

MUSIC

A MOST remarkable entertainment, last week at the Toronto Conservatory of Music. Never before was there one like it in this country. An audience of seventeen at a long table on a high stage. A choir of 200 scattered about at tables on the floor of the hall; sopranos, basses, altos, tenors—all mixed up as informally as a crowd in a street-car; then the conductor behind his own plate and a bunch of daffodils—and the most bewitchingly blended quality of tone imaginable from what may still be considered as the greatest choir in the world. You have guessed that it was the Mendelssohn Choir. And the occasion was the valedictory dinner given by Sir Edmund Walker, C.V.O., to Conductor Dr. A. S. Vogt, who is handing the great choir over to Mr. Fricker, of Leeds—to arrive July 1. The programme contained five numbers, ending with the finale "Britons Alert," from Elgar's *Caractacus*, a piece of magnificent choral enthusiasm never before, we suppose, tendered to an audience of 17. Speeches unmentionable—anyway not mentioned—by the chairman, Sir Edmund Walker; by the Choir's President, Mr. W. H. Parkes, asking the conductor to please allow the Choir to have his portrait painted by E. Wyly Grier; by Dr. Vogt; by the members of the Choir presenting a formal address of appreciation; by W. H. Rundle, honorary vice-president of the Choir—and others. It was a rare occasion.

Sir Edmund Walker said two things about Dr. Vogt that are worth repeating: No man in Canada has ever yet done so much to realize his vision of art—as Vogt. This is a highly psychological statement, even for Sir Edmund. Also—A. S. Vogt is nothing so much as a real Canadian. This is not psychological. So far as we know, nobody in that crowd ever openly suggested that A. S. Vogt was ever anything else. There is really no reason why he should be. He was born in Canada, made his reputation and did his life work here. What else could he be?

Fricker is Progressive

APPARENTLY there is nothing mediaeval about Mr. Fricker, the successor to Dr. Vogt, at the desk of the Mendelssohn Choir. One of his latest unconventional feats is turning Elijah into a smoking concert for soldiers. We imagine this is the first instance on record of any such delightful blasphemy against the name of Mendelssohn. The entertainment took place in Leeds as part of the Music in War-Time scheme of that musical metropolis. But it was never intended by Mr. Frickers to give a nicotine version of Elijah in the first place. It was a case of the growth of an idea. For two years now it has been the business of the War-Time music organization to give concerts in hospitals and camps. Mr. Fricker for some months past has been in the habit of taking volunteers from his Leeds Philharmonic to sing in the wards of the great hospital in Beckett's Park. Out of this grew the idea of giving Elijah for the benefit of as many soldiers as possible in the Leeds town hall, of which Mr. Fricker is the able organist. The entire Leeds Philharmonic volunteered, along with the Leeds Symphony Orchestra. The performance is said to have been brilliant. Mr. Fricker is a live conductor. If he adapts himself to Canadian choral conditions as aptly as he does to wartime in his own country he should carry on the Mendelssohn Choir to—

But, of course, this is mere speculation. Mr. Fricker will have some things to learn. Toronto is not Leeds; neither is Ontario Yorkshire. As organist of the Metropolitan Church, Toronto, he will be able with his degree from Cambridge to carry out the express wish and design of Mrs. Massey-Treble who, in her will, specified that the great organ for which she had paid about \$40,000, should thereafter always be played by one possessing a Mus. Doc. degree from either Oxford or Cambridge. What on earth a Mus. Doc. has to do with good organ-playing we don't know. But Mr. Fricker will probably be able to demonstrate. He will have one of the most complicated organs in America to negotiate. The present incumbent of the bench there is Mr. T. J.



Palmer, who has not a Mus. Doc. of the kind specified in the testament. His immediate predecessor was Mr. Weatherly, who went back to England.

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Huneker's Pianograms

J. G. HUNEKER is always saying something unusual about music. In last Sunday's New York Times he has an article on the vanishing of the grand air among modern piano artists. It seems there is no grand manner left now to our great expounders of ivory messages. But the most asserting thing about the article is the way Huneker hits off the horde of pianists whom he has heard in the past forty years.

Anton Rubinstein, he says, displayed the grand manner. Notwithstanding the gossip about his "false notes," he was, with Tausig and Liszt, a supreme stylist. He was not always in practice and most of the music he wrote for his numerous tours was composed in haste and repented of at leisure. It is now almost negligible. The D minor concerto reminds one of a much traversed railroad station. But Rubinstein the virtuoso! It was in 1873 I heard him, but I was too young. Fifteen years later or thereabout he played his Seven Historical Recitals in Paris, and I attended the series, not once, but twice. He had a ductile tone like a golden French horn—Joseffy's comparison—and the power and passion of the man have never been equalled.

On a hot night in 1876, and in old Association Hall, I first saw and heard Teresa (then Teresita) Carreno. I say "saw" advisedly, for she was a blooming girl, and at the time shared the distinction with Adelaide Neilson and Mrs. Scott-Siddons of being one of the three most beautiful women on the stage. Carreno to-day, still vital, still handsome, and still the conquering artist, was in that faraway day fresh from Venezuela, a pupil of Gottschalk and Anton Rubinstein. She wore a scarlet gown, as fiery as her playing, and when I wish to recall her I close my eyes and straightway as if in a scarlet mist I see her, hear her; for her playing has always been scarlet to me, as Rubinstein's is golden, and Joseffy's silvery.

Eugen d'Albert, surely the greatest of Scotch pianists—he was born at Glasgow, though musically educated in London—is another heaven-stoimer. I heard him in Berlin four years ago, at Philharmonic Hall, and people stood up in their excitement—Liszt redivivus!

It was the grand manner in its most chaotic form. A musical volcano belching up lava, scoriae, rocks, hunks of Beethoven—the *Appassionata* Sonata it happened to be—while the infuriated little Vulcan threw

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emotional fuel into his furnace. Eugene d'Albert, whether he is or isn't the son of Karl Tausig—as Weimar gossip had it; Weimar, when in the palmy days every other pianist you met was a natural son of Liszt—or else pretended to be one—he has more than a moiety of that virtuoso's genius.

I think it was in 1879 that Rafael Joseffy visited us for the first time; but I didn't hear him till 1880. The reason I remember the date is that this greatly beloved Hungarian made his debut at old Chickering Hall (then at Fifth Avenue and Eighteenth Street); but I saw him in Steinway Hall. Another magician with a peculiarly personal style! In the beginning you thought of the aurora borealis, shooting stars, and exquisite meteors; a beautiful style, though not a profound interpreter then. No one has ever played the E minor Concerto of Chopin as did Joseffy. He had the tradition from his beloved master, Tausig, as Tausig had it from Chopin by way of Liszt.

In the same school as Joseffy is the capricious de Pachmann; with Joseffy I sat at the first recital of this extraordinary Russian in Chickering Hall (1890?) This last representative of a school that included the names of Hummel, Cramer, Field, Thalberg, Chopin, the little de Pachmann (he was bearded like a pirate), captivated us. It was all miniature, without passion or pathos or the grand manner, but in its genre his playing was perfection; the polished perfection of an intricately carved ivory ornament.

After de Pachmann—Paderewski. And after Paderewski? Why, Leopold Godowsky, of course. I once called him the superman of piano playing. Nothing like him, as far as I know, is to be found in the history of piano playing since Chopin. He is an apparition. A Chopin doubled by a contrapuntalist. Bach and Chopin. The spirit of the German cantor and the Polish tone-poet in curious conjunction. His playing is transcendental; his piano compositions the transcendentalism of the future. Dramatic passion, flame, and fury are not present; they would be intruders on his map of music. The piano tone is always legitimate, never forced. But every other attribute he boasts. His ten digits are ten independent voices recreating the ancient polyphonic art of the Flemings. He is like a Brahma at the piano. He is a pianist for pianists, and I am glad to say that the majority gladly recognize this fact.

From 1888, when he was a wonder-child, Jozio Hofmann's artistic development has been logical and continuous. His mellow muscularity evokes Rubinstein. No one plays Rubinstein as does this Harmonious Blacksmith—and with the piety of Rubinstein's pet pupil. I once compared him to a steam-hammer, whose marvellous sensitivity enables it to crack an egg-shell or crush iron. Hofmann's range of tonal dynamics is unequalled, even in this age of perfected piano technique. He is at home in all schools, and his knowledge is enormous. At moments his touch is as rich as a Kneisel Quartet accord.

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A Play Without Words

PIERROT THE PRODIGAL paid his first visit to this country last week. He may come back as soon as he likes. There never was a pantomime like this in Canada. Most pantomimes are sleepy affairs. Pierrot sparkled every second. The average p.m. is three parts guesswork. Pierrot was as explicit as a nursery rhyme. A common Rube could have followed it. And in every detail of stage business it was as finished and as beautiful as a tray of diamonds. It was all a sort of silent language, set to music. It had the character of a dance. It had the vivid delineation of the movie. And it was both a comedy and a tragedy. Gestures and dumb show were never so eloquent.

The story? Here it is.

Pierrot is a prodigal son of thoroughly French villager parents. He falls in love with Phrynette, the golden-haired laundress—a siren. She will not take him without heaps of money. Renot has more. He steals his father's frugal earnings and decamps with

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