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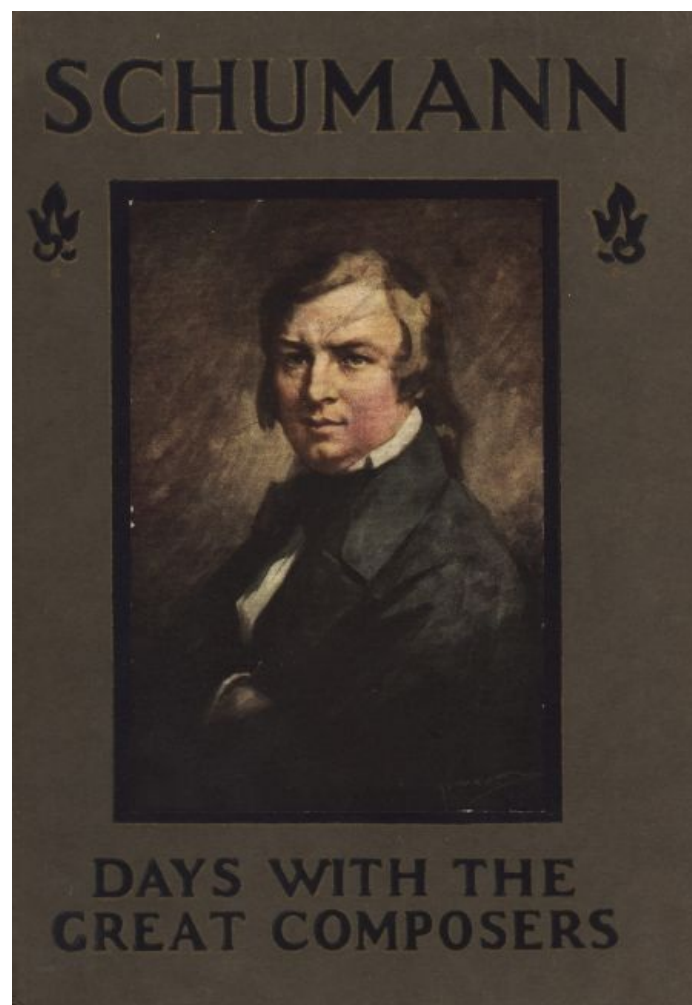
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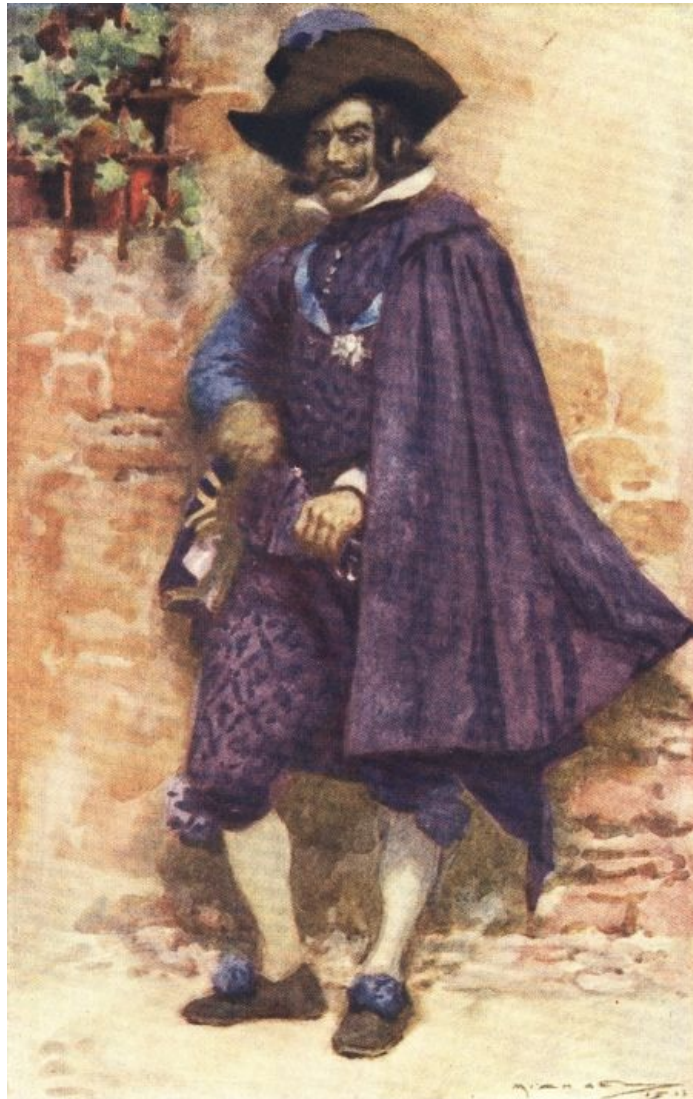
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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK A DAY WITH ROBERT SCHUMANN ***





THE HIDALGO.

**My days I spend in courting,
With songs and hearts a-sporting,
Or weaponed for a fight!**

(Der Hidalgo).

**A DAY WITH
ROBERT**

SCHUMANN

BY MAY BYRON



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A DAY WITH SCHUMANN.

It is an April morning in 1844, in the town of Leipzig,—calm, cool, and fraught with exquisite promise of a prolific spring,—when the Herr Professor Doctor Robert Schumann, rising before six o'clock as is his wont, very quietly and noiselessly in his soft felt slippers, dresses and goes downstairs. For he does not wish to disturb or incommode his sleeping wife, whose dark eyes are still closed, or to awaken any of his three little children.

The tall, dignified, well-built man, with his pleasant, kindly expression, and his air of mingled intellect and reverie, bears his whole character written large upon him,—his transparent honesty, unflagging industry, and generous, enthusiastic altruism. No touch of self-seeking about him, no hint of ostentation or conceit: he is still that same reticent and silent person, of whom it was said some years ago by his friends,

"Herr Schumann is a right good man,
He smokes tobacco as no one can:
A man of thirty, I suppose,
And short his hair, and short his nose."

That, indeed, is the sum total of his outward appearance: as for the inward man, it is not to be known save through his writings. Literature and music are the only means of expression, of communication with others, which are possessed by this modest, pensive, reserved maestro, upon whom the sounding titles of Doctor and Professor sit so strangely.

In the unparalleled fervour and romance of his compositions,—in the passionate heart-opening of his letters,—in the sane, wholesome, racy colloquialism of his critiques,—the real Robert Schumann is unfolded. Otherwise he might remain a perennial enigma to his nearest and dearest: for even in his own family circle, tenderly and dearly as he adores his wife and children, his lips remain sealed of all that they might say: and the fixed, unvarying quietude of his face but rarely reveals the least suggestion of his deeper feelings.

Yet, at the present time, were you to search the world around, you should hardly find a happier man than this, in his own serene and thoughtful way. For, in his own words, "I have an incomparable wife. There is no happiness equal to that. If you could only take a peep at us in our snug little artist home!" Clara Wieck, whom he has known from her childhood, whom he struggled, and agonised, and fought for against fate, for five long years of frustration and disappointment, is not only his beloved wife and the mother of his little ones,—she is his fellow-worker and co-artist, and literal helpmate in every department of life. She has "filled his life with sunshine of love,"—and, "as a woman," he declares, "she is a gift from heaven.... Think of perfection, and I will agree to it!" But, beyond that, she has poured her beautiful soul into every hungry cranny of his artistic sense. "For Clara's untiring zeal and energy in her art, she really deserves love and encouragement.... I will say no more of my happiness in possessing a girl with whom I have grown to be one through art, intellectual affinities, the regular intercourse of years, and the deepest and holiest affection. My whole life is one joyous activity."

The annals of art, indeed, hold no more lovely record of a union between natural affinities. That of Robert and Elizabeth Barrett Browning perhaps approximates most closely to that of Robert and Clara Schumann. But whereas in the former case both husband and wife were alike engaged

upon the same branch of literature,—poetry,—and a certain sense of sadness was apt to embitter the success of the wife, because of the unpopularity (in those days) of the husband,—Schumann is solely and pre-eminently a composer, and Clara solely and absorbingly a pianist. No shadow of artistic rivalry can fall upon their delight, nor darken their pleasure in each other's achievements. Schumann's most impassioned and characteristic productions have been definitely inspired by Clara, ever since the days when, as a child of nine, she listened to his fantastic fairy-tales, and her exquisite playing thrilled him with a desire to think in music. And Clara, who has never made a mere show of her marvellous executive skill, but has "consecrated it to the service of true art alone,"—is never happier than when interpreting her husband's works.

It is, in short, necessary to deal with Schumann as a whole,—as a man who has fulfilled the triple destiny for which Nature intended him,—as individual, husband, and father,—before one can even approximately understand this silent, studious dreamer, whose one ideal of happiness is to sit at home and compose.

Schumann considers this early morning hour the most precious of his day, from a working standpoint. He seats himself at his desk, and places his two treasures where they shall catch his eye conspicuously; for he regards them more or less as charms and talismans to bring out the best that is in him. They are, a steel pen which he found lying on Beethoven's grave at Vienna, and the MS. score of Schubert's C-major Symphony, which he obtained by a lucky chance. He regards these with a mixture of sentiment and humorous toleration of his own mysticism: but he cherishes them none the less, and often casts a reassuring glance in their direction, as he covers sheet after sheet of paper with his shockingly illegible handwriting. "Poets and pianists," says he with resignation, "almost always write with a dog's paw. The printers will make it out somehow." He is engaged upon his work in connection with the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* (New Musical Times), which he originally founded, and of which he has been some nine years Editor. During all these years he has contributed to its pages those admirable reviews and appreciations which are so utterly unlike anything heretofore attempted in the realm of musical criticism. "There is no quality to be desired in a musical critic that Schumann does not possess:" and in addition to technical equipments of every kind, keen insight and an almost prophetic quality in his predictions, he has the priceless gift too often denied to the critic,—that of superabundant sympathy. His hands are ever thrown out to welcome the young and timid genius, even as they are clenched, so to speak, with threatening fists towards Philistinism, charlatanism and mediocrity. He loves to praise rather than to blame, and to detect the germs of coming greatness in some obscure, unsuspected artist. He takes into his regard the personal equation wherever possible, and does not separate the musician from the man: for, he says, "the man and the musician in myself have always struggled to manifest themselves simultaneously.... I speak with a certain diffidence of works, of the precursors of which I know nothing. I like to know something of the composer's school, his youthful aspirations, his exemplars and even of the actions and circumstances of his life, and what he has done hitherto."

As his pen travels rapidly over the pages, the reason of his cramped and crabbed handwriting is only too evident. Schumann's right hand is crippled. In an evil hour of his youth, while yet he was consumed with the ambition of a would-be virtuoso, he experimented, with artificial restrictions, upon one of his right-hand fingers, intending thus to strengthen the rest by assiduous practice ... with the result that he lamed his hand for ever. This disastrous attempt deprived the world of a good pianist, but conferred upon it a great composer: for it is possible that the executive would have superseded the creative ability within him. Nevertheless, he confesses that, "My lame hand makes me wretched sometimes ... it would mean so much if I were able to play. What a relief to give utterance to all the music surging within me! As it is, I can barely play at all, but stumble along with my fingers all mixed up together in a terrible way. It causes me great distress."

Thus, you perceive, he is considerably debarred from expressing himself in sounds, no less than in words: he must perforce retire more and more within himself. The ease with which he writes is balanced by the difficulty with which he speaks: and bitterly he has complained, "People are often at a loss to understand me, and no wonder! I meet affectionate advances with icy reserve, and often wound and repel those who wish to help me.... It is not that I fail to appreciate the very smallest attention, or to distinguish every subtle change in expression and attitude: it is a fatal something in my words and manner which belies me."

He is, indeed, only paralleled by the *Lotus Flower* of his own delicious song,—shrinking from the daylight of publicity, and softly unfolding to the gentle rays of love.

The Lotus flower is pining
Under the sun's red light:
Slowly her head inclining,
She dreams and waits for the night.

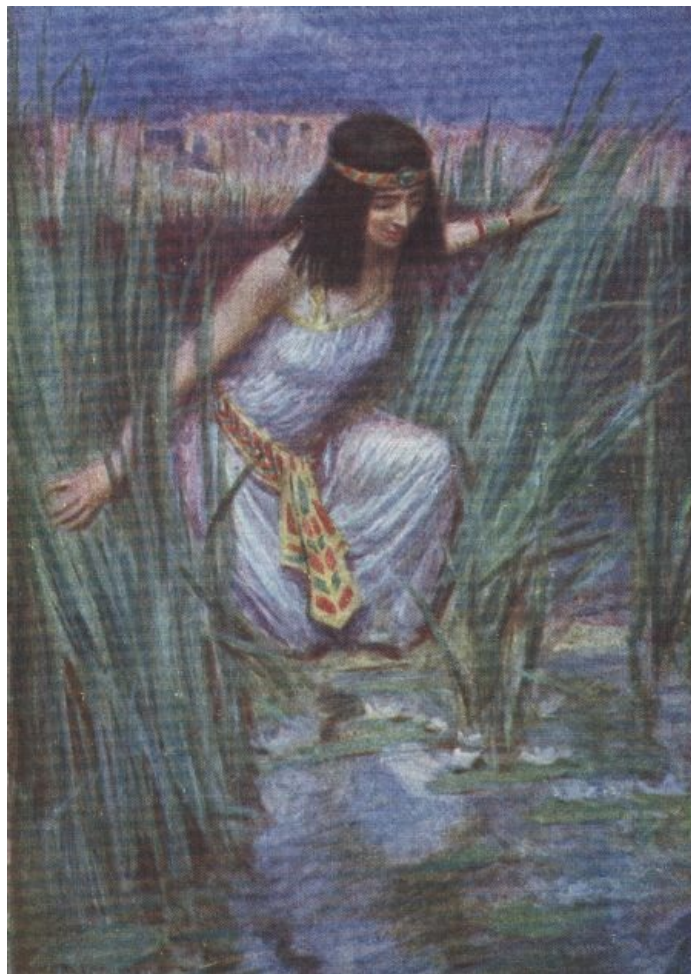
The moon, who is her lover,
Awakes her with his rays,
And bids her softly uncover
Her veiled and gentle gaze.

Now glowing, gleaming, throbbing,
She looks all mutely above,—
She is trembling, and sighing, and sobbing,
For love and the pangs of love.

(Heine.)

And here she enters the room, this woman who is literally his *alter ego*, and the small prattle of children is audible in the awakening house. Madame Schumann is, in her husband's words, a "pale, not pretty, but attractive" young woman of twenty-six, "with black eyes that speak volumes,"—slender, vivacious, affectionate: the exact complement of Robert in all respects. It is easy to perceive in them, at the first glance, "two noble souls distinguished by fastidious purity of character—two buoyant minds concentrated to the service of the same art." The heavily-thoughtful face of the composer lights up with sudden sunshine.

"Come and sit beside me, my dear, sweet girl!" says he. "Hold your head a little to the right, in the charming way you have, and let me talk to you a little. Upon my word, Clärchen, you look younger than ever this morning. You cannot be the mother of three. You cannot be the celebrated pianist. You are just the queer, quaint little girl you were ten years ago, with strong views of your own, beautiful eyes, and a weakness for cherries!" This is a very long speech for Schumann, and his wife looks at him with a shade of anxiety—such anxiety as she is never wholly free from. For the words which she wrote in her diary on her wedding day were more prophetic than even she may yet recognise: "My responsibilities are heavy—very heavy; give me strength to fulfil them as a good wife should. God has always been and will continue to be my helper. I have always had perfect trust in Him, which I will ever preserve." She, and she alone, is aware of all those mysterious clouds of melancholia, those strange sounds of inexplicable music, which brood at times above her darling husband—friend, comrade and lover in one. She, and she only, can banish, as David did from Saul, the terrible phases of irrational depression, and exorcise the evil power which is always lurking ambushed in Schumann's outwardly happy life.



THE LOTUS-FLOWER.

**The Lotus flower is pining
Under the sun's red light:
Slowly her head inclining,
She dreams and waits for the night.**

(Die Lotos-Blume).

"See," says he, with modest pride, "what a vast amount of work I have completed this morning!"

"You are a most diligent creature, Robert!" she tells him, "and yet I cannot but wish sometimes, that this literary work were off your mind—that you had more time to devote towards composing, which is your true *métier*. I want all the world to understand how great a master you are—I am jealous of every minute spent upon the *Neue Zeitschrift*!"

"Don't be too ambitious for me, Clärchen: I desire no better place than a seat at the piano with

you close by."

"That does not satisfy me," says the impetuous little lady, "I want you to be recognised and applauded by all men. When I am rendering your divine compositions, I feel as though all the while I were declaring: 'Just hear this!—Just listen to that!—This is by Robert Schumann, the greatest genius in Germany: it is an honour to me to be allowed to perform such works.'"

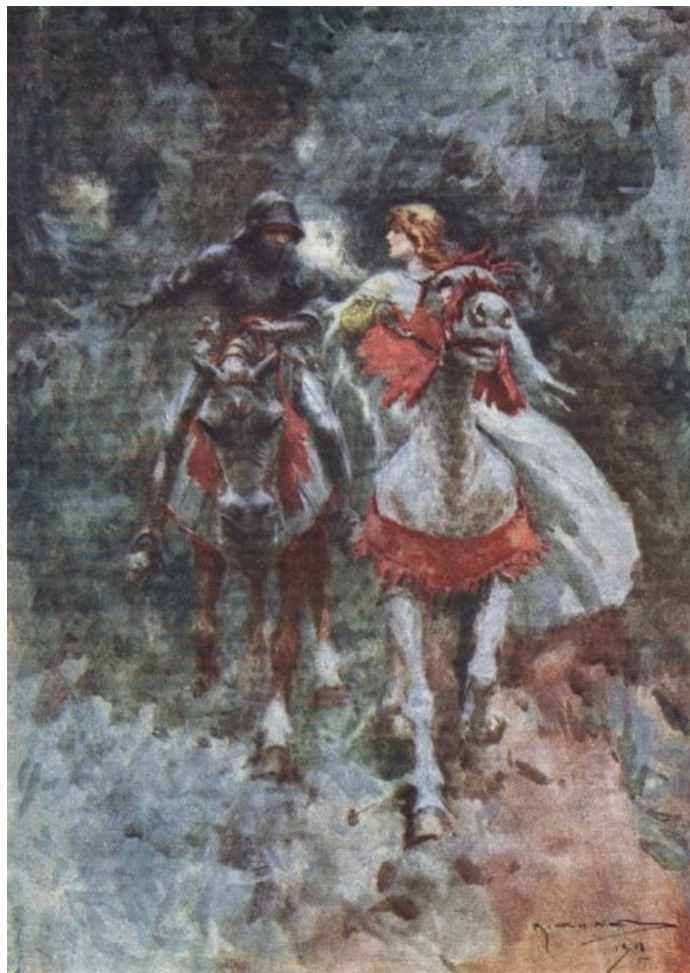
"My dear, those compositions are my poor, weak way of expressing my thoughts about you! The battles which you have cost me, the joy you have given me, are all reflected by my music. You are almost the sole inspiration of my best—the Concerto, the Sonata, the *Davidsbündler* dances, the *Kreisleriana*, the *Novelletten*. Why, dearest, in the *Novelletten* are my thoughts of you in every possible position and circumstance and all your irresistibility!... No one could have written the *Novelletten*, unless he had gazed into such eyes and touched such lips as yours. In short, another may do better work, but nothing just like these."

"That, indeed, I feel," replies Clara with a little sigh, "and the very significance of their meaning, I believe, forbids my doing full justice to their amazing difficulties. You need a pianist like Liszt, my Robert, to interpret you to the best advantage."

"I have every admiration for Liszt's wonderful playing, with its diapason of all the moods between the extremes of fiery frenzy, and utmost delicacy. But his world is not mine—not ours, Clärchen. Art, as we know it—you when you play, I when I compose—has an intimate charm that is worth far more to us than all Liszt's splendour and tinsel."

They embrace with the warmth and sweetness of perfect mutual comprehension: and she prevails upon him to descend from cloudy Olympian editorial heights, so far as to refresh himself with a modest *Frühstück* or breakfast, and a brief gambol with the little ones—for he has that devotion to tiny children characteristic of all great men. Never, perhaps, has any composer so thoroughly entered into childish griefs and fears and pleasures—the April shower and shine of babyhood—than Schumann in his *Kinderscenen*. The consummate musician who has surmounted every difficulty, acquainted himself with every method of his art—the man who has mastered the forms of symphony, chamber-music, pianoforte and vocal music to their farthest present limits—here stands forth as the exponent of little innocent every-day emotions. *By the Fireside, Bogeys, A Child's Petition, From Foreign Lands, Blindman's Buff*, and so on, the simple titles run. "They are descriptive enough, you see, and as easy as winking!" he has told his wife. And they are the very breath of childhood,—they "dally with the innocence of love, like the old age." Nobody could have imagined them but a man who had eternal youth in his heart. "The dissonances are as softly blended as if a child had actually poured forth its pure soul."

It may readily be imagined with what looks askance the composer of the *Kinderscenen* is favoured by his academic and hide-bound contemporaries. "Romanticism run mad"—"modernism gone crazy;"—"discordant innovations;"—"new-fangled nonsense"—there are few terms too harsh for Herr Schumann; and sometimes he is contemptuously ignored as beyond all possibility of classification. Already sufficiently *outré*, in the opinion of all conventional musicians, by his adoption of the cyclical form, rather than the orthodox classical, for his abstract pianoforte music—"the whole becoming organic by means of the intimate connection between the various parts;"—already sufficiently outlandish, in the estimation of the average conservative critic, by what is condemned as his *grotesquerie* and *bizarrierie* of treatment: Schumann is not careful to answer his opponents, or to defend himself from any charges of *lèse-majesté* against the imperial art which he serves. That wide and genial tolerance which he extends towards all new composers, he does not demand or even expect for himself. Nevertheless, as he allows, "I used to be quite indifferent to the amount of notice I received, but a wife and children put a different complexion upon everything. It becomes imperative to think of the future." And he is aware that his own personal idiosyncrasies are the strongest obstacle in his way; for he is unable to push or praise himself in the least, and the lordly egotism by dint of which other composers win, or command, a hearing, has been entirely omitted from the making of this dumb genius. He knows no professional jealousy, he never speaks ill of a soul;—but then, one might say that he hardly ever spoke at all. He is almost unknown in society,—partly because he really has no interest whatever apart from music, partly owing to his silent manner and retiring disposition. It is on record that one day after Madame Schumann had been playing with tremendous success at one of the smaller German courts, the Serene Highness who was ruler there enquired of her with great affability, "whether her husband were also musical?" And with his fellow-musicians he is so invincibly taciturn that conversation is almost a farce. Even Wagner, whose powers of loquacity are almost illimitable, resents being reduced to the utterance of an absolute monologue. "When I came to see Schumann," he grumbles, "I related to him my Parisian experiences, spoke of the state of music in France, then of that in Germany, spoke of literature and politics,—but he remained as good as dumb for nearly an hour. Now, one cannot go on talking *quite* alone. An impossible man!"



THE KNIGHT AND THE LORELEI.

**The hour is late, the night is cold,—
Who through the forest rides so bold?
The wood is wide,—thou art alone,—
O lovely maid, be thou my own!**

(Waldesgesprach).

The fact is, that the "impossible man" dwells apart in a world of his own, a world peopled by the best folk he has ever encountered either in the flesh or the spirit, and a world where the austere canons and noblest aspirations of his great art are upheld on a very different plane from that of Leipzig. He has the highest possible view of his vocation and what it should entail. "To send light into the depths of the human heart, that is the artistic calling," he has declared.... "The artist is to choose for his companions those who can do something beyond playing passably on one or two instruments—those who are whole men and can understand Shakespeare and Jean Paul.... People say, 'It pleased,' or 'It did not please,'—as if there were nothing higher than pleasing the public!"... A man with such notions as these, in the first half of the nineteenth century, must of necessity live and move to a great extent in an ideal atmosphere of his own: and Schumann, to do so the more literally, has created his own company in that "spiritual and romantic league," the *Davidsbund*, which exists only in his imagination, but exercises considerable vigour none the less.

The *Davidsbund* is a mystical community of kindred souls, each enlisted, with or without his knowledge, under the banner of "a resolve to do battle in the cause of musical progress, against Philistinism in every form." One can only vaguely compare it to the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood in England. "Mozart was as much a member of it as Berlioz now is," so declares its founder. Chopin, Julius Knorr, Schuncke, Carl Banck and others, without any form of enrolment, are members of the Davidite fraternity. New names and old are added from time to time, in the friendly columns of the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, which is the organ of the league: and especially Schumann himself appears under a number of *noms de guerre*, representing the manifold facets of his identity. As *Florestan*, he speaks for "the turbulent and impulsive side of his nature, full of imaginative activity;" as *Eusebius*, he expresses those gentle, thoughtful, sensitive qualities which sit so lovably upon him. As *Meister Raro*, calmly logical, he stands between both the above, and, "acting as arbitrator, sums up their opposing criticisms," much as his father-in-law Friedrich Wieck the great professor might do. To light-hearted, humorous, almost frivolous critiques he signs himself *Jeanquirit*: and last, not least of the "Davidites," he introduces Mendelssohn as *Meritis*, and embodies varying traits of his beloved Clara as *Zilia*, *Chiarina*, and *Cecilia*.... Call it feather-brained, fantastic, ridiculous, if you will, the *Davidsbund* has a very definite meaning, and fulfils a very noble purpose. For, to use its inventor's own phrase, "In every age there is a secret band of kindred spirits. Ye who are of this fellowship, see that ye weld the

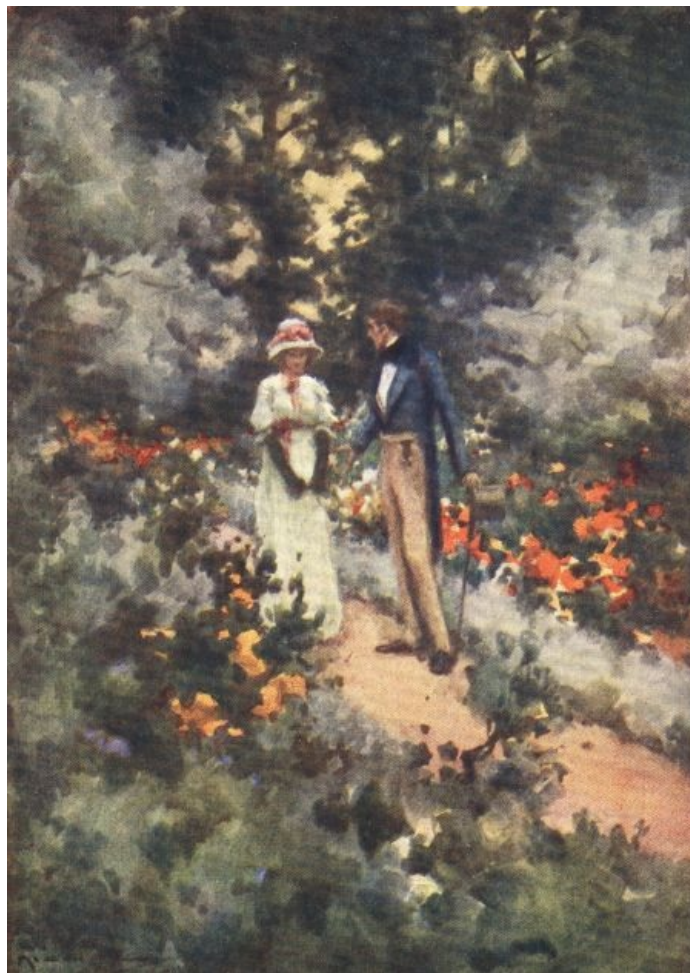
circle firmly, that so the truth of Art may shine ever more and more clearly, shedding joy and blessing far and near."

That remarkable power of expressing the personalities of his friends in music, which has been Schumann's from youth, stands him in good stead for the depicting of various "Davidites": he could show the peculiar characteristics of any one of them in a few moments, on the pianoforte, whereas years would not suffice him to give a verbal explanation. This power of portrayal is noticeable in the very construction of his songs,—such as, for instance, *The Two Grenadiers*, or *Freedom*, or *The Hidalgo*, with its essentially Spanish arrogance.

My days I spend in courting,
With songs and hearts a-sporting,
Or weaponed for a fight!
The fragrant darkness daring,
I gaily forth am faring,
To roam the streets by night,
For love or war preparing,
With bearing proud and light....
The moon her light is flinging,
The powers of Love are springing,
And sombre passions burn ...
Or wounds or blossoms bringing,
To-morrow I'll return!
While o'er the horizon darkling,
The first faint star is sparkling,
All prudence cold I spurn,—
Or wounds or blossoms bringing,
To-morrow I'll return!

In the course of the morning Schumann, reluctantly leaving a mass of unfinished MSS. upon his desk and pianoforte, betakes himself to his duties at the Conservatorium, where he has been professor for about a year. Conscientious and painstaking in tuition as in all else, he is not naturally a good teacher. He seems to be devoid of the priceless power of imparting verbal instruction, or of imparting the secret of the system whereby a desired effect shall be attained. His habitual and increasing melancholy reserve rises up like a barrier between himself and his pupils: his reticence chills and bewilders them. His own musical education has been an entirely personal matter, and not wrought out upon the accepted scholastic lines. Moreover, intercourse with musical people has always "appealed to Schumann far more, and with greater success, than dry lessons in thorough bass and counterpoint." Hence, whilst he appears almost unable to assist the novice in the beginning, or tadpole stage, he is able to afford invaluable help and stimulating criticism to those young artists with whom he may come in contact, and who adore him for his sympathetic kindness. The violinist Joachim never forgot how, as a boy of thirteen, he played the *Kreutzer* sonata with his host at the house of Mendelssohn. Lonely and silent all the while, Schumann remained in a corner of the room; but subsequently, while Joachim was sitting near him, he leaned forward and pointed to the stars, shining down into the room through the open window. He patted the lad's knee with gentle, friendly encouragement. "Do you think they know up there" he queried, "that a little boy has been playing down here with Mendelssohn?"—This question was the very essence of Schumann,—romantic, mystical, full of tender dreams.

His composition-lessons over, he conducts a part-singing class. Orchestral conducting is abhorrent to him; it is "too defiant and conspicuous a task." He cannot make his meaning clear by word of mouth: and in gesture he is singularly deficient. But in part-singing he is an excellent instructor, because he is seated at the piano and can indicate there the suggestion which he fails to convey *viva-voce*. Even now, in the wreck of his abilities as a pianist, it is possible to imagine what he might have been: he can produce an extraordinary depth and richness of tone, seeming to obtain some of his effects by unusual and almost illegitimate means. His accentuation is very slight, and he uses both pedals too frequently and too freely. Notwithstanding these peculiarities, however, the same indefinable magic pervades his piano-playing as his compositions.



I WILL NOT CHIDE.

**I will not chide, although my heart
should break,
Though all my hopes have died, lost
Love, for thy dear sake—
I will not chide.**

(*Ich grolle nicht*).

Nervous, excitable, uneasy, the master draws a breath of relief when the class is dismissed. The pleasant Hebraic face of Mendelssohn nods in at his door in passing. The two musicians are so busily engaged, that often they hardly exchange a word for weeks together. Mendelssohn, the recipient of many a generous and whole-hearted encomium from his devotee Schumann, does not return this fraternal enthusiasm. To his well-balanced mind, the silent moody man and his productions are too wild, too eccentric, too uncanny. He regards them, at times, with a species of grudging admiration: at others, he sides in heart, if not in speech, with the current opinion of the town. "Opposition to all artistic progress has always been a distinctive characteristic of Leipzig musical society," and therefore horror-stricken hands are uplifted at the editor of the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, his heretical doctrines, and still more heretical deeds. The good people of the Thomas-School Choral Society, the audience at the Gewandhaus concerts, the subscribers to opposition musical papers, regard Herr Schumann very much as the knight regarded the lady at the close of his own magnificent *Waldesgespräch*.

"The hour is late, the night is cold,—
Who through the forest rides so bold?
The wood is wide,—thou art alone,—
O lovely maid, be thou my own!"

"Great is the craft and guile of men,
With grief my heart is rent in twain;
Far sounds the bugle to and fro,—
Away! my name thou dost not know!"

"Thy steed and thou so bright array'd,
So wondrous fair, thou lovely maid,—
—I know thee now! God! let me fly!
Thou art the fairy Lorelei!"

"Thou know'st me now—my towers do shine
Deep mirror'd in the dark blue Rhine,—

The wind blows cold, the day is o'er,—
Thou shalt escape me never more!"

In the afternoon, Schumann, back at home, is occupied with creative work. This, perhaps, is the most congenial part of his day: for, as it has been said of him, he sees life musically, and whatever happens to impress him takes the form of music. Steadily, deliberately, of set purpose, and yet with the authentic fire of divine inspiration infusing his smallest effort, he has conquered, one by one, in every field of creative art. His finest pianoforte works were composed during the wretched years of strain and stress whilst he was waiting to marry Clara, held apart from her by her jealous and inexorable father, until (again like the Brownings) the lovers took matters into their own hands and were married in sudden and in secret. Three of his four great symphonies saw the light in one year, 1841,—an achievement truly colossal. Last year, 1843, he was studying and perfecting himself in chamber music. His life, outwardly so uneventful, has been abnormally prolific in brain-work: and that of no fatal fluency or shallow meretriciousness, but conceived upon the highest possible plane. "The more clearly we examine Schumann's ideas," says Liszt, "the more power and life do we discover in them: and the more we study them, the more are we amazed at the wealth and fertility which had before escaped us." And his own theories of art are bound to evolve themselves thus:—for "Only think," he has written, "what circumstances must be combined to produce the beautiful in all its dignity and splendour. We need,—1st, lofty deep purposes and ideality in a composition; 2nd, enthusiasm in description; 3rd, masterly execution and harmony of action, closely combined; 4th, innate desire for giving and receiving, a momentarily favourable mood (on both sides, that of listener and performer); 5th, the most fortunate conjunction of the relatives of time, as well as of the more especial question of place and other accessories; 6th, sympathy of impression, feelings and ideas—a reflection of artistic pleasure in the eyes of others."

And these definitions apply in all their detail to the outcome of Schumann's happiest year of all,—the year after his union with Clara,—the time when like a bird he burst into infinite ecstasy of melody, and eclipsed himself with the number, variety and bewildering beauty of his vocal compositions. That perfect balance between words and music, that power of identifying himself with the poet whose words he "sets," which pre-eminently differentiates Schumann from all other musicians, was born of "hopes fulfilled and mutual love." There are no songs which can compare with his, in passionate intensity and depth of emotion. It may be that only the skilled and sympathetic musician can interpret them with full effect: but the least expert auditor can be poignantly affected by them. Especially is this the case with his treatments of Heine,—the one poet *par excellence* in whom he discovers all he can desire of power, of pathos and of passion. "The lyrics *Die Lotos-blume* (The Lotus-flower) and *Du bist wie eine Blume* (Thou art like unto a flower) are among the most perfect things found in the realms of song, in their enchanting truth and delicacy of sentiment"; and "not one of all those subtle touches ... which make Heine's poetry what it is, has been lost upon Schumann." *Ich grolle nicht* (I will not chide) is unapproachable in its white-heat of uttermost despair.

I will not chide, although my heart should break,
Though all my hopes have died, lost Love, for thy dear sake—
I will not chide.

Though thou be bright bedeck'd with diamond-shine,
No ray of joy illumines that heart of thine,
I know full well!

I will not chide, although my heart should break,—
I saw it all in dreaming,
I saw the night that thro' thy soul is streaming,
I saw the snake that on thy heart doth feed,
I saw, my love, how sad thou art indeed,—
I will not chide!

Die Beiden Grenadiere (The Two Grenadiers), with Schumann's favourite *Marseillaise* introduced in such masterly fashion at the end, remains an unrivalled utterance of manly and patriotic grief.

To France were returning two Grenadiers,
In Russia they long did languish,
And as they came to the German frontier,
They hung down their heads with anguish.
'Twas then that they heard the story of woe,
That France was forlorn and forsaken,
Besieged and defeated, and crushed by the foe,
And the Emp'ror, their Emp'ror was taken!

* * * * *

"My cross of honour and crimson band
Lay on my heart right surely;
My musket place within my hand,
And gird my sword securely:

So will I lie there and harken, dumb,—
Like sentry when hosts are camping,—
Till I hear the roar of the cannon come,
And the chargers above are tramping!

"Above me shall ride then my Emp'ror so brave,
While swords are flashing and clashing,
While sabres are fiercely contending,—
In that hour of his need I will rise from the grave,
The cause of my Emp'ror defending!"

And in his song-cycle *Frauen-lieben und Leben* (Woman's Life and Love) he has evinced "extraordinary depths of penetration into a side of human character which men are generally supposed incapable of understanding—the intensity and endurance of a pure woman's love."... Yet who should know it if he does not?...

Towards evening, various folk drop in by ones and twos,—musical acquaintances, it need hardly be said, for there is no other topic than that of their art which they can discuss with Robert Schumann. The discussion may possibly be on their part only, with a man like this, of whom it is told that one day he went into a friend's house, whistling softly *sotto voce*,—and, with nothing but a cheery nod, walked to the piano and opened it,—played a few chords,—made a modulation, and returned to the original key,—shut the piano, gave another courteous nod, and—exit, in utter silence! He is, indeed, capable of sitting for hours in the midst of a merry chattering company, completely lost in thought, employed upon the evolution of some musical thought. But when he *does* speak, his words are all altruistically ardent, full of eager praise and joyful appreciation for the great names of music, whose excellencies he loves to point out. "The great masters, it is to them I go," he avows with the humility of a child,—to Gluck the simple, to Händel the complicated, and to Bach the most complicated of all." His admiration of "John Sebastian" is boundless. "I always flee to Bach, and he gives me fresh strength and desire for life and work.... The profound combinations, the poetry and humour of the new school of music principally emanate from Bach."



THE TWO GRENADIERS.

**To France were returning two
Grenadiers,
In Russia they long did languish,
And as they came to the German
frontier,
They hung down their heads with
anguish.**

(Die Beiden Grenadieren).

Mozart is to him, as to all great artists, a veritable divinity. "Do not put Beethoven," says he, "too soon into the hands of the young: steep and strengthen them in the fresh animation of Mozart.... The music of the first act of *Figaro* I consider the most heavenly that Mozart ever wrote." And with his customary absolute freedom from professional envy, he terms Mendelssohn "the Mozart of the nineteenth century," and will not even sit in the same room with anyone who disparages him. He has upheld with noble enthusiasm the merits of such rising stars as Chopin, Heller, Gade, Sterndale-Bennett, Berlioz, Franz, and Brahms. He has, it may be said, only one *bête noir*, the blatant and flamboyant Meyerbeer. Regarding Wagner, his opinion is in abeyance. "Wagner is a man of education and spirit ... certainly a clever fellow, full of crazy ideas, and audacious to a degree.... Yet he cannot write or think of four consecutive lines of beautiful, hardly of good, music." So Schumann has delivered himself at one time; but he is ready to revoke this judgment, and to declare, "I must take back one or two things I said after reading the score of *Tannhäuser*; it makes quite a different effect on the stage. Much of it impressed me deeply."

When his guests depart, Schumann accompanies them a little way, that he may, according to his invariable custom, spend an hour or so of the evening at Popper's Restaurant. There, should his friend Verhulst be present, he enjoys what is for him a free and animated conversation—otherwise, among the chink of glasses and clank of plates, he remains aloof and meditative.

Evening darkens slowly into the calm spring night,—that *Frühlingsnacht* which he has set forth in such exquisite music—as he regains his home and rejoins his wife. She is practising softly lest the children awaken, but rises with a smile of joy, and receives her husband as though he had been a year away. Side by side, holding each others' hands, they sit by the window and inhale the sweet April air. A sense of beatitude encompasses them.

"Hast thou done well to-day, Robert?" she enquires.

"Well? Yes—very well: better than I hoped or expected. A soft voice seemed to whisper to me whilst I worked, 'It is not in vain that thou art writing.'... But in such an hour as this, my Clara, I long more deeply to give expression to my holiest thoughts. To apply his powers to sacred music must always be the loftiest aim of an artist. In youth we are all too firmly rooted to earth with its joys and sorrows: but with advancing age, our branches extend higher. And so I hope the time for my efforts in this direction is not far distant."

"It is, then, at present, eluding you—the study of sacred music?"

"It demands a power of treating the chorus—a knowledge of superb *ensemble* and massive effects to which I have not yet attained." And he heaves a sigh as of one faced with mighty problems. For to this man, "from whom the knowledge of no emotion in the individual heart is withheld, it is a matter of extreme difficulty to give expression to ... those feelings which affect the whole of mankind in common."

"For you, who can realize human love so devoutly, there should be no eventual hindrance to the expression of love towards God," says the little dark-eyed woman, pressing his hand with warm devotion.

"You yourself are the concrete expression of love towards God," the composer murmurs, gazing down at her in the twilight—"you and your music together. If I once said I loved you because of your goodness, it is only half true. Everything is so harmoniously combined in your nature, that I cannot think of you apart from your music—and so I love you one with the other." A sudden spasm contracts his face as he speaks—he turns his head wildly to and fro.

"Robert!" she exclaims, "what is the matter? You shuddered—your hand has gone cold and clammy. What ails you?"

"What are those distant wind-instruments?" he asks in awestruck tones. "What are they playing? Don't you hear? Such harmonies are too beautiful for earth...."

Clara strains her ears into the stillness. "There is nothing—nothing audible whatever," she asseverates. "Robert, you are ill—you have overworked your head—"

"I have heard them before ... beautiful, beautiful!—Ah! now they are silent!" and he passes his hand over his brow with a bewildered air.

"Come, dearest, you are overwearied—come and sleep sweetly." Schumann permits himself to be led away from the window by his anxious wife: slowly he regains his composure.

"My little treasure!" he whispers, clasping her tenderly, "what should I be without your loving care of me? Clärchen ... Schumann ... I wonder whether an angel imagined the names together?"

"May that angel guard thee, Robert," says she, "and all that is thine and mine, for ever."

The open piano glistens whitely in the darkness: she closes it as they leave the room.



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Transcriber's notes:

Punctuation has been normalized.

Page 10: "Barret" changed to "Barrett."
"Elizabeth Barrett Browning".

Page 21: "pevote" changed to "devote."
"... more time to devote towards composing".

Page 23: "frühstück" changed to "Frühstück."
"... a modest *Frühstück* or breakfast".

Page 45: "blume" changed to "Blume."
"The lyrics *Die Lotos-blume*".

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK A DAY WITH ROBERT SCHUMANN ***

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