

# THE ART FAIR.

As an affair participated in by society leaders, artists and some sections of the general public, the above episode in our life as a city merits perhaps a little more than the ordinary reporter's notice. It is of course quite outside our province to discuss the financial success of the Fair. The object for which it was organized was a good one, and it is more than likely that should the promoters of the scheme find themselves at all out in their calculations at the end of the entertainments, the many rich friends of the Canadian Academy of Arts will be found pledged to assist materially in their extrication. All these ways of raising money—fairs, bazaars, exhibitions, and so forth,—are exceedingly difficult of regulation, and the wise rule in such cases undoubtedly would be to attain the maximum of effect with the minimum of expenditure—a problem that only the great executive mind can solve. There seemed a want of coherent effect in the arrangements of the fair, internal as well as external, that went far to imply the absence of such an executive head. There was not, for instance, at any time, any genuine illusion with regard to the premises known in commonplace parlance as the Granite Rink. Despite some very pretty draping of booths and fair women, the Rink remained the Granite Rink still, and the Old English market-place and cross and *entourage* we were promised did not come properly to hand—the artists had failed to connect somehow. This fault—disappointing and at times aggravating to a degree—might easily have been remedied by more enthusiasm on the part of the artists themselves—by a practical knowledge of stage and dramatic effect. In an immense building such as the Granite Rink detail is thrown away, except such detail as goes to create the final whole, and half the ornamentation and care expended on the internal fittings of the booths would have been more effectively spent on the concealment of the roof, the raising of some characteristic structure in the Market-Square, and in general broad touches which would have amply repaid the management.

As for the contents of the booths—the rare old fans, laces, clocks, brasses, stuffs, and books—where were they? Either it is impossible to get up a loan collection of such articles in Canada, or else our people are not public spirited enough to lend them. It is fortunately easy to please people when a fair is once set agoing, and while the sounds of the Broum-march filled their ears, their eyes were doubtless consoled by the shimmer of Japanese silk kerchiefs, Imari ware, tropical plants and cacti, with an occasional Mary Stuart pearl-bordered cup thrown in by way of seasoning. However, for a *rococo* entertainment, it was certainly very pleasing, and once or twice, when well attended, touched high water mark among fairs. The strong point scored was unquestionably the excellence of the stage representations—the Midsummer Night's Dream, the Masque of May Day, and the Minuet being each worthy of a careful hearing and attentive view. The stage was a first class one, footlights, head lights, scenery, greenrooms and all, though proving decidedly too small for the company in Mrs. Harrison's Masque. For prettiness, well calculated stage effects, charming *tableaux*, and really ambitious musical results, the excerpts from the Midsummer Night's Dream, as arranged by Mrs. Morrison and Mr. Plummer, easily carried off the palm. For novelty, a certain humorous strength in the action, and for extreme fitness with the spirit in which the fair was originally promulgated, the "Masque" deserves high commendation. Here, at any rate, was something in harmony with that distant and picturesque sixteenth century which, according to the prospectus, was to furnish the entire fair with costumes and varied suggestions as to detail.

The libretto was written and the music selected and arranged by "Seranus" (Mrs. Harrison), upon whom also fell the responsibility of the stage direction and the instruction of the entire company. The Court Dance or Pavane was an essentially brilliant feature of the masque, and its correct and cultured performance reflected great credit upon Prof. Davis, who supplied the *data*, and who has thus the honour of introducing the Pavane into Canada, where, perhaps, it may be taken up as cordially as in London and New York at the present day. Two origins are adduced for the name, one being from Padua, the other the Latin word for peacock. Shakespeare mentions this dance, and Rabelais tells us that it was one of the 180 dances performed at the Court of Lauterbourg on the arrival of Pantagruel, and many other authorities attest to the stateliness and beauty of the Pavane, Pavan, or Pavin, as it is diversely spelt. The Maypole Dance was accompanied by a tune in jig form, composed as far back as the year 1300. The Morris Dance was original in step and arrangement with the librettist, but grafted on the actual old Morris Dance originally participated in by the chief actors in the May Day games. The whole conception of the Masque was essentially English, its presentation highly picturesque, and at the final representation, when "Rule Britannia" was sung "by the full strength of the company," no slight enthusiasm was experienced, and a very general impression prevailed that it would be impossible to be too grateful to the varied talent that under the well-known name of "Seranus" had contributed so unusual a feast of reason and flow of soul.

The Minuet, or Ancient Measure, has simply the dance itself, but very correctly and gracefully rendered, though it can hardly have been paced to Minuet music it, as some declare, the time was not three-fourth time. The Minuet is not mentioned by Shakespeare, though the "Measure" is, and Sir George Grove's *Musical Dictionary* tells us that the "Measure" possessed no definite form of dance-music peculiar to itself, but that it was solemn and stately and allied to the Pavan and Minuet. The *poudrés* effects were very charming, very hard, only we were obliged to think in order to realize that the Wattean surroundings in the house of the Countess of Pembroke were supposed to chime in with the sixteenth century in

Merrie England. However, there could be no doubt of the grace and agility of the performers, nor of the general elegance of the spectacle.

Several minor performance appeared to give satisfaction and the display of beauty, *chic* and cigarette-smoke in the *café chantant* redounded to the honour of the maids and matrons who watched over the giddy throng. One most interesting stall was kept by Mr. Sims Richards, an expert in archery, and who hopes to interest our people in that picturesque pursuit. The dainty Horn-Booke was far too good for the audience. The average public cannot be bothered with so much high art at 25 cents apiece extra, especially when phonetic spelling is not included. *Volapuk*, we suspect, would be easier to some people than the quaint Olde Englishe of the delightful text for which Prof. Keys is mainly responsible.

The proceedings terminated with a ball at which orthodox calico and heterodox broadcloth and satin mixed in amusing fashion. Despite some drawbacks, let us cordially echo the generally expressed sentiment that Ye Greate Arte Fayre has been an artistic success, especially in the number and quality of its entertainments.

# THE BLACK KNIGHT.

To King Banalin's court there came  
From divers lands beyond the sea  
A score of knights, with hearts aflame  
For love of Lady Ursalie,  
Whose wondrous beauty and fair fame  
Was sung by Europe's minstrelsy.

Each lord in retinue did bring  
A noble and a princely band,  
Whose deeds the troubadours did sing  
Thro' length and breadth of Christian land,  
And each by turn besought the King  
The favour of his daughter's hand;

But spake the King to each brave lord,  
"When first the sun shall shine in May  
A tourney in the palace-yard  
We do appoint, and on that day  
Who holds his own with spear and sword  
Shall take our daughter fair away."

Whereat the Lady Ursalie  
Blushed as a lily of the vale,  
For many moons had waned since she  
First pledged her love to Sir Verale,  
And for that sick to death was he  
Her trembling lips turned ashen pale.

The heavy scent of musk and myrrh  
Hung all about the inner room;  
Dim taper lights did faintly stir  
To life the arras through the gloom:  
She bade her handmaid bring to her  
The treasure-box that held her doom.

With lightest touch a secret spring  
Upraised the silver casket's lid;  
She took therefrom a golden ring,  
A broken coin, a heart, hair-thrid,  
And many a sweet and precious thing  
Wherein their plighted troth was hid.

"Then welcome death, if death it prove,"  
She said and kissed with lips still pale  
Each sweet remembrance of his love  
"I will not fail thee, Sir Verale,  
Though from thy couch thou canst not move  
To don for me thy coat of mail."

Unto the chapel straight she went  
And knelt before the altar-stone;  
Her face within her hands she bent  
Praying with many a tear and moan  
Until the day was well-nigh spent,  
When came a headman she had known.

"O! Father! join thy prayer with mine  
The life of Sir Verale to save;  
O! plead thou at our Lady's shrine  
For health to one so young and brave:  
For I will wed, with help divine,  
No other lord this side the grave."

The holy friar knelt him there  
And crossed him and began to tell  
His beads, each counted for a prayer,  
Until the sound of vesper-bell  
Stole through the darkling twilight air  
And warned them of the day's farewell.

Each day at morn and noon and night  
Her trusted handmaid she did send  
To learn if her beloved knight  
In life's estate was like to mend,  
And on the eve of April's flight  
This message came her hand to rend.

"Tell thou my lady fair," he said  
To her who bore the answer back,  
"To-morrow will I leave this bed  
And wear my suit of armour black;  
To-morrow will I win and wed  
Or lose both love and life, alack."

The Lady Ursalie knew well  
He could not rise, so ill he was,  
And shuddered as her maid did tell  
His dying state, then forth did pass  
Unto the chapel, as the bell  
Proclaimed the holy evening mass.

The morrow broke with golden rush  
And chased the gloom of night away;  
The pipe of blackbird, song of thrush,  
Rose with the skylark's roundelay:

The wild flowers started with a blush  
To meet the first bright morn of May.

The palace-yard was all prepared;  
Bright-hued pavilions stood around;  
The banners waved; the armour glared;  
The eager steeds tore up the ground  
And twenty princes who had dared  
The tourney in the lists were found.

The King and Queen on daisied throne  
Received each knight on bended knee;  
But like an image carved in stone  
Sat lovely Lady Ursalie  
And none who saw her would have known  
For her the tourney was to be.

But one there knelt in sable mail  
Of whom the King, with accents rude,  
Did ask his name and why this bale  
Of armour black he did intrude;  
He answered, "I am Sir Verale,  
Long months thy daughter have I woo'd,

"And by this sable suit I wear  
This sterling blade of Spanish steel,  
This iron shield and trusty spear;  
But chiefly by the love I feel  
I ask to wife thy daughter fair  
And that, proud King, is why I kneel;"

When Lady Ursalie that voice  
Did hear, her heart beat high with fears,  
Her troubled soul did half rejoice  
And memory filled her eyes with tears;  
But as she smiled upon her choice  
There fell a clash of shields and spears.

Knight after knight was overthrown,  
Some ready for the bier and shroud,  
At last the black knight stood alone  
And in the air applause rang loud  
As proudly strode he to the throne  
Pursued by all the noble crowd.

Then cried the King, "Right nobly won,  
Most puissant, worthy Sir Verale,  
I would the words were well undone  
That erst in anger I did rail;"  
The Knight replied, "Words injure none  
And after-grief doth not avail,

"And now, O King, thou soon shalt wis  
Thy daughter is forever mine,  
And when thy loving liegemen miss  
Both thee and all thou callest thine,  
They shall recall the Black Knight's kiss  
And know that love hath power divine."

Then at the Lady Ursalie  
The Black Knight looked and she arose;  
But what strange visage she did see  
That his raised vizor did disclose  
Is still an awful mystery  
Which only that dead lady knows.

For when her eyes of lustre rare  
Gazed there, where none could see a face,  
A flash of lightning rent the air;  
But passing in a moment's space  
The Black Knight was no longer there  
And of his steed there was no trace.

All looked at Lady Ursalie,  
Who blushed with love like any bride,  
"No power can take my soul from thee,  
"I come, I come," she faintly cried,  
And swooned in arms held hastily  
And smiling closed her eyes and died.

But who the Black Knight was none knew  
Though one said who had second sight  
He watched a raven as it flew  
In circles slow and did alight  
Upon the tourney ground and grew  
Into a sable horse and knight

By some it is believed and said  
That Sir Verale gave one deep sigh  
And turned himself on his sick bed  
And muttered a low welcome cry  
And ere the watchers knew was dead  
As his dear lady's soul passed by.