a French garrison of 10,000 men into Bonn. War was the consequence; an imperial army successfully invaded the province, and, advancing to the capital, subjected its unfortunate inhabitants to all the horrors of a relentless siege, that ended October 15, 1689, in the expulsion of the garrison, now reduced to some 3900 men, of whom 1500 were invalids. Yet in the war of the Spanish Succession which opened in 1701, notwithstanding the terrible lesson taught only eleven years before, the infatuated Joseph Clemens embraced the party of Louis. Emperor Leopold treated him with singular mildness, in vain. The Elector persisted. In 1702 he was therefore excluded from the civil government and fled from Bonn, the ecclesiastical authority in Cologne being empowered by the Emperor to rule in his stead. The next year, the great success of the French armies against the allies was celebrated by Joseph Clemens with all pomp

in Namur, where he then was; but his triumph was short. John Churchill, then Earl of Marlborough, took the field as commander-in-chief of the armies of the allies. His foresight, energy and astonishing skill in action justified Addison's simile—whether sublime or only pompous—of the angel riding in the whirlwind and directing the storm. He was soon at Cologne, whence he despatched Cochorn to besiege Bonn. That great general executed his task with such skill and impetuosity, that on May 15 (1703) all was ready for storming the city, when d'Allègre, the French commander, offered to capitulate, and on the 19th was allowed to retire. "Now was Bonn for the third time wrested from the hands of the French and restored to the archbishopric, but alas, in a condition that aroused indignation, grief and compassion on all sides," says Müller.

Leopold was still kindly disposed toward Joseph Clemens, but he died May 5, 1705, and his successor, Joseph I, immediately declared him under the ban of the Empire. This deprived him of the means and opportunities, as Elector, for indulging his passion for pomp and display, while his neglect hitherto, under dispensations from the Pope, to take the vows necessary to the performance of ecclesiastical functions, was likewise fatal to that indulgence as archbishop. But this could be remedied; Fénelon, the famous Archbishop of Cambray, ordained him subdeacon August 15, 1706; the Bishop of Tournay made him deacon December 8, and priest on the 25th; on January 1, 1707, he read his first mass at Lille, and indulged his passion for parade to the full, as a pamphlet describing the incident, and silver and copper medals commemorating it, still evince. "Two years later, May 1, 1709, Joseph Clemens received from Fénelon in Ryssel (Lille) episcopal consecration and the pallium."—(Müller.) Upon the victory of Oudenarde by Marlborough, and the fall of Lille, he took refuge in Mons. The treaty of Rastadt, March, 1714, restored him to his electoral dignities