

Musical and Dramatic.

IN MUSICAL CIRCLES.

The musical event of the current week was the latest production by the amateurs of the comic opera "Doctor Alcantara," last Tuesday evening. In several particulars the performance was the best they have given, but in other respects there was no improvement. Everyone was glad to know that the young lady whose illness had caused the postponement of the performance from the 14th inst., had recovered the use of her voice and was able to sing her somewhat trying role of Inez. It was clearly out of compliment to her that the audience encored her solo for which by the way she received a beautiful bouquet—but it was a little bit selfish too when one considered how much work remained further before the opera was finished. She courteously responded to the encore, however, though her voice indicated the effort that was necessary. Probably because of this the duet with Isabella was omitted. Mrs. W. E. Jones sang the role of Isabella better than before, I thought, and looked very winsome. Better results would attend a performance like this if the principal members of the cast would give more attention to stage business and try so far as possible to "suit the action to the word." Some of the gentlemen were very unhappy in this respect and I do not think there is any precedent for the two porters indulging in a waltz and passing in front of the leading characters. It may have been droll, but it was not authorized.

The rehearsals by the St. John Oratorio Society, this week, of the choruses to be sung at the Sousa Band Concerts, was very satisfactory, and gave abundant promise of finished work when the concerts take place. Mr. Fisher, the conductor, is most painstaking and is evidently determined these choruses shall be the best ever given by the Society. The attendance of the active members on Monday evening was very large and again was demonstrated the correctness of the suggestion in PROGRESS last week, that for the purpose of these rehearsals a much larger room ought to be secured. I have heard that an effort is being made in this direction, and it is to be hoped it will succeed. It is said too that some talent from points outside the city will contribute their assistance and rehearse with the Society before the concerts.

It is a pleasure to announce that Mr. L. W. Titus of this city has been engaged as soloist for the concerts to be given at Acadia College, Wolfville, on June 5th next. I have heard also there is a very strong probability that an instrumental quartette from Boston will be present on that occasion.

Tones and Undertones.

Paris has a new prima donna in Mile Latargue, who recently won a brilliant success as Desdemona in Verdi's "Otello" at the grand opera.

Eugene D'Albert, the pianist, has been appointed Kapellmeister at Weimar, the position once held by Liszt. He is the first musician of British birth to hold such an appointment in Germany.

Watkins Mills, the English baritone and who is said to be one of the best of his day, was singing in St. Paul, Minn., on the 16th and 17th inst.

A western writer, dealing with the concert of classical music as it is now known speaks of "the velocity of finger movement" exhibited by violinists in their selections and asks that some genius will "dare to break down the Chinese wall of pedantic orthodoxy and for once charm us with some sweet simple melody." Many persons elsewhere will re-echo this sentiment.

"Zryni" a new opera by De Vleeshouwen, recently produced at Antwerp met with only respectful attention.

George D. Boniface jr. has left the Camille D'Arville company.

Marion Manola will return to comic opera, and will appear in Cleveland, Ohio, in "Clover."

"Dorothy" is being given at the Castle Square theatre, Boston, this week. It has not been heard in that city since 1891. Manager Duff presented it there in 1888 with a company that included Lillian Russell, Agnes Stone and William Hamilton. The next year it was given at the Boston theatre by the Bostonians.

DeKoven's new opera "Tizigane" which Lillian Russell has just brought out in New York is not likely to be a success.

"The Black Hussar" will follow "Dorothy," at the Castle Square theatre and manager Rose intends, for that production, to have on the stage a brass band mounted on horseback.

Charles Landle of the Robin Hood opera company is engaged for the season of summer opera at the Castle Square.

The London Musical Herald tells a queer story about "Jack" Wilson's tomb in the Little Cloisters at Westminster Abbey. Wilson was Shakespeare's tenor. He was probably the first to sing "Sigh No More, Ladies," and he died at the age of 78, in 1673. The inscription on his tomb at the abbey was much obliterated, and under the direction of an antiquary

man was employed to repair the letters. The antiquary stood looking over him, so that he should make no mistake, and to make the time go pleasantly he expatiated at great length to the workman upon the grandeur and merits of the deceased. The man eventually stopped his work, and looking up at the antiquary said: "I wish, sir, we had known he was such a swell before we ran that three drain pipe through him."

Mme. Melba sailed for England last Thursday, and is to sing Marguerite in "Faust," at Covent Garden next Saturday evening. During the London season she will sing for the first time in Massenet's "Manon," with Jean de Reszke. Mme. Melba will return to America in the early autumn.

Miss Olive M. d., the young violinist, will go to Europe with Mr. and Mrs. Franz Kneisel and remain with them for a time in London, after which she will visit Paris and Berlin and pass the summer with them in Ischl, the well known summer resort of musicians from Vienna.

The young Czar of Russia is a great admirer of Wagner. He is said to be a confirmed victim of Wagner's with an incurable aversion to music of the French and the Italian schools.

Yasay is in San Francisco but he will return to Europe by the steamer leaving New York the 8th of June.

There is a rumor abroad to the effect that Christine Nilsson is to reappear on the stage.

TALK OF THE THEATRE.

Joseph Jefferson lectured to fifteen hundred students at Harvard college, Cambridge, on the 14th inst.

A remarkable little play founded on an episode in the life of Elgar A. Poe, was given at a matinee performance in Boston last week.

Manager Daly was obliged to pay damages to Olga Nethersole, for mismanagement of her tour.

Carrie Turner will play with Richard Mansfield.

Miss Lotta Crabtree, has arrived in New York. She is accompanied by her mother and brother.

The Boston Museum is closed.

Miss Marie Burroughs in producing "Leah" last week in Boston "did not add to her reputation as an actress." She has a miserable company in her support, her production of "Romeo and Juliet" has been liberally scored.

For his farewell performance at the Comedie Francaise, in Paris, Got, the famous French Comedian, took the part of Falstaff in the tavern scene of Maurice and Vaquerie's adaptation of "Henry IV," a play which had not been acted for fifty-three years, and of Triboulet, the King's Fool, in the second act of Victor Hugo's "Le Roi S'Amuse." Theodore de Banville's "La Pomme" was also given, and poems addressed to the comedian by Henri de Bornier, Jean Richepin, Sully-Prudhomme, Catulle Mendes and Armand Silvestre were recited by Mount Sully, Miles Reichenberg and Bartet, and Mme. Barretta-Worms.

The Boston public continue to steadily patronize the "pops" concerts in that city. The following programme was given last Monday evening.

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| March, "Jonathan" | Millocker |
| Overture, "Fra Diavolo" | Auber |
| Waltz, "Les Patineurs" | Waldteufel |
| Selection, "Les Brigands" | Offenbach |
| Overture, "Die Meistersinger" | Wagner |
| Pizzicati, | Gillet |
| Cavatina, | Raff |
| Bal costume | Rubinstein |
| Selection, "Boccaccio" | Suppe |
| Waltz, "Grubenlichter" | Zeller |
| Polka, "Unparteiische Kritik" | Strauss |
| March, "Fort William Henry" | Knecht |

Anton Seidl has been engaged to conduct a season of German opera in New York at the metropolitan opera house.

The London season of Grand opera opened last Monday evening with Verdi's "Otello" with Madame Albani, Sig. Pessina and Sig. Tamagno as Desdemona, Iago and the Moor respectively.

The singing in the Russian church is confined to men. All the monks are singers. For a thousand years, it is said, Russia has been searched for the best voices among the monks and they are brought to the most important centres. Bass voices in Russia are of extraordinary depth, some of them so deep and powerful that they have special parts assigned to them an octave below the real part. These are called "octavists." It is not uncommon to find those who can take the F. below the C. Most of these bass voices come from North Russia. It is an interesting fact bearing on climate that contraltos of unusual depth and resonance are found in that part also.

The London Gentleman gives this welcome to a young and clever American actress: Miss Julia Arthur, the fortunate young actress to whom Henry Irving has offered an engagement to "play second"—as the theatrical phrase goes—to Miss Ellen Terry, is an American, born in Canada. A British subject, you will say. But there is nothing at all British about Miss Arthur. Her voice and accent ring frankly American, while in appearance she is altogether

southern. Everybody is anxious to know something of the personality and talent of the lady soon to tread for the first time the boards of our historic Lyceum. Miss Arthur, as I have said, is Italian-looking; and this not because she has dark, moonlight eyes and coal-black hair, but because her very expression, sombre and fugal, is southern, and her whole temperament suggestive of that far-off land sung by the Mignon of Goethe. Her acting, still somewhat immature, gives promise of excellent things to come; her voice is warm and vibrating, her earnestness undeniable.

The Italian actress, Signora Duse, has been performing lately at the Parc Theatre, in Brussels. A few nights ago, and after the termination of the performance of "Cavalleria Rusticana" and "La Locandiera," the Queen, who was present, sent for Signora Duse to the royal box, in order to congratulate her. The artist, who is of a quiet disposition, sent a message, begging to be excused. The manager, much embarrassed, made the excuse for her majesty that La Duse did not like to traverse the theatre in costume, there being no private communication between the royal box and the stage. The Queen who has much esprit, contented herself by regretting that the architecture of the theatre was so incomplete, and sent her warm congratulations.

W. S. Harkins opened his season in Halifax last Monday evening. The full list of his company with which he will shortly begin his season in this city, is as follows: William Courtleigh, W. A. Whitecar, George Barnum, E. J. Heron (comedian) C. J. Hallock, Joseph Brennan, Tom Wice—Ralph Becktel, artist, and Fred Hodgson, agent. The ladies are Miss Minnie Radcliffe, Miss Gertrude Witte, Miss Marguerite May (singing and dancing soubrette), Miss Marion Lester and Miss Emma Maddern. Mr. Harkins is deservedly popular in this city, his record is excellent and no doubt he will be liberally patronized during his stay.

The young people comprising the Proscenium club gave a matinee performance of "Won Back" last Saturday afternoon and intensified the favorable impression their previous performance had made. Mr. Thompson and Miss Alberta Fowler again made hits, and all the members evinced improvement.

THE ORGANIST'S STANDPOINT.

Mr. Charles R. Fisher Clearly States His Side of the Case.

The following letter from Mr. Charles R. Fisher is self explanatory:

To the EDITOR OF PROGRESS: I have hesitated to reply to the various statements which have been made concerning my resignation as organist and choirmaster of St. Andrew's, and which evidently came, either directly or indirectly, from some of the Elders of the church. Now that my side of the question has been asked for by the press, I feel bound, in self-defence, to answer the derogatory reports which have been circulated.

It should be clearly understood that there was, apart from myself, only the session who knew of my resignation, at the time the press item appeared notifying that action. I had nothing to do with any of those reports, therefore there could have been only one other source from which they could have sprung, viz—from the St. Andrew's session.

In taking up the matter of the reports seriatim, the first is the Telegraph report, where it says "Mr. Fisher was paid a salary of \$200, out of which he was supposed to pay \$200 to strengthen the choir with the trustees." This he failed to do, and upon the trustees complaining, resigned. Whatever the elders may have insinuated, I feel quite sure that the trustees never, at any time, accused me of being a rogue, and that is the plain English of the Telegraph report. It is true that, upon my protesting to the minister against such unwarrantable statements being made, this was denied as a measure, but that denial contained a statement equally misleading.

When I left England last summer, the session or its representatives said, "We want no change as we are perfectly satisfied and are quite willing to help all we can to firmly establish a voluntary choir from our congregation, also to aid in keeping it together when formed." Yet directly after I came back an attempt was made to force me to pay \$200 out of my salary to singers, broad hints being given, both through the press and by some of their own session, and this in defiance of both agreement, and the ready assertions made prior to my leaving for England. The matter was dropped upon my asking what was meant by such insinuations, but only to be met against me at the earliest opportunity. Does this not seem a case of sharp practice? I have all along felt it to be so, for it is a mystery how the session could entertain any such idea, when I was engaged with the clear understanding that I was to work up a choir of volunteers from their own church.

From what I can learn, and the following is the sum of what I have gathered from statements made at different times by one or another of the Session, there are those who expect for \$200—(1) A fully qualified professional organist to take charge of all the music connected with the church, train the choir and Sunday school, form and teach a congregational singing class, and give private instruction to such of the choir members as show special promise—(2) A paid quartette of sufficient showiness to fill the church with people, and especially to attract those wealthy American visitors, who will materially add to the revenue of the church by their donations to the collection plate—(3) To provide the necessary music for the choir, and other incidental expenses—(4) To keep the organ in tune and repair.

Now the minister receives a stipend of \$2,500 in a straightforward manner, to enable him to carry on his share of the church work effectively, whilst the organist has his \$200 allotted him in such a way as to give cause for the carpers and croakers—and St. Andrew's is far from free of this class of critic—to find fault and grumble continually. Until the session can be as just to the musician as to the minister, they must not expect anything permanent in the way of either choir or organist.

As to the statement made in the Telegraph, where it said, "It seems the difficulty is owing to a difference between the choir committee and the organist on what are his duties," I can only say that on no occasion have I ever been asked to meet such a committee, therefore could never have had cause for disagreement with them. Next comes the report of the morning of May the 10th, making the simple announcement that last evening the session met and accepted my resignation. This looks harmless enough in itself, yet, when coupled with the former reports which alleged to give the reason for my tendering my resignation, contains much that is malignant; for in what other way could it be interpreted by the public at large, than that the former newspaper statements were

correct? Now I was asked to meet the session on the evening mentioned, and I thought it appeared impossible to agree upon any other subject—as no one had anything definite to propose upon which to agree—yet upon my bringing up the matter of using the press in the way it had been used, they unanimously condemned either side giving biased reports. Notwithstanding this, within twelve hours the public had the matter placed before them in such a way, as would seem to justify the former reports made concerning me.

The following, taken from my letter of resignation, will sum up the immediate cause for resigning. "From the conversation I had with you last June, I fully thought something quite different was intended than that the choir was to be considered as rendering services to me, but rather to your church, and that it would be fostered as a valuable church organization. I, further, emphatically asserted that you could never had together a voluntary choir upon such an unsatisfactory footing. It is unjust to the choir and a hindrance to the organist. As I find the choir has, in a measure, already expressed itself upon the point, I need say nothing further." This, the only subject upon which I thought I was asked to confer with the session, was most carefully avoided, or turned aside whenever broached by me.

Why was this, when, only quite recently one of their members assured me that the earnest wish of the session was to establish a choir from the congregation? With an isolated exception, there was not the slightest expression made by anyone, which indicated that the session cared the least as to the personnel of the choir, so long as they had no trouble in the matter. Their plea of having a settled policy with regard to their choir must fall to the ground, in the face of the indelicacy and shirking of responsibility shown at that meeting.

Now members of the session are saying that I would make my proposition to them. Certainly not, when they accepted their position as to me twelve months since, and when they then acknowledged was the only practicable way of keeping the choir together. The manner in which the choir held together and worked enthusiastically showed that they were willing to do their part; if any disintegration has taken place, it must be solely attributed to the plainly expressed statements of the session on the 1st of March, when it repudiated any connection existing between themselves and the choir.

As one or another of the session has so freely complained of the instability and changeableness of musical people, I feel compelled, in defence of all who are connected with that profession, to protest against such unbecoming remarks. The session really must not jump to the conclusion that musicians have no fixity of character, just because they will not stay in a position in St. Andrew's church. They must forget that I know several personally, who left St. Andrew's church very dissatisfied, and yet are now most successfully filling important church appointments.

Have the members of the session ever thought that their church is the only one in the city which is continually having changes made with regard to their organists and singers, and have they asked the reason why? In conclusion may I say that I have all along felt that the matter was not, in the first instance, one of a public nature, but as it has been made so, I feel called upon to give my view from the organist's standpoint, as contrasted with that of the session. As all my personal relations with St. Andrew's session have been of a most cordial nature, I feel that the disagreement which led to my resignation resulted from no other cause, than that of their having no definite policy with regard to their services—music, formulated.

Yours etc.
CHARLES R. FISHER.

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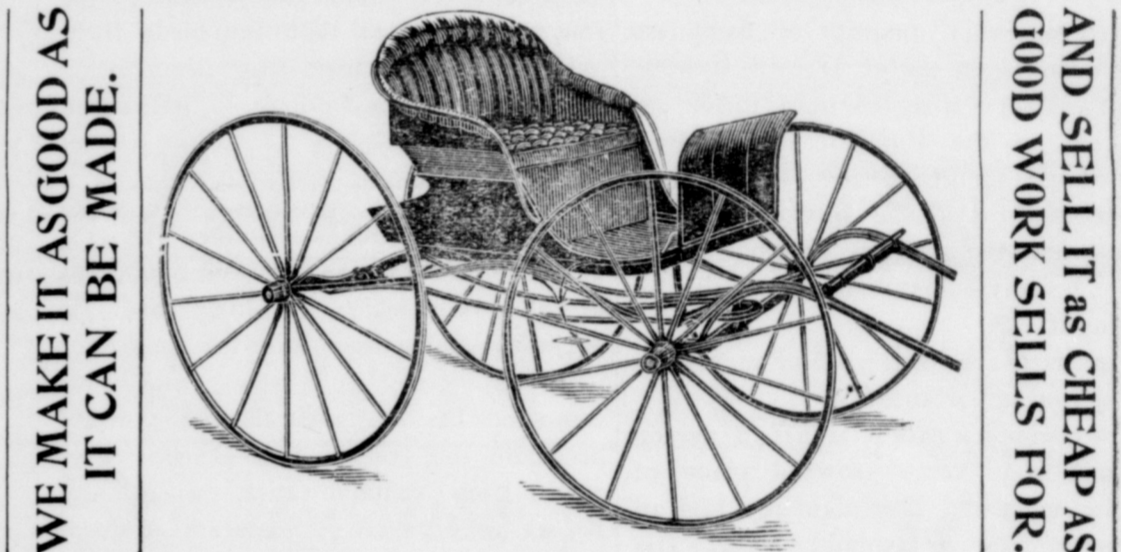
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