

MUSIC IN LONDON.

HERR MENGELBERG AND M.
RACHMANINOFF.

LONDON, TUESDAY NIGHT.

The Philharmonic Concert of to-night, the first of the centenary season, gave the audience quite a series of new thrills. They were due to the magnificent conducting of Herr Mengelberg. He had not been heard here since 1903, and then he was much praised; but few who heard him then could have been prepared for such superb performances as he gave us to-night—though his reputation on the Continent is second to none. There are occasions when one feels inclined to let the judicial attitude go hang and simply indulge in superlatives, and this is one of them. It may turn out that one was mistaken, but in this case I do not think so, and I am prepared to run the risk and say that to-night's concert has been one of the most remarkable musical experiences of the last few years. It is indeed a thousand pities that it was not possible to secure Herr Mengelberg for one of the Hallé Concerts. Herr Mengelberg is short, sturdy, and clean-shaven, and in Holland he has a nickname which signifies "Little Cherub." His gestures are sharp and incisive, and he is very economical of them till they are wanted, and then they are ample and their intention is unmistakable. He is tremendously virile, and his complete sanity is a welcome antidote to the prevalent neurosis of the day. At the same time he has the sense of beauty and the temperament which prevent his strength from degenerating into coarseness or hardness. His loudest fortissimos are not heavy, and his softest pianissimos are not weak. Above all, he never gives the impression of obtruding himself or of striving after originality for its own sake, and all he does seems completely spontaneous.

The concert began with Tchaikovsky's "Romeo and Juliet," a work which does not show his genius at its best—but still dramatic and picturesque. Herr Mengelberg secured an extraordinarily vivid and powerful performance, and it was evident after a few bars that he had his orchestra in perfect control. The clearness of detail was no less striking than the firmness of the general outline, and the beauty of the phrasing was conspicuous, especially in the languorous love melody. The performance of Schumann's D minor Symphony was a great achievement. It was full of life and beauty, and the tremendous vigour of the final climax swept the audience off its feet. The great triumph of the evening was the playing of Liszt's "Les Préludes," which was instinct with poetry and brought out all that is noble in the music—indeed, made us see true eloquence in places where before we had thought there was only brilliant rhetoric. The sustained power of the close was greatly impressive. The soloist was M. Rachmaninoff, who played his own new Piano Concerto (No. 3). It is in three movements, and all are rhapsodical and full of rapid changes of mood. There are hardly any clearly defined solos or tutti, and the structure of the movements seems to be loose. It has, however, great merits. It always sounds like music that is felt, not made, and there are some passages of considerable beauty and originality. The solo part is brilliantly and gratefully written, and the scoring is admirably rich and varied. The composer played the solo part very brilliantly, and was ideally accompanied, and at the close there was great applause. M. Rachmaninoff also played three of his preludes (including the one in C sharp minor which has made his name a household word), and had to add a fourth. The audience was very large.