THE LITTLE CHRONICLE of MAGDALENA BACH

ESTHER MEYNELL

Title: The Little Chronicle of Magdalena Bach
Date of first publication: 1925
Author: Esther Meynell (1878-1955)
Date first posted: Sep. 10, 2020
Date last updated: Sep. 10, 2020
Faded Page eBook #20200924

This eBook was produced by: Mardi Desjardins, John Routh & the online Distributed Proofreaders Canada team at https://www.pgdpcanada.net

By the same author

GRAVE FAIRYTALE
QUINTET
TIME'S DOOR
BACH (*Duckworth's "Great Lives"*)

SUSSEX COTTAGE

THE LITTLE CHRONICLE OF MAGDALENA BACH

by
ESTHER MEYNELL

CHAPMAN AND HALL LTD
LONDON

First-published anonymously 1925
(*Chatto & Windus*)
Reissued in pocket edition 1934
Reprinted 1936

CHAPMAN & HALL, LTD.
11 Henrietta Street
London, W.C.2

Printed in Great Britain by Mackays Ltd., Chatham
Bound by A. W. Bain & Co. Ltd., London

TO ALL WHO LOVE
JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH

The Little Chronicle of Magdalena Bach

PART I

In my solitude I had a visit this day which has cheered my heart. Caspar Burgholt, that old and favourite pupil of my beloved Sebastian, sought me out and came to visit me—and, indeed, it needed some seeking to discover Dame Bach in her seclusion of poverty, so quickly are forgotten our more prosperous days. We had much of which to speak. He told me of his modest successes, of his wife and the young children, but most of all we talked of the one who is dead—of his master and my husband. After we had recalled many things of those wonderful years Caspar said a word which gives a meaning to my present hidden existence: "Write," he said, "write a little chronicle of that great man. You knew him as no one else knew him, write all that you remember—and I do not suppose your faithful heart has forgotten much—of his words, his looks, his life, his music. People neglect his memory now, but not always will he be forgotten, he is too great for oblivion, and some day posterity will thank you for what you shall write."

Those were Caspar's words, and so soon as he had left me I hastened to write them down, for I perceive that whether it is true or not what he says about posterity, there will be much comfort to me in my loneliness in following his advice, It should be good counsel, for he knew Sebastian so well, was so truly devoted to him (as indeed all his pupils were who were old enough to understand his great nature—unlike those tiresome boys of the Thomas Schule, who were such a plague to him).

I have so little left that belonged to Sebastian, as all the valuable things had to be sold and divided among so many. How bitterly I regretted I could not even keep that gold and agate snuffbox of which he was so fond, which I had so often seen in his hands, so often filled for him. But it was adjudged too valuable even for his widow to keep, and must be sold and the money divided among us. But if I have little left to remind me of him it is perhaps because the good God knows there is small need—I am in no danger of forgetting him with all this priceless store of memories in my heart. Poor as I am, and forgotten, living on the charity of the town of Leipzig, and old—I

was yesterday fifty-seven years old, only eight years younger than he was when he died—I would not be other than I am now, if it was at the cost of never having known him, never having been his wife. I count but two women in Thuringia completely fortunate—his cousin, Maria Barbara Bach, who was his first wife, and myself, his second one. He loves us both—but I think perhaps he loved me the most dearly, and he certainly loved me longest, by the kindness of Providence. But a bare thirteen years was he married to Maria Barbara, and she, poor creature, died when he was absent on one of his journeys with Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Cöthen. His second son, Emanuel, young as he was at the time, has never forgotten his father's grief when he returned to find his small children motherless, his wife, whom he had left so well and happy, dead and laid in the grave. Poor Barbara Bach, that she had to die and leave him, without even a farewell word or embrace!

The first time I saw him I—how the years drop away, and it comes back so clear and sharp to me. My father, who out of his goodness would sometimes take me with him on his occasional journeys, especially if there was any matter of music involved, knowing my love for that art of Heaven, took me with him when he went to Hamburg in the winter of 1720 to visit my great-uncle and aunt. There was a very noble Organ in St. Katharine's Church at Hamburg, it had four manuals and pedal, and I heard much talk of it among my father's musical friends. The second day I was in Hamburg I had been out marketing for my great-aunt, and as I passed St. Katharine's on my way back I was minded to slip in and just look at this Organ. As I pushed open the door I heard that somebody was playing, and it seemed to me very wonderful music was coming from within, as though one of the angels was seated at that keyboard. So I stole in very quietly and stayed listening. I stood looking up at the Organ in the west gallery, with its great pipes soaring to the roof, and all its beautiful carvings and decorations, but the organist was hidden from my sight. I do not know quite how long I may have stood there in the empty church, with no sense but hearing, as though I had taken root upon the stones—I was so smitten from all thought of time by this music that even when it suddenly ceased on a glorious group of chords which filled the air with great vibrations, I still stood gazing upwards, hoping that from those pipes would issue more music. Instead, the organist —Sebastian himself—came forth to the Organ balcony to the Organ stairs, and his attention suddenly beheld me gazing upwards. For a moment I looked up at him, too startled by his sudden appearance to move. I think, after that music, I had half expected to see some great angel, if I saw anyone, not a man. Then a trembling took me suddenly. I picked up my

cloak, which had fallen to the floor, and ran out of the church in a kind of panic. When I found myself at a safe distance I began to wonder at my own exceeding folly—for even my great-aunt, who was very strict, could surely have found nothing unmaidenly in entering a church in order that I might listen to the Organ.

I had no idea who he was, but on telling my father of this episode at supper that night—with the look and the trembling and the running away, I must confess, omitted—he at once exclaimed, "Why, of course, that must have been the Duke of Cöthen's Capellmeister, Johann Sebastian Bach. He is to play the St. Katharine's Organ to-morrow to Herr Reinken, and I and some others are going to hear him. I will tell him how my little daughter admires his music. Perhaps, if he hears her sing, the small nightingale that she is, he may like her voice well enough to write a song for her."

I begged him, with uncomfortable blushes (for he did not know quite all the story), to say nothing at all about me to the Capellmeister, but the more I blushed the more amused he was, and declared I must have lost my heart to the buttons on the Capellmeister's coat back, as he did not suppose I could have seen his countenance if he was at the Organ, and in any case he had not heard that Herr Bach was noted for his good looks.

I had the wish to hear him play again the next day, but it could not be gratified, as my poor aunt was so afflicted on that occasion with the quartain ague so it was not fit to leave her. And with my desire to go and hear him again was a curious shrinking and fear of seeing him—I suppose a kind of premonition of the tremendous things he was to mean to me.

But my father went to St. Katharine's and when he came back I eagerly questioned him. He was overcome with admiration—he had never heard such Organ-playing in his life and never expected to hear such again, unless it were from the same hands. We all sat round and listened to his account. The Capellmeister played for over two hours, and for a fourth of that time he improvised on the chorale, "By the waters of Babylon," with the most marvellous pedal passages—"Double pedal," said my father, "and played as easily as one could play a scale with one hand." He also played a Fantasia and Fugue in G minor he had just recently composed, a thing of great brilliance and beauty. I, of course, did not hear it on this occasion, but I heard him play it at many later times and always had a particular partiality for it—the opening of the Fugue especially always pleased me, it is so gay and exhilarating. When Sebastian had finished his wonderful performance, Herr Reinken—who for so long had been the organist at St. Katharine's, who was so old, being ninety-seven, and who was well known to be jealous

and proud of his own powers—to the utter astonishment of those present, came up to the Capellmeister Bach and taking his hand raised it to his lips, saying, "I salute the hands of genius—I thought this art of Organ-playing would die with me, but I perceive it still lives in you."

One of the things that deeply impressed my father in Herr Bach's Organ-playing was his stillness and ease—though his feet would fly up and down the pedal-board as though they had wings, he never seemed to move his body, never twisted himself about as many organists do. It was the perfection that looks simple and shows no effort.

And then imagine what followed—we heard the complete story later on, after we had returned home, from my great-uncle, who, a musician himself, had been much interested in Sebastian on this occasion. The organist of St. James's Church in Hamburg, which had a very great and fine Organ, was just dead, and Sebastian, attracted by the idea of having such an Organ at his disposal and being in a position to compose church-music (which always meant so much to him, and while with the Duke of Cöthen his work was principally chamber music), offered himself for the post. But, instead of rejoicing at their good fortune in obtaining the greatest organist in the Fatherland, the committee elected a person called Joachim Heitmann, of no musical distinction, because he made them a present of four thousand marks —"He could prelude better with thalers than with his fingers," said my indignant uncle. But Pastor Neumeister at least was so angry at this transaction that he left the committee, and in reference to it in a sermon he said these scathing words, "I believe quite certainly that if one of the angels of Bethlehem, who played divinely, came from Heaven and wished to be organist of St. James's Church, if he had no money he would have nothing to do but to fly away."

So Capellmeister Bach did not go to Hamburg.

And now I come to my first meeting with him, which was in the year after I first saw and heard him. My father being Court Trumpeter at Weissenfels, we constantly had a coming and going of musicians in our house. He was also frequently at Cöthen, where Sebastian was Capellmeister, and it so happened that I had occasionally sung at the court concerts there, but each time Sebastian had been absent, once owing to an illness and once on a journey, to my secret disappointment, as I had the wish to see again and perhaps speak with this remarkable musician.

On a certain morning—a very fair and springlike morning, as I well remember—I had been out, and on my return was going straight into the

family room to stick some green boughs in a beau-pot before the stove, when my mother laid her hand on my arm: “Wait a little, Magdalena,” she said, “thy father is engaged on some business with Capellmeister Bach, and I do not think he requires thy presence.”

My foolish heart began thumping very suddenly. Master Bach! and I had only seen him once, though much I had heard of him in the interval, and much I wanted to see him again. I was afraid at once lest my father should call me and should not call me in. I was on the point of running to my bedchamber to put on a fresh neck-ribbon—I had a blue one that I thought became me—when my father opened the door, put his head out and said, “Has Magdalena returned, Mother?” Then he saw me, “Come here, child, Master Bach would spare a moment to hear thy voice.”

So I went into the room and stood before him. I was so abashed I could hardly look up, and I wondered if by any chance he would recognize me, and hoped he would not, for St. Katharine’s had been but dim. But he told me afterwards that he did instantly know me. He struck me at once as being a big man, in person I mean, and yet he was not exceptionally so, only a little taller than my father. But there was something about him which gave a great impression of strength—a sort of rock-like quality—and he always seemed to stand out among other people as if he were bigger physically, when really it was morally and in his mind he was so much bigger. Caspar told me he always had the same impression of physical as well as mental bigness. It was not what he said, for he was quiet and rather grave, not much given to talking, except with his intimates.

As for me, I was dumb enough. I made him a courtesy and did not open my mouth till he put some music on the clavier, sat down himself at the instrument and asked me to sing the aria. Happily, when I sing I am not afraid, and when I had finished my father cried, “Good!” with real pleasure in his face. Master Bach just looked at me very steadily for a moment and said, “Thy voice is pure, and thou canst sing.” And I—I wanted to say “And how thou canst play!” but I did not dare. It was unbelievable what he made of that simple accompaniment, which I had played often myself. His way of holding his hands, of using his thumbs, his fingering, all were different. But I could not say anything at all, I was in such a stir. I longed to run away, as I had run from the church, but I stood rooted and dumb by the side of the clavier like a child. I felt absurdly childish before that man, and yet a big thing had happened to me which does not happen to children—happened all in a short space. God had given me a soul open to music, and that being so it was, of course, impossible that having heard Sebastian Bach play I should

care for any other man in this world. And in his mind, too, had I but known it, he said to himself, "I shall marry that maiden." It was as well that I was willing, for he always had an extraordinary way of getting that to which he set his mind. There were occasions, I confess, in later years when I almost thought him obstinate.

I would be exact in my description of him at this time when I first really saw and spoke with him, because the impression is still so very clear to me, undimmed by years of the closest intimacy and even by the memory of his dear face with closed eyes as I last saw it in this world. Now I will not claim that he was handsome—few of the Bachs are that—but he had a countenance that set forth the power of his mind. His most notable features were his massive forehead, and his eyes, with the marked eyebrows drawn into the half-frown of thought. His eyes, when I first knew him, were large (later, as he grew older, with suffering and overmuch use they narrowed and the lids drooped more over them), with an intense and concentrated inward gaze that was very notable. They were *listening* eyes, and had at times a veiled and mystic look. His mouth was big and mobile, generous, and with laughter at its corners; his jaw large and square, to balance his forehead. No one could look at him and not look again, for there was something about him that was remarkable and that made itself felt, unconscious as he was of it. One of the things that from the first so impressed me was the mixture of greatness and humility in him—he knew his own powers, he was too good a musician not to do so, but in so far as it was *himself* he thought little of it, the only thing he honoured was music, and he cherished the belief that application and hard work and devotion to music would bring anyone to where he stood himself. How often have I heard him say—sometimes when I peeped into the room where he would be standing by the clavier giving a lesson to one of his pupils, "If you work as hard as I do, you will be able to play as well as I do." One of his Organ pupils, who loved him and knew how I liked to hear any of his sayings, came to me one day very pleased after a lesson at the Organ, and told me that when his lesson was finished Sebastian had himself taken his seat at the Organ-stool and played very gloriously, and when the pupil expressed his admiration turned upon him with almost an air of vexation, saying, "There is nothing wonderful about it. You merely strike the right note at the right moment and the Organ does the rest." And we two had a happy laugh together over this, for I by that time knew enough of the Organ's difficulties to appreciate that "merely striking the right note"—when you have to do it with your hands and feet together—for I persuaded Sebastian, after we were married, to give me some Organ lessons, though he said it was hardly an instrument for a woman. But I

desired to know something about it, so that I could understand his Organ music and Organ-playing a little better.

In the late summer of 1721, when his first wife had been dead over a year, Sebastian asked me of my father in marriage. I had not seen him often, though I had on one or two occasions sung at the court concerts at Cöthen, for which he was responsible, but I had thought about him much—perhaps more than was quite what my dear mother would have approved. But indeed I could not help it, and though it was far beyond my deserts to hope that he would wish me to be his wife, he made so deep an impression on me from the very first that I knew I would never willingly marry any other man. My honoured parents were very content, though they thought it their duty to point out to me that he was fifteen years older than I was and had four children living—three were dead, poor little ones—to whom, I would have to be a mother. When they understood from my stumbling words, my blushes and tears—I could not help crying a little, I was so happy—that I was willing, they sent me in to him where he was waiting for me in another room. I think he was not in much uncertainty as to my answer, I think his penetrating eyes had read my heart, though it was not much he had said to me before he spoke to my parents, and I from my first meeting with him had been smitten with a sort of dumbness. The sight of him always made my heart so beat that speech was difficult. There he stood by the window: he turned as I opened the door and took two swift steps towards me, "Magdalena, my dear one, thou knowest my wish? thy parents approve—wilt thou be my wife?" I said, "Oh, yes, thank thee very much," and burst into tears—which I fear was very indecorous—but they were tears of utter bliss and gratitude to God and to Sebastian. When he put his arms about me I could not help thinking of a chorale of Luther's we often sang round the fire on winter nights, "Ein' feste Burg"—for a "strong tower" Sebastian always was to me from the day of our marriage.

My betrothal was a very joyful occasion, for I could see how proud my dear parents were that their daughter should marry so respectable and distinguished a musician, one, moreover, so high in the favour of his Prince. Duke Leopold took the kindest notice of me, and graciously told me that in marrying his Capellmeister I was marrying a man whose name would always be honoured where music was loved. He also complimented me on the happy fact that I could sing the songs my future husband wrote. His condescension, and I may say friendship, towards Sebastian is shown by the fact that the Prince was godfather to the last child of his first marriage, and when he went travelling he would not be content unless he carried his Capellmeister with him—indeed, it was on his return from one of these

journeys that Sebastian found poor Maria Barbara dead and buried, as I have said before.

Sebastian loved quiet Cöthen, and at this time had no thought but that he and I would spend the rest of our lives there, in the service of that good Prince who was so truly devoted to music. Before our marriage took place, Sebastian and I stood godparents in the Cathedral of Cöthen to the child of Christian Halen, the Prince's cellar-clerk. It is a day I will always remember, for it was the first time I had been publicly associated with my betrothed, and my laced blue gown was pretty, and I felt that he was pleased with me—from that time onwards to his death one approving word or look from him meant more to me than anything the rest of the world could do or say—and his young children stood round us and I felt then that we were a family united. It was for that he cared—his wife, his children, his home. After the travels he had made on foot in his youth to hear famous organists and to play on different Organs, and his official journeys with his Prince—it was on these journeys that he wrote so many of those little preludes and fugues he called "The Well-Tempered Clavichord," which to me always seem so full of beautiful music, though he wrote them principally as practice pieces for his pupils—he settled down to a quiet and retired life at home. All the years we lived at Leipzig he hardly stirred out of it—his work, day by day, at the Thomas Schule and the church, the musical concerts he conducted, his composing, his home, satisfied him. He never travelled about to be admired, to make a sensation, like some other musicians who come from not so far away. And yet, if God gave genius to any man he gave it to Sebastian Bach, though I know there are few alive now, save some of his old pupils, who think so or remember him and his music.

But I have gone too far on in the years that were ahead of us. We were betrothed in September 1721, and in December our wedding took place in Sebastian's house, so that I was married in the house that was to be my home. My wedding wreath was bestowed upon me by Sebastian's gracious Prince, who took a particular interest in our wedding, as he himself was to be married only a week later to a fair princess of Anhalt-Bernburg.

How kind Sebastian was to me that day, how happy I was, in a kind of blissful dream we may experience but once in this world. They say a maiden's wedding day should be the happiest of her life, and certainly no maid could have been so happy as I was, but then who ever had such a husband as Sebastian Bach? After my marriage I had no life but his. I felt like a little stream absorbed in the ocean—enveloped, sustained, enfolded, in a life larger and deeper than my own could ever be. Year by year, as I lived

with him so closely, I grew to understand his greatness more fully—he was so far beyond me that at times I felt frightened, but I did understand him because I loved him, "Love is the fulfilling of the Law," as he was fond of quoting from that German Bible of our great Luther's, which he knew so well and read so often—truly could he say with Luther, "There are few trees in that garden which I have not shaken for fruit"—sitting in his black leathern armchair by the hearth in winter, by the window in summer. Ah, me! what memories come back to my heart!

And for me, when we were married he wrote this song—later he put it into my "Notenbüchlein"—

Thy servant, my sweet Maiden Bride!
May luck attend thee in this day's happiness!
Whoever sees thee in thy wreath
And thy lovely wedding clothes,
Cannot but laugh in his heart for sheer joy
At the contemplation of thy bliss.
What wonder that my lips and heart
Overflow with delight to greet thee?

That was my wedding gift, my foretaste of the happiness to come.

PART II

Thus began my real life—that which had gone before had been but a preparation and a waiting. But before I write of the wonderful and happy years that I was the wife of Johann Sebastian Bach, I wish to set down as well as I can the things I heard from him of his childhood and youth—all the time before I knew him—for if this chronicle is to have any value for those who come after it must tell all that I can of his life from his birth to his death.

He was born at Eisenach, and to me there always seems a certain fitness that the month of his birth was March, as that is in the time of Lent, and for Lent and for Holy Week he wrote those oratorios on the story of our Lord's death from St. Matthew and St. John, St. Mark and St. Luke, which moved his deep soul so strongly. I came in upon him unexpectedly when he was writing that alto solo in the St. Matthew, "Ah, Golgotha," and was startled to see his usually ruddy countenance gone quite ashen and tears pouring out of his eyes. He never saw me, and I stole away and sat down on the stairs outside the door and wept myself. How little those who hear such music imagine its cost. I wanted to go up to him and put my arms round his neck, but I simply dare not, there was something in his look which filled me with awe. He never even knew that I had entered the room, and I was glad he did not know, for it was a moment when only God should see him. In that sacred music, set to the words of the Gospels he gives so glorious expression, as it seems to me, to the feelings all Christians must have as they contemplate the Cross—Sebastian felt in his own soul all that anguish and that beauty before he wrote a note of that music. I first heard the St. Matthew Passion complete in the Thomas Church at Leipzig on Good Friday, eight years after we were married, and I could hardly bear it, so magnificent and poignant it seemed to me. But most people did not care for it, and as it was difficult and needed much training of the singers it was not given again for eleven years. All that glorious heart-breaking music sleeps now in silence—perhaps I will hear it once more in Heaven.

How little could anyone have thought that the small Johann Sebastian born in that long, white house at Eisenach in 1685, was going to write such music as the St. Matthew oratorio—for such music was not in the world until he made it. But of course the Bachs were all musicians and had been so long back as anyone could remember. Sebastian always said that the first musician of the family was his great-great-grandfather, Veit Bach, who was

a miller and baker, and whose greatest pleasure was a small cithara, which he used to take into the mill with him and play on while the mill ground the corn. “They must have sounded sweetly together!” said Sebastian with a smile. “And at any rate he must have learned time in this way—it was as it were, the beginning of music among us, his descendants.” He was always pleased at the thought of the old miller making music in his mill.

But all the Bach family made music, and many of them were organists all over Thuringia. Sebastian’s uncle, Johann Michael, whose youngest daughter became his first wife, was organist at Gehren, and a composer, and he also made clavichords and violins—which I think Sebastian would have done himself had he had more time, he was so interested in all musical instruments and so clever with them. He always quilled his own harpsichords, and never took more than the fourth part of an hour to tune them.

Sebastian has often told me how all the Bachs used to meet together at least once a year and make music. They always began by singing a chorale, and always amused themselves by making “quodlibets,” harmonizing several well-known airs by singing them together simultaneously—this was more a musical joke than anything else, but none of the Bachs would have been content without their “quodlibets,” and when Sebastian was in a merry mood he and his sons would make them round the hearth after supper. If I did not join in, perhaps because I was involved in the intricacy of a gathered shirt I was making for him or Friedemann or Emanuel, he would say to me, “Mother, let us hear thy sweet piping,” and name me some air to sing. He never would leave me out. This family liking for quodlibets remained with him, as is shown by the Air with Thirty Variations he wrote for Count von Kayserling in his later years: the last Variation is a quodlibet, made on the combination of two popular songs, one about a maiden, and the other about kail and turnips, worked out in imitation above the bass. Sebastian could make music out of any theme.

His father and his mother died early, and he was taken to live with his elder brother, who was organist at Ohrdruf, leaving leafy Eisenach with its running streams of water. But the ghosts of two dwellers in Eisenach failed not to make their impression on his heart—the holy Elizabeth of Hungary and Martin Luther, who was always specially vivid to him, because as a child he had looked so often upon the Wartburg, and because our great Luther was himself such a goodly musician—how often in later years have Luther’s hymns inspired him to write great choral preludes for the Organ. It was one of the little odd things about Sebastian I often noticed with faint

surprise that he himself, who was such an inexhaustible fount of music, needed the music of some other man to set him going. When he was inclined to improvise at the Organ or the clavichord he would usually play over first some little composition of Buxtehude or Pachelbel, or his uncle, Christoph Bach, whose music he much admired, and then his own genius would flow. It often brought to my mind the homely thought of how we pour a little water into the pump to start the bounteous stream from the depths below.

Another link between him and Luther, which it pleased him to recall, was that as boys they both had marched through the streets of Eisenach singing part songs—Sebastian in the Scholars' Choir, which was established nearly a hundred years before his birth, and in which the citizens of Eisenach had much pride. "Our town was always celebrated for music," he would say, and he explained to me that "Isenacum" was the Latin form of Eisenach, and "What is the anagram of 'Isenacum' but 'en musica'—lo, music, or 'canimus,' we sing!" I can see him saying that now to me with a pleased smile, and I hope I have got it correctly, for I do not know the Latin tongue, and he always hated inaccuracy. He was a good Latinist himself, which was fortunate, for when he was first made Cantor at Leipzig he had to teach the boys at the Thomas Schule Latin as well as music. He always meant to teach me a little Latin—he said he would enjoy it as a contrast to teaching those inattentive boys—but he never really had the time, and of course I was busy too with all the children and the house to see about. Besides, a woman's brain is hardly fitted for these high matters. So the only Latin I learned was the "Gloria in excelsis" and "Credo in unum Deum" that I learned because of the Mass he wrote in his favourite key of B minor.

As a boy, Sebastian had a singularly beautiful soprano voice—I have talked with those who heard him sing, and they all said it was of an exceptional quality. He used to sing in the church at Ohrdruf every Sunday and on festival days; while at weddings and funerals he would sing motets with the rest of the singing boys, and also at certain times they sang in the streets—following in this the fashion to which he had been used in Eisenach. When Sebastian's voice broke, which it unluckily did soon after he left Ohrdruf and went to Lüneburg, a curious thing happened. One day, as he was singing in the choir, he suddenly found himself singing in octaves, with a double voice, as it were. This he could not stop or control in any way, and for a whole week he continued not only to sing but to speak in octaves. I have never heard of such a thing happening to anyone before.

I never saw this elder brother who partly brought up my Sebastian, but he always spoke of him with respect and gratitude, and in later years

returned to his son in full measure all that had been given to himself. In certain ways it was not good to cross Sebastian, and one of the things he would permit from none was any slighting reference to his family, even in the remotest branches. Therefore I had to give no utterance to a grudge I had against this brother of his, inasmuch as I felt that it was partly due to his jealousy, or lack of generosity, that Sebastian suffered from a weakness of the eyes that troubled him all his life. His brother had a collection, very desirable to that child of music, of compositions by celebrated composers to which he was denied access, though he had mastered all the music he could lay hands upon. This music-book was kept locked in a cabinet with a metal lattice-work front, and through the lattice-work, night after night for many months that poor boy abstracted it and patiently sat up in his little attic copying it out by the light of the moon, being candle-less. Small wonder his eyes were strained. Then when his large labour was at length ended and he began to play the music he had obtained by such hard work, his brother, discovering the crime, as he regarded it, angrily took his manuscript away from him, and he did not regain possession of it till his brother's death in the very year we were betrothed, when he showed it to me and told me the story, without the faintest rancour for his hard usage. But it shows how young his determined character declared itself.

His sense of responsibility was also developed early. At fifteen years old he began to support himself. He went to Lüneburg, and entered the choir of St. Michael's Convent, where his beautiful voice procured him a small salary as discantist and free commons. Once I went to Lüneburg, and saw and entered the Michaeliskirche—so pleasant a church to look upon, I think, with its red brick tower crowned with cap and lantern of green copper. But the inside interested me most after all as it had once contained the seraphic voice of my young Sebastian—that voice I had never heard. I fear I sadly grudge anything of him that I have missed, which I should not do, considering the goodness of God in allowing me to share nearly half his life.

Sebastian's voice broke soon after going to Lüneburg, unhappily, and he had to earn his keep with his violin and by general accompanying. He had a natural facility for all musical instruments, and played the violin, viola, harpsichord, clavichord, clavecin, viol de pomposa, and above all the Organ, his favourite instrument of all, as I believe no one in this world has ever played it. I do not mean, of course, that he played all these instruments when he was fifteen years old, but he did when I first knew him—except the viol de pomposa, which he invented himself in later years. I do desire to write this chronicle of him with the exactness he would wish—for I recall how his hand would fall upon my shoulder, if I were careless in a statement or in my

playing at the harpsichord, and the little shake, half affectionate, half irritated, he would give me. Ah, I would risk being very inaccurate indeed could I but feel that hand on my shoulder again!

And that reminds me to put down that he had remarkable hands—they were large and very powerful, and of a wonderful compass on the keyboard. He could hold down a note with thumb or small finger and do things with the rest of his hand as if it were entirely free. He could trill with equal ease with any finger on either hand while continuing to play complicated interwoven parts. Indeed, I believe there was nothing possible (and many things which appeared impossible) on the keyboard or the manuals which he could not do. And he always maintained that it was the pure fruit of diligence and within the reach of all who would work with industry and a serious mind. But even the best of his pupils could not agree with their master in that matter, for the better musicians they were the more fully they recognized that quality in him which no one else possessed or could acquire by the utmost labours. But Sebastian never had any sort of personal proudness in his great powers, he never seemed to look upon them as in any particular sense belonging to himself—the life of music he regarded as the greatest life, but the musician himself must be humble, not arrogant of his gifts. He liked and often quoted one of the articles in the Statutes of the Union of Instrumental Musicians of Upper and Lower Saxony, which is this (well I remember it, for often I copied it out for him to give to his pupils), "Inasmuch as Almighty God is wont marvellously to distribute His grace and favours, giving and lending to one much and to another little, therefore no man may contemn another by reason that he can perform on a better sort of musical instrument; much less may he be boastful on that account, but be diligent in Christian love and gentleness, and thus walk in his art, first of all to the honour and glory of God most High, to the edification of his neighbour, and so as to enjoy and maintain at all times a good report of his honourable conduct in the eyes of men."

How closely he himself followed this rule his good life shows.

While he was at Lüneburg he worked with his own extraordinary industry, bringing his keyboard skill to perfection, developing his own method of fingering, and studying all the music in the rich library of the convent, which was such a boon to him. He devoted much time and love also to his own special instrument the Organ, and had instruction from the organist of St. John's Church, a Thuringian like himself. But he soon outgrew his teacher—it always seemed to me it must have been an alarming thing to attempt to teach Sebastian any matter of music, even in his young

years. I think the choiring angels taught him ere ever he had any human instruction. So finding he had little more to learn from the excellent Herr Böhm, in pursuit of further knowledge Sebastian set out on foot, full of youthful vigour, to places where he could hear good organists or fine Organs. He walked several times the long miles to Hamburg to hear Herr Reinken—to whom he was to play with such happy success the very year I first saw him, the year before our marriage. Of course, he had only a small store of money, and on one of these journeys he found himself, very hungry and footsore, sitting on the bench under an inn window without a coin in his pocket big enough to pay for the humblest meal. As he sat there, wondering how he was going to tramp the remaining miles on an empty stomach, a window was suddenly thrown up and two herrings' heads pitched out at his feet. Sebastian picked up this not very appetizing fare, thinking that the heads of herrings were better than no supper, and to his astonishment and joy found inside each head a Danish ducat. It was like one of those tales we tell to children round the Christmas hearth. Perhaps out of gratitude Sebastian always had a liking for herrings, and particularly for a dish of them I so often prepared for him, of herrings soused in thin white wine with spices and peppercorns. In the hot summer weather there were few dishes he liked better. With the money from the herrings' heads he was able to get a good meal, and also, which meant much more to him, to make another journey to Hamburg to hear the organ. On another and considerably later occasion—it was in May, 1716—the organ provided him with a dinner he often recalled with appreciation. It was when he went to Halle with Herr Kuhnau and Herr Rolle to test and try the new Organ of thirty-six stops. After the opening of the Organ the Council gave them a very fine repast (on Sebastian's frugal mind it evidently made a considerable impression, and he always said it was one of the best meals he ever did eat) of pike, beef, gammon of bacon, peas, potatoes, spinach and little sausages, boiled pumpkins, asparagus salad, cabbage salad, roast veal and radishes, fritters, preserved lemon peel and preserved cherries.

When he was only eighteen Sebastian obtained his first post as organist. He had already been made Court musician at Weimar, and it was from Weimar that he made a visit to Arnstadt to try a fine Organ but recently installed in the "New Church" there. Some of the authorities heard him, and at once recognized his genius, despite his youth. The organist they had being a very ordinary performer they promptly dismissed him to another post, and offered his position to Sebastian. The Organ was a beautiful one, adorned with wrought and gilded palms and foliage, and on either side bright cherubs' heads and cupidons with trumpets. It had two manuals and a fine

pedal Organ of five stops, of which two were sixteen-feet stops. Sebastian all his life spoke of this Arnstadt Organ with a peculiar affection, as a mother will of her first child. It was the first Organ he could call his own, as it were. His installation as organist was very solemnly done, with exhortation to industry and faithfulness in his calling, that he act as an honourable servant and organist before God and his superiors, which made a deep impression on his youthful and always serious mind. He felt, he said, as if God had visibly set His seal upon him as a musician and—what he always wished and intended to be—a Church musician. He loved that Organ so much that often, with the church key in his pocket and an eager friend to tread the bellows for him, they would go in the middle of the night and, locking themselves in, he would play till the dawn reddened the eastern windows. He had plenty of leisure for practice and study, as his official duties were only to play at the services on Sundays and Thursday mornings and at one service each Monday, also to accompany the choir rehearsals. But leisure to Sebastian only meant the opportunity for work. I never saw him idle, save the occasions when he indulged himself with a little tobacco—and though I never liked the smell of pipe-smoke, I was always glad to see him enjoying that curious pleasure. In my "Notebook" he wrote a song about his pipe, which runs thus:

Whenever I take up my tobacco-pipe
Filled with good "Knaster,"
For my delight, or to pass my leisure,
Sad pictures float before my eyes,
And teach me this lesson,
That like the smoke of this pipe am I.

I liked the air so much that one day I transposed it for a soprano voice into G minor and sat down to the harpsichord and sang it to him while he was puffing at that long clay. He was amused at my singing it: "It suits thy voice, which is more than tobacco would thy mouth, little mother. Let me never see a pipe between thy lips," said he with mock fierceness, "or thou wilt get no more kisses from me!"

But save for such brief interludes, through all our married life I never knew him to waste time, which he always said was one of the most precious gifts of God and would have to be accounted for before His throne. Day after day he taught, he composed, he conducted, he played the Organ, the clavier, the viola, and other instruments, he instructed his family, and whenever he had spare time he would read in the many books he slowly collected, especially in those books of theology which so interested him,

though my weaker mind found them somewhat difficult, not to speak of some of them being in Latin. And as he did in his mature life, so he did in his young life. When people held up their hands and marvelled and made fine words about his gifts, he always answered rather shortly that it was nothing but "hard work." He never had much concern with ignorant approval—the approval of musicians was all that mattered to him. "I play," he once said to me, "for the best musician in the world—he may not be there, but I play as if he were." I thought to myself that he always was there when Sebastian was playing, but I did not say so, for that was the kind of thing which did not please him. He might say no more than "Thou art mistaken, Magdalena," but by a slight narrowing of his eyes and the drawing down of his brows I always knew when he was not pleased.

However, at this time he knew nothing of me either to please or vex him, as I was but a youngling of a few years, taking uncertain steps in the world, little guessing of him to whom they were to lead me.

While Sebastian was perfecting himself in Organ-playing at Arnstadt he desired to have leave of absence to go to Lübeck to hear that famous "Evening Music" which Herr Buxtehude had brought to such beauty that musicians would go large distances to hear it. From Arnstadt Sebastian had to travel over two hundred miles, but he was young and a sturdy walker, and he set out happily in the misty autumn weather with a satchel on his back, a good staff in his hand and music in his heart to keep him company on the road. He had found another to play his Organ while he was absent, and he had permission to stay away a month. He thought that long enough when he started, but soon found when he was in that home of music that he could not tear himself away, and it was several months before he returned to Arnstadt. The "Evening Music" seemed to exercise a kind of enchantment upon him—as in some of our old childish tales, only this was no evil spell. Even in his old age he would sometimes recall to me the sort of wonder of entering on those dark Advent evenings the church, all shining with lights and filled with silent listening people, to hear Buxtehude's cantatas, of which he always retained a vivid recollection, especially of "The Wedding of the Lamb" and "Heavenly Delight of the Soul upon Earth over the Birth of our Saviour Jesus Christ and His becoming Man." The singing, the strings, and the great Organ quite filled him with happiness. As always the Organ drew him, and the post of organist would have appealed to him, as it offered him greater scope than Arnstadt. And that Lübeck Organ might have robbed me of my husband! For Herr Buxtehude gave him the knowledge that he might become his successor if he were but willing to marry his daughter. Thanks to the good God, he was not willing, for the fräulein was of a heavy disposition

and in no way attractive to him, also she was many years older. No doubt it was a certain discomfort created by this which awoke him to the necessity of returning to Arnstadt.

When he got back they questioned him why he had been so long a time away, and he said he had gone to Lübeck to learn certain things connected with his art, and that he had first asked permission and obtained it. They said he had asked permission for an absence of four weeks and had stayed away four times as long. Sebastian, with that quiet obstinacy which he, like all the Bachs, possessed, took no notice of this, but said that he hoped the Organ had been played by his deputy sufficiently satisfactorily to leave no cause of complaint. I think the honoured Consistory must have felt a little baffled by their young organist, for they fell back upon another matter—that he had made extraordinary variations and changes in the chorales, whereby the congregation were confused: also that when it was complained to him that he played for too long a time he at once went to the opposite extreme and made his playing too short. Well, those who did not love Sebastian's organ-playing certainly deserved to be deprived of it, so I will not profess to weep for them, though perhaps he was a little headstrong and I know he was capable of being obstinate.

But these complaints and trouble he had with the choir—to one of the scholars Sebastian, in a moment of temper, applied an injurious epithet, and the youth set upon him with a stick in the street; Sebastian immediately drew his sword and there might have been serious trouble had they not been separated—made his position at Arnstadt somewhat difficult, and I know, if no one else does, how sensitive he was under that strength and even obstinacy of his nature. He said once that those who had music in the soul paid for it by a skin less than other people. But he was strong and quiet, and he never talked about his feelings, as some, especially the French and Italian musicians we knew were apt to do, therefore few people knew what he was really like inside—unless some of his music told them. His feelings were so powerful and his temper naturally a little hot that I used to marvel and admire at the extraordinary control he had over himself. If he made up his mind that he would not do a thing he would not do it—and neither I nor anyone else could make him. He would be quite gentle about it, but quite immovable. Mercifully for the happiness of the family of which he was the head, he was very wise, and rarely made mistakes in judgment—only once do I recall when I had the temerity to think he was in the wrong. And with all his strength of character he was humble-minded in so many ways—though in anything that concerned the dignity of his calling, his position as Capellmeister or Cantor, he would suffer no abatement. He demanded what

he gave—that is, respect to position and rank. We had both of us spent some of our youth at Courts, been connected with them—I through my father's position, Sebastian through his own. As I knew Sebastian to be so much wiser than myself, I felt his attitude of deep respect must be right towards kings and those raised by God's Providence above us—yet in my heart I always knew that he was so much greater than any royalties, that he was a king not only of musicians but of men, that in truth it was the princes who should have stood bareheaded in his presence, who should have kissed his hands—those wonderful hands that made music fitter for the Courts of Heaven than those of Saxony. I said something of this to him once when I was vexed because the Prince had kept him waiting very long for an audience, but—which happened so rarely—he was quite angry with me for saying it. He thought that the hereditary Grand Duke had an hereditary right to keep him waiting. But in this matter even my husband could not alter what I thought in my heart, though of course I know it is true, as he explained to me with care, that the foundation of society and civilization rests on order and the divine right of kings to rule. He believed in order in all things, in his home, and his music, and his country. When he had words to make music for that dealt with order and duty he was always glad. I remember a rather excitable French lady who came once to see us in Leipzig. She wrote poems and professed a great admiration for Sebastian's music. She praised him with an extravagance he did not appreciate, for it was plain she had little real understanding of music, and he never cared for unbalanced laudation. But she disapproved of his setting certain hymns and Gospel passages, especially the words of the Church cantata, "Let all be paid duly." "A subject so dull for your gifts, Monsieur Bach," she cried, with all her feathers nodding, "taxes and tithes, law and order. But no!—now, if you would make the music to my little poem on Love and Beauty——"

"Madam," said my dear Sebastian, looking somewhat cholerically upon the lady, "there is no Love and no Beauty worthy the name without Law and Order and Obedience—attention to one's duties and obedience to one's superiors."

But I have wandered quite away from the story of his youth which I was trying to set down—it is really difficult for me to keep to the letter of my chronicle, for so many thoughts of him come crowding in upon me, so many memories.

The Consistory of the "New Church" at Arnstadt had perhaps with reason found cause of blame in his long absence at Lübeck, and later they found fault with him that he did not train and make music with the boys of

the choir in the way they desired. As a matter of truth, Sebastian was a wonderful master to those pupils who desired to learn, who laboured, and loved music. But for the rough, rebellious boys of the Arnstadt School Choir, as later for the boys of the Thomas Schule at Leipzig, he was at once too great and too impatient. Another matter in which fault was found with him was that he had allowed a stranger maiden to appear and make music with him in the Organ-loft. This maiden was no stranger, but his cousin, Maria Barbara Bach, whom soon afterwards he was to marry.

All these disturbances fretted his spirit and he began to desire to go elsewhere than Arnstadt. He was beginning to write that music with which his soul was full, and he needed a quiet existence and a wife to look after him in order that he might produce the gift God had bestowed upon him so abundantly.

Soon after this the post of organist and master of the music at St. Blasius in Mühlhausen fell vacant, and Sebastian offered himself. There were many to apply for it, but when his playing had been heard it was given to him without any hesitation—at this time he was twenty-two years old. He had now ended his prentice years and his journeying years and become "master," and he followed our good German custom that the "master" should be married and have pupils to whom he hands on his knowledge, as he hands on his name to the children who are the fruit of his marriage. The fortunate maiden on whom his choice fell was his cousin Barbara, who, during a part of the time he was at Arnstadt, was staying with her aunt in that town, whom he naturally met (the Bachs were an attached family and always congregated together) and upon whom he bestowed the blessing of his love.

Pastor Stauber of Dornheim, who married them, himself married Barbara Bach's aunt, and among Sebastian's papers I have a copy of the register, which is this: "On October 17, 1707, the respectable Herr Johann Sebastian Bach, a bachelor, and organist to the Church of Saint Blasius at Mühlhausen, the surviving lawful son of the late most respectable Herr Ambrosius Bach, the famous town organist and musician of Eisenach, was married to the virtuous maiden, Maria Barbara Bach, the youngest surviving unmarried daughter of the late very respectable and famous artist Herr Johann Michael Bach, organist at Gehren: here in our house of God, by the favour of our gracious ruler, after their banns had been read in Arnstadt."

In spite of their little disagreements, Sebastian parted on pleasant terms with his superiors at Arnstadt when he went to take up his new post, and they had the kindness to lend him a cart to convey his furniture and other possessions to his new home across the plain from Arnstadt to Mühlhausen.

And so he settled down, and his first pupil was that good and dear Johann Martin Schubart who for ten years lived with his master, learning so much from daily intercourse with him, so devoted and so loyal. It is a cause of regret to me that he died before I knew him, for Sebastian always spoke of him with such unchanging affection, and during his last illness—when the mind is apt to go back to early years—once or twice thought Martin was in the room with him. He shared all his master's interests and helped him in every possible way in the object he set before himself on first going to Mühlhausen, of improving the Church music and making it as worthy of the service of God as might be achieved. Out of his own salary Sebastian bought much music for the church, as the collection already there was poor and not at all to his wishes. The Organ, too, always his first care, was in great need of his ministrations, so many of the stops were terribly out of order, and the brustwerk quite useless. He presented a scheme for the restoration of the instrument, which was agreed to and the overlooking of it put into his care. At his wish the parishioners had bestowed upon the Organ a peal of small bells, a "Glockenspiel," to be played by the pedal, an invention of his own, which pleased him then, though in later years he was used to smile and say it was a piece of youthful folly, and that the proper characteristic of the Organ was gravity and nobility of tone.

But he was not destined to stay very long at Mühlhausen. He did not find the scope he there hoped for in the development of Church music—there was a good deal of disagreement at this time among the learned theologians and doctors, and my dear Sebastian, whose own faith was so deep and so little troubled by these doctrinal matters, found that in this atmosphere of unpeace his music could not flourish. As he wrote to the Council at Mühlhausen, "While I have always had one end in view, to conduct with all goodwill well-regulated Church music to the honour of God and in agreement with your desires, still this has not been done without difficulty, and at this time there is not the least likelihood that things will be altered." Also his pay was very small, so that he had to tell the authorities of St. Blasius, "I have humbly to represent that, modest as is my way of life, with the payment of house-rent and other indispensable articles of consumption, I can with difficulty live."

Therefore, when the Duke Wilhelm of Saxe-Weimar offered him the post of Court Organist and Master of the Chamber Music he was glad to escape to that pleasant little town set amidst the woods and waters and mountains. At Weimar, the second Christmas after his marriage, his first child was born, that Katharina Dorothea, who was a young maiden of thirteen when I married her father, and who was always such a comfort to me in our home,

helping me like my own daughter with my babies and with the many duties that come to the house-mother. All the four children of his that I found waiting for me when he married me—for the twins, and poor little Leopold had died in infancy, as, alas, so many of mine were to die—were kind and dutiful to me, and it was not long before they seemed like my own children. I could not love Sebastian as I did love him and not love his children, even though they were not mine, save by adoption. Of course, his favourite child always was his eldest son Friedemann, so gifted, so understanding and sympathetic towards his father—and yet destined to hurt his heart so sadly, as Friedemann had so little of the stability and wisdom of the Bachs. But we often love best the children who trouble us most—and so Sebastian did, though his heart was big enough and warm enough to embrace all his sons and daughters. I think he felt towards Friedemann as I did towards my poor Gottfried, though Friedemann was so brilliant and powerful in brain, and poor Gottfried one of those whom we call "God's children." Ah, well, I think sometimes it is through our children that the Almighty teaches us our deepest lessons. To have borne them and to have lost them—through those joys and those griefs come our links with the Eternal.

I know, from all Sebastian told me at different times, that he was happy at Weimar. It was the first time he had really known a home of his own—for as he sometimes smilingly said to me, no place was a home unless there was a house-mother in it. His own mother had died when he was a child and almost from that day he had been a wanderer and sojourner in other people's houses, with no hearth of his own till he married. Moreover, besides his own proper home and family which he first fully enjoyed at Weimar, he had the felicity to find a religious and musicianly prince in the Duke of Saxe-Weimar, and in his nephew, who unhappily died young, a soul compact of music. Also the town organist, Johann Walther, a good composer, was of a kind and friendly nature to him. All his life Sebastian needed but his family and a few close friends who understood and cared for music to make him content. It never was his disposition to run about after acquaintance or applause. When he played the Organ in different towns—and that was the principal cause of the journeys he usually took in the autumn—he necessarily brought forth the applause and admiration of all who heard him, which he accepted always very quietly as a due tribute to his musicianship. I never saw him elated by admiration, I never saw him cast down by the lack of it. I felt always he had within him some other standard than that of this world. Of course, I am not meaning that he was not gratified by appreciation, as for instance that occasion when he played on the Organ at Cassel, and the Crown Prince was so amazed at his wonderful skill,

especially on the pedals, that he graciously drew off a ring he was wearing on his own hand and bestowed it upon Sebastian, who always particularly cherished it.

To set against all his skill and marvellous knowledge I must not forget Herr Walther's little story of how Sebastian on one occasion failed. Sebastian was used to declare that any trained musician could read and play at sight any manner of music, and his fellow-organist and friend thought he would amuse himself by setting a little trap to catch him. Sebastian used sometimes to go to breakfast with Herr Walther, and while he was awaiting the breakfast which his friend was preparing he went over to the clavier to look at a piece of music he saw there and naturally began to play it—he had not gone far before he came across some bars which caused him to stumble, so rather surprised (for he seldom came upon music more difficult than his own) he turned back to the beginning and began again, only to halt once more over the same passage. At this moment Herr Walther, who had been listening for this through the half-opened door, could not restrain his laughter, so Sebastian jumped up, saying rather vexedly, "No, the man does not live who can at sight play everything. It cannot be done." In later years he used sometimes to tell this little story against himself, and I have known him use it as an encouragement to halting pupils.

Herr Walther was a connection of Sebastian's, as both their mothers came from the family of Lämmerhirt, and he knew that house, "The Three Roses," at Erfurt, where my Sebastian's mother was born—that mother whom he could but dimly remember and who died too young to have the joy of her son's greatness. But no doubt from Heaven the good God would let her listen to his music. At least, to my thinking, it would be the less Heaven if one could not hear it there, though I fear my Pastor might rebuke me for so saying.

The Castle Church at Weimar was called by the people "The Way to the City of Heaven," and so I am sure it was when Sebastian was Court Organist there and made the music. A Weimar friend of Sebastian's said to me once that "among the beautiful Divine services performed to the Lord in that Chapel under his direction, the devout and heart-stirring music was a foretaste of the heavenly joys, and worthy of perpetual praise." I have always remembered his words.

When Sebastian was at Weimar, with that beautiful little Organ of the Castle under his hand—and feet, I should perhaps say, too, as his pedal work was the wonder of the time—he came to his full maturity as an Organ player and composer. He particularly appreciated the quality of the pedal Organ,

with its seven stops, one of which was of thirty-two feet, and three of sixteen feet, which gave him a noble bass such as he delighted in. At Weimar and for this Organ Sebastian wrote much of his Organ music and particularly that "Little Organ Book" out of which I so much loved to hear him play. A few of those choral preludes I learned under his tuition to play myself, but they were mostly too hard for my small skill. He called that book with its leathern back and corners which I got to know so well, "A Little Organ Book in which it is given to the beginning organist to perform chorales in every kind of way, and to perfect himself in the study of the pedal, inasmuch as in the chorales to be found in it the pedal is treated as quite obbligato. Inscribed in honour of the Lord Most High, and that my neighbour may be taught thereby."

But I was too much always "the beginning organist" to play much out of that book, many things in which are indeed very difficult. Sebastian must have found it hard really to remember the difficulties of those who begin, he himself conquered them so easily. But the joy it was to hear him play from that "Little Organ Book" those choral preludes!—I have but to open the book and it all comes back to me. I know not which I loved best then when I was young, but now to me the one above all others that comforts me, that is like the voice of my Sebastian speaking to me, bidding me have patience, bidding me have hope, is that one almost at the end of the book, "For the Dying," "Hark! a voice saith, all are mortal." The last verse opens its meaning to me as it did not when I was young and living with Sebastian in this world:

O Jerusalem, how clearly
Dost thou shine, thou city fair!
Lo! I hear the tones more nearly,
Ever sweetly sounding there!
Oh what peace and joy hast thou!
Lo, the sun is rising now,
And the breaking day I see
That shall never end for me!

How, when he played it, the melody would sing on the Rückpositiv manual, and those solemn groups of quavers and semiquavers in the pedal complete one's peace. All Sebastian's noblest music was evoked by the thought of death—that used to frighten me a little, now I understand better what was in his heart.

Two other most lovely choral preludes in "The Little Organ Book" were those two for Passiontide, "O Lamb of God all holy," and "O men, bewail

thy grievous sin"—the last few bars of that one are so lovely and so sad I always used to feel as if my heart stopped when I listened to them.

But if I begin to think about and recall his music I never will get the story of his life written down—only that beloved "Little Organ Book" is so full of memories of past happinesses to me I find it hard to put the thought of it aside.

During his time at Weimar, Sebastian had become so complete and unchallenged a master of the Organ and other keyed instruments, and he had perfected so wonderful and new a manner of fingering that many people were beginning to realize he could not be matched. To Dresden, where Sebastian was beginning to be known, there came a famous French musician, Jean Louis Marchand, a vain man, very clever, and challenging all to contest his skill, to meet him and give him an occasion to show his superiority. This kind of thing would little perturb my Sebastian—he would not have walked across the road to talk about it. But some of the German musicians were annoyed at the assumptions of the Frenchman, and they begged and bothered Sebastian to stand up for the dignity of German music —"Though little enough they think of German musicians," he once said, "but leave them to shift for themselves, so that many are too overwhelmed with cares for their daily bread to be able to perfect, far less to distinguish themselves." However, on this occasion he agreed, rather reluctantly, to accept Marchand's challenge. All the details of the meeting were arranged— it was to take place at the Field-Marshal's abode, and many Court ladies and gentlemen were present, waiting with eager interest, when into the magnificent apartment, all shining with wax lights, walked Sebastian, as always, quiet and composed. He was ready to deal with any musical problem the Frenchman might set him. They all waited some time, and then it was suggested that a lackey should be sent to Monsieur Marchand's lodgings to hasten him. He returned with the news that the Monsieur had departed from Dresden that morning by express coach. It appeared that he had taken the opportunity unknown to hear Sebastian play, and recognizing that in him was someone before whose gifts his own were of small avail, he felt the only way to save his reputation was not to compete.

I should say I had not this story from Sebastian himself, but from another who was there. Sebastian never took any pleasure in a rival's discomfiture, and was always slightly vexed when this episode was alluded to, saying Monsieur Marchand was a very good musician, and that too much had been made of the whole affair. Once, when Sebastian was in Erfurt, in order to stop some disparagement of Marchand that was going on, he said,

“I will show you how pretty are his clavier suites, which you affect to despise,” and he sat down and played them with exquisite smoothness and delicacy, making them sound, in truth, much better than they really were. But that was just like his generosity to all other musicians. The altitude of his standard was always mitigated by the kindness of his heart.

He was invariably anxious to meet and listen to musicians of his own or any other country. It was a real disappointment to him that all his efforts to meet Herr Händel ended in failure—for he so much admired and delighted in his music, spending many hours in copying out the scores of his compositions (a happy task in which I helped him) and giving a beautiful performance when he was at Leipzig of Händel’s cantata on our Lord’s Passion. As they were both born in Saxony and actually in the same year, Sebastian felt there was some link between them besides music, and he made several efforts to meet Händel. Once when Händel was visiting his native town of Halle, Sebastian walked from Cöthen to make his acquaintance, but reached there the very day Händel had departed. Ten years later, as Händel was again in Halle, he sent him a courteous invitation by his son to come and see him at Leipzig, he himself being unwell and unable to make the journey to Halle. But Herr Händel found himself unable to come, and so my husband was disappointed of his wish to meet and speak with a composer he admired, and who, I felt, might perhaps have taken a little trouble on his side to meet his great fellow-countryman. For he must have been musician enough to recognize the quality of Sebastian’s work, even though it was not known outside Germany, while Händel’s own was lauded in countries so far as Italy and England. But Händel sought the world, and travelled about greatly, and made much money, while my Sebastian shunned the world and lived quietly in his home.

The time he usually travelled a little was in the autumn, when he went to various places, nearly always to try and to report on a new Organ. He was constantly being asked to do that, for people were coming to realize not only that he understood the playing but the construction of Organs, and his judgments were completely unswerving and impartial. Indeed, his friends often said that he made himself enemies by his honesty, for he would not turn a blind eye, or pass any defect, however small—“Nothing is small,” he said, “that concerns an Organ.” The first thing he always did was to draw all the stops, so that he might hear the full Organ: he wanted to find out, he would say with a smile, whether the instrument had good lungs. Then he would go searchingly through every detail. The Organ builder who lacked uprightness had indeed cause to tremble when Sebastian came to examine his work.

In the autumn of 1717 Sebastian was asked by the young Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Cöthen to become his Capellmeister. He was glad to accept, as he was feeling somewhat hurt at having been passed over in the same appointment in Weimar: the old Capellmeister having died, Sebastian not unnaturally expected to have the offer of the place. But it was given instead to his son, a very inferior musician, on the ground of relationship. I think Sebastian must have felt really angry over this matter and shown it, anyway he demanded his release from his engagement, in order to take up the Cöthen appointment, in such a peremptory manner that the Duke was angered, and ordered him to be kept under arrest for a whole month. It seems to me one of the hard things about a Court musician's life that he should be so far from free. However, by Christmas, Sebastian with his wife and young family had moved to Cöthen, and settled down there to an even quieter life and one more out of the world than he had lived at Weimar. For the time he was there he had only the small Organ of the Castle to play upon, and no official connection with Church music. But he devoted himself to chamber music, and his young Prince was most kind and sympathetic to him—a trained musician himself and ardent in love of it, he appreciated his Capellmeister at his true worth. He was gracious enough to stand as godfather to the son born to Sebastian and Barbara Bach at Cöthen—that little baby, who died so young, being christened in the Castle chapel—and when the Prince went to take the waters at Cassel he carried his Capellmeister with him. Sebastian loved Cöthen and its quiet and peace, though even if a change of circumstance had not driven him forth a few years later, I do not think he could have continued to live there cut off from what meant so much to him as a composer—the music of the Church, the expression of his own deep religious nature.

At Cöthen Maria Barbara Bach died, leaving him with four living children out of the seven she had borne him in their thirteen years of marriage. At Cöthen he married me. And so, having told as well as I am able, the story of his life up to the time when I first knew and loved him, I will go on to tell of all the years I spent at his side.

PART III

I do not think Sebastian was a very easy person to know—unless you loved him. Had I not loved him from almost the very first I certainly would never have understood him. He was reserved in speech about deep things, he did not express himself in the words he said, but in what he was, and, of course, above all in his music. He was the most religious man I ever knew, which sounds strange when I think of all the good Lutheran pastors with whom I have been acquainted, men whose whole business in life was religion and to set an example of worthy living to the rest of us. But with Sebastian it was different, it was something inside him, partly hidden, but never forgotten. There were certain things about him that made me afraid at times, especially at first—a rock-like sternness that underlay his kindness, but more than all a strange longing he had all his busy life for the end, for death. I only glimpsed it now and then, for I think he felt it frightened me, and I was younger than he and much less brave. I did not want to leave him and the world which I found so pleasant so long as he was in it, but now that I am old and alone and he has gone before me I better understand that longing he had to go where all things are made perfect, to behold his Master, Christ. Deep down in his great heart he always carried his Lord Crucified, and his noblest music is the cry of that longing for death which will give him the Vision of his Risen Lord. I had been religiously brought up in the Lutheran faith by my good parents, but Sebastian's religion was something bigger than I had known before. I felt it the very day we were married, when all the people had gone away, and Sebastian came to me and lifting up my face in his two hands and looking long at me, said, "I thank God for thee, Magdalena." I could not say anything, but hiding myself on his breast prayed so hard, "Oh, God, make me worthy of him, make me worthy of him!" I was only young, and it rushed over me then what an awful responsibility it was to be the wife of such a man as Sebastian Bach. If I had made him unhappy in any way I might have spoiled his music. As he said once and often, discords are the harsher the nearer they approach the unison —so disagreements between husband and wife are the most intolerable in the world. We had troubles, Sebastian and I, as all people have who dwell on this earth, but they were outside us, they did not touch our love.

Because he was fifteen years older than I was, because he had been married before, I think he was specially indulgent to me. Of course, I could cook and spin and use my needle, but I had never had the cares of a house

and children on my shoulders before, and my mother was so good a housewife and bore the burdens so easily that I hardly realized all there was to do and to remember in order to make comfort in the home. I soon found that disorder was a thing Sebastian could not endure—his papers and his personal belongings were to be kept in a certain manner and no other. And he hated unpunctuality, as he hated waste, for to be unpunctual was to waste what he ever held of a priceless value, time—the one thing, he said, we could never have twice over. At first, I fear, I was a little careless and forgetful, but he was patient with me and I soon cured myself when I saw it disturbed him, for my one wish, my only object, was to please him and to make his home the place where he would be happiest in this world.

Just a week after our marriage the Prince of Anhalt-Cöthen, who had so high an opinion of Sebastian, who had been so gracious to me, himself took a bride. It did not seem as though this exalted wedding would affect our humble fortunes in any marked way, but of a truth it was the direct cause of our going to Leipzig, where we were to spend the rest of our lives together. The Prince's greatest joy, up to the time of his marriage had been music, and he naturally found that music centred in and radiated from his Capellmeister Sebastian Bach—the concerts, though they were small, he not being wealthy enough to keep large troops of musicians as some of the very rich princes did, were most beautiful under Sebastian's direction, performing as they so frequently did the music he composed for them. Perhaps his new Princess felt that too great a portion of her royal husband's time was given to music and to Sebastian—she may have been a little jealous, or she may have been a little weary of the chamber concerts, for one knows there are people, even in exalted circles, to whom music has small appeal, though I have never had the misfortune to live much among them. But at least, after a few months, a change began to appear in our Prince, he ceased to play much himself, he withdrew his presence and encouragement from the concerts, the Court of Cöthen grew cold to music. Sebastian was astounded and unhappy, he could not live in an atmosphere like that. He came home to me one day after a rebuff that had shown him more completely how the Prince's interest had left music and turned to his delicate and rather exacting Princess. "Magdalena," he said, with a sad and dark countenance, "we shall have to leave Cöthen and go elsewhere, this has ceased to be a place for a musician. Art thou willing to pull up thy little home?" I told him, as was right and true, that my only home was where he was and comforted him as best I might. But the thought of leaving Cöthen was heavy to us both, for he loved the place, and to me it was my first married home, and all women will

understand what it means to uproot oneself from that place of tender memories.

We had only a little more than a year together at Cöthen, but it was a year so full and wonderful to me, the first year I was Sebastian's wife. To live with him and see him day by day seemed to me a good fortune I never could deserve—for a long time I went about in a kind of astonishment and dream, a dream from which at times when he was out of the house I feared I would awaken and find myself that poor thing Anna Magdalena Wulken, instead of Frau Capellmeister Bach. Then I would hear his step outside, I would run to the house door and there he would be with a caress and tender word for me, as I would shelter myself within his arm and know it was no dream, but a kind reality.

Very soon after our marriage he gave me a music-book he had made for me—I have it now, and whatever my poverty may be never will I part with it while I live. One evening, after I had seen his four young children safely to bed, I came downstairs and was sitting at the table by the candle working on a score I was copying out for him when he came quietly in and laid before me a small oblong book, bound in green, with a back and corners of leather in which was written—

> Clavier Büchlein
> vor
> Anna Magdalena Bachin
> Anno 1722

When I turned the pages with eager fingers, while he stood and watched me with a smile so good and kind, I found that he had written for me in this book many easy pieces for my playing on the clavier—on which instrument he had begun giving me lessons. I was not yet very advanced, though I could play a little before I was married, and he had written these little melodious compositions to please me, to encourage me, to suit the stage of skill at which I had arrived and lead me gently on towards a higher one. Amongst these pieces was a grave and beautiful sarabande—I always thought his sarabandes in the clavier Suites and Partitas were peculiarly lovely and expressive of his mind—and the gayest little minuet, and all were of a charm to tempt any student of the keyboard. Thus he was ever ready to stoop from his own height and take by the hand a child or a beginner. Nothing ever made him impatient with a pupil save indifference or carelessness.

If I can only explain what his teaching was like—he taught me, so I know myself, not just from looking on at his teaching of others. I suppose there never was another master like him in this world, so inspiring, so

patient (though never with idleness) yet so relentless, with ears and eyes that missed no smallest slip, that tolerated no carelessness. I have seen those young men, his pupils, brace themselves from trembling before going in to him, and come out with tears in their eyes because he had been so kind to them. And I have seen them go white, if he were in any way angry with them, as he was sometimes, though rarely. But occasionally his passionate nature would break through, and with certain forms of conceit he had small tolerance, as once when he snatched off his wig and flung it at a pupil whom he contemptuously called a "clavier knight," meaning one who tried to make a brilliant effect without solid work behind it.

But he was of an angelic gentleness when he taught me—never can I forget those heavenly lessons, those hours when I sat at his feet and learned of music. Of course, he did not put me through such a severe training as he gave his young men. I was not going to make my livelihood by music, and, moreover, in the earlier years I had so many babies to occupy my time that I had to fit in the music when I might. But in the first year or so of our married life he gave me clavier and harpsichord lessons, also lessons on playing from the figured bass, and, for a time, he gave me lessons on the Organ. He laughed at me a little for wishing to learn and said it was too big an instrument for a small woman. "Why," said he, "if I pull out all the stops for *organo pleno* thou wilt want to put thy fingers in thy ears and run back to thy home!" But as I refused to be discouraged by his gentle teasings he gave me a lesson whenever he could spare the leisure—and I believe he enjoyed those lessons as much as I did, which is to say a great deal. There is something strangely thrilling in even touching the keys of the organ. As I have said, he had already given me clavichord lessons, and, of course, even before my marriage I could play a little on harpsichord and clavichord—but the Organ was a much bigger matter. The three manuals were no great trouble to me, though there was an oddness in playing one's melody on the Rückpositiv manual at a lower level than the bass on the Brustwerk, as sometimes he would have me do, but I soon became used to that. But when it came to using one's feet to play the pedal keyboard, then I was bewildered. At first I played chants and cantionals in four parts with my two hands, and then he made me take the bass with my feet. It made me feel absolutely all confused and turned wrong way round. With my two hands on the manuals and my foot on a pedal note I would simply stop and look at Sebastian as he stood by me, "I cannot go on!" I said, "I cannot move!" "Thou art a small goose," said he, "were we not in church I would kiss thee!" But though he laughed at me he was endlessly patient, and at last, after toilsome practice, I could strike the pedal notes without feeling, as it

seemed, many minutes for each one with my toes. He refused from the very beginning to let me look for the pedal keys. “A fine matter it would be,” he said, “if thou couldst not hit a note with thy finger without first looking to see if it were the right one! It is a very bad organist who looks at his pedals, and that I will not allow thee to become. Thou mayest not go very far on the organist’s road, but at least thou shalt go right.”

I did not go very far—but I went far enough, which was all my intention, to understand more fully how most wonderful was Sebastian’s own playing. If one is quite ignorant of the difficult things of the Organ one cannot even understand in the least what it means to play fugues and choral preludes as he played them. As well might he play them to a fish out of the ocean—and I, the wife of this musician, did not wish to be a fish, deaf and quite stupid. The toil and the time I spent in learning to play on the Organ, even to the small degree of skill I attained, was well repaid to me in the peculiar joy I ever after had in those many and glorious works Sebastian made for that most beloved of all instruments.

In my “Clavier Büchlein” he began a fantasia for the Organ for me, but he never had time to finish it. I grew to love the Organ with a special love because he loved it so deeply, and I always feel that his most noble, most moving music is that he wrote for the Organ—the music in which he most fully expressed his own nature, his own soul. I know there are good judges who prefer his cantatas, and others the lovely things he wrote for the clavier—well, when one pauses to think, it is very hard to choose and decide, one can only say in the words of the Bible, “as one star differeth from another star in glory——”

But I have wandered away from what I wanted to tell, which was his manner of teaching. He had thought out his method very carefully, he felt no trouble too great for “the young who desire to learn.” If he was taking a beginning pupil at the clavier—as he took his own sons—this is what he would do. First he would give exercises in touch, in fingering—it was he who first used what he claimed was the natural method of crossing the thumb under the fingers, instead of over them, as had been somewhat awkwardly done up to his time, by those who had used the thumb at all, which was rare—and in the equal use of each finger in trills and embellishments. Till ease was acquired in these matters he did not allow any further steps, but for his pupils he wrote the most charming little pieces to enable them to overcome particular difficulties at the same time their minds were pleased and their toil lightened by pleasant melodies. I have seen him turn from the clavier, where a pupil might be struggling with some little

point he could not properly overcome, and, snatching a sheet of paper, write down upon it in his rapid hand, which never seemed to match the speed of his thought, some little "Invention" which presented the particular difficulty in its clearest and most attractive form, so that for sheer love of him and of music the pupil would be encouraged to further efforts. He would tell his pupils, with that kind smile of his, "You have five as good fingers on each hand as I have, and if you will but practise with them you will play as well as I can play—it needs but application."

For his eldest son, Friedemann, who was ever the dearest of his pupils, he made a "Little Clavier Book," when the child was ten years old—that was in the year before our marriage. Friedemann having outgrown its use and the other children having progressed according to their abilities through its pages, I rescued it from possible destruction—for Sebastian himself had little care to preserve his minor compositions. If one disappeared or was mislaid he would say cheerfully, "Well, then, I must write another." His mind was as fruitful as that old cherry-tree which stood in my great-aunt's garden at Hamburg.

In Friedemann's "Little Clavier Book" he wrote and explained on the first page the keys and the principal ornaments and embellishments in music, and then came a little piece in which he most carefully marked the fingering, called "Applicatio," at the head of which he put the words "In nomine Jesu." He wrote all his music in that Name, both the big things and the little things. I remember once that he was pleased when he came into the parlour of our house at Leipzig where I was playing a gigue of his to which a pair of our young ones were merrily prancing, when I said to him, "I think the Baby Jesus might dance to that melody, Sebastian." He came up to me and kissed the back of my neck. "That is a pretty thought of thine, little sweetheart," he said smiling, and I was glad that any thought of mine should pleasure him. But, indeed, he could write music tender enough for the Babe of Bethlehem—that Lullaby in the Christmas Cantata, surely His Blessed Mother would have loved to sing it to Him!—and grand enough for the Saviour of Calvary, like that Crucifixus of his great Mass. At the end of his first scores Sebastian always wrote "S. D. G.," which he told me when I questioned him as to what those letters meant, was "Soli Dei gloriae"—To God alone the glory.

For Friedemann he wrote many of those little two-and three-part Inventions which a year later he made into a separate and fuller volume, that he called "An honest Guide by which the lovers of the clavier, but particularly those who desire to learn, are shown a plain way, not only to

learn to play neatly in two parts, but also, in further progress to play correctly and well in three obbligato parts; and, at the same time, not only to acquire good ideas, but also to work them out themselves, and, finally, to acquire a *cantabile* style of playing, and, at the same time, to gain a strong predilection for a foretaste of composition."

No wonder, with all the pains and care he took for them, that Sebastian's two eldest sons became such notable musicians—Friedemann as an organist second only to his father, and Emanuel one of the great clavichord players of his time, as well as an exceedingly gifted composer. When we were married in 1721, Friedemann was eleven years old, Emanuel seven, and the little Johann Gottfried only six, while the dear Katharina was two years older than Friedemann. So I had a complete little family to mother from the very first, and, owing probably to the kind example of their father, those young ones soon began to love me and to confide in me their little pleasures and troubles, though Friedemann, as the biggest boy and responsible companion of his father was at first a little more aloof from me. But we were very happy, and happiest of all when we could drag Sebastian from his duties at Court and his composing and rehearsing and induce him to accompany us when, in the warm weather, we would pack some food into a little hamper and all go to some shady spot out of doors to eat it. He and the young ones had many merry games at these times, he would take off his coat and behave like a boy himself, and we all laughed much and ate more, so that I never could countenance one of these country days without a special baking beforehand. I used to feel as young as the children, and, I fear, at times forgot the decorum of a married woman, for when Sebastian was in a gay mood, full of little jokes and teasings, it infected us all to mirth. Then, when the children began to flag a little, and the small Johann snuggled into my lap, Sebastian would sometimes tell us stories, the legends he had learned in his own childhood at Eisenach, or, which I liked even better, true tales of those two who had also lived at Eisenach, St. Elizabeth and Martin Luther. And so we would troop homewards in the evening light, and after I had got the weary children to their beds, I, tired myself and very peaceful,would sit with Sebastian, my hand in his, and my head on his shoulder. They were days of great happiness that God bestowed upon us at Cöthen.

And soon a still better thing was bestowed upon me—a child of my own, that first-born whose coming no woman forgets. When all the flannels lay warming on the hearth my kind old nurse let him come in to me for a moment. He had a somewhat anxious look, but he said cheerfully, "My good and dear one, all the Bach women are the joyful mothers of children"—then suddenly, in quite a different voice, putting his arm tenderly round me, "My

poor lamb, how I hate that thou shouldst have to suffer!" And it was his saying that, in that voice so kind, which comforted me until our child was born.

We had in all thirteen children. God abundantly blessed us and made me as the fruitful vine upon the walls of my husband's house. And he was so good a Family-Father. I used to think that he never looked so great and so benign as when seated at the head of his table with all his sons and daughters round the board, his beloved Friedemann on one side of him, while I had the last youngling on my lap, gnawing its baby teeth through on a crust. A certain sternness that hung over him at times completely disappeared at these domestic gatherings, and he was all geniality and affection—interested in all they had to tell him, no smallest tale of smallest child too trivial for his kind attention. Respect and reverence they all rendered him—a duty children naturally owe their father—but the proportion of filial fear in their love was considerably less than is common. Strange as it seems, he never, to my certain knowledge, laid a hand upon any of them—my own father, kind as he was, had quite frequently chastised me in my childhood. Our acquaintance used to say we would ruin the boys by such indulgent treatment, and I have sometimes wondered whether Friedemann's faults may not have been due to lack of correction, for he had a much more difficult nature than any of the others. But when they were children they never needed more than the deepening of his voice and the quick frown that came when he was angry. That was enough.

Once, when Friedemann had told his father a deliberate lie, Sebastian was so grieved that he neither spoke nor looked at him for a whole day, and Friedemann went about with a miserable sullen countenance. A cloud lay over us all, it was impossible for me to be content if Sebastian was unhappy. Towards the close of the day I found the boy face downwards on his bed, weeping very bitterly. "Friedemann," I said, and I could not help thinking of the Prodigal Son in the Parable of our Lord, "why dost thou not go to thy father and confess thy fault and ask his forgiveness?" "Oh, little mother," he answered (and it was the first time he had called me by that name), "I am afraid." "Come thou with me," I said, "we will go together." So he arose from his bed, and with his tear-stained countenance went down to Sebastian. "We have come to say we are sorry," I told him, and suddenly Friedemann dropped on the floor and hid his face on his father's knee, and we all cried a little. Then Sebastian and I smiled at each other because of our tears, and he kissed his son and the estrangement was ended. But that, alas, was not the only time Friedemann made his father unhappy in the years that were to come, for he was at times moody and excitable, and he had a distressing

tendency to extravagance, in which he was utterly unlike Sebastian, who was always so careful and wise in the use of money. But he was so brilliant, so quick, so full of understanding. His brother, Carl Philip Emanuel, with his round brown face and brown eyes, was of a different nature, steady, hard-working, and nearly as good a musician, but much more solid in disposition. Yet it was to Friedemann that Sebastian instinctively turned, as I soon saw, though he was so just that he endeavoured not to display any particularity among his children.

But I suppose a father has always a special feeling towards his eldest son—it used to give me a little stab of the heart sometimes to feel that no child of mine could be Sebastian's first-born son. However, when my little Christiane Sophie was laid in his arms, I felt proud and happy enough to put that thought aside. Like all the Bachs and like Luther, whom he always regarded with affectionate respect, he was deeply attached to his family, and cared much for the society of his children. Occasionally he would flare up if they made too great a noise with their playings when his mind was full of music—I did my best to quieten them, but sometimes they got beyond me—and then they would be awed into a hushed whispering. But it was rarely that he was angry with them, and I used to marvel sometimes to see him calmly composing and writing music amid all their childish babble as though he were quite alone by himself.

And sometimes, if at midnight a crying baby should awaken us and needed to be rocked or fed, he would never be impatient, but tell me to sing it a song of heavenly things, so that we all might profit by my lullaby. He made me an air to sing to Luther's lovely little song of the Baby Jesu-lein cradled in straw, but after he had written it down and I had it by heart, he seized the little score and tore it up, saying he had written it for me and me alone, and it should have no life in any other voice than mine. Therefore, as it was his wish that it should die with me I will not write it down, though it seems somewhat sad that it should vanish out of the world when I go, for it is very sweet. If my singing should fail to soothe the infant's fretting, himself would often take it in his arms and charm it into slumber. I have seen that babies are often soothed by being held in a man's arms. I think it must give them a sense of security, they unconsciously sink into the strength of the arm that supports them—for if a man takes an infant he always holds it firmly, perhaps because he is more afraid than a woman of dropping the small creature. And if the young ones liked to be held by him, so firmly and so gently, I loved to see him with a child in his kind arms—it used to give me a sort of feeling of happy tears to see him bending the greatness of his mind to a thing so small as a month-old child. How tender were his feelings

towards infancy is shown by these lines he wrote himself and presented with the first partita of the "Clavierübung" to the new-born heir of the Prince of Anhalt-Cöthen:

Most Serene, Sweet Prince, wrapped in thy swaddling-clothes,
Although thy princely look betokens riper years,
Forgive me if I should awaken thee from sleep
By allowing my page of melody to pay thee its respects.
It is the first-fruit brought by my lyre,
Thou art the first Princeling to be embraced by thy mother,
She should sing it first in thy honour,
For thou, like this page, are a first-born in the world.
Wiseacres nowadays frighten us, and say
We come into the world moaning and crying
As though we wanted to complain in advance
That this short term is sad and troubled;
But I reverse this and say that as the sounds
That round thy childhood swell are sweet and pure and clear,
So will thy life be happy, secure and beautiful
And form a harmony of noble joy—
So, Prince full of hope, I will play to thee again
When thy fulfilment is more than a thousandfold.
I only desire always, as now, to feel the inspiration,
That I may be,
Serene Prince,
Thy most earnest servant,
Bach.

Sebastian had much of the paternal in his nature, he thought constantly of his own children, and worked for them and for their sound education, and was more ambitious of their progress in the world than he ever had been of his own. At times me too he treated as a tender father might his daughter—he was so broad, so strong, such a refuge in the trouble that came upon me when my first child died. How sad he was to lose that little one, who was only three years old, at the pretty prattling stage, with eyes so blue and hair of pale gold, but in his sadness his consideration was only of me, and I think at that time, at the first heavy trouble I had known, I came to love him even more deeply—if that were possible.

But only that little Christiane Sophie was born at Cöthen, all the others came to us at Leipzig, so I am once more getting in front of my story. As I have told already, we had only been living at Cöthen a little over a year after

our marriage when Sebastian found that his Prince's interest had so turned away from music that he felt it no longer possible to remain in his post of Capellmeister. The Court of Cöthen did not really offer him the scope he needed, for there he was dissevered from connection with Church music. All his work was chamber music, and it was at Cöthen he invented and caused to be made an instrument to supply a particular need he felt lacking in his strings—an instrument that he christened the "viola pomposa," which had five strings and was something between a violin and a violoncello: he wrote a Suite for it. He played both violin and viola himself, having been taught in the first case by his father, Ambrosius Bach, whom I had never known, but whose portrait, painted in oil colours, always hung in a place of honour in our living-room. For many years Sebastian was violinist in the Duke's band at Weimar, but when he was playing in domestic string quartets for his own private pleasure, he preferred to play the viola, as there, he would say, he felt himself at the centre and middle of the harmonies, and could enjoy and appreciate more fully what went on at each side of him, as it were.

At Cöthen he wrote, as was to be expected in his position, much music for strings, and there he also wrote and put together a collection of pieces which all the serious musicians who knew them valued highly—a collection of twenty-four preludes and fugues for the clavichord, which he called "The Well-Tempered Clavier," and said that he had written for "the edification and use of young musicians who are eager to learn, and for the recreation of those who are already facile in this study." It was indeed needful to be "facile" in order to play them as a recreation, for most of them are of considerable difficulty in performance and demand arduous practice and the whole attention of a thoughtful mind. But many of Sebastian's more advanced pupils have told me how they discovered an ever-increasing joy and satisfaction in these preludes and fugues the oftener and more faithfully they studied them. And I, who found most of them quite beyond my capacity, at least had extraordinary pleasure in listening when Sebastian played them. The swift rush of clarid notes under his fingers—he was fond of a fast *tempo*—in some of the preludes, the marvellous mingling of the different voices in the fugues, each voice so individually clear and yet all so woven together into an indissoluble whole—ah, there never was anyone who could so make plain the meaning of contrapuntal music as Sebastian himself! I often coaxed him to play for my benefit when he had a few spare minutes, a prelude and a fugue or, maybe, a couple of them. "Thou wilt turn me into a Bad-Tempered Musician if thou wilt have so much of the Well-Tempered Clavier!" he said to me teasingly one day with his left arm round my waist as I stood by him at the clavichord, while he started a fugue with

his right hand, and when the second voice came in he would not release me, but played it right through, holding me within the circle of his arm. “There!” he cried, smiling, as he wound up on the last chord, “serves thee right for being so greedy for fugues!”

What a piece of kind fortune to be the wife of Johann Sebastian Bach when one was greedy for fugues! But I must confess it was not for all fugues I was eager, for some seem to me very dry kind of things, having small relation to music. Not so Sebastian’s—he could make a fugue gay and fresh and sparkling, like running water, or sad or tender or solemn, like the E flat minor prelude and fugue.

By this time Sebastian’s destiny was leading him away from Cöthen and chamber music to Leipzig, where he was to spend the last remaining twenty-seven years of his life, and where he was to write the greater amount of his choral and sacred music.

The old Cantor of the Thomas Schule at Leipzig had died, and one reason which induced Sebastian to apply for the post, apart from the Prince’s increasing indifference to the music of his Court, was that Leipzig offered better opportunities for the education of his elder sons, who were now getting big. For himself, there were certain drawbacks, as he said in a letter he wrote after he was at Leipzig to his old friend, Georg Erdmann—who had been at the Convent School at Lüneberg with him, and who was then in Russia. He read some of this letter aloud to me before he despatched it, for he usually shared his letters with me, as he did everything else, and naturally I always obtained his approval before I indulged in epistolary correspondence. He told Herr Erdmann the reasons for his leaving Cöthen where he had purposed to spend the remaining years of his life, and said that at first it did not entirely suit him to become Cantor of the Thomas Schule after having been Capellmeister to the Court of Cöthen, but that having thought over the matter for the quarter of a year and considering the advantage to his sons, he ventured in the name of God to make the change.

PART IV

It is a strange thing moving to a new place and settling in under a new roof—how little one can foresee what is going to befall one under that roof of good and ill, of sad and happy. Both birth and death came to us in the Cantor's House at Leipzig, the birth of many children, the death of so many of them, and that death which has left the world so empty to me, Sebastian's own.

When we arrived in Leipzig in the last week of May in the year of our Lord 1723, with all our belongings and our young family, and drew up before the door of the Cantor's House, Sebastian jumped down first and insisted, in the old German fashion, on lifting me over the threshold of my new home. "Thou art not much more than a bride," he said, as he kissed me in the entrance way. And behind us came his sweet daughter Dorothea, bearing in her arms the infant Christiane. He saw my look—how quick he always was!—"Well," he said, with his dear big laugh, "thou wilt always be my bride, even though thou have twenty babies!" And I thank the good God I can say that through all our nearly thirty years of marriage he was always lover to me as well as husband. He never seemed to see when I got old and my cheeks were wrinkled and my hair had silver patches in it. The only thing he once said about it was, "Thy hair used to be sunlight, it is now moonshine—which is a much better light for a pair of young lovers like us!"

Small wonder that I loved him so much and waited on his looks and words, storing them up in my heart. As Caspar said, there is not much I have forgotten—it is often the tiniest things stay longest in a woman's memory, and maybe my last thought and recollection of him before I leave this world will not be of my wedding day or of the birth of my first child, or even of his own dying, but that evening when he played a fugue, imprisoning me within his arm, or his lifting me over the threshold of my new home at Leipzig.

The Cantor's House was part of the Thomas Schule, joined on the side, two stories only high, and under the shadow of St. Thomas's Church. It was nice and comfortable, but when we had been there eight years and our family had considerably increased, it really became too small for our needs, and we moved for a time to the House of the Windmill while a story was added to the Cantor's residence. This addition gave us, among other rooms, a most pleasant new music-room, from which a passage led to the big

schoolroom of the Thomas Schule, a very convenient arrangement for Sebastian.

Before finally being made Cantor, Sebastian had to appear before the Leipzig Council in the Council Chamber and take the vow of faithful and diligent service. He had to promise to fulfil the clauses in the contract which I here copy out, as it was an important document in Sebastian's life:

1. *That I will encourage the boys by a good example to live and comport themselves in a sober and modest manner. I will attend the schools diligently, and teach the boys conscientiously.*

2. *I will do my best to bring the music in both chief Churches of this town into good repute.*

3. *To show all proper respect and obedience to their Worships the Council, and do my best to protect and increase their honour and reputation in all places. Moreover, if a member of the Council desires to have the boys for a concert, to allow them to attend without hesitation; but beyond that never to allow them to go into the country for funerals or weddings without the knowledge and consent of the Burgomaster and of the Principals of the Schule.*

4. *To give due submission to all orders given by the Inspectors and Principals of the Schule in the name of the Worshipful Council.*

5. *To accept no boys in the Schule who are not already grounded in the elements of music or do not show sufficient aptitude to benefit by musical instruction; nor to do so without the knowledge and agreement of the Principals and Inspectors.*

6. *In order to save the Churches from needless expense, to instruct the boys diligently in singing as well as in instrumental music.*

7. *In order to preserve order in the Churches to arrange the music in such a way that it is not too lengthy, and, moreover, take care that it is not operatic in character, but may rather encourage a devotional attitude in the hearers.*

8. *Supply the New Church with good scholars.*

9. *To be kindly and circumspect in my treatment of the boys, and in cases of disobedience to be moderate in my punishment, or else report to the proper quarter.*

10. *To teach in the Schule and perform any other duties of my position in a conscientious manner.*

11. *To arrange for a competent person to teach anything I am unable to undertake myself, without putting the Schule or the Council to any expense.*

12. *Not to leave the town without the Burgomaster's permission.*

13. *In the case of funeral processions to keep close to the boys, so far as is possible, in the usual manner.*

14. *To accept no office in the University without the agreement of the Council.*

And I hereby contract and engage myself faithfully to perform all these duties, under pain of losing my position if I act against it, and in witness thereof I have signed this contract with my own hand and confirmed the same with my seal.

It will be seen from this document that there were certain drawbacks in freedom and dignity in becoming Cantor at Leipzig after having been Capellmeister to the Court of Cöthen.

But he had given his serious consideration to the question and made his choice—which, as it proved, was to be for the rest of his lifetime. He was inducted into his office as Cantor of the St. Thomas's Schule on the morning of Monday, the thirty-first of May, 1723, at nine of the clock—and so began his long labours at Leipzig. He had a deal to do in his post as Cantor, and some of his work was not very congenial to his nature, as teaching the Thomaner boys Latin, but he was rejoiced to get back to a good and powerful Organ. We had not been in our new home an hour, and there was everything to be done so that we might even sleep that night, when he came to me, saying, "Come with me, Magdalena, I would show thee the Organ." I had not been in Leipzig before we came there to live, owing to inability to leave the young infant at Cöthen, and I was running round my new house trying to see how it had best be arranged, when the dear husband came and demanded I should go and look at his Organ. And I knew—Heaven forgive me for the thought so mundane!—that if he was taken with the mood to play it I would not get back to my household tasks for a considerable time. For a moment I hesitated and hung back, feeling it was not quite the hour for organs, but he seized my hand, "Come," he said, impatiently, "thou canst see the Church is but next door." So I went, and I sat on the bench by his side

while he pulled out stops and filled all the air with lovely music, and I forgot for a while the beds unmade and the house in disorder. Sebastian with his music could make me forget most things of this world when he chose. How well I was to know St. Thomas's Church in the years to come, and what glorious music of the Cantor's was to be made there. But that was the first time I saw it and heard the Organ, all hurried and unprepared as I was. There really were two Organs in St. Thomas's, a little Organ over the choir, which was very old, having been built in 1489, and the big Organ on which Sebastian played to me, and which had been prepared and put into good order two years before he became Cantor. But the finest Organ of all was that in the University Church, with its twelve stops each to the Brustwerk and Unter-Clavier and fourteen stops to the Oberwerk. This was the Organ on which Sebastian often played when he played for his own pleasure or that of his friends and pupils. It was a new Organ, only having been completed while Sebastian was at Cöthen, and from there he had been invited over to try it and report upon it, little imagining at that time how often his own hands would play upon those manuals. In his report he complained that the management of the Organ ought to be somewhat easier, that the keys had too great a fall, and that some of the lowest pipes spoke too roughly and harshly, instead of with that pure and firm tone he so loved—but, indeed, there were no defects to be heard in this or any other Organ when he played upon it. His skill and tenderness with the most decayed old instruments were such that it was as if the Organs loved him, renewed their prime under his wonderful hands, and gave him their sweetest and their best.

Our life at Leipzig had to be regulated according to the rules of the Thomas Schule, and Sebastian was not to leave the town without obtaining permission for his absence from the Burgomaster. At first I could not help missing the greater freedom of Cöthen, where we had only to consider pleasing our Prince, whose nature was so kind and condescending. I was, I must confess, a little afraid of the Leipzig ladies and of the learned and aged Rector. The Cantor ranked after the Rector and Con-Rector of the Thomas Schule, with the principal Latin master, as the four superior masters. It was Sebastian's duty as Cantor, to give the boys singing lessons, and certain lessons in the Latin tongue—a portion of his work never very congenial to him, for though himself an able Latinist he had not been accustomed to the teaching of that language, and later he paid one of his colleagues fifty thalers a year to relieve him of this duty, a sum we could indeed ill spare, but I always thought it well spent, as the Latin teachings really fretted his temper. Besides, many a scholar could teach Latin—who but Sebastian could write those Organ preludes or the Christmas cantatas?

Besides these lessons and certain other supervisings, the Cantor had to take the boys to Church each Thursday morning at seven o'clock, to arrange the Church music and attend the rehearsals each Saturday afternoon, also to arrange the music of the choral processions at Michaelmas, New Year, and on the days of St. Martin and St. Gregory. Besides this there was a motet or cantata performed each Sunday at the Thomas Church and the Nicolai Church, for which he was responsible, and he had to direct the music of the churches of St. John and St. Paul, also to look after their Organs. So it will be seen his hands were full enough, and though he was not the official organist at any of these four Leipzig churches, no one who knew Sebastian could doubt that many were the times when he himself took the organist's seat and in the kind of music he loved best of all forgot the worries of the week past.

After a time, as he became better known in Leipzig and the surrounding country, people would come knocking at our door and ask the Cantor if he could spare time to let them hear him play the Organ. Sebastian rarely refused if he thought love of music prompted the request and not just a trifling curiosity. On one occasion I opened the house door to find a very grand gentleman standing there who proffered this request. It appeared he was an Englishman and a great lover of the Organ and had journeyed from Hamburg, where he was on business, on the rumour of Sebastian's playing. He was most kind and courteous, and Sebastian liked him so well he played nearly two hours to him on the Organ, and then brought him back to share our dinner at noon. I was a little perturbed at this, as I had no warning and I could see without doubt he was accustomed to much finer entertainment than our simple German fare. But he seemed to enjoy everything we gave him, and after dinner, when he and Sebastian had each smoked a pipeful of tobacco, he very pressingly induced Sebastian to sit down at the clavichord where he improvised some charming music which he afterwards wrote down and which we usually called the English Suites, because of our English visitor and because Sebastian later adapted some of the movements from a book of Suites by Charles Dieupart, who lived in England and was known to our Englishman, who sent his compositions to Sebastian. We never saw him again, but he sent Sebastian a beautiful parcel of books and music, including the Dieupart Suites and a score of Händel's, "in homage," as he said, "to the Master of the Organ." Sebastian had been much interested in what the Englishman had told him of Herr Händel in London. To me it has always seemed a somewhat strange exile to impose upon oneself, to leave our good Saxony for that bleak island, but of course we know the English are a rich nation and Herr Händel got much money. This Englishman had several

times heard Händel perform on the Organ in London at the big church (or is it cathedral?) of Saint Paul, and told us he was remarkably fine, which was one reason he was so eager as to make a journey to hear the only organist, who, so he had been told, was worthy to compare with "the Saxon" as they called him. But after listening to Sebastian he said to me with a courteous bow, "Frau Bach, if thou wilt permit me to say so, I believe, and I have heard many, there is no finer performer on the Organ than thy husband." I made him a courtesy and replied, "I know it, sir." Whereupon Sebastian burst out laughing, "If thou were better acquainted with my wife, sir, thou wouldst realize that she has no critical judgment with regard to my performances, and believes me the most wonderful musician in Europe—is that not so, Magdalena?" he asked, patting my shoulder—I was sitting on a little stool at his feet, where I often sat to listen to his talk. The Englishman smiled: "That is as it should be, though, unhappily, great masters are not invariably appreciated in their own homes." "Well," said Sebastian, looking at me in his kind way, "and whose fault is that but their own? They should choose their wives with more care and pious consideration."

This visit of the Englishman was but the forerunner of many visitors we were to have at Leipzig—more, it is true, towards the latter part of our life there, when hardly any lover of music would pass through the town without coming to visit Sebastian, who was ever of a hospitable disposition and most kindly inclined towards all who were genuinely interested in music. But even in our first years there his official position as Cantor brought him in contact with many more acquaintance than we had been in the habit of encountering in Cöthen. And as I was proud of being the wife of Sebastian Bach, so I took pride that our house should do him credit by its cleanliness and order when strangers paid him their respects. We had a nice set of black leather chairs, and a small and a large pair of silver candlesticks, as well as six pinchbeck candlesticks, while my parents had bestowed upon me on my marriage a comely oaken chest, old and deeply carven, in which I kept my best bridal linen. But of all our household possessions the one naturally most cherished by me was the portrait of Sebastian he had painted at my request at the time of our marriage. It was so skilfully limned, the painter's pencil had caught the gravity and intentness of his look when he was thinking, when he looked at and through people and never saw they were there at all —sometimes at first this look used to frighten me a little, but soon I got to know it was the voice of music speaking in his mind made him look like that. The very line of his eyebrows the painter has caught and the curve of his mouth, so sensitive and kind, that went up at the corners when he laughed, and made me not afraid of him, when his eyes, sometimes, had it

not been for that, might have made me just a little frightened. He was very determined looking, and one reason was that he had a strong chin which stuck outwards—his teeth met absolutely even, and most people's teeth close with the lower ones inside the upper. It gave his face a different look to other people's and made most of them appear hesitating beside him.

This portrait was to me the pride of my Keeping-Room, and one day as I was polishing the frame Sebastian came up to me and said, "I am thinking of having something prettier to look at in this parlour." "But thou couldst not," I said in a hurry, without properly considering my words. Sebastian was always pleased when I blundered in this childish way, which I regrettably did quite often. "I never regarded myself as pretty before," he said, laughing and pinching my ear, "but at least I know someone prettier, and I intend to have a picture of her to look at whilst thou gazest upon yon handsome Cantor!"

So of his goodness he had a portrait painted in oil colour of me by an Italian artist at that time in Leipzig, by name Cristoforri. Sebastian used to come in from the Thomas Schule and watch the progress of the painting, and say, "Nay, thou hast not got the colour of her cheek aright," or "I like not the curve of the chin," till one day the painter got a little vexed, and said, "Signor Bach, I would not tell thee how to write a cantata, but as thou didst entrust me with the portrait of the Signora I would paint it in my own manner." Sebastian laughed good-temperedly: "And so thou shalt," he said, "but thou canst not understand the countenance of the Frau Cantorin as I do." However, when the portrait was finished, he was well pleased with it, and it hung on our wall beside his own, where for some time it rather abashed me to behold it, for few dames in our rank of life have their portraits done in this way, and I could not but feel it as an extravagance. But as a signal mark of Sebastian's approval and pleasure in me, I was truly proud and happy to behold that young woman, the Frau Cantorin Bach, smiling beside her husband.

A further sign of his kindness which he bestowed upon me about this time was another book of music, very handsomely bound in green, on the cover of which he had written my name in gold and India ink and the date 1725. He told me we were to keep it together and that I was to transcribe in it such music as pleased me, while he himself enriched its pages with music he composed for my playing at the clavier—being at that time, under his patient and kind tuition, somewhat more advanced in skill than when he made for me my first Notenbüchlein. Sometimes at the end of the day, when he had a little leisure from teaching and was in the mood, he would sit down

at the big table and drawing a candle to his elbow and taking up his quill, say, “Fetch hither thy green Notebook, Magdalena, I fear it has but dull old music in it thou art weary with playing. I will write thee a new piece for thy performance.” And I would haste to fetch the book that its pages might receive the precious thing. How dear to me were those hours of the long autumn and winter evenings, when the children were safely tucked up asleep, and Sebastian and I sat down to copy music—our constant occupation and work, for there were always the parts of the Sunday cantatas to be written out. Two candles were lit between us—I always attended carefully to snuffing them, so that the flower of light should not be spoiled by that little black thorn of darkness—and we worked silently. I never spoke if I could help it, for often as he wrote out, in his beautiful rapid hand (his scores always had a look swift, eager, passionate to my eyes), the music of Buxtehude or Herr Händel, whose compositions he greatly admired (though I thought them not comparable to his own, even though so full of merit), or sometimes made a copy of his own music for his pupils, inspiration would come upon him, and seizing some of the loose ruled sheets I had placed at his elbow he would write down some of that inexhaustible music which ever sang in his brain.

He wrote some songs and chorales in my Notenbüchlein, and one song which at first I could not even sing to him, it made my voice tremble so:

If thou art with me, I would gladly go
To death and to my rest.
Ah, how contented would be my end
If thy tender hands would close
My faithful eyes.

Ah, Sebastian, how good and loving you were to me!

It always pleased him to pretend he could not write a love song unless it were about me. “And so,” he said one day, taking me on his knee, “this little Frau of mine has spoiled for me all the pretty little sighing songs of parted lovers, all the melancholy ballads that make Court ladies weep—how can a comfortable Cantor write them about the wife who sits upon his knee? I shall have to go backwards and pretend thy parents would not let us marry, for I have an air in my mind which demands a sad verse or two.” And the next day he brought a song, so lovely a song, for me to sing to him, which was written to these words:

If thou wilt grant thy heart to me
Then do it secretly,
So that the thoughts within us
Unknown to all may be;
Our love must lie well hidden
In the inmost heart of each;
Lock in thy breast its deepest joys
Secure from strangers' reach.

Be watchful and keep silent
For even walls have ears;
Love deep within thy bosom
Betray no hopes or fears;
Let none suspect thy secret
Thy duty's to deceive,
It is enough that thou, my life,
Canst my true love perceive.

I sometimes think how rarely privileged I have been, out of all the people in this world, that the music Sebastian wrote from the year of our marriage to his death is all woven into the very texture of my life and means to me what it can never mean to any other. I have seen it come to the birth, I have read it before any eye but its creator's had seen it, and Sebastian himself has talked to me about it and explained the things beyond my understanding. How many times have I sat in the room with him, still and hushed as a mouse, sewing silently at the family mending, while he wrote with a speed as though God were telling him every note, waiting for the moment when he would look up, hold out his arm and say, "Come here, Magdalena." And then he would show me what he had written. Sometimes, though this was not very often, the music would not come. He would write a dozen bars, and then with a guttural sound in his throat, dash his quill through them. He would drop his head into his hands and sit very still, sometimes for a long time, sometimes but a short time, and then raise his head and say with a little smile at me: "Why, of course, it goes this way," and begin to write. As Friedemann grew older and became such a good musician, and also as my hands were fuller with the cares of the household and the children, some of my cherished privileges had to be yielded to him, and indeed he became his father's closest musical companion. But Sebastian gave me so much that I had no cause for repinings, and he never wrote any music without showing it to me and letting me share his thought in it. So I have good reason for feeling that out of all the women in this world I have

been most highly favoured in that I have lived so closely with a mind so wonderful as Sebastian's, and seen his music at its very inception and creation. I do not profess that I could understand all his music—indeed, I would have needed to be as big as he himself was to do so—but all the years I lived with him, all the lessons, both direct and indirect, he gave me, all the incessant talk and thought of music in our house, added to my own natural love for it, gave me in the end some grasp and understanding of the greatness of the music my husband was continually creating. Now that he is dead people have forgotten about him, his music is rarely heard, and his sons, Friedemann and Emanuel, seem much more thought of than their father in this day, but I cannot believe it always will be so. To me it always seemed that one entered a different world in his music—serene, outside, above all troubles. At the heart of him continued this centre of peace and beauty. And when, if I felt, as I sometimes did, over-burdened with small worries, so many young children and never quite enough thalers, so many things to do and to see done, the baking and the washing and the spinning, if I could only snatch a little time to hear him play, especially on the Organ, or to hear some cantata or motet of his sung, I could get there too—I mean to that place of peace and beauty. It was only he who could take me there. The music of Herr Händel or Herr Pachelbel and others, is very beautiful, but it does not come from the same country as my Sebastian's. Perhaps I feel that partly because I love him—but, indeed, in some manner, though I cannot explain it, I feel as if there is a real difference between his music and the music of all the others.

Our first years at Leipzig were not altogether easy. The musical state of things at the Thomas Schule and Church was very bad, and the people in authority were hard to move to any reformation, and many a time after urging them to most necessary changes and meeting with rebuffs and indifference, Sebastian would come home and dropping into his chair take me on his knee, and laying his cheek against my shoulder, say, "Well, better peace at home and storms outside, than the other way about, is it not, Magdalena?" But he was fretted and harassed, and it made me sad to see him who should have been left in quietude to make his music bothered with quarrels about unruly boys, and handicapped in his musical performances because the Council would not replace broken and worn-out instruments, and because everybody seemed to care so much more about the opera than about Church music, and all the best singers went to the Musical Union, and he was left with ragged, rebellious boys whose voices were ruined with street singing in all sorts of weather. But Sebastian, as I have said, had his share of the Bach obstinacy, and though he was troubled and often angered,

he never gave up his struggle for good music and his proper rights as Cantor of the Thomas Schule. But things were very difficult, especially at the beginning. There was not enough sleeping room for the boys, they were too much crowded together and often swept by illness of one sort and another, so that I frequently trembled for my young children and especially for Sebastian, who was among the boys—though, owing no doubt to the efficacy of a cordial prepared according to the method of my great-aunt at Hamburg, who was very notable at medicines, and a careful closing of our windows when the air was pestilent, we escaped contracting any serious illness.

The lowest classes of the Thomas Schule had boys of a rough and unruly character, who went about the town barefoot and begging, brawling and making trouble, especially at the times of the Fairs at Easter, Michaelmas, and New Year, when the whole school has a week's holiday, and the town is always crowded with merchants, and many sorts of vagabonds. I was always a little glad when Fair times were done, though of course it gave to me and all housewives an opportunity to replenish our household needs, and at every Fair my dear Sebastian usually came home with a book under his arm to add to that library of his he so much valued and read in at all his leisure. In this way he acquired all the works of Luther.

The children, of course, loved the Fairs, and were in a great excitement as each came round, and much ado I had to keep the youngest ones from being lost in the crowds, and the bigger ones from blowing their red wooden trumpets all day long to the distraction of their father's ear. Not, as he said on one occasion when I was reproving one of the children for a too harsh and persistent use of this cherished trumpet, that its note was much more distressing to him than the hoarse and croaking notes of the boys of the choirs, whose voices were so often ruined before they had reached the most moderate proficiency by running singing about the streets at nights with their flaming torches in their Perambulations, not to speak of the more decorous singing processions at important weddings and funerals, where proper behaviour was assured by the presence of their Cantor at their head—though he could not guard their voices from the harm done by singing in snowy or pouring weather. Sometimes they were so hoarse that, as he said, he might as well have taken out a company of crows. It may easily be imagined how disturbing this was to him who wrote cantatas and motets of such beauty and had only such uncouth voices to perform them on so many occasions—for he did not hold with the Council of the Schule, that, after the glory of God, the principal end of the singing classes was to promote the digestion of the scholars. Herr Gesner even proposed that the scholars'

dinner-hour should be altered from ten to eleven of the clock in order that the singing lesson should immediately follow the meal, as that was the most healthy form of exercise after eating. Which shows a little to how low an estimate music had sunk in the Thomas Schule. It was indeed true enough, as the old Rector Ernesti confessed, that in "the *Chorus musicus* there is more of evil to be guarded against than of good to be hoped for."

After he had been Cantor a few years, Sebastian was constrained to draw up a memorial and report on the state of music in the Thomas Schule, which he presented to the Council, and in which he said it was the minimum necessity that each of the choirs for the three principal churches of St. Thomas, St. Nicholas and the New Church, should possess at least three trebles, three alti, three tenors and three basses, so that if any fail, which is a thing that often happened, particularly in inclement seasons of the year, as can be proved by the recipes sent from the school of medicine to the dispensary, a motet may be sung with two voices at the least to each part. Of the instrumentalists he said diffidence prevented him from speaking truly of their quality and musical knowledge, but it must be considered that they are partly inefficient and partly not in such good practice as they ought to be. "It must be noticed," he went on, "that the former practice of accepting so many boys who were not talented and had no aptitude for music has necessarily resulted in a falling-off and deterioration of the musical standard. For it may be readily understood that a boy who is totally ignorant of music and cannot even manage to sing a second part can have no musical gift, and consequently can never be of any use from a musical point of view. And even those who come to the Schule grounded in a few principles of music, cannot be of use as quickly as they should be. For time does not allow of them receiving preliminary training for a year until they are skilled enough to make use of; on the contrary, they are distributed among the choirs as soon as they are admitted, and they must at least be well grounded in time and tune if they are to be used in the Church services. Now if a few of those who have achieved something in music are taken away every year from the Schule and their places filled by others, of whom some are not yet fit for use and most are totally ignorant, it is obvious that the choirs must deteriorate. It is notorious that my predecessors, Herren Schelle and Kuhnau, were obliged to call in the assistance of the students when they wanted to give a musical performance that should be complete and melodious." Then he complained how money had been withheld from him and the choir, and stated how differently musicians were paid and treated in Dresden. "It must follow," he went on, "that if those musicians are saved from anxiety about their maintenance, and relieved from all material worries, and if, furthermore,

each man is only expected to play one instrument, the result must be admirable and excellent performances. The conclusion is easily reached, that by losing the perquisites I shall be unable to raise the standard of the music. Finally I am obliged to depend on the number of the present scholars, in order to give each one his chance of attaining proficiency in music, and then leave to more mature consideration whether the music can be carried on any further under such circumstances, or whether anything can be done to cope with its manifold deterioration."

Moreover, he found the Organs of the different churches under his direction belaboured by first one pair and then another of unwashed and unskilled hands—though it must be admitted that Herr Görner, the organist of the New Church and of St. Thomas's was not an entirely unskilled musician, though his compositions were very confused and disorderly, it being said of him (Sebastian did not say this himself, but I heard him repeat it with a certain relish) that rules of composition were things he daily dispensed with, as he did not know them. He was also extremely conceited and jealous of Sebastian's large powers, against which he had the ignorance to set his own small ones, and employed his tongue in a spiteful manner to Sebastian's detraction. It took him a long time to forget the rehearsal of a cantata, when he, playing the *continuo* on the Organ, made so many mistakes that Sebastian flew into a rage and, snatching off his wig, flung it at Görner's head, telling him he would have done better to be a cobbler than an organist. Sebastian did not often lose control of his temper: when he did there was no doubt about it.

So it will be seen that there were difficulties and disagreeables in our first years at the Thomas Schule. But whatever troubles there were took no seat upon our hearth, they belonged outside, and there Sebastian left them when he sat down to the clavichord or the viola in his own home. We made much music, on all occasions of leisure and little festival gatherings, and the winter evenings were sweet with it, while the stove crackled cheerily and kept us from the cold outside, and the candles cast their pleasant light on the score of quartet or cantata. Many of Sebastian's musical friends came in hugging a violin or an oboe under their arms, but even in our own home circle we could make up a concert without any outside helping. Sebastian's eldest daughter, Katharina Dorothea, sang sweetly and well, and my voice was, as he told a friend of his, "a very clear soprano." Friedemann and Emanuel had musical gifts of a high order, as their mature lives were to show, and the whole lot of us, down almost to the latest baby, could read most music at sight without any difficulty. As Sebastian once said proudly of his children, they were all born musicians. Indeed, it would have been

strange were they not so, considering he was their father and considering the whole atmosphere of our home, which was impregnated with music. The first thing they heard was music, the first things they saw were musical instruments: they would play in and out of the legs of clavichord and harpsichord (the harpsichord pedals were things of perpetual mystery and amusement to our infants) on the floor till they could pull themselves up to the level of the keys, and with eyes round with satisfaction, strike the notes with chubby fingers and the conviction that now at last they were doing what their father did. It would have been strange had they not been musicians.

Our house was full of musical instruments in the latter days. Sebastian loved them and could never have too many of them. When he died he possessed a clavier and four clavecin, two lute-harpsichords and a little spinet, two violins, three violas, two violoncellos, one bass viol, one viol da gamba, one lute, and a piccolo, and all these he had collected slowly as he could afford to buy them, for he never went into debt for anything, however much desired. Besides these instruments he had, during his lifetime, bestowed upon his youngest son, Johann Christian, three claviers with pedal —which gift at the time of his death caused a little feeling among the other sons, who were inclined to dispute Christian's statement, but were unable to carry their opposition far, as both I and our daughter, Frau Altnikol and her husband, knew of the gifts having been bestowed by Sebastian.

Of all keyed instruments, after the Organ, Sebastian was most fond of the clavichord, preferring it to the harpsichord, owing to its sensitive response to the player and the way it taught a delicate touch, as too heavy a pressure on the key slightly sharpened the note. "Thou playest too hard," he said one day, coming in when Emanuel was practising, "thou art as sharp as a scolding woman!" Emanuel took this rebuke to heart and became notable, like his father, for the beauty of his touch. In later years he wrote an essay on the correct manner of playing on the clavier, in which he said, "Some people there are who play the clavier as if their fingers were stuck together, their touch is so deliberate, and they keep the keys down so long; while others, attempting to avoid this mistake, play too crisply, as if the keys scorched their fingers." But Sebastian's sons and pupils had only to model themselves on him to avoid all defects and attain to a beautiful manner of playing. It was his rule that a tranquil position of the hands was essential in clavichord playing, in order to preserve the truth of intonation; his hands scarcely seemed to move when playing, except as they glided up and down the keyboard, and he specially valued the *bebung* effect, the power of sustaining the tone by giving a fresh pressure to the note without quitting the key. The

sensitive and tender quality of the clavichord appealed to the sensitive musical nature of Sebastian, and he liked the description someone applied to this instrument as "the comfort of the sufferer and the sympathizing friend of cheerfulness." Even in our bedchamber there was a clavichord, and I have known him rise up at midnight and, wrapping an old cloak about him, play very softly for an hour or more. It never disturbed the sleeping children, only sweetened their dreams—and as for me, I used to love lying there, listening to him playing in the dark, hushed house: sometimes the moonlight shone on him through the casement. It was like a foretaste of heaven, for at night he always played very peaceful music, and I confess, to my shame, that there were times when, soothed by the tender melodies that flowed from his fingers, I was asleep before he came back to bed.

All musical instruments interested Sebastian, from a piccolo to the Organ, and he was constantly thinking how they might be improved and defects taken away so that more beauty might be obtained from them. I grew quite learned myself on the subject, for he would often explain his ideas to my interested ear, and show me the interiors of instruments when he was tuning or experimenting with them. He would never let another adjust the quill plectrums of his harpsichord but himself, and always insisted that for his own satisfaction his own hand must perform this task. I have said how he invented a five-stringed viol da gamba, and the lute-harpsichord was planned by him and constructed under his direction by the organ builder, Zacharias Hildebrand. It had a greater duration of tone than the harpsichord, owing to gut as well as metal strings and an arrangement of dampers, which I do not understand quite clearly enough to explain—but Sebastian wished to remedy or modify the brief resonance of the harpsichord, which made legato playing and smooth singing passages impossible on that instrument. His friend, Herr Silbermann—a strange, quarrelsome, clever man and a great Organ builder—began making instruments which he called forte-pianos, in which Sebastian was much interested. At Silbermann's request he played on one of the earliest of these instruments and found much promise in it, but was dissatisfied with the hammer-action and the heaviness of the touch, also with the weakness of the upper range of notes. "Thou must do better than this," he said to Silbermann, "there is the making of a goodly tree in this acorn, but it needs to grow." "Which cannot be said of thy conceit!" exclaimed Silbermann, angrily—he was of a violent temper and uncouth, he had run very wild in his youth—"Here have I been toiling at this thing for long periods, and then thou sittest down and puttest thy white Capellmeister's hands on the keys and sayest it is wrong!" He was quite exploding with annoyance. Sebastian's own temper could be hot upon

occasion, but he looked very patiently at Silbermann and said, “But it is wrong, and thou knowest it is wrong, that is why thou art so angry. Come, do not let us quarrel over a matter of music. Thou who canst build such noble Organs canst make a better matter of this hammer-clavier——” and he pointed out certain defects which needs must be overcome. Silbermann listened sulkily for a few minutes and then went away, saying, “Truly thou art a marvellous genius and there is nothing thou dost not know!” banging the door shut after him. I was very shocked and indignant that anyone should speak to Sebastian so, but he smiled at me quite unruffled and said, “He is unhappy because he has not yet made the instrument what he knows it ought to be—I understand of a certainty how he feels.” “But he need not be rude to thee, Sebastian,” I protested. “That is of no moment, so long as he gets the clavier right,” was his answer. And after working for a long period upon his invention, Silbermann conquered his difficulties and at length invited Sebastian (after having abstained from all communication with him) to try the improved instrument. Sebastian went with eager interest and played and was delighted. Silbermann stood by listening and when he heard Sebastian’s warm words of praise his rugged face broke up into a pleased smile, “Thou art the master of all musicians, and I knew until I had satisfied thee my work was no good, but it has been a hard task to fulfil all thou set me, nevertheless.”

Near the end of his life Sebastian played on the Silbermann pianos that the King had at Potsdam, and for Silbermann’s Organs he had a great admiration, though quite early in his career he had got across with Silbermann over an Organ which it was proposed to build and which he told Silbermann must have the low CC sharp on manual and pedal, and be tuned to equal temperament. Silbermann refused to do either of these things and so Sebastian said, “Then we can have no Organ from thee.” But in spite of these disagreements they respected each other: Gottfried Silbermann recognized Sebastian’s genius, and Sebastian always regarded Silbermann as a great Organ builder. No one, he maintained, could build a true Organ who had not some special gift from God—it was not like building a cabinet or even a harpsichord, a little of a musician’s soul must be imprisoned within the pipes before they could speak fitly and well. If love did not make the Organ it would never really live. And Silbermann certainly loved his Organs, and put more into them than was ever paid him in money. That was why Sebastian liked him and his instruments and minded little his rough speeches and his intractable ways.

But though Sebastian was not perturbed by the somewhat quarrelsome ways of Silbermann because he knew his heart was good and his love and

knowledge of music deep and sincere, he was greatly upset by the miserable disputes and disagreements into which he was forced by the Council of the Thomas Schule. It seemed as though they would have him make bricks without straw, they did not support his proper authority, they withheld certain moneys to which he was entitled and put it out of his power to pay for the musical assistance he needed; for as he said in a report to the Council, the little perquisites which used in former times to fall to the *Chorus musicus* had been wholly withdrawn and in consequence their willingness had also disappeared, "for who will labour in vain, or give his services for no reward?" In innumerable ways they made his life needlessly difficult, and when he, in his direct manner said what he thought of their way of behaving they called him "incorrigible," and said that he not only "did nothing, but would not give any explanation." And through all this troublesome time Sebastian was writing music for performance at St. Thomas's and the other Leipzig churches such as had not been known before in Germany. Indeed, it was too good for them, too high above their dull wits —only a few musicians here and there really understood and loved it. But the strain of this life was too great for Sebastian's spirit, so sensitive under all his outward solidity, and he seriously contemplated leaving Leipzig and seeking his fortunes in a more peaceful atmosphere. Not quite knowing where to go, he wrote to the old friend of his youth, Georg Erdmann, who had now become something of a great personage in Russia, asking him if he could assist him to a suitable employment. This letter, with his usual consideration, he showed to me before despatching, and I must admit the thought of removing our home and family to Russia caused me a certain discomfort of the heart, it seeming a country so remote and vast and almost heathen, so different from our good Saxony, but, of course, had it been needful for Sebastian to go thither it would have been needful for me to show no repining. And after all what was Saxony to me, what was the whole world compared with Sebastian? A woman's home is where her husband and children are.

In this letter he said that his appointment as Cantor to the Thomas Schule had not proved so advantageous as it had been described to him, that many of the fees belonging to it had been reduced or stopped, that Leipzig was very expensive to live in, as in Thuringia he could do better with four hundred thalers than with twice as many in Leipzig owing to the excessive cost of living. But the thing that more than all made his life as Cantor difficult, as he said in this letter, was that the authorities were very strange folks, with small love for music, so that he lived under almost constant

vexation, jealousy, and persecution, to the extent that he felt compelled to seek, with God's assistance, his fortune elsewhere.

But when things had reached this pitch of discomfort they became easier, on the death of the old Rector, Herr Ernesti, and the appointment to that post of Sebastian's old Weimar friend, Herr Gesner. I will not forget his pleased face when he came to tell me of Gesner's appointment—"Now Magdalena, we shall find that many things will be easier." And I kissed him thankfully, and felt very glad, for it not only greatly disturbed my heart to see him so harassed, but I knew it injured his music, and that, I felt, was a very serious matter, as I knew God had sent him to make music for this troubled world, and if the world troubled him so that he could not make this music then that would be a very ill thing.

The new Rector, though of such delicate health he had to be carried to and from the Schule in a chair, was full of energy and enthusiasm and goodness. Though a learned scholar he was most kindly in heart, and I, indeed, was filled with respectful gratitude towards him, as he understood and appreciated Sebastian. There grew up a great friendship—or rather it was renewed and increased—between the Rector and the Cantor, and no longer were the Council so difficult about the music and about supplying the necessary scores and other matters required by Sebastian. In particular he desired for the choir a fine collection of motets and responses that was then to be had, and as the Rector interested himself in the matter he obtained them. Also, Herr Gesner would often look in on Sebastian when he was giving a singing lesson to the boys, and listen with pleasant encouragements to the practisings—a matter in which other Rectors had little concerned themselves. In all possible ways he showed the other masters and the Council in what honour and friendship he held the Cantor and his music.

I was greatly pleased because one day the Rector came to me with some manuscript in his hand, and said in his courtly and yet friendly way, "Dame Bach, canst thou spare me a little leisure to listen to a small thing I have written about thy honoured husband?" I requested him to be seated and gave him all my attention while he told me that he was editing a learned book in Latin by one called, if I remember rightly, Quintilianus. And in this book somebody named Fabius remarks on the many-sided capacity of a man who plays the lyre, and at the same time sings and marks time with his foot. "All this," wrote Rector Gesner (I asked and obtained his permission to copy out this piece for my own delectation), "All this, my dear Fabius, you would consider very trivial could you but rise from the dead and hear Bach: how he, with both hands, and using all his fingers, either on a keyboard, which

seems to consist of many lyres in one, or on the instrument of instruments, the Organ, of which the innumerable pipes are made to sound by means of bellows; here with his hands, and there with the utmost celerity with his feet, elicits many of the most various yet harmonious sounds: I say, could you but see him, how he achieves what a number of your lyre-players and six hundred flute-players could never achieve, presiding over thirty or forty performers all at once, recalling this one by a nod, another by a stamp of the foot, another with a warning finger, keeping time and tune; while high notes are given out by some, deep tones by others, and notes between them by others. Great admirer as I am of antiquity in other respects, yet I am of the opinion that my one Bach, and whosoever that may chance to be that resembles him, unites in himself many Orpheuses, and twenty Arions."

It may be understood what pleasure that passage gave to me, and how many times I read it, till I knew it by heart and could tell it to such of our children as were old enough to understand it. Though not a trained musician himself, which made it the more remarkable, Rector Gesner had most ably set forth the manner of Sebastian's way of conducting a cantata or instrumental concert. According to circumstances he would sometimes, especially if he had a large number of singers and instrumentalists to control, beat the time with a roll of music in his hand, or, taking his seat at the harpsichord or clavier, partly set the time by his own playing and partly by beating it with one hand while the other was employed on the instrument. His son Emanuel said of him, "He was very accurate in conducting, and in time, which he generally took at a very lively pace, he was always sure." Many of the rehearsals of the Church music took place in our house, as there was no harpsichord in the Thomas Schule, though there was one in the Organ-loft at St. Thomas's, but in the winter it was more comfortable to have the rehearsals at home, and so many a time I have seen Sebastian conducting and teaching the makers of music as the Herr Rector describes it. He was a most inspiring leader, seeming all compact of the music, his hands looking as though they drew it from the air, and his face full of happiness when things were going well—but not a single false note or dragged tempo was missed by his keen ear, and he never was contented till the music, all the voices, all the instruments, flowed as one harmonious stream in perfect tune and pitch, and to attain that harmony and unity meant much hard work for him and for those under his direction. But—except he were dealing with wilful and thick-headed boys—he had the power of inspiring enthusiasm and devotion in all those who had any feeling for music and any knowledge of it, and they worked willingly and hard to obtain his approval. As he himself said, "It is well known that those among the students who are lovers

of music are always ready and willing with their offers of assistance. I, for my own part, have never had with the students any unpleasantness, they are wont to help me in both instrumental and vocal music without hesitation, and do so to this hour, freely and without payment."

He was brought into still closer contact with those who had a care for music when, in the year 1729, he became Director of the famous Musical Union founded by Herr Telemann. This Union, under his guidance, gave very beautiful musical performances once a week, in the time of summer on Wednesday afternoons from four o'clock to six o'clock in the Zimmermann Garden in Wind Mill Street, and in the winter season the concerts were on Friday evenings from eight to ten of the clock in the Zimmermann Coffee House. During the times of the Fairs, the Musical Union played twice in each week, on both Wednesday and Friday. Also, under Sebastian's direction the Union gave several special concerts, performing the music he wrote for them, as on the Queen's birthday, in December 1733, he gave a performance of his *Dramma per Musica*, and, a month later, a work he wrote for the coronation festival. Sebastian controlled the Musical Union for some years and brought it to a high state of competence, giving some very beautiful performances for the delectation of those people in our town who understood and appreciated music.

I heard most of these concerts and many of the rehearsals of the Schule choirs that took place in our house, and used, when I could spare the time, to go and listen to those that took place elsewhere, and on one occasion, when I could not go, one of my husband's pupils, Johann Christian Kittel, who at the time was living with us, came and told me all about the rehearsal of a cantata. "Caspar had to accompany on the harpsichord," he told me, "and thou mayest imagine that he could not venture on playing too meagre an accompaniment from the figured bass, and he seemed to me a little nervous, especially as he had always to be prepared to find the Herr Cantor's hands and fingers suddenly coming in over his arm, and without troubling him any further the accompaniment completed with masses of harmony, which amazed him even more than the unexpected proximity of his strict master. What a wonderful man is our master!—there is not such another in all Germany, and I do not know whether we love him or fear him most." "I think I know, Johann," I said, smiling. "Well, yes, thou art right—but still, 'tis a terrible thing to vex him."

These young men, Sebastian's pupils, who passed in procession year by year through our house, some staying with us many years, some a lesser time, were nearly all of them a source of interest and pleasure to me, as they

were, in a still closer sense, to their master. They used to come fresh and impressionable to him—only very occasionally were they filled with self-importance, and very soon, if they were any good at all, they lost that and became very humble when they saw the greatness of Sebastian's nature and of his powers—and quickly he discovered to them the solemnity of the calling of a musician, the hard work, the uplifted heart, the devotion it required. "He lights a flame in our breasts," one said to me on leaving, "and music will always speak to us with his voice." To me it was beautiful to see these young men gathered like disciples round my Sebastian, so eager, so devoted, so full of the ardour of youth and music, working very hard, copying score after score of their master's music that they might bear it away with them when they left him, studying counterpoint and composing themselves under his direction, and presenting the results of their labours to him with a nice mixture of trembling and pride, practising many instruments, but more particularly the clavier and the Organ, studying hard in all things, and eating—well, only I knew what they would get through in the way of food and drink. "Music makes us very hungry, Frau Bach," they would say, following me into the kitchen to beg for a bowl of black broth or a cup of almond milk and a heller-loaf, "and when the Herr Cantor is pleased with us we are so cheered that we must eat, and when he is not then we must sustain our drooping spirits!" They were a merry set of young men, though they took their music very seriously.

These, of course, were Sebastian's proper pupils, who were going to devote their lives to music, in whom he took the deepest and most fatherly interest, but in the latter years of his life he had a certain number of amateur pupils who rather bothered him by insisting on having a few lessons from "Bach of Leipzig," as he was by that time called. He tried to some extent to get rid of this kind of pupil in whom he was not greatly interested, by charging more for the lessons, but when that did not frighten them away, he accepted such number as he could spare time for, as the remuneration was of considerable assistance to us. But if any of these pupils proved too conceited or too careless he promptly turned them out of doors. I remember one musical amateur of the clavichord who was given a certain piece of music to study and when he returned at his next lesson proceeded to play it with a different tempo and fingering from that Sebastian had marked for him. "I think it sounds better this way," he declared blandly, "and I find thy manner of using the thumb difficult, so I preferred to do it my own way." Sebastian's face darkened for a moment, then it cleared, and he said with a smile, "Sir, thou art evidently too advanced for my teaching, so we will bring these lessons to an immediate conclusion." "Oh," said the fine gentleman, rather

taken aback, “I think I might learn something from you.” But Sebastian never gave him another lesson. If he saw conceit proceeded from sheer stupidity he rarely troubled himself to reprove it, even when it took the form of expecting him to listen to compositions of no worth. Herr Hurlebusch of Brunswick came once to our house, bringing with him some easy clavier sonatas of his own writing, which he proceeded to play to his own satisfaction, though hardly to anyone else’s, as we in our household were used to music of a different order. Sebastian listened in courteous silence, which Herr Hurlebusch took for extreme admiration, as it was his habit to expect people to be smitten mute by the wonders of his playing, and when he departed he presented his published sonatas to Friedemann and Emanuel, exhorting them to their diligent perusal and practice, as music of that quality would be very helpful to them—“In teaching you what to avoid,” said Sebastian, with a quiet twinkle when the self-satisfied composer was well out of earshot.

But his own regular pupils were very different to these fine gentlemen, and among them certain names stand out as particularly dear to Sebastian and particularly good musicians. That Martin Schubart, whom I never knew, who was his first pupil, always had a steady place in his affectionate regard, and then there was dear Christoph Altnikol, who married our daughter Elisabeth, and the two Krebs, father and son—it was of the son, Johann Ludwig Krebs, so admirable a musician and Sebastian’s pupil for nine years, that he made a little joke, saying, “he was the only Krebs (crab) in his Bach (brook).” Ludwig cherished with particular care the testimonial his master gave him on his leaving, in which Sebastian wrote: “The bearer of this, Herr Johann Ludwig Krebs, has asked me to help him by giving him a testimonial of his conduct on our Foundation. I have no reason to refuse him this service, in fact I am glad to do it, as I am persuaded that we have trained him, especially in music, in which he distinguished himself among us by his playing on the clavier, violin, and lute, and equally in composition, in such a way that he should have no hesitation in letting people hear him, as will appear more fully when he does so. I therefore trust that he will obtain Divine assistance to help him to advancement, and I recommend him once again most heartily.”

I cannot write a list of all the pupils, there were too many, but among those who distinguished themselves and proved that they had profited by the incomparable teaching they had received was Gottlieb Goldberg, a very beautiful clavier player who became clavicenist to Baron von Kayserling, and for whom Sebastian wrote an Air with Thirty Variations for a two-manuelled harpsichord, which we commonly called the Goldberg Variations.

Another pupil of whom Sebastian thought very highly was Johann Philipp Kirnberger, who is now teaching in Berlin and who bases all his teaching on what he learned from his master. When Kirnberger first became Sebastian's pupil he worked so hard and with such unceasing ardour that he fell ill of an intermittent fever, and was confined to his room for many weeks. In the times when he was free from the fever he continued to work with extreme diligence, and Sebastian, being touched by his indomitable spirit and devotion to music, used to go to his lodging to give the lessons, instead of the pupil coming to him in the usual way, as it was bad for Kirnberger to go out, and difficult for him to send his scores and exercises backwards and forwards. Kirnberger had the greatest reverence for his master, and this instance of his kind consideration filled his heart with deep gratitude, which one day he tried stumblingly to express. "Say nothing about gratitude, my dear Kirnberger," Sebastian answered him, "I am glad thou wishest to study music with thoroughness, and it only depends upon thyself to make all I have learned thy own. I ask nothing of thee but the assurance that thou wilt in time hand this small knowledge on to other good pupils, who may not be content with the ordinary *lirum-larum*." This Sebastian's "good pupil" has certainly spent his life in doing ever since he himself began to teach.

A few days ago a pupil of Kirnberger's, who was passing through Leipzig, specially came to see me—he said, with a courtesy we do not always receive from the young, that he did himself much honour in waiting upon the widow of the great Cantor, for whose memory he had acquired such reverence from Herr Kirnberger, and that he had a little story to tell me which he thought might give me some pleasure. On a day a week or two past, he told me, he went to Herr Kirnberger's for his lesson, but when he reached his room found a scene of commotion, a splash of water on the floor, a velvet cloth laid over a portrait of Sebastian which he possesses and cherishes with much devotion (it gives me comfort in these sad days to think of the few faithful hearts who still reverence and love our Sebastian's memory), and Kirnberger himself with an irate countenance from which the wrath faded into kindness as he beheld his surprised pupil on the threshold. "Enter," he cried, "my room is once more habitable: I have refreshed the atmosphere and washed the chair, and I will now unveil the Portrait that thou mayest be permitted to gaze upon it again!" For a few moments, said the young man, after this greeting, he almost imagined his honoured master's senses must be a little unbalanced by some shock, till he heard what had happened. It appeared that but an hour before his arrival a wealthy Leipzig linen merchant had been to see Kirnberger on a matter of business. After a

few moments he noticed Sebastian's portrait on the wall, and exclaimed, "Why, great heavens, to think of thou hanging up in a place of honour a portrait of our late Cantor Bach. He was but a rough person, and if the vain fool has not had himself painted in a rich velvet coat!" This was too much for the good Kirnberger (well I remembered him to be of a disposition somewhat impetuous and with the warm musician's temper), who quickly rose and taking hold of the merchant with both hands propelled him to the door, saying in a loud voice, "Out, dog! Out, dog!" and rushed him into the street with little ceremony. Then he returned to his room and proceeded to have the chair in which the merchant had sat thoroughly washed, and the contamination of his presence removed by the burning of aromatics. I could not help laughing a little as this story was told to me, but tears came, too, at the sign of Kirnberger's warm and faithful love towards Sebastian. "The great Patron Saint of music," Kirnberger once called him to me, "none of your pretty Italianate Saint Cecilias for me, but our good German Saint Sebastian, who in his single mind contained the whole of music!"

It is like light in a dark room to recall to my memory in these days of loneliness those enthusiasms and ardours of Sebastian's pupils. I am not sure if there is any relationship in this world quite so pleasing to the mind as the relationship of master and pupil, both united in the pure pursuit of an art so lovely as the art of music—the master experienced, full of knowledge, guiding, inspiring the young minds that come to him, severe but kind, permitting nothing to receive his approval but the best of which the pupil is capable, perceiving and drawing out hidden gifts; while the pupil studies, watches, listens, values each word that comes from those wise lips, flings his whole heart into obtaining the cherished approval of his master. Those at least were the relations that existed between Sebastian and his pupils—the real pupils, who lived with him and loved him—in our house. And, of course, the pupils who had the fullest measure of his teaching and his influence were his own sons. To all who worked hard—and it must be said of most of them that they did, for the good master makes the good pupil—he was so exceedingly gentle. In my memory has remained a little word he said to Emanuel, who, when studying composition, found himself perplexed and embarrassed in a certain modulation and informed his father of this difficulty, who thereupon took the pen from his hand and put all to rights, returning the score with these words, "My son, suppose you were to try it this way?" Surely it were hardly possible to set error straight with more sensitive consideration?

It was one of the happinesses of my life that these young men, when their feelings overflowed, so often came to me to talk about their master:

"Mother Bach, do let us talk a little with thee," they would say, and I always knew of whom and of what they wished to speak. "It both commands our reverence and quickens our heart," said a dear pupil of Sebastian's, Heinrich Gerber, to me on one occasion, "to see this man of so great a genius sitting down among his pupils, and explaining with such patience the elementary rules of harmony, or how to play from the figured bass, or the proper use of the fingers on the clavichord. We saw, and wondered at, in him the result of his methods, how the most exact knowledge and the finest executive power were combined in him. And then the times when he suddenly stopped teaching, swept aside the books and the exercises, and sitting down himself at the clavier or the Organ, showed us the flight of his genius in improvisation! Heavens above! those were the hours for which we lived. What music—I would lie awake at night (which thou knowest was never easy to me) to recall it to my mind. It made me want to shout for joy, it made me want to weep. Those are the hours we will none of us forget till we are cold in our graves." I remember the flush on his young countenance as he said this to me. Heinrich Gerber had a particularly strong feeling of reverence and attachment to Sebastian. He came to Leipzig partly that he might study law, but even more that he might study music under the Cantor of the Thomas Schule, but he was six months in our town before he summoned up the courage to present himself before Sebastian and ask for lessons, so great was his admiration and his awe. But Sebastian, as always to those who truly loved music, was very kind, and at the first interview put his hand on the young man's shoulder and called him "fellow-countryman," for he came from Thuringia like himself. Heinrich was positively trembling with a mixture of happiness and fear at his first lesson, when Sebastian placed his "Inventions" on the clavier, and from those he rapidly progressed to the "Well-Tempered Clavichord," for which he always had a peculiar affection, as he had the good fortune to hear Sebastian play them right through three separate times in his own unapproachable manner. Sebastian would sometimes in this way reward a diligent pupil, and saying he felt indisposed to teach, seat himself at the instrument and play to his enchanted listener the work he might be studying and much other music, sometimes for an hour or more together. In any case he made a rule to play himself to his pupils the music they were to learn, saying, "That's how it ought to sound," so that the complete form and rhythm of the piece rose before their minds and they knew to what end their efforts must aim.

For a time Sebastian had a young pupil who came from Italy, Paolo Cavatini, whom at first I thought a strange and troublesome boy. Among our wholesome Germans he was dark, saturnine, sulky, jealous, but

extraordinarily gifted Sebastian thought him, and he had not been with us long before he developed a passionate devotion to his master. He never seemed happy away from him, and followed him all the time with his great dark, melancholy eyes. He was distressingly jealous of the other pupils, and declared violently that their "heavy Saxon minds" could by no possibility appreciate such a God-sent genius as Sebastian. If Sebastian for any reason was not pleased with his work he would fling himself upon the floor without ado and weep in the way a child weeps when it is angry and hurt. We were all puzzled by him and me he frightened a little, he was so passionate and uncontrolled, but Sebastian seemed to understand him better than the rest of us (Friedemann frankly hated him), and was very patient with him. He did and said the strangest things. One day he came rushing into the room, looking particularly wild, and threw himself full length on the rug, glaring at me who was seated with the mending basket at the table in a curious excited manner. "Thou sittest there and sews," he burst out, "and dost thou know thy husband has been making music before which the choirs of Heaven might bow their heads? Dost thou love him? dost thou understand him?—but what woman could? Mend his clothes and cook his dinner, that is the best thou canst do for him!" I was a little angered, but not much, for the boy was so distraught. "Paolo," I said, "thy remarks are not very seemly to thy master's wife: but I do love him and even maybe understand him better than thou believest." "Forgive me," he begged, suddenly looking very miserable, "I hardly know what I say, that music moves me out of reason, and I love him so much it hurts me." At his saying that some impulse stirred in me and I bent over and kissed the top of his curly head. "I know how that feels, Paolo," I said to him, and from thenceforward we were friends. There was not a very long space that he was with us after that little scene, for in a short time, it being the season of winter, he caught a chill and died. One could not but feel he was not fitted for this life, so passionate, excitable, and unbalanced he was. But he became so gentle, even patient, in his few days' illness. Sebastian's heart was terribly wrung by his dying—he left all his work to be with him, except composing, for he would take his score to the boy's bedside and write it upon his knee, or just sit with Paolo's hand in his and those dark eyes fixed upon his countenance. "I am happier than I have ever been," Paolo said to me once with a beautiful smile, when I entered the sick room carrying a posset for him, and found him holding Sebastian's hand in his thin one and looking strangely contented—a look he never had before. He was beginning serious composition when he died, and Sebastian thought so highly of his work that he said, "I fear we have lost another Scarlatti—there was genius in that boy, which explains his unhappiness in this world."

Sebastian's method of teaching composition was quite different from the stiff and lifeless rules set by other teachers. Harmony, counterpoint, playing from the figured bass, the art of fugue—he taught them all in a way that made them real and interesting. He began at once with four-part harmony over a figured bass, and he made all his pupils write each part or "voice" on a separate stave, so that there should be no confused or meaningless parts—no voice saying nothing but foolishness. If a voice had nothing to say it must be silent. The inner parts must be smooth and have a real melodic line—indeed, Sebastian's own harmony was really multiple melody—and no note was to be permitted existence without a proper pedigree. No haphazard additions to a chord for the sake of impressiveness would he ever countenance: "And where do these notes come from?" he would say, striking his quill through them, half-quizzical, half-stern, "have they fallen from the sky upon thy little score?" His pupil, Kirnberger, said it was his rule that it is best to begin with four-part counterpoint, as it is impossible to write good two-or three-part counterpoint until one is familiar with that in four parts. For as the harmony must of necessity be incomplete, one who is not thoroughly acquainted with four-part writing cannot decide with certainty what should be left out of the harmony in any given case. After Sebastian's death, this good Kirnberger was engaged in a musical controversy with Herr Marpurg, and as a final word always quoted his master. This made Marpurg angry, who exclaimed, so I was told, "Good God! why should old Bach be dragged into a discussion in which he no part would have taken had he been still living? No one will be persuaded ever that he would expound the principles of harmony according to the views of his pupil, Herr Kirnberger. I am convinced that this great man had more than one manner of teaching, and that he would always adapt his methods according to the capacities of each pupil, as he saw that he was more or less naturally gifted, or quick in learning or slow. And I am well assured that if there exist any instructions in harmony in the handwriting of this master they will not be found only containing certain things which Herr Kirnberger wants to put before us as Sebastian Bach's way of teaching."

Herr Marpurg is right as to the variety of Sebastian's methods of teaching, but he is wrong in thinking that Kirnberger's reverence for his master would allow him to claim anything as emanating from him which had not really done so.

All his pupils in composition had to work out their ideas in their minds before ever they put pen to paper, and he would allow no composing at the clavier. If they lacked the faculty of doing this, of composing mentally, then he discouraged them from any attempt, saying they were evidently intended

for some other part in life than the hard one of a composer—"A thing of small rewards and much labour," as he once said. But that was said in a moment of bitterness, and his habitual attitude is more fully shown in some rules he gave his pupils: "Figured bass is the most perfect foundation of music," he wrote; "it is executed with both hands in such a manner that the left hand plays the notes that are written while the right adds consonances and dissonances thereto, making an agreeable harmony for the glory of God and the justifiable gratification of the soul. Like all music, the figured bass should have no other end and aim than the glory of God and the recreation of the soul; where this is not kept in mind there is no true music, but only an horrible clamour and ranting."

Sebastian wrote out with much patience careful "Rules and Instructions for Playing Thorough-bass or Accompaniment in Four Parts, made for his Scholars in Music," in which he gave rules and examples in the clearest abundance and with the kindest understanding of their difficulties, as twice he gives a simpler alternative "for those who cannot remember this rule." In my Clavier Büchlein of 1725 he also wrote the construction of the scales in the major and minor modes and some rules of figured bass, while at the end he wrote a hurried little note, "The other points which ought to be remembered are better conveyed by word of mouth than in writing." In which all those fortunate enough to have been his pupils will heartily agree—no written rules could compare with the experience of being taught by Sebastian himself, of hearing his lucid explanations, of laying one's difficulties before him and having them solved by his quick and unfaltering knowledge.

Sebastian's own gifts in filling out parts and improvising were, of course, of an extraordinary nature, and only to be properly appreciated by those who were themselves trained musicians. If a figured bass part was put before him when he was at the clavier or Organ, he would instantly play a full trio or quartet from it. But this was generally when he had already played some music by one of his favourite composers, which always stimulated his mind. "Thou must know," said a friend of ours, Magister Pitschel, who brought an acquaintance to our house to hear Sebastian improvise, "that this famous man who in our town enjoys so great a reputation as a musician and is the admiration of all connoisseurs, cannot, so it is said, ravish people with his wonderful combinations of tones unless he has set his imagination going by first playing from a score." Sebastian, who overheard this remark with his hands poised over the keys, smiled quietly to himself and said nothing.

As I look back I see there were many occasions when Sebastian said nothing—he let people argue and discuss all about him, but he rarely joined in unless it were some serious question involving the art or practice of music, when he said what he had to say and then ceased. He never took trouble to explain himself to the outside world, or only did so when certain rights and privileges of his position were in question, about which he was very tenacious, as was but fitting. His mind was so occupied with the deep things of music that I had at times the feeling that he was almost unconscious of us, though we thronged about him—and this with no lessening of his affectionate goodness to us. I have had awful moments when I looked at him, seated in his armchair, with the children and myself all round engaged on our various pursuits and yet I felt that he was all alone—above us, beyond us, and lonely. Sometimes the feeling was so strong and painful that I would upset my sewing or my music copying and run to him and, kneeling by his side, put my arm round him. "Why, Magdalena," he would say, tender and kind, "what is it? what has perturbed thee?" But I never told him. How could I? The great ones of this world are always lonely, and in that only follow afar off their Exemplar, the Greatest of All.

Of course, it was when he composed music and even more when he improvised it—especially at the Organ—that he expressed his great heart and soared to those regions that were native to him and where he, and only he, as I think, was fully at home. Some of the most glorious music that ever came to his mind will never be heard by human ears again—he made it once and never wrote it down, and it has died with his death. There are a small company of us who heard him make this music, who listened with uplifted hearts to the heavenly harmonies that flowed from his fingers, when we die the very memory of it will be gone. This seems to me of a great sadness.

Pupils of his whose musicianly judgment and knowledge was based on his own teaching, have told me that some of the music he improvised, flung into the echoing air to fade into silence, was more wonderful than any of the music he wrote down for Organ or clavichord, wonderful as the written music is. There was a curious contradiction about Sebastian: in the things of daily life he was careful and meticulous and economical, in the making of music he had a marvellous prodigality and richness. But it must not be forgotten that this richness, though truly the gift of God, was based on hard and unceasing work and study all his youth, indeed, fully until he was thirty years of age—or, I might say with greater truth, till the day of his death. His mind never slumbered in a lethargy of self-satisfaction, and he never ceased the task of revision of his music—he was engaged on that work at the time

of his dying—and I always felt the words of Ecclesiasticus belonged to him, "For a dream cometh through the multitude of business."

Therefore the very Muse of music seemed to speak from his fingers when he let his spirit flow in improvisation, and time stood still for his listeners. It is entirely impossible to give any idea, to those who have not heard him, of the singular expressiveness and beauty of his inspirations. But I can give a little account Johann Kirnberger wrote in a letter to a friend which came into my hands through the kindness of the friend: "When the Herr Cantor sat down to the Organ," he wrote, "irrespective of Divine service, as he was often requested to do by strangers, he would choose some theme and play it in every form of Organ composition in such a way that the matter remained the same, even when he had played uninterruptedly for two hours or more. First he would use the theme as introductory, and for a fugue with full Organ. Then he would show his skill in varying the stops, in a trio, a quartet, or what not, still on the same theme. Then would follow a chorale, and with its melody the first theme would again appear in three or four different parts, and in the most various and intricate developments. Finally, the close would consist of a fugue for full Organ, in which either a new arrangement of the original theme was predominant or it was continued with one or two other subjects, according to its character."

Most organists were astonished and somewhat alarmed when they saw Sebastian's Organ registration—for he followed none of the accepted ideas unless they suited his need. They imagined that such combinations of stops could not in any manner sound well together, so they were the more astonished when he began to play and they perceived that the Organ tones had never sounded so beautiful, even though the registration was strange and unusual to their ears. Sebastian had pleasure, also, when improvising, to go into all the possible keys, even the most remote, but so skilful were his modulations that few of his hearers realized this.

A musician well known at the Court of the King of Prussia, Herr Quantz, who wrote a treatise on "The Art of Playing the Flute," in which Sebastian was much interested, said in this volume that Sebastian Bach, "this admirable musician," had brought Organ-playing to the highest possible degree of perfection, and that it was to be hoped that when he died it may not be suffered to decline or to be lost, as is greatly to be feared from the small number of persons who nowadays bestow pains upon this lofty art. But in saying this, Herr Quantz must have forgotten the number of Sebastian's Organ pupils, whom he had so wonderfully imbued with his spirit. All these tributes to his genius I treasured up in my mind—they gave

me far more pleasure than they gave Sebastian himself, though he always valued the appreciation of musicians. His knowledge of the theory of music was profound and deep, but had nothing of the pedant about it. Indeed, one of his friends said of him, “Let anyone ask the great Bach, who has a perfect command of all artifices of art, and whose astounding works one cannot see or hear without amazement, whether, in the attainment of this great skill and dexterity, he even once thought of the mathematical relations of the tones, and whether he once consulted mathematics in the construction of so many musical artifices.”

I should say he certainly did not—he who had music in his blood and bone had small need of mathematics. He had a curious instinctive knowledge of the behaviour of sound, as is shown by the fact that once, when he was in Berlin, he was taken to see the new-builded Opera House, and when he stood in the gallery of the great dining-room he said at once that if someone standing in a corner of the hall spoke in a whisper another person standing in the corner diagonally opposite with his face to the wall would hear every word, though no one else could do so. The experiment was at once tried and Sebastian proved right, though even the architect had not suspected this curious acoustic quality of the room.

Perhaps because of his deep-seated natural understanding of all musical matters, Sebastian was less rigid than many teachers and allowed to those of his pupils who showed ability a certain freedom from rules: “Two fifths and two octaves must not follow each other,” he would tell them, and add with one of the little smiles that so lighted up his rather stern face, “That is not only a *vitium*, but it sounds ill, and what sounds ill cannot be music!” He himself never hesitated to break the rules, if he felt a pressing need to do, and I always felt what Martin Luther said of a favourite musician fitted Sebastian most perfectly, “He is the master of the notes; they have to do as he wills; other composers have to do as the notes will.” Another saying of Luther’s that Sebastian himself often quoted with satisfaction was, “The Devil does not need all the good tunes for himself!”

And both he and Luther took care that he did not have them.

PART V

All this time our young family increased around us, though, alas, when the cradle had been replenished it was so often made empty again by the grudging hand of death. There were times, I confess, when I felt it cruel to bear children but to lose them—all the hopes and love buried in the little graves besides which Sebastian and I have so often stood hand in hand, silent. But I knew these rebellious feelings towards God were impious and I tried my best to suppress them. My first daughter, Christiane Sophie, only lived to attain the age of three years, and my second son, Christian Gottlieb, was that tender age when he too died. Ernestus Andreas lived but a few days, and the next child, Regine Johanna, had not reached her fifth birthday when she too departed from this world. Christiane Benedicta, who was born just after the Natal Day of the Babe of Bethlehem, could not face the bitter winter and died when the New Year was but four days old—how joyful had we felt it that our new child should arrive at the holy time of Christmas, and how bleak seemed the New Year when Sebastian, with tears in his kind eyes, knelt by my bedside and told me the small infant had left us. Christiane Dorothea lived but a summer beyond the first year of her life, and Johann August lived only three days. So out of our thirteen children we lost seven, which sadly hurt our hearts, but we tried to feel it was the chastening of the Lord, and cherished the more the children we had left in our diminished family. When we had come home from the burial of one of these young ones and I was sitting sadly down, doing nothing—I never could get used to losing them, though kind matrons of my acquaintance came to comfort me and tell me it was the lot of all mothers, to bear children and to lose them and be happy if they kept and reared the half of those they bore—Sebastian sat down by my side with a book in his hand, out of which he read me what Luther said when he lost his daughter, Magdalene, and saw her lying in her coffin: “Thou darling Lena, how happy art thou now! thou wilt arise again, and shine as a star, yea, as the sun. How strange it is to know so surely that she is at peace and happy and yet to be so sad.” And he also read to me what Luther wrote in a letter to a friend: “You will have heard that my dearest daughter, Magdalene, is born again in the everlasting kingdom of Christ. Although I and my wife ought only to thank God with joy for her happy departure, whereby she has escaped the power of the world, the flesh, the Turks and the Devil, yet so strong is natural love that we cannot bear it without sobs and sighs from the heart, without a bitter sense of death in

ourselves. So deeply printed on our hearts are her ways, her words, her gestures, whether alive or dying, that even Christ's death cannot drive away this agony."

After I had listened to this reading I was able to weep against Sebastian's shoulder, and then I felt somewhat comforted.

But to enable us to bear these griefs our losses were mercifully spread through a space of years, and we had the six children who lived to console us for the seven children who died. And whether we were sad or not we had to keep our young family happy, for sadness does not fit the faces of children. Also, I had my needful work to be done in the house, and Sebastian his daily labours in the Thomas Schule and Church and all the writing of his music.

So long as Herr Gesner was Rector of the Thomas Schule things were well with us in regard to Sebastian's official work, and he had a few years as Cantor without frictions and disagreements to disturb his peace. He worked very hard and composed so many cantatas and other music that even I a little lost count of them. Of course, it was but natural he should write with greater freedom when his mind was free from outside harassments. When he got involved in quarrels, as he did sometimes with the Council and the Consistory—and all his serious quarrels were on matters connected with his rights and standing as Cantor—he became at times extremely angry, and, what was more difficult, extremely obstinate, which was always one of the Bach ways. I tried at times to plead with him not to be so stubborn when a little yielding might have made things smooth. But it was no use: he would pat my shoulder (he never let his anger with others overflow on to me) and say, "My dear wife, this is a matter that concerns me, not thee." But, of course, it did concern me—how could it not, when I saw the ill-effect it had on his peace?

After Herr Gesner resigned his post as Rector of the Thomas Schule, and in his place was appointed the second Ernesti, Herr Johann August Ernesti, things changed to our disadvantage, and I now come to an affair in our life at Leipzig which gives me much pain to recall—the long quarrel Sebastian had with the new Rector and with the Council and Consistory. This lasted for nearly two years, and though Sebastian eventually emerged successfully from it owing to the intervention of the Electoral Prince—nevertheless it cast a cloud over that time and I fear did more harm to his happiness than he would ever admit, even to me. When the feud was ended he never quite returned to his old place in the Schule and the general life of Leipzig, but withdrew himself more into the seclusion of his house and his work.

At the first matters were quite pleasant with the Herr Rector Ernesti, who had been godfather to two of our children. He was much younger than Sebastian, almost young enough to be his son—therefore the more reason that he should have treated his Cantor with some respect and consideration, even though he was his official superior. But the affair of the Prefect Gottlieb Theodor Krause entirely destroyed all friendliness of relationship between the Cantor and the Rector.

The probable root of all the trouble lay in the fact that the Herr Rector was absolutely indifferent to music, even contemptuous towards it, so that he would say to any boy he discovered practising a musical instrument, "So thou art going to be an ale-house fiddler, art thou?" This would not so much have mattered had he been content to leave the entire direction of all the musical concerns of the Thomas Schule in Sebastian's hands. But he would not, he interfered in the appointment of the prefects, and in particular promoted the prefect of the second choir to be prefect of the first choir, which was a serious matter involving the performance of the music, for, as Sebastian pointed out in a complaint he made to the Council, the prefect of the first choir must not only be a person of good voice and character, but he must have also the knowledge and ability to conduct the music when the Cantor is not able to be present.

Trouble first arose over the Prefect Theodor Krause, whom Sebastian had specially enjoined to keep strict watch over the smaller boys, some of whom were very unruly, and especially to punish with severity any disorderly conduct in church. On the occasion of a wedding, Krause found the boys behaving so badly that, warnings having failed, he proceeded to chastisement, and, the boys resisting, he gave them a somewhat heavier correction than he had intended. This being brought to the knowledge of the Rector he was extremely angry. In spite of Krause's excellent character and the fact that he was just going to the University, the Rector condemned him to a public flogging before the whole Schule. Sebastian was thunderstruck at this violent and unjust punishment of his prefect, and was prepared to take the blame of Krause's action on his own shoulders. He made two attempts to obtain remission of Krause's ignominious sentence, but the Rector would not be moved from his angry decision. Poor Gottlieb Krause came round to our house to learn the result of the appeal, and when Sebastian, with a set face, told him, he went very white and said, "Then, Herr Cantor, I shall have to run away and leave the Schule—I cannot face such disgrace." Sebastian himself came to the conclusion that this was the only way out, for the punishment was not only intentionally and cruelly vindictive, but Ernesti carried his rancour so far that he withheld Krause's possessions and singing

money, which were in his hands, till he was obliged to restore them by an order of the Council.

All this matter disturbed Sebastian very greatly: he was not only grieved for Krause, but he felt a serious injury had been done to his position as Cantor, and from that time he felt uncertain of the Rector. But that was not the end of the trouble—indeed, in a sense it was but the beginning. Gottlieb Krause's position as first prefect was given to another of the same name, Johann Krause. Sebastian did not think well of this young man—indeed, on one occasion when he and the Rector were returning homewards together from a wedding feast at which they had both been present, they fell to discussing this Krause and his fitness to a prefect's appointment, and Sebastian said he considered him "a disreputable dog." Ernesti agreed to some extent, but as Johann Krause was clever decided to make him a prefect, and Sebastian did not oppose, though he hardly approved. This, of course, was before all the trouble began. So on Gottlieb Krause's sudden departure from the Schule this Johann Krause was made first prefect in his place. But, as might have been expected, he did not prove satisfactory, and after a time Sebastian made him second prefect and promoted the third prefect to his place, telling the Rector what he had done and why. Ernesti at first made no objection to this change, but Krause was very injured and appealed to the Rector, who sent him to the Cantor. Sebastian at this became exceedingly angry, and in a fit of wrath told Krause, I fear unwisely, that he had made him second prefect in order to show the Rector, who had interfered in what was not his affair, who was master in this matter. Krause immediately told this to the Rector, who thereupon asked the Cantor for an explanation, and Sebastian, by now in a towering rage and without thought of any consequences, repeated his words to the Rector with no diminution of their vigour. I will not forget when Sebastian came home that evening—I did not know what had happened till later, though I had feared there was trouble brewing about this wretched Krause—he stood on the threshold of the room where we were (I thought with a pang he looked suddenly older) and he said, "My dears, do not speak to me just now, or I will say things I will regret. I would be alone for a while."

I think he felt he had put himself in a wrong position by being too hastily annoyed and letting the strong Bach temper, which as a rule he kept so well under control, rise up in him. Anyway, when the Rector demanded that Krause be reinstated in his position as first prefect he agreed to yield the point. But he was very sore and angry, and Krause was insolent and triumphant and behaved so badly at the next choir practice that it was plain he would be impossible as first prefect, so Sebastian took no steps to put

him back in his forfeited place. Then the Rector declared that if Krause was not reinstated by the Cantor he himself would do it the following Sunday morning. Sebastian wrapped himself in obstinate silence, so the Rector did as he threatened and sent Krause to tell Sebastian what he had done. This was before Matins—how sad a disturbance to occur on God's day of peace—and Sebastian at once went to the Superintendent, Herr Deyling, and told him what had happened. Then he went to St. Nicholas's Church, fetched the second prefect, Küttler, from thence, took him with him into St. Thomas's where the service had begun, turned out Krause in the middle of a hymn and put Küttler in his place. I myself think Sebastian should not have done this, that it was wrong and put him in the wrong—the one time in our life together when I ever ventured to think him less than wise—but the Bach temper and the Bach obstinacy were both thoroughly roused in him, and an angry man does not take heed to his ways. Ernesti, of course, was in the church, and saw this high-handed proceeding of the Cantor's, and he also, after the service, went to the Superintendent and won him over to his side. He reported this to Sebastian, who said he would not retract anything in the matter, let it cost what it might, and that he would lay a complaint in writing before the Council. The next thing done on this distressing Sunday was that before Vespers the Rector came to the Organ-loft and publicly forbade the choir boys, under penalty of heavy punishment, to carry out the Cantor's orders with regard to the prefects. This was extremely unjust and vindictive of the Rector, as by long-established use and custom all to do with the choir and the prefects rested in the Cantor's hands. When Sebastian arrived for the service and found Krause once more in the first prefect's place he simply took him by the collar and turned him bodily out. But the boys had been so intimidated by the Rector's remarks that Sebastian found no one dared lead the motet, so his good pupil, Krebs, did this for him. The next day Sebastian wrote a memorial to the Council in which he said that in the "Nicolai Church, at the afternoon service yesterday, to my great humiliation and dejection, not a single scholar would undertake to lead the singing, much less to conduct the motet, for fear of being punished. Indeed, the service would thereby have been interrupted had not most fortunately these duties been undertaken by an old scholar of St. Thomas's, of the name of Krebs, at my request. I represented in my late most humble memorial that the appointment of the prefect does not, according to the rules and usage of the Schule, pertain to the Rector; he has, moreover, by his mode of action, greatly vexed and offended against me in my official position, and thus weakened and indeed tried to deprive me of the full authority over the scholars in all matters of Church and other music which I ought to have."

The Council took no action in this matter, either for Sebastian or against him, but let things drift, and so the miserable affair went on for nearly two years, with a state of war between the Rector and the Cantor, which naturally had a very unhappy result upon the discipline of the Schule. They both wrote memorials to the Council stating their grievances, and Ernesti allowed himself to say spiteful things against Sebastian which were so contemptibly untrue that we could hardly be hurt by them—as that my most upright husband was bribable, as that an old specie thaler had many times made a soloist of a boy who was no soloist before. Sebastian laughed grimly when this remark came to his ears, but he was deeply wounded at the position into which he had been forced by the Rector's unwarranted interference with his proper rights, and it was a moral principle with him not to yield any of these rights in order to effect a compromise. Being a Bach, compromise was not much his way. "I have the special care and supervision of the first choir and I must know best who is most suited to me," he said with justice to the Council, "and nothing effectual can be achieved if the scholars are prevented from obeying me in all matters pertaining to the singing." And he ended by making the request (this went somehow to my heart, as curiously pathetic coming from him) that the Schule children be enjoined "to again render me the respect and obedience which are due to me, and so enable me for the future to fulfil the duties of my post."

The Council would not do anything definite one way or another, and so things dragged on, until in despair, Sebastian, who had at last received the appointment of composer to the Court at Dresden, which he had requested three years earlier, was emboldened to appeal to the Electoral Prince that the affair should be properly inquired into and his due rights as Cantor no longer withheld from him. The Prince returned a favourable answer and called upon the Consistory to duly inquire into and settle the complaint of Sebastian. Then at the Easter Fair of 1738 the Elector came himself to Leipzig, and Sebastian paid his respects to his royal patron and performed in his honour an "Abend-Musik," which was most kindly received. After perceiving the favour with which his Prince regarded him, the authorities of the Thomas Schule more or less ceased the petty persecutions to which they had subjected him.

In all the main questions of this dispute there can be small doubt Sebastian was within his right and the custom of long tradition was behind him. I fear he put himself a little wrong at the beginning by a certain violence and provocativeness of attitude. But imagine the intolerableness to such a man, of a reputation so great—there were people, though not of the Council or Consistory, who called him "the glory of Leipzig"—to be

checked and corrected by a person so insusceptible to music as Herr Ernesti, to be subjected to the insolence of an ill-conditioned youth like Krause, and the covertly-encouraged disrespect and disobedience of the boys of the Thomas Schule. This affair made me feel that it was a kind of waste of Sebastian that he should be teacher of music to small boys. So many others could be that—few or none could do what Sebastian could do.

Certainly it left a mark upon him, aged him, and made him keep more at home—though, indeed, that had always been the place where he ever was the happiest—to a quiet and domestic life, to undisturbed and constant work at his art. He withdrew very largely from participation in the public affairs of Leipzig. His children, his private pupils—most of whom simply boiled with indignation over this treatment of their beloved master and went about demanding Ernesti's head on a charger—and I did our utmost by our respect and affectionate devotion to salve the wounds his spirit had received. His nature was not light, and he felt things in the deeps of him of which he gave little outward sign, save to those few who knew him intimately. Many times through those long months when I saw the set of his mouth and droop of his big head, I wished we had gone to Russia or anywhere on the globe, so that he would have been with people who would a little have appreciated his greatness and not been so vindictive to his mistakes.

But of course there were pleasant things as well as unpleasant ones during this time. Sebastian went to Dresden when he received the title of Composer to the Saxon Court, and on the afternoon of the first day of December he played from two of the clock till four on the new Organ built by Silbermann in the Frauenkirche in the presence of many musicians and persons of distinction, including the Russian Ambassador, Count von Kayserling, who heard him with the profoundest admiration. And from such a scene as this he was on his return to Leipzig to be summoned before the Council and solemnly reproved because a choir boy in the Nicolai Church had happened to pitch a hymn too low for the congregation to sing, and told to see that it did not occur again.

Count von Kayserling, who was a great lover and connoisseur of music, became one of Sebastian's warmest admirers and came over from Dresden on many occasions to see him. Indeed, it was the Count's doing that Johann Goldberg became a pupil of Sebastian's, and a very brilliant one he proved, displaying on the clavier, which he studied unceasingly, a skill and facility and a rapidity of finger quite astonishing. For this pupil's playing Sebastian wrote that Air with Thirty Variations which is such a test of the player's ability that few will attempt it. The theme of this music first came into

Sebastian's mind in the Sarabande in G major, which I copied into my second Notenbuch. I was so vexed with myself because, when I was writing out in my book "Be thou but near," I turned two pages over by mistake, but I filled in the space with this sarabande, which later became the theme of the Goldberg Variations. This music was composed at the Count's request for Goldberg to play to him, as he suffered from sleepless nights and attendant melancholy, which he found best driven away by the strains of music. He was never weary of listening to these Variations, and gave to Sebastian for their composition the very munificent gift of a snuffbox containing a hundred louis d'or.

But it was not only the gifts and praise of the nobility that did Sebastian honour, he would think as much, if not more, of the humble tribute of a fellow-musician, as when Andreas Sorge, who was Court and town organist to the Count of Reuss, dedicated some little clavier pieces of his own to Sebastian, "the prince," as he called him, "of all clavichord and Organ players," and he also said in his dedication that "the great musical virtue which your Excellency possesses is embellished with the admirable virtue of affability and unfeigned love of your neighbour."

I think I have already said how hospitable Sebastian was. Our simple board was always open to any visitors to Leipzig who had a real care for music, whether they were famous people or poor students, and the stores of his wisdom and experience and the beauties of his playing were always freely given to them. Among our quite frequent visitors were the Director of the Opera at Dresden, Herr Hasse, the so famous composer of *opera seria*, and his wife the renowned singer, Faustina Bordoni. Frau Hasse was very gay and richly attired, also she was very kind and full of praise for Sebastian's music, some of which she sang extremely well in her powerful voice. Sebastian used to enjoy her society and that of her husband, but he said one day, after they had been with us, "I always feel as if my Magdalena had got flattened into a corner when Frau Hasse is here!" Which rather expressed my feelings also. I think that people who have travelled a great deal and seen the world and received so much fame and applause as Frau Faustina Hasse, always seem to take up a great deal of room in any apartment where they may be. But I did really like them both, for they appreciated and honoured Sebastian, and Herr Hasse was a man he always had pleasure in talking with, not only because he was so great an operatic composer, but because he was learned and without prejudice and pride, and not given to evil speaking of other musicians—in this being like Sebastian himself, who was entirely free of musical jealousies. Sebastian went sometimes to Dresden, usually with Friedemann, and he was always treated

there with distinguished respect and consideration. He enjoyed listening to the opera occasionally as a change from his own serious Church music, and when he felt inclined for a visit to Dresden would say to his son, "Well, Friedemann, shall we go to Dresden to hear the pretty little songs again?" I always was glad to see the father and son go off together on these little expeditions, for Sebastian returned refreshed and cheered from them. He was present at the first performance of Hasse's opera, "Cleofide," in which his wife, Faustina, appeared. On the following day, it being the 14th of September, Sebastian himself played on the Organ of St. Sophia's Church before the most distinguished musicians in Dresden. When Friedemann was organist at Dresden in 1733, Sebastian had still another reason for his journey thither in order to see the son so dear to him. Sometimes it was I and not Friedemann who went with him on one or two of his musical journeys, though somewhat rarely this happened, as it was always difficult for me to leave the house and the children, and by the time they were all big enough to be left neither Sebastian nor I greatly cared to travel far from our own abode. But in 1732 he was invited to Cassel to try the renovated Organ in St. Martin's Church there, which had been two years in restoration. He carried me with him on this expedition, and very handsomely considered we were by the Council of Cassel; they gave Sebastian fifty thalers for trying the Organ, and twenty-six thalers for his travelling money, while our expenses were paid at our lodgings, where we stayed eight days, and a manservant was provided to wait upon Sebastian. It was a very happy little holiday to me, casting off the cares of my household, wearing my two best gowns, one mulberry colour and the other blue, going about with my husband, observing the deference paid to him, hearing him play on several Organs, seeing all the sights in Cassel, and feeling, as Sebastian said to me with a smile, as though we were but newly espoused and first together, instead of being married a matter of nearly eleven years.

Of course, any member of the wide-branching Bach family, whether coming from Erfurt, Arnstadt, Eisenach, or any other part of Saxony, was sure of the warmest welcome under Sebastian's roof. He had educated his nephew, Bernhard, the son of the elder brother who partly brought him up, and no Bach ever appealed to him for assistance in vain. His cousin, Johann Elias Bach, now Cantor at Schweinfurth, was for a good while in Leipzig studying, and was a very welcome member of our family circle. Some time later, as a sign of gratitude, he sent Sebastian a small cask of new wine, but when it arrived and was opened it was found about a third part empty, "which is indeed a pity," said Sebastian, looking at it with a somewhat rueful countenance, "that of so noble a gift of God the smallest drop should have

been wasted." His cousin had offered to send him another such cask of wine at a later date, but Sebastian sat himself down at the table and carefully made out what the partially empty cask had already cost him for freight, delivery and town excise, and found that it came to nearly five groschen a measure. "No," he said, getting up after he had made these calculations, "we will not have any more wine from Schweinfurth, five groschen a measure is much too expensive for a present! But I must write and thank my good cousin for his well-intended kindness and present gift, and inform him of the reasons that I cannot afford another cask of wine."

But though he was, from necessity, also from his inherited Bach frugality, careful and scrupulous about all money matters, I remember an occasion on which he really wasted some groschen in pursuit of a bit of musical fun. He at one time quite often met a particular troop of beggars who always approached him with the same supplications rising to a crescendo of entreaty in which Sebastian declared he recognized a certain series of intervals. So he made ready to give them something and then pretended he could find no money on his person, whereupon the cry of the beggars became piercing, so he bestowed a small alms upon them which somewhat quietened their complaints. "But," he said, in telling us of this little episode one day, "I must satisfy myself as to whether a larger alms will not bring about a full resolution of that chord and a complete close on the key-note." So meeting the group of vagabonds—the "beggarly quartet" he called them—again he bestowed so liberal a dole that to his amusement and satisfaction the dissonance was resolved in the way he wished.

In another manner Sebastian did this for a friend of his Leipzig days, Christian Henrici, who wrote the texts for many cantatas and oratorios under the assumed name of "Picander." His earlier secular writings were not of the best reputation when Sebastian first came across him, but he perceived the young man's talent—"Picander" was fifteen years younger than Sebastian—and as he was in much need of a writer of texts for his vocal music, he took him in hand. "Picander" showed that he had good qualities in him, in spite of a certain coarseness and commonness of mind, for he responded to Sebastian's interest, became his admirer and friend and started writing the sort of sacred poetry Sebastian required. He said once to Sebastian that many of his friends had laughed to see him assuming an interest in Divine matters: but he did not wish to be thought quite unmindful of heavenly things, and considered it was only right to offer to his Creator the fresh fruits of his youth and not the worn-out remains of his old age if he ever attained to it. He wrote a year-book of cantatas, which in the preface he said were written "To the glory of God and at the request of many good friends." And

he went on to say, “I undertook the design the more readily, because I flatter myself that the lack of poetical charm may be compensated for the more readily by the loveliness of the music of our incomparable Capellmeister Bach, and that these songs may be sung in the principal churches of our pious Leipzig.” “Picander” was quite a good musician—which made him a much more useful helper to Sebastian as a writer of poetry—and he became a member of the Musical Society when it was under Sebastian’s direction.

I always felt that it was Sebastian’s unconscious influence—his uprightness, his love of all things which are fair and righteous, which had so excellent an effect upon the mind of Christian Henrici. To know Sebastian was without doubt to be influenced in this way, and to hear his music surely made one anxious to be good. I have said that Sebastian was not much elated by praise, and always took it very quietly, but once, when a cantata of his had just been sung, one of the students came to him and said, “Master, that music of thine makes me feel as though I could not do anything wrong for at least the whole of a week after hearing it!” I think that simple saying pleased Sebastian right to his heart, in a way that elaborate praises so rarely did.

An occupation on which Sebastian bestowed some of his leisure was the compiling of what he called the “Archives of the Bachs”—a sort of family tree and collection of records and compositions of various members of the Bach family. He always had a strong family feeling, a Bach was to him not just as other people, but one to whom he was drawn by invisible bonds of a shared ancestry and similar tastes, for almost unfailingly, to be a Bach meant to be a musician. The very letters of the name itself were a musical theme, as Sebastian would smilingly point out, and he wrote a fugue on this subject. As he grew older his thoughts often turned backwards to the earlier scenes of his life, to Eisenach, to Erfurt, and to Arnstadt. To Erfurt he went on one occasion, where he had long and friendly converse with a Bach relation who was interested and proud to hear of all his works and doings, and he came home much refreshed and pleased. All this family feeling in him of course found its deepest expression in his devotion to his own family, to those growing sons and daughters under his roof, for whose education and welfare he had such careful thought. When the elder sons began to leave us and go out into the world for themselves, he took as constant an interest in them as though he saw them daily, and could play with them in his leisure those concertos in D minor and C major he wrote for three clavichords which I always regarded as one of my happiest experiences to hear. He always was particularly benign and pleased on these occasions, for Friedemann and Emanuel were such admirable performers, trained, to a skill that almost

matched his own, by their father, from whose hands they had received their entire musical education. The music flowed with exquisite smoothness and precision from those three pairs of hands, and at specially favourite passages Emanuel would look across at Friedemann with a happy expression, or Friedemann smile at Sebastian. And I would look at them all and think how Sebastian was father both of the players and of the music, and wonder a little at him, as I did at sudden moments when I quietly gave my mind to thinking of him. I never quite got used to him in all the years of our marriage: I would have queer stabs of astonishment at the something so big in him which I never quite understood or could explain, which the people of Leipzig, which even his own sons and daughters, in spite of their admiring respect, never seemed to perceive. But to me it was always in the background of my mind, it was like a faint fear, and even our love never entirely cast it out. He was always bigger than I could reach to—I always knew this from our first meeting—though he enfolded me in so kind an affection and to be near him was my daily need. I was unable to imagine a world without him—except as a midnight fear, an awakening in a sudden horror that I was alone—from the time I first saw him till his death has made me know that for me the world is empty.

But to what sad thoughts I am come from the beautiful memories of Sebastian making music with his two eldest sons. Then those sons left our roof and went to make their own place and living by the art they had received so abundantly from their father. Friedemann became organist in the Church of St. Sophia at Dresden, and he composed music of which Sebastian thought so well that he often copied it out with his own hand. Sebastian had a high opinion of the compositions of his two eldest sons, and seemed to regard their works as of equal importance with his own, and in publication often grouped them together, as Friedemann's Clavier Sonata was to be had of the author in Dresden, of his father in Leipzig, and of his brother in Berlin, while Sebastian's Six Three-part Chorales were "to be had in Leipzig of Capellmeister Bach, of his sons in Berlin and Halle, and of the publisher in Zella."

Friedemann was organist in Dresden for thirteen years, and then he went to St. Mary's Church at Halle, where Herr Zachau, the famous organist who taught Händel in his youth, had been in charge of the music. This appointment pleased Sebastian greatly, but something that happened there caused him distress in his last years. Friedemann was commissioned to compose the music for a festival at the University while he was at Halle, for which he was promised the sum of one hundred thalers. Friedemann simply fitted to his text the music Sebastian had written for one of his sacred

oratorios, because—this bitter fact came to our knowledge later—he had been drinking so heavily that his head was too muddled to compose music of his own, so he stole his father's work and it was performed as his, amidst applause. Had not someone from the neighbourhood of Leipzig happened to be present and recognized the music, the fraud might have passed undiscovered—but it was exposed and Friedemann deservedly never got his hundred thalers. This deception of his favourite son's came as a heavy blow to the father in Leipzig, but even so he tried to palliate it. "He has enough brains and gifts to write the music for himself," he kept saying, "he has no need of mine: he would never have done it but for that cursed drink, ah, poor Friedemann!"

It was indeed poor Friedemann, so brilliant as he was and so perverse, with an increasing recklessness and passion for drink, quarrelling with all those who would be his friends, deserting his wife and little daughter—I am thankful Sebastian did not live to see the last state of this most cherished son. Friedemann in some ways almost seemed a changeling among the Bachs, except in his music and musicianly powers, which still shine through his dissipated manner of living, like pure gold amid ashes.

Emanuel, whom his father had intended at first to bring up to the study of philosophy and law, was too deeply imbued with the Bach passion for music to do anything but follow in Sebastian's footsteps, which he did with admirable success and industry. His musical life followed a settled path, for when he was twenty-four years old he entered the service of the most musical King Frederick of Prussia when he was Crown Prince, and is in it still as his royal master's clavier accompanist. He always took some pride in recalling that after the Crown Prince came to the throne he had the honour of accompanying on the clavier, quite alone at Charlottenburg, the first flute solo that Frederick played after he became King. It was through Emanuel's official position at the Prussian Court that Sebastian had the privilege of playing in the presence of that sovereign who so well understood and valued the art of music.

Sebastian's third son, Bernhard, when he was twenty years old, became organist at Mühlhausen, where his father had been before him, for, hearing of this vacancy, Sebastian wrote a letter to the Council in which he asked for their support in obtaining the post so as "to fulfil my desires and make my son happy." But poor Bernhard did not live very long, he wandered about a good deal, and for a time we did not even know where he was, which made us very unhappy, and he got into debt. He died at Jena.

Of the three sons who lived of Sebastian's and mine, two became musicians, and the one in whom we had the greatest delight, who, child as he was almost took the place of the absent Friedemann, was our youngest son, Johann Christian, who was fifteen years old when Sebastian died, and to whom he made the present of three of his finest pedal claviers. Sebastian himself was fifty years old when Christian was born, and from his babyhood he had a particular affection for this child, who was as brilliantly gifted as any son of Sebastian's need be, quick, loving, intelligent, and always trotting about after Sebastian, hanging on to his coat-tails, begging for music-lessons and music-paper—a real joy and solace to his father, and I had a particular joy of my own in watching them together. Life brings disappointments to us all, and not even our children make always for happiness, but I felt that our last son, Johann Christian, was a special gift of God to us, adding, as he did, so much felicity to his father's closing years with his youth, his ardour, his gifts. How many boys and young men Sebastian had guided through the intricate labyrinths of music in his time, and I think, none with greater satisfaction than his youngest son.

And thus our large family of thirteen children gradually left us: so many of them dying, hardly staying to make experiment of this life at all, and the others grew from childhood to youth, and then went away from the Cantor's House at Leipzig to make their own place in the world. In our later years our household had dwindled to the eldest of all Sebastian's children, Katharina Dorothea, our eldest son, Gottfried, who though grown remained but a child in mind (with flashes of musical genius in him which it was not possible to cultivate—I have seen his father sit listening by the clavier with tears in his eyes while Gottfried played in his wild, untaught, but touching fashion,) and the rest of our children, dear pretty Liessgen, Christian, Johanna, and the little Susanna. Katharina Dorothea, with her sweet, sober disposition, was a great comfort in our household. She was very retiring before strangers and only showed her full niceness in her own home circle. To her father she was devoted with a passion that few imagined under her quiet manner. When a promising young advocate came seeking her hand in marriage she refused him, much distressed at her incivility, but quite firm. I talked with her a little, and pointed out the goodness of marriage to her: "Well mayest thou say so," she replied to me, "for thou art married to my father. But this Herr Advocate is not like my father, he is not even of a musical disposition, I have even doubts as to whether he appreciates my father's compositions, besides I do not love him. Moreover," and here she began to weep with a vehemence unlike her usual restrained demeanour, "I could not leave my father, I could not live away from him—thou, at least, Mother, should

understand that." I did understand, and so urged her no more. Sebastian, with his usual kindness, did not employ his parental authority, but said, "Well, let the dear maid do as she wills—I have never thought it well to force the inclination in matrimony."

As the years went on the cares of the household grew somewhat less, as both Katharina and Elisabeth were good and capable and the best of helps to me, and so I had more leisure to spend at Sebastian's side, and we got back to some of the quietude of our first married years. To me this was joy: when our many visitors were not there, and I had my Sebastian a little while to myself. Then came the times for which I always cared so much, when seated by his side he would take some volume from his shelves of books and read aloud in his deep voice to me, while I occupied my hands with the family mending. In this way he read to me much of Luther's "Table Talk," in which he took extreme pleasure. He would read Luther's saying, "When natural music is heightened and polished by art there man first beholds and can with great wonder examine to a certain extent (for it cannot be wholly seized or understood) the great and perfect wisdom of God in His marvellous work of music." He would read this or some other opinion of Luther and lay down the book for a moment and look across at me and say, "Is it not a wonderful matter, Magdalena, that thou and I, by means of this book in my hand, can talk with Luther, as it were? Can ask his opinion on any subject on which we desire it and obtain his answer? Books should always be treated with great consideration, for they hold for us the wisdom of the past."

He always so treated them himself, and his library was a source of solace to him when he was troubled over outside things. He would forget the ways of the Thomaner boys in reading the learned Josephus's "History of the Jews," or Geyer, his "Time and Eternity," or the volume of Rambach "On the Tears of Jesus." He also had particular consolation in the "Sermons" of that good Dominican monk, Master John Tauler, of Strasburg, who lived in the long time before us. I think he was first minded to the purchase and reading of this book by what Luther said: "If thou hast a mind to read a volume of pure, thorough, Divine learning, get for thyself the Sermons of John Tauler, the Dominican. For nowhere, in Latin or in German, have I seen a more wholesome theology or one that accords more with the Gospel. This is a book wherein may be seen how the best learning of our times is not even brass, but is mere iron compared with this learning of true blessedness."

From this volume Sebastian read many times to me to my great edification, especially on the evenings of the Sundays, when one's spirit

should be specially peaceful and inclined to holy things. Some passages, which particularly pleased his mind, would be read often till I had them by heart, as this one: “How can we come to perceive the direct leading of God? By a careful looking at home, and abiding within the gates of thy own soul. Therefore, let a man be at home in his own heart, and cease from his restless chase of and search after outward things. If he is thus at home while on earth, he will surely come to see what there is to do at home—what God commands him inwardly without means, and also outwardly by the help of means; and then let him surrender himself and follow God along whatever path his loving Lord thinks fit to lead him: whether it be to contemplation or action, to usefulness or enjoyment; whether in sorrow or in joy, let him follow on. And if God do not give him thus to feel His hand in all things, let him simply yield himself up and go without for God’s sake, out of love, and still press forward, setting ever before him the lovely example of our Blessed Lord Jesus Christ.”

PART VI

I feel I must give a little space of this chronicle to Sebastian's music, which to some degree I have neglected in writing so much about himself and his life—though, indeed, to me, he and his music may not be severed. I can no more imagine Sebastian without his music than I can think of his music being written by any other than himself. I am not able to write a learned treatise on this subject, greatly as it does require it—indeed, some person of the quality of Herr Marpurg or Herr Quantz only is fitted to do this—but I can tell something of the effect it had on those who heard it.

When I stop to try and count up all the music that Sebastian wrote in the course of his life I am astonished and bewildered at its mere quantity—the Organ music, the chamber music, the hundreds of Church cantatas, the great Latin Mass, the five different sets of music to the Gospel accounts of our Lord's Passion, the cantatas for the six days of Christmas, the Well-Tempered Clavichord, the Suites and Partitas and the other clavier music—as I recall it all, some sudden lovely aria, some Organ fugue or trio, comes to my inward ear, like "My heart, ever faithful," or "Prepare thyself, Zion," or such Organ music as the haunting opening of the "Passacaglia," or that grave and lovely little "Canzona" in D minor, and I cannot write for remembering that beauty.

And he who wrote these things is gone from among us—though truly we who loved him can say in Divine words, "He, being dead, yet speaketh." I feel sure, with an unshakable conviction, that so long as that music lives, he will live: there are newer fashions in music come up, and the young, who ever seek after new things, follow them, but as they become older, if they are serious and worthy musicians, they will find that they have to return to Sebastian. Apart from being his wife—or his widow, as, alas, I now am—I know enough of the art of music to be convinced this must be truth, in spite of the present neglect of his works, so few years after his death, and the much greater favour that is shown towards the compositions of his sons Friedemann and Emanuel, than to his. "Old Bach," he is called now, and "the old peruke"—ah, me, reverence has departed out of the world, I fear. How differently we regarded our forbears when I was young.

Sebastian himself never followed any "fashion" in his music: he had tried and tested all forms in the pursuit of his own education and development, he had an iron perseverance in his determination to reach the

real structure and meaning of music, but in all he wrote he expressed his own conviction and inspiration without regard to the pleasing of contemporary taste. Therefore much of his music is not cared for or understood. “I believe thou wouldst write just the same music if all people were deaf!” I said to him one day. “I believe I would,” he answered, smiling; “a many of them are, as it seems, but at least I can hope that some day they may hear a little better! And if I write to please myself I must not be too much vexed an they do not like it.” As a matter of truth, he never seemed to trouble much what people thought of his music, except it were for just the small circle of people whose opinion he cherished.

Into my hands as I write this has come, by Caspar Burgholt’s kindness, a description of my husband as a musician, which reinforces what I have said as to his greatness, and which, for my pleasure, I will here set down: “Herr Johann Sebastian Bach was a genius of the first order, so unusual was his soul, so vast, that before he is reached by anyone centuries will have to pass away. He played the clavier, the flügel, the cymbal, with an equal creative power, and the Organ—who is there like to him? Who will ever be his equal? His fist was of immense size; he could stretch a twelfth with the left hand, and perform running passages between with the three other fingers. His pedal runs were performed with the greatest possible exactness, he drew the stops so silently that the hearer was overcome with the magical effect; his hand was inexhaustible, and lasted out unwearied through a whole day’s Organ-playing. Both the grave and the humorous style were familiar to him; he was both a virtuoso and a composer. He had such a wealth of ideas that only his great son can come near him; and with all this he combined a gift for teaching that was of the rarest quality.”

In his youth Sebastian wrote a Capriccio on the departure of his elder brother, Johann Jacob, to join the Swedish Guard as a player on the oboe, and this Capriccio we often performed in our family concerts, for it is very charming and used to amuse the young ones with its post-horn fugue, while the “Lament” on the brother who could not be persuaded to stay at home has a very haunting melody. Sebastian was always rather pleased when we played this youthful production of his, and said it made him feel the age again at which he composed it.

Most of his music, of course, is Church music, with the exception of the large amount of chamber music he wrote at Cöthen, but he wrote a few cantatas, apart from the “Capriccio,” which were secular. The most important of these were the “Peasants’ Cantata,” the “Coffee Cantata,” and “Phœbus and Pan.” Also some music-dramas for the name-days of certain

personages, and wedding cantatas and the delicious Spring Cantata, which, it being written for a soprano solo voice, I so often sung in our home at Sebastian's wish. For my singing also he wrote a sacred cantata, the one for Septuagesima, "I am content." He was wont to say, smiling at me in his so kind way, that the words, "Let others have their whims, I still will be contented," suited his wife. "And wherefore not, since she is thy wife?" I said to him in answer. At least I knew the cause of my content and that it had deep roots.

So much of Sebastian's music is on grave and sacred themes that those who did not know him were surprised that he should write things full of fun and humour, like the "Coffee Cantata." But he liked a laughing tale, and he also liked coffee, as well as good beer and his pipeful of tobacco, and when his friend, Picander, made up a humorous story about the evils of coffee-drinking and how it nearly deprived a maiden of her lover, till she out-witted her father and contrived both to have her lover and her dish of coffee, Sebastian was vastly pleased and minded to set it to music. Picander made up the story that a royal mandate had come that none should drink coffee without special permission obtained, save the King and his Court, alone. "Alas!" wailed the womenfolk, "as well take our bread from us, for deprived of coffee we are but dead!" The people of Leipzig are said to be specially addicted to the drinking of coffee. The daughter of a certain Schlendrian was so enamoured of coffee-drinking that her father threatened she should have no husband till she gave it up—but she got the better of him by letting it be known she would marry none unless he promised her that she should still have her coffee. To this little tale Sebastian wrote some gay and lively music, which was always a favourite with his family, and many a time he listened and smiled at three of his children singing the happy trio with which it closes.

Picander also wrote the words for the "Contest of Phœbus and Pan," that very charming and amusing cantata of Sebastian's which was performed by the Musical Society of 1731. The song of Phœbus is very melodious and beautiful, and well may Momus tell him to "grasp again his lyre," as "nothing is more lovesome than his song." Pan has some lively music to sing, which is in pleasant contrast to that of Phœbus. After it was first given one of the Leipzig Councillors came up to me and said, "I congratulate thee, Frau Bach, on this performance of thy husband's. I knew not that he could write music of this style, for of a truth I thought of the Herr Cantor in connection with Church music only." "That is because thou dost not know him in his home," I answered, "where, indeed, he makes music of all kinds." And I thought of the quodlibets and gay little minuets, and the little

nonsense songs he would make for an infant as he jumped it on his knee, nonsense songs with a catching air that all the children would at once pick up and sing about the house, till at last they had to be stopped on pain of their father's wrath. "But thou madest it, Father!" protested a small maiden to him when the command to cease went forth: "Yes, and now, like a Roman parent, I will slay it," said he, pinching the child's ear, "I cannot be so plagued by my offspring!"

But, of course, the Councillor was right in associating Sebastian with the music of the Church and the gravity and dignity that naturally went with such compositions—he who in his years in Leipzig composed the "Principal Music," as the Church cantatas were usually called. So many are there and so beautiful that it is beyond my power to even mention them all, and besides our people in Leipzig are familiar with them through many Sundays. Always, when I went to Matins each Sunday it was with the good thought that I would hear the "Principal Music" which he had composed, and therefore that it would be beautiful and set heavenly things before our minds. Of course, even among his compositions, I had those which I specially loved, which filled me with a sort of exaltation, so that at times when I had come home with him and saw him sitting at the head of the table eating his dinner with a good appetite (which happily he always had, so that it was a pleasure to cook food for him), I had a kind of feeling that it could not be true—I mean that such music could not be written by someone who ate and slept and walked about this world, but must have dropped straight from Heaven above us. Doubtless Sebastian would have thought me very foolish could he have seen into my mind at these times.

But, of course, I who lived with him, who knew how constantly his thoughts moved among religious and spiritual things, how dear to him were the chorale melodies of our Fatherland and how much part of his life from childhood, should have been the last person in this world to be surprised at any music he should produce. In one sense I was not, but yet, in some of his music, in some of his melodies and great choruses, there was a quality which I would almost dare to call miraculous—which seemed to stop one's breath, and leave one afraid of him who had produced such music. I felt like this when I heard for the first time, on the Twenty-seventh Sunday after Trinity, ten years after my marriage, the "Principal Music" Sebastian had written for that day, "Sleepers, Awake!" The words and melody of the chorale were written more than a hundred years ago by a Pastor Nicolai, when his flock nearly all perished in a terrible visitation of the plague, and it is a beautiful poem and noble melody, which no doubt helped to inspire Sebastian to so glorious a cantata. But the whole subject of the text, the

Heavenly Bridegroom Who comes in the night, the Wise and the Foolish Virgins, the joy of the Bride, inspired Sebastian to write such music as none save he could write.

Another cantata that always filled me with a kind of awe was "Christ lay in Death's dark prison," which Sebastian wrote for the second day of Easter. But, indeed, they all, in their different manners, had beauty, some grave, majestic, almost terrifying, some gentle and tender and full of the light and love of God. The more one knows them, the less easy is it to speak of them. Words cannot say what that music says. But Sebastian did not despise words—they meant much to him when they showed forth beautiful things, and certain phrases of the Scriptures, the verses of some hymns, drew from the depths of his heart that music in which he expressed the feelings which they raised in him. There was a hymn he loved, "Jesu, my chief treasure," and for it he wrote a five-part motet of incomparable beauty. The words of the hymn are these:

Jesu, my chief treasure,
Source of purest pleasure,
Truest friend to me:
Ah! how long I've panted,
And my heart hath fainted,
Thirsting, Lord, for Thee.
Thine I am, O spotless Lamb,
I will suffer naught to slight Thee,
Naught I ask beside Thee.

These words so expressed Sebastian's own feeling to the Lord Jesus that he naturally gave a special loveliness to this long cantata, founded on that chorale, and on the wonderful words he chose and arranged himself from the eighth chapter of Saint Paul's Epistle to the Romans. Often, in our own home, the older children and I would sing portions of this music for our own delectation and joy. And when Sebastian would come in and sit down and listen to us with his head bent and his eyes shut, I used often to wonder what was in his mind—how his music sounded to him who had made it? To us it sounded perfect: to him I imagine, from things he said now and again, there was much he could not get down on to the score—which was why he gave such careful time and thought, especially in his last years, to the revision of such of his music as he thought of most value. "We are only guessing at the music of Heaven," he once said. But at least his guessing, so it seems to me, was nearer to that fountain-head of music than any other we have in this world. Surely this may be said without hesitation or any doubt when we

remember such a motet as “Sing to the Lord a new song, let the company of the Saints praise Him.” As indeed they do in that glorious and great music, which leaves all who hear it with open heart and ears in a state of wonder and happy awe—not at the marvellous musicianship, as shown in that fugue at the end of the first movement, but at the spiritual power of Sebastian’s soul.

I always felt that he showed this power in a wonderful degree in the music he wrote for the Organ. I heard him play this beloved instrument so much and so often, the music he wrote for it is so woven into all the history of my married life—my very first sight of him being at the Organ—that I cannot in any sufficient manner detach my heart from this matter so as to write of it in any order. Needless to say, some of his Organ music was dearer and more rejoiced in than others—some of the smaller things, like the exquisite Pastorale in F, and the Canzona in D minor and many of the chorale preludes from the “Little Organ Book,” which I knew with a special intimacy—but to me all his Organ music, when I listened to his playing of it, was wonderful. I seemed wrapped in great waves of noble beauty. And if sometimes I was puzzled and not specially moved by some new thing of his, I always found it was but my own dullness—I had but to hear it a few times and its lines of meaning and loveliness began to dawn upon me. The brilliant splendour of the Toccata and Fugue in D minor strikes all hearers at once, but not so easily the melancholy beauty and greatness of the fugue of the Dorian Toccata. And there are the great preludes and fugues in C major, A major, F minor, C minor, B minor and E flat, those in G major and G minor, and the wonderful Passacaglia. There is a short Prelude and Fugue in E minor—not the little dear one I used to play myself—which is very lovely. Could any heart fail to be moved by the “Waters of Babylon,” with its delicate sadness? Then that set of Organ chorales on “Gloria in excelsis Deo,” especially the trio and the quartet and the Angel’s Song. And the chorale preludes over which he was working when he died, such glorious things as “Come, Holy Ghost,” “Come, Saviour of the Gentiles,” “Deck thyself, my soul, with gladness,” “O Lamb of God all holy,” and the very last of all he ever wrote, the most beautiful, the most sad, “Before Thy Throne I come”—no, I find I cannot say anything worthy of Sebastian’s Organ music. It is all too full of the memory of the most beautiful part of my past happiness, too full of the inmost heart of Sebastian himself. To me it is impossible now to hear the Organ played by another hand than his—instead, I look at the score of his Organ music, and I remember.

So far I have said no word of those tremendous works, Sebastian’s music to the Gospel narratives of our Lord’s Passion, of which those according to

St. John and to St. Matthew are surely the greatest ever imagined, and his great setting of the Latin Mass in the key of B minor. I do not think there is much I can say fittingly. When I have heard them sung—and I have never heard the Mass entire, only portions of it—I have felt in a manner dumb and overwhelmed, as if a great sea had gone over me. The opening chorus of the Mass, the great cry of "Kyrie eleison!" and then the voices dropping into silence while the instruments make so beauteous a music till once more the voices come in with their weaving of melody, has always seemed to me beyond expression wonderful. Those who have not heard this music, and the music in the Gospel Passions, cannot understand what it is like, and nothing that anyone could say could help them to do so. Therefore words seem idle. The music came intensely from Sebastian's heart: he wrote it with suffering as he never could contemplate Christ's wounds and death without suffering and a personal sense of sin. And from that pain of his came this beauty so poignant which he has given us, with which the Passion music is overflowing. Back to my mind comes that alto solo in the Passion according to St. John, "It is finished," which I always felt of so singular a beauty and tenderness. The first time it was given in Holy Week in the year 1724, there was a boy in the choir with a really wonderful alto voice of a strange, vibrating quality, and when he sang this aria the combination of such music and such a voice simply made the tears start out of one's eyes.

The music to St. Matthew's Gospel was not performed till the Good Friday five years later, and I think it was too big to be understood on a first hearing, for the people of Leipzig did not seem to care greatly for it, and therefore, partly because it was very difficult and the choral resources at the Thomas Church during many of those years were not good, it was not given again till 1740, when Sebastian had altered it considerably, and then it was performed under his direction and seemed better appreciated—in a measure, perhaps, because Leipzig people were beginning to realize a little more by that time that they had a very great musician in their midst. One of the alterations that Sebastian made in this music was in transferring that glorious chorus, "O men bewail thy grievous sin," from the opening of the St. John to the end of the first part of the St. Matthew Passion. One of the most beautiful, most touching and sad of the chorale preludes in the "Little Organ Book" is on that same theme. A device, very beautiful, which Sebastian uses in this Passion is that whenever Jesus speaks His voice is accompanied by the strings alone, so that He seems surrounded with a kind of shimmer of light. The chorus which ends that work is surely amongst the greatest things that Sebastian ever brought forth—music before which the heart stands still, as it does before the "Crucifixus" in his Mass, which

always brought to my mind the sacred words, “Yea, a sword shall pierce through thine own soul also.” When I looked at Sebastian’s blotted score of this “Crucifixus,” I would have known that sword had gone through him, even had I not heard the music. He, too, needed, as we all need, the comfort of the exquisite melody of that alto solo “Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi,” and the peace of the closing chorus, “Dona Nobis Pacem.” Such music comes from the country of the soul where Sebastian always had his abiding place, despite the troubles of this life which at times were thick about him. The more fully I grew to an understanding of him and of his music, the more fully I knew this true. Ever before his mind was a vision towards which he reached: he could say with St. Paul, “Leaving those things which are behind I press towards the goal”—but his goal, like St. Paul’s, was not on this earth.

PART VII

I have said little so far of that pupil of Sebastian's, Johann Christoph Altnikol, who became our son by marrying our daughter Elisabeth. He came as a pupil five years before Sebastian's death, and his modest and sweet nature, combined with his excellent musicianship, won not only Liessgen's heart, but Sebastian's and mine. He was as a son to us before he married our daughter. I had thought for some little time that Christoph was learning more than music in our house, and dear Liessgen's little fears and blushes and shy withdrawings took me back over the space of years to the days when Sebastian's footstep would send the blood to my cheeks and put my heart all out of time. And in spite of the years I will not say that my heart beat quite steadily when it heard that footstep of Sebastian's (which I always could tell among a hundred others) returning to me after one of his absences at Dresden or elsewhere, but, thanks be to God, the absences were not many, so my heart had not too often an excuse to beat in an unruly manner.

Liessgen was not much more than a year older than I was at my betrothal, when Christoph came to ask her of us. "Yes," said Sebastian, "thou hast my glad consent and that of my wife, as I know without asking her. We willingly give our daughter to thy care and love." Christoph stood before Sebastian, his head bent, his eyes suffused with happy tears, "Master," he said, "give me thy blessing, that I may be able to make her happy and may not be unworthy to call myself thy son." When he had gone to find his betrothed I went to Sebastian and he enfolded me with his arm and I wept upon his kind breast. "It reminds me so of the day thou first told me of thy love," I whispered to him. "And was that a day so unhappy, Magdalenchen?" said he, lifting up my face to his with a tender, half-teasing little smile. A question I did hardly need to answer, as we stood there together, happy in our memories, happy in our daughter's happiness.

We had some months of pleasant preparation for the wedding, which took place in the New Year of 1749; Liessgen and I busy with the bridal linen and other household plenishings, while Sebastian gave his new son a good wedding gift in procuring for him the post of organist at Naumberg. Sebastian, without saying a word of his intention to Christoph, applied to the Council of Naumberg—they had earlier asked his skilful advice on the matter of repairs to their Organ—for the post for his "former beloved scholar," who, so he told them, had "already had under his care an Organ for some time at Niederwiesa, and had a competent knowledge both how to play

and how to manage it." He also informed the Council that Altnikol was exceptionally skilled in composition, in singing, and in playing the violin. So, at Sebastian's request, the post of organist was bestowed upon him, and Sebastian had the pleasure of informing him of this good news.

The night before the wedding we gave a little family performance of Sebastian's Spring Cantata, which was written at Cöthen many years earlier for another wedding. To me it has always been a special favourite among his cantatas, so fresh and delicious and full of all beautiful and young things it seems. And there, side by side, were the betrothed lovers, at the dawn of another day to be husband and wife. Liessgen so pretty and blushing, Christoph so quiet and content. And Sebastian at the clavichord accompanied and directed the music he had composed, and kept the strings together, and when they sang

No happier lot is given
Than when by special grace of Heaven
True love two souls together blendeth,
On whom all bliss and joy attendeth.

they all looked with smiles upon the betrothed pair, but Sebastian and I looked at each other.

And then at Sebastian's suggestion we sung his setting from the Schemelli Book of—

O Jesu, meek; O Jesu, mild,
The Father's will Thou hast fulfilled.
Come down to me from Heaven so high,
Become like us, who to Thee cry,
O Jesu, meek; O Jesu, mild.

That bridal eve, with all the family gathered round Sebastian, singing and playing the pure and heavenly music that had come from his heart, remains more brightly in my mind than all the wedding rejoicings of the next day, happy though they were. And then we kissed our sweet daughter and Christoph took her away with him through the snow to Naumberg, where before Christmas had come round again, God blessed their union with a little son whom it hardly needs telling they christened Johann Sebastian, as a year earlier Emanuel had christened the second son born to him in Berlin.

And so were Sebastian and I become grandparents, which to me seemed somewhat strange, by reason of the fact that my own betrothal and marriage has always remained so fresh and near to me, in spite of all the years and all the children. And this first marriage of a daughter—and I may most

probably not live to see a second one, as Sebastian did not—seemed to put back time for me and give me again in 1749 those blessed years of 1722 and 1723, so that even when I looked in my little mirror I almost thought to see again the countenance I then wore. But better that the face should age than the love. Sebastian's face I looked upon so constantly that all its changes from the countenance I first beheld at St. Katharine's in Hamburg, had come imperceptibly upon me, and it was only by conscious recollection and remembrance that I perceived how time had dealt with him. In the year of Liessgen's marriage he was sixty-four years old, and his countenance in repose (his smile had a wonderful mellowing effect) was rather stern, even alarming to those who did not know the goodness that lay behind it. All the lines of his face were greatly deepened and accentuated, the set of his mouth much grimmer, with a deep line going downwards towards his chin, and the frown between his thick eyebrows much more marked—but it was not anger made that frown, as the effort to see, for his eyes, which he had sadly strained in his youth and used so constantly and closely all his life over music scores, failed him more and more as he grew older. The beautiful open look they had when I first knew him was gone, and they gazed out upon the world from lids drawn close together in the effort to focus visionary objects. I think the first impression Sebastian, in these last years, would make upon a stranger beholding him, would have been of a certain severity and sternness, as of a man to be somewhat feared. But that impression would only last as he came into the room and stood a moment looking at his visitor, his big head a little dropped, his eyes peering in a slightly puzzled way that looked a little grim—but the minute he spoke and smiled, the goodness and the kindness and the gentleness in which we, his family, all sheltered as under the shade of a great rock, would come forth and make others understand why his children and his wife and his pupils all so loved him. Us he let see his heart, so tender and religious, but he did not give that to the world, and there were people in plenty who had no liking for him, and did not hesitate to write and say things about him neither kind nor true. There was a deal of jealousy in Leipzig in Sebastian's time, and controversies and quarrels, of which he took not much notice, though he was sufficiently annoyed by Herr Scheibe's untrue statements about him to request his friend, Magister Birnbaum, to answer for him in the public print, as he had neither time nor inclination to leave his music in order to do so himself. He was not interested in writing about himself, and entirely refused to Herr Mattheson the biographical details he requested for his Dictionary of Musicians, which he called "A Foundation for a Gate of Honour, wherein shall appear the Lives, Works, and Merits of the most excellent Capellmeisters, Composers, Writers upon Music and Performing Artists."

This, I confess, I regretted, as I would have liked to see the history of my husband printed in that book. But in his last years he drew even more into himself and into the circle of his home. He felt he had yet some music to write, and not much time, perhaps, left him in which to do it. “My dear,” he said to me once, “ ‘Old Bach,’ as the Thomaner boys call him, has not many years left in which to write his music, and he must not waste them on outside things.” He even refused for some time to join Mizler’s Society for Musical Science, partly because if he became a member he had to have his portrait painted in oils to present to the Society. However, in the end he yielded to Mizler’s persuasions, had the portrait painted—and a very good one it was—and wrote a triple canon in six parts, and variations upon “Vom Himmel hoch,” to present to the Society, which was afterwards engraved. Lorenz Mizler, the founder of this Society, had been for a time Sebastian’s pupil, and he said, in a public dissertation shortly before leaving Leipzig, “I have derived great benefit, most famous Bach, from your instructions in the art and practice of music, and lament that I can no longer enjoy them.” Mizler was clever in many ways, but Sebastian had never a very high consideration for him, he was too vain, too satisfied with himself—“In spite of his brains, but a shallow fellow,” said Sebastian. Which was perhaps one reason why he delayed so long before he would become a member of the Society of the Musical Sciences.

Within himself, Sebastian had all the musical science he needed, acquired by a lifetime of patient and unending study. He gained knowledge from every piece of music that came under his hands, and he never disdained to learn and profit from the works of composers of infinitely less merit than himself. He always had the greatest pleasure in seeing and hearing what others had done, and no youthful musician ever had to fear intolerance or contempt from him, though, when the need was, his corrections could be severe enough. Sometimes he would be asked to write a simple piece for the clavier, for those whose skill was not great, and he would answer pleasantly, “I will see what I can do.” He would take an easy theme, but, on his beginning to develop it, so much crowded into his mind to say, that the piece soon ceased to be simple. When this was discovered to him he would say, with his kind, half-quizzical smile, “Practise it diligently, and you will find it quite easy.”

At this time of his life, Sebastian had reached the height of his fame. He did not go about, but musicians of all kinds and countries came continually to his door, and he welcomed them with cordial interest and a desire to help and please them. Emanuel was in the service of the King of Prussia, at Berlin, and the King, himself so devoted to the art of music, began to

express to his clavecinist a desire to see and hear his celebrated father, the Cantor of Leipzig. Emanuel conveyed this august wish to Sebastian, who was gratified by this royal condescension, but very disinclined for the journey to Berlin and all the publicity and ceremony. However, as the King became more insistent, it became plain that the journey would have to be adventured, so at last he set out, taking his journey by way of Halle, where Friedemann joined him, and arrived at Potsdam on a Sunday evening, going to Emanuel's lodging. But he had no sooner arrived there, all tired and travel-stained, when he was summoned immediately to the King's presence, and not even given time to change his travelling dress for his black Cantor's gown. The King, ever impatient, had waited so long as he was inclined to see him, and would not wait even the half of an hour longer. It appeared that the usual evening concert was about to commence, the King had his flute in his hand, the orchestra was waiting, when the list of strangers arrived was presented to His Majesty. He glanced down the list, and then, laying his flute down, turned to the assembled musicians and said, with some excitement, "Gentlemen, old Bach is come!"—and so he was at once sent for. Sebastian, rather agitated and weary, was ushered into the King's presence, into the brilliant room and company—he told me, on his return, how splendid and royal the Palace was, the concert-room was ornamented with great mirrors and with sculpture, part gilt and part of the most beautiful green varnish, the music-desk for His Majesty's use was of tortoise-shell, most elegantly and richly inlaid with silver, while he also saw a wonderful harpsichord with pedals and frame of silver, a case inlaid and a front of the same costly shell as the King's music-desk. Sebastian made his apologies for the negligent state of his dress—some of the smart Court ladies and gentlemen began to smile and make remarks on his appearance, not being in the latest Berlin fashion, but the King, as Friedemann told me, reduced them to silence with a glance, and treated Sebastian with a marked courtesy and consideration. The King himself was a musician and a lover of music, and, therefore, he recognized Sebastian's greatness and did not judge him by the unfashionable cut of his coat. The royal flute concerto was put aside for that evening, and the King gave himself to the pleasure of listening to his visitor, instead of performing himself. He led Sebastian through the rooms of the Palace, and showed him the seven forte-pianos by Silbermann, of which he was possessed, and begged him to do himself and the members of his Court the pleasure of letting them hear him play upon these instruments. So Sebastian sat himself down and made music, and perhaps some of those who heard him realized that there were two kings in the Palace that night. When Sebastian had played upon all the Silbermann hammer-claviers, he begged the King to give him a fugue subject on which to extemporize. So His

Majesty gave him a subject, and Sebastian proceeded to develop it in his own learned and incomparable manner, to the great astonishment and admiration of the King.

The next day Sebastian played on the Organ in the Church of the Holy Ghost, before a large and admiring company of people, and in the evening he was again commanded to Potsdam, and the King asked to hear a fugue in six parts, that he might learn how far polyphonic treatment could be carried. The subject of this fugue Sebastian chose this time himself, as every theme is not suitable for so full a working out, and produced a fugue which filled the King with amazement and delight, so that he became quite excited and cried out several times, "There is only one Bach! there is only one Bach!"

After this agreeable visit to Potsdam, Sebastian went to Berlin and visited the newly-builded Opera House, where he discovered by his musical intuition, not by experience, the curious acoustic properties of the dining-room attached to it, as I have already told.

On his return home—and how proud I was to welcome him and hear his quiet tale of how the King of Prussia had received him and talked to him and praised his music—he set to work on a more complete and polished working out of the royal fugue subject, in a fugue in three parts and a six-part fugue, eight canons, a fugue with an answer on the fifth in canon form, a sonata in four movements, and a two-part canon over a *basso continuo*—all these based, more or less, on the King's theme. This work he called "The Musical Offering," and spent much time and pleasure in adorning with little ingenuities, as above the fourth canon he inscribed the words "Notulis crescentibus crescat fortuna Regis," which, so he explained to me, meant "As the notes increase in value, so may the fortune of the King increase"; and over the fifth canon he wrote "Ascendenteque Modulatione ascendat Gloria Regis"—"And with the rising modulation may the glory of the King rise." This work he had engraved and he presented it to King Frederick with a dedicatory letter, which I here copy out:—

Most Gracious King,

I hereby most humbly dedicate to your Majesty a Musical Offering, the noblest part of which proceeds from your Majesty's illustrious hand. I remember, with respectful gratification, the very special Royal grace vouchsafed to me by your Majesty on my visit to Potsdam some time since, when your Majesty deigned with your own hand to play a theme for a fugue on the clavier, and at the same time graciously deigned to command me to work it out at

once in your Illustrious Presence. It was my humble duty to obey your Majesty's order. But I soon found that owing to lack of preparation the performance was not doing justice to so fine a theme. Consequently I decided, and promptly resolved, to work out this truly Royal theme in a more adequate manner, and then to make it known to the world. I have now accomplished this work to the best of my ability, with the sole and irreproachable purpose of magnifying, though in a small way, the fame of a King whose greatness and power in all Arts of War and Peace, and especially in that of Music, are universally admired and revered. I venture to ask one humble petition, namely, that your Majesty will receive this small work with gracious favour, and may graciously consent to show further favour to your Majesty's

most obedient, humble servant,
The Author.

Leipzig, July 7, 1747.

The first portion of the "Musical Offering"—for it was not all finished at once—in the copy that was presented to the King of Prussia, was beautifully engraved on thick paper and bound in leather with gold enrichments, and the whole business of writing it and working out all his variations on the royal theme gave Sebastian peculiar pleasure. In compliment to the King, who was, moreover, so excellent a performer on the flute, the fugue in canon style is written for clavier and flute, while the sonata and the final canon are scored for clavier, flute and violin. The two first fugues are for clavier alone, while some of the other pieces are for stringed instruments. The "Musical Offering" is a work of much beauty and interest, and worthy to be offered by such a musician as Sebastian to a King who was also a musician.

Following on this, and partly growing out of it, Sebastian wrote his incomparable "Art of Fugue"—a noble crown to his musical life as the particular master of fugue. It is a deeply learned work, which I am in no manner competent to explain or discourse upon. But I have listened to Sebastian and musical friends of his discussing it, and from what I heard in this way gained some idea of its meaning and value. One of his admirers called it "this practical and splendid work, this treasure," and another said, "This 'Art of Fugue' is too lofty for the great world." In truth, it was so deeply learned that it took a very skilled musician to appreciate all the accumulation of knowledge, genius and inspiration that Sebastian had put into his "Art of Fugue"—the very apex of his great achievements in the creation of this form of music. The tone and feeling of the whole work is

grave and devotional—so, indeed, had Sebastian been all his life, but as he approached his end, this deeply-rooted character in him became more apparent to us all. He sometimes quoted to us Luther's saying, "Music is the best solace, by it the heart is refreshed and settled again in peace," and no one ever proved this truth more fully than he did. He was engaged upon the "Art of Fugue" at the time of his death, and the greater part of it had been engraved under his own supervision when death put an end to his works in this world. The "Art of Fugue" was published, but owing to a regrettable carelessness and confusion on the part of those responsible for it, unfinished things were put in, including an incomplete and very lengthy and splendid fugue for the clavier, which had really no connection with the "Art of Fugue" as planned by Sebastian, upon which he was working when he died. This fugue is a wonderful one, and particularly interesting as Sebastian had made the curious discovery that the letters of his name, Bach, were melodic in their arrangement—which, indeed, we might all have discovered had we but thought what that name stood for in music. He used this sequence of notes in the last of the three themes in this fugue, but time was not given him to complete this splendid thing.

And so, engaged upon this contrapuntal work, upon the letters of the name Bach—so long, for so many centuries, linked with music and coming to so great a flowering in him—Sebastian wrote this fugue, which was to be his last contribution to the art he loved with his whole heart and being: his last work except one other, and that, as was fitting, was written for his beloved instrument, the Organ, to which he had ever gone to express his intimate and religious self, in which culminated all those qualities in him which put him ever apart, as I do feel, with humble but deep conviction, apart from all other musicians as one who had in a particular manner the seal of God upon him. His work in music he had done all his life with the utmost of his strength and will. To music he had given his life, without any faltering or turning backwards, from the days of his childhood in Eisenach, and in the end music cost him his eyesight. He had strained his eyes from the time of his boyhood in the constant copying out of music, apart from the masses of music of his own composing which he wrote down. He constantly worked late into the night by the light of candles, in spite of the fact that often he complained of pain in his eyes—I spared him all I could by helping him in the copying of music, and I taught his children to do the same, and also his pupils lent their hands and eyes. But we none of us could write the music for him that only existed in his own brain. And so his eyes grew worse, so that when they were specially bad I would have the grief of seeing him feel with his hand for the lintel of the door as he came in or out, or for his chair ere he

sat himself down upon it. Yet he would but call for more candles if he wished to write music, as if the multiplication of illumination would compensate for the increasing dimness of his vision. “I must write while I can see, Magdalena,” he would say to me when I would venture sometimes to lay a hand of remonstrance upon his shoulder, raising his narrowed, suffering eyes to me. I knew, though he never said so, that the thought of blindness was more cruel to him by far, than the thought of going to his grave. And there was nothing I could do, save go away and weep a little and wish the blindness might be mine, for I had no music within me to write, as he had.

Then came, as we thought, a fresh hope in this tribulation. There visited Leipzig a famous English surgeon, of great reputation in his own country for his success in operating on cases like Sebastian’s. His name was Herr Johann Taylor, and friends came to us at once, urging that Sebastian should take advantage of his skill and submit to an operation which would restore his sight to its old usefulness. At first he was reluctant; the expense, the risk that no good might result, made him hesitate. But everyone urged him so—I did not, I am thankful to remember, I felt that it was for him alone to decide, and I did not like that word operation in connection with the eyes, which are so delicate a gift of God—and they pointed out that the presence of Herr Taylor in Leipzig was a golden opportunity which should not be missed. So Sebastian yielded to what seemed good advice, and Herr Taylor promised him the most satisfactory results.

On a day Herr Taylor came with his instruments and did things to my Sebastian’s eyes—Sebastian said no word, but I saw the knuckles of his hands clasped together, whiten, and I felt as though my heart had been squeezed in a vice. Then he had bandages over his eyes and had to be led about. When the bandages were taken off his eyes were no better, but worse, and that man, Taylor, said another operation would be necessary, and it was done, and in the result Sebastian, who could before see a little, was then blind. O God, the anguish of it is on me again. And Sebastian, when this dreaded calamity had come upon him, was so patient. When we found that he was blind I failed to be calm like him and wept against his bed. He laid his hand upon my neck, “I think we should all be glad to suffer a little,” he said, “it brings us a little closer to our Lord, Who suffered all things for our sakes.” And after a little while he asked me to get and read to him out of Master Tauler’s Book of Sermons, the second sermon for Epiphany, in which comes this passage that he remembered in past reading, and wished to hear again for the better consolation of us both: “That my eyes are now in my head, is as God our Heavenly Father has seen it from eternity; now let

them be put out, and let me become blind, or deaf, this also has our Heavenly Father foreseen from eternity, that it ought to come to pass, and had His eternal counsel with respect unto it, and determined it from eternity with Himself. Ought I not, then, to open my inward eyes and ears, and thank my God that His eternal counsel is fulfilled in me? Ought I to grieve at it? I ought to be wonderfully thankful for it! And so also with loss of friends, or property, or reputation, or comfort, or whatever it be that God allots to us, it will all serve to prepare thee, and help thee forward to true peace, if thou canst only take it so."

Sebastian suffered more than the loss of his sight, for they treated him with such powerful drugs and bleedings, all of which I suppose were necessary, that his strong health was broken down, and though he lived for some more months he was never well again.

But a great and deep serenity came to him in these last weeks of living. Death had never been a dread to him, but a hope to which he looked unfaltering all his life—it was, to his mind, the true consummation of all living. Always in his music he expressed this: he never wrote such beautiful melody in the cantatas as when the words expressed the thought of death, of release from this world. Those who are without genius cannot understand what it must be like, and how daily life must seem a fettering of its powers. I did not fully realize this at the time Sebastian was alive, I fear, for he never said anything of it, and we were so happy together, and he was always so busy and full of work. But underneath I knew, I had glimpses, that to him the best hope of living was to die and to go to the Saviour Whom he loved so deeply. He, more fully than anyone I have known, realized the beauty and the truth of these words of Luther's: "Wilt thou go surely and meet and grasp God rightly, so finding grace and help in Him, be not persuaded to seek Him elsewhere than in the Lord Christ. Let thine art and study begin with Christ, and there let it stay and cling."

This desire for death in Sebastian, as I have said, frightened and distressed me in my youth, and I did not think of it if it could be helped. But since his death, when my time is so often given to pondering on his ways and words and recalling the past time, I have begun to see that death to him was a release into a larger freedom, where those powers that here could not fully express themselves would expand in the heavenly air of the mansions of God.

In one of his cantatas he himself adapted some words of Neumeister's and set them to music which expressed his longing—

Welcome! will I say
When Death shall come for me.

And then in another cantata what a sad and lovely melody he made for the words,

O Christ, my all in living,
Dying brings me reward.
What joy to end the striving
And come to Thee, my Lord!

which goes on to that chorale, so haunting, so piercing in its loveliness, that even when he was living I could rarely hear it without tears coming to my eyes:

From Heaven a song is falling, its music greets mine ear,
From Heaven are angels calling, their welcome soundeth near.

And then the tenor sings:

How comforting is now the thought of thee,
O happy Death, the end of all my woes, to all desire thou bringest rest.
I long for thee, with eager heart do I embrace thee; thou art no foe, but deliverer kind.
Then toll for me soon, ah, toll for me soon, thou most beloved of holy bells.
Come soon, ah, call for me soon, voice of my ransom.
Come! Come! I raise my hand to greet thee,
Come, take me from my sorrow, take me, thou long desired day of death.

The words were not Sebastian's but the music was, and in it he expressed his deep and secret heart.

Ah, my great one! now is he gone to make music before our Lord God in Heaven.

But in his last months of life in this world, even blindness did not stay Sebastian working to the end upon his music, with the aid of his old pupil and son-in-law, Christoph Altnikol, and a younger and newer pupil, Johann Gottfried Müthel, who was living in the house with us at this time. He was stricken, but he was not idle—he never had been idle—and he wasted none of the little time yet left to him. He was in the midst of revising his eighteen great Chorales for the Organ, when his last strength gave way—the heat of the July days had greatly tried him—and in pain and weakness he had to yield himself to his bed, to his death-bed. With what acuteness of memory

those last days, those last hours, return upon me! He had suffered so much for several days, and three nights I had sat with him, for to suffer and to be in the dark, to see nothing—we, with our sight, can little know what that must be like. Then, mercifully, the good God sent him a little space of ease. He said that he could sleep, and besought me to go and rest. He passed his dear hands over my face, saying, "I feel how weary thou art, go and sleep for my sake."

So for a little while I left him and went to lie down in another chamber. Our dear son-in-law, Christoph (for neither Friedemann nor Emanuel were at home) promised to keep watch with him. He told me later that Sebastian, after lying very still for about the space of an hour, so that he thought him sleeping, suddenly raised himself up in bed, and said, "Christoph, get some paper, there is music in my head I want thee to set down for me." So hurriedly fetching paper and a quill and ink-horn, Christoph sat him at Sebastian's side and wrote as he told him. After he had dictated the last note, Sebastian laid himself down with a sigh, and said, so low that Christoph only just caught the words, "That is the last music I shall make in this world." And then he fell asleep for some hours, all his suffering dropped from him.

When I came in at the early sunrise, Christoph showed me the score and told me what had happened. "Look at it," he said, "see how beautiful it is: 'Before Thy Throne I stand'—it is his soul struggling through pain and dimness, and then the lovely, serene melody coming in like dawn after darkness, and swelling to that heavenly end."

But I could hardly see the score for tears—I looked at Sebastian's face as it lay upon the pillow, at the music, and I felt it was his last, the song they say the dying swan sings at the end. I went to the window, pulled aside the curtain a little and watched the rising sun colour the sky, quietening my weeping lest it should awaken him from that peaceful and blessed sleep. I do not know how long I stood there in a kind of maze of misery and glory. But after a while I heard his voice, "Magdalena, beloved one, come to me." I turned, startled, there was such a strange thrill in the sound of his speaking. Christoph had gone, I was alone with him. I ran to the bed, his eyes were open, he was looking at me—he saw me! Those eyes so shrunken and drawn together by suffering and the effort to see were once more open and had a piteous brightness. It was God's last gift to him, the return of his sight, just at the end. He looked once more on the sun, on his children, on me, on his little grandson, whom Liessgen had brought, who bore his name. I carried a red, sweet rose to him, he feasted his eyes on the rich colour: "But," he said,

“there are better things where I am going, Magdalena, lovelier colours, music you and I have only dreamed of, never heard—and the Lord Himself!”

He lay still, holding my hand within his own, seeing the Vision which had always been the light of his life—the Vision of his Lord and his God Whom he had served so faithfully in his music.

Soon after this little interval of blessing it was plain the end could not be far. “Sing me some music,” he said to us as we knelt round his bed, “Sing me some good song about death, for it is now my hour for dying.” For a troubled moment I hesitated what we should sing, the last earthly music that was to sound in his ears, so soon to hear the Heavenly. Then God gave me the right thought and I began that cantional, “Hark! a voice saith, all are mortal,” on which he made so beautiful and touching a chorale prelude in the Little Organ Book, and the others joined in till we had the four parts complete. As we sang a look of great peace came over my Sebastian’s face. He was already past the troubles of this world.

It was on the evening of Tuesday, at a quarter to nine o’clock, the 29th day of July, in the year 1750, that he died. He was sixty-five years of age. On Friday morning early he was buried at the Church of St. John, in Leipzig. The Pastor said from the pulpit these words: “The very worthy and venerable Herr Johann Sebastian Bach, Hofcomponist to his Kingly Majesty of Poland and Electoral and Serene Highness of Saxony, Capellmeister to his Highness the Prince of Anhalt-Cöthen, and Cantor to the Schule of St. Thomas’s in this town, having fallen calmly and blessedly asleep in God, in St. Thomas’s Churchyard, his body has this day, according to Christian usage, been consigned to the earth.”

But more than any words of the preacher, in my heart were the words of that chorale for which Sebastian had made the music on his death-bed.

Before Thy Throne, my God, I stand,
Myself, my all, are in Thy hand;
Turn to me Thine approving face,
Nor from me now withhold Thy grace.

And thus I have come to the end of the story of the life of Johann Sebastian Bach. The task which Caspar Burgholt in the first place set before me of telling, as clearly as I might remember, the history of his life and works—the doing of this has been a singular comfort to me for many months—is now finished. Because it is finished I feel as if my own life had come to its close. There is no further reason for living: my real life came to

an end on the day Sebastian died, and I pray daily that in His mercy the good God will take me away from this place of shadows, and let me once more be with my Sebastian, who, ever since I first loved him, has been my all of good. The time is long away from him.

THE END

Those familiar with the known and authenticated facts of Bach's life will realize that certain episodes in this book are imaginary.

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY
MACKAYS LIMITED CHATHAM

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Mis-spelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

When nested quoting was encountered, nested double quotes were changed to single quotes.

A cover was created for this ebook which is placed in the public domain.

Some pages of advertising from the publisher were excluded from the ebook edition.

[The end of *The Little Chronicle of Magdalena Bach* by Esther Meynell]