
TIME'S DOOR
ESTHER MEYNELL

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GRAVE FAIRYTALE
QUINTET
THE LITTLE CHRONICLE OF MAGDALENA BACH
BACH (*Duckworth's "Great Lives"*)

TIME'S DOOR
BY
ESTHER MEYNELL

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FOR

DAVID PEPLER

1905-1934

Invéni David servum meum, óleo sancto meo unxi eum: manus enim mea auxiliábitur ei, et bráchium meum confortábit eum.

CONTENTS.

PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS IN THIS BOOK

Giovanni Cavatini
Gerda Cavatini
Luigi Cavatini
Heinrich Eisner
Nicolo Paganini
Paolo Cavatini
Christian Theodor Weinlig
Anna Magdalena Bach
Johann Sebastian Bach
Catharina Dorothea Bach
Christoph Clauder
Amades Govoni
Gobbo
Anton Eccard
Father Sebastian Narni, O.P.

Scene: Rome, Leipzig

Time: 1818-1850, 1734-1750

Time's Door

Book One

The Door Opens

I

The memory was curiously clear to his mind. It hung, like a delicately coloured aquatint, on the wall of half-forgotten days—things round it, events that came before or after, were dim, confused, or vanished clean away. But this picture remained: his mother, in her spreading silken skirts which billowed about her, seated at a small spidery rosewood table, on the table a little black lacquer casket with a domed lid, inlaid with Chinese designs in gold, mother-of-pearl, and a soft green. The casket was lined with a green velvet, somewhat rubbed and faded—he still could see the little patch near the keyhole that was worn bare with use—and it held a collection of trifling trinkets, a pierced gold hair dagger with a chased gold ball dangling from a chain, little fretted works in ivory, a brooch set with a mosaic of St. Peter's. But the valuable contents of the casket was not these things, but a parcel of old letters which lay, untied from their ribbon, on his mother's lap. She was turning them over, reading here and there to herself, a remote dreamy look in her eyes, quite unconscious that her small son, lying full length on the floor at her feet, his dark head propped in his hands, was no longer absorbed in his book, but had become aware of her, of her mood. After a minute she felt his gaze, and the blue eyes and the tawny brown eyes—so like, his mother often thought, to those of a small lion—met in a smile.

"Why do you look at me like that, Giovanni?" she questioned gently.

"Because of the way you look, *Mütterchen*, you have a little dream?—it is an old letter of love?"

She shook her head, so that her pale ringlets swayed slightly, "No, foolish

one, not as you mean it, though indeed they are letters of love, of a love dead so young, of a love for one so great—and all the music that might have been!"

A little sigh caught at her breath.

Giovanni sat up. Music was a word of meaning to his mind.

"Have they then to do with music, those letters? May I read them?"

"Not yet, Giovanni, you are too young. They are a treasure for the time when you have more years. When that time comes then they will mean to you so much, they will lift you up into a great world. Now, you are not of an age to understand."

This view of things did not appeal to Giovanni. "But if it is music I would understand," he said, with a look half protesting, half appealing.

"No, not yet," his mother repeated. "The letters are not for you now. But I will tell you somewhat of him who wrote them—he was your ancestor, he is worthy to be your inspirer. He was a pupil of the greatest of all the musicians."

Giovanni had no need to be told who that was. He nodded gravely, his eyes shone.

MIXED INHERITANCE

"A pupil of his?—and an ancestor of mine?" For a moment of silence he let those two facts sink into his eager mind.

"Tell me all about it, tell me now, quickly."

His long, unchildish fingers clutched excitedly at her knees.

She told him.

II

That had happened some years before he was ten. The story had dwelt in his mind, continuously present and cherished, ever since, the impression of it greatly deepened by portions of the Letters which he had persuaded his mother to read to him, though in spite of his beseechings she would not yield the Letters into his hands. This very withholding made them the more precious to his eyes, and the thought of them and all they told and stood for, made a deep and definite mark upon his childhood, moulding it to destined shapes.

His nature had two distinct sides to it—the quick maturity and passionate eagerness of his Italian father, the sentiment and tendency to melancholy of his German mother, who had never become completely reconciled to her Italian exile. Giovanni her only child, who to outward seeming was almost purely Italian, had been her consolation and link with her adopted country. But her

heart continually turned backward to German scenes—it was German poetry she read to her son, the German tongue she taught and spoke with him, German music she sang and played for his delectation. So Giovanni had two countries—the Italy where he was born, born too in Rome, the very heart and centre of that Italy, pervaded in his early years by the enchanting, exciting, and spasmodic presence of his father, who seemed to flash across the scene in torrents of brilliant music, talk like fireworks, caresses, sweetmeats. His other country was a still, fairy Germany that was the creation of his mother, a place entirely of dreams—he had never set foot there.

He delighted in his actual, vivid life, it filled his day with complete satisfaction. But when he lay in his bed at night then another country and another life stole into his mind, he held sleep at bay as long as his heavy eyelids would permit each night so that he might walk there. It was a curious country, or would have seemed so to anyone of mature and sensible mind. Even his mother, though fortunately her mind was not too sensible, would have been a little surprised had she realised exactly into what a tangled garden her tales had flowered. Princesses with swinging ropes of hair resided there, and dwarfs, and animals whose fur was but a cloak of disguise, and fair but dangerous maidens whose home was water and whose tresses flowed like streams. Mingling strangely with these beings of mythology and fairy tale were musicians—crowds of musicians attired in curled wigs, with velvet coats and ruffles and a beautiful courtliness of manner (except one who was not courtly at all, but wild, and like a great driving storm), musicians from whose hands poured marvellous floods of melody, sweeping the small Giovanni entirely out of this world. This stream of melody was always to him the most vivid of all these experiences. And there were musical instruments too: violins, and harpsichords slender and stiff, and great organs that climbed with immense gilded pipes and fluted ornament and carved Cherubin and Seraphin blowing trumpets towards soaring church roofs. It was a glorious country, that of his mother, full of magic tales and music.

When the girl who became his mother had married the Italian violinist Luigi Cavatini, she had brought her magic tales with her and kept them childishly in her heart in the new world opened to her by marriage—a world still filled with music, but holding other and more difficult elements.

GERMAN MAIDEN

Gerda Eisner was the youngest of three daughters—the youngest, the most beautiful, cherished and adored not only by her parents, but by her two elder sisters, who both married early and with complete suitability and became the satisfied mothers of large families. But even with the cares of their own offspring upon them, they both,

Elsa and Margreta, still kept a loving eye upon Gerda, more as though she were child instead of sister. When the mother of the three of them died this care became of an even greater necessity. Gerda was sixteen at the time of her mother's death, and like most German maidens perfectly competent in kitchen and household, even though she had been known to keep a poetry book as well as a cook-book in the kitchen drawer. She could not see that the pot boiled any the less satisfactorily if one read a lyric while waiting for it. "But no, *Liebschen*," Elsa would say, taking the book from her hands, with a little kiss on the cheek flushed from the stove, "The pot boils over while you read your poetry, and then where are you?"

Gerda did not regard that calamity as irremediable, but she submitted without protest to her sister's gentle domination. Frau Elsa and Frau Margreta continually congratulated themselves that their own abodes were within such easy reach of their father's house that one or other of them could constantly run in to guide the child. They chose her dresses for her, they brushed her hair, and when the time came they wound the pale silvery plaits round her little head—hair that as Margreta said, as the strands slipped through her fingers, was "like a cornfield by moonlight." They chaperoned her proudly to her parties, and they began to look about their circle for a husband for Gerda as safe and suitable as their own.

But Gerda, surprisingly, took this matter into her own control. She who had been so gentle and malleable, so fearful of in any way crossing what her wise elder sisters thought right, took this tremendous step quite alone—"Well, practically alone," as Elsa said, "for of course we all know the *kleine* Papa is as good as nobody!" No disrespect was intended, it was simply a fact that the Herr Professor—outside the class-room where he dealt with the mysteries of counterpoint and composition—was no use at all. It was almost necessary to put the food into his mouth. And of course in a foreign country—oh, why, sighed the two sisters in a melancholy chorus, did we ever consent that Gerda should go with Papa?

But she had gone, it was too late, the thing had happened. The Herr Professor, at the close of an exhausting season's work, had decided that he would take a holiday and that his Gerda should accompany him. They would go far from Leipzig, they would cross the Alps, they would go to Italy, to Rome. Professor Eisner had been corresponding for some time with that famous Italian teacher of counterpoint, Signor Carlo Antonelli, who was at that time engaged upon a critical edition of the works of Arcangelo Correlli in which the Professor was deeply interested, and he felt that personal intercourse would yield very satisfactory results on

several controversial points. It was two decades since he had been to Italy, and it would be a delicious experience to show some of the treasures of that land to Gerda.

So Gerda had found herself in Rome, and in Rome, where her father was received with enthusiasm into all the musical society of the City, she met Luigi Cavatini. To Cavatini Gerda appeared like a dream come visible, with her pale shining hair, her innocent eyes, her sweet singing voice, the gentleness of her manner. Gerda felt as if all the heroes of romance had yielded their perfections to the brilliant creature, all grace, fire, dazzling teeth in the olive-skinned face, eyes that held flashing lights in their dark depths, a manner, an air of conquest, calculated to disturb the equilibrium of a heart far more experienced than was hers. He was as different from the Saxon young men of her brief acquaintance as is wine from milk. Add to this his superb gifts as a violinist, the way in which, with his chin tucked down on a bit of varnished wood, the slender bow vibrating in his long fingers, his smouldering passionate eyes searching and holding Gerda's, he would pour his music straight into her shaken bosom. She was as a bird in the net of the fowler, as helplessly his.

When, after a few flying weeks, Cavatini asked her hand in marriage her father, though with an uneasy feeling that it was terribly precipitate and that his elder daughters might not approve, was altogether too unworldly to withhold his consent from a pair of lovers so ideally romantic. The sight of them together stirred tender memories in his heart—and remoter dreams that had never been fulfilled. Luigi's brilliant musicianship broke down one inhibition, and Gerda's tears, smiles, trembling and fated joy, another.

And Rome, in the spring, so fair, so lifted out of the common day, made it impossible to consider the dullness of discretions—of what less intoxicated minds might be thinking beyond the Alps. Gerda's own impression of that time was a moving enchanting kaleidoscope of light, of large golden moons and stars that seemed almost as large, flowers, sweetness, music, of Luigi's magic bow which swayed the pulses of her heart as it swayed the fiddle strings. She knew hardly more of where she actually was than if she had been transported to the shining moon which rose so magically over the mistiness of the Campagna. She could hardly have been said to have returned to earth till her marriage was more than a month old, and she found herself saying farewell to her father, who was returning to Germany. For the first time she realised that she must be left behind in Italy, the country which was now hers. She had not fully understood that marrying Luigi made her an Italian woman. The thought frightened her—it was like being plucked up by the roots and told to grow afresh. Difficult adjustments

she had to make, and her roses discovered their thorns, but when the small Giovanni appeared upon the scene there was no shadow on that joy—Rome in all its tremendous history had seen no such child before. As she lay in her bed gazing at the little downy head she heard the Roman bells ringing—from her high window she had a view of a slender Campanile, pale against the deep blue of the sky, and round it circled flights of white doves, their outspread wings dazzling in the radiant air.

Gerda was reconciled to Italy.

III

From that time onwards Gerda's daily life and happiness were wound round her little son, for Luigi, her husband, was a wandering comet, whose appearances, sometimes productive of storm, sometimes of beneficent gaiety, were never to be expected till he was there. He delighted in and spoilt his child in the days of its infancy, and when he discovered that the small Giovanni was enthralled by his playing, produced a violin to match the size of his fingers and proceeded to instil into him the first principles of his beloved art. He knew that to make a violinist training must begin early.

But Cavatini's teaching of his son, always spasmodic, owing to his musical engagements and his excitable and wandering temperament, had entirely ceased when the boy was ten years old. Cavatini had not died, he had retired into a darkness. His brilliant brain had climbed to dangerous heights and then toppled down into childishness where he sat with a fiddle on his knee, plucking at the strings with his fingers as though it were a guitar and weeping because his violin was dead. For nearly a twelve-month before this break-down he had dragged his wife and his child through a series of nervous tornadoes, doing and saying things that at first seemed only a little exaggeration of his usual excitability, and falling in between into piteous tears and melancholy. For painful periods his sleep deserted him—and he burned his life so fast that he needed sleep more than most human beings. Gerda's tears fell faster than his as she looked at his ravaged face, or stroked the dark head abandoned to her lap, fears, strange dreadful fears, rising within her mind. She tried to persuade herself that these violent alternations of mood were due to the Italian temperament. But doubts came creeping, shadowy and terrifying. Could even the wildest Italian temperament be quite so mad?—ah, that word, that word which she was trying to push out of sight! Those eyes of her husband that stared and did not see, those sudden sobbing cries, those footsteps that paced in restless misery up and down. And then there were days when he was so gay, so tender, and the sun came out from behind the cloud that was darkening all her horizon. Fear fled away, and trembling hope returned.

But the end came suddenly, and music brought it, and the greatest player who ever held a fiddle. Giovanni was in it too. Gerda had kept all she could from him—though it was not possible to do so completely. But this she could not keep. It was to be so great an occasion, so happy, so memorable. For the first time Giovanni was to hear Nicolo Paganini play, and after the concert was to speak with him. For years that prince of violinists had been held before the boy—his father had told him all that he knew of Paganini's strange romantic history, of his magnetism, of his playing which hardly seemed of this earth. The face of Paganini fascinated all Giovanni's waking dreams, and it was his deep secret ambition that one day he might be privileged to have lessons from him. His father laughed at this when once, inadvertently, he let the secret escape him: "You expect the great, the supreme, Paganini to teach an insect like you? Ah, well, ambition is good, my little son, but you have gone a little beyond yourself in this matter!"

FACE OF PAGANINI

So indeed it might well seem, had not destiny taken a hand in the affair.

The night of the concert came. It was a mist of bliss to Giovanni. His father, with eyes alight, with smiling countenance, all his strange frightening looks gone away; his mother, so pretty and excited, with a little string of pearls looped in her hair, and wearing her best dress of rich blue satin, striped with silver. The night, when he stepped out into it with his parents on either hand, was all blue and silver too—an immense dome of dark blue above him in which silver stars trembled.

"Look," said his father, pointing upwards with a hand that shook a little, "All the stars are crowding round to hear Maestro Paganini!"

"Ah, my Luigi, my foolish one!" whispered Gerda, and leaned across the boy's head to kiss her husband's hair.

Giovanni felt as if his heart would burst with the ecstasy of it all. And then the great theatre, with the stars come much closer and shining in golden clusters at the top of wax candles, and the crowds of people packed together, whispering and murmuring and waving airy fans. But they were all forgotten when the "Pale Musician" stood before Giovanni's eyes—so tall, so shadow thin, his long-tailed coat buttoned tight across his chest, wrinkled because it covered nothing save bones, the black locks waving above the death-white face, the hooked nose, the extraordinary eyes: a being from another and stranger world he seemed. A being of unearthly powers he was known to be when the raised bow fell on the strings of the Josef Guarnerius and all the beauty and the pain of life cried out with a bewitching and heart-shaking voice. Giovanni felt himself swept out of his small body—his spirit ceased to be that

of a child and spread wings that are ageless. He knew that existence would be for ever changed for him from this day on which he had first heard Paganini. He had beheld perfection. In his state of high excitement he walked outside himself—a thing that was to happen to him at intervals throughout his life—and saw all that followed as though he were suspended in air at his own shoulder level. He saw himself taken to the artist's room, standing dumb before Paganini, saw Paganini's hand rest on his head for a moment, heard some uncomprehended words, saw his father, with tears streaming down his face, take Paganini's hand and kiss it with a sort of burning humility and despair.

DESPAIR

Then they went home. Gerda, looking at her son in the light of the lamp, was so startled by his expression that she forgot to pay much attention to her husband, and was occupied with thoughts of warm goat's milk and bed for Giovanni. In the midst of her maternal preparations there came a sudden violent splintering sound and wild cries of grief and rage. Gerda and Giovanni ran to the adjoining room and checked upon the threshold, clutching at each other, at the sight before them. Luigi, the Amati in his hand which was the most cherished of his set of fiddles, was crashing it down repeatedly upon the heavily carven corner of a chestnut wood coffer, shattering the delicate back and belly, the ebony tail-piece dangling helplessly at the end of the swinging strings. As his wife and son entered, the body of the violin was severed from the scroll and finger-board, which he flung savagely across the room, then surveyed the broken fragments at his feet and flung himself down upon them with a cry and such despair that a sharp splinter of wood tore a gash in his hand from which the blood flowed upon the floor. His wife ran to him and gathered him in her arms. But Giovanni fled across the room to the broken fiddlehead, picked it up and cuddled it to his breast. "Oh, the poor fiddle!" he said, and began to cry.

IV

Into all the confusion and misery of the succeeding day stalked Paganini. The rambling apartment in a crumbling Roman palace in which the Cavatini family lived, high up, like birds, with rooms that mostly opened out of each other, seemed full of doctors and apothecaries to Giovanni, women who wailed, and one frightening glimpse of his father prostrate on a divan, with stony face and staring eyes. Everyone seemed circling, as in a desolate dance, round that figure. No one heard the knock upon the door, so Giovanni, who had been crouching forgotten in a corner, on the second summons, went to answer it. He pulled open the heavy door, and there stood Paganini. Giovanni's mouth fell open, he stood gazing upwards and did not say a word. He did not

believe Paganini was real—anything might occur in the dislocated world in which he was now living.

Paganini knew what had happened—that was why he had come. But had he not known he might have read something of it in the boy's troubled and frightened face.

He put his lean hand on Giovanni's shoulder. "May I come inside your apartment for one small moment?" he said, "I know the poor father is ill, but one thing I would say to you."

PAGANINI'S VISIT

By this time he was inside. He sat down on the nearest chair and drew Giovanni close to him, looking at him intently with his melancholy eyes, so large and deeply set in their cavernous sockets.

"How old are you?" he asked the silent boy.

"Ten years on the last St. Leo's Day."

"I wonder what saint presided at my birth?" Paganini muttered grimly. Then he turned again to Giovanni, "You play the fiddle? Your father said you had the real gift. He said you much desired lessons from me?"

Giovanni by this time was quite sure that he was dreaming. "I thought—I once said," he stammered, "But my Papa, he laugh at me. But he does not laugh now, he cries, cries. No one, he says, must ever play the violin any more, only Paganini, he is the only one, all the others they must smash their fiddles. He has broken his, the beautiful Amati, all into little bits."

Paganini gasped as though he had been struck over the heart, "Broken up an Amati? But he must be mad!"

The word echoed round them.

Suddenly Paganini knew, just as if he had been told. Luigi Cavatini's brain had turned—it was his own playing the previous night which had helped to cause this, he remembered the trembling excitement of Luigi when they spoke together, the wild strained look in his eyes. The whole thing assumed to him an entirely different aspect. He had heard of Cavatini's sudden collapse, and had come to ask for a violinist whose ability he knew and respected. The small son had also appealed to him. He thought possibly he could do something for the family, and felt secure that any help he might offer would not need to take the form of money, for that he could not bear to part with. It now seemed as though destiny had drawn him more closely into this circle. His strange heart was curiously touched, yet he shrank from any close human contacts. He gazed at the boy, while he thought rapidly, and the boy gazed back at him. He was

leaving Rome that afternoon, he could do nothing immediately.

Giovanni suddenly leaned against his shoulder. “If I could hear you play, many times——”

He left the sentence unfinished.

Paganini put an arm round him. The simplicity that lay under his twisted mind responded to the simplicity of the child.

“I cannot stay now. But in one month I will come back to Rome. I will come here—do you understand?—in one month, on the Day of St. Leo, since you like the Saint’s Days. And then you shall play to me, and I will see if it is possible that I can give you lessons. Your mother cannot see me now, she is sad and in much trouble, but tell her what Paganini has said. I will speak with her fully when I return—but before anything can be done it is necessary that I hear how you play. Now I go, but I will come back.”

HIS DEPARTURE

He looked for a long moment at Giovanni, curiously attracted by the sensitive face which betrayed its mingling of races, its Italian dark and its German gold, in the black brows and tawny eyes, dusky skin and shock head of dark hair. His eyes had his father’s trick of half-closing in moments of strong emotion, and the brows had the pathetic lift of his mother’s, while his mouth was still childish, but showed signs of the passionate curves of Luigi Cavatini’s. It was a face undeveloped, but full of a troubled eagerness and enchanting possibilities.

In that look Paganini took in a complete impression of the boy, which confirmed his aroused interest. A moment later the door shut, Giovanni was alone, Paganini had vanished like a dream, but the marvellous things he had said remained. Giovanni went over them carefully to himself. He must find his mother, give her the wonderful message.

When he did so Gerda gazed at him with a blanching cheek—tears, which had been flowing at intervals all day, rose again to her tired eyes.

“Blessed Mother of God,” she cried, “Is it not enough that my husband is mad? Not my son, too!”

She dropped her face into her hands and wept.

V

On the Day of St. Leo the Great Paganini returned to Rome. Giovanni had marked each day as it passed and the expected, inevitable day drew nearer. Gerda, amid all the mournful matters that perforce required her attention, since

her husband had been pronounced insane, had not been able to make up her mind about Paganini's alleged visit. Giovanni had been so detailed in his statements that she half believed him at times—and then it seemed so unlikely that he, aloof and remote and in some manner inhuman, should seek them out, even though Cavatini as a violinist was known to him, that she thought the child's overwrought imagination, the terrible night of his father's collapse, the lack of sleep and food (for who could think of such things when Luigi was beating his head against the wall in a strong frenzy and crying out that he had better be dead?) had so worked upon Giovanni that he saw what was not there, and heard words which were never spoken by mortal lips.

So she soothed him, and said that he had probably had a dream—he must not be disappointed.

"I shall not be disappointed," said Giovanni, holding his head up and looking at her confidently, "He will come."

So Gerda found herself, against her real and reasoned belief, counting the days to the day appointed. She found herself regarding it with hope and with dread. Her husband's state had been caused, as she well knew now, by the excitement and despair induced in his musician's soul by a miraculous perfection he could never reach. She did not put his mental break-down to Paganini's account, she knew bitterly enough, how it had been growing on Luigi, creeping onwards like a shadow, dispersed for a time by a spell of sunshine, but returning, and deepening its darkness. And the night that Paganini played had brought the final Tenebræ to his soul when the last candle was removed and darkness fell around him. She could not but associate that tragedy with the fateful figure of Paganini. Yet she realised how her husband's shadowed mind, could it have known, would have been soothed and helped by the thought that Paganini should regard with interest his son, might even, as it seemed, bestow upon him that boon so rare and difficult of attainment, of some lessons. This possibility so fantastic only seemed imaginable in the evening hours—in the morning she never could believe it and chid herself that she did not deal more seriously with Giovanni's determined faith, lest the overthrow of his hopes be too bitter.

GERDA'S THOUGHTS

The month of waiting passed with great slowness, for change and dislocation always arrest the smooth speed of unruffled days. Each day seemed a week and each week a month to Gerda, though to Giovanni the days were swifter, as he arduously and passionately worked at his violin. But Gerda had so many arrangements to make, so many difficult decisions. At last Cavatini was safely, and as comfortably as might be, bestowed in a monastery secluded among the hills in

the care of some monks who served God by the service of the saddest of the sick. There her husband dwelt in a listless melancholy that seemed to have forgotten everything, including the face and voice of his wife, everything except the unstrung fiddle over which he wept.

"We shall pray to God to heal his mind," said Brother Organist, who was specially grieved at Luigi's state, "And through the voice of that great Angel of Music He may heal what has been hurt."

But though he lured the violinist to his organ-loft, Cavatini sat there as though deaf, his violin on his knee—he refused to be parted from it for a moment, and became violent if any effort were made to remove it, even while he ate—and his eyes, which used to sparkle with dark vitality, gone dull and expressionless. Gerda visited him on all permitted days. She might as well have visited a stranger.

VI

When Paganini came, when Giovanni led him in to his mother, Gerda stood up and curtseyed and gazed at him in silence. Her eyes seemed to sink into two dusky mountain pools as she looked into Paganini's eyes, full of an unfathomable melancholy—she knew that for his marvellous genius he paid a bitter price. Paganini felt her understanding, he gave her neither greeting nor condolence—such things were unnecessary with people like Gerda.

"Do you wish your son to be a violinist?" he asked her.

"It is not what I wish, but what God designs," Gerda answered.

"Or the Devil," said Paganini with a queer little smile. "Anyway the boy will have to work as hard as the Devil works to catch the souls of mankind."

"I will do that!" said Giovanni, looking up with eager adoration at the tall figure before him.

"Fetch your fiddle," Paganini commanded, "and we will see what you can do with it."

Paganini took the violin from him, ran his right hand down the smoothly swelling back in a kind of caress, touched the strings, tightened the peg of the A string by a hair's turn, and handed it back to Giovanni.

"Holy St. Anthony, help me now," murmured the boy under his breath. "If I fail it is the end. I will not play any more if he will not teach me."

And suddenly it was as if he had stepped into miraculous waters which rose to his knees, to his heart, to his lips. He felt as though he no longer stood

upon the ground.

"Play something that you love," said Paganini, looking at him intently, "not just to show what your fingers can do."

BACH SONATA

"Bach," his mother whispered from her seat at the keyboard.

Giovanni nodded, smiled, and just audibly to her murmured "The Fifth."

She slipped into the lovely opening bars of the Largo. Giovanni lifted his fiddle to his chin and played his deep tender phrase with a restrained and quivering volume of tone that surprised himself. It was as though the violin spoke of its own volition, from its own heart. All apprehension had left him, he knew that he was playing as he had never played before, and that his desire would be granted to him.

Gerda and he completed the Fifth Violin Sonata of Bach, ceased and looked at each other with shining eyes.

"What is that you play?" was Paganini's first word. The two players were amazed at this question. How strange to be in ignorance of Bach's violin sonatas. Gerda explained a little.

"It is good music, it is beautiful, with both brain and heart," said Paganini. "But I do not know the name. A Cantor in Leipzig, you say, and dead some long while? Well, I am of Italy, and I more generally play Italian music, usually my own. I know better what my fiddle can do—and the people pay much good money to hear it! They have never heard of this Bach, but they have heard of Paganini! But it matters not what your son play. I will teach him and then he shall know how to play anything under the stars. Whether I teach you for a long or a short time," he said, turning to Giovanni, "I cannot tell, for my life is a wandering and a broken one. But in the time I teach you it is sure that you will learn something none other can give you—I, Paganini, say so. You shall come with me now."

"Now?" Gerda's question was so faint as to be like a sigh.

"Yes, now, *Cara Signora*. I take your boy away—but I will give him back to you made into what he could never otherwise become, a violinist. I take pupils almost never, but I will take him. You will let him go?"

He rose and put his hand upon the shoulder of Giovanni. They both looked at her for her releasing word.

As the drowning see their whole lives in one anguished moment, so past, present, and to come rushed over Gerda's

WINGS TO

head like a great wind that lifted her up and held her poised over an abyss of sacrifice. She had given up her country for her husband, and now her husband had been taken from her—was her son to go too, leaving her alone? Might she not at least go with him? But the swift thought was followed by a swifter denial—she must stay near Luigi, for he might come back to the untenanted house of his mind and need her. She could not wander away over Europe with Paganini and Giovanni. And Giovanni did not want her—like every mother's her heart was pierced with this sword. Her *bambino* had sprouted his little wings and would fly away. Perhaps he would return, but first he must fly. He would hurt himself and she would not be there. That also was necessary. And Paganini?—some said he was in league with Evil Powers. But no, she had looked into his sad eyes.

And there they both stood, waiting for her to speak. Her tongue seemed weighted with lead. She felt as if she were dragging herself from a far distance—it would be too late, they would be gone away, she would have failed her Giovanni. No, not her Giovanni—Paganini's Giovanni.

"Yes, I will let him go," she said.

Paganini bent over her hand, "You are a brave woman."

But Gerda knew she was not a brave woman, only a loving one.

VII

Nicolo Paganini's life was as strange as his fame. To the truth had been added many legends, for the human mind tried thus to explain what it could not understand but only continually gape at. Gerda's Italian friends were astounded and alarmed when they heard that Paganini was taking Giovanni away with him. Envy may have added an edge to their comments, for some of them had also sons.

"He is not a man to be entrusted with a child, he will neglect him, he is cruel and dangerous."

"They say that he has sold himself to the Evil One and that it is the Devil who teaches him how to excel all other violinists."

"You know what he has been called?—a Vampire with a Violin—and you let your son go with him?"

Gerda's heart sank a little under these comments, but she had made her decision, and these stories sprang, she knew, from jealousy and ignorance. Also, deep in her mind she realised that were she to attempt to come between Giovanni and his idol Paganini she would lose him more completely than she

could lose him by any physical absence. It was destiny that had taken him away. Her people had been musicians for several generations, and she knew the sacrifices that music demanded from those who embraced that career. In her heart was the thought that Giovanni might have genius—surely that Paganini should take him was an indication that her thought was not a mere mother's dream?—and if that should be so then everything must yield to that inescapable claim. Luigi, who had just missed genius, would have said the same without a shadow of hesitation. There could be no denial.

DREAMS

Paganini's mother had dreamed the same dream about her son, had Gerda but known it, many years earlier, and lived to see her dream come true. When Nicolo was a small boy she had dreamed that an angel appeared to her and told her that her son would be the greatest violinist who had ever appeared in the world. Gerda's dream did not take so definite a form as Signora Paganini's—it was but a faint roseate colouring on the grey mist of Giovanni's departure.

To Giovanni at this time the world contained really only one person. The tragedy of his father had shocked him greatly, but he had not properly understood it, and his father's disappearance from his horizon had obliterated much to the young mind living so urgently in its immediate day. His mother was to him one of the permanent facts of his life, he could no more imagine his existence without her than without air or light. He accepted her with the same simplicity. But Paganini had burst upon his world with all the astonishment of a great meteor in the sky—he could not cease to gaze, he could not think of any other.

Gerda knew that his thoughts were gone beyond her even while his arms were clinging about her neck in ardent childish farewells. The young have no past, only a future.

When he had departed with Paganini to a destiny of which she had not any knowledge save Paganini's solemnly spoken words to her, "I will care for him, I too have a son I love," Gerda flung herself down in an abandonment of tears. "I am as mad as my poor Luigi to let him go. I may never see him again, my little son gone out alone into the world."

Fears of all sorts pressed upon her. How should a person so strange as Paganini take thought to the needs of a child, his food and his sleep? He would most likely keep Giovanni up in the night hours, take him to late concerts, perhaps forget altogether about him. She leapt up in anguished agitation—she would go after them, she would fetch back her little Giovanni. Then she stopped. She might fetch back his body, but she could not fetch back his spirit, that was with Paganini. It was destiny. Gerda suddenly felt that everything had

been taken out of her hands, she could do nothing. Prayer was left to her, but she felt that even her powers of praying were stilled into a helpless waiting.

VIII

FIRST VIOLIN LESSON

Giovanni's first violin lesson from Paganini was a strange one. They had travelled all day by post chaise, and Paganini had slept most of the time, after giving the boy a large bunch of grapes and a long stick of bread, but eating nothing himself. Giovanni had eaten, looked out at the country moving past the window, and shyly studied Paganini's sleeping countenance, where all the ravaged lines stood out upon the pale parchment of his skin in a writing the boy could not understand.

When they reached their destination for the evening Paganini ordered a generous meal, of which he partook hungrily—"*Ho una fame da lupi*" he said, as he satisfied that wolfish appetite—but seeing to it that Giovanni's plate also was piled with the good pasty of macaroni stuffed with chicken. As he poured the wine Paganini's thin hand shook so that he spilt it on the table.

"I am tired with this travelling," he said, "It is well that I have not to play this night. But to spill wine brings luck, it is only the spilt oil that brings bad fortune."

When they had finished their meal he flung himself down upon a sofa by the open window, watching the sunset preparing its impressive pageantry. Though early in the year, it was a close evening, and as the clouds increasingly piled themselves up, Paganini exclaimed, "We shall have a storm—let us go out and see it!"

Giovanni realised new and exciting freedoms. Gerda would have said "There is going to be a storm, let us take shelter."

So Paganini and the boy went out of doors, turning their faces away from the little inn, and climbing through a scanty patch of woodland, emerged on to a small rock-strewn eminence. A great stretch of Italy lay below them, for the inn at which they had supped and were to spend the night was itself considerably elevated. Where two great boulders overlapped to make a kind of cave, Paganini sat himself down and pulled Giovanni to lean against his bony knees.

"Now we have a box at the theatre," he said. "And the performance is about to begin!"

The sky by this time was shrouded in black clouds on whose dark surface

anvil-shaped forms of an evil grey-white floated. Mutterings and growlings were all round them, and zig-zags of pulsating violet light took their eyes from them with startling frequency. As the storm increased in violence Giovanni felt an increasing excitement in Paganini—it trembled through his whole frame, he was like a stretched string on which the storm played a set of terrific variations. Giovanni was himself excited by the storm, by its grandeur and rage, but even more by his close contact with his master.

After a while the tempest and the lightning wandered away, a shimmering star showed in a patch of torn cloud. Then Paganini spoke for the first time since they had climbed the hill:

"They say the Devil teaches me. If this is the Devil"—he opened his hands to the scene below them, to the majestic broken masses of cloud and the appearing stars—"then yes! But I have an idea it is One greater than the Devil. But you have had your first lesson, child, as to what you must get from your fiddle."

Giovanni's imagination received an impress from that storm seen in the company of Paganini and from Paganini's words which never left him.

IX

SECOND VIOLIN LESSON

His next lesson took place the following morning. It was a shining day after the storm, and Paganini sent him to explore the country near by. Himself, he was weary—he looked it, being of an extraordinary sallow colour in the strong morning light—he had not slept, he would dispose himself again upon the sofa and breathe the balmy air through the opened casement. He stretched out his bony limbs as he spoke and waved Giovanni away with his hand.

"Stay an hour, two hours, while I take a small *siesta*," he commanded, "Then maybe we will look at a fiddle together."

On his return from his pleasant wanderings Giovanni found him as he had left him. As the boy entered Paganini motioned to the case on the table wherein reposed the Guarnerius which was the inseparable companion of all his travels. With trembling excitement Giovanni opened the case and took the violin to Paganini—to hear Paganini play, alone, no one there save himself and the Maestro! Paganini took the violin, but declined the bow with a small sardonic smile.

"Sit down," he said, "I will now practise for a little while."

To Giovanni's surprised disappointment he put the fiddle to his chin, and

proceeded to stalk silently up and down the finger board with his gaunt and lengthy fingers, measuring intervals as though they were mathematical problems. The smile faded from his face, he was absorbed, oblivious of the boy whose eyes so intently watched his every movement. At last he ceased, laid the violin across his knees, and turned to Giovanni.

"That was a good practice," he said, smiling in a teasing manner at the puzzled face before him, "But you do not seem to appreciate it, Giovanni. You look as do the orchestra when I rehearse a concerto with them. When we come to my cadenza and they are all ready to lay down their instruments and listen to me with open mouths, I bow to them with great courtesy and say 'Gentlemen, we will omit this unimportant section and proceed!' "

Enjoyment of his little trick flickered over his face.

Then he turned to Giovanni and went on more seriously, "That silent practice is usually enough for me nowadays. But when I was your age I practise in a different manner altogether, from sunrise to sunset, with both my hands and all my strength—and the stick of my father across my shoulders! My thin carcase was the fiddle on which he practise! It was die, or be the greatest of all the fiddlers. Well, I do not die, though I come near to it—when I was quite small I was wrapped in my shroud to be put in the grave—but I work till my bones nearly come through my skin. I have lessons from some great teachers, but mostly I teach myself. I experiment, I investigate, I play tricks with the fiddle. The great teachers they treat the violin as if she were a Madonna in some dark church. You must do this and so, never that way. You are careful with your bow, and you tune your first string at E, and then you go down the steps to A, and then D, and land safely at G"—Paganini sang the intervals in a queer croaking voice—"and you keep most carefully to all you ought to do, and it is most safe and pretty. But I," he flung out one arm in a violent gesture, "I do quite other things, I tune my strings as suits me, and if one string breaks I play on three, and if two break I still have two left, and if they all break, why then I would play on a hair from my head! I make my violin not one instrument but many. She is a harp, a flute, an oboe. I fly up the harmonics right into the air, where no fiddler has flown before. They are not notes, they are a dream!"

He was suddenly silent, his enormous eyes in their cavernous sockets staring out of the window. Giovanni hardly dared breathe. After a minute Paganini turned to him and laid the Guarnerius gently on his knee.

"A violin is a mystery," he said, "Look at it and always remember that—think of that as you play your scales and arpeggios which are the staircase to the stars. Out of that little

shell of wood you can draw anything, into it you can pour everything. The human hand and mind have never invented another instrument like the fiddle and never will. It grows to you like your own bones, I would as soon lose my hands as this Guarnerius. It was given to me years past by a generous friend at Leghorn. I had been forced to pawn my Stradivarius—which I had won by playing at sight a concerto considered monstrously difficult—so this lovely Guarnerius was loaned to me, and when the owner had heard me play upon it tears streamed from his eyes, and he said 'You shall keep it. Never again will I profane the strings that have known your fingers. It is to you and not to me that my violin belongs.' As he wept to give so I wept to receive, for I knew the sacrifice, but I could do no other than accept—when my fingers went round her neck, when my bow fell on her strings, I knew my Josef del Gésu and I were born for each other!"

Paganini at times would talk like this to Giovanni, telling the boy of his own strange childhood, expressing his feelings and ideas with simplicity and kindness. At other times he would utter hardly a word except to complain that his throat hurt him and his mind was a desert. He would not talk and he would not teach, and Giovanni had to do his practising well out of his master's hearing. Leave it undone he neither dared nor desired, for at any moment Paganini might come out of his dark mood and demand from him transcendent efforts and achievements. In adjusting himself to Paganini, in watching and waiting upon him, in realising that life could be very strange and broken and uncertain, Giovanni rapidly grew to a wisdom beyond his years. He adored Paganini and was sorry for him. He knew him for an unhappy, almost a haunted, man, though what was the cause of the sorrow he had no knowledge.

X

MOUNTAIN CASTLE

A day or two later in their travels they came to a mountain Castle where Paganini was expected to play. It was a Castle set by the side of a lake—"eyes of the sea" these uplifted lakes were often called—and behind it climbed rich chestnut forests. A Princess lived there who loved music, and not only the members of her Court, but many others from the cities of the Plain were gathered round her upon this occasion to hear the far-famed Paganini.

It was evening when they arrived, and to Giovanni's enchanted gaze was presented the scene of the Castle, every window glittering with light, and the whole great circle of the lake surrounded by servants bearing torches, each torch seen double in the reflecting flood, barely moving in its liquid surface, where fire shone in water and wavered faintly in the evening breeze.

Paganini, too, was impressed with the strange still beauty of the scene. “I shall play this,” he said to Giovanni, “My fiddle shall draw this picture.”

When all was ready for the concert, the chamber orchestra disposed, the audience arranged, the candles shining in clusters on the golden walls of the Music Salon, when a silence had fallen on all as Paganini stepped to the edge of the curved platform, bowed deeply, and was about to lift his violin to his chin, suddenly there was heard a curious trampling, a murmuring of subdued voices, a sense of urgency and many people crowding invisibly around. All were startled. The Princess’s cheek grew pale—since the Revolution in France the firm ordained foundations of the world seemed visibly shaken: she herself had lost by the guillotine an aunt, who as a brilliant girl had married a great noble at the Court of Marie Antoinette and perished with the Queen. She beckoned to her Chamberlain and bade him discover what all the trampling and movement without could mean.

In a few moments he returned.

“Madam,” he said, bending before her, “The courtyard is crowded with peasants, they have come from the mountain and from villages many miles away, and crave Your Highness’s permission that the windows may be opened wide so that perchance they may hear some notes of the violin of Maestro Paganini. They say he is Italian and they desire before they die to hear once their countryman.”

The Princess rose, she stepped across the space before the platform to where Paganini still stood as if he were turned to stone.

“Maestro,” she said and told him what had occurred, “Is it your pleasure that these people should hear you?—for if so I will admit them into the ante-chamber, so shall they hear better than through the windows, which are high up, and would in any case give them no sight of you.”

“It would be gracious, Princess,” Paganini answered, “And to me a pleasure to play to them.”

PAGANINI PLAYS

His mind swung back to his own humble origin, the poverty and harshness of his early days, his scorn for the silken people before him stirred within him. He was acquainted with courts, had been attached to that of Napoleon’s sister, the Princess of Lucca.

“I use these great ones, the rich and the powerful of the world,” he thought as he waited upon that platform, “I play to them and play upon them, and for this they pay me good gold. That is the only thing worth having in this existence.”

By this time the peasants were shuffling in, eagerness pushing, shyness holding back. The great carved doors between Music Room and ante-room were folded against the walls, so that the two rooms became one, and once more silence descended upon the strangely increased audience.

Once more Paganini lifted his violin to his shoulder, and when the last note faded into silence under his poised bow, there was a moment's pause until the Princess raised her white hands and led the applause. For a minute or two it was the enthusiastic but elegant clapping to which polite ears are accustomed —then, their awe overcome by their excitement, horny hands and stamping feet broke in, making a storm of sound which drowned the applause of the Princess's courtiers. Paganini bowed and bowed again in his gaunt and angular manner, his long arms holding fiddle and bow almost sweeping to the floor as he did so. He smiled at the Princess and said something, but the noise was too great for her to hear. Paganini tucked his violin under his arm, stepped off the platform, and walked down the length of the Music Salon to the thrown-back doors of the room beyond. This ante-chamber was crowded with brown faces and black eyes in which a deep inexhaustible life burned with elemental strength, as marked in the old faces—some of which in their deep wrinkles and leather-like skin seemed to have passed age into timelessness—as in the young ones. All crowded together were the coloured kerchiefs and striped petticoats of the women, the thick buckled shoes and earth-worn hands of the old men, the rich black curls and bold countenances of the young men. Tears stood in the eyes of some of the old women, and smiles were on the lips of all the young ones—but all, old or young, sad or happy, under his spell. "*Viva Paganini!*" they cried as with one throat.

Paganini stood between the two rooms, as between two worlds. He held up his hand. "*Vi ringrazio*," he said, "And because you liked my playing I will now play you something I have myself made for you, something that came into my mind when I arrived here this evening and saw this Castle among the chestnut woods and the lake ringed all round with the fire of torches."

His improvisation was a picture to them all. The most unlettered old peasant father saw and felt his meaning as well as could the most cultured musician. That was Paganini's gift, and quite as much as his extraordinary technical fireworks explained his hold upon his hearers.

Giovanni was lifted out of the mortal world altogether. Everything that his wildest dreams had depicted was happening before his eyes.

XI

But sterner things took hold of him when they reached Milan, where

Paganini settled down for a time. There Paganini put Giovanni through a course of technical training besides which everything he had done and learned before seemed like falling asleep on a soft pillow.

SICK FIDDLERS

"By the sweat of the brow you learn to be a fiddler," said Paganini grimly, "There is no other method. You must work till there are no difficulties left, till you have forgotten that they ever existed, just as you are unconscious of the labour of your lungs by which you breathe. Only in sickness do you notice this, and it is only sick fiddlers who think of difficulties—poor invalids who struggle on to the platform in the last stages of decay!"

He laughed his sepulchral laugh.

"I have so few pupils because so few know what work means. There is no fierceness in them. But I see a little spark in you, that is why I took you with me, Giovanni. I would even take the stick to you as my father took it to me, if necessary—a great sign of affection!—but I have an idea it will not be much needed. Also I think your gentle mother would be grieved, and I would not wish to make her more unhappy. The hand of God has fallen upon her with sufficient heaviness as it is."

But Giovanni's mother would have been considerably disturbed could she have seen at this time the manner in which he was working, the tenseness of his eagerness. As though he would copy his master in all ways his physical form drew out into lankiness, the lines of his face sharpened, his already long hand lengthened itself visibly. He would fall upon his bed at night sometimes too exhausted to shed his garments. But his sound slumbers and his youthful resilience saved him from intolerable strain—also the fact that Paganini's own health was in so poor a state. There were days when he could not teach, could not endure that Giovanni should touch a fiddle, so turned him loose to amuse himself in idleness. Giovanni's eager young mind found much to interest him in Milan, and realised almost for the first time that there were other arts and other beauties than those of music. The changed direction of his thought refreshed his musical powers. The vast Duomo, so pinnacled, decorated, ornate, was an immense surprise to the Roman boy, and it did not please him, till one night he saw it turned into a dream in the light of the moon. But when he felt homesick he turned to the noble row of Roman columns in the Corso di Porta Ticinese—he walked slowly alongside them, he ran his hand down their flutings, he stood at a point where he could see two tall cypresses beyond them silhouetted against the sky. He was at home. The Church of St. Ambrogio appealed to him far more than the Duomo, he went there often, and also to the Dominican Church of St. Maria Delle Grazie. In the beautiful refectory of the

Dominicans he saw the great ravaged Last Supper of Leonardo. It impressed him as no picture had ever before impressed him. He saw other paintings also, and many strange interesting things.

THE DEVIL'S FAILURE

But Paganini, as soon as he was recovered from his indispositions, recalled Giovanni sharply from his pilgrimages about Milan, and hard work began again. Sometimes, when pleased with Giovanni's progress, Paganini would beguile the hours with long tales, telling him episodes in his own life, telling him many things about violins. As he talked he filled the boy with a sense of the mystery of the fiddle —"The one perfect thing the human hand has made," he called it, "The one thing even God could not improve. The Devil has never tried, after his failure!"

"Failure to make a fiddle?" Giovanni questioned, puzzled.

"No, foolish one. Do you not know the tale? I thought it was told to every Italian baby. God was showing the Devil all the animals and insects and birds He had made—the elephant and the fire-fly, the flaming tiger and the lamb, the rhinoceros and the donkey, the nightingale and the toad. The Devil was very jealous that God had been able to think of so many shapes, and of furs both spotted and striped, and wings and silvery scales of fishes, but he covered it all up and said 'Pooh! I could make a much better animal than any of these if I tried!' 'Try then,' said the Lord God. So the Devil set to work, and after drawing plans and thinking of everything that God had not used, he produced, with immense labour—a spider!"

"Well," said Giovanni laughing, "The web of the spider is a very pretty thing."

"It is," Paganini agreed, "And it can teach you a useful lesson, as it taught me. Do not have your fiddle strings so thick as they are usually made. I watch one day a spider spinning his web, and I see how he takes the thread and tugs it with his claw—so fine it is, but strong. I think to myself what a string that would be on which to play, what unearthly sounds one could draw from it, harmonies remote as the stars! So I experiment, and I find the thinner string helps much."

"But will it not snap, Maestro?"

"Yes, often, then one plays upon the strings that remain. It is quite simple. I have done that many times. Once I love a lady, so as I had little chance to speak with her, I play my love to her on two strings. The high string, that was the lady, the deep string, that was me, and they sing to each other and tell all their love."

"Was the lady pleased?" asked Giovanni, leaning with his elbows on his knees and gazing absorbedly at the teller of these tales.

"I think so," Paganini replied, smiling enigmatically.

On another occasion he told Giovanni another violin tale.

THE BROKEN BOW

"From every accident comes a lesson," he said, "A string snaps and you learn to play without it, a bow is broken and you learn the advantage to have half a bow. There was once a composer born at Cremona called by the name of Claudio Monteverdi—you, my little German child, may not have heard of him, for he came long before your Bach who so curiously fills your musical sky—but he was a composer of much merit, and for his music he wanted better instruments than then existed. He had written some music to tell how Tancredi wounded his love Clorinda, whom he did not recognise, and to show the lover's grief he desired a tremolo from the violins"—Paganini's long fingers shook in imitation of that desired tremolo—"but the heavy and clumsy bows of that time could not attain it. Monteverdi, driven to frenzy, seized the bow of the nearest fiddler and smote him with it so that it broke off short. Then he commanded the violins to try again. The chastised fiddler asked how he could play with a broken bow. 'As well with a broken bow as with a whole one!' cried Monteverdi—ah, can you not see his noble rage!—and the man was so frightened that he tied up the hairs of his bow to the broken end and played thus. After a few moments Monteverdi stopped the others and bade him play alone, and then told him joyfully that his lighter bow had given the effect he desired. I do not promise you," Paganini continued, "that story is true, but it is true to essentials, for from accidents we learn."

Of pure technical knowledge Giovanni absorbed in those months with Paganini enough to last him all his life. He could neither grasp nor use the whole of it at once. It was as though Paganini had given him a great lump of gold and told him to break off bits as he needed them. Certainly he realised ways to do things on the violin which had never been done before Paganini did them, learned secrets which were unknown to other violinists, acquired a lovely tone of great purity. Paganini told him that had his ear not been as sensitive as his own he would never have taught him for more than a day.

"I have no use for the tone-deaf, who think E flat is the same thing as D sharp!" he cried, looking particularly sardonic.

There seemed no imaginable thing that Paganini could not do with his violin, but one thing surprised Giovanni—grandson as he was of a distinguished Leipzig musician, and possessing also, through his Italian father

an hereditary and special feeling for the music of Sebastian Bach—the fact that Paganini was ignorant or careless of that music. So he decided to put Bach away in his mind, along with the thought of Gerda, and devote himself to acquiring the skill which should enable him to play Bach's music and in particular the Chaconne in the manner he hoped one day to play it. He had a feeling deeply rooted that Bach's music was unlike any other music, and that in some strange way Bach mattered to him. This was partly owing to the Letters, though his knowledge of them at this time was very incomplete. But his feeling about Bach and all that concerned him was unlike his feeling about anything else. So when he realised that Bach's music was a country where Paganini did not walk he became entirely silent on the subject, shut up that side of his heart, but followed Paganini passionately on all other paths.

XII

On one occasion Paganini took Giovanni on a pilgrimage to a mountain Convent. They hired asses to convey them up the steep and rocky paths. Giovanni was enchanted with the views that unfolded beneath them as the sure-footed creatures slowly ascended. Half-way up there was a little plateau on which was a Calvary, with the life-size Figure of the Crucified hanging under a small pent roof of straw. Giovanni slipped off his mule to say a little prayer. Paganini gave the Calvary a pained glance, but was passing by when he was nearly thrown to the ground by his mule suddenly going down on its knees. The mule attendant laughed, even as he genuflected and crossed himself.

THE HOLY ASS

"Ah, that is our holy ass!" he said. "He once belonged to a monk, who trained him never to pass a shrine to Our Lady or a Crucifix without going to his knees. I should have warned you."

"I am properly rebuked," Paganini answered, "slack son of Holy Church that I am." He went up to the ass and rubbed its ears. "I will buy this animal," he continued, "and give it to the Brothers, so that it may live a good life."

"But it does not matter what happens to them," said the ass driver with good-humoured indifference, "They have no souls."

"But they have bodies and they can feel, just as you can," Giovanni burst in, for he had inherited a tenderness towards animals from his mother, and had rescued little hapless creatures on many occasions from Latin hands.

The man stared at his vehemence.

"I do not use my asses ill," he said, "or they do not work and then they put

their silly hoofs into my pocket. But as for their feelings"—he shrugged —"Were there no goad they would eat all day and work not at all!"

After this little episode they mounted higher into the sky and at length, towards evening, came to the gate of the Monastery.

Sharp and beautiful were Giovanni's impressions of it—bare white walls, little cupolas roofed in rose-red tiles, brick floors echoing underfoot to the slurring sound of the monks' sandals, a sky rose and gold with sunset, the dark notes of cypress trees and ilex against that radiant colour. There was a hurry of welcoming figures, people climbing up the mountain track behind them—people who were coming to listen to Paganini—bells ringing, gleam of tapers wandering uncertainly about, a glimpse through a lifted leather curtain of a golden shining Altar.

Then Giovanni found himself set down with Paganini at one end of a narrow trestle table, to which a Lay Brother brought for their refreshment bowls of soup, platters of eggs and beans, cheese, bread, a flask of wine in a straw-cased bottle. One of the older Brothers, who was the Guest-Master, sat with them, his hands folded in his wide sleeves, and talked placidly while they ate. Giovanni, whose hunger was sharp, said little, but as he ate watched the faces of Paganini and the Brother. He thought it impossible to imagine two human faces more unlike—Paganini's so bitten into fantastic hollows, so ravaged like a landscape swept with fire; the monk's, though old and withered, showing no line that did not spell serenity, with a sort of silver shining on it, like a reflected light.

CONVENT CONVERSATIO

"Here, in the cell, there is much peace," he was saying in his quiet voice, "Much peace. But the world is full of many troubles—we can feel it washing in waves down there in the Plain, and we wonder why the poor people do not climb up here and come out of it, like those who went into Noe's Ark when the world was flooded—lift themselves out of it on a little prayer."

"You cannot escape your troubles by climbing up a mountain," answered Paganini, "And we do not all want to enter that Ark of Noe. I lift myself on a wing of music."

"But music soars not so high as a prayer," the Brother said calmly.

"No?" Paganini twisted his lip in a smile, "You listen how high my notes ascend. Maybe your prayer and my music are the same thing—only my notes are the purer, for they ask for nothing, they bear no burden of human requests. Surely the Almighty must get tired of the eternal human cry for the things it wants!"

"He told us to pray," said the monk with undisturbed peacefulness, "He shaped our lips to the Paternoster before the beginning of time."

"Well, I pray with my fiddle."

"That," said the Brother, "is permissible and right. All things should serve God, and music is His handmaid. Know you not that the holy Saint Francesco longed for music in the suffering of his last days?"

"Nay," answered Paganini, whose mouth had twisted a little at the phrase of music being a handmaid, "I know not that story of the Saint, though I have heard others, of birds and of a wolf."

"They also are good stories, but this is more holy. Know you then that when the *Poverello* was near to his end and in much pain, a desire came upon him to hear the music of the viol. So he turned to one of the Brothers who had in his worldly days played upon that instrument, and said to him, 'Brother, the children of the world have no understanding of divine sacraments, and musical instruments which in former days were set apart for God's praise, man now wantonly uses for the carnal delight of the ear. Now I beseech thee to go secretly and borrow a viol and thus bring comfort with some honest melody to Brother Body who is so full of pains.' But the friar thus requested had scruples and thought such things not suitable. 'Let it be, then,' said the Saint meekly, 'It is better to put aside good things than to cause scandal.' But still his thoughts dwelt on music, and as he lay awake in the night he heard the notes of a viol and music whose sweetness was not of this earth came to his ear. As he lay listening all his pain left him. In the morning he told of his experience and said, 'Brother, our Lord, who consoles the afflicted, never leaves me without consolation. I could not hear the viol of men, but I have heard one far sweeter.' "

Tears came to Giovanni's eyes as he listened to this tenderly told tale, and Paganini's face had grown less harsh.

PAGANINI'S PRAYER

They rose from the table and stood for a moment while the thanks were murmured in swift Latin.

"And now I will show you how my fiddle says its prayers," Paganini said smiling a little to himself.

The small white Chapel where Paganini was to play was crowded to its doors, for people had come from all the hamlets round and toiled up from the Plain below. The office of compline proceeded calmly and when the melody of "Te Lucis ante Terminum" flowed softly through the air it was taken up by a voice that sent a shiver down every spine—a voice remote and pure as though

it came from the first large star, just glimmering above the campanile of the Convent Church. It was the voice of Paganini's violin, breathing from muted strings, so faint as to be hardly heard, yet of such a strange remote perfection that the listening ear heard nothing else. Then all other music ceased, prayers were ended, and the hidden violinist stood forth to play.

When he had finished—and Giovanni, listening, felt that never had he played with more beauty or more gravity, throwing aside entirely those dazzling fireworks of the virtuoso with which he at times displayed his powers and his bitter contempt of his audiences, all the best in him brought forth by these simple listeners, these monks and peasants—the little Chapel witnessed a scene unknown since its building five centuries earlier. The congregation forgot where it was and broke into frantic applause and cries, it stood on benches, and sobbed, and wiped its eyes, and applauded again. The monks hastened from the choir, and some with shocked frowns and others with understanding smiles, repressed and checked and quietened and recalled the people to a sense of the place in which they were.

"But the gracious Lord Himself will understand," whispered one young Brother to another, " 'Twas as if the gate of Heaven had opened a little way and we heard the music there."

When Paganini came out of the Church, Giovanni close behind him holding his fiddle, the people, still quivering with emotion, thronged after him, pressing round him.

"Maestro, play to us again—once more—for us to remember when we die—for the Blessed Virgin's sake!" They seized his fingers and kissed them, they clutched at his coat, one or two even fell on their knees and put up their hands as though they were praying.

"Shall I?" Paganini asked Giovanni, and took his fiddle from him. "Make me a little space for my bow arm," he said, looking at the excited people round him with eyes that glowed like coals in their sockets. They fell back from him, so that he stood alone.

EVENING SCENE

Giovanni drew a breath that went through him with a sharpness as though it were his last. Every detail of the scene penetrated to his inner mind where it remained unforgettable and perfect. The sky of deepest blue was now thronged with stars. A yellow patch of light streamed out to the little courtyard where the shadowy forms were gathered, and on the wide steps by the door in this light groups of the monks were standing together, as silent and as still as though they stood in the background of some altar painting. The roof of the Church, with its campanile

pierced by the turret where swung the solitary bell, was outlined sharply against the last faint primrose light left by the sunken sun.

And Paganini lifted his Josef del Gésu to his chin and played.

XIII

Gerda received at uncertain intervals long and glowing letters from Giovanni, assuring her of his happiness, his ecstatic devotion to his master, his violin progress—he was studying among other things Paganini's Caprice in A minor and was exultant that he now could manage the dazzling and difficult passage in which the melody is played on muted strings to a pizzicato accompaniment by the remaining fingers.

"He can see no one in his world save Paganini," Gerda thought a little sadly, for in spite of the many words of love to herself and the rather shy and awkward enquiries about his father, she knew that he was globed in the crystal shell of youth's inviolate ego. "God puts the young there, like the chick in the egg," she thought, "to grow unharmed by outside hurts. And may he stay there till he is formed into a beauty and strength that can face and conquer the world."

It seemed to her as she waited for life to show her the path she was destined to take, that there were only two ways in which it was possible to make anything of existence—a completely developed and dominating self-hood, such as Paganini possessed, or a complete selflessness.

She had much time for thinking. There was nothing she could do for her husband—her visits, regular and faithful as they were, meant nothing to him, no recognition was in his eyes. At first he had greeted her with dull courtesy as a stranger, then he ceased to do even that, and stared at her listlessly, withdrawing his hand when she tried to touch and caress it. After these melancholy visits Gerda walked away down the white dusty road, her eyes so thick with tears she could but stumblingly see where she was going. She was immersed in desolation. She felt like a ghost, lost in a strange country. Rome was the only place in Italy that was in any sense home to her, and she could not even be in Rome, as it was too far away from the mountain monastery where Luigi Cavatini was cared for. The kind monks would persuade her to go back to Rome, seeing the uselessness and the pain of her daily visits. They would send a messenger for her if there was any change and she were needed. But Gerda would not return to Rome. She felt that suddenly Luigi might require her, and some instinct told her that his time of living would not be greatly prolonged, though the physician thought he might live for years, as the unused mind does not wear out the body.

But even Rome held little happiness for Gerda now—only the memory of it. Giovanni was not there. Her lonely days had little light in them save Giovanni's letters and her answers so lovingly written. Her mind, shrinking from contemplation of the future, turned to memories of her own country and her own girlhood—wandering in thought about the old clustered streets of Leipzig where everything seemed so comfortable and kind, and her father smiled at her, and her matronly sisters discussed matters of food and dress and small festivities which had no thought of pain in them. What a shelter of little friendly things had been erected all about her, and why had she, not built to an heroic pattern, as she felt convinced, stepped through them to the dangerous joys offered by this Italy, so gay in light and colour, so fundamentally tragic, so drenched with the spilled blood of humanity, so old, so dark, so secret under the sun? Why had she given to her Giovanni this trouble of a mixed inheritance, a nature that would pull him two ways? Already she saw its signature in the lines of his young face. When his youthful shell was broken he would suffer—he would suffer through temperament as well as circumstance. He had her hesitancy and trembling heart as well as his father's fire and passion. He would feel things that Luigi had never felt. Ah, kind and friendly Leipzig, where she was born, where she belonged, life was simpler there than in Rome. In an effort to transport herself back to those days she pulled out her old green volume of *Märchen* from which she had never been parted—when she had packed for her fateful visit to Italy with her father she had first of all put that fat book at the bottom of her little calf-skin trunk studded with brass nails. She looked again at the beloved woodcuts, read again some of the remembered tales, the Gothic type saluting her eye with the sweetness of past days. Enchanting world, where only the wicked came to harm, and the innocent and good were befriended by winds and waters and all the creatures of fur and feather—a world where the heavy blotted law of man ran not. Giovanni had to her heart all the qualities of all the darling heroes of the fairy-tales: but she, alas, had no talisman for his happiness, no filbert nut to give him which broken in his hour of need would solve all his difficulties and lead him to the desired destiny. She fluttered the pages and smiled wistfully at the old Germanic woodcuts of goblins and big round moons, bent old women with crutches and a load of sticks on their backs, peasant girls with muslin bodices and coronals of flaxen plaits, homely old kings in slippers that ill-accorded with their crowns, proud princesses, and adventurous splendid youths. Each page to her held more than print and pictures—an aroma of her own youth was distilled for her as she turned them. Her own dreams slipped forth and looked at her—how wonderfully had they seemed fulfilled when she first saw Rome and her lover together. Now that all had vanished into a mist of melancholy. She shut the book, and it was as

though she shut her happiness and her youth inside it.

XIV

She was justified in her feeling that she must stay by her husband, little need as he appeared to have of her. On one of her visits, futile and sad as ever, she had turned away, her hand on the latch to leave him, when she heard her name called in a sighing undertone. Her back was towards Luigi, and for a moment she dared not turn round, she felt it must be some trick of memory, not his actual voice. But it came again in a firmer tone that there could be no mistaking. In an instant she was kneeling by the low wooden bed—for a considerable time past Luigi had been steadily growing weaker and had entirely ceased to take any interest in his fiddle, no longer caring to have it in his sight.

LUIGI'S RETURN

"Gerda," said Luigi, looking at her, knowing her, loving her, "Where have you been, why did you leave me?"

I must not distress him by explaining anything, thought Gerda. So she told him that she had been obliged to go away for a little while, but came back as soon as she could possibly do so and would never go away again.

"I have been ill?" asked Luigi, looking at his emaciated hand.

"Yes, my poor one, you have been ill, but you are better now."

"Where is Giovanni? He will be entirely forgetting all that I have taught him."

"Oh, Luigi, something very wonderful has occurred. Paganini is teaching our son. He is with him now in Milan."

Luigi lay in silence for a moment, absorbing this news.

"God is good," he said.

After a while, for his weakness was very great, he asked one or two questions. "Was it because I was ill that Paganini took him?"

Gerda hesitated. "Yes," she answered.

"Then he saw the boy's gift, otherwise he would not have done that. He but rarely teaches. All is well."

Into Gerda's mind floated a phrase of falling notes from the *Johannespassion*—"It is finished." It was as though the mighty Bach had reached out across space and time to warn her. Luigi lay in exhausted silence,

holding her hand in a clutch that even through his weakness had some of its old fierceness. Not again should she leave him. When the monk who nursed him returned he felt Luigi's pulse and fetched him a cordial, his eyes expressing a silent surprise and a silent warning.

"IT IS FINISHED"

Luigi intercepted his glance at Gerda. "Yes," he said, "I am dying—'It is finished,' " he faintly sang the phrase. He looked up at Gerda's startled face, "You had it in your mind a moment ago, I heard it sing."

Gerda put her arm round his shoulder. What need to deny the truth to the dying?

"Yes," she murmured, her cheek laid to his, "It was in my mind."

"And it was a message," said Luigi quietly, "Fetch to me the holy oils, give me Viaticum for my last journey."

The Brother who had been watching him solemnly left the little whitewashed room.

Luigi turned again to Gerda, "I have but one thing to ask of you, my love, my wife. Give Giovanni the Letters when I am dead and tell him to cherish them all the days he lives in this world. Those Letters, I see—Paolo—Giovanni——" A strange look came in his eyes, his voice choked in his throat.

XV

Luigi Cavatini died that night, very peacefully, assoiled and conscious. To Gerda, who had seen him so long in a worse death, his going was a release—her own sadness would come upon her later.

When certain necessary things had been done she returned to Rome so that she might the more quickly get in touch with Giovanni. She was very weary as she climbed the flights of cold marble stairs to her home, so long deserted, but her mind was still and uplifted. She felt that her own life had come to some close, she did not know, she did not greatly care, if it were to go on again. Giovanni was all that mattered. Giovanni's future, that life should yield him a largesse of beauty and joy, that genius—surely that delectable dangerous gift was his?—should not destroy happiness, as it was apt to do. Each step up the old stained stairs was marked in an ascending rhythm by the thought of Giovanni. At the top she paused, to still her heart which was beating unaccountably. As she opened the door she thought she heard Giovanni's voice—she stayed her step again, and the pulse leaped in her throat. Giovanni was in Milan, weariness and strain must have made her slightly light-headed.

She closed the door, and glanced through a little window in the wall at the crowded roofs of Rome below her, and even as she looked another door opened and she heard the undoubted living voice of her son in an astounded cry of "*Cara la mia mammina!*"

She turned, he was coming swiftly towards her across the tiled floor, his arms held out, his face radiant. She fell forward into his arms—he was grown now taller than herself—and behind him, as a sudden darkness took her brain, she beheld for one shaken and half-conscious moment, the thin black figure of Paganini. He seemed to waver, to stretch up to the ceiling, as shadows cast by a moving candle-flame stretch and waver. Then the blackness of Paganini spread into an universal darkness.

A SWOON

When Gerda returned to consciousness her first thought was that both Giovanni and Paganini would have vanished into that darkness into which she had fallen headlong. But they were both still there when she opened her eyes, Giovanni nursing her head on his knee and awkwardly dabbing at her with a wet cloth, while Paganini stood by, looking as guilty as though he had with his own hand smitten her to the ground.

So soon as he saw she was conscious again Giovanni burst into explanations.

"The Maestro is giving a concert in Rome—we thought it just possible you might be here—I was coming this afternoon to see you——"

Gerda sat up and pushed back her fallen plaits of hair which gave her a strangely young and innocent look.

"Giovanni," she said, "Your father has died."

The boy stared at her, caught up in the rushing flood of his own tidings, unable for a moment to adjust his mind to the shock.

Paganini crossed himself, "May his soul rest in peace."

"I think it will," said Gerda, "He made a good death, and he is released from the prison of the body."

Giovanni had in this time assimilated the knowledge of his father's death. He put his arm round Gerda, "Poor Father. But I will take care of you now."

Gerda had a sudden realisation that she had never been taken care of since she left her German home—it was always she who cared for her husband, whenever he was with her to be cared for, and then for her son. Men are but babies, whatever their age. She suddenly began to laugh, and her laughter

mounted up the scale till it fell down the other side in tears.

XVI

One thing Paganini did which Gerda never forgot to the end of her life. He insisted on accompanying herself and Giovanni to the monastery where Luigi's body lay and where he was to be buried. He brought his violin with him. When the three of them stood together by the side of the coffin Paganini drew his fiddle from its case and leaning a little towards Gerda whispered to her, "I will play a farewell to your dead violinist."

What he played neither Gerda nor Giovanni ever knew—they never heard it again. It must have been made by Paganini as he stood there, his dark figure swaying over his fiddle, his head bent down, his eyes shut, as he drew forth deep and tender notes that spoke farewell—the regret, the helpless sorrow for the unreturning pilgrim to another world. The lovely air seemed to follow after Luigi with entreating hands, to stand watching, to come back at last to the left ones with some message of peace. All is well, it seemed to say. So it appeared to Gerda as she stood there, her hand in Giovanni's, the tears falling down her face as softly as summer rain. Her first thought, when Paganini began to play, had been "Could Luigi but hear!" Her second and deeply consoling one, "He does!"

FAREWELL MUSIC

When Paganini ceased there was a moment's silence. Then to Giovanni's amazement he handed the Guarnerius to him and said, "You must play a little farewell to your father—here is my fiddle."

Never before had the boy been allowed to touch the sacred instrument, save to put it into its case or take it out. He took it almost timidly and looked at Gerda. Swiftly she leaned to him, "Play the last music Luigi had in his mind in this world—play the Bach St. John, 'It is finished.' "

Giovanni lifted the violin, still warm from Paganini's hand, to his chin, and with remote and tender beauty the noble patience of that melody stole into the air and hovered like a benediction over the coffin.

So was Luigi Cavatini sent to his rest.

XVII

When her family heard that her husband—whom they had hardly known and almost inevitably regarded unfavourably—was dead, Gerda was besought to return home, to leave that comfortless country Italy, with its decaying marble palaces and absence of proper heating arrangements, and come back to

the Germany where she was born. Her father, growing old, longed to behold his grandson and discover the quality of his musicianship—longed, above all, once more to have with him the daughter whose loss had darkened the name of Italy to his mind. Gerda's own feelings all turned homewards: she had never taken root in Italian soil, as she realised suddenly when the link that held her there was severed. But with Giovanni it was another matter. He was Italian by birth, he knew no other country—for Luigi had always shown a passionate intention that his wife and son should not leave him to visit Germany; he had always declared that someday he would take them there, but that had never been accomplished. So Giovanni had never set foot outside Italy, and it was Italy that held for him the compelling figure of Paganini. Impossible that he should leave Paganini. Gerda bowed to this—her own hopes and desires must once more wait. But she was spared another separation, for Paganini insisted that she should come to Milan and take her son to live with her.

"I have been nursemaid to him long enough," he said, with a sardonic gleam in his eye, "Besides you want your boy, he is all now left to you," and the sardonic look melted into something kindlier. Paganini, in spite of his general contempt for women, his remarkable unfitness for any normal domestic life, yet knew the parental passion for the son that Antonia Bianchi the dancer had given him. Also he was at moments curiously touched by Gerda—she made so few claims for herself, and there was something innocent and simple about her which had not been a marked characteristic of the women he had known hitherto, with the exception of his mother.

So to Milan Gerda went and began again her life with Giovanni, who, as she said, was never seen without his violin save when in his bed. His advance in technical skill, in power, in depth of interpretation, was almost startling to his mother. He had grown, in the time of his absence, with great suddenness to a man's height, and though still far from a man's years his face had taken on something of the look that was to mark its maturity.

As soon as they were settled down together in their small abode Gerda obeyed her husband's last wish and gave over to Giovanni's keeping the Bach Letters with his father's message.

"They now belong to you, Giovanni," she said with deep solemnity, "They are in your keeping while you live and then you must hand them on to your son, if you have one. Since they were written they have been the most precious possession of the Cavatini family."

Giovanni took the little casket from her hands with a feeling almost of awe.

"Always, since I can remember, I have wanted to read these Letters," he

said, “And they are now mine? But surely you cannot bear that I should keep them?”

THE LETTERS

“I have read them so often that I almost know them by heart—they now belong to you.”

Giovanni spent the whole of that night reading them. In spite of the lack of sleep he had a curious radiance of look as he kissed his mother the next morning.

“What a link with him!” he exclaimed, his eyes shining, “One becomes of his household. And if you had not married my father I should never have known!” He took her hand and kissed the wedding-ring. “Thank you!” he said.

After reading—and re-reading—the Letters Giovanni became possessed by the desire some day not too remote to go back to Leipzig.

“Go back?” questioned Gerda smiling, “But you have never been there! You cannot return to a place where you have never been.”

Giovanni looked faintly puzzled. “It is strange that I have not seen Leipzig —I feel as if I belonged there.”

“That is because I have talked to you so much of my home.”

“Yes, that must be the reason, but while the Maestro will teach me we must remain here.”

But the time came, after some period of this life in Milan, that Paganini gave the two of them their release.

He called upon Gerda one day, looking unusually smart in a long overcoat of dark grey that reached to his heels.

After the usual salutations and some unusual commendation of Giovanni’s gifts and hard work, he said “There are only two things that matter in this world.”

“And they are——?” Gerda questioned.

“Music and money!”

“THE RICHEST MAN”

Gerda looked startled. She did not know that Paganini had an avaricious love for gold—she had never seen that aspect of his character, for he had entirely refused to take any payment whatever for his teaching of Giovanni. “A really good pupil is payment in himself,” he had said.

Paganini enjoyed her expression.

“With the first I make the second—so much I make that when I die people they will say, not ‘He was the greatest violinist,’ but ‘He was the richest man in Italy!’ And now that so frightfully rich nation the English want that I go and play to them. Their hands are full of their gold guineas which they pour into my pockets if I give them concerts. My pockets can never have enough guineas, so I go. And that will make an end to Giovanni’s lessons.”

“An end?—for always?” asked Gerda, much perturbed.

“Ah, how can I tell? I make no promise. But when I come back from England—if I come back, I may stay there and marry some rich English heiress and grow fat and red of the face like the Englishmen!—I shall not return to Milan, I tire of the life here, indeed I tire of it everywhere. And you too are tired of it,” Paganini patted her shoulder in an awkward manner. “You are much tired of it. Go back to your own country—you will be vastly happier there than in this Italy.”

Book Two

Through the Door

I

The first landmark that arrested Giovanni's eye as he and his mother approached Leipzig across the plain was the steep roof of the Thomaskirche standing up in a blunt and arresting manner. He knew its appearance from a print of Sperontes' with which he had been familiar from his earliest youth, for it hung upon the wall of his mother's bedchamber and she had many times elucidated it for him with loving care.

"There," she would say, pointing with her embroidery stiletto, "is the roof of Bach's church, where that music of his was first heard. Think of it floating up to heaven out of those little windows in the roof!"

As a child he had loved the detailed print, which showed the river Pleisse curving peacefully beside the Promenade dotted with mop-headed trees, and the chequer-board foreground whereon were disposed figures in the costume of Bach's day, while a Muselike person played elegantly on a clavichord. Each detail was dear to him, from the classical forms floating in the sky, and the elaborate scroll work which announced that it was Sperontes' *Singende Muse an der Pleisse*, to the massed roofs and spires of Leipzig which led the eye to that outstanding roof of all, rising above the others almost like a truncated pyramid—the roof of the church where Bach had been Cantor. And beside it stood the school where Bach had lived for twenty-seven years, where Bach had died. Giovanni knew his way in these regions where he had never walked, for almost from his infancy his mother had told him of the streets and the look of Leipzig. More than that she had drawn and coloured for him little pictures of the place, stiff and childish little pictures, but accurate in their memory of the town where she was born. Gerda herself found comfort in these efforts of her pencil when she was feeling specially homesick. With her head bent over the careful details of her little sketches she could forget for a while the cold marble palaces, the ruined columns and temples of Rome. And by her efforts and her tales Leipzig became wonderfully real to Giovanni. Encircled by its fortified walls and escarpments he imagined that thus it guarded the music and the memory of Bach. For him and for no other the umbrageous lime and linden trees waved their boughs, for him the conduits ran merrily in the cobbled streets, in his honour the citizens painted their house fronts, stuck pots of

rosemary and gilliflower on their broad window ledges, lit their seven hundred oil lamps that swung from oak standards when evening fell. To Giovanni, who carried this dream undamaged in his mind all through his early years, the sole reason for the existence of Leipzig was Bach.

To Gerda Leipzig had a different and more personal radiance. It was full of memories of a happy youth which seemed in retrospect without any flaw, bathed in a calm light where no shadows showed. Italy, as she looked back upon it and her life there seemed like a landscape under towering thunder clouds, part purple in the shadow, here and there jewel-like bits picked out by a fervid sun—a loveliness always threatened with eclipse and murk. She was tired, she wanted the old peaceful domestic life again. But even as the little hopeful sigh escaped her heart she glanced at Giovanni, at his face at once so dreamy and so passionate, and knew that her life must be conditioned by his needs—so long as he needed her. She had already begun to prepare herself for the thought that he might not need her much longer. Her simpler nature—which she had kept in a singular manner unspoiled by life—was becoming conscious of his complexity.

BACH'S BIRTHLAND

To Giovanni this journey to Leipzig was of a particular meaning. He was coming to the birthland, to the very town, of Johann Sebastian Bach. He talked of him nearly all the time, with such an eager insistence and so much in the present tense, that Gerda said once, "You seem to forget that he has been dead these eighty years or so!"

"Has he?" Giovanni answered absently, and then woke up and laughed, "Of course, yes. It is the Letters, I suppose. So to remind me that he is dead, the first thing I shall do in Leipzig when we get there, will be to visit his grave and lay a little wreath upon it. Did you ever do that, *Mütterchen*?"

Gerda looked guilty before her son's urgent eyes. "I do not think I ever saw his grave. You see, I thought more about his music than about himself—I had not seen the Letters then. We all knew he had lived and died in Leipzig, but nobody thought much about him as a man, not many people really thought a great deal about his music. If it had not been that Papa cared so much——"

"But some day people will care," Giovanni broke in vehemently, "And put up monuments and statues, and know he is the greatest, the greatest——"

Gerda patted his hand. "You say that because of Paolo—you must be very like him, I think. I wish we had a portrait."

"His heart is my heart!" Giovanni cried. Then he stopped, his glowing face turned suddenly pale. "What made me say that?" he asked in a puzzled way.

“Why should you not say it?” Gerda answered.

But they both felt as though something strange had passed between them.

II

Leipzig materialised itself to Giovanni at first into the persons of what seemed to him, brought up a solitary child, as a bewildering crowd of relatives. His grandfather he could distinguish, and his aunts, though they seemed to him much alike, in mind as in person, and singularly lacking in the charms of his mother. But the crowd of his cousins, some older, some younger than himself, alarmed him. He was not used to the companionship of young people, he did not like it, and drew very much into himself. Of all his new relations the one whom he most appreciated was his grandfather, especially when he discovered that he was not only a fine musician, but a very learned one who could give him certain knowledge he deeply desired.

RELATIONS

The two aunts, kind and well-intentioned as they were to “poor Gerda’s” son, were not favourably impressed by him. They seized the first opportunity of being alone together after his arrival to talk him over.

“So foreign!” said Elsa.

“That, unfortunately, was to be expected,” replied the more practical Margreta, “as the first child usually favours the father—look at my Hans. I always thought Gerda read too much poetry. Life is not like poetry. And now see the result—an Italian nephew!”

Frau Elsa’s sense of humour was not very acute, but this made her laugh a little.

“My dear Margreta, it was not the poetry produced the Italian nephew. It was Papa taking her to Rome—if Gerda had never left Germany all would have been well, the only Italians she would then have seen would have been those creatures selling little plaster images. I never did think foreign travel wise for the young.”

“Well, Papa was old enough, surely!”

“Papa? he has no sense at all in matters of that kind, as you well know. And Gerda, so young as she was and so pretty, and her head full of romantic dreams. *Ach*, I suppose it was fated. And after all this, and now a widow, she does not seem any more wise, she thinks everything that boy does is right. See how she looks at him! And what are we to do with Giovanni? He is painfully striking looking—he appears not only foreign, but strange.”

“You feel that? It had occurred to me also. Do you think he is a little unbalanced in his mind? He does not seem to appreciate the importance of things. He was at our house the other day when the Baroness came to call. He kissed her hand and behaved quite nicely, but then he walked away.”

“Walked away from the Baroness?” Elsa’s face expressed horrified astonishment.

“Yes, actually! And when I reproved him afterwards, what do you think he said?”

“I cannot imagine any excuse for such behaviour.”

“It was not an excuse. He did not think that necessary. He said ‘She is not interesting and she is very ugly.’ ”

“Poor Gerda!” exclaimed Elsa.

“She does not seem to mind greatly. She is changed.”

“Yes, Italy has much to answer for.”

They contemplated the sins of Italy for a moment in silence.

“Well,” said Margreta, her natural optimism rising again within her comfortable bosom, “At least Italy has taught him to play the violin amazingly well.”

They smiled at each other, for they were not the daughters of a musician for nothing.

“Paganini—we have never heard him. I regret that. I suppose the world has never known anyone like him?”

“Gerda says it is a marvel that he would teach Giovanni, he has no pupils—but it was partly because of the boy being fatherless.”

“Yes, poor Giovanni, though really it was the best thing his father could have done. But see how his father died—he was mad, of course, though Gerda will not say it. And everyone declares that Paganini is mad too. Very bad for the boy!”

“Of course. If only Gerda would marry again, and give her son a German step-father, it would be admirable. She is still quite young enough. Do you imagine she might consider such a possibility?”

But Margreta could not imagine any such thing. It was altogether too sensible and wise a course to be pursued by Gerda.

So the two sisters decided they would do what they could to provide for

Giovanni wholesome young society.

III

But Giovanni did not show any desire for wholesome young society. He endured the companionship of his male and female cousins and their friends, when he could not avoid it, with palpable patience. But the society of his grandfather appealed to him increasingly, and he began to love his grandfather's house, where he and his mother dwelt since their arrival in Leipzig.

It was a narrow house with stepped gables, pressed between taller neighbours on either hand, the front door opening on to a quiet cobbled street, with chains and posts to protect the ground-floor windows from too close contact with the few passersby. It was a very peaceful little house when his bustling aunts were occupied with their own affairs in their own domains. Gradually it dawned upon them that Giovanni and Gerda did not care for the social gaieties that their circles offered—"After all, poor Gerda is a widow of barely a year"—and that Gerda was fully prepared to take over the responsibility of looking after their father, which they had conscientiously—and even excessively—discharged hitherto. Their own households were humming with life. The supervision of the cleaning, the cooking, the education, and clothing of their children at all stages of growth, as well as the nice conduct of social amenities, really left them with small leisure. They were extremely busy and very happy women. Giovanni refused to fit into their lives, Gerda had for many years ceased to be their charge. So, with a certain amount of regret, and wondering if it were quite right, they decided that Gerda and her son and the *kleine* Papa were very well together.

They were. Something that had been starved in the Herr Professor ever since he left Gerda in Rome with her young husband, was now fed. He looked on her older and sadder but still so innocent face, with a dew of gratitude in his eyes that the good God had restored to him his heart's darling. And with the largesse of a grandson—such a grandson! In the long hours of the night, when, as is the way with the old, he slept little, he lay in a kind of ecstatic peace, thinking of Giovanni, planning for him the future, the fame, the happiness, his love desired. He had no shadow of doubt of Giovanni's genius. "Why, one has but to look at him, without need to hear his playing!" Giovanni's beautiful brow, deep retreated eyes with the lustre of dreams in them, his wide sensitive mouth, rose before his inward vision. He sat up in bed, his heart beating so fast that it hurt him to lie down. "*Lieber Gott*, be good to him!" he breathed in the stillness of the night.

THE *KLEINE* PAPA

Giovanni had never known anyone like his grandfather. "The *kleine* Papa" his daughters called him, though it was not in height that he was little, but because he had never attained the comfortable rotundity proper in an elderly German professor. He was tall, but so thin that his height seemed of no importance to those who admired solidity. Also he stooped a good deal, and his head on its thin neck drooped forward as though tired. His skin, his hair, his eyes, all were blanched to colourlessness—"I sometimes think if you pricked Papa he would not bleed!" Elsa once declared—and in all matters of daily life he was entirely and hopelessly vague. He quite frequently forgot whether he had eaten. No wonder that his daughters felt that a five year child was more capable of caring for itself—"To have lived so long in the world and to have learned so little!" they would say to each other, with exasperated, affectionate faces.

But music was his elixir of life. When he heard music, made music, or discussed music, a light shone in his faded eyes and his old cheeks took on a faint flush of colour that was like a pale reflection of the rosy hues of youth. His two elder daughters disliked this flush, "There is Papa getting excited again! So bad for him." But in reality this shaken flame within was what he lived by—had it been quenched in him then nothing would have been left but the grey ash of age. The wind of Giovanni's youth and Giovanni's genius blew upon him and he was renewed. To see them together clutched Gerda's heart with exultant pain—she saw a new meaning in her life, she stood as the link between her father and her son. He who had given her life, received life again at her hands through Giovanni. No wonder the three of them shut their door upon the outside world of Leipzig on all possible occasions.

IV

At the back of Professor Eisner's little quiet house was a small garden, high-walled all round. The tall houses all about turned shouldering or blind sides to it, so that its seclusion was greater than if it were surrounded by a desert. It got little sun, so as not much would grow there, it was paved with slabs of stone; it had a well in the middle with a stone curb round it, whence the household water was drawn from secret depths in a nail-studded copper bucket. In one corner was a tall twisted old acacia which cast more shade as itself sought the sunshine above the clustering roofs—its radiant young green, its frond-like leaves, its drooping tassels of white scented bloom, were the principal adornment of the little garden. In the hot summer days the small paved garden was a charming retreat from the dust and glare of the streets outside. But the garden led to a *Gartenhaus* which was the most important part of the Professor's establishment. The house itself, facing the street, in which he

ate and slept, was narrow, and all its rooms were restricted. “Hardly could one get the length of a harpsichord in any room, unless its tail were out of the window,” the Professor used to say smiling. But across the end of his garden a portion of an old granary had been left from some remoter rural day, and this, with the addition of a couple of windows, a wooden floor, and a china stove, had been made into a room as large, nearly, as the whole ground-floor of the dwelling-house. Here all the musical side of life—that being so much the most important—was conducted.

GARDEN HOUSE

Giovanni fell in love with the *Gartenhaus* when he first set foot there. It had two windows draped with striped muslin curtains—a concession this to his daughters, for the Professor declared, as the windows looked into the little garden, there was no one to overlook him—its painted floor boards were clean and bare, save for a small worn carpet under the big table against one wall, strewn with music scores and papers and musical books. A tall white china stove stood in one corner, and a tall gaily painted Black Forest clock ticked heavily in another. Most of the rest of the room was occupied by musical instruments—a long slender harpsichord, redolent of the grace of a departing day, a square pianoforte, heavier in build, a harp, a bass-viol, a couple of violins hanging by their scrolls on the wall, a ’cello propped in a corner.

The only picture in the room was a copy, not very well executed, of the Haussmann portrait of Bach in the Thomasschule. It was the first portrait of Bach that Giovanni had ever seen—the music he had known since his infancy, and something of Bach’s life had always seemed part of his own, even before the Cavatini Letters came fully to his knowledge. But the face of Bach was strange to him till he entered his grandfather’s Music Room.

He stood before the portrait.

“That is the old Cantor Bach,” said the Professor.

Giovanni nodded his head, “Yes, I felt he was like that.”

“But have you then seen a portrait before?”

“No, never before.”

“He is not handsome, the ‘Old Peruke,’ as they called him.”

Giovanni looked silently at the solidity and power of the face under its closely curled wig.

“It is a face very good,” he said slowly, “It is sweet and cross at once, but it is much sweeter than cross. He has laughed, and he has thought—his forehead

is higher than a mountain! He has seen so much light that he has had to half-close his eyes lest he go blind."

"He did go blind at the end."

"I do not mean his outside eyes, but the eyes that saw beauty."

"Which means God."

The old man and the young looked at each other, they both felt a little strange, and in the old man's mind was the thought—How does this boy know so much and speak with such a surety?

"You see things in that eighteenth century Cantor's face that most people miss," he said.

"The things are there, if you look," Giovanni answered.

V

BACH'S GRAVE

Early after his arrival in Leipzig Giovanni expressed to his grandfather his cherished desire to visit the grave of Bach.

"You have been there many times?" he said.

It was hardly a question.

Professor Eisner looked at him apologetically.

"Dear Giovanni, you reproach me. I who have lived in Leipzig so many years I can hardly count them, and have played Bach's music and taught it to many pupils for nearly as long, never, in all those years have I ever visited his grave to say a thanksgiving to his dust. It is a great omission, a shabby ingratitude. We will procure a large wreath of bay leaves—yes, of the largest size—and lay it at his feet!"

Giovanni was still looking at him in an astonished manner. His grandfather hurried on, fearing this sudden rift in their harmonious relations.

"Often as I pass the Thomasschule I look at the Cantor's doorway and consider his life, but he is so immortal that one does not think of him as dead."

Giovanni accepted this.

"You are right, *Grossvater*, but as he is dead let us visit his tomb. Where is he buried?"

His grandfather hesitated, "I am not quite sure."

"You mean you do not know!" Giovanni was laughing now, for the old

man looked so crestfallen, “But surely in his own Thomaskirche?”

“No, that cannot be, there have not been burials there since before 1750 when he died.”

So they had to make enquiries, and found that the body of Johann Sebastian Bach had been buried in an oaken coffin in the churchyard of the Johanniskirche outside the walls of Leipzig.

They pilgrimaged there with the large repentant wreath which Giovanni bore gallantly on his shoulder, his heart full of an emotion whose strength surprised himself. It was as though he visited the tomb of one known and dearly loved. His mind’s eye showed him the funeral procession that had passed this way something approaching a century ago. He pictured the grief of wife and children for a loss so irreparable, imagined the citizens of Leipzig bowed in woe. Could the passing of any monarch compare with the death of Bach?

But when they had passed through the Grimmaisches Tor outside the walls and came to the Johanniskirche standing rather bleakly among its surrounding tombstones, they searched in vain for that of Bach. Neither within the church, nor without in the churchyard, was there any sign of his burial. The old Sexton could tell them nothing.

FORGOTTEN

“Nay, I know nought of un’s grave,” he said, “ ’Tis a long whiles he’ve abeen gone if he died in the middle of last century, as you do say. My old father, he might have known, but he’ve been dead these fifteen years.”

Giovanni was pale with disappointment and anger.

“These miserable people of Leipzig put up no monument to his memory!” he cried, “They forgot him as soon as he was dead! And his wife?—she loved him, I know, why did she not do it?”

“But Frau Bachin, as I happen to know,” said his grandfather, “was too impoverished to be able to do anything of that kind—and she herself was an almswoman when she died. You see our great Cantor at his death was quite a poor man. All his work and his music never brought him any lavish reward.”

“The Frau Muhme died in poverty?” Giovanni exclaimed, “Ah, I did not know that. How her husband would have grieved for the one he loved so much!”

“Doubtless. But why do you call her the Frau Muhme?”

“It was the name the house-pupils called her, and often the family Bach

used it also."

"That is an odd thing for you to know—who told you that?"

"Bach's pupil, my ancestor."

His grandfather continuing to look at him in a puzzled manner, Giovanni explained further.

"I do not mean he told me himself—of course he died long before even my father was thought of, but in his Letters, which are now in my possession, there is no other subject but music and the Bach household. Oh, I shall show them to you, it is wonderful!—you see him, you talk with him!"

The old man's face turned even whiter than was its wont.

"Thank God for permitting me to live to see this day!" he said, "The Letters, oh, Giovanni, that you should have such a gift in your hands. Show me the Letters, now, at once. It makes me fear lest some accident snatch them from me."

VI

There was the initial difficulty that all the Letters were written in Italian, a language of which Professor Eisner had but a slight knowledge. But Giovanni's double tongue solved this problem—Italian and German were both native to him.

"I shall read these Letters to you in German," he told his grandfather, "And then there will be three people living who know them—before then there was only Mother and I, since Father died."

But first Giovanni and Gerda between them told him the story of how the Letters came to be written and of he who wrote them. This story was told principally by Gerda. The three of them gathered together in the *Gartenhaus*, and Gerda, sitting in a low chair, her hands clasped round her knees in her favourite attitude which dated from her girlhood, her eyes dreamy with the past in which she walked, told of Paolo Cavatini.

STORY OF PAOLO

"He was of my husband's family," she said, "I suppose about a hundred and twenty years ago from now. There were two brothers, eighteen months apart in age, as devoted to each other and as alike as though they had been twins. The elder was called Battista, and the younger was Paolo."

"Were they Cavatini, like your husband?" questioned her father, "Or of the spindle side?"

"No, they were Cavatini—Battista and Paolo Cavatini. As I said they were twins in spirit, save in one thing. They both loved music, but while Paolo was most gifted, both as violinist, clavichordist, and with a genius inclined to composition, Battista his elder brother had nothing but the love of music, he could neither sing nor play any instrument. This was a grief to him, but made him the more full of admiration for Paolo's powers. Their young years they spent together, and Paolo devoted himself to learning all of music that he could from the musicians within his reach. He had already become a musician of acknowledged powers and as an organist highly thought of, when it chanced that one day he heard a little of Bach's music played by a student who had lately returned from Leipzig. To Paolo it was like a door opened into a new world. He questioned eagerly of its origin, and when he heard that the composer was living and teaching in Germany at that time he was possessed with a fever to go to him. Battista besought him not to leave him, not to throw away the good appointments that were already his, not to venture on that distant journey, among an alien people. Paolo also hated the thought of leaving his brother, but the compulsion was on him that he must go. He went. He journeyed to Leipzig, he presented to Bach the introduction he had secured, and when Bach heard him play and learned that he had come all the way from Italy in order to become his pupil, nothing more was needed. With a large generosity he agreed to teach him and also took him into his household. To bridge the sad gulf of absence which both brothers felt so much, Paolo had promised to write regularly to Battista of his life and work in Leipzig. He kept his promise with faithfulness. The Letters have been cherished by the family Cavatini for a hundred years and by four generations—and here they are!"

She laid her hand upon the casket on the table beside her, and looked across at Giovanni with a tender smile.

"When my poor Luigi died," she went on, "almost his last words to me were that these Letters should be given to Giovanni to be an inspiration to him. The Battista Cavatini to whom they were written was Giovanni's great-great-grandfather."

"It gives Giovanni then, a kind of double link with the great Cantor," said the Professor, who had listened to this narrative with an absorbed attention, "His mother born in Bach's own town, his father descended from a family that had given a pupil to Bach."

"Giovanni always seems to have felt that, ever since I first told him of his ancestor and the deep devotion he felt for his great master."

Giovanni nodded. Clearly he remembered his first hearing of that tale from

the lips of his mother. It had continued with him like a pattern unfolding, like the weaving of a counterpoint. The feeling that it was all leading somewhere had curiously increased since he had come to Leipzig.

"Now," said Gerda, "I think I have told all that is needed to make the story clear—it is time to come to the Letters, and Giovanni will translate them better than I can, for Italian is still somewhat of a foreign tongue to me."

She handed the casket across to Giovanni, and the Professor leaned forward, his thin face alight, "To hear these Letters will be an experience most wonderful."

Giovanni looked at him. "I will like to read them to you—you will understand them."

"Yes," Gerda whispered, clasping his thin hand, and feeling how it trembled, "Dear Father will understand the Letters."

VII

"I think," said Giovanni, "one or two of the earlier Letters, describing Paolo's journey are lost. Anyway the first one that we have is written from Leipzig, and describes his first meeting with Bach. I will translate it as I read—I know the contents so well that it is easy to me."

"Do not omit one word," his grandfather begged.

"Not one word," promised Giovanni.

He opened the casket, and took out the first bundle of Letters—each packet was carefully numbered—and unfolded the large sheet of thin opaque paper closely covered with writing, the ink of which was brownish from age.

"This letter," he said, "is dated July 11, 1734. So he came to Leipzig one hundred years ago, it is odd, *nicht wahr*, that I should come to this city just a hundred years after him?"

He began to read the letter:

> "Battista, my Beloved Brother, I have at last reached this town of Leipzig which contains the greatest musician in the world. I gave to thee some account of my travels in my previous epistle, but all that is matter of small importance. Leipzig is a town crowded with old gabled houses with steep roofs and plaster walls which are often crudely painted. The Germans appear very pleased with it and think it a fine city, but of course the poor wretches have never seen Rome. They are a heavy people, and I like them not overmuch, and their

cooking is heavy, like themselves. But it was not for such things I journeyed hither. Having arrived here and got me a bed at an Inn called by the name of the 'Red Oxen,' I then walked forth into the cobbled streets, hearing on all sides the harsh and guttural sounds of the German language talked by the people about me. After Italy what growling and crawling sounds! It was fortunate that I had acquired some small knowledge of the ungracious tongue from that old teacher of counterpoint——"

Giovanni broke off and turned to his grandfather, "You must not mind the things that Paolo says about the Saxons, he never really liked Leipzig, in spite of his devotion to Bach."

"Did he dwell long here?"

"Just over two years—he died here."

"Died here? Then he died young?"

"Yes," Gerda answered, "He was but twenty-five when he died, and his brother, who had been sent for when it was known that his illness was probably fatal, arrived the morning of the day he died, quite overwrought with grief. He would not consent to leave the body behind him, but had it embalmed and took it back to Italy."

ROMAN INSCRIPTION

"*Mütterchen* and I have many times seen the tomb," Giovanni interposed, "Great-great-Grandfather made himself quite poor with all the expense of the embalming and the journey and the burial. It says on the stone in deep letters, carved as the old Romans carved them: 'Here Lies a Dead Musician, Paolo Cavatini, aged Twenty-Five Years, whose Spring of Promise was cut Untimely Short in a Foreign Country. He was a Pupil of Johann Sebastian Bach, the German Master. He Gave His Life to Obtain that Teaching, and Thought Not the Sacrifice Too Great. Born in Rome 1711, Died in Leipzig, in Saxony, 1736.' That is what is written in deep letters on his tomb."

"There is something strange in that young man's story," said Professor Eisner, "Some meaning I cannot quite perceive. But continue—I am of a great eagerness to hear all."

Giovanni looked across at him—he saw with some surprise that his grandfather had the same kind of feeling he had himself about these Letters. But he continued his reading without any further comment.

" 'I wandered about the streets,' he read, "and soon found myself

in the cobbled Square which had on two sides of it the Thomaskirche and the Thomasschule, which you must know, Battista, means the church and school of St. Thomas. In the middle of the Square is a stone water fountain—a poor thing after ours in Rome. They are tall straight ugly buildings, and the Church of St. Thomas is on the outside more like a vast house for orphans than a Basilica—to an eye that has looked on the Dome of Michael Angelo or on Santa Croce in Gerusalemme, it has little suggestion of religious beauty. It is as deformed as the 'Reformed' religion they practice here!"

Professor Eisner could not resist a word here, "Bach, whom your ancestor so admired, was a good Lutheran," he said.

"Yes, dear Papa," Gerda answered, smiling at his rather perturbed look, "And Paolo was a good Catholic. And they came to understand each other very well, as you will see. But Paolo, especially in the early days, was always saying contemptuous things about German ways and customs. He was very impetuous and hot-headed and young, and he had never been out of Italy till he came to Leipzig. So you must be patient with him—as Bach was." "Forgive me," said the old man, "And please to continue, Giovanni."

LEIPZIG IMPRESSIONS

Giovanni read on: "To me the one virtue in this place, in these buildings without distinction, was that they housed the Signor Bach, to whose side I so much desired to come. I looked at the porch of the vast ugly church, at the door of the Cantor's dwelling facing on the cobbled Square and the stone fountain with its pale air of Italy, and I thought of his footsteps passing those thresholds. I had in my pocket the letter which should introduce me to him, but I found myself unable to knock upon that door and present it. From Italy, travelling many days and many miles I had come to knock upon that door and I could not do it! I felt as though some shadow of greatness brooded over me and made me afraid. Thou, my Battista, will, I think, understand this—in his music speaks a greatness I hear in no other music known to this world. Small wonder, then, that I had a certain fear of him. But, as might be surmised, these Saxons have but small understanding of his greatness. I made one or two enquiries as to his repute in this town. The pigheads had but the most ordinary ideas of him—they admitted him a fine organist, but as a Cantor thought him unsatisfactory, of a temper difficult—small wonder considering the fools among whom his lot is cast. They regard his music as too severe, he has written none of the operatic stuff now so popular in Leipzig—the sort of

stuff any Italian dancing master with his little kit-fiddle can turn out in his sleep—persists in writing in an outmoded fashion. The fashion of the angels, I should call it, but these Leipzigers have few ideas of Heaven. Such were some of the remarks that the mention of the Cantor's name produced. I assure you I took a hot head to my pillow, and turned and tossed while the towers of Leipzig spoke the dragging hours till dawn. I promised thee that by my pen I would talk with thee in careful detail, as I should by my tongue were we in the company of each other. But I cannot tell what has left no impression on my mind, and of my second day in Leipzig I recall nothing worth setting down till I stood and knocked upon that door. He dwells on the left-hand side of the Thomasschule—the large ugly building which houses the Cantor and his family at one end, the School in the middle, and the Rector at the end which is towards the Church. I knocked, the door was opened, and I was led up a steep narrow flight of stairs through a room which was evidently used for the family meals, into another and larger room in which were several musical instruments and also a Signora whom I took to be the Frau Cantorin. She was younger than I should have expected, having been told that the Herr Cantor's age was forty-nine years, and had a pleasant manner, while her blue eyes were very gentle in expression. She curtsied and said after a word of greeting and enquiry as to my travels—I had sent my commendatory letter by a messenger that forenoon—'The Herr Cantor is expecting thee,' and opened a door that led out of the room we were in. 'Here is the Signor Cavatini, Sebastian,' she said, and shutting the door after I had gone through it, retired to the other room. I was alone with him who had called me from Italy. I was without power of speech or of movement, I stood and looked upon him. He looked at me for an instant, and then he got up rather slowly from his chair, came to me, and put his hand on my shoulder. 'So, it is love for music hath caused thee to make this long journey?' he said. 'Thy music,' I answered. He has a face powerful and somewhat grave, but when I said that word a smile like the sun coming out on a stern landscape entirely altered his expression. 'It was courteous of thee to come so far for so small a thing!' After this little remark I suddenly felt that I had known him always—'Sicut erat in principio, et nunc, et semper.' A sense of eternity, without a beginning and without an end. A curious feeling, Battista, a knowledge that I had come home, was where I had always belonged, in spite of being in this alien land. Having found this great Signor I knew that I was not going to leave him, and my fear of him had gone

from me. Very soon we were in the adjoining chamber where were the musical instruments, though the Signora his wife was no longer there, and the Signor Bach sat himself down at the harpsichord and asked what of his music I had heard. I told him. 'Then, in compliment to thy country, I shall play to thee a little Italian Concerto of my composing and thou shalt tell me if it please thee.' Battista, that first movement was a bit of pure joy, and the second the most tender meditation—alas, it is but waste of words to attempt to tell thee. Then he rose from the keyboard: 'But if thou dost desire my teaching I must hear something of thy capacities.' He pushed me down on the harpsichord stool, and took up a sheet of music, which, as I knew afterwards, was written in his own hand and put it on the rest before me. 'Play that,' he commanded. It was somewhat intricate, but so lovely that it led me on from bar to bar. He turned the page without a word. A glance showed me it was a four-part fugue. 'Is it permitted that I look through it one moment first?' I asked, blessing for the first time that old German stranded in Rome who taught me something of the contrapuntal mystery. Signor Bach nodded, smiling. When I had, with the help of that hurried silent reading, performed it not discreditably, he said, 'I perceive that thou dost treat a fugue with due respect, not like those Knights of the Keyboard who will dash at a fugue with no more thought than it were a Courante—and then come heavily to grief! Well, so thou dost wish to become my pupil?' 'Signor, it is my greatest earthly desire.' Then he said these wonderful words—almost I should write them in letters of gold—'Thou hast come at a fortunate hour, for at this time I have no pupil living with me, and so have room to take thee under my roof.' My breath almost left me at this joy—for already I felt that every moment away from him was a moment of not living. To be not only his pupil, Battista, but a member of his household. Little thought I when I left thee that I was journeying towards so great a happiness. I must have looked strange from the shock of it, for he put me into a chair, and strode to the door. 'Magdalena,' he called, 'Bring hither a glass of thy cordial water with haste.' A voice answered, and in a moment she whom I had already seen hastened in with the reviving drink. She stood smiling as I drank it and while her husband informed her that I was to take up my abode with them the next day. 'He can have that little room downstairs which was Friedemann's,' he said. So it was all arranged, and feeling almost dazed at this turn of events so unimaginable I left that roof which on

BACH PLAYS

the morrow was to be my home. I am weary with the great happenings of this day, Battista, the pen, which has laboured so long to tell thee these things, falls from my hand and my eyes are heavy with sleep. I will betake me to the stone posting-box I saw at one of the town gates and entrust to its jaws this epistle so that thy waiting for news of me may be the shorter. I will tell thee of the things to come in another letter—which will be written from under the very roof of Signor Sebastian Bach."

Giovanni folded the sheet carefully.

"Shall that be enough reading for to-night?" he asked, "I, like Paolo, am sleepy!"

VIII

But though Giovanni pleaded sleepiness, when he had got to his bed he found sleep had deserted him—the old excitement he had felt when he first read those Letters had descended on him again. He lay on his back, his hands clasped under his head, staring at the pale silvery square of his window. His thoughts were with that ancestor of his, Paolo Cavatini, who found the flowering of his life in Leipzig. He imagined him, young and ardent, coming to this town in which he himself was dwelling. Not greatly changed since Paolo's day in the Inner Town, the Old Town within the fortifications which had been Bach's town. The Pleisse still flowed, slow and placid, the Thomaskirche and the Thomasschule still stood unchanged. But the great change, the great loss, was that Bach had gone. The streets that had known his footfall no longer echoed to that step, the sound of his voice was silent, though his music still spoke in eternal beauty to certain hearts. Phrases, sequences, murmured in his mind. He was oppressed with the thought of places, of inanimate objects, remaining, while the people who gave them all their meaning, departed. Why, when that music meant so strangely much to him, could he not have been born in an earlier generation, so that he, like Paolo, might have seen and spoken with him who made it? In answer to this question came the thought that had that wish been granted he would now be dead and lying in the cold grave, a lost and forgotten grave, maybe, like Bach's own. And what would that matter? Another side of Giovanni's mind responded. All who lived were dead sometime. The thing that mattered was to live when life offered the best, the greatest, one could imagine. And he knew that for him that time was when Bach was living upon this earth. Then Paganini came to his thoughts, that marvellous, that almost incredible genius, who had taught him—had he known Bach he could not have known Paganini.

THE OLD TOWN

But really, of course, it was fantastic to compare them. The creator of immortal music, the virtuoso performer, each supreme in their own way, were not comparable. The one lived so long as music lived, the other died with his death, or lived as a shadow in the memory of those who had listened to his playing, and with their dying was no more. Paganini was alive, but death walked near him—the extraordinary countenance rose upon the darkness before him, and it had an awful likeness to a skull, the merest veil of flesh covering, though not concealing, the urgent bones. Giovanni shut his eyes and saw that face, opened his eyes and saw it. The silence of night, the emphasis of solitude, perturbed him. He stirred, turned over, finally rose from his bed and went to the window.

The roofs of Leipzig lay encompassing the little paved garden, faint moonlight showing their varied outlines and hunched or sloping roofs, which had some of the attractiveness of a fairy tale to Giovanni after the rectangular buildings, the flat roofs, the severe marble palaces, the campanile, the domes, the colossal ruins, of his native Rome. As he hung at his window looking out upon the night some distance away to the left rose the steep shoulder, jutting skywards, of the Thomaskirche, dark, with the dropping moon behind it. All the roofs Giovanni looked upon were old, as old, and much older most of them, than Bach's day. As he leaned upon the sill, awake, and yet with the languors of coming sleep weaving faint webs around him, he wondered whether in the still and darkling streets ghosts were walking—those to whom Leipzig was once as real and solid as it was now to him, visiting the places they once had known so well. Could he slip out of his encumbering body, would he meet them, not as spirits to fear and shrink from, but as people whose lives were as real as his own? And if he could go forth on that quest he would find him for whom he felt he had always been searching—time would no longer be a barrier between them.

NIGHT THOUGHTS

Suddenly he realised that the moon had sunk, not only behind the roofs, but below the horizon. It was dark, and he was cold. With a little shiver he climbed into his bed again, pulled the feather quilt about him, and fell at once into a deep and peaceful slumber.

IX

Giovanni's grandfather had spent a considerable part of the same night also lying awake, thinking of the letter written a hundred years earlier, and musing upon the writer, whose history was new to him. Long vistas of human life reveal a pattern not visible in immediate living, and he perceived the curious design which brought the passionate Italian boy from Rome to Leipzig that he

might become Bach's pupil, and then, decades later, took his Gerda from Leipzig to Rome, and by her marriage linked her son to this dead pupil of dead Bach whose Letters had exercised such influence upon Giovanni. He had realised even at this first reading that to Giovanni those Letters were not simply an interesting, even enthralling, re-creation of a vanished past. To the boy they were a key to something that lived, that had never ceased to live. Heinrich Eisner was old enough, and had all his life lived so much in an immaterial world, to feel that the boundaries of past and present were not so hard and definite as most people imagined, that the largesse of time was more generous. Beauty did not die. His mind, steeped in music, and already beholding the shadowy shores of Eternity, was prepared to receive all things and deny nothing.

When he and Giovanni met next morning his first word was of the Letters.

"I thought of them most of the night, Giovanni. I was glad to be in Leipzig where they were written. And this evening, after *Abendessen*, you will read me more of them? In the day we must continue our duties, but in the evening, when it is peaceful and our work is done, we will once more step over Bach's threshold."

"Can we not do that in reality?" Giovanni asked, "I have walked outside the Thomasschule many times, but I want to step within. Already many times I have meant to ask you to introduce me there, but something has withheld me."

"But of a certainty you shall go there, dear boy. But not just at this time, as my friend the Herr Cantor is indisposed, and has been for some little while."

"The Herr Cantor?" Giovanni looked puzzled, "But that was Bach."

THE HERR CANTOR

"There have been Cantors since Bach," said his grandfather smiling, "You live so much in those Letters you think you are still in the eighteenth century!"

Giovanni looked a little abashed, "I am foolish, *Grossvater*, only Cantor has always meant Bach to me since I first heard the word."

"I do not call you foolish," said the old man, looking at him tenderly, "It is only that you have the power of living in two worlds. Cherish it."

X

The three of them gathered for the evening reading, Gerda, her father, and her son. All day they had looked forward to this hour. Giovanni because in thus sharing these treasured Letters with one so sympathetic as his grandfather

he vividly increased his own strong feeling about them—they took on the vitality of the spoken word. Gerda, though her interest in the Letters was deep and permanent—they had been of a singular comfort to her during all her Italian life—cared more for the two who read and listened than for Cavatini or even Bach. But the old man who sat listening so intently in his high-backed chair distilled a double essence of content from the occasion. He knew that he had come to a quiet resting place, where for a little while he might enjoy what was left to him of life—as each hour slipped through his fingers he felt its preciousness, but refused to let regret at its passing destroy his peace. He had moments when he felt all the hours of all the lives gathering into a deep pool, dark and still, into which it was possible to look as though it were a mirror and see strange and lovely things. He thought Giovanni would look in that pool sometime.

"I like this next Letter," said Gerda, slipping into her low chair by her father's side, "It is so nice and domestic. It tells some of the things that a woman likes to know about the Cantor's household—though not all! Paolo never says what was the colour and the fashion of the Frau Cantorin's gown!"

"The fashion, I imagine, my dear," said her father smiling, "would be that of her day, so Paolo would naturally take no particular note of it."

"No, I suppose not," Gerda sighed, "Still, it disappoints me. But men never regard clothes save when enamoured of the lady who wears them, and even then cannot distinguish between a paduasoy and a taffeta."

"These are mysteries too deep for us! Proceed with your reading, Giovanni."

Giovanni took a letter from the little lacquer casket and unfolded it:

"I always feel specially stirred by this letter," he said, "For it is the first letter he wrote from Bach's house."

"Yes," Gerda smiled at him, "That house just down the *strasse* and round to the left, and there it is!"

"And we sit here, in Bach's town, reading this letter of a hundred years ago," said her father, "Or rather, not reading it, but talking about it. Once more, proceed!"

"Do not be in so great a hurry, Papa! It is so nice that one wishes to save it up, and eat slowly all round it as one used to eat the *Kuchen* round the jammy bit in the middle!"

The Professor looked fondly at her, “Baby! But you have eaten this *Kuchen* before, and I have not yet tasted.”

“Poor starved Papa! But he shall not go hungry any more!”

And as her father looked at her gentle smiling face and at Giovanni’s dark one lit by that intensity of living which always seemed increased in him by any contact with those Letters, he felt within himself “This is a good moment. Time, hasten slowly, spare to me a little space in which to hold in my hands this moment.”

> “Beloved Brother,” Giovanni began reading, “This page is written under the roof of the Signor Bach. Here I have my dwelling, as in the Courts of Heaven. Though, if I tell the full truth to you, as ’tis always my aim to do, I must confess that this spreading roof shelters many more than the family Bach—a whole school of boys and youths and masters and Rectors and Con-Rectors and personages innumerable. Indeed the roof itself has but lately been lifted so that another story might be inserted. But the Herr Cantor’s dwelling was not increased by this enlargement, but remained as it had been before, though he and his household had to dwell elsewhere while these changes were proceeding. ‘And glad I was to return again to my own home,’ said the Frau Cantorin, looking round her with pleasure. And indeed, ’tis very neat and well-ordered. I think myself that while they were a-building they might have prepared some increase of lodging for the Cantor—he has not overmuch accommodation from what I have seen of it. The ground-floor has one large bedchamber and a smaller one behind, which is now mine, also a washhouse and other domestic arrangements, to which I have not penetrated. The floor above contains the bedchamber of the Cantor and his wife and a little room opening from it, the dining parlour, the family living-room, and beyond that the *Componierstube*. On the floor above this are more bedchambers, which I have not seen. You will perceive that this is not overmuch accommodation for a considerable family. But outward shows are not needed by the Cantor, wherever he may be he makes a greatness about him. To me he is always the only person in a company—I see not, hear not, think not of any other when he is present. I do not feel I can give to you any very satisfactory description of his person—he is of medium height, of somewhat heavy build; his head is massive and massively set on his shoulders. His mouth is very beautifully shaped, sensitive and generous in its lines, his nose is slightly pushed

to one side of his face, his brows take a steep curve upwards and outwards, there is a permanent frown between them, his eyes somewhat stern in expression, except when he smiles, and yet at the same time they have a strange remote look. His forehead is both wide and very high—the lofty temple of music. I feel that it is a countenance full of strong and somewhat contradictory qualities, difficult to understand, still more difficult to describe. No words can do that, only to see him and speak with him, which some fortunate day may befall thee, Battista."

"It did," Gerda broke in, "Only it was not a fortunate day for poor Battista, as it was when he came to his brother's death-bed."

"Has he left any record of the occasion?" asked her father.

"Yes, a few broken sentences in an old note-book, which he evidently carried upon him—they complete the tale of the Letters."

"How remarkable that it should be thus complete and rounded off."

"You shall hear the little Battista has to say when we have finished the Letters," Giovanni said, "Shall I now continue?"

Assent being given, he went on:

BACH'S HOUSEHOLD

"His household I have not yet all seen. His eldest son Friedemann, and his second son Philipp Emanuel, are not here. His eldest daughter, who I take to be about my own age, is at home. She is very slender and quiet and I should not much have noticed her, for I have seen many more beautiful maidens in Italy, had not my attention been drawn to her by the way her eyes are always on her Father—she listens to every word he says. The Frau Cantorin is much younger than her great husband, and treats him with an affectionate and becoming deference, but as there are several children of various ages, including one so small as still to be crawling on the floor, her attention is much turned to her maternal duties. The ages, names, and dispositions of these various children I shall no doubt later be better acquainted with.

The Cantor is very proud of the musical powers of his two eldest sons, whom I have not yet seen. 'I taught them from infancy,' he said to me, 'And for long they followed in my footsteps, but now they are leaving me far behind.' To this statement I ventured a dissent, but he shook his head, 'Ah, the young, they go far and fast—

my road is slower, but maybe we all, by God's goodness, arrive somewhere in the end.'

The day of my arrival, after *Abendessen*, which the Cantor's household partake of at the hour of six, the Signor Bach said, 'Shall we have a family concert for our young friend, now that we have an additional performer?' At first I did not imagine that he meant to include me, and when I found he did, think how I felt, Battista, thus to be included in the family Bach. 'You, Paolo, shall take the *Continuo* at the harpsichord,' he said, handing to me some sheets of music, and himself proceeding to take from its wrappings a viola, while Frau Bach and the elder daughter leaned side by side over their notes, and the younger girl sat upon a cushion on the floor and sang quite unabashed and perfectly in tune and time. The Frau Bach has a singularly clear soprano, and the daughter a very tender contralto. It was a short cantata of his own we performed. When it was finished he came to me and put his hand upon my shoulder, 'Thou didst play as a musician should. Tomorrow I will give thee a lesson.' So overcome I felt that I seized his hand and kissed it. He looked astonished and said, 'We only do that to princes in Saxony.' 'But thou art greater than princes!' I cried, 'Nay, that is foolish,' he reproved me. I felt much abashed, but as the daughter Catharina bade me good-night she whispered, 'He is!' "

Giovanni paused a moment to take breath.

"What a picture these Letters give us!" his grandfather exclaimed, "You are there in the house of the family Bach, you see and hear and talk with them. Your ancestor, Giovanni, had a nimble pen. And you, too, do your part well—I quite forget that you are translating to another tongue."

"Well," Gerda put in, "With an Italian father and a German mother he was born to two languages. I talked German with him from his babyhood, and everyone else spoke to him in Italian."

XI

The reading continued:

ORGAN LESSON

"The next forenoon I had my first lesson from Sebastian Bach, and it was at the organ keyboard I had it, the organ of the Thomaskirche, just across the Square. I knew something of his reputation as an organist, even these

grudging Leipzigers put a little awe into their voices when they spoke of his organ-playing. While I was awaiting the Cantor's leisure from his morning duties in the School, his daughter Catharina entered the room where I was working upon a little piece of counterpoint and said, 'My Father will be disengaged for thy organ lesson in the half of an hour.' She spoke shyly and stiffly, then she leaned over the table and said swiftly, her eyes shining, 'If thou canst but induce him to play to thee, then thou wilt be in Heaven!' Before I could answer she had gone from the room. A strange, withdrawn little creature, but evidently one who understands what things are of importance. Punctually at the time named the Maestro arrived, and I followed him with palpitating heart into the Church of St. Thomas and up to the organ-loft. It seemed a dream, my Battista, that those broad shoulders and that grey curled wig in front of me were Bach's. His music had called to me with a compelling voice, and because of that voice I was here in Leipzig. But his organ music was unknown to me, till that moment, 'I shall play to thee a little first,' said he, 'then thou wilt have some idea of the capacities of the instrument. It is not so good an organ as the one at the University Church, which I will show thee one day. But something can be done with this one.' He was seated on the organ stool, pulling out stops. Then he turned the sand hour-glass saying 'Time flies too fast at the organ.' A moment's silence and a tremendous chord, like the thunder of the gods, broke the silence, and from that moment I was, as his daughter had promised, in Heaven. Words can give no impression of the beauty and the majesty of his playing—it is useless that I attempt to describe to you music that never in this world you can hear, for he was playing what existed only in his mind, not on paper. When he ceased I think my face must have told him what my stumbling tongue could not. ' 'Tis a pleasure to play to those who really care,' he said. Then he pulled out from some recess a book with leathern back and corners, 'These are some little pieces I wrote for the Beginning Organist. They are mostly short Choral Preludes on our Lutheran hymns, and as they have a variety derived from the ancient melodies, I find they are the less wearisome to my pupils. Also they may be played in different manners according to the registration.' He turned the pages to a Prelude on 'Jesu, meine Freude' and with full diapason tone made it most noble and majestic, then he repeated it with a quiet and tender registration which specially brought out the tenor voice and produced a new and appealing loveliness. It was as

though Religion and Beauty had joined hands and sung together. ‘So,’ said Herr Bach, with that direct and simple manner which I begin to see is characteristic of his nature, ‘Thou wilt perceive what transmutations of tone and feeling are shut up in this wooden box of pipes. Now, let us see what thy hand and thought can bring forth.’ Thus, it befell me to experiment with Bach’s music and Bach’s organ, under Bach’s own eye. My hands shook with the uncontrollable emotion of my heart, as I played from pages written by his hand music of a loveliness hitherto unknown to me—such things as ‘Erschienen ist der herrliche Tag,’ ‘Liebster Jesu, wir sind hier,’ ‘Ich ruf’ zu dir.’ I have the book now, by his permission, under my eye as I write this page to thee. When I came to the Prelude on the hymn for the dying, ‘Alle Menschen müssen sterben,’ and reached the poignant beauty of the final bar, I could no more. I rose from the organ seat, leaned my head against the carved casing and wept. ‘All men must die’—but if he died, or I died and had to leave him! I know not what confused thoughts were running in my head, but that beauty he had made and his presence overset me completely. Again that kind hand on my shoulder, ‘My poor child,’ said his voice, ‘Thou art tired and homesick, maybe.’ ‘Nay, not homesick, my only home is near thee. Promise that thou wilt never send me away from thee!’ ‘Be more calm, my child’—again he called me by that name—‘I will not send thee away unless thou shouldst desire to go. Come now, it is near the time for *Mittagessen*. I think thou must need a little nourishing food.’ Battista, I would have died for him, that minute, in the organ-loft, but instead he told me to go home and eat with him. He bewilders me, he is so great, he soars so high above us all, and yet he is so homely and simple. He despises not the humble things of life. I think God has made him as a pattern to us.”

XII

Giovanni paused, his dark eyes shining.

“I feel as though I had written that myself, as though it were I, and not Paolo, who had been with Bach in the Thomaskirche!”

“That does not surprise me,” his grandfather said, “For your ancestor has the gift of relating things as they occurred, which means both truth and vividness. I too was in that organ-loft, and the shadow which was Bach, a music-creating abstraction, is taking on the warmth of life. But you will not cease your reading?”

Giovanni smiled, “You feel as I did when *Mütterchen* first gave these Letters into my hands—I lay all night reading them on my bed, I could not cease for sleep. It was like finding a new life.”

He turned the page in his hand and continued:

> “My first organ lesson from the Maestro resulted in my spending the whole of the afternoon hours in sleep, to my own shame, but I felt most curiously exhausted—we small ones have to adjust our vision when we dwell with the great ones. Yet do not think that he himself makes any claim of greatness—it is something that surrounds him. His manner is quiet, though he has a natural air of authority. His tastes are evidently simple, he is essentially the good husband and the good father. There are many children —I begin to discover the names of the family and their condition. His wife, whose name is Anna Magdalena, is his second spouse and evidently much younger than he, indeed, if it were not for her matronly coif, she might almost be his daughter. The maiden Catharina Dorothea is not, of course, her daughter, but offspring of the first marriage. So are the two eldest sons, Friedemann and Carl Philipp Emanuel—the elder of these two has recently been appointed organist to the Sophienkirche at Dresden, and the second son is also away from his home. Their father has much pride in these two sons, already he has told me of their unusual musical gifts—which, surely, are the natural results of being his sons —and how Emanuel when he was but eleven years old would look over his shoulder when he was writing music and going to the adjacent instrument would immediately play what he had seen written. In this house at present are his eldest daughter, and a son of his first wife’s, Gottfried Bernhard, who is about eighteen years of age, a little girl called Liesgen, and a small boy or two. There are also several children who have died, which is a tender subject with the parents. I find this German family like to Italians in their love for children. Their childish talk and their continued experimenting with some musical instrument or other—the Dwelling Room is full of them—does not seem to disturb the Maestro. He retires into his little Music Study—it has no furniture save a small writing table, a clavichord, two black leathern chairs, and a case of books upon the wall—which opens out from the Dwelling Room, shuts the door and proceeds to the composition of a cantata. It appears that he generally writes a new cantata each month for performance in the two

SONS AND DAUGHTER

churches whose music he directs. I have heard one being rehearsed, and I have been permitted to read over several of the scores, and they are of a beauty that uplifts the heart. I awake in the night in my little room just to remember that I dwell under the roof where such music is created. I walk in the Square and look at it from the outside and wonder that I do not see a golden aura about that roof such as our painters put behind the heads of saints. But, as I told thee before, those Leipzigers trot complacently past, their wigs snug on their thick heads and the skirts of their coats swinging with importance, and never turn an eye to the Cantor's door. And his family?—they obviously have for him a devoted respect and affection, but do they understand what he really is? I feel sometimes, Battista, that I am the only one to perceive the immensity of his genius, its depth and its height."

The Professor broke in, "I imagine that would be true then, as indeed it is now. I, by good fortune of my old master Zimmermann have been brought up in the true Bach tradition, which was instilled also into your mother, Giovanni, while your father in Italy had it from this other and more immediate source."

"My Father," said Giovanni proudly, "had copies which Paolo had made under Bach's roof of many of those immortal compositions—including the violin sonatas and some organ works."

"We step deeper into that brook—that everflowing brook, and the deeper we go the clearer and sweeter are the waters."

"Waters of life," murmured Gerda, "They kept my heart alive many days when life seemed too difficult."

Her father and her son looked at her; it was not often she spoke of her own griefs.

XIII

VISIT TO THE CANTOR

Before they had got any more deeply into the nightly reading of the Letters, Professor Eisner said to his grandson, "One of your wishes, Giovanni, can now be fulfilled. Will you come with me this afternoon to call upon the Herr Cantor?—he is now sufficiently recovered to see you."

Giovanni was enchanted at the prospect. For the first time his feet would go where his thoughts had so often dwelt—he would enter the house where Bach had lived, stand under the roof that had sheltered him from the cold and

the heat, under which he had experienced inspiration, trouble, death. It seemed so strange to him, this thought, that he felt a kind of fear. The stones, the wall, the roof, remained, but Bach was gone. This idea took a strange possession of his mind, so that as he walked with his grandfather to that familiar door—scarcely a day had passed since his arrival in Leipzig that he had not gone to gaze upon it—he found it difficult to talk in his usual manner. It was an effort to pull himself to the surface from a remoteness in which his mind seemed sunk. This difficulty was still upon him when they reached the Thomasschule and were admitted to the Cantor's apartments.

Herr Christian Weinlig's greeting to the grandson of his old friend was kindly, and his interest evident in the dark slender boy, about whose musical gifts his curiosity was aroused. Giovanni's Italian origins had their appeal to him, as he too had known Italy, and studied at Bologna with Mattei. He asked many questions about Paganini, which Giovanni answered as best he might, all the while longing to ask questions in his turn about this dwelling which had been Bach's, but unable even to utter his name. His eyes looked round the room in which they sat, wondering to what use it had been put by the Bach family—its aspect now so evidently different in its heavy comfortable furniture and the pictures hanging on the walls.

His grandfather was not unmindful of Giovanni's obsession—though he had been besought beforehand that no mention must be made of the secret treasure of the Cavatini Letters. He said something of Bach and asked the Cantor if there were any relics of his residence there.

"My predecessor who died here in 1750?" his successor asked, "A very fine organist, so they say, and composed a deal of music for which the present generation has small taste——"

"The more fools they!" burst in Giovanni.

The Cantor looked at him with some amusement.

"So you cultivate a taste for this old-fashioned music. I suppose by now it has become ancient enough to be new to the young. Give it another twenty years or so and I daresay there will be quite a cult of Bach among our youthful intellectuals."

"I imagine you do not prophesy amiss," said Professor Eisner, "That music is too fine to be permanently neglected. And as my grandson cultivates this interest in your predecessor and his works, is there anything of his in this house that you could show to him?"

The Cantor shook his head. "Nothing, I fear. You see I am sixth in the

succession since Bach—Harrer and Anton Doles and Hiller and Müller and Schicht came after him, before me. But I do not imagine even had I been his immediate successor that there would have been any of his possessions remaining. He had a large family and they all took their share, while his widow died so poor that she had become a charge upon the town and had been obliged to sell such of her husband's manuscripts as she possessed."

PAST CANTORS

"And no one now knows where she was buried, or even the grave of Bach!" cried Giovanni, with a flush of feeling mounting his forehead.

"You seem to take that to heart more than we Leipzigers do," said the Cantor, who liked the boy and was amused by his vehemence.

A hot retort rose to Giovanni's lips, but he checked it—he must not so easily reveal his heart to strangers.

"Not that I regard this neglect as creditable to Leipzig," the Cantor went on, "Sebastian Bach was a very distinguished man, though somewhat choleric and hard to work with, as the tradition of the School avers. He lived in this house, though unfortunately for your interest these walls tell no secrets. If you go behind that screen and open the door there you will see the room which he used as his Composing Study."

Giovanni stood up.

"May I?" he said, in a voice which had gone a little from his control.

His grandfather knew that this was a moment of special meaning to Giovanni, and that he might have it entirely to himself he began talking to the Cantor.

XIV

Giovanni moved behind the screen and stood for a moment with his hand on the door. His heart beats were heavy. He opened the door, stepped across the threshold, and shut the door behind him.

He found himself in a small room with one window. It was rather a dark room, because the walls were covered in a deep blue paper flecked with gold. A maroon upholstered sofa stood against one wall, a satin-wood table in the centre of the room, and a slender bureau at the side of the window, which was heavily draped with velvet curtains.

Giovanni stood by the door, gazing, and his heart smote him with a deep sense of disappointment. The room, the sacred room, said nothing to him.

Then a sense of giddiness smote him, he shut his eyes for a moment, and when he opened them again he was standing in another room. He stared with amazement—had he fallen asleep? The room was the same size and the window was in the same place, but the walls were whitewashed and on them hung nothing but a rather clumsily-made shelf of books in dark leather bindings, serious looking volumes. The window had a light muslin curtain looped across it and behind the pane rain was falling steadily. Under the window was a heavy oak table piled with manuscript music and bearing a pair of pinchbeck candlesticks and a pewter snuffer-tray. Before the table was a massive arm-chair, with a black leather seat and back, the chair was pushed to one side as if someone had just risen from it.

For a couple of heart beats Giovanni gazed blankly, then an immense wave of exultation rose up in him.

WINDOW TO THE PAST

"This is Bach's room!"

But even as the words formed in his mind the room slowly faded into a mist through which the maroon sofa, the blue wall-paper, the satin-wood table emerged, wavered unsteadily a moment, and then settled down into the solidity of every day.

XV

After a short space of musical conversation the two men noticed Giovanni's continued absence.

"Evidently he finds something interesting in that room," said the Cantor, "He seems to be a young man of parts and feeling."

Before Giovanni's grandfather could reply, they were both startled by the sound of a fall. They hurried to the inner room to find Giovanni lying on the floor. As they entered he stirred, put his hand to his eyes, and half sat up. They each took hold of him and led him to the sofa. He laid his head back for a moment and shut his eyes—his grandfather was startled to see how greenish his olive skin looked.

Giovanni was the first to speak.

"I am very sorry. I fear I frightened you. I suddenly felt as if everything was slipping away—and then you were both looking at me."

"You must have fainted," said the Cantor kindly, "Lie still while I get you a cordial to restore you."

He hastened from the room and as he did so Giovanni and his grandfather

looked at each other knowing that the same thought was in both their minds. In this room an earlier Cantor had offered a cordial to another Italian boy—Giovanni was to drink where his ancestor had drunk.

"This room has given you some strange experience?" the old man asked, looking round with puzzled eyes at its comfortable commonplace.

Giovanni nodded, but did not speak, as the Cantor at that moment entered with the restorative.

"Seeing Bach's house has been too much for this grandson of yours," he said cheerfully to the Professor, "He is, I imagine, of a nature rather high strung. You must feed him well and get some good German stamina into him."

Giovanni slowly drank the cordial and a more natural tinge returned to his cheeks. When he had finished he sat up.

"You are very good," he said, "And I have been a trouble, for which I am ashamed. But I am most glad to have been in this room."

His grandfather took his arm: "I will conduct him home now and get his mother to put him to bed."

Giovanni smiled at them both, "I am perfectly recovered," he declared.

VISION OF REALITY

But when they were outside the Thomasschule and walking homewards, he relapsed into a silence which his grandfather, glancing at him, did not break. He was full of questions, but he was too sensitive to ask them. Giovanni would tell him when he was ready.

Giovanni walked in a daze, hardly conscious of where he was, but one thing his eye saw with a curious shock—the pavements were dry and dusty. The rain he had seen falling so steadily from Bach's window was eighteenth century rain which had splashed and dried on those stones nearly a hundred years before he was born.

Gerda was much disturbed when she heard of Giovanni's fainting—she looked anxiously at his face, perceiving there some shock. But he resisted her desire that he should retire to his bed—he would not depart from his usual time, but when that arrived he was thankful. His mind was in a strange turmoil and he wanted to be alone. He had come across a bewildering thing, he desired to look at it, to find out, if he might, what it meant. He lay on his back in the dark, and the whole scene returned to him. It was not a dream, he knew, it was not imagination—it was a vision of reality, but reality as it had been a hundred years earlier. He had not created it. Definitely and certainly and without any

manner of doubt, he had stepped into something that was outside himself, that had an existence entirely unconnected with him. By some accident he did not remotely understand he had gone backwards in time. Suddenly his heart began to beat with great violence—a thought had smitten him and shook him. If he had seen that room as it was in Bach's day might he not go further and behold the people who had lived in it? Bach himself? He felt as if the bed was sinking away beneath him, as if he himself were sinking into entirely new regions of consciousness—or was it madness he was sinking into? He pressed both hands to his head and struggled to a sitting position—he felt like a swimmer coming to the surface from depths of water. A ray of moonlight fell on the crucifix on the wall—he sent a prayer like a cry towards it and felt better. He had come back to a world he knew. He lay down again and a phrase from the Mass for the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel floated gently into his mind: "I am the mother of fair love and of fear, of knowledge, and of holy hope."

He repeated the words to himself several times. They were like a spell to him. He felt calmed, his sense of strangeness and faint stirrings of fear left him. He felt as though he were high in the air looking down at the world which slowly revolved below him—he could see all that was happening there, he saw history as a vast procession and felt that if he wished he could take his place there in any period and in any country. It was all in the mind of God. One short period of history—a matter of sixty-five years—one man's lifetime, had always meant more to him than any other. Why should he be afraid if through some links of blood and spirit which he did not understand, the veil that lay over the past grew thin for a moment to him? He might see nothing ever again. Let him cherish that glimpse so strangely vouchsafed him. But this might be but the first step—he might go much further. He rolled over and buried his face in the pillow. He dared not look at that possibility, it was too heart-shaking.

Ten minutes afterwards he was deep in the sleep of physical and spiritual exhaustion.

XVI

The next morning he did not wake at his usual time, so his mother, who had thought constantly of him through a broken night, went to his room and tapped gently on the door. As she got no answer she entered, her heart giving a little anxious swerve as she did so.

Giovanni lay on his side, his eyes closed in a deep but evidently not dreamless sleep, for a smile wavered on his mouth. Gerda watched him for a moment, and then remembering that the watched sleeper wakes, she moved

softly away and closed the door.

BREAKFAST TABLE

She and her father had almost finished their morning meal when a tousled, half-dressed Giovanni burst in upon them. He was half laughing, half sulky.

"I apologise for being so late, but why did no one call me? May I have breakfast like this, for I am completely starving—a little longer and I should have died in my sleep!"

"Sit down and begin at once," said his mother smiling, relieved by these very natural symptoms—she remembered that he had eaten nothing the previous day after his return from the Thomasschule. She began pouring his coffee, while his grandfather laid liberal slices of liver-sausage upon his plate. Giovanni hacked a great wedge from the rye loaf and began eating ravenously.

When he had finished he said, "I will now go and finish dressing, and then I intend to have a real hard morning with the fiddle."

His grandfather watched him depart, and knew that Giovanni was on the defensive, that he did not want to be questioned. He deeply desired to understand what lay beneath that collapse in the Cantor's room, but he must await Giovanni's wish to tell him. So he carefully kept out of his grandson's way throughout the day, and they did not meet till the evening, when, after supper Gerda suggested that they should resume the interrupted reading of the Letters.

Giovanni hesitated a moment and a sudden flush spread over his face, then he said, "Of course, let us continue at once."

"Are you sure you wish it, Giovanni?" his grandfather asked, "If you would rather postpone it to another night——?"

"But no," the boy replied, looking at him with steady eyes, "I desire it above all things."

Just as they were about to begin the reading Gerda was suddenly summoned to deal with Katchen the maid's finger, which she had cut rather deeply.

TWO ROOMS

"Do not wait," she said, as she hurried off for bandage and salve, "I shall only be a few minutes."

When the door shut upon her Giovanni leaned forward and stared in front of him. Then he slowly turned dark affectionate eyes upon his grandfather.

"You know that something strange happened yesterday in the

Thomasschule? I have been thinking about it ever since. I do not understand it. Perhaps it is nothing—perhaps it is everything."

He paused.

"Can you tell me?" his grandfather asked very quietly.

"Yes, I think I can tell you—I could not tell anyone else, even Mother. I went into that room, and it looked quite ordinary. I felt very flat and disappointed, for I had expected that it would be different, that I should feel some shadow of his presence there. Then suddenly it all changed—and Bach's room came back. I saw his black leather arm-chair and his composing table with music on it, and the bookshelves and the little clavichord, and the walls were whitewashed."

"But," said the Professor, careful to show no surprise, "Cavatini has told us in the Letters what that room was like, he described the furniture."

"Yes, I remembered that. But though he said black leathern chair and the rest, that does not tell the shape of the chair and how many brass nails there were in the back. I saw the chair, and the writing table, which had a drawer in it, and two tall pinchbeck candlesticks with tapers in them and a pewter snuffer tray upon it—Paolo did not tell me that! And another thing which seemed to me very strange, when I looked at the window it was raining heavily, and you know it has not rained in Leipzig for a week past. That was rain which fell when Bach was alive. And that room and the things in it were not a delusion—it was as real as this room is. I did not faint till it had gone away. I felt extraordinarily happy while it was there, it was only when it was fading that I could not bear it."

At this moment Gerda entered and said, "I shall have to take Katchen down the street to the chirurgeon—it is a cut that needs a stitch put in."

She was gone so quickly that the two had no time to say anything, indeed their minds had hardly taken in her words, so absorbed were they in what they were discussing.

"It is a strange experience," said the old man, "Some things in life have always been impossible to explain. The whole of existence is such a continued miracle that when anything swerves aside from the normal track it does not surprise me so much as that it should not happen more often. We are surrounded by the inexplicable. Since you have been here, Giovanni, I have thought much about you and about that ancestor of yours, Paolo—there seems to me some strange connection between you."

Into Giovanni's mind as he spoke, leapt the memory of the words he had

said to his mother before they reached Leipzig—"His heart is my heart!" He looked at his grandfather with burning eyes.

"I have felt that most strongly at times," he said, "I feel as if he were part of me—my brother, my twin. I suppose my passion for Bach came from him, for though it is only since my Father died I have known all the Letters, I have known of him and his life ever since I have known anything that matters."

ADVICE

"Do not brood on this experience too much, Giovanni," said his grandfather, rather perturbed by his look, "It is some strange gift bestowed upon you, that moment when you stepped back into Bach's day—produced perhaps by your love and your imagination. It may never happen again to you."

"I do not quite know whether I want it to happen again or not," said Giovanni with a certain absence of candour, for he was eagerly full of hope that this first experience might not be the last. A wonderful possibility stretched before his eyes—if he had this power of getting back he would use it to the utmost. But he could not say this, even to his grandfather with whom he was in such sympathy. He feared the deterring hand of age, his youth did not want the words of wisdom and caution, however gently offered. He longed for his mother's return so that this talk might cease. Even as he wished it he heard her hurrying step.

"I am so sorry, but it is all right now. Where have you got to in the reading?"

"We waited for you," said Giovanni, "We have been talking, but we will now begin."

XVII

"It is strange, Battista," the next letter began, "how all my Italian life is going away from me. It is but a matter of a bare two weeks that I have dwelt under this roof of Bach's, yet I feel that only now is it that I find myself—I can no more imagine life away from him. And it is a real home to which I have come, full of kindliness and mirth and hard work. We rise at five o'clock in the morning, as it is summer; in the winter an extra hour is permitted. The Cantor is responsible for the punctual appearance of the boys in church—that side of life in the Thomasschule, of course, does not affect me, but I have obtained permission to slip into whichever church—there is a Nicolaikirche as well under the Cantor's direction—hears the

Sunday motet or cantata. So before me stretches a procession of Sundays wherein I shall hear Bach's music. Already it has fallen to me to know some of this music before hearing it, for I soon found that a music copyist was needed in this household, as the departure of the two eldest sons had removed their able pens. The Frau Cantorin is skilled in this matter, but her hands are full enough of household cares. So, seeing the opportunity, I offered my services. 'If thou canst write a readable script,' said the Cantor, ' 'twill be of real service. See, take this quill, and let me observe thy style.' Thou wilt remember, Battista, that I somewhat prided myself on my musical hand. I rejoiced that when he looked at it the Cantor was pleased enough to call his wife and praise it to her. 'Then I may help thee?' I asked. 'Indeed, thou wilt probably regret thy good hand, so much will I let thee help me!' he answered. So now my spare moments are filled with this most profitable task, for as I copy I learn from the structure and the beauty of the music before me. As though to encourage me the Herr Cantor told me how he, when much younger than I, taught himself by copying music his elder brother thought too advanced for his use—because of this he was obliged to copy it in secret by the light of the moon in his little attic, as no other light was permitted. 'Bad for my eyes, which often now feel overtired, but good for my musical growth was the close study of those old Northern musicians.' So to me now falls the privilege to help to save those eyes of his. For that alone it were enough to have journeyed from Rome."

MUSIC COPYING

As he read of this copying of music a thought sprang into Giovanni's mind which he put aside for further consideration, and continued:

"We, who have been accustomed to a certain majestic formalism in the music of our Church, come to something strangely different in these sacred cantatas of the Maestro's—all the tender human feelings, yearning, hope, fear, love, find expression in this music. I wish it were possible for thee to hear it, Battista, it would be to thee a new and most lovely world. I perceive, as is always the case with deep natures, that the Maestro is of a most religious disposition, even though not of our Faith, and in this music he expresses his heart. He told me this day when he found me copying a cantata and I ventured some expression of my feeling for it, that he has written a Missa in B minor, which has been performed in the Thomaskirche but did not

greatly interest the Leipzigers—said I not they were pigheads! ‘Perhaps in Rome it might be better liked,’ he said quietly. I had a vision of the Sistine Chapel and the Sistine Choir, the singers of the Vatican, a Missa where it belonged, not in this cold ‘Reformed’ country. I have not yet seen the score of the Mass, but the Maestro has promised me that I should, even said that at some leisure time he might give me some outline of it at the organ. Thou canst see from this the goodness of his disposition towards me. I think it is partly because I come from Italy and as it doth happen I am the first pupil he has had from our country. He asks me often of Italian music, though indeed he already knows much of it; he is interested in any form and manifestation of the art in which his soul is bound up. Even opera, though it is hardly native to his genius and the serious mould of his mind, is not despised by him, and he goes to Dresden sometimes to see his son Friedemann, who is organist at a church there, and takes the occasion to hear an opera while there—‘music that is all pretty tunes’ he calls it.

Since writing that page I have had the opportunity to meet this eldest son of Herr Bach, Friedemann, the gifted, the apple of his father’s eye. Friedemann—ah, my Battista, I write not that name with any pleasure. He arrived unexpectedly from Dresden, and there was a great running up and down the stairs and cries of ‘Friedemann has come!’ The Maestro, who was at that moment giving to me instructions in the art of fugue, rose, when he heard this cry, in a haste unusual to him and flung open the door to the Dwelling Room, and there stood his son, a tall, and as I at first thought, handsome young man. His father embraced him with warmth and enquired affectionately of his welfare, but with hardly an answer to his questions, Friedemann, who all the while had been staring at me over his father’s shoulder, enquired insolently, ‘And who is this foreign popinjay we have here?’ The slight was the less as I was of the same height as Friedemann, though, I admit, of a slenderer build. ‘I have the honour to be your Father’s pupil,’ I answered with a low bow, which I purposely exaggerated. If he had no manners that should not destroy mine, though I confess the look in his eyes—small eyes, set too close together—would have been well met by the stiletto. I said at first I thought him handsome, but his eyes spoilt that, they were eyes one could not trust. His Father was visibly disturbed by his behaviour, ‘Are these Dresden manners, Friedemann?’ he asked sternly, ‘Italy has sent to

FRIEDEMANN’S BEHAVIOUR

me a singularly gifted pupil in Paolo Cavatini.' Friedemann murmured some sort of an apology, and the scene was eased by the arrival of his step-mother and his sister Catharina, also the smaller children rushed in with enquiries as to whether he had brought them any Dresden sweetmeats. In spite of that ill beginning things smoothed themselves, and it was evident that the Herr Cantor took great pride and pleasure in this highly gifted son, and they soon were deep in discussion of musical affairs in Dresden. The Frau Cantorin was always content if her husband was happy, and the only shadow seemed to lie on the brow of Catharina. The reason for this was accidentally revealed to me as I overheard her saying to her step-mother, 'I do hope Friedemann is not come to ask Father for money.' This was a shock to me—so evidently his Father's pride, and with his hand in his Father's pocket. His dress was much richer than that of Herr Bach, who only wore his plain black cloth Cantor's suit and stitched linen shirt without trimming save fine gathers, while Friedemann's coat was of velvet and needle-lace ruffles showed off his shapely hands. He had an air of swagger, so different from his Father's bearing. But I admit, little cause as I had to like him, when after supper he sat himself down at the harpsichord and played to us I had to confess that musically he was the worthy son of his Father, and as an organist I am told that he is remarkable. But next morning, when he departed for Dresden, his only remark to me was, 'And how long art thou going to stay here?' as though to say 'The sooner thou dost depart the better pleased will I be.' I did not answer, as my heart prompted, 'For ever,' but said 'As long as the Herr Cantor permits.' A hand came on my shoulder, a voice spoke in my ear, 'And that will be a long time.' What cared I then for Friedemann? What cared I for any save one in this town of Leipzig? Though it was not without pleasure that I watched his departing back across the cobbled square."

XVIII

"I am learning little facts and stories about the life of my great Master," the next letter that Giovanni read, stated. "After *Mittagessen* yesterday, he invited me to attend a Singing Practice of the Foundation Scholars, and when that was over we lingered a little in the long room at the back of the Thomasschule whose windows look out on the Promenade and Apfel's Garden and the Windmill which was clacking away on the banks of the river. 'That windmill

annoys some of the people in the School,' the Cantor said, 'But to me it has a friendly sound. My great-great-great grandfather was a miller, but to solace his work he would take his zither into the mill with him, and as the sails went round, grinding the corn, he would play to that ground-bass, and learned maybe something of time and tune in that manner.' He smiled, and then he sighed, 'It is well not to despise the homely things of life, and I would have no Bach forget his simple origins.' I knew he was thinking of Friedemann, and I guessed wounds I knew not of caused by that son. But at least the female members of his family give him such balm for those wounds as they may—his daughter Catharina's devotion is marked, and the Frau Cantorin appears full of wifely solicitude. But I feel, Battista, that no woman can be a mate for that mind—indeed one might search the world for one to companion it. He lives with his family in kindly affection, but where is he when he is writing that music which dwells within him? Dost thou think me a little mad about him? In thy last letter thou dost ask me if there is nothing of interest in Leipzig save Herr Bach? And I answer thee—nothing! Would I be in Saxony instead of my own country, would I be in a German provincial town instead of Rome the Eternal if it were not for him? This town is full of people, but they are shadows to me, they are the dark side of the moon, and only if his light shine on them do they have any visibility. The Rector of the Thomasschule, Herr Matthias Gesner, is a good and excellent man, somewhat delicate and a scholar. He exists for me because he has some due understanding of the Cantor, values him and makes his path smoother than it would be were he not here—he holds in some check the jealous and provincial minds that surround Herr Bach, minds that see in his greatness a reproach to their smallness and to level the balance put on the pomposity of authority. I begin, Battista, to have a little light on these town jealousies and I am not pleased at many things I see. But Herr Gesner is a man of feeling whom I respect. One evening he came across to visit the Bach family, and he and the Maestro were discussing the Thomaner boys and their singing. I sat by listening to their conversation, for like his daughter I wish to hear as many of the words that fall from his lips as may be. Herr Gesner did shake his head at the boys' lack of due appreciation of the important part they were called upon to play in the musical life of Leipzig. 'It is,' he said, 'the historical function of this our School to provide music for the Town Churches—this is a privilege that links them with the Heavenly Choirs above.' Herr Bach laughed

SINGING BOYS

outright at this. ‘I find small resemblance to angels in the most of them,’ he said, ‘Hard enough it is to make them pay attention to my *Wink und Takt*!’ ‘That is true enough,’ the Rector replied, looking at him with affection, ‘as I have betimes observed when I look in at thy practices. But patience, my Bach, one day thou wilt have a choir of angels to conduct and thy cantatas will be sung with perfect beauty, as they can never be sung in this world!’ To the surprise of us all the daughter Catharina, who as usual, was sitting on a little stool close to her Father, suddenly broke into weeping. ‘But then he would be dead!’ she cried. The Cantor looked at her somewhat sternly, ‘Control thyself, my child,’ he said. ‘Nay, reprove her not,’ the Rector pleaded, looking at the maiden with much gentleness, ‘ ’Tis but her affection for thee. We all shall die, Catharina, but thy Father’s name will live when all of ours are forgotten and sunk in oblivion’s shadow.’

Perhaps thou wilt say, Battista, that these small stories of people unknown to thee have but small interest when they reach thee in Italy. But if I am to write to thee it is of these things I must write—I dwell here and my heart is here, as a bird will choose her nest in preference to the palaces of Cæsar. All things radiate from the head of this household, and the further they are away from him the less they matter. So thou must resign thyself to a chronicle perhaps out of scale to thy thinking. Wert thou but here, could thou but speak with this Master of all the Musicians, then wouldst thou perceive thy wisdom of thy Paolo.”

XIX

THUNDERSTO

One afternoon Giovanni had gone out to execute an errand for his grandfather, and, that finished, he had wandered about for a while in the Old Town which held the fascination for him of being as it was in the days when Bach walked those twisting cobbled streets. As he arrived at the famous Town Square the black and thundery sky above him broke in a roar of light and sound, and simultaneously the rain fell down in solid sheets of water. Giovanni fled to the shelter of the arches of the Rathaus, and stood there watching the storm with fascinated eyes. The thunder and lightning did not continue for long, but rolled muttering away across the plain. The rain, however, fell with fierce persistence—the drops leaped again with their own violence when they reached the ground, and all the gutters gurgled and sang as the roofs delivered their torrents. The steady falling rods of rain before his eyes, the liquid murmuring voice of water in his ears,

induced in Giovanni, as he leaned against the arch, a slightly dazed and dreamy state of mind. He became unconscious of the other storm-bound people also sheltering under the arches: his mind drifted and flowed with the water, he no longer knew where he was or who he was. He had no consciousness of how long he had stood thus, time had ceased to exist, the small beat of minutes was no longer there—unchecked he floated away from his present self. The rain fell, his thoughts had gone a vague voyage, drifting like a ship with no steersman at the helm, they swirled and returned in meaningless circles as did the water meeting itself in the gutters, moving and shifting and knowing not where it was going, yet always going somewhere. Slowly the rain began to slacken, the beat of the drops became hesitant, the blackness of the sky was torn, rifts of blue showed through, great cauliflower heads of snowy white sailed up from the horizon, the sun shone suddenly on silver puddles.

Giovanni came to himself with a jerk, unfolded his crossed arms, and was about to step into the Square on his way home, when a strange feeling that someone beside him was also moving into the Square came over him—someone he could not see, only feel. He stood rigid, his eyes staring where his consciousness told him that personage was moving. Suddenly the stillness of a puddle was splashed by a footstep—he saw, with his clear awake eyes, a buckled shoe, a burly form swathed in a black cloak, saw it as though it passed a little opening in the daylight, between one time and another.

Bach, also, had been storm-bound.

XX

Herr Christian Weinlig had, at this time, been Cantor of the Thomasschule for over a decade. He was considered one of the finest contrapuntists of his day, and he was a sympathetic and excellent teacher. A young pupil of his, a year or so earlier, Richard Wagner by name, in sign of gratitude had dedicated to “my Weinlig” his first published work, a Sonata for Pianoforte.

ANXIOUS PUPIL

To him came Giovanni, the morning after his experience in the rain storm. Herr Weinlig looked intently at the boy as he stood before him, attracted extremely by the dark eager face, the deep vitality in the eyes, something urgent and swift in the young personality. His experience of the slower German mentality in his Thomaner pupils made him take special pleasure in Giovanni.

“Herr Cantor,” said Giovanni, “It is most urgent that I increase my knowledge of counterpoint. I beseech you that you will teach me—I cannot possibly continue to live unless you will teach me, and teach me here, in this

house.”

“But why all this excitement?” the Cantor asked, smiling, “Is it not my business to teach the mysteries of music? I certainly would take some pleasure in teaching you.”

Giovanni clasped his hands in anxiety: “You will teach me? That is good. But there is one other thing, one other thing that matters more than all——”

He paused, for his voice failed him.

“And that is——?” the Cantor enquired, looking at him curiously.

Giovanni went pale.

“That you will permit that I work, at least sometimes, in that little room ——”

“That room where you fainted! A lot of work I shall get from my pupil if he spends his time falling on the floor!”

“Ah, no, I will not do that again. But you cannot imagine what it would mean to me could I but work sometimes in his room.”

“Bach’s room?”

“Yes.”

“Why have you this strange obsession about Bach?”

Giovanni looked at him, his eyes clouded and lost their candour, “I cannot tell—it is my life, always has been. Should you permit that I study in that room I will do work for you better than I could do anywhere else in the world!”

Weinlig laughed and patted his shoulder.

“Well, we will see. Perhaps you will write a violin concerto and dedicate it to me, as my pupil Richard has done.”

He went over to a shelf and took from it a piece of music which he brought over to Giovanni, who read the title with interest: “Sonata for Pianoforte by Richard Wagner. A first work. Breitkopf and Hartel, Leipzig.”

“He is young, of course,” Weinlig said, “And so is this Sonata. But he has the stuff in him, full of ideas and of fire, convinced the world is his oyster. But I kept my hand on him when he wrote this, made him model himself on Pleyel, and told him that he must keep within strict harmonic and thematic lines. The young want to float abroad on every wind, till they dissolve into thin air! Form, structure, that is what we need, and to learn to move within the form.”

“As Bach did,” said Giovanni.

The Cantor smiled, “Once more we return to the beginning of all things! Well, he is a good model for the young contrapuntist, but there have been composers since Bach. Have you by any chance heard of Ludwig van Beethoven? He has written some quartets and a Concerto in D which are worthy the attention of a violinist.”

Giovanni flushed, “I do not know the quartets, but the Concerto must have been written by a god! I have but lately learned it.”

VIOLIN CONCERTO

“Then go home and fetch your fiddle and we will play it together. I have a keyboard arrangement of the orchestral score made by a young friend of mine who is also an Italian like you, and a very remarkable pianist.”

“But I am half German,” said Giovanni, who would by no means lose his kinship with the country of Bach.

“Of course, that is not to be forgotten. But Amades Govoni is Italian on both sides.”

The name smote not only Giovanni’s ear but his mind—it spoke to him in some way he did not understand.

“Amades Govoni,” he repeated.

“You know him?” Weinlig asked.

“No, I wish I did. So lovely a name—is he like his name?”

“Perhaps—yes, I think he is a little. Anyway you shall meet him and judge for yourself. He comes shortly to Leipzig and will lodge with me.”

At these words Giovanni felt as if something new had already come into his life.

“Now hasten and fetch that violin of yours and we will see what we can make of the Concerto.”

The Cantor was not a little surprised when they had finished the lovely set of movements. He looked at Giovanni’s shining eyes.

“Paganini need not be ashamed of his pupil,” he said.

XXI

Giovanni obtained his wish, and Herr Weinlig allowed him on many occasions to work at his contrapuntal studies in the little room that had been

Bach's *Componierstube*. When he first entered the room again it was with fear, hope, trembling excitement. He sat down at the table, arranged his papers and his pen, propped his head on his hand, and waited. The room was solidly around him, the furniture looked uncompromising and immovable. Giovanni sat there with a receptive mind, but the visible had every air of being the unchangeable, and after waiting for some considerable time he turned a disappointed attention to his work.

It was not to be expected, one part of his mind was saying in a dejected manner, while another considered the progression of his fugual voices, that it should happen again, this miracle of which he had received a glimpse. The very mark of miracles was that they did not repeat themselves. If the veil that lay over the past had fallen for a marvellous moment for him, it had been snatched back again, and he was once more shut out with all the people who dwelt in this later day. He laid his head on his arm with a kind of groan—how much, with what passionate impotence, he desired to go back. Here he was under this very roof, which a bare hundred years ago and less had held that life, those beings, who called to him with so insistent a voice. It was like walking, in a fog, knowing that maybe but just beyond the searching outstretched fingers was all that mattered. In a fog, impalpable, there and not there, yet a barrier that divided and hid. The greatest barrier of all was time—Giovanni's nervous hands clutched themselves as he thought of it, those fatal unnecessary years. He would force his way back through them—his mind should return and bring his body after it. His teeth set, his eyes grew cloudy and abstracted with the intensity of his thought, the urgency of his effort. But no vision came—not a hint of the wavering and shifting of time. Instead, a sense of despair welled up in him—he had felt so sure that in this spot he would repeat and increase his experience of the past, that he would not only see Bach's room, but Bach himself.

After several days of disappointment the hope began to leave him, and he turned to his work in a temper almost savage that was new to him. Weinlig was pleased.

TIME'S BARRIER

"I will admit," he said, "that your desire to work in Bach's room has had good results."

XXII

At this time the Letters were Giovanni's principal consolation. He read and re-read them, for thus, and as it seemed, only thus, could he walk in the time and place where he desired to be.

"Know then that I am now recovered from an injury to the right arm which precluded my writing to thee on an earlier occasion, Battista," the letter he was reading began. "I am long behind with the news of what has been occurring in the Bach household. I told thee some while gone of our change of Rector, and how Herr Gesner has departed to another sphere, and he who was the Con-Rector has been promoted to his place. Even at the beginning I liked not overmuch the look of him and was full satisfied to think there was a wiser man above him. But when he became Rector I was convinced that things thereafter would go the hither side of good. His countenance shows much of what he is: his eyes look out upon the world with more of suspicion than of kindliness, his mouth has a sarcastic twist. He thinks full well of himself, and being young to hold this position of Rector here makes him think the more. And imagine, my Battista, this man, who holds himself in a position of authority over Bach, has a contempt, a deep pompous contempt, for music. It is nothing to him that the greatest musician upon earth resides under this roof, it is nothing to him that this very Thomasschule was founded that the scholars might provide choirs for the churches. That is of no moment. The Herr Rector August Ernesti considers that music is a trifling pursuit. I heard him asking one of the boys who was working at his violin, if he were practising to be a pot-house fiddler? 'That is all music is worth,' said this fool in the Rector's gown, 'Or as an amusement for the idle hours of the weaker sex. I would not have boys, whose destiny it is one day to become men, wasting their time upon it.' Hearing this I slammed the door with such hearty violence of disgust that I hope Ernesti's neat wig shook on his head, and fled to tell Herr Bach what I had heard. He looked stern and quite a little sad. 'I bode me music hath but an ill friend in our new Rector. But fear not, Paolo, I will uphold the dignity of our art and of my position here. The music of this School is under my sole authority and care.' But it was not long ere Ernesti began trying to lay his hands upon the Cantor's rights. There were clashes and disagreements, and it was through one of these that I came by this damaged right arm which has made it impossible that I write to thee this long time. It is now restored, and though I had some pain and malease for a while, it was well worth the pain, in that I was enabled to strike a blow for my Maestro. It is so long a tale, and somewhat complicated, that I will not embark upon a full recital. All that concerns thee is that a certain prefect of this School called by the name of Krause behaved with an

A QUARREL

insupportable insolence to the Cantor, refusing obedience to his rightful orders, bearing tales to the Rector, and generally proving himself such a misbegotten hound, that one day I gave myself the extreme happiness of telling him in some detail what I thought about him. He stared at me with his ugly mouth open, not being very quick of understanding. When my words had penetrated through his thick hide, his only means of response was a blow. I evaded this—he is good deal bigger and more heavy than I am, but I am much quicker—and returned him a blow which most fortunately knocked out two of his front teeth. Then he flung himself and all his weight upon me and struck me on the body and twisted my arm, so that I have had no use of it till just of late. But before this pretty tourney had gone much further, Catharina Bach, hearing the noise of the scuffle, came out into the passage leading into the Practising Rooms, and with a cry ran to fetch her Father. I was led away to the Cantor's quarters, and Catharina bathed my bruises with balm-water and tied up my arm in such a manner as to make it as little painful as possible—she is skilful in these womanly arts and she and the Frau Cantorin compound many herbal lotions and ointments. But if my arm were damaged it was a consolation to remember that dog Krause had a hole in his mouth he could not mend—I had seen the two teeth lying on the floor. When Catharina had completed her ministrations and gone to make me a warm possett, Herr Bach began enquiring into the matter. He looked somewhat stern at first, but when I explained to him that it was because all who did not honour him were my enemies, he altered his countenance towards me, especially when he discovered that I did not strike the first blow. When I said that two of Krause's teeth, at any rate, would never speak ill of him again, he laughed outright. 'We should present them on a lordly dish to the Rector!' he said. 'Though I fear me that after this thou wilt be somewhat to the north of his favour!' Later that night I became fevered with the pain of my arm, and the Cantor came to my bedside with a cooling drink containing an infusion of fever leaves, after having himself helped me in the somewhat awkward business of doffing my garments. 'I grieve that thou art in pain for my sake, poor child,' he said, bending over me. 'If it were needful I would die for thee,' I answered, looking up at him from my pillow. He bent lower, his lips touched my forehead, 'Italy has sent me a valiant champion. Sleep well, my Paolo.' "

Giovanni sighed impatiently as he read these words, "Ah, had that but been

me, I would not care that I were dead now," he thought.

> "The daughter Catharina," the letter went on, "has tended me with every care. She has even become somewhat less silent. When she speaks of her Father, I listen with a particular pleasure, and she, seeing this, is tempted to further speech, and a little flush of colour tints her usually pale cheeks, her eyes shine, and almost I think she has a sort of beauty. There is something wistful about her look, though it catches not my taste. I have not yet seen a demoiselle who put stars in the sky for me. Catharina's principal interest to me is that she is the daughter of Bach. She has a certain sweetness, I perceive, and I wish her well enough. I wish, indeed, that she would open her eyes to the attentions of a quite presentable young German who does frequent this house with a most obvious desire for her favour. But she shrinks away from him, hides, if possible, behind her Father, or departs altogether from the Dwelling Room—becomes completely the flower shut up."

"FLOWER SHUT UP"

Giovanni repeated that phrase to himself—the flower shut up. Often as he had read these Letters it had not detached itself to his mind as it did at that moment. Bach's eldest daughter, child of his first marriage, was but faintly shadowed forth in this correspondence of Paolo Cavatini. Gentle, withdrawn, asking so little for herself and receiving nothing, wrapped so visibly in her devotion to her father, yet, with a tentative hand held out—for what? Suddenly, Giovanni saw it, that timid hand was held out to Paolo, and Paolo never was aware—or if aware, made no responsive gesture, died and made no response, never saw that he might have linked himself to Bach, whom he so worshipped, by another and a deeper love. The flower shut up—the flower that withered and died with her petals unopened.

Giovanni sat with his head in his hands, pondering this discovery. These Letters seemed always revealing themselves anew to him. They bore no stamp of age, they were alive, they were part of his present and the unknown future which lay before him. It was as though they opened to him more and more as he grew, speaking to him in a changing voice, leading him—where?

XXIII

All this time Giovanni was working hard with Weinlig, showing a great aptitude for his studies which increased the Cantor's natural inclination to him.

One afternoon he came to Giovanni, who was in the little room that had

once been Bach's, bearing in his hand some sheets of manuscript music, written in a bold hand on thick yellow paper.

"See," said Herr Weinlig, "I have here a treasure for you. This has just come into my hands—it is an organ Prelude and Fugue of Sebastian Bach's."

Giovanni looked up and stretched his hand eagerly towards the manuscript. Weinlig smiled at the sudden flush that rose on his dark cheek.

"I set you the task," he went on, "that you copy it out in open score—thus you will more fully realise the structure of the composition, and learn from that great contrapuntal master more than I can teach you."

He laid the music on the table before Giovanni, patted his shoulder, and went away.

Giovanni sat quite still for some moments, looking at the score in front of him. It was the first time he had seen any music actually in Bach's own handwriting—certain of the Thomasschule cantata manuscripts in that script were such a commonplace to Weinlig that he had not thought of their intent to his pupil.

PRELUDE AND FUGUE

"Præludium pro Organo cum pedale obligato," he read, followed by the firm signature "Joh: Seb: Bach." The music writing was black and vigorous—a full quill and full mind had gone to its making, flights of demi-semi-quavers swept across the staves, the whole thing was alert and alive, without an erasure. At the bottom of the fourth page, rather than carry the last four bars of the Prelude on to the leaf where he began his Fugue, Bach had ruled a rather crooked pair of staves on which to complete the Prelude.

As Giovanni turned the pages he hardly breathed—then, very cautiously, he felt the ribbed paper under his hand. Bach's hand had rested on that paper—the hand that now was dust had rested, warm and full of life and purpose, on that paper, had traced those lines and notes which had survived their creator: the paper, the ink, so much less perishable than the flesh which had clothed the immortal spirit of Bach.

Giovanni gazed at the manuscript before him, sunk into a deep absorption and dream, while the music wove its melody through his mind. He was out of himself, without any effort of his own, and it was with no surprise that he raised his eyes from the music Bach had written to see that the room he had beheld once before was about him again—the furniture, the whitewashed walls were the same. As before the room was empty, but even as he regretfully realised its emptiness, the door behind him opened and shut—Giovanni dared

not look round, he felt that the least movement on his part might be fatal to his precarious hold of the experience—a firm step went past him. Giovanni involuntarily shut his eyes, he knew that it was Bach—knew it, and for a moment could not look, the beating of his heart took his sight from him. Then he heard a chair being pulled forward, he opened his eyes and saw, as he had expected to see, the broad shoulders clad in black cloth, the grey wig, of him who a hundred years before had been Cantor of the Thomasschule. All Giovanni's life went to his eyes—at last he was beholding what he had so long desired. He gazed with a kind of mounting passion at the form before him, though he could see nothing save Bach's back and the feather of a quill held in his right hand above the broad cuff turned back with silver buttons. This was Bach, real and substantial before him. Giovanni's heart was curiously satisfied, though as yet he had not beheld Bach's countenance. He felt no strangeness in thus being in the same room with him—there was no gap of years. Instead he had a strong sense that at last he was where he belonged. He became unconscious of the passage of time. He seemed to be in a still place where Bach bent over his writing, while he watched: he had no wish save for the continuance of this strange, this blessed, moment. Bach was writing with speed all this while, so fast that his quill spluttered and complained. Then he ceased, and dropped his forehead into his left hand, still holding the pen ready in his right—he was thinking, he was waiting on his genius.

CATHARINA APPEARS

The door opened again very quietly, and Giovanni's heart checked on a sudden fear—was the Present coming in through that door to rob him, or would it still be the Past? His apprehension fell from him—a girl had slipped through that door, a girl most clearly of the Past. Catharina Bach, he knew, even before he heard her name spoken by her Father. She was small and slight; visibly there was little enough of her under the full skirts of blue woollen gathered into a tight narrow waistbelt, the white kerchief drawn across her slender shoulders. A strand or two of pale gold hair escaped her plain white coif. She made Giovanni think of a snow-bell as she stood there. Her eyes were a pale blue, most innocent under heavy melancholy lids, her mouth too large for beauty, but full and sensitive, resembling her Father's, her chin had a tiny cleft in its rondure. "A flower shut up"—the phrase rushed into Giovanni's mind with a curious pang.

At her step Bach lifted his head and held out his hand to her without turning round. She fluttered to him like a dove to her nest, knelt by his chair, and laid her lips to that hand.

"What has my honoured Father written now?" she asked, and leaning across his knee gazed at the music lying before him and sung a measure under

her breath in a shadowed contralto voice. “I like it. Thou art a great composer, dear Papa,” she said, and then added, with a teasing loving glance, “But of course, not so good as Emanuel!”

Her father pinched her cheek. “Of course not! Was not Emanuel taught by me, and I was taught—by nobody!”

“But by God,” said another voice. The Frau Cantorin stood there, looking with tender affection at her husband.

He turned, so as to put his unoccupied arm round her, and Giovanni had a glimpse of his face.

Giovanni shut his eyes, for he felt it was not fitting that he should look upon this intimate domestic moment.

When he opened them again Bach and his wife and daughter had vanished like a dream. But it was no dream. Not in a dream had he beheld that countenance, strange, yet deeply familiar, not to his vision, but to his spirit, seen the glance of those grey eyes under the narrowed lids, heard the deep quiet voice.

He was surprised at his own calmness. All the agitation and astonishment, the feeling almost of fear, of his first experience in that room had vanished. He knew that he had come to the place where he belonged.

XXIV

WRONG CENTURY

To Giovanni’s bitter disappointment and amaze the door into Bach’s time did not open to him again. The sense of certainty and hope which that experience had bestowed upon him was frustrated. He worked frequently in the *Componierstube*, he completed his copying in open score of the Organ Prelude and Fugue, he sat brooding over that *handschrift* of Bach’s, touching it as though it were a talisman. But in spite of the intensity of his desire he remained obstinately in his own century. To him was left no other means of getting back save the Letters written by his ancestor—happy and fortunate Paolo, who was born at the chosen time.

The reading of these Letters to his grandfather was drawing to a conclusion. Night after night, with an occasional interruption, he had translated Paolo’s experiences in the household of Bach—quiet experiences, most of them, centring round Bach himself, his teaching, his ways, his character. Round Bach—as a setting to that central portrait—were little glimpses of his wife Magdalena and his children, only glimpses, for Paolo could never keep

his pen long away from his master. But the Frau Cantorin emerged into recognition, busy with her household cares and her children, always tenderly watchful of her husband's needs, and not too busy to spare thought for the little graces of life. She had a cherished linnet, and having no garden, she grew the yellow carnations, of which she was especially fond, in earthenware pots on her window-sill.

The linnet had a place to itself in one of the letters.

> "There was much ado a few days gone over Frau Muhme's linnet. It sang sweetly and was a great favourite—even the Maestro would put a finger through the bars of its cage and stroke its little head as it came eagerly to his hand, and listen with a pleased air to its singing. Then one morning it was found lying on its back, its claws curled into little knots. Water and seed were beside it in plenty—its mistress was not a person ever to forget the needs of little creatures dependent upon her—but the bird was dead. The Frau Cantorin lifted it out from the cage and held it in her hands and tears fell down her face. Catharina also wept as she stood beside her. The Maestro came in at this mournful moment and saw what was amiss. He bent over the ball of feathers in his wife's hand, 'So, the poor little musician is dead! Well, he sung his best while he lived, and we none of us can do more.' I thought, Battista, as I heard those words from his lips, that I would be well content if that were my epitaph. The evening of that same day he came into the Dwelling Room, where we were gathered, and in his hand was a small wicker cage containing another linnet. He deposited it in his wife's lap. 'There is another feathered baby for thee!' he said smiling."

"Little tales about great men have a pleasing quality," the Professor remarked in his gentle way, "Perhaps birds and musicians are akin to each other in some special manner. Do either of you know the story of Mozart and the Starling?"

"No," said Giovanni and Gerda together, "Tell it to us."

MOZART'S STARLING

"Well, the story goes that one day Mozart was passing a shop where caged birds were sold, and his astonished ear heard a bird clearly singing the allegretto theme from that Concerto in G major which he had completed five weeks past. In much amazement he went into the shop. '*Wo ist dieser Vogel?*' he asked. A cage containing a starling was lifted down for his inspection and Mozart bought the bird and took it home. He wrote down the price he paid for the starling in his account-book,

and under this he wrote also the notes sung by the bird, which but for a G sharp and grace notes were the same as the first five measures in his allegretto —written on the 12th of April, 1784, while the purchase date of the starling was the 27th of May in the same year. When the bird eventually died Mozart buried it in his garden, and wrote a little poem for its tombstone, saying—a small fool lies here that he had loved, and that he believed it would still, in the sky, sing for him in its old friendly way without any pay. A pretty tribute from one musician to another!"

"I think that is a most charming little story, Papa," said Gerda smiling, "It is nice to think of Bach's linnet and Mozart's starling."

"And they would have valued each other's music," her Father went on, "When Mozart came here in '89 he played on the Thomaskirche organ so finely that Anton Doles, who was then Cantor, cried, 'Sebastian Bach has again risen!' Mozart found the parts of some of Bach's cantatas in the Thomasschule cupboards, spread them round him on bench and stool and absorbed their beauty with delight."

"So Mozart realised then better what Bach was than people do now!' Giovanni cried.

"Ah, but Mozart had genius himself, so he knew it when he met it, however ignored by the common run of mankind."

XXV

They were arriving now at the final letters from Paolo Cavatini to his brother in Italy, and a new note was creeping into them—a note of apprehension.

> "I have completed a quartet for strings—two violins, viola, and bass-violino—in the key of E minor; I know it is the best thing by far I have yet achieved. All that I have learned of the mystery of music from the Maestro's teaching, from the continual hearing and studying of that so inspired music of his, from analysis of the structure and rules which alone tie this heavenly art to earth, had made me fit to write this quartet. Suddenly I felt the stirrings within me of a breath that was not mine—*Es fällt ihm etwas ein*, as they say here of inspiration, 'Something falls into him.' It was like that to me, Battista, something from on high fell into my heart, as a star might fall from the firmament, and shone there, and while it shone I wrote by that light. Never have I felt in just that manner before. When my quartet was completed I took it to him and laid it before him. 'Wilt

thou read this small work I have just now completed?' I asked him, 'And if thou shouldst think not too ill of it may I be permitted to dedicate it to thee?' He looked at me with a deep smile in his eyes as he drew the score towards him. 'Thou dost feel it is good, I perceive?' he said. Shams live not in his presence, so I answered, 'Yes, or I would not dare to ask thy name upon it.' 'Well, return to me in the half of an hour and I will tell thee my opinion.' So I shut the door and left him in his little Composing Study with my quartet. But oh, Battista, the blow when I returned! He held out his hand and clasped mine. 'Paolo,' he said, 'It is good and admirable. Well hast thou learnt thy lesson, and now thou hast passed thy pupilage. In future it is thine own inspiration must teach thee—thou dost not need me any more.' I stared at him, smitten to the heart. 'I am to go from thee?' 'Nay, child, I said not so.' I cried to him, 'It would be death!' He looked startled. 'Paolo,' he said, 'Sit thee down by me, we must talk of this. Thou must know that in the time of youth we learn our craft, whether it be the milling of corn or the making of music. When we come to manhood we are no longer apprentices, but masters of a trade which we then proceed to practice, and maybe teach to others, that the good tradition may be carried on, that noble music may not cease to delight the heart. Dost thou not perceive this? I would be loath indeed to lose thee—but some time thou must venture into the world to make music as a master musician.' I looked at him, I saw the wisdom of his words, but to me it was like the end of all things. To be no more his pupil! All of two years had I dwelt in his household—never, after the first few weeks had I thought to dwell elsewhere. He put his hand upon my shoulder, seeing the matter came amiss to me. 'Be not so downcast, my Paolo. I tell thee thou art a pupil after my own heart, who hast done credit to my teachings. I will be proud that thou shouldst dedicate thy quartet to me. And think not that I spoke of an immediate parting. It is thine own good I must consider. Now, I would continue this motet——' he glanced down at the manuscript on his table. I rose, I bowed. My love for him sealed my lips, and I did not speak what was in my heart. It is for thine own good, he had said. And for me there was no good away from him. I went from the room, I went from the house, I wandered by the river—I walked until I was miles from Leipzig. It began to rain heavily, and before I got back I was very wet, and so exhausted that I but pulled off my coat and my shoes and fell upon my bed to sleep. When I awoke I was at once very cold and very hot, and my clothes were still

STRING QUARTET

clammy upon me. I was just about to put on some dry garments when there was a gentle tap upon my door, and when I opened it there stood Catharina. ‘The evening meal is waiting,’ she said, ‘My Father sent me to ask why thou dost not come. He said I was to tell thee he was missing thy presence.’ My heart was comforted that he should miss me. ‘In one moment I will come.’ But as I said this Catharina exclaimed at my wet clothes and was horrified when I admitted that I had lain down and slept in them. ‘Get into dry garments while I heat some chocolate soup for thee.’ She shut the door and fled. When at last I appeared, with apologies, at the table, Frau Bach was much concerned, and told me to eat at once the bowl of steaming soup that Catharina set down before me, while the Maestro went to a small corner cupboard and fetched from it a glass of carraway schnappes, so stinging that I coughed as I drank it under his eye. At first I felt much restored by the cordial and the hot soup, while my spirits had risen from their sadness at this kindness and concern for my welfare from all of the Bach family. But soon my cheeks and head were burning as though fire had been laid upon them. The Frau Cantorin came and placed a cool hand upon my forehead. ‘Come, Paolo, thou must at once to thy bed. A fever is upon thee, for which I will concoct a drink of herbs.’ The Cantor with much kindness took my arm, ‘Come,’ he also said, ‘once more I will assist thee to thy bed.’ I went willingly, for the room was beginning to move in curious fashion about me, and the eyes of Catharina, who was looking at me with some concern, seemed to get larger and larger.

A FEVER

That, Battista, was all I remembered for a week, and when I woke up again to daily life I was so feeble that it astonished me—to lift up my hand seemed difficult. But this weakness was cause of satisfaction to me, for when the Maestro came to visit me, I said to him, ‘Thou wilt not send me away from thee till I am stronger?’ He looked puzzled, ‘What fragment of a dream is in thy head? Why should I send thee away?’ ‘But when my quartet was completed, thou didst say——’ He broke in, looking at me with a look whose kindness I cannot describe. ‘I shall never send thee away, unless thou dost desire to go. Thou art become like a son to me.’ Such relief and joy, such pride, flooded my heart that I could do nothing save lie and look up at him. And at once I began to get well again with rapidity, and now, as I write all these past things to thee, my fever has long departed, and nothing

remains of my foolishness but a small cough. I would not tell thee of these things till I was recovered."

"But he was not recovered," said Giovanni. "The cough would not leave him, and when the cold of that winter came he began to cough more searchingly, he slept ill at nights, and he got thinner and thinner. His letters to Battista, too, became very short. He would say he was too busy to write, when it was really that he had not the superfluous strength."

Giovanni took up the smaller sheets of paper, on which the writing was no longer close and neat and upright, but larger and more careless, and read the sparse details they contained—always excused by the statement that there was little to tell, or that his time was too fully occupied to leave him leisure for lengthy epistles. Occasionally the fear of having to leave Bach flared up. "I cannot see any future," said one letter, "for I suppose the time will come when I must leave him."

"There was no future to see," said Gerda gently. She was sitting with the casket on her knee, and now lifted out the last letter it contained and handed it to Giovanni.

He turned it over and looked at it before he began to read: "He is so alive to me, Paolo Cavatini, that I always find it most hard to believe that this piece of paper is the last that was ever to bear his handwriting."

Then he began to read the last of the long series of the Letters:

"I am once more a-bed. I have been forced to this idleness by the Frau Muhme who fusses about me as though I were her child. 'Tis this cough which takes my strength and makes me sleep but ill by night. So I am to make up this lost sleep by day. And where, thinkest thou, Battista, is now my bedchamber? Indeed, thou wilt never imagine, so I will tell thee without delay—I now abide in the Composing Study of the Maestro. The second day he came to visit me in my little room at the back of the entrance he said 'Methinks this room is somewhat small and dark, Paolo, thou wouldst do better above.' He went away, but shortly returned with one of the Prefects and together they half carried me—and indeed I felt strangely weak—up the stairs and through the Dwelling Room into this place, where I found the writing table pushed aside and a neat bed against the further wall. 'Now,' said he who is all goodness, 'thou wilt have more light and cheerfulness and I shall more easily be with thee when I work.'

LAST ILLNESS

Almost it seemed to me that I had entered into Paradise. I am cosseted like a babe. I have been bled several times, while the Frau Cantorin is always bringing me warm drinks and delicate dishes, and Catharina comes at times to sit with me and re-create me by singing. Always she sings music made by her Father, for both she and I are agreed upon the truth that there is no other music to compare with it. Once, when she had sung to me, she suddenly burst into tears and fled from the room. This somewhat surprised me, for she is usually of a disposition so serene and quiet.

'Tis two days since those words were written, Battista, for a weakness so extreme overcame me that it was overmuch labour to raise my head and hand. But the chirurgeon was fetched to bleed me again. ' 'Tis the overflux of blood dizzies thy brain,' he told me. Indeed, we had quite a little scene at my bedside, for the Frau Muhme amazed everyone by protesting that I had no more blood to lose. 'Gracious Frau,' said the old man, looking very cross, 'Dost think thyself wiser than an Apothecary and Chirurgeon who hast bled the population of this School for more years than thou hast been in this world?' He was so fierce that she looked quite frightened. But when he had gone, after the bloodletting, she came to me with a bowl of broth, and slipping her arm under my head lifted me up a little, 'See, Paolo, here is broth that has the goodness of a whole chicken in it, drink it up—I like not overmuch the School Chirurgeon.' So I drank it, and felt, as I told her, that I could crow and clap my wings after it.

But these are silly trifles to tell thee, Battista. The real thing that matters and the real joy, is when the Maestro can escape from his outside duties and comes to be with me, which out of his goodness he does on all possible occasions. He brings his composing actually to my bedside. I lie and watch him, in a content deeper than this world has ever given me. I watch his moving hand covering the ruled sheets—many is the time I have done that little task for him—with those black lines and dots which mean that more heavenly music has come into this world. And when he is weary of writing he will move to the clavichord and say 'Shall we have a little music, Paolo?' He has thus played to me in this time the whole of these pieces, in all the keys that he calls 'The Well-Tempered Clavier.' Ah, could I but expound to thee their beauty and their delight!—it seems to me that every mood of the human heart is there. I feel that all my life has been for this, that I might know him. Thou wilt remember, Battista,

that often I was fierce and discontent and full of difficulties—but now all that is vanished and I am most singularly full of peace. I draw this from him, when, as often happens, he lays aside his quill, or shuts down the lid of the little clavichord, and comes to sit by my bedside and takes my hand in his. Several times it has happened that I have fallen asleep, my hand held in that deep clasp. But one thing more were needed to complete my felicity—could I but see thee, my Battista. Italy seems so strangely far away to me now. This long writing has wearied me. I will lay down my pen for a while and resume my epistle on the morrow."

"That," said Giovanni, "is the end. He never took up his pen again."

END OF THE LETTERS

The Professor sighed. "It is parting from a friend—one has come to love him."

They were silent for a moment or two, recalling that life which had ended thus in youth, leaving nothing behind it save these Letters and one String Quartet, and yet made upon all their minds an impression so deep.

"But there is still a little to be read," said Gerda, "The fragment of Battista's Diary."

From the lid of the casket she let down a little flap of green velvet, which was looped up with a tiny knob of mother-of-pearl, and took from it a small thin book bound in faded leather, and handed it to her father.

"That is the note-book of Battista," she said.

Professor Eisner took it and opened it. At the top of the first page was the date 1736 and some statements of expenditure in a fine careful hand. The next page was blank. On the following page was a date, and some writing in a more hurried script.

"Giovanni, will you translate this for me?"

" 'On this day I left Rome,' " Giovanni began reading, " 'In much haste and without time to put my affairs in order. Jesu, grant that I may reach Leipzig while he yet lives.' "

The next page was headed "Leipzig: I was too late, though I travelled post. I arrived at eight of the clock in the morning, and Paolo had died two hours after midnight that same morning—so the little horses had galloped in vain. I went at once to the School of St.

Thomas. At my knock the door was opened by a maiden whose face was pale and whose eyes brimmed with tears. I was curious to observe how they filled and fell over down her cheeks, without her taking any apparent notice. ‘Enter,’ she said, ‘Thou art the brother of Paolo?’ Looking at her face, so woebegone, I knew. ‘He is dead?’ She bent her head. ‘Yes, last night. Let me lead thee to my Father.’ I was led up some stairs to the door of a small chamber out of which Herr Bach came. He bowed silently and took my hand to conduct me within. There lay my Paolo. They had folded his hands upon his breast, resting on that rosary of lapis beads I gave him when he left Italy. There was a smiling look upon his still lips. His face and hands were very thin. They were all very kind. I looked upon the Signor Bach whom Paolo had so loved. He was very grave and sad. He said he felt as if he had lost a son. The Signora Bach was weeping, and later she told me the last words Paolo said before he died. He looked at the Signor Bach, who was sitting by his bedside, suddenly smiled, and said, ‘Now, I shall not have to leave thee!’ He took the Cantor’s hand and held it close, and after a time fell asleep. Even in sleep, I was told, his grasp did not relax, and the Cantor sat there, very still, near to falling asleep himself, till suddenly Paolo’s hand fell loose. He leaned over and saw, by the light of the flickering taper, that he was dead. So easy was it. I am thankful to say that the Bach family, though Lutherans and heretics, had on the previous day fetched a priest to Paolo and he was shrived.

I am taking the body back with me to Rome. Where he was born he shall sleep, in his own country.”

“HIS OWN COUNTRY”

Book Three

The Door Closes

I

A certain restlessness and disappointment overcame Giovanni at this time. He felt checked and thwarted. After he had completed the reading of the Letters to his grandfather, he put the casket away, and, contrary to his usual habit since he had possessed it, did not open it again, to handle, to look at, to read, portions of the Letters, for some considerable time.

Instead, he threw his energy and his discontent into his violin practice. Paganini's presence came back urgently to his mind, a ghostly vision drove him on to excel. Day by day, week by week, he surpassed what he had formerly attained. Paganini had given him a large portion of his technical skill—it began to appear that he had also acquired something of Paganini's passion and wizardry.

So his grandfather thought, as one evening he came home at dusk and stood still in the little garden to listen to the brilliant flood of melody that issued from the open windows—the perfectly rounded fluid notes, the fiery bowing, the ascending harmonies like pearls or iridescent globes of dew.

The Professor's musicianly heart shook a little as he listened. Giovanni was stepping out of the ranks of fine violinists into that place where stood the few, the elect.

With the Professor was a small pale old man, whose wild grey hair and cavernous grey eyes were the most noticeable things about him. This was Christoph Clauder, whose passion in life was violins. He collected them—and in truth cared more for the violin itself than for the music that could be drawn from it by the most gifted fingers. He drew his acutest pleasure from the handling of a violin—stroking its back, studying the cutting of the sound-holes, the curves of the sides, the shape of the scroll head. Nevertheless he had a very keen ear and an experienced judgment as to a violinist's ability. He was considerably astonished at what he heard as he stood in the paved courtyard listening to Giovanni's performance. He and the Professor remained motionless till the music ceased. Then they entered and Giovanni was presented to his grandfather's friend.

Herr Clauder looked at the young man approvingly, but instantly walked

across and picked up the fiddle which Giovanni had laid down on the end of the harpsichord.

"Ah, a Bergonzi," he said approvingly, glancing at the large and low-set sound-holes. "Very good, and a brilliant tone."

"It is not so good as the Amati my father had," Giovanni answered.

"An Amati, ah! And where is that fiddle, as I understand your father is deceased?"

"He broke it up," Giovanni answered, before he had stayed to think what he was saying.

The old man went paler than he was by nature—so bleached was he that his grey hair and eyes looked almost black by contrast. "Broke up an Amati!" he cried, with the same horrified astonishment in his tone that Paganini had displayed on an earlier occasion.

The Professor tried to soothe things, "Giovanni's father was ill."

"Ill!" the old man snorted contemptuously, "He must have been mad! Only a madman could have done that!"

"ONLY A MADMAN"

Giovanni looked at him quietly.

"Yes," he said, "I suppose you would call him mad."

Herr Clauder appeared a little taken aback: "Sorry. Too blunt—always was. Always say what comes into my mind. But madness is often a sign of genius—look at Stainer."

"Who was Stainer?" asked Giovanni, liking the emphatic little man, in spite of his blundering.

"Stainer? You have never heard of Stainer? And you are a violinist, and half German and half Italian, as I understand? *Gott!* Have you never been educated?"

"Not much!" Giovanni said smiling, "Will you not tell me who Stainer was?"

"Wait—I will show you."

With those words Herr Clauder rushed from the room.

Giovanni began to laugh, looking at his grandfather.

"What a strange old man!"

"Yes, I suppose he does seem strange to those who first meet him. He is a

violent bachelor, cannot bear women—says they are useless as they have never made a fiddle in all their existence!—he only just manages to tolerate your Mother. He is rich, and spends nothing except on violins, barely keeps himself alive. But his knowledge of fiddles is extraordinary."

"Why have I never seen him before," Giovanni asked, "in all the time I have been in Leipzig?"

"Because he has only just returned from Italy—he has been at Cremona."

"Where has he gone now?"

"I expect to fetch one of his fiddles—he lives in that funny little dark house round the corner."

As they spoke Herr Clauder returned, bearing in his hand what was obviously a violin, wrapped in a faded piece of silk.

He pulled off the covering with a flourish and held up the violin.

"See! Stainer made that—Jacob Stainer, who was mad, like your father."

Giovanni was so interested in the look of the fiddle that the harsh conclusion of the remark escaped his attention.

It differed markedly from the violins he had known in Italy—his father's Amati, vanished in splinters, Paganini's Guarnerius. The varnish of this fiddle was yellow, with a faint rose-flush in it. The belly was high and more swelling than the back, the side-grooves were deep, the scroll a lion's head, very skilfully carved, the purfling lay close to the edges.

Clauder thrust it into Giovanni's hands, "Try it," he commanded.

STAINER FIDDLE

Giovanni found it almost perfectly in tune. The tone was brilliant, even startling, a tone with an edge to it that would have cut through the tone of any other fiddles in an orchestra.

"Like it?" said Clauder, looking at him sharply.

"Not so much as my own fiddle, and it has not the tenderness of an Amati. But I like the feel of it—and the workmanship."

Herr Clauder turned to the Professor, "Your grandson is no fool—knows something about fiddles! Send him to me tomorrow afternoon at four of the clock, and I will show him a fiddle or two, and also improve his education with a little knowledge of the man who made this,"—he was wrapping up the Stainer as he spoke—"but give him his coffee first, he will get none with me."

He had gone as abruptly as before.

Giovanni and his grandfather looked at each other and laughed.

“But,” said the Professor, “it is a great honour he has done you. It is the most rare thing for him to ask anyone to his house. But we must not forget the coffee, and some cakes as well—you must not starve while he discourses to you, and certainly he will not feed you!”

II

Herr Christoph Clauder’s dark little house was even more narrow-fronted, and at least a century more ancient, than that of Giovanni’s grandfather. It looked a house that could keep a secret.

When the door was opened to Giovanni by his host—if there were any servants in the abode Giovanni never saw them—he seemed to step from the comparative lightness of the street into deep dusk. Only a faint gleam of light found its way through a partly opened door at the back.

“Stand where you are,” said Herr Clauder anxiously, without any other form of welcome or greeting, “Or you will knock something valuable over.”

He returned after a moment with a small lamp by whose light Giovanni saw that he was standing against a double-bass propped precariously in an angle of the little passage.

“Come this way,” said Herr Clauder, and Giovanni followed him into a small very dark room, whose only furniture was a solid table of oak, and two black oaken chairs. The walls were furnished more lavishly than the floor, for they were almost covered by fiddles hanging by their necks from wooden pegs. Everything looked very dusty and cheerless, except the fiddles, which were polished and shining.

He was pushed into a chair, and his host enquired, “Had your coffee and cakes?—always eating, you young people. Well, perhaps you will grow out of it.”

Had Giovanni been hungry he would soon have forgotten it in the interest of the violins Herr Clauder showed him and of the violin stories he told. From the walls he unhooked the graceful forms of fiddles, and laid them on the table under the lamp, where their soft deep varnish shone in tones of amber and rose-red and brown. He pointed out the subtler differences in the curves, the purfling, the cutting of the sound-holes, in the workmanship of the great masters. He told Giovanni tales of how and when he had bought each instrument. Then he laid the Jacob Stainer again before Giovanni.

"Look at it while I tell you something of him who made it. The man who made that violin died a long time back—in 1683."

"Two years before Bach was born," said Giovanni involuntarily.

"Bach—do you know his music? Can you play a certain Chaconne of his? Can you play the unaccompanied Fugue in G minor which he also wrote, and that Sonata in E minor which has such an unforgettable Adagio?"

Giovanni's heart warmed to the old man, he had not expected that he would thus know and care for Bach.

"Yes," he answered.

"Then you shall play them to me on that Stradivarius over there. But first I will continue with your neglected education."

Giovanni settled himself down to listen with much content, he liked the atmosphere of this house, and Herr Clauder began his story.

"This German violin-maker—German, remember—I expect you think all the violin-makers were Italian?"

"Well, were not the greatest of them Italian—all the Cremona ones?"

"Perhaps—yes, certainly. But there are good things out of Italy—Bach, for instance?"

Giovanni nodded. He did not want to take up this challenge, he wanted to hear about Jacob Stainer, whose violin lay by his hand. Old Herr Clauder seemed prepared to wander down any side path in an irascible quest of disagreement. He peered at Giovanni's face in the dim light and took noisily a pinch of snuff from a gold and agate box.

"Bach—well, well, we will see how much you understand him when you play the Chaconne."

Suddenly he pulled out again the snuff-box which he had just restored to his pocket.

"See, this snuff-box once belonged to Bach—at least, so they told me when I bought it, the ruffians."

Giovanni sat up abruptly and leaned forward.

"Oh, let me hold it," he cried, stretching out his hand.

As he took it an immediate and curious conviction of its authenticity possessed him. He shut his eyes on some inner compulsion and saw, imprinted

upon the darkness, an instant's vision of Bach, attired in a dark velvet coat and ruffles, with the snuff-box open in his hand. Quick as it came, the tiny vignette vanished.

He held the little box in his two hands, staring at it, feeling its preciousness —so infinitely beyond the gold of which it was made—forgetting where he was.

Old Clauder watched him a minute, then held out his hand. "See, young man, give me back my snuff-box—I tell you I paid a pretty penny to the Jews for it."

Giovanni returned it regretfully. "It was not a penny too much—it is genuine, it belonged to Bach."

"And how, maybe, does my young friend know this so interesting fact?"

"Something told me—you need not believe me, but it is the truth."

Clauder looked at him curiously, though he said nothing, and put the snuff-box back in his pocket.

III

STORY OF STAINER

After this little interruption the old man continued the tale of Stainer.

"Jacob Stainer," he said, "was the son of a carpenter, and perhaps through that inheritance sprang his remarkable feeling for wood. He heard the song in the tree, could tell from the sound of its falling when hewn down whether it was fitted for his business of making violins. He would tap a tree with a hammer he carried about with him, and its answering note would tell him all he desired to know about it. A man small and sensitive—it is the small people who feel most,"—Herr Clauder tapped his own chest—"They are as the violins to the deeply crawling double-basses! In his youth Stainer had seen a violin, probably an Amati, and thenceforward it was his dream to make such instruments. His father, good man, thinking one kind of musical instrument the same as another, apprenticed him to an organ-builder—as though to one who wanted a flower should be given an elephant of the Indies! Absam, the village of Jacob's birth, was on the highway to Italy, and pack-mules travelled back and forth, carrying many things, even such things as violins. Such a highway to the land where violins were made at Cremona called to Stainer, and to Cremona he fled. The story goes that he became pupil to Nicolo Amati, but that when Amati offered to this promising apprentice the hand of his daughter in marriage Stainer refused and fled back to his native

Tyrol. Such rubbish I believe not. Is it thinkable, I ask you, that one who understood a violin should leave such a master either for love or dislike of a girl? Can these tale-tellers but weave a woman into a man's life they think it is completed, instead of being wrecked—chut! it makes me sick. Anyway the unhappy boy returned to Absam and proceeded to marry a slut called Grethel who bore him eight daughters! Eight daughters! *Der Teufel!* Is it any wonder he went mad? He made fiddles, beautiful fiddles, but these nine females hanging round the poor wretch's neck dragged him into sluttery and despair and debt. He became violin-maker to the Emperor, but who could survive eight daughters? To console himself he read what were called heretical books, and the Papists—are you a Papist?" Herr Clauder broke off to ask.

"I am a Catholic," said Giovanni quietly.

"Pity—still I will shut my mouth. Well, in short, Stainer, burdened with his daughters and his debts—no doubt caused by their extravagancies—and his heretical books, was cast into prison. When he came out that delicately balanced brain of his, tuned like a violin string, had snapped. He was what they call mad, like your father. I thought the tale might console you."

Giovanni could not quite perceive how his own father's piteous death was ameliorated by this madness of Stainer, but he felt the queer kindness of the intention. He looked at the violin made by the subtle fingers of the man whose brain was to fail him while those fingers still had not lost their cunning and their delicate skill.

Clauder touched it caressingly. "The man who made that," he went on, "spent the closing period of his life chained to a bench in his garden, as one would chain up a dangerous dog. If you should ever go to Absam you can see that bench there still."

"Chained to a bench!" Giovanni cried in horror. "But why was he treated with such cruelty? Had he not a wife to consider him?"

"Wives! Have you ever heard of their being any good? But I did not say he was treated cruelly—if he was violent restraint was doubtless needful. Mayhap in his calmer moments the trees spoke to him, and the voices of the violins he had made—in Heaven no doubt he would hear the voices of the violins of which he had only dreamed."

VIOLIN VOICES

His own voice shook a little. Angrily he took a pinch of snuff from the precious box and glared at Giovanni.

IV

“Now,” said Herr Clauder, still faintly annoyed at his relapse into sentiment, “I have told you of a great fiddle maker—you shall in turn tell me something of a great fiddler, your master Paganini.”

Giovanni began to describe Paganini’s appearance, his height, his gauntness, his great eyes.

“Chut, chut!” cried the old man contemptuously, “I do not want that sort of stuff. Do you imagine that I—I, who have spent my whole life worshipping violins—have not heard, have not seen, the supreme fiddler of the world? No, no, tell me the things about him that you—who lived long with him, as your grandfather tells me—only know.”

Giovanni looked at him, his dark eyes very bright—he felt an increasing liking for the old man. It was exciting to talk to him—he did not say smooth things. He would meet him on the same ground.

“Several times you have referred to my father’s madness,” he said deliberately, “Well, it was Paganini who sent him mad—he told me himself that was why he took me as a pupil, took me to live with him. It was a reparation.”

If he had intended to startle Herr Clauder he had succeeded. He leaned across the table, he breathed eagerly, “Tell me all of this—this is the reality I want.”

Giovanni told the strange tale, his own young remembrance completed by all his mother had told him, and by Paganini’s words.

“His playing was so perfect,” he concluded, “that my poor father died because he could not reach those heights.”

“That is the only spirit which matters. If the world were not so full of contented fools, who know not good from bad, nor great art from shoddy imitation, there would be more hope for its future. You should be proud of your father, my young friend, he died for the cause of noble music, he fell as a soldier falls on the battlefield.”

He jumped up. He unhooked a shining Stradivarius from its peg.

THE CHACONNE

“Now let us see whether you are worthy of such a father and of such a tutor. Let us have the great Chaconne. See, here is a Tourte bow with which to play it—a true plume for your spirit. More is the pity he will make no more of these bows. As you seem to have a passion for connecting everything to Johann Sebastian Bach, I will tell you that the maker of that bow was three years old when Bach died. We are

becoming educated, is it not? But now proceed."

Giovanni proceeded.

V

"If there is a better bit of violin music in the world than that Chaconne I have yet to hear it," said Herr Clauder, "And you played it like a master."

Giovanni did not need to be told that. At the touch of that marvellous fiddle as he tuned it, at the feel of that perfectly balanced logwood bow in his hand, a bow that seemed endowed with some unique life of its own and sprang across the strings with a delicate elasticity, he knew that he had fallen upon some curious perfect moment—Stradivarius, Bach, and himself had met. It was not only Bach's music, for by chance Clauder, just before he began to play, took out the snuff-box for a pinch and left it lying upon the table as the first notes came to his ears, forgetting to return it to his pocket. There it stood, the little box that had known Bach's usage, the gold dimly gleaming, the agate like an eye in the lid, the little unchanged box. Giovanni saw nothing else in the room save that small trinket, felt nothing save Bach's music going through him in waves of joy.

He did not need to be told that he had played well. He knew that he had left his musical youth behind, was now full grown, had reached his manhood.

While Herr Clauder talked to Giovanni, praising him, regretting how few were the violinists who had either the skill or the knowledge of that magnificent work of Bach's to play it, he had left the gold box upon the table. Then at last he stretched out his hand to return it to the pocket in his old-fashioned skirted coat. As he did so a shadow passed over Giovanni's face—his eyes had been on it all the time he listened, and with difficulty he had refrained from touching it again. Clauder, whose eyes were quick as a bird's, saw the change of expression.

"You like that little box," he said, "You would like to own it. Well, I am not going to give it to you—cost too many good *thalers*. But I will make a bargain with you, and it is no Mephistophelian one. If you will come for an hour each week and play that Chaconne, and maybe one or two other things, to me on my Stradivarius, then when Old Time cuts my thread of life, by my Will and Testament that snuff-box shall be yours. This night I will add that codicil to my Will, which lies in yonder chest, if you agree to this bargain. Come, you need not hesitate, you will have your toy before many years are gone."

Giovanni trembled. He feared to believe that what he heard was true. Also another thing struck him. He might leave

"I said when you were in Leipzig, *Esel*, not when you were in Dresden or Paris. When we are both in Leipzig—for I too go often away if I hear of fiddles—then you come. If you agree to this, then the snuff-box of Bach is yours, though I should die next week. Only do not brew for me the cup of hemlock," he added, with a dry chuckle.

Giovanni clasped the old man's hand with a rush of gratitude—he wanted to laugh, he wanted to cry.

"It is too much—it is wonderful. Of course I agree, with joy I agree. And I will play to you every day—twice a day!"

"Once a week is all I require or desire."

"Then once a week."

Nothing could check Giovanni's overflowing feelings. He picked up the little gold box and kissed it. One day it would be his—what had been Bach's would be his.

"At least I can feel sure, when I am in my coffin, that you will not lose the snuff-box," said Herr Clauder, watching him.

VI

These weekly meetings at Clauder's withdrawn little house immensely increased Giovanni's knowledge of violins and of violin-makers. He handled the Stradivarius with reverence, and looked through the sound-holes at the label inside, which said

Antonius Stradivarius Cremonensis
Faciebat Anno 1704

while the old man told him all that had gone to its making, and how, when Stradivarius had completed each lovely instrument, he would hang them up on pegs in the organ-loft of the Cathedral, to attune the wood, to tone the varnish, in that golden vibrating atmosphere before they were purchased by princes.

He also told Giovanni of violin music, opening to him unknown treasures.

"You play, of course, that celebrated sonata of Tartini's which they call the Devil's Trill?"

"Yes," said Giovanni.

"Of course, you would!" the old man seemed sarcastically pleased, "But what about the Dido Forsaken Sonata, also by Tartini? Do you play that?"

Giovanni had to confess that he had never played it or even heard it. Clauder pulled it out from his collection and gave it to Giovanni to take home and learn.

"Then you can appear upon the platform with something that is not in every fiddler's pack. Look at the intensity of the opening allegro—look at the feeling of that last movement. Always, my young friend, explore, and do not consider that even Bach has said the last word."

OLD MUSIC

Out of old presses Herr Clauder brought manuscript music of all ages—music beautifully and floriately engraved also. Giovanni, with the golden Stradivarius to his shoulder, tried this and tried that, till Clauder would snatch the sheets away, crying impatiently, "Too much bad music, too many people!"

Giovanni glanced round the walls hung thickly with violins, a looming bass-viol in one corner, a 'cello in another, a broad-bellied lute on the window shelf. But no more than Christoph Clauder would he have said, "Too many fiddles in the world!"

Clauder, when the mood took him, showed to Giovanni books on music, old documents and letters he had collected, all bearing on the violin. In wind instruments and keyboard instruments he had no interest—for the organ he had an aversion equal to Jacob Stainer's own, "To think that they should imagine to get string tone on a column of air confined in a leaden pipe!"

He showed one day to Giovanni a letter written from Rome long years past.

"See now what this letter tells of Corelli—that great countryman of yours. See how a young man of intelligence in those days would use his leisure, instead of wasting his time on opera and ballet."

He began to read: "I cannot mention here Corelli, without adding a little more about him. He was the chief violinist as well as the chief componist of the age, and perhaps carried both those talents a greater length than ever they had been known before. His manner on the violin is charming, and exceeds what can be well imagined possible on that instrument. His *arcade* is inimitable both for softness and strength, for at the same time he forces out a sound that is like to tear the ear in pieces; nothing can be imagined more great or so strong; one would think that by degrees he raises a sound to the height of a tempest, and softens it down again to the breathing of a zephyr. This is his manner in adagios, to which he adds innumerable graces, not crowded in confusion, as some do, but gentle, easy, and sliding, and suited withal to the composition of the other parts, which no man but he who has his taste and

knowledge in composition can perform. In his allegro he plays even, clear, quick, and distinct. In his compositions he is exact and curious to the last degree."

"Now that," continued Clauder, "I call a letter of intelligence and interest. What would you not give for such a letter, describing the way and the style of performance of your Bach?"

Giovanni could not think of a suitable answer to this question, so made none.

"Bach has written some of the most admirable music in the world, and he himself played, so I understand, the viola, but it is a regrettable matter that he cast away so much time in performing on the organ and composing music for that elephantine instrument."

But as no music of Bach's and no work or act of his could be anything but right to Giovanni, he again made no comment.

"Silent to-day?" said Herr Clauder. "Well, there are better things than talk. Play to me the Chaconne."

VII

AN ENCOUNTER

One day Giovanni was walking across the cobbled Thomaskirche Square, so almost exactly as it had been in Bach's day, save that the stone fountain in the centre had been removed. Suddenly he heard quick footsteps behind him and a hand fell on his shoulder. He turned round and looked into a face that was utterly strange to him, a face he knew he had never seen before. Level narrow eyes gazed at him, a mane of light hair sprang backwards from a broad capacious forehead, wide shoulders completed a frame not quite so tall, but more powerful, than his own.

The young man at whom he stood staring with surprise burst into a roar of laughter, showing strong white teeth and the width of his mouth as he did so.

"You do not know who I am, nor why I speak to you. But have patience, I will tell you. I am your countryman——"

Before he could continue, in the blink of an eye, Giovanni knew who he was.

"Amades Govoni!" he said.

It was the turn of Govoni to look surprised.

"But how do you know my name? I am but this morning arrived in

Leipzig."

Giovanni bowed.

"The Herr Cantor has spoken to me of you—he has said you were to come."

"And he has also spoken of you to me—saw you pass the window, and said we should meet soon. But I thought now was better than soon!"

Again he laughed and held out his hand to Giovanni.

"We are friends?" he said.

Giovanni took it and felt a powerful grasp.

"We are friends," he repeated solemnly.

Govoni took his arm and marched him round the Square.

"We are friends," he chanted in a low deep voice. "There are few friends, but we are friends. We are Italians, we are Romans in an alien city. We are musicians—there are few musicians, but we are musicians. At least," he broke off his chanting and peered into Giovanni's face, "if you are not a musician, real, not sham, then our friendship, so new, so young, is dead!"

He began chanting again, "But he is a musician, the Weinlig declares he is a musician, so I will love him!"

By this time they had gone twice round the Square, which rather fortunately was empty, it being those noontide hours during which German cities eat and slumber.

"THE WONDERFUL NAME"

Giovanni was willing to go round and round the cobbled Square, the Thomaskirche looming on one side, the white-fronted Thomasschule gazing at them on the other, till he dropped. His mind saluted Govoni with joy. "Amades Govoni! Amades Govoni!" it kept saying within him, "The name!—the wonderful name!" He was lifted by this young man, who so far had done nothing save laugh uproariously and chant absurdly, on to another plane of being. He knew that something momentous had happened to him.

VIII

Amades Govoni, like Giovanni, was born in Rome. Both his parents died when he was young, and he was left to the somewhat reluctant upbringing of a much older brother, whose reluctance to undertake his charge was much modified when he realised that so remarkable were Amades' musical gifts that

he would make money, instead of regrettably consuming it. At a suitably early age Amades was produced as a musical prodigy—a second Mozart.

For many years, owing to Amades' unexpected fair tawny colouring, his large-mouthed innocent smile, combined with unusual technical ability and a prodigious gift for improvising on any theme presented to him, he made large sums of money for his brother—who groaned publicly on all possible occasions over the immense sums he was expending on his brother's training and upkeep.

"But who would not sacrifice everything for art?" he would cry, eloquent hands emphasising the depth of this noble feeling, "For music incarnate in the body of an orphan brother?"

But the body of this orphan brother persisted in growing with such undesirable speed—spreading, expanding—that the day came when the "infant prodigy" inevitably deceased, and a large and vigorous youth stood in his place. The youth played as well, or better, but the public would no longer congregate to hear him.

When this truth dawned finally upon the elder brother's mind, he told Giovanni that he was old enough to earn his own keep, and could no longer expect to exist upon the bounty of his relations. While he was saying this, at length, and with many gestures, Amades stood staring at his brother with an astonished expression, then he burst into a gigantic roar of laughter. He rocked with laughter, all the while gazing upon his brother with a deep and ribald amusement which that personage found extremely uncomfortable.

"So be it," said Amades, when he could get his breath, "I will remove myself. But first I must enjoy this joke—it is worth all the money you have made out of me."

And he laughed again. His capacity for immense laughter was, on occasion, a great trial to many people. In his later life he used to declare that it was the best exercise in the world—as good for the body as it was for the spirits. In reality it was the reverse side of a deep melancholy, which he rarely permitted to show, holding melancholy a weakness, though the fundamental gravity of his mind he did not hide from his real friends. But, especially in youth, he had a great fund of animal spirits, and an abounding vitality.

WANDERINGS

For years after leaving his brother Govoni supported himself—came near, on many occasions, to not supporting himself. He wandered over Europe, teaching, learning, working out his theories as to pianoforte playing—and also his theories as to other things than music. He was responsive to life. He did not turn away from

the squalid or the ridiculous, though loveliness, in all its shapes, drew him with a passion. He knew extremes of misery. He was once dangerously ill for many weeks in a Hungarian gypsy encampment, where comforts and medicines there were none. But he laughed again when for the first time he staggered to his feet which seemed so curiously remote. “Death had everything in his favour that time,” he thought, “but he has lost the game.” He felt within himself that it was necessary that he should first sink low, endure many things, before he could rise high.

When he and Giovanni met he was beginning to rise. He had played the “Emperor” Concerto in Vienna in the Redoutensaal, and Beethoven’s own city had acclaimed him. He was come to Leipzig to play at the Gewandhaus concerts. Paris was awaiting him the following year. He was that rare thing the child virtuoso who had grown to greatness in his manhood.

“The kindest act my brother ever did me was to kick me out,” he said once, “Nevertheless I shall not send him tickets when I play in Rome. He will have to pay for them if he wishes to hear me—and he will certainly not do that! So he will not see the tame lamb he led about on a golden chain roaring like a very devil of a lion!”

And he laughed again. He found life continually amusing.

IX

One afternoon Giovanni began to excuse to Govoni his proposed absence for an hour or two.

“Where do you go?”

“Just close, round the corner, to play to an old man who has a marvellous Stradivarius, which he permits that I play upon.”

“Old man with Stradivarius sounds interesting. I also will come.”

“But——” Giovanni hesitated.

“You think your old man will not like it if I come? But he will—I assure you I will make him like it.”

And without more ado he took Giovanni’s arm and walked him out of the house.

Herr Clauder stared with unpleased surprise at the two young men upon his doorstep.

“Who are you?” he asked Govoni in an unpromising manner.

Govoni smiled broadly at him.

VISIT TO CLAUDER

"I am a friend of Giovanni's—I have come, with your permission, to see your beautiful Stradivarius."

"I have other beautiful fiddles, as well as the Stradivarius," said Herr Clauder, and held the door open for the two of them to pass within.

It was as easy as that.

When they were inside the fiddle-hung room he asked Govoni if he too were a violinist.

Govoni looked at his broad-palmed, square, nervous hands, with the spatulate fingertips.

"No, I play a less perfect instrument—but one with which I can make more noise!"

"Chut!" cried the old man, "Do you mean the Devil's coach-horn, or that well-named Hammerclavier—a hammer hitting wood and wires, surely an instrument that must have been invented by a carpenter!"

"Must it not have been a carpenter who made the first fiddle out of two boards?" said Govoni smiling mischievously. "But the Hammerclavier is my instrument—poor enough, I grant you, but anyway it does to exercise my fingers."

Herr Clauder stared at him, a twinkle appearing in the remoteness of his old eyes.

Amades saw the twinkle.

"Well," said the old man, "Do not expect that I shall come to listen to you trotting your fingers up and down that keyboard. No doubt you expect to find fools who will actually pay in good money to hear you—but I am not one of them. Come, we will listen now to Giovanni's fingers more profitably employed."

After that visit Govoni was as free of Herr Clauder's little dark house as was Giovanni.

"What did I tell you?" he said to Giovanni, as they came away. "I can always make people like me if I want to do so."

X

Giovanni and Amades stood gazing at each other. They had just finished a rehearsal of the Beethoven Violin Concerto which they were to play together at

a very select little concert to be given by the Herr Cantor Weinlig the following night to some important musical friends.

"God!" said Amades, "We will never play it so well again, however long we may live! Old Ludwig united us as one soul!"

They paused and breathed. The air all round them still seemed vibrant with that loveliness.

"Queer old fellow, Beethoven," Govoni said, "He had not been dead many years when I played his 'Emperor' at Vienna, and the place was full of stories about him. He was stone-deaf, you know, and his great recreation was to walk about in the country, and if the composing fever was on him he would wave his arms and sing and shout, till, they say, the very cattle in the fields fled from him."

"To be deaf must be the saddest thing that can befall a composer."

"I am not entirely sure about that," Amades answered, "It is certainly cruel—but it may be good. It shuts him in with his music, he lives in the globe of his own thought, he is free of the distraction of people. Before he became completely deaf Beethoven was full of all sorts of curious tricks. When he was going to perform he would often strike the keyboard with the flat of his hand, making hideous discords and laughing to himself—he seemed to enjoy listening to execrable music and would roar with laughter at it. Sometimes in rehearsing his Symphonies the orchestra would become all confused and lost at the sudden changes of tempo in the scherzos, and then Beethoven was terribly pleased, and used to shout with laughter and say he had expected nothing less. As you might expect he was a boor in society—rude and uncouth in the polished *salons* of the aristocracy who admired his genius, and proud of it. He had a violently independent spirit."

"He sounds an amazing person," said Giovanni, "Tell me some more about him."

"Well, if he was intolerant and violent he, nevertheless, had a good heart. In Vienna there was an old crippled man who sat at the door of a *Gasthaus* where Beethoven often ate. One day he came in for his midday meal, and his eye fell upon this old man—usually he was so absorbed in his own thoughts that he saw nobody. A few moments later Beethoven came out again with a sizzling dish of their favourite food *Wiener Schnitzel*, thrust it into the beggar's hand, and strode off, his coat tails flapping, his tall hat pushed to the back of his grizzled mane. The old man told me the story himself."

“But what about Beethoven’s own dinner?” Giovanni asked.

“Oh, I do not know. Probably had not any more money in his pocket—or, more likely, completely forgot that he had not eaten.”

To Giovanni and his family Govoni played Beethoven’s pianoforte sonatas—their passionate picturesqueness, their violently human and impetuous quality, was a new experience to the Bach-saturated mind of Giovanni. The one he liked the best of all was the last of all. Amades played it with a deep and penetrating understanding. The serenity and mystery of the *Arietta, Adagio molto, semplice e cantabile*, wove a strange spell in the listening room. His hearers felt as though Beethoven was telling them marvellous things—things which they did not hear with their ears, but with their souls, which they understood, but could not explain. It was like an ambience about them.

“That is the best of the lot,” Govoni would declare, “He cannot say what he wants to say—it is too far off, it hovers like a mist over the notes, grey, tender mist. It is as though he said to us—you cannot understand my thought if I have to spell it out for you.”

Amades swung round from the keyboard to face his small audience. His strange narrow eyes had a sort of icy flame in them, his hair was wild and tossing as though an unseen wind blew through it—all his laughter had departed.

“Genius!” thought the old Professor. “Genius—its stamp is plain.”

GENIUS

“Beethoven himself speaks in all his music,” Govoni went on, “And all his listeners hear something different in his voice, something that belongs to themselves alone. In the slow movement of the Seventh Symphony, that heavenly Allegretto, I always hear these words, funny little words, but they are always there when I listen to that music—

“You will never
See me again.
I go away now—
Away from this pain.”

He suddenly turned away from them, swung his hands down on the keyboard, and crashed into the massive opening chords of the “Hammerclavier.”

Wild he was, untamed and fierce, under his laughter.

Giovanni had never heard the Seventh Symphony.

XI

If Amades Govoni taught Giovanni of Beethoven's range and beauty, Giovanni and his grandfather had something to show him of Bach. To their amazement, though he had heard of Bach, he thought of him as an organist who had composed a certain number of church cantatas. When the Professor—who was a delicate expert in this art—played to him on the harpsichord Preludes and Fugues from the "Well-tempered Clavier," Govoni stood listening in amazed silence.

"Great God!" was all he said.

When he was introduced to the Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue he fell upon it like a wolf.

"But this is mine!" he cried.

He laughed as his fingers fled through the flying arpeggios, the swirling eddies of notes, illusive, brilliant. He laughed with joy.

"This is different from Beethoven!"

"And better!" said Giovanni.

They stared at each other, like two dogs considering whether they would fight.

Amades jumped up.

"What a world!" he cried, swinging Giovanni round by the arm, "What a world! Bach, Beethoven!—Beethoven, Bach! At least you will admit, you obstinate ass, that Bach never wrote anything for the fiddle so entirely glorious as the Concerto in D?"

"But you have not heard Bach's Violin Sonatas yet!"

"Where are they?—where are they?" Amades cried, his eyes shining with the peculiar icy light music, and the excitement of music, brought to them, "Let us try them!"

They fell upon the Sonatas, they devoured them.

"Well, I give it up," Amades admitted, "They are both gods!"

"You must not forget that Bach died twenty years before Beethoven was born; that in the last half of the eighteenth century music had spread herself into new forms, like the sea at full tide filling a creek. Mozart and Haydn had come and gone—the sonata had been born and the symphony, new orchestral possibilities had developed, unknown in Bach's day."

This was the Professor's little lecture.

Govoni looked at him respectfully.

"Yes, I understand." Then he laughed. "Holy Virgin! what does it matter? Bach and Beethoven—there they stand to eternity!"

XII

When he had played at the last Gewandhaus concert of the season both Bach and Beethoven—with a power, a delicacy, a fire, that enchanted his listeners—all musical Leipzig began talking about Amades Govoni. He was invited to parties, he was offered and promised musical engagements. He accepted all this at first with satisfaction—"Good for my career," he would say to Giovanni. But after a while it definitely began to bore him.

"Let us get out of this," he cried one day to Giovanni, slamming the front door of the Thomasschule behind him, "Weinlig—I love Weinlig, but he knows a lot of dull people. I am sick of my career, as they call it. Let us go away—let us walk together into the world, with nothing but our clothes on our backs and a *thaler* or two in our pockets."

SPRING DAYS

It was spring. The sky and the winds called. A new sense of delight in life rose within Giovanni—everything was quickened, enchanted, by the presence of Amades Govoni. It was the first time he had known any intimate contact with anyone near his own age, for though Amades was three years older than Giovanni, his vitality, his laughter, his immense physical strength—which he delighted to show off in all sorts of childish ways—made him seem younger. Giovanni's upbringing shadowed by his father's melancholy death, and so deeply marked by his two years' pupilage to Paganini—who could hardly be called a cheerful companion for the young—followed by a life lived almost exclusively with his mother and grandfather had given him no youthful and irresponsible companionship. He had known, in these earlier years, extraordinary stimulation for his art, a stimulation almost too extreme and exciting. He had, through his strange inheritance, received glimpses into a world remote and yet passionately real and dear to him. He had worked and thought and wondered—he had laughed and played hardly at all.

But now came Amades to change this, to show Giovanni how to exist as lightly as birds exist—to throw his too studious cap gaily over the windmills.

Gerda had taken an instant liking to Amades—he always had the effect of a rush of fresh wind into a closed room, eyes brightened and cheeks warmed when he entered. It is a good world, his presence said, and we would be

thankless fools not to enjoy it. Seeing him with Giovanni Gerda realised for the first time that her son's life had been too enclosed, too serious in its daily surface manifestations, though underneath she knew that fundamentally it was essentially serious. Suddenly she felt that Giovanni had been too young to receive when he did the heritage of the Cavatini Letters—though she had not realised, when she gave them to him according to her dead husband's wishes, how deeply, in what an extraordinary manner, they would affect him, appeal to him. She had not forgotten his strange look, exalted, afraid, when he returned from his first visit to the Thomasschule. Little as she had been told she knew that something lay behind the talk, the evasive talk, of a fainting attack—she was not without a perception of the something that lay behind. She had not been unconscious of other occasions when her love told her that something had touched Giovanni, something that came from beyond his daily life. Without a spoken word she felt that her father knew more than she herself knew. She did not resent it—she was not a jealous woman, nor an encompassing, inquisitive one. She took gratefully what those she loved gave her, and if sometimes she wished a little wistfully that it might be more, she never said so. She knew that perfect confidence, complete candour between one generation and the next, even though it were mother and son, was not possible. She doubted whether such confidence were possible between any two human beings—though they were lovers. It had never existed between her and Luigi Cavatini, helplessly though she had loved him. She was not embittered. Each personality, simple or complex, moves in a sphere of its own.

So it was with maternal blessing that Giovanni set out on his travels with Amades.

SHADOWED THOUGHTS

Gerda, her arm linked in her father's, stood at the door of the little house in the quiet street, and bade them both *auf wiedersehen*

It was a brilliant day—the sky a deep blue, across which great white cauliflower heads of cloud raced, while the wind sang an inviting song of the road. Over the steep old roofs of Leipzig flew the clouds, as though they were as anxious to leave the town as the two young men had become.

"Would it not be grand to be up there?" Amades said, glancing upwards, "Flying like those clouds! It is wings we want, not feet!"

"You have your wings in your hearts," said the Professor smiling, "And that is really a better place for them—they will carry you further."

Giovanni threw his arms round his mother. Amades took her hand and kissed it, and then, to her surprised pleasure, suddenly gave her a salute like Giovanni's. They set off, they waved and looked back at the corner of the

street. They vanished from sight.

Gerda stood there a moment, gazing at the empty quiet street. A surge of youth, which she had thought departed, rose within her breast. Was her life, her own personal life—not that which was linked so dearly to her son and her father—quite finished? Italy and her existence there with Luigi suddenly seemed as though it had never been. She sighed. A voice called from the house.

She went in and shut the door.

XIII

POOR PEOPLE

As their pilgrimage, by mutual agreement, was to cost as few *thalers* as might be, for they were young and healthy and needed no luxury as sauce to their bread and sausage eaten under the sky, they decided they would simply walk from Giovanni's door into whatever part of Saxony attracted their carefree footsteps. Such beauty as was lacking in the flat agricultural country was supplied by their gay spirits, and the memories each one carried within him of Italy. They had no need to wonder where they would sleep—if the little hedge-inn could give them no more, it could provide a bundle of straw to lie upon, and, when they were in luck, milk soup, or a pan-cake.

"Poor—poor, and depressed, are these people," Govoni said, one day as they were walking along through a flat and hedge-less landscape. "The peasantry are poor too in Italy, but with what a difference!—it is the land of sun, the land of the vine, above all the land of the Faith. Their God is always with them to console whenever they enter a church, and the saints belong to their family, sit down to meals with them, as it were. If these poor wretches think anything about God they probably think He is walking about in the Herr Pastor's black gown—He certainly is not in their cold churches!"

In spite of his Catholic feeling Giovanni thought this rather harsh.

"But if they do not know any better?"

"Heyho! Well, we will leave them to it!" said Amades. "The thing that troubles me most at the moment is the vast hollow, big as a cathedral nave, in my interior. Think you there is hope of provender at yonder stately hostelry?"

He pointed to a small post-house lowering under a decayed thatch-roof by the roadside which they were approaching.

"More bedrooms for birds than for humans," he continued, as they drew near and observed the holes in the thatch and the raggle-taggle of birds

hopping about there.

But the little hedge-inn was better than its look. Two large bowls of chocolate soup with lumps of rye bread were shortly placed before them, and as they sat eating them on a tumble-down bench in the sun, they read bits from a book they had found at the inn.

This distinctly surprising discovery had been made when they went indoors to ask for food. In the corner of a window-shelf lay a broken little book curled at the edges, the brown cover drained to the grey colour of chalky soil. Govoni picked it up with a look of surprise, which increased as he turned the leaves and observed its contents.

The busy *Hausfrau*, attired in her bunched petticoat, a dirty chintz bed-jacket, and a still dirtier calico cap, saw him holding the book. "*Ach*," she said, as she hurried by, " 'tis a useless little book and nobody can read it. What is the use of a book anyway, save the *Heilige Schrift*, which the Pastor reads in the church of a Sunday? Who wants such things at other times? Take it away with you, gentlemen."

"IMAGES OF GRACE"

So they took it to the broken-down bench, and turned it over as they waited for their meal. The little book was called "Images of Grace"—a small Catholic volume astray in an alien country—and was a collection of little tales of miracles and comforts wrought by sacred images, homely, innocent tales which pleased the young men, and touched that deep responsive nerve which stirs in the Catholic heart when it encounters unexpectedly such things as speak of the Faith. The pages were sprinkled with little prayers to the Mother of God—quaint, charming little prayers. Govoni smiled as he read some of them aloud, "Oh, thou pure swan, who sailest on the lake of Divine Grace"—"Oh, thou Arch of Triumph, through which alone the Lord of Glory was permitted to pass."

A somewhat tattered maiden at that moment brought out their bowls of soup.

When she saw the little book in their hands she giggled.

"How came this book here?" Govoni asked her.

"So odd a man!" the maiden declared, giggling still more, her fair plaits shaking with her amusement, "So tall and thin, with a face like a corpse, in a long garment of white wool like a woman, and a black cloak, and he would eat nothing save a handful of dry bread and a cup dipped in the brook. He left that book, to bless the house, he said. As if a silly book could bless a house!"

She fled in a paroxysm of laughter.

“Dominican,” said Govoni. “I have a cousin who is a Dominican—you must see him one day.”

“Yes, that would be good,” Giovanni answered.

“What these people about here would appreciate would be a saint who could give them something to eat, not something to read, like Jansine.”

“Who was Jansine?—I have never heard of a saint of that name.”

JANSINE

“She was not a saint—not canonised, I mean. Just a mountain village girl who was always praying, and her prayers were always answered. When the villagers discovered this they came crowding round her, asking her to pray for all the things they wanted. Jansine, pray that my hair may curl, so that the young blacksmith will love me. Jansine, pray that my hens may lay all the year round. Jansine, pray that my field of flax may be better than any other. Jansine, pray that my daughter’s next child may be a son—five girls is really too much. Jansine, pray that my tooth may stop aching.

And so it went on, till all the desires and troubles of the village were on Jansine’s shoulders and in Jansine’s thoughts—her young knees grew stiff with kneeling. Jansine had no prayers for herself. But one day a stranger young man came to the village, and as he passed by he looked at Jansine—the eyes of Jansine were cast down, nevertheless she saw the look, and for the first time she prayed a little prayer for herself—‘Oh, dear Jesu, please let him look at me again!’ She was so taken up with this thought that she forgot to pray for the village, and the people all came running to her and scolding her and saying it was all her fault—the blacksmith was troth-plight to another maiden; the hens had ceased laying and were eating up the widow woman’s little substance; the flax was full of weeds; the daughter’s child was another girl, and the tooth-ache was worse than ever. They scolded so much and danced round shouting at her so loudly, that Jansine grew frightened and picked up her skirts and ran away down the mountain. But her prayer was answered, for the stranger young man ran after her, and when he caught her up they ran hand in hand till they reached his own village and then they were married. But he said she had better not begin praying for the people in his village, or they would have no peace. After she had gone her own people began to think she was a saint, and they wanted their priest to write and tell the Holy Father in Rome about her.”

“What a nice tale!” said Giovanni, who had been listening with enchanted interest—the stories his mother had been wont to tell him in former days, the stories he had dreamed in his little bed, all rushing back to his mind—“Where did you hear it?”

"I have no idea," Amades answered, "Someone told me, I read it in some book—I do not know."

XIV

By day they walked, by night they slept, sometimes in a place so poverty-stricken that it yielded them nothing save a bundle of straw for a bed. In the villages they were roused frequently from their healthy slumbers by the watchman who tramped heavily about the tiny street, sounding a horn under the windows of the peasants to assure them that they were being guarded from thieves and vagabonds till daybreak.

"Though what there can be to steal in such a hole as this," Govoni muttered as he stirred uneasily, "the Devil alone knows! Anyway, these serfs of the soil would not wake from their snoring were the Devil himself to come in person, if they can survive that horn!"

The discordant assiduity of the Watch, combined with the discomfort of their beds, made them rise early enough on many a morning to behold the glories of the sunrise gilding the poor landscape, pathetic in its barren marsh, its humble hamlets of mud, huddled like a cowering flock of sheep under the magnificent and coloured dome of the morning sky. The youth in them responded to the youth of the day, and each new dawn, each sun-setting they saw together, drew them closer, made them as brothers of one birth. They talked till they knew each other's minds on all the things that mattered—on life, on the nature of man and his destiny, above all on music. Govoni always grew deeply excited and moved on this topic.

"Music is glory—but it is also pain! If there were no pain, longing, loss, in the world, this world, there would be no music. It requires the dissonance to bring out the full sweetness of the consonance. Your unfulfilled leading note must lead—to Heaven, to the peace thereof. *Dona nobis pacem* we pray, and all the time He has given it to us, when He gave us music!"

SCOPE OF MUSIC

"I suppose that is one reason why the lives of musicians, on the whole, do not seem very happy in the ordinary way. Look at Beethoven, and poor Schubert—they are so often impoverished, neglected, ill, crossed in love."

"But they have music," said Amades, as though that compensated for all.

So they talked. They were grave with the gravity of youth—and gay and full of laughter.

Govoni was avid of experience.

"I do not yet know enough," he declared, as they marched along side by side, "My fingers, they can do anything—but my mind is not so good as my fingers. I must learn, work, travel, I must suffer. Ah, if I could die and come back again from Limbo—then, then, I would play! Your Leipzig believes only in German musicians," he went on, "Italy—whoever heard of a serious musician coming out of Italy, anything but a castrate, an opera-singer and no man! The last Italian pianist the Germans have heard of is Domenico Scarlatti. But I will show them something before many years!"

Amades was the talker. Giovanni listened, and his mental horizons expanded as he listened.

"You must never forget that all things can go into music—not just the beautiful things, but pain, and harshness, and people. Look at that old man advancing towards us with his kerchief tied across his cap to keep out the blast, look at his knotted legs and his face all crumpled inwards on his hollow life. You do not like people, Giovanni?"

"No, I do not think I do very much—except when they are nice and interesting."

Govoni made him feel very young.

"Nice and interesting! All people are interesting, though not all people are nice. But look at them, try to understand, even when you hate them—and I assure you I hate them by the score!—it all goes to make a musician. And remember this,"—he flung his arms to the horizon with a wild emphatic gesture—"There are only two things to be in this world—a musician or a religious."

"But you need a vocation to be a religious."

"God!" cried Amades, "Do you not need a vocation to be a musician?"

"Well, it is fortunate that not all have this vocation, or who would grow the corn and the beeves for our food?"

"Ah, the good Deity will see to our sustenance—that is why he sends so many people into the world to work for us—and to listen to us! Look, down in that valley is a farm of a more comfortable kind than we generally see. Let us find out if it contains a kindly *Hausfrau* and the refreshment of which we are in need."

They raced down the slope, shouting and laughing to each other.

It was a broad and prosperous-looking farm-house, with deep eaves, the walls a bright ginger-bread colour, with a

capacious porch at one side, and the bread-ovens and the prune-ovens like big mudheaps under a rough canopy of tiles. One or two of the plaster squares between the timber framework of the house were ornamented with rude mouldings of the most elementary nature.

FARM-HOUSE

"Art is evidently not the strong point of these people," Govoni remarked as they stood awaiting some response to their knock, "Look at those roses, like colossal cabbages, and that horse like a rampant weasel!"

Hospitality fell upon them with the opening of the door. The farmer and his rotund wife were by far the most prosperous people for many square miles around, and enchanted to have the opportunity to display their prosperity. Amades and Giovanni were fed to repletion on the richest fare—liver-sausage, smoked goose-breast, prune pudding, and many other things, with carraway-schnappes. Such lavishness of food they had not seen since they left Leipzig. No excuse was taken but that they must sleep the night there at least, if not longer. The evening was enlivened with games, one of which was "How do you like your Neighbour?"

"I like her not at all," said Govoni, as they prepared for sleep when the revels were over, in the vast raftered room which had been allotted to them. "I like her not at all when she is the farmer's fat daughter, with her shiny face and on-coming disposition. Little need to beat her with the hank of flux to make her kiss a young man! *Ach, du grosser Gott*, these German maidens take not my fancy!"

He snuffed the ill-smelling candle and climbed into the high bed.

As he said these words the thought of another German maiden he had once seen flashed into Giovanni's mind—so quiet, so withdrawn, nothing of an on-coming disposition in her. Like a wraith her face floated on the darkness. But she was dead—dead long ago. Something deep within him stirred—a little light, a little sweetness, all very far away. Sleep swept down upon him before he had time to consider the matter more closely.

XV

The next day, after they had declined the warm invitations of the farmer and his wife to prolong their stay, and skilfully avoided getting entangled in the languishing glances of the fat and flaxen daughter, they departed on a further stage of their wandering light-hearted pilgrimage. They had no plans, they just walked whither they felt inclined. They made no attempt to see any famous places—with the reservation of one in Giovanni's mind.

"Anyway, what is there to see in this Saxony?" Govoni asked

contemptuously, “Not enough to stir the eyes that saw the light in Italy! Think of the Pincian Hill, with that deep blue evening light over Rome, think of the Appian Way, and the tombs and the cypresses and the grass whispering in the wind! God, I am glad I am a Roman!”

Giovanni looked at him, “Oh, Amades, we must go to Rome together!”

“We are going,” said Amades, “You were too youthful when you left to know what Italy means. Now, you will understand—I will show you. My cousin, you will like him, he is your kind of person, and he will show you too.”

They walked for a time in silence, both seeing visions. Rome with Amades, thought Giovanni—and all the landscape before him turned colourless at the radiant imagination.

ENTER A DOG

Suddenly Giovanni said, “Look at that dog!”

Govoni swung round, “Dog?” he said, “Where?”

Then he saw the big black shaggy dog, of no known breed, that tentatively was following after them, crouching as though he did not wish to be noticed.

Giovanni was a little startled.

“Do you think he is fierce?” he asked.

Amades broke into a roar of laughter, and stood still in the rough track for the dog to come up with them.

“Fierce?” he cried, “Dogs are not fierce unless they have been ill-treated. Dogs are the best people in the world—do you not know that?—your education has been neglected.”

Giovanni began to feel it had.

When they stood still the dog stood still, immobile, staring with brown eyes which showed a queer rim of white round the iris, and gave him a slightly clownish look.

Govoni did not move towards the dog, but dropped on one knee, and held out one hand.

“Come on,” he said, “Good dog, come on.”

The dog still stared at him, then suddenly he dropped his loppy ears a little lower on his head—it was as if he smiled—and the tip of his feathered tail hanging down moved slowly from side to side.

“Come on,” said Amades, “Come on, Gobbo.”

The dog put one paw before the other, stood still a moment, then moved with increasing speed to Govoni kneeling in the road. They looked at each other a moment, Govoni patted the rough head and stood up.

"Let us go on," he said, "Take no notice of him, he is our dog now."

They walked on, the dog close to Govoni's heels, coming after as though he had never been parted from them in his life.

"Poor thin wretch," Govoni said, glancing sideways at him, "He has had a hard life—well, things will go better henceforward."

In a mile or two they arrived at a post-house, and when their broth came he ordered another platter, poured some soup into it, broke in some lumps of rye bread, and put the dish on the floor. The dog shivered a little, his nose wrinkled, but he did not move.

"Poor beggar, he is frightened."

Govoni picked a piece of the sopped bread out of the platter and held it to the dog's nose, "Here, Gobbo, for you." The dog gave him an adoring look, and with surprising gentleness, opened his mouth and took it.

Amades and Giovanni looked at each other, surprised at such patience in an animal obviously half-starved. They put the dish closer and knelt on either side of the dog as he at last ravenously fell upon it, glancing now and then sideways at them with his queer ecstatic eye, his tail spasmodically wagging at one end, as he gulped and lapped at the other.

"There is a study of a famished, frightened, grateful animal for you," said Amades as they began on their own broth. The dog had by then finished his share, and stood looking at them both, not as though he wanted any more food, but as if he were wondering where these benign gods had come from. Then he stepped up to the table and laid his head heavily upon Govoni's knee—as if saying "Here is my head; it is all I have to give you," gazing unutterable things with his brown eyes.

GOBBO

"Dogs' eyes always make me ashamed—they make me feel as though I ought to be a better man, as the pious say," Amades remarked, stroking the floppy ears, so rough and uncared-for, which should have been so soft, "But the marvellous thing about dogs is that however bad you may be, however much of a failure, they love you just the same, *nicht wahr*, Gobbo?"

From that day the dog's name was Gobbo, and he was Govoni's shadow. He was a black dog, but he had many splashes of white—his chest was white;

while under his chin was speckled black and white, like a thrush in half mourning; he had four white socks; a little line of white like a perpetual question mark between his eyes; and that curious white rim which showed when he rolled his eyes, the socket being a little too large for the iris of the eye. A few days of food and affection—and the affection was far the most important to Gobbo—and he was another dog. His coat was shining and sleek instead of staring, his tail a plume of triumph and satisfaction that he had been so singularly clever as to discover a master like Govoni. He adored Govoni: Giovanni he very kindly patronised.

XVI

So the two of them became three, and Gobbo proved himself to be a young dog, not the old and sober animal he had first appeared. His idea of perfect bliss was a stick and his master in a mood to play with him. He would trot to Govoni, with the stick in his mouth, growling temptingly and wagging his tail violently at the same time to show that the growl was part of the game, his ridiculous eyes rolling and showing large expanses of white. Govoni would grab at the stick, purposely missing it, so that Gobbo could feel triumphant. The two of them would roll over and over together, roars of laughter from Govoni, growls of joy from Gobbo.

At first the dog had not known how to play—evidently never had been played with before. He stood with his head on one side, trying to understand what was wanted of him, but when he grasped the glorious idea, which he did very quickly, he was enchanted.

“Lord!” said Amades, sitting on the grass after one of these games with his dog, who panted round him with rosy tongue dripping out of his jaws, trying to encourage him to further noble efforts, “Lord, I shall be wanting a wet-nurse soon if I go on growing younger at this pace! Pull me up, Giovanni, and let us talk of something sensible.”

He ran his hands through his tumbled mane of hair, and shook himself, looking down with a smile at the prostrate dog, who had thumped down on his side with a sigh of satisfaction so immense that it seemed to deflate him like a balloon.

Gobbo was to be, in the years to come, a dog well known throughout Europe. At every concert Amades Govoni gave, Gobbo appeared on the platform with him, and while he played sat under the grand pianoforte. When Govoni stood bowing to the applause Gobbo stood by him, his mouth open in a wide smile, his tail wagging. If the applause waxed especially furious Gobbo barked. No recital, in the years to come, would have been complete without

him, and Amades used to say his name ought to be printed on the programmes.

GYPSY TALES

When tired of romping with his dog Amades would tell Giovanni tales of his varied experiences. Giovanni was particularly enthralled to hear of his sojourn among the Hungarian gypsies. A certain quality, wild and strange, came over Govoni as he talked of those past days. He had so many aspects and phases. Five minutes earlier he would have been like an exuberant child romping with his dog—then Giovanni would remember how he would look when he was playing from the *Wohltemperierte Clavier*, grave and remote. The changes of his moods, the number of entirely different ways in which he responded to his thought and feeling, were an amazement to Giovanni, who continually felt his youth and inexperience by the side of Govoni.

Yet Govoni would say to him: “You have lived with Paganini—nothing I have known can equal such an adventure as that. The most genius-possessed—perhaps the most devil-possessed—man now alive in Europe. And those gypsies I lived with, and nearly died with, would have understood him. Music is in their bones—they make music as they make love, it takes you off your feet. The gypsies had a woman who would have been a mate for your Paganini—even her name chimes with his, Ginka Panna. Match it to his—Ginka Paganini! Evidently arranged by destiny, only destiny in a careless manner got the dates wrong. Alas, another blunder in this curious world! For see, Giovanni, she was a fiddler, a great one, her playing is a legend among them. She had a magic tune—a little wandering air from another world. Imagine it on those vast plains at night, the gypsies gathered round a blazing fire, which is yet so small a spark of humanity in the solitude, the great empty sky above in which the round moon hangs vacantly, the deep shadows, the glittering eyes, and Ginka Panna’s magic tune, which says things to those gypsy hearts we can never hear!”

Giovanni was suddenly excited by the picture. He laid his hand on Govoni’s arm, he whispered, and his eyes looked as though they were seeing something: “And into that circle a thin black figure comes stealing. He is so thin and so shadowy he is hardly noticed till the firelight shines into the caverns of his eyes—no eyes like his among the gypsies. He draws out from under his cloak a violin. He raises it to his chin, he plays. The gypsies neither breathe nor move, the moon drops nearer and nearer, for she too wants to listen, there is no sound in the whole world save Paganini’s violin.”

He stopped.

“I will continue your tale,” said Amades, “A lovely gypsy girl, wild locks falling on her shoulders, velvet eyes, creeps up to him, takes the violin from

his hand and plays a little air of four bars—four bars, nineteen notes—and looks at him. Paganini starts up, clasps her arm. ‘You are mine!’ ‘I am yours,’ she says. Then they hold hands, they rise from the ground, and float away in the gibbous light of the moon, and are no more seen!”

For a moment they looked at each other, then they laughed. “What idiots we are!”

“Oh, quite mad!” said Govoni cheerfully.

“But was Ginka Panna a real woman?”

MAGYAR MAGIC

“Yes, quite real. She was a Magyar, and she was good as well as wonderful. She was married when she was fifteen, and had children, and kept her house clean and neat, for she lived in a house with her husband and children in the winter, but when the summer came she could not stay there—she took her fiddle and wandered away, playing, her raven hair falling about her, the magic tune calling her to the far horizon.”

“It hardly sounds as if it could be true, it is so marvellous.”

“There is nothing we can imagine which is not true somewhere and at sometime. Had you and I been born somewhat earlier we could have met and spoken to Ginka Panna.”

“And to another than Ginka Panna,” came the echo in Giovanni’s mind.

XVII

And then they came to Eisenach. It was the one point in their wanderings upon which Giovanni had set his heart. The village of Bach’s birth was a place he greatly desired to see. He found it rural beyond all expectation, and soon discovered that “swine-flesh” interested the bulk of the inhabitants far more than the memory of Bach.

He and Govoni entered Eisenach one evening by the principal gateway and found themselves in “Saturday’s Market Place.” Most of the houses seemed wattle-and-daub, of a poor tumble-down description. They walked along the principal street, and in a few minutes heard the sound of the *ranz des vaches* and beheld with surprise cows, goats, pigs, flocking into the thoroughfare, pushing pedestrians aside, diving down alleyways and through doors, in their eagerness to attain the dark and odorous quarters in which they lived, apparently, at the back of the houses.

Eisenach seemed to be one large farmyard—the squeal of pigs, the lowing

of cows, the cackle of hens, pervaded the air, while in the autumn the steady unceasing beat of flails was like the pendulum of time, swinging to and fro. Everybody in Eisenach kept pigs. The Palace Apothecary kept pigs. The citizen who was known as the Privileged Palace Apothecary kept pigs. So did the Mayor, and the Saddler, and the Palace Sweep, and the Night-Watch, and the Tanner.

PIGS OF EISENACH

Amades and Giovanni arrived too late to engage in any Bach researches—instead, it was more pressing to discover beds in which to sleep. All night the farmyard noises at the back of their Inn penetrated their slumbers, and when at an early hour the Herd's horn aroused them, the whole four-footed population of Eisenach seemed to be scrambling, grunting, and snorting its way to the day's feeding on the outlying pasture.

"Lord, what a place!" said Amades, turning over with a groan, "I did not imagine that your Bach's ears were attuned to such a symphony from the Ark of Noe!"

As a result of their perturbed night and their long tramping the previous day, they both overslept, and when they awoke, lay talking idly. Amades was the first to pull himself from his bed, and to proceed to dress himself.

After he was attired he leaned from the window looking on to the street and surveyed the scene below him. The street was empty, nothing and nobody appeared. Then a man was seen walking very slowly leading a pig on a string, which gave a sudden affected squeal when its owner prodded it with a stick. Instantly the silent thoroughfare became alive—from almost every doorway or window appeared a head. Voices called out, "Whose pig is that, Hans?" "What does it weigh?" "Where are you taking it?" People gathered round the pig, poking its ribs, looking at it solemnly with their heads on one side and an absorbed expression of countenance.

Amades was much amused by this porcine comedy. He turned his head back over his shoulder.

"Giovanni, you sluggard, do get out of bed—you are missing all the fun."

When Giovanni arrived at the window, he continued, "There you behold what really interests your Eisenach citizen—the pig, the walking sausage. Already they eat him in anticipation."

It was an odd, unwashed collection of people, attired simply in shirt and breeches, or huddled into dirty dressing gowns, many of them smoking long pipes, who stood in an absorbed group round the pig. They continued to

contemplate and discuss this absorbing subject for an appreciable part of the morning—long after Amades and Giovanni had dressed and drunk their bitter black coffee, without sugar or milk, and eaten a roll from the platter which was flung down in the middle of the table by a slatternly serving maid.

The episode of the pig seemed to give Govoni much satisfaction, and while Giovanni went in search of traces of Bach's birthplace, he pursued less lofty researches into the life of the citizens.

On Giovanni's return he told him with great glee: "The Baker, I have discovered, lays his own eggs—with the assistance of a few scraggy hens! The Upholsterer keeps a couple of sheep in his woodhouse, so as to have stuffing handy for his chairs, and the Mayor has geese in his back premises so that his slumber may never be short of feathers. And everybody keeps pigs—they would rather keep pigs in their bedchambers than not keep them at all. The keeping of pigs seems to interest them far more than attending to such business as they have."

Giovanni was rather silent as to the result of his particular quest.

A QUEST

"Yes, with some difficulty I found a house on the Frauenplan with a red-tiled roof, looking up that cobbled street to the Wartburg in the distance. Nobody seemed much interested. Rather a good house, but the people would not let me in. I saw a big sort of old hall place with red brick sanded floor and black beams. There was a massive wooden staircase in one corner, the whole thing built a long while ago, a good deal longer ago, I should imagine, than the time of Bach."

He did not tell Amades that the house had disappointed him, had given him no feeling of Bach. But that, he knew, might have been his own failure—he had, for a long time, experienced nothing of that feeling of Bach.

In their walking, talking, sleeping together these many days, Giovanni had told Amades of his ancestor's Letters. But not to Amades, any more than to his grandfather, save in an unavoidable degree, had he confided the things that lay below and beyond the Letters.

XVIII

They stayed in Eisenach only two days and nights.

The birthplace of Bach was more poor and depressing than Giovanni had expected. The citizens' only form of amusement, after their pigs, and their numerous Inns for drinking, seemed to be their "garden-houses." All round

about the village were these little erections, not much bigger than a sedan-chair, with a small patch of garden-ground in front, and to these retreats the burghers and their wives went on summer evenings, to drink coffee and smoke their tobacco-pipes. They would sit and contemplate the verdure, and exclaim, "*Wunderschöne Grüne!*" Another favourite remark was "*Gott, das ist prachtvoll!*"

Amades wanted to depart from Eisenach after the first day and night. They had seen the Wartburg and the village beneath it—what else was there to see in the place? But Giovanni desired to be there on the following day, which was St. George's Day, so that he might hear the Currende Choir singing in the streets in the early morning.

"And why do they sing in the streets in the early morning?" questioned Amades, grinning, and beginning to divest himself of his attire. "Sounds a silly custom to me—you do something of the kind in Leipzig, do you not?"

Giovanni explained a little, and told him how Luther had sung in the cold streets of Eisenach with his beautiful voice, begging for a little bread for the love of God.

"And what is Luther to a couple of Catholics? I always imagined the renegade monk with horns, and at least one tail!"

"He was not quite so bad as that," said Giovanni laughing, "And he really was a musician. Besides, what specially interests me about the Currende is that Bach as a child must have known it, been wakened by it in his bed—perhaps been one of the Currende boys himself. I do not know. Anyway I am going to get up on the morrow and see them and hear them."

"Do as you choose," said Amades, burrowing his head in his pillow, "Only if you value your skin do not rouse me with your rising. After the farmyard disturbances of last night I would sleep!"

He grinned affectionately at his friend, shut his eyes, and in a few moments was asleep.

EISENACH DAWN

In the dawn Giovanni awoke. He scrambled into his clothes and went out into the freshly cold streets. The oil lamps that dangled on ropes in the middle of the thoroughfare had spent their oil. He turned into "Wednesday's Market Place," seeing the ancient tower of the Rathaus silhouetted against the morning sky. At a few casements still showed the dim lights of early risers or late sick-watchers. It had rained heavily in the night, and little streams were still dripping from large dragon-shaped gargoyles which hung far into the roadway from the roofs.

As Giovanni reached the Nicolai Platz he suddenly heard the singing, and as he reached "Saturday's Market Place" the solemnly sung choral became clear in the stillness. The singing boys were clustered in a group, wearing long blue cloth coats, their voices and the beauty of the music they sang sounding almost unearthly in Giovanni's ears. He stood listening entranced—his eyes following the angles of the ancient roofs, the sharp spire of the Nicolaikirche and the square tower of the Nicolai Thor set with a strange spectral look against the eastern sky. So must the young Bach have seen it many times nearly a century and a half ago. This thought absorbed him and, with the music, wove a web about him, and he was hardly conscious that he was following the Currende boys when they moved through the gate to the little "Fore-town," and sang another choral standing before a small baker's shop, while the Baker came to the door and taking a cap from his head listened uncovered. He followed them still when they went to the Dyers' Quarter and sang by the little bridge there. Still singing, they returned, and paused to sing before the Cotta House with the caryatides beside the gateway.

By this time the daily life of Eisenach was beginning, and the old water-women were fetching the day's supplies from the street fountains in the long quiver-like wooden buckets strapped on their backs, staying now and again to rest those heavy burdens upon the stones set upon the side of the roadways for that purpose. Giovanni felt sorry for them staggering along—but he could not think much about it because of Bach.

CURRENDE CHOIR

Later in the morning he saw the Currende boys collecting for their singing in the little round tin boxes painted brown, with a slit in the lid and a handle in the back. He asked, as he put his money in, if they had always been that shape.

"Like that in Luther's time," an older boy told him, "I cannot say before."

That was far enough for Giovanni. He felt, as he looked at the singing boys in their blue clothes and their brown tin mugs, that he had learned something more about Bach, "Bread, for the love of God!" had been the old cry, as they perambulated the cold streets of dawn.

Yes, and something more than bread.

XIX

When Giovanni and Amades returned to Leipzig, lean and well sun-tanned —Amades' fair complexion looking almost as dark as Giovanni's—Gerda was happy to see not only how amazingly healthy they both appeared, but that the look, she could not call it a shadow, but a strange remote, unyouthful look in

Giovanni's face, had vanished. His eyes were as candid and as gay as Govoni's.

The arrival of Gobbo was a great surprise. Gerda had never had a dog, and after one look at this one, his long black snout, his loppy ears, his comic, sentimental eye, his innocent sides, no longer staring and thin as they had been, she took him to her heart. It was mutual. After sniffing round her skirts, Gobbo laid his head heavily on her lap, and sighed a vast sigh of content.

"Oh, Gianni, what a lamb! Where did you get him?"

"We did not get him, he got us. Anyway, he is not my dog—it is Amades he has specially adopted."

Govoni told the story of Gobbo's arrival on their horizon, while the dog listened, fully conscious that it was of him they talked. When the conversation turned to other less important matters he showed his boredom by throwing himself on his side and going fast asleep.

"What a supreme acceptance of life is a dog's," Govoni said, watching him, "Comes to an entirely strange place like this and accepts it without question, perfectly content if his people are with him, just as he would be content with a bundle of straw in a barn in the same circumstances."

He stirred the sleeping dog gently with his foot, and Gobbo opened one eye —he was too blissful to open both—and turned over completely on his back, showing his white feathered underside, flopped his tail on the floor, and shut his eye.

Gerda smiled down at him, "Why he is about as nice as a baby!" Gobbo having received his due meed of attention, other things were considered and told.

During their absence the Professor had been ill—hearing this Giovanni looked anxiously at his grandfather, but he was so thin and so white always that there was not much visible change: perhaps he looked a little more transparent, that was all.

"Oh, he is recovered now," said Gerda, stroking his hand tenderly, "Quite well again. We have a clever new doctor—he is so clever he has even made Papa eat!"

A NEW DOCTOR

"A new doctor?" Giovanni questioned, "Well, that is good. I never liked old Doktor Klausmann—a snuffy old man. I always hoped I should not have to have him attend on me."

The Professor shook his head, smiling at Giovanni, "Ah, that is not kind,

the poor old Herr Doktor had looked after us since before you were born."

"Quite time to have a change, then—is he dead?"

"No, he has decided to retire and write a treatise on the spectrum—that has always been his major interest in life."

"No wonder he was such a poor doctor!"

"Well," said Gerda, "Our new doctor is not a poor one. He is most clever—and kind."

She hesitated a moment over the last adjective, and Govoni's quick eye darted to her face. He thought she blushed slightly. Pretty she looked, her placidity faintly ruffled, like water stirred by a breeze taking the light at fresh angles. Too young to be Giovanni's mother. He began to feel interested in the prospect of seeing this new doctor. Himself, he had known several affairs of the heart already, but with a curious caution in the midst of his impetuosity, he had not abandoned himself to them. He put his art first—he did not mean to wreck himself over a woman, as he had seen several fellow musicians do. But he had a faintly amused interest in the matter when other people were involved. And he liked Gerda—he had no sisters, he barely remembered his mother: he found her goodness, her gentleness, very pleasing. She was so kind too. When he thought he had better remove himself from the re-united family circle, she looked at him with astonishment.

"But of course you are staying here. Your bedchamber is all ready—you cannot go."

He did not want to go.

XX

At supper they gave a fuller account of their adventures and wanderings. The Professor was pleased they had visited Eisenach—"Dear, sweet Eisenach," he said, quoting Martin Luther's phrase.

Giovanni and Amades looked at each other and smiled.

"Sweet is hardly the word now, whatever it was in Luther's day—there was a mixen at the back of our Inn there, as high as a haystack and not as sweet!"

"And such a lot of Inns—you know it is a small place, and there were forty Inns! The Angel, the Crown, the Lion, the Town Ditch, the Goose-Eye, and many more—I cannot remember all their names. You would think the inhabitants did nothing but drink!"

“Except when they were looking after their precious pigs,” Govoni laughed.

“Oh, come, you unromantic children!” The Professor shook his head at them, a little grieved. “I remember when I was at Eisenach we used to go into the woods at Whitsuntide at dawn, and watch the sun-rising from a hill, and then sit down and eat our breakfast—our ‘early bit’ as they called it—among the trees. We used to sing old German chorals and the splendid Students’ hymn *Gaudeamus igitur*. It was most enchanting. Of course, I was young then.” He sighed a little.

“Perhaps you were in love, Sir?” Govoni suggested smiling.

EISENACH ANCESTRY

“I was,” the Professor answered gravely. “I was deeply and happily in love with the maiden who became my wife. She was of Eisenach stock and birth.”

“My grandmother was born in Eisenach?” Giovanni asked, looking very surprised.

“She was—her family had resided in Eisenach almost since the time of Luther. No wonder I echoed his words, ‘Dear, sweet Eisenach.’ In the spring it was all embowered in drifts of fruit blossom. I did not see any pigs.”

Giovanni felt amazed that he had only then heard that his grandmother came from Eisenach. It had just not occurred to any one to tell him—assuming, in all likelihood, that he already knew. Had he known he would have searched for her birthplace, as well as Bach’s. There was Eisenach blood in his veins—his forbears were living there when Bach himself was born and lived there. This momentous piece of news gave him a curious content.

“Tell us more of Eisenach, Grandfather,” he said, “Tell us of the things we missed—had I known that even remotely I belonged there I should have looked with another eye.”

“It was remiss of me not to have told you—I suppose I assumed you knew. But Eisenach was a good place to be young in and in love—though all places are good when one is in love! It was full of old and often pretty customs. There was not a maiden in Eisenach who on the eve of Easter Day did not creep at midnight to the nearest brook to dip her pail in the running water, that on the morrow she might wash her face in it and be fair with a magic fairness—only no word must be spoken as she fetched the water and returned home with it, or the spell was broken.”

“Did my grandmother do this?” Giovanni asked with interest.

"She was fair enough without," the old man answered simply.

"HOLY GHOSTS"

"Then all the young men and women danced round a pole hung with garlands that was set up outside the Jörgen Thor, and their dresses were decked with bits of coloured paper and tinsel. Large bunches of budding birch-tree were brought home and stuck in pots at the corners of the rooms to show that spring had come. That meant winter was dead, so before Easter came what the Eisenach people called 'Dead Sunday'—when the effigy of Old Winter was carried in triumph to his burial. What a spectacle was Eisenach on that Dead Sunday. All day the people poured in from the villages and hamlets round, attired in their festal clothes—the old women wearing their best black 'snout caps' at which all we young people used to laugh. It seemed that the whole of Thuringia was packed within the confines of Eisenach. On the sunny side of each street were toys and 'bake-work' for sale, while the windows of the other side were filled with onlookers. Queer toys were sold then, and at no other time. Little models of cocks with real feathers—the bird of dawning, of the end of dark days—and figures made from the pith of the elder-tree, coloured and tinselled, also birds of pith with two necks, which the people called 'Holy Ghosts.' If you hung a Holy Ghost from your ceiling it protected you throughout the year till *Sommer Gewinn* came round again. Ah me, how proudly I pushed through the crowds with my Annchen on my arm, and bought her all the toys, and fed her with coffee and cakes on the sunny side of the street!"

He smiled and sighed.

And Giovanni, listening, had seen not only his grandfather and grandmother among those crowds in old Eisenach of fifty or so years ago, but a boy's eager face and figure wearing clothes of a still earlier date.

It was all very fascinating and strange.

XXI

His reflections and his grandfather's tender memories were interrupted and most entirely put an end to, by the arrival of his aunts.

"To welcome you home, Giovanni," they said, kissing him heartily on both cheeks.

Govoni was presented, and they made amiable and musically intelligent remarks about his concert, meanwhile both of them looking him over carefully with a grown and unbetrothed daughter in each of their minds. Was it possible to consider him in the light of a son-in-law? Clever, yes, but probably wild, and in any case it was a great drawback being Italian. Well, the least thing was

to see something of him.

"It is fortunate that you have both returned unharmed from your adventures. Very rash, I thought it," said Elsa.

"We did not have any adventures, Aunt Elsa," Giovanni answered, "We just walked."

"Our only adventure was that we met a dog," Amades remarked.

"A dog?—that sounds very unimportant."

"Excuse me, *gnädige Frau*, it was extremely important. We brought him back with us."

"Gerda!" Elsa swung round on her sister, "You are not going to permit Giovanni to keep a dog in the house? They are only fit for stables and boar-hunting—they ruin the furniture!"

"It is not Gianni's dog, Elsa. It belongs to Amades. And anyway it is a most charming dog—I should be glad to keep it."

At that moment Gobbo walked into the room, stood a moment on the threshold looking at the two ladies, as who should say—Who is this in my house? Then walked over towards them, sniffed solemnly at their skirts, walked away, and sat down against Govoni's knees, staring at them with unwinking and entirely unsmiling eyes.

"What an unmannerly dog!" said Elsa and Margreta, who had both stood rigid with alarm during this inspection.

Govoni dropped his hand down on to Gobbo's head, and the dog flung it backwards to smile at him.

XXII

A PARTY

Frau Elsa and Frau Margreta had come with two definite purposes in their minds. First to enquire after their father's health and see if he was being properly and adequately cared for—for they still felt that as a *hausfrau* Gerda was not entirely to be trusted. Secondly they had planned together a little festivity, as they wished to bring Amades Govoni in contact with their daughters. They had first thought of a small evening party, but after talking it over from all angles, they decided it was hardly necessary to embark on that expenditure to begin with.

"Let us see if he is likely to be worth while first," said Elsa prudently, "With butter at the price it is—six and a half groschen I paid for a pound this very morning, and I am truly thankful I made two hundred pounds of plum

Muss this fore-winter to save the butter—one has to be careful. A coffee-drinking will be sufficient to begin with."

"But one does not usually ask gentlemen to a coffee-drinking," objected Margreta.

"Do you imagine I am not aware of that, Margreta?" her sister said severely, "But when it is like this—in the family—Papa will not come, of course, only Gerda, and Giovanni, and his friend. We can have a little music—no doubt he will play. And your girl can sing and mine can accompany her on the harp. They shall have equal chances."

When Elsa made up her mind about anything it usually happened, whether other people liked it or not, as Gerda and the two young men found when this plan was unfolded. Faint attempts at escape were firmly put aside.

"At my house," Elsa commanded, "as my rooms are larger than Margreta's. The afternoon after tomorrow, so that you may have a day to rest after all that absurd walking—having been away so long you cannot have any other engagements."

It was settled. She made her departure with her sister, carefully avoiding Gobbo, who lay with his head on his two white paws regarding her steadfastly.

"How awful!" said Giovanni.

"I think it will be amusing," said Govoni.

XXIII

He was the only one who enjoyed the party.

Giovanni was definitely and miserably bored, and Gerda always found her nephews and nieces in the mass rather overwhelming. Amades did not succeed in disentangling them. Two of the girls—one of whom sang somewhat shakily to the harp accompaniment of the other—she has too thick an arm for the harp, he thought, watching them—seemed to be rather forced upon his notice. But they giggled so much that he gave up his polite efforts to converse with them. They did not interest him in the least.

REFRESHMENT

He was much more interested in the varieties of the refreshments, and the times and order of their appearance. He was not well acquainted with German hospitality when it was done "in style," as Frau Elsa and Frau Margreta were doing it on this occasion. They were determined that it should be a "fine eating."

The two not very large rooms seemed crowded with the relations of the

family. One room was more honourable than the other, and it contained a capacious sofa upon which the more important ladies were seated.

“I would far prefer a chair all to myself, rather than be wedged among those solid dames,” Amades whispered to Giovanni.

“Do not fret yourself—sofas are not for the likes of you!”

“But I am a distinguished visiting pianist!” mocked Amades.

“Nevertheless you will not sit on the sofa.”

The refreshments began to come in. Large trays of coffee, with milk, sugar, and a bottle of arrac, were handed round to everyone, with little baskets of thin black bread-and-butter and elaborate “bake-works” in the form of cakes and biscuits. Then all the cups were collected, and once more presented refilled, while a fresh supply of cakes was handed round. This was done three times—when, after the third time, everything was removed, there was a slight exhausted pause.

“A little music,” said Elsa’s firm voice, “My dears——?”

An obedient daughter and niece immediately rose and proceeded, with giggling, and glances at Govoni, to provide the “little music.”

Polite applause; another pause in the room of honour and whisperings from the lesser room where most of the young people were gathered.

Elsa rose, she advanced to Govoni with wreathed smiles, he had no difficulty in guessing her embassy.

“Perhaps you would honour us? It is a good pianoforte, a Schiedmayer, it was tuned last week.”

Govoni bowed: “It will be a pleasure.”

He did not feel that he could give this coffee-party audience anything very serious. “A little Scarlatti,” he thought. He played a little Scarlatti with brilliance and effect. Everybody was enchanted. The desire for more was checked by the decisive way in which Govoni rose from the keyboard, also by the arrival of slices of fruit tart and glasses of raspberry lemonade. A quarter of an hour was allowed for the consumption of this, and then saucers of pudding and potato-meal jelly, with a basket of macaroons, were handed round, followed almost immediately by more fruit tart and fruit salad. This would have been the end of the entertainment had it been the usual ladies’ coffee-party, but as Govoni was present a masculine note was introduced by the appearance, after all the lighter viands had been eaten, of a wine called

"Cardinal" flavoured with fruit juice, which was presented, accompanied by *marinierter Hering*, raw ham and smoked salmon, sausage, black bread-and-butter, and radishes.

"It is well if we do not have a nightmare after this entertainment," Amades remarked as he walked homewards with Giovanni.

END OF THE PARTY

"Well, we shall not have to go there again for a long while, for which mercy let us be thankful."

Elsa and Margreta had rapidly removed their elaborate dresses, and were engaged in gathering up the remains of the feast and arranging for the most economical manner of its disposal.

"I think it was a very handsome entertainment—the Baroness herself could not have been more lavish," said Elsa.

"Do you consider it is worth giving later an evening party for the young man?" Margreta asked.

"I do not"—Elsa's maternal eye had not derived any satisfaction from Govoni's manner to the appointed damsels,—"I do not really care for Italians, and after all, a musician is not the best son-in-law, business is better, and of course the Army best of all. We have done all that can be expected of us."

XXIV

The next morning, feeling that frivolity had received its share of attention, Giovanni and Amades devoted to a prolonged and strenuous practising together in the garden music-room.

"It is good to get back to work," said Govoni, wiping beads of sweat from his forehead, and smiling up at Giovanni, who stood resting his fiddle on the lid of the pianoforte, "It was good fun, all that walking in the air, and being too tired to do anything at night save slumber like a pig—an Eisenach pig! But there is no life without this——"

He struck a tremendous chord, and then swept up the keyboard in flights of arpeggios returning upon themselves that suggested the sweeping wings of a strong rejoicing bird.

"Come, Giovanni, that Presto again!"

Giovanni smiled at him, lifted his bow, then laid it down.

"Oh, Amades!—it is wonderful, being with you. I never play so well alone. Can we not go on being together?"

“Why not? one can always do anything if one wants to do it badly enough —there is no insurmountable obstacle save a weak will.”

“But it is not just a question of my wanting—it is you, what you want.”

Govoni looked at him.

“The future—I do not know. But the present, yes. I want you, we must stay together. But we cannot stay here for ever—I shall go to Rome some day not remote. You must come with me.”

Rome! The name echoed in Giovanni’s imagination as though he had entered some vast building whose roof reached the sky. Rolling music made a background to the majestic scene, galaxies of lights, colour, deep and rich. All his young unheeded impressions rushed into his mind.

“It is the birthright of us both—surely we will go there together,” Amades went on. “It is the birthplace of our Faith, and therefore of the world.”

A small village called Bethlehem had temporarily escaped his mind. He had abandoned music for the time being, and was off on one of the mental flights that overcame him at intervals, and revealed how widespread and surprising his knowledge was on matters entirely unconnected with the art and mystery of music.

“These Saxons were savages living in clearings in the dark forests when Rome was a City of Light—Leipzig probably a noisome swamp. There is a boorishness about them still, as we saw in our walking—no manners, no gaiety, a heavy touch. They never drank fully at the springs of Rome. Their brutish pagan gods still wander darkly at the back of their unlettered minds. Rejoice you are a Roman, Gianni.”

“But I am half Saxon, too,” Giovanni said uneasily, somewhat ashamed it was so—yet not thus could he be torn from his allegiance to the country and the tradition of Bach.

“True, and it is well, for you get your own special music from your German heritage. But you are not half Saxon—say one-third. The first child is always heavily stamped with the paternal mould. I never saw your father, but I know your mother, and it is not much of her you carry in your look. No, you are a Roman, typically Italian, far more than I, though I have no German blood —pure Latin. Citizens of Rome! Do you remember what St. Jerome said when the hordes of Alaric invaded Rome?”

Giovanni shook his head dumbly, gazing at Amades’ brilliant face, vivid

with the urgency of his thought.

"St. Jerome said: 'The light of the world is gone out—the world expires in a single city—who shall be safe if Rome has perished?' But Rome has not perished."

Suddenly Govoni dropped his hands discordantly on the keys. "Look here, Giovanni, stop this eternal chattering of yours and let us get on with this sonata. How am I to become a transcendent pianist"—he rolled his eyes in an exaggerated manner to the ceiling—"if I spend all my time with a person who never stops talking?"

XXV

When they returned across the little paved courtyard to the house, having completed their interrupted practice, they found a stranger sitting with the Professor in the Dwelling Room. A big, brown, ugly man, Giovanni thought him. Gerda was there too, smiling at her father and the stranger, and Gobbo was sitting as close against him as possible, his head on the man's knee, wearing what Govoni called his "sentimental shark" expression.

As Giovanni and Amades entered, Gerda said, "This is Doktor Eccard," and the big man held out his hand to each of them in turn.

DOKTOR ECCARD

"I cannot move," he said, "I should disturb this beautiful dog of yours."

Gobbo swivelled his eyes round to them, showing the whites in the way which always made him look so absurd, but his head remained as if glued to the Doktor's knee, and he continued gazing as if it were the only occupation worth doing in the world.

The odd thing was that Giovanni and Amades, after they had shaken hands with Doktor Eccard, felt that Gobbo was right. That hand-clasp was magnetic—waves of all that was good in life seemed conveyed from the heart of that man down his arm. They felt that nothing could matter, no disaster, if he were there. In five minutes both Amades and Giovanni had completely revised their opinion that he was ugly—they saw only beauty in his tired-looking brown eyes behind large brass-rimmed glasses, his heavy chin, his stiff, greying hair, his big, loose figure. His clothes, which hung carelessly upon him, were shabby and unbrushed.

He smiled across at them both, as though he had known them for years, showing big white teeth in his olive-coloured face. He continued some story he was telling.

“So I picked the old man up, and strange to say he was no more than badly shaken, but the dog lay yelping in the road, and when I went to it I found one of the poor creature’s forelegs was broken.”

Gobbo slowly wagged his tail—this was an interesting story.

“ ‘Is my dog hurt? Is my dog hurt?’ the old man was crying. I was bandaging the leg as best I could, for I had no splint, and when I told him what had happened he began to weep bitterly. ‘What shall I do without my dog? We shall both of us die together, starve and die!’ ‘But you are not going to die,’ I told him, ‘Nor your dog. You are coming with me to my house and I will set the poor beast’s leg properly and put it in splints, and look after you both till he is well.’ That calmed the old fellow a bit. So I took the dog in my arms and the old man clutched on to my shoulder, and we went along—a funny little procession we must have looked.”

Gerda’s eyes suggested that she thought it something other than funny.

“And now the poor dog is going on finely—wonderful creatures, dogs, licked my hand when I had just been hurting him.”

“Where are the two poor things now?” Gerda asked.

“In my outhouse. My housekeeper blankly refuses to have them in the house—you know how fussy some women are!” He shrugged his shoulders and smiled tolerantly. “I told her to remember what the Lord Jesus said, but she stood with arms akimbo and answered, ‘I don’t expect in them nigger countries where He come from as they thought much about a clean kitchen and sanding the floor and polishing the coppers. Anyway, I aren’t having no blind beggars and scratching dogs in here. The outhouse is good enough, as you’d know, Doktor, if your heart wasn’t as soft as a potato with a bit of *speck* in it! I’ll hot them up a drop of soup, and there’s that bundle of straw as Hans brought in yesterday—it’s cleaner than what they be!’ That woman ought to have been one of Napoleon’s Marshals—I retired in disorder, with bag and baggage. But I managed to smuggle a blanket or two into the outhouse, and I must say, once she had gained her point about the kitchen, she feeds them well. They are both getting visibly fatter daily.”

KITCHEN PRIDE

He laughed contentedly, and then turned to Gerda.

“And all this time I have been telling this long tale, Frau Cavatini, instead of making acquaintance with your son and his friend.”

Gobbo, exhausted with his worship at the altar of the Doktor’s knee, suddenly flopped on the floor, letting out a sigh like a collapsing bellows.

Doktor Eccard questioned Giovanni and Amades as to their recent travels and their music.

"Perhaps you will permit," he said turning to Gerda, "that one evening I come to hear a little of their playing? I missed the Gewandhaus concert, but the name of Amades Govoni is one known to me."

When he had departed, after a few final injunctions to his patient, Gerda told Amades that Doktor Eccard was a listener worth having, as he was himself a musician of quality, playing the viola in such scanty leisure as he had. It was his dearest relaxation.

"I would play to him, if he wished it, were he stone-deaf and just wanted to watch my fingers," Govoni answered.

"What a marvellous person, *Mütterchen*! He makes one feel so good!" said Giovanni, "Where did you find him?"

"We did not find him—he came," she replied.

XXVI

The next day Giovanni and Amades decided to go and call upon the blind man and the dog to see how they were progressing. Gerda assisted their wishes by giving them a baked meal pudding of large dimensions as an offering.

"One must help the Doktor a little to feed some of his pensioners," she said, "Or he will have nothing to eat himself."

"How young and happy Mother looks," Giovanni said, as they walked down the street carrying the basket, "I have not seen her look quite like that since my Father died."

"Well, of course."

"Why of course?"

Amades stood still and looked at him.

"Ass!" he said, and laughed.

"You mean——?"

Of course I mean—who would not love such a man?"

"But she could not marry again!"

SECOND MARRIAGE

"And why not? Are you not just like every pretty boy who thinks that once his mother has achieved him, the Eighth Wonder of the World, she can by no possibility have any life apart from his?

Her husband is dead, she is a widow; her son grows up, he will leave her, he will almost certainly marry, she will be alone—but she must not consider having any happiness of her own, save an occasional word from a son who may be in Russia or building a castle in Spain!"

"Shut up, Amades," cried Giovanni, a little angry under this tirade, "Of course I do not feel like that about her. But you have forgotten my Grandfather—she would never desert him."

"There will not always be your Grandfather—and anyway, if the Doktor takes in dogs and beggars he might even take your Grandfather too."

"Perhaps the woman would allow Grandfather in the kitchen—he is very clean and quiet!"

They roared with laughter. Then Giovanni became suddenly serious.

"But what a wonderful idea! Of course *Mütterchen* likes him, I can see that, now you have opened my eyes. But do you think he likes her?"

"I think so. Perhaps you do not realise that your Mother is a most attractive woman, and not a faded creature with one foot in the grave, as appears to be your filial way of regarding her! I wish I had a mother who could attach such a man as Doktor Eccard to my family."

"Yes, I agree it would be wonderful. But are we not being rather premature?" Giovanni asked, feeling rather sobered at the thought.

"Oh, excessively premature! And do not go and spoil it all by creeping about as if you were in a sick-room when you see them together!"

"Anyway, our little schemes will probably come to naught. How do we know he is not married and keeps five children in the outhouse?—I am sure they would not be allowed in the kitchen!"

XXVII

But Doktor Eccard was not married. He always laughed and said he had never had time to consider the matter. His lack of time resulted from his own nature, which was so embracing in its compassionateness to suffering of all kinds that every single creature he met, from a starving dog to an overfed Archduchess, proceeded to throw all their troubles upon his shoulders—"Fortunately my shoulders are broad," said the Doktor, "And I have the health of a dray horse!"

He had adopted his profession because he felt that it offered to him the greatest scope for his desire to ameliorate suffering—though what he suffered

himself at the things he saw and the pain he was obliged himself to inflict by his cruel-merciful knife, no one but himself knew. It was the reason his hair went grey when he was a young man. But he discovered that he had a peculiar gift. In a day when anesthesia was unknown, the touch of his hand, some emanation of his personality, produced an effect on pain that appeared like wizardry. Patients clamoured for him. “If we must be cut, give us the Doktor—he will not hurt us!”

COMPASSION

Anton Eccard might have been a rich man, but he would never settle down to visit and attend wealthy persons who had nothing seriously wrong with them. In urgent need he would visit the rich—“I suppose they, too, are God’s people,” he would say, with a little humorous shrug—but as he found such neglected, helpless suffering among the poor, it was to the poor he gave most of his time. And animals counted among the very poor to him—ill-treated, beaten, starved, worked till their wretched bones collapsed in a little heap of death. The Doktor’s wrath at such things was terrifying, it blazed, it consumed. He made the cruel man afraid as he had never been afraid before.

When Giovanni and Amades reached the Doktor’s house they found several people sitting on his doorstep or leaning against his wall, waiting their turn for his attention. The Doktor’s voice was audible within, and at intervals he put his head out of the window to say, “I shall not be long now—I will look at that baby of yours next, Mother. Do not be impatient.”

He saw the two young men and smiled at them.

“Come to see the dog? Well, go through to the back and tell Gretchen—do not be afraid of her!—that I sent you. What a splendid pudding—is that from your Mother?”

“Yes,” said Giovanni, “I do not know whether she meant it for the dog or the old man.”

“Never mind—they can both have it.”

So a highly gratified dog, with his leg in a splint, shared the meal pudding with his blind master.

Gretchen, who in spite of her rather alarming appearance and manner, had not a bad heart, so long as her kitchen was respected, had come out to watch.

“Treating the dog like a Christian!” she ejaculated. But Giovanni and Amades noticed that the dog wagged his tail when she appeared.

“And why for not should he be treated like a Christian?” the Doktor, who

had come up behind them, asked. “Do you not remember what Sulpicius Severus said—‘With Christ, every brute beast is wise, and every savage creature gentle’?”

The housekeeper looked at her master as though she had long given up any hope of sanity for him, turned her back, and walked heavily across the little yard and into the kitchen.

“Not a very responsive woman,” said the Doktor mildly, “But good underneath—most people are good underneath, you will find. I must return to my patients. But to-night I come to your house to hear music. Even you musicians cannot imagine what music means in a life like this. It is an evocation, puts everything into a due proportion—adumbrates the beneficence over all.”

Giovanni and Amades looked at him, realising a little of the poetry and the depth behind that homely exterior.

“Come, let us hasten back,” said Amades, as the Doktor returned to his work, “Let us decide what we will play for him, let us make it as perfect for him as we may.”

They both felt that there was no one living to whom they would rather give of their best than to this shabby doctor, with his retinue of blind beggars, lame dogs, and ailing babies.

XXVIII

HAPPY EVENING

There was an indescribable air of happiness about that evening which both Giovanni and Amades long remembered.

To begin with, Giovanni, with enlightened eyes, was astonished by his mother’s appearance. She had put on her best deep blue lute-string dress; her hair was still fair, even though it showed a sprinkling here and there of pale silver; her eyes shone, her cheeks were faintly flushed. So were her father’s—it was curious to see the deep resemblance between them when that little flush of excitement tinged their faces, in spite of Gerda’s rounded curves, like a firm packed autumn rose, and her father’s aged transparency, like a fallen leaf, whitened by the winds of winter. “How festive you look, Papa,” said his daughter, gently adjusting the set of his stock.

“Not to be compared with you, my Cabbage,” he replied, “You are wonderful to-night.”

Doktor Eccard was ushered in, and his eyes echoed the Professor’s words as he bent over Gerda’s hand.

He sank into a chair with a sigh of satisfaction almost as large as Gobbo's, and looked round the homely pleasant room.

"What peace!" he said, "And music to follow! Could any human being ask more of the good God?"

Giovanni and Amades played the Beethoven Violin Concerto, with Amades' keyboard arrangement of the orchestral score. They both played superbly. They both felt as though they were making an offering of love and reverence to the big, quiet, humble man sunk in the chair—lost in that beauty, set free from the troubles and sorrows on the releasing tide of music.

When they had finished he got up and came over to them, putting a hand on the shoulder of each, "I thank you from my heart," he said, and they both felt completely rewarded. He bent over the manuscript piano score and made comments which showed his musicianly knowledge of the original. Then they plunged into Bach—two of the violin sonatas and the Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue. After this Amades returned on their tracks and played the Hammerclavier. It was glorious.

Gerda never moved. She watched her son and Amades—she watched the Doktor. She felt very strange, and strangely happy. On that marvellous flood of the shifting music, peaceful, passionate, delicate, fierce, she floated, seeing her past life, her present life,—dreaming that perhaps she might yet have a future life, a real one, not a shadow. She had given up that thought when her husband Luigi died, she had believed that only autumn lay before her—and now she felt little shoots of spring, stirrings, gleams, something sweet as the song of a bird. She had for some little time realised that Giovanni had now grown up, that he must go away from her, live the life that was opening before him. She would, henceforward, only be a background in that life. She had accepted the idea—not a very gay idea, but she had felt she must receive it with fortitude and patience. But now—her lips parted in a small secret smile—perhaps she was not going to be a background. She turned her eyes a little, still keeping her quiet pose—she looked at the Doktor. Her breast lifted in a little shaken sigh. She looked with gentle affection at her Father, so thin and frail, she knew, with a deep content, that no conflict would be asked of her between those two beings.

SECRET THOUGHTS

Nothing had happened, no word had been spoken, but she was serene, content, radiant.

XXIX

She was brought back from her dream by slight sounds of arrival in the

entry. The door opened, and Herr Clauder stood there. The musicians paused. He waved at them irritably to proceed, tip-toed to a chair, and sat there bolt upright and as stiff as a wooden figure in his old-fashioned clothes, his outmoded knee breeches and full-skirted coat.

"I did not know you had a party of music," he said when the sonata they were playing came to its conclusion, "Or I would not have disturbed you. But I came to ask when that son of yours was coming to play to me again?"

"I was coming tomorrow," Giovanni said hastily.

Clauder looked at him with a somewhat cynical eye.

"Maybe you have not heard of a certain poet named Shakespeare, who, by some oversight, was born of the English nation instead of the German? He has some lines applicable to the present situation about Tomorrow, and tomorrow and tomorrow creeping on his petty pace from day to day, that I would recommend him to your attention."

Giovanni felt uncomfortable, but only for a moment, as Doktor Eccard smiled at him and stepped easily into the little breach.

"If born in England, he is becoming appreciated in Germany," he said, "His is a genius too universal in its scope—as wide as the sorrows and joys of mankind—to be confined to one country."

The Professor joined in, and the three of them weighed play against play, and talked of the different characters as though they were people they had known.

Neither Gerda, nor her son, nor Amades, had any knowledge of the works of Shakespeare.

Seeing this, the topic was brought to a conclusion, and some more music suggested.

Giovanni walked over to Herr Clauder, "Shall I play you the Chaconne?"

"Yes, play to us the Chaconne," said the old man, looking at the young one with a smile, "And come to see me tomorrow."

So Giovanni played the Chaconne. Gobbo lay asleep on the floor, flopping his tail in a pleasant dream.

XXX

The next morning Giovanni went to see Herr Clauder.

A GIFT

"I have got something for you," he said, as Giovanni

entered.

Giovanni's heart missed a beat. Could it be the Bach snuff-box which was to be his one day? But no, that was too much to hope.

Clauder had an uncanny insight. There was a twinkle in his eye.

"No—not the snuff-box. You will not get that till I am departed this life. Besides you are too young for snuff. No, this is what I am going to bestow upon you with my blessing, my young friend."

He lifted down from its peg the Stainer fiddle that Giovanni already knew.

"It is yours. You begin your public career—you are not equipped for emergencies with but one violin. Do not forget the old man who gave it to you—and I shall not forget my promise when the time comes to remember."

There was much rejoicing when Giovanni brought home his new violin. Amades danced round him.

"The young knight is now equipped for the fray. A violin in his right hand, a violin in his left hand, a bow in his teeth, he sets forth to seek his fortune, and rescue the distressed damsel! By the way, Giovanni, where is the distressed damsel? We seem to have omitted that essential and romantic element!"

He did not understand the look that flashed into Giovanni's dark eyes—flashed and faded.

"I find my romantic element, as you call it, in this," Giovanni said, drawing his hand down the shining back of his Stainer. The question of the other sort of romance had not begun to touch him, in spite of his Italian blood—the atmosphere of this last year or two, and something strange that lay like a veil upon obscure impulses, had seen to that. Govoni was more experienced, but yet had taken his experiences either lightly or contemptuously. It was not within his scheme of things to marry for a long while, not till he was old enough and established enough to marry, as an Italian should, in a reasonable and considered manner. Romance had nothing to do with marriage.

XXXI

Amades Govoni spent several pleasant weeks at Giovanni's home, enjoying their musical companionship, their days of hard work, their walks round Leipzig, enjoying also the simple amenities of an attached family life such as he had never known before. The innate simplicity of Gerda and her Father, something almost childish which marked them both, at first astonished and then enchanted him.

"They are both rather like people in one of your old German *Märchen*," he said to Giovanni one day, "And your Mother's marriage is also a kind of fantastic tale—I cannot see her in Italy, with such a man as I imagine your Father to have been. I think she turned the wrong page in the fairy book when she married him!"

Giovanni was rather indignant.

"What can you know about it?"

"More than you do, my wise one. I can see your Mother as a person apart from you. She has not yet lived her life—she is the sort of creature who does not transplant to another country. She may not die, but she just stays still and waits. That is why she is so young—all those Italian years have not really touched her. Yes, I was quite right, she turned the wrong page—but she is turning the right page now. You and I had better leave her to continue reading it."

"Leave her?"

"Yes, you are coming to Rome with me—did you not know, Giovanni?"

He laughingly pronounced the name with the sharp rising Italian inflexion, instead of the broader German one.

"It is time we set forth to make our careers," he continued, "We will give a few recitals in the city that had the honour of our birth—we are ripe musicians."

"But you have already made your name."

"Then I will make it a little more. But you, my poor *bambino*, you have not yet stepped out of the cradle! You go on learning, you practise till your bow arm falls off, you are a pupil of Paganini—and the world is not littered with his pupils—yet you and your completely unpractical family make nothing of it. You should have been in the hands of my brother—he would have made two fortunes out of you by now! It is too late to produce you as the infant Mozart, you are unhappily past the age of curls and a toy sword and a smile full of gaps where the pearly milk teeth have fallen out. So you must burst upon the world as the dark mysterious young man—Paganini's illegitimate son they will probably all think you!"

Giovanni was lying back in a chair, his legs stretched out in front of him, his hands in his pockets, his dark hair fallen forward over his dark face. Amades was an unfailing source of interest to him, he never knew what next he was going to say. But that last remark went beyond the bounds. He sat up.

“Look here, Amades, I refuse to have you say things like that!”

Govoni enjoyed this: “Ah, the mind so delicate being perverted by the sinister Italian pianist!”

He threw back his head and burst into one of his great laughs.

“Nobody sinister could get far with a laugh like that, my friend. Do not become of the mentality of a donkey. But I cannot permit that you say derogatory things to me about Paganini.”

“But Paganini has an illegitimate son?”

“Yes, and adores him—it is pathetic, for he will never be much comfort to his father.”

NOBODY-KNOWS-WHO

“How uneasy are the ways of the wicked!” said Govoni, folding his hands and looking upward piously, “Let it be a warning to you, my child!”

Giovanni gazed at him smiling. It was no use trying to be serious with Amades in that mood.

“Well,” Govoni went on, circling round him and looking at him from all angles, “Well, you shall not be Paganini’s illegitimate son—as your producer I relinquish with regret that so interesting idea—but you shall be something even more mysterious, you shall be the son of Nobody-Knows-Who. You shall burst upon an astonished world like a meteor. You can play well enough now to astonish anybody. But why are you so deuced unambitious?”

“I am ambitious to play Bach’s violin music better than anybody has ever done before. Paganini did not play Bach—he played himself mostly, and that is not equal to Bach. Is that not a big enough ambition?”

“Yes—yes, in a way. But you do not seem to be ambitious for yourself. Do you not desire to be famous, rich, have the world at your feet?”

“I always thought it was the music that mattered,” Giovanni answered, “Bach was not famous and rich and did not have the world at his feet—even this little world of Leipzig.”

Amades shrugged eloquently, “I said you were not yet out of the cradle!”

It was no use talking to Giovanni when that curious look came into his eyes. He would take him to Rome, he could show him some things there. It occurred to him that it might be a good thing if Giovanni fell in love—one or two lovely Italian faces floated on the background of his mind.

XXXII

Before departing for Italy with Govoni, there were farewells to be made. One of these was to the Herr Cantor at the Thomasschule.

The Cantor was very kind. He had always liked Giovanni. He had found him a most apt and gifted pupil in his contrapuntal studies—already he had written one or two small things for the violin that were full of promise—and as a violinist he felt Giovanni had great powers and possibilities. Without doubt he had "temperament"—that so necessary addition to technique. It was not for nothing that he came from three generations of fiddlers—he had the perfect violinist's hand. Gentle enough, and, as Weinlig was inclined to think, almost too unassuming in his daily life—people were caught by a touch of the charlatan in the public performer, as Weinlig had seen often enough in his career—Giovanni yet was capable of great passion in his playing, uprushes of fire and feeling from the depths below. There was flame in his heart. There was something else, something shadowed, hidden, which Weinlig was conscious of at times—sometimes he thought it might be a trouble, or perhaps a joy. He did not know. Anyway he liked the boy, wished him well.

"So you go to Rome? You will see Italy again with eyes more capable of due appreciation than when you left it. I am glad you go with Amades—there is no doubt he has genius, and no doubt that he will make the world realise it. You can learn a trick or two from him, Giovanni, to further the acceptance of your art."

Giovanni smiled: "Oh, Amades has been trying to teach me all sorts of tricks already—he has been talking as if I were a marionette show and he was beating the big drum at the tent door! I let him talk!"

"Well, do not utterly despise his advice. He knows his world—the world of musicians—better than you do. And who was the great pageant-master if not your great Paganini?"

DEATH WALKING

Funny how they harp on Paganini, thought Giovanni. Aloud he said, "Permit me to say so, Herr Cantor, but you are quite wrong. Paganini has been called mountebank, just as he has been called the Evil One himself. I lived with him and I know—he was neither. He is simply himself. He was born with that genius, just as he was born with that face. Certainly the world has never seen anything like either. He looked at times like Death walking. *Lieber Gott,* I wonder how he is now and what he is doing?"

"Perhaps you will meet him again while you are in Italy?"

“I should be glad—he was very good to me. They say he is very mercenary, but he was not mercenary to me.”

He got up and walked round the room.

“I must be going—there are very many things yet to do.” He looked at a door. “May I say farewell to my little room?—I have not seen it for a long time.”

Weinlig smiled and nodded. Queer boy, he thought, the attraction of that room has not ceased, then?

Giovanni went in—this time he did not shut the door behind him. The room was familiar to him now, he knew every corner in it, every object it now contained—every object it had once contained. He felt sad, not so much because he was going away from it, as because it—the older room—had gone away from him. Had it been but a dream after all, some trick of the brain, some reflex of those Letters which he had made so closely intimate a part of his life? He did not believe this, though his backward glimpses had been so brief. But the circumstance of dream was different. That, as he was convinced, had been a shifting of time, a veiling of the present—or rather, the past emerging through the present, obliterating it. Water sometimes gives reflections at two different levels—might not time do the same at rare moments? He did not know, he could not explain. He only felt that once he had known something—known it so precariously, so fleetingly, that a wrongly taken breath might shatter it—and now he knew it no more. He was going away. He did not know when he would return. Something precious and strange had left him. In an impulse he put his hand to his heart and bowed deeply in that room. Then he came out of Bach’s Composing Study and shut the door very gently behind him.

XXXIII

FLOWING TIBER

Two months later Giovanni was leaning over the side of the Ponte Sisto, watching the yellow Tiber swirling through the arches. Before his eyes, a little to the left, was the dominating yet tender Dome of St. Peter’s, of which he, like Amades Govoni, could claim that he was born “*all’ ombra del Cupolone*.”

He was waiting for Amades, who was already late—a not unusual matter with him—but Giovanni felt very content. It was not necessary to be strenuous in this Rome still slumberous with the remains of the summer’s heats. Before him was a view majestic and peaceful, and few human beings can resist the fascination of watching moving water—at rest oneself, gazing on that which is

never still, which flows eternally from the wild hills to the sea. So the Tiber had flowed when the Cæsars ruled Imperial Rome, when St. Paul preached there, when St. Peter died. It was warm and still and the water moved smoothly between its banks—the river so old, yet the water ever new. And all the fountains of Rome flinging their lavish sparkling sprays into the air,—where, thought Giovanni lazily, where did all that glittering joyousness of water come from? Dark depths underground and hidden mysterious springs held it—then man had in ancient days taken it and built great arched aqueducts to carry it aloft across the Campagna. Water, surely, was the mark and sign of Rome—water, and cypresses springing like dark fountains to the sky. Before all the majestic temples, columns, amphitheatres of antiquity, before the Christian basilicas, there were water and trees upon the Seven Hills. Giovanni sighed with satisfaction. It was wonderful to be returned again to Rome, it was wonderful to belong to Rome.

He and Amades had come there full leisurely, across a late summer Italy, staying at any place that attracted them. It was too hot to hurry themselves, any more than the horned plough-oxen would hurry themselves. The heat was great, yet Giovanni found his Italian blood happy in it, the darkness of his skin and hair and eyes making, as it were, a tent of shelter for him from all that brilliance of light and heat. His vitality seemed to increase, instead of wilting under that urgent sun. Amades complained occasionally, and refused to go so fast and far as Giovanni would, and at such times they prolonged the day's siesta and travelled under the stars, gigantic as jasmine flowers. There was no hurry in the whole world, a vast somnolence of sleep and sun was over all. It seemed almost in a dream that they beheld Convents perched upon rocky heights, stern and plain, with rows of narrow windows, and a stiff campanile rising above the level roofs. They passed groves of olive and almond trees; little steep clustered villages half surrounded by rushing streams, spanned, maybe, by a bridge that was the remains of a crumbling Roman aqueduct. Rocks and bridges and turbulent streams seemed a constant setting to their travels, and the shallow red-tiled roofs of Italian villages—in such contrast to the steep-stepped roofs of Leipzig. Someday they would come to Rome. There was no hurry. None of the people were there yet whom Amades considered important. The palaces were shuttered. His musical engagements were still in an ambling future.

Gobbo was not with them. "I doubt if a Northern dog would survive these heats," Govoni had said. So Gobbo had been temporarily transferred to the care of Doktor Eccard—most content to be with him, yet looking back with a rolling puzzled eye at Govoni as the Doktor led him away. His canine philosophy failed to

understand why the world's two most perfect beings must separate their perfection. He sighed a little as he trotted away, yet not uncontent with his lot, and quite unconscious of the famous future that lay before him when he, as well as Amades Govoni, would appear on concert platforms to the immense delight of immense audiences.

Giovanni's return to the Rome of his childhood had been a revelation to him. Remembered and familiar things took on a new significance. This he largely attributed to Govoni. The longer he lived with Amades the more he was amazed at the quality of his mind, and at his knowledge—particularly his knowledge of the history and the monuments of Rome, for which he had a passion.

"Musicians are so rarely anything but musicians," he had said to his friend one day.

"And is not that a very good thing to be?"

"Of course—the best! But you could also be a learned antiquary, grubbing like a mole in the Forum and writing treatises that the world would admire ——"

"And not read!" broke in Amades.

"Yes, but you would be famous. And you might be an explorer, or build churches, or write poems."

"Or be a grower of good wine, or a famous chef—I know a lot about food and vintages. I should like to be all these things, if I had the same number of lives. But it takes a lifetime to excel at one trade, and I would not care to do less than excel. I will be transcendent or nothing—and music is my choice. But one need not shut one's mind to every other interest in life."

And as the days passed he poured out to Giovanni all the stored and varied richness of that mind.

So it was with a great increase of imagination and of knowledge that Giovanni saw Rome again. Names which as a child had been merely names to him—the street where he went with his mother to the *Pizzicherie* shop to buy cheese and butter and fruit preserves, for instance—became places not only where he walked, but where other and greater beings had walked on dark tremendous destinies that had affected the history of the world. Evil emperors and humble saints had been there before him, and they, like he, had needed their daily bread, whether it were gilded or dipped in tears, or, in the old Roman manner yet continuing, glazed and sprinkled with the seeds of the white poppy. Encompassing, encircling City—Eternal Rome! Pagan, Christian

—Catholic in every sense of that great word. That very morning he had been past the remains of the gate by which St. Paul had entered Rome, a prisoner and yet a citizen—the Servian Porta Capena. Amades had, at that spot, told him the legend that St. Paul had wept upon the tomb of Virgil because he had come too late—born out of due time—to give the message of Christ to that Roman poet. Every thing seemed true in this City.

Giovanni propped his chin more comfortably upon his elbows, and gazed at the water swirling gently below him, at the Dome, dream-like in the soft haze of heat.

XXXIV

"Asleep?" asked Govoni's voice.

THE DOMINICAN

Giovanni started. Had he been asleep? Well, only for a few moments. Certainly, he had not heard the approach of Amades. And with Amades was another young man wearing the white habit and black cloak of the Order of Preachers.

"This is my cousin, Father Sebastian Narni, of whom I told you," said Amades, "Do not malign a harmless creature by imagining him to be any connection of that beloved only brother of mine! Such stuff as he does not breed saints!"

The face of the Dominican broke into a smile which contrived to be at once merry and sad.

"If you know Amades well, you have learned by now to take small notice of what he says! He is singularly irresponsible in his statements."

He grasped Giovanni's hand and looked at him with interest—almost, Giovanni felt, with affection.

Father Sebastian was young, though several years older than they were; he was also small and thin, looking particularly so by the side of Amades' broad shoulders and abounding air of vitality. Giovanni at once felt strangely drawn towards him. Nature had not bestowed upon Father Sebastian any particular physical attractions: the bony structure about the forehead gave a drooping line to his eyes, which were not remarkable in size or shape, but gazed out as from a cave of thought—melancholy eyes, till he showed his shining teeth in his own strange smile. His skin was rather a dusky sallow colour than real olive. He looked shy and quiet and rather sad—yet there was some curious radiance about him. That radiance puzzled Giovanni then, at their first meeting, and continued to puzzle him—he never understood what caused him to feel it. At

first he thought it was holiness—it did not take long to discover that there was no doubt of the holiness. But he had known and was to know other priests, and people not priests, whose holiness was as undoubted as the Dominican's. But they had not this radiance.

Giovanni's musical life and, in particular, his late years in Leipzig, had not brought him into personal contact with monks or friars of any of the great Orders, though his eye was becoming used to the different habits in the streets of Rome, as to the shabby-magnificent coaches of the Cardinals, and to the different coloured garbs of the students of the Colleges of many nations. He looked at Father Sebastian's habit with much interest—but at his face much more. They were walking up and down together by the banks of the Tiber.

Amades' quick eye saw Giovanni's interest in his cousin. "Giovanni thinks you are a queer sort of bird, Sebastian," he said, "I confess I sometimes feel you belong more to the Thirteenth Century than to this late day six hundred years afterwards. It is all very well to give up the bad things of life, but you give up the good things as well—freedom, the legitimate use of money and the entirely desirable things money can do."

"Are you poor like the Franciscans?" Giovanni asked.

"Well, we do not actually beg our bread, as the first Franciscans did, but we have not any money for our own use."

"None?"

"None at all!"

Seeing Giovanni's rather disturbed expression Father Sebastian continued: "There is nothing to be troubled about in that—we have all we need. We all need so much less than we imagine."

Amades declared dramatically, "Not me!—I need so much more than I am ever likely to get!"

Father Sebastian smiled at him affectionately.

"You are alarmed at the idea of possessing nothing? But we all are in that position?—only we do not know it, do not want to know it. If a man said he would give you a fine fiddle, but that he would want it back the following week, you would say—But that is not giving it, it is only lending. You would not take any deep joy in the possession of that fiddle if you knew you had to give it back in seven days' time?—it would not be worth while getting passionately attached to it when it was only yours for so short a period?"

"No," said Giovanni, as the Friar seemed to be looking particularly at him, "No, certainly, it would not be worth while."

"Beware, my simple child!" Govoni said laughing, "You are falling into the hand of the Preacher."

The radiance of the son of St. Dominic seemed visibly to increase as he looked at the two young men.

"We are agreed, then, that it would not be worth while to become too much attached to your so temporary fiddle? Yet that is how people behave about their worldly possessions. 'Mine! mine!' they cry—'I have more things than anybody else. More land, more gold, more cattle, more dancing girls, therefore I am happier than anybody else.' Poor fool! When St. Peter looks at him at the portal of Paradise, he will not require an inventory of his worldly chattels.

" 'But I had ten thousand furlongs of land—I had a dinner service of solid gold, so heavy it required two of my servants to lift each dish—my wife had an emerald in a ring—the largest emerald in the world!'

" 'And where are these things?' St. Peter will ask.

"The rich man—now so poor—will look at the empty spaces of Eternity. They are not there.

A PARABLE

"And St. Peter will ask him: 'Were you as a father to the peasants who laboured upon your land? Were you generous to the servants whose strength was needed to lift your golden dishes? Did you love your wife and glance not aside at other women?'

"But theologically it is most improbable that rich man will ever reach the portals of Paradise to speak with St. Peter."

He paused and smiled, half apologetic, drawing, as it were, his cloak of shyness about him again.

"See what it is to be a son of St. Dominic!" Amades cried affectionately, "You will regret, Giovanni, that I have let you fall into his clutches!"

Giovanni had been much absorbed in the little parable and almost more in the manner in which it was told.

"But we must have certain things for our lives?" he questioned, "Food and garments—and it cannot be wrong to have a violin when you are a violinist?"

"Of course you must have a violin. We are entitled to the use of the good things of the world, which God has put there for our need—but not beyond our need. And some of us find our needs are so small that a pallet to sleep upon, a

habit to clothe us, a little food, a Breviary and a Mass Book, are all that we require."

He smiled his sad merry smile.

XXXV

This was only the first of many discussions Giovanni and Amades had with Father Sebastian. These discussions were often religious, almost invariably serious, though the most serious were punctuated by Govoni's gusts of laughter, for they both wanted to know many things. The great mystery of life was upon them, and not all the theological answers, accepted though they were, quite filled their need. There were little gaps and chinks where questions crept through. Amades had a wild and wandering curiosity. Giovanni felt his own inner mystery of time, a mystery personal and peculiar to himself, pressing upon his mind.

Both Giovanni and Amades felt the Dominican could help them. His foundations were laid so deep, yet his surface was so simple. He had the real, the rare, love of humanity—he saw them as souls, but he did not therefore neglect their small needs, even though such needs might at times appear ridiculous in the face of the tremendous Four Last Things.

Father Sebastian was by nature intensely shy—he had felt that an enormous drawback when he became a Preaching Friar, but he had set himself to overcome this drawback, and in the result it had turned to an advantage. Owing to it nobody ever felt he was clutching at them. He understood that the delicate processes of the soul must be allowed to unfold as slowly and as imperceptibly as a flower opens. He could so veil himself in this shyness that it was possible to tell him the most difficult things as though he were hardly there.

Giovanni had never known anyone in the least like him.

"You love my cousin, I perceive?" Amades asked him.

"Who could fail to do so?"

"Yes—everyone does. He is a rare creature, small and light and insignificant, and yet filled to the brim with the wine of God."

"To know him alone would make it worth while to walk barefoot to Rome."

And about Rome they walked, not barefoot, with Father Sebastian. He knew its stones as even Govoni did not know them.

ANCIENT ROMANS

"It is a great interest to me," he admitted, "At times I wonder whether too great an interest?—perhaps it would be better that I should confine myself entirely to Christian Rome, and of course that aspect has my deepest interest and my heart. Only one cannot but consider the old pagans when one looks at the things they left behind them"—they were passing, as he spoke, the tremendous Portico of Octavia at the side of the Pescheria—"The ancient Romans have been such a phenomenon in the history of the world, and then to be subdued by a handful of unlettered men. A literal fisherman, a man who handled nets and whose fingers were covered with fish-scales, became the Rock on which the Church was founded, and his Successor, age after age, sits yonder." He looked towards the pervading Dome.

He was full of legends and little tales—"the illuminated margins of our Breviary," he called them—and on one occasion when they walked along the majestic loneliness of the Appian Way told them how St. Peter had walked there before them on a memorable occasion.

"When Nero—strange tool in the hand of God—decreed death to the Christians, St. Peter was begged by his small flock to depart from Rome—for their sakes to 'bear yet a little longer the burden of life.' He was most loath to do this, but at last he yielded to entreaty and set forth upon this Via Appia. But after all it was not the road which leads from Rome that he was to take, for out upon the Campagna he saw a burthened Figure coming towards him. As he drew nearer St. Peter perceived it was Christ bearing a Cross. 'Quo vadis, Domine?' asked St. Peter on his knees. 'I come to Rome to be crucified again.' 'Back I will turn to follow Thee,' St. Peter said, knowing now without hesitation which road was to be his."

XXXVI

So firmly set upon that rock of St. Peter was Father Sebastian's mind—deep in its foundations, and yet so free and adventurous in all realms of thought. "A fortress of truth, the Church," he said, "But a fortress with expanding walls, that can include all things of worth."

Rome itself in his company took on a strange significance to Giovanni—the Dominican seemed all the while so conscious not only of the history of Rome, but of some mystery lying far beneath, unseen, inexplicable, but not unfelt. Time and space stirred questioning thoughts in Giovanni's mind. His experiences in Leipzig, what did they mean?—why, with nothing to help him save what might be called an inherited love, had he glimpsed a life, a mode of existence, long silent before his birth? It came to him that one day he might

unfold his troubled questionings to Father Sebastian—the very name he bore was propitious. He felt that in some remoter day he might speak to the Dominican of what he had only half-spoken to his grandfather, and then only because circumstance almost enforced it—while to his mother, to his beloved Amades, he had said no word at all, and never would, as he knew. This reticence seemed imposed upon him from without, it was not exactly his deliberate choice. But to Father Sebastian he might speak—someday, not yet.

Meanwhile he spoke of many other things, as did Amades. The problems of existence pressed upon their young minds heavily at times. Why? Why? was their cry to this, as it seemed, tranquil, and certainly understanding, mind.

With a deeply affectionate look at them Father Sebastian delicately laid aside the cloak of his innate reticence—he was asked, he came forth from the silence where his spirit preferred to dwell.

THE ANSWER

"The answer to all your questions is God," he said, "It is so simple an answer, and at the same time so incomprehensible an answer—as it will always remain—that the young find it difficult to accept. Eternity is also another difficult thought. But complete nullity is even more difficult. The very thought of nothingness is something—absolute nothingness is a thing much more difficult to envisage than Eternity. And as it is impossible to conceive the complete non-existence of everything—entirely empty space is still a concept—we are driven to the inevitable, inescapable, thought of God, for nothing can appear out of nothing, without a cause: Aquinas has it all in that section which concludes 'And this is what we mean by *God*.' You must perceive that if nothing existed at all save one minute, almost invisible grain of sand, that grain of sand, that imponderable speck of dust, would be as much a proof—if there were any minds in existence to which to prove it—of the existence of a Creator, as a thousand constellations."

So they would talk and think of deep mysteries till their minds were stretched to exhaustion, and Amades would make some absurd comment and they would relax into laughter.

"It is no use, Father, we are only two poor musicians—you will never make philosophers and Thomists of us."

"There is no reason why you should not be both. I often feel when I listen to music that it says easily and in a heavenly manner what philosophy is but stumbling towards. I can imagine, Giovanni, that your Bach and St. Thomas of Aquinas may have many things to discuss together in Heaven."

He had already perceived that Bach and his music meant something

particular to Giovanni. It was as though he felt a change in the rhythm of a heart-beat.

XXXVII

Father Sebastian, as was natural, took them to the special Dominican places in Rome. They went to the Dominican Church of Santa Maria Sopra Minerva—a building both beautiful and strange in Rome, with its pointed arches and its great groined roof of deep blue. At Santa Sabina they wandered in the garden which had known St. Dominic's footsteps, and also in the sunny place of the little thirteenth-century cloister of the Lateran, where St. Dominic and St. Francis in their day may have walked.

PALATINE HILL

And not only churches and places connected with great Christian saints. The three of them went one late afternoon to the Library of the House of Domitian on the Palatine Hill—that Library which is nothing save grass, and slender broken columns, and tumbled prostrate stones.

"Look," said the Dominican, "do we not see this as a symbol of the pagan learning and the pagan pride, fallen before the teaching of a little handful of unlettered men? These columns fallen, forsaken, and yonder the Rome of the Church sown thick with Christian altars, and the air as thick with bells calling to those altars!"

Everywhere they moved in a world of contrast, and everywhere Father Sebastian seemed equally and naturally at home. Giovanni saw and remembered him in many settings. On the wide melancholy stretches of the Campagna, where the great oxen wandered, with horns rising from the heads like the branches of a candelabrum—"Ecclesiastical oxen" Amades called them, "makes you think the Ark of the Covenant is somewhere about!" In the tremendous halls, pillared and unimaginably enriched, of the Vatican. Tasting a glass of wine outside a shabby little wine-shop. Or helping him to purchase some small souvenir for his mother. His years of living in Leipzig had made Giovanni forget the Italian method of bargaining.

"The price is twenty lire—how much will you give?"

Father Sebastian, with amused eyes, explained the procedure.

"Ah, Mother of God," came the immediate outcry, "I assure the holy Father it cost me the whole of nineteen lire—but it is ill luck to oppose the Church, so fifteen lire I will take for it."

After a deal more disputation Giovanni eventually got his trinket for ten

lire, and the proprietor of the little shop waved them away with bows and flourishes and with many repetitions of the wish "*Cento di questi giorni*."

"He must have made a handsome profit on that ten lire!" said Father Sebastian, "Even so I hardly desire to live a hundred years—it is too long, even in Rome."

"One would not expect a religious to be so gay over these little things," Giovanni remarked later to Amades.

Govoni looked at him, "But it is just they who are most gay over the little things. Ask Father Sebastian if St. Dominic ever enjoined gloom upon his sons? Besides, he had a dog, and who could be gloomy with a dog?" said Amades, his mind going to his distant Gobbo, "You have been long in a non-Catholic country—you have forgotten."

WORK AGAIN

But the happy wanderings and talks with Father Sebastian could not go on for ever—he had his definite duties and studies which tightened again about him after this period of relaxation, and people were returning to Rome. Amades' friends and musical admirers were coming back.

"Now we shall have to play in another sense," he said half ruefully to Giovanni, "So you had better get out your best fiddle and polish her up for the salons of the great."

Govoni had an imposing list of engagements, and Giovanni was to make his Roman *début*. Amades was a little astonished at Giovanni's calmness about this.

"St. Anthony of Padua knows how many prayers I put up to him before my first big public appearance!"

"If one has played to Paganini," said Giovanni smiling, "And to some extent satisfied him, I do not think my Roman compatriots are going to disturb me very much. Also I am inclined to think old Herr Clauder is more alarming than they are likely to be—he knows so much, he has heard all the great fiddlers for more than half a century, oh, it must be much more than half a century, and I am sure he was critical in his cradle! But you cannot imagine him in his cradle—I am convinced he had grey hair when he was born!"

"And told his mother she was doing all the wrong things, in fact was a most incompetent female!"

Govoni broke into a roar of laughter.

"He hates and despises women, my Grandfather says, so it must have been most trying for him to submit to a mother of the female sex in his helpless

days. He says women have never built a fiddle, so what are they worth?"

"Anyway they have built a few fiddlers and fiddle-makers. I suppose even Paganini and Stradivari had mothers!"

This talk of Herr Clauder brought a sudden little picture to Giovanni's mind of that gold and agate snuff-box, and the vision that had come to him—the little vignette from the past—as he held it for the first time in his hand.

XXXVIII

Amades had played.

CONCERT PLATFORM

Giovanni stood waiting behind the platform, with his Bergonzi under his arm, while the applause, which had been coming like waves breaking on the sea-shore, at last subsided, and the orchestra began re-tuning their instruments.

He was not thinking of himself and his own imminent appearance. He was absorbed in the music he had just heard, awed by Govoni's musical stature—the immense power of his playing, like some cosmic force, bringing forth from the pianoforte notes that seemed to come from the foundations of the world, a tone as of organ and storm, his manner of grasping handfuls of notes, as it were, and flinging them from one end of the keyboard to the other.

Govoni came back from the platform for the fourth time, flushed, smiling, his hair tossed forward on his forehead.

"Now," he said, laying his hand on Giovanni's shoulder, "It is your turn. But wait a minute or two, it heightens expectation—they are already very curious about you. I have worked the Pupil of Paganini business for all it is worth! Feeling nervous?"

"No, oddly enough," Giovanni answered, "I suppose I ought to be, as it is my first big public appearance, but I am not. The only trouble is that after that glorious 'Emperor' and the way you played it, this stuff of Paganini's will sound rather second-rate."

"Of course, musically, it is second-rate, but they will never know it. The young women in the audience will be looking at your dark eyes and your straight figure—both are not ill-looking, you know!—and the older musical listeners will be so dazzled by your technique, that they will none of them realise how very obvious the musical structure and ideas are. Now, on with you."

He gave Giovanni a little affectionate shove towards the platform.

Govoni's prophecy of the effect of the Paganini Concerto in D major upon the audience was singularly accurate. Giovanni's aloof look, his quiet composure, in the first place interested them, as he stood waiting for the long and distinctly commonplace orchestral introduction to reach its conclusion. Then he fell upon his fiddle with a fire, an ease, with the sheer and simple virtuosity in which Paganini himself had delighted. The clear, true notes poured down like water, they fled in rushing scales in thirds, they floated away into harmonics marvellous and remote—he sailed the treacherous sea of fantastic difficulties with amazing ease. He made his own *cadenza*, founded and based on the Paganini model, but his own. There was no doubt what the audience thought of him.

"One more recall than I had!" said Govoni, as pleased as though Giovanni were his own son, "Pistols for two will be the only reparation you can offer my wounded honour!"

They discussed the Concerto in detail later, when at last they had escaped from crowding congratulations and from the pressing hospitality of important people.

"It is really a commonplace work in inspiration, and the orchestra has a shabby part to play, just to make a background against which the violinist can display himself. I know all that, of course, but oh, Amades, Paganini has the most astounding understanding of the fiddle, knows so exactly all the tricks and fireworks that can be shaken out of it. Even you can hardly realise what magnificent fun it is to play that Concerto—you are in the very middle of the musical universe, you are the Sun shining in a golden fury, and the earth and all its inhabitants revolve round you!"

"And then," Govoni went on, "After the magnificence of Beethoven, and the fireworks of Paganini, we play that Sonata of your friend Bach, and it appears the best of them all!"

"BEST OF ALL"

"Because he is the best. Even this Roman audience seemed inclined to think so. Do you suppose they had ever heard Bach before?"

"I should imagine it extremely unlikely," Amades answered.

XXXIX

Roman Society opened its stately doors to Govoni and Giovanni after that concert—invitations and festivities were showered upon them. Amades enjoyed it on the whole more than Giovanni, though to him it was not a new experience, as it was to Giovanni, but only a repetition of what Vienna and Paris and Berlin had shown him already.

“The people in the big capitals are all the same, you will find,” he told Giovanni, “They wear the same clothes, and say the same things, and eat the same food—in their salons, you can hardly tell which city you might be in. It is only the outside setting of streets and buildings and sky that varies. The English may be different, I do not know them so well, though I have met a number of English people and stayed in England once. I am going to London again after Paris. But it is all very amusing, though after a time one gets tired of it.”

For a while Giovanni found it more than amusing—it was exciting. An exulting sense of his own powers was rising in him, and the abundant recognition was very stimulating. There was a sparkle in his eye, a poise in his walk, a touch of young arrogance in the carriage of his head. Amades saw and approved—this was the Giovanni he would have to face the world with. The flattery and appreciation, the brilliant Roman autumn air, were like spiritual wine to him—he was just faintly intoxicated.

“Now,” said Amades, smiling at him, “All you want to complete the picture is an attractive young woman—already I have seen several of them, with good Roman names, eyeing you in a favourable manner.”

Giovanni laughed easily.

“You profess to be so experienced and worldly wise, Amades, but in truth you have a real sentimental fairy-tale mind. The Prince and Princess and Happy-Ever-After, is the way you would have all your stories go!”

“I have no particular faith in the Happy-Ever-After—I have seen too much of the other thing. But I do think it is possible to be happy for a while. And anyway, love is an experience, may be a tremendous experience.”

“That is just it,” said Giovanni.

“Just what?”

“Too tremendous to play with. It is not an amusement—it is a destiny.”

A DESTINY

Now what, his interior mind asked him, made me say that?

Amades laughed, “How well you would wear the buskin, Giovanni! Almost I regret thou art a mere fiddler!”

“Well, of one thing I am quite certain,” Giovanni went on, “I would rather spend an hour with Father Sebastian than with the most lovely damsel Rome can offer.”

Even Father Sebastian was a little puzzled and curious as to Giovanni's lack of interest in young women. Amades had told him of the number of attractive ones upon whom he had turned an indifferent shoulder.

"He steps between their glances as though he did not see them—and comes back to me, or enquires when he can see you again, Sebastian, saying the early days in Rome when we saw you so often, were much the best. It really is quite provoking—it would do him good to fall in love."

"Has he, think you, a previous attachment in Leipzig?"

"Leipzig!" Govoni laughed. "I lived with him there for some months and never saw a girl that an Italian eye would have brightened for. So young, so callow, so full of giggles, and so empty of charm, of mystery. The mamma hen so pleased with her offspring, the well-trained chicks waiting with their silly mouths open for the corn of matrimony—all with their nice little chests of bridal linen, so many dozen of this, and so many dozen of that, all waiting in the background! No, I can undertake to say with confidence that Giovanni has no attachment in Leipzig."

XL

But while Govoni was vainly spreading the matrimonial net before the feet of Giovanni, he fell into it himself.

They had both been invited to a big diplomatic and musical party at a famous Villa on the outskirts of Rome. All nationalities would be at this reception, and that Amades and Giovanni should be invited as guests—even though they knew well that they would be requested to play during the evening—set a distinguished stamp upon their career as musicians.

Together they had played the Kreutzer Sonata, and alone Govoni had played the Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue, rousing his highly cultivated audience to great enthusiasm by his manner of doing so. He was carried off, to be introduced to great personages who desired to say nice things to him.

Giovanni—who was not quite so happily at home in the great world as Amades—had managed to seclude himself in a little recess behind a curtain from which he could survey the scene, without himself being noticed. He had spoken to so many people who were strangers to him, he had been obliged to repeat the same sort of polite remarks about the same sort of subjects so many times, that he felt it would be agreeable to be silent for a while. Also he wanted to recall to his mind Govoni's performance, just over.

That magic of Bach, how eternal it was, and how continually renewed in its

freshness. No change of time or of place could destroy it—in a palace of the Cæsars, in a hut on a mountain side, it was the same. It carried credentials that were not to be denied: one of the universal voices of the world, for all times and for all peoples. Catholic. And of what a perfection had Amades' performance been! Giovanni had noticed that as Amades increased in knowledge and power—and he was visibly and daily doing so—his interpretation of Bach advanced in depth and in beauty.

ETERNAL VOICE

"You do not come to the end of him, I perceive," Amades had once said, "Always he is ahead, leading you—where?"

"Where?"—Giovanni's heart had echoed. There was some depth always underneath, some light always beyond, in that music, even when it was simply delicate and gay.

He was musing silently in his corner when he found that Amades had come back to him.

But what had happened to Amades? He looked different, he looked pale, he looked far more excited than he had ever seen him look even when he had been playing with concentrated passion. What had happened?

He laid a hand that shook a little on Giovanni's arm. "Look!" he whispered.

Giovanni looked, following the intense gaze of Amades across the salon. He saw a slight brown-haired girl, with little ringlets dropping over her ears, wearing a spreading dress of soft pink that matched her cheeks, standing in a stiff shy way by the side of an impressive matron in a gold and maroon turban and a gold and maroon gown.

"She is very pretty," said Giovanni.

"Pretty?" Amades cried, swinging round on him, "Pretty? She is a bird strayed out of Paradise! But she is more, oh, much more. Cannot you see that Gobbo would love her at once? Cannot you see the immense, implicit, maternal quality of her?—and yet she is virginal as a young pine-tree against the morning sky! I have not yet spoken to her, I do not know who she is, but one thing I know—she is mine!"

Giovanni stared at him, thinking he had suddenly gone mad.

"How can you say that when you do not know her—do not know what she is like?"

"I always know the things that belong to me—did I not know the

Chromatic Fantasy?—and I take them! There is a saying, Fate leads the willing, the unwilling drags. I go willingly when I see my destiny. I take it."

Giovanni was silent. Certainly he had taken the Fantasia, made it his so that no other pianist dare touch it—but a girl was not quite so simple, surely?

"In five minutes I will be introduced—in ten minutes she will know she is mine," said Amades, and was gone.

Giovanni stayed in his hidden corner—it was like being in a curtained box at the play. Only he was not sure if he liked the play. Also he felt doubtful what part the matronly lady was to take. She did not look as though she were in the habit of yielding up her wishes to those of others.

A GREETING

Within the stated five minutes Amades was being presented to the damsel of his choice and the gentlewoman her mother. The impressive matron received him with amiable condescension—he, though only a musician, was, without question, one of the outstanding personages at that distinguished gathering. In her own country musicians were hardly of this importance—but after all this was Italy, and one always heard that in Rome one should do as the Romans did. So her remarks to Govoni, in admirable, if rather stiff, Italian, were gracious. The daughter said nothing. After a shy greeting she looked at Amades, and dropped her eyes, and looked again. Amades said nothing to her either—in words—conversing the while with her mother, but his eyes spoke a language that needed no interpreting, that the girl understood so far as to tremble under it, as a flower trembles under a caressing zephyr. But Amades was so clever in his manner of secret speech that the mother continued to make pleasantly condescending remarks to the gifted young pianist without perceiving any undercurrent. How could there be any undercurrents in the case of a foreign musician just presented to her and her daughter in these stately and exclusive salons?

"Lucy, my dear," she said, "I think it is time we considered our departure. I hope that by so doing"—she turned graciously to Amades, "we shall not be missing any of your charming music, Signor Govoni?"

He bowed.

"If the Signora withdraws I shall play no more to-night."

She bridled slightly. It was flatteringly said, of course, but it savoured faintly of familiarity. Foreigners were all like that, never knew when they overstepped the bounds.

She took a stately departure, the daughter following obediently in her wake.

Oblivious of all else Govoni watched her—the narrow girlish shoulders, so smooth and sloping, the pink frock slipping and just not slipping off them, the brown ringlets, through which the little ear showed like a slip of young moon shining, the long and graceful neck, the stiff, drilled little back.

"Oh, Lucy, my Lucy!" Govoni's heart cried within him, "The name as sweet as you are! Lucy, Santa Lucia! I will make you without eyes to everything and everyone in the world—you shall only have eyes that behold me!"

Just as she reached the doorway to the second salon on her way out after her mother, Lucy turned her head with a swift movement and glanced back at Govoni. Their eyes met—already Lucy's were his.

Giovanni watched all this little drama, which was a dumb show to him, as he could not from his corner hear what was said. But it was eloquent enough without words.

XLI

"Said I not so?"

WITHERS ST. MARY

Amades was at Giovanni's side again, and clutching at his arm.

"Come out of this—she has gone, what is there to stay for? Let us go out under the stars, and I will tell you something of what has happened. But first wait a moment—I must get hold of an essential thing I need."

A little later they were outside the palazzo, and under an oil lamp Amades stayed and looked at a little oblong of pasteboard on which was engraved in fine copper-plate:

Mrs Withers
Hall Place.
Withers St. Mary. Wiltshire.

"She is English, you see," said he, gazing in an enchanted sort of way at the bit of pasteboard.

"What a curious name—Mrs Withers. And she looked as though she would be at least a Baroness, if they have Baronesses in England, or a Countess, or something like that. It means no more than Signora, does it?"

"The English are a curious people," Govoni replied, "I have been once in their country, I have even had an English pupil or two—they are difficult to teach, for they think good breeding matters more than good music, their female

dilettanti must never exceed a certain level of proficiency, for fear they should become artists! They are very shut up and stiff, and they take a pride in being a very old family and without a title, and you think they are nobody in particular and they are very careful never to tell you anything—and then you find that they live in vast mansions in the country behind enormous walls that enclose miles of park, with huge old trees and herds of deer, and they only know about twenty people, because the others are not 'correct,' that is the word, and if you are not 'correct' then practically you do not exist."

"It sounds very difficult—and very dull," Giovanni said, "You seem to know a lot about it after your short time in England."

"Well, I have eyes and ears, and the English people and their ways have always interested me. They do not belong to Europe at all, they are shut up in their queer self-satisfied Island. And now, of course, I shall have to go there again."

He looked musingly at the card.

"Mrs Withers, of Withers St. Mary—it is probably her village. 'Twill be interesting to see it."

Giovanni stared at him.

"Do you mean you are going to England just to see that place—Withers St. Mary?"

"Incidentally—but I am going to see Lucy Withers."

"But she is here—in Rome."

"She will not be here long. I shall call upon them tomorrow. I shall contrive to whisper 'Borghese Gardens' in that shell-like ear—I do not mean Mamma's," said Amades with a laugh, "Or slip a minute note into her hand. We shall meet, I shall say a few important words. We shall probably be discovered. Mamma will take fright and return to England in her travelling coach, with her courier riding ahead. I shall follow a few hours behind. If I cannot obtain entrance to the house as a visitor I shall be the man come to wind the clocks or quill the harpsichord, or I shall make friends with a Still Room maid, and get a note delivered to my Lucy. I shall lurk in the great park."

He laughed, his eyes glittered, he was immensely excited. He obviously delighted in the difficulties that surrounded Lucy Withers.

"Mrs Withers has met her match," he went on, "I should say from her countenance, that it will be the first time she has done so. Oh, it is going to be

magnificent. Lucy is mine. Never before have I felt this dart from the hand of Love transfixed in my breast! From the beginning of the world this was decreed!"

His voice shook, his laughter had left him. Brown eyes, brown curls, and an apple-blossom cheek—what had they done to Amades Govoni? Giovanni looked at him and wondered. Always he had felt that Amades was destined to be the great lover. He had half-consciously hoped that it would not come so soon—this severance, this inevitable break in their friendship.

Two days later Govoni came to him and announced that he was departing for England.

"It is as I said. Mrs Withers has taken alarm, and she is a firm woman who does not hesitate to act. The English are an admirable race, full of obstinacy and determination. She is a widow of much wealth—she imagines I am a fortune-hunter. When I have got Lucy I will show her that it is only Lucy I want. She is an opponent worthy, as they say, of my steel. We shall respect each other yet—I liked the gleam in her eye when she told me she had been hurriedly summoned to England on affairs connected with her estate. With difficulty I refrained from telling her that I also was summoned to England on affairs connected with my heart. But she will discover that in time! First I had better behold this so-important place of Withers St. Mary, and then I will know how best to act."

"And so you are going?" Giovanni could not keep a desolate note from creeping into his voice.

"And so I am going—but I leave you in your native city, my Giovanni, and not in any strange place. And Father Sebastian will give you as much of his companionship as he may. When your time comes you will know that all things must yield to this matter of love. Wish me well on this quest—if I fail I am indeed undone. But I shall not fail. Someday I will come back—with the angel Lucy."

XLII

Father Sebastian realised how curiously desolate Giovanni felt after Amades' sudden departure. Such time as was permissible he gave to Giovanni. Their wanderings about Rome together greatly increased Giovanni's intimate knowledge of his birthplace—not only its magnificence but its homely adjustments to Italian life, the poor clustering like birds about the habitations of the Cæsars. Little vignettes stood out in Giovanni's mind, as when they passed the Temple of Vesta, patched and shabby, with its queer little bell-

cupola for Christian service set in its pagan roof, a line of washing strung from the door to a broken wall, a boy milking a goat against one of the encircling columns. Tufts of grass and little wild bushes grew everywhere among those ruins, the grim broken walls of the Colosseum sprouting into an elevated grove, a drapery of verdure over old horror, under the green obliterating finger of nature. Out of the incongruous the Italian peasant made a home, as in the majestic half-sunk remains of the Temple of Pallas, whose massive portico and carved entablature sheltered the miserable quarters of a woman with many children, who besought the Dominican's blessing on one, obviously dying, as they passed her door.

ROMAN PICTURES

And while he gathered unforgettable little Roman pictures, Father Sebastian was coming to a more intimate knowledge of Giovanni's character. When Amades had been with them Giovanni had generally watched and listened and been enthralled and amused —with the Dominican he came forth himself more fully than he had ever done before. Sensitive as his own fingers on the fiddle, so were the Dominican's on his spirit.

After Amades' departure the burden of Giovanni's mind had been

"Oh, who can bring the days again
Of that sweet gracious time?"

But Father Sebastian would not let him dwell on so personal a note.

"In Rome, beyond all cities of the world, one cannot think of oneself overmuch," he said, "It dwarfs our troubles and our losses, this city so tragic and so calm. Look at the ruined arches of the Aqueducts, at the tombs along the Via Appia, at the grinning jaws of the Colosseum, and then look at the Dome of St. Peter's, and you know that the final message is peace, and that nothing matters save to live the good life. All that triumph and tragedy and cruel victory finally subject to a little Cross! Ah, this Rome, what words it speaks eternally to mankind, these perdurable stones, these voices—*Semper eadem . . . securus judicat orbis terrarum*. Even it makes one speak in the language of St. Augustine and in a style to match Bernini!"

He smiled his gentle deprecatory smile.

"But I like you to talk like that."

"Do you? I fear sometimes I am too much the Preacher. But you and I are akin in many ways. I think we are both trying to get through."

"Get through to what?"

"To the beauty which is God. But it is good to laugh as well—our Father

St. Dominic knew that too—there are many ways to catch the hearts of men. The saints knew the value of foolishness and the dangers of overmuch solemnity. I always like to remember how that Franciscan Brother Juniper stayed to play at see-saw with the children outside the walls of Rome, to the scandalisation of a deputation which waited to receive him. Cannot you see him, with the skirts of his habit tucked up, and his knotted girdle flying? It is only those who have the true wisdom who dare be foolish."

CHURCH MUSIC

Father Sebastian took Giovanni to hear music in many Roman churches.

"I know music comes before monuments in your mind," he said smiling, "Indeed, I strongly suspect that you believe the first thing God made was a fiddle!"

In these musical pilgrimages Giovanni, whose knowledge of music had been so largely instrumental, learned many new things—learned the secret of the incomparable crescendos and diminuendos of the Vatican Choir; heard an oratorio of Alessandro Scarlatti's "San Filippo Neri," the beauty of which much surprised him, especially an Aria, "Mio Gesù," whose tender pathos brought the music of Bach to his mind.

"It might almost have been written by Bach," he said to Father Sebastian afterwards.

"And when you have said that there is nothing further to be said?"

"Nothing further to be said!"

Giovanni smiled, looking at the dark face of the Dominican which had grown so dear to him. He hesitated, then he continued: "There is much further to be said, in truth, much that puzzles me—perturbs me somewhat."

Father Sebastian waited.

"I feel that time is a strange thing," Giovanni went on, "Do you ever feel that?"

The Dominican looked at him. "Who could fail to feel that in Rome, of all places on earth? Time, it seems to me, speaks here as nowhere else. The past is ever about the present here—sometimes it is difficult to tell which is which, and in which century we move and have our being."

"God!" cried Giovanni, a sudden wave of emotion sweeping up his face like a tide, "That is what I have often felt—only not here in Rome, not in any special sense. But in Leipzig, which is not my native city, nor was it his."

“His?—whose?” asked Father Sebastian.

“My ancestor—a musician of Bach’s day, and his pupil, but born in Rome, and buried here. Why, I will take you to see his tomb.”

“And tell me his story?”

“Yes, and tell you his story—I have never really told it to anyone yet, not even Amades. But first let us go and look upon his monument—I feel an urgency that we should do that. On the way I will tell you who he was.”

They came to the little lonely church; they stood together and read the inscription:—

“Here lies a Dead Musician, Paolo Cavatini, aged Twenty-Six Years, whose Spring of Promise was Cut Untimely Short in a Foreign Country. He was a Pupil of Johann Sebastian Bach, the German Master. He Gave his Life to Obtain that Teaching, and Thought Not the Sacrifice Too Great. Born in Rome 1710, Died in Leipzig in Saxony, 1736.”

“I feel that we inherit many things from our ancestors,” said Giovanni after they had read the inscription, “A look persists through generations, a liking, or a fear, a feeling for music, an hereditary skill. Do you think it is quite impossible that we should inherit a memory, and through that some power to go back in time? Surely time is a great door, always open, but most of us have lost the way back. Does not great joy or great grief make an impress on the soul that may be transmitted to those of the same blood and lineage?”

He had a strange look as though he were praying, as he stood before the monument of his ancestor.

The Dominican was very still, his hands folded in his wide sleeves, his eyes on Giovanni.

“You walk in deep waters,” he said, “Deep and troubled waters, Giovanni.”

Book Four

The Door Opens Again

I

Almost a year later Giovanni stood at a window of his grandfather's little house in Leipzig, holding a small gold box in his hand.

He was alone. He felt that henceforward he would always be alone. His grandfather had died, suddenly and peacefully in his sleep, while he had still been in Italy. He had returned immediately to his mother, but everything had long been done and completed before he could reach her.

Doktor Eccard was with her, and Doktor Eccard had looked after her and comforted her—and then asked her if he might not continue to do so for the rest of his life. Gerda could imagine nothing more beautiful, and tears of sorrow for her father's loss, and tears of joy for her own heart's gain, had mingled so that she could not distinguish their separate sources. Indeed, she was inclined to accept the Doktor's doctrine that grief and joy and pity were all one. But though she accepted this shelter of love so thankfully there was the question of Giovanni—what, if she married, was to happen to Giovanni?

"My sweet Cabbage," said the Doktor, his kind brown eyes twinkling a little as he looked at her troubled face—he always found something of the incurable baby in Gerda, that was one reason why he loved her—"My sweet Cabbage, it is only the usual problem reversed, and it is much better this way, for the young and healthy son is far better able to look after himself, than an aged and decrepid mother like you! Besides, in my house you will only live a street or two away from your Gianni in his house—when he is there. But you do not imagine he is going to spend the rest of his life in Leipzig? What he has been doing in Rome and Milan and Vienna, he will do also in Paris and Berlin and London."

There seemed no answer to this argument, and when Giovanni himself arrived, travel-stained and weary, he had no sooner fed and slept and visited the grave of his grandfather, than he opened up the question himself. He did not need telling how things were between Gerda and the Doktor. They must not delay and wait, they must get married.

Gerda's timid suggestions of a year's delay were brushed aside.

"You talk as though you were a widow, *Mütterchen,* instead of an orphan!

An orphan much in need of someone to protect you. Moreover, for myself"—he turned and took the Doktor's hand in both his—"I much desire to attach Doktor Eccard to our family as speedily and as securely as possible."

His grandfather had left the little old house and the musical instruments and the furnishings, except such as Gerda might desire, to Giovanni. He, too, had known with content before he died where Gerda would find her home. The one charge upon Giovanni was that he should continue to support Marta, the old servant who had looked after the Professor since his wife had died.

"So you see how simple it all is," Giovanni had exclaimed, "Marta is dependent on me for her home and I am dependent on Marta for my comfort! We cannot turn each other out, and we get on very peaceably together. The only trouble is that she will cook me such excellent meals I shall get too fat to practise my fiddle!"

Faced by all these so neatly dove-tailed arrangements Gerda found herself without excuse for delay.

"I am too old to wait too long, Sugarheart," the Doktor pleaded, "Now that I know what a paradise you hold in your hands you cannot keep me outside. And all my orphans and lame dogs cry to you to come to them as a mother."

So Gerda, filled with a new joy, a joy she had never known, put her wedded hand in the Doktor's and went to dwell in his house and minister to all the creatures on two feet and four who came there and whom her sisters referred to as "his miseries." They did not approve Gerda's second marriage—they felt she might have done so much better for herself, and been, in consequence, so much more helpful to her innumerable nephews and nieces.

"TINSEL-MOON"

Soon after Gerda's marriage, while she was still enjoying her "Tinsel-moon" in the Schwarzwald, Herr Christoph Clauder died. Since his return from Italy Giovanni had gone to see him, to talk and play to him, not once a week, but every evening. The old man had become very frail, though he tried to hide this with an appearance of fierceness which certainly did not deceive Giovanni. His eagerness for music and more music was like the unquenchable thirst of a man in a fever.

"Play, play!" he would cry, his bony fingers twitching at the arms of his chair, "I have not much time before I go into the silence."

"But," said Giovanni, embarrassed and pitiful, "There is much music in Heaven—Bach is there, and many others."

"Who knows? who knows?" the old man said irritably, "They talk, they tell pretty tales—and ugly ones too. Listen while you can, I say. Who has ears in

the grave?”

So Giovanni took down the golden Stradivarius and played peace to his old friend.

One evening he could not go to see Clauder as he was playing at a Gewandhaus Concert the Paganini Concerto. When he returned home, feeling considerably elated at the enthusiasm of his audience, he found an urgent message awaiting him—Would he go round to Herr Clauder at once, whatever the hour of his return?

He found the old man propped up in bed, his night-cap crooked on his head, his hands burning and dry, his breathing hard and difficult.

“It has come,” he said, “Well, let us hope it will be quick—I hate prolonged death-beds. No, no,” as Giovanni said some deprecatory words, “I know, and I have had my turn, I am not making any moan. But there is one thing”—he paused and drew painful breath—“I made you a promise. You have done your part—here is mine.”

He fumbled under the bedclothes, and clutched in his withered hand Giovanni saw the gold and agate snuff-box which had been Bach’s.

GOLDEN GIFT

“There, take it,” said the old man, “It is yours, and now it is safely in your possession. I would not have some shark snatch it away from you when I am dead. Take it—with my blessing, whatever that may be worth.”

He cackled a little in his throat, his eyes closed. His look frightened Giovanni, and he thrust the little precious box hurriedly into his breast, and ran to summon the doctor.

When he returned with one—Doktor Eccard was still away in the Black Forest—it was to find the old man unconscious, and, unconscious still, the next morning he passed away. At least he had been spared the prolonged death-bed he had dreaded.

II

Christoph Clauder had bequeathed to Giovanni not only the promised snuff-box, but also the glorious golden Stradivarius—of all the possessions in the world, of all the wealth and splendour and riches in the world, the two things most precious, thought Giovanni, as he looked at them and handled them, and knew that they were his.

He regretted passionately that he could not thank the old man who now lay

in his grave—even the expression of his gratitude for the snuff-box, given to him while Clauder still lived, had been paralysed by the imminence of death. And the bestowal of the Stradivarius had been a thing undreamed-of, which had overwhelmed him when it was delivered at his door, tied up in a black leather bag, and, slipped under the strings, a little card on which was written: "For Giovanni Cavatini, who can play it, with an old man's blessing. Follow where Bach leads you." The handwriting was very shaky and uncertain—Herr Clauder must have written it when he felt his end was upon him. Tears rose in Giovanni's eyes as he looked at the scrap of paper and that message from the dead. The message that his heart echoed, had always, as it seemed, unconsciously obeyed: "Follow where Bach leads you."

If he were alone, if his mother had entered a new life, and Amades had gone after his Lucy to England, and Father Sebastian was in Rome, and Herr Clauder was dead, like his grandfather, still he had this marvellous companionship—this violin of the world's greatest maker, this snuff-box that had been the personal and intimate possession of the world's greatest musician.

The Stradivarius lay upon the table at his elbow, the little gold and agate box was clasped close in his hand, he was gazing at it, thinking of Clauder's curious little last message. No need to say that to him, surely—he had always felt the impulse so deeply rooted within him, to follow where Bach led.

The previous evening, for the first time for so long, he had opened the casket containing the Cavatini Letters, turned them over, read a page here and there, the whole story setting itself clearly before his mind—the story whose smallest detail he could never forget, not so much because he had read the Letters till he knew them almost by heart, but because, in some curious way, the story seemed to be his own. Rome faded on the horizon of his mind, it was his birthplace, his proud natal city—but at Leipzig he was at home, Leipzig said things to him that Rome, despite her tragic tremendous history, could never say. Thoughts wandered to and fro in his mind processionally.

A GIRL SINGS

After a while he became conscious of a voice singing, a low girl's voice. At first he could not distinguish any words, only a slender stream of melody. Someone singing outside in the street, rather far away it sounded. But slowly the singing became clearer, the words shaped themselves into recognition—

". . . seated on this bank of clover, my love hath tuned my zither strings—
How can I then forget my lover, whose voice with softest music rings?"

With a shock of surprise Giovanni realised that the voice was in the room, not outside. The extraordinary sensation came over him that he had known

before—as though time shifted a little, as though a veil were being drawn away.

He saw the singer. He knew her. She was spinning as she sang, drawing the thread between the fingers of one hand, turning the wheel slowly with her other hand, her grave little face held slightly sideways, her mouth half-opened, entirely unconscious and alone. Giovanni's heart nearly stopped. One glimpse he had received of her, this eldest daughter of Bach, one glimpse in the room at the Thomasschule that had been her Father's *Componierstube*. But this time he was in his own house, though the room in which he now beheld her was not any room he knew, it was not the Study in the Thomasschule. But he could not stay to question or speculate, all his thought was given to absorbing her presence, to imprinting her lineaments on his mind. Her quiet meditative singing continued:

"*While seated on this bank of clover——*"

The door opened, she stopped, looked up from her distaff, and smiled—for the first time Giovanni saw how blue her eyes were in the pale face. Her Father stood there. He shut the door and came over to her side.

" 'Tis an old ditty thou dost sing, Catharina—it was old in Thuringia when I was a boy. I like well to hear it again."

He walked over to a harpsichord which stood against the wall and struck a chord or two.

"Come," he said, looking at her with a smile, "Begin that verse again."

Catharina smiled back at him and obediently opened her mouth and sang:

"*While seated on this bank of clover my love with cherries me hath fed—*
How can I then forget my lover, whose lips than cherries are more red?
While seated on this bank of clover, we've heard the hum of honey-bee—
How can I then forget my lover, than honey sweeter far to me?"

As she sang her Father wove delicate counterpoints around her melody, enhancing and supporting. When it was ended he leaned one arm on the harpsichord and looked at her.

AND WEEPS

"A pretty old *Volkslied*," he said, "And a pretty subject, child—is it not a subject should engage thy attention?"

Catharina's head drooped, a faint tinge stole across her cheek. She said nothing.

"Thy Mother tells me that the young Heinrich Auber has many thoughts of thee. Dost have no thought of him?"

Catharina raised her head. Tears stood in her blue eyes, her cheek had paled again.

"Please, dear Father, if thou would permit that I hear no more of Herr Auber's intentions I should be humbly thankful to thee. I do not desire to be betrothed—I am well content if I may but stay with thee."

Her head went down into her hands and she wept.

Bach rose from the instrument and came across to her and put his arm affectionately round her shoulders.

"Dear child," he said, "I feel that it is a matter for thy personal wishes—I would not press thee against thine own heart. So weep not any more."

The door opened again and a young man entered.

"See," Bach went on, "Dry thy tears, for here comes Paolo."

Giovanni's heart stopped dead, as it seemed, and went on again with a jar that shook him. Paolo Cavatini, known so long, unseen before, stood there in front of his eyes—across a century of time's oblivion at last they met. But it was not the seeing of his ancestor that gave Giovanni so great a shock—it was the fact that Paolo was himself. The face he had seen in his own mirror looked back at him—the only difference that Paolo's dark hair, which grew at the temples as his own grew, was brushed back and tied at the neck with a black ribband. Mouth, eyes, height, and build were his own; the knee breeches, stockings and buckled shoes, the full-skirted coat of green cloth, the ruffled linen bands at wrist and throat, being the only difference between them.

In his amazement Giovanni unclasped his hand and the gold snuff-box rolled to the floor. He stooped involuntarily to pick it up, and when he raised his head, nothing was there save his own quiet room. Bach, Catharina, Paolo, had vanished like a vision in a dream.

III

It took Giovanni some time to understand anything of the mystery that lay in his hand. He realised almost at once that the little box, which had been Bach's, could at times open for him the door into the past. He might walk there—outside the walls of that room in the Thomasschule which had hitherto been his only means of entry—when he held that talisman in his hand, that talisman which had spoken to him the first time he touched it.

Such had been his first belief and hope. He was to find that in this hope he was mistaken. For days, indeed for weeks, the

little box refused to open its mystery. He would sit clasping it, hoping with the whole of his strength to be admitted into that past world, yet staying obstinately in his own time. Then, for no cause that he could explain, he would be conscious of that wavering of time. He would return.

After long and intense thought—the fundamental mystery of it he never could explain—he came to the conclusion that he was only able to get back when he happened to have the snuff-box in his hand at the precise moment of time which corresponded in the circling year with the episode or the conversation that he beheld or heard again a century or so after it had first occurred.

Amades had said to him once, “Do you realise that in each year we pass unconsciously the day on which we shall die?” Giovanni had considered it rather a morbid thought, but Amades had said, “No, not morbid, interesting I think it is.”

So, and in a similar unconscious fashion, Giovanni was passing day by day in the nineteenth century the events of Bach’s life which had occurred in the eighteenth century, and occasionally, when the event and his mind coincided, he had those sudden backward glimpses.

This seemed the most possible explanation, though for the long “dumb” periods when nothing happened, he never could account. It was not till much later that it dawned upon him that possibly these might be partly explained by the fact that when it was in his possession Bach did not always carry the gold and agate box upon his person—it was a prized possession, he almost certainly had another and less valuable one which filled his everyday needs. The first time Giovanni had held that little box and had that sudden vision, Bach had been wearing a velvet coat and ruffles, which certainly was not his everyday garb.

Giovanni carried the snuff-box everywhere with him, was not parted from it by day or by night, but unless he held it in his hand, unless his mind was undisturbed by outside distraction, he perceived nothing. Even when these conditions were fulfilled he generally perceived nothing. The two moments in separated time had not coincided—he was at the mercy of an unpredictable chance. He was like a person holding a key which would open a door—but would only open it at certain moments of which he had no knowledge—he only stumbled upon them. The mystery remained a mystery. Even this broken kind of knowledge came to him but gradually, after many failures and disappointments and experiments.

But the door had opened to him—that was the amazing, the incredible

thing.

His first sight of his ancestor Paolo Cavatini—so fleeting, only lasting for just the moment before he stooped to the floor and then gone—was an immense shock. Equally a revelation. Why had he never guessed, why had he never realised, that his sense of deep intimacy, of oneness, with Paolo—"his heart is my heart"—his strange passion for Bach in this late day when he was almost forgotten, were thus to be explained? It was so natural, so simple, once seen. The blood that ran in his veins he drew from a common source with Paolo—Paolo's parentage was his, two or three generations removed. His musical nerves and gifts were Paolo's. An immense urgency was upon him to see Paolo again, to observe more closely the form of which he had received so short and brief a glimpse.

III

SIGHT OF PAOLO

But it was Catharina Bach, not Paolo, whom he first beheld again. And this time the snuff-box had nothing to do with it. He had spent so many hours holding that little box in his hand, hoping, longing, with no results, that he had almost come to the conclusion his two glimpses into the past by its agency, like his two experiences in the *Componierstube* at the Thomasschule, were to be his last.

He had been working very hard at some fantastically difficult violin studies Paganini had given him and advised him to work over each week of his life in order to keep his technique at the necessary stretch—"If you have climbed a summit you must not begin sliding down the other side through laziness," he had said. Giovanni was physically exhausted by the hard work he had been doing, but also exhilarated by the sense of his mastery, which increased upon him from day to day. He would play a little Bach before he relinquished his fiddle. Also he would have a little more air, he thought, mopping his moist brow. He moved to the window and flung it wide, and then perceived that the silent quiet street, where so few foot passengers came and no wheeled traffic, as that was forbidden by the iron posts which closed its entrance, was all flushed to a warm glow by the colours of the sunset which was radiant in the sky above the darkening roofs of Leipzig. He took his stand by the window that he might watch this changing pageantry of colour—he leaned against the wall, and began to play the Adagio of the Bach Partita in G minor.

A LISTENER

He had thought the street was empty, but he saw a female figure standing on the opposite side. Her face was partly averted, but her attitude suggested that she was listening—listening to his playing. She stood so very still that Giovanni felt gratified by

the intentness of her attention, and played the lovely thing with great feeling to his audience of one. His eyes watched her idly at first, then slowly it dawned on his mind, given to the music, that her garb was strange. His mother did not dress like that, or the other women he saw in the streets of Leipzig or of Rome. He looked more intently, and something familiar in the shape, small and slender under the wide skirts and the long black cloak and hood that covered her, struck him. An immense eagerness to see the averted face came over him. He looked at her so intently that she turned her head and looked across and up at him. The street was beginning to grow dusk, the sunset glow was fading, but there was enough light for him to see the pale little face, the wide mouth, the heavy lidded eyes whose shape gave a sadness to the whole countenance. He saw her face for a moment before she turned it away again—it had a ghostly transparency in the dying sunset light. He knew her at once, but instead of excitement he felt a strange peace. He could not feel sure if she had seen him, as it was then almost dark in his little room. All this time—which had been so short, though in retrospect it seemed long—he had been playing the Partita. When he had completed it, without a break and without thinking what he was doing, he slipped into a delicate Rondo of Mozart's. As the first notes took the air, her figure, on which his eyes had been fixed, faded swiftly away. Where she had stood, he saw the wall, which her form in its long cloak had obscured from him, appear again. He stopped playing, he put down his Stradivarius with much less than his usual care. He strode across the room.

"Fool, fool!" he cried. "She comes—to her Father's music, and you drive her away with stuff she never knew."

He went again to the window and leaned out. The street was empty. It had grown quite dark.

V

Her face haunted him. He took out again Paolo's familiar Letters and read again every reference in them to Catharina Bach. So slight and few they were—her fear that Friedemann had come to beg money; her sudden tears at the thought that the time must come when her Father would die; Paolo's little description of her as "the flower unopened"; her bandaging of his injured arm; her summoning of him to supper; her singing to him on his death-bed, her weeping which had puzzled him; and the last glimpse of all, when pale, with tear-weary eyes, she had opened that door at the Thomasschule to his own great-great-grandfather when Paolo was lying dead upstairs.

That was all which the Letters gave him, but with his own glimpses into that past, he began to feel he knew Catharina, felt faint flutterings of those

folded wings of hers, knew something which her Father and her tender Step-Mother had not guessed.

And a few days later his little snuff-box let him through the door again—on two successive days he had this experience. So pervaded was he by this atmosphere that he almost felt he had become his ancestor, was living in the eighteenth century where his heart was—he found that it was difficult to return to his own time, for, doing so, he left behind him all that he had come to feel mattered most to him in life.

Paolo, Catharina, Bach himself. He reversed it—Bach, Catharina, Paolo. But in whichever order he put the names it hardly mattered, they were so linked, so close to him. Bach he had long known through his music, Paolo through his Letters—Catharina, the latest-comer to his mind, wavering a little, but growing into clearness, as though the mists of morning were falling away from her.

"But, my dear child,"—the veil had dropped once more, and it was the Frau Cantorin, Anna Magdalena, speaking, "My dear child, marriage is the ordained estate."

WEDDED LOVE

How oddly familiar Giovanni felt with the turn of Catharina's neck, the face held slightly away, the eyes dropped.

"But my Father does not insist," the low voice replied, "He says that it is a matter for my own wishes."

" 'Tis more indulgent he is than most parents. But indeed I would not press thee, Catharina,—only as I have been happy in marriage, so would I have thee happy also."

"Thou didst marry my Father," Catharina's eyes were turned fully and with somewhat of reproach upon her Step-Mother.

"True—and there is no other such man! *Ach, lieber Gott!*" the Frau Cantorin's face flushed a little, and she looked almost as young as her step-child, "It seems so short a time ago, in spite of the years. It comes back to me as though it were but yesterday."

"Tell me," said Catharina, sinking on the floor at her side.

It was as though a door shut upon the scene for a few fleeting moments, then opened again. Giovanni knew that he had missed some portion of this conversation when he heard the next words.

"And when he put the betrothal ring upon my finger," Anna Madgalena was saying, "the ring inside which was engraved his name, I knew then

without one doubt and have proved it ever since, that above all women I was blessed. See, Catharina, in that pot on the window-ledge, is a little bush of myrtle, grown from a sprig of my bridal wreath. I should be so happy to cut from it a wreath for thy brow."

She touched the girl's forehead with gentle fingertips.

At that moment Bach himself entered the room. His wife held out her hand and he came over to her chair, bent and kissed her upturned face. She sighed and smiled.

"I would wish for thy daughter, Sebastian, some happiness like ours."

Catharina had risen from the floor, and stood with a curious stiffness looking at them.

"That is a thing not possible," she said gravely, and with a surety of manner she did not often show. It was as though a sense of fate spoke in her words. She paused, she seemed to be looking about the room with a faintly startled air.

"What art thou gazing at, my child?" her Father asked.

"I thought—I felt—there was someone present."

"Certainly—there are two people present, besides thyself." Bach smiled a little.

"I meant—someone else," Catharina said, in an almost inaudible voice.

"Thou must be dreaming, wake up, sweetheart," Bach patted her shoulder affectionately, then turned to his wife, "Could I have thy help, Magdalena, over this motet? There is but little time for the copying."

She rose at once, tucked her hand under his arm with an affectionate look, and passed with him through an adjoining door.

Catharina stood alone in the room, quite still, her winged eyes wandering all round—the only moving thing about her—as though she searched for something. Then she sighed a little sigh, faint, like the brush of a bird's wing against the air, and very quietly went from the room.

"*Thou must be dreaming.*"

The words beat on Giovanni's heart—far away, dim, but increasing in significance. What did it mean? Was it possible that he was in her dream, as she was in his? He could not understand—he was afraid to understand. Strange, half-guessed things seemed to hover about him.

And all the while he was staring at the room which Bach and his wife and daughter had just left. Its details were unconsciously printing themselves upon his mind. He knew that room quite well—it was the Dwelling Room in the Cantor's quarters at the Thomasschule, and that door on the right led into the Cantor's Study. It had a long heavy wooden table under the window, partly laid with knives and horn mugs, as if for a meal, with a long bench pushed against it. There was Catharina's spinning wheel, and a long tapering harpsichord against one wall. Above the harpsichord hung a painting, which from its place of honour drew Giovanni's attention. It was in a golden frame, and it was a portrait of a man of a marked and individual countenance—a face full of decision, a firm mouth, wide-open brown eyes, a broad jaw and nose inclining slightly to the left, which made Giovanni think it might be a portrait of Bach's father, especially as through a window in the background of the painting could be seen the Wartburg rising on its height, so the picture was obviously painted in Eisenach.

There were shelves upon the wall that housed a considerable collection of books—solid and serious-looking books. A cupboard held some shining silver and copper. Black leather chairs stood ranged against the wall, and laid down upon the lid of the harpsichord was a violin that Giovanni felt convinced from its shape and varnish was a Stainer. He leaned forward to look closer, but as he moved the violin and the room together were no longer there.

VI

SMALL PLANET

Imprisoned in time. Severed by a barrier of years from a creature dead before he was born—yet in no sense dead, but more living, more real to him, than the people with whom he spoke daily. Catharina Dorothea Bach, she who had known his ancestor, she who, as Giovanni realised, had loved his ancestor—while Paolo, living under one roof with her, had not seen her, had passed her by, because his eye could behold no one save her Father—in the radiance of that sun her little light had been swallowed up. But it was as though the great orb had sunk in the sea—set for a little while, to rise again—and in the ensuing darkness Giovanni had beheld the timid shining of that small planet, Catharina. He who, it appeared, was in some sort his ancestor come again, was come to repair his neglect. Yet though he, by some rare combination of chance, could go back through time's closed door at certain moments, could behold what was past, he was but a spectator, he could not enter that past day, and she—she could not in any manner enter his life. If, for a moment, he had thought her faintly, remotely, conscious of him, he felt later that all she was conscious of, all she was longing for, was Paolo as she had dreamed he might be—never found him.

This was borne more fully in upon Giovanni at the next occasion on which this door of the past opened a little way to him.

He had seen Paolo Cavatini but once, and as soon as seen had lost him, as he dropped the snuff-box. The next time it was Paolo he saw first. He was sitting at the clavichord, alone, playing a tender melancholy little Sarabande. Giovanni, with a quick-beating heart—there was no fear in this hurried beat, only a quickened intensity of living—looked at him, impressing his image on his mind. His ancestor, so definitely his spiritual progenitor, to whom he owed not only so many of his physical characteristics, but, more intimately, the things that made up his quintessential life—the loves, the joys, the sadness. The set of the shoulders, the shape of the hands, he knew immediately for his own. The complexion was a little darker than his, more markedly Italian, but the different early eighteenth century style of the hair-dressing could not disguise the manner of its growth, so exactly like his own—the arch of the brows, again, was exactly his. Giovanni longed, with a longing that almost impelled him to some violent gesture or cry which he knew would destroy his frail hold upon this scene, to speak with this figure so near, so infinitely and inescapably remote. His knuckles were white with the pressure of his hands upon the little gold box—his silence, his stillness, so hard to hold.

Into the room, when the Sarabande was half played through, came Catharina. She entered, and stood quietly by the instrument, listening till its tender plaint was completed.

"I have not heard that before," she said, "Has he but just finished it?"

"Yes, I picked it up from his desk but now."

Catharina sighed, "His mind is full of these things so beautiful."

"The power, and the glory, and the majesty," said Paolo. Then he struck some chords. "My thought was full of this all last night—sing it," he commanded.

Catharina obediently opened her mouth, in the tender, passionate appeal: "Have mercy, Lord, on me, Regard my bitter weeping."

Waves of emotion swept through Giovanni as he listened to this dead girl singing music that would never be dead.

"Oh, God! oh, God!" something within him kept crying.

Bach entered the door, and stood looking at them both, and as he stood there Giovanni looked at him. Clearly he saw the countenance of the musician whom all his conscious life had

BACH'S COUNTENANC

been supreme in his love: the massive, majestic forehead, the firm jaw, the sweet-tempered and genial mouth, the narrow, retreated eyes. A face that told something of what Bach was, but hid much more.

As the last notes fell upon the listening air he came towards the players and put a hand upon the shoulder of each.

"That suits thy voice, Catharina."

"Yes," said Paolo, "it suits her well."

But he never looked at her, never glanced towards her as she left the room, hearing her name called from outside. Paolo's eyes, his thoughts, his mind, had no space for any other than his master, Johann Sebastian Bach.

It was all very plain to Giovanni. He watched. He could do nothing. He was held bound in the magic web of time, so frail, so unbreakable.

VII

The lovely Sarabande haunted his mind. He lit his lamp, and set forth his music paper to write it down, for it was not among the published or manuscript works of Bach known to him, and he desired not to lose its memory. As he wrote the rhythmical phrases it brought the whole scene back to him so vividly that it was almost as if he saw it all again with his eyes, instead of in his mind.

He was recalled to his surroundings by a tiny fluttering form about his lamp—a little feathery white moth had come dashing in from the night to the light by which Giovanni was writing at his open window. Its wings fluttered with joy at the beautiful and moon-like globe. It flew ecstatically towards the light. It was hurt by the lamp's hardness and heat, and fell to the table, where it lay without apparent injury, fluttering its antennæ. It was the most spotless white, a white that seemed too dazzling for earth, decked with infinitesimal black dots.

"Oh, foolish, pretty moth," whispered Giovanni watching it, "Has a thought entered that minute mind of yours that it is unwise thus to rush straight at the thing which shines and draws your heart?"

The antennæ fluttered, drooped, were still.

It seemed to Giovanni that like the faintest emanation came an answer from the moth: "I do not think. I die."

That minute spirit had fled, that vital spark, as real, as inexplicable, in the moth as in himself, was quenched. All life was like a candle-flame on the altar of God. Suddenly into his

mind came the memory of a small Convent chapel in Italy, and how from the place where he knelt he had seen the candle-flames on the altar reflected through the window into the dark enclosed little Convent garden. Against the tall stone wall, under the cypress trees, the flames shone faintly, looking in at the candles on the altar—multiplied, like the ghosts of all the candles that had shone there.

Giovanni was beginning to feel increasingly that the whole of existence was like that, reproducing itself in mysterious distances, leading down hollow vistas to things deeply desired, but not to be reached.

His own inner life was a frustration—yet he knew he would not relinquish it for the most complete fulfilment that his actual existence could offer him. Like the moth he had seen beauty, and, like the moth, he would not think death too great a price to attain it. Nevertheless, there was much to do before death was likely to solve his questionings. He shook himself from his tangle of thoughts, lifted the corpse of the little moth delicately on to the leaf of a plant growing round the window sill, and completed his writing out of the Sarabande which he had heard played. How strange to think that what he was now writing, what he had listened to with his living ears that very day, had really been played in the early part of the eighteenth century. The music under his hand was proof enough, if proof were needed, that his experience was no dream.

When the writing was completed he picked up the sheet of music and went over to the harpsichord—that silver tone seemed more suited to it than the pianoforte, and it was on the harpsichord that Paolo had played it, sat down and repeated note for note the delicate and tender music that his ancestor had played. He smiled at his successful evocation of that lost loveliness, then suddenly a wave of desolation swept over him.

Where did he belong? The present so incomplete—the past so unattainable.

Suddenly, into his memory, crept some music that was not Bach's, the Allegretto of the Seventh Symphony, which now he knew so well and loved—this music, so strangely different from Bach's, yet akin in greatness. As the sweep of it went through his mind, Amades' odd little verse came back to him. There was no denying it fitted the music in some curious manner:

"You will never
See me again.
I go away now—
Away from this pain."

For no reason that he could discover Giovanni felt immensely consoled.

VIII

The next day his mother and her husband returned from their *Tinselwoche* which had lengthened itself into five weeks instead of one.

Giovanni surveyed his mother with astonishment and admiration.

"You do not look old enough to be married! What have you been doing to her?" he asked the Doktor.

"Treating her in a manner suitable to her youth," he answered, his brown eyes smiling, his whole being radiating happiness. He, too, looked incredibly younger. He held himself more uprightly, his clothes were brushed, and did not hang upon him so shapelessly.

"But our Giovanni seems to have stolen some of the years you have discarded, my Angel," the Doktor went on, looking at him with a keen affectionate eye, "We shall have to take him in hand."

"With the rest of your lame dogs," Giovanni said laughing. But underneath he felt, as he looked at these two perfectly mated beings, that there was something of the lame dog about him.

LAME DOGS

Doktor Eccard felt it too, though he did not know why he felt it, so he said, "There is not much lame dog about the young violinist whose name is beginning to be coupled with that of Paganini for more reasons than because he was Paganini's pupil."

Giovanni glanced gratefully at him—he felt the deep warmth, the deep sympathy that lay below the words.

At that moment a dog who looked as though he had never been lame in his life, burst into the room, leaped up at the Doktor, and then came over to Giovanni and stood smiling before him, wagging a plumed and friendly tail.

"Gobbo remembers me," Giovanni cried, with the gratification all humans display at this remarkable sign of canine intelligence.

"Of course he remembers you," Gerda said, "You have no idea how intelligent he is. Why, the other day——"

"Stop her!" exclaimed the Doktor, "When she begins on Gobbo she is like a woman babbling about her first baby!—lost to all sense of proportion, and unconscious that the world contains ought save one black dog!"

Gerda leaned her head against his shoulder, laughing up at him, "You never let me forget you are in the world," she said.

“Well, I have had hard work to maintain my position against my furry rival. But, really, he is an amazing animal.”

And he too began to tell tales of Gobbo’s intelligence and character.

Gobbo immediately brought up the thought of Amades Govoni, and enquiries about him on the part of the Doktor and the Frau Doktorin elicited the fact that Giovanni, only two days earlier, had received a long letter from him. Giovanni offered to read it to them, for Govoni’s letters had no particular quality of privacy about them. So when Marta had brought in large quantities of excellent coffee and cakes—It is not lack of good food makes Gianni look so thin and fine-drawn, Gerda thought to herself—they settled themselves comfortably down to listen.

“It is a somewhat strange country, this England,” the epistle began, “In London well civilised, but in this remote county of Wiltshire one is in a world entirely cut off, a little world to itself. Low, lowering hills which they call Downs, almost bare of trees, seem to surround this village of Withers St. Mary, a little cluster of cottages of grey stone, thatched with straw, out of which small windows look shyly—all the cottages have the appearance as though they were just about to curtsey. I am sure they would if they could when Mrs Withers drives past with her high-stepping horses. The whole village is hers—my forecast of the situation to you was of a singular accuracy. We have Countesses and Princesses in Italy, and you have many High-bornnesses in Germany, but I assure you in neither country have you a Mrs Withers—a plain untitled Mrs Withers, whose family have held these lands and estates and messuages and tenements—I have collected these words specially for you—for more centuries than you have fingers on your right hand. She lives in a great stone house with rows and rows of windows looking on to a stone terrace, set in the middle of a vast park. The house is ugly and without imagination, but, my Giovanni, the park is wonderful, with its sweeps of green grass—we do not know what grass can be like in our countries—and the most stately trees you ever saw, singly or in groups, set amidst this grass. All this park, which merges eventually into a beech wood, is surrounded by an immense stone wall which marches on for miles, and has no opening in it save two great gate-ways of wrought iron-work, guarded on either hand by small stone houses which they call lodges, in which servants live whose business it is to open those gates to those who have the right of entry.

ENGLISH VILLAGE

“At first I did not venture through those gates—I wished to discover how the land in which my Lucy lived might lie. So I followed that wall, like the Great Wall of China, which was entirely unscaleable—Lucy is guarded, you see, like a princess in a dragon’s

castle—till I was in despair. Just as I was about to give up I found an old beech-tree that hung a friendly arm over the wall, which I was just able to grasp, and with some difficulty hoist myself down the other side. It was growing dusk and I walked to the edge of the beech wood, from whence I could see the house rising upon an eminence in the middle distance, and stood there, concealed by the twisted bole of a tree. Suddenly, a greyhound, with a blue leather collar round its neck, came bounding towards me. At first I was startled lest he should betray me, but as you know, I have a certain way with dogs—they know their friends—and in a moment he was licking my hands. Then I heard a silver voice calling 'Flash, Flash!' Imagine, Giovanni, it was Lucy—Heaven was kind! The dog bounded back to her, and she came into sight—alone, by God's mercy. I disclosed myself. She stared at me. 'You!' she whispered, 'You, from Italy!' She swayed, as all the colour left her face, she fell towards me. I caught her and held her form in my arms. Over land and sea I had come, and over the Great Wall of China, and here she was in my arms! There was a tiny stream among the moss close by, and I carried her there, that I might revive her with the refreshing fluid. Soon she opened her eyes and looked at me and smiled. I kissed her very gently and she suffered it. But then she raised herself against my shoulder. 'Oh, what would Mamma say!' she cried, 'I must go—please let me go.' 'Never!' I said, 'Not for twenty Mammas, nor all the ladies in England.' She turned very pale, then she flushed like a rose—oh, Giovanni, could you have seen her! 'But, but, what do you mean? I hardly know you—I have but seen you twice before.' 'And how often have you thought of me?' She drooped her head. 'Look up, my Lucy—I will tell you what this means—it means that I am going to marry you!' She trembled in my clasp. 'But—but, Mamma!' she cried once more, like a lamb with only one bleat. 'Mamma, it is highly probable, will not permit it—nevertheless I am going to marry you.'

GOVONI'S LETTER

"I will not tell you further of our conversation, it was of a somewhat private nature and hardly interesting to any save us two. But I made plain to her what I intended to do. I also told her what she must do. She trembled and shrank, till I made her realise that unless she did as I directed we should be parted for ever. Then she became suddenly calm: I was not wrong when I believed there was strength under that dependence, that cultivated and guarded helplessness. As we had completed the essentials—though not the delights—of our conversation, we perceived an elderly maid, accompanied by a footman carrying a cloak, emerge from the house. 'There is Reynolds come to seek me,' Lucy cried. I sent her forward to meet them, keeping myself well out of sight behind the trees. That, my Giovanni, is how the matter stands at present. It will be obvious to you that

Providence is with me, that Lucy soon will be my bride. I will write to you again as opportunity offers. Did I say that these Downs of Wiltshire were gloomy? They are radiant as the hills of Paradise!”

The Doktor and his wife looked across at one another and smiled.

“The sun has risen for him on those hills of England,” said Doktor Eccard.

“Do you think it is possible that he may win her from that mansion of her mother?” Giovanni asked doubtfully.

“I would stake the love of a person of Govoni’s character against many opposing mothers,” said the Doktor.

“But you have not seen the Frau Withers,” Giovanni answered.

“No, but I have seen many sorts of women, including the English, who are not really worse than any other nation, though, perhaps, harder to know. But now I will go and see how things are getting on with my patients, and leave you and your Mother to have a little talk after your separation.”

IX

For a while Gerda told her son of the things they had done and seen on their honeymoon in the Schwarzwald, and spoke with grave joy of her husband, of the depth of his character unfolding itself before her day by day.

“I am not worthy of him, Giovanni,” she said, and tears rose in her gentle eyes, “Nobody could be worthy of one who lives as Christ would have us live—who truly loves his neighbour before himself.”

“Little as I have yet seen him, I feel that to be true,” Giovanni answered, “You are greatly happy in having him for your husband.”

For a few moments they were silent. Then Gerda turned and looked at him.

“Has not the time come for you to begin to think of that happiness?” she asked.

Her voice sounded timid. Strange to feel that Giovanni was now grown up to manhood and that his inner mind was closed to her. But in spite of a timidity of manner her clear eyes looked at him steadily.

Giovanni looked back at her and smiled.

“Is it Amades’ love affair or your own makes you feel that I too must enter this charmed circle, little Mother? It would be a pity to leave me outside, would it not?”

His tone was not very encouraging, but she persisted.

“Is there nobody you have seen—in Italy perhaps?—that you like, that you might care for? It is true that there seems no one in Leipzig.”

“You may believe me, *Mütterchen*, that there is no young woman at present living in Leipzig, or anywhere else, who could make my heart miss a single beat—and I believe that is an infallible test!”

He laughed, but there was a shadow on his face.

“You mean you will not tell me, Giovanni.”

“Very well—I mean I will not tell. We are both too old for fairy-tales, and the only daughter-in-law I could give you would be a princess out of a fairy-tale. I shall only fall in love with a dream—and so both you and I will be spared disappointment!”

He jumped up. He could not any longer endure the vision which lay at the back of his mind, which he was shielding from sight with his words. He beheld the Frau Cantorin a hundred years ago speaking in the same manner to Catharina—Catharina, as unable as himself to explain her feelings and her needs. There was no affirmation possible to either of them.

He bent and kissed his mother’s cheek.

“Do not distress yourself about me. Amades is always saying that marriage is a mistake for the artist—though I suppose he will sing another song now!”

X

CHARITY AT HOME

Nearly a month passed. Gerda was fully settled in her new home—she had taken her own particular possessions there, she had brought a new comfort and grace into the Doktor’s neglected abode. Most remarkable achievement of all she had even won Gretchen over to a reluctant and grumbling consent to these changes—the Doktor had thought to pension her in order to spare his wife what he had so long endured with humorous patience, but she had refused to be pensioned: “If so be as I don’t work for you,” she had said grimly, “I don’t take none of your money!”

It was an alarming prospect—“Till death us do part!” said the Doktor shrugging his shoulders.

“Such a little thorn!” Gerda replied, and proceeded skilfully to pad the thorn till everyone almost forgot its existence.

There was no end to Gerda’s activities, her youth was indeed renewed by

her new happiness. She tore the Doktor's old linen shirts into bandages, and was in process of making him new ones—"Though he is as likely as not to give them away to the first beggar he meets!" she said to Giovanni. She was learning, under her husband's guidance, to be surgical dresser and nurse to all his "miseries"—so pervasive was his power that she did not shrink, when with him, from things that, without him, she could hardly have borne to hear tell of. "It is the relief of the suffering of which we think, my Heart," he would tell her, "Not of the suffering."

She was more busy than she had ever been in her life, she was learning new things each day. She had little time in which to indulge in half-formulated disturbance about Giovanni. She confided everything, including this, to the Doktor.

"It is a matter you must leave," he told her, "You can touch no one's inner mind until they themselves desire you to do so. I see much wisdom in the Roman Church in this matter. At any rate your Giovanni has his Confessor in whom to confide should he so need."

So Gerda contented herself in seeing that Giovanni's material needs were well looked after—as was indeed the case, for old Marta was completely devoted to him. The only trouble to which Giovanni would confess was a certain anxiety as to Amades and his Lucy, for since the letter he had read to his mother and step-father he had received no word.

"I am afraid of that Mrs Withers," he said, puckering his brows.

Then one day Amades walked in on him—and upon his arm was a creature so radiant that for a moment Giovanni hardly recognised her. Amades himself looked triumphant, and, as Giovanni said to him later, "Happier than was decent in a troubled world."

"My wife!" he said, "My wife, Lucy Withers—or rather, Lucy Govoni!" Then he burst into one of his great roars of laughter. "We have done it!" he cried, "We ran away! It was the only possible thing to do. And really it was very romantic—moonlight, escape from the ancestral home. Like one of those tales by Mrs Radcliffe in which my Lucy so delights. Only of course I should have taken her to a haunted hollow castle on the Rhine, not to this most respectable abode in Leipzig!"

"I like this better," said Lucy.

It was the first word she had spoken.

"She has a voice, you perceive," Amades said proudly, "And occasionally says short sentences!"

“But you talk so much,” said Lucy with an adoring glance at him, “There is no need for me to say anything!”

“True, my Angel, I am prepared to say everything necessary on all possible occasions. A silent wife is one of the greatest boons with which a man can be blessed. Tell me, Giovanni, is she not a darling?”

Lucy, for the first time, seemed to become conscious of someone else than her husband.

“I am truly glad to see Amades’ friend again,” she said, offering her hand with a charming gesture, “It was in Rome—it seems such a little while ago, and yet so much has happened!”

Again her eyes returned to Amades, as though they could not long stay away from him.

“PENNILESS MUSICIAN”

“Much indeed has happened,” agreed Amades. “And some of it happened very fast! You remember how I told you that I met my Lucy, by the grace of God, walking in the wood? Well, I had no wish to snatch her daughter from Mrs Withers if she was prepared to consider my suit for Lucy’s hand in a reasonable light. I did not really imagine she would consider it in a reasonable light—perhaps that was too much to expect. Penniless musician, lovely heiress!”

“Oh, darling Amades!” Lucy broke in, “You are a great genius!”

“But your Mamma, my beloved one, is constitutionally incapable of understanding genius. Well-bred English people do not indulge in it—it is a foreign peculiarity! However, I did endeavour to become as much like an English gentleman as my Italian parentage permitted. The next morning I walked through Lucy’s impressive entrance gates, instead of climbing the wall. I was ushered into those ancestral halls by at least two footmen with the finest calves clad in white silk stockings I have ever beheld!”

Lucy laughed deliciously: “They have too!” she said.

“She means that what nature does not supply is provided by padding!” Govoni explained, “You see, my love, in the impoverished musical circles in which you now move, footmen—with, or without, calves—are as rare as genius at Withers St. Mary.”

He collapsed into laughter.

“Is he not wonderful?” said Lucy, “I never knew people could laugh like that before!”

“I commended you too soon in saying you were the perfect silent wife. With your permission I will resume the thread of my story. I entrusted my humble name to the care of the footman, and after an interval an alarmingly dignified middle-aged person in black silk and lace lappets appeared——”

“Mamma’s woman,” Lucy interrupted, “I always was afraid of her!”

“Mrs Withers’ woman fixed me with a cold and disapproving eye and informed me that her lady was unable to give herself the pleasure of seeing me. I looked at her with my firmest expression, like this”—Govoni glowered at them—“and requested her to inform her mistress with my humble duty that as I had come all the way from Rome with the express intention of seeing her I did not propose to leave till I had done so, as I happened to have something of particular and urgent importance to say to her. After some delay the woman returned, and with much dignity bade me follow her. I was ushered into the presence of Mrs Withers, who, after the stiffest of greetings, informed me she was not aware that she had extended to me any invitation when in Rome.”

“Oh!” shuddered Lucy sympathetically.

THE ELOPEMENT

Amades was enjoying his narration: “I replied I was fully aware of that. I had come on my own responsibility—to request her permission to pay my addresses to her daughter. She took the blow very gallantly, I must admit, ‘Which I entirely and quite permanently refuse,’ she said, ‘Under no circumstances could such an alliance be considered. I shall give instructions to my servants that you are not again to be admitted. There is nothing further to discuss.’ I bowed, ‘There is nothing further to discuss.’ That night Lucy and I eloped. I had not expected any other result, and I had made my arrangements. To have delayed, to give her a chance to become suspicious—worst of all to question Lucy—would have been fatal. She had no idea that Lucy and I had met, she closed the gates of her fortress and thought all was safe. She did not know that a friendly tree leaned over her Great Wall of China! Lucy displayed great courage and did exactly as I had told her to do, with the happy result that she now has got a husband and I have a wife!”

They looked at each other—it was a look of perfect happiness.

“What are you going to do now?” Giovanni asked.

“We are going to Vienna for a time—I have been asked to take a ‘Master Class’ at the Conservatoire there. I must do something for a living now I have this expensive person to support!”

“I had nothing but the clothes I stood in and a dark cloak. Amades forbade

me to bring anything—not even the tiniest jewel. He had to buy all sorts of things for me!"

Giovanni looked at her with admiration—so small, so courageous, so gay, launching out from her rich and sheltered harbour into an unknown life in a foreign country.

"Has Mrs Withers written to you?"

"Not one word. We wrote and told her we were married, but she has completely ignored the communication."

"Perhaps she is terribly heart-broken."

"I do not think so," said Lucy soberly, "She never loved me very much—I should have been a boy as I am the only child and the heir. Now, I am cut off from it all—and it is wonderful to be free."

"To be no longer Miss Withers of Withers St. Mary," said Govoni, "But that much more important person, my wife!"

XI

After a day or two with Giovanni in Leipzig, gay, crowded days, in which both Amades and Lucy showed him that his company increased their happiness, they departed to Vienna—"Where Lucy will really taste the life of poverty she talks so gaily about," said Amades, "She thinks it funny to ask if we can afford this and that! It is a great joke!"

Lucy hung her little head out of the post-chaise window, her curls nodding under the straw bonnet trimmed with quilled ribbons.

"I know it is going to be too beautiful for words," she cried, "And you must come and see us—dear Giovanni."

She waved and kissed her hand, the postillion sounded his horn, the horses began to trot away.

CAPRICCIO

Into Giovanni's head, as he watched the little cloud of dust dwindling in the distance, came some music of Bach's which had been almost the earliest he had known—his mother used to play to him the Capriccio on the Departure of a Beloved Brother, and tell him the story of it. The tender, wistful air of the Lament and Appeal to the brother that he would not go, then the lilting Postillion's Horn, the Departure—he used to laugh and clap his hands when he heard that horn.

Well, Amades had been indeed a beloved brother to him. And now he was gone, not simply to Vienna, but to a changed life where Giovanni could not

follow him. And much had gone with him, as Giovanni knew. There was an urgency about Amades—a balance, a genius for life, and some pressure of passion deep down in him.

When he reached his house he found his step-father waiting there for him.

"Your Mother and I felt you might be somewhat lonely after the departure of the Govonis—what a charming little creature that is, sweet and sound as a honey-comb! He has made a wise choice, though all the circumstances seemed unpromising. Will you come and eat with us, dear Giovanni?"

"I should much like to come—it will seem lonely here to-night."

"It does not always seem lonely?" asked the Doktor, watching him.

"Oh, no—not lonely at all."

"Peopled with dreams?"

Giovanni looked a little startled.

"Dreams can be very good company—but it is necessary also to live in the world of our daily existence," the Doktor continued, "You know, better than I do, that an artist never gives up working and learning and growing. To cease doing so, to imagine one has arrived, is to die—you, I feel convinced, will never do that. Your danger seems more a tendency to live among dreams, to find in dreams some satisfaction life does not offer you."

He looked at Giovanni searchingly: "It is the nature of dreams that they should be elsewhere—realised, they are not dreams. Forgive me if I say too much—but my experience as a doctor has taught me that in order to help people's bodies you have to make an effort to understand their souls. Our lives are our destinies. What we love makes us."

The words struck home to Giovanni's heart, but he felt the need still to be on the defensive, in spite of his real gratitude for the sympathetic understanding of the Doktor.

"But my body is not ill," said Giovanni.

"Nor is your soul—least of all your soul. I feel that in certain unseen matters you are more at home than most of us, as a blind man in a fog could lead us where we wanted to be better than a man with his eyes—he has that sort of sixth sense. But when it comes to daylight the blind man is not so well off. I want you to be at home in both worlds, Giovanni."

He put his hand on Giovanni's shoulder and looked at him with real affection. Then he went back to his "miseries," who were always awaiting his

ministrations.

Giovanni returned to his own abode after a happy evening spent with his step-father and his mother in an atmosphere singularly harmonious—not a flower or a fly, he knew, if the Doktor could have his way, should be anything but happy. Giovanni could not help wondering to himself why he did not confide his secret to the Doktor. If ever there was a man fitted by heart and brain to receive secrets, it was he. One reason, he imagined, was that he was too near—he could not tell to anyone who lived in Leipzig this tale of a past Leipzig.

"WHAT WE LOVE"

A phrase the Doktor had used kept returning to his mind—it was like a phrase of music, and it seemed in some way to fit and to explain his whole life—"Our lives are our destinies, what we love makes us." He lay awake a long while considering these words—they seemed, in a singular manner, to explain things to him. He suddenly perceived that his life had a definite pattern—as definite as the pattern in a fugue of Bach's. He was surprised, as he traced it backwards, how curiously clear the pattern was. It was strange to be so young and to see it so clearly. He had imagined that it was only when one became old that it was possible to see the pattern of one's past days.

He lay quietly, his mind drifting, soothed in the seclusion of his room by the sound of the gale outside. He always slept, against all proper Leipzig custom, with his windows open and his curtains drawn back. From his bed he could see the sky, full of flying clouds, a star shining suddenly and then eclipsed. The wind came rushing at his window in great gusts and waves. He heard it wandering away again, like a vast spirit, over the sleeping roofs of the town, into the country, into the far distances. Perhaps this wind, strong enough to break trees and pick up solid things from the ground and hurl them about, also picked up all the dreams that were hovering over the roofs of Leipzig, all the emanations that rose from the unconscious minds beneath them, and carried the dreams away, scattered them like seeds over the world. There had been many dreams dreamed in Leipzig through the centuries.

XII

Giovanni's violin-playing was beginning to make him a notable figure among the musicians of Leipzig. The new conductor of the old Gewandhaus concerts, Herr Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, regarded him with a favourable eye, and they had not conversed long together before they discovered their deep mutual admiration for Bach. The youth and ardour of Mendelssohn attracted Giovanni, as they attracted so many people.

"My old master, Zelter," said Mendelssohn, smiling at his memories, "was a regular old bear, but I learned much from him, and most of all I learned to reverence that forgotten musician, Sebastian Bach—'Old Bach' as Zelter called him. It was a sort of bread upon the waters returned to bless me, for it was my Father who gave Zelter a number of the musical manuscripts of the 'poor Cantor of Leipzig.' He professed to think them but 'crabbed *Stücke*,' but he would often take me up to the little closet in the Singakademie where they were kept, and show them to me, and say, 'There they are! Just think of all that is hidden there!' Naturally I wanted to handle and study them, but that he would never permit. However, eventually, my grandmother persuaded him to let a copy be made of some of the St. Matthew Passion Music, which she gave to me as a present at Christmas in 1823—and then I began to know what Bach really was!"

"OLD BACH"

"What a noble present!" Giovanni exclaimed enviously.

"Indeed, yes, and much too precious to keep to myself," Mendelssohn's eyes sparkled with enthusiasm behind their long lashes, "But I had a task to make old Zelter agree to its being performed at the Singakademie. But after a lot of rehearsals we did it in March, '29, and everyone was enormously impressed. I think the conducting of that work was one of the most glorious occasions of my life!"

Mendelssohn enlarged upon all he wished to do to bring Bach's music to a fuller recognition and honour in the country of his birth—"And outside it," he continued, "He is altogether too great to be confined to the German nation, he belongs to the world. But first his own people must perceive his stature."

"Which they have failed very completely to do so far," Giovanni exclaimed, his early indignation rising again within his breast. He told Mendelssohn how on his first arrival from Italy he had looked for Bach's grave and found it obliterate and forgotten by the indifferent citizens of Leipzig.

"But if the people of Leipzig, where he died, forgot his grave, it was strange that you, coming from Rome, should remember and search for it?" said Mendelssohn, looking at Giovanni with an enquiring expression on his sensitive half-feminine countenance.

"I had an ancestor who was a pupil of Bach's," said Giovanni, "And the tradition of his music has continued in our family."

He did not say any more. He liked and admired the brilliant and popular young composer and conductor, but he found himself becoming, as time went on, increasingly reluctant to take anyone into his confidence on the real inner subject of Bach.

But because of Bach, and the way he played Bach's violin-music, Mendelssohn gave him all sorts of musical opportunities and encouragements. At Mendelssohn's house he met all the important musical people of Leipzig, including a dreamy slouching young man named Robert Schumann, whose compositions and whose paper, the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, aroused continual interest among musicians, and some of whose pianoforte music was played with remarkable ability by the prim young daughter of the old Herr Professor Wieck.

Giovanni won his own place in this musical heart of Leipzig—made much good music and listened to it.

MUSICAL SOCIETY

But all the while he realised that it had a curious shadowy quality compared to the Leipzig musical society of a century earlier. There he was at home, there lived a musician of a greatness that none of these he dwelt among could come near. And sometimes—he never knew when this might happen—sometimes, he could go back to that time, behold that musician and listen to his words, hear music of his of which there was no written record. And see Catharina—that creature so gentle, so curiously ardent, as he felt, under her quietness. What had this living nineteenth-century Leipzig to offer him compared with these occasionally vouchsafed glimpses of this vanished, this unforgettable household of Bach?

He seldom had more than glimpses—moments when time seemed to shift a little, and he could catch some fleeting picture, as when he saw Paolo pass Catharina in a corridor which he recognised as still existing in the Thomasschule, pass her with a gay nod, whistling a little melody, and saw Catharina, with her hand on the door leading to the Cantor's quarters, stand a moment gazing after the vanishing form of Paolo, with an expression upon her face that went to Giovanni's heart. How blind, how gaily blind, was his ancestor. But on another occasion he would see the expression on Paolo's face as he listened to Bach, and he realised that a soul so absorbed in one object had no eyes, no thoughts, for any other. It was a predestined pattern, that of their lives, a tale that was told, and he could do nothing save watch and wonder at the fragments of it that came thus strangely to his knowledge. It was a mystery he could not fathom. He felt with increasing strength that he belonged in that world, was at home there. For Bach his love had grown with his growth. He had beheld his portrait painted in music long before he had beheld his physical lineaments, and nothing that he now saw in those intimate domestic glimpses contradicted that greatness, only gave it a homely reality, a simple nobility and worth. Paolo he had known and loved for years, through his Letters, imbibed from him a devotion to Bach which partook of the nature of his own, and, as

he felt, came from some deep source that went back through the generations of their common blood.

But one figure in this trio had only recently emerged to his clear seeing—Catharina Dorothea. She had been only a shadow in the background of the Letters—Paolo had barely seen her, so Giovanni had also beheld her dimly, till the time when he had seen her directly with his own eyes. Each further glimpse showed him more clearly what she was: he saw her soul emerging through the quietness of her face, the flower unopened was opening to his spirit. And twice he heard her sing, and carried thenceforward that veiled contralto, of a peculiar sensitive quality, close within his memory. It sung across the years to him, across the gap of years.

TIME'S MYSTERY

Time—what was time? A barricade, a wall across which there was no seeing? A shut door which sometimes opened? A stream which flowed, smooth and unceasing, from the past to the future?

There were periods when he was inclined to think time had no existence, that it was as artificial and man-made as were clocks, and that it only needed a tremendous effort of the will and imagination to discard it. At least it was plain to him that any one period of time was at once the past, the present, and the future, according to the time-point from which it was regarded. To-day was its own ancestor and its own child—there was really no essential distinction between yesterday and tomorrow, between a century past and a century to come. The future, so opaque to the forward-looking mind, becomes the transparent past, simply by the lapse of time.

Giovanni would sink into these puzzled speculations, feeling like a spent swimmer in water too deep for him.

Then to him would come Marta, panting a little from age and agitation: "You will not be forgetting the time the post waggon starts for Dresden?" Or his mother, hurrying in, straightening the bonnet ribbons under her round chin, "I hope I am not late for the Mendelssohn's music party?—but time does go so fast!"

Time! Apparently they could not get outside it.

XIII

VISITING FRIAR

It was a cause of great happiness to Giovanni when he heard from Father Sebastian that business connected with his Order was bringing him to Leipzig very shortly. Since Govoni's departure he felt that there was no one he so much desired to see and

speak with as the Dominican. In some respects he desired Father Sebastian's presence even more than Govoni's—he had certain qualities that Amades lacked.

The brown face of Father Sebastian, the white woollen habit, the black cloak, the swinging rosary of heavy beads looped under the leathern belt, came to Giovanni's eyes with a shock of pleasure. He recognised the changelessness, in a changing world, of the great religious Orders—stability; where all other things shifted their values. In Rome in the thirteenth century, in Leipzig in the nineteenth century, so would a Dominican or a Benedictine have looked and believed, his life based on the same mystical reality.

Father Sebastian immediately seemed to belong to Leipzig, as he had belonged to Rome, which, on the face of it, was his so much more natural setting.

He had never been in Leipzig before, and his quick eyes took in everything with eager interest.

"Your town—and Bach's town!" he said to Giovanni, "I always link your names together. I am glad that the Father Prior had cause to send me thither."

Giovanni realised suddenly the quality which marked out Father Sebastian from ordinary people—he gave a delicate and particular attention to the affairs of others, he thought of them as though they were his own: it was the large charity of imagination that gave him this key with which to unlock the human heart. But if he held this key in his hand, his own personality, so sensitive and retired, gave the assurance that he would unlock nothing which should remain closed, remember nothing which were better forgotten.

Giovanni took Father Sebastian to visit his mother and step-father, and was both gratified and amused to see how naturally he was at home in that simple household. Different in type, upbringing, and religious outlook as he was to the Doktor, they had the common link that they both founded their lives on the love of God and the love of humanity. The Dominican was very quickly at home in the room set apart for poor patients, and with his wide sleeves rolled up, and an apron of the housekeeper's tied round his waist—"Must try and keep my habit clean, it costs such a lot to wash!"—was assisting the Doktor in his labours. One or two of the patients shrank away from him at first, frightened by his garb, but the children soon found the brown beads of his big rosary fascinating, especially when—with a tentative look at the Doktor and a smiling statement that he was not trying to make Catholics of good little Lutherans—he began telling them stories about it. The older patients forgot his friar's habit when, they looked at his eyes, and yielded to the kindly offices of

his lean brown fingers.

"Is he come here for good, Doktor, to help you?" one of them asked, and when told that his visit was but brief, said, "And is that not a pity—we could do with two like you and him in this town."

"In which I quite agree," said Doktor Eccard, when, the bandages removed and the potions administered, they returned together to the parlour, "You would be a marvellous help to me if you did nothing but tell stories to the patients to distract their attention from the unpleasant things I am doing to them."

Gerda and the Dominican had many matters of which to talk together—their common memories of Rome, for one, and though Gerda was at home in her own country and once more a German woman instead of an alien, and certainly more happy than she had ever been in her life, yet the memory of Rome, as Father Sebastian spoke of it, touched her as with a magic finger. She sighed a little and her eyes grew dreamy.

"I suppose no one who has lived in Rome can remain untouched by it?" she said.

"I think not," Father Sebastian answered, "Even those who have never been to Rome find a sound in that name different from any other—its hollow O encircles the world as with a girdle, it is perhaps the one spot on earth where Eternity seems to break through Time."

Giovanni looked at him as he said this. The Dominican's eyes, so still apparently, so sensitively alert in reality, did not miss that look. Giovanni's face had new writings on it since he had last seen him in Rome.

XIV

Much of Father Sebastian's time in Leipzig was taken up with the Dominican business on which he had been sent there. But all his leisure was spent with Giovanni, or Giovanni's people.

DOMESTIC INTERIOR

"What a perfect example of the domestic interior is that abode," he said to Giovanni, "Makes us poor hedge-priests realise what we have abandoned!" He smiled, "But it is good that we have something to offer Him who gave us all. Though we must not forget that happiness itself—happiness like that—can be an offering too. Now tell me about Amades—he also has found the perfect mate?"

Giovanni told him the surprising history of Govoni's courtship—"And had you seen Mrs Withers you would have realised how very brave he was!"—and

its most fortunate conclusion.

“And you think this English Lucy will make a right helpmate for Amades? I do not see Amades as an easy husband—he has in his nature too much of the zig-zag lightning flashes of genius.”

“I think she is the perfect wife for him,” said Giovanni, “And it was extraordinary how Amades knew it, he just looked at her and knew it. He told me she was his within the first five minutes of setting eyes upon her. There were damsels as pretty, or even prettier, in the room. He just looked at them with an unperturbed eye. He felt something in Lucy, instantly. She is so gentle, so yielding yet she has courage, or she could never have come so unfalteringly to his call; through all the barricades of wealth and isolation that had been built about her.”

“Yes—I think that must be so. We will consider that all is well with Amades.”

Father Sebastian sat in silence a moment, then turned his eyes consideringly upon Giovanni, “And what about you?”

Giovanni answered his look, but dropped his eyes quickly.

“There is nothing to tell about me.”

“Nothing, Giovanni?”

After a slight pause Giovanni said, “Nothing that is possible to tell.”

Father Sebastian was silent, his hands folded in his wide sleeves. Giovanni was silent too. Then suddenly he leaned a little forward.

“It is very difficult to tell. Perhaps I might—to you. But you will find it hard to believe.”

“I never find anything hard to believe—I have heard so many things strange, incredible,” said the Dominican.

“Well, will you not find it difficult to believe that I have come to feel love for a girl who was dead when I was born—a girl who walked this earth when my great-great-grandfather was alive?”

Father Sebastian turned quite unsurprised sympathetic brown eyes upon him.

“Would it not be better if you began at the beginning?” he asked calmly.

“Oh,” said Giovanni, “How extraordinary! I shall be able to tell you—and I did not believe I should ever be able to tell anyone!”

"Well, you see," said the Dominican smiling quietly, "I think I have guessed already a little of what you are going to tell me."

"Guessed it—but how?"

"I want you to tell me the story—I do not know it. Only I have some sort of feeling that at least I shall understand what you have to tell me."

STRANGE STORY

"It is a long story—if I am to begin at the beginning."

"That is surely the only place at which to begin a story—especially if it is a strange one. It will not be too long for me, Giovanni."

An atmosphere of complete understanding surrounded Giovanni as he began his tale. He was ready to retreat if he had felt the least breath of scepticism or doubt in his listener, but he did not for one moment.

When he had completed the long narration—he had fetched the Letters and let Father Sebastian himself read certain portions—the first words of the Dominican were, "I see her, I feel her presence."

Giovanni looked at him, and a sudden film of tears rose in his eyes.

"Oh, Father," he said, "If you knew how much I long at times for that presence—and I am cut off from her by this barrier of time."

"It seems to me that for you, in some strange way I cannot understand, this barrier of time has been removed. It is not for us who are Catholics to deny the reality of visions and mysteries. Do you not feel"—something flamed in the Dominican's dark face as he looked at Giovanni—"that you are specially privileged? You see the reality, the secret beauty, of this Catharina Bach as you would never have beheld it had you lived in her century and known her after the flesh. It seems to me that you and your ancestor Paolo are the two sides of existence: he saw her bodily, and was blind; you see her spiritually and perceive her, shall I say, as she is known to God. It is one of the strange qualities of this our earthly existence that the thing itself is never enjoyed perfectly, never loved completely, save in memory. The thought is always greater than the thing. As this is a thought, a spiritual apprehension, your flower unopened that blossoms in a dream, you have it in a strange perfection which no earthly love can know. No cause have you for regret—you have something that can never be destroyed, so long as you cherish it worthily."

His words were words of power and light to Giovanni.

At the end of the week Father Sebastian was under orders to return to Rome, the business on which he had been sent concluded.

He had refrained from any further comment, realising the reaction that usually followed any confession that was not sacramental confession, and feeling also that Giovanni's was a history so strange that any unnecessary verbal handling was of doubtful wisdom—by silence and by prayer he would help.

So he asked Giovanni to play to him music of Bach, to walk with him about Leipzig, and in the avenues of the woodland Rosenthal, to take him to visit the Doktor—anything save talk with him.

SHELTER OF SILENCE

Giovanni appreciated this shelter of silence which was offered to him—though he was not feeling the reaction which he himself had expected the following day. There was something about the personality of the Dominican which prevented that. Still, he felt curiously drained and dry after the experience of telling for the first time completely to any human being the strange, interwoven, and still continuing history of his inward life. In telling it he had gained help from Father Sebastian's way of listening and from his burning words. But for a little while he needed only silence.

It was just before his departure for Rome that the Dominican broke this silence.

"Some unusual gift has been bestowed upon you, Giovanni," he said, "Use it with restraint. Remember God has put you here to live out your life in this world—you have work to do, and you must not neglect it. We must not build towers without foundations, as St. Teresa warned us. I shall pray for you."

"I will remember," Giovanni answered. He dropped on his knees, "Give me your blessing, Father."

The Dominican raised his hand: "Benedictio Dei omnipotentis, Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti, descendat super te, et mancat semper."

XVI

It was very strange, Giovanni thought, after Father Sebastian's departure, how a few words, a short exhortation, from him had put this whole matter on a different and, as it were, at once natural and spiritual basis. He had been depressed and unhappy, even when excited and exalted, at his limitations—the limitations imposed upon him by time. He had looked into another country—a country into which he could not pass. This inability was fretting at his life,

beginning unconsciously to take the value and the goodness from his daily existence, eating into his heart. He was beginning to feel that he had lost something so precious that nothing he possessed—not his youth, his health, his art, his steadily increasing reputation as a violinist, was of any importance to him. Then a few words from the Dominican—words weighted with his own experiences and renunciations—had turned the whole thing round and made him behold it from another angle. Giovanni suddenly saw clearly that he had not been deprived, but enriched—enriched immeasurably beyond his fellows. He felt that in some mysterious way he was completing what Paolo had left unfinished. He did not understand how or why—he was content not to understand. He had his life to live in his own century. He would endeavour to live it to the full extent of his powers, inspired by those glimpses vouchsafed him of a household where his heart would always dwell. He felt that the full realisation of the possession that was his required nothing less than Eternity—deep, profound Eternity.

DEPARTED SHADOW

His look was changed the next time he went round to see his family—Gerda saw at once that some shadow had departed from her son's face, and seeing, rejoiced.

"Almost your Dominican friend persuades me to become a Catholic," said the Doktor, "In him you see goodness walking."

Giovanni looked at his step-father, and felt suddenly abashed by his cheerful humility.

"I do not think it is necessary for you to become a Catholic in order to attain goodness," he said rather awkwardly.

"I thought he was wonderful—like you, Anton," Gerda said gently, "It did one good just to look at him."

"It did me good," Giovanni answered, bending down to kiss her.

"Goodness is what everyone really desires," the Doktor stated, looking at his wife and step-son, "But most of them go such extraordinary ways to find it!"

He took off his brass-rimmed spectacles and polished them vigorously. The perversity of people always puzzled him. To him it seemed so much simpler to do right than to do wrong—at least in normal cases. Where disease, either physical or moral, had twisted nature—and he had seen enough of that in his life—the case was much more complicated. When ignorance and bad environment had shut off the things that were fair and of good repute he had a passionate pity for the ill results. But it was not among the poorest that he

commonly found the sins which most depressed him.

He put his spectacles back again—they were so strong they magnified his eyes into kind brown lamps—sighed a little and shook his grizzled head. Then he looked at his wife and Giovanni, who were still talking together about Father Sebastian, smiled, and went from the room. There was always so much to do. “Time—more time!” was the Doktor’s prayer.

XVII

Giovanni’s own time was very fully occupied. He never ceased in his constant endeavour to make his violin playing more perfect—in particular his playing of Bach. He studied every score of Bach’s he could lay his hands upon, and listened to every performance within his reach of Bach’s music—and these, largely owing to the enthusiasm of Mendelssohn, were becoming more frequent.

“GOD’S PHENOMENA”

“Do you know what old Zelter once said of Bach?” Mendelssohn had asked him one day after a rehearsal at the Gewandhaus, “He said, ‘This Leipzig Cantor is one of God’s phenomena—clear, but never to be cleared up.’ The more one knows of Bach the more one feels the truth of that. See, take this book—you will find it interesting.”

Mendelssohn thrust into Giovanni’s hands a volume which proved to be a life of Bach written by one Nikolaus Forkel, born the year before Bach died. Giovanni took it home and read it, lost to the world while he did so. It told him things he had not known before, or only known in an uncertain fashion, for Paolo’s Letters told only of the two years when he was Bach’s pupil. He was enthralled by the enthusiasm that Forkel showed for what he called “the sublime genius of this prince of musicians.” He learned from the sixty-nine pages of the book something of Bach’s ancestry, of his methods of teaching, of his organ music. Forkel knew Bach’s two eldest sons, and from them had heard certain little anecdotes of their Father which he recounted and each word of which was precious to Giovanni. His heart echoed Forkel’s words when he said, “Bach cannot be named except in tones of rapture, and even devout awe, by those who have learnt to know him.”

When he had finished the volume he sat for a long time, silent and brooding over what he had read. Because he was tired—it had been a strenuous and prolonged rehearsal—his mind felt singularly lightened and perceptive. There were many ways of approach to Bach—the ear, through his music; the mind, through study; the heart, through love. And, finally, his own secret path into the past—that path, which he believed none other had trod

before him.

He pondered these things till at last he fell asleep, and lay there, with his head on the table before him, sleeping soundly. At last, in the small hours, his sleep grew thin, and he became conscious of a pressure on his chest where he leaned against the table. He stirred, half sat up, and put his hand to his breast—it was the little snuff-box against which he had been lying. He sat up, took it out of his pocket and looked at it. A feeling of excitement rose within him, he became fully awake, as a sense of wavering and slipping took him, as it had taken him on previous occasions—the air about him seemed to tremble a little.

When it steadied he knew, without any hesitation upon what he was looking—Paolo's death-bed in the little Composing Study of Bach at the Thomasschule. The dark tumbled hair on the pillow, the drawn cheeks, the incredibly thin hand which clutched at Bach's, who sat beside the bed looking at his dying pupil with a pitiful countenance. Paolo's dark eyes opened, they seemed to blaze with a sudden leap of the vital flame. "Good-bye," he whispered, "Good-bye, Master, I will remember——" His voice trembled into silence, his eyes closed, a shiver ran down his form. Bach leaned over him, laid a hand on Paolo's heart, "It is finished," he murmured in a low voice, and suddenly covered his face with his hands. He sat thus, very still, till the door opened slowly and there was the soft sound of skirts. Bach put out a hand without turning.

"Magdalena," he said.

But it was not Magdalena. "Father?" questioned a muted voice.

He turned round. "He is gone, Catharina—may his soul rest peacefully."

"RELEASED TO JOY"

Catharina stood quite still, then she began to tremble. She flung herself on her knees by the bed, and began weeping slowly and quietly, as though she would never cease. Bach did not stay her, for he knew the woman's relief in tears. But at last he put his hands on her shoulders and pulled her round against him. She continued to weep in the same quiet way, hiding her face against his heart.

"Is that the way of it, my child?" said Bach, "I had not thought of that—God pity thee."

"He will—He does," Giovanni's mind cried urgently.

Catharina lifted her face. Tears still poured down it, but a light shone there.

"He does," she said.

My heart is broken—my spirit is released to joy.

Giovanni never knew who spoke those words. It was not Catharina, it was not her Father. He only knew that he had heard them.

A few moments later he looked at the tall clock standing in the corner of the room—the clock that on its elaborate face told not only the time, but, in little revolving circles, the phases of the moon, and the days of the month. He saw that it was the day, and thirty minutes past the hour, upon which his ancestor Paolo had died.

XVIII

Some years later Giovanni was sitting one hot July evening in his room at Leipzig. He had but recently returned from a long tour of Europe. He had spent two months in Vienna with Amades, established there as a pianist and teacher of international fame, and surrounded not only by many pupils, but by offspring of various ages in whom he took the most uproarious delight—himself, as Lucy said, younger than the youngest. The eldest child was Giovanni's god-son, named after him, and "doomed, poor little beggar," as his father said, in consequence to pursue the career of a fiddler. He was already showing much promise. Lucy had blossomed into a plump gaiety, always laughing—a somewhat careless and haphazard housekeeper, but a delightful wife and mother. She and Amades had as much joy in each other as in the first months of their marriage. No one could regard that Italian-English alliance, that wild and unpromising elopement, as anything but a perfect and surprising success. There was only one cloud upon the horizon—the knowledge that when Mrs Withers deceased, the mansion, the park, the village of Withers St. Mary, would descend to Lucy. The estate was entailed, otherwise Mrs Withers would have taken care that it should go to the most distant and most disliked of cousins, rather than to the daughter who had disgraced her. She had never forgiven the elopement, and such communication as had taken place had been, on her side, entirely through the family solicitors. Letters in Lucy's handwriting directed to her ancestral home—the vast Palladian mansion which enclosed and eclipsed portions of a much older dwelling that had been fortress as well as dwelling—were returned unopened. Mrs Withers sat alone in her vast empty rooms and brooded bitterly on the thought that some day her renegade daughter would have the right to return there accompanied by the Italian musician who called himself her husband. If it was a bitter prospect to her it was a dreary one to Lucy and Amades, who was appalled when he learned that Lucy's behaviour had not alienated her possessions. "But never mind, my Angel," he would say, "We shall probably die long before my respected mother-in-law!"

Giovanni's visits to Vienna had been fairly frequent, not

only to see the Govoni household, to which he was deeply attached, but to give those joint recitals with Amades which had become one of the most appreciated features of the Vienna musical season.

DISCARDED DAUGHTER

He gave each year many recitals of his own, in Paris, London, Berlin, Munich, as well as Leipzig, in Rome and Milan. At these recitals he was spreading a knowledge of the violin music of Bach. He would say smiling to Amades, “I play Paganini to fetch them—then I play Bach to hold them!”

But it was not only his virtuosity and his fire that held them. To the female portion of his audiences, at least, he was a romantic figure. His dark attractive countenance, his aloofness from all feminine contacts, his curious indifference to the worldly side of his musical success, roused an interest in many feminine breasts of which Giovanni was completely unconscious, and to which he would have been quite indifferent had he been conscious of it. He did not want his audience to look at him, to speculate and sentimentalise about him, but to listen to the music of Bach, to walk with him in that ordered silver world of sound. With the skill that Paganini had taught him he would lead them to the world of Bach.

Paganini was dead. Giovanni had been playing in London at the time of his death. But he had heard some details later from one who had been present at that death-bed. Paganini’s illness had taken away his voice, but not his skill—in his last hours he had taken up his beloved instrument, his life’s companion, and played his last melody. It was said that never had he played as he did then. But the Church, of which he had been so indifferent a son, had visited her harshness upon him, and denied sepulture to his poor remains, which embalmed, but unburied, had been left, as it were, lying about on the surface of the earth for years, instead of folded in the peace of the grave. A wanderer in life, even his corpse must wander homeless. Giovanni’s heart ached within him at this memory. Strange, brilliant, meteoric, hungry career! Sad to think how little happiness it had held. Fame, yes, but fame seemed a poor thing with which to line a coffin—love was the only thing had warmth in that cold home.

Many years earlier, soon after Beethoven’s own death, Paganini had listened to the Seventh Symphony in Vienna, and when it ended, the tears had rolled from his eyes as he said the sad, simple words “*È morto*!”

DEAD MUSICIANS

But, thought Giovanni, remembering this little story, death cannot destroy the great ones. Beethoven and Bach are securely immortal, though the memory of Paganini’s incomparable mastery would fade to a legend.

Mendelssohn was dead also. Giovanni, like all the musicians of his day,

had felt that death a shock and loss irreparable. Mendelssohn at least, in his lifetime, had received much love. In a sense it was love had killed him—grief for the loss of that sister he so adored, the girl born with "Bach-fugue fingers." To Giovanni's thought among the best things that Mendelssohn had done in his short life had been his work, his unselfish devoted work, to bring back Bach to the recognition and honour that were his due. Bach's grave was obliterate and unknown—his music was beginning to rise from the tomb of neglect and oblivion. His statue now stood before the Thomasschule—his carven image now looked down on the place where his living feet had walked amongst those who had no thought that one of the immortals trod the streets of Leipzig.

Many times since his return had Giovanni gone to gaze upon that statue. He could have corrected the sculptor on a point or two, the jut of the jaw not quite enough marked, the way the head was set upon the shoulders not so life-like as he could have made it. He smiled sometimes to himself as he stood in front of that statue and imagined the faces of the town authorities should he go to them and say that it erred in certain particulars.

"And how, will you please to inform us, do you happen to know these things?"

"Because I have seen Bach."

"Seen Bach?—are you aware, young man, that it is close upon a hundred years since that excellent musician whom we have honoured by this *Denkmal* has deceased?"

No, it could not be done—he would only be regarded as mad.

He remembered his curious little experience in Milan. After one of the concerts he had given there, when he had played two of the Bach Sonatas, an old man had come up to him and said "I like to hear Bach's music again—when I was a boy he was organist of the Duomo here, and often would speak a word or two with me."

Giovanni had gazed at him in astonishment, "Why, he never was in Milan."

"He was here in '61," said the old man, "And a nice-looking and nice-spoken young man he was too."

"But he died in 1750," Giovanni had said, then suddenly realised that they were speaking of two different Bachs—the Milan one must be the son of Johann Sebastian.

"He was born in some heathen part of Germany, as I have heard tell," the old man went on, confirming Giovanni's guess, "And I be glad that I have heard some of his music again. He always had a pleasant word for us singing boys."

"What was his name?" Giovanni had asked.

"Bach, as I told you before."

"Yes, but his other names."

"Oh, his other names were Giovannino Christiano—and very glad I am that you played some of his music for me to hear again. A many of us were sorry when he went away to England."

Giovanni had made no further attempt to make the old man realise that the music he had heard was written by a greater than Johann Christian Bach. The old man had never heard of Johann Sebastian Bach. Giovanni himself had felt pleased to discover that a son of Bach had lived in Milan, in his own native Italy, for several years. He made one or two enquiries, and discovered that he was the youngest of Bach's sons, and had become of much repute in England and had died there.

But after all it was only because he was the son of his Father that Giovanni had made those few enquiries. He might live and die where he chose, it was not very important—at least to him.

But the death of Johann Sebastian Bach was another matter. It was a hundred years since he had died—a whole century of neglect was beginning to roll away and show the glory of that long dead Cantor. Could he come back, thought Giovanni, and see that large statue of himself standing before his own doorway almost, how very much astonished he would be. He had never thought of anything like that—he had been too busy, writing his music, rehearsing the Thomaner boys, bringing up his family. Probably the statue would rather perturb him.

But certainly, Giovanni thought, one thing would please him, and that was the project then afoot to collect and publish all his existing music in a great complete edition. He had in his possession a little bit of Bach's music, that Sarabande which Paolo had played, of which no one else knew anything. But he dared not offer it to the learned editors of the *Bachgesellschaft*. They would ask him how he came by it, they would want authentic proofs—though it bore the stamp of its lineage in each measure, to any who had ears to hear. Still, he would keep it, this treasure, to himself—he could not tell the tale of how it came to his hands. That remained his secret, the secret spring from which his

life was fed.

He sank into a deeper brooding. The July evening was hot and airless, despite his widely opened windows—a sense of oppression, like that of coming thunder, was in the air. One hundred years ago, that very night, Bach had died. His thoughts dwelt on the scene, on the ending of that life, so unrecognised in its true greatness when living, so quickly forgotten when dead, his music neglected, his possessions, the things which had pleased and helped him in his daily life, scattered.

Giovanni put his hand to his breast and pulled out the gold snuff-box. He turned it over and looked at it, wondering what had been its history since it had left Bach's hands?—a little gold, a polished stone, which had survived the passage of time when the flesh of its dead owner had crumbled to a little dust, and even that dust vanished from the knowledge of men. But it was neither dust nor gold that mattered. It was the imperishable spirit, the quenchless spark that dwelt among the ashes. And now the wind of time, moving through the void of Eternity, began to blow upon that spark, which glowed, which broke into a flame—no, not a flame, but a great fixed star in the heavens, which the cloud of their ignorance had hidden from their gaze. But the wind blew steadily, the cloud was thinning, the rays of that star began to pierce their hearts—no more would their dreams be sad without that beauty which Bach had made.

* * * * *

A DEATH BED

The room was so dark that Giovanni at first could hardly distinguish anything. The curtains were drawn close, but it was still only summer dusk outside, so that slowly a faint light became visible through the thin folds drawn across the casement—they moved slightly in the faint exhausted air. As Giovanni's eyes adjusted themselves to the dimness he was able to perceive the objects in the room. But he looked at nothing else once he had seen the bed and the form that lay there. At first he thought Bach was sleeping—or dead. Strangely changed he was: long sickness had marked him. The broad substantial figure had sunk in upon itself. But the face was changed most of all, as Giovanni perceived its outlines—it was as though the knife of God had cut away all that belonged to this world from his countenance. Prostrate upon the pillow, the eyes that had ceased to see, closed upon the things of earth, lay Bach. His form upon the bed was utterly still, with a barely taken breath. For this strange moment of time it was given to him to be alone with Bach—some consciousness told him that a watcher had but a moment before left that silent room, and would as soon return—a sense of sorrow and apprehension of approaching loss seemed to hang upon the air. A

pale strange brightness became visible to Giovanni hovering over the form of Bach, a faint murmuring of music seemed to come from this brightness. But Giovanni's senses were so extended, so merged and lost in Bach's, he was so utterly in another stage of being, that he did not know whether he heard or saw the music, that, without words or shape or notes, seemed hovering in the air. It was like the fragrance of flowers, an emanation of their secret being. Amid confusion and things inexplicable, this clarity, this peace. Into his mind floated some fragments of the thoughts that were in the dying mind of Bach. He bowed his head, overwhelmed with a sense of unworthiness before this final revelation of a personality so majestic and so humble, so near to God. Bach's journey from Time to Eternity was nearly completed—the stream of his life was entering that lake unfathomably deep, unfathomably serene.

TIME AND ETERNITY

Perceiving these mysteries the thought entered Giovanni's mind, "Am I, too, dying?" There was no disturbance in that thought. For years past he had carried the vision, tender, remote, yet so close, of Catharina in his heart, and in his mind always the words that were like a melody, lovely as any her father ever wrote, "I shall meet her when I die."

His sense of Time and of Eternity were so enlarged, so linked and woven into the texture of his living, that he had no feeling this waiting would be too long.

Ditchling: December 1934.

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Mis-spelled words and printer errors have been corrected or standardised.

Inconsistency in hyphenation has been retained.

Inconsistency in accents has been corrected or standardised.

[The end of *Time's Door* by Esther Meynell]