BEETHOVEN: A CRITICAL BIOGRAPHY

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Beethoven: A Critical Biography by Theodore Baker & Vincent d'Indy

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THEODORE BAKER & VINCENT D'INDY

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A CRITICAL BIOGRAPHY By VINCENT D'INDY

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH By DR. THEODORE BAKER



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LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

INTRODUCTION

Only he who has never lived in intimate communion with Beethoven's art would venture to assert that the productions of the genius of the symphony present themselves under but one aspect, so that no essential modification can be distinguished in the course of a career which, opening with a few insignificant variations, closed with the five last quartets.

In support of the opinion which would suppress the division of Beethoven's works into periods, strongly marked though they be, we can find nothing to cite except a letter from Franz Liszt to Councilor Wilhelm von Lenz, the principal advocate of the "three styles." In this letter the celebrated virtuoso, after having first of all declared Beethoven's creative work to be one and indivisible, ends by himself dividing it into two categories instead of three - an entirely arbitrary and illogical arrangement. On all who knew the composer of the Faust Symphony and his refinement of appreciation this letter will make the impression of a mere freak of humor, or possibly even one of those solemn mystifications which, as a good romancer, he had a habit of bringing forward in his letters or conversation, with the greatest emphasis, for the astonishment of reader or auditor, thereafter laughing over them in private. At all events, if such was his view in 1852, he professed twenty years later an opinion diametrically opposed, when it was our privilege to