

## NIGHT.

At peaceful hours like these, how sweet to glide  
 In floating pinnace o'er the rippling tide,  
 With gentle hand to ply the impelling oar,  
 And view the nightly beauties of the shore!  
 Like some fair child her mother fears to wake,  
 The moon seems slumbering on the placid lake,  
 Rocked in the stillness of her dreamless rest  
 By every breeze that heaves its crystal breast.  
 With peerless cups the opening lilies shine  
 Like white-robed queens or fabled nymphs divine,  
 Whose amorous deeds full many a minstrel told  
 When inspiration struck the lyres of old.  
 Then wandering Fancy gave celestial power  
 To tinkling-stream and dewy-petalled flower;  
 In every fount some light-haired Naiad dwells;  
 'Tis Echo's voice that animates the dells,  
 And from the chambers of her ocean cave  
 The Nereid's music floats upon the wave.  
 Thus oft of old the nymphs in frolic played  
 In limpid streams, or coursed the moonlit glade;  
 While jocund mirth impelled the sportive throng  
 To measured dance or sweet enlivening song.

—FRANCIS HENRY WOOD: *Echoes of the Night.*

## MUSIC IN ONTARIO.

In the days now past, when Ontarians were engaged chiefly in conquering the wilderness and making homes for themselves, little time could be given to the study of music. The daily life of a people compelled to labour hard to secure a livelihood and a home in a new and rough country, is not conducive to that state of mind in which artistic ideas are likely to germinate or develop. Not until a community has reached that stage of progress when Nature has been conquered, when it is no longer necessary to devote all available energy to caring for the needs of the body, and when leisure for recreation and amusement is possessed by the majority, can general cultivation of musical taste and executive ability be looked for. Ontario's material progress, however, has been rapid. Her people are now in a position to devote time and energy to the cultivation of science and the fine arts. Their love for music is inherited from ancestors who were citizens of music-loving countries. There has, therefore, of late been considerable advance in the cultivation of musical taste. The peripatetic "professor" who paid a flying visit to the village and taught "singing school," and closed his term with "A Grand Performance of the sublime cantata 'Esther,'" is a well-remembered personage. But he does not flourish as of yore. The day of such songs as "Mollie Darling," "Put Me in My Little Bed," is gone, and now they are seldom heard. From the "singing school" and the reign of the trashy sentimental song there has been, in this Province, a remarkable and pleasing advance in the cultivation of music among the people, and in saying this the singing of such songs as "Oh, Dem Golden Slippers," and the like, by certain classes at the present day, is not left out of account. This advance is evidenced in the existence in Toronto, Hamilton, Ottawa, St. Catharines, Guelph, Brantford, London, and other cities and towns, of large musical societies, composed for the most part of enthusiastic amateurs, who give of their time and money for the sake of studying and performing the grandest works that have been written. Some of these societies have been in active life for years. The list of works given within recent years by the Toronto and Hamilton Societies includes many of the standard oratorios, and the people of these cities have had an opportunity of listening (within a very short time of their first performance at the festivals for which they were specially written) to the latest and best oratorios and cantatas by modern composers. In Ottawa the "Messiah" and works of lesser importance have been given; in London the "Creation," and various cantatas; in Guelph and Brantford the "Messiah" has also been performed, and in St. Catharines portions of the "Creation" and Barnett's "Ancient Mariner" have been given. At the present writing, Toronto possesses the Philharmonic Society, under F. H. Torrington, the Choral Society, under E. Fisher, the Vocal Society, under W. Haslam, and other societies of lesser magnitude, and also a professional string quartette, in connection with which a series of very successful concerts, known as the "Monday Pops," has been given during the present season. Hamilton has the Philharmonic Society, under F. H. Torrington, the Musical Union, under R. Thomas Steele, the Orchestral Club, under J. E. P. Aldous, and the Arion Club (male voices), under F. W. Wodell. London has a Philharmonic Society in a quiescent state, and the Arion Club, under W. D. Birks; Guelph, the Choral Society, under W. Philip; St. Catharines, the Choral Society, under A. M. Read; Brantford, the Mendelssohn Society, under Prof. Garratt; and Ottawa, a Choral

Society, under (I think) J. W. F. Harrison. Ontario has been fortunate in that for years band music has been popular in nearly every town of any importance. The 13th Battalion band of Hamilton, 7th Battalion band of London, Queen's Own band of Toronto, 27th Battalion band of Sarnia, Guelph City band, Waterloo band, Bowmanville, Preston, and other bands have of late years given each season a series of popular concerts, on each programme of which has appeared an overture by some composer of good rank, or selections of a high-class character. The steady progress of these bands toward greater excellence, and their choice of the best grade of selections, cannot have failed to educate public taste. The Toronto Choral Society is now at work upon Mendelssohn's "St. Paul," the Philharmonic Society is rehearsing "Mors et Vita," Gounod's latest work, the Hamilton Philharmonic Society has just performed "Samson," the St. Catharines Society is preparing Mendelssohn's "Hymn of Praise," the Guelph Society has begun the rehearsal of Bennett's "May Queen," and Costa's "Naaman" has been spoken of in connection with the Brantford musicians. Add to this list of works in preparation the fact that arrangements for a gigantic June festival in Toronto are well under way, that a Saengerfest, at which Haydn's "Creation" is to be the principal work, is being arranged for August, at Berlin, under the direction of Theo. Zoellner, and that a great band competition for the same month is talked of for Walkerton, and it will be acknowledged that (although the list of organizations is confessedly incomplete) the people of Ontario, judging by the public efforts of citizens of leading cities and towns, have reached a stage of intellectual and art progress where the love for the best in music is widespread.

Yet it would be unfair to assert that the existence of the organizations spoken of, and the frequent performance of high class music, show that the people of Ontario are equal to their privileges and opportunities. It is the enthusiasts who keep these societies alive prominently before the public and up to the times in the character of the selections performed. Those who have for years carried the burden of debt incurred by some of these societies, and spent valuable time in persuading their fellow-citizens to give of their means for the support of large musical organizations,—others who have brought from abroad to our cities and towns artists of high rank to give public performances, and been obliged to meet from their private funds large deficits because of lack of patronage—and yet others who have played and sung classical works to unappreciative audiences who apparently wondered "what it was all about," afterward loudly applauding a tricky performance of a fantasia upon some well-known air, or a quartette by performers upon the instrument commonly known as the "mouth-organ,"—will another tale unfold. But musical taste is a thing of growth, and in order to its development there must always be in a community some in advance of the majority, ready to work as missionaries for love of art, and spend time and money without immediate or adequate return.

These missionaries and the organizations they support are hindered in their work by the injudicious style of criticism characteristic of the Ontario press. It is perhaps too much to expect that the critical writing on art matters in the press of this Province shall, in breadth of treatment and general style, be so far in advance of general culture as to rank with that of the press of older countries, such as Germany and England. Yet part of the mission of the press, professedly, is to mould public opinion and lead public thought, and if the journalists of Ontario (who have done so much for their country at great self-sacrifice) could be led to see the real purpose of criticism as considered from a musician's standpoint, as well as from that of the newspaper publisher, the work of cultivating the public taste for the good in music, would be greatly advanced. How is it possible that people shall come to estimate musical works or performances at their true value while newspapers continue systematically to publish a series of indiscriminate puffs, and call their work criticism? All these extravagant statements certainly cannot be true, and one result of the "general admiration" style of criticism is that when a really great artist or work comes before him for consideration the critic finds himself high and dry upon a barren shore which is strewn with the mangled remains of words that have been wrecked in the attempt to describe "the superlative excellence of Miss Jones's singing of 'Tit-for-tat,'" or Signor Brown's "magnificent performance of 'Robin Adair' as a violin solo upon four strings." The critic having exhausted the English language in his remarks upon local or amateur doings, is sorely at a loss for words to set forth the merits and demerits of a genuinely artistic effort. Indiscriminate criticism—criticism not based upon knowledge and tempered by breadth of view and a charitable spirit, whether in praise or censure, is bad, both for performer and public. Human nature is so constituted that if Mr. Jones is told by his newspaper that his playing of "Fairy Wedding Waltz" was "so excellent as to make it advisable for Rubinstein to look to his laurels," he is apt