

MUSIC AND THE DRAMA.

THERE has not been for many years a season in Toronto during which there has been so great a dearth of high-class music from outside talent as the one just ended. In former winters singers of the calibre of Nilsson, Parepa, Carlotta Patti, Lucca, Ilma de Murska, Kellogg, Van Zandt, Rose Hersee, Clara Pearl, Patey, Edith Wynne, Mario, Santley, Whitney, Maas, and Tagliapietra, and pianists such as Rubinstein, Carreno-Sauret, and Goddard, have been listened to with delight. The lover of music amongst us, whose soul hungers for a feast of divine melody and harmony as a starving man does for a meal, must sigh as he casts his eye over the list and remembers what the past season has given him. We are almost ashamed to sum up the beggarly account. At the beginning of the winter a scratch company of second and third rate artists, evidently got together so hastily as not to have had time to study their parts properly, went through a few hackneyed operas in a style so slovenly as to reflect credit neither on themselves nor on Mr. Strakosch, their manager. Later on, Ole Bull gave us proof that his right hand had lost but little of its ancient cunning, and he himself but little of his old fire. At his concerts in the States he had been accompanied by Miss Thursby, the rising young American soprano, and heroine of the much-talked-about \$100,000 engagement with Strakosch. On coming to Toronto, however, Miss Thursby was dropped, and her place supplied by an inferior singer. Anna de Belocca, the well-known Russian contralto, was announced to appear early in the season, and at a later date, Mdme. Essipoff, the equally well-known Russian pianiste; but Mr. Strakosch, though he has reaped many a bounteous harvest in Toronto, apparently does not consider the field worth cultivating now, and neither artiste condescended to put in an appearance. The same thing took place last season, with Von Bulow, the great German pianist, who failed to appear notwithstanding that the hall had been actually engaged.

Having been thus thrown almost entirely on our own resources, we have had to make the most of such native talent as we possess. Of this there has been no dearth; and, from the ten-cent musical evenings given by the different churches to the oratorio performances of the Philharmonic Society, the number of amateur entertainments given has been legion.

Not the least enjoyable of these have been some delightful Saturday afternoon recitals given at the music rooms of Messrs. Mason, Risch, and Newcombe, by our most promising pianist, Mr. W. W. Lauder, a pupil of the Conservatory, Leipsic, assisted by several of our lady and gentlemen amateurs. The programmes have been almost exclusively classical, Beethoven, Mozart, Bach, Schumann, and Chopin being the most conspicuous names. Mr. Lauder gave his farewell recital on the 19th May, prior to his departure for Europe to resume his studies. He is yet quite young, and with patience and hard work, has a brilliant future before him.

The season at the Grand Opera House has not, we fancy, been a successful one financially. The commercial depression is no doubt to some extent answerable for this. Some fault, however, must be ascribed to the management. The stock company was markedly inferior to that of the two previous years. The star system is one of doubtful policy. It is true that an actress like Neilson draws crowds, and is thus the means of putting money into the treasury. But she herself pockets the greater portion of the profits, and so thoroughly drains the theatre-goers of their surplus cash, that 'business' is killed for the next two or three weeks. Another drawback to the system is that if the 'star' happens to be unknown, she fails to draw, no matter how good she may be, and then there is a loss. On the whole we think the true policy would be to have a star occasionally, but to rely mainly upon the stock company. If that is thoroughly good, it will become popular, and people, knowing that there will be something worth seeing, will turn out with confidence. The season wound up, appropriately enough, with an excellent centenary performance of 'The School for Scandal,' which was produced for the first time on the 8th May, 1777. Lord Byron once said that whatever Sheridan did was the best of its kind: 'He has written the best comedy (School for Scandal), the best drama, the best farce (The Critic—it is only too good for a farce), the best address (Monologue on Garrick), and, to crown all, delivered the very best oration (the famous Regum speech) ever conceived or heard in this coun-