

Show omniscience of conscience. All other means having failed, he invents a desperate scheme. What? On reflection in cold blood, it seems almost incredible. He calls on Marion to say good-bye. I have, says he, a wife living—mad, but living. We cannot be legally married, and, knowing your views, I see it is useless to ask you to come with me to my coral island unmarried. And with this outrageous falsehood he so plays on the passions of the desolate widow that she flings herself into his arms. Marriage or none, the once conscientious woman cannot be without him. Now she is in the same case as Mrs. Averil. She understands the strength of love, and her mouth is sealed.

The Latest Shriek.

London has received yet another melodrama from the pen of that indefatigable person who writes under the name of Walter Melville. The outstanding feature of the thriller is, first, the title—"The Sins of London"—and, secondly, the abnormal number of villains. The proportion to the remainder of the cast works out at 45 per cent. Naturally, the audiences, which flock to such performances, were prepared cheerfully to witness any amount of crime, and the business included a number of forgeries and an attempted murder in a cellar, an explosion in an ocean-going steamer and a mutiny. Out of the danger of the seas escaped the senior villain, Julian Crawford, financier, to claim the property of his lovely ward, Millie Anderson, reckoned as drowned in the foundered steamer. London, with its sins, was good enough for this Napoleon of crime until Millie and her brave sweetheart Jack, after a long exile on a tropical island, came home to settle accounts.

The majority of authors of that period of the story would have finished the tale, but Mr. Melville only then began a new series of thrills. The financier had a whole bagful of crimes unexhausted. He spirited away the hero to a noisome cellar, and having drugged Millie sent her away to a church to be married to his son.

But an awful retribution was close at hand, for Jack escaped in the nick of time from the cellar, and just when the clergyman was about to marry "the drug-stricken bride" the brave fellow leaped into the church to take his place beside the girl he loved. How the music crashed out the glad welcome, how the house cheered, how the actors bowed, and bowed again, is now history.

Opinions differ about one of the scenes in the melodrama, as witness these two parts:—

... the long scene on the deserted island, where the sun drops like a meteor to its bed.—"Westminster Gazette."

The lovers whispered soft nothings by the shore, whilst a harvest moon that seemed uncertain in its movements raced hurriedly down to meet the horizon as the curtain descended.—"Observer."

Whatever happened, it must be of some consolation to the people who hate to be disillusioned that the moon or the sun, whichever it was, did not twinkle.

New Plays for this Side of the World.

Mr. Geo. Willoughby has purchased the Australian and New Zealand rights of Willard Holcomb's dramatic stage version of Mrs. Augusta J. Evans Wilson's novel "St. Elmo." This book is well-known, and the play secured by Mr. Willoughby is the only version authorised by Mrs. Wilson and her publishers. It is said to preserve as far as possible within dramatic limits of time and space the main incidents and atmosphere of the original romance. The scenes are laid in South America before the Civil war. The new piece by B. C. Carton, "Mr. Preedy and the Countess," which has succeeded "The Night of the Party" at the Criterion Theatre in Sydney, is said to be full of clever humour, so that playgoers are not invited to laugh at mere nonsense or buffoonery. "A Fool There Was" is the title of a drama founded upon Kipling's poem "The Vampire," which is just now being played in America, and is shortly due in London. This piece will be seen in Australia early next year. Mr. George Willoughby having purchased the rights. It will be in the repertoire of the company which he is about to form to produce "The Woman in the Case."

The "Chocolate Soldier" Secured for Australia.

"The Chocolate Soldier"—the musical parody of Bernard Shaw's "Arms and the Man"—which was produced in London with big success, is to come to Australia. Messrs. Clarke and Meynell have secured

the rights. Ernest Shavians—and there are some, it appears!—were completely bewildered by the new piece at the Lyric. According to the English notices, the same "Arms and the Man" story has been employed, but with a seasoning of lyrics obviously from some other hand than that of "G.B.S.," and with some of the familiar gags of musical comedy. Meanwhile, the amused are asking, What is "G.B.S.'s" attitude? The programme, says the "Daily Chronicle," offers apologies to Mr. Shaw for an unauthorised parody on one of his comedies. But the thing isn't a parody, and it could not be unauthorised, since it contains whole speeches only slightly varied from the Shaw original. The story goes, however, that Mr. Shaw was, in fact, approached. The German libretto, it is said, was written, and Mr. Oscar Strauss added his captivating music. Both together were then sent to Mr. Shaw, with a cheque for several thousand pounds, in anticipation of his sanction. He returned the cheque and refused his sanction. Despair on the part of adaptors and composers? Then followed an appeal to Mr. Shaw's good nature. This was successful. Permission gratis, but nothing more at any price! So "The Chocolate Soldier" is produced in Germany, with success; in America with success; in England, with success! This is just the story that is

of 64 voices, although there was in one or two items not the class and crispness one would like to have heard. Raff's "A Call to the Empire"—a stirring composition for baritone and male chorus, and presented to the Society by Madame Melba—received a moderately good rendering, considering the difficulties it presents. The solo part was in the hands of Mr. W. Ryan. A spirited number was Dudley Buck's "The Signal Resounds from Afar." Carl Fischer's "Calm at Sea" was not free from blemish, otherwise it might have provided some truly poetic moments, and "Pilgrim's Evening Star" (Kucken) was the concluding number to a concert of average merit, in which none of the vocalists gave any very distinctive performance. Both Madam Chambers and Mr. J. W. Ryan, as well as Mr. W. Aspinall, were recalled, and all contributed more or less to the success of the concert.

£300 Per Night

Madame Melba told an interviewer recently that the work of getting the artists together for the Australian opera season next year is nearly completed. All the artists whom Madame Melba hoped to secure for the Commonwealth have been obtained with the exception of Mlle. Destinn. Although this great

Stray Notes

The fact that sporting melodramas occupy the boards of two Melbourne theatres at the present time, and are drawing crowded houses, gives rise to some reflections, says "The Southern Sphere." It is true that there are a great many devotees of the turf in this community, and that there are many artistically unsophisticated souls to whom the transpontine drama supplies full satisfaction, but it would not, despite the evidence of the well-filled auditoriums of the theatres, be a legitimate conclusion to draw that sporting melodrama is the kind of theatrical pabulum with which the Australian public will remain content. In neither instance is the plot of the play up even to the ordinary standard of Drury Lane. In both the sporting chances, which prove such a delusion in real life, prove the financial salvation of the hero—a winning ticket in one and a wager with a bookmaker in the other—not a very high ethical ideal to present to an intelligent community.

Hall Caine's play "The Eternal Question" has been a failure in London. It was withdrawn three weeks after staging, and was to be replaced by another hatched-up production from the same author, entitled "The Bishop's Son." "The Dollar Princess" has run for a year in London, and is still going strong. "The Whip" at Drury Lane has also completed its anniversary, whilst "Our Miss Gibbs" continues to draw crowded houses in the Metropolis.

Clarke and Meynell's pantomime this coming Christmas will be "Dick Whittington and his Cat."



THE CANARY'S PREDECESSOR.

"Pretty Dick! Sweet! Sweet!"

going round. The great thing in the piece is Oscar Strauss' music, which is described as "absolutely charming." "It is full of life and wit and melody, and delicate little touches of orchestration, is the verdict of the "Chronicle." Mr. Clyde Meynell, writing to his firm regarding the production, states that on the opening night at the Lyric Theatre the audience went wild with enthusiasm; and that Oscar Strauss, the composer of the opera, who travelled from Vienna to be present, was accorded a memorable ovation when the curtain fell.

Surely things in Australasia have come to a pretty pass when none of the leading theatrical organisations will stage any of Shaw's plays, whilst they don't mind one bit snapping up a parody of his works?

Miss Marie Hall's Tour.

Miss Marie Hall, the famous violinist, has commenced at Durham her long tour, which is to extend over ten months, and in the course of which she will play at 200 concerts. She was to give four concerts at Durban before proceeding to Johannesburg, and probably Pretoria. Her last appearances in South Africa will be at Capetown, where she gives eight concerts. She next visits India, where she is to play in Bombay, Calcutta, and several other cities. From India she proceeds to China and Japan, and then she is to fulfil engagements in New Zealand and Australia. For the tour she has been guaranteed the sum of £10,000, and in addition she is to have a share in the profits of each concert which shows a surplus of more than £50.

Auckland Liedertafel.

The Auckland Liedertafel concluded its season at the Choral Hall last week with a fine programme under the direction of Doctor Thomas. The choral selections on the whole were well rendered by a choir

singer was offered £300 per night her engagements would not allow her to accept a contract which would necessitate so long an absence from Europe.

Farce and Farcical Productions.

"The Man from Cooks; or, The Girl of Ostend," is virtually the last half of the title, or the piece in which Charles Hawtrey made such a hit with in days bygone. It is a farcical jumble in three acts with the usual stereotyped characters dressed up to represent human beings. Fred Graham and Gerald Kay Souper are really the piece. The former has to fill the part of a man who, for the greater part of the first act, staggers over the stage in a state of intoxication. This may be funny—Fred Graham is certainly a splendid mimic—but it is hardly the thing to expect intelligent folk to do otherwise than yawn at. The remaining two acts see him a husband victimised by a decoy on the sands at Ostend, and led into making violent love to a strange lady, whilst the biographer quietly records the whole scene. The same thing happens to his friend Baron de Longchamps (Mr. Kay Souper), and his father-in-law (Mr. Alfred Harford). When the films are shown in London, the "erring" husbands and their wives are plunged into consternation. On this motive the whole action turns. The situation becomes very laughable as the piece proceeds, and the success of it in the eyes of the audience largely springs from the talents of the two leading comedians already named. But, however clever and brilliant these individual parts may be, (for Fred Graham is an irresistible comedian of infinite resource) pieces of this class with their strained situations, their worn-out humour, and their unhuman types, are no longer appealing to the great bulk of the people. The plain fact is, we—that is, most of us—want something which does not fail so conspicuously in its appeal to human credulity.

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