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An Appreciation

Having been present at the Eleanor Mews Recital in the Synod Hall, on last Tuesday evening, I thought I should like to share with my fellow-citizens who were not so fortunate as to be present, something of the pleasure which I and others experienced.

Despite other attractions the Hall was full. St. John's has had several previous opportunities of hearing this talented young singer, and its musical population were eager and willing to give its most artistic songstress a close hearing. Rarely has a singer here been so fortunate as to get such a responsive audience, and its effect was to add to the artist's brilliance. Miss Mews opened with a group of six half-century-old German songs, "Der Nussbaum" and "Wenn ich in deine Augen seh" received skillful treatment, which created a perfect background for the vivacity of Wolf's "Mausfallen-Sprachelein." With a surprising change came Wolf's second item "Anakreons Grab." The concluding numbers of this group were Brahms' "An die Nachtigall" and "Meine Liebe ist grün," which revealed a rendition worthy of the Master. These latter two were eminently suited to the singer, and were songs in which she was able to display her surprising capabilities. Following

the German group came a cello solo by Mr. Alex W. Mews, and his rendition of Mendelssohn's "Romance sans paroles" was glorious. Group three was listed on the programme as "Childe's Songs sung by Prunella," and the audience with a pleasing reminiscence of Miss Mews' rendition of Nursery Rhymes was prepared for a treat. Scarcely had they expected that a singer could so portray a fresh personality as Prunella did, when she opened with Maurice Beasley's "Second Minuet." Were she not entitled to the term by her past performances, Miss Mews surely gained a right to be truthfully termed an artist by her handling of these simple, lovely songs. Her very selection of them was artistic. We shall all remember the delicate and liquid quality of tone as she imitated the singing of the fairies. Mr. Mews was again heard to good advantage in Franz's "Widmung" and Schubert's "Peace." These two are amongst the selections that seem indisputably linked with cello work. Their depth and character lend themselves most admirably to this father of stringed instruments and so eminently is the music wedded to the words that it seems to be self-expressive. In the costume of a Sicilian peasant lad, and with the personality of that Pietro whose songs she sang Miss Mews next opened with a group of Sicilian songs. Her serenade, light and melodious, with her long sustained floating tones, enabled one to visualize the romantic Latin wooing his lady, whilst with a sudden change came "Ero la vo," a lovely crooning cradle melody. From those to that old Adriatic fishing song "In mezzo al mar" conjured up another scene, of blue waters, and tiny boats, of silver-like fish being hauled from the depths and the tolling fishermen joining in their musical voices to create a happy toll. Miss Mews' genius seems to lie in her ability to portray in the minds of her listeners the very picture she is painting with her glorious voice. Though languages may differ the language of music is universal, and the vocalist seemed to be speaking a universal language and telling her audience about all the lovely things that she knew of. So truly did she accomplish this that for some moments the sombre surroundings of the hall faded away and one was deftly transported to the sunny

fields and seas of Italy. But an even greater treat and finer exhibition of talent was at hand. Mr. Mews as the cellist, and Mr. Gordon Christian, L.R.A.M., at the piano, were an ideal pair for the "Overture and Intermezzo of Macsen's masterpiece "Cavalleria Rusticana," and in "Vol to Sapete," Miss Mews as Santuzza, and her sister, Miss Marjorie Mews as Lucia, gave expression to one of the most tragic scenes in all Grand Opera. What expression she put into her love story, and what anguish was depicted in her despair! This is surely Miss Mews' masterpiece, for here does she reach the sublimest heights of dramatic expression and here does her voice realize its true function. Her despairing wail and deep seated passion, the avowal of love, and final heart-breaking despair is worthy of wider fields than we have to offer her. Many can sing, and others have the dramatic touch, but not often are both to be found so wonderfully balanced as in Miss Mews.

Mr. Alex Mews was heard in a final cello solo from the Largo of the New World Symphony, wherein Anton Dvorak pays a tribute to the hemisphere on which we live. Its beauty suffered nothing at the hands of Mr. Mews, who was accompanied by his wife, who one always remembers as an accomplished pianist. The final group consisted of five songs in English, "Silent Noon," "The Crying of Water," "The Traction Engine," "O Men from the Fields" and "The Letter." Of them all, Miss Mews was heard to the best advantage in Padric Colum's "O Men from the Fields," and Campbell-Tipton's "The Crying of Water." These songs she interpreted most exquisitely, and they displayed to advantage her control and steadiness in the softest of tones—a most difficult feat for a singer.

At the close of the concert a grateful audience gave the singer the tributes that she so justly deserved, and the finest possible tribute, when it left her the National Anthem as a solo. So eager were they to get the last joy of her singing that her rendering of the Anthem was followed as closely as any of her numbers. Miss Mews' voice delights one, her dramatic power holds one, while her versatility astounds one. Added to this she is already making a name for herself as a teacher of singing. We bespeak for her many honours in the world of song. With a true realization of her gifts she has always been ready in the past to come forward and assist all charitable causes and has not been selfish with a power that should be the world's.

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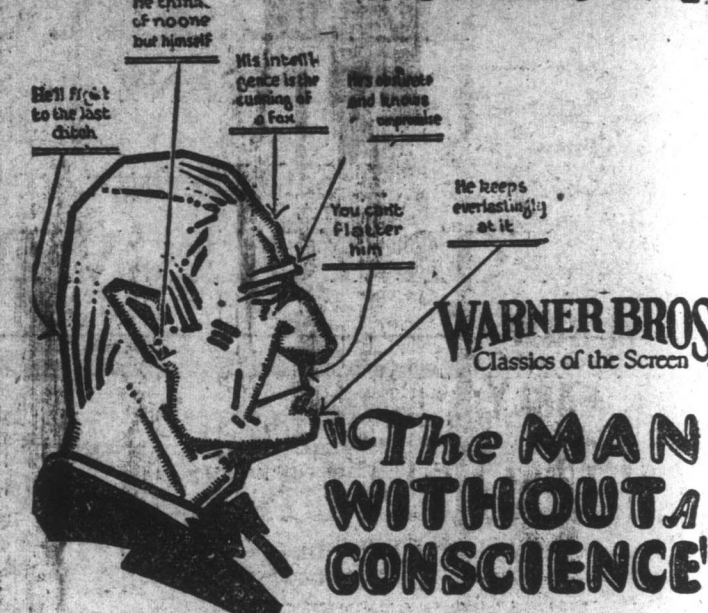


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