

Music and Drama.

CHORAL HALL
TREE BLITZ POPULAR CONCERTS.
 1st. 1st. 1st. 1st.
FAUST (IN CAMERA FORM).
 WEDNESDAY, APRIL 2.
 ADMISSION 1/6.
F. LILIAN TREE.....MARGUERITE
WALTER WHYTE.....FAUST

Messrs. Litsca Marx and Co., the well-known cigarette manufacturers, have received an order from Messrs. Alexander Loftus and Jack Dale for 20,000 hand-made cigarettes, which will be used as an advertisement on the forthcoming "New Barmaid" tour.

"Pasquin's" correspondent advises that Harry Qualey, the clever dancer of Tom Pollard's Opera Company, has become engaged to Miss Nellie Finley, the principal dancer of Hall's Juveniles. The wedding is set down to take place in Perth this month. Congratulations!

Apropos of a remark heard during the performance of "The Lady of Lyons," that the central situation and idea of the plot (the impersonation of a prince by a peasant) is impossible and absurd; one would like to ask how many months it is ago, since a valet successfully impersonated a prince, and in that guise married so exceedingly sophisticated and experienced a young person as "Babs," sometime Lady Russell?

Mrs. Frances Hodgson Burnett, who has been christened by the Americans the "lightning playwright," has written five new plays during the past twelve months: "The Little Princess," "The Pretty Sister of Jose," "That Man and I," "The Making of a Marchioness," and "Lisbeth."

Jo-Jo, the Russian dog-faced man, a well-known figure among the freaks at Barnum's show, died on January 31 at Salonika from pneumonia. He was a Russian from Kostroma. Jo-Jo was "boomed" by Barnum 20 years ago as "the wonder of the world." He was merely a boy with a phenomenal growth of hair on his face, yet this enabled him to amass a fortune.

Frank Lincoln, the American humorist and mimic, who was boosted by his brother journalists into a huge Australian success, is now giving a turn at London Criterion as a curtain-raiser to the Duke of Killiecrankie, a farcical romance of a somewhat thin kind, and with highly artificial characters, by Captain Marshall, author of "Second in Command."

It appears that Lydia Thompson, sister to Mrs. Henry Bracy—who used to act as Clara Thompson in her youth—will return to the stage, after a fifteen years' absence, in a new musical comedy at the Savoy. Miss Thompson's farewell benefit at the Lyceum realised nearly £4000.

On May 20 next, by the Orontes, the great Paderewski comes to Australia. The pianist previously intended to visit the Far East and then come on here, but he thinks the fortississimo duet between Russia and Japan will rather clash with his performances. There is enough excitement out there already, says Paderewski, and it mightn't be safe.

On March 7th Fred Graham was accorded a complimentary benefit at Sydney Royal by Mr Williamson to mark the conclusion of his three years' engagement. The Musical Comedy Co. played the first act of "Florodora," then Frederick the Short joined the Waverley Musical Society to play Charles Brown in the first act of "The French Maid"; Eileen Boyd sang the "Honey-suckle and the Bee"; the Little Mac-Leans danced; and Fred Leslie and six of the boys rendered "Keep off the Grass," from "The Toreador." There was a large and enthusiastic house.

"Faust in camera form" is advertised for production in Auckland at the Choral Hall on Wednesday, April 6, and amongst music-lovers great interest will attach to the success attending so commendable a venture. It is perhaps unnecessary to explain that "in camera" means in concert form and without the choruses. All the solos, duos and concerted numbers for the principals will be given. The cast is a really capital one, and if anticipations are confined, a most enjoyable evening is assured patrons of the immortal opera.

Amongst the many sterling English pianos, it is safe to say that none stand in higher esteem, or is more widely sold than the "Challen." The makers, Messrs Challen and Son, Oxford-street, London, insert in this issue an advertisement of these pianos, and also invite representation in every town in the colony. For further information see advertisement in another column.

Mrs. J. C. Williamson and Miss Marjorie Williamson, wife and daughter of Mr. J. C. Williamson, one of whose companies is at present playing here, arrived by the Ventura last week in order to meet Mr. J. C. Williamson, who arrived here by the Sierra on Monday. Miss Marjorie is the subject of a famous picture in the Sydney Art Gallery.

Mrs Langtry and her theatrical company, while recently touring in Western America, were travelling down a steep decline on the railway, when the carriage occupied by the company went off the line. Mrs Langtry coolly drank the toast, "Here's to the one who keeps the coolest head"; but the train stopping suddenly, she was thrown against the side of the car and fainted.

Commenting on the common fault of an orchestra rendering the vocalists almost inaudible, "Table Talk" observes:—When shall we have the orchestra in the position which the one at the Opera House, Bayreuth, occupies—below the level of the floor? Then perhaps we shall no longer suffer the infliction of overwhelming accompaniments, as at present, for apparently the conductor either cannot keep his forces sufficiently in hand, or is under the mistaken impression that the instrumental music is the chief point of interest, and the most important portion of the entertainment, whereas it should be the foundation and background only, upon which to build the display.

Houdini, the amateur "prison breaker and handcuff king," who was in Liverpool when the mail left, succeeded in so interesting the police force of the city in his performances that, by special permission and in the presence of the Head Constable, he was permitted to demonstrate his prowess at the main Bridewell. As a result, the Head Constable wrote the following testimonial:—"I certify that to-day Mr Harry Houdini showed his abilities in releasing himself from restraint. He had three pairs of handcuffs, one a very close-fitting pair, round his wrists, and was placed, in a nude state, in a cell which had previously been searched. Within six minutes he was free from the handcuffs, had opened the cell door, and had opened the doors of all the other cells in the corridor. Had changed a prisoner securely locked him in that he had to be asked to unlock the door.—Leonard Dunning, Head Constable."

That capital actor—so great a favourite in New Zealand—Mr Cecil Ward, is not only letting his Sydney house, he is also selling off its fine furniture—not yet two years old—prior to leaving on a European tour; some say with a view to getting attractions for Australia. Mr Ward was so bent on going that he refused a leading engagement from Mr Williamson for "The Marriage of Kitty and Cousin Kate"—at £25 per week, it is said. The part has since been offered to Mr Herbert Fleming.

Mr Wilson Barrett's new play, "The Never Never Land," proved a huge success at the Grand Theatre, Hull, at least so says the "Era," and when at the

close Mr Austin Melford appeared with a sheaf of telegrams in his hand, and read a kindly wire from Mr Barrett, his request to know if he might tell Mr Barrett that they liked his play was answered by a roar of applause which could not be mistaken for anything but a unanimous "Yes." Mr Melford's creation of Nat Rudder, a drunken wastrel, is another proof of his marvellous versatility.

Miss Rosina Buckmann, a New Zealand soprano, who is about to tour the colony, having completed a course of study in the Old Country, gave the first concert of her tour in Auckland on Monday before an appreciative audience. For so young an artist Miss Buckmann possesses a voice of exceptional power and range, and she uses it with taste and discretion lacking sometimes in artists of wider reputation and greater training and experience. In her operatic work Miss Buckmann proved herself a very capable artist, and each item was thoroughly enjoyable, and she was excellent in "Carmenita," a waltz song, which is always popular. Miss Buckmann should do well in her Southern visit.

Mr Francis Holworthy, who has recently arrived here from London, has arranged to commence a tour of the colony almost immediately, and on April 21st and 23rd, "Shakespeare week," will give two Shakespearian recitals in the Y.M.C.A. Hall, Wellesley-street. Mr Holworthy brings with him an exceedingly high reputation, and the "London Times" of April 23rd last, writing of his "Taming of the Shrew" performance, said: "Mr Holworthy met the demands made upon him in a manner that was entirely satisfactory. He possesses a finished and scholarly style of elocution, and he showed unflagging spirit and humour in the presentation of the characters and the unfolding of the successive stages in the development of the plot."

The flatness and lack of news with regard to stage matters in New Zealand continues, and one notices—with some poor comfort—that all our New Zealand contemporaries are feeling the same pinch, and curtailing the space devoted to drama and music. The making of bricks without straw is certainly a wearisome business to the manufacturer thereof, and it is to be doubted if the product is widely appreciated by the public.

Joan of Arc's beatification, which will be celebrated in Rome in the course of 1904, has inspired French dramatists, and the Parisians are threatened with an invasion of Maids of Orleans. M. Iostand is putting the finishing touches to a Jeanne d'Arc specially written for Madame Sarah Bernhardt, who was so eager to impersonate that heroine that she actually accepted another Jeanne d'Arc from M. Moreau. The latter author being too modest to compete with his great colleague, he will probably take his play to the Vaudeville, where, since Madame Rejane's departure, Madame Suzanne Despres reigns supreme. A Jeanne d'Arc drama has been written by M. Anatole France; and it is rumoured that Parisians will see Joan in an opera bouffe, dancing the cake-walk.

The suppression of tone and concentration and rapidity of utterance, which is one of Mr Hastings' more pronounced mannerisms, has curiously suited such parts as he has played in "Sherlock Holmes," "Secret Service," "The Admirable Crichton," and even to a great extent "The Light That Failed," in which, however, a monotony of elocution was somewhat noticeable. Still, it is a mannerism, and while it has no doubt helped to build his reputation in such a character as Holmes, yet it wants watching. Irving is the only actor the writer has seen who can have mannerisms, but by sheer force and magnetism triumph over them. Far less irritating, ludicrous, and pronounced mannerisms in lesser stars may mean perilous approach to failure. In "The Lady of Lyons" Mr Hastings showed he realised his weakness, and made an heroic effort to emancipate himself from his usual style. He was so far successful, that the performance was thoroughly enjoyable, and even artistic on his part, though he failed to reach the height of passionate emotion necessary to make this fine acting but somewhat stilted play thoroughly impressive.

"I would like to shake hands with every man, and hug every woman in this vast audience," said Mr. Cuyler Hastings, in a rather suspiciously felicitous and painful "improvisation" (?) speech at the conclusion of the Auckland season. The sentiment met with a perfect thunder of applause, which was redoubled amid uproarious delight when an ingenuous young lady in the dress-circle observed in tones of ecstasy audible all over the house—"Oh, I wish he would!" The remark was so deliciously spontaneous, so impetuous in pronouncement, and so obviously genuine, that the house fairly roared its appreciation.

Certainly no actor made himself more popular in the northern metropolis than Mr. Hastings. He has magnetism and charm, and his very mannerisms, and accent add to the favour with which the bulk of theatre-goers regard an actor, whom the most captious critic must pronounce as very far above the average of "star" artists visiting the colonies, and a man of whom it is certain more will be heard in his own country.

Other professional theatre-goers will doubtless agree with the critic of this paper that Mr. Hastings has very greatly developed his powers since he arrived in Australasia, and that he returns to the States a far more finished artist than he left. His performance in "The Light That Failed" showed a depth of power and a subtlety which was certainly not observable on his former tour, and though the part had no doubt something to do with it, it is very doubtful if before the long experience of his tour Mr. Hastings could have proved so impressive.

Melodrama of the ultra-sensational and most liberally spiced description continues the attraction at the Auckland Opera House. The appetite of a large section of theatre-goers for this class of entertainment must surely "grow on that it feeds on" in the Northern capital, for one company follows another with relentless rapidity, each with a series of plays—if one can call these extraordinary productions such—more sensational than the last. Everyone to his taste, of course, and Mr Anderson and his co-managers in melodrama know what to give the public, but one cannot but view the development of so abnormal and pronounced an appetite for melodrama without apprehension. There is perchance no very actual harm in melodrama, but a constant diet thereof is much like a prolonged study of literature of the Dendwood Dick and half-penny novelties order, and must inevitably be followed by similar results. Auckland has now had a full three-quarters of a year of melodrama at one or other of her theatres, and on occasion

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