

The Spring Musical Festival.

THE year 1908 will fulfill the promise of an annual musical festival in Salt Lake City, whatever the future years may do. And we do not propose to retrograde; we anticipate that the future will see this festival of culture grow into greater perfection year by year, until it achieves the status not only of Salt Lake, but of the intermountain country.

This year the number of concerts will be increased one-fourth (four performances instead of three), and the size of the orchestra one-third—63, instead of 48—while the quality of the soloists will advance in ratio with the size of the orchestra.

The vocal work, under the leadership of the ever progressive Stephens, has already taken shape to the extent that the rough of one entire musical work has been mastered by the festival chorus, the special organization of the festival, and the second work is in progress by the same chorus and the main-pitch soprano choir combined, while the Stephens' children's choir is already rehearsing on material for a matinee chorus.

All this has been done—while last year the work of rehearsing and bringing together of the special festival chorus did not commence until January, indicating the superiority of this year's festival over last year's, successful as it was.

THE WEDDING FEAST.

To decide upon the works to be given in the first, and in some respects the greatest test of efficiency in the management of the festival, it is an easy matter to take up the places of the festival, and to methodically select out of hundreds of musical productions year after year, the best for its time and place, requires not only great familiarity with masterworks in general, but a keen judgment as to the most interesting and fitting under present conditions; Prof. Stephens took the following points particularly into consideration in selecting the works to be given at the next festival:

First, our people are as fond of things dramatic as they are of the musical. Hence a dramatic musical work will reach them more intensely than a merely musical or religious work.

Next, with all due reverence for the old works, Stephens felt desirous that his singers and public should be brought into touch with the modern in music. That they are in the proper state of advancement was proved by their delight at the beauties of "The Song of Minerva" last season. The people listened with reverence and rapture to the grand old masterwork, "The Messiah," but had there been a third light and had the people attended both, been given the choice of nights for a repetition, nine-tenths of them would have chosen the first, as it appeared more directly to the modern trend of musical thought and expression.

A third consideration was the educational value. Music, since the Wagnerian epoch especially, has become intensely sympathetic in character, a matter possibly difficult of mastery to singers, as the faculty is so changeable as to make it very difficult to sense in advance the "key" and pitch, without the aid of the mechanical instrument. These difficulties the Salt Lake singers, who are quite familiar with the old choruses from the classics with their fingers and formal modulations, understand. These three points, after careful consideration, aided Mr. Stephens in the selection of two works, one unexcelled in these points.

The first and lesser work, was the

"Wedding Feast," by S. Coleridge-Taylor, the one man of a peculiarly musical race who has suddenly appeared at the top—a master fit to take a place among the masters of the supposed superior race—a man of color setting the poem of a white man to music illustrative of the most poetic characteristics of the red men, and all harmonizing so perfectly that the three races seem to blend in one, showing the close kinship of the whole human race. Longfellow's poem is too well known to need description, but we would advise the reader to peruse it over anew, that he may more fully enjoy the musical illustration of it when he hears it rendered at the festival. Starting at the lines

"You shall hear how Pau-Puk-Kewew, How the handsome Yemadizze, Danced at Hiawatha's wedding,"

and ending with the stanza "Such was Hiawatha's wedding. Thus the wedding-banquet ended. And the wedding guests departed, Leaving Hiawatha happy With the night and Minnehaha."

The music is a web of quaint Indian rhythms and melodic themes, made descriptive in the highest degree of the subject spoken of in the poem. The dance of Pau-Puk-Kewew, to any one knowing anything of an Indian dance, becomes an exciting reality, while the entire music surrounding the love songs of Chibabos entrances the listener into dream of misty love and tenderness that no music outside of the best in grand opera can equal in its effectiveness.

Then the buoyancy of the hoistings of Hiawatha is another picture of Indian life amounting almost to a wild "pow-wow." All ending in the peace and quiet of happy love.

This work, like Gounod's "Faust" and Mascagni's "Rusticana," brought before the world a new name, a name that no matter what other good things the author may write, must always be associated first of all with this his great first work. Gounod will ever be known as the composer of "Faust," Mascagni the composer of "Rusticana," and Taylor the composer of the "Songs of Hiawatha."

THE GOLDEN LEGEND.

Even more dramatic in character, and greater three times or more in length, is the work selected to take up the entire second night of the festival. The composition of England's most melodic dramatic composer, well known to us in his lighter moods, has expressed himself in the charming set of comic operas that made his name a household word in Europe and America. Arthur Sullivan, the Mendelssohn of England, who, after showing what he could do in the serious, and even classic lines, raising the hopes of a musical world to the belief that another great successor to the classic oratorio writers had arisen, suddenly shocked it by turning out a set of comic operas that fairly intoxicated the world. The critics mourned, and declared that the world's greatest musical light had deserted his high art to seek popularity and money. But Sullivan's gift for higher things was kept in reserve while he tickled the public with the most melodious, and he it said, the most chaste and charming light operas ever written. When the time arrived, he turned upon his mourners and gave all England a musical shock in the other direction, when his great dramatic work upon Longfellow's beautiful poem, "The Golden Legend," was brought out at one of the great musical festivals of England. The musical public became delirious with delight, and ovation after ovation was given the composer after every part of the great work, all being followed by the good Queen Victoria, making a "night" of him. His knight-hood was but a small mark of honor compared with the place he holds in the musical heart. The text certainly is arranged to give a composer great opportunities. The first great scene, or "Prologue"—a mere outline of which would give the most indifferent reader an idea of the possibilities. Here it is from the book: "Prologue—The Spire of Strasburg Cathedral. Night, and Storm. Lucifer, With the Powers of the Air, Trying to Tear Down the Cross."

The orchestra describes the howling, rushing storm. Lucifer is heard through it calling upon his craven and inefficient spirits of the air to tear down the cross. They reply (ladies chorus) in the most weird tones that they cannot, as the saints and angels protect it. Then mingling with the peals of the bells in the tower is heard the old Latin chants of the Monks or Priests in the Cathedral. Finally Lucifer gives up the attempt, deciding to leave it all to the destroyer "time." The chorus of spirits goes away in the distance, the storm gradually calms down, and then swells out the tones of the great organ, presently joined in an old hymn by the monks, all in such an uplifting manner that it is no wonder the effect upon the hearer on its first presentation was intense.

After the story of the prince and the maid Esle is followed in almost the form of grand opera, with a certain air of the oratorio pending and uplifting it all, making it the ideal work to impress music lovers, who at the same time delight in dramatic effects.

The delight of the singers in working upon these compositions indicates that Director Stephens made no mistake in his choice, and Salt Lake can look forward to its greatest musical festival yet, next spring.

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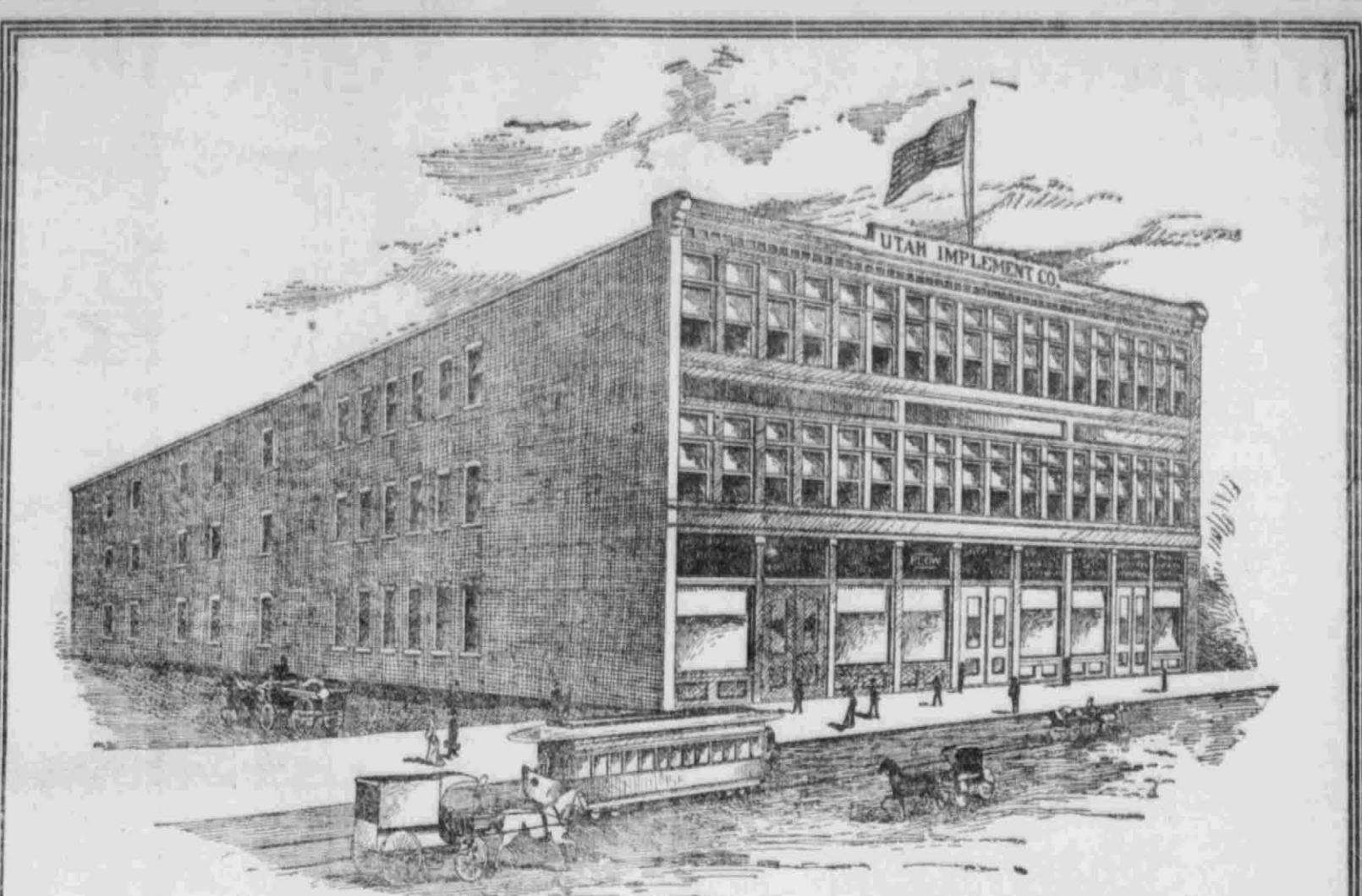
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