

**THIRTY STERLING  
SONGS BY THE GREAT  
MASTERS; PP. 1-117**

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Thirty Sterling Songs by the Great Masters; pp. 1-117 by Henry T. Fink & Alys E. Bentley

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**HENRY T. FINK & ALYS E. BENTLEY**

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MASTERS; PP. 1-117**



# THIRTY STERLING SONGS

BY THE GREAT MASTERS

*SELECTED AND ANNOTATED BY*

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**Boston**

ALLYN AND BACON

1906

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## PREFACE.

It is an American trait to insist on having the best of everything, and only the best. In music we patronize the world's leading opera singers, pianists, and violinists at any cost, while the minor artists find it more profitable to remain in Europe. One branch of the divine art presents an unfortunate exception. Our school music is for the most part far from being the best of its kind.

In the literature classes in our schools the students are introduced *directly* to Shakespeare, Milton, Tennyson, Ruskin, and the other great masters of style and thought, to the students' immense advantage. But the music books are, for the most part, filled with inferior songs and second-hand arrangements, apparently on the erroneous assumption that the best songs of the great masters are too difficult to sing or understand, when they are, in truth, often as simple as folk-tunes, and much more likely than inferior productions to make an immediate and deep impression. The aim of the *Thirty Sterling Songs* is to do for music what has already been done for literature, by bringing the students into direct contact with nearly a dozen of the greatest song writers, representing seven different countries, — Germany, Austria, Hungary, Russia, Poland, Norway, and America.

As the time allowed for music in our secondary schools is more limited than it ought to be in view of the importance of this art as a healthful recreation and refining influence, it is obvious that the quality of the music supplied is of infinitely more consequence than the quantity. It has, therefore, been decided, after due deliberation, to limit the number of songs in this collection to thirty, but to make sure that each of them is a work of genius, — every bar a bar of gold.

Apart from the quality and the appropriateness of the material, the distinguishing feature of this collection lies in the comments on the songs and their makers. An experience of a quarter of a century as a critic and lecturer has convinced me that most persons enjoy music doubly if they know something about it and its composer. For this reason concert-givers often supply their audiences with programmes containing notes on the pieces performed. In a school book such notes seem essential. In preparing those for the present volume, we have tried to avoid the dry facts that may be found in any musical dictionary, and to supply instead a few biographic touches that will give the

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student an interest in the composers as actual persons, and will make him eager to know more about these composers and their works.

"Nothing so awakens an interest in music as helping to make it," was one of the maxims of that great conductor and missionary, the late Theodore Thomas. The *Thirty Sterling Songs* are therefore intended to be sung in unison by the whole class. In some cases, as in the *Erlking* and *Loreley in the Forest*, the interest of the students can be increased still further by dramatizing the songs, as explained in the introductory note to the *Loreley*, assigning the several characters in the poem to different groups of singers. These two songs and several others are rather difficult, but the remainder are within the capacity of the average school class. Every song in this collection has a melody that is easily seized and remembered. It is needless to say that the piano part should always be played by the best pianist in the school, be she teacher or pupil; for in these songs the instrument plays quite as important a rôle as the voice. The pianist should be careful to observe the expression-marks; to use the sustaining pedal correctly and as much as possible for the sake of fulness of tone; she should play neither too soft nor too loud, and, above all, she should know what she is playing about. It is quite as important for the pianist as for the singers to know and to follow the text, especially in such dramatic and romantic songs as those of Liszt and Schumann just referred to.

For the translations used in this volume (with a few exceptions) I have secured the coöperation of Miss Jessie F. Smith, head of the English department at the Wadleigh High School in New York City, and Miss Hildegard Hawthorne.

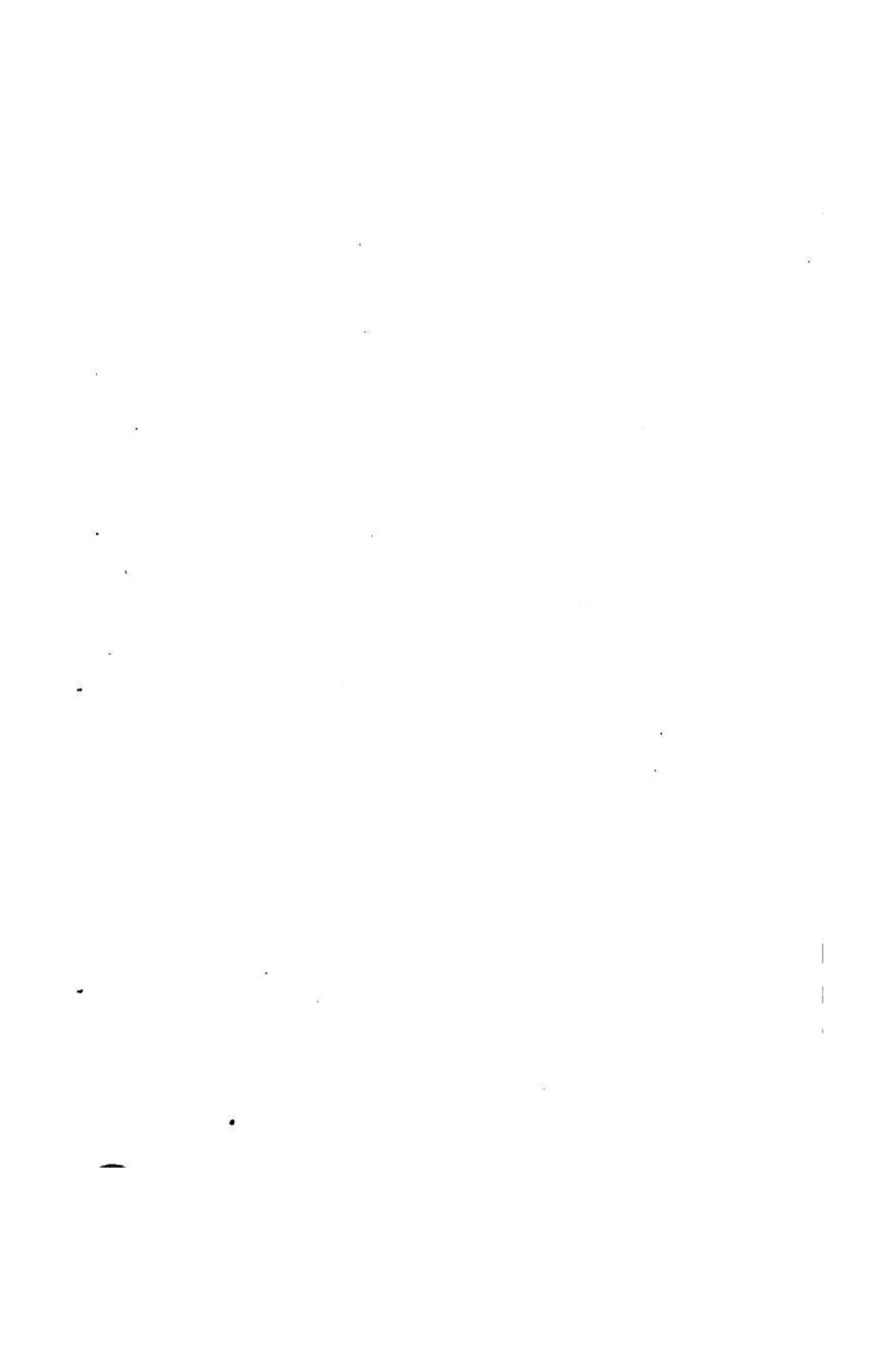
HENRY T. FINCK.

JANUARY, 1906.

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## THIRTY STERLING SONGS.

### I. THE WILD ROSE.

(*Heidenröslein.*)

*Poem by Goethe.*

*Music by Schubert (1797-1828).*

FRANZ SCHUBERT is the greatest of all song writers. Some of the immortal masters who came before him — Bach, Handel, Gluck, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven — might have written songs equal to his best had they tried; but they preferred to put their best musical thoughts into oratorios, operas, sonatas, and symphonies, and it remained for Schubert to infuse so much genius into a short song of two or three pages as to make it equal in rank to any one-hour symphony or four-hour opera; for works of art are not to be measured by their length, any more than flowers are by their size. He was the most prolific of all composers; although he lived only thirty-one years, he wrote over a thousand pieces of instrumental and vocal music. Among them are five hundred and sixty-seven songs. Not all of these are first-class, but the best of them have seldom, if ever, been equalled by the great composers who came after him, all of whom learned their most valuable lessons by studying his songs. Schubert's father was a teacher in a primary school, in a suburb of Vienna. He had a small salary, and ten children to support, wherefore he could not afford to buy music paper for little Franz, who in his school days already felt an irresistible impulse to write music; but a classmate kindly provided him with paper. For three years Franz helped his father, and then he turned to music as his profession. Though he wrote so much, he got so little for his compositions that he could hardly keep body and soul together. The Viennese did not then know what a great man he was. His death at the age of thirty-one was the greatest loss music ever suffered — a loss the more deplorable in view of the fact that he might have lived many years longer if he could have afforded to leave the city, as he wanted to, in the summer in which he caught the deadly typhoid fever.

*The Wild Rose* was written when he was only eighteen; he was teaching school then, yet in that one year he found time to write one hundred and forty-two other songs. *The Wild Rose* is as simple and dainty as one of those folk-

songs which originate among the common people of all nations. The words of the folk-songs are based on a legendary or historical event or on some incident or feeling of common life, and are handed down from generation to generation, though they may never be written out. Unaffected simplicity is the characteristic of both the words and music of these songs; *The Wild Rose*, like them, must be sung without affectation, yet with tenderness. Be sure to retard where the *rit.* is marked, and to resume the regular pace at the *a tempo*.

## II. HARK! HARK! THE LARK.

(Hörst, hörst, die Lerch.)

Poem by Shakespeare.

Music by Schubert.

SCHUBERT composed immortal songs as easily as others write letters. One day, while sitting with some friends in the garden of a tavern near Vienna, he picked up a volume of poems, including the "Hark! hark! the lark," from Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*. Hardly had he read it, when he exclaimed that a lovely melody had come into his head, and wished he had some music paper. There was none, but one of his friends drew a few staves on the back of the bill of fare, and Schubert immediately jotted down the complete song, piano part and all. It is often called "Schubert's Serenade"; but as there is another song which goes by that name, and as a serenade is really an evening song, while this is an *aubade*, or morning song, it is better to use the title, *Hark! Hark! the Lark*. It is a glorious song, with which not only singers, but pianists like Liszt and Paderewski, have won some of their triumphs. The only thing to be regretted is that it is so short and has only one verse. The German edition has two additional verses by Reil, but they fall so far below the level of Shakespeare's verse that it is better to repeat the music once or twice with Shakespeare's lines, as David Bispham, for example, does in the concert hall.

## III. WHO IS SYLVIA?

(Was ist Sylvia?)

Poem by Shakespeare.

Music by Schubert.

As a rule, Schubert's songs, like others, are good in proportion to the excellence of the poem to which they are wedded. It is therefore not to be wondered at that this is one of his best, as it is a setting of a poem from Shakespeare's *Two Gentlemen of Verona*. As in all of Schubert's songs, the melody flows as spontaneously as water bubbles from a spring. Note the charming echoes and imitations in the piano part, whenever the voice rests a bar. It is by attending to such details that we learn how to listen to music.