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and of singing. But the other two were given when the voices had been rested, and they were a disappointment to those Canadians who have heard at least two of Bach's biggest choruses done in a manner that would have made the old forerunner and maker of fugues desire to rise again upon earth. One of these the Sheffields sang with a listless tempo that robbed the work of all the snap and delightful abandon that belongs as a distinguishing feature to all of Bach's melodic harmonies. This was set down by one of the choristers to a "mood" of the conductor.

As to the unaccompanied part singing: this was rather unconvincing. England is the home of the glee and the madrigal, but Sheffield is not evidently the home of ultra-refined part singing. In the first place the programmes contained nothing in this category but English part songs and motets; not a trace of Gounod or Tschaiikowsky; of Palestrina or of Brahms or Cornelius; nothing more European than Sullivan and Boughton and MacFarren. This may be patriotic; but it looks somewhat like parochialism. If the Sheffield Choir have European unaccompanied repertoires and had taken trouble to turn up programmes of the Mendelssohn Choir, they might have discovered that Toronto at least has for years been listening to finer things than most of the English motets, madrigals and glees. Furthermore, there was no particular art in singing a hackneyed old melody like "Banks and Braes," and singing it without apparent preparation and with flatness of tone.

Much of the unaccompanied work was ragged. The conductor did not seem to be over regardful about the nuances and the sustained pianissimos; neither as to attack and release of tone; for in this sort of work the voices have a prime chance to show either how good or how bad the training may have been. We cannot say that Dr. Coward is a great trainer in unaccompanied choral music. He is too headlong. He suffers from lack of restraint. There is not the silken finish and the clean-cut, razor-like crispness about the Sheffields' performances in this work that the most critical Canadians would have liked to observe. At the same time there was a good deal of native art and splendid feeling about some of these pieces.

Of course even for the average performances of most of these things the choir got boundless applause. Our audiences are very kind sometimes. We have a strong love for the old flag and we like to have our English cousins visit us; like to have them sing to us or talk to us or act for us, or do anything for us that they know well how to do. But there are a few hundreds of people in the Massey Hall clientele who will encore any mortal thing on a programme because they want to avoid the odium of discrimination. Heaven knows some of the solos given us by the Sheffield Choir would have been more benevolently let go without an encore. But we fetched them all back; in so doing we showed that we were having a good time, and doing our best to show our English cousins that we appreciated their visit.

In the *Dream of Gerontius*, Dr. Coward undertook to make a fresh display of what his chorus could do. He succeeded. This work is a tax on choristers. It is also something of a choral anomaly. Why it was not scored for orchestra alone or for the opera stage is not clear. It seems hard for a stout, red man in a dress suit to personate a dying white soul by a deal of musical phantom talk, no matter how well he may sing—and

Mr. Brearley did his part with a true artistic finish. The Sheffields did the work here with organ and piano in place of orchestra, which was a risky thing to do; and the fact that they carried it through in the main so magnificently stands as a mark of great credit. Vocally the choir did its best work in this oratorio meant for an opera. Their work was dramatic and full of strength; highly convincing in interpretation and done with splendid response to the conductor. The much talked of "demons' chorus" proved to be a thrilling performance marked by a resort to the super-dramatic; some rather cacophonous "ha-has" being understood by some critics as the essence of scornful drama in singing; and so they might have been if the choristers could have been staged as imps and snarling devils instead of being ladies and gentlemen in evening dress.

Finally, we were glad the Sheffields came. They have taught us the real imperishable love of song; the undying heart interest in choral work; the wholesome devotion to a form of art of which in the north of England they have plenty and of which in Canada we are beginning to see the true native worth in culture. Most we are sorry for is that the press agents took the trouble to advertise this chorus as a world-beater in order to get big crowds; for we all like to see and hear the thing that tops the list. Candidly, when we think it all over we are inclined to think that Dr. Coward and his admirable choristers brought with them a good share of the proverbial British forbearance towards colonials who might have been expected to be strangers to the best in choral art; something of what Lowell after his British ambassadorship called "a certain condescension among foreigners." And it is a trifle awkward that whereas in most Canadian towns and cities the work of the Sheffields must have been a gospel of pure high art, in the capital of Ontario for some years back we have been hearing choral utterances that made us critical and inclined to scold.

Altogether the visit of this Choir will be of immense benefit to Canadian choral music. We are sorry that our cousins have had to work so hard. Heaven knows they should have given no more than a concert a day, but the box office decreed otherwise. So that if we have received our co-workers with enthusiasm we have also worked them like horses. We only hope that when they come to look back upon this visit to the first Dominion in the Empire they will forget the hardships and the railway bumps and the long ship voyages and the weary hotels and the cold skating rinks, and remember chiefly that we were mighty glad to welcome them and to hear them sing; that we hope they will come back again and bring with them the best they have in choral singing, for the best is none too good for Canadians and we firmly believe that these English folk have the best with them somewhere.

A word as to the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, who did a difficult work nobly well. We are sure that our English singers appreciated the work of this organisation, which is now less than two years old; and if it continues to do as well and to progress as rapidly for another two or three years, the Toronto Symphony ought to be able to go into concert with the best of our Canadian choirs for at least one or two concerts in a season. With the advantage of being able to rehearse for a month with the choir, this orchestra should be able to give a better account of itself in concerted work than an imported organisation which has to get along with two or three rehearsals. A. B.

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