

Music and Drama.

By BAYREUTH.

BOOKINGS.

(Dates subject to alteration.)

H.M. THEATRE, AUCKLAND.
 June 9 to June 25—Geo. Marlow, Ltd.
 June 26 to July 5—J. C. Williamson, Ltd.
 July 7 to 10—Allen Doone.
 August 4 to 10—J. C. Williamson, Ltd.
 August 23 to September 27—Brancombe Co.
 October 1 to 11—J. C. Williamson, Ltd.

AUCKLAND PICTURE SHOWS.
 Globe Theatre, Queen Street—Continuous.

Social Problems—Two Remarkable Plays.

A **NOTABLE** play called "The Necessary Evil," by Charles Rann Kennedy (Harper's), deals with a great social problem with a spiritual exaltation of manner and spiritual indignation rather unusual in a dramatist.

His whole argument is against the dogma that there is a "necessary evil"—especially the Social Evil.

Here is the gist of the play as told by the New York "Times."

The Dark Woman.

"It raises a social fact into the realm of idealism. It is symmetrical in construction, and is fraught with earnestness and with refreshing tenderness.

"While Mr. Kennedy's 'dark woman' is representative of many poetic qualities, she is also the living evidence of the so-called 'necessary evil,' which the girl's brother declares, brands every man alive. She is the human reminder of the girl's dead mother, who, like so many other mothers of the world, believes innocence to be more white if guarded by ignorance. But through the women of the streets Mr. Kennedy means more than this; she comes to take the place of the girl's dead mother; she serves to illustrate to the girl, just awakening into womanhood, the principle that purity is not a passive but an active element in one's nature.

"This is all very skillfully portrayed by Mr. Kennedy. Beginning with the preparations for a birthday celebration for the girl living alone with a dreamy musician father, the play enters into a period of storm when the worldly son and brother arrives with the atmosphere of the city about him. Then arrives also the woman, and her presence awakens the girl, rouses the fire of the son, and stirs the father to the wantonness of this 'necessary' evil. In diction the special pleadings are dramatically effective, and in attitude socially true.

What the Father Says.

"Though the son call the father dreamer, unworlly, nevertheless he is a keen observer of the world. He has a word to say about club men, who have told him he knows nothing of temptation. And he adds further—

"Don't you make any mistake about it, my boy. I know all about it. I know everything these men of the world know. But I know something else as well. . . . That there is a Man in this world—a Real Man, an Alive Man—Who is the power unto salvation from sin."

"When the son claims that art is on his side of the argument, the father, as artist, protests.

"Mr. Kennedy's realism is shot through with idealism of the right sort. The innocent girl is not any the less innocent because she has been told a thing or two by a stranger—a woman whose symbolical force gives her the right to enter unbidden into the room spread for a birthday celebration. This is what the woman preaches:

What the Woman Says.

"First, then, your innocence. Cherish it, keep it unspotted—within, mind you, deep within; and let it grow. Seek wisdom and understanding with it. Don't be content any longer to be babies, playthings, dreaming dolls. Grow up. Learn to be. Next, save your men. The men around you, the men you have to do with, every one of them, even the worst. . . . Then when the time comes, marry. Refuse to be married. Don't let them give you away in darkness. Marry in daylight. Ask; ascertain; don't be put off with lies. And one thing above

all, don't marry an unclear man. Help, pity, if you can; but don't marry him."

"When the dark woman passes from the house the girl of twenty-one hastens to her room, her innocence burning; the son leaves his father, after confessing his shame and hoping for salvation, while the father, left alone with the portrait of his dead wife, finishes Brahms's intermezzo, with which the play begins."

A Play for Congress.

This play of Mr. Kennedy's is an indication of the remarkable way in which, at the present moment, the United States is dealing with the Social Evil. To still further emphasize the need for action to the United States Congress, arrangements have been made for a dramatic representation of the famous play by Brieux called "Les Avariés" ("Damaged Goods").

"Those who are promoting the movement intend to give 'Damaged Goods' at Washington before a Congressional audience, and perhaps also at the State capitals during the legislative session," says the New York "Independent." "For this purpose the drama is especially adapted, as the last act is nothing more than a lesson to legislators, though Brieux is not one who believes that social evils are to be cured by laws and yet more laws. He believes that most of the trouble is caused by ignorance, and urges education, public enlightenment, and franker recognition of existing conditions. All this may be needed, but still we may well doubt its effectiveness as a remedy. The drunken Helot argument is not a strong one, and those who live a vicious life know more about its risks than any teacher or preacher could tell them. Brieux also urges the requirement of health certificates of marriage, such as many clergymen now insist upon, and which, doubtless, will be made compulsory before long in many of our States.

An Absurd Argument.

"Brieux paints in black colours, yet is no fanatic; in fact, he will be criticised by many as being too tolerant of human weakness. The conditions of society and the moral standards of France are so different from those of America that his point of view and his proposals for reform will not meet with general acceptance, but it is encouraging to find a dramatist who realises the importance of being earnest, and who uses his art in defence of virtue instead of its destruction.

"Whatever one may think of the propriety or advisability of discussing such a theme upon the stage," says the "Independent," "there is something absurd and more than absurd in the fact that hundreds of plays are being given depicting in glowing colours the joys of licentiousness, and yet the one play which shows its dangers is prohibited."

A Play for Doctors.

A remarkable medical audience has already witnessed in the United States, the play "Damaged Goods."

"A subscription performance was given in New York on March 14, under the auspices of the 'Medical Review of Reviews,' to an audience very different, but even more distinguished, than usually attends a 'first night' for the Fulton Theatre was packed with physicians, settlement workers, eugenicists, philanthropists, authors, suffragists, ministers, and university professors, about equal numbers of ladies and gentlemen. The play was introduced by the reading of Shaw's preface by the Rev. J. H. Holmes, of the Church of the Messiah.

"How far they advanced the definite aim of those who were instrumental in getting the play produced—the enactment of a Federal law which shall forbid marriage without certificates of good health from both parties—only time can tell," says the Chicago "Tribune." "Certainly no speech received quite so much applause as the doctor's arraignment of the old notary for investigating his prospective son-in-law's financial and moral standing, and asking nothing about his physical health; but the applause at this point may prove only that the audience knew why it had been asked to hear the play. Whatever one may think about the advisability of producing 'Les Avariés' it

cannot be denied that this particular presentation was conducted with dignity and seriousness, and was admirably acted throughout, so that full justice was done to both the dramatic and the sociological values of Brieux's play."

The Lure of Crime—The Good-Bad Hero.

We are filling our heads with a lot of sentimental nonsense when we take it without question that the criminal of stage and fiction and the criminal of real life are one and the same. Mr. Arthur Stringer, who knows something about both types, having dealt with them in real life for the sake of his fiction, declares they are about as wide apart as the poles. He finds it high time for someone to point out this fact, and to stop the stultification of one's intelligence with such beliefs. The "crime writers," he reminds us, have been "boldly announcing themselves as realists." Even editors are beginning to affix footnotes to say that their crime stories are transcripts of real life. A crime novel asserts that it is an actual portrayal of police conditions. A playwright gets an ex-convict to form a member of the cast. Some of the ways in which these so-called realists fool the

No Raffles in Real Life.

These are perhaps only absurdities showing how shallow is the author's real knowledge of crime. His portrayal of the criminal himself, Mr. Stringer avers, is a more open and offensive sin:

"There is no such thing as a romantic criminal. By this I mean that there is no romance about professional crime. There is no Raffles in real life. As McCusky once said down at police headquarters: 'A crook is a crook at heart. Day or night, drunk or sober, he is awayed by his criminal instincts.'

"The playwright who exploits crime loves to have his hero bad only not-mor-east. When the wind is in the other quarter he is the gentlest of lovers and the most impeccable of characters. It is the same with the book criminal. Even his felonies are prompted by a supposed ameliorating love of adventure. He follows the gentle art of burglary for the thrill that's in it. He likes the game for the game's sake. He makes house-breaking and highway robbery lose half their evil by losing all their grossness. He seduces you into the belief that it's quite fit and proper for him to take toll of the over-jewelled ladies who are enjoying the same weekend with him in the same country house, or to exact midnight largesse from the altogether unsympathetic jeweller who has not appreciated his devil-may-care audacity, his good breeding, and his languidly enunciated epigrams. We remember that it's only human to sympathise with the bad and tolerate the good. We follow our fiction-made villain through his round of denatured adventures; we feel that he is being true to some wider scheme of things than the trivial laws that he is breaking; we like to witness his leap through the paper hoops of the temporal while swayed by those emotions which we regard as eternal. We watch him in a pink light, or we see him stalk through his chapters like a Christy illustration, and we imagine that we have at last come face to face with the sombre and true side of this seamy life of ours. But back no more the real criminal of to-day than is Ali Baba or Robin Hood of yesterday. And his adventures are no mere actual criminal life than were the adventures of the Forty Thieves. You are really eating pink gum-drops and, from their colour, imagining them raw beef.

Always a Defective.

"The habitual criminal is always a defective. If he is not a weakling physically, he's a weakling mentally. His ranks are recruited from incompetents and degenerates. His mind may not differ much from the ordinary man's in many respects, but it is a mind that is either stupid and narrow on the one hand or passionate and uncontrolled on the other. He has a craving for alcohol, for drugs, or for artificial and unhealthy excitement. Only too often his spirit has been further brutalized by the cruelty of gaol punishment. He is a man of no settled place of abode, no knowledge of trade, and no desire for honest work; no technical equipment for earning his living; no place in the industrial scheme of things. He is a graduate in idleness, who will live off a woman if he is able to blackmail an invalid if need be, sleep in verminous lodging-houses, and poison his own enterbled body with fusel-oil whisky. Inspector Schmittberger once told how even Monk Eastman begged to be put in a cell because he didn't have a gun and the kellys were after him. "When I'd thrown him out of the station-house," Schmittberger said, "he slunk into a hallway and went to his kennel by way of the roof." And, as the same inspector has pointed out, the spirit of adventure no more enters into the make-up of the East Side criminal than does the respect for women or the will to work. As Schmittberger put it, he's usually a cadet out of work....

The Criminal Instinct.

"The last time I was down at police headquarters I happened to see a burglar who had become famous, or rather infamous, in the evening papers. This devil-may-care robber, whose newspaper description had excited such sympathy among dove-eyed ladies, was being put through his Identification Bureau examination, nudged and measured. I watched him take off his poor, old, run-over gaping boot shoes to get ready for the Bertillon measurements. There were no soles or feet left to his socks. He was not terrified, but just pathetically ill-nourished and ill-clothed and anaemic and unclear andunken-



ILLUSTRATED DRAMA.

"Bought and paid for."

gullible among us are set forth by Mr. Stringer in the New York "Times" "Review of Books":—

"I know of one novelist who describes a safe-breaking scene wherein the master-crook attaches a wire to a chandelier and an electrode to the end of this wire, and by the deliciously naive means of a mere lighting circuit burns his way through a ponderous steel door. It would be no more ridiculous to say that he prised that door off with his fountain pen. Another novelist, with an international reputation has his villain sit on a steamer's deck and quietly read at the zinchead an incoming wireless message. It's of little consequence, of course, that the professional operator in the wireless room is compelled to have a microphone of the most delicate nature held close to his ear before he can even pick up that same incoming message. This same villain, I take it, could stand on the Singer Tower and hear a hairpin fall off a bureau up in Albany. An important feature in a reigning 'realistic' crook play is a Maxim silencer, which is used as a revolver, despite the fact that a silencer cannot be and never has been attached to a revolver. In still another Broadway sleuth-play a woman under suspicion casually takes up a sheet of writing-paper from the desk of a man mysteriously murdered. The detective on the trail of the offender holds up this sheet to the audience, showing the finger-prints thereon impressed as plainly marked as ink spots. Now, the murdered gentleman may or may not have had the hobby of imitating his correspondence on chemically sensitized note-paper. Or, on the other hand the lady under suspicion may have been opening a tin of printer's ink in one of the room's off-steps. But without one of these two, extremely remote contingencies the over-convenient appearance of those nice black blotts must be accepted as either absurd or miraculous."