

MUSIC AND DRAMA



Mr. Frederick Stock,
Conductor of the Theodore Thomas Orchestra.

of Beethoven's Choral Symphony. It would have been difficult to imagine anything more exalted than their unfolding of that flower of choral genius; yet the last week has displayed a strengthening of fibre and a touch of rounding grace here and there which indicate the conductor's eternal vigilance, the price for artistic development, as for political freedom.

Grieg's dramatic cantata, *Olaf Trygvason*, that wonderful outburst of Norse poetry and harmony, was rendered with a realistic vigour which appealed to the audience with such effect as only the finest effort can attain. The delineation of the impassioned resistance of the Odin-worshippers to the new faith ended in a magnificent chorus of thanksgiving which fairly swept the hearers back to the centuries when Odin and Thor swayed the northern imagination. Miss Janet Spencer, contralto, and Mr. Gwyllim Miles, baritone, were the assisting soloists. Lotti's *Crucifixus*, which was a unique number in last year's list, was repeated, greatly to the satisfaction of those to whom its exquisite tone-balances are the very spirit of melodious worship. Palestrina's *Hodie Christus Natus Est*, a Christmas motet for double chorus, with the harmony of the first choir, answered antiphonally by the second, the final union of movement being the richest tone-blending, produced a tremendous effect. But to many the most hauntingly beautiful number of a memorable programme was the Christmas song by Peter Cornelius for contralto solo and eight-part chorus. The andante nature of the choral movement, whose slowness is made to harmonise with the freer solo measure produces a final devotional effect which is a perfect consummation. Miss Spencer's solo work in this number was of the most delicately clear and soaring quality. There is in her voice that definiteness of tone which gives the outsider to understand Browning's line:

"The rest may reason and welcome; 'tis we musicians know."

Then came a burst of sportive harmony, Howard Brockway's setting of that daintiest spring song, "It was a Lover and His Lass," in which the composer has caught the joyous Elizabethan abandon which made the Forest of Arden enchanted ground forever. Sir R. P. Stewart's *The Cruiskeen Lawn* was flung off as gaily by the Choir as if no technical difficulties nor rhythmic complications were involved, with the natural consequence that the audience vociferously demanded another tip of the *cruiskeen*. The concluding choral number was *Blest Pair of Sirens*, Sir Hubert Parry's setting of Milton's stately ode. It is one of the most frequently sung of British compositions at the leading English festivals. The great Puritan poet's rhapsody on those harmonious sisters, Voice and Verse, is given majestic choral transcription by the modern composer, for which the double choir and orchestra afforded vocal and instrumental interpretation which, in Milton's own *L'Allegro* lines:

"Untwisted all the chains that tie
The hidden soul of harmony."

The Theodore Thomas Orchestra under Mr. Frederick Stock formed such an alliance with the Mendelssohn Choir as led one to hope that they may never be put asunder. The orchestra numbers were, for the most part, familiar to the audience, thus giving an opportunity for the appreciation which arises from inevitable comparison. Clearness of phrasing and delicacy of interpretation, united with a noble vigour in the bolder passages combine to render this Chicago organisation the most artistic which Toronto has heard since the Boston Symphony Orchestra sent thousands of enchanted citizens homewards. The wind in the Beethoven overture, *Leonore* No. 3 was exquisite in quality, and the Strauss *Serenade* further displayed the supreme finish of this section of the orchestra. In the closing number, Liszt's symphonic poem, *Les Preludes*, the orchestra won a genuine triumph which was achieved by superb "musicianship," the finale of that colourful composition being such magnificent harmony as reached the "ninth wave" of orchestral effect. There was but one verdict on the Thomas players and that was of an enthusiasm which makes their annual appearance devoutly to be wished. We may be reminded that Toronto was stupidly indifferent in 1896 but that it has learned since then is largely due to the splendid perseverance of Mr. A. S. Vogt, whose motto has ever been *plus ultra*.

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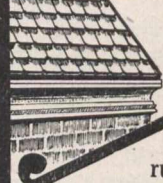
OTTAWA has been enjoying musical events of the highest class during the last fortnight. On Thursday night last week, Madame Nordica of the golden voice delighted a large audience at the Russell Theatre. The New York Symphony Orchestra, under Mr. Walter Damrosch, also made a highly favourable impression on the hearers who were treated to an "all-Wagner"

It would be interesting to know the composition of the audience at the opening night of "Mendelssohn Week." Someone hazarded the guess that there were music-teachers and choir-masters from all corners of Ontario, anxious to learn something of Conductor Vogt's secret of leadership. There was enthusiasm everywhere—either of expectation or assurance.

The three concerts already given this week have been of such variety that every temperament should find satisfaction. To-morrow night will be reminiscent of "old times," like the fifth Toronto concert of last year, as the Choir will be unassociated with the orchestra, having for assisting artist the famous pianist, Mr. Josef Hofmann who is fresh from Californian triumphs, and also the baritone soloist, Mr. Claude Cunningham.

The Mendelssohn Choir has grown in the graces of musical development with the year that has gone since their second rendering

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