

Old Musical Days in Taranaki.

By D. SAUL.



At one time I was a frequent visitor to New Plymouth, and although not a musical performer, had opportunities of mixing with musical people; and there were few amateur concerts which I did not attend, and very few musical people, either amateur or professional, with whom I was not acquainted. Unfortunately, my experiences do not go back to the good old times of such musical lights as Mr. R. Parris and the late Mr. John Newland. No doubt a most entertaining volume could be written about the music and musicians of those days; and it is a thousand pities that the old settlers of that generation are dying out without making any record of their experiences of what is undoubtedly the most interesting period of New Zealand's history.

The parent of the music of these latter days, in New Plymouth, was undoubtedly the late Mrs. S. P. King. Mrs. King gave lessons in music to so many people that one can scarcely encounter a lady who has not lived in New Plymouth for twenty-five years who was not taught by her. Her execution on the piano was brilliant, and she read well at sight, added to which she really loved the great tone poets and all their works. Mrs. King was a native of Belfast, and was a most determined Irish "Home Ruler." I do not think she ever performed in public, but all lovers of music who knew her enjoyed listening to her conversation and hearing her play in private; and although she was of all women the least vain, she was looked

up to as quite an oracle, and in matters of argument her opinion was generally regarded as conclusive. Mrs. King rarely stirred away from her house, and lived much alone,



Wrigglesworth and Binns, Photo.,

Wellington

MRS. S. P. KING.

and yet there was no movement of any importance going on in the world with the details of which she was not familiar.

The first musical conductor I remember encountering in New Plymouth was the late Mr. G. G. Richter. He was an able, though eccentric, musician; but his passion for musical truth proved his ruin, for I have heard of him refusing to give lessons to so