

Gossip.

THINGS IN TORONTO.

An obliging correspondent from the capital of western Canada furnishes us this week with the following paragraphs of 'Metropolitan gossip.'

'A hard frost,' he states, 'had set in at the commencement of the week, and, as usual, skates and sleighs came into violent requisition. All indoor amusements were deserted for the exhilarating pastime of skimming over the ice. Those who had bought season tickets were naturally anxious to have their money's worth. But the pleasure was of brief duration. There came 'a killing thaw,'—rain and snow, which melted as it fell—and high boots and wheeled vehicles resumed their sway. But, among a people who know how to turn all the vagaries of the season to account, the disappearance of the ice was the signal for the resumption of domestic enjoyments, and the attractions of halls and concert rooms. Mrs. Wentworth Stevenson, who has altogether put aside the pre-names of 'Laura Honey,' in order to be recognised as a teacher of vocal music, rather than a professor of the drama, gave a Concert and Ball at the Music Hall. The effect of this combination of entertainments was good. A large crowd attended. You will have seen the stereotyped notices of the music and singing in the daily Toronto papers. Unfortunately we have not yet reached that point of cultivation in Canada West, when judicious criticisms would become instructive as well as entertaining. We have few professors who sing and play in public, and no local editors or musical reporters whose familiarity with all the fine arts qualifies them to descant upon professional effort. Hence, Music, the Drama and Painting, are left to run to weed. Could not the 'Illustrated Canadian' take a lead in the critical way? There is evidence in the leading articles (suffer me to say) that a pure taste presides over the editorial department of the paper, and a little extension of the same style of thing would inaugurate a judicious control over our entertainments, restraining absurd pretensions and encouraging meritorious endeavor. Suppose you appoint me critic *en chef*. Here is a specimen of my cunning.

The Concert on Thursday evening exhibited the usual *melange* incidental to our state of society.—There was a 'military band,' one of those musical mistakes which all Professors in Garrison towns find it necessary to make in order to draw an audience. The military are always popular. What they 'patronize' they feel bound to attend, and wherever the red or green jackets go, there also go the belles of the town. But the music, even of the best kind, is distractingly loud and totally unsuited to a concert room—especially such concert rooms as the public Halls of Toronto and Hamilton where the laws of acoustics have been quite disregarded by the architects, and a thousand echoes bewilder the unlucky hearers. Another disadvantage attending these bands, here at least, is, that whenever they come upon the platform, the piano has to be hoisted off to make room for the music stands, and then to be hoisted up again when the audience have seen enough of the book-boards of the musicians and been tolerably deafened by the noisy wind instruments. The operations of the band of the 30th 'obligingly lent, &c.' were followed by and interspersed with vocalisation. Mrs. Stevenson, when in 'good case,' is an extremely pleasing singer. She does not spare herself. She has a rich volume of voice, which she pours forth ungradually, in the bravura and cavatina. Her cadenzas are melodious and all-resent—there is no extravagance, no painful effort apparent, all is ease and grace. If I were to take any exception to Mrs. Stevenson's voice it would refer to the lower notes of the

register, which are somewhat metallic, the result, I fancy, of her having commenced singing before the voice had acquired a settled character. The beautiful quartette 'Rock me to Sleep, Mother,' owed every thing to Mrs. S., and the exquisite 'Casta Diva,' which was substituted for the 'Mocking Bird,' (owing to the indisposition of Mr. McCarroll, the 'late obligato') received a full measure of justice at the hands of the same lady. She likewise gave us a new song 'The Canadian Volunteers,' to the old tune of the 'British Grenadiers,' the words 'of course' being inaudible. But there was a row-de-dow accompaniment. Could the martial spirit of our bonnie brow volunteers resist that appeal? Encore, encore, burst from their 'manly bussams,' and, as usual on such occasions, when the thing was re-demanded. Mrs. Stevenson sang something else.

It is a pity, I think, that a true, chaste, and accomplished singer should be obliged to resort to those tricks of the professors, *ad captandum vulgus*. A modest, polite young lady, Miss K. Macdonald, a pupil of Mrs. S.'s assisted her on this occasion. She is an admirable commentary on Mrs. Stevenson's skill as a teacher. Under the good discipline to which she has been subjected, her voice has acquired considerable power and flexibility, and she promises to become quite an 'institution.' Miss Macdonald has feeling and expression—two of the best attributes of the vocalist; and if she will avoid such clap-trap compositions as 'The jockey hat and feather,' a slap-dash, common place affair of the nigger minstrelsy type, she will adorn the profession. Adeline Petti always avoided the row-dow and lost-fa-la-lol-liddle school. So let it be all interesting, little K. M. . . . We are badly off for male singers here. A Mr. Farley is a very good amateur tenor, and offers evidences of careful cultivation. He has been trained in the Mario school—the very best. But he stands alone. Mr. Armstrong has a voice not altogether under control, and his knowledge of music appears to be limited. Dr. O'Dea, the *basso profundo*, lacks power for such lugubrious pieces as 'My heart bowed down.' It was not exhilarating. So much for our concert.

Of other entertainments, we have had a meeting to form a Humane Society—but the humanites were not active. Charity begins at home, and the humanitarians stopped. It nearly adjourned *sine die*. It reminded me of the Irish manager's postponement, when his audience consisted of one little boy—'Ladies and gentlemen, as there is nobody here, these performances will not take place to-night, but will be repeated to-morrow.'

The Butchers here had a 'Swarry' for the benefit of the Lancashire weavers. It was a good, substantial effort of benevolence, worthy of the sturdy vendors of beef and mutton. 'Who drives fat oxen should make others fat,' said somebody, or something like it. There were speeches, and tea drinkings, and subscriptions. I think \$300 worth of meat is a respectable present from such a body—don't you? The Tobacco Twisters had a ball. I did not attend. *Finis coronat opus*, Mr. Siddons and his daughter have been giving some of their pleasing entertainments. On the final night, when Mr. Siddons gave specimens of popular American lectures—not excluding George Francis Train—the Mechanic's Institute was crowded to excess, and scores of people could not gain admission. He will have to repeat this lecture. Miss Siddons promises well. Her voice is singularly sweet and sympathetic, but she has not volume enough yet to fill a large Hall.

We are looking forward to the establishment of a new daily paper of the Conservative order. I am sorry for it. Two papers can just live in Toronto, and already we have four or five. Cannot you say something to stop this flood of type? I don't mean to say that we could not very readily spare one or two

of the existing journals; if we could have a substitute, one that would be superior to them in intelligence, variety, literary taste, and freedom from partizanship—but from whence is it to come? And when it has come, how can it stand (unless it has a large capital at command to be judiciously spent and rapidly consumed) in the presence of the established 'Globe' and justly popular 'Leader'? However, *non errons*.

I called in at the Queen's hotel, the other day. The house has, of course, been filled by the destruction of the Rossin, and Captain Dick is enlarging his premises. There are many Southerners at the Queen's. They are really objects of commiseration. Having no occupation, and living in a fever of hope that the Confederacy will ultimately triumph, they pass their lives in reading the papers, which they greedily devour when there is intelligence of a Federal repulse, and fill up the interval with the pipe and the quid. I regret that the exiles—in other respects worthy people—should have brought into cleanly Canada the vile habit of squirting tobacco juice in the grates, which makes the American hotels such disgusting places of resort. There is a clergyman named Weils at the Queen's. He is a noble specimen of a Minister of the gospel, energetic, eloquent, simple and benevolent. It is a treat to hear him preach.

CONVERSATION.

So manifold are the phrases which conversation assumes, and so complex are the causes from which it originates, that it is difficult to define and exemplify its various characteristics. I will make a grand distinction which will include all minor ones. I will consider conversation as attractive and unattractive.

Like a child, reserving the best portion for the last bite, I will speak first of the kind of talk which is decidedly unattractive.

Extravagant tirades against servants, who are not angels, a fact which mistresses systematically ignore, though they may be the subjects on which a great deal of energetic eloquence is expended, I shall not hesitate to set down as unattractive conversation; at the same time admitting that the curiously conceived expletives, which are some times indulged in, may be the cause of a laugh, but then it is not a healthy laugh. How often are we pestered by being obliged to listen to the marvelous panegyrics which are bestowed, with such an indiscriminating generosity on infants; not that it is not very proper for parents to see great promise in their children—but when made a constant theme of talk, one cannot help, ill-naturedly or not, suggesting that the eulogists of the innocent minia-tures of humanity, might show a little more consideration for their auditors.—Pet subjects should carefully be avoided in ordinary conversation, for, if your hearer is not possessed of superabundant courtesy, you need not feel surprise, if he yawns and looks frequently at his watch, at the same time making a meaning reference to the hard day's work he has had. Nothing is more painfully ludicrous, than to see the efforts which half a dozen people sometimes make to create a flow of talk,—nothing seems to have any flowing capacity—you make suit with every expedient.—Spring will soon be here; does Miss Eliza like flowers? Miss Eliza may be passionately fond of flowers; but the question is so obviously for the sake of talk that she does not feel disposed to disclose her feelings with regard to them. Was Mr. Henry at the ball? Mr. Henry has, perhaps, been to too many this season, and merely remarks, he was cursing them as horrid bores; a portfolio of pictures is produced, which elicits a few dull rapid remarks. It is truly astonishing how epidemic in its manifestations dulness sometimes is—occasionally you find people with sprightly imaginations

unable to make them act in a dull atmosphere, the best remedy for this idiosyncrasy is a good round game. The inertia of conversation is very powerful, if once a subject of interest is started, you immediately get freedom from restraint. It is like sailing down a stream with many tributaries, where each can find scenery suitable to his sympathies; you get dispersed in twos and threes and travel along pleasantly enough. A song is sung, each expresses his opinion concerning it, and a remark is made apparently quite foreign, but in some way suggested, and thus an animated interchange of sentiment lures the hour away, making it as difficult to stop as it was to begin. Good conversation is accidental, if you try to give your thoughts with premeditation, they seem to leave you without power of pleasing. How often you find yourself expatiating, on some topic unintentionally brought into discussion with the greatest freedom; whereas, if you had tried ever so much, you could not have made it half as interesting. Flint requires to be struck before it will emit sparks. I have seen men who have passed the greater part of an evening in silence, when suddenly some remark has aroused them into action, proving them the most brilliant conversers of the evening. If silence does not arise from stupidity, you may generally expect superiority. I regard as stupid people who, fancying themselves to belong to rather a higher intellectual grade than their associates, think it undignified to converse upon ordinary topics. True genius finds instruction in the simplest questions; it cannot know great matters if it shun small ones. What makes our beloved Shakespeare such a sociable companion? Is it not because he interprets and gives meaning to the minutest actions of our lives. We often sneer at the weather as a subject of conversation. Now, for one, I must admit that I am under great obligations to it; many a time it has been the prelude to the most delightful conversation. Many people have a shyness which they cannot overcome before strangers; the weather is often the means of dispelling this; it is linked with so many familiar scenes that a person feels at home on the subject. Besides, Mr. Weather is rather an important personage in regulating our everyday life, and should not be treated with disrespect. One more remark, which shall be an apology for the meagreness of my illustrations of this subject. Fiction writers rarely gave us the *tele-a-tele*, it is only the result; or they put us off with—Charles and Mary, you may be sure, had much to say to each other after so long an absence: the hours sped rapidly as they discoursed with each other on the past, and breathed to each other hopes of the future. Our imagination has to fill up the details. If you, *austere* reader, find I have only given obscure hints, extend the same indulgence to, yours truly,

DERWENT.

ORIGIN OF THE GAZETTE.—One of the smallest pieces of money at Venice was called a gazetta; and as the newspapers, which were published at Venice in single sheets, so early as the sixteenth century, were sold for a gazetta each, all kinds of newspapers were from thence called gazettes.

WATER-PROOF BOOT SOLES.—If hot tar is applied to boot soles, it will make them water-proof. Let it be as hot as the leather will bear without injury, applying it with a swab, and drying it by fire. The operation may be repeated two or three times during the winter, if necessary. It makes the surface of the leather quite hard, so that it wears longer, as well as keeps out the water. Oil or grease softens the sole, and does not do much in keeping the water out. It is a good plan to provide boots for winter during summer, and prepare the soles by tanning, as they will then become, before they are wanted to wear, almost as firm as horn, and will wear twice as long as those unprepared.