

THE REV. CHARLES WESLEY'S ACCOUNT OF
HIS TWO SONS.

CHARLES was born December 11th, 1757. He was two years and three quarters old, when I first observed his strong inclination to music. He then surprised me by playing a tune readily, and in just time. Soon after, he played several, whatever his mother sung, or whatever he heard in the streets.

From his birth she used to quiet and amuse him with the harpsichord; but he would never suffer her to play with one hand only, taking the other and putting it on the keys, before he could speak. When he played himself, she used to tie him up by his back-string to the chair, for fear of his falling. Whatever tune it was, he always put a true bass to it. From the beginning he played without study, or hesitation; and, as the learned declared, perfectly well.

Mr. Broadrip* heard him in petticoats, and foretold he would one day make a great player. Whenever he was called to play to a stranger, he would ask, in a word of his own, "Is he a musicker?" and if answered, "Yes," he played with all readiness.

He always played *con spirito*. There was something in his manner above a child, which struck the hearers, whether learned or unlearned.

At four years old I carried him with me to London. Mr. Beard† was the first that confirmed Mr. Broadrip's

* His name is spelled Broderip in the Dictionary of Musicians, two volumes, 8vo., London, 1825. He is there said to have been of Bristol, and "was a good composer of Protestant church music."
—EDIT.

† He was an English singer of great celebrity, having a rich tenor voice. His second wife was the daughter of Mr. Rich, the patentee of Covent-garden theatre. The mother of this lady, it will be recollected, received the truth under Mr. Charles Wesley's ministry, and was long his personal friend. In this way the introduction of young Wesley to the great professional vocalist is easily accounted for (Dictionary of Musicians.)—EDIT.

judgment of him, and offered to get him admitted among the King's singing-boys; but I had then no thoughts of bringing him up a musician.

A gentleman carried him next to Mr. Stanley,* who expressed his pleasure and surprise at hearing him, and declared he had never met one of his age with so great a propensity to music. The gentleman told us he never before believed what Handel used to tell him of himself, and his own love of music, in his childhood.

Mr. Madan † presented my son to Mr. Worgan, ‡ who was extremely kind to him, and, as I then thought, partial. He told us he would prove an eminent master, if he was not taken off by other studies. He frequently entertained him on the harpsichord. Charles was greatly taken with his bold, full manner of playing, and seemed even then to catch a spark of his fire.

At our return to Bristol, we left him to ramble on till he was near six. Then we gave him Mr. Rooke for a master: a man of no name, but very goodnatured; who let him run on *ad libitum*, while he sat by, more to observe than to control him.

Mr. Rogers, the oldest organist in Bristol, was his first and very great friend. He often set him upon his knee, and made him play to him, declaring he was more delighted to hear him than any of his scholars, or himself.

I always saw the importance (if he was to be a musician) of placing him under the best master that could be got, and

* John Stanley, bachelor of music, lost his sight when he was two years old, by falling on a marble hearth with a china bason in his hand. Few professors have spent a more active life in every branch of his art than this extraordinary musician, who was not only a most neat, pleasing, and accurate performer, but a natural and agreeable composer, and an intelligent instructor. (Dictionary of Musicians.)
—EDIT.

† Minister of the Lock Hospital.—EDIT.

‡ Worgan was a doctor of music, and was greatly admired, both as an organist and composer. As his body was carried for interment into the church of St. Mary Axe, London, "Mr. Charles Wesley, one of his favourite pupils, played the *Dead March in Saul* on the organ; and the instrument, which in the doctor's time had fascinated thousands, thundered forth a volley, as its unconscious master descended into the grave."—EDIT.

also one who was an admirer of Handel, as my son preferred him to all the world. But I saw no likelihood of my being ever able to procure him the first masters, or of purchasing the most excellent music, and other necessary means of acquiring so costly an art.

I think it was at our next journey to London, that Lady Gertrude Hotham heard him with much satisfaction, and made him a present of all her music. Mrs. Rich had before given him Handel's songs; and Mr. Beard, Scarlatti's Lessons, and Purcell. Sir Charles Hotham was particularly fond of him; promised him an organ, and that he should never want any means or encouragement in the pursuit of his art. But he went abroad soon after, and was thence translated to the heavenly country.

With him Charles lost all hope and prospect of a benefactor. Nevertheless, he went on with the assistance of nature, and his two favourite authors, Handel and Corelli, till he was ten years old. Then Mr. Rogers told me it was high time to put him in trammels; and soon after, Mr. Granville at Bath, an old friend of Handel's, sent for him. After hearing him, he charged him to have nothing to do with any great master; "who will utterly spoil you," he added, "and destroy anything that is original in you. Study Handel's Lessons, till perfect in them. The only man in London who *can* teach you them is Kelway; * but he *will* not, neither for love nor money."

Soon after we went up to town. Charles, notwithstanding Mr. Granville's caution, had a strong curiosity to hear the principal masters there. I wanted their judgment and advice for him. Through Mr. Bromfield's recommendation, he first heard Mr. Keeble, (a great lover of Handel,) and his favourite pupil Mr. Burton. Then he played to them. Mr. Burton said "he had a very brilliant finger:" Mr. Keeble, that "he ought to be encouraged by all the lovers of music; yet he must not expect it, because he was not born in Italy." He advised him to pursue his studies of Latin, &c., till he was fourteen, and then to apply himself in earnest to harmony.

* Joseph Kelway was the organist of St. Martin's-in-the-Fields. His playing was so excellent, that Handel is said to have often gone to the church for the purpose of hearing him.—EDIT.

Mr. Arnold * treated him with the utmost affection ; said, he would soon surpass the masters ; and advised him not to confine himself to any one author, but study what was excellent in all.

Dr. Arne's † counsel was, like Mr. Keeble's, to stay till he was fourteen, and then deliver himself up to the strictest master that could be got.

Vento confessed "he wanted nothing but an *Italian* master."

Giardini, urged by Mr. Madan, at last owned "the boy played well ;" and was for sending him to Bologna, or—Paris!

They all agreed in this, that he was marked by nature for a musician, and ought to cultivate his talent. Yet still I mistrusted them, as well as myself, till Mr. Bromfield carried us to Mr. Kelway. His judgment was decisive, and expressed in more than words ; for he invited Charles to come to him whenever he was in London, and generously promised to *give* him all the assistance in his power.

He began with teaching him Handel's Lessons ; then his own, and Scarlatti's, and Geminiani's. For near two years he instructed him gratis, and with such commendations as are not fit for me to repeat. Meantime Charles attended the oratorios and rehearsals, through the favour of Mr. Stanley, and invitation of Mr. Arnold.

As soon as he was engaged with Mr. Kelway, his old friend Mr. Worgan kindly offered to take him without money, under his auspices, (as he expressed himself,) and to train him up in his art. Such a master for my son was the height of my ambition ; but Mr. Kelway had been beforehand with him.

Mr. Worgan continued his kindness. He often played, and sung over to him, whole oratorios. So did Mr. Battishill. Mr. Kelway at one time played over to him the Messiah, on purpose to teach him the time and manner of

* Dr. Samuel Arnold is well known to have been one of the most eminent musical composers of his age. He is the author, among other publications, of four volumes of cathedral music.—EDIT.

† Dr. Thomas Augustus Arne was bred to the profession of the law, which he early quitted for music, and was long one of the most popular composers of the age in which he lived. He died in the year 1778.—EDIT.

Handel. For three seasons Charles heard all the oratorios, comparing the performers with each other, and both with Mr. Worgan and Mr. Kelway.

He received great encouragement from Mr. Savage. Mr. Arnold was another father to him. Mr. Worgan gave him many lessons in thorough-bass and composition. Mr. Smith's curiosity drew him to Mr. Kelway's to hear his scholar, whom he bade go on and prosper, under the best of masters. Dr. Boyce came several times to my house to hear him; gave him some of his own music, and set some hymns for us; asked if the King had heard him; and expressed much surprise when we told him, No. His uncle enriched him with an inestimable present of Dr. Boyce's Cathedral Music.

It now evidently appeared that his particular bent was to church-music. Other music he could take pleasure in, (especially what was truly excellent in the Italian,) and played it without any trouble; but his chief delight was the oratorios. These he played over and over from the score, till he had them all by heart, as well as the rest of Handel's music, and Corelli, and Scarlatti, and Geminiani.

These two last years he has spent with his four classical authors, and in composition. Mr. Kelway has made him a player, that is certain; but he knows the difference betwixt that and a musician; and can never think himself the latter, till he is quite master of thorough-bass.

Several have offered to teach it him. One eminent master, (besides Mr. Worgan,) equally skilled in Handel's and the Italian music, told me, he would engage to make him perfect master of harmony in half a year. But as I waited, and deferred his instruction in the practical part, till I could find the very best instructor for him, so I keep him back from the theory. The only man to teach him that, and sacred music, he believes to be Dr. Boyce.

EXTRACT OF A JOURNAL RELATIVE TO MR. KELWAY AND CHARLES.

MONDAY, August 14th, 1769. At one Mr. Bromfield met us at Mr. Kelway's house, having promised my son the hearing of him. He highly entertained us with one of

Handel's lessons, and one of his own. Then he made Charles play. Some of the words wherein he expressed his surprise were, "I never saw one carry his hand so well. It is quite a picture. It is a gift from God. How would Handel have shook his sides, if he could have heard him!"

He confirmed the advice Mr. Granville had given him at Bath: "Let him have no great master. B—— or A—— would ruin him."

At parting he said, "Come to me as often as you will, whenever you are in town; and I will assist you all I can." He stroked, embraced, and praised him immoderately, and appointed him to come on Monday.

Mon., August 21st. Mr. Kelway gave him his first lesson, (the first of Handel's,) and much commendation. "You have a better hand," said he, "than any of the masters. They would hurt instead of helping you. B—— or A—— would utterly spoil you in one month."

Thur., August 24th. He was quite pleased with his scholar; warned him against Handel's enemies, and modern musicians; said to me, "If any great master had taught him one year, it would cost me two to unteach him those lessons."

He made him a present of his own Sonatas, with Handel's Overtures, and Pergolesi's *Stabat Mater*.

Thur., September 14th. Mr. Kelway to Charles: "You will be an honour to me. Handel's hands did not lie on the harpsichord better than yours." [His word was, "Not so well."]

Mon., September 18th. Kelway to Charles: "Was you my own son, I could not love you better. Go on, and mind none of the musicians, but Handel. You should not hear others. Come to me, and I will instruct you the best I can. You have a divine gift."

To me he said, "There are not two masters in town can play these two adagios. One cannot hear him play four bars without knowing him to be a genius. He has the very spirit of Scarlatti."

Thur., September 21st. While Charles was playing, he cried out, "It is here,—in his heart, or he could not play thus." Then, starting up, "I will maintain it, before all the world, that there is not a master in London can play

this sonata as he does. The King would eat up this boy. I *must* carry him some morning to St. James's. I am greatly obliged to Mr. Bromfield for bringing him to me. He need not (as Mr. Keeble told him) study eight hours a day. Let him only go on as he has begun, and he will soon excel them all. I have no trouble in teaching him : it is pure pleasure." To him he said, "My dear, let not the world debauch you. Some decry music for being old. They may as well object to an antique statue, or painting. But B., and A., and G., have cut the throat of music : true music is lost."

Mon., September 25th. "Handel once asked me, 'Mr. Kelway, why don't you keep company with other musicians?' 'Nay, Mr. Handel,' said I, 'why don't you?' He replied, 'Because I don't care to dirty myself.'"

To me Mr. Kelway said, "You must take great delight in this boy. I am sure he is of a sweet disposition. His very soul is harmony." "All that I can say of him," said I, "is, that you have him uncorrupted." "Uncorrupted!" answered he : "he is purity itself : he is a miracle!" To him, "You will not be vain, my dear : it is a divine gift ; and I hope you will make a proper use of it."

While he went on playing, Mr. Kelway said, "He teaches me my own music." To him, "My dear boy, I will do for you all in my power ; first, for Mr. Bromfield's sake ; then for your sake, and my own. I am better pleased to teach you for nothing, than if I had ever so much money with you."

"You are to uphold music. Not one of my scholars could have learned that in a year, which you have learned in ten lessons." A gentleman (Mr. Brown) coming in, and hearing him, cried, "Why, the boy *feels* every note." He then shook him by the hand, with, "Go on, young gentleman ; and, by and by, you will be one of the first masters."

Thur., September 28th. Mr. Worgan came to meet us, at a friend's in the city. After hearing Charles play, he generously said, "I will take him, from this time, under my own auspices, and *freely* teach him all I know myself." I should have thankfully accepted of his offer, had not Mr. Kelway been beforehand with him.

Mon., October 2d. I mentioned this to Mr. Kelway, and asked his leave to tell Mr. Worgan the only reason for my not closing with so advantageous an offer; namely, Mr. Kelway's having made it first. He gave me full permission to tell him, or whomever I pleased, that he taught my son gratis. Again, with warm affection, he warned Charles against the moderns.

Thur., October 12th. Some of his words were, "Never have I met one who played with such spirit! Charming boy! I defy any master in London to play like him." For his encouragement, he promised to get a fine old harpsichord of Mahew's fitted up for him; and then to give him his choice, of that, or of his own, a conchet; the clearest and sweetest instrument I ever heard.

Mon., October 23d. "Dear boy! He treats me with my own music. I wish Handel and Geminiani were now alive: they would be in raptures with him."

Thur., October 26th. "He will bring my music into vogue. It cannot be played better."

Mon., November 6th. "It is delightful! it is admirable! it is perfect singing! Dear jewel! Charming boy! I never heard any one play with such feeling." Then he talked of leaving him his successor,—or words to that effect.

Tues., November 21st. "Here sit I, for my amusement. He makes me delight in my own music."

Tues., November 28th. "Handel used to say, 'These ignorant fellows, after my death, will murder my music.' Geminiani made me swear to rescue his from them.

"It is the greatest pleasure to instruct this boy. He will keep up my music when I am gone. I shall leave my stamp upon him. I shall make him the depository of my skill."

Tues., December 5th. "The King has asked after him again. I told His Majesty, he had learned more in four months than any other would in four years. He asked me, if he intended to make music his profession. I answered, no; and that he did not want anything," &c.

To me Mr. Kelway said, "He will keep alive my music. He will be hated by all the masters. I loved music when young; but not so well as he does. One would think he had been the composer of this. He gives the colouring; the nice touches and finishing-strokes are all his own. I love

him better and better. He has it from God. He is an heaven-born child."

Tues., December 12th. "This boy consoles me. He raises my spirits whenever I hear him. He has more taste and feeling than all our band."

Fri., December 29th. "He plays this [K.'s sixth sonata] beyond all that I could have hoped." To my sister he observed, (as, before, to others,) "It is the gift of God. No man in London can play like him. What colouring! What lights and shades! I could *cry* to hear him."

Tues., January 2d, 1770. "Handel used to tell me, 'The musicians are all impostors.' Geminiani said, he studied Corelli every day of his life; and that *one particular song* in Otho he could play from morning till night."

Fri., January 5th. "He is an old man at the instrument. He is not a boy." To Mr. M——n he said, "He is the greatest genius in music I have ever met with."

Fri., January 12th. Charles was so transported in playing, that, as he afterwards told me, he did not know where he was, or that there was any person in the room but himself.

Tues., January 16th. "Sir," said Kelway to me, "you have got a Scarlatti in your house, as well as the King of Spain. Never have I heard a boy play with such spirit and feeling. Here sit I, to hear myself. I never took such pleasure in my own music. His play is a cordial to me. He will be the restorer of music. Miss B. asked me, 'What shall I give him, for playing to me?' I answered her, 'Yourself.' How would Handel and Geminiani have embraced him! I love him, Sir, as well as you can do."

Wed., February 7th. "He is Scarlatti all over. Play thus, my dear boy, and revenge my quarrel. He plays as well as me already."

Wed., February 21st. Mr. Kelway coming to my house, to teach Miss Hill and Charles, I paid him forty-five guineas, for an harpsichord of Mahew's. Miss B., he told us, was to have given fifty guineas for it; but he favoured Charles.

Wed., March 7th. In walking with Mr. Kelway from my house, I asked him whether, on our return to Bristol,

I should not have Mr. Br—— to my son. He answered, "No. He can learn nothing from B., though B. may from him. If any man would learn to play well, let him hear that boy. Miss Hill does not know what an advantage she has in hearing him. I can find no fault with him."

Sat., April 7th. We took our leave of Mr. Kelway, who has now bestowed upon Charles sixty-five lessons.

Thur., February 7th, 1771. The day after my return to London, I waited upon Mr. Kelway, who received me with great kindness, and appointed Charles to come on Saturday following.

Sat., February 9th. Charles played over his Sonatas. His master was much pleased to find, that, in ten months' absence, he had forgot nothing.

Fri., March 15th. While Charles was playing, Mr. Kelway surprised me, by saying, "He plays my Lessons better than I can."

Tues., April 2d. "Now he never can be spoiled by the fashionable music.

"If they never should sell, yet I am glad I published my Sonatas, for his sake. There is no man can play them like him."

Fri., April 5th. Walking about, as delighted with his pupil, at last he stopped, made him a low bow, and said, "Sir, you do me great honour. It puts me into a good humour to hear you."

Fri., April 12th. "There is no music in London like this boy's play. There is not a man in Italy can play so well. It is not I, Charles, but God who has given it you; and I heartily thank you for this lesson: it composes and makes me happy."

Fri., May 24th. I paid Mr. Kelway six guineas for twelve of his second set of Sonatas, which Charles impatiently waits for.

Tues., May 28th. Charles was happy in making his master so; but Mr. Kelway was very angry at G——i, for his cool approbation of his scholar. "G——i does not so much as know what is in this boy; neither does any master in London."

Wed., July 3d. Mr. Kelway gave him his hundred and fourth lesson; which makes a year complete. "No other,"

he assured me, "could have learnt so much in many years. People," he added, "would not believe it, unless he had a particular account of the Lessons." This, therefore, at his request, I gave him, extracted from my Journal.

Glorying in his scholar, he said, "They say I cannot communicate my skill: but I dare maintain, there is not such a player as this boy in England; nor yet in France, or Spain, or Italy." He could carry it no farther, unless he had repeated his former words to Mr. Bromfield: "That there was not such another boy upon earth." *Abi, patris-sas*; more than even the father himself.

Wed., July 10th. "It would be worth the masters' while to pay this boy for playing to them. If Mansoli was here, he would eat him up."

Wed., August 7th. Mr. Kelway began teaching him Geminiani's Lessons for the Harpsichord; having, he thinks, made him perfect in Scarlatti's music.

Wed., August 28th. "Geminiani, if now alive, would carry this boy with him everywhere. He plays quite as well as I."

Wed., September 11th. I carried Mr. Russel, the painter, to Mr. Kelway. He told me afterwards, that he knew the finest passages by the change of Charles's colour. Mr. Kelway, being asked to play, said, in jest, "How shall I play after my scholar?" However he did play, and most inimitably.

Sat., September 28th. Again he said, "If Handel and Geminiani were alive, they would be mad at hearing this boy."

Wed., October 9th. Pointing to Geminiani's picture, he said, "O what would that man have said, if he could have heard Charles! No man in London can play this prelude."

Wed., October 23d. "No one can play this prelude like him; no, not I myself." He added, as in a rapture, "This is too much to bear!"

ACCOUNT OF CHARLES WESLEY.

PRINTED IN THE PHILOSOPHICAL TRANSACTIONS OF THE
YEAR 1781.

BY DAINES BARRINGTON.

CHARLES * was born in Bristol, December 11th, 1757. He was two years and three quarters old, when I first observed his strong inclination to music. He then surprised me by playing a tune on the harpsichord readily, and in just time. Soon after, he played several, whatever his mother sung, or whatever he heard in the streets.

From his birth she used to quiet and amuse him with the harpsichord ; but he would not suffer her to play with one hand only, taking the other and putting it on the keys, before he could speak. When he played himself, she used to tie him up by his back-string to the chair, for fear of his falling. Whatever tune it was, he always put a true bass to it. From the beginning he played without study or hesitation ; and, as the masters told me, perfectly well.

Mr. Broadrip † heard him in petticoats, and foretold he would one day make a great player. Whenever he was called to play to a stranger, he would ask, in a word of his own, "Is he a musicker?" and if answered, "Yes," he played with the greatest readiness.

He always played *con spirito*. There was something in his manner above a child, which struck the hearers, learned or unlearned.

At four years old I carried him with me to London. Mr. Beard was the first who confirmed Mr. Broadrip's judgment of him, and kindly offered his interest with Dr. Boyce, to get him admitted among the King's boys ; but I had then no thoughts of bringing him up a musician.

A gentleman carried him next to Mr. Stanley, who expressed much pleasure and surprise at hearing him, and declared he had never met one of his age with so strong a propensity to music. The gentleman told us, he never

* I was favoured with this account of his eldest son, by the Rev. Mr. Charles Wesley.

† Organist at Bristol.

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before believed what Handel used to tell him of himself, and his own love of music, in his childhood.

Mr. Madan presented my son to Mr. Worgan, who was extremely kind, and, as I then thought, partial, to him. He told me he would prove an eminent master, if he was not taken off by other studies. Mr. Worgan frequently entertained him with the harpsichord. Charles was greatly taken with his bold, full manner of playing, and seemed even then to catch a spark of his fire.

At our return to Bristol, we left him to ramble on till he was near six. Then we gave him Mr. Rooke for a master, a man of no name, but very good-natured ; who let him run on *ad libitum*, while he sat by, more to observe, than to control, him.

Mr. Rogers, the oldest organist in Bristol, was one of his first friends. He often set him on his knee, and made him play to him, declaring he was more delighted in hearing him than himself.

What follows contains the strongest and fullest approbation of Mr. Charles Wesley's manner of playing on the organ, by the most eminent professors ; to which commendation they, who have the pleasure of hearing him at present, will give the most ample credit.

I received the following account of his son Samuel from the Rev. Mr. Charles Wesley :—

Samuel was born on St. Matthias's day, February 24th, 1766, the same day which gave birth to Handel, eighty-two years before. The seeds of harmony did not spring up in him quite so early as in his brother ; for he was three years old before he aimed at a tune.* His first were, "God save great George our King," Fischer's Minuet, and such like, mostly picked up from the street-organs. He did not put a true bass to them till he had learned his notes.

* His mother, Mrs. Wesley, however, has given me the following most convincing proof that he played a tune when he was but two years eleven months old, by producing a quarter guinea, which was given to him by Mr. Ady, for this extraordinary feat, wrapped in a piece of paper, containing the day and year of the gift, as well as the occasion of it. Mrs. Wesley had also an elder son, who died in his infancy, and both sung a tune, and beat time, when he was but twelve months old.

While his brother was playing, he used to stand by, with his childish fiddle, scraping and beating time. One, observing him, asked me, "And what shall this boy do?" I answered, "Mend his brother's pens." He did not resent the affront as deeply as Marcello did: so it was not indignation which made him a musician.*

Mr. Arnold was the first who, hearing him at the harpsichord, said, "I set down Sam for one of my family." But we did not much regard him, coming after Charles. The first thing which drew our attention was, the great delight he took in hearing his brother play. Whenever Mr. Kelway came to teach him, Sam constantly attended, and accompanied Charles *on the chair*. Undaunted by Mr. Kelway's frown, he went on; and when he did not *see* the harpsichord,† he crossed his hands on the chair, as the other on the instrument, without ever missing a time.

He was so excessively fond of Scarlatti, that if Charles ever began playing his lesson before Sam was called, he would cry and roar as if he had been beat. Mr. Madan, his godfather, finding him one day so belabouring the chair, told him he should have a better instrument by and by.

I have since recollected Mr. Kelway's words, "It is of the utmost importance to a learner *to hear the best music*;" and, "If any man would learn to play well, let him hear Charles." Sam had this double advantage from his birth. As his brother employed the evenings in Handel's Oratorios,

* This alludes to a well-known story in the musical world. Marcello, the celebrated composer, had an elder brother, who had greatly distinguished himself in this science; and being asked what should be done with little Marcello, he answered, "Let him mend my pens;" which piqued the boy so much, that he determined to exceed his elder brother.

† Incredible as this may appear, it is attested by the whole family; and that he generally turned his back to his brother while he was playing. I think, however, that this extraordinary fact may be thus accounted for: There are some passages in Scarlatti's Lessons which require the crossing of hands (or playing the treble with the left, and the bass with the right); but as what calls for this unusual fingering produces a very singular effect, the child must have felt that these parts of the composition could not be executed in any other way. It is possible, indeed, that he might have observed his brother crossing hands at these passages, and imitated him by recollecting that they were thus fingered.

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Sam was always at his elbow, listening and joining with his voice. Nay, he would sometimes presume to find fault with his playing, when we thought he could know nothing of the matter.

He was between four and five years old when he got hold of the Oratorio of Samson, and by that alone taught himself to read words. Soon after he taught himself to write. From this time he sprung up like a mushroom ; and, when turned of five, could read perfectly well, and had all the airs, recitatives, and choruses of Samson, and the Messiah, both words and notes, by heart.

Whenever he heard his brother begin to play, he would tell us whose music it was, whether Handel, Corelli, Scarlatti, or any other, and what part of what lesson, sonata, or overture.

Before he could write, he composed much music. His custom was to lay the words of an Oratorio before him, and sing them all over. Thus he set (extempore for the most part) Ruth, Gideon, Manasses, and the Death of Abel. We observed, when he repeated the same words, it was always to the same tunes. The airs of Ruth, in particular, he made before he was six years old ; laid them up in his memory till he was eight ; and then wrote them down.

I have seen him open his Prayer-Book, and sing the *Te Deum*, or an anthem from some psalm, to his own music, accompanying it with the harpsichord. This he often did, after he had learnt to play by note, which Mr. Williams, a young organist of Bristol, taught him between six and seven.

How and when he learnt counterpoint, I can hardly tell ; but, without being ever taught it, he soon wrote in parts.

He was full eight years old, when Dr. Boyce came to see us, and accosted me with, "Sir, I hear you have got an English Mozart in your house : young Linley tells me wonderful things of him." I called Sam to answer for himself. He had by this time scrawled down his Oratorio of Ruth. The Doctor looked over it very carefully, and seemed highly pleased with the performance. Some of his words were, "These airs are some of the prettiest I have seen. This boy writes by nature as true a bass as I can do

by rule and study. There is no man in England has two such sons," &c. He bade us let him run on *ad libitum*, without any check of rules or masters.

After this, whenever the Doctor visited us, Sam ran to him with his song, sonata, or anthem, and the Doctor examined them with astonishing patience and delight.

As soon as Sam had quite finished his Oratorio, he sent it as a present to the Doctor, who immediately honoured him with the following note :—

“ TO MR. SAMUEL WESLEY.

“ DR. BOYCE’S compliments and thanks to his very ingenious brother-composer, Mr. Samuel Wesley, and is very much pleased and obliged by the possession of the Oratorio of Ruth ; which he shall preserve, with the utmost care, as the most curious product of his musical library.”

For the year that Sam continued under Mr. Williams, it was hard to say which was the master, and which the scholar. Sam chose what music he would learn, and often broke out into extempore playing, his master wisely letting him do as he pleased.

During this time, he taught himself the violin : a soldier assisted him about six weeks, and, some time after, Mr. Kingsbury gave him twenty lessons. His favourite instrument was the organ.

He spent a month at Bath, while we were in Wales ; served the Abbey on Sundays ; gave them several voluntaries ; and played the first fiddle in many private concerts.

He returned with us to London greatly improved in his playing. There I allowed him a month for learning all Handel’s Overtures. He played them over to me in three days. Handel’s Concertos he learned with equal ease, and some of his Lessons, and Scarlatti’s. Like Charles, he mastered the hardest music, without any pains or difficulty.

He borrowed his Ruth to transcribe for Mr. Madan. Parts of it he played at Lord Le Despenser’s, who rewarded him with some of Handel’s Oratorios.

Mr. Madan now began carrying him about to his musical friends. He played several times at Mr. Wilmot’s, to many of the nobility, and some eminent masters and judges of music. They gave him subjects and music which he had

never seen. Mr. Burton, Mr. Bates, &c., expressed their approbation in the strongest terms. His extemporary fugues, they said, were just and regular, but could not believe that he knew nothing of the rules of composition.

Several companies he entertained for hours together with his own music. The learned were quite astonished. Sir John Hawkins cried out, "Inspiration! inspiration!" Dr. C—— candidly acknowledged, "He has got that which we are searching after;" although at first, out of pure good-nature, he refused to give him a subject. An old musical gentleman, hearing him, could not refrain from tears.

Dr. Burney was greatly pleased with his extemporary play, and his pursuing the subjects and fugues which he gave him; but insisted, like the rest, that he must have been taught the rules.

Mr. S. and Mr. Burney expressed the same surprise and satisfaction. An organist gave him a sonata he had just written, not easy, nor very legible. Sam played it with great readiness and propriety, and better (as the composer owned to Mr. Madan) than he could himself.

Lord Barrington, Lord Aylsbury, Lord Dudley, Sir Watkin W. Wynne, and other lovers of Handel, were highly delighted with him, and encouraged him to hold fast his veneration for Handel and the old music. But old or new was all one to Sam, so it was but good. Whatever was presented, he played at sight, and made variations on any tune; and, as often as he played it again, made new variations. He imitated every author's style, whether Bach, Schobert, Handel, or Scarlatti himself.

One showed him some of Mozart's music, and asked him how he liked it. He played it over, and said, "It was very well for one of his years."

He played to Mr. Kelway, whom I afterwards asked what he thought of him. He would not allow him to be comparable to Charles; yet commended him greatly, and told his mother, it was a gift from heaven to both her sons; and as for Sam, he never in his life saw so free and *déagagé* a gentleman! Mr. Madan had often said the same, that Sam was everywhere as much admired for his behaviour as for his play.

Between eight and nine he was brought through the

small-pox, through Mr. Bromfield's assistance; whom he therefore promised to reward with his next oratorio.

If he loved anything better than music, it was regularity. He took to it himself. Nothing could exceed his punctuality. No company, no persuasion, could keep him up beyond his time. He never could be prevailed on to hear any opera or concert by night. The moment the clock gave warning for eight, away ran Sam in the midst of his most favourite music. Once he rose up after the first part of the Messiah with, "Come, mamma, let us go home, or I shall not be in bed by eight."

When some talked of carrying him to the Queen, and I asked him if he was willing to go, "Yes, with all my heart," he answered; "but I won't stay beyond eight."

The praises bestowed so lavishly upon him did not seem to affect, much less to hurt, him; and whenever he went into the company of his betters, he would much rather have stayed at home; yet when among them, he was free and easy; so that some remarked, "he behaved as one bred up at court, yet without a courtier's servility."

On our coming to town this last time, he sent Dr. Boyce the last anthem he had made. The Doctor thought, from its correctness, that Charles must have helped him in it; but Charles assured him that he never assisted him, otherwise than by telling him, if he asked, whether such or such a passage were good harmony. And the Doctor was so scrupulous, that when Charles showed him an improper note, he would not suffer it to be altered.

Mr. Madan now carried him to more of the first masters. Mr. Abel wrote him a subject, and declared not three masters in town could have answered it so well.

Mr. Cramer took a great liking to him, offered to teach him the violin, and played some trios with Charles and him. He sent a man to take measure of him for a fiddle; and is confident a very few lessons will set him up for a violinist.

Sam often played the second, and sometimes the first, fiddle, with Mr. Treadway, who declared, "Giardini himself could not play with greater exactness."

Mr. Madan brought Dr. N—— to my house, who could not believe that a boy could write an oratorio, play

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at sight, and pursue any given subject. He brought two of the King's boys, who sang over several songs and choruses in Ruth. Then he produced two bars of a fugue. Sam worked this fugue very readily and well, adding a movement of his own, and then a voluntary, on the organ, which quite removed the Doctor's incredulity.

At the rehearsal at St. Paul's, Dr. Boyce met his brother Sam, and, showing him to Dr. H., told him, "This boy will soon surpass you all." Shortly after, he came to see us, took up a *Jubilate* which Sam had lately wrote, and commended it as one of Charles's. When we told him whose it was, he declared he could find no fault in it; adding, there was not another boy upon earth who could have composed this; and concluding with, "I never yet met with that person who owes so much to nature as Sam. He is come among us, dropped down from heaven."

*Ore puer, puerique habitu, sed corde sagaci.
Æquabat senium.*—SILIUS ITALICUS, lib. viii.

"In looks and garb a boy; in judgment sage
Beyond his years, and wise as hoary age."

I HAD first an opportunity of being witness of Master Samuel Wesley's great musical talents at the latter end of 1775, when he was nearly ten years old.

To speak of him first as a performer on the harpsichord, he was then able to execute the most difficult lessons for the instrument at sight; for his fingers never wanted the guidance of the eye, in the most rapid and desultory passages. But he not only did ample justice to the composition in neatness and precision, but entered into its true taste, which may be easily believed by the numbers who have heard him play extemporary lessons in the style of most of the eminent masters.

He not only executed crabbed compositions thus at sight, but he was equally ready to transpose into any keys, even a fourth;* and if it was a sonata for two trebles and a

* Most musicians, when they transpose, conceive the succession of notes to be written in a clef in which they have been used to practise, as the bass clef, tenor clef, &c.; but the transposition of a

bass, the part of the first treble being set before him, he would immediately add an extemporary bass and second treble to it.

Having happened to mention this readiness in the boy to Bremner, (the printer of music in the Strand,) he told me that he had some lessons, which were supposed to have been composed for Queen Elizabeth, but which none of the harpsichord masters could execute, and would consequently gravel the young performer. I, however, desired that he would let me carry one of these compositions to him, by way of trial, which I accordingly did; when the boy immediately placed it upon his desk, and was sitting down to play it; but I stopped him, by mentioning the difficulties he would soon encounter, and that therefore he must cast his eye over the music before he made the attempt.

Having done this very rapidly, (for he is a devourer of a score, and conceives at once the effect of the different parts,) he said, Bremner was in the right, for that there were two or three passages which he could not play at sight, as they were so queer and awkward; but that he had no notion of not trying; and though he boggled at these parts of the lesson, he executed them cleanly at the second practice.

I then asked him how he approved of the composition; to which he answered, "Not at all, though he might differ from a Queen; and that attention had not been paid to some of the established rules." He then pointed out the particular passages to which he objected, and I stated them to Bremner, who allowed that the boy was right; but that some of the great composers had occasionally taken the same liberties.

The next time I saw Master Wesley, I mentioned Bremner's defence of what he had blamed; on which he immediately answered, that "when such excellent rules were broken, the composer should take care that these licences produced a good effect; whereas these passages had a very bad one." I need not dwell on the great penetration,

fourth belongs to no clef, except that which the Italians term *mezzo soprano*, or an intermediate clef between the treble and counter-tenor, and which, not being ever marked in our compositions, cannot be fancied by an English performer, when he is obliged to transpose a fourth.

acuteness, and judgment, of this answer. Lord Mornington, indeed, who hath so deep a knowledge of music, hath frequently told me, that he always wished to consult Master Wesley upon any difficulty in composition, as he knew no one who gave so immediate and satisfactory information.

Though he was always willing to play the compositions of others, yet for the most part he amused himself with extemporary effusions of his own most extraordinary musical inspiration, which unfortunately were totally forgotten in a few minutes ; whereas his memory was most tenacious of what had been published by others.

His invention in varying passages was inexhaustible ; and I have myself heard him give more than fifty variations on a known, pleasing melody, all of which were not only different from each other, but showed excellent taste and judgment.

This infinite variety probably arose from his having played so much extempore, in which he gave full scope to every flight of his imagination, and produced passages which I never heard from any other performer on the harpsichord.

The readiness of his fingering what was most difficult to be executed on the instrument, and in the only proper manner, was equal to his musical fancy ; of which I will mention the following proof :—

Since the comic Italian operas have been performed in England, there is frequently a passage in the bass which consists of a single note, to be, perhaps, repeated for two or three bars at quick and equal intervals, and which cannot be effected on the harpsichord by one finger, as any common musician would attempt to do it, but requires a change of two.

I laid an opera song before Master Wesley with such a passage, and, happening to be at the other end of the room when he came to this part of the composition, I knew from the execution that he must have made use of such a change of two fingers, the necessity of which that eminent professor of music, Dr. Burney, had shown me. On this I asked him from whom he had learnt this method of fingering ; to which his answer was, “from no one ; but that it was impossible to play the passage with the proper effect in any other manner.”

In his extemporary compositions, he frequently hazarded bold and uncommon modulations, so that I have seen that most excellent musician, Mr. Charles Wesley, his elder brother,* tremble for him. Sam, however, always extricated himself from the difficulties in which he appeared to be involved in the most masterly manner, being always possessed of that serene confidence which a thorough knowledge inspires, though surrounded by musical professors, who could not deem it arrogance.

And here I will give a proof of the goodness of his heart, and delicacy of his feelings.

I had desired him to compose an easy melody in the minor third, for an experiment on little Crotch; and that he would go with me to hear what that very extraordinary child was capable of. Crotch was not in good humour, and Master Wesley submitted, among other things, to play upon a cracked violin, in order to please him; the company, however, having found out who he was, pressed him very much to play upon the organ, which Sam constantly declined. As this was contrary to his usual readiness in obliging any person who had curiosity to hear him, I asked him afterwards what might be the occasion of his refusal; when he told me, that he thought it would look like wishing to shine at little Crotch's expense.

Every one knows that any material alteration in the construction of an organ, which varies the position of certain notes, must, at first, embarrass the player, though a most expert one. I carried Sam, however, to the Temple-organ, which hath quarter-notes, with the management of which he was as ready as if he had made use of such an instrument all his life. I need scarcely say how much more difficult it must be to play passages which must be executed, not by the fingers, but the feet. Now the organ at the Savoy hath a complete octave of pedals, with the half-notes; on which part Sam appeared as little a novice

* Mr. Charles Wesley hath composed some singular pieces for two organs, which would have great merit if performed by others, but have still more so when executed by the two brothers, as they are so well acquainted with each other's manner of playing, and are so amazingly accurate in the precision of their time. Such as have heard the two Pla's in duets for the hautboys, may well conceive the effect of these compositions from the Wesleys.

as if he had been accustomed to it for years. Nay, he made a very good and regular shake on the pedals, *by way of experiment*; for he had too much taste and judgment to suppose that it would have a good effect.

He was able to sing at sight (which commonly requires so much instruction, even with those who are of a musical disposition) from the time of first knowing his notes. His voice was by no means strong; and it cannot yet be pronounced how it may turn out. His more favourite songs were those of Handel, composed for a bass voice, as, "Honour and arms," &c.*

He has lately practised much upon the violin, on which he bids fair to be a capital performer. Happening one day to find him thus employed, I asked him how long he had played that morning. His answer was, "Three or four hours; which Giardini had found necessary."

The delicacy of his ear is likewise very remarkable, of which I shall give an instance or two.

Having been at Bach's concert, he was much satisfied both with the composition and performers; but said, "The musical pieces were ill-arranged, † as four had been played successively, which were all in the same key."

He was desired to compose a march for one of the regiments of guards; which he did to the approbation of all who ever heard it; and a distinguished officer of the royal navy declared, that it was a movement which would probably inspire steady and serene courage when the enemy was approaching.

As I thought the boy would like to hear this march performed, I carried him to the parade at the proper time, when it had the honour of beginning the military concert. The piece being finished, I asked him whether it was executed to his satisfaction; to which he replied, "By no means;" and I then immediately introduced him to the band, (which consisted of very tall and stout musicians,)

* Having heard him sing, "Return, O God of hosts," and an Italian air, since this sheet was in the press, I can now venture to pronounce, that his voice is a pleasing counter-tenor, and that his manner is excellent. Without any practice, also, he hath acquired an even and brilliant shake.

† It is supposed that this was a mere accident in the person who made out the musical bill of fare.

that he might set them right. On this, Sam immediately told them that they had not done justice to his composition; to which they answered the urchin, with both astonishment and contempt, by, "Your composition!" Sam, however, replied, with great serenity, "Yes, my composition;" which I confirmed. They then stared, and severally made their excuses, by protesting that they had copied accurately from the manuscript which had been put into their hands. This he most readily allowed to the hautboys and bassoons, but said it was the French horns that were in fault; who making the same defence, he insisted upon the original score being produced, and, showing them their mistake, ordered the march to be played again, which they submitted to with as much deference as they would have shown to Handel.

This concert of wind instruments begins on the parade, about five minutes after nine, and ends at five minutes after ten, when the guard proceeds to St. James's.

I stayed with him till this time, and asked him what he thought of the concluding movement; which, he said, deserved no commendation, but that it was very injudicious to make it the finishing piece; because, as it must necessarily continue till the clock of the Horse-Guards had struck ten, it should have been recollected, that the tone of the clock did not correspond with the key-note of the march.

I shall now attempt to give some account of this most extraordinary boy, considered as a composer; and, first, of his extemporary flights.

If left to himself, when he played on the organ, there were oftener traces of Handel's style, than any other master; and if on the harpsichord, of Scarlatti. At other times, however, his voluntaries were original and singular.

After he had seen or heard a few pieces* of any composer, he was fully possessed of his peculiarities, which, if at all striking, he could instantly imitate at the word of

* I asked him once to imitate Lord Kelly's style. This he declined, as he had never heard any composition of his Lordship's, except the Overture to the Maid of the Mill, which he highly approved of, however, for its brilliancy and boldness.

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command, as well as the general flow and turn of the composition. Thus I have heard him frequently play extemporary lessons, which, without prejudice to their musical names, might have been supposed those of Abel, Vento, Schobert, and Bach.

But he not only entered into the style of the harpsichord masters, but that of solo players on other instruments.

I once happened to see some music wet upon his desk, which, he told me, was a solo for a trumpet. I then asked him if he had heard Fischer on the hautboy, and would compose an extempore solo, proper for him to execute. To this Sam readily assented, but found his little legs too short for reaching the swell of the organ, without which the imitation could not have its effect. I then proposed to touch the swell myself, on his giving me the proper signals; but to this he answered, that I could neither do this so instantaneously as was requisite, nor should I give the greater or less force of the swell (if a note was dwelt upon) which would correspond with his feelings. Having started this difficulty, however, he soon suggested the remedy, which was the following:—

He stood upon the ground with his left foot, while his right rested upon the swell; and thus literally played an extemporary solo, *stans pede in uno*; the three movements of which must have lasted not less than ten minutes, and every bar of which Fischer might have acknowledged for his own. Every one who hath heard that capital musician, must have observed a great singularity in his cadences, in the imitation of which, Sam succeeded as perfectly as in the other parts of the composition. After this, I have been present when he hath executed thirty or forty different solos for the same instrument, to the astonishment of several audiences, and particularly so to that eminent performer on the hautboy, Mr. Simpson.

Having found that the greater part of those who heard him would not believe but that his voluntaries had been practised before, I always endeavoured that some person present (and more particularly so if he was a professor) should give him the subject upon which he was to work; which always afforded the convincing and irrefragable

proof, as he then composed upon the ideas suggested by others; to which ordeal, it is believed, few musicians in Europe would submit. The more difficult the subject, (as, if it was two or three bars of the beginning of a fugue,) the more cheerfully he undertook it, as he always knew he was equal to the attempt, be it never so arduous.

I once carried that able composer, Mr. Christopher Smith, to the boy, desiring that he would suggest the subject; which Sam not only pursued in a masterly manner, but fell into a movement of the minor third, which might be naturally introduced. When we left Mr. Wesley's house, Mr. Smith, after expressing his amazement, said, that what he had just heard should be a caution to those who are apt to tax composers as plagiarists; for though he had wrote on the same subject, and the music had never been seen by any one, this wonderful boy had followed him, almost note by note. Baumgarten found the same, upon a like trial of what he had never communicated to any one.

I can refer only to one printed proof of his abilities as a composer, which is a set of Eight Lessons for the Harpsichord, and which appeared in 1777, about the same time that he became so known to the musical world, that his portrait was engraven, which is a very strong resemblance. Some of these lessons have passages which are rather too difficult for common performers; and therefore they are not calculated for a general vogue.

His father, the Rev. Mr. Wesley, will permit any one to see the score of his Oratorio of Ruth, which he really composed at six years old, but did not *write* till he was eight. His quickness, in thus giving utterance to his musical ideas, is amazingly great; and, notwithstanding the rapidity, he seldom makes a blot or a mistake.

Numbers of his other compositions, and almost of all kinds, may be likewise examined; particularly an anthem on the following words, which I selected for him, and which has been performed at the Chapel-Royal, and St. Paul's:—

1. "O Lord God of hosts, how long wilt thou be angry at the prayer of thy people?"
2. "Turn thee again, O Lord, and we shall be saved."

3. "For thou art a great God, and a great King above all gods."

This first part of this anthem was composed for a single voice ; the second, a duet, for two boys ; and the third, a chorus. With regard to the merits, I shall refer to that most distinguished singer of cathedral-music, the Rev. Mr. Mence, who has frequently done it ample justice.