

Music and Drama

The new organ established in St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Auckland, is one of the finest in the colony. The great organ has 58 notes and seven stops, the swell organ 9 stops and 58 notes, the choir organ 5 stops and 58 notes, and the pedal 3 stops and 30 notes. A very competent organist considers the organ as equal to anything purchasable in the Old Country at 25 per cent. higher price. It is, at all events, a very beautiful and effective instrument.

Mr. F. Frankfort Moore writes to the "Express": In your notice of my latest novel, "An Amateur Adventuress," you say respecting the heroine, "Her story is curiously like that of 'Diana of Dobson's.'" I should rather think it is. Would it be considering this matter "too curiously," however, were I to point out that my novel appeared as a serial in a magazine more than a year ago, so that it would be more correct to say that the plot of "Diana of Dobson's" is like that of "An Amateur Adventuress"? Some years ago it was thoughtfully suggested that the publication of my "Nell Gwyn, Comedian," showed a commendable desire on my part to make the most of the Nell Gwyn boom then raging. The point of the compliment was, however, somewhat blunted by the knowledge of the fact that my "Nell Gwyn" had appeared in "Pearson's Magazine" the year before the boom.

"A Millionaire's Revenge," a play founded on the Thaw tragedy, was recently produced at Newark, New Jersey, U.S.A., and at the close of the first performance the police arrested the manager of the theatre and several members of the company. Two of the characters were named Harry Daw and Stanford Black. The offenders were charged before a local magistrate with producing a play which endangered the morals of the community, and were placed under bonds. The magistrate pronounced the play "unfit to be put on the stage in any part of the civilised world."

Opera goers and music lovers generally will be interested in the announcement, says "Musical Opinion," that the copyright of "Tristan and Isolde" has just run out, which makes the fourth of Wagner's operas to pass into the stage of cheap editions. It is interesting to note that an old world village—Chapelizod, near Dublin; the chapel of Izod or Isolde—was the residence of the passionate and auburn haired Irish princess, daughter of King Aengus, immortalised in Malory's romance and in Wagner's opera. William the Third spent some time there after the battle of the Boyne. And the mansion that he occupied was used as the country residence of the viceroys before the erection of the present viceregal lodge in the Phoenix Park. Chapelizod's most notable residence in recent years is that of Mr. T. M. Healy, M.P.

Mr. Gordon Craig, Ellen Terry's talented son, has been trying experiments with the theatre for several years, and has only now hit upon the right idea. It is a theatre of silence that Mr. Craig suggests, and according to a correspondent of the "New York Sun," he has made a successful venture in this direction in Florence. Mr. Craig's idea is to abolish the playwright and the actor, and to present instead scenery and puppets. As every one knows, the two most disturbing elements in the enjoyment of an evening at the theatre are the play and the players. Now if we can get a theatre in which neither of these factors appears, we are sure of an evening of unalloyed delight, for there will be no stupid lines and no bad acting. Mr. Craig does not appeal to the eye with overwrought scenery. His scenes are simple. As for his puppets, they are dressed—dressed at all—by Mr. Craig, or by his sister, Miss Ailsa Craig. But the beauty of it all is that no words are

spoken. Our ears are not offended by twang, by tortured r's or any spoken unpleasantness. What a great idea for England, too; the Censor could not interfere! There are no spoken lines, and puppets have no morals! wherein they do not differ from the plays some of their unfortunate fellowcraftsmen among the mortals are obliged to interpret.

J. M. Barrie's delicious phantasy, "Peter Pan," at the Princess Theatre, Melbourne, is abundantly proving that its claim is universal, for it already holds in thrall Australian in common with British and American audiences. The theatregoers who hang nightly upon the freaks of "dear, darling, invincible Peter Pan" find, with W. T. Stead, that they are renewing their youth in the exploits of the fascinating hero amid the Redskins, the pirates, and all the wonderful happenings that beset him and his band in the Never, Never, Never Land, and though perhaps there is a pang or two felt in the looking backward across the years to the long gone days of childhood, Miss Tittell's joyous interpretation of the part does not permit of more than a passing sadness. Her boy who wanted always to be little and have fun is such a gay and spritely elf, skimming lightly the depths of emotion, never sorry for more than a minute, never cast down, but always ready to find the fun his heart craved for, that tears, when they do come (and Miss Brune is too true an artist not to evoke them sometimes), are quickly lost in laughter. Another who has admirably caught the light touch with which Barrie has invested his play is Mr. Loring Fernie, whose bold, bad pirate is a really fine performance, worthy to rank among the best burlesque efforts we have had here for many a day. Then there is Mr. Chas. Weston as the cleverest of dogs, Nans, Mr. Fred Cambourne as Smees, the pirate bontawain, little Toots Pounds as Liza, Miss Florrie Kelly as a sweet and natural Wendy, Curtis and little Rosie Fitzgerald as the Darling boys, and Miss Valentine Sidney as Mrs. Darling, standing out from a cast of all-round excellence.

That fine piece of dramatic work, "John Glayde's Honour," in which Mr. Alfred Sutro is seen at his best, was received for the first time at Her Majesty's Theatre, Melbourne, and received by a crowded audience in a fashion which showed how deeply its strength, both in construction and in literary merit, had stirred the feelings. Full of intense situations and powerful passages as it is, the piece held them from first to last, and to this result the cast contributed in no little measure. Mr. Thomas Kingston was really splendid in his study of John Glayde—one more proof of the versatility of that sterling actor—and Mrs. Robert Brough's interpretation of Muriel Glayde lacked nothing to make it one of the best in her long list of emotional roles. Miss Emma Temple, Miss Nellie Ferguson, Miss Lily Titheradge, Messrs. Grogan McMahon, Cyril Mackay, J. B. Atholwood, indeed, all the company were extremely well placed.

The Brisbane visit of the J. C. Williamson Musical Comedy Company has been received with every mark of appreciation by playgoers in that city, who have revelled in the series of bright pieces in that organisation's repertoire.

Both Her Majesty's and the Theatre Royal, Sydney, are at present playing to packed houses nightly. "Humpty Dumpty" at the former, and "The Lady Dandies" at the latter, being responsible for this very satisfactory state of affairs. The pantomime has most decidedly captured the public taste in the most emphatic fashion, and nightly the enthusiasm for all its manifold good points is expressed in the most lavish applause. Nothing misses an excellent reception, and the whole production "goes with a bang" from start to finish. "The Lady

Dandies," though more familiar to playgoers by this time than "Humpty Dumpty," has evidently lost none of its attractiveness, for audiences exhibit just as keen an appreciation in its delightful music, droll situations, and elaborate mounting as ever. It is now in the sixth week of its run, and there can be little doubt that it will stay on the boards for the rest of the Royal Comic Opera Company's visit there.

Miss Tittell Brune's popularity remains at the same level as it attained before she left Australia last year, as anybody can see for themselves if they are outside the stage door of the Princess Theatre, Melbourne, after any performance of "Peter Pan." A great crowd always waits for her there, and the other day they experienced an unexpected pleasure. The coachman drove away suddenly without Miss Brune, who was left on the pavement, to be immediately "mobb'd" by a hundred or so of eager admirers, who were glad to get so near to their favourite. Miss Brune had to be rescued from their importunities by a couple of constables.

Its English birthday (it has already had half-a-dozen Continental ones) of "The Merry Widow" takes place shortly at Daly's Theatre, London, and Franz Lehár goes over to conduct for the occasion. Every capital city in Europe has seen him in the chair under similar conditions during the past two years, for the twelve months' run of his famous opera had been easily achieved in each big city from Vienna to London. There is a romance about Franz Lehár's life, as there is about that of most musicians. The son of a military bandmaster, he began his musical career at the mature age of four, and at twelve was a student at the Prague Conservatorium. His early years were full of trials, for his parents were poor, and life was hard for the young artist. But he was always being stimulated to further efforts by such encumbrances as those of Anton Dvorak, who, when asked for his opinion on two sonatas by the youthful composer, advised him to give up fiddling for a living and take to composing. It was impossible to do that, both because money had to be earned and because his father wanted him to be a violinist. At last Lehár revolted, and turned his attention to writing music instead of making it. At first the way was hard, for he applied his genius to grand opera—and grand opera was apparently not wanted. "At last I grew sick and tired of it," he says, "and took to writing light operas, with which I had more luck," a faint way of expressing the tremendous sensation his work has made in Europe and America.

The new piece for the J. C. Williamson Musical Comedy Company, "The Prince of Pilsen," has evidently as much vitality and vigour in it as "The Belle of New York." It has been played for six years in America—four distinct productions of it being given in New York alone—and it is still a strong attraction there, while in London it made a big hit, and in Berlin and Paris it has made good in German and French translations.

The Bland Holt tour, booked three years ago, opens in Auckland in September. The repertoire will include "The Great Millionaire," "Flood Tide," "The Bondsman," "The Great Rescue," "Breaking of the Drought," "The Prodigal Son," and "The Lights of London."

New Zealand is included in the itinerary of Jan Kubelik, the great violinist, and the tour commences in Auckland on Monday, 22nd June.

Frank Thornton's New Zealand tour, under the direction of Mr. Edwin Geach, commences at Invercargill on June 22nd, "When Knights were Bold," "Charley's Aunt," "Private Secretary," and other pieces will be produced. The first-named play has been running at Terry's Theatre, London, for 550 successive performances.

"Call Boy," of the "Evening Star," Dunedin, ascertained while on a recent visit to Melbourne, that the Williamson management proposes to send the following attractions to New Zealand before

the close of the year: "Humpty Dumpty," Pantomime (Auckland, July 27), "Peter Pan," "Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch," Margaret Anglin in "The Thief" (Dunedin Christmas), the Musical Comedy Company with "The Prince of Pilsen," Royal Comics with "The Merry Widow" (Auckland, Boxing Night), and Miss Ada Crossley's Concert Company.

Miss Jeannie Pollock, who joined Mr. Holt when he was last in Auckland, and who has made great strides in the profession, is now taking leading roles with the re-organised Bland Holt Company.

Mr. Edward Branscombe is again in Australia, this time not with the Westminster Glee Singers, but with "The Scarlet Troubadours." They undertake an entertainment which is a compromise between light opera, concert work, and vaudeville—in other words, an amalgamation of singing, dancing, and comedy, which should provide enjoyment for all classes of amusement-seekers.

"The Southern Cross," Mr. Edmund Duggan's Eureka Stockade melodrama, was produced in Melbourne on Saturday night by Mr. William Anderson. The part of the heroine was played by Miss Frances Ross.

Mr. and Mrs. Bland Holt were enthusiastically received at the Adelaide Theatre Royal recently, when they returned to the stage after their absence of six months. Nearly fourteen years had gone by since they were previously in Adelaide, so that their reception was all the greater on that account. Flowers were handed over the footlights in great profusion to Mrs. Holt, whom everybody was glad to see looking well and happy again after her recent serious illness. The play was "The White Heather," Mrs. Holt appearing as Lady Janet M'Lintock, and Mr. Holt as Edger Trefusis. The cast also included:—Marion Hume, Miss Harrie Ireland; Lady Hermoine, Miss Jennie Pollock; Lady Molly, Miss Muriel Dale; Lord Angus Cameron, Mr. Styan; Captain Alexander M'Lintock, Mr. Max Maxwell; James Hume, Mr. Charles Brown; Dick Beach, Mr. Leslie Woods.

The Misses Aileen and Doris Woods, known as the New Zealand Twins, who recently made a big hit in pantomime, were the vocalists at a concert at the Gaiety on Sunday evening, when their duets were enthusiastically received, says a London paper.

Mr. George Musgrove, who recently arrived in London, is busy making plans and engaging artists for a comic opera company, with which he will return to Australia in about three months' time.

Rose Musgrove is studying singing with Madame Minna Fischer in London, prior to appearing in musical comedy.

It is stated that in the new production of "A Beggar on Horseback," at the Sydney Criterion, Mr. Harcourt Beatty has an ideal part, and the same may be said of Miss Midge McIntosh, as Lady Mary Dudley.

The Fitzmaurice Gill Company was to have done an Easter season in Hobart, but (reports the "Tasmanian Mail"), owing to some change in their arrangements, the agent had to cancel the dates, and that, too, after the company had been well advertised throughout the city.

Walter Rivers, who spent many months in Auckland with Dix's years back, is at Pastor's, New York, appearing with Nina Rochester under the style of "The Australian Singing Duo."

When the late Sir Henry Irving was playing his famous impersonation of Mathias in "The Bells" in Scotland, a humorous, if provoking, incident occurred. It was during the big scene when the murderer hears those tinkling phantom bells, and his guilty conscience is rendering him in two, so great is his fear. Everything was quiet and the audience spell-bound when a voice from the gallery said, as the bells were still going ting-ting, "Eh, but it's natural, just like the tramway cars!"