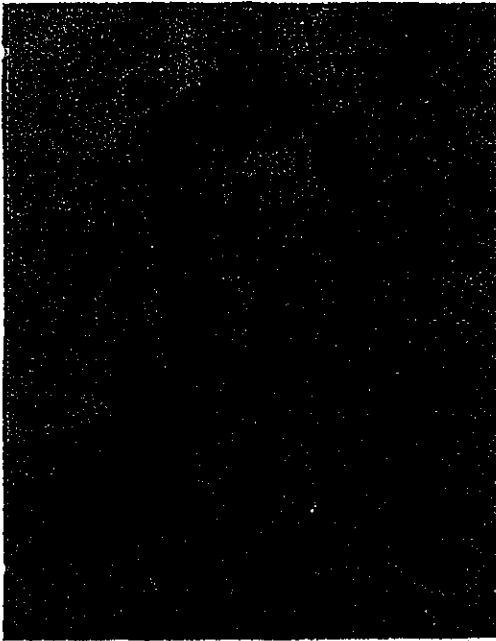




That Bland Holt is very popular in New Zealand no one will deny who has watched the progress of his season. He commenced with splendid houses, and despite the prediction that his audiences would fall off, they have increased to that degree that the directors are contemplating erecting a swinging-gallery, sustained by iron stanchions from the roof. The idea, if feasible, is a good one and, with the addition of "punkahs," will be both ornamental and comfortable during the coming hot season.

The literary merit of the productions put on by Bland Holt are, in most cases,



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open to severe criticism, but they are so gorgeously mounted and ably interpreted, that the auditor forgets to criticise and is lost in admiration of the *tout ensemble*.

Take for instance "A Million of Money" deprive it of its magnificent scenic effects, and put the play in the hands of an indifferent company, it would simply be "egged" in a back-block barn. But as produced at present, with its gaudy trappings, mechanical effects, and array of clever artists, it hits the public taste as light fits the eye, and, as compared with other productions, is as the blonde-haired snow to the dark-eyed mud.

"The Sailors Knot," when viewed in a coldly critical manner, is a wild conglomeration of anachronistic impossibilities, but when watched from the dress circle it seemed a series of intensely interesting situations and effective tableaux that increased in interest as the action of

the play went on, or until a climax was reached when every single woman in the theatre fell desperately in love with Mr. Baker as Jack Westward, and the majority of the married women contrasted him with their husbands to the latter's disadvantage.

The "Trumpet Call" showed more coherent continuity and, when not dazzled by the *mise en scene*, a general interest was taken in the unfolding of the plots. Miss Edith Blande appeared to exceptional advantage in this piece as a sensationally wicked woman with a tendency towards insanity, which showed itself principally in a fondness for low "doss" houses, and a shrieky kind of laugh which usually preceded a "back fall" or an exit.

The humorous element which runs through the various productions, like a

is cast or light comedy in the next piece, and perhaps in the following one plays something between the two. Antics of this character can only be played with a company that has been picked with the most careful discrimination. Such a company is now under Bland Holt's management.

Lack of space prevents our entering into details as to the merits of the members of the company, but suffice it to say that Bland Holt has succeeded in welding into a company a number of artists (they have their alloy) who would draw friendly audiences, even if his scenery were to get mislaid or burnt up, or something of that kind. We publish in this number pictures of both Mr. and Mrs. Bland Holt. In our next issue we will give our readers a more detailed account of the new piece "Taken from Life," which will be played to-morrow.

Morgan Barnett's reception in Wellington goes far to prove the assertion that Wellington people very often don't know a good thing when they get it. As an interpreter of Chopin, and an all-round pianist he is certainly the best that has been here for years.

Theatrical touring on "spec" in New Zealand seems hardly a paying institution, if one may judge by some of the recent disastrous adventures. The Amy Vaughan Company a short time back went "bung" up country, and a slender gentleman named Claude Hermann, advertised as the colonial double of Henry Irving, failed to impress the Feilding people sufficiently to induce them to part with their shekels, and is at present *en route* to Wellington in the capacity of a long-distance walker.

The following (says the *Musical Times*) is accredited to Dr. Hans Von Bulow:— "I greatly admire a Strauss waltz, and can see no reason why such a work, which is always artistic and is among the best things of its kind, should not be played now and then by a symphony orchestra at a serious concert. It would take the sound of much dullness out of our ears, and act as an olive acts in preparing the palate for a change of dish." If the Wellington Orchestral Society were to put the above into practice, instead of struggling with so much that is classical, they would have the thanks of many of their patrons.

Miss Nellie Stewart's reappearance in Sydney has been greeted with overflowing houses. The people on the other side seem to be just as fond of her and as glad to see her back as they were sorry to say farewell to her when she left for England.

Miss Eloise Juno with a company which includes several old favourites, Frank Cates among the number, will shortly tour New Zealand under the management of Mr. Dick Stewart.

streak of lean through a fat piece of bacon, is provided by Bland and his clever little wife. In the "Sailor's Knot" and the "Trumpet Call" they are both excellent, and in "A Million of Money" as Tom Cricklewood and Hetty Nestledown, respectively, they introduce a leaven of fun that is as appreciable as a mint julep on a hot day.

The productions and the players have been already dealt with by the local daily press, and it would seem almost superfluous for us to, at present, speak further on the subject; still, in fairness to ourselves and the company, we would like to point out one or two things. First, the versatility which Mr. Holt requires from the members of his company. A discriminating auditor will notice that in every successive production there is a complete change in the allotment of parts. The gentleman or lady who plays "heavy" one week