

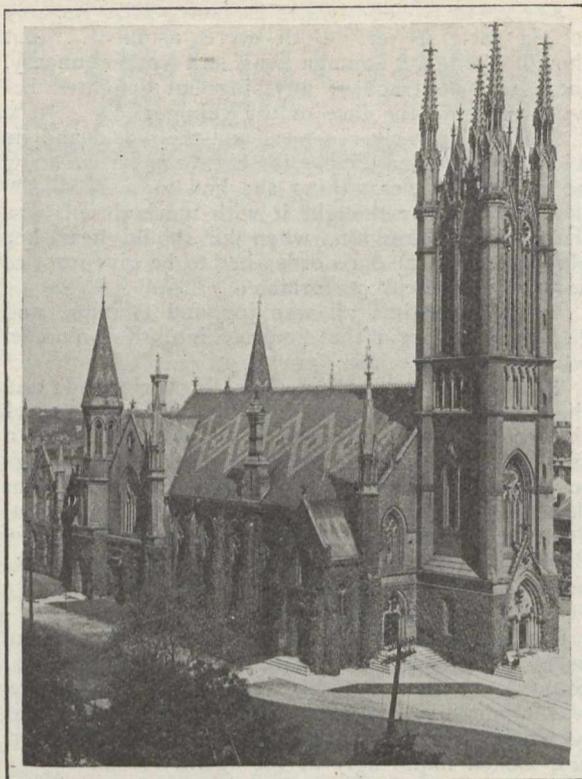
parisons here are futile, for while Mendelssohn's success is undoubted in the overture and following chorus, it must be admitted that Handel, in this short solo, has demonstrated his genius with a directness and simplicity which Mendelssohn has seldom, if ever, equalled.

The solos in the two works present striking differences. In the Messiah, perhaps the two which exhibit the most vivid contrasts are, "He shall feed His flock," and "Why do the nations rage?" For simple pastoral beauty, perhaps the former stands alone in the realm of music. No elaborate accompaniment, no sudden modulation, clever imitation, or any of the devices used by many composers are needed here to enhance the charm of this matchless song. "Why do the nations" is of a totally different type. Undoubtedly the finest part of this air is the orchestration, which would in itself be a splendid selection, even without the voice part. The tumultuous raging of the people is here portrayed in a most realistic manner. Of the other solos, "I know that my Redeemer liveth," calls for special mention, and is considered by some the finest in the work. It is, however, a difficult song to interpret well, and while its beauty is beyond question, it is rarely given full justice.

In Elijah, "Oh rest in the Lord," is the best known, and with many considered the finest of Mendelssohn's simpler songs. It is a question, however, if Mendelssohn here is the equal of Handel. It is a proof of genius to be able to do much with little, and Handel generally achieves his end in such matters as these with simpler means. Some of the other solos, however, might be singled out as especially meritorious. The first, for tenor, "If with all your hearts," is certainly a master stroke—Mendelssohn is truly appealing here, and the melody has a freshness and individuality seldom equalled in any other part of the oratorio. However, the air, "Then shall the righteous," surpasses it in popularity, but the effect is here obtained largely by the orchestration, which is particularly fine. "Hear ye, Israel"—especially the latter part—shows the composer at his best in writing for a high voice. This is the chief soprano solo in the work. The air, "It is enough," deserves special mention for the clever obligato given to the 'cello.

Of the choruses much might be said did space permit. If a criticism of Handel were to be made, it could truthfully be said that many of his choruses are too much alike, and also too complicated. The listener's interest is never so keen if he knows that the structure of any chorus is likely to be the same as its predecessor. The fugue subjects of many of the Messiah choruses are too long. If Handel had used the massed chorus oftener, as Mendelssohn has done, he would oftener have produced more telling effects. Such choruses might be cited as "And He shall purify," "For unto us," and "All we like sheep." Handel too often writes his choruses so that few—unless they be highly trained musicians—can follow certain parts with anything like interest or pleasure. In the case of the Hallelujah chorus, the composer's expert musicianship, while apparent enough to all, has not the unfortunate effect of detracting from the grandeur and impressiveness of the whole chorus. The last chorus, "Amen," is unique, and one of the most remarkable examples of choral writing in existence. Handel has evidently exhausted all his wonderful powers in this chorus—the seemingly simple themes are built up by one part upon the other till the hearer is lost, yet not bewildered, in the wonderful mazes of tone.

Mendelssohn's choruses in many instances equal Handel's in grandeur, and possess more variety of form. Of course, Elijah is essentially dramatic throughout, which would account in some measure for this difference. Yet, this is not wholly responsible, for Handel's "Samson" is intensely dramatic—yet nothing like Elijah. When Mendelssohn wishes to be impressive his choruses take on a peculiar psalm-like effect, which often approaches the sublime in religious fervour. It is impossible to conceive of a more impressive treatment than Mendelssohn has given to the words—"He is a jealous God." Several places the same style of music is introduced, which has the particularly church-like tone, intensified yet more by coming, as it occasionally does, after something of a vastly different nature. The three Baal choruses, with the interjections by the prophet, thrill the listener as the high expectancy of the people grows more and more manifest. In the chorus, "Thanks be to God," too, Mendelssohn's genius is wonderfully displayed. Voice parts and orchestra are wonderfully contrasted, and the whole forms a masterpiece which singles this chorus out for special commendation. "Be not afraid" is bold and strong, with a massive church-like ending. The intensity of Jezebel's and the people's fury against the prophet is another unique part of the work. The beautiful trio, "Lift



The Metropolitan Methodist Church, Where Dr. F. H. Torrington Was Organist and Choirmaster for More Than Thirty Years, and Whose Good Friday and Easter Services Used to Attract People From Other Towns Than Toronto.

thine eyes," is a triumph of simplicity and grace—unfortunately it is seldom rendered as it deserves to be. The ethereal charm of this angelic trio is

such that many voices are too indelicate for it.

Thrilling in its intensity is the chorus, "Behold, God the Lord passeth by." The wind, earthquake and fire can be almost felt and seen, after which follows one of the most peaceful movements imaginable, describing the still, small voice.

Of the concluding choruses, nothing but praise can be given. Elijah's translation is realistically depicted; the change of key and accompaniment in rapid triplets, suggesting, in a striking manner, the appearance of the heavenly cohorts which were to convey the prophet from the scene of his sorrows, struggles and triumphs. The concluding chorus is masterly in every sense of the word, and while it cannot be put in the same class as Handel's "Amen," yet it is an achievement in fugal development and massive finish which Mendelssohn has rarely surpassed.

In the employment of the orchestra, there is one difference which must impress every one who heard the two oratorios. In the case of Handel, the orchestra is used both before and after the voice parts in the solos, to play over the principal theme. With Mendelssohn, this feature is absent, the composer having written only a few bars as a prelude, and a few at the close.

Now, while it may be traditionally correct to give the Messiah solos in this way, it is certainly unnecessary, and it also takes up a great deal of valuable time. Many beautiful parts of the Messiah are nearly always omitted, and these repetitions—tiresome because unnecessary, are retained. When a solo in Elijah is concluded, Mendelssohn adds a few bars of orchestration as an artistic finish, but he never repeats the chief theme over again. When the singer has finished, who wants to hear the same thing over again, often hurting the impression the singer has made, and irritating the waiting audience who are impatient to applaud? This is something that needs remedying.

## The Festival—Easter

By AUGUSTUS BRIDLE

EASTER is by nature the most beautiful festival in the calendar. In the evolution of the human race it is a much older festival than the one which has made civilization loosen its pockets and purses so lavishly about the 25th of December. Christmas, somewhat vaguely associated with the shortest day in the year, is not as we understand it in the Christian era, older than 1912 years. Easter was a festival long before that among the ancient races that peopled the north of Europe. Nobody ever heard of a festival of eggs and spring millinery originating in the tropics. Only in north countries have both Christmas and Easter been given their just place among the seasons. Easter Sunday, whose exact date depends on the phases of the moon following the vernal equinox, is practically the day when spring comes to the north land.

But of course the particular style of Easter so far as Canada is concerned may be about as different as a Lochieux Indian on the Peel River differs from a grape-grower on Pelee Island; which is about the limit of extreme latitude in this country. The Mackenzie River will be a month or more bound up in the ice after Easter Sunday 1912. The old-timers in Edmonton will be laying bets on when the Saskatchewan begins to move—within a few days after Easter. The ice will still be coming down the great lakes. Navigation will scarcely have begun even on Lake Ontario. The St. Lawrence channel will still be blocked with ice. Only at the cities by the sea will the ships be moving.

But Easter has really nothing to do with navigation as a phase of commerce. However much we have overloaded poor old Christmas with trade and business, we must at least let leisurely, amiable Easter have its own pagan abandon. The boy down on the farm—does he still hide eggs in the hay—now, when eggs are just beginning to climb down from a sixty-cent perch? Does he still hike away with the neighbour boys to the bush or the beach, with a basket of eggs and a camp kettle and a package of salt? Perhaps not.

But the farmer looks abroad over his fields at Easter and wonders if the ice is smothering the fall wheat; when he will be able to get out with the plough; what the frost has been doing to the clover. He squints through the barn and estimates that his hay-mow is getting pretty low after a hard winter's feed; his strawstack is whittled away.

In the city, also, Easter has its own relaxing charm. The spring bonnet is not the only sign manual of Easter on the street. Lent, to be sure,

drags her solemn, somewhat farcical length towards the day when the most pious churchman may consume a plethora of eggs, and as many kinds of meat as he feels able to afford, fetch up his light wines from the cellar, and scan over the list of social engagements made by the family for the next few weeks. Lent is a paradox; the season of the year that nobody bothers much about on the farm, and many city folk who still retain the observance regard it largely as a custom and somewhat as a bore.

But Easter is welcome to any man. Perhaps it is a coincidence that it has as much to do with the spring of the year as with certain prescribed ritual and music in the churches. The ancient pagans who celebrated the revival of all nature knew nothing of a religious resurrection, unless by analogy. The modern pagans who buy Easter millinery and eat eggs and generally jubilate over the disappearance of Lent in its trail of weary winter, are not always profoundly concerned with Easter hymns and anthems and oratorios. But the music of Easter is full of beauty; not less than the music of Christmas. The old hymn, "Christ the Lord is risen again," to its somewhat Lutheran and bump-tious tune is not to be compared to "Hark the Herald Angels sing!" or "This is the day and this the happy morn." But Gounod's Easter oratorio, "The Redemption," is in many respects a much more beautiful work than Handel's "Messiah"; though more modern, more operatic, more refined in its orchestral treatment, less fugal in its choruses and not nearly so flamboyant in general style. Still G. F. Handel did his Christmas oratorio more than a hundred years before Gounod did his oratorio for Easter. And in the meantime one Richard Wagner had come along; and he also in his "Parsifal" music drama had some very sublime pagan music devoted to Good Friday.

It makes little difference how literally people believe in the doctrine of crucifixion and resurrection. Even doctors of divinity differ as to details of this drama. Doctors of philosophy and doctrinaires who profess to know precisely how the soul-body coheres in the physical body, have all sorts of theories as to the phenomenon of a soul-body appearing to the natural eye as one in the flesh and being wafted into the unseen. So that plain, busy folk, whose main business six days in the week is to pay bills, may be pardoned for just the opportunity of being glad about the spring weather, the new hats, the flowers and palms in the churches, and whatever really good music there is; and being quite certain that the whole blessed matter is a miracle.