

co-operation and liberal support on the part of the public would enable the Philharmonic Society to carry out such a scheme, but we feel assured that when required, these would not be withheld. If, as we are informed, the Society have this honourable aim in view, they would have greater claims upon the public than would be acknowledged for any purely local purpose.

Before proceeding to notice the recent performance of the *Messiah*, at the Grand Opera House, it may not be out of place to give a sketch of the circumstances that attended the first production of the oratorio in Great Britain, for although the public are perfectly familiar with the design and the numerous beauties of the work, but little is known of its early history. Victor Schœlcher, Handel's biographer, tells us that in the summer of 1741, the great composer, then 58 years of age, left London on a visit to Gopsall Hall, Leicestershire, the residence of his friend, Charles Jennens, a gentleman of distinction, and of some literary ability. It was Charles Jennens who arranged the libretto of the *Messiah*, and it is supposed that during his visit, Handel wrote his inspired music. Jennens, in a letter which he subsequently wrote to a friend says: "I shall show you a collection I gave Handel, called *Messiah*, which I value highly, and he has made a fine entertainment of it, though not so good as he might, and ought to have done. *I have with great difficulty made him correct some of the grossest faults in the composition. But he retained his overture obstinately, in which there are some passages far unworthy of Handel, but much more unworthy of the Messiah.*" The extraordinary opinions advanced in this letter are refreshing, to say the least, and need no comment. Whether the music of the *Messiah* was written at Gopsall Hall or not, the inscription on the manuscript shows that it was commenced and finished in the autumn of 1741—

"Commenced on the 22nd Aug., 1741.

End of first part, on 28th August.

End of second, on 6th September.

End of the third, on 12th Sept., 1741.

Filled up (scored) on the 14th."

It surely could have been nothing less than an inspiration which enabled Handel to complete so stupendous a work within the short space of twenty-three days. We have only to consider that Haydn took nearly three years to compose the *Creation*, to appreciate the nature of such an achievement. Having been somewhat harassed by the undisguised hostility of the nobility of London, Handel had determined to try his fortune in Dublin, where he had long been eagerly wished for; and accepting the invitation of the Lord Lieutenant, he set out for the Irish capital on the 4th November, carrying with him the new oratorio. He arrived in Dublin on the 18th November, and having given a series of successful perform-

ances of his earlier compositions, announced that the *Messiah* would be produced at the Music Hall, Fishamble Street, on the 13th April, 1742. The curious advertisement that appeared in *Faulkner's Journal*, was as follows:—

"This day will be performed Mr. Handel's new grand sacred Oratorio, called the *Messiah*. Doors will be opened at eleven, and the performance begin at twelve.

"The Stewards of the Charitable Musical Society request the favour of the ladies not to come with hoops this day to the Music Hall. The gentlemen are desired to come without their swords."

From a report that appeared in the same journal, it would seem that the new oratorio was most enthusiastically received, being witnessed by over seven hundred people. The proceeds amounted to nearly \$2,000, which Handel generously distributed among three charities of the city. The writers of those days stated that "words were wanting to express the exquisite delight it afforded to the admiring crowded audience. The Sublime, the Grand, and the Tender conspired to transport and charm the ravished heart and ear." The *Messiah* was performed for the second time in Dublin on the 25th May, 1742. After a nine months' residence in Ireland, Handel left Dublin for England in August, 1742. On his return to London, the *Messiah* was produced three times at Covent Garden in 1743, but, owing to a senseless cry of sacrilege that was raised, was announced under the title of the "Sacred Oratorio," as a kind of concession to popular prejudice. It was performed twice in April, 1745, and then withdrawn until 1750, when it was announced under its original designation, "The Messiah." It was, doubtless, on account of this bigoted cry of sacrilege raised against his work, and not to the supposed coldness of its reception by the London audiences, that caused Handel to give it so seldom. On the 11th April, 1750, Handel gave a performance for the benefit of the London Foundling Hospital, and the proceeds having been considerable, it was repeated in the following year for the same charitable purpose. Finally Handel, finding that his oratorio had become popular, gave the hospital a copy of the score, and promised to give a performance each year in aid of the Institution. The trustees of the Hospital, wishing to secure the gift legally, drew up a petition to Parliament for leave to bring in a Bill to secure the privileges Handel proposed to confer upon them. It is related, however, that when a deputation was sent to the composer to ask his assent to the measure, Handel flew into a great rage, and exclaimed, "Ted—I! for vat sal de Foundling put mien oratorio in de Parlemt. Te d—I, mien music sal not go to de Parlemt." Handel, nevertheless, fulfilled the pro-