

Music and Drama.

[BY THE PROMPTER.]

Messrs Brough and Boucicault play Hobart during the opening weeks of the Tasmanian Exhibition.

The Annie Brandt Dramatic Company did good business during their season at the Princess Theatre, Dunedin.

Madame Christian has decided to forsake the concert platform for a nunnery. She is in Sydney, preparing to enter convent life at St. Vincent's.

Madame Sara Bernhardt objects to diamond ornaments, because they kill the best expression of the face, put out the fire of the eyes, pale the tint of the ears, and make the finest teeth look like porcelain. I should give all that in and take the gew-gaws—if I could get them.

Here is the *Bulletin's* opinion of "Morocco Bound," the reigning attraction of Williamson and Musgrove's Company:—"It appears to be a mass of slack-baked dialogue, covered by a thin coating of story. A few ingenious lyrics and glimpses of female underwear are connected with this indigestible talk, and a poor attempt at a variety show crowns the dumpling."

A new comic opera has blossomed into being at Dunedin in "Fabian," the music of which is said to be charming and lively, and the libretto, which is from the pen of Mr D. Cargill, a Dunedin resident, is, according to "Pasquin," full of fun. Mr H. Smith, who was here with the Newbury-Spada Company, will sustain the title role when the piece is produced this month.

The London Correspondent of the *South Australian Advertiser* writes:—"The ladies who play the nude figures in the 'living pictures,' now so popular in all the music-halls, do not really show so much as Lady Henry Somerset supposes. Their arms and legs are covered with flesh-covered and invisible silk tights, and the busts, etc., are papier-mache imitations. Lady Henry unfortunately did not realise this, and after a visit to the Empire or the 'Pav.' (she doesn't say which) wrote a scream of horror to the *Times*. As a result the halls have been fuller than ever, and more nude pictures are in preparation."

Mr. Hall Caine, the novelist (author of "The Deemster," "The Scapgoat," etc.), contributes his ideas on "The Novelist in Shakespeare," in the August number of the *New Review*. In treating of theatrical things in general he declares that the drama has been sold into slavery to the upholsterer and the milliner, and that "we are taking the productions of the stage carpenter instead of the productions of Mr Pinero, the productions of the milliner instead of the productions of Mr Jones." No doubt there is an ever increasing desire for intense realism and effects of the ultra-spectacular order. "The old order changeth," and if the bard of Avon were granted another lease of life on this changeable world I think it is a question whether he would not produce work just a little different to the creations which will forever keep his (or Bacon's) memory green. As a London journal has it: "If Shakespeare were alive now he would write melodramas for the Adelphi, fairy comedy for the Gaiety, farcical comedy for the Vaudeville, another 'Much Ado about Nothing' for the Lyceum, and another 'Henry' for Drury Lane. All things considered, perhaps it is just as well for the dramatic authors of to-day that Shakespeare is not alive."

"Dagonet" (Mr G. R. Sims) remarks in a recent number of the *London Referee* that an American theatrical manager, after seeing a sporting drama in which six horses ran across the stage from wing to wing, expressed a very poor opinion respecting the spectacle. "In my theatre I did a scene of that sort and I had twenty horses, and they came right down full gallop from the back of the stage to the footlights. One night four of them went over into the orchestra, and we had to set 50 carpenters to work to cut the wood work away to get them up again; but it was all done in ten minutes and the play went on as if nothing had happened." This tight little yarn tempts "Dagonet" to go one better. He, of course, locates his "stretcher" in America, and compares the pitiful advertising of the Britisher with the methods followed by his American cousin. "A single American poster (writes this sad wag) frequently goes all down one side of a street and half way up the other, and then the manager arrives with his company, grumbles at the agent in advance, and says, 'You must do a bit better than this. How the dickens can we expect to do good business if we don't let the people know that we're here?'"

In connection with a charitable performance in New York, Professor Hermann, a professional magician, recently proposed to accomplish a feat which certainly looks a bit "steep" on the face of it. He was willing to stand, unprotected by any bullet proof garment or shield, at thirty paces from six soldiers of the regular army whose officer would see that their regulation muskets were loaded with Government cartridges, previously marked by a disinterested council. The soldiers were to shoot at Hermann who averred he would catch the bullets in his hands or on a china plate and present them, hot from the rifles, to a council for identification. Such a proposal could only be made by a madman or a fakir secure in the knowledge that the firing party were "in the swim" and open to the reception of "faked" rifles or bullets. Whether this precious act of deception or madness was allowed I do not at present know. The proposal reminds an American contemporary of a development that once occurred in a western town where the Houdin trick was being played. This deception was practised thus. The alleged regulation weapon was replaced by a special revolver or rifle so contrived that the bullets do not go into the barrel, and cannot be shot out of it, or if they do go in they are bogus pellets that dissipate with the discharge. The result is that the performer faces blank cartridges and smilingly produces duplicates of the marked bullets. After the blank cartridges had been

fired in the case referred to, a cowboy suddenly drew his revolver, pulled the trigger, and cried, "Let's see if you can catch this bullet between your teeth, mister magician." The fakir promptly fell dead.

THE OPERA HOUSE CONCERTS.

Lovers of artistic singing owe a debt of gratitude to "the syndicate of Auckland gentlemen" who engaged Messrs Saunders, Prouse, and Gee for the series just completed. A capital house on Wednesday evening began by appreciating and ended by working itself up to a pitch of enthusiastic excitement rarely reached in Auckland. Mr Charles Saunders not only possesses a splendid tenor voice, but is also one of the most finished and artistic singers of the English school. Trained on an excellent method, he displays a complete mastery of all the resources of vocal technique, enhanced by exquisite taste and marvellous delicacy of *nuances*. He shines in various styles—oratorio, opera, and ballad examples alike "winning each heart and delighting each ear." Mr Saunders was evidently taken aback by a mark of appreciation which in most countries is bestowed on lady performers only. A lovely basket of flowers handed up to him was somewhat suspiciously received, and at first handled as gingerly as if it had been a kettle of boiling water or an anarchist bomb. But his surprise soon melted into manifest appreciation of the compliment. Mr John Prouse is a *basso cantante*, gifted with a penetrating voice full of sympathetic *timbre*. He occasionally uses the *vibrato*, but always with discretion. His conception of "It is Enough," the great test-piece from "Elijah," displays finished taste and marked intelligence. His light and shade and dramatic bursts merit the highest praise. Of our Mr Gee it is needless to say more than that he held his own bravely in such good company. His "Lost Chord" evoked quite an ovation. Miss Buckland passed through the ordeal of comparison with such an accomplished trio very fairly. The accompaniments were well played by Miss Thorpe and Mr Alf Bartley, and Mr F. Edgar's cello obligato to Mr Prouse's singing must not be passed by without a word of praise. Altogether, Wednesday's concert proved a rare musical treat. On Thursday there was again a large attendance of delighted lovers of music, and a rare treat was given by the promoters. The programme was divided into two sections—sacred and secular—and the taste displayed in the selection of the various numbers was only surpassed by the finished rendering given by the artists. In the sacred section Mr Saunders sang with exquisite taste and execution, the recitative and air from the *Messiah*, "Comfort Ye" and "Ev'ry Valley," and followed with "And God Created Man" and "In Native Worth," from the *Creation*, the success achieved in each of these efforts being nothing short of a vocal triumph. His rendition of "A Wonderful Joy," in which Gilbert and Sullivan describe the many beauties of the English girl, showed that Mr Saunders possesses more than a fair share of dramatic power, and in his conception of "Come into the Garden, Maud" showed the artist's ability in this direction to even greater advantage. Mr Prouse proved himself to be a finished artist in that most difficult air from *Samson*, "Honour and Arms," and Faure's grand song, "Les Rameaux," received a splendid rendering, the beauty of the interpretation being enhanced by Mr Edgar's cello *obbligato*. Mr Gee's numbers were "The Holy City," "The Lost Chord," "The Desert," and Sullivan's touching composition, "Thou Art Passing Hence." They were all given in this vocalist's best style (which means a lot), and when the singer replied to the pronounced applause which greeted his masterly interpretation of "The Desert" by adding "Simon the Cellarer" to his other efforts, the audience were well satisfied. Miss Buckland played the Andante from Mendelssohn's "Concerto in G," and sang Cowen's ballad, "The Old and the Young Marie." Balfie's fine duet, "Excelsior," closed the concert, which was, I am glad to say, a financial success, as well as an artistic treat. A ballad night was given on Saturday evening with further marked success.

MISS BESSIE DOYLE.

At her farewell concert Bessie Doyle surpassed all her previous performances here with an almost faultless rendering of Paganini's stupendous Concerto in G Major. This brilliant *tour de force*, which almost exhausts the wide resources of the king of instruments, bristles with difficulties in the shape of remote intervals, grand double stopping, extraordinary harmonics, and wonderful pizzicato and bowing effects. It was chosen as the test-piece at the competition for the Mendelssohn Prize, when Bessie Doyle won that "Blue Ribbon" against six hundred candidates. The conditions of the contest require that candidates shall receive notice of the test piece only three weeks before the trial. In that brief space not only must the competitor learn to play the work without music, but is also expected to have a thorough knowledge of the theoretical matter of the composition. Bessie Doyle triumphed over all difficulties, and after hearing her rendering of the *magnum opus*, one can readily understand how the judges unhesitatingly crowned her as senior (music) wrangler. The gifted young lady has a brilliant career before her which will be closely watched by scores of New Zealand admirers. Her next move, it is said, is to America to fulfil a three years' engagement at five thousand dollars per annum.

THE BENTLEY SEASON.

The Opera House has been secured for a twelve-night season, commencing November 5th, by Mr Walter Bentley, and Southern reports of his company's triumph would make a big Auckland success appear to be a foregone conclusion. The opening piece will show the actor-manager in one of his favourite characters "The Silence of Dean Maitland" having been chosen to ring up the curtain. Readers of Maxwell Gray's novel will readily understand what a fine field there is in the dramatised version of this powerfully

written book for the display of high-class histrionic work. The tale told is that of a young churchwarden, eloquent, ambitious, who prior to his ordination becomes entangled in a *liaison* with Alma Lee, the daughter of a farmer. In one of their stolen interviews, which the father overhears, the dishonour of his daughter is made known to him, and in the quarrel that ensues Lee is killed. Another man is arrested and sentenced for the crime and the young churchwarden keeps silence. The years roll by, and after suffering the poison of remorse the Dean, unable to longer bear the strain, confesses his sin from the high altar of the cathedral and falls dead in the sight of his congregation, the members of which had for years cherished him as a man incapable of wrongdoing. The concluding act is, as may be imagined, a most powerful one, and Mr Bentley is said to do it full justice. If that is so—and any one who has seen the actor in "The Bells" can well believe it—theatre goers have a treat in store. Mr Bentley is said to be supported by a well-chosen company, the members of which have achieved more than passing success on the Australian stage. A popular feature of the season will be the admission rates—3s, 2s, and 1s.

OUR MELBOURNE LETTER.

"Morocco Bound" is a light musical trifle, and some of the costumes are also light, in fact "Bound in Calf" would not be an inappropriate title.

With this company Elton the London comedian returned to the antipodes. Billy Elton is an immense favourite in Australia, and nobody gives him more credit than I do. All the same I never could understand how the Press in this part of the world should go into raptures over such excellent comedians as Elton, when such excellent comedians as the late Johnny Hall was every bit as good as the best of them and a jolly sight better than some "eminent" comedians—the eminent Lonnen for instance. Another capital man, Wilfred Shine, is with the Princess Company and to my mind deserves just as much *kudos* if not more than Elton, for this reason. The latter is an old favourite here and we all know what he can do, while Shine is a refined comedian of the first water and clean away from the customary buffoon that, alas, we are compelled to get used to in those prosaic times.

The Melbourne *Evening Standard* has lately given photographs of a Miss Olivia Kempf and a Miss Marcella Day. Both ladies are described as well-known actresses, etc. Miss Kempf is a Russian lady, whose principal performance was as a "super" with the famous Parker Hall of Melbourne Theatre Royal notoriety. Of Miss Day, Inigo Tyrrell in his brief and money-dropping season at the Alexandra, wrote:—

Miss Day will take a night off,
Tra-la-la, for she is such an artless thing.

The "artless thing" is now suing Inigo for £250—will she get it? Tyrrell's season closed up so abruptly that his own little joke recoils back on his own head:—

With a flourish of trumpets he came on the scene
In productions suppressed by the Czar,
But his season, one big, sad, disaster has been,
And he takes a night off Tra-la-la.

At the Theatre Royal, Melbourne, Charlie Taylor and Ella Carrington have had a particularly successful season, and are still running strongly. They remain here till Melbourne Cup time, when Maggie Moore and Company take up the running.

The Bijou and Oxford theatres are running variety shows under the one roof. One of the shows will shortly come kerwollop, and I don't honestly think it will be the Oxford, where the Coghill's are.

The Alexandra, Opera House, Victoria Hall, and St. George's Hall (two theatres and two music halls) are closed—a sign of the times—and the country shows are not doing much. Tom Buckley and Company go to the provinces to fill in the Taylor-Carrington dates, the latter Co. being kept going at the Melbourne Royal where they are now staging "The Lancashire Lass."

THE FLAT.

WANGANUI J.C. SPRING MEETING.

SECOND DAY'S RACING.

[FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.]

Beautiful weather was experienced for the second day's racing of the Wanganui J.C. The attendance was fair and speculation proved brisk, the only thing that marred the day's sport being the wretched starting, but, nevertheless, the finishes were close in most cases. The principal event of the day was the Wanganui Stakes, the winner turning up in the four-year-old colt Purepo (by Arneil), which was nicely ridden by D. Watt. Rosefeldt finished second, coming very fast in the last 100 yards. Judging from her performance she should have a good outside (inside—Ed. S.R.) chance in the N.Z. Cup. The totalizer put through £3,522 making a total of £7,200 for the meeting, an increase £651 on last year. The fines imposed on jockeys amounted to £17 on the first day, and £11 on the second day. The successful riders were Watt and Alexander two wins each; Birkett one win and dead heat with Whitaker; White, Higgins, Cox, King, Taggart, Donnelly, Farrell and Mr F. H. Gibbons one each.

Racing commenced with the Owen Stakes, six going to the post, viz., 200 Johnny Faa 8.0 (Birkett); 41 Lebel 7.4 (Kingan); 57 Pihanga 6.9 (Donnelly); 39 Reynard 8.0 (Schaffer); 57 King John

7.0 (Reed), and 65 Cyrus 6.11 (Watt). Johnny Faa jumped off with the lead and kept at the head of affairs till the straight was entered, when Lebel got on terms, and a good race home resulted in Johnny Faa winning by half a head, Pihanga a length away third. Time, 1min 49.3-5sec. Dividend, £2 1s.

The second hurdles produced seven starters, and resulted as follows:—179 Melinite 12.8 (Alexander) 1; 114 Kapua 11.8 (Hope) 2; 9 Sunbeam (G. Morris) 3. The following also ran:—42 Oaklands, Kingan; 72 Bonovore 9.10, Anderson; 2 Murat 9.8, O'Brien; 18 Nanakia 9.5, Hall. Nanakia made play on the fall of the flag and led till going down the back stretch for the second time when Sunbeam went to the front. She showed the way until the last hurdle was cleared, when Melinite, who had been handy, came to the front, and won with a bit to spare by a length. Kapua came with a rush and finished in second place a length ahead of Sunbeam. Time, 3min 25sec. Dividend, £2 3s.

A field of five started for the Hack Hurdles, as follows:—117 Rangipai 10.8, Taggart; 165 Tramore 10.8, Lang; 47 Lady Clare 9.7, Hall; 15 Result 9.0, Anderson, and 171 Strike 11.9, Higgins. Tramore led until a quarter of a mile from home, when Rangipai joined issue and lasting longest won by half a length. Time, 2min 56.2-5 sec. Dividend, £4.

The Wanganui Stakes resulted as follows:—99 Purepo 7.4, Watt, 1; 131 Rosefeldt 8.10, Lindsay, 2; 100 Golden Plover 8.9, Whittaker, 3. Also ran:—198 Musket 8.9, Kingan; 46 Monte Carlo 7.7, Jenkins, and 68 Marino 7.7, Farrell. Marino made play, followed by Musket and Golden Plover, Rosefeldt lying last. This order was maintained until five furlongs from home, when Purepo got in front, and by the time the quarter-mile post was reached he had a couple of lengths to the good. Once in the straight Rosefeldt came with a big rush, but had to suffer defeat by a couple of lengths. Time, 2mins 42sec. Dividend, £5 16s.

The Hack Flat finished thus:—61 Dummy 7.7, Donnelly, 1; 191 Roll Call 9.6, Taggart, 2; 20 Nile 7.9, Leeson, 3. Also started:—293 Irish Twist 9.5, Cox; 63 Buckler 8.0, Eva; 6 Natatorial 8.0, Retter; 33 Hinau 7.13, Johnstone; 13 Helen 7.7, Neary; 87 Ascotvale 7.7, Farrell; 17 Effort 7.7, Hall; 6 Tomboy 7.7, Stevenson; 3 Tanganui 7.7, McEwan; and 6 Dawn 7.7, Manning. Half the field broke off to a false start, and completed the distance, Irish Twist winning easily, Nile second, Buckler third, but the starter declared a "no start," so the race was run over again. Dummy got six clear lengths lead when they were set going, and managed to run all the way, beating Roll Call by a couple of lengths, with Nile third. Time, 1min 18.2-5secs. Dividend, £11 16s.

The Marangai Stakes resulted:—30 Kalmea 6.8, Watt, 1; 56 Epilogue 7.2, Jenkins, 2; 107 St Laura 7.12, Mantle, 3. The other starters were:—12 Reynard 8.0, Schaffer; 43 Prestige 7.7, Reed. There was a good finish, Kalmea winning by half a length. Time, 1min 16.3-5 secs. Dividend, £7 8s.

The Consolation finished thus:—57 Monte Carlo 8.0, Farrell, 1; 77 Pihanga 6.0, Jenkins, 2; 95 Musket 9.5, Kingan, 3. Also ran: 90 Lebel 8.6, McDonald; and 100 King's Bowman 7.4, Reed. King's Bowman had the misfortune to get his bit slipped, so was pulled up, Musket continuing in the van. Nearing the straight, Monte Carlo and Pihanga went to the front and a desperate finish resulted in a win by half a length for the black horse. Time, 1min 37sec. Dividend, £6 8s. A protest was entered that Pihanga was struck over the head, but it was disallowed.

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