THE TABERNACLE CHOIR.

Its Pilgrimage to the World's Fair and Its Victory.

The Memorable Journey Began One Year Ago Today—How the Great Prize Was Won.

An ardent admirer of the Salt Lake Tabernacle choir writes to the News as follows, under date of today, on an event that every Utonian looks back upon and remembers with feelings of pride and satisfaction:

On Tuesday afternoon, one year ago today, Aug 28, our Tabernacle choir left Salt Lake City on their unparalleled and highly successful journey to enter a competition against any body of singers in the world who chose to enter the arena; and their chief competitors were to be the Welsh, who had for at least twenty years established themselves at London as champions unrivalled in choral work.

It seems like a dream, yet it real when we think of the scene at the depot one year ago this afternoon, thousands of enthusiastic friends, of every creed, crowding the entire length of the train with one happy wish in their hearts—God speed to the "Mormon Choir"—as it was termed—and crown them with success, everybody proudly called them "our choir" even then, and hopes ran high for its success as a winner, but this hope was born rather of enthusiasm perhaps than reason.

There was one at least on board that train, quite perfectly composed and resigned as to the result, had counted over and over the odds against him. With less than one-half our little city's population to select the singers from (for ours was a church choir of one denomination, and the many splendid voices outside of this were not at his disposal), with only ten weeks of special preparation on the difficult choruses to be rendered, as no decision to have them go had been reached earlier. Voices whose various natural qualities made them characteristically different to be assimilated as nearly as possible—the whole, himself inclined, with no experience whatever in competing for prizes, to enter at once a world's contest and against choirs whose members and males were mostly of one nationality, and whose life business and pleasure had been musical contests, who had competed on some of these very selections more than once, and who had over a year's special preparation for this event.

Added to this was the fact that only two pianos were to be the accompaniment. Something customary to the choir ob its but most unusual to ours who were so accustomed to the great organ. All these disadvantages he could not forget while hundreds of enthusiastic friends wrung his hands in fervent, his consolation came chiefly in unwavering faith in the success of his concerts, in this his singers had never failed, and he knew where to stand and what good the favorable impression made would reflect on the community he and his choir was representing. Then whatever the result of the contest, there was the unheard of least to 250 of his beloved singers in the trip and the Fair itself, if defeat came. This satisfaction would balance against the humiliation caused by the appointed friends who hoped against reason.

Well, away they sped with cheers, "God bless you," "God bless you," ringing in their ears. Their entrance into Wyoming was welcomed with music, flowers, fruits and cheers from the good people of Evanston and Rock Springs. Denver, while making no public demonstration, on their arrival greeted them at the depot in such numbers that hundreds could not gain admittance into the elegant church. Full of humility and prayer in their hearts for success they took their places before an audience friendly, but with evident curiosity on many a countenance, which the first "Hosannah" eliminated, placing evident, deep satisfaction on every face which the thunderous applause even could not express more unmistakably that the victory was won so far as the entertainments went. Notwithstanding difficulties arising such as a sudden change of seating arrangement in various halls some of which were very perplexing, disarranging the order of seating, placing the choir on level floor, etc., which could make it almost impossible to see or hear or so to do harmonious work. Yet Kansas City and St. Louis only added to the success begun at Denver. On arriving at Chicago they found some of their eastern competitors there already, but with kindly greetings. On hearing one chorus of their song at an entertainment, some Salt Lakers were at once sanguine of our choir's success. But the change in climate was affecting many of our best voices and later it was found they had engaged the two choirs that were over from South Wales to enter the male chorus and ladies chorus contest, and no protest against this could avail because there was no stipulations to prohibit it in the rules of contest. Daily our singers met at the Utah building and rehearsed while hundreds would gather around and listen. The male chorus contest drew two prize winning choirs from over the ocean, one from North and one from South Wales, and four to one our own from the United States. Our boys were told to the order of appearing, and they did themselves proud. Mr. John Carmen, the adjudicator from London, declaring "First west of the Atlantic ocean." The two Welsh choirs then the other sides, were indescribable in their excellence. None could be more enthused than our boys in listening to them, Stephens beaming with pleasure at what he knew must be his defeat, cried:

"That is worth more to me than a prize! That is perfection! Remember it, boys, and let us work up to it!"

Friday was the day of the final test of choirs, and everybody, singers and listeners, were worked up to the highest pitch.

Rehearsals were held at noon by all the choirs, two of them in the Concert hall and our own in the Utah building, they having relocated in the Hall the previous day. Simpson's last words to his choir were: "Pay no attention to your competitors until you have sung, be not eager to excel them. Simply be calm, earnest, and sure in that we do ourselves justice, and I, for one, will be satisfied, prize or no prize." So when the time of contest arrived, they being second on the program, while the first chorus were singing, ours arranged themselves in order in two large rooms under the pipe organ. A prayer was offered up in each room, humbly asking the Lord that we might be enabled to do themselves and the people they represented credit on this momentous occasion. The first choir having sung, our leader stepped up on the platform and quietly directed all to their places without the least confusion, the vast assemblage breaking out into rousing bursts of applause every few moments. Positions were taken, of them as they stood ready for the signal. Then, amidst perfect silence, they heard the opening chord of Worthy is the Lamb, and sang in a manner which they have at least never excelled. At the close the cheers and applause was simply deafening, and it would seem never to come to an end. The other two numbers rendered as well, and who could excel them was the general feeling.

The quiet Blessed are the Men was more trying to a body of people labouring under suppressed excitement, yet they held their own well, though scarcely able to command that calmness necessary, which they might have done on a less exciting occasion.

This over, the tremendous "Now the Torrents Rise" turned them loose again, and they swept along steady and gradually more so by far than any other choir in the contest. The snow last portion of it representing the awful hush over a devastated world, was most trying, and at the last three bars the tension flung way at the thought that the ordeal was over, the sopranos in particular—who could not hear the piano—fell perceptibly from the pitch, the only mishap of the rendition. Three cannon led to this. The state of the voices caused by the damp, raw climate of Chicago, to which we from the high altitude dry, pure mountain air were thoroughly unaccustomed to, made it difficult to control the voices in singing softly after singing with full power. The excitement which swayed us up through the whole, relaxing at the close, yet the most trying place of all three choruses. The insufficiency of two pianos accompanying 250 singers in solitude which should in justice to themselves or such a chorus, have at the very least an orchestra of fifty pieces to accompany. The other choirs were by no means free from the same trouble. The accompanyist going so far as to cease playing that the falling of might not be perceptible to the listeners. Our choir retired amidst cheers, applause and congratulations from many eminent musicians and the general impression was that they had fairly won the great prize.

Stephens on being asked by President Woodruff and Cannon what his impressions were, said: "We have done the very best possible in our present stage of progress and I am satisfied." They in return fully agreed with him. At night when the adjudication was to be rendered there was some disappointment on account of Mr. Tomlins failing to appear to render the same. Mr. Thomas having quite unprepared to assume the task, the result being that no satisfactory statement of relative merit was given, the whole amounting to little more than awarding the prizes without giving adequate reasons therefore. The rest of this memorable trip had many interesting incidents. The Utah Day exercises, the music hall concert, the starting for home and arriving to give their concert at Omaha nearly ten o'clock at night, where they found a large audience patiently waiting, and a great final carp five feet high scrapping the stage. Their welcome home, where interest had clean to fever heat and preparations had been made by the choir members remaining at home and others to meet them and welcome them was all made impossible by the sad incident of the sickness and subsequent death of Mrs. Allison's little boy. All possible speed being made to reach home on her account, the train arrived about four o'clock in the morning. But even then many had remained up the whole night, and there were warm welcomings as all hastened to their homes. A few days later a grand reception was tendered them in the new Tabernacle, when the Governor of the Territory, Mayor of the city, and Presidency of the State and a couple of thousand citizens expressed their delight and welcome home. The whole was an event never to be forgotten. If ever to be repeated—we hope the latter will end with a tour of the world—Why not?

Friday of the coming week will be the anniversary of the day of contest and the winning of the $1,000 prize, and fittingly the choir will celebrate it at Saltair on their own great inland sea, with perhaps thousands of their friends present with them to enjoy the reunion. The singing again of the songs they sang there, and to congratulate each other on the past and the future of music in their own mountain home.

PROVO.

PROVO, UTAH, Aug 28, 1894.

A Serious Accident.

Abraham Halladay, of this city, met with a painful accident yesterday. He had been hauling grain from the harvest field and in sliding down from the rack fell on a rake stake, which penetrated his body, inflicting a dangerous wound. He is now lying in a critical condition, under the surgical care of Dr. McCleanin.

Notes.

The Provo boys have again taken the matter in hand of organizing a militia company.

The Sunday school teachers of the second ward and their friends go to Geneva on Friday next.

Willard Y. Child, of Springville, was yesterday again committed to the Insane asylum after being out six or seven months.

A young man and his dearest girl, who were out driving on Sunday, were overtaken in the night. Neither bones nor hearts were broken.

The bicycle races on the 29th inst. promise to be an unequaled event in the sporting annals of the city. Many are anxious to see Champion Eagler ride.

Brig Madsen and Levi Carpenter have been arrested by Deputy Sheriff Hall for illegally catching game fish. They will be tried in Justice Wedgwood's court.

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