

MUSIC

PAUL ROBESON

VIRILE LIFE EXPRESSED IN SONG

WHAT sort of a man is this Paul Robeson who again last week captivated a huge Birmingham audience as much by his personal charm as by the beauty of his voice, both singing and speaking?

He is certainly one of the most remarkable men I have ever met and he towers above his fellows in more ways than one. Physically he is a giant of a man. He stands about 6ft. 4in. and

poured out his talents in the cause of the coloured people and has immeasurably enhanced the dignity of his race and has softened and sweetened human relations in many a sphere.

The critic who tries to assess Robeson the singer without understanding something of Robeson the man is ill-equipped for his task; indeed is hardly worthy to undertake it. It is, in fact, a life expressed in song. Cold technicalities are forgotten, little labels for this or that facet are discarded as one is swept away by the deeper meaning of the music, by the elemental surge, the more compelling because it is so controlled. Robeson is a man with a mission and the folk songs alone give the key to it. He can wring the hearts of his hearers not only for the music, but for the cause of coloured races wherever they may be in subjection.

One thought comes readily to the mind. Here is a scholar, a man of culture, who can walk with white men nor lose the Negro touch. Is he the exception, or the product of a new era? If the latter, if in another generation America is going to turn out many more such figures, then the colour question will have assumed a vastly different character, at once more serious and infinitely more encouraging.

A. F.



Paul Robeson

weighs nearly 15 stones, is broad-shouldered and massive-chested, tapering to the waist like the perfect athlete.

His voice is deep and cultured with just enough of the American accent to give it extra charm. He laughs easily and unaffectedly and manages to give everyone the impression that to talk to them is the thing that he has desired above all others. In short a gentleman of infinite charm and tact.

There can be few people to-day who do so many things so well. This is an age of specialists and proficiency at one thing is usually attained at the expense of others. But Robeson seems to command success in all he does. There is a poise and a balance about his life that none but the really big men ever possess.

He studied the law and won his degree from two universities. He started to sing and was acclaimed by half the world. He took to acting and spoke Shakespeare as it has been given to few men to do. He

school teacher to the grammar school specialist," said Mr. Baker.

PAUL ROBESON RECITAL AT THE TOWN HALL

Mr. Paul Robeson finished his recital at the Town Hall last night by giving Othello's last speech, the opening words of which might fairly be applied to Mr. Robeson himself: "I have done the State some service and they know it." So he has, and music is equally enriched because of him.

I do not know whether it is a sign of weakness in a critic to decline to analyse and dissect one of the most glorious voices ever heard. If it is, I am unrepentant, for I, at any rate, was content to revel in the beauty of it rather than attempt to probe for imperfections, if such there were.

No one with feeling can remain aloof before such elemental work. One is swept up with the passion of it; it becomes a thing not of the mind but of the heart. The negro folk-songs were almost unbearably poignant, and a Hassidic chant seemed to contain the eternal questioning of Israel to the God of the race's beginning. It was an experience the memory of which will not soon pass, for one was hearing not only the singer but the missionary.

A. F.

P.C.S HAD HOSPITAL