

RACHMANINOFF'S RECITAL.

LONDON, SATURDAY.

M. Rachmaninoff, who has been in London some little time and was entertained by the Music Club on Wednesday with a concert of English music, gave a farewell recital in the Queen's Hall to-day to a vast audience. He showed his love for romantic elegy by opening with the Ballade in B minor by Liszt and following with the Ballad Variations of Grieg in G minor.

Probably no player in the world could have done as much justice to these two pieces. The heroic passage-work and the lyrical elements of the Liszt Ballade were nobly contrasted and as finely fused. The Grieg Variations had a robe of greatness not all their own, but in the melodic sense were played with such poignancy and with such a noble capriciousness that one could not question the legitimacy of the reading while enjoying its grandeur.

The C minor Polonaise of Chopin kept up the noble and sombre note. One recalled the readings of Rubinstein and Paderewski, than both of whom M. Rachmaninoff was palpably slower. They were each more headlong and more direct. M. Rachmaninoff sharpened his deliberate style by sudden irritabilities and by a military hardness and decision of style which neither of those great players so prominently employed. He also separated sharply the chordal capriciousness from the rhythmical flow of the piece. He had a style of less grandeur in the lovely middle melody, but developed the approach to the original subject with great strength and consistency.

The A flat Ballade he transformed very much to his own style. His grandeur here had a brusqueness of which you could not convict the tenderest and most melodic of all pianoforte writers. The chordal choppiness affected by M. Rachmaninoff in his own music was developed more and more as the piece went on, and this lovely Ballade was certainly not one of his best interpretations. His presentation of the "Children's Corner" Suite by Debussy had also a greatness of style not suggested by M. Cortot's literary exposition of these pieces quoted in the programme. A "Fairy Tale" by Medtner was something more new, and its lovely melody was endowed with such a tender capriciousness and grace that it was among the choicest morsels of the recital.

We next had a selection from the two series of new studies, opus 38 and 39, entitled "Etudes Tableaux," composed by Rachmaninoff himself. A brilliantly polished execution gave his playing in these pieces more fascination even than elsewhere. In the poetic sense the pieces revealed little that was new, their technical fascination outrunning everything else. Then M. Rachmaninoff gave us some more Liszt, inserting in the Second Rhapsody a long cadenza of his own composition. Cleverly ingenious and brilliant as this was, it had not all the life of the Lisztein passage-work, and finally it seemed almost to halt and grew tedious before the Lisztein conclusion appeared. More music of his own, concluding with the hackneyed C sharp minor Prelude, brought the recital to a close.

The performance clearly indicated M. Rachmaninoff's partiality for the Lisztein technique, and in the Chopin Ballade especially his subservience to it. The sharpness of his military chordalism does something at times to hinder the expansion of his style, which seems liberated only by the intricacies of melodic design and the brilliance of figuration. But his technique, both as a writer for the pianoforte and as a player, conserves a purity and beauty not often attained or striven for in our day.

S. L.