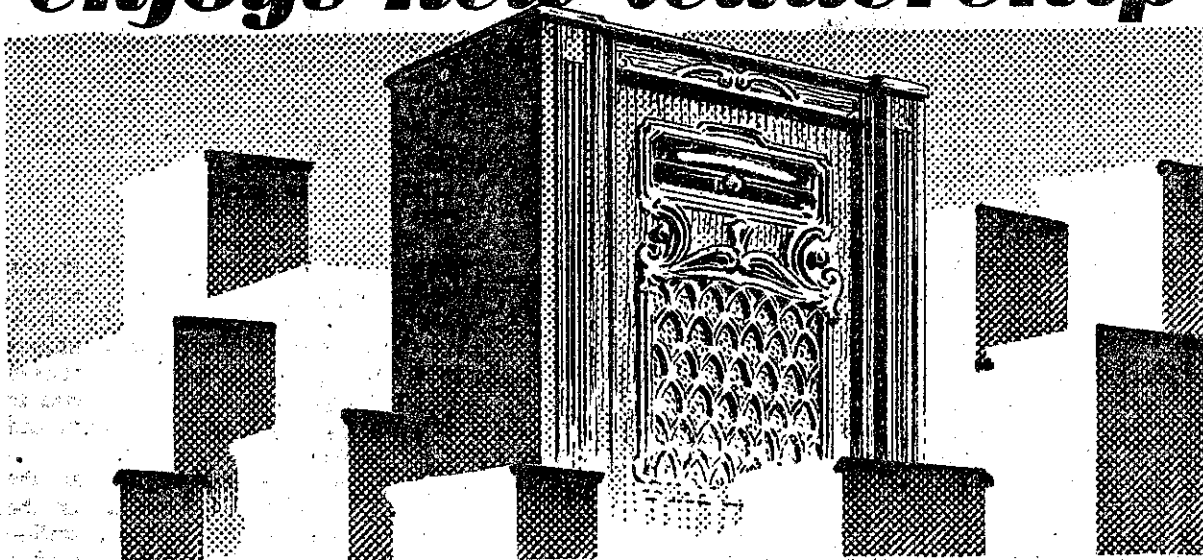


Beethoven

(Continued from page 1.)

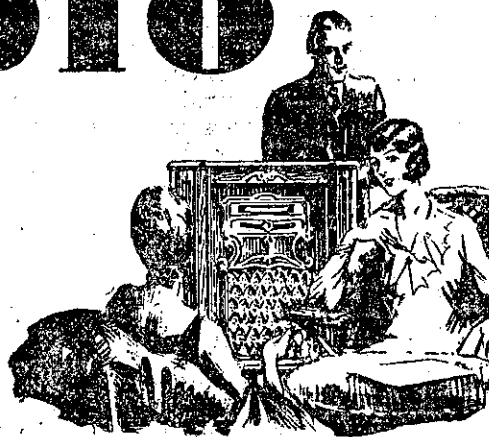
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The 1931 SENSATION IN RADIO

great Haydn himself, thought them daring. Haydn, after all, belonged to the age of Sterne and Goldsmith; Beethoven to that of Byron and Goethe.

But this successful man was deeply unhappy. At the age of 26 the first symptoms of deafness appeared. It is probable that the disease began in infancy, and it may have been congenital. Inexorably, though gradually, the curse crept upon him, and neither physicians nor quacks could relieve it. Partly from pride, partly from concern for his professional reputation, he concealed it even from his friends, and though he suffered agony from loneliness, he shunned society, until the world came to think him a misanthrope and a beggar. Yet his was an affectionate and sociable nature, capable of gaiety as boisterous as his scherzos. Tones he could always hear better than words.

He played in public for the last time in 1814, but in his later years his attempts to conduct brought humiliating disaster, and on the rare occasions when he played for friends, his fingers in the quieter passages would run over the keys and give no audible sound. The world could now reach him only by writing in the notebook which he always carried.

At his last concert, in 1825, the great audience, listening for the first time to the Ninth Symphony, abandoned itself to a tempest of applause. His friends had to turn him round to see the clapping.

This curse, the most terrible which could visit a musician, was through thirty years the central fact of his life. The man reached greatness by defying it. In 1802, after a summer spent in vain in the rural quiet of Heiligenstadt, his hopes of a cure faded. In his will he described the despair and isolation of these years.

Cut off from friendship and love, only his music remained, and for how long would he be able to create inaudible beauty? He even meditated suicide. Gradually his will asserted itself; he would fight; he would live to create. He ceases about this time to be ashamed of his affliction, and returns to society and finds that his work has gained. It is this victory which explains the sudden growth of power of which one is aware in the Eroica.

It was dedicated to Napoleon, but does it not sing the new ideal of heroism? The death which the Funeral March celebrates is not that literal death of the body which the registrar records. It is rather the spiritual tomb which a hero must escape. As one listens to the gay Scherzo and the triumphant Finale which follows it, instinctively one's inner voice repeats: "And the third day He rose again."

From this year onward, this theme inspires all Beethoven's greater work. Occasionally one hears a note of resignation, but much more often of triumph. No man has written music of such abandoned gaiety. But there is the force of a titanic will in these terrific hymns to joy. They are not, like Mozart's, the outpourings of a child of nature. One is the witness of inner struggles in most of his loveliest creations; in the Fifth Symphony, and even in the Seventh, in the Violin Concerto, and even in the "Emperor" Concerto.

(Concluded on page 29.)