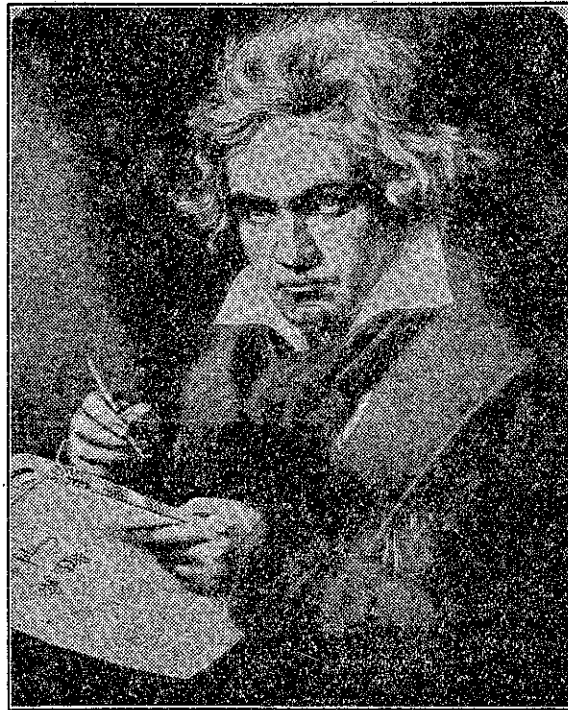


Beethoven and Domestic Problems

2YA is this week commencing a series of "Petites Periodes" with favourite masters of music. They include short sketches and recitals by eminent musicians. The first of these will be "Beethoven."



Beethoven—after Schiller.

Beethoven was a man apart—a soul longing for love—but he was not understood and, as he prematurely decayed, he became more difficult to tolerate. Following is Matthew Quinney on one of his difficulties.

A GOOD managing wife—a typical Hausfrau—would have made all the difference to Beethoven. Let us see how. For a start, she would have put a stop to the numerous flittings that must have disorganised his work and sacrificed his nerves. It is a pious and picturesque custom to mark with a suitably inscribed plate the houses in which the great have passed their lives. To distinguish in this way all the dwelling places of Beethoven in Vienna, however, would be impossible, for there were thirty of them!

On an average he packed up and moved about once a year, and only a few of his lodgings are known to-day. Nor can the reason for his frequent migrations be ascertained, though we can easily guess at some of them. His eccentricity, violent temper, irregular habits, and (it must be said with regret) his casualness in matters of personal hygiene, must have made him an undesirable tenant; the probability is that he received notice to quit as often as he gave notice of quitting. In the matter of personal hygiene we must not be misled by his excellent habit of pouring jugs of water over his head. Such enthusiastic ablutions weigh little against some less desirable habits, such as spitting on the floor of any room and in any house in which he happened to be. Nor did he confine his marksmanship to the floor; occasionally (we read) he would regard a large mirror as an attractive area, and . . . however this may have been mere absence of mind. But the worst on this subject cannot be told in a refined, family journal.

His devoted slave and worshipper, Schindler (who was so proud of his servitude that he printed on his visiting cards, "L'ami de Beethoven") says, after speaking of Beethoven's shortage of underwear, "I must hesitate

to describe his condition exactly as it was." Think of the difference a first-rate wife would have made!

Yet, though he worshipped some women (albeit never the same one for long at a time) and even more women worshipped him (in spite of his embarrassing manners) a wife was not for Beethoven. His pursuits were as vain as they were fleeting. 'Now you can help me to hunt a wife,' he wrote to his friend Count Gleichenstein, in 1810, during a period of comparative affluence; and he bids the Count to buy him "at least half a dozen neckties," in preparation for the chase; and a few months later he goes even farther than neckties, asking another friend to obtain his (Beethoven's) birth certificate as a preliminary to the documentary part of the ceremony.

Among the women who fluttered round him, however, was one who deserves honourable mention for her disinterested devotion. She was Nanette von Stricher, wife of a noted pianoforte maker. As a child of eight, by the way, she had lessons from Mozart, and so was a link between the two great men. She undertook from time to time to straighten out things for Beethoven when they got too bad even for him. We may safely guess that it was to the faithful Nanette that Beethoven wrote the list of questions that is still preserved in the State Library at Berlin:—

What ought one to give two servants to eat at dinner and supper, both as to quantity and quality?

How often ought one to give them roast meat?

Ought they have it at dinner and supper, too?

That which is intended for the servants, do they have in common with the victuals of the master, or do they prepare their own separately, i.e., do they (Concluded on page 2.)

