

Musical & Dramatic Notes.

BY VIOLA.

I am informed that Mr. Edward Fisher is at work on the details of a scheme for the formation of a club for musicians, artists and literary men. The need of such a club has long been felt, but there is no disguising the fact that the difficulties in the way are very great. There is little doubt, however, that if Mr. Edward Fisher takes up the scheme in earnest he will succeed in inaugurating it. The great problem will then be to obtain sufficient financial support to maintain the organisation on a permanent footing.

The Harmony Club is busy preparing for public production Milloecker's opera "The Beggar Student." The work has never been given in Toronto, although it is considered the best opera that the composer has yet written. I have no doubt that the Club will give a creditable performance. Much of the success which has attended the efforts of the Club in the past is due to the personal interest taken in its labors by Mr. Albert Nordheimer.

Miss Fanny Davenport has assumed a rotundity of figure that is scarcely a qualification for posing as an ideal Cleopatra. Her production of the Moreau-Sardou version of the play "Cleopatra" at the Grand Opera House this week is, however, a remarkable one as a splendid stage spectacle. The mounting of the piece must have cost a large sum of money, and it was a courageous act to bring it to Toronto for the week immediately following Christmas, a time of the year when there are always heavy demands upon the pockets of our citizens. Miss Davenport's diction and acting as the fascinating Queen struck me as being decidedly mechanical—a finished bit of work, it is true, but without inspiration. As Miss Davenport has, however, been a sick woman for some time past, it would be unfair to take her impersonation as the best she can do. I must not forget to mention, as a feature of the play, the realistic and startling storm scene in the fifth act. The electric and mechanical effects elicited unbounded admiration from the spectators. The play is unequal in dramatic construction, but it contains several powerful situations. Mr. Melbourne MacDowell, in his effective portrayal of Mark Antony, gave a signal proof of the great progress he has made as an actor in the past few years. In the old days when he was a member of the Eugene MacDowell Co., he was considered a perfect "stick," and was assigned subordinate roles.

I have just come across an article recently published in an English magazine written by Mr. J. Carlile, which touches in a measure upon the subject of the little discussion I had with "Chromaticus." It seems that Mr. Ebenezer Prout has been contending for the necessity of additional accompaniments to Handel's orchestration in his oratorios. Mr. Bennett, the critic of the London *Daily Telegraph*, in reply advocated Handel in his integrity. Mr. Carlile in his comments says:

"Mr. Bennett, for the sake of argument, chooses to adopt the views of the unlearned and to cry out for Handel in his integrity. It is a pious wish, like that of the Scotch divine, who, being troubled about the interpretation of a passage in the Hebrew scriptures, took up the version of King James with the remark, 'Let us turn to the original.' Mozart's revision of the Messiah is no more Handel than the authorised version of the Psalms is David; and Mr. Prout has been completely successful in showing, first, that Handel in his integrity is impracticable, and secondly, that if practicable, we should find it deadly dull. If there are any who remain unconvinced by Mr. Prout's reasoning, let them borrow an old harpsichord, import some of the coarse-voiced oboes which are believed to linger in Germany, find a player on the Viol de Gamba, if there is one left, and then give a performance of one of Handel's earliest works. It will be extremely interesting as an antiquarian curiosity, but very little likely to be repeated."

The Leipsico-cum-Chopin school of pianists are getting decidedly aggressive. They now talk very glibly of the variety of tone-colors produced by the educated touch of a skilled pianist. My old friend, Mr. Wesley Forsyth, in a paper he read on Tuesday before the Society of Musicians, spoke in glowing terms of the rich tone-color that could be evolved from the piano. As he said this I noticed a sarcastic smile flit across the mobile features of Miss Norah Hillary, who had up to that time been listening to the Aurora disciple of æsthetic pianism with rapt attention. "Rich tone-coloring" from a pianoforte is decidedly good. I had always thought you could get tone-colors from an orchestra in which there are varieties of instruments with different *timbres* and having the tone produced in different ways. But 'rich tone-color' of a piano—Oh, shades of Berlioz, Weber and Wagner!"

The Canadian Society of Musicians held its seventh annual Convention in this city on Tuesday and Wednesday. The association is one which the profession ought to support, but I fully recognise the difficulties experienced in keeping it alive. The absence of an adequate support from places outside of Toronto is keenly felt, and it may perhaps be many years before teachers in the country will be convinced that they receive any direct benefit from the Society. The promoters of the scheme need not, however, lose heart on that account. The support of the profession in Toronto and Hamilton should be sufficient to maintain it for the present, and as the representative musicians of the country gradually drop into the rank and file of the profession will seek to become members in order to be in good company. It goes without saying that I am presupposing that the affairs of the Society will be conducted with judgment and tact. The Convention just closed has at last recognised the long labors of Mr. F. H. Torrington in the cause of music by electing him to the honorary position of President. A good deal of time is wasted at these conventions by prolix discussion. It was highly amusing,

though, to hear a number of teachers who ought to know better, gravely assert that the melodic combination of music had been exhausted, or in other words that it would be almost impossible to write original melodies.

It struck me that these gentlemen must either be indulging in a joke at the expense of their audience, or were seeking to find a reason why they had failed to produce original melodies. The question of requiring candidates for membership to pass an examination took up some time in the discussion. Naturally many musicians have an objection to examinations of the kind, for they know full well that had Beethoven and Wagner been examined by their contemporary musicians, they would have been ignominiously plucked. The convention was brought to a brilliant close on Wednesday night by a concert at which Mr. Vladimir de Pachmann was the bright, particular star. At last we have heard a pianist who does not abuse his instrument, and who cannot be classed among the peripatetic pounders who make it a business to spread the gospel of noise. Mr. de Pachmann is simply an exquisite player, a pianist in the true sense of the word, and a genial and genuine artist.

SO ENGLISH.

One of the strange paradoxes of our queer American nature, says the Toledo *Bee*, is the way our people—or a good portion of those who make themselves heard—rail out against England of all foreign nations and then hasten to ape and to quote her. It is not "good form." We shut her out of our markets and laud "the home industry" in laws and on paper. Our men and women who are rich enough to do so go over there and buy their season's wardrobe and smuggle them home in domestic-looking trunks, because they get better goods for the same or lower prices. The Christmas mistletoe is as common in Maryland as the woodbine is in Ohio, and yet, to find sale in the markets, it is branded "English mistletoe."

A TERRAPIN FARM.

Of late years a number of terrapin farms have been started along the Chesapeake. The biggest farm is on the Patuxent River, and it consists of a large salt water lake which could accommodate thousands of terrapin if they would breed as rapidly as desired. The farmer has surrounded this lake with broad fences to keep out the muskrats and foxes, which are the terrapin's enemies. He has made hatcheries of boxes partly filled with sand and so arranged that when the females enter them they cannot get out until taken out. He has nurseries for young terrapin and he keeps the little ones in here until they are ten months old, in order to preserve them from their fathers.

Some persons are so infernally officious that had they been present at the creation, they would have delayed matters several days by their interference; and before the final judgment is fairly inaugurated they will begin to kick because they have not been assigned a more prominent place on the programme.