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TALES OF THE TOWN.

*I must have liberty,
That as large a charter as the wind—
blow on whom I please."*

LAST WEEK, in this column, I took occasion to make a few remarks on musical criticism, and to enter a plea for the truth, even if it should prove disagreeable to those immediately concerned. It has, in my humble belief, been a great hindrance to the cause of good music in this city that the truth has so seldom been told, and I am firmly of opinion that if the role of candid friend had oftener been enacted by the musical critics of my esteemed contemporaries, if the sometimes necessary cold douche of disapproval had been oftener prescribed to the patient, we should have better performances all round than we have to-day. Modesty forbids that I should mention the one paper in this city, in which at least an attempt has been made to criticize musical occurrences on their merits, but I will say that the criticisms of this paper, so I understand, have given satisfaction to the liberal-minded, even of those who have been criticized. They have not been perfect, *cela va sans dire*, but what criticism is perfect? The critic after all is a man, and subject to the conditions of a man's life, which at this season especially, what with its turkey and plum pudding and extras, are sometimes of a rather bilious texture. But so long as he makes an honest effort to criticize; to censure in many instances with regret; to give each performer, always with pleasure his or her meed of praise; who has any right to say him nay? To the critic it is, or ought to be, never present the necessity for telling the truth, no matter on whose pedal extremities he may tread, and he should further have some idea of proportion, by which I mean that he should not criticize a church concert, where Miss X and the choir render a few pieces in their well-known artistic fashion, as if the Philharmonic chorus with Madame Patti as soloist were in question.

I have been led to these brief remarks by a report, evidently communicated, which I noticed in the columns of a city contemporary a few days ago. The critic treated of the service at a well-known city church on Christmas eve, and right well did he acquit himself. He had become so imbued with the excellence, not to speak of the gravity of the occasion, that he felt it necessary to spread himself in this alarming fashion:—

"The music was of uncommonly interesting description, and was pronounced by hundreds who attended as amongst the greatest musical treats ever heard in this city. The singing 'by the fine choir was grand.' A beautiful anthem

was given faultlessly. The marks of expression in this magnificent piece, and it fairly bristles with them, were taken most admirably. Mrs. X's voice 'filled the church with glorious melody' in a solo. In a subsequent chorus the fugal parts were taken up with an exactitude in time and tone that would have done honor to the best trained metropolitan philharmonic society."

Leaving the voices for a brief spell our friend devotes his attention to the organ which,

"Was never in better order, and its full power, both forte and piano (whatever that may mean) were shown off with great effect by the deft fingers of the organist, whose still deft fingers brought forth the bravest tones in W. Hill's fine march in D, after he had in Batiste's sweet Communion thrilled the assembled congregation with its exquisite inflections and cadence. It is full of delicate claribel passages requiring a sympathy of handling from the player," etc.

In the name of the prophet what does all this mean? Rendered into plain every day English I presume my young friend simply means to say that the painstaking organist and his choir did their best, and no doubt did it well. But why not say so in as few words as possible? Why attempt to give an impression as of Madame Patti and the Philharmonic chorus, with W. T. Best at the organ? Where is the church choir in this city, or in any other for that matter, which can carry the weight of such "eulogics" to coin the only word that fits the occasion? My pen grows weary. But to my esteemed contemporary who publishes not a hundred miles from Campbell's corner, I would say, next Christmas send the baseball editor or the fighting editor to criticize, but do not put your faith in the amateur editor, if you want to preserve a reputation for sanity.

I understand that there is a proposition to amalgamate the different athletic clubs of this city; in fact a great many of the members of the clubs have expressed themselves emphatically in favor of the project. To my mind, there are too many clubs here for a city the size of Victoria. At present there are the lacrosse, canoe, football, tennis, cricket, yacht and bicycle clubs and the James Bay Athletic Association. Now there are a great many of our young men who are members of each of these clubs, and the result is that unless they have long pockets, there must be a great drain on their salaries to keep their dues paid up, which in one year amount to quite a sum. One young man informs me that it cost over fifty dollars in 1892 while another said that one hundred dollars did not pay his dues. This, it occurs to me, is a great waste of money. These young men could enjoy themselves just as much, if not more so, if this amalgamation took place and be even with the

game at the end of the season. In the city of Toronto, which has a population in the neighborhood of 200,000, the different athletic clubs have organized as one body, and it has been found that where separately many clubs were actually struggling for an existence, united they have become a great financial success.

The James Bay Athletic Association have paid their running expenses each year besides liquidating a large number of outstanding debts contracted before this committee hold hold of the affairs of the club. The association has a good boat house, gymnasium, baths, reading and dressing rooms and everything required for a first-class club. Why should it not be made the headquarters? With a membership of say 300 or 400 at \$12 per annum, the different committees, representing the various clubs, would receive their share of the revenue, and thus be enabled to carry on with profit the affairs of the club during the summer months, and in the winter gymnasium classes could be carried on under a capable instructor. Of course it does not necessarily follow that the amalgamation should take place under the name of the James Bay Athletic Association—the Victoria Athletic Association would perhaps sound better.

The municipal elections are upon us, and now that the scramble for position may be said to have begun it might not be amiss to warn the electors that it will stand them in hand to remember a few things:

1. It is not wise to condemn an untried quantity.
2. That although there was danger of another smallpox epidemic in 1893—and it was handled successfully—there was a power above the municipality which interfered in 1892, and brought order out of chaos.
3. As a rule, he is the best governor who, once in a while, at least, will listen to the voice of the people, and not forever play the role of Sir Oracle.
4. If the mayor of the city is to be the law-maker and is to have a Board of aldermen for the purpose of simply ratifying what he desires, let the people do away with the aldermanic board and bow down to the Emperor.
5. The board of aldermen should be composed of any even number of men then, as a rule they would be able to pass upon civic questions without encountering the mayor's vote—for instance, with an even number on the board you would rarely find a vote of 5 against 4 being carried by the minority—as has been the case during the past year.
6. Had the north ward been divided, as was intended by her representatives, the city would now have five wards and ten aldermen. The increase in the number