



Johann Strauss.

Drawn by V. Gribayédoff from a photograph.

THE WALTZ KING.

The famous musical family of the Strausses, of Vienna—The work and personality of its present head, the composer of the "Beautiful Blue Danube."

WHEN Johann Strauss was a little fellow of six he wrote his first waltz.

It was the germ of his genius, but it took a mother's hope and love to recognize it. His father, himself a conductor and composer of ability, brought his fist down upon the family table with a bang, and declared that one fiddler in the Strauss family was quite enough; Johann should not be a musician. The mother was silent. With a little money of her own she sent her boy to the best teachers she could find. And Johann, senior, stormed and raved, and finally separated entirely from his wife.

The father's opposition to his son's study of music could hardly have been due to a desire to spare the boy the hardships of a musician's life, for his own had been made comparatively easy. Born in March, 1804,

of poor Viennese parents, the elder Strauss had had such good fortune that he hardly knew what the study of music under difficulties meant. His father kept a little inn, "Zum Guten Hirten" (At the Sign of the Good Shepherd), where an orchestra of three interpreted music of the lighter order to the delight of strolling guests. Little Johann loved their music, and was invariably to be found under the table, listening attentively. Of the toys given him, he was chiefly interested in a small violin. He would play upon it for hours, running over snatches of dances and airs he had heard while hiding under the inn table.

He had no liking for school, though he was fortunate enough in being sent to a teacher who at once recognized that the boy should have a thorough musical education. His parents could not afford this, and

Johann was sent to learn book binding. But he soon tired of his trade, and before he was fourteen years old, with his violin under his arm, he started out to play for a living.

One of the frequenters of the "Zum Guten Hirten" was Herr Polischansky. He had taken an interest in little Strauss, and finally got the consent of the boy's parents to let him have—at Polischansky's expense—a systematic musical education. He learned rapidly. What it took the usual student a year to acquire, he accomplished in a week; and soon he was playing in Vienna with a favorite string quartet. A little later he was engaged by Joseph Lanner to play in the various gardens and beer halls of the Austrian capital.

Lanner and Strauss became good friends. On one occasion, when the former was prevented from writing a waltz promised for a concert on the following evening, Strauss undertook the task. The composition met with



Frau Strauss, Wife of the Waltz King.

an outburst of applause; and although Lanner's name appeared on the program as the composer, Strauss recognized the piece's success as his. Thus encouraged he continued composition. Eventually he organized and conducted an orchestra of his own, which became famous at once.

Strauss had married the pretty daughter of an innkeeper, and it was on October 25, 1825, just before his first concert tour began, that the second Johann Strauss, heir to the genius of his father, was born. The boy's early love of music, and the elder Strauss' vain attempt to stifle it, have already been mentioned. In spite of his father's preference for any other calling for his son, little Johann often managed to be present at the rehearsals of the Strauss orchestra. With his younger brother Josef he would play, on the piano, waltzes of his father's composition; and Vienna soon prophesied that the lad would be the elder Strauss' successor.

At eighteen Johann was obliged, by the lack of money, to enter a bank



Josef Strauss, Younger Brother of the Waltz King.



The First Johann Strauss, Father of the Present Waltz King.

as a clerk; but he soon left the desk and began his career as composer and orchestra conductor. As early as 1844 the Austrian capital had gone wild over him. In October of that year, when he first conducted some of his own dance compositions at Dom-mayer's Garden in Vienna, the audience recalled him sixteen times, and the musical world rang with his praise. Although the two conductors' relations had been strained, the son performed, as a compliment to his father, the latter's "Loreley Rhein Klänge" waltzes. The act made the younger Strauss the idol of the hour, and he was proclaimed "Waltz King Johann Strauss the Second."

At this period of his career he was a most prolific writer. He wrote day or night, whenever the fancy took him, and he had a habit of jotting down musical thoughts on his cuffs or collars. Some of the most popular dance music ever composed was thus first recorded. The Strauss dances

now number nearly five hundred, and many of them are familiar the world over. "Artist Life," "The Beautiful Blue Danube," "Wine, Woman, and Song," "From the Mountains," "German Hearts," "Harmony of the Spheres," "Village Swallows," and the "Lob der Frauen" are among the best known. The "Blue Danube," almost a national air in Austria, was originally written for a male chorus with orchestra.

The early success of Johann Strauss is thus described by Hanslick, the musical critic of Vienna: "The young man's animal spirits, so long repressed, now began to foam over. Favored by his talent, intoxicated by his rapid successes, petted by the women, he passed his youth in wild excitement, always productive, always fresh and enterprising, always daring to the point of recklessness. In appearance he resembled his father, but was handsomer, more refined, and more modern in dress and air. His waltzes combined the unmistakable Strauss family physiognomy with unique and original qualities of their own."

After the death of his father, in



Frau Strauss, Mother of the Waltz King.



Eduard Strauss.

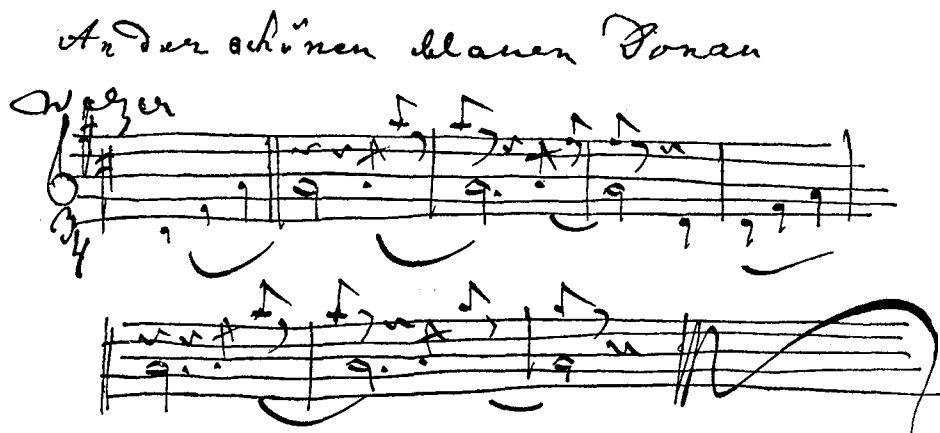
From a photograph by Gertinger, Vienna.

1849, for a number of years Strauss and his orchestra gave concerts in all the principal cities of Europe, notably in St. Petersburg, Berlin, London, and Paris. It was in Paris that the writer first met the famous composer. He was to lead the orchestra at one of the masked balls given at the Opéra. The musicians were French, and were inclined to resent the leadership of a German. At the morning rehearsal they were inattentive. The newspapers, too, had commented on the subject. Strauss requested me to wait.

"You will see if there is the slightest inattention on the part of the orchestra," he said. "If there is, I will break my baton and will not conduct a bar."

I waited. Strauss took his position, violin in hand. He was facing the orchestra. In a moment he raised his instrument and began to play. It was his beautiful "Artist Life" waltz, and his rendering of it was perfect. The enormous audience sat spellbound, and as he finished, rose to their feet with thunderous applause. Strauss had conquered; there was no further difficulty in Paris. While there he was further honored with the cross of the Legion of Honor.

In June, 1872, the Waltz King came to this country. The late Patrick S. Gilmore had engaged him, at a large salary, to conduct at the Boston Peace Jubilee. His presence



"The Beautiful Blue Danube"—The
Composer's Autograph Copy of the
Opening Bars.

Johann Strauss

there was one round of triumphs. He directed an orchestra of a thousand musicians, and more than ever popularized his melodious compositions. In the same month he gave four concerts in New York,

at the Academy of Music. Rarely, if ever, has a composer received such an ovation in the American metropolis as was given to Strauss. His audiences seemed never to tire of his music, while the magnetism of the man with both audience and orchestra was simply astounding.

I shall never forget an incident on the composer's first appearance here. He was leading from a little platform in front of the orchestra, and playing himself. In some way his foot slipped, and he fell, breaking his violin. He scrambled to his feet, took another violin from one of the players, and went on with his waltz as if nothing had happened, losing only eight bars of the music.

It was while in New York that Strauss composed the "Manhattan" waltzes, in which he introduced "Old Folks at Home" and "The Star Spangled Banner."

Following the advice of Jacques Offenbach, in 1871 Strauss entered the field of operetta. Between that time and the present he has produced the following fourteen pieces: "Indigo," "Karneval in Rom," "Die Fledermaus" (originally produced in Paris under the title "La Tzigane"), "Cagliostro," "Prince Methusalem," "Blinde Kuh," "The Queen's Lace Handkerchief," "The Merry War," "Night in Venice," "The Gipsy Baron," "Simplicius,"



The Wreath Presented to Johann Strauss by His American Admirers,
October 15, 1894.

"Ritter Pazman," "Fürstin Ninetta," and "Jabuka." The last of these was first presented in October, 1894, at Vienna. Nearly all of them have been performed in America, "The Queen's Lace Handkerchief" inaugurating the Casino as the home of comic opera in New York, in October, 1882.

Johann Strauss has enjoyed the friendship of Liszt, Meyerbeer, Verdi, Brahms, and Rubinstein, the last of whom rearranged and frequently played Strauss' "Nachtfalter Walzer." Richard Wagner said of his music: "One Strauss waltz overshadows in respect to animation, finesse, and real musical worth most of the mechanical, borrowed, factory made products of the present time."

The Waltz King lives in a handsome house in Vienna, No. 4 Igelgasse. He was appointed musical director of the Vienna court balls in 1864, succeeding Philip Fahrbach, who in turn had followed the elder Johann

Strauss. As his engagements multiplied, however, he resigned in favor of his brothers Josef and Eduard, the latter of whom has held the post since 1874.

Americans hold Strauss and his music in great esteem. Last October, at the celebration of his golden jubilee in Vienna, a number of the most eminent musicians of this country sent a silver and gold wreath to the famous composer, in token of their respect. To present the gift was the writer's pleasure. It was a work of exquisite design and finish, each leaf being inscribed with the name of a favorite composition of the master.

Herr Strauss accepted the token with expressions of deep gratitude. He said that he owed everything to his predecessors, and above all to his father, who showed him the way to musical progress, especially in the sphere of dance music. "My feeble merit," he said, "is only the methods of the past enlarged and broadened."

Rudolph Aronson.

THE AUTUMN TROUBADOURS.

PAST was the royal pageant of the leaves,
And yet the poet crickets at high noon
From fields wide widowed of their saffron sheaves
Sent up a jocund tune.

No more they made the violet twilight-tide
To throb and thrill with bursts of lyric glee;
Yet, true to song, they would not be denied
Their midday minstrelsy.

And listening, enamored of the sounds,
The golden vested hours were loath to go
Adown the dark declivity to the bounds
Of icy night and snow.

And we, the close companions of the hours,
Beguiled, at heart were fain to linger too,
Clinging to memories of the vanished flowers,
Opaled with morning dew.

Ah, all too brief the choric interludes!
The seal of silence beauty soon immures;
And yet they solaced many wintry moods,
These autumn troubadours.

They were the links that bound us to the skies
That hung the birth of all our bliss above;
And who but backward looks with gladdened eyes
Upon the days of love?

Clinton Scollard.