

Music and Drama.

By BAYREUTH.

BOOKINGS.

(Dates subject to alteration.)

H.M. THEATRE, AUCKLAND.
 January 21 to 25—The Great McKeena.
 February 1 to 8—Muriel Beanes.
 February 14—Rickards' Vaudeville Co.
 February 17 to 22—Rickards' Vaudeville Co.
 February 24 to March 8—J. C. Williamson, Ltd.
 March 10 to 22—Allan Boone.
 March 24 to April 12—J. C. Williamson, Ltd.
 May 9 to 21—Branscombe Co.
 May 22 to June 7—J. C. Williamson, Ltd.
 June 9 to June 25—Geo. Marlow, Ltd.
 June 26 to July 5—J. C. Williamson, Ltd.
 July 7 to 19—Allan Boone.
 August 1 to 16—J. C. Williamson, Ltd.
 August 28 to September 27—Branscombe Co.
 October 1 to 11—J. C. Williamson, Ltd.

TOWN HALL (Main Hall).

Concert Hall.

January 28 and 29—T. H. De Spang, Elocutionary Recital.

AUCKLAND PICTURE SHOWS.

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

WELLINGTON OPERA HOUSE.

January 18-21—Carrie Moore Comedy Co.
January 25 to February 8—J. C. Williamson, Ltd.
February 27-March 6—Rickards' Vaudeville Co.
February 28-March 10—J. C. Williamson.

The Drama of the Superman.

(By E. A. BAUGHAN, in the "Daily News.")

DRAMA is not, and should not be, an objective picture of life. No great dramatist can help putting himself into his plays. Shakespeare? Well, I know he is held to be the typical objective dramatist; the man of detached mind, who viewed life as a pageant; but if you examine his plays as a whole, you will find that in nearly all you have variations on the same character. Macbeth, Othello, Lear, Hamlet, Richard III., and King Lear are psychological relations. The sonnets strike the same note. It is the eternal struggle between intellect and the instincts of man as animal. Religions have always tried to make peace of that ceaseless warfare; some by the utter capitulation of self; others, by the promise of rewards which shall take away the sting of present suffering. Shakespeare, being an artist, had an abnormally sensitive mind, and he expressed the pity of the struggle as well as its pomp and circumstance, but he expressed it dramatically.

After all, why should a man wish to write of life unless the contemplation of it moves his whole being? And what kind of man can be he who, at any time in the history of mankind, could accept the false value of man's rough-and-ready systems of morality? None of the great spirits has accepted them. The little men, the thoughtless optimists, alone glorify the world as it is. On the other hand, he is but a shallow idealist who sees naught but ill in life. He judges existence by some pretty, little mental diagram, and squeals because life is not like it. When you think of what man is, and the ceaseless struggle he has had to wage, you cannot be a pessimist, and, if you be an artist you cannot be a realistic describer of what is worst in life.

Nothing But Little Shaws.

Those who have criticised Mr. Bernard Shaw for having given us nothing but little shaws as the chief characters in his plays have confused an artist's proper expression of himself with an absolute technical fault. We may not like Bernard Shaw's point of view; we may think it too compact of negations; too unhuman on its emotional side; and, above all, too destructive; but it is the point of view, and, as an artist, he has every right to express it in terms of drama. Unfortunately, he is too self-conscious in his expression, and that self-consciousness or egotism mars his plays as drama. You feel that most of the thoughts he desires to give to the world could be better expressed in an essay or a lecture, or even in a novel. He has chosen drama as his medium in recent years, but he refuses to play the game according to the rules.

Drama has certain rules. I do not mean the stupid rules of the well-made play. You can call a play a "discussion" or a "demonstration," or a "climatic," if you will but you cannot get away from the fact that you have assembled a number of people in a theatre to tell them something in the terms of life itself, and that something must have point and climax, or the tale is not worth telling. Moreover, since human beings are your mouthpieces, your characters must be like human beings. I do not know of any other rules, except those of mere craftsmanship.

The Faults of Shaw.

Mr. Bernard Shaw, as a matter of fact, is an excellent craftsman, a trifle mimetic in his devices, perhaps, but still an excellent craftsman. He has a sure eye for stage characterisation, and that is proved by the success players can make with his characters. But with all these virtues his plays have cardinal faults, and these faults are so glaring that they overshadow the virtues.

To begin with, he is so intent on expressing himself that he will violate all spiritual probabilities, and will mar characters, which, in the first instance, were well conceived. And he is so intent on proving his argument that he conditions the mental life of his characters to that end. His characters become either fools or Shaws. If he desires to present men and women of conventional ideas he makes them not only conventional, but absolutely stupid. He thus misses the tragedy of existence, for brains, and, to make a necessary distinction, intellect, are by no means the sole possession of the unconventional. The world would easily be put right if that were so. There is no clash and no opposition in Mr. Shaw's plays. The supermen and superwomen have everything their own way. They walk round the poor conventional fools and plant blow after blow without ever having to parry a serious return. The stage resounds with their punches, and incidentally the noise makes us realise that the figures of the attacked, for all their outward semblance to life, are but stuffed.

Not Playing the Game of Drama.

Mr Shaw gains his point, but it does not bear thinking about after you have left the theatre. Men and women are not like Mr Shaw's creations. They may be worse, and certainly are not always so amusing, but they are also much better. It is not playing the game of drama to invent characters with the outward semblance of life and to withhold from them all mental and spiritual reality; merely for the sake of making a point. Moreover, the superiority of the supermen is fictitious when examined closely, and seems to consist mainly of their having been born without normal human feelings, or feelings of any sort.

As a dramatist Mr Shaw has systematically chosen the point of least resistance. It is much easier to invent lay figures who will not stand in the way of your thesis than to let a set of human beings work out your ideas. In the same way Mr Shaw has made quite a mannerism of what may be called the Palace of Truth method of dialogue. Instead of allowing an audience to guess the thoughts and nature of the dramatic personae as if it were witnessing a scene in real life, our dramatist kindly permits his characters to turn themselves inside out so that we shall be under no misapprehension. The device is amusing as burlesque, but it does not bear perpetual repetition. "Over-ruled" is a glaring example of this particular mannerism. It is pitiful to see a man of Mr Shaw's genius gradually becoming the slave of his own conventions. Why does he not write a drama in which his ego would be merely suggested and not made the principal dramatic personae?

The Monk and the Woman.

The air at the Adelphi Theatre in Sydney, was charged with electricity for a few seconds, one evening last week, when one of the largest audiences yet seen were present to witness the drama, "The Monk and the Woman." This is the play which Archbishop Kelly recently banished his circle against, and it was because of this, probably, that a certain incident occurred, - fortunately, without

serious results, but it might have developed into something more stirring than actually happened.

It was during the last scene of the third act, where the monk is being married that the incident happened. The king in the drama, Mr Gerald Kay Souper, as the ceremony is being concluded, rushes up the aisle of the church, and asks, "Who is this man? It is not de Montreuil?" Mr George Cross (the principal monk Paul), was just about to turn round and reply when a man sitting about the centre of the stalls got up and shouted: "Stop! Stop! I protest against this play. It is against the principles of my church."

It was here that something serious might have happened; but Mr Cross, with a promptitude that deserves all praise, stepped forward to the front lights from the altar, and addressing the audience, said he appealed to them to say whether there was anything in the play that would offend the susceptibilities of any member of the audience, or any section of the community. He did not think so. "I ask you, as an intellectual body of people," added Mr Cross, "whether there is, and if the play should proceed, and so judge for yourselves."

There was immediately an universal cry to put the disturber out, and a chorus of approval for Mr Cross' prompt remarks, and for the play. Amid a perfect babble of "Kick him out!" "Shove him out of the way!" the theatre attendants quickly surrounded the man; but he went out quietly. The disturber as he was going out said he had a right to object, for the Archbishop had told him it was not the right thing. The audience immediately settled down again; but the incident apparently warned them all the more for the drama, for at the conclusion there was another unique demonstration.

Reminiscences of "Faust."

The recent revival of "Faust" in Sydney has induced a writer in the "Evening News" to become reminiscent. "We have seen and heard many great performers as Marguerite," he says, "but the record for the Commonwealth, if not for the world, is easily held by 'Our Nellie,' as Miss Nellie Stewart is affectionately called. There are those who only know that clever lady as an accomplished comedy actress and player of romantic and Shakespearean roles, but it is not so very many years ago that she was the undisputed queen of comic opera, and 'breathed' in Australia several of the most popular Gilbert and Sullivan Soprano parts. It was thought to be a most hazardous experiment to put Miss Stewart forward in grand opera, but her singing and acting of Marguerite in Gounod's masterpiece brought on so tremendously that the opera was postponed for six weeks to overflowing houses in the Princess Theatre, Melbourne. A terrific strain, indeed, six performances a week for six weeks on end; and it should be noted, the prima donna sang the whole of the music allotted to the part. Always a thorough artist, in a long list of memorable songs, 'Sweet Nell' has done nothing of which she may fairly feel proud, than this."

A Tragic Performance.

Again, the string of memories recalls the tragic conclusion of the premiere of Nellie Stewart's performance in "Faust." Charles Leumann was the tenor, and a then well-known basso with the name of Mephisto. The latter was in indifferent health, but studied hard to ensure success, and his was one of the details triumphs of that first night. He sang as he had never sung before. Alas! It was the poor fellow's swan-song. Struggling desperately against the weakness that was gradually overcoming him, he got through to the moment when the fiend, claiming the fulfilment of his contract, seizes Faust and disappears with him into the infernal regions. As the "trap" bearing the two artists descended beneath the level of the stage, wicked-looking flames circled about their heads, Frederick collapsed against Leumann. The tenor supported the unconscious form of his confrere, while the auditorium resounded with thousands of applause from people who never suspected the real tragedy that was being enacted. The unfortunate basso was hastily removed to his dressing-room, and medical help summoned, but there was no hope. In the ghastly habitations of the Evil One, Frederick had received and obeyed the last call.

An Amazing Incident.

A less gruesome recollection is of an

even more distinguished basso, who has also shuffled off this mortal coil. A very celebrated lady was giving excerpts from grand opera, and he was the Mephisto for the opening performance. There was a huge and ultra fashionable audience to see and hear one who had previously only appeared in Australia on the concert platform. Behind the curtain all was excitement and alarm, for 7 o'clock, 7.30, and 7.45 had been reached and passed, but no Mephistopheles had presented himself. The manager had telephoned himself into a condition of speechless fury; the conductor was in despair; and the prima donna—well, the prima donna revealed a vast knowledge of the possibilities of a least half-dozen languages. At five minutes before 8, a red-faced, hearty, fatuously smiling individual lurched through the stage entrance. He was immediately seized by half-a-dozen pairs of stalwart arms, and practically carried at a run to the stage, where stood in a black rage the leading lady. She turned pale under her make-up and in a few frantic bounds was at the offender. She caught him by the shoulders and shook him till his head, already top-heavy, threatened to roll off. She boxed his ears soundly. She hissed inquiries, reproaches, and other things too numerous to mention, until even the "lines" men turned blubbery away. Her victim made no protest, uttered no sound, he merely grinned stupidly. Rushing his neck and crop, L.M.C., the excited lady brought the dreamy basso up hard against a stanchion at the rear of the stage, and held him determinedly under it while the full force of the water was turned on his heated headpiece. The effect was magical, Mr. Baso, at first lugubly amused, passed quickly into a state of annoyance, and began to struggle. He choked and spluttered words that no gentlemanly devil should see, but the cure was going on, and in three minutes, as angry as a wet hen, he was rushed off to his room. There, in no gentle fashion, three strong men forced him out of his lounge suit and into the red trappings of the fiend, painted his rebellious face, gave him one gulping draught of cold-water, and hurried him to the wings. The curtain went up; the lady, showing no traces of her strenuous experiences, went on, and, at the cue, which he took like a bird, Mephisto rolled his voice magnificently into the music. That night he sang and acted in a style that earned for him the incidental praise of the critics—but it was a close thing.

How Is It?

Young men will be young men, and while the world wags the younger sons of noble families will find that the only girl in the world for them is behind the footlights. The cables recently notified the marriage of a "Gaiety girl," Miss Olive May, to Lord Victor Paget, brother of the Marquis of Anglesea, and heir presumptive to the earldom. Not long ago the cables announced that Mr George Edwards, who commands at the Gaiety, had been forced to put an anti-marriage clause in his contracts, having been so often "dipped up," when a piece was running smoothly, by an unexpected marriage which necessitated the introduction of an understudy at the eleventh hour. But no doubt love will laugh at contracts, even so bunglers are said to laugh at locksmiths, and a future Marquis would probably be ready enough to pay the penalty even were it tall as heavy. Actresses and aristocrats have now made so many matches that the world ceases to marvel. Belle Bilton became Countess Lancaster, Rosie Boote the Marchioness of Healdroyd, Connie Gilchrist is Countess Orkney, Dora Orme the Baroness Thurston, Eva Carrington, Lady De Clifford. And there are many more whose names might easily be brought to mind. But how is it that, though the beauty actor is the most adorned of men; that, though his photograph may hang in many a dainty boudoir, and his autograph occupy a place in a neat Russia-leather album, he never has the luck to marry a lady of title? Really, he doesn't seem to be getting quite a fair deal! By the way, in discussing matrimony, it is stated, on good authority, that during the tour of the Oscar Acle-Lily Brayton Company in New Zealand, quite a crop of engagements occurred.

A £2,000 Offer to Clara Butt.

Mrs. Clara Butt, and Mr. Kennerley, Rufford, are to make their American debut in Boston on January 5, and on January 7 they will appear at the Carnegie Hall, New York, with the Volpe Symphony Orchestra, under Arnold