

We have often heard, and mentally endorsed, the remark that there is a lack of musical vitality in Toronto, but though we admit the fact, we see no reason to be ashamed of a state of things which is necessarily begotten of the conditions under which we live. In formulated phrase, a community does not turn its eyes to the cultivation of the fine arts so long as its energies are concentrated on the improvement and perfection of its material condition. If, instead of saying, "Money before virtue," Horace had said, "Money before music," the observation would have been at least equally true. It is, however, our opinion that we of Toronto have, so to speak, turned the corner, and are giving indications of the existence in our midst of a taste for higher music, which is destined to make Toronto the musical metropolis of Canada. We would appeal for confirmation of this view to the performance of the "Messiah" by the Philharmonic Society, on the evening of the 21st ult., in Shaftesbury Hall. The day for criticising the "Messiah" itself has long gone by, and the fact that it is so familiar has the advantage of enabling the hearer to devote himself exclusively to noting the rendition. The manner in which the opening solo, "Comfort ye," was sung, had the sole merit of rendering the efforts of the subsequent soloists a cheerful surprise. One of the most satisfactory numbers in the first part was, "Rejoice greatly," which was sung by Miss Hillary with a flexibility and correctness which shew that this lady has taken no small pains to cultivate her voice. Mr. Warrington also deserves a word of praise for the conscientious manner in which he rendered the numerous solos which fell to his share, and, would he only infuse more spontaneity into his singing, he would leave little to be desired. With the exception, however, of Mrs. Bradley's "I know that my Redeemer liveth," which deservedly evoked loud applause, the rest of the solos presented little that calls for special comment. The critical and censorious spirit, which it is the duty of the critic to assume in the case of professionals, is obviously out of place in speaking of the performances of amateurs. The choruses we can praise unreservedly; they were, without exception, efficiently rendered, and without that hesitancy which arises from an imperfect acquaintance with the music, and which we have been pained to notice on previous occasions. But it is of the orchestra that we would more particularly speak, the improvement in which is most marked, and reflects the highest credit on Mr. Torrington. It is easy to see that this gentleman possesses in an eminent degree the power of placing himself *en rapport* with his orchestra, and those who understand music will be the first to assent to the proposition that the state of the band is a much better test of the ability of the conductor than that of the vocalists. The improvement of which we speak was chiefly seen in the intelligent manner in which the orchestra followed the *bâton* of their conductor, and in the fact that, unlike most amateurs, they understood the meaning of the words *crescendo*, *diminuendo* and *piano*. The Pastoral Symphony, which was played throughout *con sordini*, was really a creditable performance, on which we congratulate Mr. Torrington no less than the performers. We take leave of the subject with the hope that the next public performance will be marked by a corresponding improvement.

To show that Toronto is not the only city of our Dominion where music is