

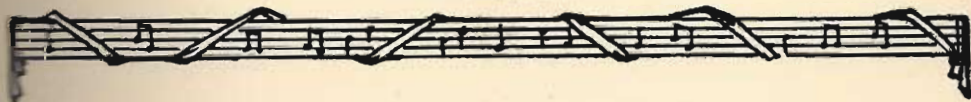


MINUTE SKETCHES
of
GREAT COMPOSERS

by
EVA v B. HANSL
and
HELEN L. KAUFMANN
With 74 full-page portraits by
SAMUEL NISENSEN



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Anton Bruckner

"SELF-MADE MUSICIAN"

[Born 1824—Died 1896]

ANTON BRUCKNER was born September 4, 1824, in Ansfelder, near Vienna, but despite his proximity to that great centre of musical activity, he had to create many of his own opportunities for music education. Nevertheless, he became a great organ virtuoso, and, still more important, composer of much lofty music.

His father was a poor village schoolmaster, who could help him with but few advantages. Eventually, however, Anton managed to get lessons with Sechter and Kitzler, and became organist, first at the Institute of St. Florian, then at the Cathedral of Linz. Later he held the position of court organist in Vienna, and professor at the Conservatory there.

His appearance was wholly against him. An awkward peasant, shambling along the street in ill-fitting dusty clothes, with a floppy black hat upon his head and the flowing black tie of a by-gone day, a first-class bore to boot,—it is difficult to discern greatness in such a figure. And during his life-time, there were few who did. It was not until after his death that the efforts of his four friends, Nikisch, Mahler, Hugo Wolf, and Loewe, were rewarded by his recognition, enthusiastic in his own country, slowly growing in others.

The popularity of Brahms, nine years his junior, and his own imitative admiration of Wagner, who preceded him by eleven years, had much to do with this postponement of fame. Moreover, his pieces were unduly long, with such interminable stretches of dreariness between their inspired moments that conductors considerate of their audiences feared to play them. One critic said that he wrote "platitudes under haloes," and that his symphonies were "inlaid with gold and weighted with lead."

Granted that blue-penciling was what his manuscript needed, the fact remains that he has left nine symphonies, three grand *Masses*, a *Te Deum*, and many *Motets*, increasingly liked as they become increasingly familiar. A deep piety brooded over all his writings. When asked if he really believed in God, he replied simply, "How else could I have written the Credo of my *F Minor Mass*?" There is no stress or turbulence, but the ecstacy of the mystic, terrific earnestness,—and—no humor.

He was writing the Ninth Symphony during his last illness, when he was seventy, and his one prayer was that he be allowed to complete it before the end. But the prayer was not granted, for he died leaving but two movements completed, on October 11, 1896.



A. Dukner -