

## Musical &amp; Dramatic Notes.

BY VIOLA

I have a strong suspicion that nothing will come of the proposal to hold a musical festival in Toronto next year. One great obstacle in the way of the scheme is the difficulty in satisfying the claims of our numerous conductors to a prominent participation in the performances. Each of these conductors has his circle of influential friends, and any suggestion to give the control of the festival to one man would meet with determined opposition. It is well known that Mr. Torrington's so-called monopoly of the musical management of the last festival aroused a good deal of ill-concealed bad feeling. Another troublesome question is that in connection with the orchestra. It is an open secret that Mr. Torrington is firmly opposed to the engagement of a first class orchestra such as the Boston Symphony Orchestra, or that of Seidl. I believe he takes the ground that the interests of our local orchestra will be hurt by the employment of a foreign orchestra, and in the second place that while the local conductor will have to do all the work of the festival, the foreign conductor will step in and take the chief credit. In spite of these objections I must firmly hold that without an efficient orchestra—and an efficient orchestra means one from over the border—the festival will neither be satisfactory to the public, nor successful from an artistic standpoint. *Nous verrons*, but I think we shall have no festival next year.

There is no disguising the fact that the love of oratorio music is on the decline, even among English-speaking communities. The change of public sentiment on the subject is felt even in Toronto. Year by year the difficulty of getting adequate support for our oratorio societies is increasing. The English are supremely faithful to their old loves in art; and in England the lovers of music have mounted Handel on a lofty pedestal and periodically fall down and worship him. And the multitude cry "there is but one god in music, and his name is Handel." Yet there are indications that the Handel cult is losing ground. The conventional critic and the orthodox musician will no doubt still pour out the vials of their wrath and scorn upon the head of any one who ventures to suggest that Handel's style is often felt to be antiquated, that his music has both strong individual mannerisms and the mannerisms of his time; that his setting of English words is often ridiculous and inartistic, and that the orchestration is extremely thin, and lacking in warmth and colour. But all the same, our oratorio societies find it difficult to obtain subscribers, and their audiences yawn and show weariness at the two hour performances of the mathematically constructed choruses and the dry recitatives which go so largely to make an oratorio of the standard type. In certain special effects Handel has not been surpassed; but these effects take a very limited range. My remarks apply to oratorio in general. I have referred especially to Handel, because most oratorio composers have adopted new methods, his because musical Phari-

sees still cry in polyphonic tones that Handel is the beginning and end of this class of music. I may have more to say on this topic on a future occasion.

Sir Arthur Sullivan is now actively engaged upon the music of a comic opera for the London Savoy Theatre, and, moreover, the libretto is not written by Mr. Gilbert. This will make no difference to the arrangement already announced by which the two Savoy partners will eventually write another opera in collaboration. Sir Arthur, however, did not deem it necessary to wait, and he has therefore accepted another libretto; while, on his side, Mr. Gilbert, with Mr. Collier as his musician, will, in about a month's time, produce at the Lyric a new comic opera which at the present bears the title of "The Mountebank," and early next year he will also produce at the Prince of Wales, in collaboration with Mr. George Grossmith, a musical comedy which for the moment bears the title of "Haste to the Wedding."

The Haslam Vocal Society gave their first concert of the season on Tuesday evening in the Pavilion Music Hall, in which a large audience of subscribers and friends had gathered. The Society was assisted by the Musin Concert Company, and the combination resulted in a very attractive programme of a character not likely to give one musical indigestion. The various parts were sung most effectively, delicacy, nice shading, good intonation being specially noticeable. Mr. Haslam, the conductor, has selected voices of fresh and pleasing quality; occasionally he produced in unison parts a sustained unswerving tone from the sopranos and altos that reminded one of *cantabile* from the strings of Thomas's orchestra. In the rendering of soft effects Mr. Haslam's choice has always been particularly happy. Mr. Haslam has now succeeded in getting a remarkable volume of tone from the limited number of voices at his disposal. Mr. Ovide Musin, the solo violinist, added another triumph to his long list of successes here. His style is essentially popular, and he interprets compositions with a freedom of imagination that no doubt must cause the long-hair of the musicians of the German school to stand on end. He has, however, a fine, powerful tone,—although not of that exquisite quality of Sarasate—and a splendid technique. His wife, Annie Louise Tanner, was the solo soprano. I cannot say I ever had much admiration for these high singers of the *sfogato* class, but there is no doubt they please a public where a full-toned voice might fail. *Chacun a son gout*; there have been people who preferred the Steiner violin to the Cremona, and the piping voice of a Di Murska to the full flavoured organ of a Tietjens. I think all musical people must agree, however, that in music of an expressive or passionate nature these sopranos of extreme tenuity of voice always fail. Their mission is to warble; and like the trained canary of the Hartz district, they should be content to do nothing but warble. The solo pianist, Herr Scharf, did not set the lake on fire, while the French tennor, Dupuy, made a moderate success. He sings with that peculiar vibratory intensity which is so distasteful to English and American ears. The basso, Herr

Senger—who by-the-way, speaks English remarkably well for a Herr—made a favorable impression. Mr. Haslam conducted with his usual care and skill.

Paderewski, the celebrated Polish pianist, (he of the "minuet" fame), will, it is said, play in Toronto in January next under the management of Suckling & Sons.

It seems to be our unhappy fate to lose our most promising musicians. Miss Nora Clench, the talented solo violinist, of St. Mary's, has left for Brussels to study under Isaye for a year. It is unlikely she will return to Canada. She has become enamored of the attractions of London, which she visited a few years ago, and will, it is said, make that city her home. It will be easy to manage this, if the rumor be true that her sister is shortly to marry a citizen of the English metropolis.

The musical public ought to boycott the Pavilion Music Hall. It is totally unsuited for concert purposes. The place is full of draughts; the floor is flat, so that there is no proper line of vision, and solo singers and instrumentalists have their most felicitous efforts marred by the accompaniment of banging and creaky doors. Last but not least, it tires one dreadfully to have to sit for two hours or more on those hard-bottomed benches. The Pavilion is really a relic of barbarism. It ought to be given away to Bullock's Corners or Burk's Falls.

Lewis Morrison is playing "Faust" this week at the Grand Opera House. In many respects it is a striking and attractive production, but it is all fudge to say it is equal to Irving's presentation.

## A CHAPERONE APPROVED.

An amusing experience is told by one of a party of young people whose chaperone was hastily replaced by a delightful woman, whose ideas of the onerous duties were, to say the least, unique. It was at the seashore in Maine. The party were greeted each morning, and anxiously asked at intervals if they were enjoying themselves, but otherwise were allowed entire freedom. One lovely evening a pretty girl and her sweet escort went to the chaperone. "Can we go out rowing, Mrs.—?" they asked timidly. "I see no objection," was the answer. "We've been!" was the unexpected response from the curlpits, who added, "We forgot to ask."

## MONOPOLY.

"Down with the monopolist," is naturally enough the cry of those who suffer from the evils of monopoly. But does it ever occur to those who are not monopolists, that monopoly lives only because of their acquiescence with laws that make monopoly possible? It is not the monopolist who should receive your condemnation, but the laws in which we hold out inducements for men to become monopolists. If we place a saddle on our backs and invite the monopolist to get on and ride, he is a fool if he don't do it. No man could become a monopolist without special laws to protect him in that monopoly. The destruction of one monopolist only makes room for another, but the abrogation of special laws make all monopoly impossible.