

BLACKFRIARS

James Gunn's *Plaster Cast* (No. 19), the three dimensional illusion is so complete that a figure appears perilously poised on the edge of its frame, or, as in Mr. L. M. Glas-son's extravagantly praised *Breakfast*, an admirably painted egg reposes in fussy folds of tablecloth. A foil to these were the unity of conception and the distinctively painterly qualities of Miss Emily Paterson's *Dordrecht* (No. 26) and Mr. Sickert's superbly self-assured *'Frisco* (No. 20), evidencing as fine and as characteristic a sense of medium as Mr. Steer's two water-colours, *Whitstable* (No. 43) and *A Calm Day on the Thames* (No. 50), in which one welcomed the purely pictorial interest, as opposed to the picturesque interests typified by Mr. Henry Rushbury's *Richmond Castle* (No. 44) or, at the New Burlington Galleries, by Mr. Vernon Wethered's *Stratford-on-Avon* (No. 20). That deliberate portrayal of the picturesque never produces a significant painting is possibly to be explained on the one hand by the excessive subject interest which the choice of Richmond Castle suggests, on the other by the difficulty in universalising something local. Contact with reality is necessary, certainly, but not contact with a particular reality. The good painting is always abstract, abstract not as Mr. Ben Nicholson uses the term, but abstract in the wholly laudatory sense in which it can be applied to these two water-colours of Mr. Steer's and to the greater number of works in Mr. Paul Nash's exhibition.

JOHN POPE-HENNESSY.

Music.

DURING the past month or so much has been made of the fact that there has never before been such a wealth of orchestral concerts as that provided by the present London season. From this it might appear that the London devotee of orchestral concerts was suffering from an embarrassment of riches.

This, however, is not exactly the situation. That there is an embarrassment, numerically speaking, must be admitted, but that this embarrassment is one of riches is not so certain. A careful study of the advertised programmes of these concerts soon reveals the fact that a large number of items receive two, three, and even four per-

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formances in the space of a few weeks. The number of masterpieces which can stand the test of such huddled repetition is very small indeed, and these items are badly overworked. Indeed, it is often the case that the works chosen for performance in this unanimously insistent fashion can, by no stretch of the imagination, be termed masterpieces. Nevertheless, there have been many finely played and interesting programmes of orchestral music already during the season, and there is still a large number of equal promise that have yet to be performed.

Among the most interesting of the January orchestral concerts are those to be given by the B.B.C. during their experimental Winter Promenades at the Queen's Hall. This series starts on New Year's Eve and continues for a fortnight. Sir Henry Wood will be in charge of proceedings as usual. The all-Delius programme in these 'Proms' on January 5th is full of good and interesting music. A seldom performed work is included in the Bach programme on January 11th—the D Minor Concerto for three pianos and strings.

When Bach wrote this work he could hardly have foreseen the demand it would make on platform-space owing to the immense proportions of the modern grand piano, neither could he have bargained for the volume he thus placed at the modern pianist's control. It may be a very noisy evening in the Queen's Hall!

On January 16th, 17th and 19th the Courtauld-Sargent Concert Club continue their enterprising series of programmes with performances of three such widely different works as Berlioz's *Harold in Italy* for orchestra and solo viola, the Mozart Double Concerto in E flat for violin and viola, and Walton's increasingly popular *Belshazzar's Feast*. The soloists at this concert will be Albert Sammons, Lionel Tertis and Roy Henderson. At this Club's last concert the new Bax Fourth Symphony was given its first performance. Despite some excellent playing by the London Philharmonic Orchestra under Dr. Malcolm Sargent, this new symphony sheds no further light on the problem of the development of its composer's unquestioned genius. As far as could be judged by a single hearing of this work, nothing in it can be said to go any deeper

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than does the highly-complicated thought of the Third Symphony, although the method of that thought is considerably clarified in its successor.

At the Queen's Hall, on January 27th, the Royal Philharmonic Society are presenting the first performance of a Symanovsky Piano Concerto, with Nicolai Malko as conductor and Jan Smeterlin as the soloist. On the Sunday afternoon of January 29th Sir Thomas Beecham and the London Philharmonic Orchestra are presenting the new Concerto for Two Pianos and Orchestra by Francis Poulenc, the 'enfant terrible' of the musical world a decade or so ago. He will find it a difficult task to shock the present generation of concert-goers by the eccentricity of his harmony and rhythm. The composer himself will be at one of the pianos. Quite a number of other composers have now 'queered his pitch' by going one better (or worse) in the matter of dissonance.

At the B.B.C. Concert on February 1st, Vaughan Williams' new Piano Concerto is to be given for the first time. This work has aroused the keenest interest since it is the first essay in this form of composition by any contemporary English composer of established repute. Miss Harriet Cohen will be the soloist. PATRICK GEOGHEGAN.

The Play.

MIRACLE AT VERDUN. By Hans Chlumberg. At the Comedy Theatre, London.

In this play we have presented to us, by the medium of a German ex-soldier's vision, the world-crisis created by the sudden return to life of the whole of the thirteen million War dead. Firstly we are shown a small section of the 'miracle of resurrection' taking place in a military cemetery in the Argonne.

Then come three short but very amusing scenes depicting the casual manner in which the news of the 'miracle' is received by the French and German Presidents, and the English Prime Minister.

Next we see the reception afforded to two of these 'resurrected' individuals, one French and one German, in their respective homes. Different in nationality, they yet receive the same treatment. Both return to find them-