

tion at an inopportune season. We (ponderous here, verily), Secretary Evarts, representing the people of the United States, are necessitated to admit that the proceedings of the Halifax Commission come into collision with our upstart diplomatic existence. For a lengthened period, as you all know, we have been writing voluminously on the subject—and in vain, inasmuch as no reply has been vouchsafed. And what renders the Newfoundland embroglio all the more unbearable is the fact that the day is at hand when the arbitrament of the Halifax Commission must be attended to and the dollars forked out.

In the last sentence there appears to be a gleam of sense. John Welsh, the Ambassador, the unassuming, the stranger to tall talk, is enjoined to read Secretary Evarts' remonstrance. And thus is Lord Salisbury, the author of a diplomatic circular commanding the consideration of Europe, saved the trouble of wading through the confused intextual mass, and escapes unmoved and uninfluenced. The uneasiness arising from the effort to be appearing to listen was found to be bearable. Still no results appreciable by the people of the United States are forthcoming. Mushroom diplomacy at a discount, and so a portion of the Alabama surplus must be doled out. This liquidated, though with a grudge, let Sabbath desecration and the seizing of fishing apparatus in Newfoundland become the subject matter of future diplomatic action.

HUGH NIVEN.

### CURRENT LITERATURE.

**SENSIBLE ETIQUETTE OF THE BEST SOCIETY.** By Mrs. H. O. Ward. (Philadelphia: Porter & Coates. Montreal: Dawson Brothers.)

The author of this book is an American. She has, as she herself tells us, "introduced into her work such rules as are suited to a Republic, and discarded all such as are useless and unsuitable." Many authorities are quoted; indeed, the writer's chief fault is the freedom with which she indulges in lengthy paragraphs from other authors. No less than sixty names figure at the end of the book from whom quotations have been made, ranging from Cicero and Epictetus to Carlyle, and Frederick Robertson, Thackeray and Ouida. But in spite of too much book-making, "Sensible Etiquette" is really what it claims to be. It gives the rules of modern society on every ordinary and extraordinary occasion; and bases the laws of social intercourse on something deeper than mere conventional propriety,—true kindness of heart, and the desire to do unto others as we would that they should do unto us. It is a handsomely bound volume, and would make a valuable hand-book for young people going into society.

### MUSICAL.

#### THE PHILHARMONIC SOCIETY.

Mr. G. Couture writes to the *Star* that our criticism of the performance of "The Creation" by the above Society is "absurd and unjust." He says the performance of the work last winter in the Normal School was decidedly superior. Mr. Couture is surely joking; we have been trying to convince people that it was the *same work* which was performed at both concerts, but many still seem incredulous.

Among other things he says: "The orchestra was relatively more satisfactory," and this is how it was more satisfactory: "the strings were far too feeble, and required considerable reinforcement, the bassoons also rarely reached the ears of the audience," &c., whilst further on we are told that one of the bassoons, in company with the 2nd flute and other instruments, *was not there at all*. Does Mr. Couture forget the "ground was trod" by 2nd bassoon, *fortissimo*, in Mr. Whitney's solo? and that the first few bars of the introduction to the third part of the work were played by *two flutes and an oboe*? The principal part of the article is devoted to claiming points of excellence for the Mendelssohn Choir which its most ardent admirers never claimed for it, and mentioning it as a superior organization to the Philharmonic. "How is it possible that the Philharmonic should be superior to the Mendelssohn Choir," says he, "when the latter is composed of the most distinguished artistic elements of Boston?" This will be news to Mr. Gould and the members of the Mendelssohn Choir. We always understood that it was composed of Montreal amateurs, but now we are informed that we were mistaken, and that it is made up of Boston artists.

Now to draw a comparison between the two organizations is manifestly absurd. One is a choral society, pure and simple, performing principally part songs and detached pieces; the other consists of a choir and an orchestra, and devotes its attention chiefly to the performance of complete choral works with orchestral accompaniment. Then again many of the singers are members of both organizations (we are informed by the Secretary of the Philharmonic that both he and almost the entire committee are members of the Mendelssohn Choir), and surely they cannot be "Boston Artists" every Monday night and Montreal Amateurs on Friday. We did not say that the members of the Mendelssohn Choir were incapable of doing a large work like the "Creation," and we are quite willing to admit that a choir that can perform the elaborate choruses from a work can, if they try, do the whole of it; but we have never heard the Mendelssohn choir do the elaborate choruses from any oratorio, whilst we *have* known them perform many of the simple ones from several oratorios. Still we could certainly not argue from that their inability to perform any known work complete if so disposed. What we said and adhere to is this,—that an organization capable of performing grand choral works with complete orchestral accompaniment in the manner in which the "Creation" was performed has never existed in this city before; and that the Philharmonic is greatly in advance of all hitherto existing Societies. Both the Philharmonic and Mendelssohn Choirs might be better balanced, but we think the former the better balanced of the two, the latter requiring *as much tenor again* as it possesses at present to balance the ultra-ponderous bass on the opposite side; however, we are proud of both organizations, and would be glad to hear both of them oftener.

As regards Mr. Couture, we would like to know what musical organization

he directs, or what grand musical work he has given to the world? We have heard of Gounod, Wagner, Barnby, Torrington, Gould, Maclagan, Fowler, and others, but of *Couture*—never. We hope he will send us tickets when he gives his next concert; we are sure it must be a rare treat to hear him play or sing, and that it would be worth dozens of music lessons to listen even for a brief space to such an *extra-ordinary individual*, who alone is privileged to criticise our local musicians.

One of the great drawbacks to the progress of musical art in this country is the scanty remuneration of musicians either as teachers or executive artists. Canadians understand well the value of dry goods and produce, and the like; but they do not seem to think that art should be paid for at all—in fact, when they *do* pay they give it as a sort of bonus or gratuity, and not as though they had received a *quid pro quo*. Now we have sometimes heard it remarked of a musician that he was an excellent artist, of gentlemanly manners and conversation, but that his dress was shabby, and his associates not of the best (that is the richest) class. Poor fellow! he dressed shabbily because, though busily employed from morning till night he did not earn sufficient to procure more fashionable habiliments; his richer acquaintances, as a natural consequence, did not encourage his visits, and he was forced to accept the society of those who, though his equals in circumstances, were beneath him both as regards talents and general education.

A musician is expected to be a man of culture and refinement; his profession brings him in contact chiefly with ladies and gentlemen of good birth and education, and he is supposed to dress and deport himself like a gentleman. How can this be expected of one receiving such remuneration as is given to many efficient music teachers in this city?

Many musicians in England and elsewhere compare very favourably as regards general education with the members of the learned professions; but most young men of talent, who have received a sufficiently good education to account of the social status and adequate remuneration which they may expect by following any of these pursuits.

We cannot complain in this country of the social status of artists as such, indeed we generally find that they are cordially received and invited into the best society; but to mix on terms of equality with the members of other professions one must dress and live in somewhat the same manner as they do, and this musicians *cannot possibly do* in Montreal.

Musicians are much better paid for their services in Europe than in America, but in Montreal we believe a lower scale of fees prevails than in any city of its size in the world. In England, a professional man of any standing, receives half a guinea for a half-hour lesson; in the United States the best musicians receive from two to five dollars; but in Montreal we believe *one dollar* is considered quite a liberal fee, and many of our best musicians find it difficult to obtain a full complement of pupils even at that moderate rate.

Many good musicians have come here from time to time, but have left in disgust, having wasted what little money they may have had, in the vain endeavor to build up a paying business. We cannot say that they were not appreciated; they received innumerable invitations to musical parties, were highly complimented on their playing (or singing) and could have had hundreds of pupils at fifty cents or seventy-five cents a lesson—but *two dollars* they might give that to a doctor to come and look at their tongue, but a first-class artist would have to sit and hear them murdering Beethoven's sublimest creation for half an hour for a dollar.

This ought not to be; we should be willing to pay for what is good in art as in everything else, and although the price is regulated to some extent by the demand and supply, we think that in this country where living is more expensive than in England, musicians should receive at least the same remuneration for their services as they do there, if we expect the best or even the second-best English, French, and German musicians to take up their abode permanently in Montreal.

Herr Wilhemj, the distinguished violinist, is making a tour in the United States. Could we not induce him to include Montreal?

Mr. L. A. Maffre, the affable clerk at Mr. De Zouche's Music Store, has returned to his old position. Mr. Maffre is well known for his courtesy and politeness, and we are glad to see him back again.

We have received the following letter from Dr. Maclagan:—

SIR,—A gentleman, named Couture, has written to the *Star*, criticising the Philharmonic Concert in general, and myself in particular, stating that I had not sufficient fire, yet lacked coolness, did not take up the leads, &c., in short, that I was not competent to conduct the concert. He begins his article by saying:—"One would almost imagine that a knowledge of the art of music is innate in every man, judging by the free-and-easy manner in which an ordinary individual, out of his superficial knowledge," criticizes artists, &c.

Now I do not object to criticism (it advertises me capitably), but suppose we judge Mr. Couture by his own words. Who is Mr. Couture? Does not he criticise "in a free-and-easy manner out of superficial knowledge"? Is Mr. Couture a vocalist or instrumentalist of ability, or is he merely *endeavouring to get up a reputation* for extensive musical knowledge by abusing the performances of others? Mr. Couture says I cannot conduct—granted. Can he? My work is daily before the public; where is his?

P. R. MACLAGAN.

**HARD ON THE PROFESSION.**—A contemporary says that "America has one physician to every 800 inhabitants. That is, they begin on that basis, but after that there are not so many inhabitants."

WHILE Dean Stanley was in Hartford, Conn., a well-known ecclesiastic sent a boy to his room, instructing him to say, in answer to his enquiry as to who was at the door: "The boy, my lord." But the boy being overwhelmed with the responsibility of his mission, when he heard a mild "Who's there?" replied, "The lord, my boy."—*Trinity Tablet*.