

8th May 1914

FESTIVAL CONCERT AT THE GREAT HALL.

SUCCESS OF THE FRANCIS FOOTE CHOIR IN "ELIJAH."

On Wednesday, at the Great Hall, a festival performance of "Elijah" was given by Mr. Foote with a choir of 160, and an orchestra of 50 instrumentalists, most of whom are professionals in leading London orchestras. Kindly hands had been busily at work decorating, by means of blue royal drapery and a lovely floral garniture in front of the platform, consisting of blue bells, lilac, and variegated spring foliage. The bust of Mendelssohn stood as an inspiring centre-piece, and bright young programme sellers dressed in white, with wauve sashes and knots of iris flowers at the waist band, brought a certain animation to bear upon the preliminaries; they were the Misses Doris Griffiths, Madeline Reeves, Dorothy Pickett, Doris Downes, Margaret Taylor, and Winnie Cole. The pretty decorations in the hall were the work of the Misses Harman. The ladies' choir made a smart appearance, and adhered to a tasteful uniformity in their white dresses, the soprani being distinguished by pink roses on the corsage, and the contralti by deep red flowers. The principals taking part were Miss Dorothy Richardson, of Heathfield, whose beautiful soprano voice has been trained by Mr. Foote; Miss Gladys Parr, contralto; and Miss Margery Strange, of Tunbridge Wells, who was one of about forty pupils of the concert giver taking part on this occasion. The impressive part of the Prophet was confided to Mr. David Brazell, while Mr. Cynlais Gibbs sang the tenor music without a flaw. Miss Dorothy Richardson was inspired for her big solo at the commencement of the second part, "Hear ye, Israel," by the presentation of a lovely floral tribute bearing the inscription, "From a few old chums," and Miss Margery Strange, who took the part of the youth, and also lent assistance in the double quartets, was much appreciated for her simplicity of style, and a nice certainty of intonation. Miss Gladys Parr could easily bring a little more naturalness and spontaneity to bear in the production of her nice deep notes, but she must take credit for not allowing herself to be overweighed by such big solos as, "O rest in the Lord," "Wee unto them," etc., etc., and on the whole her interpretation of the soprano music was much enjoyed. Mrs. Pierson, Mr. A. E. Mitchell, and Mr. W. J. Hall took part in the double quartets, which went with a delicious blend of harmony.

GOOD WORK OF THE CHOIR.

Any conductor in a festival town might be proud to direct such a choir as Mr. Foote had under his control on this occasion. It was well balanced, and productive of an enormous amount of tone power. This latter was carefully directed, so that the most pleasing results

accrued, and all without any straining after effect. It is not often that the "stalls" applaud so loudly or intelligently as they did on this occasion, which may be regarded as a pleasing revelation. To enumerate the successes of the choir is difficult when every number was so perfectly rendered, and with such expressive understanding of both words and music. This is the great factor in Mr. Foote's success—he is not content with any surface singing, but demands from his forces that they should touch realities of life that are so wonderfully and mysteriously embodied in these oratorios.

Others may be technically as clever as he is, some perhaps more so; other maestros are to be found with well trained choirs, and the power to give effective performances, but the conductors who present the soul of things to the public in such a manner as to leave the influence behind, may be numbered upon the fingers of one hand. This is perhaps what Tunbridge Wells does not fully appreciate in Mr. Foote, but happily other towns show a better understanding, and it is hoped that the links which now happily unite the East of Sussex with Kent may in time form a complete musical circle round the two counties.

In the larger and more appropriate surroundings of the Floral Hall, Devonshire Park, Eastbourne, the Francis Foote Choir will give a concert on June 24th next, when the programme will include Brahms "Requiem," the Tone Poem, "Elaine" (by Francis J. Foote), and Hans Wesseley, the famous violinist, will perform the Mendelssohn Violin Concerto with a full orchestra.