

Music and Drama.

By BAYREUTH.

BOOKINGS.

(Dates subject to alterations.)

AUCKLAND—HIS MAJESTY'S.

April 15 to May 6—J. C. Williamson ("The Whip") Co.
 May 9—William Anderson Dramatic Co.
 May 18 to June 10—J. C. Williamson
 June 12 to 14—MacMahon Bros.
 July 24 to August 5—Jack and the Beantalk.

WELLINGTON—OPERA HOUSE.

April 15, May 6—J. C. Williamson.
 May 9, 17—Alban Hamilton.
 May 26, June 7—J. C. Williamson.
 June 12, July 1—George Marlow.
 July 6, 20—Clarke and Meynell.
 August 17, 28—J. C. Williamson.
 September 15, 30—Clarke and Meynell.
 October 3, 25—J. C. Williamson.
 November 3, 16—Clarke and Meynell.
 December 2, 16—Max Maxwell.
 Christmas Season.—J. C. Williamson.

Shaw's Latest Plays.

BERNARD SHAW has added another volume to his published plays accompanied by the inevitable preface. The dramas are his three latest, if "Misalliance" be omitted—namely, "The Doctor's Dilemma," "Getting Married," and "The Shewing Up of Blanco Posnet."

One of Mr Shaw's plays with one of his lengthy prefaces affords in itself a sufficient task for the reviewer. But three of his plays with three of these weighty tracts bound up in a single volume present a field of discussion so vast that one may despair of touching more than the edge of it. The plays themselves have already been through the mill of public and private discussion since their first presentation on the stage. Clever, witty, and charged with ideas as they are, they are certainly not his best plays, and "Blanco Posnet" is possibly his worst. When it was seen in Dublin eighteen months ago, critics marvelled at the complacency of the melodrama no less than at its high moral tone to which the Censor objected. But if the plays do not show Mr Shaw at his best, on the other hand, the essays which introduce them are fine examples of his gift for exposition as anything which this writer of brilliant prose has done. Mr Shaw is beyond question a master of exposition. His ceaseless fusillade of witticism blinds many people to the fact that it is not the witticism he is aiming at but the argument. His rapid instinct is made powerful by his exact logical brain. He can marshal an argument and bring heavy guns to bear with masterly precision whilst his quick-firing wit is putting a storm of ridicule on the enemy. For the most part, if you refuse to be blinded by his mere brilliance and steadily examine his argument you find it to be almost a model of sweet reasonableness. Occasionally he departs from that, and then he is appallingly and mischievously plausible. But generally one is astonished that so brilliant a man can be so fundamentally wise and right. His plea for the abolition of the Dramatic Censorship is not only far the most effective practical exposure of the Censorship that has ever been written, but it is a far-reaching and drastic philosophical analysis—first, of the meaning of liberty in the expression and propagation of moral ideas; and secondly, of the actual working of the present system.

"My reputation has been gained by my persistent struggle to force the public to reconsider its morals," he says in the "Rejected Statement," the presentation of which to the Royal Commission on the Censor which sat last year, affords one of those delightful true stories that only a Shaw can make so damning. "I write plays with the deliberate object of converting the nation to my opinions in these matters." That he has to a large extent already converted the intellectuals is beyond question. It is a significant fact that the most powerful modern writers have in the last ten years concentrated their efforts on exposing the tyranny of the established idea. Such diverse writers as Mr Wells, Mr Galsworthy, Mr Granville Barker, Mr Cunningham Graham, Mr Beloe, and Mr Chesterton have written books on the motive of which is savage indignation, or divine anger, or satire, directed against the established

moral codes or intellectual habits. But Mr Shaw, himself following the then obscure Samuel Butler, showed the way for the others. His method was, and is, to combine argument with the more telling weapon of ridicule. In this book he exposes and ridicules the dramatic censorship. He exposes and ridicules the popular conception of happy domestic life, and in like manner the superstition that the faculty of medicine is infallible.

Public Superstition About Doctors.

The picture of concerted professional fraud given up in "The Doctor's Dilemma" is, no doubt, an exaggerated one, but perhaps not more so than is legitimate for the purpose of satire. But in his long essay on the subject he is essentially reasonable. He does not treat the doctor as a murderer or a pickpocket or a human vulture or even a cold-blooded cynic; he merely shows what must happen to the ordinary moderately decent, normal man, without any special moral or intellectual equipment, who becomes a doctor. "As to the honour and conscience of doctors, they have as much as any other class of men, no more and no less. And what other men," he adds characteristically, "dare pretend to be impartial where they have strong pecuniary interest on one side?" He analyses

himself dreams of. When Mr Shaw calls himself an "immoralist," he means that he is the true moralist; that he is going to substitute for a decayed, outworn, conventional, and stupid morality, a morality based upon a rational human principle—a morality that will make society better. He wants us to get rid of the idea that the family, as at present constituted, is the highest form of co-partnership. "The people who talk and write as if the highest attainable state is that of a family stewing in love continuously from the cradle to the grave can hardly have given five minutes' serious consideration to so outrageous a proposition."

Home life, as we understand it, is no more natural to us than a cage is natural to a cockatoo. Its grave danger to the nation lies in its narrow views, its unreasonably sustained and spitefully jealous consciousness, its petty tyrannies, its false social pretence, its endless grudges and squabbles, its sacrifice of the boy's future by setting him to earn money to help the family when he should be in training for his adult life (remember the boy Dickens and the blacking factory), and of the girl's chances by making her a slave to sick or selfish parents, its unnatural packing into little brick boxes of little parcels of humanity of ill-assorted ages, with the old scolding or berating the young for behaving like young people, and the young hating and thwarting the old for behaving like old people, and all the other ills, mentionable and unmentionable, that arise from excessive segregation. It sets these evils up as benefits and blessings representing the highest attainable degree of honour and

smoke in any form, and he clothes himself in the swaddling clothes of a blameless life in the shape of Jaeger garments. He even goes to rest, I have been informed upon excellent authority—that of the maid who looked after his room when he was staying in the Midlands—in a sleeping bag, like an Egyptian mummy in a sarcophagus. In his early days he was the despair of his friends. They regarded him as inhuman, where really he was unhuman. He was a man who never drank, never smoked, never ate meat, and never swore—his objections to the words "d—n," "devel" and "hades," being significant, not to say pathetic. There is some hope of a man's reformation if he has been a sinner—but the case of Bernard Shaw was hopeless, for there was nothing to reform.

"One man in disgust addressed him thus: 'You don't smoke, you don't drink, you don't swear—what do you do?' Shaw replied quite pleasantly, 'I? Oh, I spit.'"

Commercialised Journalism.

Arnold Bennet's striking play "What the Public Wants" has been produced at the Gaiety Theatre in Manchester. It is a drama of the newspaper world and unmistakably aims at the methods of "The Daily Mail" and other Harnsworth papers in the art of writing to please people, and sometimes writing to deliberately mislead the public.

In his drama, Mr. Arnold Bennet has vividly portrayed the evils of this commercialised journalism. We are introduced to the head of a great newspaper trust which runs numberless dailies, weeklies, and monthlies throughout the country, and all on one principle—"Give the public what it wants; don't give it what it ought to want, but what it actually does want." Sir Charles Worgan, the chief proprietor, is impatient with the moralists, who would have him be General Booth, H. G. Wells, and the Hague Conference all in one. "When one goes into a tobacconist's and asks for cigarettes, the man behind the counter does not think it his duty to tell one that cigarettes are injurious and to hand one a pipe and tobacco instead." Similarly must journalism be a trade supplying the demand of the public without inquiry as to its ethical and moral values. Whilst unashamedly asserting this principle and expressing pain that it should be attacked, Sir Charles thinks it perfectly legitimate to create the demand for his productions by stirring the worst human passions. "The circulation of the 'Daily Mercury' (does not one character in the play purposely say 'Daily Mail'?) must be a million in two months' time, even if the country goes to war for it," he exclaims, banging his fist upon the table. In contrast with Sir Charles Worgan, enter Mr. Holt St. John, theatrical manager and idealist, who stages artistic plays before empty houses. "The majority is always wrong," his philosophy runs, "and it's we who change it." The battle between these two conceptions is fought out (with the aid of a woman) in a dialogue that is brilliant and epigrammatic. The play is a revelation of modern newspaper methods, which are rather conspicuous in the politics of the particular journals which the author has in mind.

Millionaire Bunglers.

The millionaire's theatre of New York which was intended to elevate the drama and be run on repertory lines, has come in for some strong criticism.

The history of the theatre to date, writes Jeanette Gilder from New York, reads like a chapter of bungles for even the construction of the house itself, beautiful though it be, was a bungle. At first the audience could not hear unless they sat in the front rows. Then a quarter of a million, I believe that is the figure, was spent in lowering the ceiling, which has helped the acoustics, but spoiled the beauty of the great dome. One still has to be well in the middle of the house to see all the stage, for the proscenium square—it is not the usual arch—cuts off much of the view from the sides. Now the directors have discovered that the whole house is a mistake for dramatic productions, and it is generally understood that a newer and smaller theatre will be built for the production of plays and that the present house will be given over to opera. What will be the name of the proposed theatre? Will it be called the Newest Theatre to distinguish it from the one first built?

The director seems to have been the right man in the wrong place, for he has resigned after untold difficulties. The board of directors is made of men of affairs, shrewd financiers, bankers, and the like, who would no more think of



PLAY TITLES TRAVESTED.

"Is Marriage a Failure?"

the psychology of the practitioner and the specialist; he shows how much guesswork there must be, where even the most distinguished differ; in what manner we are all handed over bound, to the tender mercies of men who are often poor, overworked, unscientific, and if they are specialists, prejudiced. What he says about the surgeon and the specialist is more true than what he says of the general practitioner. Long experience of varied illnesses is more valuable for the curing of simple diseases than much so-called "scientific knowledge"; and as it happens the life of the general practitioner is one which does result in promoting certain healthy cynicisms and human deficiencies which are singularly lacking in the specialist on the one side and the routine-driven hospital nurse on the other.

On Marriage.

The essay which precedes "Getting Married" is stronger in its attack than in its reconstructive proposals. It is interesting to find Mr Shaw confessing that "young women come to me and ask me whether I think they ought to consent to marry the man they have decided to live with." Mr Shaw, of course, urges them "on no account to compromise themselves without the security of an authentic wedding ring." But has he any right to be surprised? If you attack an existing morality, it is only natural that the public should think you are advocating the corresponding "immorality," as popularly understood; and one suspects that Mr Shaw has, from this natural misunderstanding, more to answer for than he

virtue, whilst any criticism of or revolt against them is savagely persecuted as the extremity of vice.

Mr. Shaw thinks that the matter can be solved by such simple economic expedients as making women economically independent and legitimising children.

Such material for a play is characteristic of Shaw's daring and originality. Whatever his views may be and however much we may be inclined to disagree with him, does not after the fact he is the living evidence of his intense morality. His abstinence in the matter of food and drink, his simple habits of living and the deep-seated vein of kindness which animate the man (as his more intimate friends well know), raise him high above the conception conservative minded people are apt to form of the dramatist as a man. Shaw lives a clear century in advance of contemporary ideas of what is fit, proper and right in so-called home life. One needs an intimate personal knowledge derived by contact with the social problems of the millions in the older countries of the world to recognise the force and the justice that is behind a lot the dramatist says. Meanwhile students of the greatest of our modern playwrights will find very entertaining reading and food for infinite reflection in the brilliant pages of his latest volume.

Garments and Habits.

Appropos of "G.B.S." Desmond Shaw writes in "The Coming Nation" as follows:—

His saintliness is overwhelming. It is unnatural. It is Satanic. He has not a single redeeming vice. He has never tasted stimulants; tobacco he detests—he has a particular dislike to