

HALLÉ CONCERT.

A GREAT RUSSIAN IN MANCHESTER.

A week ago, as it did last night, the Hallé Concert led off with Strauss. On that occasion, the most recent of his published compositions—a thing of gigantic mould—receded into the background before a fine performance of Beethoven's Choral Symphony. Last night, with an older work—new to Manchester—Strauss more nearly held his own.

"Aus Italien"—with its four separated movements, approximating more closely to a suite than to a symphonic poem—is the first extended composition in which the composer was drawn away from the classic forms. Italy has fascinated other composers—Elgar, Berlioz, Charpentier, and Mendelssohn among them—and "Aus Italien" is the result of a visit paid to that country at an impressionable age. Thus we get, in the first movement, a brooding suggestion of the desolate Campagna. The second is headed "Amid the Ruins of Rome," with the sub-title "Fantastic Pictures of Vanished Glory"; then follows "By Sorrento's Strand" and "Scenes of Popular Life in Naples." Over it all—the wealth of facile, sweeping melody the sense of youthful vigour, there sings in one's ear the spirit of the future Strauss.

But the remarkable audience, filling the hall in every part, came not to hear Strauss. Sergei Rachmaninoff, the composer of a short prelude that has found its way into every home that possesses a piano, was the attraction, and his presence lent exceptional distinction to the concert. He was heard in his second piano concerto and the power and rare tonal beauty of his playing made an immediate appeal. The long-drawn curving melodies of this work—that droop more often than they rise—if not perhaps distinctly Russian, are suggestive of the Slav temperament. Heightened by every artifice, that always seems to have a climax in view, they are used with real emotional effect. The music is born of feeling and developed by art. The noble peroration that closes the Adagio was profoundly moving, while for sheer brilliance of effect the Finale is nearly unique among concertos. At the close, and after the Preludes given in the second half, Mr. Rachmaninoff was again and again recalled. In these short pieces, where the note of poetic imagery is rarely absent, though the harmonies maintain a logical movement, the composer's playing was delightful for its fine gradations of tone and its imaginative scope.

The concert came to a rousing conclusion with another unfamiliar work—Balakirev's "Overture on a Spanish March Theme." So little Russian music—outside the work of one composer—has been heard here that its inclusion was of peculiar interest. It is curious to note already the knack of brilliant orchestration that seems ingrained in every composer of the Russian School. But in these days it sounds curiously naive, and as an alternative to its lengthy heading the title "1512" would not be inapt. Throughout the evening the orchestral playing was at its best, and with Mr. Balling and the soloist they shared the honours of a notable evening.

Next week Bach's *Mass* in B minor will be given.
A. J. S.