

Music and Drama.

By BAYREUTH.

BOOKINGS.

(Dates subject to alteration.)

HIS MAJESTY'S THEATRE.

In Season—"The Speckled Band."
April 8 to 20—"Everywoman" Company.
June 24 to July 6—"Pantomime."
July 22 to August 3—"The Blue Bird."
September 20 to October 12—"Oscar Asche-
Lily Brayton.

WELLINGTON OPERA HOUSE.

In Season—H. R. Irving Co.
February 17 to March 1—Allen Moore
Comedy Co.
March 19 to March 26—Alban Hamilton
Dramatic Co.
March 27 to March 31—Mr. Joseph Blascheck,
Society Entertainer.
April 27 to May 18—Marlow Dramatic Co.
May 25 to 28—"Everywoman" Co.
July 17 to 30—"C. Williamson, Ltd., Pan-
tomime Co.
August 14 to 27—"The Blue Bird" Co.
October 19 to November 2—"Oscar Asche-
Lily Brayton Co.
November 5—"Ben Hur" Co.

The Broad View.

IT is a deplorable fact that the average musician is far too narrow in his ideas, and lives in a world of his own, says a Home paper in a sensible plea for the broad view in matters musical. There is a large Debussy and Strauss following who look upon Mendelssohn as a musical prattling babe. In earlier times there were hosts of Wagner-phobes. Before Ella and others brought him to our notice, Schumann and all his works were either unknown or totally unappreciated in England. It was left to old Wesley to germinate the seeds of admiration for Bach, long after the old Cantor had passed away. The war between the pro-Lizts and the anti-Lizts still rages. Schubert did not live to enjoy the grunts of popularity. Sullivan, because his latter years were devoted to lighter form, is considered by many beneath notice. Mozart's scoring is, in these times, looked upon as thin. Handel's oratorios as hopelessly old-fashioned. The only master who appears to silence the adverse critics is the mighty Beethoven. All these things are due to violent partisanship, which, if a credit to enthusiasm, is a menace to the broad view. While acknowledging that prejudice and hatred are preferable to indifference, it would be well if violent critics asked themselves one question before indulging in whole-hearted abuse: "Is Go-and-So's work good music?" If it be good music, there must be merit in it, whether it appeals to them or no. If their answer is in the negative, then they will be at considerable pains to define bad music. When one comes to think of it, this is no easy task. It is hard to see how any music can be bad unless it breaks in the most flagrant way various laws of harmony. Music can be dull, monotonous, or light, without being bad. It can be good whether simple or complex, whether beautiful or ugly (in the latter of the cases it is usually called "fine" or "impressive"). One regards a piece of manufacture as bad when it is defective, and it can only be defective when either the material is poor or the construction is opposed to the rules governing the construction. But the material for music-making is always the same—twelve semi-tones re-duplicated at will. The construction is the laws of harmony and its attendant sciences. Thus the breaking of such laws must be the cause of bad music. It is, therefore, passing strange that the much-vaunted modern school is just that school which deliberately breaks the accepted rules. We know, however, that laws are made to be broken, and that our modernists break them with their eyes open. So that it would seem that the only really bad music—music with absolutely nothing to recommend it—is that wherein the accepted laws are broken through ignorance of their existence, and the work is one of ill-constructed crudity. This is a somewhat unfair corollary, for to sin in ignorance is not so bad as to sin against the light. Still we must accept it, and until the supporters of this or that school of musical thought can give any better definition of what bad music is, they should view the works of composers who do not find favour in their eyes with toleration.

Typically English.

I like the Alhambra; it is a gay bobbing bubble of a place, says an appreciative Londoner. It has kept the frilled banner of the ballet flying through good and evil repute. In spite of its name, there is no London dancing-hall, save the Empire, more distinctly English in character, and it has the best bob amphitheatre in town. It knows where it stands and what it stands for. It realises that it faces on the one side the self-contained flats and the second-hand bookshops of Churing Cross-road, and on the other the lights and laughter of Leicester Square; and it has kept, as I have hinted, the frilled skirt of the old-fashioned ballet flying through all the intoxicating whirl of the Russian invasion. For though Geltzer came and conquered and a Russian gentleman drilled the corps de ballet, it was remarkable how entirely English the Alhambra Russian ballet remained. The principal dancers at the Alhambra have not always been first-class—Britta was just competent, another wasn't, but its corps de ballet is always superb. It is always so young, so spirited, so full of that plain English jollity we find so much easier to understand than the fiery abandon of the East.

National Anthems.

I wonder nobody takes the trouble to compile an official record of the National Anthems of the world, writes J. M. Glover, in London "Opinion." The American Government some years ago commissioned Mr. Sousa to tour the hemispheres and publish such a directory, but even this is hopelessly out of date, and in most cases inaccurate. The amount of learning and labour which is expended on esoteric collections of once-published and—and-never-heard-of-again—musical literature alarms one by its magnitude, and yet I am willing to wager that not six musicians in England could off-hand tell us what is—or was—the correct National hymn for Canada, India, or South Africa, apart from the Empirical strains of our own "God Save the King." This paragraph grows out of the complaint of a reader that both "Yankee Doodle" and "The Watch on the Rhine" are invariably played in music-halls in England as the "National Hymns" of America and Germany. They are, of course, National melodies, but not the accepted "official" anthems. It was Sir W. Gilbert, I think, who gave us the song about "That Horrible National Anthem," and from another lyrical source I quote of a monarch who went about crying in the wilderness:—

Give me a song with a flag in it,
Written by Kipling or "Dag-in-it";
Plenty of national brag in it,
Oh—give me something to sing.
Give me a song of the motherhood,
Give me a song of the brotherhood,
By Gilbert, by Tom, or the other Hood,
Oh give me something to sing.

The sentiment is a little rough, and, oh! the rhyme in the second line—"Dagonet," forgive me—but the song which has just occurred to me had a certain vogue some years ago.

Tuneful or Toneless Passies.

The "New York Times" has printed a communication from a correspondent, who avers that near him lives an old Italian violin maker. This person having noticed that cats—like human beings differ in the quality of the vocal sounds they emit, has divided the tribe into two portions, which, according to the tunefulness or the reverse displayed, he has dubbed "Italians" and "Germans" respectively. By some means, not revealed, he manages to entice the pussies to his room, and makes them sing, probably by measures more forcible than sympathetic. Those with bad voices he has no use for, but should poor grinnalkin prove to have a good one her fate is sealed. She is sympathized, and her last end is—fiddle-strings! This ingenious old gentleman says that the best quality strings are obtained from pussies with the best voices, so henceforward people who are troubled of nights with the nocturnal serenaders, had better secure the offenders and ship them off to New York. Hitherto the best Italian strings have been made from the intestines of lambs, though in France and Germany those of sheep and calves are used. If musical

cats are to be utilised in this way, one may look forward to the regular breeding of the feline race for the Italian market, but we incline to fancy that some rude, irreverent fellow has been indulging in the pastime of what is vulgarly called "pulling the leg" of the editor of the "New York Times," a thing which is particularly to be reprobated when done to an editor. Notwithstanding its name, catgut is not derived from cats, musical or otherwise.

The Covent Garden Season.

The London operatic public is the most fickle in the world. At one moment it seems to like novelty; at another the old, hackneyed works seem to be preferred. Even the cleverest of managers can scarcely know how to deal with such a state of affairs. On the whole, the recent season at Covent Garden was quite successful. The Wagner performances had large audiences, and the Russian ballet—upon whose services the management have an option for next year—always drew well. But we might have had a little more opera and a little less ballet, for the latter has actually out-rivalled the former as regards the number of performances, says the "Evening News." As another contemporary points out, the whole of the original programme was not carried out, and neither "Lohengrin," the "Flying Dutchman," nor the new ballets seen. The fact is accounted for by the extra cycle given of the "Ring." This work certainly proved very popular, and the third representation fully met the wishes of the patrons of the Royal Opera.

A Future for English Opera.

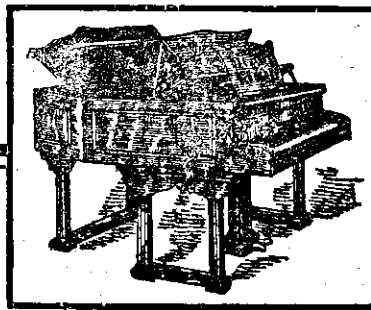
Mr. Oscar Hammerstein, in responding to the toast of "Our Guest" at the London Press Club House dinner recently, made a striking speech on the future of the British opera. He expressed his appreciation of the reception accorded to his venture in Kingsway. It had been said he was bound to fail because the English public cared nothing about opera. The house had only been opened a month, and that prediction had already been proved to be untrue. The support of the public had been enthusiastic in the extreme, and the attendances had

been large and constantly increasing. (Applause.) Presently he hoped to be able to do something in the way of fostering native talent.

It was the modesty of the English race which caused them to under-rate their musicians, for he was convinced by the scores which he had looked through that English composers were fit to be compared with the greatest of living musicians. They only needed encouragement. His venture was still in its infancy and had to feel its way, but in the future, if they permitted him to remain in London—(applause)—he hoped to give the works of their native composers a prominent place in his repertoire. (Applause.) Mr. Hammerstein also paid a splendid tribute to the work of his chorus, which, he said, was composed wholly of English singers. He had engaged French and Italian choruses, but after he had heard only half a dozen bars from English chorus singers, he cancelled the old contracts, and engaged all English singers. The talent would grow and expand, and would be the envy of every country.

A Mystery Play.

The production in London of Professor Reinhardt's mystery play, "The Miracle," which was mentioned in a cablegram the other day, the occasion of a visit of a large number of clergymen being taken advantage of for a demonstration on the part of the Anti-ritualists, was a remarkable achievement. "The Miracle" is a wordless mystery drama written by Dr. Karl Vollmoeller, a young German author, who had previously adapted a number of Greek plays for Professor Reinhardt. The period chosen for the story was the end of the twelfth century, and the dresses were of similar design to those used in "Faust." The leading woman character in the play is a nun, and the principal men are a knight and his troubadour. The "crowd" forms an important factor in the evolution of the drama, no fewer than 2000 persons being required to portray its movements. The music, written by Humperdinck, is a special feature of the play. The preparations for the production were considered the most elaborate ever undertaken in London. A large portion of the great Olympia building was transformed into



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