

ENGLISH.

ORATORIO AT THE ROYAL ALBERT HALL.

ELIJAH.

Probably no other composition, saving *Messiah*, whether sacred or secular, could bring together such an enormous assemblage as attended the performance of *Elijah* on Saturday afternoon, Feb. 4th, by the Royal Albert Hall Choral Society, under the conductorship of Mr. Barnby. Oratorio writing, or, as, perhaps it would be more correct to say, oratorio production, had long been at a standstill until the influence of the art of the past decade began to be felt; but Mendelssohn's work having in the interim taken a firm hold of the affections of the people has been able to cope with every species of rivalry, and is undoubtedly at the present time more popular than ever. Whether given on an extensive scale by the old-fashioned societies that appeal to metropolitan amateurs at large or by the smaller local institutions *Elijah* may confidently be relied upon to draw a gathering both great in numbers and interested in the performance. The same degree of favour is accorded it in the provinces. *Elijah* is considered indispensable to the district festivals recurring at stated periods, but this fact does not interfere with the frequency of its repetition by the choral societies, from the ranks of which, as a rule, the members of the choruses of the triennial meetings are drawn. Nowadays the festival of the Three Choirs of Hereford, Gloucester, and Worcester (to be held this year in the first-named city) would certainly not be complete without it, and it would be an altogether exceptional incident were a Birmingham festival to pass without honor being paid to the noble work in the grand town hall in which its sublime beauty and dramatic energy were originally manifested. For a good performance on Saturday of the choral passages there was the assurance furnished by the task being entrusted to the Royal Albert Hall Choral Society, one of the most efficient and reliable bodies of its kind, inasmuch as the resumption of familiar labours is not found to result in indifference or carelessness. The voices are fresh, the musical proficiency is marked, and there is an evident desire pervading each section of the choir to maintain the reputation honourably won. Mr. Barnby is no less fortunate in having such an intelligent and painstaking company of chorists than the latter are in being assembled beneath the baton of such an able conductor. Both the reflective and the more stirring choruses went admirably on Saturday afternoon. There was rugged force in the cry of the erring people to Baal, complaint of want of closeness and of unanimity of attack could not be made in connection with the execution of the occasionally trying choral recitatives, and in the majestic "Thanks be to God"—as fine a climax to a great dramatic situation as was ever penned by composer—there was the full volume of sound reasonably expected from such a choral host. Taken as a whole, the solo parts were also capably rendered. Madame Nordica, who sings oratorio music almost as well as she does operatic, gave the soprano share of the duet between the Widow and the Prophet, as well as the music in the second part, thus reverting to the good old custom that prevailed before it was thought absolutely necessary to engage two leading sopranos for the work. The grand air "Hear ye, Israel" was delivered with excellent perception of the effect intended by the composer, and in the other pieces in which she was engaged Madame Nordica demonstrated the highest qualifications for the position she occupied. Madame Belle Cole was the principal contralto, and compensated for any little disappointment that might have been occasioned by her seeming want of power in Jezebel's declamatory utterances (with which it is by no means easy to fill such a vast space as the Albert Hall) by so exceedingly smooth and devotional a rendition of "O, rest in the Lord," that the applause, notwithstanding the advanced period of the afternoon, would not be silenced until Mr. Barnby consented to a repetition. The air "Woe unto them" was exceedingly well given by Miss Hannah Jones, who was cordially congratulated thereupon, and Miss Julia Nielson should be complimented upon her readiness in undertaking at very short notice the music assigned to the promising Miss Lily Crabtree, unable to sing in consequence of an attack of congestion of the lungs. Mr. Edward Lloyd's execution of the tenor-solos was his own—a term that in this instance is equivalent to "matchless." Mr. Henschel's "Elijah" shows improvement, and,

whatever its shortcomings in comparison with the only "Elijah" of modern times (does not the form of Mr. Santley at once float before the mental vision?) the vocalist must be credited with brave and indefatigable attempts to master the peculiarities of pronunciation of the English language. Minor parts were taken by Messrs. Maldwyn Humphreys and David Hughes, and, from beginning to end, Mendelssohn's instrumentation was given in an irreproachable manner.

CRYSTAL PALACE CONCERTS.

The performances of the pantomime have ceased, and the Saturday afternoon concerts have been resumed. Between now and the benefit concert of Mr. Manns, which, as usual, will immediately follow the last of the present series, room will be made in the programmes for several works by distinguished musicians not previously performed. For instance, Mr. Charlton Templeman Speer's cantata, *The Day Dream* (words by Lord Tennyson) will be given for the first time here, with Miss Shudichum and Mr. Harper Kearton as solo vocalists, and to this attraction will be added a positive novelty in a setting for chorus and orchestra by Mr. Hamish McCunn of Campbell's ballad, "Lord Ullin's Daughter." One of the special items of last Saturday's concert was Dvorak's concerto for violin (Op. 53), dedicated to Dr. Joachim. It had not before been played here, and its introducer was Herr Franz Ondricek, whose qualifications for what we may reasonably suppose to partake of the nature of "a labour of love" are indisputable. The concerto was welcome to the habits of these concerts, and its execution all musicians are glad to again see in this country. Herr Ondricek is a very fine player. The opening piece was Wagner's massive "Overture to *Faust*" (in D minor), which has been so extravagantly praised by Dr. Von Bulow, and the place of honour in the musical scheme for the afternoon was allotted to Mozart's Symphony in E flat, now (with the beautiful G minor and the majestic "Jupiter") within a few months of completing its centenary. With Mr. Manns as conductor, the rendition of both works was admirable. In the absence, through severe indisposition, of Mr. Sims Reeves, the vocalist was Mr. Charles Banks, who sang "If with all your hearts," *Elijah*, with excellent judgment.

The election of a Principal of the Royal Academy of Music, resulted in the choice of Mr. A. C. Mackenzie. His chief competitor was Mr. Joseph Barnby.

It is stated that Her Majesty has "commanded" a special performance of *The Golden Legend*, at the Albert Hall on May 8th. Mmes. Albani and Patey, and Messrs. Banks and Santley will be the chief vocalists. Sir Arthur Sullivan will conduct.

On Saturday, Feb. 25th, St. James' Hall was crowded, as it usually is since Herr Joachim has arrived to take part in Mr. Chappell's classical programmes. The stringed quartet was Schumann's in A minor, op. 41, No. 1, which was magnificently rendered with Herr Joachim as "leader," and MM. L. Ries, Straus, and Piatti as interpreters of the second violin, viola, and violoncello parts respectively. Mlle. Janotha, who is never heard to greater advantage than in the works of Chopin, selected that refined composer's Barcarolle in F sharp major, op. 60, and as an encore piece played the delicious "Berceuse." The pianist was subsequently associated with MM. Joachim, Straus, and Piatti in Brahms' quartet in G minor, op. 25. The other instrumental piece was a movement with variations from one of Spohr's violin duets, played with well-balanced effect by MM. Joachim and Straus. The vocal relief was supplied by Miss Hamlin with Spohr's "Rose softly blooming," and a couple of Mendelssohn's songs.

"DON'T."

Don't forget that there was a Beethoven, young composers.

Don't overlook the fact that there was a Liszt, young players.

Don't forget that vanity is weakness and that it makes people offensive.

Don't praise yourself, let others do it.

Don't be afraid to express your ideas either in tones or in words. Say what you have to say, and be honest about it.

Don't be afraid of the study of harmony.