

maxim that all Government contracts were awarded to the lowest tenderers.

"Ah," put in the soft voice of Mr. Mackenzie, as though a great light were breaking upon him, "then we may understand, sir, that you were the lowest tenderer for this lawyer job."

Members on both political sides joined in the roar of laughter which followed.

WHAT kind of fallacy was that which the rigorous and rigorous training of the copy-book of yore used to teach. "Birds of a feather

flock together"—not much! Listen. It was when the recent warclouds broke over the Militia Department; when erstwhile Tory editors fired slander writs at the head of the Minister, and that warrior bold was breathing threatenings and defiance. All this was bad enough; but think of bringing the representative of the newspaper edited by Rev. J. A. Macdonald and Col. the Hon. Sam Hughes together in one room in the midst of such disturbing happenings. The correspondent came to interview the Colonel. He found the military man in his room. The Colonel gave the interview, pacing the floor,

throwing out scorching sentences. As he warmed up—and those who know the Minister know how such a proceeding must play havoc with the thermometer—he walked to the window, and threw it up. Almost immediately a fearless pure-white dove, looking for warmth and shelter, flew in at the window and gravely settled on the back of the soldier's chair. The man of war capitulated. The warlike interview was withheld. He pointed to the fair feathered visitor. "The Dove of Peace wins," quoth he, with a smile, "I'll say nothing now."

The Boston Symphony Orchestra

By THE MUSIC EDITOR

LAST week, after an absence of eight years, the greatest orchestra in America, and in some respects the greatest in the world, one hundred players in a programme of Beethoven, Wagner, Strauss and Mendelssohn, played to a Canadian audience. The total seat sale was under three thousand dollars. The amount received by the orchestra was two hundred dollars less than their regular charge for an engagement on their regular circuit. On the day of the concert, when it was known that through a severe illness the conductor, Karl Muck, could not be present, and that the associate conductor would be at the desk, a large number of people went to the box office and asked for their money back to the extent of \$340. Notwithstanding the fact that the programme was carried out in every particular and the orchestra present in full strength—all as advertised.

That is one picture in outline.

Here is another. Two years ago the greatest choir in America, and in some respects the greatest in the world, went to Boston from Toronto by way of New York. This choir has been so often compared by leading critics in the United States to the Boston Symphony Orchestra, that the musical public have come to consider them coequals. The choir sang in the hall that belongs to and was built by the Boston Symphony Orchestra through the perennial munificence of Col. Higginson, the orchestra's sole guarantor. The audience was the most critically cultured that Boston could produce; the people that are accustomed to the best orchestra season in America. According to the best newspaper accounts of this auspicious visit of a Canadian choir to the musical centre of the United States, the enthusiasm of cultured Boston amounted to an ovation. Seats were at a premium. The visit was an event in the musical history of Boston, never to be forgotten.

BOSTON is evidently too enthusiastic. But the Boston Symphony Orchestra will be a long while paying a return visit to what is known as the music centre of Canada. The public that crammed even the choir seats behind the stage to hear Ysaye the week before, left several hundred seats vacant when the orchestra played—and some hundred of them were money-backs. All the fifty-cent seats were taken, however.

And the orchestra were not in Toronto to make money. Even at their regular charge for a concert, the management would lose money, which it does, counting in its home season free of rent and traveling expenses to the tune of \$70,000 a year. Because this band of a hundred men are the highest salaried symphony orchestra in the world. Practically every man is a virtuoso. No such body of men has ever been heard in Canada before. The nearest approach to the Boston standard of personnel ever heard in this country was the London Symphony, that played here last spring under Nikisch, and there were seats vacant even for that.

It would be too much to say that Canadian audiences are unappreciative of good orchestral music. To say so would mean that Canadians are unmusical. Yet we are told that Canada is a very musical country. We spend vast amounts every year on music of all kinds. The concerts of the Mendelssohn Choir are always to capacity audiences. The concerts of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra are seldom given to even a few empty seats. In both cases local pride has something to do with the result. In one—no doubt a good deal depends on the solo artists hired to assist the orchestra.

Comparisons are usually tiresome. The people who were fortunate enough to hear the Boston Orchestra will long remember it as they do the programme given under Nikisch last year, as something of a revelation.

That Dr. Karl Muck was not at the desk made little, if any, difference to the real character of the

programme. The Boston Symphony Orchestra would be a treat if conducted by a grandfather's clock. We do not know what Dr. Muck would have done. We only know that for years he was the conductor of the Royal Opera House in Berlin, where Richard Strauss is the musical director—when the Kaiser isn't looking. We know that for two years, and up till two years ago, he had the Boston Symphony till he was recalled to Berlin by the Kaiser; and that what this great orchestra is now is due more immediately to what he made it than to Fiedler, who had it last, or Gericke, who antedated Muck, or Paur and Nikisch, who came before Gericke.

Since hearing it last week people are wondering what the orchestra really owes to the marvelous associate conductorship of Otto Urack, who has charge of many rehearsals and takes the concerts whenever the conductor is unable to attend. To look at, Urack is nothing but a youth; a slim, thin-shouldered, sharp-faced boy, whose solo instrument is the 'cello. In the whole band of a hundred men was none that looked so youthful as he; but many who were virtuosos before he was born. There were musical scholars in that orchestra who were acquainted with all the great masters when Otto Urack was a nervous, white-faced lad, stuttering at the 'cello in Berlin.

When he glided on to the stage to begin the Fifth Symphony of Beethoven—he was received with about as much enthusiasm as a corpse gets at a graveside. The symphony was familiar enough. Its many great melodies and tone-colourings and dynamic climaxes, even though less than half so mysterious as Berlioz, the famous annotator—so copiously quoted in those learned Boston programmes—made out, were given in the best traditional style of the orchestra that has played it hundreds of times. In so well-defined a big field of tone-poetry expression, made legitimate and authoritative by all the great modern conductors, there was little for a youth like Urack to do by way of trail-blazing. But it was a great performance. Perhaps it might have been as great with Urack sitting in the green-room smoking a cigarette. The orchestra seemed to know it in their sleep. The conductor merely made a moving picture of their performance. To the audience it came as a tremendous familiarity that never can become commonplace. The melodies alone of the first two movements—especially the Andante—are of the kind that make the amateur anxious to jot them down on the edge of his programme and haunt him most of next week. Half the mystical lore written about this work is sentimental moonshine of a very intellectual character. But even with the handicap of the Berlioz descriptions, the work was profoundly impressive.

We may dismiss the Mendelssohn Concerto by saying that the orchestra did the accompaniment with a magnificent subordination to a solo instrument played by Mr. Anton Witek, considerable of a technician, but woefully lacking in colour. His instrument seemed to be tonally indisposed. He himself was in good enough fettle. He knew the work. He struck every note with absolute precision. And he provided an opportunity for the orchestra to show what it could do by way of really interesting the people—many of whom heard Elman play the same thing a few weeks before.

But it was in the "Till Eulenspiegel's Pranks" of Strauss that the youth-conductor began to demonstrate that he was a real master at the desk. Urack spent several years, under Strauss at the Berlin Royal Opera. He knows Strauss from the inside out. It was a piece of extraordinary description. With the most mediocre of conductors it would have been a great, interesting novelty. With Urack it was a most graphic and gorgeous burlesque, with

the outlandish character of a Tale of the Arabian Nights.

Still more impressively in the hackneyed Vorspiel to the Meistersinger, played twice in the same hall during the previous month, Urack showed that he could drive the Boston Orchestra of a hundred virtuosos as Ben Hur drove his chariot, reins in one hand and whip in the other. I don't think Nikisch did any one thing greater so far as it might go than this young man did with the Vorspiel. He was as daring as Rodman Law, who climbs New York skyscrapers with his hands and feet, or Bold Turpin on the heath. He chucked his score and his self-consciousness and he sailed in to recreate Wagner with the fine frenzy of a Valhallan. It was truly magnificent. It was so devilishly fine that it seemed altogether worth the \$340 of money back at the box office.

TO follow the Flonzaley Quartette within ten days with a programme quite as exacting would have been a species of audacity if the Toronto String Quartette were not such an efficient body of players. The programme of this corps of players a few days ago contained a Beethoven Quartette, a Dvorak, a Grieg and a Rauchenegger; as discreetly balanced a programme as has ever been heard in Toronto. Between the Beethoven and the Dvorak lies a large gulf of variety in character. For the absolute perfection of form the quartettes of Beethoven and Haydn and Mozart and some of Mendelssohn cannot be surpassed. Much of Beethoven's best work was written for a small hall and a small body of players. Except for the occasional oddity of rhythms caused by accents placed on the last beat of a bar, there is no reason why a fairly efficient body of amateurs should not do at least isolated movements from Beethoven or Haydn. The difference between such a performance and that of the T. S. Q. would lie mainly in subtleties which only a professional corps are able to achieve; such qualities of tone and colour and rhythmical nuance as make the real ultimate character of the work as a piece of painting. The beauty of these old writers, however, is that their works are so conventionally perfect in form that good amateur players are able to get what might be called a good "black and white" reproduction of the painting without sacrificing the temper of the audience. That is impossible with most of the modern writers; absolutely so with Debussy, mainly so with Dvorak, and for the most part Grieg.

In the Dvorak number of three movements, however, there was an agreeably fine element of real grateful melody well brought out by the instruments. In the Rauchenegger number there was much more of this, beautifully and consistently balanced among the first violin, viola and 'cello. The T. S. Q. have played together so long and studied each other so intimately that they are able to give the real lyric value to such passages without making any obligato instrument too prominent. This is the kind of thing that can only be got by experience and mutual knowledge of the players; the quality that the Flonzaleys and the Kneisels have in the highest possible degree. It is a great satisfaction to the critically appreciative clientele of the T. S. Q. to note year by year the development of this agreeable refinement of ensemble playing and the gradual elimination of the nervously over-worked string. Chamber music is of the most exacting character when done for the purpose of bringing out the full quality of the best works for four instruments. It is far more exacting than playing in a symphony orchestra, which the Flonzaleys never do. Amateur chamber music players anywhere in Canada—and there should be many such, for this kind of music is feasible where even small orchestras are out of the question—would do well to study the programmes of the T. S. Q. for suitable material of the very best character.