

**FROM HANDEL TO HALLÉ:  
WITH AUTOBIOGRAPHIES  
OF PROF. HUXLEY AND  
PROF. HERKOMER**

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From Handel to Hallé: With Autobiographies of Prof. Huxley and Prof. Herkomer by Louis Engel

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**LOUIS ENGEL**

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## P R E F A C E .

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THE very kind way in which public and press have received my last book, "From Mozart to Mario," encourages me to hope that similar indulgence may be extended to the present effort. There are a few essays in this volume which have been already published in a magazine, others are new; two however, for which I need not ask any leniency, are autobiographies, and when I mention the eminent names of Professor Huxley and Professor Herkomer, I think it will be sufficiently clear that if I do not especially recommend them, it is because the interest which they cannot fail to awaken renders leniency unnecessary.

That scientific giant, Professor Huxley, everybody knows, need only put his pen to paper to command general attention, while the autobiography of Professor Herkomer is the most straightforward, and in its simple honesty, one of the most remarkable products of the kind, I ever remember having seen in print. As a painter, as a master, as a lecturer, and lastly as a musician, he tells you his successes with the ingenuity of a child, and without being wanting in modesty, he has the self-consciousness of genius, and in the simple words, "This was another of the arts I had to find out for myself," he

shows you in a few outlines what the expression, "a self-made man," really means.

It will thus be seen that I have very little merit myself in the success of this book, should it be so fortunate as to meet with success. Yet the difficulty of getting correct information concerning details of the lives even of the greatest men must not be underrated. This desire to find out, and the still more dangerous proceeding to say, the truth is well represented in the French proverb: "*La vérité se trouve au fond d'un puits — faut être un sceau (sot) pour l'aller chercher.*" (The pun lies in *sceau*, bucket, and *sot*, idiot). I believe that I can safely say that there is not likely to be found an untrue word in this volume. How far it may interest, amuse, or instruct the reader, I must leave to my wise judges to decide.

In one respect I believe the reader will be satisfied: that is, the manner in which the publisher has done his work. There is an unpublished letter and a musical MS. of Beethoven exactly reproduced. The portraits have been engraved from the most reliable sources, and among others I think that the portrait of Madame Patti, for instance, at the age of seven years, has never been published; yet the child's face is so entirely that of the great prima donna, that it cannot for one moment be mistaken. And now let me hope that with the art and help of others, my feeble essay may find a chance to please you.

L. ENGEL.

LONDON, *Easter*, 1890.



## Handel,

### HIS EARLY YEARS.

FAIRY tales are bound to begin with : " There was once upon a time a fair princess with golden hair and violet eyes," etc. And if you do not begin in this strain you revolt against the tyrant of life, habit. Children will not be told a story unless it is told in this fashion. Big children will not be told a biography or even a sketch of a great man's life unless it begins thus: George Frederic Handel was born in the year 1685, on Feb. 23. He would therefore be two hundred and four years old if he was now alive. Unfortunately, however great a man may be, he sometimes dies before such an age can be attained. Handel's birthplace was Halle, in Saxony; his father a surgeon was sixty-three years old when he was blessed by the birth of our hero. Strange to say nothing was more distasteful to the old gentleman than music, and, terrified to discover that his little boy, as he grew up showed a strong inclination for music, he resolved to resort to the most stringent measures to keep all music and musical instruments out of his son's way, and rather prevent his going to school, that he should not be taught music there. The unusual energy and inflexible will for which Handel was well known in after

life showed themselves, however, in his childhood, for when he was but seven years old he contrived, by the help of his mother and a friendly nurse, to get a little harpsichord up a garret in his father's house there to practise all to himself. Again, when his father refused to take the child with him on a journey to an organist, a son of a previous marriage, the little boy watched for the departure of the carriage, and running by a short cut, contrived to overtake the vehicle, and so earnestly begged his father would allow him to share his company, that he gained his object and was permitted to travel with his parent. The relative they were going to see, being in the service of the Duke of Saxe-Weissenfels, little George was admitted to the service in the private chapel, where he found means to creep up to the organ and in his own fashion to play so originally that the Duke's attention was drawn to him, and so amazed was he to see a mere child organist that he sent for the father and there and then overcame the surgeon's determination to make a lawyer and not a musician of his son, and from that moment Handel's regular musical studies began.

I need not tell the intelligent reader that there is nothing new to be said about so well-known a name as Handel, but since an attempt has been made in so many languages to write his biography, I hope that taking the most interesting parts of each of them, I may be able to give some facts as yet unknown in this country. I cannot suppress the remark that while the Germans are dreadfully particular as to completeness, and for that purpose cram their books with innumerable and often

quite irrelevant details, yet it must be conceded to them, that what they do state as a fact, is a fact, and though they go into unnecessary depth and expand into unnecessary breadth, that which they say you can rely upon. Not so with French writers, less still with Belgians. I have seen a work on Handel by a Frenchman, published only a very few years ago, where in the most innocent manner the author declares that he writes a life of Handel, because "there is none to be found in French, English or German"!!! And he calls his hero Frideric, probably to show that he will not use the French name Frédéric, but the German, which by-the-bye is Friedrich, so that Frideric is only so far justified that Handel himself sometimes amalgamated the French and German and signed "Friederic."

It is curious that Handel's father, after having married a widow more than ten years older than himself, a year after her death, when he was sixty-one years old married again. This second wife was twenty-eight years younger than he (33). Two years later she became the mother of George Frederic Handel.

The first works mentioned of Handel are ten sonatas for two hautboys and a bassoon. He was then ten years old, and one year after this his master, Zachau, declared to his father that although only eleven years old, he knew as much as his master and that he could teach him no more. Handel nevertheless continued studying and writing, copying old masters' works and learning from that exercise. He was then sent to Berlin, where he made the acquaintance of Buononcini, whom in later days he was to meet again in London