
An End in Paris

By Richard Wagner

Translated by William Ashton Ellis



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An End in Paris

By Richard Wagner

Translated by William Ashton Ellis

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[46]

An End in Paris

(1)

WE have just laid him in the earth. It was cold and dreary weather, and few there were of us. The Englishman, too, was there: he wants to erect a memorial to him; 'twere better he paid our friend's debts.

It was a mournful ceremony. The first keen wind of winter cut the breath; no one could speak, and the funeral oration was omitted. Nevertheless I would have you to know that he whom we buried was a good man and a brave German musician. He had a tender heart, and wept whenever men hurt the poor horses in the streets of Paris. He was mild of temper, and never put out when the street-urchins jostled him off the narrow pavement. Unfortunately he had a sensitive artistic conscience, was ambitious, with no talent for intrigue, and once in his youth had seen Beethoven, which so turned his head that he could never set it straight in Paris.

It is more than a year since I one day saw a magnificent Newfoundland dog taking a bath in the fountain of the Palais Royal. Lover of dogs that I am, I watched the splendid animal; it left the basin at last, and answered the call of a man who at first attracted my attention merely [47] as the owner of this dog. The man was by no means so fair to look on, as his dog; he was clean, but dressed in God knows what provincial fashion. Yet his features arrested me; soon I distinctly remembered having seen them before; my interest in the dog relaxed; I fell into the arms of my old friend R

We were delighted at meeting again; he was quite overcome with emotion. I took him to the *Café de la Rotonde*; I drank tea with rum,—he, coffee with tears.

"But what on earth," I began at last, "can have brought you to Paris—you, the musical hermit of the fifth floor of a provincial back-street?"

"My friend," he replied, "call it the over-earthly passion for experiencing what life is like on a Parisian sixth, or the worldly longing to see if I might not be able in time to descend to the second, or even the first,—I myself am not quite certain which. At anyrate I couldn't resist the temptation of tearing myself from the squalor of the German provinces, and, without tasting the far sublimer pinches of a German capital, throwing myself straight upon the centre of the world, where the arts of every nation stream together to one focus; where the artists of each race find recognition; and where I hope for satisfaction of the tiny morsel of ambition that Heaven—apparently in inadvertence—has set in my own breast."

"A very natural desire," I interposed; "I forgive it you, though in yourself it astonishes me. But first let us see what means you have of pursuing your ambitious purpose. How much money a-year can you draw?—Oh, don't be alarmed! I know that you were a poor devil, and it is self-evident that there can be no question of a settled income. Yet I am bound to suppose either that you have won money in a lottery, or enjoy the protection of some rich patron or relative to such a degree that you are provided for ten years, at least, with a passable allowance."

"That is how you foolish people look at things!" replied my friend, with a good-humoured smile, after recovering from his first alarm. "Such are the prosaic details that [48] rise at once before your eyes as chief concern. Nothing of the kind, my dear friend! I am poor; in a few weeks, in fact, without a sou. But what of that? I have been told that I have talent;—was I to choose *Tunis* as the place for pushing it? No; I have come to *Paris*! Here I shall soon find out if folk deceived me when they credited me with talent, or if I really own any. In the first case I shall be quickly disenchanted, and, clear about myself, shall journey back contented to my garret-home; in the second case I shall get my talent more speedily and better paid in Paris,

than anywhere else in the world.—Nay, don't smile, but try to raise some serious objection!"

"Best of friends," I resumed, "I smile no longer; for I now am possessed by a mournful compassion for yourself and your splendid dog. I know that, however frugal yourself, your magnificent beast will eat a good deal. You intend to feed both him and yourself by your talent? That's grand; for self-preservation is the first duty, and human feeling for the beasts a second and the noblest. But tell me: how are you going to bring your talent to market? What plans have you made? Let me hear them."

"It is well that you ask for my plans," was the answer. "You shall have a long list of them; for, look you, I am rich in plans. In the first place, I think of an opera: I am provided with finished works, with half-finished, and with any number of sketches for all kinds—both grand and comic opera.—Don't interrupt!—I'm well aware that these are things that will not march too quickly, and merely consider them as the basis of my efforts. Though I dare not hope to see one of my operas produced at once, at least I may be permitted to assume that I shall soon be satisfied as to whether the Directors will accept my compositions or not—For shame, friend—you're smiling again! Don't speak! I know what you were going to say, and will answer it at once.—I am convinced that I shall have to contend with difficulties of all sorts here also; but in what will they consist? Certainly in nothing but competition. The most eminent talents converge here, and offer their [49] works for acceptance; managers are therefore compelled to exercise a searching scrutiny: a line must be drawn against bunglers, and none but works of exceptional merit can attain the honour of selection. Good! I have prepared myself for this examination, and ask for no distinction without deserving it. But what else have I to fear, beyond that competition? Am I to believe that here, too, one 'needs the wonted tactics of servility? (2) Here in Paris, the capital of free France, where a Press exists that unmask and makes impossible all humbug and abuse; where merit alone can win the plaudits of a great incorruptible public?"

"The public?" I interrupted; "there you are right. I also am of opinion that, with your talent, you well might succeed, had you only the public to deal with. But as to the easiness of reaching that public you hugely err, poor friend! It is not the contest of talents, in which you will have to engage, but the contest of reputations and personal interests. If you are sure of firm and influential patronage, by all means venture on the fight; but without this, and without money,—give up, for you're sure to go under, without so much as being noticed. It will be no question of commending your work or talent (a favour unparalleled!), but what will be considered is the name you bear. Seeing that no renommée attaches to that name as yet, and it is to be found on no list of the moneyed, you and your talent remain in obscurity." (3)

[50]

My objection failed to produce the intended effect on my enthusiastic friend. He turned peevish, but refused to believe me. I went on to ask what he thought of doing as a preliminary, to earn some little renommée in another direction, which perchance might be of more assistance to the later execution of his soaring plan.

This seemed to dispel his ill-humour.

"Hear, then!" he answered: "You know that I have always had a great preference for instrumental music. Here, in Paris, where a regular cult of our great Beethoven appears to have been instituted, I have reason to hope that his fellow-countryman and most ardent worshipper will easily find entrance when he undertakes to give the public a hearing of his own attempts, however feeble, to follow in the footsteps of that unattainable example."

"Excuse me for cutting you short," I interposed. "Beethoven is getting deified,—in that you are right; but mind you, it is his name, his renown that is deified. That name, prefixed to a work not unworthy of the great master, will suffice to secure its beauties instant recognition. By any other name, however, the selfsame work will never gain the attention of the directorate of a concert-establishment for even its most brilliant passages." (4)

"You lie!"—my friend rather hastily exclaimed. "Your purpose is becoming clear, to systematically discourage me, and scare me from the path of fame. You shall not succeed, however!"

"I know you," I replied, "and forgive you. Nevertheless I must add that in your last proposal you will stumble on the very same difficulties, which rear themselves against every artist without renown, however great his talent, in a place where people have far too little time to bother themselves [51] about hidden treasures. Both plans are modes of fortifying an already established position, and gaining profit from it, but by no manner of means of creating one. People will either pay no heed at all to your application for a performance of your instrumental compositions, or—if your works are composed in that daring individual spirit which you so much admire in Beethoven, they will find them turgid and indigestible, and send you home with a flea in your ears." (5)

"But," my friend put in, "what if I have already circumvented such a reproach? What if I have written works expressly to aid me with a more superficial public, and adorned them with those favourite modern effects which I abhor from the bottom of my heart, but are not despised by even considerable artists as preliminary bids for favour?"

"They will give you to understand," I replied, "that your work is too light, too shallow, to be brought to the public ear between the creations of a Beethoven and a Musard."

"Dear man!" my friend exclaimed, "That's good indeed! At last I see that you are making fun of me. You always were a wag!"

My friend stamped his foot in his laughter, and trod so forcibly upon the lordly paw of his splendid dog that the latter yelped aloud, then licked his master's hand, and seemed to humbly beg him to take no more of my objections as jokes.

"You see," I said, "it is not always well to take earnestness as jest. Passing that by, come tell me what other plans could have moved you to exchange your modest home for this monster of a Paris. In what other way, if you will please me by provisionally abandoning the two you have spoken of, do you propose to get the requisite renown?"

"So be it," was the reply I received. "In spite of your singular love of contradiction, I will proceed with the narration of my plans. Nothing, as I know, is more popular in Paris drawing-rooms than those charming sentimental [52] ballads and romances, which are just to the taste of the French people, and some of which have even emigrated from our fatherland. Think of Franz Schubert's songs, and the vogue they enjoy here! This is a genre that admirably suits my inclination; I feel capable of turning out something worth noticing there. I will get my songs sung, and perchance I may share the good luck which has fallen to so many—namely of attracting by these unpretentious works the attention of some Director of the Opéra who may happen to be present, so that he honours me with the commission for an opera."

The dog again uttered a violent howl. This time it was I who, in an agony of laughter, had trodden on the paw of the excellent beast.

"What!" I cried, "is it possible that you seriously entertain such an idiotic idea? What on earth could entitle you—"

"My God!" the enthusiast broke in; "have not similar cases happened often enough? Must I bring you the newspapers in which I have repeatedly read how such-and-such a Director was so carried away by the hearing of a Romance, how such-and-such a famous poet was suddenly so impressed by the talent of a totally unknown composer, that both of them at once united in the resolve, the one to supply him with a libretto, the other to produce the opera to-be-written to order?"

"Ah! is that it?" I sighed, filled with sudden sadness; "Press notices have led astray your simple childlike head? Dear friend, of all you come across in that way take note of but a third, and even of that don't trust four quarters! Our Directors have something else to do, than to

hear Romances sung and fall into raptures over them. (6) And, admitting that to be a feasible mode of gaining a reputation,—by whom would you get your Romances sung?"

"By whom else," was the rejoinder, "than the same world-famed singers who so often, and with the greatest [53] amiability, have made it their duty to introduce the productions of unknown or downtrod talent to the public? Or am I here again deceived by lying paragraphs?"

"My friend," I replied, "God knows how far I am from wishing to deny that noble hearts of this kind beat below the throats of our foremost singers, male and female. But to attain the honour of such patronage, one needs at least some other essentials. You can easily imagine what competition goes on here also, and that it requires an infinitely influential recommendation, to make it dawn upon those noble hearts that one in truth is an unknown genius.—Poor friend, have you no other plans?"

Here my companion took leave of his senses. In a violent passion—though with some regard for his dog—he turned away from me. "And had I as many more plans as the sands of the sea," he shouted, "you should not hear a single one of them. Go! You are my enemy!—Yet know, inexorable man, you shall not triumph over me! Tell me—the last question I will put to you—tell me, wretch, how then have the myriads commenced, who first became known, and finally famous, in Paris?"

"Ask one of them," I replied, in somewhat ruffled composure, "and perhaps you may discover. For my part, I don't know."

"Here, here!" called the infatuate to his wonderful dog. "You are my friend no longer,"—he volleyed at me,—"*Your cold derision shall not see me blench. In one year from now—remember this—in one year from now every gamin shall be able to tell you where I live, or you shall hear from me whither to come—to see me die. Farewell!*"

He whistled shrilly to his dog,—a discord. He and his superb companion had vanished like a lightning-flash. Nowhere could I overtake them.



It was only after a few days, when all my efforts to ascertain the dwelling of my friend had proved futile, that I began to realise the wrong I had done in not shewing more consideration for the peculiarities of so profoundly [54] enthusiastic a nature, than unfortunately had been the case with my tart, perhaps exaggerated, objections to his very innocent plans. In the good intention of frightening him from his projects as much as possible, because I did not deem him fitted either by his outward or his inward condition to successfully pursue so intricate a path of fame—in this good intention, I repeat, I had not reckoned with the fact that I had by no means to do with one of those tractable and easily-persuaded minds, but with a man whose deep belief in the divine and irrefutable truth of his art had reached such a pitch of fanaticism, that it had turned one of the gentlest of tempers to a dogged obstinacy.

For sure—I could but think—he now is wandering through the streets of Paris with the firm conviction that he has only to decide which of his plans he shall realise first, in order to figure at once on one of those advertisements that, so to say, make out the vista of his scheme. For sure, he is giving an old beggar a sou to-day, with the determination to make it a napoleon a few months hence.

The more the time slipped by since our last parting, and the more fruitless became my endeavours to unearth my friend, so much the more—I admit my weakness—was I infected by the confidence he then displayed; so that I allowed myself at last to search the advertisements of musical performances, now and again, with eyes astrain to spy out in some corner of them the name of my assured enthusiast. Yes, the smaller my success in these attempts at discovery, the more—remarkable to say!—was my friendly interest allied with an ever-increasing belief that my friend might not impossibly succeed; that perchance even now, while I was seeking anxiously for him, his peculiar talent might already have been discovered

and acknowledged by some important person or other; that perhaps he had received one of those commissions whose happy execution brings fortune, honour, and God knows what beside. And why not? Is there no star that rules the fate of each inspired soul? May not his be a star of luck? [55] Cannot miracles take place, to expose a hidden treasure?—The very fact of my nowhere seeing the announcement of a single Romance, an Overture or the like, under the name of my friend, made me believe that he had gone straight for his grandest plan, and, despising those lesser adits to publicity, was already up to his eyes in work on an opera of at least five acts. True, I had never come across him in the haunts of artists, or met a creature who knew anything about him; still, as my own access to those sanctuaries was but rare, 'twas conceivable that it was *I* who was the unfortunate that could not penetrate where his fame maybe already shone with dazzling rays.—

You may easily guess that it needed a considerable time, for my first sad interest in my friend to change into a confident belief in his good star. It was only through all the phases of fear, of doubt, of hope, that I could arrive at this point. Such things are somewhat slow with me, and so it happened that almost a year had already elapsed since the day when I met a splendid dog and an enthusiastic friend in the Palais Royal. Meanwhile some wonderfully lucky speculations had brought me to so unprecedented a pitch of prosperity that, like Polycrates of old, I began to fear an imminent reverse. I fancied I could plainly see it coming; thus it was in a gloomy frame of mind, that I one day took my customary walk in the Champs Élysées.

'Twas autumn; the leaves fell withered from the trees, and the sky hung grey with age above the Elysian pomp below. But, nothing daunted, Punch renewed his old mad onslaught; in blind rage that scoundrel constantly defied the justice of this world, until at last the dæmonic principle, so forcibly depicted by the chained-up cat, with super-human claws laid low the saucy bounce of the presumptuous mortal.

Close by my side, a few paces from the humble scene of Polichinel's misdeeds I heard the following remarkable soliloquy in German:—

"Excellent! excellent! Where, in the name of all the world, have I allowed myself to seek, when I could have [56] found so near? What! Am I to despise this stage, on which the most thrilling political and poetic truths are set in realistic dress, so directly and intelligibly, before the most receptive and least assuming public? Is this braggart not Don Juan? Is that terribly fair white cat not the Commander on horseback, in very person?—How the artistic import of this drama will be heightened and transfigured when my music adds its quota!—What sonorous organs in these actors!—And the cat—ah, that cat! What hidden charms lie buried in her glorious throat!—Now she gives no sound—now she is still mere demon:—but how she will fascinate when she sings the roudades I'll write expressly for her! What a magnificent *portamento* she'll put into the execution of that supernatural chromatic scale!—How treacherous will be her smile, when she sings that famous passage of the future: "*O Polichinel, thou art lost!*"— —What a plan!—And then, what a splendid pretext for incessant use of the big drum, will Punch's constant truncheon-beats afford me!—Come, why delay? Quick, for the Director's favour! Here I can walk straight in,—no ante-chambers here! With one step I'm in the sanctuary—before him whose god-like piercing eye will recognise at once my genius. Or must I light on competition here as well?—Should the cat—?—Quick, ere it is too late!"

With these last words the soliloquist was about to make straight for the Punch-and-Judy box. I had speedily recognised my friend, and determined to avert a scandal. I seized him by the arm, and span him round towards me.

"Who is it?"—he pettishly cried. He soon remembered me, quietly detached himself, and added coldly: "I might have known that it could only be *you*, that would thwart me in this step as well, the last for my salvation.—Leave me; it may become too late."

I grasped him afresh; but, though I was able to keep him from rushing forward to the little theatre, it was quite impossible to move him from the spot. Still, I gained the leisure to observe him closely. Great heavens, in what a [57] condition he was ! I say nothing of his dress, but of his features; the former was poor and threadbare, but the latter were terrible. The free and open look was gone; lifeless and vacant, his eye travelled to and fro; his pallid, sunken cheeks told not alone of trouble,—the hectic flush upon them told of sufferings too,—of hunger!

As I studied him with deepest sorrow, he too seemed touched, for he struggled less to tear himself away from me.

"How goes it with you, dear R . . .?" I asked with choking voice. With a mournful smile I added: "Where is your beautiful dog?"

He looked black at once. "Stolen!" was the abrupt reply.

"Not sold?" I asked again.

"Wretch," he sullenly replied, "are you also like the Englishman?"

I did not understand his meaning. "Come," I said in faltering tones—"come! take me to your house; I have much to speak with you."

"You soon will know my house without my aid," he answered, "the year is not yet up. I'm now on the high road to recognition, fortune!—Go, you do not yet believe it! What boots it to preach to the deaf? You people must *see*, to believe; very good! You soon shall see. But loose me now, if I am not to take you for my sworn foe."

I held his hands the faster. "Where do you live?" I asked. "Come, take me there! We'll have a friendly, hearty chat,—about your plans, if it must be!"

"You shall learn them as soon as they are carried out," he answered. "Quadrilles, galops ! Oh, that is my forte!—You shall see and hear!—Do you see that cat?—She's to help me to fat fees!—See how sleek she is, how daintily she licks her chops! Imagine the effect when from that little mouth, between those pearly rows of teeth, the most inspired of chromatic scales well forth, accompanied by the most delicate moans and sobs in all the world ! Imagine [58] it, dear friend! Oh, you have no fancy, you!—Leave me, leave me!—You have no phantasy!"

I held him tighter, and implored him to conduct me to his lodgings; without making the slightest impression, however. His eye was fixed with anxious strain upon the cat.

"Everything depends on her," he cried. "Fortune, honour, fame, reside within her velvet paws. May Heaven guide her heart, and turn on me her favour!—She looks friendly,—yes, that's the feline nature ! And she *is* friendly, polite, polite beyond measure! But she's a cat, a false and treacherous cat!—Wait,—thee at least I can rule! I have a noble dog; he'll make thee respect me.—Victory! I've won the day!—Where is my dog?"

He had shot forth the last few words in mad excitement, with a piercing cry. He looked hastily round, as if seeking for his dog. His eager glance fell on the roadway. There rode upon a splendid horse an elegant gentleman, by his physiognomy and the peculiar cut of his clothes an Englishman; by his side ran, proudly barking, a fine Newfoundland dog.

"Ha! my presentiment!" shrieked my friend, in a fury of wrath at the sight. "The cursed brute ! My dog; my dog !" My strength was unavailing against the violence with which the unhappy creature tore himself away. Like an arrow he fled after the horseman, who happened just then to be spurring his horse to a gallop, which the dog accompanied with the liveliest gambols. I rushed after—in vain! What effort of strength can compare with the feats of a madman?—I saw the rider, the dog, and my friend, all vanish down one of the side streets that lead to the Faubourg du Roule. When I reached the same street, they were gone.

Suffice it to mention that all my endeavours to track them were fruitless.—

Alarmed, and almost driven to madness myself I was forced at last to give up my inquiries for the moment. But you may readily imagine that I none the less bestirred [59] myself each day to find some clue to the retreat of my unhappy friend. I sought for news in every place

that had the remotest connection with music:—nowhere the smallest intimation ! It was only in the sacred ante-chambers of the Opéra that the subordinates remembered a pitiable apparition, which had often presented itself and waited for an audience, but of whose name or dwelling they naturally were ignorant. Every other path, even that of the police, led to no surer traces; the very guardians of the public safety seemed to have thought it needless to worry themselves about the poor soul.

I fell into despair. Then one day, about two months after that affair in the Champs Élysées, I received a letter sent me in a roundabout fashion through one of my acquaintances. I opened it with a heavy heart, and read the brief words:

"*Dear friend, come and see me die!*"

The address denoted a narrow little street on Montmartre.—It was no time for tears, and I ascended the hill of Montmartre. Following my directions, I arrived at one of those poverty-stricken houses which are common enough in the side-alleys of that little town. Despite its poor exterior, this building did not fail to rear itself to a *cinquième*; my unfortunate friend would appear to have welcomed the fact, and thus I also was compelled to mount to the same giddy height. It was worth the while, for, on asking for my friend, I was referred to the back attic; from this hinder side of the estimable building one certainly forwent all outlook on the four-foot-wide magnificence of the causeway, but was rewarded by the incomparably finer one on the whole of Paris.

I found my poor enthusiast propped-up on a wretched sick-bed, drinking in this wonderful prospect. His face, his whole body, were infinitely more haggard and emaciated than on that day in the Champs Élysées; nevertheless the expression of his features was far more reassuring. The scared, wild, almost maniacal look, the uncanny fire in his eyes, had vanished; his glance was dulled and half-extinguished; [60] the dark and ghastly flecks upon his cheeks seemed quenched in a universal wasting.

Trembling, but still composed, he stretched his hand to me with the words: "Forgive me, old fellow, and take my thanks for coming."

The softness and sonority of the tone in which he uttered these few words produced on me an even more touching impression, if possible, than his appearance had already done. I pressed his hand, but could not speak for weeping.

"I think,"—went on my friend, after an affecting pause,—"it is already well over a year, since we met in that glittering Palais Royal;—I have not quite kept my word:—to become renowned within a year, was impossible to me, with the best will in the world; on the other hand it's no fault of mine that I could not write you punctually upon the year's elapse, where you must come to see me die: spite all my struggles, I had not yet got quite so far.—Nay, do not weep, my friend ! There was a time when I must beg you not to laugh."

I tried to speak, but speech forsook me.—"Let me speak!" the dying man put in: "it is becoming easy to me, and I owe you a long account. I'm sure that I shall not be here to-morrow, so listen to my narrative to-day 'Tis a simple tale, my friend!—most simple. In it you'll find no wondrous complications, no hair-breadth strokes of luck, no ostentatious details. Fear not that your patience will be wearied by the easiness of speech which now is granted me, and certainly might tempt me to long-windedness; for there have been days, dear old man, when I couldn't utter a sound. Listen!—When I reflect on the state in which you find me, I hold it needless to assure you that my fate has been no bright one. Nor do I altogether need to count you up the trivialities among which my enthusiasm has come to ground. Suffice it to say, that they were no *breakers*, on which I foundered!—Happy the shipwrecked who goes down in *storm!*—No: they were *quagmires* and *swamps*, in which I sank. These swamps, dear friend, surround all proud and dazzling Art-fanes, to [61] which we poor fools make such ardent pilgrimage, as though they held the saving of our souls. Happy the feather-brained ! With one successful entreaty he leaps the quagmire. Happy the rich ! His well-trained horse

needs but one prick of the golden spur, to bear him swiftly over. But woe to the enthusiast who, taking that swamp for a flowery meadow, is swallowed in it past all rescue, a meal for frogs and toads!—See, dear friend, this vermin has devoured me; there's not a drop of blood left in me!— —Must I tell you how it happened? But why? You see me done for;—be content to hear that I was not vanquished on the field of battle, but—horrible to utter—in *the Ante-chambers of Hunger I fell!*—They are something terrible, those Ante-chambers; and know that there are many, very many of them in Paris,—with seats of wood or velvet, heated and not heated, paved and unpaved!—"

"In those Ante-chambers,"—continued my friend,—"I dreamed away a fair year of my life. I dreamt of many wondrous mad and fabled stories from the "Thousand-and-one Nights," of men and beasts, of gold and offal. My dreams were of gods and contrabassists, of jewelled snuff-boxes and prima-donnas, of satin gowns and lovesick lords, of chorus-girls and five-franc pieces. Between I sometimes seemed to hear the wailing, ghost-like note of an oboe; that note thrilled through my every nerve, and cut my heart. One day when I had dreamed my maddest, and that oboe-note was tingling through me at its sharpest, I suddenly awoke and found I had become a madman. At least I recollect, that I had forgotten to make my usual obeisance to the theatre-lackey as I left the anteroom,—the reason, I may add, of my never daring to return to it; for *how* would the man have received me?—With tottering steps I left the haven of my dreams; on the threshold of the building I fell of a heap. I had stumbled over my poor dog, who, after his wont, was ante-chambering in the street, in waiting for his fortunate master who was allowed to ante-chamber among men. This dog, I must tell you, had been of the utmost service to me, for to him and his beauty [62] alone I owed it that now and then the lackey of the ante-chamber would honour me with a passing glance. Alas ! with every day he lost a portion of his beauty, for hunger gnawed his entrails too. This gave me fresh alarm, as I clearly foresaw that the servant's favour would soon be lost to me; already a contemptuous smile would often purse his lips.—As said, I fell over this dog of mine. How long I lay, I know not; of the kicks which I may have received from passers-by I took no notice; but at last I was awoken by the tenderest kisses,—the warm licks of my dear beast. I leapt to my feet, and in a lucid interval I recognised at once my weightiest duty: to buy the dog some food. A shrewd *Marchand d'Habits* gave me a handful of sous for my villainous waistcoat. My dog ate, and what he left I devoured. With *him* this answered admirably, but I was past mending. The produce of an heirloom, an old ring of my grandmother's, sufficed to restore the dog to his ancient beauty; he bloomed afresh—oh, fatal blooming!

"With my brain it grew ever darker; I know not rightly what took place within it,—but I remember being seized one day by an irresistible longing to seek out the Devil. My dog, in all his former glory, accompanied me to the gates of the *Concerts Musard*. Did I hope to meet the Devil, there? That also I cannot tell. I scanned the people trooping in, and whom did I espy among them? The abominable *Englishman*: the same, as large as life, and not one atom changed from when, as I related to you, he harmed me so with Beethoven!—Fear took me; I was prepared to face a demon from the nether world, but never more this phantom of the upper. O how I felt, when the wretch also recognised *me!* I couldn't avoid him,—the crowd was pressing us towards each other. Involuntarily, and quite against the customs of his countrymen, he was compelled to fall into my arms, raised up to force myself an exit. There he lay, wedged tight against my breast, with its thousand torturing emotions. It was a fearful moment ! We were soon released a little, and he shook [63] me off with a shade of indignation. I tried to escape; but it still was impossible.—'Welcome, mein Herr!'—the Briton shouted:—'I always meet you on the ways of Art This time we'll go to *Musard!*'—For very wrath I could say nothing but: 'To the Devil!'—'Quite so,' he answered, 'it seems that things go devilish there!—Last Sunday I threw off a composition, which I shall offer to Musard. Do you know this Musard? Will you introduce me to him?'

"My horror at this bugbear turned to speechless fear; impelled by it, I gained the strength to free myself and flee towards the Boulevard; my lovely dog rushed barking after me. But in a trice the Englishman was by my side once more, holding me, and asking in excited tones: 'Sir, does this splendid dog belong to you? Yes.'—'But it is superb! Sir, I will pay you fifty guineas for this dog. A dog like this, you know, is the proper thing for a gentleman, and I have already owned a number of them. Unfortunately, the beasts were all unmusical; they could not stand my practising the horn or flute, and so they always ran away. But I take it for granted that, as you have the good fortune to be a musician, your dog is musical also; I accordingly may hope that he will stop with me. So I offer you fifty guineas for the beast.'—'Villain!' I cried:—'not for the whole of Britain would I sell my friend !' So saying, I hurried off, my dog in front. I dodged down the back streets that led to my usual night's-lodging—It was bright moonshine; now and then I looked furtively back:—to my alarm, I thought I saw the Englishman's long figure following me. I redoubled my pace, and peered round still more anxiously; now I caught sight of the shadow, now lost it. Panting for breath, I reached my refuge, gave my dog to eat, and threw myself all hungry on my rough, hard bed.—I slept long, and dreamt of horrors. When I awoke,—my beautiful dog had vanished. How he had got away from me, or been enticed through the badly fastened door, to this day is a mystery to me. I called, I hunted for him, till sobbing I fainted away.—

[64]

"You remember that I saw the faithless one again one day in the Champs Élysées;—you know what efforts I made to regain possession of him;—but you do not know that this animal recognised me, yet fled from my call like an untamed beast of the wilderness ! Nevertheless I followed him and his Satanic cavalier till the latter dashed into a gateway, whose doors were slammed behind him and the dog. In my anger I thundered at the gates;—a furious bark was the answer.—Dazed and crushed, I leant against the archway,—until at last a hideous scale on the horn aroused me from my stupefaction; it reached me from the ground-floor of the mansion, and was followed by the agonised moan of a dog. Then I laughed out loud, and went my way.—"

My friend here ceased; though speech had become easy, his inward agitation taxed him terribly. It was no longer possible for him to hold himself erect in bed,—with a smothered groan he sank back.—A long pause occurred; I watched the poor fellow with painful feelings: that faint flush so peculiar to the consumptive had risen to his cheeks. He had closed his eyes, and lay as if in slumber; his breath came lightly, almost in ethereal waves.

I waited anxiously for the moment when I durst speak to him, and ask what earthly service I could render.—At last he opened his eyes once more; a dim but wondrous light was in the glance he straightway fixed on me.

"My poor friend,"—I began—"I came here with the sad desire to serve you somehow. Have you a wish, O speak it !"

With a smile he resumed: "So impatient, friend, for my last testament?—Nay, have no care; you too are mentioned in it.—But will you not first learn how it befell that your poor brother came to die? Look you, I wished my history to be known to *one* soul at the least; but I know of no one who would worry himself about me, unless it be *yourself*— —Fear not that I am overexerting myself! 'Tis well with me and easy—no laboured breath oppresses me—the words come freely to my lips.—And see, I have little left [65] to narrate. You can imagine that, from the point where I broke off my story, I had no more outer incidents to do with. From there begins the history of my inner life, for then I knew I soon should die. That terrible scale on the horn in the Englishman's hôtel filled me with so overpowering a weariness of life, that I there and then resolved to die. Indeed, I should not boast of that decision, for I must confess that it no longer lay entirely within my own free will. Something had cracked within my breast, that left a long and whirring sound behind;—when this died out 'twas light and

well with me, as never before, and I knew my end was near. O how happy that conviction made me ! How the presage of a speedy dissolution cheered me, as I suddenly perceived its work in every member of this wasted body!—Insensible to outward things, unconscious where my faltering steps were bearing me, I had gained the summit of Montmartre. Thrice welcoming the Mount of Martyrs, I resolved on it to die. I too was dying for the wholeness of my faith; I too could therefore call myself a martyr, albeit this my faith was challenged by none else—than Hunger.

"Houseless, I took this lodging, asking nothing further than this bed, and that they would send for my scores and papers, which I had stowed in a wretched hovel of the city; for, alas ! I had never succeeded in pawning them. So here I lie, determined to pass away in God and pure Music. A friend will close my eyes, my effects will cover all my debts, and for a decent grave I shall not want.—Say, what more could I wish?"

At last I gave vent to my pent-up feelings.—"What !" I cried, "was it only for this last mournful service, that you could use me? Could your friend, however powerless, have helped you in nothing else? I conjure you, for my peace of mind tell me this: Was it a doubt of my friendship, that kept you from discovering my whereabouts and acquainting me before with your distress?"

"O don't be angry," he answered coaxingly, "don't chide me if I own that I had fallen into the stubborn belief that you [66] were my enemy! When I recognised that you were not, my brain was already in a condition that robbed me of all responsibility of will. I felt that I was no longer fit to associate with men of sense. Forgive me, and be kindlier toward me, than I have been to you!—Give me your hand, and let this debt of my poor life be cancelled!"

I could not resist, but seized his hand, and melted into tears. Yet I saw how markedly the powers of my friend were ebbing; he was now too weak to raise himself in bed; that flickering flush came ever paler to his sunken cheeks.

"A little business, dear chum," he began afresh. "Call it my last Will ! For I will, in the first place: that my debts be paid. The poor people who took me in, have nursed me willingly and dunned me little; they must be paid. The same with a few other creditors, whose names you will find on that paper. I bequeath all my property in payment, there my compositions and here my diary, in which I have jotted down my musical whims and reflections. I leave it to your judgment, my experienced friend, to sell so much of these remains as will liquidate my earthly debts.—I will, in the second place: that you do not beat my dog, if you ever should meet him; I assume that, in punishment of his faithlessness, he has already suffered torments from the Englishman's horn. I forgive him!—Thirdly, I will that the history of my Paris sufferings, with omission of my name, be published as a wholesome warning to all soft fools like me.—Fourthly, I wish for a decent grave, yet without any fuss or parade; few persons suffice for my following; their names and addresses you'll find in my diary. The costs of the burial must be mustered up by you and them.—Amen !"

"Now,"—the dying man continued, after a pause occasioned by his growing weakness,—"now one last word on my belief.—I believe in God, Mozart and Beethoven, and likewise their disciples and apostles;—I believe in the Holy Spirit and the truth of the one, indivisible Art;—I believe that this Art proceeds from God, and lives within the hearts of all illumined men;—I believe that he who [67] once has bathed in the sublime delights of this high Art, is consecrate to Her for ever, and never can deny Her;—I believe that through this Art all men are saved, and therefore each may die for Her of hunger;—I believe that death will give me highest happiness;—I believe that on earth I was a jarring discord, which will at once be perfectly resolved by death. I believe in a last judgment, which will condemn to fearful pains all those who in this world have dared to play the huckster with chaste Art, have violated and dishonoured Her through evilness of heart and ribald lust of senses;—I believe that these will be condemned through all eternity to hear their own vile music. I believe, upon

the other hand, that true disciples of high Art will be transfigured in a heavenly fabric of sun-drenched fragrance of sweet sounds, and united for eternity with the divine fount of all Harmony.—May mine be a sentence of grace!—Amen!"

I could almost believe that my friend's fervent prayer had been granted already, so heavenly a light shone in his eye, so enraptured he remained in breathless quiet. But his gentle, scarce palpable breathing assured me that he yet lived on.—Softly, but quite audibly, he whispered: "Rejoice, ye faithful ones; the joy is great, toward which ye journey!"

Then he grew dumb,—the radiance of his glance was quenched; a smile still wreathed his lips. I closed his eyes, and prayed God for such a death.— —

Who knows what died in this child of man, leaving no trace behind? Was it a Mozart,—a Beethoven? Who can tell, and who 'gainsay me when I claim that in him there fell an artist who would have enriched the world with his creations, had he not been forced to die too soon of hunger?—I ask, who will prove me the contrary?—

None of those who followed his body. Besides myself there were but two, a philologist and a painter; a third was hindered by a cold, and others had no time to spare.—As we were modestly approaching the churchyard of Montmartre, we noticed a beautiful dog, who anxiously [68] sniffed at the bier and coffin. I recognised the animal, and Looked behind me;—bolt-upright on his horse, I perceived the Englishman. He seemed unable to understand the strange behaviour of his dog, who followed the coffin into the graveyard; he dismounted, gave the reins to his groom, and overtook us in the cemetery.

"Whom are you burying, mein Herr?" he asked me.—"The master of that dog," I gave for answer.

"Goddam!" he cried, "it is most annoying that this gentleman should have died without receiving the money for his beast. I set it aside for him, and have sought an opportunity of sending it, although this animal howls at my musical exercises like all the rest. But I will make good my omission, and devote the fifty guineas for the dog to a memorial stone, which shall be erected on the grave of the estimable gentleman!"—He left us, and mounted his horse; the dog remained beside the grave,—the Briton rode away. (7)

Notes

Note 1 on page 5

Under the title "Un musicien étranger à Paris," this story appeared in the *Gazette Musicale* of Jan. 31 and Feb. 7 and 11, 1841. Its German original was first printed in Nos. 187-91 of the *Abend-Zeitung* (Aug. 6 to 11, 1841) as a sequel to the "Pilgrimage", and with the special title "Das Ende zu Paris. (Aus der Feder eines in Wahrheit noch lebenden Notenstechers.)"—i.e. "The end at Paris: from the pen of an in reality still living note-engraver." The title in the *Ges. Schr.* becomes "Ein Ende in Paris," but otherwise the two German texts are identical, saving for one or two quite trifling stylistic alterations and the appearance in the *A.Z.* of "—denn ich bin mehr Banquier als Notenstecher—", i.e. "—for I am more of a banker than a note-engraver—", following the words "as my own access to those sanctuaries was but rare" on [page 55](#) *infra*.—Tr.

Note 2 on page 6

In the French this sentence ran, "Me faudrait-il craindre par hasard de me trouver, ici comme en Allemagne, dans l'obligation d'avoir recours à des voies tortueuses pour me procurer l'entrée des théâtres royaux?"—and was immediately followed by "Dois-je croire que, pendant des années entières, il me faudra mendier la protection de tel on tel laquais de cour pour finir par arriver, grâce à un mot de recommandation qu'aura daigné m'accorder quelque femme de chambre, à obtenir pour mes œuvres l'honneur de la représentation? Non sans doute, et à quoi bon d'ailleurs des démarches si serviles, ici, à Paris" etc.—Some specific case appears to be referred to here, for, although the passage drops out of this connection in the *Abendzeitung* and *Ges. Schr.*, we meet with an identical allusion in the essay on "Conducting," see Vol. IV., pp. 294 and 297.—Tr.

Note 3 on page 6

Between this paragraph and the next there appeared in the *Gazette Musicale* "(Je n'ai nul besoin, je pense, de faire remarquer au lecteur que, dans les objections dont je me sers et dont j'aurai encore à me servir vis-à-vis de mon ami, il ne s'agit nullement de voir l'expression complète de ma conviction personnelle, mais seulement une série d'arguments que je regardais comme urgent d'employer pour amener mon enthousiaste à abandonner ses plans chimériques, sans diminuer pourtant en rien sa confiance en son talent.)"—Tr.

Note 4 on page 6

In the *Gazette* here appeared "(Le lecteur voudra bien ne pas oublier de faire ici une nouvelle application de la remarque que je lui ai recommandée ci-dessus.)"—Tr.

Note 5 on page 7

Here, as also at the end of the next paragraph but one, the *Gazette* had "(Le lecteur voudra bien ne pas oublier, etc.)"—Tr.

Note 6 on page 8

Here again, and after the first sentence of the next paragraph but one, the *G. M.* had "(Le lecteur voudra bien ne pas oublier, etc.)"—Tr.

Note 7 on page 15

Translator's note:—In the *Gazette Musicale* there was an additional paragraph: "Il me reste maintenant à exécuter le testament. Je publierai dans les prochains numéros de cette gazette, sous le titre de *Caprices esthétiques d'un musicien*, les différentes parties du journal du défunt, pour lesquels l'éditeur a promis de payer un prix élevé, par égard pour la destination respectable de cet argent. Les partitions qui composent le reste de sa succession sont à la disposition de MM. les directeurs d'Opéra, qui peuvent, pour cet objet, s'adresser, par lettres non affranchies, à l'exécuteur testamentaire,

RICHARD WAGNER."