

18 December 1914

## THE FRANCIS FOOTE CHOIR.

PERFORMANCE OF HANDEL'S  
"MESSIAH."

The Great Hall was well filled on Wednesday evening, when the "Francis Foote Choir" gave (as at a similar time last year) an excellent interpretation of Handel's "Messiah," preceded with the National Anthem. The oratorio, with very few exceptions, was rendered in its entirety, and the appropriate music, at such a time of stress as this, possessed a still deeper significance. Familiar as are the solos and choruses to everyone, yet the appreciation of Handel's immortal masterpiece remains as firmly fixed as ever, and will do, until time with us all is no more. We may be deemed old-fashioned, but we still believe that even to this day it is recognised by the majority of the English people to be the greatest oratorio that has ever been written. On this occasion the orchestra (which was led by Miss Williams) consisted of strings (with the aid of a grand piano), and minus any wind instruments. It was, however, a thoroughly capable one, consisting of professionals and well-known local amateur players. One naturally missed the full orchestral effects in some of the choruses, notably "For unto us" and the "Hallelujah" (in the latter especially), when the passages increase in volume until at the end a torrent of sound should be forthcoming. As one readily imagines, the choruses were sung under the highly-skilled Conductor, Mr. Francis Foote, with customary success. His well-trained choir was ever on the alert to fulfil his wishes, with the result that the extremely attentive audience were manifestly impressed, and not slow in expressing admiration for all that was done in this direction. Miss Dorothy Richardson, to whom was confided the soprano solos, was in excellent voice, and unstinted praise should be bestowed upon her efforts, particularly in "I know that my Redeemer liveth," which was given with much feeling and expression. Miss Lindley Hindley was the contralto, and the music which fell to her share was correctly sung, but at present her voice lacks volume. Mr. George Morris (a young townsman), who was entrusted with the tenor music last year, again proved himself a worthy exponent of his part in the proceedings. In "Comfort Ye" and "Ev'ry Valley," which follows the orchestral prelude with its startling series of chords and short fugue, Mr. Morris sang with the confidence of one possessing a full knowledge of his subject; likewise the "Passion" music, which also received thoroughly adequate treatment, while his remarkably fine tenor voice enabled him to do full justice to "Thou shalt break them." Mr. Percival Driver is so well-known in the musical world that it is only necessary to mention that his bass solos were much enjoyed, an instance being afforded in "Why do the Nations."

We cannot conclude this necessarily fragmentary notice without alluding to the appearance of the front of the platform, with full-sized palms and effective blue and white bunting, with large red rosettes intermingled; while the allied flags surrounded the Conductor's rostrum; nor should we omit to state that each of the lady singers were the recipients of charming floral offerings. In congratulating Mr. Francis Foote on another noteworthy artistic success, he may also be congratulated upon the interesting fact that three of his pupils were soloists.