

# Music and Drama

The hearty support accorded to Mr. Ed. Branscombe's "Scarlet Troubadours" wherever they appear is conclusive evidence that the style of entertainment has hit the public taste, and is likely to become as popular here as it has already proved itself in England. This clever party of English vocalists and humorists commenced a short season at the Choral Hall, Auckland, on Monday evening, and has been attracting remarkably good houses. Amongst the most favourably received numbers contributed by the "Troubadours" are those given by the male quartet. The disbanding of the famous Meister Glee singers just at the time when the "Scarlet Troubadours" were leaving England, enabled Mr. Branscombe to secure the services of two members of this celebrated combination, and their eccentric musical comedicalities, which are further enhanced by the introduction of suitable costumes and actions, have secured for them enviable reputation.

"The Messiah" was successfully performed in Auckland last week by the local Choral Society. The singing of Mr. Hamilton Hodges was the feature of the evening.

After a splendid season all over the Dominion, "The Scarlet Troubadours" opened a return tour of the Dominion on Monday. The company have an almost limitless repertoire, and each new entertainment seems better than the last. They show in Auckland every evening this week except Christmas Day.

At Napier last week a Council meeting of the Professional Society of Musicians was held. A certificate of incorporation was also received from the Registrar-General's Department and a communication from the Auckland Society of Musicians asking that delegates be sent to attend the forthcoming conference of New Zealand musicians, which takes place this year in Auckland on January 25th and 26th. At a previous meeting it was decided to encourage musical competitions in Napier, and, on the proposal of the secretary, seconded by Mr. Sydney Hoben, it was decided that members of the Council wait on Mr. J. V. Brown, M.P., asking him to call a public meeting at an early date to push the matter forward.

"The Red Mill," said to be one of the most amusing and varied of musical comedies, with a novel Dutch flavour all its own, will commence a tour of the prosperous and good-natured Dominion on Boxing Night, the inaugural performance taking place at His Majesty's, Auckland. "The Mill" is reported to suit its company to a T (whatever that may be) and to be more than ordinarily tuneful and fascinating. According to the "Sydney Mail," whose critic is reliable, it opens with the elements of an unusually strong story of farcical comedy type. It has plenty of vivacious dialogue and clever repartee. It is greatly superior to the "Prince of Pilsen," and the laughter which it provokes is of a spontaneous kind—not at all the result of mere infection. In the second, the performance gradually degenerates into a variety show, it is a very good sort of variety show. This is though not extravagant adulation, is quite sufficient to make "the average playgoer" want to see "The Mill" and judge for himself.

Are New Zealanders fond of Dickens? We shall presently see. A Dominion tour by Mr. Edward Reeves, Professor of Education at Adelaide University, opens in Auckland on Monday next, when "A Christmas Carol" will be the chief attraction. As the story of Dickens' "Carol" is ever increasing its sale in book form, and lovers of the book are constantly multiplied, there ought to be a large audience to hear Mr. Reeves tell the story in the language of the writer without the aid of notes of any description. It is, perhaps, the one of Dickens' works which best lends itself to the artist, and Mr. Reeves comes with a reputation of

being an accomplished elocutionist, and the power to pass from character to character with an easy versatility and a clearness of enunciation that will be delightful to all lovers of the great humorist.

Whenever Mr. Reeves has given this recital in the Commonwealth, he has met with enthusiastic and eulogistic references, and whilst listening to him we are promised portraiture by means of voice, expression, and gesture; and as the story includes the doings of Marley's Ghost, old Fizziwig's Ball, Bob Cratchet's Christmas Dinner Party, Poor Tiny Tim, and many others, he has certainly ample scope to display his artistic abilities.

One of the important features announced of the coming Christmas attractions is the visit of Miss Florence Baines in the exceptionally funny farce "Miss Lancashire Limited," opening on Saturday night next at the Auckland Opera House. The advent of this bright star some 12 months back proved a starter to the public of Sydney. Almost unheralded, the lady stepped from the boat with her company from England, and two weeks later the public of the city were most enthusiastic over the bright artist who nightly sent them into convulsions of laughter. For ten weeks without a change of bill the Palace Theatre was packed. A tour followed, and Miss Baines repeated her success in Melbourne. Determined on visiting New Zealand before returning to England, the company opened in Christchurch early in November, a season in Dunedin and Wellington following. Again more than the usual success was the good fortune of Miss Baines, the southern Press declaring her to be one of the finest comedienne seen in the Dominion. The character of Mary Ellen Thompson, in which Miss Baines appears, is described as one of the most fun-provoking characters seen for a long time. Miss Baines sings many songs during the performance, but her famous laughing song is her most brilliant effort. Supporting Miss Baines is a fine, efficient company. The season is only a limited one. The plan is now open at Wildman and Arey's.

New Zealanders have a very warm corner in their hearts for Maggie Moore, and will be delighted to hear of the extraordinary ovation she received at Sydney Palace after five years of absence. There was a roar of welcome when Maggie Moore stepped on the stage, and the applause that followed seemed to last five minutes. At the end of the first act the curtain had to be raised half a dozen times while Maggie Moore stood "blowing kisses" near the footlights. The applause was kept up during the presentation of flowers in all sorts of designs. There were bouquets, wreaths, crooks, boomerangs, harps, and even stands of flowers. One admirer passed up to the stage a Teddy bear. To some of the flowers the Australian colours were attached. Others had the stars and stripes, and others broad green ribbons. Mr. Roberts, who came to his wife's assistance, piled up the "floral tributes" until Lizzie Stofel was completely hidden. There must have been two van loads of flowers. More flowers were presented after the second act, and there still remained a fair supply for the end of the third act. At the close of the play shouts of "A speech! A speech!" came from all sides. Maggie Moore said: "I am not Lizzie Stofel now, but just Maggie Moore, and I cannot thank you enough for the welcome you have given me. It is long ago since I first played Lizzie Stofel, and those who were little children then are now grown men and women. That was thirty-four years ago, and I am still playing the part of a kid, and somehow I think I'll be playing it, in thirty-four more. (Cheers.) It is not because the years creep by and we get little plants in our faces that we get older in our hearts. I may be a bit thicker than I was then, but my heart is just the same. (Cheers.) You all love Australia, and I love it too, because I have made my bread and butter here and you have always been so kind to me. Again, thank you very much." (Cheers.)

That brilliantly successful actress and playwright, Miss Rosamond Rees, daughter of W. L. Rees, of Gisborne, is on a visit to her relatives at Poverty Bay. Since leaving England she has heard of the acceptance of another play of hers, entitled, "The Happiest Woman in the World." It was to be produced at the Coronet Theatre, in London, on November 30th, as a curtain-raiser to "Brewster's Millions." Miss Rees is only in New Zealand on a short holiday, and hopes to play in Australia before leaving again for England. Before leaving she was playing Lady Merston in "Lady Frederick" with Mrs. Brown Potter, and though they wished her to remain with them until December she was determined not to put off her trip to New Zealand any longer.

Boxing Night will see the opening of a new picture company in Auckland. The Royal Pictures are well known in the South, having played long seasons in Dunedin and Christchurch, while they have been established for twelve months in His Majesty's, Wellington. The management has secured a long lease of the Royal Albert Hall, and intend to produce the same programmes which have made its companies so popular in the South.

After Christchurch, the William Anderson Dramatic Company will make a tour up the West Coast of New Zealand. For this the already strong repertoire of the company will be augmented. In addition to "The Squatter's Daughter," "The Village Blacksmith," "The Face at the Window," "When London Sleeps," and "Thunderbolt" will be presented. It is the first time such a large organisation as William Anderson's has toured the West Coast.

Pollard's Juvenile Opera Company, under William Anderson's direction, is touring W.A. to particularly good business. At Kaitiaki, the organisation made a decided hit, attracting crowded houses during the whole season at Anderson's new Cromorne Theatre.

William Anderson's great Christmas attraction at the King's, Melbourne, will be a new up-to-date version of the evergreen American play, "Uncle Tom's Cabin." Special engagements are being made for the production. Gown ballets, quartettes, and choruses, and numerous other incidentals are being introduced. Eliza's escape across the river will be done on a tremendous scale, and the Vision Scene will be a revelation.

The Dominion tour of the Royal Welsh Male Choir will commence in Auckland on January 17th. These world-famed chorists have met with huge success wherever they have appeared, and have received municipal courtesies in all the large towns in Australasia. Their tour will embrace the larger centres in New Zealand. They appear in Wellington on February 2nd, Christchurch the 17th, and Dunedin about the first week in March. The fact that this choir has won over £10,000 in prize money, and has won the championship at all the Great National Eisteddfod competitions, is sufficient proof that they are amongst the world's best singers.

Miss Rosina Buckmann, the New Zealand soprano, has been scoring very signal successes as "Marguerite" in "Faust" at Sydney Criterion. She sang on alternate nights with Madame Shapoffski, and "Punch" says the part is her best. She has also appeared with success in "Il Trovatore."

Mme. Albani, the well-known prima donna, following the example of Mr. Sims Reeves, Mr. John Coates, Mme. Cavalli, and other singers of eminence, has agreed to appear in vaudeville. She commenced a fortnight's engagement at the Pavilion music hall in Glasgow on December 7th, at "a very high salary." Mme. Albani says that the earnest endeavour that has been successfully made to raise the tone of performances given at music halls has been so remarkable that she willingly listened to the proposal that she should accept an engagement.

An incident of the production of "Faust" by the National Opera Company at the Sydney Criterion the other day, was the singing of Mephistopheles by Herr Greder in German. The artist delivered a few phrases in English, but then dropped into German, and went through the opera without taking any more risks in English. His singing was nothing out of the ordinary. He pulled through on his acting. "I do not blame Herr Greder for singing in German (says the "Melbourne Punch" correspondent). It was Hobson's choice—that or nothing. He could not have sung the part in English. Still, it must be confessed that it was ridiculous to have a German Mephistopheles while all the other parts were sung in English. Something even worse occurred while Mr. William Verdi, professionally known as Signor Verdi, was appearing in Sydney by the Montague-Turner Opera Co. "Lucretia Borgia" was to be given in English, with the burly American baritone as the Duke. "Lucretia Borgia" was one of the stock operas of the company. On the night about which I am writing the manager came before the curtain at 8 o'clock, and asked the indulgence of the audience on Mr. William Green's behalf. "I regret to have to announce," said the manager, "that Signor Verdi has not had sufficient time to learn his part in English. With your kind indulgence, the Signor will sing in his own language." The opera was then commenced, and "Signor Verdi" went through his part in Italian. Anna Montague and the late Charles Turner had to smile while they were singing the trio with the Italian-American in one of the most dramatic scenes.

As it was in the sacred cause of charity, Mme. Adolina Patti's appearance at the Albert Hall last month, and the consequent breaking of her vow of retirement, must be excused. She is not given to "farewell" and "positively the last farewell" so much as are some artists of the concert platform. The greatest offender in this way was Sims Reeves, who "farewelled" for about 20 years. "May I have the gratification," he wrote to "my dear Antoinette Sterling," "of numbering you among my contributors to my 'Farewell' at the Albert Hall on May 11? I need not say how pleased I shall be



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