

A REMINISCENCE OF THE ROYAL VISIT TO INDIA



The famous eight camels of Benares in the great Calcutta Pageant witnessed by Their Majesties. Photo by L. N. A. Staff Photographer.

given on Tuesday night: the "Vita Nuova," by the Italian-German modern composer, Wolf-Ferrari, set to the quaintly beautiful and melancholy text of Dante, concerning Beatrice; and the "Te Deum," of Hector Berlioz, composed in honour rather of Napoleon than of the subject of the piece.

The latter may safely be omitted from the category of appreciation. It is without doubt a magnificent creation of musical noise, abundantly taxing the resources of choir, orchestra and organ, and exploiting quite fully the remarkable though bizarre genius of Berlioz. As most of the critics have already said, it came as a very heavy dessert after a full meal and was not appreciated as it might have been. Actually it succeeded in obliterating the grateful impressions of the much bigger work of Wolf-Ferrari. A similar case of this occurred a few days ago in the first rendering of the German Requiem which was followed by an orchestral programme. No doubt in the light of experience, if the Choir again perform the "Vita Nuova" the management will prelude it with a suitable orchestral number as a curtain-raiser; thus giving a hundred late-comers a chance to hear the beautiful prologue without looking through glass doors, and enabling the audience to go home just as the "Vita Nuova" is finished.

This was the only flaw in an otherwise perfect programme. The Vita Nuova is a tremendously interesting work; quite as revolutionary as the Children's Crusade of Pierne given for the past two seasons—though written much less for the choir of children. It typifies well the radical, almost revolutionary evolution of this great choir that seemed to have reached a culminating point in Pierne's sensational work last year and the year before. But of course there is a reason for this. And the reason why the Mendelssohn Choir chose to sing the Vita Nuova with its almost exotic wealth of modern colouring and sang it so tremendously well, might shed a deal of light on what has been the real development of that organization.

Here was a work that called for the singular coaggregation of an immense adult choir capable of the highest virtuoso performance; of a large, well-voiced and finely trained choir of children as an auxiliary; of two solo singers, soprano and baritone; of the entire modern orchestra—numbering ninety-five men—though without resorting to the circus tricks of one Strauss; of two harps, a piano and a pipe organ.

This more than operatic and almost fabulous co-ordination was performed without an apparent hitch. The simple, most idyllic neo-tragedy of Dante was given a tone interpretation and a musical colouring absolutely gorgeous in character. The tonal climaxes were at times almost overpowering—if less bewildering than some of those in the Children's Crusade. Harmonic unconventionalities of

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EARL GREY PRESENTED WITH FREEDOM OF LONDON



At the Guildhall, London, Earl Grey was presented with the freedom of the city. He is in the centre; Lady Grey on his right; the Lord Mayor on his left. At extreme left are Sir Vezey Strong, Sir G. Truscott, Sheriff Hanson, and Sir F. Fulton, recorder (with wig).

Photo by L. N. A.