

the Rev. T. H. Taylor—at the desire and instigation of Mr J. C. Williamson. Miss Brune's best opportunity for portraying high emotional character and passionate love gets full scope in this wonderfully dramatic play. The reading of it is an exciting performance. The story of Kundry, "The Cursed One," direct descendant of the legendary woman who mocked our Saviour on the Cross—carries one breathlessly on from scene to scene. A splendour of weird scenic pictures is suggested as the story progresses, so that the mind is under the spell of this pictorial magnificence as well as the stormy passions of the lovely sinner. The allegorical struggle of Good and Evil becomes most eloquently real in this version of "Paradise Lost." The alternate triumph of one and the other provide two of the strongest scenes possibly ever staged. When shall it be produced? That is the great question. That such a passionately human drama will raise controversy and paper battles goes without saying, but isn't such the very life of theatrical enterprise? Apart from the aspect of the new morality play, there is this to say—that Miss Tittell Brune is rare in having a manager who considers her starting talents and provides a play built on lines that promise to set her in one of the most sensational roles of her experience.

The promotion of the Australasian Grand Opera Company, Limited, is proceeding (states the "Argus"), and the prospectus will be published shortly. The company is being formed, as the outcome of a consultation among leading musicians, for the purpose of co-operating with Mr. Musgrove in the production of grand opera in the principal cities of Australia and New Zealand by competent artists to be engaged abroad. Mr. Musgrove has entered into an agreement to engage a grand opera company, and it is intended to open a season in Melbourne about Easter next year. Thereafter Mr. Musgrove will go with the company on a tour of the States and New Zealand. Of course, such an undertaking means a large preliminary expenditure, and the company is formed practically for the purpose of providing a fund upon which Mr. Musgrove can call. At the end of the tour, which it is estimated will last about 12 months, the net profits are to be divided equally between the company and Mr. Musgrove. In the event of a loss it will be borne by the company, but only to the limit of its unexpended capital, and no further claim can be made on the company or the shareholders. Shares in the company give no right to seats at the performance, but shareholders will have the privilege of booking seats in priority to the public. The operas to be produced will include "Lohengrin," "The Flying Dutchman," "Tannhauser," "Meistersinger," "Die Walkure," "Der Freischutz," and either "Romeo and Juliet" or "Orhelo." It is to be hoped that Mr. Musgrove will be able to include also such favourite operas as "La Boheme," "Hansel and Gretel," and "Pagliacci." The operas will be given in English. The capital of the company is £4000 in £2 shares, and Mr. Musgrove is entitled to use £2000 for preliminary expenses, which are to be repaid out of the receipts. The company will receive one-half of the profits. If there be a loss the capital of the company is available to meet it as far as it will go. No shareholder is allowed to take more than ten shares.

To Remove Tight Finger Rings.—Pass the end of a piece of twine underneath the ring, and wind it evenly round the finger upwards as far as the middle of the finger; then take hold of the lower end of the string beneath the ring and begin to slowly unwind upward, when the ring will gradually slip over the twine towards the tip of the finger and come off.

A Ghost Story of the Sea.

BOARDED BY A SPECTRAL CREW.

The "Suffolk Review" publishes a "Story of Mid-ocean Visits"—a ghost story which would have appealed strongly to Robert Louis Stevenson. It is vouched for as true by the narrator, Captain Johansen, of Liverpool, of which Mr. Birchall, the managing director of the Liverpool "Journal of Commerce," says:—"Captain Johansen may be regarded as absolutely trustworthy, and I certainly think that his statements may be thoroughly relied upon."

Captain Johansen begins his weird narrative by telling us:—"In the autumn of 1900 I made a trip across the Atlantic from Gibraltar to Florida, in a small open boat. During the voyage a most extraordinary visitation occurred to me—to me it was no illusion. Here is a plain account of it. . . I may here remark that I had always been a decided unbeliever in anything pertaining to the supernatural."

His incredulity was soon put to a severe test:—"On the eighth day out, August 25th, 1900, in the forenoon, I was sitting on the stern of the 'Lotta,' my boat, steering, while my son was sleeping, when I heard a voice close to me as if someone had made a remark. Shortly after I heard a second voice, different from the first, as if in answer to the remark. Then I heard other voices in different keys, and softly modulated tones, remarks, responses and interjections, until it seemed there was a general conversation going on round about me, all in a foreign tongue, no word of which I could understand."

His son also heard the sound of the voices, but they could see nothing.

On the tenth day a glare sprang up. The boy was at the helm, when his father ordered him to let go the jib sheet. The boy obeyed, but he let go not only of the sheet but of the tiller. Instantly shadows of men flitted past the binnacle light and a tall figure grasped the tiller and sat down beside the son. When Captain Johansen went to the stern, this man addressed him, while his companion stood by, in a language which, says the Captain, "I do not ever remember to have heard in my life, and no word of which I could understand. He seemed very earnest, as if he wanted to impress some important truth on my mind." The tall spectral helmsman, finding that he could not make Captain Johansen understand, stood up in the boat, facing to windward, shouting with commanding voice, as if directing some operation carried on in the immediate vicinity. Captain Johansen heard a voice respond, but he could see nothing in the darkness.

Captain Johansen continues his narrative as follows:—"After this the leader sat down on the thwart immediately forward of the seat in the stern where my son and myself were seated facing him, the cheen from the binnacle lamp illuminating his features. I noted his stature was about six feet. He was of muscular build, and had iron-grey hair, features elongated, with a lofty brow, firmly-set mouth and prominent jaws; his countenance was pale, and there was a sardonic smile playing about his lips that gave his features a striking appearance; he was dressed in a coarse white canvas cap, without a peak, a faded mantle looking the worse for wear enveloped his shoulders, and a sash around his waist held his trousers, which were of a dark woollen material. I noted in particular that he had a substitute of iron for his left leg of about 1 1/2 inch diameter, at the bottom of which was a plate of the same material doing duty for a foot, the bottom of which was worn bright with continual service, and that his left trousers leg was neatly tied with a string at the particular place where the ankle ought to be. His companions were short of stature and broad of chest, and their features were good-humoured and bronzed by the sun; they were simply dressed in shirts and trousers,

with sashes at their waists doing service for belts."

His son, being drenched through, went amiss to his trunk to change his clothes. As he passed, two of the spectral crew took possession of the lad and proceeded to act as his valets:—"My son was addressed in endearing tones by the men, one of whom took him by the hand and patted him on the shoulder, while the other man tried to embrace him, an attention he seemed unwilling to endure. Then the trunk was opened and dry clothes were brought forth; one of the men helped to relieve him of his wet apparel while the other handed to him the dry clothing, article by article, as required, a flowing commentary in softly modulated tones being kept up all the time by the strangers. After this one of the men gathered up the wet clothing in a bundle, took the sash from his waist, and tied the bundle with the sash to the mainboom. Then I understood that our visitors, whoever they were, and though so unceremoniously intruding on our privacy, were friends desirous of our welfare."

Captain Johansen slept soundly that night:—"When I awoke again it was dawn. I started up and looked forward. There was the leader sitting astride of the inner end of the bowsprit, like a person riding a horse. He was shading his eyes with his hands and intently scanning the horizon ahead and to windward. As he sat there, his mantle thrown loosely over his shoulder, he looked like some great piratical chief in quest of the next prize of which to make conquest. A grim figure-head and incongruous for our trim boat."

When next the Captain woke the ghosts were gone. At five at night he and his son were congratulating themselves upon the departure of their unwelcome guests, when "Lo! as we were talking, and looked forward, there were the strangers again in that end of the boat. There was the leader in his faded mantle, canvas cap and iron leg, with

the same sardonic smile on his pale face, talking to his companions in commanding tones. We watched intently to see what would follow. One of the men detached the jib at the tack, while a second got hold of the sheet; the former took up a position on the gallant forecastle, and the latter stationed himself at the mast. In these positions the two men kept swinging the jib from starboard to port and from port to starboard for upwards of ten minutes, while the leader, with hands shading his eyes, and the remaining man kept scanning the horizon in the direction whence we had come. I could understand they were making a signal."

Nothing could be seen, and after a while the visitors retired to their old quarters at the bottom of the forward end of the boat, where they seemed to be discussing something. The Captain was furious. He decided to solve the mystery. If he could do nothing else he would seize the fellow's iron leg. He sent his boy to summon them to come. As he went they vanished, and never returned. Captain Johansen swears the story is literally true. His trip was chronicled by Reuter in the "Times" between August 20th and 26th, 1900. But who were the ghosts? why did they come? and whither did they go? The story beats the legend of the Flying Dutchman hollow.

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