

MUSIC AND ART AND DRAMA

Myra Kemble's Comedy Company opened to a good house on Wednesday evening with Sydney Grundy's comedy, in four acts, entitled "A White Lie." The production embraces a number of humorous situations, and includes a fair amount of what is technically known as "bright and sparkling dialogue," but it requires a lot of good "business" and clever acting to make it go as successfully as it did on Wednesday evening. The piece is somewhat French in its structure, and there are several features in it that remind one of "Pink Dominoes." Like most adaptations from the French, however, it gives the impression of having gone through a process of emasculation before being presented to the censorious and proper B.P. Apropos of this literary vandalism we wonder in what form Miss Kemble intends to produce "Pauline Blanchard?" As presented by Sarah Bernhardt in Sydney, it merited the description "distinctly naughty," and unless it has undergone a very careful revision in the translation, we fear the good people of Wellington will never survive the shock. But to return to our mutons, the plot (if it may be called such) of "A White Lie" is composed of a chapter from the lives of two young married couples, who through the indiscretion of one of the wives, play at cross purposes with one another and tangle things up generally. Sir John Molyneux, an easy going *blasé* sort of individual, who lives in a perpetual state of boredom, and considers sleep a panacea for all ills, has married the sister of George Desmond, a quick-tempered fiery young fellow, the exact reverse in temperament of the baronet—also lately married. During Desmond's absence Lady Molyneux carries on a flirtation with a mild sort of villain, Captain Tempest by name, and receives a compromising letter from him. This letter falls into Sir John's hands, who is roused to a state of wakefulness by his wife's conduct. Kate Desmond, to shield her sister-in-law, affirms that the letter has been sent to her, and it is on this "white lie" that the action of the play hinges. Both women meet unexpectedly at the Captain's chambers, in the Blue Post Inn, intent on some plan to extricate Lady Molyneux from her difficulty and allay the suspicions of Sir John. While there, first Sir John and then Desmond, who has returned to his home in the meanwhile, and missed his wife, arrive at the Inn. The women hide in different rooms and the visitors instituting a search, Sir John discovers Desmond's wife, while he finds Lady Molyneux. Both are, of course, anxious that neither shall know of the presence of their wives, and carefully conduct one another out, each intending to come back and release the lady he discovered. In the next act matters are all cleared up by the confessions of the wives, and everything ends serenely.

Miss Kemble's Kate Desmond is that curious anomaly, a society woman, who

has compunctions about telling a lie, and what is a shade more natural, a perfect horror of being found out. Her scene with Sir John, when he has discovered the letter, and insists on her proving the assertion that it is meant for her, by answering it, is very cleverly carried out, and her comically indignant barney with Captain Tempest at the Blue Post Inn is equally interesting. A great deal of amusement is afforded by her description of Sir John, when thoroughly wide awake, and the final confession to her husband in the last act is excellent. She was by turns vivacious, ludicrously sorrowful, and almost pathetic; but the part hardly afforded the clever little lady sufficient scope to display the ability which has made her so popular both in Australia and New Zealand.

Mr Sass gives a very able interpretation of the careless, easy going and even lazy, Sir John Molyneux, who is a thoroughly good fellow at bottom, but who was either fortunately or unfortunately born tired. His cool nonchalant style of taking things, and the equally deliberative way in which he either lit a cigar, or forcibly ejected an unwelcome visitor, was particularly well represented. Mr Sass has made himself deservedly popular in



Miss MYRA KEMBLE.

Australia, and will win many admirers here. One thing, however, we would call attention to; he holds the stage a little too long at the close of the second act. No matter how naturally a gentleman may dress himself on the stage, the operation falls on the taste after awhile and the audience are apt to grow uneasy. If he could manage to get into his overcoat a trifle quicker and leave something to the imagination in the way of other details, we think the effect would be more satisfactory.

Miss Emma Gwynne's Lady Molyneux was somewhat amateurish. The character which, as she played it, was of the "gushing-dear-little-innocent-thing" type, seemed somewhat forced and gave the impression that the artist was "trying too

hard," a little more ease and natural abandon would be a distinct improvement. Mr Plimmer's George Desmond was not bad, but there seemed to be a great deal of unnecessary rushing hither thither, and diving around the stage in circles, until one became uneasy at the gentleman's activity and almost wished that he would confine his exercise to walking in a straight line, say for about twenty miles or so, and grow up with the country as it were.

Mr Scott Inglis appeared as Captain Tempest, but, somehow, although the remark may scarcely seem relevant, he reminded us of a tempest in a teapot. We admit that the part gives little scope for brilliant acting, but a little more vim might have been put into the impersonation. The minor parts were fairly well sustained, and a word of praise is due to Miss Flora Anstead, and little Alma Gibson. "A White Lie" will be played for the last time to-morrow night.

The Palmer-Beaumont Concert Company concluded their brief season of two nights at the Opera House on Tuesday evening, and we regret to add that the season was anything but a successful one. Notwithstanding the claim that, from a musical standpoint, New Zealand is the Italy of Australasia, and Wellington the Milan of New Zealand, concert companies, no matter how good they may be, rarely meet with the support afforded to other combinations in this colony. Music, unless accompanied by scenic effect, gorgeous costuming, and a ballet, meets with but lukewarm patronage. A case in point was the disastrous venture of the Alb's, who had met with success throughout Australia, but who lost all the money they had made and a lot more in New Zealand. Even the local Chamber concerts are poorly patronized in Wellington, and unless a go-as-you-please, high-note contest or a comic song and dance or two is included, people won't even pay sixpence to go to a concert at the Rink. It's not music the people want in Wellington but spectacular entertainments. The Palmer-Beaumont Company included instrumental and vocal artists, far above the average, and were worthy of the heartiest support—but they didn't get it. Mr. John Lennone is a flautist of exceptional ability, and his performance of Briccialdi's caprice (*The Wind*) was the best thing of its character we have heard in New Zealand for many a year—if it has ever been equalled. Arnes Beaumont we all know, and Mr. A. Gee possesses a rich baritone voice that would command admiration anywhere. It has been said by a witty Frenchman that singers are divided into three classes, viz., those who know how to sing and have no voice; those who have a good voice but don't know how to sing, and those who have no voice and don't know how to sing, but who *will* try. Mr. Gee is an exception to the three classes enumerated, for he does know how to sing and possesses a good voice. The same may be said of Mrs. Palmer and Miss Stirling