

# Music and Drama.

By BAYREUTH.

## BOOKINGS.

(Dates subject to alteration.)

**HIS MAJESTY'S THEATRE.**  
 November 27 to December 9—Auckland Competitions Society.  
 December 23 to 24—"The Speckled Band."  
 December 30 to January 13—H. B. Irving, 1912.  
 January 26 to February 13—New Comic Opera Company.  
 April 6 to 20—"Everyman's" Company.  
 May 6 to 22—"Chocolate Soldier."  
 June 24 to July 6—"Pantomime."  
 July 22 to August 3—"The Blue Bird."  
 September 30 to October 12—Oscar Asche-Lily Brayton.

**WELLINGTON OPERA HOUSE.**  
 December 2 to 16—Rikards' Vaudeville Co.  
 December 21 to January 16—New Comic Opera Co., "The Bulkin Princess."  
 January 23 to February 14—H. B. Irving Co., "The Speckled Band."  
 February 15 to 22—"The Speckled Band" Co.  
 March 10 to 26—Alma Hamilton Dramatic Co.  
 April 4 to 20—"The Chocolate Soldier" Co.  
 April 27 to May 16—"Manly" Dramatic Co.  
 May 23 to 28—"Everyman's" Co.  
 July 17 to 30—J. C. Williamson, Ltd., Pantomime Co.  
 August 14 to 27—"The Blue Bird" Co.  
 October 16 to November 2—Oscar Asche-Lily Brayton Co.  
 November 5—"Ben Hur" Co.

### The Coming of a Great Singer.

THE approaching year of 1912 promise to bring to this side of the world the finest English contralto in Madame Kirkby Lunn. To many people, denied the opportunities of contact with the wider world of the arts, the name of this singer can convey but little. Having had the opportunity of hearing her both on the concert platform and the operatic stage, perhaps I may be pardoned in wishing to say a few words about a truly fine singer. There is nothing of the ballad-monger about this full-toned, gorgeous voice that penetrates every fibre of ones' being. She excels in the masterpieces of German vocal art, the inexpressible songs of Schumann, Brahms, Schubert, and Richard Strauss. She takes rank with the leading operatic artists of the world. Only last year at Covent Garden she added to an already great reputation by her performances, especially in "Samson and Dalila," in which her acting, like her singing, was superb. She is a real, all-British prima-donna, and as "Brigandina" in Wagner's finest tragedy, "Tristan and Isolde," she has few equals anywhere. Her career is full of interest, especially to those who have heard her rich and glorious voice pouring out its beauties to the favoured few at the Opera House.

### Early Days.

True, there is a strain of Spanish blood in her veins, which, no doubt accounts for a dramatic power and abandon rather unusual in English artists, but save for that her family is exclusively British, and she was born and reared at Manchester. There is more than a touch of romance about Madame Kirkby Lunn's early life, for in those days a frequent visitor to her home was a distant cousin, a Mr. Pearson, whose wife she was destined to become. Himself an enthusiastic amateur musician, it was Mr. Pearson who first discovered the rare possibilities of his cousin's voice, and on his advice she took lessons from Mr. Greenwood, organist of All Saints' Church. Then, again, on Mr. Pearson's advice, she tried for a rational scholarship at the Royal College of Music, but could get no nearer than proxime accessit. Nothing daunted, Miss Kirkby Lunn entered the college as an ordinary student, and the following year she triumphantly carried off the coveted scholarship.

### A Famous Teacher.

Madame Kirkby Lunn was fortunate in her teacher of singing at the Royal College of Music, and she does not forget to acknowledge how much she owes to the whole-hearted enthusiasm, vast experience, and skilful methods of her professor, that very remarkable and clever man, Mr. or, to give him his full title, Cavaliere Albert Visetti. What Mr. Visetti has done for the cause of English singing can never be adequately expressed, but some day perhaps he will write the story of his long fight with the prejudice against English singers, and

the prejudices of British parents, who for long were convinced that Continental professors alone could train and produce a singer of the first rank. Anyway, in Madame Kirkby Lunn Mr. Visetti vindicated the principle for which he has long and stubbornly battled, namely, that the best place to train an English singer, who is necessarily going to appeal mainly to English audiences, is England.

### Her Debut.

While still a student of the Royal College of Music, Madame Kirkby Lunn had the unusual honour of singing twice before Royalty; on the first occasion before Queen Victoria in a command performance of an opera which had been produced by the students at the Prince of Wales Theatre, and on the second occasion before the then Princess of Wales, who sent her a gracious message, as she again did when Madame Kirkby Lunn made her first appearance in "Lohengrin." Her actual debut, however, was in "Shammas O'Brien," with the late Mr. Denis O'Sullivan as the hero, although before this she had already been offered and accepted a five years' contract for Grand Opera with Sir Augustus Harris. His death, however, put an end to that engagement ere it was well begun, and then she toured for three years with the Grand Opera Company. Later Madame Kirkby Lunn was appointed first contralto at Covent Garden, and since then, a true British product, she has gone on from triumph to triumph in opera, oratorio, and ballad concert, not only in England, but on the Continent and in America. Mention of America reminds one that Madame Kirkby Lunn has more than something of the heroic in her composition, for while giving a series of concerts in that country some years ago, she contracted congestion of the lungs, but nevertheless appeared and sang while suffering from that complaint.

### After Twenty Years.

"Lady Windermere's Fan"—one of Oscar Wilde's better-known plays, which was first produced in London some 20 years ago, has been revived at St. James' Theatre—the fashionable house of the "West End." The revival awakened memories for some of the leading critics. "To see it again," remarks the "Telegraph," "is to be reminded vigorously that many things have happened to our stage in this last decade. In 1892 the people who liked the play least admitted that it was vastly clever. The plays that we call clever in 1911 have to be much less ingenious, much less like a wax-work, than 'Lady Windermere's Fan.' This is not to deny its wit. There are a thousand neat things in it, and a considerable array of things much better—the final perfect form of epigrams that even in the rough would be a possession for ever. To be intelligible is to be found out, and a cynic knows the price of everything and the value of nothing, may be jewels dug up long before Oscar Wilde's day, but it was he who cut them to their delightful perfection. The audience of 1911 enjoyed these and everything else tremendously. If their laughter and applause be a final judgment, the play must surely be a masterpiece. But it is impossible for criticism to call it even the shadow of that. The naivete of its technique, the simple-minded theatricality of its characters, its poverty of invention, and conventionality of imagination and thought were not hidden from everyone in 1892. They are glaring to 1911. Even in 1892 there were critics who felt a duty to repeat Whistler's gibe that Oscar Wilde had a good memory. That memory for stage devices, which, even twenty years ago, were sadly faded, is now a means to melancholy. Yet the wit flashes as brightly, or almost as brightly, as ever, and you may still spend a very pleasant, though not a wholly pleasant, evening watching 'Lady Windermere's Fan.'"

### Driven Out by the Puritans.

Mr Arthur Bourchier, the well-known actor-manager, is responsible for the statement that the majority of people in England do not take the drama seriously. It would be wrong (he says) to blame the man who, after eight or ten hours' worry in the city, rather resents being asked by the dramatist to solve some knotty moral problem. The man had done his duty grimly all through the

day, and when evening came he wanted to laugh, not to think. He was frivolous as a playgoer simply because he was strenuous as a citizen.

That the people would soon begin to take the drama seriously was not, he thought, too much to hope. We had seen how quick and how great the change had been in musical performances since the people began to take a serious practical interest in music. If there be sympathy with regard to the drama at the present moment, it was because the Puritans in their mistaken zeal drove it out of the hearts of the people, and it had never really returned.

Perhaps so, Mr. Bourchier, perhaps so. The decline of the drama is inevitable so long as it is governed by commercial and not artistic considerations. Puritanism has strangled a certain amount of art in Britain, but money is killing a good deal more.

### A Book of Amazing Stories.

Mr. James Glover is a well known figure in London, who conducts the Drury Lane Pantomime every year and fulfils various capacities in public life.

His latest is to appear as the author of a volume of stories gay and curious, a record of "things seen"—mostly with a twinkle in the eye—in his quadruple capacity of musician, journalist, Bohemian; and late his Worship the Mayor of Hexhill-on-Sea, "Jimmy Glover: His Book," just brought out by Messrs. Methuen, is indeed an autobiography of infinite jest and humour.

"The general conductor, with his round face and figure, his baton and monocle, is as much an institution at Drury Lane as the pantomime itself," it is recorded. But his fourfold personality is apt to lead to error. As witness the following incident: "While I was Mayor of Hextill," relates Mr. Glover, "I was asked by the West Country Association to respond to a toast on the occasion of the visit of the Lord Mayor, Sir William Trehear, of whom it is said that he 'throws oil-cloth on the troubled waters.' My neighbour was Sir William's popular Sheriff, Sir William Dunn, M.P. After grace, the Sheriff took up my card, and read out: 'The Mayor of Hextill, James Glover, Esq., J.P.' 'Dear, dear!' he continued. 'Why, you've got the same name as that advertising chap at Drury Lane who is always getting his name in the papers. It's perfectly sickening! Every Sunday morning I take up my 'Referer,' and see that Jimmy Glover has done this—that—and the other thing.' I replied, 'Yes, it's awful! In my speech later on in the evening I soon convinced Sir William of my advertising power.'"

### In Ireland.

It is superfluous to observe that Mr. Glover hails from Ireland. From the first page to the last his book teems with picturesque episodes of life in the land of Swift and Sheridan, all of which the author views from a humorous aspect. The following chestnut, he assures us, is attributed to Baron Dowse, who once charged a jury in a libel action where the defence was a printer's error. "Jintleminey th' joory," said the Judge, "the diffence in this case is th' owid you is a printer's error. I well remember once making a political speech in Cork, and quoting that old saying, 'Better fifty years of Europe than a cycle of Cathay,' and what was my astonishment to read in 'The Cork Constitution' the next morning that I had said 'Better fifty years of tightrope than a direus in Bombay.' Now, jintleminey, you know the value is a printer's error."

As with most artists, the author's early career was marked by alternate periods of prosperity and penury—mostly penury. He was a true Bohemian, and his nomadic instinct led him from town to town, from London to Paris, where, inspired by a letter that appeared in "The Daily News," he sought an interview with Victor Hugo, on the question of a State-subsidized theatre in London. The poet received the struggling young journalist with the utmost cordiality, and in somewhat dogmatic style made to him the following statement: "I am afraid," he said, "that the conditions under which the drama pursues its way in your Metropolis, the conditions under which your poets and authors write their works, the conditions under which they are performed, and the general atmosphere of irresponsibility under which the average Briton patronises all amusements, and his theatres in particular, render it almost impossible that the scheme could be successfully realised."

### A Story of Shaw.

On his return to England in 1890 young Glover found himself stranded in London, his allowance of twenty shillings being abruptly discontinued. His luckily (or unluckily) obtained an engagement at Southampton to "wamp" appropriate music to a magician lady, who, he frankly admits, performed all sorts of ridiculous feats. Other touring experiences with acrobats, a sword swallower, and a "man-fish" followed, until finally he was appointed musical director in Mr. Charles Collette's burlesque company at the then handsome amusement, to him, of £3 per week. Fortune at last smiled upon him. He became the friend of all the stars of the London stage in the eighties and nineties, and joined Sir, then plain Mr. Augustus Harris at Covent Garden.

Here, among other parts, he played that of mediator between the manager of the theatre and Mr. George Bernard Shaw, to whom Harris had taken a dislike, and barred on first nights. The first meeting between the critic and the manager took place at the premiere of the "Valkyrie," with Herr Lohse conducting for the first time in England. Harris took special pride in the band—always a big Wagnerian "desideratum." "What do you think of the opera tonight?" the manager asked of G.B.S.

"Oh, very good—very good."  
 And then a lull. A long, deadly pause. "And," continued Harris, "what do you think of the band—yes, the band?—isn't it splendid?"  
 Another long pause.  
 Then, Shaw, pushed in a corner, said: "Yes, they're not bad—not bad—but I think they've wonderfully deteriorated since I heard them last on the Sunday boat going to Hampton Court."

### Paper Bag Song.

The pantomime songster is hard at it in London rhyming sentimental and comic ditties wherewith to stir the imagination of the great British public. Here is a sample Harry Fragon is to sing at the Drury Lane pantomime at Christmas:—

You've heard about the latest kind of cooking  
 In little paper bags—it's quite a craze.  
 My wife has got the fever, and I swear  
 I'll have to leave her  
 If she doesn't change her paper-baking ways.  
 It's not the paper bags that I object to,  
 It's her method that's so very, very crude.  
 For the paper bags she uses are all made  
 from "Daily News-ies."  
 And the print boils off and comes out  
 on the food.

Delightfully inconsequential is the chorus of the second verse:—

First the hero meets the maiden on the codfish,  
 And murmurs, "Just one kiss before we part."  
 Then the villain his "Ha! ha!" snips in  
 the middle of the parsnips.  
 And he awears his love upon the apple tart.  
 He murmurs, "Fly with me!" upon the cabbage.  
 She spurns him—then the villain, getting vexed,  
 Cries, "Your jewels I will purloin!" but  
 she stabs him on the sirloin.  
 And the wedding is "continued in our next."

### "The Blue Bird."

Maeterlinck's "The Blue Bird" is to reach Australasia late next year, and it is rumoured that the original producer in London, Mr. Herbert Trench (late of the Haymarket Theatre), is to supervise the production on this side of the world. It is now being played at the Kensington Theatre in London, but after Christmas it will return once more to the "West End." Finally, after its reappearance in London, the "Bird" is to take its long flight across the seas—as far as the Antipodes. This will be the first production of it by an English company, in a country outside Europe and America. When it is added that "The Blue Bird" has lately had a most prosperous run in the provinces, it will be seen that Maeterlinck's popularity as a dramatist in England has been well established.

Yet when the piece was first produced at the Haymarket not a few people thought the management was attempting a somewhat hazardous experiment. Would the Belgian poet's symbolism be understood by the average playgoer? it was asked.

To-day there is an unequivocal answer to the question. "The Blue Bird" has been understood and appreciated, not only