

MAPLE UNDERWOOD. By James McGowan. Toronto: Hunter, Rose and Company.

A collection of youthful poems "rudely cut by a youthful beaver."

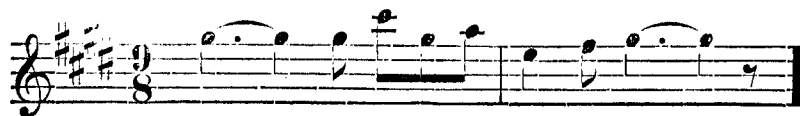
BIOGRAPHICAL ESSAYS. By F. Max Müller, K.M. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons; Toronto: William Briggs. Published by arrangement with the author.

Sketches of Rām Mohun Roy, Keshub Chunder Sen, Dayānanda Sarasvati, Bunyin Nanjio and Kenjiu Kasawara, Mohl and Kingsley.

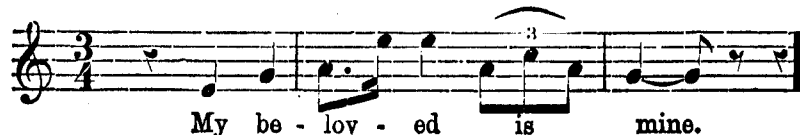
MUSIC.

CLAUDE FRANCOIS MENESTRIER, a Jesuit father, who wrote, and published in Paris in the seventeenth century, a treatise entitled, "Des Représentations en Musique Anciennes et Modernes," tried to prove that the "Song of Solomon" is the earliest opera on record, being a musical drama written by Solomon for his own nuptials. Most modern commentators, too, in the present day, at all events those of the "literal" school, appear to be agreed that the poem is dramatic in design. Therefore, Mr. Joseph Bennett, the compiler, and Mr. A. C. Mackenzie, the composer, of "The Rose of Sharon," are right in calling it a dramatic oratorio—if indeed that can be called an oratorio which is purely poetic in conception and treatment. It is somewhat to be regretted that Mr. Bennett has not had the courage of his convictions, and allowed the work to stand as what he intends it to be: simply an Eastern love story to let in beautiful language, descriptive of passionate and constant devotion. Instead of this, he has sought to appease the musical Mrs. Grundies by tacking on a prologue and epilogue which try to suggest a spiritual meaning and point a moral quite foreign to the scope of the work.

This is probably the cause of the uninteresting and perfunctory nature of the contralto music to which the composer has set the prologue, showing that his heart was in the dramatic part of his work, not in this irrelevant introduction. After this the orchestra gives out the graceful subject of a vintage song, afterwards sung by the heroine of the story, a Sulamite maid, and used throughout as a *leitmotif* or representative theme typical of herself.



At the close of the opening vintage chorus the same subject is heard, immediately followed by the voice of the "Beloved," under the lattice of the beautiful Sulamite, singing an *aubade*, with the accompaniment of which the same subject is lovingly entwined. The Sulamite replies from her window, ending with the words "My beloved is mine and I am his," which forms a second *leitmotif*, used whenever the constancy of the maiden's love is alluded to.



The Sulamite then sings her vintage song, "We will take the foxes, the little foxes that ravage the vines," to the first *leitmotif*, hitherto heard only in the orchestra, leading to love duett, succeeded by a vintage chorus which closes the scene. An orchestral intermezzo follows, descriptive of a spring morning on Lebanon, and then the villagers, seeing King Solomon approaching, sing a chorus descriptive of his magnificence and the grandeur of his retinue. This chorus is introduced, accompanied, and followed by what may be called the Solomon *motif*, a bold and somewhat Handelian figure used when allusion is made to Solomon, and cleverly worked out later in the work.



The procession having halted, the Sulamite is observed in the crowd, and as the nobles, struck by her beauty, ask, "Who is she?" the orchestra replies with the Sulamite *motif*, ingeniously varied by being put into common time and syncopated.



Throughout the broken exclamations which follow this theme are worked out with increasing intensity until they are thundered out with great power, leading, rather abruptly, to a song for Solomon (baritone) who, speaking for the first time, addresses the maiden in a strain of exquisite beauty, the first figure of which, a very short one, suggests rather unfortunately a Mendelssohn song. Further on Solomon pays her the barbaric compliment of comparing her to a charger in Pharaoh's stud, set to commonplace and boisterous music, when a beautiful contrast of metaphors is obtained

by her reply "My beloved is to me a nosegay of Myrrh," most happily wedded to gracefully phrased accompaniment interspersed with snatches of the first Sulamite *motif*. A masterly bit of part-writing follows: "Hearken, O daughter, and consider," in which the elder and villagers give her worldly advice—one of the gems of the work. After passionate protests from the "Beloved" and the Sulamite herself, she is placed in Solomon's chariot and carried away to his palace amid cries of "God save the King," from the people.

The second part commences with a long scene, some portions of which have great beauty, between the Sulamite and women in the palace, who express surprise at her refusal of Solomon's magnificent offer to make her his bride, to all of which she replies with protestations of her undying love for the "Beloved." In this scene much is made of the two Sulamite themes already quoted; there is also some beautiful three-part writing for female voices, much of which will be useful for separate performance. At the close of this number a subject is heard from the orchestra which is afterwards used as the procession march of the Ark, and an officer entering summons the women to go forth and see the procession of the Ark of the Covenant which is being conveyed to the temple built by Solomon for its reception. This scene commences by women singing, "This is the day the Lord hath made," followed by an elaborate setting of the Hundredth Psalm, "Make a joyful noise unto the Lord," for full chorus, supposed to be sung by the populace in an open space before the palace. Next the Ark approaches, to the march subject already alluded to, followed by the maidens of Jerusalem, singing, "We will praise His name," three-part chorus for female voices; male voice chorus of elders, "Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion"; chorus of shepherds and vine-dressers—soprano, alto, and tenor; male chorus of soldiers finely worked out on the Solomon *motif*; male chorus of priest bearing the holy vessels. On this chorus a striking effect is obtained by the basses holding a pedal in the dominant while the orchestra plays a very quaint succession of chords. Afterwards this effect is increased by the tenors and basses holding the dominant and tonic, a pedal in a fifth, during the chord passage on the orchestra. The scene ends by a magnificently worked up chorus of the people, as Solomon passes, singing the praise of the Lord and of the King. This portion forms the climax of the choral-writing in the work; the various parts of the procession are admirably varied, and form a succession of brilliant musical pictures culminating in a very grand climax. After the passing of the procession the women sing to the Sulamite, "Thus shall it be done to her whom the King delighteth to honour," to which she replies in her second motive, most beautifully varied three times in different positions with changed harmonies, "My beloved is mine and I am his."

The third part opens with a nocturne for orchestra, entitled, "Sleep," a graceful and dreamy, though somewhat laboured movement, introducing the Sulamite's dream, in which she thinks her beloved comes to her chamber door which, after some demur, she opens only to find him gone. She seeks him in the streets, but cannot find him, and appealing to the watchmen is insulted by them. The composer has succeeded in giving to this scene a poetic and dreamy effect, the episode of the watchmen with their short orchestral march being almost ghostly in character. On awakening from her dream she is told by a contralto, in an uninteresting song whose first phrase suggests "My Queen," that the King is coming to press his suit, which he does in a song which, though very beautiful, is hardly original, the first part being harmonized in such a way as to vividly recall Wagner's treatment. The Sulamite replies as before, and with a new variation of the former theme, "My beloved is mine and I am his," upon which she is taunted by Solomon and the waiting women, "Art thou simple, O fairest of women; then go and follow the flock," and contemptuously set at liberty to return to her village and her Beloved.

The last part opens with the lamentations of the villagers at the absence of the Sulamite and grief of the Beloved. This portion is not very interesting, and is unnecessarily protracted. It will probably be one of the portions cut out at future performances, the work having been found too long at the Norwich Festival. The interest re-awakens at the unexpected return of the Sulamite, "leaning on her Beloved"; they are received by the villagers with joyful acclamation, culminating in a very fine chorus worked out at some length, "Sing O Heavens, and be joyful O Earth," during which occurs a well-written, but somewhat conventional, unaccompanied quartett, followed by a duett for the Sulamite and the Beloved, after which comes a chorale for solo voices repeated by the chorus, which concludes the work with a grand and massive effect. The epilogue is like the prologue, uninteresting and perfunctory.

Even if space permitted, it would be impossible to give a thorough analysis of the oratorio in the absence of an orchestral score, or any opportunity of hearing it performed; any opinion as to its merits must therefore be cautiously given. It shows in every bar the work of a learned musician; the part writing could hardly be excelled, and the power of piling up great and massive choral effects almost unrivalled. On the other hand, there is too much self-conscious cleverness, and too little of that quality which, for want of a better name, is known as inspiration. The subjects, too, are not interesting, nor always original. The device of representative themes is used in the "Rose of Sharon" to a greater extent than in any previous sacred work, and, though the themes themselves may not be always satisfactory, the manner in which they are worked out is masterly, and results repeatedly in the attainment of effects of almost magical beauty. The oratorio was most successful at Norwich, the composer being literally pelted with flowers and receiving an ovation which must have reminded many of the elder people present of the scenes at the Festival when Mendelssohn conducted his own masterpieces.