

Music and Musicians.

the heavy, lumbering waggons plunging and jaying on the boulder-strewn veldt.

Their speed was not great. "We'll never get in, Dan," Lieutenant Palmer murmured, in a curiously exhausted voice. "The demons won't let us. We haven't half enough horses for the job."

Dan had no breath left. He was years older than his master.

It was at this point that they seemed to become very confused as to what was transpiring. Englishmen were cheering. The Boers were rifle practising. There was an awful din and stampede; men coming out towards them, hollowing words they but dimly understood.

The strain had become more than they could bear. The horses, too, were suffering from the unnatural strain.

But all things must have an end. A few moments later the forlorn hope staggered blindly into the centre of the convoy, some of the horses dropping with exhaustion as they reached their destination.

It seemed hours before the men crowded round them and lifted them from their saddles. They shouted their admiration and congratulations. It was the bravest deed of the war, they said, and it had saved the convoy.

"What a deuce of a fuss they are all making about it," Lieut Palmer remarked to Connelly next day. "We didn't do anything, Dan. By Jove, though, the fellows somehow make a chap feel glad inwardly that he is a soldier."

Dan blinked. "Got any baccy, Mister Joe?" he inquired.

"Dan, you're an awful old scoundrel," answered his master.

Dan blinked again.

"Hedad, but it was meself hate ye clane that time, sorr," he said, with a sideways look at his master. "Beggorra, but ye hadn't the ghost of a chance, Mister Joe. I luste ye all to snathereens."

"What a disgraceful old liar you are, Connelly?" replied his master, sorrowfully. "But here's the tobacco, and I fancy I'll stick to the soldiering, Jan, after all. There's a lot in it which I never detected before."

Smiles and Similes.

Anxious.—There is nothing that so increases a man's desire to work in the garden as the discovery that his wife has misplaced the rake.
If a lazy pupil ever wants to practise, it is when the piano is already in use.

Sins of Omission.—Clergyman (examining a Sunday School class): Now, can any of you tell me what are sins of omission? Small Scholar: Please, sir, they're sins you ought to have committed and haven't.
But music pupils omit them. They omit the hard places, difficult chorals, the inner notes generally. They omit to practise their exercises, scales, arpeggios and etudes, omit their lessons, and sometimes to pay their teacher.

A Commendable Ambition.—Old Gentleman: What would you like to be when you grow up? Small Boy: I'd like to be a bricklayer. Old Gentleman: That is a commendable ambition. Why would you like to be a bricklayer? Small Boy: 'Cause there's so many days when a bricklayer can't work.

Some young people choose music teaching because they think it is such an easy, genteel and agreeable way of earning a respectable living.

THE DRAMA.

Nance O'Neil continues to boom in Auckland. Her success as Peg Woffington was followed by a triumph with Queen Elizabeth, and she again pleased her audience in Camille. In Queen Elizabeth Miss O'Neil looks the great Queen to the life, and plays with the perfervid enthusiasm and fire which are her chief characteristics. The Queen of the dramatist is far from a lovable personage, or one with whom it is possible to have much sympathy, but when played by Nance O'Neil she certainly dominates her audience in much the same fashion as she is supposed to have dominated her subjects. Her dresses are, of course, superb, and no one can deny that she wears the regal purple as to the manner born. In every attitude, in every accent, she is the great Queen, and it is perhaps only in the closet scene, where she awaits Essex's plea for pardon, that she allows the woman to conquer the monarch. In this scene Miss O'Neil is certainly at her best. But the character is one that suits her from every point of view, and theatre goers in the South should mark it with a double tick.

"La Tosca" succeeded "Camille," and if it did not quite equal some of her other successes it yet proved a wonderfully fine performance, and gave Miss O'Neil an opportunity of proving her right to the title she has assumed of "the English speaking Bernhardt." "La Tosca" is the great French artist's favourite play, and in it she surpassed all previous triumphs. Nor has she since done anything better. One cannot call to mind any play of our day which makes so great a demand on an actress. Miss Nance O'Neil gave us a remarkably fine interpretation of the character of the impetuous, adoring, and wildly jealous Floria, and her acting was at times superb. In every way she was infinitely superior to Mrs Brown Potter who essayed the role during her New Zealand tour. But in calling herself the English speaking Bernhardt while playing in that great actress's favourite parts Miss O'Neil does not do wisely. She herself is quite a sufficiently great actress to render any borrowed radiance superfluous. Miss O'Neil's Floria is worthy of the praise that we can give it. The abandon with which the actress throws herself into the part, and the strain she imposes on herself, is almost uncomfortably severe, and must tax terribly even so manifestly a splendid physique as Miss O'Neil's. She never spares herself for one single instant, and at the end of the play must be terribly exhausted. "Fedora"

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is following "Tosca" to-night, and a capital interpretation may be looked forward to with confidence.

"Pans in Boots," the Rickards' pantomime in Sydney, was a great success. Amongst the cast I noticed Miss Nani Rickards, who came round with "Pans" when his company visited New Zealand, and Dave Caston, who also made himself a great favourite on this side. Albert Whelan, of Ichabod Bronson fame in the "Belle of New York," also had an important role.

"A message from Mars" was the attraction at the Palace Theatre, Sydney. When the mail left Mr Hawtree's Company was drawing great audiences.

The Biograph finished a very successful season in Christchurch last week. The new pictures are said to be remarkably good. The Biograph is working steadily north, and will pay a return visit to Auckland before concluding its New Zealand season.

Chieftain Rangitia's concerts in Dunedin were very successful. The Maori rangitira is warmly praised as a pianist by the Southern dailies.

The Wirth Circus season, which has just closed in Dunedin, was a very successful one. The circus is coming through both islands, visiting all the principal cities.

John F. Sheridan is doing prodigiously well with his farce, "The New Barmaid." It is one of the new things he will give us on his New Zealand tour in the autumn. At present he is coinng money amongst the sightseers in Sydney.

"Lohengrin" and "Carmen" were the alternate attractions in Sydney during the last week of the old year, with the "Bohemian Girl" for the first nights of the new.

Miss Lottie Collins, now singing at the Bijou, Melbourne, turns out to be far more than a name (says a critic). Her galvanic success with "Tara-tara-boom-dee-ay" ceases to surprise when she has been seen and heard in other songs—for she has broken with the time-worn ditty that brought her fame. Her forte lies in bringing an unexpected reserve force of energy—shall we say flightiness—suddenly to bear so as to vanquish an assumed demureness and fairly startle the spectators by the change. This is exemplified in her song "The Widow," given in the garb of woe and pitched for a time in a subdued key. But sympathy is appallingly diverted by the sudden flash of crimson-covered undergarments in a wild dance, conveying that the widow is not so incousolable as she appears. Her song in riding attire has a spice of the same characteristic, but is given with really ex-

cellent grace and elan. In fact, whatever suggestiveness may be read in her songs, Miss Collins is not open to the charge of purposely emphasizing it. Therein she differs essentially from another clever vocalist of the variety stage lately heard here. The ditty of the coalman's wife seems introduced to show the singer's versatility, and the song in which she has the assistance of members of the orchestra (in other than their recognized roles) is an amusing example of how successful an illegitimate device may be made.

The "Australasian Stage Annual," edited by Mr William Crawley, and published by the J. J. Miller Printing Company, is a Christmas publication. This is the second year of publication. It contains portraits on a large scale of actors, actresses, and managers known to the Australian stage, and numerous sketches, stories, etc., by equally well-known persons. One of the sketches relates to Fitzgerald's Circus. "If ever we are ruined," Mr Tom Fitzgerald is made to say, "it will be through the habit my brother has of pensioning off horses that have grown old in our service. His old age pension scheme causes us to pay for horses left behind in all parts of Australia and Manildra, where their old age is soothed in nice grass paddocks. When the bills come in annually Dan swears, but he pays."

At a certain hotel in Rotoman quite recently, a certain prestidigitateur was giving an evening entertainment in the drawing-room, at which a large number of visitors were present. Prior to the performance an elderly lady, apparently "sulphuring" on account of a tendency to embonpoint, comfortably ensconced herself in the corner of a sofa placed in the front row, and, perhaps, overcome by the magician's skill, gradually sank into the arms of Morpheus, emitting at regular intervals snores distinctly audible throughout the room. This threatened to queer the show, and not unnaturally irritated the performer, who at length lost all patience, and approaching the sleeper, blandly remarked, "I trust, madam, that I am not keeping you up."

A TRUE STORY.

An earnest playgoer writes to Clement Scott, the well known critic: "As you so justly remark, 'The tear of sympathy that are shed in the theatre, the vows for amendment of life that are uttered in the play-house, the lessons of love, and toleration, and charity that are learned behind the glare of the footlights, are as valuable for the public good as any sermon preached in any pulpit by pastors of every known and recognised denomination!'"

"The force of these words was brought home to me in an incident which came under my personal notice a few days ago. Bearing, as it does, on the subject of your remarks, it will, I am sure, interest you; otherwise, I would not venture to take up your valuable time by relating it."

"I was standing in the pit of a theatre. Next me was a young girl, of about 16, a child of the people. She asked me some question about the play, which I answered, and told her the plot of the piece, which she did not understand. Between the acts she talked to me about herself, saying she often went to the theatre, and how much good she got from it. 'I went to see "Faust,"' she said, 'and liked it so much. Poor Marguerite! it was very sad. It's enough to make a girl good after seeing what happened to her.' Then she continued, 'I went to see "The Sign of the Cross." Oh! it was just lovely. I've known, I used to go to chapel regularly; but I left off going, and got careless and wild. But ever since I saw that play I go to chapel regularly, and—and I'm trying to be good.' I added, 'Go on trying, child; it's the only way.'"

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