

A WEEK'S MUSIC

IN the article on choral music week before last nothing was said about the Elgar Choir of Hamilton. This was intentional. The Elgar Choir was not forgotten; but the writer of the article had not heard this ambitious Hamilton choir—which sang in Toronto last week. This is the second visit of the Elgar Choir to Toronto. They cannot be said to have been overwhelmed with the warmest of welcomes. The big hall was less than half full; in spite of the fact that the Toronto Symphony Orchestra took part in the programme



Mr. Bruce Carey, Conductor of the Elgar Choir in Hamilton.

and played quite as well as the Elgar Choir sang, which is saying a great deal.

Very probably Toronto reckons that she has choral music enough without Hamilton coming over. And it may have been a stroke of poor management on the part of the Hamilton choir that sent them into something of an enemy's camp. Toronto is blandly certain that no living organization ever could oust the Mendelssohn Choir from its pedestal; which is quite true. And along with this patriotic appreciation of its own great choir there has come along rather a bigotry towards outside organizations.

However, the Hamilton choir of about a hundred voices demonstrated that they have no call to be afraid of Toronto criticism. They even succeeded in giving a few of the blasé overfed ones some real thrills on at least one piece—"O Day of Penitence," by Gounod. This used to be one of the Mendelssohn Choir star numbers. Indeed all but two of the pieces on the programme were things in the repertoire of the Toronto choir. There is no harm in this; any more than it is a mistake that the quality of tone and the general style of singing in the Elgar Choir bears a near resemblance to the work of the Mendelssohn Choir, at least in lighter and unaccompanied works. In some respects the character of the tonal work could not be improved for that sized choir. Mr. Bruce Carey, the conductor, who is evidently a very temperamental musician, went hard after what he wanted from his choir, not before he knew what it was. In five years or so he has built up a choral body of which Hamilton should be excessively proud. Up to the present there is certainly no other choir but one in this part of Canada able to compare with the Elgar Choir; and if Mr. Carey keeps on advancing he may continue to show all but one choir a very clean and swift pair of heels.

This is a very desirable thing. It would be better for music all over Canada if the example of the Elgar Choir could be followed in the building up of strong local societies doing choral music. This is what has made England the greatest choral country in the world. Because Sheffield had a tremendous choir, Leeds and Birmingham and Blackpool were not deterred from having choirs almost as great. The fact that Toronto had developed herself into a strong centre of choral work

built about the greatest choir in America was not enough to keep Hamilton from wanting a choir as near as possible to the standard of the best. Years the Toronto choir had journeyed through Hamilton to Buffalo. Every time it did perhaps Mr. Carey determined that he would work all the harder to get a choir fit to compare with the best small choirs in America.

And he has got this. Much is owing to the undoubted stimulus of choral standards in Toronto, whose choral programmes have been copied and imitated in scores of Canadian and American cities. But there is quite enough originality about the work of the Elgar Choir to clear it from the charge of plagiarism. The programme was highly enjoyable from beginning to end. The Elgar number, "The Wraith of Odin," was perhaps the least satisfactory of all except in climactic bits. The work generally seemed to lack snap and character—neither of which certainly was lacking in the much more exacting work of Gounod, "O Day of Penitence." In many essential respects Mr. Carey's production of this piece has never been surpassed in Toronto, at least for that number of voices. He got the results easily without sacrifice of tone quality or pitch. This was by all odds the most delightful number on the programme. The Barcarolle from the "Tales of Hoffman" was the least worth while. Other numbers were the "Ave Maris Stella" of Grieg, also sung in a masterly and quite beautiful style; a three-part song by Elgar for women's voices with orchestral accompaniment in wood-wind and violins—"Fly, Singing Bird, Fly," rather a weak thing in character but well enough sung; and "The Water Lily," a singularly pretty thing of Gade without accompaniment, in which the peculiarly fine quality of tone in the bass section was very apparent.

The assisting pianist, Miss Jean Wood, made a decided hit in her rendering with the orchestra of the "Allegro Molto Moderato" movement from Grieg's concerto in A Minor. Miss Wood is a strong interpretative play-



Miss Jean Wood, Concert Pianist.

er and she succeeded in achieving a really big piece of work in a most difficult number.

Miss Wood was originally a graduate from the Conservatory of Music at Halifax, afterwards going to Leipzig, of whose famous Royal Conservatory she is a distinguished graduate. Her playing with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra was her first public appearance since leaving Leipzig.

The orchestra played quite as well as ever it had done at its own concerts. Indeed that part of the programme, though subsidiary to the choral numbers, was quite as much of a treat as the Elgar Choir. The two organizations are exceedingly well matched and they produce an ensemble such as would be impossible if either were much bigger than the other.

And it is altogether a pity that

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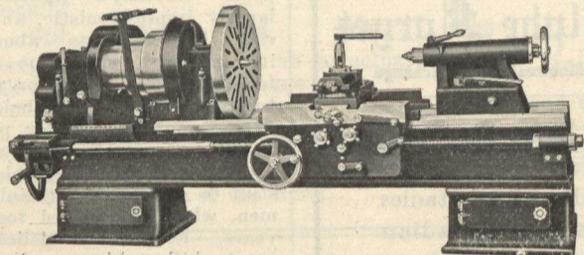
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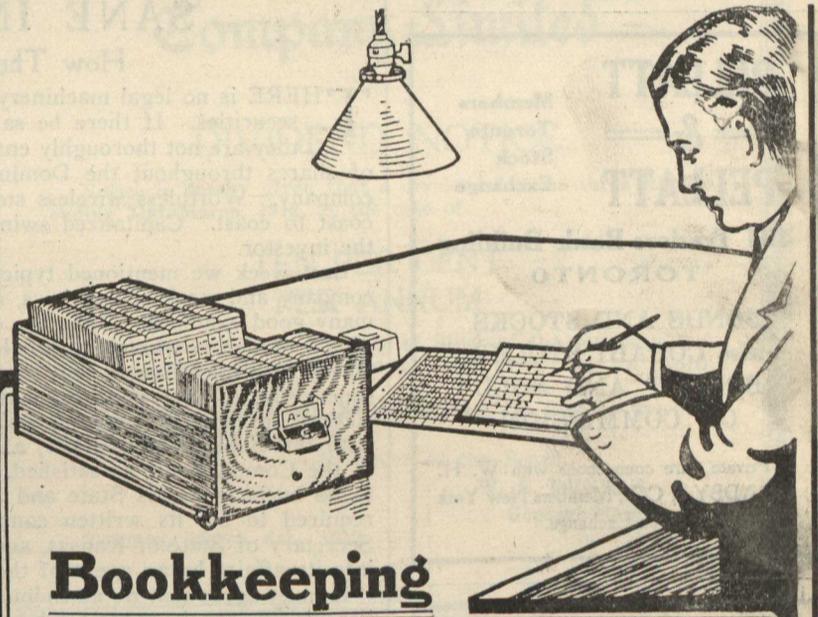
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