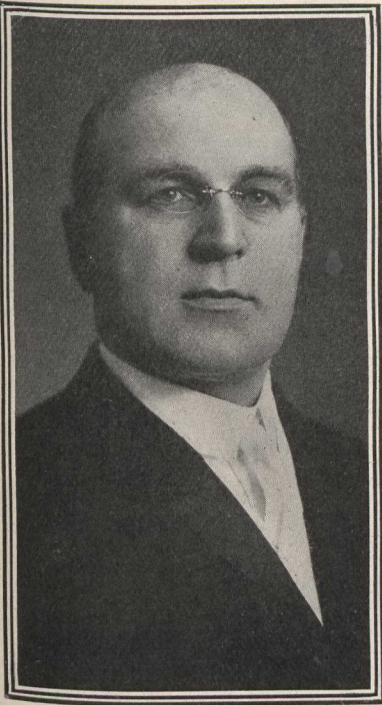


MUSIC AND DRAMA

THE first event in this year's cycle of Mendelssohn Choir concerts was marked by the proverbial attendance, and the thousands who packed Massey Music Hall last Monday night went away fully per-



Dr. A. S. Vogt
Conductor of Mendelssohn Choir

suaed in their own minds that in this chorus Canada is safely superlative. As this is the year and month of the Mendelssohn Centenary, it was becoming that the first two numbers on the programme, orchestral and choral, should be the compositions of the genius so fittingly named Felix. The overture, "A Midsummer Night's Dream," was a breath of sheer witchery, blown across the century from 1826, when the boy Mendelssohn dreamed it in a German garden. The Theodore Thomas orchestra showed the ethereal quality of wood-winds and strings in this exquisite "fairy music" and made one realise the justice of the critic who called Mendelssohn "a Theocritus among the musicians." The choral number, "Judge Me, O God," the lyric setting of the 43rd Psalm, afforded evidence once more of Dr. Vogt's absolute devotion to the best, and his indefatigable endeavours to secure perfection of tone and balance. The Eaton Faning chorus, "How Sweet the Moonlight Sleeps" was a purely poetic setting of Lorenzo's melodious address to his Jewess love. The "Lullaby" for chorus and orchestra from Elgar's "The Bavian Highlands," is a delightful movement in which a mazurka is interwoven with a soothing cradle-song, and was interpreted by both players and chorus with a charming appreciation of its varied phases of light frolic and tender sentiment.

Those who heard the Mendelssohn Choir sing "By Babylon's Wave" in Buffalo last year would have vowed that it could not be done better, but in the *adagio* movement especially, as sung last Monday night, there was a depth of dramatic feeling, hardly realised before. This Gounod chorus always evokes applause of a rapturous order and its latest reception was no exception to the rule. The Brahms' "Song of Destiny," for chorus and orchestra, afforded an arresting contrast to the impassioned psalm rendering, the former being a severely spiritual treatment of the themes of celestial and earthly existence, with the intellectual breadth and serenity of the purest art. The Kremser chorus for men's voices, "In Winter," proved one

of the most popular features in the programme and the Canadian voices gave a crispness to the exacting finale which was absent from the interpretation of the Vienna Maennergesangverein, as given in Buffalo two years ago. The Howard Brockway setting of the gladsome "Hey Nonino" brought the golden time of the Forest of Arden into our workaday world and the closing choral number, "The Challenge of Thor," from Elgar's "Saga of King Olaf" was a magnificent burst of Norse vigour and defiance. The ruggedness of the heathen warfare, finding its climax in "Force rules the world still, the swift nuance of 'Thou art a God, too, O Galilean,' and the reiterated challenge of the dauntless closing, 'Here I defy Thee,' were splendidly magnetic and brought such a wave of applause from the audience as fairly swept the conductor to the front once more, to give the Thor ballad again.

The most eagerly anticipated orchestra number was doubtless "The Dance of the Seven Veils" by Richard Strauss, which proved, in sensuous Oriental colouring, all that its New York critics had written, affording a curious following to Brahms' silvery "Heavenly Existence." The love scene from the Strauss' "Fire Famine" was possessed of the same



Mr. Frederick Stock
Conductor of Theodore Thomas Orchestra

voluptuous and glowing harmonies, and was exquisitely interpreted by the Chicago musicians. One of the most charming orchestral features was the overture, "Donna Diana," by Reznicek, in which the *staccato* quality of the violins was most effectively displayed. Anatole Liadow's weird *tableau musical*, "Baba-Yaga," was a picturesque Slavonic witch-dance. But what shall be said of the best of the wine, poured at the last of the feast? Toronto has not heard for many a day such a superb burst of supreme orchestral effect as the "Ride of the Valkyries" and its almost unearthly brilliance will not be forgotten.

The first concert of the Mendelssohn cycle was of such a character, as to intensify the desire that the Choir, so marvellously trained by the man who has made its excellence the finest expression of his art, should be heard, not only in the great centres of this continent, but in the older lands across the seas—by Sir Edward Elgar himself.

* * *

MR. JAMES K. HACKETT, the Canadian actor, opened a fortnight's engagement at the Royal Alexandra Theatre, Toronto, this

week, in such romantic favourites as "The Prisoner of Zenda" and "The Crisis." The new play, "A Son of the South," is to be put on next week and Mr. Hackett will doubtless prove a popular hero in that romantic drama also. The Royal Alexandra has made quite a feature of Winston Churchill plays this season, as "Mr. Crewe's Career" has already been on the season's course of entertainment. Mr. Hackett has been greeted as an actor coming to his own people, who appreciate his talents and the success they have brought him. As *Rudolf Rassendyll* in "The Prisoner of Zenda," he is especially attractive and enters with spirited fervour into the personality of Mr. Anthony Hope's Quixotic yet fascinating adventurer.

* * *

THE name of Coquelin has meant the finest achievement in modern dramatic art to all those acquainted with the European stage. An English correspondent of the *Courier*, signing herself *Anglaise*, sends us the following tribute to the famous Frenchman:

Coquelin dead! When the news flashed across the wires to all parts of the world on Wednesday, January 27th, that Constant Coquelin was no more; many must have been the deep regrets on all sides, that this famous French comedian, who delighted so many audiences, in whatever country he happened to be performing, had passed away at the age of sixty-eight.

Who that has seen him in "Cyrano de Bergerac" will ever forget his wonderful acting as the hero, in that admirably poetic play of Rostand's? Always fantastic, a real humour, yet often with such pathos in it, that though the laugh was on our lips, the tears were already glistening in our eyes. He always carried his audience with him into the real life of the play. In "Cyrano de Bergerac" his vigorous attacks on the courtiers concerning his nose, his delicately tender love scenes with Roxane, and finally his fight with death in the park of the convent, in which scene he indeed surpassed himself, were vividly real to all spectators.

But what better eulogy could he have than the author's dedication of the book: "C'est a l'ame de Cyrano que je voulais dedier ce poeme. Mais puis qu'elle a passe en vous, Coquelin, c'est a vous que je le dedie."

His roles were many, and whether as Mascarille in "Les Precieuses Ridicules," the old servant, Noel in "La Joie Fait Peur," as Eugene, the pseudo-interpreter, in "L'Anglais tel qu'on le parle," or Flambeau, the old soldier, in "L'Aiglon," or in "Tartuffe," "Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme," "Le Voyage de Monsieur Perrichon," and many others, he showed that thoroughness and devotion to his art, which marked him out as the premier French comedian. Like many other actors, in the early stages of his career, at the Theatre Francais in Paris, one day just as he was walking on to the stage, he was smitten with stage-fright, and could not remember his part, he turned to the leading lady in dismay, but all the help she gave him was to say between her teeth:—"Parle donc petit animal!"

Coquelin was devoted to art, and was well known for his splendid generosity, he had built a beautiful home for distressed actors and actresses at Pont-aux-Dames near Paris, in the midst of delightful grounds. He was looking forward to appearing ere long in Rostand's "Chanticleer," for which rehearsals were in progress, and for this arduous task he was taking a few days' rest at Pont-aux-Dames, where he was taken suddenly ill, and died.

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