

## Musical.

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THE imputation under which England has lain so long may surely be said to be now dissipated : the imputation of being an unmusical country, and in particular of producing no composers of more than third or fourth rate merit. There can be no doubt that, notwithstanding the absurd fuss made lately in England over Purcell, who never wrote a line in his life, that was not an imitation of Handel, and over Storace, Arne, Bishop, and others, her fame as a country of musicians will rest on those men who are now the pride of this generation, rather than on the antiquated contrapuntists of former centuries. We are certain that shamefully little is known in Canada of the compositions of Barnett, MacFarren, Benedict, and Smart for instance. Arthur Sullivan, of course, being more of a popular composer, a song-writer, and so forth, is better known and appreciated ; but we doubt if many of our readers, on being told that Dr. MacFarren's new oratorio of "Joseph" was the great feature of the Leeds Festival, would know very much more, either about him or his music, than that he is principal of the Royal Academy of Music, and an honoured and sufficiently talented musician. However, as we only propose to give a slight sketch of "Joseph," we will address it to those among our readers, who are interested in Dr. MacFarren's career, and understand and admire his genius, though they be in the minority. And that career has not been an idle one, though it has been an easily successful one. Four years ago, his first oratorio, *St. John the Baptist*, was produced, and since then he has produced the "Resurrection," a cantata of grand dimensions to be brought out at Glasgow shortly, and finally there is "Joseph," a work of grandeur and importance. "Joseph" engaged the attention at one time of Handel, and of course Mehul's "Joseph," or at least parts of it, are well known. But it seems that it has been left to Dr. MacFarren to perpetuate the story by means of his learning and great powers. The librettist of this as well as of the other two oratorios, is Dr. Monk, organist of York Minster, and although generally speaking he has suited his book to the genius of his colleague, some of the respective texts are evidently both out of place and radically unfit to be set to music. The persons are Joseph (baritone), Jacob (bass), Reuben (tenor), Benjamin (soprano), and Pharaoh (tenor) ; also three choruses of tenors and basses, an impersonal soprano, (there is no woman in the *dramatis personæ*, by the way), and full choruses of Sheperds, Wise Men, Ishmaelites and Egyptians. The influence of Wagner on modern music is remarkable in this oratorio, recitation being to a great extent discarded for "dialogue." There are thirty-six numbers, including the overture, which is said to be strictly classical, full of power and beautiful *motives*, the two principal being Jacob's love for Joseph, and the "Canaan" motive.