

Canada's Great Choir

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work a fresh glimpse of the meaning of life and the joy of life as well as its deep, simple sorrows and its far-off religious meaning brought close and intimate to the soul — must be quite too blase and trifling to have much hope in this world or the next either. It was a time to forget the restrictions of common life; to revel in the pure and perfect appreciations of childhood; the time when in the words of the great child's poet, Wordsworth, "meadow, grove and stream, the earth and every common sight, to me did seem appalled in celestial light, the glory and the freshness of a dream." For the perfect achievement of that and without and reference whatever to the colossal character of the music of the modern French master, the clientele of the Mendelssohn Choir do feel profoundly grateful to Dr. Vogt and the choir. It has been in most respects a labour of love. On the part of the choir it has meant such self-sacrifice as might almost have prompted a crusade in itself; on the part of the conductor a work of drilling and of interpretation and of reading and of fine whole-souled conducting such as he has never before achieved.

In this respect the "Children's Crusade" marks a distinct epoch in the work of the great choir. Its production on so stupendous a scale reaccentuates the remarkable genius of A. S. Vogt for organisation and the controlling of forces. As a conductor he never appeared to so good advantage. The work is highly complicated, so that no man who has not a faculty for immense detail, coupled with the most rigorous preparation of the work in rehearsal could



Mr. Frederick Stock.

Whose Symphony in C Minor was given its first performance in Canada last week.

subdued parts of the work where the genius of the modern Frenchman found full expression in the most enchanting harmonic effects, particularly in the men's sections. It must be admitted that in this respect the glory was bound to be divided mainly between the men and the children. The women's parts were largely an accessory which at times seemed almost ungrateful. But the children and the men and the orchestra had things much their own way. The solo parts are well scored and were for the most part well done; though Mr. George Hamlin is too light for the tenor part.

Taken altogether the work made just as much of a sensation as could have been either hoped or endured. The impression on most was rather baffling. The net result was a sense of great humanising beauty such as has never been compacted into a choral work in any performance in Canada. It was possible to have left a far different impression. The Choir had its own reputation to maintain. It also had to blaze a new trail in both performance and interpretation. They did both. The weakest part of the performance was perhaps the octette of women who sang two passages under great disadvantage.

The other outstanding feature of the festival was the afternoon concert which was given by the orchestra assisted by Mr. Ferruccio Busoni, a really remarkable pianist. Busoni played with wonderful technical accuracy and a good deal of poetry; but with much less fire than might have been expected from one of his race; for he is a Latin — but he never smiled or went into a frenzy. The Stock symphony must be taken with some tolerance. Perhaps the Englishman was a little extreme who went to the box office to buy

a ticket, thinking that the Symphony in C Minor was by Beethoven, and when he found it was composed by Mr. Stock, conductor of the orchestra, refused to buy the ticket. At any rate there were many people in the audience who rather forced themselves to believe that Mr. Stock had made any real contribution to the literature of symphonies. Apparently the composer has been deeply and irrevocably affected by Richard Strauss and the modern French school. In that respect the first two movements were strongly reminiscent and not very original. The third movement had some real melodic quality. On the whole the work was much what might have been expected from a man of Mr. Stock's temperament. Some said it was better than Elgar's. Eheu! Elgar should be notified. Others compared it with Paur's symphony given in Canada last year under his own baton. Well, so far as mere form is concerned, Mr. Stock has the legitimate advantage. In form his work is a symphony; but in musical meaning Mr. Paur's is worth more to the inch than Mr. Stock's is to the foot—and it is not a symphony at that. Mr. Stock is undoubtedly a capable composer. But he is a prose essayist in musical writing; by no means a poet; which means much.

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