

[BY ORPHEUS.]

AUCKLAND CHORAL SOCIETY: "THE MESSIAH."—The annual performance of Handel's great oratorio on Tuesday evening filled the hall to its utmost capacity. Notwithstanding untoward circumstances, including the severe illness of Herr Professor Schmitt, who bravely battled through his trying task, and atmospheric conditions seriously affecting the vocal chords of both soloists and chorus, the oratorio on the whole proved a creditable performance. All the soloists, for the reason just stated, were occasionally imperfect in intonation. Mr W. S. Cousins sang the tenor music with much intelligence and refined taste, being most successful in "Thy Rebuke," "Behold and See," "He was Cut Off," and "Thou Didst Not Leave." Mr Mitchell sang with fire and dash in the bass solos, but was somewhat throaty in production. His "Why do the Nations" was specially effective. Mrs W. Eady sang the contralto parts with care and tenderness, but evidently suffered from the hot humid atmosphere more than anyone, her intonation being uncertain. Her portion of "He Shall Feed His Flock," was very sympathetically rendered. Madame Chambers in her opening recitatives, "There Were Shepherds," "And to the Angel," etc., was also handicapped by the atmospheric conditions, but overcoming them later, gave really admirable renderings of "He Shall Feed His Flock," "How Beautiful are the Feet," "I Know That My Redeemer." The chorus, save occasional lapses in intonation, for which the sopranos were mainly responsible, sang with a good volume of tone and precision, "And the Glory," "Surely He Hath Borne," "All We Like Sheep," "Their Sound is Gone Out," and the "Hallelujah" being especially effective. The band, led by Dr Cox, lent efficient aid, and when it is remembered that the very slightest rehearsal was possible, the society must be congratulated on doing so well all round. During the interval Mr Archdale Taylor presented a purse of fifty sovereigns to Herr Professor Schmitt in testimony of the subscribers' appreciation of his long and valuable services to the cause of music, expressing sympathy for his recent illness, and a hope that a quiet holiday would completely reinvigorate him. Herr Schmitt, who was manifestly overcome with emotion, feelingly responded in a few touching words which, owing to his weakness from a severe influenza attack, were only audible to those within a few feet of the speaker.

OPERA HOUSE: MISS EILEEN O'MOORE—As I anticipated, a crowded and fashionable house enthusiastically greeted this accomplished young violinist's reappearance in Auckland after an absence of three years. Finished as was her technique at that time, she has undoubtedly made tremendous strides in the interval, and that eminent critics should pronounce her the greatest living lady violinist is no longer a matter of doubt and wonder to those who had the pleasure of listening to her magnificent performances on Wednesday evening. Opening with Wieniaski's brilliant and elegant "Airs Passes." Miss O'Moore at once captivated her audience with her splendid tone, bowing, delicacy, power, sympathy, perfect intonation, and unflinching accuracy of double-stops and natural and stopped harmonics, qualities which were consistently displayed throughout all the delightful *morceaux* which followed; Paganini's concerto (first solo and cadenza), bristling with difficult *tours de forces* in all varieties of violin resources proved a veritable triumph, and carried the audience by storm. Spohr's stately and majestic adagio was rendered with a breadth and purity of tone and soul which betokened a deep individuality in the performer. Hubay's Hungarian dance was just a Niagara of sparkling gems, including a marvelous combination of pizzicato and feathered effects, and a perfect double trill. As encores Miss O'Moore played an exquisitely dainty lullaby (muted) by Hilliar; a brilliant Spanish dance by Sarasate, in which harmonics, double stops, legato, and pizzicato effects were tossed off with charming ease and precision, and Schumann's "Traumerci," a soulful and melodious andante. Readers of this column may confidently accept "Orpheus'" assurance that they have a rich and rare feast in store whenever Miss O'Moore plays. Miss O'Moore is supported by Mr Reginald Coke, a fine violoncellist, who, however, was manifestly not in his best form after a trying sea voyage. His rest-peg also handicapped him severely by slipping at awkward moments. The gavotte by Popper, however, gave some idea of what he could achieve under more favorable conditions. Mrs Reginald Coke was also suffering after her voyage, but nevertheless sang very pleasingly; she possesses a sweet, equal, pure and true light soprano voice, and was very charming in Posti's "Beauty's Eyes," with cello obbligato by Mr Coke. In Miss Beatrice Vartha, a brilliant solo pianist and admirable accompanist has been secured. A *berceuse* by Chopin was rendered with refined and delicate taste, and Ketten's brilliant "Les Castagnettes" displayed the clever young lady's elastic touch and perfect execution to great advantage. Two local singers held their own bravely in such distinguished company. Miss Mabel Maxwell rendered a charming little chanson (by her teacher, Mr Arthur Boulton), "Dream Fancies," and "The Calico Dress" with complete success, and, with Mr Tracey Hall, sang Mendelssohn's "I Would That My Love" very nicely, but the tempo appeared to be somewhat too fast. Mr Tracey Hall, in splendid voice, was encored for "When Bright Eyes Glance," responding with "Bid Me to Love," and was effective in "Thy

Sentinel am I." The stage was beautifully decorated with foliage, fairy lamps, and draped with hangings which, although artistic, I fancy did not improve the acoustics.

OPERA HOUSE: "FOR ENGLAND."—Of Mr Bland Holt one may truly say, "Everything you do still betters what is done!" He is always surpassing himself and everybody else. That the public are alive to this fact was once more evidenced by the sardine-packed house which grew so enthusiastic on Boxing Night. Mr Sutton Vane, the brilliant dramatic author, has made a play with which the most fastidious critic suffering from a bilious fever could scarcely quarrel, so consistently clever are plot, situations, characters, and writing. Mr Bland Holt and his versatile supporters stage and play it in a style which leaves the audience with the comfortable sensation experienced after enjoying all the delicacies of the season well cooked and perfectly served. This is an appropriate Christmas simile! An excellent sketch of the plot, printed on the programme, runs as follows:—"In the course of four acts a plot is worked out descriptive of the gallantry and honor of Lieutenant Cecil Cranbourne as contrasted with the villainy and treachery of Major Fordyce Dangerfield, a cashiered army officer, who is anxious to supplant Cranbourne in the affections of Alma Dunbar, a South African heiress, whose banking account is the only possible means he (Dangerfield) can see of employing to restore his position. Dangerfield has seduced and deserted Lesbia Penn, a daughter of an old Quaker gardener, whom he subsequently murders,

(Dangerfield) has betrayed and deserted, is played with telling sympathy and pathos by Miss Fitzmaurice Gill, while Miss Flora Anstead displays her versatility as Lady Cranbourne, a pathetic role in strong contrast with her wonted humor. As the hero (Cecil) Mr W. E. Baker's manly presence, sonorous voice, and natural acting found full play and won all sympathies. Mr Albert Norman made a model villain, and Mr Cosgrove was delightfully humorous as Baby Bembrose; Jeremy Grattan, in the hands of Mr C. Brown, proved a capital bit of low-comedy work. Mr Bland Holt, in another of his supremely clever Hebrew impersonations, makes a stupendous hit as Manasses Marks, his droll speeches and immense make-ups—what price the Zulu?—compelling inextinguishable laughter. Racing demands upon my space compel me to omit much that I would add to this inadequate notice of a splendid production. But a warm word of praise must be bestowed upon the excellent music performed by Mr Kehoe and his orchestra, and the beautiful scenery and stage accessories. This (Thursday night) is the last performance of "For England," which no one should miss seeing. "In Sight of St. Paul's," another great production, is underlined for Friday evening.

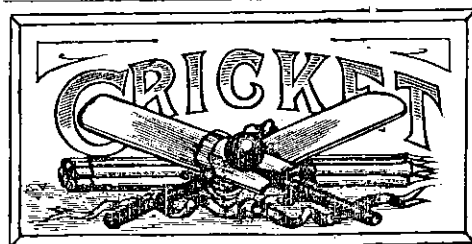
MR WYBERT REEVE continues his Cinematographe Lumiere entertainment at the City Hall on Friday and every other evening until further notice. On Saturday night new pictures will be shown, including the Melbourne Cup. Mr Wybert Reeve is assisted by the favorite contralto, Miss Hope Nation, and Mr Geo. Higgott.



MRS REGINALD COKE, OF THE EILEEN O'MOORE CONCERT COMPANY.

after failing in an attempt to throw the blame of the girl's downfall upon Cranbourne, against whom he also plots in an endeavor to transfer the capital charge from his own shoulders. War breaks out in the Transvaal, and Cranbourne is ordered, with his regiment, on active service to South Africa, whither Dangerfield also goes in the guise of a war correspondent, but really as a spy in the pay of the Boers, which treasonable position he employs to again attempt to ruin the hero and get Alma Dunbar into his clutches. That lady, accompanied by her maid (Keziah Penn) and Vera Cranbourne, has also found her way to South Africa, and the three ladies do much to circumvent the efforts of the traitor. Manasses Marks, a Jew money-lender, who has lent money to nearly all the officers in the regiment, and also to Dangerfield, follows his creditors to the war, and also turns up at the right moment to do Cranbourne a good turn and bring confusion on the heads of his enemies. Of course everything turns out happily in the end, and Marks is the individual who unravels the tangle. He is the sole witness of the murder of Penn. Afterwards he intercepts Dangerfield's despatches to the Boers, and, although he is supposed to have been shot by Dangerfield, he puts in an appearance again in the last act, and finally vanquishes the villain." Turning to the characters, and taking the ladies first—Miss Elizabeth Watson plays Alma Dunbar with much emotional power and grace; Miss Frances Ross looks lovelier than ever as Vera Cranbourne, playing a pleasant role with delicious *espieglerie*; Mrs Bland Holt is delicately humorous and fascinating in one of her own inimitable parts—that of Keziah Penn, a demure Quaker damsel with many fine touches of that nature which "makes the whole world kin"; her sister (Lesbia Penn), whom the villain

"The Flying Jordans," after a very successful trip through New Zealand, under the capable management of Mr Arthur Gray, have just finished their trip at Invercargill. The company leaves Australia for India very shortly. Mr A. Gray is now with the Kinematograph Syndicate, and, after the Xmas season at Invercargill, he goes through the goldfields. On his way to Sydney he hopes to pass through Auckland and meet some of his many friends.



[BY STONEWALLER.]

THE ANGLO-AUSTRALIAN TEST MATCH.

The following budget of interesting notes in the first test match between Stoddart's English Eleven and the Australians were contributed to the *Australian Star* of December 20th by Ireland, the well-known cricketer:—"The first great match is over, and England has asserted her right over Australia. The nine wickets victory hardly represents the difference between the sides. One very curious thing about the result is that no one, not even the members of both teams, anticipated that the match would turn out in the way that it did. The English team openly stated that they

thought Australia had a fine chance, providing the wicket kept hard. This fact was known to the Australians, and they themselves, before a ball was bowled, were confident they would hold their own with the powerful English side. Even the most sanguine English supporters must acknowledge that the Australians in this match played a good deal below real form. The 237 runs which they got in the first innings do not represent the true batting strength of the team. The Englishmen themselves openly state that they do not consider that they have a fine bowling team, so that we are forced to think that Australia shaped poorly at the opposing bowling. This may seem a poor compliment to the English bowlers, but knowing them so well they will forgive me if I say that some of our wickets were given away. It is to their credit, however, to say that in spite of the enormous strain which they were put to in having the follow on against them they never flagged for an instant, but kept manfully to the hard task which was before them. They deserve all praise. If the luck came in their way it was none of their seeking, and though very welcome it seemed only a fitting tribute to a side which did its level best to win the match. As McLaren remarked to me after the match—"Well, old man, it is all over; we had the luck on this occasion, what little there was. It will be your turn in the next. We have had a pleasant match, and we naturally feel pleased at our win." I am sure no one will begrudge the Englishmen their win, and although the Australians had to lower their colors to the English team, it was only to a magnificent side, before whom it was no disgrace to fall. Defeat either brings humiliation or it acts as an incentive to greater efforts in the future. Australians would not be true to early traditions if they were to accept the defeat on this occasion as an indication of the results of the future matches.

DEGRADATION OF THE GAME.

Speaking of the postponement of the test match, the cricket writer of the Melbourne *Leader* says:—"The most severe of the various hard blows that Australian cricket has had to suffer was struck, and struck below the belt, on Thursday by the trustees of the Sydney cricket ground, when they decided that the first of the five test matches should not commence on the day appointed. Their action was disgraceful, disloyal, and discourteous, and will not bear criticism from any point of view. It was disgraceful that the trustees should for financial considerations completely ignore the public to whom they owe everything. They were disloyal in sacrificing the reputation of Australian cricket for the sake of greed, and discourteous in the last degree in not consulting the teams or the respective captains. The last-named offence is easily explained. The trustees knew that there was no possible chance of Stoddart and Trott becoming parties to such a lamentable degradation of the game. As in the case of Giffen's abstention, various reasons may be weakly assigned, but the public are not simpletons to swallow any explanation, save one, and that is that it was feared the match, if started at the time appointed, might be over in two days, and that a couple of days' gate money might thereby be lost. If people were to talk for a month they could not make any other explanation hold water. It was moreover a gross piece of impertinence for the trustees to assume a power which they only grabbed through holding the keys of the gates, and it is not surprising to hear that Stoddart wrote to them, indignantly protesting against their action, and that furthermore he cabled his opinion of the transaction to England. Earlier in the day the popular English captain had received by cable intelligence of the death of his mother, making his experience on December 9th sad in the extreme, as well as harassing and annoying in connection with the Sydney contretemps.

We are informed that Messrs Thomas Ogden, Ltd., Liverpool (England), the manufacturers of the celebrated Guinea Gold Cigarettes, have opened an Office at 7, Spring St., Sydney, under the management of the well-known firm of Messrs J. Frossard & Co. The Guinea Gold Cigarettes are a standard brand in England, and we feel confident that the quality and purity of these Cigarettes will soon make them popular here, as at the price of 6d per packet of 10, with mouthpieces, they are really good value, and lovers of a refined smoke will appreciate them.

OPERA HOUSE

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