



VOL. XVI.—No. 798.]

APRIL 13, 1895.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.

HANDEL.

By J. F. ROWBOTHAM, Author of
"The History of Music."

HANDEL was undoubtedly the greatest musician who ever lived. Not only does his past and undying fame testify to this fact, but the consenting opinion of other composers who, like him, have attained European celebrity, but yet unlike him have not achieved world-wide renown, is also a further evidence to the fact which we advance. Beethoven, for instance, who, in the view of many cultivated musicians, holds the place of honour in music as the greatest of all composers, yet confessed that Handel was more excellent than he. When appealed to to give his opinion about Handel, Beethoven is reported to have said, "He is the giant of music." Haydn in like manner remarked concerning him, "He is the father of us all." While Mozart declared, "Handel knows better than any of us what is capable of producing a great effect. When he chooses, he can strike like a thunderbolt."

The scene on Beethoven's death-bed is a striking case in point, and well illustrates the depth of the conviction in that great composer as to Handel's vast and towering abilities. When Beethoven lay at the point of death, a friend or a society, we forget which, being in ignorance of the composer's dangerous condition of health, had sent him a musical present, consisting of forty volumes of Handel's compositions. Beethoven was of course too ill to examine the present or even to make due acknowledgment to the donors. But lying as he was in the extremities of death, he ordered with a feeble voice that the books should be brought into the room, and gazing at them for a moment, he lifted his finger and pointed at them, saying, "There is the truth!"

This "giant of music" like most great musicians, was devoted to his art from his infancy, and learnt by instinct those lessons of music which often cost people who are not musically gifted untold drudgery. His father was a barber-surgeon at Halle in Saxony, a sort of occupation which combined the apparently uncongenial callings of barber and doctor, and which was reckoned from a social point of view a very honourable profession. Old Handel was a strong-willed man, who was determined to have his own way in things; and among his other



PORTRAIT OF HANDEL.

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resolutions was this, that his son should become a member of one of the learned professions, by preference the law. He could not be blind to the fact that the little boy was gifted with immense, with utterly unusual talents for music, for the little fellow was whistling and singing about the house all day long, and whenever he could get a chance of laying his fingers on an instrument he played it as it were by instinct. In order to stamp out and eradicate every tendency to this unholy passion, old Handel decreed that all musical instruments should be banished from the house, and that on no account should his little son ever attend a musical performance, or hear, if possible, a note of music.

This was certainly a stern edict for the father of a family to pass in relation to so brilliant a child. But let us see how entirely it missed its mark. Little Handel, debarred from music by fair means, was determined to compass it by foul. Accordingly, by the help of his mother, an old harpsichord, which would not sound at all, owing to all the strings being broken, was secreted in a garret, and every night, after all the family had gone to bed, the little boy sat up playing in ecstasies on his battered old instrument, which uttered no sound in response to his efforts, but for that very reason was to be preferred to the finest piano in existence. The truth however always comes out in the end, and though young Handel was not detected in his nefarious practices by his father in the garret, yet, as the saying is, the whole murder came out in a very unexpected way. Old Handel had another son in the employment of a German duke who lived not far away, and one day he went over to see him taking the little boy with him. Among other objects of interest in the ducal grounds was the chapel, and the day happening to be Sunday, the organ was playing at the service. The service concluded, and after everybody was gone and the church closed, little Handel stole away from his father in order to indulge in a pleasure which he could not resist—namely, to pass his fingers over the keys of the organ. In a moment the organ began to peal out in a burst of music, and the people in the grounds were all on the *qui vive* to know who was the player. The duke among others caused the inquiry to be made, and when it was found that the performer was a little boy who had never been taught a note of music, and was moreover the son of the music-hating barber-surgeon, their astonishment, and perhaps their amusement, knew no bounds. The boy obviously played too well for this to have been the first occasion of his performing on a keyed instrument, and this is how old Handel was led to the discovery of the long and silent hours of practice which had gone on for months past in the garret.

This little incident decided the fate of the young composer, for the duke used his influence with Handel's father so successfully and so potently that the latter consented after a great deal of persuading to allow the boy to follow the profession of music. We do not propose to pursue the details of his education step by step, but will go on to give a little anecdote of the early part of his career, which will illustrate a very peculiar custom prevailing in Germany at that time in relation to the posts of country organists. It was a rule in many churches, where the organists were poorly paid and often died without being able to make any provision for their family, that on the death of an organist the new one appointed should marry the daughter of the old one, and so provide for the girl quite as much as if her father had been alive. The daughter of the organist formed, so to speak, a part of the organ, and the new candidate if he took one was expected to take the other. An appointment such as this fell vacant in Handel's early years, and he along with a

fellow-student, Mattheson by name, set out on a journey to the village where the church was, to compete for the appointment, though without knowing or suspecting in the slightest the singular condition attached to it.

They arrived at the village in due course, and both alike played admirably in the organ competition, which was the preliminary to the appointment. Handel was the best player of all the candidates, and being declared the successful competitor he was informed of the condition with which he was expected to comply, namely, that he must marry the daughter of the former organist. Unfortunately for the lady but fortunately for Europe—for if Handel had settled down into quiet obscurity at that place, perhaps the world might never have rung with his fame—unfortunately, we say, the young lady was one of the plainest ever seen. Indeed, report whispers that she was not only plain but positively hideous, with many physical defects including a humpback and several other endowments equally unattractive. The first sight of her decided Handel, and thanking the village authorities for their offer, he made all the haste he could back to the town of Hamburg, whither his friend soon followed him.

To pass over Handel's experiences in Germany and abroad, what will ever be most interesting to English readers and to his countless admirers, we might almost say worshippers, in this country is his connection with our own land. The greater part of his life, indeed, was intimately bound up with London, so much so that in thought and spirit, and certainly in association he was far more of an Englishman than a German. He came over to England first in 1710, and from that day found he was the leading figure in the musical life of London. He was organist and music-master in various noblemen's families, such as in Lord Burlington's in Piccadilly, in the Duke of Chandos', at Cannons and elsewhere, besides being composer to the Court. London with its busy life, and with the new-found wealth which flowed into it from the American colonies and from the operations of the East India Company, was just the place for a busy, energetic man like Handel. He amassed a large fortune, and the busy pulsating centre of all the musical life of England was his house in Brook Street.

Here he received visits from the patrons of his concerts, tried the voices of singers who were anxious for an engagement, held a sort of musical levée occasionally, and last not least received subscriptions for his various oratorio performances. A constant advertisement in the newspapers of that date was to this effect: "At Mr. Handel's house in Brook Street, tickets for the new oratorio may be applied for between the hours of twelve and three any day of the week." Handel was always in personal attendance to receive the money, and occasionally to have a chat with those of his subscribers with whom he was personally acquainted. These formed a considerable number, owing to the fact of so many of the nobility and their families having been his pupils.

An adjoining room to that wherein he received his visitors was his study, completely removed from the bustle of the street, being at the back of the house yet sufficiently near to the place of his business to afford him easy access thereto. He generally took his dinner after the callers of the afternoon had gone, and immediately after dinner he used, as a rule, to sit down to his work. From half-past three to half-past six was the time he devoted to the occupation of writing—a short interval in a long and busy day, yet sufficient for Handel.

His rapidity of composition was something tremendous. By the time that other men would scarcely have closed the door and put

their writing-table to rights before commencing, he would have snatched up an immense roll of score-paper, and covered at least one sheet of it with musical characters. These musical characters which Handel poured on the paper in such profusion were about the most illegible products of the pen which eye had ever seen. The haste with which he scattered them over the paper might have enabled this conjecture to be made about their character, but over and above that the composer was a singularly careless man in matters of penmanship. The manuscript when it was completed resembled a piece of paper over which a pepper-box had been shaken, with here and there a great splash of ink. It was said that only one man living could read Handel's writing with fluency, and few could decipher it at all. This favoured individual was Handel's copyist, Smith, whose duty it was to transfer these unspeakable scores into neat and dainty manuscripts fitted for the eye of the printer and occasionally of the public.

Finding himself in great request in England, Handel had resolved to settle there for good. But one obstacle to his doing so was the fact that he had promised the Elector of Hanover, in whose employment he had been before visiting our shores, to return to that country after his visit to England was over. Since London, however, offered such attractions, and gave him the promise of such prosperity, he informed the Elector that he found he could not comply with his request, and would much prefer to remain in England. This incensed the Elector greatly, as may be imagined, and he vowed never to receive the disobedient composer into favour again. Handel, fancying himself free from the royal displeasure on this side of the Channel, made very light of the Elector's threats of displeasure. But the composer's consternation can better be imagined than described when he heard the intelligence that the Elector of Hanover had succeeded to the English throne as King George I. Here was his powerful patron, and now his implacable enemy, coming over to England as it were after him, and certain to strike a blow at all his aristocratic patronage and connection in London.

The dilemma was a serious one for anybody to find himself in, and was only another convincing proof of the fact that honesty is always the best policy. Handel, though a great and a good man, made a serious mistake in breaking his promise to the Elector, and his misdeed certainly descended on his own head in most exemplary fashion. The king came to England, and Handel at once found himself out of favour. But after enduring this for some time, unlike many men who would have sunk under the withdrawal of the royal smile, Handel with his very practical instincts set to work to remedy the mischief done, and to achieve if possible his reinstatement into the good graces of his royal master. To effect this he had recourse to a stratagem. Everything, they say, is fair in love and war, and certainly between George I. and Handel at this moment there was war of the most implacable character, though so far as the composer was concerned it was not of his seeking. The stratagem was suggested by the fact of the king being very fond of excursions on the Thames, and delighting to gather around him on these occasions all the most brilliant company of the Court. One day Handel heard that His Majesty intended to have a specially grand water-party, to which a large number of guests had been invited. The composer accordingly arranged with the royal chamberlain that a barge full of musicians should follow the royal boat as a most appropriate appendage to the pleasure of the hour, and as likely to furnish a great attraction to the water-party in general. For this bargeful of musicians Handel wrote a

selection of most beautiful music, such as would have won the sympathies and interest of "the most savage breast," to quote the words of Shakespeare, let alone the interest and attention of King George I., who was a very fair connoisseur in the art, and boasted that he could appreciate good music when he heard it. The players were carefully practised in the music until they could perform it to perfection; and on that eventful afternoon, with the sun shining and the trees blooming along the banks of the Thames, the procession of boats started, with the barge full of musicians behind the royal boat exactly as Handel had arranged.

The mysterious secret was well kept. No one knew what was coming, until all of a sudden from the surface of the blue water there arose a charming and melodious sym-

phony, which arrested immediately the attention of all. The king was delighted beyond everyone with the music, which he listened to with rapture, the boats proceeded, and the concert continued. There were twenty-five pieces in all, and each more beautiful than the one preceding it. There was never such an adornment to a water-party, for the very good reason that such "water-music" was never penned before nor will be again.

At last the king had the curiosity to inquire the name of the composer, and a special message was probably sent to the musicians' barge to gain that information. But when word was sent that the author of the music was the execrable Handel, the dishonest fellow who had played the truant, the king could not restrain his ill-humour for awhile, and averred that though he liked the concert, he could

not like the composer. Ultimately, however, better counsels obtained the ascendancy in the royal breast, and George was fain to confess that rogue as Handel was, he yet could write such music as almost made amends for his roguery. He then hinted that possibly he might be reconciled with the composer, in return for the beautiful strains which had given him such pleasure during the afternoon, and with that end in view Handel was invited to the king's private apartments shortly after, to accompany a sonata of Geminiani's, in which his Majesty was interested. On the latter occasion a complete reconciliation was effected between the two, and the king, to evince that all rancour had departed from him, bestowed on Handel a pension of £200 a year, but bade him play the truant no more.

(To be continued.)

HER OWN WAY.

By EGLANTON THORNE, Author of "Aldyth's Inheritance," "The Studio Mariano," etc.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE BAZAAR.



WHEN at last the day fixed for the bazaar arrived, the weather proved all that the most sanguine could have anticipated. It was brilliant without

being over-warm, for a delightful breeze from the sea tempered the sun's heat. The sea was beautifully blue, and broke in crisp, white-crested waves upon the sands. Such a day could not fail to tempt visitors to St. Anne's. Fortune seemed to smile upon the undertaking that had cost so many busy hours and so much anxious preparation.

Despite the brightness of the day, Juliet's spirits were somewhat dashed when she learned that her mother had awoke that morning with so bad a headache that she feared it would be impossible for her to be present at the opening of the bazaar.

"The room is sure to be very warm and crowded," said Mrs. Tracy, "and you know that I can hardly at any time

endure a close room without turning faint. I am very sorry, for I had counted on being there."

"So am I very sorry," said Juliet; "but you must not think of it if you do not feel well enough. The bazaar will be open again to-morrow, but of course it will not be so nice on the second day. And I wanted you to see Lady Ernestine Whitehouse."

"Never mind, darling, you must tell me all about the opening. And you know I saw the decorations last evening, so I can picture the scene to myself. Now don't loiter about me and get late. Mrs. Staines particularly desired all the stall-holders to be there by twelve o'clock."

Juliet went away to get ready. Her mother had persuaded her to wear white on the occasion, and when a little later Juliet came fully attired to bid her good-bye, Mrs. Tracy, as she surveyed her critically, was well-pleased with the result of her advice. The simple white frock and large white hat became Juliet charmingly. She wore no colour save that bestowed by a lovely cluster of half-opened pink roses which she had fastened in her belt. She looked a lovely vision of youth and happiness. Her mother smiled on her, and hugged to her heart the proud belief that there would not be another girl in the room to compare with her.

"Good-bye, darling," she said. "I hope you will have a happy time and sell lots of flowers."

As she lay back on her pillow Mrs. Tracy rejoiced to think that Juliet had so recovered her light-heartedness. The shadow of the past had fallen from her.

When Juliet entered the schoolroom, so prettily draped and decked that the scholars could hardly have recognised it for the room in which at this hour they usually sat on hard benches droning out their lessons, Mrs. Staines welcomed her with a kiss.

"How nice you look!" she said heartily. "I am so glad we decided that you should have the flower-stall. In your white array you look like a flower yourself. See, here are your

young assistants, Gwen and Gladys, waiting to receive your orders."

It had been finally arranged that instead of helping the Miss Browns Juliet should take charge of the flower-stall which, well placed at the further end of the room, added greatly to its picturesque appearance. Gwen and Gladys Owen, the doctor's little daughters, were to help her by carrying round "button-holes" for sale.

Juliet was well-pleased with the department assigned to her. She loved flowers, and had great skill in arranging them. She meant to make her stall the most charming one in the room, attracting all comers by its beauty and perfume.

"Most of the sellers are here now," said Mrs. Staines as she peered round the room. "Everyone, indeed, except Mrs. Belsham. The train from Lytham must be late. However, her stall is all but ready, and she is bringing some girls with her to help. They are the daughters of a clergyman, so are used to this kind of thing. They were to arrive from London yesterday. It is to be hoped they will not be very tired from their journey."

"Oh, it is not such a very great journey," Juliet said.

She was not interested in what Mrs. Staines was saying. She felt no curiosity respecting the girls from London. She was absorbed in contemplating a stock of plants which had been sent in that morning for her stall, and considering how she could display them to the best advantage. After a brief deliberation she set to work with eager energy, massing together gorgeous geraniums, snowy lilies, purple petunias, heliotrope, carnations, roses, of hues varying from deepest crimson to palest cream, with fuchsias, sweet williams, mignonette and the humbler products of cottage gardens. Her stall was soon aglow with colour, and when she had finished it presented the appearance of one huge bouquet.

Wholly occupied by her task, Juliet had not observed what was going on at the other stalls. She had walked backward some paces from her stall, and was critically observing its general effect,

is not such a tyrant as all that. He will consent fast enough when he sees my happiness is at stake. Meantime you will tell Dr. Lorrimer of our betrothal?"

Faith considered a minute.

"If you do not object," she said then, "I would prefer to keep it a secret till I hear from you. When do you think that will be?"

"As soon as I have had a talk with my mother. I hope to have found or made an opportunity before to-morrow is over, but I may have to wait a day, or even two."

"Or even longer. Please do not think I shall be impatient. I shall understand your silence."

"You will certainly get a letter from me by the first possible post," he said, "but there may be nothing in that about what is now so important to us both. And now, Faith," he added, rising, "if we do not hurry we shall lose our last chance of watching the sunset from the cliffs."

Early the next morning there was a short leave-taking between the lovers. Frank greatly regretted Dr. Lorrimer had not been

acquainted with their secret. Had this been done he could have bidden Faith good-bye in a befitting and vastly more pleasant manner. As it was he could only draw her aside, and whisper a few parting words. How often they rang in Faith's ears afterwards.

"You will be true to me, my darling, come what will?" he asked.

"Always," was her soft firmly-spoken reply, "and whatever happens I shall never doubt your love for me."

(To be continued.)

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PART II.



THE first oratorio that Handel ever wrote was to Italian words, and was entitled "The Triumph of Time and Truth."

Another Italian oratorio followed, called "The Resurrection." But his fame began to spread as the great master of the style, when he composed music to English words. "Esther" was first performed in 1732, and was composed at Cannons for the Duke of Chandos. The work proved very successful, and being the first composition of the kind which the London public had ever heard, was, naturally, much talked about, and those who had the good fortune to hear it looked forward eagerly to the time when Handel would write another; yet for various causes, which we need not enter into here, but chiefly because his attention was meanwhile engaged with secular works, Handel postponed for some years the composition of his next oratorio. This, when it came, was "Deborah," which with its magnificent opening chorus, "Immortal Lord of earth and skies," and its charming air, "Tears such as tender fathers shed," was admitted to contain many beauties, though its success was not so striking as that of some of his later works.

"Athalia," the next great work of the oratorio style, was produced in the same year as "Deborah," though later in the season. Oxford was the city which saw the production of this masterpiece, and the Commemoration was the occasion which enabled Handel to introduce his composition to the world. According to the *Gentleman's Magazine* of that date, which used to chronicle events with the precision of a newspaper, "Athalia" was received at Oxford "with vast applause, and before an audience of 3700 persons." It was on this occasion that Handel was offered the diploma of Doctor of Music by the University of Oxford, but in response to their offer he is reported to have said, "Why should I throw away my money for a thing which blockheads may wish, but which I don't want at all?" An indispensable preliminary to the degree of Doctor of Music is the payment of a fee of £50. This in Handel's opinion was excessive,

and at the same time he was convinced that his reputation was so secure that no trifling diploma could be of any value to him.

Handel's rapidity of composition served him in good stead with his next oratorio, "Saul," which was commenced on July 3, 1738, and finished on September 27. Scarcely had he laid down his pen after completing this colossal work than he took it up again to compose a far more stupendous and magnificent oratorio, perhaps the most gigantic work in the whole range of music. This was "Israel in Egypt," a glorious and sublime sacred drama, abounding in double choruses, intricate figures, and elaborate musical effects. Yet such a master was Handel of the *technique* of his art, that the whole of this stupendous oratorio was dashed off in twenty-seven days. We have the records in his own handwriting of the exact time he took to accomplish the composition of this oratorio: the first part was written in eleven days, beginning on October 1 and ending on the 11th; the second part occupied the composer from October 15 to November 1. It was the composer's habit to make a short memorandum at the beginning of each oratorio, indicating the day of the month on which he started, and a similar one at the end to mark the day when his task was completed. Were it not for this authentic and indubitable testimony to the dates we have just quoted, many people would be disposed to doubt the possibility of the achievement, and would regard it as a prodigy unapproachable by any human genius, however unrivalled he might be.

In "Israel in Egypt," the various stages of Israel's trial are displayed in a solemn and stately panorama before us. A recitative opens the oratorio, which is followed by a solo and chorus, "And the children of Israel sighed," a plaintive and pathetic movement, set for double chorus, like most of those which follow. A second recitative introduces the first of the descriptive choruses, entitled "They loathed to drink of the river," in which by the use of augmented intervals and chromatic passages, Handel has conjured up the feeling of "loathing" in a way that no art has ever equalled.

To this chorus there succeeds an air which is yet more realistic in its design, for passing from the plague of waters he portrays the plague of frogs. The portrayal of the plague is assigned to the contralto voice, as being most adapted for the special purpose in view. The contralto air, "Their land brought forth frogs," is a most remarkable example of the power of musical imitation. The notes of the song "almost exactly represent" (we quote the words of an old critic of the last century) "the hopping or skipping of that lively animal through the chambers of Pharaoh." The next chorus treats of the plague of flies, and while

the music is playing you may almost hear the flies buzzing. It only needs a slight stretch of fancy to conjure up this idea most realistically to the mind. The violins are skilfully used to produce the illusion, which the voices supplement by descriptive language.

The hailstone chorus, which follows next in order, is the masterpiece of the oratorio. The impression it invariably creates on an audience is stupendous; often on the Handel Festival at the Crystal Palace, for instance, the audience, electrified by the pompous force of the music, will take no denial, but interrupt the progress of the oratorio by a tempest of applause, in order to have their favourite number repeated again. "He gave them hailstones for rain," "Fire mingled with the hail ran along upon the ground," such are the themes of the chorus, such the ideas which Handel has transmuted into music. The pattering of the hailstones is imitated so graphically in the orchestra, the sound of the instruments is so terribly like the reality, that the auditor for a time may believe that a storm is really raging without, of which he hears the echo and continuation within. The musical description of "fire running along the ground" is vivid and lightning-like in its effect. Handel's genius has never been more conspicuously shown.

The plague of darkness is one of the most happily conceived. The subject might well defy a meaner master than Handel, but the darkness which his music has expressed certainly deserves the words of the chorus as its motto, "Even a darkness that might be felt." Almost as sublime is the grand chorus, "The waters overwhelmed their enemies," in which one of the finest effects is a continuous and unflagging bass, which comes surging in a roll of tones from the pedals of the organ, and serves as a most graphic commentary on the declamation of the singers. The second part of "Israel in Egypt" is confessedly inferior to the first, and the reason is plain—the subject is by this time exhausted, and, with the exception of two descriptive numbers, the whole of the second part is occupied with songs of thanksgiving. What must ever amaze us with respect to this great oratorio is not only the lightning rapidity with which Handel penned it, but the further fact that much of the music was borrowed by him from some old lessons for the harpsichord which he had written early in life. The two choruses, "They loathed to drink of the river," and "He smote all the first-born of Egypt," are directly borrowed from six figures for the harpsichord; while in the second part of the oratorio still more extensive has been his borrowing. A *magnificat*, with Latin words, which he had composed while in Rome in his young days, furnished him with the musical themes for no less than eight pieces in the second part of this great oratorio.

Passing now to his masterpiece, "The Messiah," which occurs next in order among his compositions, having been written three years after "Israel in Egypt," we shall find Handel's rapidity as a writer equally remarkable in this case likewise. The "Messiah," which has been the delight of generations of music-lovers, we may almost say the delight of the world, ever since it was composed, was written in the short space of three weeks and three days. Its first performance was for the sake of a charity, "for the relief of the prisoners in the several jails, and for the support of Mercer's Hospital, and of the Charitable Infirmary in Dublin." The object of the first performance has curiously been steadily maintained in the subsequent history of the oratorio. No work has been so frequently performed for the purpose of charity, and no musical work has ever brought to good and deserving causes such large sums of money.

Dublin has the honour of being the place where the "Messiah" first saw light. The Music Hall in Fishamble Street was filled with a large and discriminating audience on the evening of Monday April 12, 1742. The audience was, as we say, a large one, and the hall was likely to be somewhat too small for their accommodation. Accordingly the following quaint announcement was made and largely advertised before the performance: "Many ladies and gentlemen who are well-wishers to the noble and grand charity for which Mr. Handel has written an incomparable work, request it as a favour that the ladies who honour this performance with their presence would be pleased to come without hoops, as it will greatly increase the charity by making room for more company." The oratorio, it need scarcely be said, was a great, a brilliant success. Its magnificent choruses, its lovely and melodious solos carried away in ecstasy all who listened to the music. Not long afterwards it was given in London. The *élite* of England were present at the performance, the king himself being among the audience, and beauty and fashion represented in every part of the house.

Handel took his place at the organ, his usual post during the performance of one of his oratorios. There was an instantaneous pause, and the massive overture began.

We need not describe in detail the incidents of this fine performance of the "Messiah" in London, but we must briefly allude to one special incident, which was the origin of a certain tradition in the performance of the "Messiah" which has remained in vogue ever since. "The audience," says a contemporary of Handel's writing to a friend in the country with relation to this occasion, "were exceedingly struck and affected by the music in general throughout the oratorio. But when they came to the part where the chorus struck up 'For the Lord God omnipotent reigneth' in the 'Hallelujah,' they were so transported that they all, together with the king who happened to be present, started up and remained standing till the chorus ended." Such was the beginning of the present practice, and such the description of it taken from the mouth of an eye-witness.

We must pass now to the closing scenes of Handel's life. Several more oratorios were written by him—"Samson," "Joseph," "Belshazzar," "Judas Maccabeus," "Joshua," etc.—all great and noble works, though none of them attained the fame and the distinction of the "Messiah." But at last, with excessive work and a natural weakness of the eyesight, which he inherited from his mother, total blindness fell upon the giant, and he became as helpless as a child. He was couched by one or two eminent surgeons without any alleviation of his ailment, and he was forced unwillingly to resign himself to the conviction that his blindness was complete and incurable. Handel's indomitable spirit, however, knew no rest. He was determined to keep up his work and his labours as long as life lasted, and directly he attained the consciousness of his incurable state, he made arrangements for doing so.

Being unable, now that he could no longer see, to conduct his oratorios himself, or rather single-handed, he sent for his amanuensis,

Smith, who at that time was travelling in France, in order that he might be of assistance to him during the oratorio performances in Lent. Smith came post-haste from abroad, and the general public, who had heard of Handel's affliction and expected to see no more of him again, were astonished to behold him led into the hall, and to witness him seat himself at the organ, which he proceeded to play to perfection. The oratorio which was being performed was "Samson." In spite of Handel's moral energy the audience could not listen untroubled to the song of the sightless Hercules of the Hebrews, in which he gave utterance to his infinite and irremediable grief, "Total eclipse; no sun! no moon!" Then it was that they saw the mighty master who was at the organ grow pale and tremble, and, when he was led blind and helpless to the front of the platform before the audience, many of those present were so forcibly affected that they dissolved in tears, and wept in sympathy and in company with the great musician who stood before them.

This period of darkness and trial in the life of Handel was protracted during six years. The last performance he ever attended was that of the "Messiah," on April 5, 1759, at which he played the organ. After returning home from this performance he went to bed, never to rise again. Seized with a mortal exhaustion, and feeling that his last hour was come, he retained consciousness sufficient to indicate the disposition of some necessary business arrangements, and afterwards fell asleep.

It had been for years past his constant prayer that he might die on a Good Friday, in order, as he phrased it, "that he might hope to meet his good God, his sweet Lord and Saviour, on the day of His resurrection." April 13 was the day of his death, the year 1759. A public funeral, attended by upwards of three thousand persons, followed his body to Westminster Abbey, where he was interred with extraordinary solemnity, and now sleeps with the great of the English nation.

A WILFUL WARD.

By RUTH LAMB, Author of "Work, Wait, Win," "Sackcloth and Ashes," etc.



CHAP. III.
CAPTAIN TORRANCE made no mistake when he spoke of the great beauty of Kathleen Mountford's mother, and of its reproduction in the girl herself.

Mrs. Mountford was under twenty, when she became a wife. She was a poor, but well-born Irish girl, named Kathleen Dillon, whom

Mr. Mountford met when he was past forty, and regarded by all his friends as a confirmed bachelor. After a very short acquaintance the two were married, and he proved a most devoted and indulgent husband to the young wife who was less than half his own age.

Mrs. Mountford was proud of her conquest and truly loved her husband, but she was of an impetuous and somewhat wilful disposition. She would often take advantage of Mr. Mountford's almost unlimited indulgence, and liked to show that she had only to ask and to have, or to have without the asking, whatever she set her mind upon, whether wisely or otherwise. In time, however, Mr. Mountford realised that he might be more truly kind in refusing, than in granting some of his wife's demands, and that her real happiness would be best furthered by the exercise of his own sober judgment. Then followed a sort of struggle for mastery. Mrs. Mountford had been so long used to follow the bent of her own will, that she chafed

under the slightest opposition. Sometimes when her silence led Mr. Mountford to think that she agreed with him, she would take the first opportunity of setting his orders at defiance. If he showed displeasure, she would try him sorely by keeping out of his sight, or when in it, answering only by monosyllables and resolutely declining to share in anything he might propose.

Probably Mrs. Mountford punished herself quite as much as she did her husband. For, with her lively disposition and impetuosity of temper, such a state of things was no light trial. A few hours of it, and her lovely face would look like that of a troubled child. Her eyes would fill with tears, her lips would tremble, and she would look at her husband with an expression half penitent, half reproachful, as if mutely asking—

"How can you be so cruel and treat my little faults so seriously? I am only a child compared with one who is so wise as you."

One pleading pitiful look from those



GEORGE FREDERICK HANDEL. (*Painted by Hudson.*)
(*The "Gopsall Portrait." By permission of Earl Howe.*)