

The Arion,

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OURSELVES.

In making our bow before the Canadian public, we are by no means forgetful of the responsibility we assume. The burthen we shall gladly bear, if the public will but kindly extend to us its generous sympathy and support.

We shall endeavor to render THE ARION both interesting and instructive to our readers, and while its pages will be open to discussions on subjects of music and art of public interest, it will in no case lend itself to the airing of rancour or personal feeling against the humblest votary of art. On the other hand, believing that the real value of any journal depends upon its absolute freedom to speak out plainly, and fearlessly, its honest opinions, we shall reserve to ourselves the right of criticism, the tone of which will always be guided by a desire for the public good, and the advancement of art, and although in the exercise of this right we may sometimes find it necessary to lop off a rotten bough or two, it will, in the end, be productive of a healthier growth, and more perfect fruit. The professions of the fine arts, unlike the *learned* professions, are not protected, and recognition of excellence in their members depends wholly upon the discriminating power of the public; this in turn, largely depends upon those who profess to teach and lead the public taste. It follows, as a consequence, that if the teachers be false the taste for art must also be false. The primitive North American accepts the rudely carved figures in wood or stone wrought by his native sculptor as works of art, and so they are, but useless would it be, should some modern sculptor attempt to set up such, as a standard of excellence for us who have seen the works of the Greek and Roman Masters. Vain would be the efforts of the most enterprising picture dealer to palm off, notwithstanding gorgeous frames and mountings, the prints from Chinese tea chests as works of true art. Equally futile would prove the attempt of a manager to persuade an audience that a concert of Jews' Harps or Tom-Toms is the highest order of musical performance.

It is true that our tastes are sufficiently cultivated to distinguish the difference between the extreme cases which we have drawn as illustrations, and those which we do accept; nevertheless we have reason to fear that true art occupies a position very far above our common standard. It is also true, figuratively speaking, that if the public chooses to prefer Tom-Toms and Chinese prints, it has a right to indulge itself therein, but we do not think we assume too much when we say that the public *does not* prefer the false gods in art, and that it is the province and privilege of the faithful critic to expose those false prophets who would impose the base for the real, the false for the true.

It may be argued that critics are but individuals, and that they give expression to their individual tastes. To this we

reply, there are recognized standards by which all matters of taste are governed. Those standards are the works of the great Masters (creative or executive) the excellence of which the whole civilized world unites in recognizing, and the critic, who passes upon any matter regardless of those standards (unless he can give most substantial reasons for differing therefrom) renders himself an object of ridicule and his criticism valueless. Laudatory 'puffs' undeserved have a most vicious tendency upon both the recipient and that portion of the public who look for instruction, while a discriminating criticism condemning what is bad, (giving reasons therefore) not only incites the art student to greater efforts to attain excellence, and to renounce or overcome bad practices or methods, but assists the public to determine for itself between the true and the false; then, and not till then, may the conscientious artist expect that recognition of his talents and art, which is too frequently usurped by the bolder and less scrupulous charlatan. Though endeavouring to do our duty never so conscientiously, both with reference to criticism, and the tone of, and general management and matter of our paper, we are not sanguine enough to even hope to please all; the object which we shall seek to secure will always be that, which, according to our judgment, may be productive of the greatest good to the greatest number. Should some of our more favored readers find fault with the simplicity of our style, our homely figures and illustrations, to such we desire to say at the offset, that our chief aim shall be to remove the veil of mystery, which through pride or ignorance is too frequently thrown around the simplest art, content to accept the censure of those to whom such explanation may be gratuitous, well pleased, if we gain the thanks of others, less favored, whom we have instructed.

ORGAN RECITALS.

We have always been led to regard an "Organ Recital" as a musical performance of the highest order. A performance of works of the grand old masters, Bach and Handel, (or at least of works of the school of which they were the founders), upon the grandest instrument of human construction. Works which calls forth at once, all the resources of the instrument, and the genius and cultivation of the performer. But alas, to what base purposes do we now-a-days too frequently see this noble instrument subordinated, like Sampson of old, to make sport, for the Philistines. True it cannot be expected that the people can fully understand and appreciate the works of Bach, Handel, and others of that school, but if they are worthy of being understood—and we think no one will deny that they are—in what other way except by public performances is it possible for them to acquire that understanding? It is a noble privilege which the organist enjoys, that of interpreting the works of the great masters to the listening crowd; of appealing to the, perhaps dormant, sense of something grander,