

Music and Drama

HIS MAJESTY'S THEATRE.

Under the Direction of
MR J. C. WILLIAMSON.
ENORMOUS ATTRACTION
For Auckland Playgoers.
FRIDAY EVENING, JANUARY 17.
POSITIVELY SEVEN NIGHTS ONLY.
J. C. WILLIAMSON
Will have the pleasure of presenting for the
FIRST TIME HERE,
THE LAUGHING HIT OF ENGLAND,
AMERICA AND AUSTRALASIA,
BREWSTER'S MILLIONS
Which has attained a remarkable success
in London for two seasons, and is now
repeating its triumph in New Zealand.
This famous play will be interpreted by
J. C. WILLIAMSON'S
NEW COMEDY CO.
Including
MR THOMAS KINGSTON
And
MRS ROBERT BROUGH.
AN ENTIRELY NEW PRODUCTION,
Embracing
MAGNIFICENT SCENIC EFFECTS.
Box Plan at Willman and Arey's.
Prices—5/-, 3/-, and 1/-.
Touring Manager—Mr Geo. Matheson

The inaugural concert of the Clara Butt New Zealand tour eventuated in Auckland on Monday evening, before probably the largest audience ever packed into His Majesty's Theatre. Neither the price of the seats nor the heat of the weather, had any deterrent effect, and several hundreds of patrons of the five-shilling seats, after vainly offering ten and six, and in some cases even a guinea, for a seat, were compelled to go unsatisfied away. Thus much was, of course, achieved by the splendid reputation and unassailable position of the great contralto, and the place she occupies in the hearts of audiences we have read about. There remained only the question of how such an artist would strike New Zealanders. Would she leave us (as did the greatest soprano of our decade) wondering, yet unmoved, or would there be that faint sense of disappointment which so often follows anticipations built perhaps too high? In the matter of Madame Clara Butt, these questions are easily answered. The highest expectations were far more than realised, and an audience, cordial and warm even at first, were worked up into a pitch of excited emotional enthusiasm, rare indeed for apathetic Auckland, which furnishes forth probably the coldest and most "difficult" houses to arouse south of the line. The marvellous range and breadth of this truly phenomenal voice has been described by many and able pens, and nothing that we now could say could hope to improve thereon; suffice it to say, that every eulogy has been well deserved, and that no exaggerated praise has, so far as our opinion goes, appeared about Madame.

With regard to Mr. Kennerley Rumford, it may at once be said that he both surprised and delighted his audience, being a far greater and more pleasing artist than we had been led to believe. The accompanist is (even including Benno Scherek) the finest and most artistic who has ever come to this colony, and his work in this line was an absolute revelation to the majority of the audience. It seems almost a pity that the management did not leave the company at this, but includes a moderate violinist and a solo pianist to whom one can scarcely apply that mildly qualifying adjective. Both gentlemen would in the company of less distinguished artists be tolerable, may, perhaps, even be acceptable enough, but to associate them with a trio of such supreme artistic excellence is both unkind to them and positively cruel to the discriminating amongst the audience. Mediocrity, when isolated, may pass unnoticed, but shot down upon one will kill; after one has been raised to the seventh heaven of artistic and intellectual delight, it has a most unpleasant and cold douche like effect, and brings the soul back earthwards with the disagreeablest celerity. How much better would be intervals of simple rest and silence. In conclusion, to those who have the chance of hearing

Mamame Butt and Mr. Rumford, there is only one thing to be said—that to miss them would be absolutely criminal. The success of the tour is, of course, a foregone conclusion, and that success is well and thoroughly well deserved.

No doubt there will be an excuse forthcoming, but it seems to this paper that the tactics of Messrs. Tait Brothers in announcing a third concert, after definitely stating that there could by no means be more than two, is open to grave objection, seeing that the possibility of a third night must have been well understood from the first. Had three nights been announced in the first place, a lot of inferior ten and sixpenny seats would, of course, not have been taken at that price, but sold for five. Hence the object of the move, which is not, we venture to submit, altogether fair.

Mr. Tree, at a luncheon to which he was recently entertained by the members of the Manchester Art Club, said, referring to Mr. Comyn's Carr's play on "The Mystery of Edwin Drood," that the cynical attitude adopted in certain journalistic quarters towards his work and the efforts of his company had forced him to decline to risk a new venture in that city. "The natural-tinted tone of the criticism," he declared, "betrayed a grey-blooded humanity that is not in accord with a world full of pulsating life. When criticisms are superficial, sneering and flippant, and do not touch the essential object, they do infinite harm."

All along the line "Brewster's Millions" seems to have proved one of the most successful comedies the English stage has seen for some years. Originally produced at the New Amsterdam Theatre, New York, in January of last year, the piece immediately found a firm place in public favour, and ran for ten months to record business. It was not long before London had the opportunity of seeing it, and the way in which it caught on there may be judged from the fact that it has been drawing crowded houses to the Duke of York's Theatre for the past eight months. According to the latest English files, it is still continuing its prosperous career. When first produced in Australia by Mr. J. C. Williamson at the Sydney Theatre Royal, "Brewster's Millions" scored an instantaneous success, running for no less than eight weeks to "capacity" houses. Its career in the South Island of the Dominion has been correspondingly successful, the seasons in Dunedin and Christchurch being the biggest successes which the J.C.W. firm has contracted in those centres. It will be seen here for the first time at His Majesty's Theatre on Friday evening, January 17. A distinct element of spectacular drama is said to be added to the comedy in the great yacht scene of the third act, which is stated to be one of the most effective stage pictures Australasian audiences have seen. When the curtain rises the deck of a yacht at anchor in a French harbour is seen. Orders are given to put to sea, the anchor is weighed, and as the boat moves off the shore slips by in panorama, while the ship itself begins to lift to the swell of the open ocean. Then a storm comes up, and the boat pitches more and more violently, the wind whistles through the cordage, the lightning flashes, and Monty Brewster's friends stagger about the wildly heaving decks until at last the engine break down and Monty seizes the chance of being towed across the Atlantic and paying a heavy salvage for the privilege. The characters will be interpreted by the members of Mr. J. C. Williamson's splendid new comedy company, headed by those popular artists, Mr. Thomas Kingston and Mrs. Robert Brough. The Auckland season will last for seven nights, after which New Plymouth, Stratford, Hawera, Wanganui, Napier, Hastings, and Masterton will be visited.

Mme. Tetrassini, the "new Patti," has been inundated with letters from all parts of England and the Continent. The following, says the Evening News, are a few extracts from some of the communications received:—

"Madam,—I love a good singer, and you apparently are good. If you will send me a season ticket for the Opera, I will go to hear you every time you sing and applaud as loudly as I can."

"We are holding a bazaar in our town hall next week. Will you come and sell things there, for if people knew the great singer would sell things they would buy. The bazaar lasts three days."

"I have, as the result of many years' experiments, invented an elixir which will render any woman's voice beautiful, almost divine, giving it strength and durability."

"I am a flute-player, and can accompany any singer. If I get no engagement here soon I am off to Japan."

"I want £18 to publish a book, entitled, 'Tales and Sketches of Bristol.' I have received orders from the King of England, King of Italy, and other Royalties, and all that stands between me and fame is £18. Will you send it to me? (Postal orders preferred)."

"Herewith some pretty wrist-cuffs to keep you warm. They are made by me. Will you write to me explaining how you like them, telling me their faults and their good points, and, in fact, all you think of them?"

"I have a guitar 200 years old. Would you buy it? You could easily learn, and accompany yourself on the stage with it."

"I was witness," writes a theatre-goer to the "Onlooker," "of a scene in the stalls the other afternoon, amusing to a spectator though painful, perhaps, to the parties principally concerned. A party of four arrived in just as a play was about to begin. Their seats were divided, two by two, so that one couple sat two rows behind the other. Sandwiched between the quartette sat a remarkably pretty woman with a friend. She wore, need it be said, the latest creation in head-dress, an enormous construction made more obstructive by the angle at which it was worn. Of course, it completely blotted out the stage from the unfortunates behind. One of them, leaning forward after an interval, in most persuasive terms requested her to remove the monstrosity. It was only after many protestations and some feverish manifestations that the lady acceded. Her resentment was visible from afar, and being a woman, she had her revenge. With a savage dab she fastened her hat to the back of the seat of the friend in front, and it was only the music on the stage that drowned what appeared to be a yell of agony as the point of her wrath entered the small of the unoffending victim's back."

There are ructions at Oberammergau in connection with the preparations for the next representation of the Passion Play in 1910. The Bavarian villages elect the actors to their different roles, and a dispute has arisen regarding the choice of the man to represent Christ. Guido Lang played the part in 1900, and his forefathers played it on many previous occasions. Lang has, however, developed Progressive political tendencies. He stood as a Progressive candidate during the recent elections of the Bavarian Diet, and the clericals, who reign supreme in Oberammergau, are opposing his re-election for the play. Father Daiser is leading the opposition, and a minority of the villagers are supporting Lang. The dispute has developed into violence, and threatens to upset all arrangements for the next historic representation.

All the dramatic critics, and every mere ordinary man and woman who has learned how to spell, are writing players; the peacocks are marrying the stage; officers are leaving the Services to become actors, and young women deserting domestic service to stand among the chorus with bare knees. Indeed, so great a proportion of the population has to do in one way and another with the stage that there is a very small proportion remaining to go to the theatre, so says Cosmo Hamilton, the author.

Henry Arthur Jones tells how he writes his plays: "The idea, the plot, al-

ways comes first. The plot in a sense is nine-tenths of a play. And yet it should be as simple as possible. I believe I could put the plot of any of my plays—with the exception, perhaps, of 'The Silver King'—on a bit of paper the size of a shilling. Let me try with one—'The Middleman,' shall we say?" Placing a shilling on a sheet of paper, the dramatist drew a circle round it, in which he wrote: "An old inventor who has made the fortune of a rich manufacturer finds that his favourite daughter has been ruined by the manufacturer's son. He makes a new invention, and ruins the manufacturer."

"There are times when circumstances combine to upset one's calculations," writes Miss Ada Crossley in "The Tattler." Thus, I was once due to sing in Sydney one Thursday night, and the steamer by which I was travelling was late. The captain pushed her on as well as he could, but the Harbour there is a very long one. There did not seem to be much chance of my being able to land in time; but in the end all turned out well, for they sent me on in a steam launch, landing me in full evening dress at the concert hall just in time."

Miss Crossley also relates that she had once been singing at a wedding one afternoon in London, and on her return home she found an agent waiting to know whether she would take the place of a singer who had disappointed at Manchester for that same evening. She promised to do so, packed up, and at once hurried off to catch the train. She had dinner en route, and changed into evening dress, so that by the time she reached Manchester she was ready to go straight to the concert platform. "Upon our arrival at the northern city, however," she continued, "I could learn nothing about any concert there at all, for the very good reason that there did not happen to be one. I therefore had supper at an hotel, changed back into travelling clothes, and returned to London. The concert happened to be in Birmingham."

Whatever may be the exact merits of George Barr McCutcheon's novel, "Brewster's Millions," it certainly contains inspiration for a successful comedy (says the "Otago Daily Times"). The comedy, as an accomplished fact was introduced to a Dunedin audience under very favourable circumstances at His Majesty's Theatre on December 26, the building being crowded in all parts, many being unable to gain admission. The dialogue is up to an excellent standard, always crisp and smart, and may be considered, on the whole, an example of clever writing. The humour of the piece is of a generous order, but it is entirely wholesome, and never quite farcical, if not unusually subtle. All things considered, "Brewster's Millions" realises expectations, and is a dramatic production of a kind calculated to be exceedingly popular.

ELECTION OF MEMBER OF AUCKLAND CROWN LANDS BOARD.

It is hereby notified, in accordance with the provisions of Section 27 of "The Land Laws Amendment Act, 1907," and the regulations made thereunder by Governor-in-Council, that a vacancy in the membership of the Auckland Crown Lands Board has occurred owing to the retirement from the said Board of the Honourable William Wilson McCutcheon, whose appointment ceased on the 20th November, 1907. He is a member of the General Assembly, and that nominations to fill such vacancy will be received at the office of the Commissioner of Crown Lands, Auckland, up to 5 o'clock in the afternoon of the 20th day of January, 1908.

No person shall be eligible as a Candidate for election unless he is nominated in writing by at least two persons, who, ON THE FIRST DAY OF JANUARY, 1908, were the owners of any lease or license or in respect of any Crown Lands situated in the Auckland Land District, and unless the nomination paper bearing the Candidate's consent is received at the Office above-named before the time fixed for the closing of nominations. Such nomination papers will be applied on application to the Commissioner of Crown Lands, Auckland.

Should only one nomination be received, such candidate shall be declared duly elected, provided he is otherwise eligible for election, the date of which election (if required) will be duly notified.

No Member of the General Assembly shall be eligible for election.

JAMES MACKENZIE,
Commissioner of Crown Lands,
Returning Officer.