

mise he had made, and the eleven performances under his direction in aid of the hospital, from 1750 to 1759, realised \$34,000. This is a touching history of his generosity, especially when it is remembered that he conducted these performances in person up to 1758, and that he became *blind* in 1753. After Handel's death, seventeen performances were given from 1760 to 1770, and we are told, on the authority of Dr. Burney, that the hospital gained an addition to its funds of \$50,000 from this one source. It is scarcely necessary to follow the history of the *Messiah* further than to say, that in 1798 Mozart wrote his additions to the instrumentation, to serve as a substitute for the organ accompaniment which Handel used to add when presiding at that instrument. The charitable work that Handel commenced has been continued up to the present day, and the London Sacred Harmonic Society make it a practice to give the *Messiah* every year for the benefit of distressed musicians, so that it has truly been said of it, "It has fed the hungry, clothed the naked, and fostered the orphan."

The performance of the *Messiah* by the Philharmonic Society, on the 11th ult., was given by way of experiment in the Grand Opera House. A more disastrous step could scarcely have been taken, for, from a musical point of view, the whole thing was a failure. It required no extraordinary perception to discover that under existing arrangements the Opera House is quite unfitted for the representation of oratorio. The acoustics of the house are defective, and a large proportion of the performers having to be placed at the back of the stage, the choruses were rendered indistinct in outline, and sounded comparatively insignificant. It would, however, be unfair to lay the whole blame of the very level performance upon the Opera House. The orchestra, which had been reinforced by Mrs. Morrison's orchestra and several members of a Buffalo band, had evidently not had a sufficient number of rehearsals. Indeed, it is doubtful whether the violinists who came from the other side had ever played the music of the *Messiah* before in their lives. There was not the slightest pretence to uniformity of bowing; each player seemed to phrase and take the passages as best suited his peculiar style or convenience, and the result was that the beautiful accompaniments were disfigured, and often made to assume a character quite inconsistent with the elevated nature of the oratorio. Had not the Society been put to great expense for the purpose of securing the services of these foreign musicians, there would have been no occasion to dwell upon this point; but we may be allowed to complain if the outside material was of indifferent quality. The soloists were Mrs. Grainger Dow, of Boston (soprano), Mr. Simpson, of New York (tenor), and Mr. Egan (bass). Mrs. Dow, although the possessor of a flexible and

brilliant voice, misinterpreted the solos that fell to her share in a manner that led us to believe she was quite out of her element in oratorio. She *improved* upon Handel to an appalling extent—introduced shakes and other ornaments that were entirely out of place, while her singing throughout was marked by a want of sympathy or understanding. Mr. Simpson, whose voice is of fine quality, was unmistakably the most successful of the soloists, and the public will doubtless be glad to hear him again in Oratorio. The exquisite recitative, "Comfort ye," was sung in most chaste and finished style, and under his treatment the music was truly in harmony with the words of consolation to which it is wedded. Equally satisfactory was his rendering of "Behold and see," which he sang with great pathos. It was regretted that on one or two occasions he slightly departed from the text. Mr. Egan, it was apparent, had not sufficiently rehearsed his part, and in justice to him it must be said that it was generally understood he had received short notice that his services would be required. Our amateurs, Mrs. Osler, the Misses Dexter, and Miss Madison, sustained their parts creditably. The choruses, owing to the disadvantageous position of the singers, did not go so crisply as usual. Had the stage been effectually boarded in at the back and sides, as well as above, the effect might have been improved. The chorus, however, struggled bravely against the acoustical difficulties, and delivered the "Hallelujah" with something like their wonted fire. It was observed that during the singing of this number, the audience adopted the English custom of rising *en masse*. It has been erroneously supposed that this is a mark of respect to the more than ordinarily sacred character of the chorus. The explanation may be found in the following extract from Beattie's Letters, published in 1820:—

"When Handel's *Messiah* was first performed, the audience was exceedingly struck and affected by the music in general; but when that chorus struck up, "For the Lord God omnipotent," in the Hallelujah, they were so transported, that with the King (who happened to be present) they started up and remained standing till the chorus ended. This anecdote I had from Lord Kinnoul."

The practice, therefore, is merely an act of homage paid by the English public to the memory of the composer, as they do not rise at the Hallelujah chorus in Beethoven's *Mount of Olives*, and other oratorios. In concluding our notice, we must not forget to add that the conductor was Mr. Torrington, who presided with his usual care and ability. It is hoped that Mr. Torrington will give us an opportunity of becoming familiar with the *Israel in Egypt*.

A concert company, under the management of a Mr. De Vivo, visited Toronto last month, appearing at the Grand Opera House on Fri-