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M. HENRI KOWALSKI.*

M. HENRI KOWALSKI, the noted pianist now travelling through New Zealand, was born in the year 1841, and is the son of M. Adam Kowalski, a Polish refugee, and Miss de Wogan, a French lady of noble Irish descent. M. Kowalski's father was deported to the mines of Siberia for participation in the Polish insurrection of 1831, but escaping after three years of exile, found his way to Paris, where he subsequently resided. There he espoused Miss de Wogan, the only daughter of Baron Edouard de Wogan, and granddaughter of Baron Charles de Wogan, an Irish baronet, the members of whose family left Ireland during the religious troubles in the early part of the last century, and greatly distinguished themselves in the Irish Brigade of the French Kings. The seat of the family was at Dinan, in Brittany.

M. Henri Kowalski, the subject of our notice, received his musical education at the Conservatoire of Paris, where he had for his teachers Marmontel, Prudent for the piano, and Reber and Carafa for composition. During the last empire he was called upon several times to play at the Court and in other official concerts. An opera of M. Kowalski's was played at Paris in 1877, entitled 'Gilles de Bretagne,' and a comic opera at the Royal Alhambra of Brussels in 1883. Amongst his oratorios and lyric dramas may be mentioned 'Vercingetorix' which was performed in Melbourne three times, and also in Sydney during 1880, '81, and '86. M. Kowalski intends shortly producing an opera comique in three acts, named 'The Chevalier.' He has also written an oratorio, 'Future Life,' the plot of which is based upon Miss Mary Corelli's book known as the 'Romance of Two Worlds.' Among M. Kowalski's productions are one hundred and twenty original works, the chief of them being the 'Marche Hongroise,' of which it is calculated 700,000

copies have been sold since 1865. M. Kowalski can boast of being the recipient of many distinctions, amongst which are the wreath of France, *Officier d'Academie*, the two crosses



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of the *Secours aux Blessés*, and that of the *Ambulances de la Presse*.

M. Kowalski came in 1880 to Australia, where he represented France at the Melbourne Exhibition as a juror for the fine arts, and was most distinguished in concerts. On returning to France he was appointed professor of the Paris National School of Music, and for three years—1882, '83, '84—secured the first prizes in his class. In 1885 M. Kowalski revisited Australia, and after a number of concerts given in Victoria was detained in Sydney by accepting the post of director of the first musical societies and the attraction of holding the University Chair of Music. He began to teach, and is gratified to state that during six years he has succeeded in producing many promising pupils, amongst whom is Miss Emilia Wool, whose playing was so much applauded in New Zealand recently when officiating in her capacity as pianist of the Patey Concert Company; Miss Beatrice Griffiths, who appears with so much success in his present concerts; Miss Lottie Hyam, Miss Hunter, Miss Cameron, Miss Jagge, Miss Hester, and others well known in Australia. It is owing to the interest which M. Kowalski takes in all these young and gifted natures that he has abandoned his country for so long, where nevertheless his works serve to keep his memory green.

In embarking upon his present tour M. Kowalski has conferred a great favour upon all lovers of music in New Zealand, as there is a danger of our forgetting what the capacities of the pianoforte are, and to disbelieve what the effects it is capable of producing in the hands of an accomplished soloist. When M. Kowalski plays a new light and character seem to be thrown upon the instrument. It would be idle to enlarge upon the skill displayed by M. Kowalski in overcoming the technical difficulties of piano-playing; that goes without saying, and shows itself in the crispness, delicacy, and power which form the medium of his interpretation. It is in the latter respect that his special excellence appears. His repertoire is so large and varied, and his interpretation of each piece so stamped with his individuality, that the audience listen to him with as much pleasure at the close of a long performance as at the beginning. In the rendering of Chopin's compositions he is most conspicuous, but in all pieces and under all circumstances he exhibits the conscientiousness of a true artist, who thinks more of the work he is expounding than of the number of his auditors.



LEVUKA, FIJI.—SEE 'A TRIP TO THE SOUTH SEAS,' PAGES 148-49.