

THE
Canadian Courier
THE NATIONAL WEEKLY

Vol. 9

Toronto, November 12, 1910

No. 23

RUSSIAN VIOLINIST IN CANADA

Mr. Jan Hambourg's First Public Recital

STANDING in a stage light, with no vague resemblance to a Mephisto in evening dress, Mr. Jan Hambourg played "The Devil's Trill" to the soothing, supernal accompaniment of a pipe organ. The effect was very fetching. It was by no means vaudeville; it was a touch of musical art with stage colour—and it worked.

The "Sonata del Diavolo," as it was called on the programme, was the second big number at Mr. Hambourg's first recital in Canada, given last week in Toronto, where the violinist, with his father, Professor Michael Hambourg, has recently become established. The hall was filled. There had been considerable curiosity regarding Mr. Hambourg. Why should a man with his alleged reputation as a violinist settle in Toronto, whose musical atmosphere is as



Mr. Jan Hambourg.

yet very nebulous? And there was some inevitable suspicion—of the usual kind based on a certain type of provincialism, which has frozen out big artists before now.

Mr. Hambourg has now been vindicated by a critical Toronto public. Oh, yes, Toronto is sometimes coldly critical; just as she has at times the enthusiasm of a child for imported talent or for home-grown talent bearing the hall-mark of foreign approval. Whereby it happens that while as a rule the press refrains from criticising home productions, the public either damn with faint praise or laud each the production of his clique. Two organisations have succeeded in partially obliterating the parochial lines: the Mendelssohn Choir and the Toronto Symphony Orchestra.

It must be conceded to Mr. Jan Hambourg that he has begun to do likewise. There never has been an outsider come to Toronto to live who gave a first recital to so enthusiastic a critical audience. He had a good deal to face. For though he has given many recitals in London and in most of the music centres of Europe, he had never undertaken to play to an audience among whom he had come to live as the leading exponent of violin music. It is certain that Mr. Hambourg established himself in Toronto criticism as a master of the violin in all its potentialities; as a worthy disciple of Ysaye and of Kreisler, whose Belgian methods he has adopted; as one worthy to be classed among the greatest masters that play to Canadian audiences.

The programme contained almost all sorts of violin music. From the Cesar Franck Sonata, twenty odd minutes in length, to the humoresque, "The Bee," by Schubert the Second; the "Devil's Trill," by Italian Tartini, a big melodic and technical virtuoso piece with a cadenza by Kreisler—written almost two hundred years ago; the romantic "Abendlied" of Schumann, written oddly enough for the piano; the "Introduction et Rondo Capriccioso" of Saint-Saens, pre-modern French and "Le Tambourin" of archaic Rameau, who lived about the time of Tartini; in short, anything out-

side of Russian, which Mr. Hambourg himself, a Russian, might be expected to do even better than any of these.

So in repertoire and interpretation, Mr. Hambourg is an eclectic, as every true performing artist should be. In style, he has the conservatism of years in London, coupled with the fire of Russia; though he looks more like an ambassador than a violinist. He made the Franck Sonata profoundly interesting. This number he had played the day before as an after-luncheon episode to a critical audience, many of them musicians, at the Arts and Letters Club of Toronto; and the audience gave him an ovation. The "Devil's Trill" he had also played before the same club some weeks before. In both he was completely master in his public recital. He has the Kreislerian capacity of making a superb technic merely a means to an end in the production of tone-poetry. He has no tricks; but he has poetic license in his rhythm—and he is a big rhythmist. In tonal production he is conservative. He never over-works his instrument. The result is

great refinement of tone with abundant vitality.

But while analysis of a performer's work is usually disjunctive and sometimes stereotyped, on one thing Mr. Hambourg may congratulate himself from the testimony of those who listen to a thing because they are learning to love it: he is able to make the violin a thing of interest to a critical crowd in a big recital which unless done with great regard for all the essential qualities of violin music, would have been productive of yawns. He does not impress you as a genius or a wizard; rather, as a profound student of the violin with reverence for its capabilities and regard for its limitations.

At the same time, he has established himself as a violin exponent who, with his distinguished father teaching tone-quality on the piano, will do much to increase the reputation of Canadian cities as the home of those who appreciate and encourage the best in art.

Mr. Richard Tattersall, who played the piano and organ for Mr. Hambourg, must be recognised as one of the coming Canadian performer-musicians, who in many respects has already arrived. He has succeeded in combining the qualities of a fine organist with those of a really capable and sympathetic accompanist on the piano. He did much to aid in the success of Mr. Hambourg's first recital.

THE FLAG QUESTION

The somewhat nebulous question of flags in Canada is considerably cleared up by the following letter from Mr. Barlow Cumberland to *Le Canada*, replying from the English point of view to a letter of the Hon. Mr. David in *Le Canada* on that question:

A REMARKABLE, indeed one might say an extraordinary, article on "La question des drapeaux" appeared in your issue of September 29th.

Its author has evidently no liking for "la bannière Carrion Sacre Coeur," which, he says, is proposed by some "remplacer ici le drapeau de la France."

He narrates some excellent historical allusions connected with the history of Canada shown in the colourings of the Carrion Sacre Coeur, which far antedate the flag of present France, and unfortunately for his argument as to its replacement, the Tricolour has never been adopted in Canada, nor has it any connection with its history. It is, therefore, impossible to displace anything which has had no prior authority.

He very truly says, "comme sujets Britanniques notre drapeau officiel est l'Union Jack, le drapeau de l'Empire Britannique. Il est un signe de force, de grandeur et de puissance, et protege tous les peuples, tous les hommes qui vivent sous son egide." But he appears to forget that the French-Canadians had been guarded under the Union Jack in the preservation of their laws, their language, and their religion, and had fought under it in defence of their own country during more than a quarter of a century before the Tricolour flag of the revolution in France was even devised or had any existence.

The Tricolour of modern France was never the flag of the ancestors of the French-Canadians, nor of those of the present day; it has never protected their race nor their religion; nor did it ever appear in Canada until brought in on an English steamer in May, 1854, on which it was raised out of courtesy to the alliance of the British and French armies for united service in the Crimean War. In the celebration of subsequent united victories it naturally came into further evidence.

In Canada the Tricolour has never been other than a flag of courtesy, although, perhaps, there may have been some modern European French among us who have recognised it as the flag of their own nationality.

But your writer goes further to say of the Tricolour, "Il peut venir un jour ou pour proteger les

droits qui nous ont ete garanties par les Traités nous serons heureux d'arborer le drapeau de la France et d'invoquer son secours." This is to express a doubt upon the honesty of British government, to wipe out the fair dealing of a century and a half of Canada's history, and make the Tricolour again the emblem of a revolution.

It is unfair to cast such an aspersion of meaning upon anyone who may raise the Tricolour, even though it be in courtesy. It is quite unfair to make it a note of disunion; a warning signal of disaffection; a prelude to the calling in the intervention of another people.

Your writer, in referring to the Union Jack, says, "Il devrait nous suffire si nous etions anglais."

May I remind him that it is not the flag of the English, but the union flag of the British of all nationalities. Its basis was formed upon the flag of the Norman kings who conquered England, and whose lineal descendant, King George V., now reigns upon the British throne. It represents the Norman-French, the English, Irish, Scots, Australians, Canadians, South Africans, and the myriad islands of the seas, the true British of the world over.

From analogy with your writer's views respecting the Tricolour, the fact of any one raising an American flag should be taken to mean that he desires intervention from the United States.

Such was not the view of the French-Canadians of 1775 and 1812, nor is it, I presume, of those of the present day.

But your writer appears to seek some other local flag for the Canadiens Francais, "qui nous distingue des autres nationalites qui indique notre origine," similarly perhaps as the English have their ancient St. George, the Scottish their flag of St. Andrew, the Irish their St. Patrick. I will not discuss what form such a local flag should take, but an ancient white French cross, or the Fleur de lis upon any flag would be taken to record the history and origin of the French inhabitants of Canada, while the Tricolour of the revolution has no connection whatever with them, beyond a similarity in the language of its people.

The patriotism of the French-Canadians is older than the Tricolour. It is in no way the expression of their history, their heroism, their nationality, or their fidelity. It is the flag of a government in another country, and it would be an indelicacy and a wrong to it to term it the national flag of any part of Canada.

BARLOW CUMBERLAND.