

maid and Oliver the poet, to Juliette, the little blind girl, and the fairies. Such a plot (says the "New York Theatre") affords Mr. Belasco all the opportunities he needs for the display of that theatrical art of which he is a master. There is every mood represented, from broad farce in the scenes between the ogre aunt and her quipreres, the Old Nicks, to pure, sweet sentiment in the childish love scenes between Charles and his Juliette, and for these every degree of lighting is demanded. There is a starry night, when the fairies are floating from planet to satellite; twilight for lovers' trysting and broad noonday sun for the frolics of schoolboys and garden friends.

One-act Drama.

Eugen d'Albert's one-act opera, "The Dead Eyes," will be produced in Berlin at an early date.—The subject matter of the libretto is described as follows:—"The central figure is that of a blind young Greek woman, who lives on the scene, and at the time of Christ's entry into Jerusalem. The New Testament incident forms the background of the whole work. The Saviour Himself will not be portrayed in person. His presence being expressed by the music and the phantasy of the work. Touched by the healing hand of Christ, the blind woman regains her sight, and her eyes, filled with the light of love and passion, fall first upon a magnificent Roman, whom she believes to be her husband. Her husband, however, is really a most repulsive figure, and it is in giving expression to the conflict of emotions in the woman's heart when she discovers her mistake that the music of the new opera finds its vent. The finale occurs at sunset on the same day. The woman, troubled and disturbed in spirit, stands gazing into the blazing glory of the western sky until she again becomes blind, and with her loss regains her peace of mind."

An Old Teacher.

Mr. Laurence Godfrey Smith, who returned last week to Sydney from a trip to Europe, America, and Japan, brought back as one of his most lasting impressions that of his meeting with his old teacher, the celebrated Leschetizsky, in Vienna. This amazing old man—he is 84—seems to have discovered the secret of perpetual youth; he retains wonderful vitality, and exhibits all the zest of life of one who is only 30 or so. So far as music is concerned, Mr. Smith's most noteworthy experience was to hear Pablo Casals, the cellist of whom all London was talking not long since. A little man, without any marked personality until he begins playing, Casals is one of the wonderful cellists of the world; indeed, Leschetizsky considers that he is the greatest artist since Rubinstein. Mr. Smith heard him in Vienna, where also he was impressed by a new operatic soprano, Mitzi Jeritz, who will probably be heard of in the near future. She made so pronounced a success in an early appearance that she was immediately engaged for the Imperial Opera House. She is a young woman, with the advantages of a handsome presence and talent as an actress.

Church Choirs.

Dr. Augustus Stephen Vogt, the conductor of the unique Mendelssohn Choir of Toronto, writing in "Musical Canada" of his musical impressions gained during his recent extended visit to England and the Continent, says: "Two of the most highly efficient church choirs of London are unquestionably those of Brompton Oratory and Westminster Cathedral (Roman Catholic). At the former church a beautiful and dignified musical service has been developed, in which the highest vocal standards are allied to an impressiveness of style and a true spirit of devotion. The boys are splendidly trained, and the general balance of the choir is admirable. In choice of repertoire somewhat greater latitude is permitted, apparently, than at Westminster Cathedral. Several things are included in the regular musical offerings of this choir to which the attention of choirmaster Barclay and organist d'Éry was drawn by Toronto choral enthusiasts, including some of the best unaccompanied choruses of Lotti, Grieg, and others. On Sunday, September 29, the music of the day was Mozart's Mass in C. At Westminster Cathedral, the choir, which, under Dr. Terry, is rightly deemed to be among the very finest in England, impresses one with the splendid manner in which the

Gregorian music is sung. In a cappella singing this choir also demonstrated its quality in beautifully graded and devotional renderings of motets by Palestrina and Arcadelt. There appeared to be two choirs in this cathedral, one occupying an elevated position in the rear of the pews, the other being placed in the usual choir stalls of the chancel, similar to the placing of the boys and men in Anglican Cathedrals. The unaccompanied motets named, which were sung by the choir in the far distance, produced an unusually striking, ethereal effect."

"The Blue Bird."

Under cover of "The Blue Bird," the great Belgian writer, Maurice Maeterlinck, has evolved a fantasy of striking literary merit—a beautiful allegory that delights the discriminating reader but leaves unmoved and indifferent those who want their literary dish served up in homelier fashion. The application of this point may be carried from the book as a composition to the play as a dramatic production. With the obvious aid of the stage producers, the play merges into a procession of suggestive pictures, of direct human appeal, and by cunning stagecraft, sustains the illusion in a way that is truly astonishing. But it can scarcely be called a popular play. The average theatre-goer waxes fane of a different order. The public taste is not yet cultivated sufficiently for such a triumph of symbolism. This much may certainly be gauged by the attitude of the overflowing audience at His Majesty's on Saturday night, when the initial production was given in Auckland.

But it is a charmingly poetic fairy tale in this portrayal of the quest for happiness, enhanced by the gorgeous and realistic stage settings, the clever impersonations, and the appropriate music contributed by the concealed orchestra. It should attract large audiences throughout the Auckland season, as well as the New Zealand tour.

From the time the two children Tyltyl and Mytyl fall asleep to dream in the humble wood-cutter's cottage through the eight scenes compressed into six acts, there is a harmony of movement, and a feast of philosophy that sustains interest and keeps the faculties alert. It is not necessary to attempt to give an outline of the story. Those who have read the book are familiar with it, and those who have not should not miss the scenic marvels that pass before the footlights in this enrapturing play; also it is not necessary to stress the fact that the principal as well as the minor characters are admirably impersonated. With less distinction in the matter of acting the illusion would be a hopeless thing. Sustained by a remarkably strong combination, it is a magnificent success.

As the two children, Gertie Cremer and Vera Paul show distinctive talent and act with a pleasing freedom and naturalness, George O'Meara, as the Fairy Beryllune, is excellent. Representing Fire and Water, Charles Mettam and Midge Elliott, respectively, do some clever dancing in the struggle for dominance. Lawrence Dudley gives a striking representation of Tyto the dog, and Ernest Lashbrook imitates a cat in realistic fashion. Harry Halley affords some amusement in the rotund character of Bread, and the dozens of other representations complete the heavy cast. Light and Night are beautifully spectacular characters. All the scenes are magnificent conceptions of the themes pictured, the woodcutter's homely cottage, the Fairy Beryllune's palace, the Land of Memory, the forest, the Kingdom of the Future, the Palace of Night, and the leave-taking, all carry vividly the wide suggestiveness of the story, and are a feature of the production.

Stray Notes.

Judging from the letters to the "London Daily Telegraph," a number of people appear to be shocked at the ragtime dances now in vogue. As regards titles at all events, these dances compare favourably with some of those enjoyed in the past century. Harriet Beecher Stowe records that she and her visitors used in their girlhood to dance a jig entitled, "Go to the Devil and shake yourself." This dance must have enjoyed a long spell of popularity. The first Duke of Buckingham was highly indignant, when, having deigned to attend an assembly ball at Alresford, his request for a dance, addressed to a local rector's wife, met with the reply, "Go to the Devil and shake yourself." He complained to the rector, and it then

transpired that the lady, who was somewhat deaf, thought his Grace had asked the name of the dance then being played.

As showing the cost of modern dramatic productions, it is said that "From Convent to Throne" will cost the Marlow management something like £1500 to defray the curtain goes up. The title, "From Convent to Throne," is suggestive of many possibilities. The management are keeping the story pretty well to themselves so far.

"The Sunshine Girl" was produced by Charles Frohman for the first time in New York on February 3, and the critics branded it a success.

"Bella Donna," which ran for five weeks in Sydney, proved to be a big profit earner, drawing crowded houses throughout. Mr. Julius Knight and his company opened with the drama in Melbourne on Easter Saturday.

Mr. Frank Dix, the producer of the "Puss in Boots" pantomime, is partly responsible for the book and lyrics, having collaborated with J. Hickory Wood. Mr. Dix has written forty-six pantomimes, and is a well-known London doctor of musical comedies and other musical attractions. For instance, he was called in to practically re-write "Princess Caprice," now being played in London, and is entirely responsible for Mr. George Graves' part in that musical play. With George R. Sims he wrote the Drury Lane pantomime of two years ago, "Hop o' My Thumb," in which Miss Violet Loraine was principal boy.

Ragtime is strongly featured in the "Puss in Boots" pantomime, now running in Sydney. The ragtimes include "Waiting for the Robert E. Lee" (the cotton ship), "The Mysterious Rag," "The Ragtime Violin," "Everybody's Doin' It," "You've Got to Sing in Ragtime," and "Alexander's Ragtime Band." There are a number of song hits apart from the "hustle" music. Principal among them are "There's a Girl in Havana," "Josine," "I'm on My Honey-moon," "Oh, Mr. Dream Man," "Where the Brass Band Plays," "All that I ask is Love," "Soft Pedal," and "The Man I Love."

A portion of the celebrated Sheffield Choir, which sang its harmonious way through New Zealand three years ago, was appearing in vaudeville at the London Coliseum when the last mail left. Dr. Henry Coward was wielding the baton, and his chorus consisted of 45 voices—14 sopranos, 10 altos, 10 tenors, and 11 basses. This capture by the music-halls just now shows the prime quality of up-to-date vaudeville.

The principal girl in "Puss in Boots," this year's pantomime, which opened at Sydney last week, is Miss Alice Russon, who has appeared in a number of the London Gaiety productions. She also played the part of the girl with the brogue in the New York production of the "Arcadians." Miss Violet Loraine fills the role of principal boy. George Miller, who plays the dame, has many times been the old lady in pantomime in England. He has also had a great deal of experience on the legitimate stage. He visited America under engagement to Charles Frohman, and played in New York with Nat Goodwin. He was also with Frohman at the Duke of York Theatre, and supported William Gillette in his London "Sherlock Holmes" season. Sydney playgoers will remember Mr. Miller for his performance of "Passers-by." Miss Ivy Schilling and Mr. Fred Leslie have three specialty dances, besides taking part in the chief ballet, the designs of which were secured by the Williamson management from M. Carl of the Theatre Folies Marigny, Paris. Mr. O. E. Lennon, who plays the cat, has figured in the same part several times in England, and is regarded as the best cat in English pantomime.

Quite a new type of waltz characterizes "The Count of Luxembourg," which is to be staged in Melbourne shortly by the New Comic Opera Company for the first time in Australia. It is danced up a staircase by Count Rene and Angela. The effect is striking as the couple, away to the rhythm of the waltz, mount step by step, until at the top of the staircase the Count takes Angela in his arms. It is not likely, however, that the waltz will become popular in the ballroom. The acrobatic skill it requires should prevent that.

Irene Brown, who supports Mr. Julius Knight in "Milwinton," was last here with Mr. H. B. Irving's company. Mr. Irving asked Miss Brown to be the leading lady for his South African tour

in place of his wife, Miss Dorothea Baird, who had retired from the stage.

While alighting from a tram in St. Kilda Road, Melbourne, recently, Miss Beatrice Day, the well-known actress, was knocked down by a passing buggy. One of her arms was severely sprained. Dr. R. H. J. Fetherston, who attended her, had the injured arm under the X-rays, but found no broken bones.

The public is not likely to enjoy the humour of Mr. Harry Lauder for many years longer if he maintains his present resolution. Mr. Lauder asserts that he has promised his wife to retire from the stage as soon as he has saved £120,000. He expects to be in possession of such a sum by the time he has concluded his tour of the world, which is due to start in 1914. The contemplation of such a prospect must be very pleasant to a man of his temperament, when he recollects that not

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