

## SIR HENRY WOOD

### The Jubilee Concert

LONDON, THURSDAY.

The celebration of Sir Henry Wood's fifty years as a conductor was done in a spacious way; it was rather like a Promenader's dream of paradise, with the Albert Hall appropriate to the vision. The place was crowded and there were four orchestras rolled into one, and four choirs rolled into one. Rachmaninoff came specially to England to do homage to an old friend and admirer; he played the solo part of his C minor Concerto, and proved once again that he is the most complete of pianists. A verse of the National Anthem opened the proceedings, then the choir (or choirs) sang Sullivan's "O Gladsome Light." Later they sang not so satisfactorily the Sanctus of the B minor Mass of Bach. The orchestral programme seemed more after the manner born—the "Egmont" Overture; the "Ride of the Valkyrie"; the first of the "Pomp and Circumstance" marches; and the "London" Pageant of Arnold Bax, a work which combines the best of Eric Coates's "Knightsbridge" march with something of Elgar not at his best. Into this mass of jubilant noise a new work by Vaughan Williams came in shyly, almost blushing on the doormat, so to say. This was a "Serenade to Music," a setting of lines from the Jessica-Lorenzo scene in the last act of "The Merchant of Venice," a composition for sixteen solo singers and orchestra. Sir Henry received his soloists in his happiest way, carnation in coat, but mingling artfully his charm of manner with his equally familiar air of seeming to say: "Beautiful to see you all, but come on, let's get to the work in hand."

Vaughan Williams has written sensitive music to words lovely enough to make the whole art of music blush and turn silent; Schubert and Mozart and Schumann and all could not, boiled into a single composer, find strains fit to go with "Look how the floor of heaven is thick inlaid." Vaughan Williams is content to express his natural sensibility; he makes not a single musical point; the setting is a model of delicacy, with ingenuity concealed by tact. No other living composer could have done the impossible thing so well.

Enormous as the audience was, we who were present knew that it represented only a small portion of that audience which, throughout the land, Sir Henry has made his own. Many of these absent admirers would no doubt wish to share in the "jubilee," and they can do so by sending a contribution to the Henry J. Wood Fund for the endowment of hospital beds for orchestral musicians. Last night's concert served this good cause handsomely, as well as rendering due tribute to the most popular of our conductors.

N. C.