

Music and Drama.

THE BROUGH SEASON.

'THE NOTORIOUS MRS EBBSMITH.'

DOUBTLESS the majority of those who went to see 'The Notorious Mrs Ebb-smith' anticipated a play as powerful in its leading motive and construction, and as full of deep human interest as is Pinero's masterpiece, 'The Second Mrs Tanqueray.' The drama, however, is in no way calculated to gratify such expectations. True, it deals in the same open and above board manner as the latter does with certain aspects of modern civilisation which afford a favourite subject for discussion and treatment in the literature of the day, and if arrayed in decent phraseology, are welcomed for consideration as piquant topics of conversation. It is altogether well constructed and well written, and on this occasion was well played. But though as masterly a dissection of the complexities and the anomalies, the depth and the strength of human passions as 'The Second Mrs Tanqueray' was, it fails to touch that responsive chord in our common nature as did the tragedy of Paula Tanqueray. Perhaps this is just because it savours more of the dead dissection room than of the living breathing world, is less of a drama than of a homily, and fails to send its lesson home to the hearts of the audience with that clearness and force which is the crowning merit of a play of the kind. Regarding the production as a whole, this is the inevitable impression it leaves with one; and to some extent this impression is present during the evolution of the drama. But, however great or little a sense of dissatisfaction one may feel with the play as a living picture, it is impossible not to admire and enjoy the admirable art displayed by Mrs Brough and Mr Titheradge in two of the leading rôles. The former is a smouldering volcano pregnant with terrible possibilities, and it is a volcano that does not smoulder only, but there are times when the pent-up, fiery flood of passion bursts forth a cruel withering tide. The part is very far from an easy one, but Mrs Brough played it with wonderful attention to the thousand little points that are, as it were, windows through which we can discern the workings of that most complete piece of womankind—Agnes Ebb-smith. Mr Titheradge shone in the rôle of the Duke of St. Olypherts, the gouty, aristocratic sensualist, in whom the fires of youth occasionally flicker up with a strange lurid glare. Never for an instant does he suggest that he is playing a part. He is the Duke, and that withered face is no mere make-up, but the actual lineaments of the man—the mask that half reveals and half conceals the life history of a selfish, unbelieving, cynical soul. Mr Brough in the small part of the Rev. Amos Winterfield was most effective, and Miss Temple deserved all praise for her impersonation of Gertrude Thorpe. Mr Plimmer as Lucas Cleve was somewhat overweighted, but he managed to maintain his rôle with sufficient force to make his performance harmonise with Mrs Brough's clever and thoughtful acting.

'A PAIR OF SPECTACLES' AND 'IN HONOUR BOUND.'

Perhaps of all the new productions of the season these two gave the most genuine satisfaction to the audience as a whole. Coming after 'The Notorious Mrs Ebb-smith,' their wholesome freshness was thrown into greater prominence in the eyes of those who had witnessed the former production, and even those who had not come under the spell of that sad tragedy may have been influenced by the sense of relief with which in this case, I fancy, the actors turned from the heavy to the lighter vein. Mr Titheradge appeared in the first piece, 'In Honour Bound,' as Sir George Carlyon, Q.C., M.P., one of those rôles in which he is particularly at home, and Mrs Brough's reputation suffered nothing by her impersonation of Lady Carlyon. It was in the following production, 'A Pair of Spectacles,' that the enjoyment of the house reached a climax, and contagious laughter was heard everywhere. In this delightful comedy from the pen of Sydney Grandy each member of the Company that played appeared to find a part exactly suited to him or her. Mr Titheradge and Mrs Brough in altogether new characters were as effective as ever, and Mr Brough added, as he always does, a big dash of rich humour.

'THE VILLAGE PRIEST.'

In the 'Village Priest,' one of the, if not the, pleasantest plays presented by the Brough Company during their farewell season, the central figure is L'Abbé Dubois, and this change is a very agreeable one from the new woman type of most of the other comedies or dramas which have, for the last few nights, amazed and entranced Auckland audiences. There is a degree of rest in 'The Village Priest' which is decidedly soothing after the strain of trying to follow the tortuous emotions of 'The Notorious

Mrs Ebb-smith' and others of like ilk. The complex character of L'Abbé Dubois is not merely acted by Mr Titheradge—in fact, there is no suggestion of acting in his representation at all. He simply is the Abbé, displaying the dual impersonation of man and priest in a marvellous manner. The struggle between his vows to his church and his duty to his neighbour is so portrayed that the audience fight each step of the battle with him, feeling as if they, too, were trying to decide whether or not it is right to reveal confessional secrets, or allow an innocent man to suffer for another crime. Mrs Brough is, of course, good in her impersonation of La Comtesse de Tremellan, but after seeing a few of her plays—much as we appreciate her clever acting—we get used to her abandonment of grief and despair, and it moves us less than such tragedy, such intense human suffering, should do. Mr Drough was splendid as the poor convict, Jean Torquenie, and his own personality was completely merged in the abject, despairing, yet withal noble man who has been so unjustly incarcerated for eighteen years. His daughter, Jeanne, is very well represented by Miss Temple, whose shriek on seeing her convict father for the first time is extremely natural. Miss Watt-Tanner, as the blind and widowed Madame D'Arcy, is at her best, and that is saying a good deal. The quiet peace of face and manner is a thing apart from the stage, and conveys the idea of

A soul at leisure from itself,
To soothe and sympathise.

Miss Titheradge is young, and doubtless her dramatic power will greatly develop. She is hardly at home at present in severe emotional scenes. Armand D'Arcy is well represented by Mr Plimmer, and the gendarmes are models of soldiers. The Abbé's housekeeper, Madeline, is very good, and acts her small part to perfection.

'NIOBE' AND 'DANDY DICK.'

The last two nights of the season witnessed the revival of these two old favourites. On both evenings the Opera House was so crowded that not even standing room was available, and the utmost enthusiasm prevailed. When the performance concluded on Saturday many were the expressions of regret which were heard that Auckland had probably seen the last of the Broughs.

Miss Noake, whose abilities as a teacher of the piano-forte and singing are so widely recognised, has arranged to give an afternoon concert in the Wellington Art Gallery on Saturday, 2nd October, when the items of an attractive programme will be provided by a number of her pupils.

A concert is to be given in the Wellington Opera House on Monday next, October 4th, in aid of the Trimmell Memorial Fund. Mr R. Parker, Mr Prouse, Dr. Pyffe, and other musicians are taking a keen interest in the entertainment, which will be patronised by His Excellency the Governor.

A successful variety concert was held in the Princess Theatre, Hastings, on Tuesday night in aid of St. Matthews' Floral Fête Fund. The programme was as follows:—Pianoforte duet, Miss Kelly and Mr Bocking; song, 'Old King Cole,' Mr Corry; double quartette, 'The Gipsy's Life,' Mrs Price, the Misses N. Maddison, Percy and N. Caulton, Messrs Wright, Ridgeway, Mackay, and Thornton; song, 'Postillion,' Mr Bocking; glee, 'Sweet and Low,' the Hastings Vocal Octave; song, 'Let Me Love Thee,' Mr Mannerling; song, 'Love's Serenade,' Mrs Johnson; skirt dance, Mrs Merewether; quartette, 'Awake, Eolian Lyric,' Mesdames Price and Johnson, and Messrs Mackay and Wright; song, 'Spring is Coming,' Miss Annie St. Hill; song, 'Out on the Deep,' Mr Hudson; comic song, 'Good Old Mary Ann,' Mr Bocking; recitation, Mr A. L. Ryan; burlesque (in character), Mr W. P. Stuart; character trio, 'Three Little Maids,' Mrs Johnson, and the Misses C. Rosch and George; glee, 'The Three Chafers,' Hastings Vocal Octave. Mrs Mannerling and the Misses Kelly and St. Hill played the accompaniments, and Mr Hunt acted as musical director.

The Hawke's Bay Maori representatives of the Jubilee have returned home, and were entertained at a smoke concert at the Princess Theatre, Hastings, on Monday night, when Mr C. A. Fitzroy, the Mayor of Hastings, presided. He was supported by Sergeant Tareha on his right and by Taranaki on his left. Others present were Captain Russell, M.H.R., Mr R. D. D. McLean, M.H.R., Messrs H. A. Cornford, A. L. D. Fraser, W. R. Blythe, T. W. Lewis, E. H. Williams, and representatives of the Napier Naval Artillery, the F. Battery, and the Napier and Hastings Rifles. Numerous toasts were given, and speeches made by the Chairman, Sergeant Tareha (who spoke in Maori), Captain Russell, Taranaki (who also spoke in Maori), Mr H. A. Cornford, Mr McLean, and several others. During the evening the contingent sang 'Soldiers of the Queen,' and also dined a *haka*. Songs were contributed by Messrs Hughes, Hunt, Mackay, Thornton, and Wright. The Maori speeches were interpreted by Mr Lewis.

When the late Charles Ryley was leading man in Williams and Musgrove's Comic Opera Company (says the Melbourne *Press*) he looked a youthful, smart fellow of thirty. When in Melbourne with Edwardes' Gaiety Company a couple of years back he might easily have passed for thirty-four, and even then, when little misses of eighteen were raving about him, he was getting on for fifty. Most marvellous it is how theatrical people retain their youth. Look at Bellew, a man to all appearances of thirty-four or so, in spite of his grey hair, and yet he, too, must be little short of fifty. Think of Nellie Stewart in 'Ma Mie Rosette' and try to believe she is forty. Recall Mrs Potter in 'The Ironmaster,' or as Juliet, and wonder how a woman on the shady side of forty has been enabled to look eighteen with the make-up she used.

We learn that Miss Fricilla Verne (Mrs Lawyer Kelly) has retired from the stage.

Bland Holt opened his New Zealand season in Dunedin on Saturday last with 'One of the Best.'

The Flying Jordans have had splendid houses during their first week's stay in Auckland. Notwithstanding that the Broughs were giving new pieces every evening at the Opera House, the big tent on the Reclamation Ground was filled nightly with a large crowd that applauded the performance to the echo. The acrobatic feats were especially relished, and they are, indeed, wonderful. We do not remember to have witnessed more daring and skilled exhibitions of the kind in Auckland. The Company gave a change of programme on Monday evening.

On Thursday evening last at Berlin House, Grafton Road, Auckland, a fashionable and highly appreciative audience attended, in response to invitations from Mr W. H. Webbe, to the 78th open musical evening for visitors, given by his and Miss Spooner's pupils. The pupils who took part were Misses M. Cole, G. Davidson, F. Garlick, M. Howard, Hanna, W. Lambourne, E. MacLaurin, N. O'Neill, E. Spooner, G. Spooner, M. Scott, M. Webbe, and Mr A. Walton. The programme, which was a very interesting one, included piano quartettes, duos for one and two pianos, concerto for piano and organ, also violin, vocal, and piano solos. The playing of the quartettes and duos was exceptionally good.

The Auckland Ladies' Liederkranz gave the second concert of the season in the Opera House yesterday (Tuesday) evening.

The New Plymouth Amateur Opera Club have decided to stage 'The Sorcerer' at about Christmas time.

A Liedertafel has been formed in New Plymouth, of which Mr A. E. A. Clarke, manager of the National Bank, has been elected president; Mr N. K. McDiarmid, manager of the Bank of New South Wales and Mr James Paul, Vice-presidents; Messrs J. W. Rowe, H. M. Bannister and H. Fookes are the committee, with Mr H. M. Didsbury hon. secretary, treasurer, and librarian. Mr Sydney Cooper, organist of St. Mary's Church, was elected as hon. conductor. The Society intend to give their first concert before Christmas.

HUNTING.

(BY ONLOOKER.)

THE hunting season for 1897 is fast drawing to a close, and like all pleasant things, has passed but too swiftly, and will be too soon but a happy recollection of the past. Last Monday the meet was at Mr Harris' farm, East Tamaki, a distance of sixteen miles from Auckland, where an excellent day's sport was indulged in. On Saturday the hounds met at Penrose, when the weather was by no means a joy, as it rained incessantly after we had all assembled at the rendezvous. We drew round Mrs Bailey's estate, and after some time had a short run. The hounds, I believe, had a kill, there being only one jump, which was rather an ugly obstacle, having a nasty drop on to the road. The only ladies who took this were Mrs Bloomfield (Blue Peter) and Miss Maud Buckland (Villiers), both taking it in very pretty style. After this we all adjourned to our homes in a saturated condition—this is what hunters call pleasure. Amongst those present were Mrs Bloomfield, Mrs Kelly, Misses Gorrie, Buckland (two), Taylor (Maugere), Burns, Bull, Percival, Colonel Dawson, Colonel Noakes, Messrs McLaughlin, Pollock, Carmluer, Phillips, Burns, Kinlock (two), Rae, Wells (H.M.S. 'Goldfinch'), Harrison, and Elliot. Driving were Mrs Gorrie, Miss (W.F.) Buckland etc.

John Ruskin's health is much improved, and he is taking an active interest in the publication of the addresses on landscape painting delivered by him at Oxford.