

Music and Drama.

By BAYREUTH

BOOKINGS.

(Dates subject to alterations.)

HIS MAJESTY'S, AUCKLAND.

October 23 to November 8—Auckland Amateurs. "The Mikado."
November 11—Carrie Moore Company.

AUCKLAND PICTURE SHOWS.

The Lyric Theatre, Symonds Street—Nightly.
Royal Albert Hall, Albert Street—Nightly.

AUCKLAND TOWN HALL.

November 30—Mr. H. Barry Cosay's Recital.

Milestones—A play of Three Generations.

It is too early to say whether "Milestones," the play written in collaboration by Arnold Bennett and Edward Knoblauch (author of "Kismet"), is a work of enduring merit; but it certainly is an unusually interesting and extraordinarily successful experiment. After being the rage of London for a season, it is now repeating its English success in America. Before long we in New Zealand and Australia will see the play for ourselves under the J. C. Williamson management, and for that reason the following summary will be of interest:—

The two authors have here attempted in the drama what Eugene Sue, Victor Hugo and other writers of their period have accomplished in fiction. They represent three successive generations of one family, beset by the same problems under varying aspects—in 1860, in 1885, and in 1912. Although the family history thus repeats itself in the three acts of the play, we never, as the London critics point out, are bored for a moment. With exquisite irony Bennett and Knoblauch reveal how the progressives of today are the reactionaries of to-morrow. The play would leave us somewhat discouraged if it did not insinuate that life moves, after all, not in a circle, but in a spiral. Though human nature remains essentially the same, we have reason to hope more from to-morrow than from the present. The burden of the play is distinctly melioristic.

The action of the play takes place in the drawing-room of Samuel Sibley senior's house in Kensington Gore. In the first act all the decorations, pictures and furniture are of the mid-Victorian period. Mrs. Rhead, a woman near sixty, is sitting on the sofa, crocheting some lace, which is evidently destined to trim petticoats. Her hair is dressed in the style of 1840, although her dress is of the 1860 period. Near her, in an armchair, sits Rose Sibley, a romantic, gentle-looking girl of twenty-one, who is dressed in the height of fashion of the period. Rose's father and her brother Sam are in the iron business with John Rhead, a young man in whom Rose is more than interested. John represents the younger generation in business, for he sees the future of shipbuilding in iron ships, whereas the Sibleys, both father and son, put their trust in English oak. John tells Rose that he loves her, but he also intimates the probability of a crisis in his business relations with her father. Rose confesses that she shares his feelings, but adds that she would not marry him without her father's consent. She advises John to win over her brother Sam, who is engaged to his sister Gertrude. Sam receives John's overtures with grave suspicion. "Why," he inquires of his partner and prospective brother-in-law, "don't you play with the cards on the table?"

Samuel: Why don't you play with the cards on the table?
John: I'm only too anxious to play with the cards on the table.
Samuel: There it is, business you really wanted to talk about after all!
John (movement of irritation concealed): I expect your father's heart is not as hard as Macleans, though how it's got about I can't imagine.
Samuel: Macleans? Macleans of Green-blithe?
John: Yes. That's what's worrying the old man, isn't it?
Samuel: I don't know.
John: He hasn't mentioned Macleans to you?
Samuel: He has not. He isn't a great talker, you know. He merely said to me he suspected you were up to something.
John: And what did you say?
Samuel: Briefly, I said I thought you

were. (Disgustedly.) But, by gad, I never dreamed you were hobnobbing with the Macleans gang.

John: Macleans are one of the oldest shipbuilding firms in the South of England. I went to the launch to-day with Andrew Macleans.

Samuel: What's shipbuilding got to do with us?

John: It's got nearly everything to do with us. Or it will have. Now listen, Samuel. I've arranged a provisional agreement for partnership between Macleans and ourselves.

Samuel: You've—

John: Half a minute. Macleans are rather flattered at the idea of a connection with the august firm of Sibley, Rhead and Sibley.

Samuel: By God! I should think they were. (Walks away.)

John: They've had an output of over 25,000 tons this year. All wood. Naturally they want to go in for iron. They'll pay handsomely for our help and experience. In fact, I've got a draft agreement, my boy, that is simply all in our favour.

Samuel: Did you seriously suppose—

John: Let me finish. It's a brilliant agreement. In three years it'll mean the doubling of our business. And we shall have the satisfaction of being well-established in the great industry of the future. Your father's old. I don't expect him to be very enthusiastic about a new scheme. But you're young, and you can influence him. He'll be retiring soon, and you and I will be together—just the two of us. We're marrying each other's sisters. And we shall do it tomorrow or fortnight or so.

Samuel: And have you had the impudence to try to make an agreement behind our backs?

John (controlling himself): I've made no agreement. It's only got the offer. It's open to you to refuse or accept. I only held my tongue about it so as to keep the job as easy as possible.

Samuel: You had no right to approach anyone without consulting us.

John: I guessed from your father's attitude these last two days that something had leaked out. That's why I'm telling you first, Sam—to-night. Come now, look at that draft agreement and reason with me. Don't condemn it offhand. A great deal depends on your decision—more than you think.

Samuel: I don't see that anything particular depends on my decision. If we refuse, we refuse. And we shall most decidedly refuse.

John: But it's impossible you should be so blind to the future! Impossible!

Samuel: See here, John! Don't you make the mistake of assuming that any man who doesn't happen to agree with you is a blind fool. To begin with, it isn't polite. I know you do think we're blind, old-fashioned, brainless dotts, father and I. We've both felt that for some time.

John: I think you're blind to the future of iron ships, that's all.

Samuel: Well, shall I tell you what we think of you? We think you've got a bee in your bonnet. That's all. We think you're a faddist in the style of Ned Pym's noble model!

John (this lips curling): Me like Lord Monkhurst! Ha!

Samuel: Precisely. Don't you go and imagine that all the arguments are on one side. They aren't. Five-sixths of the experts in England have no belief whatever in the future of iron ships. You know that iron ships indeed? And what about British oak? Would you build ships of the self-same material as bridges? Why not stone ships, then? O, yes. I know there's a number of faddists up and down the land—anything in the nature of a novelty is always bound to attract a certain type of brain. Unfortunately we happen to have that type of brain just now in the cabinet. I quite agree with my father that the country is going to the dogs. A motor Reform Bill this year! And actually an attempt to repeal the paper duty. But, of course, people who believe in iron ships would naturally want to unsettle the industrial classes by a poisonous flood of cheap newspapers! However, we've had enough common sense left to knock both these schemes on the head. And I've no doubt the sagacity of the country will soon also put an end to this fantastic notion of iron ships.

John (quietly): I see.

Samuel: Oh, don't think I'm not fond of iron! Iron means as much to me as it does to you. But I flatter myself I can keep my balance. More quietly, however, we expect this of you, John, with your intellect. John (as before): Very well.

Samuel: I've made it clear, haven't I?

John: Quite.

Samuel: That's all right.

John (still quietly): Only I shall dissolve partnership.

Samuel: Dissolve partnership? What for?

John: I shall go on with Macleans alone.

Samuel: You don't mean it.

John: I mean every single word of it! (He rises. They look at each other.)

Samuel: Then I can tell you one thing. You won't marry Rose!

John: Why shouldn't I marry Rose?

Samuel: After such treachery!

John (raising his voice): Treachery! I merely keep my own opinion. I leave you to yours.

Samuel: Do you think father will let you drag Rose into this famous scheme of yours? Do you think he'll give his daughter to a traitor?

John (sarcasm and rage): Don't get on (He snatches his hat and exits.) And what has my marriage got to do with you? When I want your father's opinion, I'll go to your father for it.

Samuel: Don't try to browbeat me, John. I know my father's mind, and what's more, you know I know it. And I repeat, my

father will never let his daughter marry a—

John (shouting): Silence!

(Enter Mrs. Rhead by the double doors, followed by Ned Pym, Gertrude and Rose. The women remain silent.)

Ned (fervently coming forward): Why silence? Go on. We've only come in because we thought it might interest us. What's it all about? A hint will suffice.

John: Ned, you're a blundering donkey, and you will be a blundering donkey to the end of your life.

Ned: My one desire is to please.

Gertrude (coming to Sam, in a quiet, firm tone): Sam, what's the matter?

Samuel: Nothing! We must go! Rose, get ready. (Very respectfully to Mrs. Rhead.) I'm sorry to break up the evening.

Gertrude: But you can't go like this.

Samuel (with deference): My dear Gertrude, please leave matters to your brother and me. You're a woman, and there are things—

Gertrude (stopping him): It is possible I am a woman, but I'm a reasonable creature, and I intend to be treated as such.

Mrs. Rhead (very upset): My dear child, remember you are speaking to your future husband.

Gertrude: That's just why I'm speaking as I am. I ask Sam what's the matter (earnfully) and he says "Nothing." Am I a child? Are we all children?

Samuel (curtly): Come, now, Rose.

Gertrude: And why must Rose go off like this? She's engaged to John.

Samuel: Who told you?

Gertrude: Her eyes told me when she came out of this room.

Mrs. Rhead: We all knew it, and no word said. We've been expecting it for weeks.

(Mrs. Rhead and Rose embrace.)

Samuel: You are mistaken, Gertrude. Rose is not engaged to John, and she is not likely to be.

Gertrude: You object?

Samuel: I do, and I know my father will.

Gertrude: You object to John for a brother-in-law? John! Why? You might at least condescend to tell Rosie, if not me. It's an affair that rather interests her, you see.

Samuel: If you must know, John is going to leave our firm.

Mrs. Rhead: John?

Samuel: He thinks my father and I are old-fashioned, and so he's leaving us.

Mrs. Rhead: John! Leave the firm? Surely you're not thinking of breaking up Rhead and Sibley?

Samuel: Sibley, Rhead—and Sibley.

Mrs. Rhead: It was Rhead and Sibley in my young days, when your father and John's were founding it. John, you cannot mean it!

Samuel (sarcastically): He's going to build iron ships.

Gertrude: And is that any reason why you should make poor Rosie unhappy and spoil her life?

Samuel: I do not propose to argue.

Gertrude: The man who does not propose

to argue with me is not going to be my husband.

Mrs. Rhead: Gertrude!

Gertrude (looking at Sam): I mean it, (Sami bows.)

Mrs. Rhead: Please don't listen to her, Sam.

Samuel: All my apologies, Mrs. Rhead.

Gertrude: And you, Rosie, what do you say to all this?

Rose (humbly and tearfully): I—I hardly understand, Sam, what is the matter?

John (coming to Rose): It's quite simple. I believe in the future of iron ships and I have the courage of my convictions. Therefore you are not to be allowed to marry me. You see the connection is perfectly clear. But you shall marry me, all the same!

Gertrude returns Samuel's engagement ring and John leaves in anger, as the curtain falls. Twenty-five years elapse. Consequently great changes have occurred when the play reopens. The furniture has been rearranged and greatly added to. The flowered carpet of the first act has given place to an Indian carpet. The room is overcrowded with furniture in the taste of the period.

Rose Sibley, now Mrs. John Rhead, forty-six years of age and dressed in the fashion of 1886, her hair slightly gray at the temples, is seated writing some note. Ned Pym, now Lord Monkhurst, enters, followed by John Rhead. The former has developed into a well-preserved, florid, slightly self-sufficient man of forty-six. The latter, now fifty, has not changed so much physically, except that his hair is grey and his features have become much firmer. But his manner has grown even more self-assured than in the first act. He is in fact a person of authority, the successful man whose word is law. There is a daughter, Emily, a handsome girl of twenty-two, combining her father's pluck with her mother's loving nature. Gertrude has grown into a faded, acid spinster with protective instincts for her niece Emily, on whom she spends all her suppressed maternal feelings. Sam is married to Nancy, a girl not of his own class. He has retired from business. Ned is in love with Emily. The John Rhead of the previous act finds his counterpart in Arthur Proce, a gifted young employee of his, who is an admirer of William Morris and who entertains warm feelings for his employer's daughter. He tells Emily of his

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