

Waikato Musical and Elocutionary Competitions.

Our Illustrations.

(Special to "The Weekly Graphic.")

HAMILTON.

During the past week the Waikato musical and elocutionary competitions were held at Hamilton, and proved highly successful. The proceedings were formally opened on Monday afternoon by Mr Greenelade, M.P., and were continued each afternoon and evening till Thursday night. The prize-winners' concert was to have taken place on Friday, but had to be postponed owing to the mourning services for the late King, and will take place this (Wednesday) evening, in the Hamilton Public Hall.

The judges were Mr H. Barry Coney, for vocal and instrumental music, and Mr J. F. Montague, for elocution, both of Auckland; and the decisions in every case appeared to give satisfaction. I had special opportunities of getting "inside" information on this point, and in nearly every case even the defeated competitors were satisfied with the decisions given, an unusual state of things at such competitions. The management of the competitions was beyond praise in every department, and everything was carefully planned for the comfort and convenience of the public, the competitors and the judges. Every member of the executive worked with enthusiasm, but no one was paid to work, and this plan must always prove the most successful. Paid workers will never get the same result as those who work for the joy of the thing. The attendance of the public was very large throughout the

whole of the competitions, and the financial result will be highly satisfactory.

On Wednesday evening, when the Choir Contest took place, the large Town Hall was crammed, and many had to stand throughout the whole evening. The excitement ran high in this contest, especially as competing choirs came from Thames, Auckland, Cambridge and Hamilton, and when the local choir was declared the winners by one point Hamilton fairly broke loose. Mr. Riley, the popular conductor, received an ovation when he came on later to conduct the combined choirs. While the competitions proved interesting and successful, it must be fairly said that the standard attained in nearly every instance was not very high, and in the elocutionary section especially the work was very poor, with the single exception of H. E. Gaze, in the humorous class, who gave an exceedingly clever performance. However, the competitions disclosed a few young performers of exceptional promise, and one hopes these will be further encouraged to persevere in their studies.

The competitors called for special mention were: Williams (Thames) and Beek (Cambridge), cornet solo; Gordon (Thames) and Miss Bosworth (Auckland), violin solo; R. Bell and A. C. Rees (Hamilton), tenor solo, the latter, though only third, showing exceptional promise; Mrs. Bellini (Hamilton) and Miss Parker (Waikato), soprano solo; and Powell (Waikato) and Milner (Cambridge), bass solo.

night. I fancied he was a little inclined to be stiffer than the part required; the impression one gathered was that he was a rather "bearish" sort of bridegroom for the pretty little Geisha. But he sang excellently, particularly in the third act, he sang beginning "Yes, in one sudden moment, I see my heartless action."

Miss Rosina Buckmann was very warmly welcomed back to Wellington. She made a very dainty Suzuki, and pleased all with her singing and acting. She had a good deal of the tragic in the third act, where Suzuki grieves heart-breakingly for her little mistress's woes.

Miss Florence Quinn, as Kate Pinkerton, the American lieutenant's wife, was the third lady principal. She did not appear till the third act, when she came on for a small but nevertheless important part. Aucklanders will be very pleased to hear that Miss Quinn—who is an Auckland girl—bids fair to make her name in her adopted profession. She has now had a good deal of experience in opera, and her singing and acting are both good. She makes an attractive Kate Pinkerton; and had the part been a bigger one I have no doubt she would have acquitted herself well, for she has all the makings of a fine operatic artist. Miss Quinn has had a very good training in Australia since she was last in New Zealand, and the progress she has made was appreciable even in the short period she was on last night.

A Query.

Listening to "Madama Butterfly," and reading the story of the opera, I wondered whether Long and Belasco had not got their inspiration from Pierre Loti's novel, "Madame Chrysantheme." The story in "Madame Chrysantheme" is, you will remember, that a French naval officer—Pierre Loti himself, no doubt—contracts a "Japanese marriage" with a little Nagasaki girl, and lives with her for a while in just such a dainty summerhouse as that shown on the stage in "Madam Butterfly." The marriage broker, the hosts of absurd relations, the Jappy officials, are all in Loti's book, just as in the opera. With the marriage scene, however, the resemblance ends. In "Madama Butterfly" the end is a tragedy, whereas Pierre Loti's marriage ends without any heartbreak on either side. Sneaking back to the house just before he sails, he takes a farewell peep at his little "temporary" wife, fearing to find her weeping her little head off. On the contrary, he sees her quite reconciled to his departure, singing away, and tapping the

heap of silver dollars he has given her with a little mallet, to make sure they were genuine. Which pleasing sequel, one imagines, would be more in accord with the "little Jap-Juppy" temperament than the tragic fidelity of Lieutenant Pinkerton's Cho-Cho-San.

Prettily Quaint.

In the first act "Madama Butterfly" is slightly reminiscent of "The Mikado." The scene that precedes the marriage is rather humorous, and the dialogue between Pinkerton and little Butterfly is prettily quaint.

Then, when the bride's relations come on,—Pinkerton (Mr. Blaney), looking at them with much disapproval, sings:

"What a farce is this procession
Of my worthy new relations,
Billed on terms of monthly contract!

That shabby-looking nunny,
Jumping like a frog in action,
To the mad and boozey uncle!"

Look at them, intently chatting,
Trying to kow-tow before me."

It sounds rather quaint, too, to hear Pinkerton, when entertaining the U.S. Consul, Sharpless (Mr. Arthur Crane), gravely singing the inquiry whether he will have "milk-punch or whisky." But grand opera, I suppose, can be broadly defined as opera in which everything is sung—no matter what the theme—and not a line is spoken.

Williamson's Grand Opera Company gave the final performance of "Madama Butterfly" in the Wellington Opera House on Wednesday, the 25th inst. On the following evening Puccini's "La Boheme" will be produced for the first time, and in it Signorina Pampari will make her first appearance; she is not playing in "Madama Butterfly." "Carmen" will follow. From there the company go to Palmerston North, Wanganui, and Napier, thence to Auckland, where they open in a month from the time of writing.

Stray Notes.

Those who know Allan Hamilton personally will be concerned to hear that the genial and usually stalwart partner in the Maxwell-Hamilton Melodrama Company, now touring New Zealand, and several other theatrical ventures of im-

TRAGEDY OF THE AIR.

M. LE BLON'S FATE.

M LE BLON was killed on Saturday, 2nd April, at San Sebastian.

The monoplane which caused his death was the one which killed M. Delagrance at Bordeaux on January 4. Delagrance bequeathed it to Le Blon, who had it repaired and had been using it ever since.

He made a circle above the bay at an altitude of about 150 feet, but as he took his turn to come above the aerodrome, it was noticed that his machine seemed to be out of control.

At first he tried to glide down, but then the machine buckled completely, and he fell like a stone into the sea from a height of seventy-five feet, with the apparatus on top of him.

The few spectators raised cries of hor-

ror, says an "Express" telegram. Mme. Le Blon who had been watching the flight, shrieked "He is lost!" rushed about in a demented fashion, and was taken eventually to the ambulance station, whether the body was brought.

As Le Blon's was an unadvertised flight, the usual boats were not on duty in the bay, and it was some minutes before a motor boat put off to the spot where the wreck of the aeroplane was floating, and Le Blon's body was recovered. It is believed that he was held down by the wreck and drowned.

Mme. Le Blon had to be dragged from her husband's body after it was taken to the ambulance station.

M. Le Blon, who was born in 1872, was a cyclist and a chauffeur before he was an aviator. He was a working mechanic until three years ago, when he became the favourite pupil of M. Delagrance, with whom he made flights at Doncaster last year.

portance, has been seriously ill, and is still, after undergoing two severe operations, very far from completely convalescent, though the latest news is better and more hopeful. Mr Hamilton deserves well of New Zealanders, for in the days of the war, when touring the Dominion with Robert Brough as business manager, confidant and secretarial factotum (for he wrote all Brough's letters), he threw himself heart and soul into the various benefits given by the ever-generous comedian. On his shoulders fell the bulk of the extra work, and the whole of the organising which these extra performances necessitated. It is worth recalling that for these benefits Brough paid personally all salaries and expenses to stage hands, and thus gave large out-of-pocket sums, besides the loss of the £150 to £200 which a performance such as that of "Dandy Dick" (which was the play given) would, in ordinary course, have brought into the treasury. In every benevolent scheme Brough had Hamilton's co-operation and loyal assistance, and as I worked as joint secretary and organiser of the Auckland benefit with him, I know these—on top of his other work—were not nominal. Wherefore let us all wish Allan a speedy restoration to health.

When the fireproof curtain at the South London Music Hall was about to be lowered one night, just before the mail left, a stage hand new to the work, pulled the wrong handle, with the result that the fire emergency water sprinkler was set in motion. The stage was swamped, the orchestra coming in for a shower bath, which caused considerable amusement among the audience.

A furious war of words is being waged, says the "Daily Mail's" Paris correspondent on April 8, between M. Jules Claretie, the aged and distinguished "administrator" or manager of the Comedie Francaise, and M. Charles le Bargy, one of the leading members of the theatre and the most popular "jeune premier" in Paris.

The grave judges of the Court of Appeals, the highest tribunal in the States, have before them the question of whether the order given to a Miss Henrietta Lee Morrison to wear tights was a hardship, against public policy and a violation of her contract with Hurltig and Seamon, theatrical managers. Miss Morrison's photographs in cadet costume and knee length trousers and in tights were before the Court. Miss Morrison was a member of the "Me, Him, and I" company. On the road she was a great favourite in her military costume, and when the company came to New York she was ordered to discard the high-heeled, knee-length, tasselled boots and the knickerbockers and don tights. She refused, was discharged, and then sued. The Lower Courts awarded her \$7000 in damages. The managers appealed.

One point in Mr. Henry Arthur Jones's lecture on "Shakespeare and the Modern Stage" calls for comment (says a London review). He mentioned certain performances of Shakespeare's plays in which it was "next to impossible to tell even that the actors were speaking blank verse," and he attributed this faulty delivery to "want of training." It may, however, surprise Mr. Jones—it will certainly astonish some of our readers, though we have drawn attention to the matter before—

to hear that the style of elocution here referred to is, sometimes, not the result of lack of training at all, but of deliberate and definite instructions on the part of the manager that the dialogue is to be made to sound as unlike verse as possible. "Break it up! Make it sound natural!" is, we believe, the actual formula discharged in these cases at the actor grappling, during rehearsal, with the speeches of a Shakespearean character. That instructions so lacking in respect for the work of the poet and the intelligence and culture of the audience should be attributable to any theatrical manager is, of course, fairly surprising; but the fact is pretty well known. The poet wrote part of the dialogue in nearly every one of his plays in verse and part in prose; and, obviously, if he had intended the whole of it to be spoken as prose he would not have written any of it in verse. (The above remarks might be noted by one or two Shakespearean Reading Clubs in the Dominion.)

The tenor who plays the part of the poet in "La Boheme" has to be careful how he acts in the last scene—the death of Mimi. Although she does not appear here as Mimi, Miss Cecile Lorraine of the Minsgrove 1901 Grand Opera Company, told a good story about herself and Signor Saly, who was also a member of the Minsgrove company. "It was the death scene of Puccini's 'La Boheme.' As Mimi I was brought to the Bohemian's attic in a dying condition, and they all did their utmost to make me comfortable. An old bed in the corner of the attic was brought down stage, and I was placed on it. On this particular evening someone must have loosened one of the legs, for, as soon as they placed me on the bed I felt myself gradually sinking. Signor Saly was supposed to come over and sit on the bed, in order to support me through this death scene. When I saw the tenor approaching, I said, in a loud voice, 'For the love of Heaven, do not sit down, the bed is giving way.' I could almost picture the two of us sprawling on the floor, and quite ruining the pathetic scene. Fortunately Saly was clever enough to comprehend the situation, and at once knelt, placing his knee under the bed, and in that position he was obliged to remain until the fall of the curtain—about twenty minutes. It took him quite a week before he could walk properly, and he told me he could never forget the agony he endured. I could sympathise with him, knowing, as I did, the burden he bore so bravely, for I am no featherweight. I was splendidly supported by the tenor that night."

It has been demonstrated after six months' trial, so declares the "Era," that moving pictures are beneficial to the insane. At the Columbus (U.S.A.) State Hospital a machine has been used weekly to entertain the patients. The films have been carefully selected from the best comedies with a few dramatics in use occasionally. Not only have the pictures made a hit, but, as diversion is one of the chief methods for the cure of insanity, it is believed that the "moving picture cure" will be largely introduced in other institutions for the insane. Pictures are found to have a soothing and beneficial effect upon the mind, and the 500 patients who are able to attend at the local institution have been much benefited by the shows.