THE LIFE OF ANTON BRUCKNER
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In Friendly Admiration
To
Max Aufer,
Whose Authoritative Book is the Source of all
Facts Presented in this Modest Initial
Essay in English
THE LIFE OF ANTON BRUCKNER

Like Franz Schubert, Anton Bruckner springs from a line of Austrian schoolmasters. In the pleasantly situated village of Ansfelden, not far from the town of Linz, the Master's grandfather Joseph and his father Anton had both devoted their lives to the conscientious wielding of the rod, at that time still regarded as a hereditary occupation. Hence, the arrival on earth of Anton himself on September 4, 1824, meant in the regular course of things merely another candidate for the abundant miseries of schoolmastership.

Already at the age of four, the tiny "Tonerl," like Haydn, showed his undeniable musical bent. He could bring forth intelligible music from a little fiddle, and (to quote an old Ansfelder's naive characterization of these first signs of composer's fancy) "the infant could often be heard humming or whistling unknown tunes."

With the dawn of schooling the child evinced a definite dislike for all studies except the "Singstunde," an hour which seemed for him filled with an enchantment he could not miss. Of course he received many a whipping for his neglect of other studies.

In traditional connection with the schoolmastership, Father Bruckner had also to play the organ in church,
and it is doubtless owing to his efforts that the ten-year-old boy knew enough about the organ to attract the attention of a good musician in a near-by village. Under this man, Weiss, who was a cousin of the family, Anton now earnestly studied musical theory and organ-playing for two years. Remarkably enough, the organ preludes composed during this period by the almost unschooled lad exhibit a freedom of expression which deserted Bruckner all through his Odyssean decades of theoretical study, to return again unimpaired in his ripe, symphonic years.

The death of his father in 1837, leaving eleven children (Anton being the eldest) rendered it imperative for the widow to accept the refuge offered the gifted boy as Sängerknabe in the secular music school of St. Florian. The four impressionable years he spent there learning how to play the organ, piano and violin, and mastering the elements of musical theory doubtless stamped his entire character, musical and otherwise, with a fervent piety which no later influence ever dimmed. Even when the conflict of suffering and passion rages highest in his monumental symphonic first and last movements, a primitive appeal direct to heaven through the noblest trombone chorals points back to the spiritual guidance of those early years of unquestioning devotion and zeal at St. Florian.

Yet at this time the idea of music as a life-work seems hardly to have entered the boy's mind. His father had been a schoolmaster; he too must become one. To achieve this aim he added to his arduous music courses private studies in academic subjects, thus gaining admission to the teachers' preparatory school at Linz.

The ten months' course of careful bigoted warnings as to what pious children should not be taught at length being past, young Bruckner (17 years old) set out for the first scene of his tutorial activities, the world-for-saken mountain-village of Windhaag. Here, as an elementary teacher and organist, he was to receive the munificent monthly wage of 2 Gulden (less than 80 cents). In accordance with his salary, if not his work, he was to help in the field during "spare" time, and to breakfast with the maid servant.

In spite of these disadvantages the youth seems not to have been altogether unhappy, for there were friendly people about, and, with the folk-life and dancing, an opportunity for a new kind of music making. In this the life-loving youth gladly joined, playing the fiddle at dances and absorbing those rustic, rhythmic strains which the Midas-touch of his genius later turned into incomparably vital and humorous symphonic scherzos.

The church services of the village were subjected to the already marked leaning of the young genius towards dramatic harmonies, his experience with the startled villagers in this regard reminding us of that of the mighty Bach himself, who was once officially reproved for his fantastic modulatory interpolations during services.

His innate musicianship, however, must have dawned even upon the ignorant villagers, for this word has come down about it direct from the lips of an ancient Ansfelder, "Yes, that fellow Bruckner was some musician!" And then as an afterthought, in the light of a teacher's unhappy lot, "But I wouldn't let any kid of mine be a teacher, no sir! Much better be a shoemaker!"
There came a day when Bruckner forgot to attend to some menial chore in the field and for punishment he was transferred to the still smaller village of Kronsdorf.

The teacher’s demotion proved the musician’s promotion, however, for the little nest lay only an hour distant from the two towns of Enns and Steyr, and the fine organ in the latter soon became the object of the youth’s frequent pilgrimages. In the former, moreover, he found in the organist, von Zanetti, a fine musician and a new master of theory. All his compositions during this period bear the character of occasional church music; for the incredibly long veil of years of academic self-suppression had already fallen over his genius.

All this time he had been preparing himself for the final examination for a schoolmaster’s license. At length, in May 1845, he passed the examination and experienced the good fortune of being appointed to serve at St. Florian, that happy haven of his earlier youth.

The texts and dedications “to the beautiful days of young love” of several little occasional songs and piano pieces tell us that Bruckner met his first “love,” young Antonie Werner, soon after his appointment as a teacher at St. Florian. Sentiment, however, was but shortlived in the heart of this youth whose insatiable yearning for musical knowledge swept aside all other considerations. At this time, too, there began to unfold that titanic talent of his for free improvisation on the organ, the gift with which he in later years held audiences spellbound as perhaps only Beethoven and Bach had done before him.

In 1851, the post of organist at St. Florian falling definitely vacant, Bruckner, who had already for some time been filling it in effect, was officially appointed thereto. By now he had reached the affluent state of 80 Gulden per year, with free rent; but one of his dearest wishes was at last realized—he was master of the finest organ in the world. At this time it was his custom to practice on the piano ten and on the organ three hours a day.

Here too, in 1849, he had composed his Requiem in D-minor, the only early work deserving classification among his mature accomplishments.

Desiring now to be granted the license to teach in “main schools” he continued his academic studies, particularly Latin, and in 1855 found himself possessed also of this added dignity.

In 1853 he made his first trip to Vienna in the hope of laying the ghost of doubt that would ever loom up in his soul as to the life-work he had chosen. This doubt had even led him to consider abandoning music, for he seems to have at one time applied for a clerical position in Linz claiming in his letter that he had been preparing himself for several years for such a vocation. Wise counsel however induced him to forget such thoughts and to apply himself anew to theoretical studies. From this decision date his years of faithfulness to the contrapuntal chains forged by the famous Viennese musical grammarian, Simon Sechter. There is this to say for the almost unintelligible devotion of the old schoolboy Anton to his text-book lessons, that only such
hard prescribed work could keep away the torturing distrust and doubt which lurked grimly at the threshold of his consciousness.

In January 1856, having been persuaded to take part in an open competition for the vacant post of organist at the Cathedral in Linz, he easily carried off the honors, astonishing all by his incredible powers of improvisation on given themes.

Strange as it may seem to those who still think of Bruckner as “just an echo of Wagner,” it can be demonstrated that Bruckner was in numberless instances almost note for note ahead of Wagner as a so-called Wagnerian; that there are in Bruckner’s work Goetterdämmerung-passages a decade or more before anyone had heard the music-drama, and that one Parsifal passage antedates by twenty-five years the first performance of that Bühnenweihfestspiel, while another appears in an organ-prelude of the eleven year old Bruckner child.

During the first few of the twelve years he served as organist in Linz, Bruckner made practically no efforts at original composition, burying himself heart and soul in the contrapuntal problems heaped upon him by the pedantic Sechter. During the periods of Advent and Lent, the Cathedral organ being silent, Bishop Rudigier, who greatly admired Bruckner’s genius, permitted him to go to Vienna to pursue (in person) the studies which throughout the year had to be left to the uncertain mercies of a correspondence course.

One may get some inkling of the stupendous physical and mental labor involved in “studying,” as Bruckner interpreted the term, if one believes the evidence advanced by eye-witnesses, who assert that the piles of written musical exercises in the “student’s” room reached from the floor to the keyboard of his piano. And should that sound incredible there is the written word of the unerring Sechter himself to the following effect: upon receiving from Bruckner in a single installment seventeen bookfuls of written exercises, he warned him against “too great an intellectual strain,” and lest his admonition be taken in ill part by the student, the teacher added the comforting assurance: “I believe I never had a more serious pupil than you.”

Eloquent of Bruckner’s Odyssean wanderings through the world of musical grammar and rhetoric during those years is the list of examinations to which he insisted upon subjecting himself (after typical Bruckneresque preparation). After two years of work, on July 10, 1858, he passed a test in Harmony and Thorough-bass. (Of the text-book he studied, not a single leaf remained attached to the binding.) Then on August 12, 1859, he passed Elementary Counterpoint; April 3, 1860, Advanced Counterpoint; March 26, 1861, Canon and Fugue, which, being the last, elicited from the student this remark: “I feel like a dog which has just broken out of his chains.”

And then came the crowning trial of all, one without which he was still not sure of himself. He begged for permission to submit his repertoire of accomplishments to the judgment of the highest pedantic musical tribunal in Europe, a commission consisting of Vienna’s five recognized Solons of musical law (to-day all turned to names or less than names). The request was granted,
and Bruckner accorded the grace of choosing the scene of “combat.”

Such final tests of “maturity,” not so rare in Vienna, had assumed a somewhat stereotyped nature. But in the case of this student the occasion assumed an epic flavor, being, as it were, a last magnificent gesture.

Bruckner had chosen for the setting the interior of the Piaristen-Kirche. Could one have been present, one might have been reminded of the examination of Walter by the Meistersinger. The customary short theme was written down by one judge, and submitted to the others for approval; but one of these, being maliciously disposed, doubled it in length, thus at once changing the test of scholarship to a challenge of mastery.

The slip of paper was now passed down to the expectant candidate seated at the organ. For some moments he regarded it earnestly, while the judges, misinterpreting the cause of delay, smiled knowingly.

Suddenly, however, Bruckner began, first playing a mere introduction composed of fragments of the given theme, gradually leading to the required fugue itself. Then was heard a fugue—not such a fugue as might be expected from an academic graduate, but a living contrapuntal Philippic, which pealed forth ever more majestic to strike the astonished ears of the smug judicial quintet with the authoritative splendor of a lion’s voice bursting forth fresh from the jungle.

“He should examine us!” exclaimed one judge enthusiastically. “If I knew a tenth of what he knows, I’d be happy!”

Then, being asked to improvise freely on the organ, Bruckner exhibited so fine a fantasy that the same judge cried: “We want to test him? He knows more than all of us together!”

This man’s name was Herbeck; and he was from that moment Bruckner’s greatest musical friend, though unfortunately he survived the occasion by too short a time to be of much help to the struggling composer.

Of great advantage to Bruckner during his Linzian years was the opportunity afforded him for the first time to try his hand at “wordly” music, for church-music had monopolized his attention ever since his earlist boyhood.

The choral society (Liedertafel) “Frohsinn” chose him as director in 1860, and through this association in a concert on May 12, 1861, Bruckner made his first public “city” appearance as composer with an “Ave Maria” for seven voices.

Hardly had he shaken off his “conservatory” chains when he realized how narrow all his study had been. Unhesitatingly he once more sought out a teacher, this time a young conductor, named Otto Kitzler, who was, fortunately for the “student,” a practical musician. From the revealing analysis of Beethoven Sonatas, Kitzler led the now happy disciple to the study of instrumentation, introducing him to the beauties of the “Tannhäuser” score. Here Bruckner was given his first glimpse of a new world of music the possibilities of which he had long suspected. At length after hearing two performances of this opera in 1863 he became convinced of his mission and maturity, and finding all school chains now unbearable, took leave of Kitzler and the long years of preparation.
Those years are perhaps unique in the annals of mortal genius, at least in those of Western civilization. The naive modesty of a great artist already within sight of middle age burying himself more desperately than any schoolboy in the mass of antiquated musical dogma prescribed by a “Dr. Syntax” would be at once labelled in these psycho-analytic days as a sample of the workings of an inferiority complex. But Bruckner’s had been a church-life, his language a church idiom, and in the light of this, is it illogical to claim that his particular preparation had to differ from that of other symphonists as the architecture of a cathedral differs from that of a palace or villa?

In short, without those drab years of study mistakenly termed “belated” the tremendous symphonic form concepts of Bruckner would most likely never have been realized.

Of significance in the contemplation of his spiritual affinity to Wagner is the fact that an Overture in G-minor (composed by Bruckner in 1863) closes with the still unknown “Feuerzauber,” not that either master plagiarized the other, but that the caprice of nature which set two such gigantic figures side by side in the same generation must not be ignored. It is truly a cause for human gratitude that the sublime accident gave the one the faculty it denied the other. For epic as is the expression of both these artists Wagner’s helplessness in the field of the Symphony is as notorious as Bruckner’s in that of the music drama. The future will simply have to regard the two composers as one in spirit, but supplementary in achievement.

The music of “Tannhäuser” sang into Bruckner’s ears a veritable proclamation of independence. Thus, Wagner, whom he had never seen, at a mere spiritual touch, set him free, urging him to unrestrained self-expression. With the very first effort of this new-born Bruckner, the glorious Mass in D, the world was endowed with an initial major work equalled in depth and brilliancy by no other perhaps in the history of music. Inspired by “Tannhäuser,” if you will, yet sounding not the slightest echo of its music, the mass abounded in marvelous touches now dubbed Wagnerian, but which no one before them could as yet have heard. The opening Adagio, built up on the theme of the “Liebestod” (it was only 1864!) the music accompanying the settling down of the dove at the end of “Parsifal,” the fall of the Gods, and the “Spear-motive” from the “Ring,” these anticipatory touches should, in justice, be viewed not as Wagnerisms but rather as forerunners of the new epic spirit that had risen in music.

The composition of this masterpiece took only three months. After the first performance, in the Cathedral at Linz, November 20, 1864, the Bishop, Rudigier was heard to remark: “During that mass I could not pray.” Indeed, so profound was the impression the work made, that it was given a “concert” performance by general request immediately after, achieving a great triumph. Bruckner’s success was proudly reported in the Viennese papers, this being good publicity for the “home” conservatory of which he had been “one of the best pupils.”
Shortly thereafter the Master began working on his first symphony. In this year 1865, May 15 had been set aside in Munich for the greatest musical event of the century, the opening performance of "Tristan." Naturally, Bruckner made the trip to the Bavarian capital and when, owing to the illness of "Isolde" (Frau Schnorr), the event was postponed till the 10th of June, he decided to await the day in the city. There he had the fortune to be presented to the great Wagner himself who at once took a liking to the serious honest Austrian, inviting him to spend many an evening in the famous Wagnerian "circle." Von Bülow became Bruckner's first confidant; for the latter shyly showed the great pianist the first three movements of his budding symphony. Von Bülow was so astonished at the splendor and freshness of the ideas in this new score that he could not refrain from betraying his enthusiasm to the great Richard, much to Bruckner's embarrassment, for when Wagner asked in person to see the symphony, so great was the awe in which the younger composer stood of this "Master of all Masters that he could barely bring himself to take a step that struck him as little short of sacrilege. So naive was he in this regard that he could not even be induced to sit down in Wagner’s presence. No wonder, then, that after the "Tristan" performance Wagner became for Bruckner a veritable religion; and for this honest hero-worship the younger man was condemned to suffer such abuse as has fallen to the lot of no other in the history of art. He was to write nine mighty symphonies, *ad majorem Dei gloriam*, for from man he was to get no material reward, but only neglect, scorn, and spiritual abuse without end.

On April 14, 1866, Bruckner's first symphony stood complete, ready to announce to a skeptical world that the instrumental symphonic form had not culminated in Beethoven. True enough, it was from the immortal Fifth of Beethoven, that Parnassus of musical classicism, that the new Master drew the spiritual motto for all his symphonic efforts. In the case of each of his symphonies the whole work might be described as an ascent *per aspera ad astra*; and through the logical order of the four movements ran the panorama of the trials of the human soul as hero, beginning with (first movement) the drama of inner conflict, then (adagio) returning from the prayerful communion with God to the (scherzo) joys of life in nature, at length (finale) with unconquerable energy and determination to enter upon the battle with the world leading to the final triumph over all opposition.

That the first performance of this symphony, 1868, perhaps the most difficult that had as yet come into existence, was not a total failure, is nothing short of a miracle; for the best string and brass sections the town of Linz could provide faced the "impossible" score almost hopelessly. Yet Bruckner conducted the numerous rehearsals with such desperate zeal that the result was at least musical enough to call forth admiring comment from the critics, though they could have gleaned but the scantiest notion of the true significance of the work.

Even the noted critic, Hanslick, on the strength of this favorable report, congratulated the Viennese
conservatory on the rumor that its faculty was to be augmented by so valuable an acquisition as Bruckner.

The rumor came true though only after long, long hesitation on Bruckner’s part. He feared to give up his certain post in Linz for what struck him as a not only miserably paid but also insecure chair in theory at the noted music school of the capital; but his friends knowing his timidity and realizing the tremendous artistic advantages of the offered professorship, urged him on, and when Bishop Rudigier kindly assured Bruckner that the organ at the Cathedral in Linz would always be waiting for him, the die was cast. The date upon which he officially assumed his title of professor was July 6, 1868.

Just about this time, in his forty-third year, he was made the unhappy victim of a great spiritual shock. The parents of the seventeen year old Josephine Lang with whom the composer had fallen in love refused him the girl’s hand on account of his age. In Bruckner’s many cases of platonic affection for young girls (this continued till his seventieth year) there is nourishing food for the modern psychologist’s penchant for speculation.

And now began for him a slow and cruel martyrdom. His very first Viennese attempt, the newly composed Mass in F-minor, was refused a hearing on the ground of being “unsingable.” After this two new symphonic attempts were suppressed by the nerve-racked composer himself with the bitter comment: “They are no good; I dare not write down a respectable theme.”

Greatly discouraged, he decided to stop composing for a while and set out on a concert tour through France. The newspaper reports of this series of recitals were so jubilantly enthusiastic that Europe soon rang with the name of “the greatest organist of his time.”

Returning to Austria, lighter of heart, he experienced “the most glorious day of his life” when his Mass in E-minor (composed in 1866) was given its initial hearing (in Linz, 1869) midst unqualified enthusiasm.

The astonishing reports from France about Bruckner’s organ-improvisations so aroused the curiosity of many Englishmen that the virtuoso was offered 50 pounds for twelve recitals in London to be given within a week! Out of this enormous fee he was expected also to pay travelling expenses!

Nevertheless August 2, 1871, found Bruckner seated at a London organ dutifully improvising on the appropriate theme “God save the King.” John Bull seems to have been quite impressed by the grandeur of these improvisations but remarked judiciously that the performer showed his weakness in a Mendelssohn Sonata, as had been expected. After one of the recitals a certain London lady through an interpreter requested Bruckner to learn English for his next visit to Britain. He never visited England again.

Back in Vienna he doffed the mask of virtuoso and determined at his own cost to give the shelved F-minor Mass the hearing he was sure it deserved. This took place in June, 1872. He had hired the world famous Philharmonic orchestra for the occasion at a cost of 300 gulden (eight months wages to the Professor of Counterpoint), but the favorable report of the famous Hanslick about the work (though he declared it reminded him of Wagner and Beethoven) was alone worth the
price; Hanslick, Wagner's most powerful and bitter opponent, did not as yet even dream that the simple Bruckner was to receive at the hands of the great music-dramatist the heavy legacy of critical abuse he had gathered through two score years of stormy travel from Dresden to Bayreuth. Bruckner, only two years before this (1869), once more turned student, had sat with rapt attention at the feet of Hanslick then lecturer on "Musical History" at the Viennese conservatory.

In the meanwhile, during his London experience, he had launched upon a new symphony, determined to make it from the point of view of technical playability totally acceptable to the comfort-loving world of musicians and critics among whom fate had cast his lot. However, rather than abandon the titanic skeletal structure of his "First," the symphonic "Wagon" to which he had "hitched his star," so to speak, he hit upon the unusual idea of punctuating the longer movements of the work with general pauses in the whole orchestra. This unusual detail at once caught the superficial ears of the musicians during the rehearsals for the first performance and resulted in the fabrication of the sarcastic nickname, "Rest Symphony," by which the work was thereafter known in Vienna. However, the adjective "Upper-Austrian" later applied by the noted Bruckner biographer, Göllerich, is far more appropriate; for the opening and closing movements, and particularly the scherzo are thoroughly permeated with the atmosphere and song of Bruckner's "home country" surroundings. Being once more refused an official hearing for his new work on the ground of its being "unplayable," Bruckner again dipped deep into his yawning pockets and allowed Vienna to hear his II Symphony to the tune of 405 blood-born, professional gulden. Speidel, a prominent critic, had the honesty to say in his report of the occasion: "It is no common mortal who speaks to us in this music. There is introduced to us in this symphony a composer whose very shoe-laces his numerous enemies are not fit to tie." Hanslick, still no outspoken opponent, expressed discomfort at the titanic dimensions of the work, and emphasized the "masterly manner" in which the orchestra played the "unplayable" score. (October 26, 1873.)

Although Brahms was by this time firmly seated on the world's symphonic throne, for he had been by all critics officially crowned Beethoven's heir, court-conductor Herbeck could not refrain from making the following remark to Bruckner after hearing this work: "I assure you if Brahms were capable of writing such a symphony the concert-hall would be shattered by the applause."

That Bruckner did not enter upon these huge personal expenses because of a thirst for public applause, and that the joys of symphonic creation were by now become sufficient artistic exaltation for his soul, we may deduce from the zeal, with which he began working upon his "Third" at the time his "Second" had been unconditionally rejected by the Vienna Philharmonic. In the production of this new score he clearly abandoned all intention to compromise with friend and foe who alike had complained about the length and difficulty of his previous orchestral efforts. The heroic defiance that stalks proudly through every movement
of this work like some huge declaration of independence or self-confidence has caused some to label it the "Eroica," implying a comparison between Beethoven and Bruckner.

That it was Bruckner's original intention to make this "Third" a "Wagner" symphony, is clear from the actual note for note quotations from the already widely discussed "Ring." He had apparently, by now, gained sufficient assurance to go and meet Wagner face to face and ask him for his artistic approval. His arrival at Bayreuth, armed with his last two symphonies, caught the Master of Wahnfried in most friendly humor. Bruckner's own description of his emotions as Wagner examined the scores is eloquent: "I felt just like a schoolboy while his teacher is correcting his note-book. Every word of comment seemed like a red mark on the page. At last I managed to stammer forth the wish that he accept the dedication of one of the symphonies, that being the only and also the highest recognition I wanted from the world." Wagner's answer, one of the few happy moments in Bruckner's tragic life, is surely recorded by the angels. "Dear friend, the dedication would be appropriate, this work of yours gives me the greatest pleasure."

After this, to quote Bruckner once more, "We discussed musical conditions in Vienna, drank beer, and then he led me into the garden and showed me his grave!" They apparently spent a most delightful afternoon together, and we have it on the authority of the famous sculptor, Kietz, who was present part of the time that a most amusing sequel developed on the two following days. Bruckner had had so much beer, relates Kietz, the hospitable Wagner continually filling his large glass and always urging him to empty it, (for a whole barrel had been ordered for the occasion) that the next morning found the Austrian quite muddled and uncertain which of the two symphonies the Master had preferred. At first ashamed to return to Wagner, he sought out the sculptor, and appealed to him for help in this dilemma; but the latter, highly amused, pretended not to have paid attention to the discussion, saying he had heard some talk about D-minor and a trumpet. And now the sculptor's own words, "Overjoyed Bruckner threw his arms about me, kissed me, and cried, 'Thank you, dear Mr. Councillor (I don't know to this day how I came by the title) thank you! Now I know it's the one in D-minor the Master has accepted! Oh, how happy I am that I know which of the two it is!" Next day, however, he seems once more to have become doubtful for he plucked up the courage to send the following words to Wagner on a blue slip of paper: "Symphony in D-minor in which the trumpet introduces the theme. A. Bruckner." The same leaf came back to him with the following addition: "Yes, yes! Hearty greetings! Wagner." and thus came Bruckner's "Third" to bear the name "Wagner Symphony."

The report of this incident with its clear implication of Wagner's regard for Bruckner's genius was the death-knell for whatever chance the latter may still have had for Viennese recognition during the Hanslick regime. Up to that point his work had been neglected mainly because the musicians of the city had little ear for such "modern" harmony and dramatic orchestra-
tion, but the leaps and bounds Wagner’s music-dramas and Liszt’s Symphonic Poems were making in the world of art had brought about a complete revolution in musical taste. The new era was one of bitter personal hatreds between musicians and critics of two opposing factions. No political enemies have ever used more poisonous epithets than the Wagnerites against the Anti-Wagnerites and vice-versa; indeed in the history of music the ’70’s might well be called the “Poison Age.” Such a lion for punishment, both taking and giving, as Wagner himself could easily weather the storm of unspeakable abuse; but away from his scores and classes Bruckner was a mere child so simple and retiring, that the merciless critical boycott of his works which now followed, all but crushed his spirit. It was inconceivable to him that human beings could be as cruel to him as Hanslick and his snarling myrmidons merely because he had gained Wagner’s friendship and recognition. Fortunately he had become reconciled to composing work after work without the encouraging incentive of public hearings.

The “Fourth” already in the making at this time, and bearing the title “Romantic,” was finished November 22, 1874. Although the description “Romantic” is no less fitting than that of “Pastorale” in the case of Beethoven’s “Sixth,” there seems little doubt that the detailed “program” or symphonic plot communicated to his circle of friends by Bruckner was a postanalysis influenced by no other than Wagner, who had even published a rather fantastic pictorial description of Beethoven’s Ninth. It is at any rate silly to dilly-dally over the fitness of its details; for the “Romantic” has so clear and effective a tale to tell that it has become the favorite vehicle for the introduction of Bruckner to a new audience. That the composer did not regard the “program” seriously is evident from his remark concerning the Finale: “And in the last movement,” said he, “I’ve forgotten completely what picture I had in mind.” The work possesses, however, an unmistakable unity hitherto without precedent in absolute music, for all four parts spring from the main theme in the first movement. So logical and masterly is the development of this theme in the course of the work that the climax is not reached until the closing portion of the Finale, making the “Romantic” symphony from the point of view of perfection of form perhaps the last word that has as yet been spoken by man.

At this time thanks to the zeal of his enemies his spiritual condition had become almost hopeless. To quote from one of his letters, January 12, 1875: “I have only my place at the Conservatory, on the income of which it is impossible to exist. I have been compelled to borrow money over and over again or accept the alternative of starvation. No one offers me any help. The ‘Minister of Education’ makes promises, but does nothing. If it weren’t for a few foreigners who are studying with me, I should have to turn beggar. Had I even dreamed of such terrible things no earthly power could have induced me to come to Vienna. Oh, how happy I’d be to return to my old position in Linz!”

But the Viennese musical “powers that be” had conspired to make life unbearable for the avowed Wagnerite. One of the highest officials at the conservatory upon being appealed to by Bruckner gave him the fol-
lowing kind advice: “It’s about time you threw your symphonies into the trash-basket. It would be much wiser for you to earn money by making piano arrangements of the compositions of others.” Then the same man with equally good intention told all who were interested: “Bruckner can’t play the organ at all.”

Of course the war-like Wagner’s arrival in Vienna in the spring of 1875 drew more attention to the timid symphonist; but it seems to have done him more material harm than good. The music-dramatist’s reiterated praise of Bruckner’s work was like a signal for the authorities to redouble the cruelty of their method of torture. Dessoff, conductor of the Philharmonic, promised to perform the Wagner-symphony, invited Bruckner to several rehearsals, and suddenly (after two months) declared he could not find room for it on a program. Later the orchestra took hold of it again but dismissed it finally (only a single musician opposing the move) as absolutely “unplayable.”

In a similar state of gloom Wagner set to work on his “Meistersinger,” pouring his sufferings out through the lips of Hans Sachs. Bruckner plunged into the tragic depths of his “Fifth,” for only in the construction of his colossal symphonies was he able to play the hero against fate. Over two years in the process of composition the “Tragic” symphony was compelled to wait eighteen years for its first hearing; and that was not to be in Vienna.

In 1876 he was invited by Wagner to the inaugural “Ring” performances at Bayreuth, and once more the two giant musicians discussed the “Wagner” symphony. Perhaps as a direct result of this conference Bruckner now set about simplifying the condemned score, and once more appealed to the Philharmonic for a hearing. But the prompt refusal given his request must have convinced even him that a relentless hostility due to Wagner’s praise made his cause impossible so far as that organization was concerned. Into this spiritual state of almost total eclipse there suddenly broke a ray of light. Herbeck, old friend of sunnier days, now conductor of the less-famed orchestra of the “Society of the Friends of Music,” became so disgusted with the relentless persecution that he determined to brave the wrath of critics and musicians by espousing the Bruckner cause. Hardly had he announced the first step of his campaign, a production of the “Wagner” symphony, when he died. Had not, at this juncture, an influential government representative named Gollerich (father of the noted Bruckner biographer) stepped into the breach, the “Third” symphony would have been taken off the Herbeck program and the unhappy composer, poisoned with a cup of misery worthy of a Job, would probably have gone mad.

The performance itself which took place December 16, 1877, was one of the saddest in the history of music. Since no conductor dared to wield the baton upon the occasion, Bruckner himself was compelled to direct the orchestra. During the music, Director Hellmesberger, spokesman of the conservatory, burst out laughing; another “director” followed suit; upon which the apish students joined in; and then of course the public too. Soon people began to leave the hall indignant that the cause of music had been offered so great an insult as a “Bruckner work” in the sacred musical metropolis.
When the symphony came to an end there were hardly ten people left in the parquet. The few faithful occupants of the “standing room,” a handful of Bruckner-pupils, among them Gustav Mahler, rushed down to the heartbroken master, from whom even the musicians of the orchestra had fled, and attempted in vain to cheer him with consoling words. At this moment, however, an angel approached in the guise of the music publisher, Rättig, described the symphony as wonderful, and declared himself ready to risk the expense of publishing it in fine shape. Under such a black sky was the “Wagner” Symphony given to the world.

To return to the Viennese critics for whose “Wagner-eating” appetite it had been a gala evening, the director Hanslick (intending it, of course, only as a joke), for once told the absolute truth, namely, that he “could not understand the gigantic symphony.” He said there had come to him, while listening, “a vision in which Beethoven’s ‘Ninth’ had made up to the Valkyr maidens only to be crushed under their horses’ feet.” As a sarcastic climax he added that he “did not wish by his words to hurt the feelings of the composer, whom he really held in great esteem.”

A little before this time, through the good graces of the previously mentioned Gollerich, the University of Vienna had announced the creation of a “chair” of music and the inclusion of harmony and counterpoint in the regular curriculum. Bruckner who had ten years ago appealed to the faculty that some such step be taken in his behalf was now appointed lecturer. From the opening address, April 30, 1876, which was attended by so great a number of students that the occasion might be compared to the first of Schiller’s lecturers at Jena, the younger generation embraced the Bruckner cause enthusiastically. To the subjects themselves taught by the Master with Goethe’s words as motto: “Gray is every theory, Green alone life’s golden tree,” were added those glorious improvisations for which he was so noted and the powerful message of which endeared him to the hearts of his “Gaudeamuses” as he lovingly called his students. The open bitterness of Hanslick towards their beloved professor soon assumed for them the proportions of a political issue and a life problem. In the years to come the Bruckner cause in Vienna was to attain such a strength through the loyalty of the University students that the combined enmity of critics and musicians would have to bow before it in the dust. This actually took place, however, only 10 years later, when the Philharmonic was compelled owing to the force of public opinion, to program the already world-famous Seventh Symphony (1886).

As the result of the frigid reception accorded the “Wagner” Symphony, Bruckner spent the next two years, 1878-80, in a radical revision of the instrumentation of the Second, Fourth and Fifth Symphonies, including the composition of a totally new scherzo, the now famous “Hunting Scherzo,” for the Fourth or “Romantic.” However, the changes he made in the scores are not of the nature of compromises between the artist and the world, for the themes of the symphonies remained unaltered, only unnecessary rhythmic and technical complications being abandoned.

To this interval also belongs the composition of the “Quintet” for strings, Bruckner’s sole contribution to
chamber-music, but a work so deep and mighty that those who have heard it proclaim that in the whole range of chamber music only the last Beethoven string-quartets soar to such spiritual heights. The “Quintet” was composed by the symphonist Bruckner, and has the sweep and grandeur of his best symphonic creations.

The interval of rest from major composition saw him frequently attending the many colorful formal dances of Vienna. It seems psychologically consistent that one whose mind was always engaged in tragic inner conflicts, should seek recreation in the halls of festivity and laughter. Of dancing Bruckner had always been fond.

A severe attack of “nerves,” doubtless due to overwork, drove him to seek relief in Switzerland during the summer of 1880. In August of that vacation period he visited the Passion Play at Oberammergau and fell head over heels in love with one of the “daughters of Jerusalem,” the 17 year old Marie Bartl. He waited for her at the stage-door, obtained an introduction and escorted her home. Having spent the evening and most of the next day in the Bartl family circle he seems to have arrived at a temporary understanding which left the affair on a correspondentional basis. There followed a lively exchange of letters between him and Marie, lasting a year but the time came when the girl no longer answered him. Thus the now 56 year old lover found himself again refused entrance into the halls of matrimony. One is here involuntarily reminded of the love of the 37 year old Beethoven for the 14 year old Therese Malfatti; but nowadays we have ceased to gasp at such things. The solitary silent remnant of this romance of Bruckner’s is a photograph of his bearing the inscription: “To my dearest friend, Marie Bartl.”

In these gloomy days when following the deplorable fiasco of the “Wagner” Symphony no one in Vienna dared or cared to lift a hand in favor of the “Romantic” and “Tragic” symphonies now long finished and unperformed, a malady affecting his feet compelled Bruckner to take to his bed. There, in spite of depressing circumstances he summoned up the spiritual strength to work on his VI Symphony; and just as if his misfortunes had been trials sent from above to prove his faith, while Bruckner was still busy with the last movement of the new work, Hans Richter, the Wagner disciple, visited him and was so struck with the beauties of the dormant “Romantic” Symphony that he at once programmed it and invited Bruckner to a rehearsal. Richter’s own words describing the occasion throw some light on the composer’s naive character: “When the symphony was over, Bruckner came to me, his face beaming with enthusiasm and joy. I felt him press a coin into my hand. ‘Take this,’ he said, ‘and drink a glass of beer to my health.’” Richter, of course, accepted the coin, a Maria Theresia Thaler, and wore it on his watch-chain ever after. The actual performance of the “Fourth” took place on February 20, 1881, and was a triumph for Bruckner, who was compelled to take many bows after each movement. On the same program, however, the symphonic poem the “Singer’s curse” by Bülow, met with utter failure. Bülow, now a deserter from the Wagner camp, and turned to a staunch “Brahmsite” (another term for Hanslicker) could not contain his jealousy and asked sarcastically, referring to
the successful symphony: “Is that German music?” From Bülow, at any rate, the most devoted of Wagnerians could expect no praise. In time the insults Bruckner had to endure from this source grew vile beyond description. Even seven years later with musical Germany at the composer’s feet, Bülow still stood by his sinking ship saying: “Bruckner’s symphonies are the anti-musical ravings of a half-wit.” At last in 1891, the patient composer experienced the gratification of hearing that Bülow had turned again and was promoting Bruckner’s *Te Deum* as a splendid work well worthy of public performance.

In July, 1882, he made a flying trip to Bayreuth to hear the opening performance of “Parsifal.” To him these few days were a beautiful idyll. He would stroll along the road with a black frock-coat on his arm, ready to don it should Wagner come along by accident. It made no difference to him that people said this was an unnecessary act of homage. Or, he would stop at “Wahnfried” and gaze at its windows long and reverently. Mornings he would visit Wagner, and the Master would come to greet him, offering him the hand of the little Eva, while he said laughingly: “Mr. Bruckner, your bride!” Then Wagner would talk of the disappointing state of contemporary music, exclaiming: “I know of only one who may be compared to Beethoven, and he is Bruckner!” One evening, grasping the Austrian’s hand, the aged Master cried: “Rest assured, I myself shall produce the symphony (meaning the ‘Wagner’) and all your works.” “Oh, Master!” was all Bruckner could answer. Then the question: “Have you already heard ‘Parsifal’? How do you like it?” Bruckner sank upon his knees, pressing Wagner’s hand to his lips, and murmuring: “Oh, Master, I worship you!” Wagner was deeply moved. When they bade each other good night that evening, it was the last greeting they ever exchanged on earth; for the call of Walhalla for the “Master of all Masters,” as Bruckner called him, was soon to sound. This is the premonition that took hold of the younger composer, then already deep in the creation of his VII Symphony. No more majestic tribute to the greatness of one mortal has ever been made by another than in that glorious soaring “Adagio of premonition.” It is an appeal direct to the soul of the mighty music-dramatist, and spoken in its own dialect here consummately mastered by a kindred soul.

The death of Wagner was a stupendous blow to the whole musical world, and especially so to Bruckner. The latter, now approaching his sixtieth birthday, was still just Prof. Anton Bruckner to the world about him. The field of musical fame suddenly deprived of its gigantic solitary tenant seemed to yawn for a new Titan. The psychological moment was at hand.

On the 29th of December, 1884, Hugo Wolf wrote: “Bruckner? Bruckner? Who is he? Where does he live? What does he do? Such questions are asked by people who regularly attend the concerts in Vienna.” The Viennese were destined to the shame of soon being taught by Germany the greatness they had been ignoring in their midst for a score of years.

When on Dec. 30, 1884, young Arthur Nikisch, Bruckner pupil and born king of the baton, gave the VII Symphony its first hearing in no less modest a
hall than the Gewandhaus at Leipzig, it was as if a divine Voice had burst forth from total darkness crying, “Let there be light!” As the last note ceased there was enacted a scene of unparalleled enthusiasm, the applause lasting fully fifteen minutes. As Bruckner appeared on the stage dressed in his simple manner and bowed repeatedly in answer to the unexpected ovation, one of the critics present spoke of him as follows: “One could see from the trembling of his lips and the sparkling moisture in his eyes how difficult it was for the old gentleman to suppress his deep emotion. His homely but honest countenance beamed with a warm inner happiness such as can appear only on the face of one who is too goodhearted to succumb to bitterness even under the pressure of most disheartening circumstances. Having heard his work and now seeing him in person we asked ourselves in amazement, ‘How is it possible that he could remain so long unknown to us?’ ”

On New Year’s Day, 1885, the whole world knew that a great symphonic composer whom Vienna had for years held bound and gagged was at last free to deliver his message to all mankind.

The performance of the VII Symphony in Munich under Hermann Levi proved an even greater triumph. The conductor called it the “wonder work,” avowing its interpretation was the crowning point of his artistic career. Perhaps Levi, famous Wagnerian chieftain as he was, intended to annihilate Brahms with a word when he also added, “It is the most significant symphonic work since 1827.”

 Into the performance at Karlsruhe, (the work was now making its meteoric way through all Germany) 34 Felix Mottl, gifted Bruckner pupil, threw so much spiritual fire that even the white-haired Liszt, sitting among the distinguished audience, became from that moment on a staunch Brucknerite. This conversion was all the more remarkable since the great pianist had long remained cold to Bruckner’s music, although he had been for two score years one of the chief marshals of the Wagner camp. Liszt as a Wagnerian had fondly nursed the weird notion that the Liszt “Symphonic Poems” could never be properly understood by the people until they had learned to appreciate his son-in-law’s music dramas.

Despite the recognition of the whole of Germany, Vienna and the Philharmonic continued to maintain a dogged silence. Bruckner actually anticipated any possible desire on the part of the famous orchestra to play his work by entering a formal protest against such a move, on the ground that “the hostility of the Viennese critics could only prove dangerous to his still young triumphs in Germany.”

For diplomatic reasons, no doubt, the Quintet was now given, for the first time in its entirety by the Hellmesberger aggregation. One of the most prominent reviewers wrote about it as follows: “We cannot compare it with any other Quintet composed in this generation. It stands absolutely alone in its field.” Kalbeck, Brahms’ biographer and one of Bruckner’s bitterest enemies said: “Its Adagio radiates light in a thousand delicate shades,—the reflection of a vision of the seventh heaven.”

Apparently the dawn of recognition was not far away even in Vienna. Yet the conspirators were determined
to die hard; for another critic on the same occasion after paving the way by admitting that the Quintet was perhaps the deepest and richest thing of its kind, warned the public on ethical grounds against Bruckner, as "the greatest living musical peril, a sort of tonal Anti­christ, etc." His argument follows: "The violent nature of the man is not written on his face—for his expression indicates at most the small soul of the average Kapellmeister; and yet he composes nothing but high treason, revolution and murder. His work is absolutely devoid of art or reason. Perhaps, some day a devil and an angel will fight for his soul. His music has the fragrance of heavenly roses and yet is poisonous with the sulphurs of hell."

Meanwhile, for the benefit of his Viennese friends, whom he did not wish to disappoint, the composer personally prepared the initial performance of his recently finished Te Deum. This, a sort of family affair, took place in a small concert-hall. Two pianos were used in the absence of an impartial orchestra.

Suddenly Germany and Holland began clamoring for other Bruckner compositions but only the "Wagner" Symphony had appeared in print. That work had even penetrated to America where the noted Wagner disciple, Anton Seidl, had given it a hearing at the Metropolitan Opera House, December 6, 1885. When Bruckner heard about the flattering report in the "New York Tribune," he was as happy as a child, and exclaimed: "Now even America says I'm all right; isn't that just rich?"

These successes, however, did not turn his head. He was far from ready to rest on his laurels. During the summer of 1884 he seems to have already begun work on a new symphony. His sister, in whose house in the little town of Vöcklabruck he was vacationing, says he would show her a stack of music-paper covered with pencil marks and say that these scribblings would become another symphony. In order to be able to set down undisturbed the ideas that came to him during frequent walks in the surrounding woods, he rented a room with a piano in a house nearby, "just for composing."

Upon hearing that the owner of this house had a young and pretty daughter, he said, "I'm glad; here I'll be able to compose." Every day he would bring this girl, a Miss Hartmann, a bouquet of flowers. The sight of the younger fair sex seems to have been always a source of happiness to the composer. He was now over sixty years old.

At this time, like Balboa when he first stood upon the hill overlooking the mystic expanse of the Pacific, Bruckner stood at last in the halo of his belated and hard-earned fame looking back with calm melancholy upon the bitter trials of his artistic career. Beneath this retrospective spell his VIII Symphony unfolded itself. As a colossal structure of spiritual autobiog­raphy in tone it is a sequel to his "Fifth" or "Tragic" symphony, which it excels in depth of expression. It has been called the "crown of nineteenth century music." It is vain to attempt to give any idea of it in words, but its revelation in brief is: (First movement) how the artist, a mere human being, like Prometheus, steals the sacred fire from heaven and daring to bring the divine essence to earth, is condemned to suffer
for his temerity; (Scherzo) how his deed is greeted with scorn and ridicule by his fellow-men, and he finds solace only in the beauty of nature; (Adagio) he reveals the secret of his creative power, communion with the Supreme Source. (Finale) the battle all truth must fight on earth before it attains recognition, and the final victory and crowning of the artist.

In Bruckner's physical appearance at this time there was no hint of the senile. He was a little above the average in height; but an inclination to corpulence made him appear shorter. His physiognomy, huge-nosed and smooth-shaven, as he was, was that of a Roman emperor; but from his blue eyes beamed only kindness and childish faith. He wore unusually wide white collars, in order to leave his neck perfectly free; and his black loose-hanging clothes were obviously intended to be above all, comfortable. He had even left instructions for a roomy coffin. The only thing about his attire suggestive of the artist was the loosely arranged bow-tie he always wore. About the fit and shape of his shoes he was, according to his shoe-maker, more particular than the most exactly elegant member of the fair sex. As he would hurry along the street swinging a soft black hat, which he hardly ever put on, a colored handkerchief could always be seen protruding from his coat-pocket.

In the summer of 1886 he just arrived in Bayreuth in time to attend the funeral of Liszt. As Bruckner sat at the organ improvising a "Funeral oration" in his own language out of themes of "Parsifal," it was as if he were saluting the passing of that golden age of nineteenth century music, which had endowed the world with the titanic cultural contribution known as the art of Wagner. Now he was leader of the glorious cause, its highest living creative exponent; but he stood alone, he and his symphonies, while the enemy still held the field in great numbers.

The VII Symphony continued making new conquests. Cologne, Graz, Chicago, New York and Amsterdam paid tribute to its greatness. When it reached Hamburg the aged teacher of Brahms said it was the greatest symphony of modern times. Brahms, however, continued to shrug his shoulders, and remarked: "In the case of Bruckner one needn't use the word 'Symphony,' it's enough to talk of a kind of 'fake' which will be forgotten in a few years."

Then young Karl Muck, Bruckner pupil, came to Graz with the same symphony, and following upon this really Austrian triumph, Vienna was compelled at last to capitulate, much to the annoyance of the Hanslick coalition. Hans Richter conducted the hostile "King of Orchestras" on March 21, 1886. The VII Symphony after hunting for the "blue bird" all over the world, had come home at last to bring happiness to the "prophet in his own country." Hanslick's review the following day was a sort of brief apologia pro vita sua. "It is certainly without precedent," complained he, "that a composer be called to the stage four or five times after each movement of a symphony. To tell the truth the music of Bruckner so rubs me the wrong way that I'm hardly in a position to give an impartial view of it. I consider it unnatural, blown up, unwholesome and ruinous." Kalbeck, his aide-de-camp, picked on Richter for having shown personal homage to Bruck-
ner, and alleged that it was done purely for stage effect. Concerning the music itself he said: "It comes from the Nibelungen and goes to the devil!" Dömöpke, another member of the staff wrote: "Bruckner writes like a drunkard," Richter, however, at the banquet of the Wagner-Verein held to celebrate the occasion declared that many members of the Philharmonic orchestra had changed their minds about Bruckner and that there would be no difficulty about producing his works in Vienna from that time on. As a matter of fact, the next symphony, the VIII, was introduced to the world by the Philharmonic. Heroic Richter now carried the banner into the British Isles, in spite of Brahms' reproving warning, "You surely are not going to perform Bruckner in England!"

The triumphant journey of the VII continued, Budapest, Dresden and London being conquered. Berlin, in the hands of the Brahms marshals, Bülow and Joachim, only gave it a timid welcome. A prominent writer said of the occasion: "It was like offering a roast to a table of mules." Another said: "I considered Brahms a great symphonist until to-day; but how the little 'Doctor' seemed to shrink when he was programmed beside this giant, as was the case in this concert."

It was still impossible for Bruckner to find publishers for his colossal work. Time after time manuscripts of his were called for by different firms, but always returned to him with regretful apologies. Then suddenly, New York through Anton Seidl threatened to publish the "Romantic," whereupon Hermann Levi for the second time made a collection of the required sum in Munich and thus saved Europe from the imminent disgrace.

In the autumn of 1889, personal friends of Bruckner and Brahms, in the hope of ending the quarrel between the two masters, agreed to bring them together in a Viennese restaurant. Bruckner, quite amicable, had arrived early and had already had two or three portions of Nudel-soup before Brahms put in an appearance. "Stiff and cold they faced each other across the table," related one of those present. It was a weird situation, and the well-meaning conspirators were highly disappointed. Finally Brahms broke the silence and called for the bill-of-fare. With a forced display of good nature he cried out: "Now we shall see what there is to eat!" He glanced along the list of courses, suddenly looked up and ordered: "Waiter, bring me smoked ham and dumplings!" At once Bruckner joined in, saying: "That's it, Doctor! Smoked ham and dumplings. That's the point upon which we can understand each other." The effect of this remark was instantaneous. Everybody shook with laughter. The ice was broken and the remainder of the evening proved to be friendly and jolly.

But a real understanding between the two was by nature impossible. It was a case of temperaments diametrically opposed, conceptions of art basically at variance, in short a spiritual illustration of Kipling's phrase: "and the twain shall never meet."

Bruckner explained the condition of affairs thus: "He is Brahms (hats off!); I am Bruckner; I like my works better. He who wants to be soothed by music will become attached to Brahms; but he who wants to be
carried away by music will find little satisfaction in his work.” Brahms himself had declared before joining the Hanslick camp: “Bruckner is the greatest symphonist of the age.”

Once after listening to a Bruckner symphony, Brahms approached the composer, saying: “I hope you won’t feel hurt about it, but I really can’t make out what you are trying to get at with your compositions.” “Never mind, Doctor,” answered Bruckner, “that’s perfectly all right. You see, I feel just the same way about your things.”

In 1890, warned by repeated attacks of laryngitis and general nervousness, he begged leave to spend a year free from conservatory duty. His request was granted, but with no pay. He now drew the long-dormant “first” symphony from its dusty shelf and set to work polishing it. Several years before Hans Richter, happening to be present when two of Bruckner’s pupils played a four-hand arrangement of the work, in his enthusiasm snatched up the orchestral score and wanted to run away with it, when Bruckner called out anxiously, “But the dirty ragamuffin has to be cleaned first.” From that time the “first” symphony was known in Bruckner circles as the “Ragamuffin”—a well-fitting nomenclature, indeed, when one remembers the impudence of the opening bars.

Hermann Levi already familiar with it, was particularly worried that the now aging Master might make radical changes in the process of the revision, and wrote to him: “The ‘first’ is wonderful! It must be printed and performed,—but please don’t change too much—it is all good just as it stands, even the instrumentation.

Please, please, not too much retouching.” An eloquent witness of the genius of the early Bruckner is this verdict from the lips of the greatest of Wagnerian conductors and certainly one of the finest musicians of his time.

During these vacation days, the Master would review with longing the happy times he had before his Viennese trials began. Wondering what had become of the pretty Josephine Lang with whom he had fallen in love twenty-five years before, he actually looked her up and experienced the delight of finding in her beautiful fourteen year old daughter, the living replica of his own flame of long ago. Kissing the girl, he called her: “My dear substitute.” In her company all reckoning of time past or present was lost for him, and there is no doubt that his heart beat once more as swiftly as the vacation moments flew by.

On December 21, 1890, the first and second printed versions of the “Wagner” symphony were performed in Vienna. Hanslick admitted that here and there four or eight bars of exceptional and original beauty might be heard, but that the bulk of the work was “chaos.” One wonders whether the man was really so old-fashioned that he could only read confusion out of the super-order which the world now knows as Bruckner’s symphonic form, as vast and as centripetal as a great empire.

About Hanslick there seems ever to be popping up a ghost of doubt, “Was the man, after all, sincere?” If so, he certainly deserved the immortality Wagner gave him in the figure of Beckmesser. It is good for us to keep in mind that Beckmesser or Hanslick is...
an eternal type to be found in every generation and in every field of activity.

On the above occasion the critic, Helm, long faithful Hanslick assistant, left the opposition and stepped over to Bruckner's side beating his breast for his past sins; but the valiant Kalbeck still stood firm, for he had not yet run out of wit. He offered this recipe as criticism: "Stand the Allegro of Beethoven's Ninth on its head and see the Finale of this Bruckner Symphony tumble out."

Vienna, however, was by now thoroughly convinced of Bruckner's quality, and a group of wealthy Austrians met to take the financial step necessary to free the composer from his arduous academic duties. Though at first misunderstanding the motive of this act, the Master soon became convinced that nothing but regard for his genius had prompted it, and accepted the offer, deeply moved. Thus was he set free to do with the last five years of his life as he wished. Now he would often make trips to Germany to hear his works performed.

* * *

Once, a maid in a Berlin hotel pressed a note into his hand on his departure for Vienna, in which she expressed great concern for the bodily welfare of her "dear Mr. Bruckner." Naturally, he responded at once to the call, but insisted (this was a matter of principle with him) upon being introduced to the girl's parents. With them an understanding was arrived at and a lively correspondence entered upon, until Bruckner, despite the admonition of his horrified friends, had made up his mind to marry the girl. He insisted, however, that she be converted to Catholicism (she being Protestant) and this proved in the end the only stumbling block to one of the weirdest matches on record. The girl simply would not sacrifice her religion even for the privilege of nursing her "beloved Mr. Bruckner." He was 71 years old when this adventure with Ida Buhz, the solicitous maid, came to an end.

Then there was also the affair with the young and pretty Minna Reischl. Add to a pair of roguish eyes a thoroughly musical nature and it is easy to see why the aged lover lost his heart in this case. The girl, of course, must have been amusing herself at Bruckner's expense, because when she went so far as to bring the composer home to her parents, these sensible people of the world at once awakened him out of his December dream. When he came to Linz shortly after, his acquaintances guessing the truth, teased him, saying: "Aha! So you have been out marrying again!" With Minna, however, who soon married a wealthy manufacturer, Bruckner remained very friendly until his death.

In the autumn of 1891, he was created "Honorary Doctor" of the University of Vienna, a distinction which gave the ingenuous Master much happiness. Not long before this he had received from the emperor Franz Joseph an insignia of which he was inordinately proud, and which he was very fond of flaunting, much as a child will a new toy. This weakness of his for glitter, a characteristic as a rule incompatible with true greatness, is yet easily to be reconciled with his
childishness and the long years spent in a land where titles and decorations are still regarded as the highest marks of honor.

The summer of 1893 saw him the central figure at the Bayreuth Festspiele. His arrival was greeted by a host of musicians and music-lovers. In the confusion of welcome the trunk containing the sketches of the Ninth Symphony disappeared; but after some anxious hours it was located at the police-station, and great was the composer's relief. Daily he made his pilgrimage to the grave of the "Master of all Masters." The critic Marsop, once an enemy of his, says he saw Bruckner approach Wagner's grave reverently, fold his hands and pray with such fervor that the tears literally streamed down his face. Perhaps, Bruckner already felt that this visit to Wahnfried might be his last.

In the consciousness of the more enlightened Viennese his name now occupied a place beside the great masters who had lived in the "city of music," and as he passed along the street, voices could be heard whispering with awe: "There goes Anton Bruckner!"

He lived in a small, simple apartment of two rooms and kitchen which were kept in order by an old faithful servant, Kathi, who for twenty years had spent a few hours each day attending to the bachelor's household. In the blue-walled room where he worked stood his old grand piano, a harmonium, a little table and some chairs. The floor and most of the furniture were littered with music. On the walls hung a large photograph and an oil painting of himself. From this room a door led to his bedroom the walls of which were covered with pictures of his "beloved Masters." On the floor stood a bust of himself which he was pleased to show his friends, who relate that he would place his hand upon its brow, smile wistfully, and say: "Good chap!" Against the wall stood an English brass-bed presented to him by his pupils. This he called "My luxury." At home he would go dressed even more comfortably than on the street, merely donning a loose coat if a guest was announced. Kathi knew exactly at what hours guests were welcome. If the Master was composing no one was permitted to disturb him. At other times he went in person to meet the caller at the door.

Bruckner worked, as a rule, only in the morning; but sometimes he would get up during the night to write down an idea that had suddenly occurred to him. Possessing no lamp, he did this night work by the light of two wax candles; but if Kathi saw traces of these in the morning she scolded him severely, warning him to be more careful about his health. When she insisted that he compose only in the daytime, he would say contemptuously: "What do you know about such things? I have to compose whenever an idea comes to me."

Sometimes, other answers failing him, he tried naively to impress her with his importance, crying: "Do you know whom you are talking to? I am Bruckner!" "And I am Kathi," she retorted; and that was the end of the argument. After his death, she said of him: "He was rude, but good!"

On the eighteenth of December, 1892, occurred the most impressive performance of his career, when the Philharmonic played his VIII Symphony. Realizing the
unprecedented depth of this work, a profundity which only movements of the most colossal proportions could cope with, Bruckner had been much worried as to the welcome it would receive from the public. The performance, however, was superb and aroused the greatest enthusiasm. Just before the Finale the exasperated Hanslick rose to take his leave and received an ovation such as only the consummate villain of the play is given upon a particularly effective exit.

Bruckner's condition at this time was already causing his doctors much concern and it was only owing to the extreme importance of the occasion that they permitted him to be present.

At the close of the symphony which had been the sole number on the program, the applause was tremendous and threatened never to end. Bruckner, after countless bows to the audience, turned and bowed to the famous orchestra which had at last been won over to his side. It was a true triumph, the first unqualified victory he had gained in Vienna. The critics called it the "crown of nineteenth century music," "the Masterpiece of the Bruckner style." Hugo Wolf wrote: "The work renders all criticism futile; the Adagio is absolutely incomparable." Even the "holdout," Kalbeck, at last admitted, "Bruckner is a master of instrumentation," and "the symphony is worthy of its sole position on the program."

Bruckner was most unhappy that his increasing illness often made it impossible for him to hear his own works, the performances of which were becoming ever more frequent. He had been put on a strict diet. "Even my favorite Pilsner beer is forbidden me," he complained to his former teacher Kitzler. His badly swollen feet rendered organ-playing out of the question, and he had to remain in bed most of the time. Nevertheless it was this same suffering Bruckner who wrote the scherzo of the IX Symphony, perhaps the most vital of all his lighter movements.

The end of 1893 saw such an improvement in his condition that he was even permitted a trip to Berlin. This change for the better was, however, only temporary, for the following days brought such an enduring relapse that he could not attend the first performance of his "Fifth" Symphony in Graz, under that young eagle of the baton, Franz Schalk, April 8, 1894. A pupil of Bruckner, Schalk had embraced the enormously difficult undertaking of love involved in the study and production of this mighty work, with its irresistibly inspiring climax. Only the presence of the ailing Master was lacking to render the occasion as happy as it was musically important.

During the summer Bruckner was sufficiently recovered to return to the rustic surroundings of his earlier years, but his seventieth birthday was celebrated quietly by order of the Viennese doctor who had accompanied him. Telegrams of congratulation and best wishes streamed into the little town of Steyr from all corners of the earth. Articles about him and his work appeared in all the newspapers. The people of Linz bestowed on him the key of the city; he was elected honorary member of countless musical organizations. In short, not a single sign of esteem the earth might show its kings of tone was now withheld from the ailing genius. The glory he had richly earned twenty years before now
came to him when the greatest joy he could reveal at the realization of his universal recognition was a smile in which life-long spiritual pain lurked behind the ghost of a belated happiness.

Unexpectedly what seemed a swift recovery in the fall of 1894 found him once more ascending his platform at the university to resume his lectures on musical theory. Only a few such days of grace were granted his shattered body by relentless Fate; for two weeks later he stood for the last time before his beloved students. From that time on his health declined steadily and even his mental condition suffered from erratic spells. He was compelled to abandon his Ninth Symphony at the close of the third movement, an Adagio which he told friends was the most beautiful he had composed. From sketches found among his posthumous effects we know it had been his intention to add to this glorious work a purely instrumental finale, perhaps in the manner of the closing portion of his "Tragic" Symphony.

Yet, little though he realized it, when the last note of this Adagio dies out there is no expectation unfulfilled. It is as if he has confessed all, poured out his very soul in this music, so that the work he despaired of ever finishing, the work he died thinking incomplete now strikes the listener as a perfect symphony unit needing no prescribed finale.

On January 12, 1896, he heard his Te Deum, its performance in Vienna having been recommended by no other than Brahms himself, who at last seems to have changed his attitude towards the man he had opposed for years. This was the last time Bruckner ever heard one of his own works. The very last music he listened to in public was Wagner's "Liebesmahl der Apostel." It was much like a musical farewell-greeting from the Master he had esteemed above all others in his life time. During the summer of that year Bayreuth was prepared for the worst, for a strong rumor was afoot that Bruckner was dying. But his gigantic vitality outlived the season. Not till October 11, did the dreaded moment come. It was a Sunday. In the morning he had occupied himself with the sketches for the finale of the Ninth Symphony. There seemed nothing alarming about his condition. At three in the afternoon he suddenly complained of feeling cold and asked for a cup of tea. A friend who was with him helped him to bed and no sooner did he appear comfortable, when he breathed once or twice heavily, and all was over.

At the burial service Ferdinand Löwe conducted the Adagio of the Seventh Symphony. Hugo Wolf was refused entry into the church on the ground that he was not a member of any of the societies participating. Brahms, a very sick old man, stood outside the gate, but refused to enter. Someone heard him mutter sadly: "It is my turn soon," and then he sighed and went wearily home.

In accordance with Bruckner's implicit wish his remains were taken to St. Florian where they lie buried under the mighty organ that had been his best friend, and into the golden majesty of which he had on innumerable occasions poured the troubled confessions of his tragic life.
THE SYMPHONY OF THE FUTURE

At this date, while musical art is being swept by the scourging fires of revolution that follows in the wake of decadence, and while thick smoke obscures the sight, it is no easy task to predict at which shrine the coming generation will worship.

However, the soul-physician who offers the most powerful antidote to the prevailing nervous disorders is certainly destined for canonization.

These ailments are fortunately not deeply rooted nor are they nearly as violent and vicious as they appear. Their symptoms are all superficial and belong to the vast category of ultra-sophistication, for it becomes ever clearer that the musical expression of the passing generation is characterized by a new skill, trivial to grotesqueness, a sort of hair-splitting wisdom, involving both advantages and disadvantages. Disadvantages, for much that is inane and ugly has been foisted upon a bewildered and helpless public; advantages, for the orchestral language has, through the combined and concentrated efforts of a hundred experimentalists, at last been endowed with an unabridged dictionary.

Although Bruckner did most for the symphony by restoring to it, in enhanced form, the spiritual strength which had departed with Beethoven, his technical contribution was also a great one. To take the limited, if infallibly founded, orchestra of Beethoven, dip it in the rich dyes of the Wagnerian tone-color and then to temper the loud resulting shades with his darker, less-sensuous colorings better suited to the stern manner of absolute, symphonic expression: this was no mean technical accomplishment. Its analysis would involve the detailed study of nine tremendous symphonic scores, a matter obviously beyond the scope of this purely biographical monograph. Suffice it to say that in the Bruckner symphonies the various instruments begin with a hitherto unprecedented frequency to speak their native languages. With an unerring sense of fitness of a particular passage to the soul of a particular instrument the Master sounded the tocsin for the modern school of orchestration. The vast impressiveness of the Bruckner orchestral tone is the result of a vast understanding of the principle of fitness. This feat of making the instrument talk without a foreign accent, as it were, has comprised almost one hundred percent of the efforts of the outstanding modern orchestrators and has resulted in that tone virtuoso of the musical organizations, the "chamber symphony."

And if the result seems at times somewhat monstrous, it is not because the principle involved is faulty, but that the time of assimilation of the prodigally vast bounty of fresh knowledge has been as yet too short. The great master-hand, the touch of the one chosen to order the new expression and to perpetuate its message is still lacking.

In contrast to the more or less mad musical expression of these days, Bruckner's symphonies are pervaded by an honest transparent grandeur and a soothing rich mysticism, thus presenting that healthy blend of truth.
and romance that is the hallmark of all great art. His adagios do not soar artificially on the agitated shoulders of the increasing tempos, but ascend calmly from height to height through powerful masses of tone, becoming ever fuller and richer, until in a final burst of glory the very heavens seem to open before the listener.

However, to attempt to reveal through workshop analysis the method of attaining these supreme musical moments would be in vain, for they are fundamentally due to the rarest inspiration and have fed on that subtle true symphonic essence revealed before Bruckner only in the deepest passage of the Beethoven adagios. The opening bars of the adagio of Bruckner's Seventh Symphony have taken their place among the immortal quotations in music. They form but a single passage which many other less known Bruckner passages at least equal in expressiveness.

Most characteristic and perhaps least understood is the way in which the Master prepares the stage for the entrance of some of his most heroic themes. It is, in a way, a miniature cosmic process, suggestive of the original mystery of creation out of nothingness. To attempt to probe the method of these passages by suggesting some such labels as "descending or ascending chromatics," or "pianissimo plucked strings," or "muted brass," etc., etc., would require too much space. Bruckner's genius alone explains them to a very great degree, and to explain genius is about as simple as to solve the universe.

The extended symphonic movement, so characteristic of Bruckner, and still regarded with disfavor by old-fashioned critics, is a firm mile-post in musical art sprung not from the quiet Bruckner (as the world in general seems to think) but from that great revolutionary spirit, Beethoven. No less illustrious an ancestor does this discomforting giant creation boast than the opening movement of the "Eroica." Here, it is now obvious that unusually elemental themes compelled the true artist in the great composer to resort to a "development section" of so thorough a nature as to produce (though purely coincidentally) a symphonic movement of unprecedented length.

The Bruckner themes, conceived in the pregnant spirit of a most utter simplicity and directness are beyond all, elemental and unmistakably call for huge dome-like housing. Remarkably enough, not even the Austrian's worst enemies attack his artistic integrity; and this, added to the fact that the "Eroica" has long since become an uncontested document of the progress of civilization, appears to vindicate Bruckner's espousal of extended symphonic structure. Less than a generation ago, Gustav Mahler, an artist of a sincerity relentless to the point of fanaticism, departed this world, leaving nine symphonies, still more colossally formed than those of Bruckner, thus putting another mighty stamp of approval upon the doctrine prophetically voiced by Beethoven and further expounded by his modest follower.

In the matter of form, Bruckner had implicit faith in the heritage handed down by his great predecessor. Of course, in the progress from the Third to the Ninth Symphony, his inspiration acquired an ever greater depth and the framework (which great artists have al-
ways regarded as adjustable to the stature of its content) was subjected by him to still further expansion. That the Adagio of his Eighth Symphony is the longest in musical literature is perhaps true; but the statement is at best a piece of irrelevant statistics. Those who judge music with the stop watch in hand will squirm and grow impatient, for this Adagio certainly breaks no speed record. But those who feel in music the nobility and sweep of the soaring of a great soul on wing cannot, while listening, be aware of the banal ticking of endless chronometric seconds, but will be borne along with it in its sublime flight for an infinitesimal cosmic moment into magic, mystic regions where the mere passing of measured minutes is about as noticeable as in the planetary time-table. For over a century musical art has suffered from a critical prejudice founded on the false interpretation of some hopelessly vague aesthetic dogma relating to the virtue of brevity and conciseness in composition.

Each generation has been (and still is) hampered by its narrow inquisitorial tribunal of dictatorial power which with a single contemptuous flourish of the pen has kept from an unsuspecting and gullible public the greatest contemporary works of art. In the light of Beethoven's and Wagner's slow and hard-won attainment of universal recognition, it cannot have gone otherwise with Bruckner; and Mahler's fame is but now making its first attempt to travel what may some day prove to have been a still longer and stonier path.

**PRINCIPAL WORKS OF BRUCKNER**

### SYMPHONIES

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<tr>
<th>No.</th>
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<td>I</td>
<td>in C</td>
<td>1865-6</td>
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<td>II</td>
<td>in C</td>
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<td>III</td>
<td>in D</td>
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<td>IX</td>
<td>in D (unfinished)</td>
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### CHAMBER MUSIC

- Quintet for Strings, 1879

### CHORAL WORKS

- Germanenzug, 1863, for male voices
- Abendzauber, 1878, for male voices
- Helgoland, 1893, symphonic chorus and orchestra

### CHURCH MUSIC

- Requiem in D, 1849
- Missa Solemnis in B flat, 1854
- Mass in D No. I, 1864 (revised 1881-2)
- Mass in E No. II, 1866 (revised 1869)
- Mass in F No. III, 1867-8 (revised in 1881-3)
- Te Deum, 1881 (revised in 1881-3)
- 150th Psalm, 1892