

MUSIC AND THE DRAMA.

SO charming a literary and musical conception as the 'Masque of Welcome' (words by F. A. Dixon, Ottawa, and music by A. A. Clappé, late bandmaster of the Governor-General's Foot Guards), should not longer remain unknown to our Canadian public, as, through delay of publication, we fear it has done. It now appears, thanks to the music publishers, Messrs Orme, of Ottawa, in a particularly dainty and suitable dress (witness the excellent treatment of the title page), and will amply reward those who care to read its quaint and pleasing libretto or study the musical setting which is highly successful, and, though occasionally somewhat trite, fully displays the musicianly qualities which we believe distinguish Mr. Clappé. Mr. Dixon is not unknown to the readers of the MONTHLY, and this, one of his best efforts, retains all his old grace and delicacy of diction, while it displays a certain dramatic strength in many parts new even to his admirers. To both author and composer are due hearty thanks for having embodied in so pleasing and withal original a form the feelings of Canadians towards their present Governor-General, and the cultivated lady who aids him in recognizing and improving whatever of artistic excellence there may be in this new country. For them the 'Masque' was written, before them it was presented, and doubtless met with their approbation, as it is sure to do at every fairly adequate representation, even if the crowning interest, or *raison d'être*, so to speak, of the first performance be absent. The 'Masque' is presented by *Canada*, robed as an Indian maiden, by an Indian chief, who sings in a touching strain his farewell to the woods on the approach of the white man, and by the different Provinces appropriately 'habited'; *Quebec* as one of the old French noblesse; *Ontario* in white, with agricultural emblems; *Prince Edward Island* as a sturdy farmer; *British Columbia* as a bronzed and red-shirted miner, while *New Brunswick* as a maiden, attired in green, singing in praise of the fisher's craft; *Manitoba* as a hunter, and *Nova Scotia* as a fisherman complete the list.

It is no platitude to say that where there is so much charming writing it is difficult, and perhaps invidious, to particularize, but, at the same time, it is possible to discriminate with regard to the libretto as well as to the music, and we think the duet between *Manitoba* and *Nova Scotia*, with its fine descriptive lines, and the songs allotted to *Quebec* and *Ontario* claim special mention. Another successful bit occurs in the miner's song which sounds the praises of the 'Mountain Land.'

'Land whose summer sun the snow
Swelis the torrents far below;
Where the rain-cloud ever breaks,
Rushing down to soundless lakes.'

And what can be prettier in alliterative effect than the following stanza from *Canada's* opening song?

'The summer woods for me grow green;
For me the maple turns to red;
The busy beaver owns me queen;
The big moose bows his mighty head.'

We have referred to the musical setting as indicating in a high degree the talent of Mr. Clappé, yet as being occasionally trite, and we fancy that too great consideration for what is termed 'popular' music, has led him into the error. The beginning of the overture, for instance, is highly dramatic, suggestive and original, and leads one to expect better things than the *opera bouffe* airs that follow; again, in the setting of *Ontario's* fine song and in the closing air for *Canada*, 'Royal lady, on our welcome,' there is a great falling off from the charming 'gavotte,' which is given to *Quebec*, from the opening chorus of invisible spirits, and the replettes for the provinces. The accompaniments throughout prove the composer's knowledge of instrumentation and form the most attractive portion of his work. We hope that before long he may produce music to some other pleasing libretto, and leaving his genius unfettered by any but strictly artistic considerations, assert still more strongly his right to be considered one of our best musicians.

The 'Masque' as an *ensemble* deserves to be regarded as a Canadian classic, and will probably find much favour with