

natural gift but vastly more skill. Our best singers are scarcely able to cope with music written for third rate singers by Bach and Mozart." Yet from this very proficiency came an influence which hastened the termination of this, the only great music period in history. There appeared a school of musical acrobats who sought to perform some remarkable feat. Writers no longer sought to adapt the composition to the singer; to execute a piece unfitted to the voice was an especial victory over nature. Decay could be the only result of such folly. Hence, with the present century began a decline which has continued to the present.

Regarding the music of our own day, the vocal seems to be suffering from the aggression of the instrumental. Man's capabilities are limited and as says Pacchurotti,—“The study of music is too long for our life. When we are young we have the voice but not the knowledge, when old the knowledge but not the voice.” We should follow the Italians in holding the instrument as merely an assistant to the voice. In this, as every other department of life, the first twelve years are of immense value. The reform in singing has rightly begun in the public school. But at its present rate of advancement it will be some years before we reach the perfection of the German system under which everyone has an opportunity to gain musical instruction, and every school master must be also a music teacher. Further, there are many to whom music is nothing more than a pleasant noise. We believe this class would be reduced to the minimum by introducing into all primary schools efficient musical instruction. Surely the great influence excited by music in the past and its greater possibilities for the future will justify additional attention. It is needed in the family to combat vice, for there is nothing that satisfies and creates a home sentiment like music. We need it through such songs as “My Own Canadian Home” to co-operate with our poetry and story in building up a strong national feeling in Canada. Says a critic,—“Every art in its beginning is indebted to the church and returns to her in its highest development.” The question of church music will scarcely bear a reference. All admit the great indebtedness of religion to music, and the dreadful disproportion of its importance to the attention it receives in even our best churches.

Is music to be classed among the lost arts? Critics

tell us that it has steadily declined during the present century, but that this decline has been in a constantly diminishing ratio. Centuries ago certain musicians bemoaned the decline of music, but as each style became exhausted a better system succeeded. Moreover, we see in music an analogy to the *ebb and flow* of poetry. It was long before the study of the old writers, with other causes, produced the Shakspearian era. So we may look hopefully to the increasing interest in classical music to produce another period, when with our minds tuned to the pitch of nature, we shall echo her sweet refrains. Meanwhile, as says a recent writer: “Let the nation break forth in music. Let domestic songs tell the story of love and home, national songs make us true to our country; and sacred songs lead our souls into higher and purer life.”

AMERICAN ABORIGINES.

No. II.

THE AZTECS.

When the traveller on the western coast of the Mexican Gulf turns from its restless waters to follow the course of the declining sun, he rapidly rises by a grand succession of natural terraces to the summit of a broad plateau. Here, elevated seven thousand feet above the distant oceans and about midway between them, lies the beautiful valley of Mexico whose gentle slopes, with a circumference of some sixty leagues, surrounds a city bearing the name. This modern city occupies the site of the ancient Indian capital which stood on the shore of a charming lake, with its fortunes so nearly entrusted to the placid waters themselves, that it appeared to Europeans, “the Venice of the Western World.” This spot saw the beginning of the Aztec civilization. It was here that the sturdy warriors from the North, scorning all claim to such lofty lineage as fed the vanity of the Peruvian, raised their standard; and at the end of two centuries the sovereign of a kingdom whose subjects were originally comprised in the inhabitants of a petty city ruled from sea to sea, and made felt the terror of his arms from the Rio Grande to the Nicaraguan Lake.

That benignant policy, which mitigated the horrors of war and assuaged the severity of the Inca's conquests, was unknown at the council fires of the fierce