

THE GREAT MORMON TABERNACLE CHOIR AND ORGAN.



HIS now largest and perhaps greatest church choir in the world had its birth when the hardy pioneers held their first meetings, under a rude "bowery" after their arrival in the Great Salt Lake Valley.

This "pilgrim band" held regular daily worship upon their entire journey, and on arriving near the present site of the great white Temple, to the west of which nestles the also great Tabernacle with its self-supporting roof, a rude bowery of brush was erected, and services held every Sabbath under its leafy shade. There the sweetest voices led in singing. Later a tabernacle was erected where now the Assembly Hall stands. The organization was rightly christened "the Tabernacle Choir," in contradistinction to the numerous "ward choirs," for be it said, every "ward" and congregation in the "Mormon" Church has its choir. Under various and capable conductors the choir flourished and grew to an organization of from sixty to one hundred voices, in the new and large Tabernacle of today, always considered the best and head choir in the Church. In the "old" it was particularly good under the direction of Professor George Careless, who in addition to his own splendid talent and training in London, England, had the support of a phenomenally fine singer in the person of his wife, Mrs. Lavina Triplet Careless.

In 1882, a new force began to make itself felt in the training of Sabbath School children in choral singing by the man whose destiny it was to later make this organization world-famous. Mr. Evan Stephens born in South Wales, emigrated to Utah when a boy of twelve years, and subsequently was put through the peculiarly western process of development at all sorts of manual and mental toil. On the farm, in the canyons, on the railroad, during the

daylight of week days; at the Sunday School and afternoon and evening service, in the little town of Willard where he lived, on the Sabbath; and at his beloved music when darkness of night brought to an end the labors of the day. The simple love of it was his only prompter; the application born of that love, his only teacher. The masters' works, sacred and secular, were his constant companions. So when he laid down the pick, shovel and crowbar he was prepared to take up his baton in the leading musical city of the west. And beginning with the training of children—familiar now to him for having trained them in the village—he soon had the opportunity of doing the more honored work of training the adults. A general class of one hundred students in an evening school finished their course by giving performances of the three operas, "The Bohemian Girl," "Martha," and "The Daughter of the Regiment," at the Salt Lake Theater in a manner that at once established him as being a director of adults—as he was already the "children's man."

The beloved, and widely noted Patrick Gilmore hearing of him, engaged him to organize and train a local chorus to take part in a musical festival in the great Tabernacle. It was done so successfully that the chorus refused to disband and a magnificent choral society resulted, made up of singers of any and all denominations, and "Mormon" and "Gentile" sang together in Haydn's "Creation" and "Seasons," Dudley Buck's "Light of Asia," Rossini's "Moses in Egypt" and lesser works. The years were passing on. The children of former years were becoming young men and women, and seldom is so much devotion shown as in this case of pupils and teacher.

The "Mormon" Church leaders in every way encouraged his labors, and successful concerts as well as the performances of the above named oratorios were given freely under his direction in the great Tabernacle. Still he had not, until September, 1890, been given charge of the chief "Mormon" musical organization, then he was offered the position of director with instructions to create and maintain an ideal Church choir of large proportions corresponding with the great building facing them



PROF. EVAN STEPHENS,
Conductor.

and the magnificent organ flanking them. By March of 1890 he had the choir galleries entirely remodeled and a choir of three hundred voices greeted the new era in the noted organization's history. Without one salaried singer in it, it contains the best vocalists in the city. From the proceeds of its concerts alone it has earned fifty thousand dollars in ten years and expended the same in a large library of the choicest music, much of it composed by the director and other "Mormon" composers of ability—but mostly sacred work of classic masters; free school in vocal music reading, voice culture and organ playing; a grand pleasure trip to the Chicago World's Fair in 1893, where they were awarded the second prize of \$1,000 by the judges, (the first by the vast audience and critics generally present) in a choral test, giving concerts enroute. Another great pleasure trip was taken to California in 1894. In each case the entire party of four to five hundred traveling entirely in first-class Pullman sleepers, and still later a visit to Denver to attend the great Elsteddoff there, at which they did not compete, but sang selections at every session.

They were engaged by New York

"O, MY FATHER."

A Popular "Mormon" Hymn.

O, my Father, thou that dwellest
In the high and glorious place!
When shall I regain Thy presence?
And again behold thy face?
In thy holy habitation,
Did my spirit once reside?
In my first primeval childhood,
Was I nurtured by thy side?

For a wise and glorious purpose,
Thou has placed me here on earth.

And withheld the recollection
Of my former friends and birth:

Yet, ofttimes a secret something
Whispered "You're a stranger here."

And I felt that I had wandered
From a more exalted sphere.

I had learned to call thee Father,
Through thy Spirit from on high;

But, until the Key of Knowledge
Was restored, I knew not why.

In the heavens are parent single?
No, the thought makes reason stare!

Truth is reason—truth eternal
Tells me I've a mother there.

When I leave this frail existence—
When I lay this mortal by,

Father, mother may I meet you
In your royal courts on high?

Then, at length, when I've completed
All you sent me forth to do,

With your mutual approbation,
Let me come and dwell with you.

capitalists to make a tour of the United States in 1890, but certain unexpected conditions arose which finally led to the giving up of the project. For the past five years a membership of over



PROF. JOHN J. McCLELLAN,
Organist.

five hundred has been enrolled, the average attendance at present being four hundred. Those who have had the pleasure of hearing them at their late complimentary concert will never forget the thrill their magnificent singing caused. That it is not a thing of today and gone tomorrow is assured by the fact that still five hundred little " tots" are in training to take the place of those who drop out. There is its real strength and guarantee of perpetuity. And its real, vital labor is its Sabbath work in the services of the great tabernacle. Now leading the big congregation of three, four, or, at general conferences, ten thousand people in some massive well known hymn such as Cowper's "God Moves in a Mysterious Way," now softly chanting the favorite "Mormon" hymn "O My Father," with a devout tenderness that melts the listeners to tears, or in thunderous tones making the great dome of the tabernacle reverberate with "Hallelujah! for the Lord, God Omnipotent Reigneth" (from Handel's "Messiah"); or soaring upwards like rising tidal waves in Gounod's immortal "Unfold ye Portals Everlasting." To sit in that vast auditorium, and while seeing the

broad base of that magnificent towering organ set with a living boquet of humanity, tier above tier, to hear the combined flood of music from human throats and organ pipes roll towards and over one is an inspiration and a veritable musical baptism by immersion.

On the 14th of March next the twelfth anniversary of their first concert at the tabernacle, will be fittingly celebrated with another excursion to the Pacific coast. A train made up of first class Pullmans will leave Salt Lake bearing about four hundred happy souls, two hundred of whom will be singers, the remaining 200, their friends. The trip will be made at the expense of about eighteen thousand dollars, one third or more of which will be raised through the choir's concerts this season; the remainder paid in by the parties taking the trip. Salt Lake City and Utah are justly proud of having the greatest choir and organ to be found in any church building in the world.

And there is not a western heart that does not beat in unison with the big choir when it sings one of its directors' songs that runs thus:

"Once these vales were but a dreary,
barren waste,
Sweet tuneful lays these hills had never
heard;

The songs of howling wolves, dread
beasts of prey
Chimed with the Indians' savage cry
or war.

And nature wept to be by art adorned—
But, hark! the hills resound with sweet
and tuneful lays.

Up to the heavens ascend glad songs
of grateful praises,
Nature puts on her lovely robe of flow-
ers.

To mirth and music glide away the
hours.

The Tabernacle Organ.

THIS magnificent and probably priceless instrument, like many other distinctive features of Utah life, was the inspiration and conception of Brigham Young. He was mus-

ically inclined himself and believed firmly in the humanizing and beneficial influences of the "divine art." Its effect had been witnessed numberless times in the thrilling and trying experiences of the Pioneers in their historic march across the trackless plains to Utah. Frequently when well nigh overcome by the hardships and privations which were a part of their pilgrimage, and when at the point of giving up with despair, they would be called hastily together in some rudely constructed bowery to "sing the songs of Zion." Invariably a magical change would ensue. The same was true after the settlement of the Pioneers in the Great Salt Lake Valley.

It was in 1861 that President Young first spoke of building a big organ, one that would be in harmony with the mammoth Tabernacle, a striking reproduction of which appears elsewhere in this number. Great difficulties were encountered in the building of the instrument, particularly in securing suitable wood for the gigantic pipes with which it was equipped. Some of these pipes took as much as eight hundred feet of lumber. The mountains far and near were fairly scoured for the proper kind of pine—hundreds of loads of which were hauled by teams from a point nearly three hundred miles south of Salt Lake. It required two months to make a round trip. It will thus be seen that work was very slow. The designer as well as the builder was Joseph H. Ridges, whose genius was recently rewarded by a magnificent testimonial in the Salt Lake Tabernacle. Great credit, however, is due to the musical and mechanical capability of Nels Johnson, who put in a great many of the pipes of the old organ—pipes that did much to make the organ famous for the resonance and extraordinary tone producing quality. The workmen were all Pioneer settlers. The method of joining the wood together was unique to say the least, the closest joining being done by means of home-made glue, the making of which consumed hundreds of cattle hides, while numberless calf skins were used in making the bellows. Altogether ten years were consumed in the building. Since the

(Continued on page ten.)