

NAPIER.

MURCHISON 'BULLER.

DEAR BEE,

JUNE 4.

We have so enjoyed the Montague-Turner Opera Company, and the theatre has been crowded. Amongst the large audience on various nights were Mesdames Howdy, McLean, Pat McLean, Ormond, Williams, Ralfoor, Tabuteau, Fulton, Fraser, H. Smith, Hamlin, Logan, Kettle, Davidson, Hoben, Russell, Baker, Taylor, and the Misses Shaw, Donnelly, Seale, Cotterill, Rainbow, Taylor, Locke, Rhodes, Milly Rhodes, Nelson, Russell, Hitchings, Hamlin, Williams, Fulton, Weber, and crowds more.

THE CINDERELLA DANCE.

The 'Truda Brothers' played at the Cinderella dance, and their playing was much appreciated. The 'Swinging Waltzes' were delightful to dance to. Miss Miller, who was decidedly the belle of the evening, looked very charming in a black gown trimmed with yellow; Miss Lascelles looked very well indeed in a pale pink gown, made with a baby bodice, and chiffon frill in the form of a berthe; I liked Mrs Kettle in black; Mrs Logan looked very charming in white; Miss Gendinning wore a lovely gown, and looked remarkably handsome. The 'Kitchen' dancers were danced a good deal. I cannot say I like them; they savoured of below stairs. There is far too much twisting and turning to suit me. They are certainly 'jolly,' if that is anything in their favour. A number of country men were in for the ball, including Messrs J. A. Fraser, Robinson, Minden, Fenwicke, Frank Nelson, White, and several others.

MRS LOGAN'S DANCE.

Mrs Logan gave a most enjoyable little dance. The night was propitious, and everything went well. Miss Mabel Rhodes looked one of the best. Nobody can complain of the lack of dancing in Napier this season.

GLADYS.

HASTINGS

DEAR BEE,

JUNE 4.

We have had the Rev. E. Walker lecturing in Hastings on that much-talked-of theme—drink. His lecture was listened to most attentively, although, of course, there were those in the room who did not agree with everything that was said. This would be a very tame world if we all agreed upon every subject.

At the

CHRISTY MINSTREL ENTERTAINMENT

were Mesdames (Captain) Russell, Hobbs, Nelson, Morison, and the Misses Wallace, Nelson, Williams, Russell, and others.

There is some talk, Bee, of our having an asphalt tennis court here for the winter. Mr J. A. Fraser is moving in the matter, and a meeting is to be held this evening to see what can be done. If the court can be made it will be an immense boon for Hastings folk, as there is literally nothing to do in winter. Of course we have a few dances, but we want some out-door sport. No hunting goes on in this district. I am sorry to say, and men, as well as girls want something to do in winter.

The Musical Society is making steady way, the practices are regularly held, and a large number of people have joined. We hope soon to have a concert, and feel sure it will be a good one.

DOLLY.

FIJI.

DEAR BEE,

APRIL 30.

We have been so anxious these last two months expecting the usual hurricane to come upon us at any time, but we are thankful to say the season has now passed without a blow. The weather is getting much cooler, and it is simply delightful, especially in the evenings.

Mrs McConnell, of Ardmore Hall (Taviuni) gave a welcome dance for Mrs J. W. Watkins, and it was a most enjoyable evening. It would be impossible to be otherwise, as Mrs McConnell is a charming hostess, and her parties are always a success. We are sorry to say that this lady is now leaving us, and we shall miss her very much. She is going to Sydney for some months, and we trust her visit will be a most pleasant one.

Holmshurst Estate is quite picturesque with its acres and acres of beautiful sugar-cane. I hear the mill is likely to commence crushing in June or July, and also that the gentlemen there intend giving a ball in the latter month.

A farewell dinner was given by Mr and Mrs Eastgate to Dr. Lynch on his departure for Ba, and Dr. Pound, who was formerly there, has been removed to Suva.

His Excellency the Governor is now on his way to Samoa and the Niun Group in H.M.S. Curacoa. We hear that Lord Charles Scott is shortly to visit Suva, and some of the other warships in the Australian station are likely to be in port about the same time.

The Catholic Chapel at Wairiki was opened on 29th inst., and a great number assembled to witness the event. The s.s. Maori brought over two hundred passengers that day, and some who wished to take their passage by her to catch the outgoing steamer were unable to do so. How they wished that the Company would put on a larger steamer something like they used to have here.

There is to be a regatta in Levuka on the Queen's Birthday, and also a dance, and we hear some of the Suva people will be there. Suva seems rather sleepy lately. When are the inhabitants going to wake up and give us all a surprise? Wait until the warships come in, and then we shall have gay times indeed.

We shall have an abundance of fruit this year, such as oranges, lemons, limes, citrons, bananas, pineapples, shaddock, peanuts and coconuts. The planters are hoping they will not have too dry a season, and then things are sure to flourish.

OLIVE.

DEAR BEE,

No doubt the small village of Murchison is unknown to many readers of the GRAPHIC. It is situated in the centre of the Buller Valley, which is so famed for its beautiful scenery. Although far, among the hills, balls, concerts, and other entertainments are not unknown. A most successful concert and dance took place in the Public Hall in aid of the funds of the Public Library, when many of our talented singers were heard to great advantage. Mrs F. H. Smith sang 'No One Like Mother' in excellent style. Miss Bloxham's 'Yesterday' was equally successful, and well deserved the encore accorded her. She was attired in a most becoming dress of black silk covered with black lace, prettily trimmed with gold. Mr McGuire sang well. Mr T. O'Rourke completely brought down the house with his Irish comic songs; Mr T. Bell, M.C.C., gave 'Nancy Lee' in his usual excellent style; Mr E. F. Paton's 'The Scout' was much appreciated; Mrs Bell, who was robed in brown silk and velvet sang 'Killarney,' and was accorded a well-earned encore. The hall was so crowded that it was impossible to see all who were present, but I noticed in the front seats Mesdames O'Rourke, Cowan, Robert Downie, Misses Hunter, O'Rourke, McNece, Movel, Baigent, Brown, and several others. About forty couples attended the dance, which was a most enjoyable one. Mr Herman Huddleston deserves great praise for the excellent way he discharged his duties as stage manager, also the energetic secretary, Mr R. McNece.

It is rumored that the lady members of our tennis club are giving a ball at an early date, and as the Misses O'Rourke and McNece are taking a leading part in the affair, we are sure to have a good time.

BUSH RAT.

THE CHORUS SINGER AND THE THEATRE FIRE.

A GROUP of girls stood at the stage door of the Grand Opera House in Vienna, talking or exchanging words with the other employes who passed in, keeping the while a sharp look out for the manager. One of these chorus singers, a young and beautiful Italian girl, standing just within the extreme entrance, with her mantle wrapt closely about her throat, suddenly remarked:

'We must sing our best to-night, for the Emperor is coming.'

'Is he? How do you know? Who told you, Anna Carolla?'

'One of the band,' answered Anna Carolla, quietly. 'Carl Rosenfeldt. There he comes, with his violin.'

With some others of the opera band there approached a tall, handsome, young Hungarian, who paused to answer the girls' eager inquiry, 'Had he said the Emperor was coming?'

'Yes; the Imperial Guards have just passed by to take up their place at the grand entrance. The house will be crowded.'

Then passing inside, he stooped to whisper to Anna Carolla, with a smile in his deep blue eyes, 'Anna, I lead the violins to-night; Stendral is ill.'

She put her hand in his, with the sweet perfect trust of one who knows she is loved.

'I am sorry for him; but for you, Carl, my heart must be glad.'

'Here they come together!' cried a girl outside. 'The manager and chef d'orchestre. Away!'

The new leader of the band hurried away as the chorus trooped in, and Anna Carolla followed them into their dressing room. There she soon donned her stage dress, and slipped away to watch the house filling, and above all to hear every note of the exquisite overture to 'Oberon.'

How fast every place was filling from floor to gallery! The auditorium was one blaze of splendour; and as she gazed, the poor, friendly chorus singer, whose dramatic talent and splendid voice ought, if she had only the fortune to get the first lift, to place her high in the lyric stage, wondered sadly if such chance would ever come to her; if not, Carl's father would never consent to their marriage. And now the whole house rose as the Emperor entered his box, splendidly dressed, glittering with jewels of rarest value, which flashed a thousand rays as he bowed right and left with his usual courteous grace. Then the band struck up the overture, and with the last bar the curtain drew up.

Plitting here and there during the performance, with eyes and ears for everything, the manager noticed the Imperial visitor indicating to a gentleman beside him some one in the chorus. It was Anna Carolla, whose beauty had attracted his eye. The first act went splendidly, and the second act soon commenced; but fate had decreed that it should never be played out that night.

Half way through, as the manager, pleased and complacent, was quietly standing back in one of the wings, he suddenly felt his arm grasped, and turned sharply to see Anna Carolla's lovely face, so full of determination and character, at his side.

'Hush,' she said, 'very low and quietly, 'make no exclamations, but go and see to it before it gains or is discovered. The theatre is on fire somewhere back of the green-room. The company can leave by the stage door. Go.'

'But, child, if there is the least hint of alarm, look at that house. They will be crushed to death in their terror and crowding to get out.'

'Listen,' said the Italian, in the same calm, self-contained manner. 'Send the call-boy to tell the door-keeper to order each one as they pass out to depart quickly. I will clear the house quietly.'

'You do that!'

'Yes, here is the boy, send him, and clear out the company; I will do my part.'

The manager blindly obeyed the strong will and steady purpose of the master-mind, as people in emergency generally do, whatever their relative positions in the world.

Anna Carolla passed on to the stage, and advancing at once to the footlights, stood for one moment, her tall, commanding form and beautiful head drawn erect, unflinchingly facing that crowd, meeting full even the astonished gaze of the Emperor himself, and the wondering look of her lover. In a voice not loud, but clear as a bell, with cool, steady authority, in every measured accent, she said—

'I am here by the manager's orders. His Imperial Majesty has been robbed to-night of a rare diamond, and

the thief is in the house. Every one' and the speaker's dark eyes swept the audience from gallery to pit, 'is at once to withdraw quietly, and in order; anyone attempting to remain will be immediately arrested. The band will also retire at once.' Even as she spoke, her ear, painfully strung for the sound, could hear the warm hum of flames from the back, but unmoved, she stepped back, swept a deep obeisance to the audience and Emperor, and the curtain fell.

The Emperor instantly left his box, whispering to a gentleman to whom he had before pointed out Anna Carolla, 'There is something behind all this. I am not robbed. Send Colonel Bergmann round to summon the manager to our carriage door.'

Meanwhile the vast crowd filtered rapidly in quiet order and in safety out, only learning at the door, as they were hurried away, the awful death by fire or crushing from which the brave and quick-witted girl had saved them. The last few to leave the auditorium smelt the fire and heard the crackling of flames, and hurried wildly, spreading the alarm. But the terrible cry of fire came too late to do mischief, and once outside, the police and the soldiery, under the cool directions of the Emperor himself, kept order. And though the flames mounted at last, Anna's timely discovery and the energetic measures taken, forced the fire under. In less than an hour and a half it was completely out, and the mutilated Opera House left in charge of the police.

Then, and not till then, did the Emperor dismount from the horse he had used and return to his carriage. As he did so he paused suddenly. 'Bergmann, see! there goes that Italian girl herself, leaning on the arm of the young fellow who led the band so splendidly to-night. Go, see who and what they are. Colonel Bergmann departed to obey the order, and the Emperor drove off.

The next day the whole story was in the Government organ, with an intimation 'inspired' of course, that his Imperial Majesty had graciously caused inquiries to be made about the young chorus singer. A few days later old Herr Rosenfeldt received an official intimation that his gifted son Carl, and his fiancé, Anna Carolla, were both under Imperial protection, and their marriage was desired to take place as soon as possible, the Emperor dowering the bride. The manager also received a similar intimation through Colonel Bergmann, that his late chorus singer was to be brought forward, and advertised for the re-opening of the Opera as Madame Carolla-Rosenfeldt.

Once more the elite of gay Vienna crowded the Opera House to see the debut of the new singer as Agata in 'Der Freischütz.' The moment she came on she was received with a furor which might well make Carl Rosenfeldt proud of his beautiful young wife, and if for Royalty was her grateful glance and sweeping salute, for him was the smile in the soft dark eyes that met his for one second.

When the curtain fell the new star was called for and showered with bouquets from many a distinguished hand; but from the Imperial box was flung one in which lay nestled a costly bracelet, in the centre of which blazed a diamond of rare value and beauty.

'That fire has made our fortune, Carl,' his young wife said, smiling, as they drove home.

'Nay, Anna, your own courage and quickness,' answered Carl Rosenfeldt. 'That was a diamond rarer than the Imperial gift.' And he was right.



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