

CHAPTER I.

CHILDHOOD.

WOLFGANG AMADE MOZART came of a family belonging originally to the artisan class. We find his ancestors settled in Augsburg early in the seventeenth century, and following their calling there without any great success.¹ His grandfather, Johann Georg Mozart, a bookbinder, married, October 7, 1708, Anna Maria Peterin, the widow of another bookbinder, Augustin Banneger.² From this union sprang two daughters and three sons, viz.: Fr. Joseph Ignaz, Franz Alois (who carried on his father's trade in his native town), and Johann Georg Leopold Mozart, born on November 14, 1719, the father of the Mozart of our biography.³ Gifted with a keen intellect and firm will he early formed the resolution of raising himself to a higher position in the world than that hitherto occupied by his family; and in his later years he could point with just elation to his own arduous efforts, and the success which had crowned them, when he was urging his son to the same steady perseverance.

When Wolfgang visited Augsburg in 1777, he gathered many particulars of his father's youth which refreshed the recollections of Leopold himself. We find him writing to his son (October 10, 1777) how, as a boy, he had sung a cantata at the monastery of St. Ulrich, for the wedding of the Hofrath Oefele, and how he had often climbed the broken steps to the organ loft, to sing treble at the Feast

¹ An artist named Anton Mozart is mentioned by P. v. Stetten as settled in Augsburg, in the seventeenth century (*Kunstgesch. d. Stadt Augsburg*, p. 283).

² An oil portrait, preserved in the Mozarteum at Salzburg, shows him to have been a tall, handsome man, but with no resemblance either to his son or grandson.

³ A description of Leopold Mozart is given by Hamberger (*Christenthum u. moderne Cultur*, p. 25).

of the Holy Cross (November 29, 1777). He afterwards became an excellent organist: a certain Herr von Freisinger, of Munich, told Wolfgang (October 10, 1777) that he knew his father well, he had studied with him, and “had the liveliest recollections of Wessobrunn where my father (this was news to me) played the organ remarkably well. He said: ‘It was wonderful, to see his hands and feet going together, but exceedingly fine—yes, he was an extraordinary man. My father thought very highly of him. And how he used to jeer at the priests, when they wanted him to turn monk.’” This last must have been of peculiar interest to Wolfgang, who knew his father only as a devout and strict observer of the Catholic religion. But Leopold remembered the days of his youth, and wrote to his wife (December 15, 1777): “Let me ask, if Wolfgang has not of late neglected to go to confession? God should ever be first in our thoughts! to Him alone must we look for earthly happiness, and we should ever keep eternity in view; young people, I know, are averse to hearing of these things; I was young myself once; but God be thanked, I always came to myself after my youthful follies, fled from all dangers to my soul, and kept steadily in view God, and my honour, and the dangerous consequences of indulgence in sin.”

Long-continued exertions and self-denial laid the foundation of Leopold Mozart's character in a conscientious earnestness and devotion to duty in great things as in small; they had the effect also of rendering his judgment of others somewhat hard and uncompromising. This is observable in his relations as an official, and as a teacher, and in his dealings on matters of religion. He was a strict Catholic, and feared nothing so much for his children as the influence which a prolonged stay in Protestant countries might exert on their faith; he remarked with surprise that his travelling companions, Baron Hopfgarten and Baron Bose, had often edified him with their discourse, although they were Lutherans (Paris, April 1, 1764).

When in London, he became acquainted with the excellent violoncellist Sipurini, son of a Dutch Jew, who had broken loose from Judaism and “was content to believe in

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one God, to love Him first, and his neighbour as himself, and to live an honest life"; L. Mozart gained an acknowledgment from him that of all the Christian creeds the Catholic was the best, and was not without hope of converting him altogether (September 13, 1764).

He fulfilled all the duties which the Church requires of her children with conscientiousness and zeal; we find him ordering masses to be said, buying relics, &c., whenever occasion offers.

The strictly orthodox, almost ascetic, rules of life which the reigning archbishop, Sigismund, followed and enforced in his court and in all Salzburg must have had the effect of deepening this side of L. Mozart's character; while the greater freedom in church matters enjoyed under Sigismund's successor, Hieronymus, was not without its influence, evinced by his becoming late in life a freemason. There can be no doubt that L. Mozart was a man of genuine piety, which stood firm amid strong temptations and the most trying circumstances. It was in accordance with his education and position in life that this piety found no better justification and expression than those provided by his Church. His performance of his duties to God and the Church was undertaken in the same rigorous spirit which characterised him in all the relations of life. But he was too sensible not to remonstrate with his daughter when she chose rather to endanger her health than to be absent from mass (July 28, 1786). He was entirely free from superstition, and when some one wrote to him of a ghost-story he declared that "it must be only an hysterical illusion of the maid-servant." Again, he had "invariably found that begging sisterhoods were the signs of much moral degradation concealed under the cloak of hypocrisy" (December 16, 1785). It would be a great mistake to consider the elder Mozart as a narrow-minded bigot. United to a shrewd, clear intellect, for the cultivation of which he made extraordinary efforts, he possessed a decided turn for raillery and sarcasm. His painful endeavours to work himself free of his petty surroundings, his habit of looking beyond the narrow horizon which encircled him, encouraged in him a cynical

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turn of mind. It grew to be a settled conviction with him that selfishness is the only motive of human action on which we can safely reckon, and which, therefore, we must strive to turn to account: a belief in disinterested philanthropy or friendship is a folly which seldom goes unpunished. Nor should we have any faith in an innate love of truth. "Take it as an universal truth," he writes (October 6, 1785), "all men tell lies, and add to the truth, or take away from it, just as it suits their purpose. Especially must we believe nothing which, if known, would add to the reputation of the speaker or flatter his interlocutor, for that is sure to be false." This distrust of mankind he sought to implant in his son, but with very little success. Nor did his gloomy views of life stifle, even in himself, all emotion and sentiment. His theory, as so often happens, went farther than his practice. When Leopold Mozart analysed the conduct of men, his criticism was sharp and cutting, but he was always ready with counsel and assistance when they were needed. Notwithstanding his piety he expressed bitter contempt for the priesthood and priestcraft: he had occasion to know both intimately. He was never dazzled by the distinctions of birth and position. He judged those nearest and dearest to him, not excepting his beloved son, as severely as the rest of the world. It had the most wholesome effect on the development of Mozart's character and genius that his father, who loved him as only a father can love, who justly estimated and admired his artistic genius, was never dazzled by it, never ignored nor concealed his weaknesses, but warned and blamed him, and strove to bring him up with a conscientious fidelity to duty.

Leopold Mozart was aware that the education of his son was the highest and greatest task of his life; but this absorbing care did not narrow his breadth of sympathy, nor lessen his consideration for others bound to him by natural ties; he proved himself always a devoted friend as well as, for one of his means, a liberal benefactor.

The exertions which it had cost him to attain to even a moderate position, the unceasing thought which he was obliged to take for the supply of his daily needs gave him

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a high appreciation of the value of a secured worldly position, and as he became gradually convinced that his son was not likely to attach the same importance to this, he strove the more by his wisdom and experience to help to secure it for him. This care for economical details has been unjustly condemned. We may grant that a somewhat exaggerated anxiety increased by the hypochondria of old age was the natural result of the struggle with narrow circumstances which he had carried on all his life; but this is far more than counterbalanced by the singular union of general and of musical culture, of love and severity, of just judgment and earnest devotion to duty, which Leopold Mozart developed in the education of his son. Without them, Wolfgang would certainly not have been the man he became by their help.

We have no detailed information of L. Mozart's youthful life. His recollections of his position at Augsburg are bitter and sarcastic. Even with his brothers and sisters, whom he accused of having turned the weakness of their mother to his disadvantage, he had no close or intimate connection, although they had never any scruples in applying for his support.

"When I thought of your journey to Augsburg," he writes to Wolfgang (October 18, 1777), "Wieland's 'Abderiten' always occurred to me. One ought to have the opportunity of seeing in its naked reality that of which one has formed an ideal conception."

After passing through school life in his native town, he went to Salzburg to study jurisprudence. The monastery of St. Ulrich belonged to the community of the Benedictines, which had founded and still partly maintained the university of Salzburg;⁴ this connection may have given Leopold a reason for going thither. But as he did not obtain employment, he was constrained to enter the service of Count Thurn, Canon of Salzburg. From his youth up, he had cultivated his musical talent with assiduity, and was a

⁴ R. P. Hist. Univ. Salisb., pp. 29, 90 (s. Meyer d. ehem. Univ. Salzburg, P. 4).

thoroughly practical and well-informed musician. He had chiefly maintained himself in early youth by his singing, and afterwards by giving lessons, and had gained considerable reputation as a violinist, so much so that Archbishop Leopold took him into his service in the year 1743. He afterwards became court composer and leader of the orchestra, and in 1762 was appointed Vice-Kapellmeister by Archbishop Sigismund.

The pay of the choir was scanty, though their duties were heavy. Leopold Mozart submitted to these demands with his accustomed conscientiousness, and Schubart points him out as the man whose exertions had placed music in Salzburg on its then excellent footing.⁵ His official position necessitated his appearing as a composer; in this respect, too, he was indefatigable, and won for himself an honourable reputation.

A list of his compositions compiled in 1757, no doubt by himself, gives an idea of his industry as a composer.⁶ We find a large proportion of church music. A Mass in C major is in the library at Munich, Julius André possesses a Mass in F major, the Credo of a "Missa brevis" in F major lies before me; a "Missa brevis" in A major is preserved in the cathedral of Salzburg, together with the Offertory, "Parasti in conspectu meo," three Loretto Litanies (in G, F, and E flat major), and a Litany "De venerabili" in D major, composed in 1762. This last, a carefully finished work, was sent by L. Mozart in December, 1774, to Munich, together with a grand Litany by his son. It is written for solos, chorus, and the usual small church orchestra of the day, and shows throughout the learning of a musician skilled in the use of traditional forms. The harmony is correct, the disposition of the parts skilful, and the contrapuntal forms are handled boldly; nor does the composer fail to introduce regular, well-worked-out fugues in the proper places; "Cum Sancto Spiritu," and "Et

⁵ Schubart's *Aesthetik der Tonkunst*, p. 157.

⁶ Marpurg, *Hist. krit. Beitr.*, III., p. 183.

vitam venturi sæculi" in the Mass, "Pignus futuræ gloriæ" in the Litany.

But there is no originality or inventive power either in the compositions as a whole, or in isolated passages. Leopold Mozart's sacred music gives him a right to an honourable place among contemporary composers, but to no higher rank. Schubart, who prefers his church music to his chamber music, says justly, that his style was thorough, and showed great knowledge of counterpoint, but that he was somewhat old-fashioned.⁷ When Wolfgang was busy composing church music with Van Swieten at Vienna, he wrote to his father (March 29, 1783): "Some of your best church music would be very useful to us; we like to study all masters, ancient and modern, so please send us some as soon as possible." But to Wolfgang's regret this request was refused, for his father was quite aware of the change of taste in such music that had taken place since his day.

Nothing certain is known of twelve oratorios composed according to custom for Lent,⁸ nor of "a host of theatrical pieces, as well as pantomimes."⁹

L. Mozart was an industrious instrumental composer. He enumerates upwards of thirty serenades, "containing instrumental solos," and a long list of symphonies, "some only quartets, others for all the usual instruments"; of

⁷ Schubart's *Asthetik d. Tonk.*, p. 157.

⁸ "Have you a good subject for an oratorio?" writes L. Mozart to Lotter (December 29, 1755). "If I had it in time I would compose another for Lent. Have you the one which I composed last year, *Christus begraben*? We have to produce two *Oratoria* every Lent, and where are we to find subjects enough? It must not be *de passione Christi*, but it might be some penitential story. Last year, for instance, we produced one on Peter's Repentance, and another is now being composed on David in the Wilderness." He must have composed the above-mentioned oratorio twice, for as early as 1741 it had been printed in Salzburg as "Christus begraben; Cantata for three voices: Magdalena, Nicodemus, Joseph von Arimathæa. Chorus of disciples and friends of our Lord. Words by S. A. W[ieland]. Music by J. G. L. M[ozart]."

⁹ Gerber includes among these "Semiramis," "Die verstellte Gärtnerin," "Bastien und Bastienne," compositions of Wolfgang's, of which the scores were left in his father's possession. "La Cantatrice ed il Poeta," an intermezzo mentioned by Gerber, is quite unknown to me.

these, eighteen are thematically catalogued,¹⁰ and one in G major is by mistake attributed to Wolfgang, and printed in score. Very curious are the "Occasional Pieces" which are characteristic of the times, in their odd instrumental effects, and somewhat heavy touches of fun. Among these are a pastoral symphony with shepherds' horns and two obbligato flutes; a military piece with trumpets, drums, kettle-drums, and fifes; a Turkish and a Chinese piece; a pastoral, representing a rural wedding, and introducing lyres, bagpipes, and dulcimers; during the march, after each huzza, there was a pistol-shot, after the custom of rural weddings, and L. Mozart directed that whoever could whistle well on his fingers, was to whistle during the huzzas.

But the musical "Sledge Drive" seems to have gained most applause; a pianoforte arrangement was afterwards printed, the effect being heightened by the accompaniment of five differently toned harness-bells. The following programme was printed by L. Mozart, for a performance of the Collegium Musicum in Augsburg, December 29, 1755 :—

MUSICAL SLEDGE DRIVE.

Introduced by a prelude, consisting of a pleasing andante and a splendid allegro.

Then follows :

A prelude, with trumpets and drums.

After this :

The Sledge Drive, with the sledge-bells and all the other instruments.

After the Sledge Drive :

The horses are heard rattling their harness.

And then :

The trumpets and drums alternate agreeably with the oboes, French horns, and bassoons, the first representing the cavalcade, the second the march.

After this :

The trumpets and drums have another prelude, and

The Sledge Drive begins again, but stops suddenly, for all the party dismount, and enter the ball-room.

Then comes an adagio, representing the ladies trembling with cold.

¹⁰ *Catalogo delle sinfonie che si trovano in manoscritto nella officina musica di G. G. J. Breitkopf in Lipsia, P. I. (1762), p. 22. Suppl. I. (1766), p. 14. Suppl. X. (1775), p. 3.*

L. MOZART'S COMPOSITIONS.

II

The ball is opened with a minuet and trio.
 The company endeavour to warm themselves by country-dances.
 Then follows the departure, and, finally:
 During a flourish of trumpets and drums, the whole party mount their sledges and drive homewards.

In consequence of the performance of these occasional pieces in Augsburg, L. Mozart received the following anonymous letter :

“ Monsieur et très cher ami !

“ May it please you to compose no more absurdities, such as Chinese and Turkish music, sledge drives, and peasant weddings, for they reflect more shame and contempt on you than honour, which is regretted by the individual who herewith warns you and remains,

“ Your sincere Friend.

“ Datum in domo veræ amicitiae.”

Leopold Mozart was not a little annoyed by this act of friendship, which he was inclined to ascribe to the Kapellmeister Schmidt or to the organist Seyffert. It need scarcely be said that this “ programme-music ” is innocent either of originality or of instrumental colouring. Short characteristic pieces, such as Couperin and Rameau wrote, were composed by L. Mozart, in common with Eberlin, for a kind of organ with a horn stop, which had been erected by Joh. Roch. Egedacher on the fortifications above the town. Once a month, morning and evening, a piece was played on this instrument ; in February it was the Carnival, in September a hunting song, in December a cradle song.¹¹

Besides all this, L. Mozart wrote many concertos, particularly for the flute, oboe, bassoon, French horn, or trumpet (one of these is in Munich), innumerable trios (he offered a flautist, named Zinner, in Augsburg, fourteen trios for flute, violin, and violoncello), and divertimenti for various instruments,¹² marches, minuets, opera-dances, &c. Three clavier

¹¹ Mozart published it in 1759 with the title “ Der Morgen und Abend den Inwohnern der hochfürstl. Residenzstadt Salzburg melodisch und harmonisch angekündigt.” A notice of it is to be found in Marpurgh's *Histor. krit. Beitr.*, IV., p. 403.

¹² A “ Divertimento à 4 instr. conc., Viol., Violonc., 2 Co.,” is included in Breitkopf's *Cat., Suppl. II.* (1767), p. 11.

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sonatas are printed,¹³ of which Faiszt remarks that they might well be the work of Leopold's great son, so strong is their similarity in form and spirit.¹⁴ His compositions were for the most part only in manuscript, as was almost all the music of that day.¹⁵ By way of practice in engraving, he engraved three trio sonatas himself in 1740, and revived the old accomplishment in 1778, when he engraved some variations for his son.

In later years he composed little or nothing; his position in Salzburg was so little to his mind that he did not feel himself called on to do more than his duty required; besides, the education of his children engrossed his whole time, and when his son had come forward as a composer, he would on no account have entered into competition with him.¹⁶ L. Mozart was proud of the estimation in which his works were held abroad, as the following extract from a letter to his friend Lotter shows:

November 24, 1755.

I may tell you in strict confidence that I have received a letter from a distant place inviting me to become a member—don't be alarmed—or—don't laugh—a member of the Corresponding Society of Musical Science.¹⁷ *Potz Plunder!* say I. But do not tell tales out of school, for it may be only talk. I never dreamt of such a thing in my life; that I can honestly say.

But the elder Mozart acquired his chief reputation as a musician by the publication in 1756 of his "Attempt towards a Fundamental Method for the Violin."¹⁸ This work was

¹³ Haffner's *Œuvres mêlées* (Würzb.), V. 4, VI. 5, IX. 4.

¹⁴ *Cécilia*, XXVI., p. 82.

¹⁵ A Max d'or (about thirteen shillings) was paid to him for copies of four flute concertos, a ducat for a pastoral symphony, and a florin for two shorter ones.

¹⁶ *A. M. Z.*, XXIII., p. 685.

¹⁷ This was the Society of Musical Science, founded at Leipzig in 1738 by Mag. Lor. Mitzler; s. *Mitzler's Musik Bibl.*, III., p. 346; *Musik. Almanach*, 1782, p. 184. In his *Violin Method*, p. 7, L. Mozart praises this Society, and hopes that it will direct its scientific researches to questions of practical interest in music.

¹⁸ A long series of letters to his friendly publisher J. J. Lotter, at Augsburg, written during 1755 and 1756, when his work was in the press, testify to L. Mozart's care for accuracy of expression, orthography, and printing.