

29th November, 1912

FRANCIS J. FOOTE'S CHOIR  
(Choir & Orchestra 150)

THE MESSIAH

Wednesday December 11th, 7.30

Great Hall

(This notice appeared in the last Courier on the reel for 1912 and so we have no write-up of the concert.)

12th December 1912

THE COURIER, DECEMBER 12, 1912

**MR. FRANCIS J. FOOTE'S  
CHOIR AND ORCHESTRA.**

**GRAND-EVENING CONCERT AT  
THE GREAT HALL.**

Mr. Francis J. Foote's choir and orchestra, numbering 150 performers, presented Handel's musical masterpiece, the "Messiah," in such a style at the Great Hall last Wednesday as would have reflected no discredit upon a performance of the work in any of the large festival towns. This was not astonishing to those intelligent critics in the audience who have been in sympathy with Mr. Foote's work almost from the commencement, but the surprise lay in the antiquated taste of Tunbridge Wells that has not sooner realized what a moving spirit they have in their midst, in this young and cultured musician of the first rank. Their out of date policy is proved, of course, by the lack of a suitable environment for a choir and orchestra of this magnitude, and many conductors would have drawn back long ago, dismayed and depressed by the fact that there is no concert hall in the place where a performance of this kind can be made to pay its own expenses. This in itself is a disgrace to a town that prides itself upon being progressive. However, Mr. Foote has gone on, nobly and perseveringly, in his determination to make good music appreciated—even in Tunbridge Wells—and it is no exaggeration to say that if the "Great" Hall had not been a very "little" hall indeed, the audience on this occasion would have been counted in thousands, instead of the six hundred or so who could find seating accommodation in its circumscribed area. Mr. Foote has proved in other towns—notably Eastbourne—that he can fill any hall, however large, where he gives a concert, and it is up to the townspeople here, and their wise civic heads, to provide a building more in keeping with the character of the town, and one more likely to assist in its artistic development.

**LINKING UP TWO COUNTIES.**

The conductor, who guided his large forces with such an unerring hand through the illuminative passages of the greatest of all oratorios, is now the director of flourishing choral and orchestral societies at Eastbourne, and he is also at the head of an enthusiastic choral society at Heathfield, where a performance of the "Messiah" is already announced. In the near future a musical festival is promised at Eastbourne, at which no doubt the Tunbridge Wells choir will assist, as they did at a successful concert held there in November, and in this way Mr. Foote is linking up two counties in one common bond of sympathy for a great art, for which he is such a vigorous pleader.

The concert on Wednesday evening was pervaded by an atmosphere of true fervour, this emanating, of course, from the conductor himself, and was passed on to all the large body of performers, and thence to the audience, who were for once aroused from their apathy to realise that music is a Divine influence, and that here, at their very door, in their rather sleepy little country town, they may benefit by this influence in its broadest output. The necessity for going to London to hear good music (which the residents in their superior wisdom have thought it necessary to do hitherto) is entirely done away with, and not only should the public support this fine movement whole-heartedly, but they should be thankful it has come into existence, for the prestige of any town is raised immeasurably by such an artistic enterprise.

**GOOD WORK OF THE PRINCIPALS.**

Long ago it has been seen that Mr. Foote can command the very best talent when he is giving a concert, and under his auspices many shining lights in the musical firmament have performed in Tunbridge Wells. On Wednesday last the production was assisted in the solo portions by Miss Winifred Burke (soprano), Miss Mildred Avis (alto), Mr. George Morris (tenor) and Mr. Percival Driver (bass). All the work of these clever artistes was uniformly good, and there is no need to individualise upon their merits, although en passant we feel bound to congratulate Mr. George Morris, who sang better than we have ever heard him, and this is creditable again to the choirmaster and conductor, who is solely responsible for his present position as a singer of oratorio music.

After all, it is the glorious work of the choir and orchestra that one likes to dwell upon; they had all as one body worked themselves up to splendid enthusiasm by the time the "Hallelujah Chorus" was reached, and here the feeling was that the very spirit of the music was being drawn out of them, that all their forces—spiritual, mental, and physical—were combining in this grand spontaneous hymn of praise. The man who can fill a concert room with such harmonious vibrations as were prevalent during this chorus—not to mention other numbers that call similarly for high praise—is doing something to benefit the whole community around him. It not only touches the deeper spiritual nature of men and women, but it is a positive factor in the unfolding of that divinity which lies hidden within us all. After attending many concerts in the Great Hall, and appraising their worth from time to time, we can only say that the enthusiasm and thorough enjoyment aroused by this Christmas performance of the "Messiah" surpassed anything previously witnessed, and the respect given to Mr. Foote, both when he made his appearance at the conductor's desk and at the conclusion of the splendid musical treat, was a testimony of the high esteem in which he is held by the really intellectual people of this town.

M.S.R.—G.