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FOR THE POOR CHILDREN.

SUCCESSFUL CONCERT AT PRESTON HIPPODROME. 1906

RAISING FUNDS TO FEED THE HUNGRY

(BY OUR COMMISSIONER.)

The hearts of the ragged little urchins who satisfy their hunger almost every night in the hospitable shelter of the Shepherd-street Mission—the children of a bed of straw, crust of bread, and rags—ought to rejoice to-day. Our "Lancashire Daily Post" fund exceeds £21, and more than twice this sum ought to be netted from the splendid matinee given in the Preston Hippodrome last Saturday afternoon, so that there will be enough to provide the suppers, to clog the barefoot, abolish the worn and torn trashes, and cover bare limbs with warm clothing. Any surplus will go to the Night Shelter for Women.

The splendid matinee at the Hippodrome originated with Mr. J. W. Makinson and Mr. J. J. Jackson, who read the Commissioner's article in the "Post" a year ago, and resolved to get up a big concert in its support. They took Mr. W. B. Broadhead, the proprietor of the Preston Royal Hippodrome, into their confidence, and Mr. Broadhead, with that largeness of heart and generous sympathy he has shown on other occasions of help for the starving, offered to give the free use of the Hippodrome, together with the services of the orchestra, and the full programme of the performance of the week. There are no kinder people in the world than the artistes of the theatre or the variety, and they came forward on Saturday afternoon with buoyant zeal "to give a Christmas turn for the little kiddies," as one of them put it to me.

There had been a great response to the circulars sent out; the place was crowded, and scores of people who had never been in the Hippodrome before came away amazed with the cleverness and quality of the entertainment. To scores of children, the brilliantly-lighted Hippodrome, with its cosy fauteuils, was a veritable Aladdin's palace. The obliging staff were as keen as any of us to help the waifs and strays, and they were patterns of politeness. Of course, Mr. Broadhead's goodness dominated all, but the thanks of the organisers of the affair were due to the resident manager, Mr. J. Lindsel, whose calm and smooth administration impressed us all. Mr. F. Dexter, the chief of the orchestra, showed us what excellent musicians answer his baton with light and shade.

THE PROGRAMME.

Kronev Brothers opened the programme with a very funny turn as lazy coalmen. The activity and elasticity of their laziness was prodigious. The Prince and Milner trio gave a novel equilibristic scena, and then Sam Redfern, whose patter made crowds weep with laughing over 20 years ago, was fresh as ever. Sam has done as much good as a London hospital in his time, with the sov'ran balm of his ready wit. A right good laugh is Nature's life elixir.

Maud Vera is a first-class coon artiste; we roared at the domestic episodes of Hilda and Leigh; kept up the laughing in Brull and Helmsley's divertissement, "Fun in a Music Shop;" gave a great welcome to the Royal Naval Quartette, and enjoyed the voice quality and culture of Mr. Edward Harpur; then resumed our mirth at the bioscopic hunt after the hat, and laughed at the wind-up of the Casey Court extravaganza of the slums—the "gorgus panti-terminie, Mick Whittington." It was a right good, healthy Christmas programme by skilled artistes abounding in "business."

The ordinary programme of Mr. Broadhead's Hippodrome was supplemented by a charming programme by Preston amateurs. We had the kitchen scene from Flotow's opera, "Martha," given in costume, Mrs. Bayes, soprano (in whom we all recognised our old friend Miss Cissie Mayor) taking Martha; Miss Lily Turner, contralto, taking Julia; Mr. R. Shepherd, tenor, taking Lionel, and Mr. J. J. Jackson presenting the robust Plunket. The singing was perfect, and there were represented four of the best voices in the district; the histrionics excellent, and the spinning wheel scene very pretty.

Following this came selections by the Apollo Glee Singers, Messrs. E. S. Sykes, W. Jackson, G. Hewitson, and J. J. Jackson, who have so often delighted North Lancashire audiences by their charmingly expressive interpretations. Mr. J. J. Jackson sang a song, and did as he always does, everything he could by personal service to help on those offices of mercy and charity which bountifully mark this merry season.

IN THE AUDIENCE.

Among those present at the Hippodrome were the Mayor, wearing his chain of office, Alderman Margerison, Councillors G. Dewhurst, Green, Cartmell, Worden (Deepdale); R. Fazackerley, J.P., Colonel Carter, and Major Little, chief constable, who has been a never-failing friend to Shepherd-street Mission, and whose great concert for the ill-clad, half-famished waifs and strays he sends to win health back in the Ormerod Home of the big-hearted sisters at St. Annes-on-the-Sea, takes place next Saturday. We hope Preston will back up the Mayor and crowd the Public Hall to the doors. During an interval in the concert the Mayor and Alderman Margerison proceeded to the stage, being received with cheers. The Mayor proposed the thanks of the borough to Mr. Broadhead for his great act of benevolence, to the resident manager, the artistes, the orchestra, the amateurs, and all who had contributed to the success of the matinee. He referred to the noble work being done in the slums by Mr. and Mrs. Williamson, without fee or reward—a life's devoted, and truly Christian act of self-effacement, and said he was glad that, by the performance so admirably given that afternoon, they would be able to help on the cause of the ragged children.

Alderman Margerison seconded the motion by a speech, in which he, as one long associated with the Shepherd-street Mission encompassed its all-embracing work. He said it was eminently fitting that on the eve of the celebration of the birth of the Prince of Peace they should stretch out the hand to the outcast and the helpless, who were all alike children of the living God. (Cheers.) If the work of Shepherd-street Mission could only be truly realised in Preston it would never want for help.

The heartfelt thanks of the Mission I am asked to give to Mr. Makinson and Mr. Jackson.

At the Preston Police Court, to-day, Inspector Kingwell, N.S.P.C.C., applied to the magistrates for the transfer of Richard Sharples, 10; Alice Sharples, seven; and Annie Sharples, five, to the custody of Mr. Williamson, Shepherd-street Mission, the mother having been convicted last month of neglect.—The Bench granted the application, and made orders upon the mother to contribute towards the support of her children until they were 16 years of age.

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