

“Brandes offers a concise biographical sketch nicely illustrated with his personal collection of Schweitzer letters and signed photographs.”

Dr. Albert Schweitzer

ONE OF THE MOST UNUSUAL and interesting if homespun (or should I say PCspun) productions to cross my desk recently is a slim study published under the auspices of the German Autograph Society (AdA)—an active association founded in 1986 whose website, www.autograph-club.org, is entirely in English.

From the Hand of Albert Schweitzer was written by German autograph dealer and AdA enthusiast Markus Brandes. Albert Schweitzer (1875-1965), the Nobel Peace Prize-winning French humanitarian, missionary, physician, clergyman and organist, is the subject of great interest in Europe, though it seems to this writer that interest in him has been on the wane in the United States for quite a few years.

Other autograph studies published in recent years by such groups as the Universal Autograph Collectors Club and the now-defunct International Autograph Dealer's Alliance have strived, with varying degrees of success, to be serious collector guides. The person's signing habits are usually discussed, and most importantly exemplars of secretarial or spousal imitations, Autopens and any other relevant non-authentic signatures illustrated. Known forgers of the person's signature are identified and examples of their handwork are given—and the better guides spell out in detail how to differentiate the good from the bad and the highly questionable.

From the Hand of Albert Schweitzer does not strive to be such a signature study, and cannot be faulted for not going into the handwriting detail that other studies do. Rather, Brandes offers a concise biographical sketch nicely illustrated with his personal collection of Schweitzer letters and signed photographs. Detailed captions describe each item,

thankfully including lengthy transcripts of Schweitzer's minuscule German script into English. Illustrations are plentiful and in full color, ranging from stunning signed photographs to meaty content in signed letters.

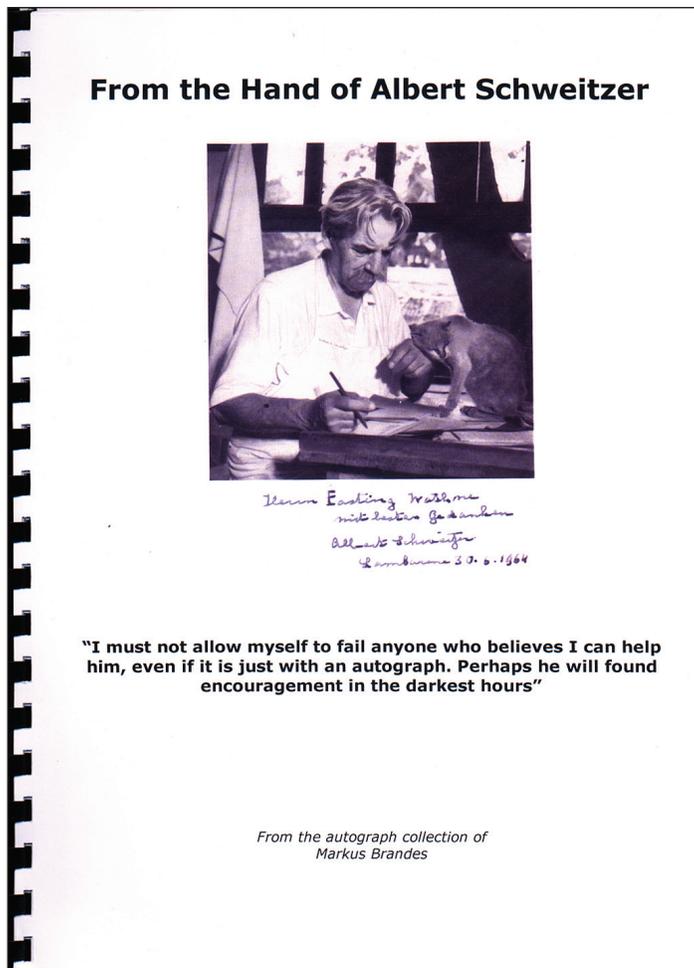
Brandes couldn't resist giving one particular Schweitzer quotation front cover status, so indicative is it of Schweitzer's atti-

supposedly inherited from his mother, which may be why photographs show him clutching his pen awkwardly between the index and middle fingers.

“On Albert Schweitzer's Handwriting,” by contributors Vreni Buttiker and Timur Yukel, are two pages that close out *From the Hand of Albert Schweitzer* with a bang. In it they

quote a 1965 Schweitzer letter in which he remarks, “Miss Mathilde Kottmann, along with two other people...has a handwriting similar to mine, as she has been instructed by me to write small and absolutely articulately. However, what she has signed with her own name, she has written herself, and what I sign, I have written myself.” Unfortunately, Buttiker and Yukel fail to clarify this rather confusing statement. They do record one secretary being upset when Schweitzer asked Greta Curtius, who had a handwriting similar to his, to write dedications in copies of his book on Paul during his absence and to send them off. This lapse they credit to “overwork... it was certainly not done with the intention to defraud.” So apparently while Schweitzer normally signed all letters personally, and penned many of the texts himself, the possibility of secretarial inscriptions and signatures exists.

Brandes' English may be stiff and textbook, the study's design quality typical of self-published productions, but I salute his enterprise in creating such a focused study. Specialized studies such as this are pure gold to the specialist collector. *From the Hand of Albert Schweitzer* gives the autograph collector the largest source of authentic Schweitzer autograph material found anywhere. ⚠



BRANDES, Markus. *From the Hand of Albert Schweitzer*. Konstanz, Germany: Markus Brandes Autographs, 2008. 4to. Stiff mylar wrappers, spiralbound. 49pp. Numerous illustrations. Edition limited to 600 numbered copies. Postpaid \$20.

tude toward autograph collectors, he wrote: “I must not allow myself to fail anyone who believes I can help him, even if it is just with an autograph.”

We learn from Brandes that Schweitzer suffered from writer's cramp from 1930 on,

IMAGE COURTESY THE AUTHOR