

**LIFE OF FELIX
MENDELSSOHN
BARTHOLDY, WITH
SUPPLEMENTARY SKETCHES**

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Life of Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, with Supplementary Sketches by W. A. Lampadius & William Leonhard Gage

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W. A. LAMPADIUS & WILLIAM LEONHARD GAGE

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LIFE
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FELIX MENDELSSOHN BARTHOLDY.



Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy

LIFE
OF
FELIX MENDELSSOHN BARTHOLDY.

From the German of *M. A. Lampadius*.

WITH SUPPLEMENTARY SKETCHES

BY

SIR JULIUS BENEDICT, HENRY F. CHORLEY,
LUDWIG RELLSTAD, BAYARD TAYLOR, R. S. WILLIS,
AND J. S. DWIGHT.

Additional Notes by *C. L. Gruneisen*.

EDITED AND TRANSLATED BY

WILLIAM LEONHARD GAGE.



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EDITOR'S PREFACE.

THE time predicted by one who wrote the sentence years ago seems to have come, "When every line and every word from Mendelssohn's pen would be treasured by the world." Most great composers make their appeal for recognition to a comparatively small circle of admirers, and are rarely quoted beyond the domain of their art. It is not so with Mendelssohn either in Germany, in England, nor in America. Chorley little knew what a weighty sentence he was inditing, when he penned the words, "There may come a day yet, when the example of Mendelssohn's life, yet more than of his works, may be invoked in Germany." In England there has been always a passionate adoration of him as a man; the fascinating presence, the stories of his remarkable culture, his unselfishness, his moral purity, his entirely religious and Christian character, awakening an interest in everything pertaining to him, which found hardly an exaggerated expression in the pages of "Charles Auchester," and which has not ceased yet. And within a few years

the people of culture in America have begun to take as deep an interest in Mendelssohn as those of Germany and England: hardly any books have found more enthusiastic readers than Mendelssohn's Letters. That wonderful romance, "Charles Auchester," has found thousands of admirers, who have been charmed by its pages. It was the fashion years ago to fling at that book as rhapsodical; but this biography will convince the reader, if the Letters of Mendelssohn have not already done so, that that work, with all its splendid colouring, and all its seeming exaggerations, scarcely overrated the glory, the beauty, the capacity, and the compass of Mendelssohn's life. A completer transcript of the spirit of Mendelssohn could hardly have been made. His wonderful reach of memory was certainly not overestimated in the scene where he directs the "Messiah," from his memory of the score: that would have been a light task for Mendelssohn. The death of his sister Fanny, narrated in this biography, is closely adhered to in the romance: the characters of Zelter, Joachim the violinist, Jenny Lind, and Sterndale Bennet, are finely painted in Aronach, Charles Auchester, Julia Bennett, and Starwood Burney. But it were needless to speak more at length—enough to say, that, the more we know of Mendelssohn, the more clearly we see how closely the writer of "Charles Auchester" adhered to the facts and colouring of his life in her fascinating portrait. It is no descent from the Seraphael of "Charles

Auchester" to the writer of Mendelssohn's Letters. The plane is the same, though the true Mendelssohn is a shade more joyous and less pensive than the counterfeit. But we trace the same exquisite purity in both; the same unsordid spirit; the same unwillingness to write, except under the stress of a great inspiration; the same freedom from envy; the same recoil from all immorality; the same abhorrence of French and Italian sensuality; the same devotion to what is good, noble, and, in the strictest use of speech, Christ-like.

Not long after the death of Mendelssohn, Lampadius, a friend of his, a musical amateur, and evidently a man of nice tastes and of high-toned character, wrote a biography of the great composer, which has been made the basis of all the smaller sketches of his life, but which now appears in a literal translation from the German. Doubtless, the time will come when this brief work will be superseded by one more exhaustive. It has many qualities of striking and sterling character; it was written with all the loving ardour which followed Mendelssohn's sudden death; it is a bouquet of fresh flowers laid on his grave. It portrays his career as Director at Leipzig, certainly the best part of his life, with minuteness and fidelity; and in its whole delineation, while it shows unmistakable marks of the warmth of friendship, yet displays colours vivid, glowing, and delightful. I have preserved all his details; and the record will hardly be judged by musical readers to be too