

## THE CONCERT BY MR. ROSS' CHOIR.

The third concert given by Mr. Ross' private choir in Orpheus Club Hall, drew out an intelligent and critical audience. The programme was both varied and pleasing, and several of the numbers won well-merited encores. The choruses were uniformly well rendered, the staccato and piano passages being most creditably performed. Of the crescendo and diminuendo passages we cannot say as much, although it was quite evident that the conductor had spared no pains in training the choir on these points. Apparently, the great bulk of the work fell upon twenty-five or thirty voices, and hence the crescendo and forte passages failed to impress one as being sufficiently full and strong considering the number of the members of the choir. Bellini's "Phantom Chorus" was very well sung, and had it not been for the lagging of the basses would have been the gem of the evening. As it was, the chorus, "Now Tramp O'er Moss and Fell," won the leading place. The unqualified success of the latter was mainly due to Miss Schaefer's rendition of her solo, which ran like a silver melody throughout the composition. The perfect ease and grace with which Miss Schaefer sang this solo was in striking contrast with the evident nervousness and hesitancy which she exhibited in singing the duet with Miss Bligh, the effect of which was decidedly painful. In the closing number by the choir the fate of "Jack and Jill" was musically illustrated in a laughable manner. Jack's broken crown and Jill's precipitate tumble appealing to the sympathetic or risible moods of the audience. We have never heard Miss Shoff sing to better advantage than at the concert under consideration. In the value "L'Ardita," her time and expression were first rate; and the spirited manner in which she went through the song, from the beginning to the end, fairly earned for her the magnificent encore which she received. Miss Shoff would have done well not to have responded to the encore, for in doing so, she lost many of the laurels she had won. Her first solo had evidently taxed her voice to its utmost limit, and consequently her rendering of "Robin Adair" was duller than this dull town. Miss Bligh has steadily grown in public favor as a singer, and is now generally regarded as one of our best vocalists. She possesses a voice of rare quality, and her tones are generally taken with sweetness and purity. No more suitable solo could have been chosen for Miss Bligh than Tosti's "At Vespers," as in it there is ample scope for displaying the pathos for which her voice is so well adapted. If the upper register of Miss Bligh's voice was equal in correctness to the lower registers, her singing would be even more attractive; but all things considered, we must congratulate the young lady upon the leading place she has taken, and counsel her to prosecute the study of music with even greater zeal in future. Space forbids a more lengthened notice of the soloists, Miss O'Dell, Miss Graham, Mrs. Taylor, and Mr. Norman, all helping to make the evening enjoyable. We were sorry to notice that Mrs. Taylor was suffering from a severe cold, and that her singing was far less effective than on former occasions. Miss Page's piano solo "Tannhauser March" was well rendered, the left hand execution being very skillful. Mr. Ross should weed out from his choir a couple of dozen or more of the silent singers whose avoirdupois add weight to the stage, but whose voices never add weight to the choruses.

## WHITE SLAVERY.

Dear Mr. Editor,—I have read with much satisfaction the articles which have recently appeared in your valuable paper, relative to the system now in force in the County of Digby for the support of the poor. I feel that I cannot put the objections to the farming-out system more forcibly than has already been done in the columns of THE CRITIC, but at the same time, it may not be amiss for me to bear witness from personal investigation to the truth of your editorials on this subject.

In September, 1865, I was retained by certain gentlemen to represent the evils of this system before F. H. Bell, Esq., who had been appointed Commissioner by the Local Government to investigate this matter. In the course of the investigation, I examined and cross-examined a very large number of witnesses, and thus became thoroughly familiar with the working of the system. From the knowledge which I acquired during the investigation, I have no hesitation whatever in bearing testimony to the fact, that case after case of immorality, cruelty and neglect, the details of which are too loathsome and revolting to appear in a public newspaper, were directly and beyond all question traced to the present system. I went into the investigation absolutely unprejudiced. I left it with feelings of disgust and loathing. I am quite confident that any unprejudiced man of ordinary humanity would have shared my sentiments. The Committee on Humane Institutions, last session, after reading the evidence and Mr. Bell's report, recommended a change in the system. I feel that the gentlemen in the House of Assembly cannot fully realize the evils existing under the present system, if they did, surely the report of the Committee on Humane Institutions would be quickly followed by legislative enactment.

Yours, etc.,

Annapolis, N. S.

JAMES J. RITCHIE, JR.

[FOR THE CRITIC.]

## NOVA SCOTIA'S HUMORIST.

A contributor to the *Wolfeville Acadian*, signing himself "Harl Harle," sometimes abbreviated to "H. H.," has within the past year or two been a source of considerable surprise and amusement to the literary circles by his truly ingenious productions. His writings are a delightful combination of fun and sense, and no one can read them without partaking of a rich treat. They are fun in its purest and richest form—not the low and vulgar sort

which occupies such a large portion of a certain class of the public prints—but that pure, racy, creamy sort which characterizes only the productions of the higher class humorists.

As far as I can learn, his first effort appeared in the summer of 1883, under the heading of "Schoolmeeting Day." This was before the *Acadian* had assumed its present size, while it was issued as an amateur sheet called the *Young Acadian*. While at this size, "H. H." contributed several articles, but none attracted special attention till "Courting" appeared. I well remember the day that this delicious bit of humor fell into my hands. It was somewhere about the middle of February in the following year. The whole country around it set in a roar of laughter, and many were the conjectures as to who was the author. A short extract from this will show something of the style of the writer:—

"Courting for some years has been the leading industry in this locality, and it is flourishing as provolently now as at any time since the flood. It is as natural to man as it is to post-masters to read post cards, or students to undervalue boarding house food. When he takes it once, and has it bad, he is very prompt to take it again when the law allows, and in eleven cases out of nine, he does. The late Solomon once said, 'A man is as prone to wander as a hen is to want to set; but it seems to me that he is just as prone to court, and perhaps a shade prouder.' There may be, however, a considerable wander in man, but there is more courting. The wanderingest man that ever lived was a courting man. He could wander up and down the streets on Sunday nights for two hours and a half after church was dismissed, and then tell his mother he stopped to inquiry meeting. I would here mention that the ignorance of this poor mother might be blissfulness, I guess. Courting may be considered as a preface to housekeeping and gathering catnip. It is a transplanting of affections, that is, taking affections from a natural father and mother and setting them out in artificial ones via their daughters. It changes a man's whole disposition as quickly and completely as seven dollars and a glass of brandy will change a voter's attachment to a councillor. He then loves everybody, but more especially his new parents whom he calls pa and ma, father and mother, or papa and mamma, whatever the daughter does. He loves every one of the family too, including the cat, as ardently as he does the parent. He declares the mother looks seventeen years younger than any of her younger sisters; and that the father is honest enough for an assessor. He knows their piano has a finer tone than any in the town, (that is, if they have a piano; if they have an organ, it is their organ that has.) Their house is so pleasantly situated that he can't bear to leave it; and it never occurs to him until he hears the servant girl shiking at the hall stove, that it is to-morrow morning, and that his father is calling him at home to get up and milk. About this time he inclines largely to hair oil; and he won't go anywhere except to bed without an external application of a hair and clothes brush."

From this time onward I have watched his articles with considerable interest, and have been fortunate enough to peruse the most of them. Since then, his articles have been steadily improving and increasing in popularity. The press is wide awake to his abilities as a humorist, as is manifested from the fact that they are so widely copied. "People," a series of articles which appeared in the winter of '86, was very popular, and was copied very largely into such papers as the *Halifax Herald* and other prominent dailies. "The Editor and his Troubles," the latest I have had the pleasure of reading as yet, is a magnificently funny production. He says: "I am not an editor, and I would sooner be an angel than be one ten minutes, but I take an interest in them. My heart leans out towards them, and I ain't a girl either. I would like to see the reading public appreciate them more, and pay them quicker." From his writings we can learn but little of his personal history. His name has not as yet been made public, but I trust it will not long remain unknown. He tells us in one of his articles that he is a Nova Scotian; that he was born at Stewiacke, Colchester Co.; and in another that he now lives at Brookfield, in the same county.

In an article of this size, it is impossible to say much with regard to the genius and ability of such a writer. In conclusion, all I have to say is, that I am proud that Nova Scotia has the honor of having such a promising and already so widely reputed humorist. When Nova Scotians do step to the front, they tell!

G. G. N.

## PARLIAMENTARY REVIEW.

DOMINION.—Parliament assembled on Wednesday, the 13th instant, when Lieut.-Col. Ouimet was unanimously chosen Speaker of the House, and the members sworn in.

The Speech from the Throne was delivered. It congratulates Parliament on "the general prosperity of the country, and on the prospect of a coming season of peace and progress." Allusion is made to Her Majesty the Queen having reached the fiftieth year of her reign, and to the prominent position occupied by Canada in the Colonial and Indian Exhibition recently held in London. It holds forth a hope that negotiations now in progress ament the fishery question may result in an arrangement satisfactory both to the United States and to Canada, and promises that meanwhile the measures for the protection of the inshore fisheries of the Dominion will be continued. It advises the formation of a new department "of Trade and Commerce" with a responsible minister at its head, and the re-organization of the departments of Justice, Customs and Inland Revenue. A measure for giving the North-West Territories representation in the Senate is promised as well as other Acts of less importance. The construction of a new canal, to connect lakes Huron and Superior at Sault Ste Marie is also suggested.

On Thursday, the Address in Reply to the Speech was read and adopted without any discussion of importance. It contained only the usual platitudes. The public accounts for the year ending with the 30th of June,