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Handel and Bach

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MARCH 2, 1885

MR. WILLIAM CHAPPELL

IN THE CHAIR.

HANDEL AND BACH.*

BY PROFESSOR SIR G. A. MACFARREN.

PART II.

IT is a gratification to me to be invited to resume the subject which was broached to you on the last occasion of our meeting. It is personally a gratification to myself, and more than this, I esteem it for the fact that the subject has proved so interesting to the Musical Association as to elicit a second day's attention to it. The present year, being the two-hundredth since the birth of the illustrious musicians whose names head this dissertation, draws attention particularly to them and their merits. Handel's birthday is passed by a week, Bach's will be on the fortnight after next Saturday. Here we stand between the two, who are more than any other two musicians parallel to each other. I attempted, when I had the gratification of speaking to you before, to collate the several periods of their lives; and I will, with your patient indulgence, resume from the point at which it was necessary on that occasion to break off.

We had arrived, with Handel, at the moment when the production of his third Oratorio of "Athaliah" at the public Act (or as it is now called the Commemoration) of Oxford, in 1733, when on this occasion had been offered to him, but had been refused by him, the title of Doctor of Music. Previous to this, some important events in the life of Bach had occurred, which to a considerable extent may be compared with the progress of Handel. He had received his appointment at Leipsic, he had issued his first publication. Music printing at that period was far more scarce than at present, and voluminous as were the productions of this master, and highly as they were esteemed, there were but seven works in all of his compositions printed during his life, and even four of these were a series in four parts "The Clavier Uebung," the first part of which was issued in 1726; three other parts of these exercises for the clavier, as he modestly named the work—a cantata which had been written many years earlier, "The Art of Fugue," which was framed upon a theme that

* Continued by request.

Frederick the Great of Prussia had given him for the composition of a fugue, and one other work—were all that he ever issued; and the work by which he is most known here, if not everywhere, “*The Well-Tempered Clavier*,” very remarkable to relate, from all the circumstances that can be traced, appears to have been first printed in this country, and in this very City of London, in the year 1799, forty-nine years after the master’s death.* Thus England has the glory of having put into an accessible form that remarkable work, by which we have the surest means of becoming intimate with the master’s skill, since his large choral works require assemblages of persons, and his organ works require an instrument which is not at everybody’s command. Bach, in his office of cantor in St. Thomas’s Church, and director of the musical department of the School of St. Thomas, in Liepsic, was under the jurisdiction of the school Rector, and was at very unfortunate variance with him. Many most vexatious circumstances passed between them, and not only between those two, but generally throughout Germany there seems to have been a contention between the professors of words and the professors of music, and in the public Gymnasia and other establishments where music and literature were studied together, there seem to have been very frequent contentions between the heads of the two faculties. Bach had in this instance been to a great extent the sufferer, because the Town Council, who had supreme jurisdiction over even the rector of the school, supported the rector, and thus added to the discomfort of the musician; on which account the cantor tried to raise his own social condition, and therefore applied for the post of kapellmeister to the King of Poland and the Elector of Saxony, with the view to obtaining which, he sent as a specimen of his ability, the *Kyrie* and *Gloria* of his great Mass in B minor, with a letter of urgent request that the author of this composition might receive the Court appointment. This was in the year 1733, to which we have brought Handel’s proceedings. Handel was at the very time in high esteem at Court and at the University, having the offer of the scholastic dignity which he refused. Bach was vexed, irritated, one may not say despised, but wholly unappreciated by the persons who surrounded him; and in order to raise himself in their esteem, since they had not the power of forming an opinion of his great merits, he sought the dignity of this Royal appendage to his name. Observe the coincidence, that, in the very year 1733, when Handel refused a proffered title in Oxford, because his musicianship commanded the respect that was due to him, Bach sought a title in Dresden in order to induce that regard in Liepsic which was vexatiously with-

* Reasons have come to light since the delivery of this address for believing that Kolmann’s projected edition, though announced, was never issued.

held from him. There appears strong reason to suppose that other portions of the Mass, the Creed — Sanctus — the Dona Nobis — may have been earlier written for service in one of the churches at Leipsic in which he was organist, for he had alternately to officiate at the Churches of St. Thomas and St. Nicholas. It was not until 1736 that he received the appointment, but then he was duly installed as the Court composer to the Elector of Saxony and the King of Poland. He held at the same time the office of composer to the Duke of Saxe Weisenfels, and he retained the office of kapellmeister to the Prince of Anhalt-Köthen, in whose service he had been for some years when he was elected to the office at Leipsic, his presence being dispensed with, and his services being to furnish compositions when occasion should call them forth. A great reason for his leaving the post in Anhalt-Köthen had been that the Prince had married a lady who had no taste for music, and who discouraged all musical performances. This lady had died, the Prince had married again a great music lover; and especially with reference to the birth of the first child of these two, Bach sent for the infant a copy of one of his most elaborate harpsichord compositions, with a long dedicatory letter to the said child. This letter, with its dedication, contained very fervent wishes for the mature musical taste and art culture of the probable future Prince of the race; but the child died at two years old, and the good wishes of the composer were thus frustrated.

Bach went on four particular occasions to Dresden, and there displayed his truly unique powers of organ playing. One was mentioned at our last meeting, another occasion was when Hasse and his wife, the famous Faustina, first arrived in Dresden for the sake of performing at the Italian Opera House. On another occasion Bach went when his son Friedmann received the appointment of organist in the Church of St. Sophia in Dresden, and then he gave what we should now call an organ recital, which was attended by the musicians of the town, but not others; and yet another time, when he went to receive formally the patent, as it was called, of his office, namely in 1736, he again displayed his powers as an executant, and this performance was attended by all the members of the Court, as well as by the musicians of the city.

It is now particularly to be noticed that, throughout the career of Bach, his whole course of art works appears mainly to have been directed to the services of the Church, and to the expression of his own religious feelings. There were two strong Church parties in North Germany at the period, the orthodox Lutherans and another sect who called themselves the Pietists. Bach's inclination appears to have been more in favour of the orthodox party; but, without entering ardently

into the disputes between these, he still seems to have executed most of his works with a view to the service of the Church in general, and the expression of religious feeling. For long his art was chiefly exercised in organ composition. He considered the organ as especially the instrument of the Church. Most of his writings, for a long period, consisted in elaborations of the Chorale tunes. These tunes, unlike our English hymnody, are especially distinguished by being each one appropriated to the text of some particular hymn, and thus, whenever the poem is brought to mind, the tune rises in association with it, whenever the tune passes through the memory, the text rises parallel, and it is thus but to play the tune to remind one of the whole purport of the hymn, and it is only to say the lines to bring the tune instantly into knowledge, because the education of all children throughout North Germany begins by teaching them these chorale hymns—verses and melodies together. This, a point which is almost beyond the appreciation of persons out of Germany, is very noteworthy; as everyone would know these tunes everyone would feel interest, and be able to perceive the peculiar treatment to which they were subjected in the remarkable compositions which were not peculiar to Bach, but which were common among the German composers of the period, the compositions evolved entirely out of the hymns of the Church. Pachelbel had established a particular form of composition which consisted in the insertion of interludes between the lines or strains of the hymn tune, and these interludes were continued as the figures of counterpoint to the succeeding lines of the melody of the hymn. This kind of organ fantasia was really but extended by Bach in his church cantatas, which are all based, one or other, upon the accepted hymns of the Church. Each one of them comprises some particular hymn. In all the instances I have been able to examine, the melody of some hymn, the text of which constitutes the whole subject of the cantata, is presented in different forms throughout the several numbers of the work. The first number will generally be a chorus, consisting of the first verse of the hymn with its appropriate tune, having such interludes and counterpoint as have been noticed; then will come a song or a duet, in which some phrase of the hymn will still be apparent. Several such numbers will succeed; and then, in plain counterpoint and with no ornamented accompaniment for instruments, the whole will terminate with the final verse of the hymn, the entire composition being thus an amplification for voices of what was the ordinary use in works designed for the organ. Such industry had Bach, that in one year he wrote no less than twenty of these cantatas, besides many other compositions. He set music several times to the story of the "Passion,"

the reflective passages being different in each case, and the biblical text being taken in each work from a different gospel. The "Matthew Passion," which has been more frequently given than the "John Passion" in this country, the others never having been heard here, was first produced at the Good Friday Celebration of 1729, and we may account as chronological curiosity that the master-piece of which I speak remained almost obscure from the date of that performance until 100 years afterwards, when it was reproduced, under the direction of the youthful Mendelssohn, by the Singing Academy of Berlin, in 1829. The "Matthew Passion" might hence be compared with the aloe which after it has spread its blossoms to the sun, flowers not again for a century, save that on its second blooming, on its re-awakening, nay, let me say, on its resurrection, this work has proved such strength of life as assures us that it cannot again relapse into forgetfulness, but will keep permanent hold on the admiration, the reverence, and the study of musicians.

You may remember how, when under the pupilage of his brother, Bach accomplished the difficult task of transcribing a collection of compositions of which only a MS. copy was within reach, because his brother forbade him access to the work; and how, when the copy was completed and discovered by the brother, it was taken from him. Such exercise as this appeared to have injured the sight of the writer, which in later years failed more and more, so that in the year of his death, 1750, he subjected himself to an operation in hopes to improve his sight, which, however, was unsuccessful. He became totally blind, and the medical treatment to which he was subjected in consequence of the operation appears to have affected his constitution so as to have induced his death six months afterwards. Very remarkably, ten days before his death, his sight entirely returned; but this by no means relieved the state of his health, and on July 28 he expired.

Bach appears throughout his whole life, though he held the very greatly prized friendship of Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Köthen, in all other instances to have lived in a most frugal, most temperate manner, having for his associates musicians, but shunning at all times the courtly classes of society. He appears to have exercised his power as a teacher most widely; many and many are the highly distinguished musicians who boasted themselves his pupils. Never did a musician come to the town in which he dwelt but Bach felt on his part a pleasure and a duty to welcome him to his house, to interest himself in his capability, to hear specimens of his performance and of his power of production, and to encourage him in any way he could; and, again, to accept any

person as a pupil who possessed ability likely to flower under the culture of such a master, and who had such confidence in the master to place himself under his teaching. The list of distinguished men who traced their culture to this source would be too long to bring before you, but one may dwell on a phase of Bach's character in citing the remarkable pun he made on his own name and on that of a favourite pupil, Johann Ludwig Krebs, whose father had previously also enjoyed Bach's teaching. You know, of course, that Krebs signifies a crab, and that Bach signifies a brook, and, therefore, you will understand his jest when he said—"This is the only crab that swims in my brook." Exceptional from his general habit of retirement, was his visit to Potsdam to the Court of Frederick the Great. He had resisted many hints, if not direct invitations, to make the journey and do homage to the distinguished King and musical amateur. A son of Bach, Carl Philipp Emanuel, held an appointment in the Court. He had been enjoined several times to suggest to his father that his attendance at Court would be acceptable; but it was not until something more approaching to a command had been issued that the father was induced to travel thither. This was in the May of 1747. It was a nightly custom of the King, when not engaged in warfare, to hold a concert, in the course of which he generally played a solo on the flute to the accompaniment of his assembled band. It was a necessary rule of the period, that whatever strangers arrived in a town in the course of the day should be reported by name and business to the chief authority of the place at nightfall. On a particular evening the King's band was assembled. The King came into the music room, flute in hand, ready to begin his accustomed performance on his favourite instrument, when there was brought to him the list of arrivals, in which was the name of Sebastian Bach. "Stop, gentlemen," said the King, "old Bach is here; we will defer our music for his." He was fetched instantly to the royal presence; he arrived in his travelling dress, and was immediately taken from place to place where the different musical instruments in the palace were kept. The pianoforte was then a recent development of the mechanism of keyed instruments, and there were several specimens in the palace. Bach was required to try one and another, and to give his opinion upon them. The King presently proposed to him to make an extemporaneous performance that should be in six real parts, and wrote him a subject for such improvisation; his own supposition being that it would be impracticable to preserve the strict identity of so many parts, when the composer could not deliberate over a written expression of his ideas. Bach did play from the King's thesis in six real parts, and amazed

everybody with his performance, but satisfied not himself; and accordingly, when he returned to his own quiet parlour at Leipsic, he elaborated at greater extent the work on the King's subject, and produced a series of compositions all framed upon the same musical theme, which he called "*Musicalisches Opfer*"—a musical sacrifice to the King. His joking habit manifests itself in the inscriptions surrounding the music. One of the methods of treating the King's thesis was by a canon in augmentation, namely, the same melody to be played in one part in notes of double the length of those in which it was assigned to another. He subscribes this with some words to the effect, "May the King's glory increase in proportion to that of the notes." Another is a canon that is answered successively at higher and higher intervals, and he says, "May the virtue of the King rise and rise for ever as do the notes of this canon." Thus do you see that whatever may have been his musical aptitude, his fancy for verbal joking must have been at any rate always ready for exercise. We find but few expressly secular compositions of Bach. One is a contest between father and daughter as to the merits of coffee, and it goes by the name of "*The Coffee Cantata*." The text runs on the father's granting permission to the daughter to marry with the stipulation that she shall take coffee daily, against which she makes strong protest. I cannot find in the music of this work such strong humour as the *Caprice* that was written for a leave-taking of his brother, who went into the army of Charles XII., evinces, or such humour as is manifested in these joking inscriptions that I have quoted. Another work, called "*The Peasants' Cantata*," has particular reference to the installation of an agent of Excise, and the peasants coming to do him homage. This is more particularly characteristic, including as it does some fragments of "*Folkslieder*." Another is a contest between Phœbus and Pan, in which the part of Midas is very conspicuous, and it is assumed that this part of Midas was written as an express satire upon some person who had made himself obnoxious to Bach in interfering with his musical prerogative. On two occasions, this cantata of "*Phœbus and Pan*" was revived, on each of which some alterations in particular passages in the text were made, applying them especially to the circumstances of the moment, when there was some contest in progress between a musical authority and a school rector; and we see in this something of rancour or bitterness of spirit, which appears otherwise unlike the general character of the man.

In all this while, Handel was writing Italian operas and was alternating the task with the production of oratorios. He had amassed a fortune, it is said, of ten thousand pounds, in

spite of the failure of the scheme of some chief members of the nobility of the country to conduct the Italian opera under the title of the Royal Academy of Music. The nobles had lost their money, but Handel had enriched himself; and, when the Royal Academy of Music collapsed, he, in partnership with the lessee of the King's Theatre in the Haymarket—a Dutchman of remarkably hideous aspect, as famous for his ugly looks as his fellow in the management was famous for his musical greatness—in partnership with this Heidegger, Handel undertook the responsibility, pecuniary and artistic, of manager of the theatre. He had as manager such non-success as the society that had lately broken up had had before him, and his difficulties were all the greater because of the institution of an opposition scheme to his own, which had the patronage of the Prince of Wales, who was at feud with the king. Hence it became as much a matter of political party as a matter of art judgment to adhere to the one opera or to the other. In his journey to the Continent for the sake of engaging singers for his opera scheme, Handel encountered Johann Christoph Schmidt, who had been his particular associate when he was still a student at Halle and deputy in the office of organist. Schmidt had established himself as a wool factor; but when he encountered his old associate, Handel, he attached himself to him again, and came to England, bringing his wife and son. He was, for ever after Handel's constant associate; he acted as his treasurer, secretary, and travelling companion, and was on terms of the closest intimacy with him. Otherwise, there seems to be no record of any personal friendship that Handel entertained. Four years before his death, Handel went with Smith, for his name was at that time translated into the equivalent word in our own language, to Tunbridge, and there had a quarrel with him. He was so implacable in his resentment, that no entreaty would bring him again into union with his friend. At the urgent request of Smith, Handel had consented to teach his son, who is here known as John Christopher Smith, and is generally supposed to have been Handel's amanuensis; but as we find that this younger Smith had lessons throughout all his period of study of another man, namely, Rosengrave, organist of St. George's, Hanover Square, there is strong reason to surmise that he had the title of being Handel's pupil though not the benefit of his instruction. As to being amanuensis, the office scarcely seems to have been fulfilled by this younger Smith until the total loss of sight by Handel, which occurred eight years before his death, and rendered him helpless in regard to pen and ink, and in the course of those eight years there appears to have been two occasions in which the writing powers of the younger Smith were called into play. An Italian work, "Il

Trionfo del Tempo," that had been written when Handel was in his early days in Italy, was translated into English and some additions were made to this which are probably to be traced to the writing of Smith, and a chorus was inserted in "Judas Maccabæus"—"Zion now her head shall raise"—supposed to be Handel's latest composition, which was written, supposedly by the same hand, for the reproduction of the oratorio, three years before the death of the master. The story is well known of Handel having officiated at the organ at the performance of "The Messiah" on April 6, 1749, this being his last performance in public. The date of his death is disputed by a few hours; some authorities believe that he died at midnight on that day week, namely, on April 13, others distinctly state that it was on the morning of the 14th, before daylight. The coincidence, if it were so, of his dying on the 13th is remarkable, since that was the anniversary of the first performance of "Messiah," a work written for production in Dublin, whither Handel went in 1742, at the invitation of the Duke of Devonshire, who then held the office we now call Lord Lieutenant, but which was then called Viceroy. The discrepancy of a few hours can signify but very little. The truly remarkable fact of the latter years of Handel's life is that he should have produced so very little as he did during this period; between the completion of "Jephtha," in 1751, and the master's death, in 1759, the two small compositions that have been named seem to have been the only products of that fertile, active imagination, which hence may be supposed to have lapsed into darkness, analogous to that which beset the visual organs of the great musician.

It may now be well to make some analogies between the personal and artistic characteristics of the two men. The very near proximity of time and place of their birth has already been noticed. The fact that they both belonged to the same Communion is again a point for observation. The facts that they were both pre-eminent over all the world except over each other as organists, and that their class of composition was greatly similar, are both noticeable. But now we begin to see divergence. Bach was of a most homely, quiet, and yet thoroughly social character, consorting greatly with musicians, little with others; having the warm friendship of one Prince, but otherwise unconnected with persons of title and state. Handel appears to have known little of friendship, and to have sought on all possible occasions the society of titled persons. Most remarkable is it that, after he had been for twenty years settled in England, he had from his early friend and associate in Hamburg, Mattheson, a request to furnish him with particulars of his

life since they had parted, which Mattheson wished to insert in a biographical work he had in preparation, and which subsequently he issued; and a letter of Handel is extant in answer to this, stating his time to be so greatly occupied with the nobility and gentry of England that he could not spare leisure to set down the particulars for which his friend applied. It may doubtless have been true that his time was thus occupied, and that his society was thus sought; but there appears to be something characteristic in his making to such a person at such a moment a statement to this effect of his occupation. Handel was truly in great esteem here. He published, and though he received for his publications infinitesimal sums in comparison with what *some* happy composers have at the present moment, the works which he wrote did find their way into print, and to this is largely due the publicity they have reached through the intervening centuries. Published copies were doubtless in all instances supervised by him, and in most instances are expressly stated to have been so corrected; and hence we may believe that in those printed copies, we have an authentic version of what were his intentions. Almost all of Bach's works, on the contrary, remained unprinted until many years after his death, and the manuscripts were so scattered that they cannot at the present time all be traced. His favourite son, the eldest, Friedmann, was unhappily of a very dissolute character. The MSS. of the father were divided among the surviving children, and those which fell to his lot were neglected or sold for small amounts, or given away, or destroyed, and thus there is great reason to believe that a very large proportion of Bach's productions remain inaccessible, if they at all exist. In Handel's lifetime, so high was his esteem, that the proprietor of Vauxhall Gardens, a place then of fashionable resort, deemed the most attractive ornament he could place in his illuminated alleys was a statue of Handel. This statue was wrought by Roubillouac, a notable French sculptor; and, after the once area of popular entertainment was disposed of upon building leases, the statue was purchased by the Sacred Harmonic Society. It has been engraved, and is very characteristic, and, therefore, probably a very truthful likeness of the original. In his will Handel especially bequeaths a sum of money for the erection of a monument to himself in Westminster Abbey. There the monument is: it consists of a statue, also by Roubillouac, which was the last work—as the one in Vauxhall was the first—that this artist accomplished during his residence in England. We are happy to bow to it as to the shrine of a great master, but we would rather perhaps that it had been erected at other cost and at other request than his own. As to the relationship between Handel and Johann Christoph

Schmidt—his youthful admirer, and the companion and zealous servitor of his after years—Handel bequeathed to this man the whole of his autographs. Later, it was intimated that the King of Prussia wished to have the MSS. for the Royal Library of Berlin, and Handel proposed to Smith (as his name was translated) to exchange the legacy of the MSS. for £1,000, from which proposal the other expressly dissented. The possession of those works in the original handwriting would be worth to him more than a fortune: his friend's productions in the very trace of his own hand would be more treasured by him than any wealth could be. Later still, Handel had the idea of perpetuating his memory by the deposition of these MSS. in the Bodleian Library of Oxford, and he made another proposal to his friend to exchange the legacy for a larger sum of money. Still Smith, with his hero-worship warm at his heart, refused the money and claimed the autographs. Handel, as he felt death was approaching, requested the son of his friend to partake with him the last offices of the Church, and share the Communion. This, young Smith refused to do, saying that he could not suppose the man to be at peace with all the world who was still in rancour with his dearest friend. This touched the old man's heart, and he consented to meet again the companion of his boyhood, the associate of his riper years, his attendant in sickness, his helpmate in his business relations with the world, the transcriber of his music, but the object of his four years' resentment; then they joined hands, and thus the author of "Messiah" departed in peace with all the world.

Bach was homely in his ways, simple in his uses, happy in his family surroundings, accessible to friendship, and hearty in its retention. His pleasure in music was enhanced by companionship in its enjoyment, and he had always happiness when he could aid musicians either in their study of art or in their quest of opportunities to practise it. He was not without enemies, but these are not to be counted among the members of his own profession; and those ecclesiastics and scholiasts with whom he was frequently at variance provoked his powers of humor to stinging sarcasm and sometimes to active resentment. Handel is reputed to have been self-indulgent. We need not give ear to the current anecdotes of his enjoyment of the pleasures of the table, but one cannot doubt that the malice which promulgated them may have seized upon and exaggerated some personal traits. He had musical opponents, between whom and him was violent rivalry, and the names of some of these are immortalised by the enmity of their owners to their great contemporary, as are those of musicians who were connected with Bach by their love and admiration of their master and their model.

Handel's genius was dramatic; not so that of Bach. The latter had the power of poetical expression in the highest degree; he applied this not to words alone, and sentences, and figures of speech, but in the entire conception of large designs and comprehensive works. He evinced no power of characterisation, for, even in his comic cantatas, the lord and the peasant, the father and his contentious daughter, have each the same style of music as the other, varied only by its fitness to the varying text. Handel, on the other hand, gives to every one of his personal creations an individuality distinct from that of each of the others. Compare, for example, in his last oratorio, "Jephtha," the character of the hero with his willingly devoted victim, with his passionately incensed wife, with the resigned lover of the daughter who is to be sacrificed, and with the persuasive brother of Jephtha who aims to smoothen all contrarieties with a surface of propriety and a sense of submission. Compare again the giant Harapha with the blinded but still heroic and devout Samson; and compare also Polyphemus with the lovers, Acis and Galatea. To turn from the vitality that speaks in every note assigned to a single person, let us think of the wondrous contrast between his choruses of the faithful and of heathens, and of the prodigiously picturesque power displayed in those pieces which, in narrating such events as the plagues of Egypt, present them in veritable life to our senses. Herein is to be observed a dramatic power that proves not only the greatness of Handel, but, indeed, the greatness of the art in which he wrought.

Let us compare the habits of composition of the two masters. Handel seems to have had great rapidity; we find from time to time, by the dates upon his MSS., which are entered at the beginning, at the end, and at the close of each Act, how long each work occupied him in its transcription, and there is perhaps nothing in the whole range of art history that appears so rapid as the production of these masterpieces. The dates at the beginning and the end of the whole oratorio of "Messiah" are at an interval of within three weeks. You may suppose that perhaps the work was pre-considered, and that the three weeks were but spent in the transcription of what was already composed. It was, however, within a month of the finishing of "Messiah" that "Samson" was entirely completed, and however much credit we may give to the comprehensiveness of memory, it is impossible to believe that two entire oratorios could be carried in the author's mind before a note of either was committed to paper. A curious and perhaps decisive evidence of both the method and the speed of the artist's work is constantly furnished by his manuscripts. The voice parts, and perhaps an instrumental bass, are generally written throughout in unbroken

continuity, and at some brief after-period the parts for the other instruments have obviously been added. One may perhaps notice a different coloured ink, or perhaps some slight difference in the writing; but more particularly, bars are erased in the earlier written parts, which bars are blank in the parts that are afterwards filled in. One finds in the closing dates of the several works some such expressions as these:—"Ended on such a day, fully completed two or more days later"; from which one may understand that the skeleton was finished on the former date, and that the accompanying parts were written in the two succeeding days. Now if Handel had conceived these works in a preceding time, and at the specified dates had only written them, it is impossible that he could in the two days have corrected ideas which had taken months to mature, have cut out bars and made other important alterations. This appears to me to be incontrovertible proof that he only conceived the works at the moment of writing them down, and that on his revision, a very short time afterwards, he found the means of improving them. It is remarkable to note, that whereas he would produce generally in the autumn, in about two months, as many oratorios, in the nine or ten months which followed there is no trace of his having written anything at all. After giving to his imagination this long rest, he would rise again, like the awakening of the seven sleepers, if ever that is to happen, to the production of a new wonder to the world. There are several instances of his appropriating to new purposes portions of old compositions. There is some reason to believe that this must have been to save himself the trouble of writing new matter for the direct requirements of the moment, for there are copies existing in which the notes are in the writing of another, and the words are written in the hand of Handel, with such alteration of the notes as will fit them to the change of text, such as the placing of two quavers instead of a crochet, and so on. Seemingly also for the sake of saving himself trouble—it could have been for no other reason, since his powers of invention never can have flagged—we find that, in a few instances, he appropriated the ideas of other composers, and not the ideas alone, but sometimes entire compositions; and it is impossible to fancy that he could have done this from either too powerful or too lax a memory—a memory too strong in remembering the work of another man, and too lax in not knowing that it was not a work of his own, because we find transcripts of pieces by other musicians, which appear in the works of Handel, in the books which he copied for his own particular study. I cannot but fancy, that when reaching such a point in the course of a work, as exacted a period of repose for the hearer's attention, he would take, from whatever source

might be convenient at the moment, something that had no remarkable power or effect, but which would not give him serious trouble in the elaboration, and insert it in his own works. Such, for instance, as the canzone of Johann Kaspar Kerl, which appears in the chorus, "Egypt was glad when they departed," in "Israel in Egypt." We have had previous to this, in the oratorio, that gorgeous succession of imitative choruses that represent the plagues. It is necessary for the renewal of such an exciting effect, as these are calculated to produce, that there should be a period of repose; a scholastic study rather than an imaginative piece will best induce that repose, consequently this chorus, which however clever, is certainly less captivating than its surroundings, this chorus written in the ungente—to modern ears frigid—Phrygian Mode of the Christian Church is there inserted, and I think it is fair to conclude that such a reason as I have surmised may have induced its appropriation to that particular place; like instances are elsewhere to be found.

Bach on the contrary was slow in his course of production. Several copies are extant, in his own writing, of some of his pieces, which present important differences, and show thus that he repeatedly reconsidered the music, and as often strove to improve it. He seems to have loved the very act of writing, and to have occupied himself therein almost daily, sometimes in putting new conceptions on paper, sometimes in re-writing his earlier works, sometimes in adding elaboration to the music of other men, and sometimes in merely transcribing their music. He very frequently incorporated in after compositions, portions of earlier works of his own; but in most, if not in every instance, he re-composed these, not transcribed them, but inserted greater elaborations, or in other ways converted them. In proof of his practice of copying many lengthy compositions of other authors in his hand, an entire oratorio of Handel stands in the writing of Bach, an entire work of his son Friedmann, and many other instances. That he spent much time upon the appropriation of the violin concertos of Vivaldi and those of Albinoni for organ use, and inserted harmonies and intricate counterpoints where single notes were in the original, is rather to be accounted as a practical study that he imposed upon himself, than at all to be compared with the, I am bound to say, dishonesty of genius that we have perceived in Handel. It would seem then that Bach had the greatest love of pens, ink, and paper, and that whenever he was away from the key-board he was at his writing desk. But Handel, one whose earthly paradise was the castle of indolence, who when not engaged in the toils of management enjoyed the sweets of doing nothing, bound himself as by duty to periodical production, which engrossed his entire humanity during its brief time of

fulfilment, and left him then a long lapse of leisure, throughout which his fallow mind was gathering strength for its next year's exercise.

Handel had the benefit of supervised study in his first entrance into music, although hindered in that pursuit in the very days of infancy. Bach does not appear to have had teaching, but by inspection of works of other persons to have taught himself; he was, however, in an atmosphere of music from his very cradle, melody and harmony were his oxygen and carbon, and counterpoint the nitrogen which he inhaled with them as his very breath of life; he was encouraged, though not aided, in the study of music, and necessitated to its practice. He was the culmination of a remarkable race of musicians, who for two centuries before his time had filled the principal musical offices throughout the whole district of North Germany. He left sons, who, though showing much art power, fell very very far below the greatness of their parent. It would seem as if there had been the long rising of a meteor which burst in the air and broke in single sparks of which those sons are the coruscations.

Handel appears to have had no concern with the other sex except in dealings with those singers who were to execute his principal parts, and with them he seems to have had anything but tender relationships, as, for instance, when Signora Cuzzoni objected to a part in one of his operas and would not yield to persuasion, legend relates that it being summer time, and the windows of the theatre in the Haymarket standing open, Handel seized her under the arms, held her out of the window saying, "You will not sing my opera, I drop you in the street," and thus obtained her consent to the performance. Bach, on the other hand, married his cousin when he was twenty-two years old; she died in July, 1721, and he married another lady in the December of the ensuing year. By his first wife he had seven children and by his second he had thirteen. Thus in the relation of marriage he stands quite at a disparity with his otherwise rival.

Much more is to be said of both these men. They stand at a period when styles in music may be said to have parted; they are on the brink between the ancient and the modern. One finds in their contrapuntal writing the reflection of the usages of prior ages. One finds in their prodigious employment of chromatic harmony a forecast of everything that is good and which has come into general use since their time. In this last particular they were briefly anticipated by Henry Purcell, whose music also contains every specialty of chromatic harmony that after ages have displayed. In the works of Handel, one notices a breadth, a grandeur, a solidity of effect that impresses all hearers and leads us to accept the

saying that the word Handel is a synonym with sublimity. With Bach, there was such an exuberance of elaboration that save in a few instances one cannot, without a large amount of intimacy, comprehend the full meaning of the author. Bach had especially the principles of counterpoint at heart in the development of manifold melodies; but in the entanglement of his melodies there cannot be a question he introduced often such progressions between parts as are acceptable only because they are Bach's, but would be condemned in the writing of any man who placed not side by side with them such incidents of absolute brilliancy as dazzle our senses and make us incapable of perceiving the unbeautiful passages. From time to time, since musical laws were first inaugurated, there has been forbidden the progression of two parts in perfect intervals, one with another, from fifth to fifth, from eighth to eighth, and fourth to fourth. From eighth to eighth one will not find in Bach's music, but fifths and fourths are not of seldom occurrence, and still worse, and still more often, one finds that his parts proceed in seconds or in sevenths, progression so hideous that the early law-givers never deemed necessary to prohibit them, believing, one may conjecture, that nobody could be seduced to write what would be repugnant to himself and to everybody else to hear. Will you think from this that I disparage the master? Will you think from this that I slight the genius of the man who, more than anyone else, proved the capabilities of counterpoint, proved the boundless resources of fundamental harmony? Oh, no! Let me not so misrepresent the feeling that I have at heart. We should do injustice to even this great master if blindly, or may I say deafly, we accepted everything he wrote as a model for our imitation. It is only by dissecting the music and observing what is to be avoided that we may learn what is to be imitated. To reproduce his beauties is beyond our power, to avoid his faults is within the reach of everyone, and we pay him the greatest homage when we distinguish what is excellent from what is evitable.

In Handel's music the part-writing is more pure, the effect is more imposing, and let it be also said the length of some of the pieces is less superabundant. Especially in the solo numbers in the works of Bach, one will often find that the attention of an audience is not commensurate with the extent of the composition, and in instance after instance his pieces would have greater charm if they had less length.

Mention has been made of some points of likeness and of unlikeness in the minds and in the works of our double star in music, mention likewise has been made of some conspicuous incident in the biography of each. As to the latter, it may further be noticed that Handel overlived his peer by

nearly nine years. One circumstance, the saddest perhaps that can be told, is that both were blind in their later time. Handel received what may be esteemed as public honours at his death. The burial of Bach was private and unnoticed, his loss was unlamented by the authorities under whom he held his engagements, and his memory may be said to have been desecrated by the instantaneous appointment of a man to his post whose main merit was subserviency, and whose chief ability was his power to do nothing.

Let us never forget that these two authors stand as a pyramid that will defy the ravages of time, and must ever be the monument of the musical powers of the eighteenth century; but if you will accept this fancy, let it be extended by the supposition that the pyramid is inverted, that its apex was in their own era, and that its constant expansion widens with the course of time, with the capability of men to perceive if not to appreciate its vastness, and that as the cultivation of musical intellect advances so will its apparent extent. We expect in generations to come there will still be regard to what these men have done, a regard which I trust we all here entertain. In summing up the whole estimate of the characters of the two, one may apply a term, which has almost become a cant term, and say that the real "music of the future" is that of Handel and Bach.

THE CHAIRMAN.—Gentlemen, I am sure you will all agree with me in giving a vote of thanks to my eminent friend, Sir George Macfarren.

MR. G. A. OSBORNE.—We have listened to Sir George Macfarren, our very worthy professor and principal of the Royal Academy of Music, with great interest. I do not think there is anything really open to discussion on this subject, but we may all express our admiration for the professor, and the fact of so many distinguished persons having been here to-day serves to show at once in what esteem he is held. We have been sitting at the feet of Gamaliel, and I am perfectly sure we have all derived great instruction and pleasure from the lecture we have received.

The vote of thanks was carried unanimously.

SIR GEORGE MACFARREN.—I accept your thanks, Ladies and Gentlemen, as a tribute to the subject, not the poor medium through which it has been brought to your notice. I have nothing to reply to, since nothing has been advanced in disputation on what I have ventured to say to you. If any thanks are really due, they will be expressed in the interest you will take in the commemoration of this bi-centenary.