

Kent and Sussex Courier

13th May 1910

GREAT HALL, Tunbridge Wells.
WEDNESDAY, MAY 25th,
AT 7.45 P.M.

On the occasion of the deeply-lamented death of HIS MAJESTY THE KING, an

"In Memoriam" CONCERT

is arranged for by
Mr. FRANCIS J. FOOTE'S CHOIR

And Professional Orchestra of
Nearly 200 Performers,
when that grandly impressive work, viz.,

VERDI'S REQUIEM,
will be performed.

The Choir and Orchestra will wear mourning. The platform will be draped. The Orchestral Drums will be muffled.

The audience is respectfully requested to wear mourning and to **Abstain from ALL Applause.**

His Worship the Mayor, the Deputy Mayor, the Town Clerk, and many other influential Ladies and Gentlemen will participate in this unique function. Tickets at HERMITAGE, High-street, and Opera House Studios.

PUMP ROOM, Tunbridge Wells.
Monday, Tuesday & Wednesday,
MAY 23rd, 24th & 25th.

H. G. GROVES begs to announce
Special Exhibitions of Living Pictures

Depicting the

FUNERAL PROCESSION

Of His Late Majesty

KING EDWARD VII.

conveying the Royal Remains in Solemn State with Full Military Honours from Buckingham Palace to Westminster Hall.

The Funeral Procession from Westminster Hall to Paddington. The Funeral Procession at Windsor.

There will also be shown Living Pictures illustrating the Notable Events in the Life of the Late King. Proclamation of His Majesty George V. on May 6th in London, also at Windsor, on May 11th.

Each Morning at 11.30; Afternoons at 3; Evenings at 6.30 and 8.

PRICES OF ADMISSION—Mornings and Afternoons (Reserved Seats, 1s. 6d.); 1s. and 6d. Evenings (Reserved Seats 1s.); 6d. and 3d.

Reserved Seats may now be booked at H. G. Groves, The Pantiles Post Office. Telephone 191.

Many tributes of loyal affection have been paid throughout the Empire to the memory of a beloved monarch since the passing of King Edward the Seventh to his eternal peace, but none has been more reverent, none more inspired, none more solemn than that offered at Mr. Francis J. Foote's "In Memoriam" Concert at the Great Hall last evening. With the accomplished conductor's well-known sense of the fitness of things, he made the performance of Verdi's "Requiem," the ambitious work which his choir have been rehearsing for three months, the occasion of a public memorial to the illustrious dead, and in this offering of Art he has had the support of many distinguished people in Tunbridge Wells and the surrounding neighbourhood. The presence of the Deputy Mayor and Corporation gave to the concert an official importance that is more than gratifying to those outsiders who have watched with growing enthusiasm and admiration the great work that Mr. Foote has been quietly and unostentatiously performing in Tunbridge Wells for Art's sake, and it is hoped that these civic dignitaries may not confine their encouragement and support to this concert only. We have spoken of the "Requiem" as "ambitious," but that is a very mild term to apply to the intricate and complicated work with which the work abounds. That the town should possess a choir and a conductor capable of doing justice to such a noble and inspired piece of writing is something of which Tunbridge Wells should be not only proud but jubilant, for it is an asset of which few towns of the size are possessed. It is not only upon the production of the work that Mr. Foote has carried the congratulations of musicians, amateur and professional, but the setting he gave it was so very, very beautiful and memorable in every way. Little as he imagined, in choosing the masterpiece for performance, what a pathetic interest would be attached to it before the day of the concert dawned; but those who grasped the passionate intensity of the music, and its full dramatic meaning felt that there was something almost uncanny in Mr. Foote's choice having fallen upon it, weeks and weeks before there was any thought pending of the great national sorrow. It was a solemn black-robed audience which filled the Great Hall last night, and the atmosphere was pregnant with meaning. There was a feeling that the solemn observances of last Friday were being re-enacted, only that the sermon (the great factor in giving consolation) had been set to music, and the spirit of submission was easier to follow. The purple drapings, in which King George asked his people to typify their mourning, were arranged, with white relief, with great taste about the platform, and each member of the choir displayed signs of mourning which has been so universally adopted throughout the Empire. In the centre surrounded by regal purple and with the laurel wreath, the symbol of victory and peace, was a lifelike bust of the dear dead King. There were few eyes that could gaze upon this unmoved, and when the sonorous chords of Handel's Dead March in "Israel" echoed through the building, the muffled drums told that it was a memorial concert indeed. There has been no music written that can touch the hearts of the populace like this funeral march with its impalpable tragedy of death and hope of the resurrection, and Mr. Foote secured such a rendering last evening as embodied a lifetime of service and love and reverent mourning.

Once again the conductor was most fortunate in his soloists, while to the choir and orchestra can be attributed no fault in all that flawless performance. The opening quartet and chorus, "Requiem—Kyrie Eleison," prettily brought the whole body of musicians into play, a splendid blend of harmony being produced by the part-singing of Miss Ethel Wood (soprano), Mr. Cyril Gibbs (tenor), Miss Marie Wadia (alto), and Mr. Percival Driver (bass). This opened two hours of intense spiritual elevation for music lovers, apart from the impressive occasion of the concert, but their appreciation of the good and the beautiful was to have further encouragement as the evening wore on. Fine work was forthcoming from the choir in the Impassioned, "Day of Anger" (Dies Irae); and "Hark the trumpet" was a magnificent piece of vocal singing in which Mr. Percival Driver's rich voice did justice to the solo, "Death with wonder is enshrouded." Religious fervour and much innate sweetness marked the admission of Miss Marie Wadia, "Now the record shall be cited"; and Miss Ethel Wood recalled to the full the majesty and reverence of "When to judgment all are hidden."

The beseeching appeal in "What affliction" was exquisitely conveyed by the trio of voices, Miss Wood, Miss Wadia, and Mr. Gibbs; and then the quartet and chorus, "King of Glories," burst forth with glowing colour and picturesqueness, as though the singers were all inspired in this touching and beautiful appeal. The duet, "Ah, Remember!" by Miss Ethel Wood and Miss Marie Wadia, touched the audience very deeply, and attention was riveted upon the vocalists as the beautiful passages of "Recordare" (which is so much more than a prayer) were unfolded. Mr. Cyril Gibbs' cultured voice gave additional refinement to the solo, "Sedly groaning, guilty feeling," and displayed an intelligence in exploiting the text that is very rarely met with. "From the accursed" furnished Mr. Percival Driver with fine scope for his powerful, deep notes, which are always held in such admirable restraint. This also made its own effect upon the thoughtful listeners. All the pent-up sorrow of the past three weeks opened to find an outlet in the dirge of the anguished "Lacrymosa"—

"Ah, woe, weeping on that morrow," which is followed by the "Domine Jesu" of reassuring comfort. In both these numbers the choir reached a high point of excellence, adequate choral support being forthcoming in the former excerpt. The choir's most representative work of the evening was heard in the Fugue, "Holy, holy, holy." This is written for two choirs, and exacts the most masterly handling. Mr. Foote had, however, due to illness, for himself or those forces who were so willingly under his banner. Careful rehearsal in each department had

perfected the ensemble, and a smooth and voluminous delivery of words and music was the result. There was an intellectual and massiveness in the hosannas that indicated how very deeply the conductor goes to the root of things in his art. There is no "surface" staging in the Francis J. Foote choir, for the higher interpretative branches of music only are cultured, and his idea, we are sure, is merely to act as guide to the wonderful temple in which all may be lifted to nobler inspirations than this mundane world of ours possesses. The "Agnus Dei," one of the concluding numbers in the "Requiem," was sung by Miss Ethel Wood and Miss Marie Wadia, and could not fail to impress by its lovely utterance of faith and love so spiritually conveyed by the vocalists; and then came "Light Eternal," with its message of peace and love in which the dark shadow of Death loses all its terrors. This trio was an emphatic success for Miss Marie Wadia, Mr. Cyril Gibbs, and Mr. Percival Driver.

The final solo and chorus, "Libera me," brought the "Requiem" to a memorable close, and the sweet soprano voice of Miss Wood, backed up by the grand choir of nearly 200 voices, was heard in such a way as to bring the spirit of Verdi into the very building where his immortal genius held sway. The salutes of the orchestra can be judged by the fact that it was led by Mr. Spencer Dyke, while among the first violins was Stensell, the celebrated boy violinist. Other instrumentalists, most of whom are soloists in famous London orchestras, came down expressly to play for Mr. Foote on this occasion. This alone, to our thinking, is a striking indication of the high repute in which the conductor is held in musical centres. A word of praise must be accorded to Miss Gladys Duncaife, who presided at the pianoforte. Her work as accompanist, a role she has filled with adverting regularity at all the rehearsals, was of enormous value to the production. One of the greatest sources of satisfaction was the absolute silence in which the work was received. This was not only a fitting tribute to the dead King, but to Art itself, of which he was ever a kindly patron; for applause is but a poor way of expressing the deep things in one's nature that are stirred and quickened by the influence of great minds.

With the audience upstanding, the National Anthem brought the "In Memoriam" concert to a reverent close.

It should be added that Alderman Caley, J.P., prefaced the concert with a few remarks as to the suitability of Mr. Foote's choice of a work to the present sad occasion of the national bereavement. He said that in every passage of the work the sympathy of the audience would reverberate. At the close of the concert his remarks were as follows:—"I am sure we have all had great difficulty in restraining ourselves from applause, as we have listened to the beautiful music and singing. Before the sacred concert is concluded I am sure, I shall only be voicing your feelings if I tender to Mr. Foote our sincere and hearty thanks for having introduced into Tunbridge Wells this fine work of Verdi's. On your behalf I must also thank the ladies and gentlemen who have acted as soloists, and to the choir and orchestra, to whom we are indeed greatly indebted for such a very fine and inspiring performance. Mr. Foote was labouring under great disadvantage in the fact that twelve of his choir were absent through illness, including Miss Sibella Jones, who is always a great force in the organising duties. The members and officials of the Council who attended the concert included Alderman Caley, Alderman Ryder, Alderman Thorpe, Councillors Badcock, Berwick, Dennis, Emson, Gower, Huggell, Col. Newnham Smith, Pashingham, Mr. J. W. Forster, Mr. W. H. Maxwell, Mr. J. W. Beauchamp, and Mr. W. F. Bellamy.

The above critique is reproduced from yesterday's "Tunbridge Wells Gazette," in which a portrait of the conductor, Mr. Francis J. Foote, appears.

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