

at both. It would still appear to pay, but one wonders not without apprehension what will be the ultimate effect on public taste. At present little harm has been done, if one may judge by the appreciation bestowed on "The Admirable Crichton," which under the circumstances was astounding. Is it possible the same people can enjoy both? It seems incredible, yet the fact remains that the theatre-going public is limited, and the same persons must go to both classes if financial success is achieved.

The virtuous occupants of pit and gallery are often sorely vexed at the turpitude of the stage villain, and often cause considerable laughter by their occasionally unrestrained use of expletives towards the evil doer. We remember Phelps being told very loudly by an excited and elderly female that he was a "wicked old man," when, as Shylock, he expressed his determination to have his pound of flesh. A similar rebuff was hurled on Monday at an actor who was playing the part of Grey, in Mr John Lawson's sketch "Sally in Our Alley," at the King's Theatre of Varieties, Walthamstow. Grey remarks to Bernard Gaster, the hero, "What if I tell you that your affianced wife is in his studio at the present moment." A lady of the audience could no longer suppress her pent-up feelings, and rescuing through the house came the exclamation, "Oh! you scoundrel!" Charles Wagner made a similar "statement"—quite without prejudice, of course—when he was present at a matinee performance of "The Heart of Maryland" a few years since at the Adelphi. The villain in this case was subjecting the heroine (played by Mrs Leslie Carter) to considerable persecution, and this involuntary exclamation of one of England's leading melodramatic actors was regarded as a great compliment by his American brother, who certainly played his part very finely.

The next Drury Lane drama on Bland Holt's list, and the one with which he will conclude his present Melbourne season, differs essentially from "White Heather," "Great Ruby," "Price of Peace," "Great Millionaire," or any other of the Drury Lane plays, produced of late years. This forthcoming novelty—"The Flood Tide"—is described by author Cecil Raleigh as a melo-farce, and its fattest part falls to the low comedian. Bland Holt will play the foremost character in the "Flood Tide," speaking only the lines allotted to it, whereas in some of the previous plays by Raleigh, and Hamilton and Raleigh, the low comedian's part has been altered or padded (in Australia), to give Bland a prominence which marred the effect of the work, though it probably pleased the gallery. In "The Great Millionaire" this was absurdly noticeable (says a "Bulletin" writer). The omission of the old-fashioned "comic relief" from the modern Drury Lane melodrama, and the introduction of a grande dame comedy character, written for the inimitable Mrs John Wood, has put Bland Holt's show at a double disadvantage. He played his own part in the wrong key, with interpolated variations as a rule, and thereby put the whole performance rather out of tune. The parts intended for Mrs. Wood in London have been

undertaken here by Mrs. Holt, who treats them quietly and pleasantly, but is not able to give them their proper value. She lacks the florid dignity, the humorous mannerisms, and the trick of pointing pungent lines in a pungent style. Mrs. Holt imparts the necessary kindness to those serio-comic grande dame characters, but her success otherwise is only negative. She is better than many another might be, if called upon to take her place. All the same, it is a pity that such fine parts should be only moderately well displayed, while the most versatile and accomplished "old woman" actress in Australia—meaning Mrs. G. B. Lewis—is mostly out of engagement. Always a trifle overwhelming, i.e., a little too much of the old-school actress in modern comedy, Mrs. G.B.L. would give all colour due, and importance to a congenial character in literary melodrama. One would like to see her as Lady Janet in "White Heather," for instance.

Mr. R. C. Knowles has just published, through Messrs. M. Whitmark & Sons, a book of reflections and stories under the title, "Of Stories—Just a Few."

When a motor race is in progress do not cross the track. You may hurt the feelings of the chauffeur and die before you have time to apologise.

Many men, suspected of being good fellows, have, when the evidence was summed up, proved an alibi.

I think it would be a good idea to have an orchestra in each of Mr. Carnegie's libraries. Then the people might be driven to read in self-defence.

Everything is here for a purpose. Even the fog has its uses. In the glorious climate of London it prevents the glare of the sun's rays from affecting those poor unfortunates who have weak eyes.

There was a time in London when quite a number of hansom cabs had bright yellow panels. A horse attached to one of 'em was slowly and carefully making its way along the wood pavement on a frosty morning when it was very slippery.

It had reached Trafalgar Square, and was going down towards Parliament street when a heavy omnibus coming behind, the omnibus horses sat down on their haunches and slid, with the pole of the omnibus far in front.

No brake could stop the slide that omnibus got on because of its weight, so the end of the pole went right through the back of the yellow cab.

The cobby turned in his seat on the suspended haunch, and had a mouthful of language ready to throw at the omnibus driver, but before he could commence the driver quietly asked, "Will you kindly take that mustard pot off my pole?" The sun shines for all. But some get all the polish, while others are—just shines.

I have often heard the ejaculation, "Oh, Jerusalem!" but I never realised its full significance until I reached the city myself. The phrase should be spelt, "Owe Jerusalem," for everybody there seems to be under the impression that you owe them something.

On my first night in Venice I thought I would take a walk. So I stepped out of the main entrance of the hotel. When I came to they were about to hold an inquest on me.

OUR ILLUSTRATIONS.

THE WELLINGTON FIRE.

The great fire at Kempthorne, Prosser and Co.'s establishment in the Empire city is the third occasion on which the fire fiend has wrought devastation to the firm's property. In 1892 the firm underwent great loss through a serious fire in Christchurch, and seven years later its Auckland business similarly suffered. A chemical bomb weighing 50lb was shot from the burning building when the explosions were in progress through the roof of the warehouse of Messrs Macky, Caldwell and Stein in Harbour-street, making a big rent which was being repaired this morning. Smoke issued all day from the burning pile, and stifling flames burst from the ceiling and rafters from between the floorings and in piles of debris. Many of the large warehouses and business premises in the vicinity of the fire sustained a considerable amount of damage by the breaking of windows, which were blown in by the force of chemical explosions. Foreman Woolcott, of the fire brigade, who had charge of the operations in the absence of Superintendent Hugo at Auckland, had lost his voice this morning, and had three times changed his clothing. Not only the firemen, but the dense crowd which assembled in the vicinity of the fire had a narrow escape from experiencing the effects of a tremendous explosion from some 40 large barrels of methylated spirits stored on the ground floor in the south-eastern corner of the building. Altogether 17 leads of water were playing upon the building at the same time. Had the fire occurred during the recent drought, or had the wind blown with anything like its force this afternoon, there must have been a terrible devastation to chronicle. One immense column of smoke which shot up and spread itself over the city like a huge cloud, first an ominous black then gradually whitening, and finally dashed with an angry red, could be seen, it is asserted, 70 miles away at sea.

The insurances on the building, the stock, and the fixtures and fittings total £35,500, as shown in the following figures in the official list:—

Buildings: Liverpool, London and Globe, £1000; National, £1650; New Zealand, £1000; North British, £500; Royal, £2000; Standard, £500; United, £350; total, £7000.

Stock: Alliance, £3000; Commercial Union, £3000; Guardian, £2500; Law, Union and Crown, £1000; Liverpool, London and Globe, £2000; National, £350, and a special line of £200; New Zealand, £3500; North British, £500, and a special line of £100; North Queensland, £2000; Norwich Union, £3000; Royal, £1750; United, £400; Lloyd's, £3000; total, £20,000.

Fixtures and fittings: Law, Union and Crown, £500; Liverpool, London and Globe, £1000; Manchester, £500; total, £2000.

ST. MARY'S WOMEN'S HOME.

The dedication of the Women's Home at Otahuhu last week was well attended,

amongst those present being the following clergy:—Bishop Neligan, Archbishop Calder, Canon Nelson, Canon MacMurray, Revs. M. E. Luch, E. M. Cowie, J. Cowie, M. H. Sutton, W. E. Budd and H. Mason. After the Home had been formally dedicated, Mrs Neligan unveiled a brass tablet containing the following inscription:—"In loving memory of Mary Ann Martin, wife of the first Chief Justice of New Zealand, who died at Torquay, January 2, 1884; and of Eliza Jane Cowie, wife of the Primate of New Zealand, who died at Auckland, August 18, 1902. 'So He giveth His beloved sleep.' This tablet is placed here by one who was privileged to share their work for the rescue of their fallen sisters."

The Bishop in the course of an address said that the object of St. Mary's Women's Home was not the herding together as outcasts, women who had fallen either from wilfulness or from ignorance or from frivolity, but rather the gathering in of those who needed to be brought back into the Father's family. Those who were sought out by God's Church, through the ministry of faithful men and faithful women, would learn that they were still wanted in the Father's home; that it was the Father's love that impelled the search after the lost sheep or the lost coin; that the Father's love and the Father's heart was hurt and grieved at the wilfulness when the child would leave the Father's home, and that there was always a welcome for the returning prodigal. The homes were some attempt towards national purity.

The buildings consist of two portions, the first being of wood, and the Maternity Home proper being of brick. The brick building is built with double walls, and is plastered throughout. The sanitary arrangements to each building are most complete, the drainage being delivered to a large septic tank and filter beds. The water supply is from a good well, the water being pumped up by an aeromotor to tanks holding 4000 gallons. The whole cost will be about £3000. The architect is Mr Ashley Hunter, and the contractor Mr G. Handcock.

Before returning to town the visitors were given afternoon tea.

Here are some figures for conciliation by strikers and those who are not blessed with a compulsory Arbitration and Conciliation Act, such as we have in New Zealand. Over 28½ million working days have been lost in the United Kingdom during the past five years owing to strikes and lock-outs. The figures for the past three years are as under:—

1902	3,573,290 days
1901	4,132,257 days
1900	3,152,094 days

The figures are very moderate, however, compared with the "black year"—1895—when the lost days numbered 15½ millions. Of 442 disputes last year, 202 were settled in favour of the masters, 107 in favour of the men, and 123 were compromised, the remaining ten being left indefinite. The boards of conciliation and arbitration averted 669 disputes last year.

Roberts' Biscuits

Factory: STANLEY ST., AUCKLAND,

The Good Housekeeper always gets good value for her money.

She is not content to take anything that is offered, but is careful to know the best, and insists on getting the best.

Where Biscuits are concerned
The BEST and ROBERTS'
are synonymous.