

# Music and Drama.

The season of melodrama continues to boom in Auckland. According to present advices "The Ladder of Life" was to disappear last evening, but there are hints that, after all, it may run for a night or so longer yet, as business is still excellent. At all events the next production is "The Greed of Gold."

Wirths' Amphitheatre in Auckland must be the largest structure of the theatre order in New Zealand by a very long way. It was run up very expeditiously, and the company lost no time in getting to work therein. The houses have been good up to date, and in "wintering" in Auckland Wirths should score a financial success.

The Trinity College local exhibition for the pianoforte has been awarded to Iaa Pea, of Dunedin.

Cinquevalli opened his Christchurch season at the Theatre Royal on Monday. In Wellington the tail of the company came in for a good deal of caustic comment. Certainly, one or two of the performers, especially the vocalists, are pretty terrible, and it is a pity such "padding" was included. At the same time, when you have two such stars as Cinquevalli and Madame Titus, you must expect some light-salaried make-weights.

The Trinity College has presented the University of London with £5000 to establish a chair of music.

A feature of the productions in London at Coronation time will be a comic opera, the music of which will be by J. P. Sousa, the March King. Sousa will conduct the first performance.

Variety business is still booming in the colony, and Mr Dix continues to do comfortable business with his various companies, despite phenomenally heavy competition all round.

The first of many pirated stage versions of "Lorna Doone" has just been produced in Chicago. It is in four acts, and is the work of Miss Mildred Dowling. Slight respect is shown for Blackmore's novel, which has almost attained the dignity of a classic, and such inimitable characters as the Counsellor and Tom Faggus, the highwayman, fade into insignificance, while Jeremy Stickles is one of the many who disappear altogether.

M. Sardou has nearly finished another play for Sir Henry Irving. This is the drama relating to Dante, which was "commissioned" early last year in order that it might be ready to follow the revival of "Faust" at the Lyceum next April. For several years Sir Henry has had a belief in the attractiveness of a play based upon Dante's career.

Much discussion is going on in society and artistic circles (says the "Era") as to the probability of some of our leading actors receiving titles at the forthcoming Coronation. There are, of course, differences of opinion as to those most likely to obtain honours—if, indeed, any are granted to the leading lights of the theatrical profession.

Mons. Ragoul, the exceedingly clever lion and tiger tamer for Wirth Bros., is about to devote some months to training the handsome but hitherto exceptionally wild young lioness in the show. This beautiful feline has as yet never been handled, as the phrase goes. The other day Mons. Ragoul entered the cage for the first time. Ructions were expected, and assistants were at hand with bars to shut her off, but no sooner did the creature realise that she was alone with the tamer than she reared up and uttering what was manifestly a cry of abject terror, fell over backwards, in what would correspond to a human swoon.

In his notice of "Magda" (evening performance) and Bjorn-ou's "Beyond Human Power" (matinee) by Mrs Patrick Campbell's company, the Boston "Herald" bestows special praise on Mr G. S. Titheradge. His portrayal of the stern old soldier and father, Leopold Schwartz, is described as admirable in every way, never for an instant overdrawn, though the actor had many temptations. The work of Mr Titheradge as Pastor Sang in "Beyond Human Power" is spoken of as a treat, "so far and beyond the rest of Mrs Campbell's company does he stand." Mrs Patrick Campbell's own performances, of course, are highly extolled.

Mr Williamson has informed the Sydney "Daily Telegraph" of various new engagements made for his musical companies. A new baritone, Mr Harold Thornley, who has been appearing with Mr George Edwards' company in South Africa, is to arrive in Melbourne by the Australian on June 18, and join the Comic Opera Company. Another new member of the company from England will be Miss Kate Milner. Mr Arthur Crane, also a baritone, whose pleasant singing was one of the features of the Tivoli Company some months ago, and Miss Lulu Evans, from England, who so far has only appeared in New Zealand with the Pollard Opera Company, and her brother, Mr Tom Evans, a dancer, are to join the Musical Comedy Company. Miss Evans has had considerable experience at the Savoy Theatre. Mr Wallace Brownlow is leaving Mr Williamson's company.

A blind pianist is one of the wonders of the hour in London just now. According to our London correspondent, Mr Mendel (that is his name) is 26, and was born blind, educated at Renshaw's Blind Asylum, and learned the rudiments of music by the Braille system, later winning a £40 a year scholarship at the Royal Normal College. He has an excellent technique, and a marvellous musical memory, his repertoire including over a thousand pieces. The most striking part of his performance is the exactitude with which he reproduces on the piano unknown pieces played by members of the audience. That there is no "hanky-panky" about it was proved by the fact that at a private reception the piece set him for reproduction was part of a difficult scherzo composed and played by Mr Landon Ronald, and the piece on the evening of Mendel's first public appearance was an original and unpublished composition of a member of a well known firm of music publishers. Mendel also proved that he was no mere trickster by his clever improvisations in the style of Chopin, Mozart, Mendelssohn, Liszt and Bach on themes supplied by his audience.

The following municipal ordinance relative to not wearing hats in theatres is in force in San Francisco: No person shall wear any hat, bonnet, or other head covering within any licensed theatre in this city, and county during the rendition of any programme on the stage or platform of such theatre, but every hat, bonnet, or other head covering shall be removed from the head of the person wearing the same during the time of performance in such theatre or during the rendition of the performance on the stage or platform of such theatre; provided, that the above inhibition shall not be held to include skull caps, lace coverings, or other small or closely fitting head-dress which does not interfere with or obstruct the view of the stage or platform of such theatre of persons in the rear of such wearers while in such theatre.

The frequent observation that Paris these days is hovering on the edge of a social, if not political revolution, receives a sort of semi-official confirmation in the fact that a new play, called "Decadence," lately announced for early presentation at the Vaude-

ville Theatre, was interdicted by the authorities on the ground that it might create a dangerous ebullition of popular feeling. The "decadence" which furnishes the title and the plot of the play is that of the nobility, which, being impoverished by the social conditions existing under the Republic, are obliged to resort to all sorts of make-shifts to avoid the poorhouse. M. Albert Guinon, the author, builds his story around an impecunious Duke, who forces his daughter to marry a millionaire Jew so that his family fortunes may be repaired. Shortly after the marriage the Duke's daughter runs off with another impoverished nobleman. Out of these facts an interesting play is evolved, but as the two classes are drawn with great vividness, and the actors are made to utter sentiments that pretty sharply define the dominant social and party distinctions of the hour in France, the Government deemed it wise to take no chances with theatrical firebrands as long as Paris remains in its present combustible condition.

The private affairs of theatrical folk possess an irresistible attraction for the majority of theatre-goers, and though the interest is usually kindly, it is occasionally found embarrassing by the victims. The obvious penchant of Mr Charlie Carter for Miss May Beatty has for many moons supplied rumours of their engagement, and even their secret marriage. The handsome and popular pair were always together, and were manifestly the very best of friends on and off the stage, but both sometimes warmly, and at other times laughingly, denied any engagement, and ridiculed the idea of marriage under the rose. Now, however, the engagement is definitely announced by "The Call Boy," a Dunedin dramatic writer, who is usually well informed, and as Carter was in Dunedin or thereabouts at the time the announcement was made, we may assume it is absolutely authentic. Both the happy man and his prospective bride will have the warm congratulations of the public and their innumerable private friends. Their lot should be exceedingly happy, for one may now say without indiscretion, a clearer case of victims to Cupid never came before those who were numbered amongst their intimates. A number of the latter were, of course, cognisant of the true state of affairs, and that an understanding has existed between the lovers for some time, but respecting the wishes of both they kept mum on the subject. Both Miss Beatty and Mr Carter are devoted to their profession, both are as the phrase goes "gluttons for work," and both should get on well. Possibly Mr Carter may now modify his plans with regard to a trip to the Old Country, and engage with Mr Musgrove, when his contract with the Pollards terminates.

How they deal it out to China,  
She can't have a say at all;  
Her position's very minor  
Among the nations one and all.  
Like a man whose health is breaking,  
Days are numbered and get fewer,  
Unless for cough or cold he's taking  
W. E. WOODS' GREAT PEPPERMINT  
CURE.

## BOOKS AND BOOKMEN.

### "THE LAND OF THE LOST."

I have just received this book from the publishers, Messrs. Methuen and Co., London, and find it a work of rather special interest. Its author is Mr William Satchell, of Auckland, who has already made himself favourably known to the reading public by a little volume of verse displaying a large amount of poetical ability. When it is understood that "The Land of the Lost" deals with life on a New Zealand gumfield, the appropriateness of its title will be readily appreciated in this colony, where the most striking characteristics of a gumfield and its Nomad population are widely known. Mr Satchell is more than successful in his minutely vivid description of his special gumfield, far away in the "neglected North." He brings it before our eyes in all its reality—we see its dreary vastness, its sad, grey colouring, its scarred surface, bearing unlovely witness to the work of the digger's spade—we feel the depression of the loneliness brooding over the grave of a mighty forest, dead and vanished a thousand years ago. The God-forsaken aspect of the great gumfield forms a fitting environment for the lost souls that sparsely dot its vastness, and congregate thickly in the lonely inn of evil repute, where they are ever sealing their damnation afresh. The squalid degradation, the hopelessness, the forlorn recklessness of the lives of this lost legion, are detailed with convincing realism and power.

It is the dreary gumfield and the wrecks of human lives stranded on it that give the dominant tone to Mr Satchell's book, but the story the book tells is itself briskly written, and full of interest throughout. It contains plenty of episode, and has a plot that does not reveal itself too readily, while the author conceals the identity of his chief villain, nearly up to the end with a cleverness worthy of the long-practised Miss Braddon. The hero and heroine are attractive personages, clean, wholesome vitalities, strongly contrasting with most of the denizens of the gumfield, and their love story, from its distinctly original beginning, to its rightly commonplace ending, makes pleasant reading. Among the minor characters in the novel, the author has given us, apart from the "Legion of the Lost," portraits of various types of people on the gumfield, and in the fertile settlement adjoining it. And from Roller, the aggressively prosperous storekeeper, to Maria, the Hamiltons' half-caste servant, and the Maori bush-fellers, they are all well individualised, and something more than mere puppets. In Jessamine Clive, the gently crazed gumdigger, whose fancy, picturesquely astray, re-creates the vanished forest about him on the sun-scorched gumfield, Mr Satchell has drawn a character that represents no type, but is interestingly original, and appeals strongly to our sympathies. To conclude, "The Land of the Lost" is a book which is sure to be found interesting everywhere, and is likely to be widely read and appreciated here, where its scenes and characters must have, to many of us, the added attraction of being pictures of realities we know.

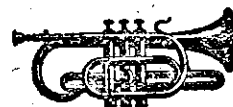
"The Land of the Lost," by William Satchell—Methuen and Co., London.

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