

The Auckland Competitions.

The Auckland competitions have shown that the Northern city possesses in its midst local talent of a very high order. They have also drawn attention to a few weaknesses. They have excited a large amount of interest, and cannot fail to improve literary and artistic standards. All competitions have this great advantage, that they show competitors how they really stand in any subject. The amateur to-day finds it very difficult to get fair and impartial criticism amongst his own circle of friends and acquaintances. He is often unduly encouraged by well-meant but unconsidered praise, or else he is unduly discouraged by neglect and being passed over in favour of some more popular local celebrity. These competitions give an assured status to the competent performer, and enable the less competent to recognise faults and correct them. But it must be remembered that many fail to do themselves justice from sheer nervousness, and no adjudications based on a single performance can be absolutely correct. Those, therefore, who have failed need not be discouraged, but should remember that failure to-day does not necessarily mean failure to-morrow.

The Octopus.

The Standard Oil Company is seeking to extend its operations over Europe, and if it encounters nowhere else in Europe any more serious opposition than Germany can offer it, the American "octopus" can proceed gaily to the execution of its plan for crushing its competitors out of existence. Some ten or twelve years ago the "Standard" entered into negotiations with the German Imperial authorities, by which the latter thought they were driving an exceedingly clever bargain. Mr Rockefeller's benevolent organisation promised to found a "German" branch or branches, and his oil was to be sold to German consumers by Germans under a German name. That sounded conciliatory, innocuous and patriotic to the Government. Since then the trust has brought no less than eight "German" companies into existence, which dominate absolutely every branch of petroleum and benzine supply in that country. All of them are duly incorporated under German law, are conducted by German managers, and are even owned—up to the same limit prescribed by Mr Rockefeller—by German shareholders. The "Standard's" monopolistic grip on the German trade may be gleaned from last year's import statistics. Germany burnt £3,500,000 worth of foreign petroleum in 1909. Some £2,750,000 was furnished by the "Standard's" various "German" companies.

General Diaz.

General Diaz, now eighty years of age, is the Grand Old Man of Mexico. His life has been one long romance. An early struggle for existence, war and strife, wounds so severe that many times death seemed imminent, imprisonments, dangerous escapes, military success, and then the Presidency—all these events followed in quick succession in the career of this extraordinary man. He has shown himself to be a man of strong character and iron will, and has proved himself to be one of the greatest rulers in history. He has reigned with all the power of a king, a pope, and a Czar. He is essentially an autocrat, a monarchical yet democratic ruler. He is a modern of the moderns; and as soon as he hears of any new invention, manufacture, or scientific discovery, he at once sends able representatives to inquire into the matter and report fully to him. That is why Mexico is so up-to-date. More than that, his position is so unique that whatever he decides is for the good of the country can practically be done at once, for he is not hampered by endless Royal Commissions, and can carry a thing through from first to last, while another land is merely thinking about it. Under his rule Mexico has improved in every way. Railways have opened up the country, the finances have been placed on a sound footing, trade has increased. And now that the President is getting old, the country bids fair to revert to its former condition of anarchy and rebellion. The Mexican can only be ruled by the iron hand.

The Selenites.

M. Camille Flammarion, the famous astronomer, has been discussing the aspect of our globe to an imaginary spectator in the moon. "The geographical configuration of our planet could not be distinguished," says M. Flammarion, "because, unlike Mars, or even the moon, it does not always have a clear sky." M. Flammarion shows that, seen as it is, the terrestrial globe suspended in the ever dark lunar sky, studded with stars by day as by night, may to the possible inhabitants of the moon be as a celestial clock placed there by nature to enable them to have a perpetual time-keeper and to regulate their calendar. "Seen from the centre of the lunar hemisphere which is known to us," he says, "the terrestrial planet hangs like a ball ready to fall from the heavens. The diameter of this ball is nearly four times greater than that of the full moon as we see it, and with a surface fourteen times more extensive and more luminous. This enormous fiery ball, which remains motionless in the sky except for turning on its axis, undergoes phases analogous to those which the moon offers us. Thus when we have a full moon the Selenites have a 'full earth' and conversely. The 'new earth' generally occurs in the middle of the lunar day, which is fifteen times longer than our day; the 'first terrestrial quarter' occurs at sunset, the 'full earth' at midnight, and the 'last quarter' at sunrise."

The Anti-slang Club.

New York has started an Anti-Slang Club. The object of the club is to provide prizes for those who can discover good equivalents for slang expressions. The prospectus reads well, and is couched in the purest of English.

THE ANTI-SLANG CLUB.

New Organisation Hits Safe the First Time at Bar, and Looks Like a Winner.

Well, Fellow Citizens, as we said last week in pushing forward our new stunt, somebody has got to put the kybosh on the habit of slinging slang. That was the why of the Anti-Slang Club, to tie a bell to old slang phrases and substitute plain English. Every week some slang phrase will be offered the members of the Anti-Slang Club, and it will be up to them to put it into plain English, or United States, or whatever it is we ought to talk here. For the best and most expressive real language substitute for each slang phrase a prize will be given. Here's another test phrase: "Get to it, Bo; get to it."

The previous competition was for the best substitute for the phrase, "Not on your life," and a prize of £1 was awarded to the sender of the suggestion, "Never! Let George do it." The club ought to be able to add variety to American phraseology, even if it doesn't exactly make it a well of English undefiled.

Conciliation Through Commerce.

Mr. Pepper has forwarded us a very interesting and instructive pamphlet on "Conciliation Through Commerce and Industry in South America." In the course of his review of the political and diplomatic relations of the various republics of South America, he shows that commerce has been a great factor in maintaining peace. He instances the friendly settlement between Chile and the Argentine, and a similar settlement between Brazil and Peru, as well as the recent treaty between Brazil and Uruguay. Mr. Pepper points out that we hear too little about these things because they are not sensational. Now that Crippen has been hanged it may be possible for people to devote some attention to South America. He especially deprecates the publication of accounts of disputes whilst the progress of commerce is ignored. He says that rumours of wars in Latin American countries get sensational headlines in the newspapers; no thought is given to the failure of the rumours to be verified. The facts of industrial progress and commercial advancement are not sensational; no excitement is caused by them, and they pass unnoticed, yet all the time they are doing their beneficent work in promoting peace.

Mr. Hugh J. Ward.

His Retirement from the Stage—Interesting Career.

TO have been an actor and a comedian, to have been the medium of letting recreation and laughter into the lives of the people, and to drop from that honourable mission into the office of a theatrical manager and become a mere hewer of salaries, and a drawer of dividends—ah! it is a terrible fall. Yet it is surprising with what equanimity Mr. Hugh Ward faces that prospective declension. He smilingly thinks that he is progressing and prospering, but how can a man be progressing who throws his talents into the lumber room and allows his artistic self to be overgrown with moss and lichens?

No, on July 1, 1911, when Hugh Ward, a principal in the firm of J. C. Williamson and Co. is born, Hugh Ward the actor dies so far as the theatre-going public are concerned. And he dies in the prosperity of his youth and the fulness

has given to us in the lighter theatrical fare of recent years. We can recall the fact that for two years in succession he contributed a star turn in the Drury Lane pantomime, first in a thoughtful and entertaining sketch of Simian progression entitled "The Evolution of Man," and next in an eccentric dancing act known as "The Scarecrow," a performance which proved so great an attraction that he was engaged by a French manager to repeat it in Paris with a French supporting company, which included Mdlle. Gaby des Lys, to whom the misfortunes of the King of Portugal have quite recently brought notoriety. In the interval between the pantomimes he was for many months premiere dancer at the Empire Theatre with the famous Mdlle. Genee.

For the last five years he has been in management on his own account, and has travelled his company throughout Australasia and the Far East. It must be almost superfluous to remind the public of Mr. Ward's success during that period. He has been the one actor, manager, who self-financed, has been able to keep continuously before the Australian audiences a first-grade company playing high-class comedies and charging top prices. A sound theatrical education in "stock" experience in America, Canada, London, Paris, Australasia, and the Orient, versatile work as an exponent of all emotions, and as a manager and producer, form a very valuable and comprehensive professional asset. Mr. Ward also owes much to the fact that he has studied the literature of the stage, has had opportunities of discussing the higher meaning of dramatic art with such men as the late Sir Henry Irving, Joseph Jefferson, and Monnet Souly, the eminent French tragedian, and has thought on acting in its intellectual and aesthetic aspects.

As before indicated, Mr. Ward considers an experience in "stock" a magnificent education. "It creates enormous resource," he said. "It gives mental and physical pliability and it develops wonderful observations from a human viewpoint. The consequence is that whenever one is called upon to play a part he has stored in his mind a wide knowledge of the oddities and eccentricities of human nature, and these he can reproduce subjective to artistic technique. After all, the soul of acting is truth idealised."

Those are the observations of an actor soon to be no more. What then does the prospective corpse say of his business hereafter? What does it feel like to be at the point of death of one's artistic self?

"Something like suicide—although I have never tried it," the footlight actor replied. "In leaving the footlights and in surrendering the joys of acting and of counterfeiting the pathos and humour of life, one naturally feels many regrets, because it is to the actual playing I attribute whatever success I have had. Time after time I have been fortunate in being able to execute little bits of humanity limned by authors with wonderful imagination, and they have led me into the hearts of characters, to give life and speech and thought to whom life was a real delight. The sensation of playing a part is the same joyous thing as that felt by a little girl in mothering a doll, or a boy in winning the world-distracting battles with regiments of tin soldiers. The actor lives in a great world of make-believe, and the characters of his creation are mentally his friends and associates always. This is the perfume of the actor's existence. But in going into management there is still great play for one's imagination, and for his knowledge of theatrical technique. One's footlight individuality disappears, but in managing and producing one essays bigger creations and expresses one's ideals per medium of the talents of others. To mould a production into proper form, to see in prospective the ensemble, to imbue the members of the company with your own artistic perceptions of what is necessary, to see that each character is first complete in itself



MR. HUGH J. WARD.

of his talents. It is time even now to write his obituary notice, to drop a tear over a Thespian's grave, and to murmur a prayer for an early and glorious resurrection.

Hugh Ward, the actor, seen in his retrospective entirety, is an interesting stage personality. He has had a more interesting and versatile career than the majority of young actors. Twenty-two years ago—and it is no secret that he was then 17 years of age—he joined the stage in America, and for 11 years played in "Stock." To the sound and varied training which he gained during that period, he attributed his later success. A weekly change of programme, and a weekly change of parts involving transition from humour to pathos, from farce to tragedy, and vice-versa, were the genesis of versatility and the development of artistic capacity over its widest range. The last 11 years have been divided between Australia and the Old Country. With an American reputation he came to Australia to play character parts, but was immediately thrown into pantomime, and the public thinking light entertainment to be his forte have ever since given him a standing order for that class of fare. Yet in those 22 years we can recall Mr. Ward in a variety of divergent roles. He stands now at the head of a most interesting gallery of very mixed characters, all of them striking portraits of himself variously expressed. Out of a conglomeration of over 400 parts come thoughts of him as a pantomime comedian, as a serious dramatic artist, as a character actor, as an eccentric dancer, and as a comedian in musical comedy and comic opera. The gallery of portraits show the same personality behind such opposite characters as Sir Toby Belch in "Twelfth Night," Mathias in "The Bulls," Head Farintosh in "School," Eccles in "Caste," "The Fencing Master," "The Private Secretary," "Mr. Hopkinson," "The Man from Mexico," and those half-dozen of giddy but nimble-footed old gentlemen whom Mr. Ward