

A POET OF THE PIANO.

Rachmaninoff at the Colston Hall.

Last night at the Colston Hall, a tall, square-shouldered man with a straight back strolled on to the platform, took his seat at the piano and looked around. He was Rachmaninoff; but before he started to play he touched a few notes as if calling for silence. Then, the murmur having subsided, he opened his recital.

The first piece was Beethoven's Sonata in F Sharp Minor, and as soon as he had struck the notes of the short and slow introduction to this piece it was evident that he had secured the attention of every single person. From floor to ceiling people riveted their gaze upon him and became entranced as they listened to each successive bar. But the audience was a little cold at the end of the Sonata. This was attributable, no doubt, to the fact that this particular work is not one of Beethoven's most striking compositions. However, Rachmaninoff put up an impeccable performance and he prepared his audience for still greater things.

After the Beethoven Sonata came Schumann's "Novelette in F Sharp Minor." He gave it temperament and tenderness, earnestness and sincerity. These same qualities he brought out in clear relief in the Chopin group. He took the Valse in E Flat Major at a rapid pace and displayed all his technical superiority, and he contrasted it with the Nocturne in D Flat Major which was full of limpid purity and rare poetic insight.

The three hymns "In Praise of Toil," by Medtner, were played with the perfect understanding of a compatriot. The same may be said concerning his reading of Tschai'kowsky's Variations in F, opus 19.

His Own Work.

But the greatest event of the evening was when the pianist played two pieces of his own—Etude Tableaux (No. 5, opus 39) and Prelude in G Major. He also gave his arrangement of the Kreisler "Liebesfreud Paraphrase." He played it with an élan that made an encore inevitable.

Rachmaninoff went off the platform. Would he come back? If he did, would he play his Prelude in C Sharp Minor? That was the question. Rachmaninoff came back, and amidst salvos of applause, too. Yes, he did play the work by which he is chiefly known, and everybody was happy! They had been worrying because they would have been disappointed if Rachmaninoff had not given them this piece. But they might have rested assured that Rachmaninoff would not have disappointed.

V. P. S.