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In the Romantic Drama,

MONSIEUR BEAUCAIRE.

SATURDAY NEXT, NOVEMBER 26.

Sensational Production of Hall Caine's Dramatisation of His Own Great Novel.

THE ETERNAL CITY.

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David Ross Mr Julius Knight
Donna Roma Volouca... Miss Maud Jeffries

Pinero's new play answers to the name of "A Wife Without a Smile," and is now in rehearsal in London.

The leading part in "L'Aiglon," played by Miss Tittell Brune in Sydney, is said to be the longest ever written for a woman.

There's a plan afloat to found a theatre in New York exclusively for the production of negro plays, and for the encouragement of negro actors.

The record for a musical comedy run is held by "Christopher Columbus," with Miss May Yohe in the name part. It ran 470 nights, with an average of over £1600 for each performance.

In Auckland the Knight-Jeffries Dramatic Company promise to repeat the successes scored everywhere down South. An enormous audience witnessed the first production of "Beaucaire," which is unanimously voted one of the prettiest plays yet seen in Auckland. Miss Maud Jeffries has captured all hearts in the Northern capital, the women raving over her charm, gracefulness, and beauty even more than the men. Assuredly she is one of the loveliest women seen on the local stage, and her histrionic abilities are of the highest order. As for Julius Knight, he is always a prime favourite, but his "Beaucaire" certainly transcends all his previous efforts, and stamps him as an actor of unquestioned genius, and in the front rank of the select cohort of "the best" of modern players. The rest of the company are not, in this writer's opinion, a very strong lot, and are, moreover, often not completely audible from the back rows of the dress circle.

On Saturday evening next Mr J. C. Williamson's Company will present Hall Caine's dramatisation of his own powerful novel, "The Eternal City," Mr Julius Knight appearing as David Ross, Miss Maud Jeffries as Donna Roma Volouca, and Mr Arthur Wontner as Baron Bonelli. To compress into a three hours' play a story to which he devoted over 700 pages was no light undertaking, but this is really what Hall Caine had to do. The author found that there was only one way to satisfactorily dramatise his book, and that was to leave aside the many political and religious details with which the book abounds, and to confine the play to the splendid love story which is the kernel of both. Except so far, then, as the relations between the Quirinal and the Vatican, and the position of the Pope, are necessary for the development of the play, no question of Italian politics or Roman Catholic doctrine is handled in the drama. Beyond atmosphere and environment neither Mr Caine nor Mr Beerbolm Tree, who put on the original London production, attempted to insist, and the play is presented simply as one of strong human passions, without any thought or intention whatever that either political or religious susceptibilities should be wounded or even aroused. Mr William-

son promises that the forthcoming production will be on a most lavish scale. A great feature will be the music, especially written by the famous Italian composer Mascagni, and rendered by a cathedral choir.

A dramatic representation of intense interest will take place at the Choral Hall, Auckland, on the afternoon of Wednesday, November 20, when Mr J. C. Williamson intends presenting the old English morality play, "Everyman," with Mr Julius Knight in the principal character. When this remarkably touching religious allegory was recently revived by the Elizabethan Stage Society in London it created a profound impression. It may not be uninteresting to give the nearest indication of the position of the morality play in the evolution of dramatic literature. The play "Everyman" itself belongs to that period which marks the confines of the closing Middle Ages and the Renaissance. At the break-up of the Roman world, the drama, as a living art, went under completely; and the discredit into which it fell was intensified by the hostility of the Christians to the "licentious force, effeminate music, and splendid pageantry," as Gibbon expressively describes it, of the late Roman stage. But later a singular revival manifested itself, as Mr C. K. Chambers points out, in the very bosom of the Church's own ritual. "One may look at the event as one will," he writes in his scholarly work, "The Mediaeval Stage," "either as an audacious, and at least partly successful attempt to wrest the pomps of the devil to a spiritual service; or as an inevitable and ironical recoil of a barred human instinct within the heart of its gaolers themselves." Whichever point of view commends itself most to the reader's mind, it is an indisputable fact that the ceremonial and offices of the Mediaeval Church, most of which have survived to our day, are essentially dramatic in character. The ideas of the early Church lend themselves to dramatic representation, as can be seen in the processions and ritual of the Roman Church. And so the first revival of drama in the theocratic age of European history manifests itself in the liturgical plays of the Church. But after a certain evolution in that direction, the condition of further advance was that the plays should cease to be liturgical. A century of transition occurred. Whilst the subject matter of the drama remained religious, a gradual process of secularisation set in, and from purely ecclesiastical the drama became essentially popular. The human, as distinct from the religious aspect of the plays, became more marked. "In their origin offices for devotion and edification," says Chambers, "they came, by an irony familiar to the psychologist, to be primarily 'spectacles' for mirth, wonder and delight." The "miracle" and "mystery" plays were the result. The rise of the spirit of Protestantism had a further secularising tendency upon the drama. The purely religious play was looked upon as a profanation, and the miracle and mystery plays developed into the guild and parish plays which, as Chambers observes, were essentially "judi maintained by the people itself for its own inexhaustible wonder and delight." The miracle play developed in two directions—the subject matter became secular, or the allegorical side of the plays was developed. The former tendency was especially discernible in the Continental drama of the period. The latter, common to both the Continent and Great Britain, gave rise to the morality plays, of which "Everyman" is the finest existing specimen. The close of the Middle Ages, the failure of the Popes to establish a theocracy over all Europe, and the revival of learning, subsequently brought about that further glorious evolution of dramatic literature which is one of the most brilliant phenomena of the Elizabethan age. Space does not permit the discussion of the origin of the play "Everyman," and a very dictatorial statement must suffice. "Everyman" is an English translation of the Dutch play "Eckerkijk" (i.e., Everyman). The earliest edition of the Dutch play in existence is dated 1495, but there are indications that a previous edition

had appeared. Internal evidence shows that the Dutch play is the origin of the English play. A Latin version of the original Dutch is in existence, bearing date 1536, and entitled "Homidus Petri Diestensis," the name of the translator, Christianus Ischyrius, also being given. This affords a clue to the authorship of the Dutch original. The merest perusal of the play reveals its obvious ecclesiastical origin. The eulogy of the priesthood and the insistence upon the supreme importance of the Sacraments denote the hand of a cleric. During the latter half of the fifteenth century there lived at Diest one Peter Dorland, a historian and theologian of a speculative and mystic turn of mind. In a posthumous edition of one of his books, his name is given as Petrus Diestensis, and it seems more than probable that Peter Dorland and the author mentioned in the title of the Latin version of "Eckerkijk" are one and the same person.

A while ago the superior musical critics of the Melbourne dailies always made a point of snoring at what they called "the encore nuisance." Singers and instrumentalists were said to be victimised by the public who compelled the performer to supply an "extra." Also the reviewing critics protested against the usual concert custom of "responding to an encore" with a new item, instead of repeating the whole or part of the number which had fetched the applause. It happened the other Monday, at Melbourne Town Hall, that Watkin Mills was given a capital chance to decline an encore, says an Australian paper. The hall was not a quarter full. He had no future recitals in view, therefore he could gain nothing by consenting to have "his good nature imposed upon"—in a musical critic way of speaking. Did he treat the persistent uproar of a limited audience as an insult? Not much. The tall basso, putting on his best mining manner, said, "I have been requested, if fortunate enough to secure an encore, to sing 'The Curfew.'" Whereupon he expressed his gratitude for his good fortune by warbling "The Curfew." Presumably there will be no more talk about the "encore nuisance" until the Watkin Mills incident is forgotten.

Dolly Castles looks promising (writes "D" in the Adelaide Critic). She is not a beauty according to the popular appreciation of beauty in a woman, which usually demands a hectic flush and a tangle of consumption, but she has a bright, happy face, the face of a true comedienne. Only one other actress in Australia has a face illumined with the same native gaiety, and that is Miss May Beatty. If Dolly Castles does not develop into a vivacious, popular favourite, I'll abandon my faith in physiognomy. To me this strong, cheerful face is ever so much more captivating than that of the dainty type of beauty behind whose flower-like fragility lurks always the suspicion of some sentimental pulmonary complaint. Besides, Dolly is an Australian girl, and that counts for something. It should count for a great deal more than it does in Australia, where the native inhabitants have little true patriotism, and are chilled rather than warmed by the knowledge that an artist bidding for their favour in any department of art is of their own country and blood. I am sure that in building upon Dolly to do big things J.C.W. is not building Castles in the air.

There are now so many Australians singing in London and the provinces that the makings of a good kangaroo and emu opera company could be easily picked up for an Australian tour. Leaving the very big fry out of the question, and also avoiding purely concert performers such as Crossley, an Australian manager might do a great deal worse than make up a combination which would include Amy Castles, Marie Narelle, Mary Omy, Florence Towl ("Hollara"), and Maggie Sterling, with Phil Newbury and Walter Kirby as tenors, and Louis Luscumbé (now leading baritone of the Carl Rosa Company), John Prouse, and Peter Dawson, the Adelaide basso, who has just been received with open arms by Queen's Hall audiences. True, several of these have not touched the stage, but they have trained for it, and possible acting weakness in one or two cases would be amply atoned for by vocal ability. For Australia is supplying England with voices in almost the same quantity as rabbits. As for the minor parts and the chorus, those

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