

"THE GONDOLIERS."—A capital first night was the production of "The Gondoliers" on Wednesday evening by the Auckland Opera Company. Herr Vennermark's lovely scenery even surpassed his own handiwork in "The Mikado." The latter opera, when replaced, was running without a hitch, and Mr J. T. Stoyles' patient teaching was rewarded by a relief from any anxiety as to the business. As Herr Carl Schmitt was engaged with "The Golden Legend" on Tuesday and Wednesday evenings, Mr Charles Waud took the baton at the Opera House, and proved a most efficient substitute, "The Mikado" going like clockwork. For "The Gondoliers," however, the Herr Professor was in his wonted position. Staging, dressing, music, and business were all of a high standard of excellence, and the audience manifested their delight by frequent encores, so that the Library clock had chimed the quarter to 11 before the curtain finally fell. The chorus sang and acted with good volume and admirable precision. "Roses Red and Roses White," "Buon Giorno," "Bridegroom and Bride," and the grand finales to both acts were capitally done. The dancing—with lovely lime-light effects—of the cachuca and gavotte was excellent. Taking the characters (ladies first) Miss Emily Reeves made a dignified and stately Duchess, and wore a lovely dress in the second act. She fully maintained her reputation, both vocally and histrionically, although the part is not nearly so strong as Katisba. Of Mrs E. H. Hopkins' Casilda I have already expressed a very high opinion. Vocally she is quite as good as ever, and her acting and delivery of Mr Gilbert's incisive dialogue proves her to have made great strides in stage-craft. The Misses Carrie Knight and Lily Thomson, as Giatetta and Tessa, must be bracketed together as two more of the successes of the production. Both ladies sing, dance, and act charmingly, and make their points with grace,

other opportunity of seeing them may occur for years to come. Once more I must congratulate conductor, stage-manager, trainer, performers, and orchestra on the great success achieved.

MR DUVAL tells me that Mr Pollard discovered in Napier an excellent tenor, who has joined the company. Mr Carter is the new recruit.

EXHIBITION MUSIC: "THE GOLDEN LEGEND."—On Tuesday evening in last week the second performance of this fine cantata crowded the Choral Hall with an enthusiastic audience. Praiseworthy as the first rendering proved, the second far surpassed it in every respect—soloists, chorus, and orchestra quite eclipsing their previous efforts. A gentleman pre-eminently competent to judge, having heard all former productions in the colony and being a distinguished musician himself, pronounces Tuesday evening's "Golden Legend" distinctly the finest ever heard in New Zealand. This, indeed, is high praise, as the visitor in question is by no means a reckless musical optimist. The triumph was largely due to the splendid conducting of Herr Carl Schmitt, who infused his fervid personality into the forces under control of his baton, and seemed to inspire them with his energy, dash, and sympathy. Only one portion of the piece dragged somewhat, i.e., the long duologue between Elsie (soprano) and Ursula (contralto), which, though dreary at best, might perhaps in some passages have had a little more dramatic meaning and force imparted. Exclamations such as "And must he die?" "Foolish child, be still!" "I will myself the offering make," "My child, thou must not die!" "Ah! Love is me!" "What if this were of God!" seem to indicate a highly-wrought pitch of passionate emotion rather than a wail of sorrow. But a truce to fault-finding where these is so

CHORAL HALL.—On Friday evening a ballad concert by the Exhibition soloists was much enjoyed by a large audience. All the singers were in their best form. Miss Large sang "Deh Vieni Non Tarder" (Mozart's "Figaro"), "The Swallows" (Cowen), and, as encores, "Annie Laurie" and "Jim"; Madame du Rieu, "Sunshine and Rain," "The Silver Ring," and "Killarney" (encore); Mr John Prouse, "Thou Art Passing Hence" and "The Deathless Army" (encores, "Ich Gralle" and "To Anthea"); Mr John Hill, "May Morning," "Mignon," and "A Song of Sleep" (encore). Every song was artistically rendered and much appreciated. Another delicious treat was afforded by the string quartet daintily and effectively played by Mons. de Willimoff, Mr Cox, Herr Zimmermann, and Judge Edger. The selections were two movements from Beethoven's No. 4 and Haydn's "Hymn to the Emperor." Mr Towsey accompanied some of the vocal numbers with wonted skill, and Miss Prouse in the others displayed exquisite sympathy and taste.

I HAVE received from the manager of the Henry Dramatic Company marked copies of Wellington newspapers containing very favorable criticisms of "From Scotland Yard."

MR CALLENDER, of the Hellers, forwards me *The Taranaki Herald* and *Hawera Star*, both of which speak in the highest terms of the artistic and financial success which the company is achieving.

WHEN the Pollards play in Auckland we shall hear Mr Ernest Fitts in the new patriotic song "Victory," which sings the praise of Kitchener's Khartoum and Fashoda triumphs. The composer (Vergne Whyte) has forwarded me a copy of the song. The air is a dashing and inspiring *tempo di marcia*, with an effective accompaniment and a ritornelle introducing "The Girl I Left Behind Me." Messrs Eady are the publishers.

THE annual meeting of the Auckland Liedertafel took place on December 9th, Mr G. M. Reid in the chair. The balance-sheet presented showed that the finances of the society are in a healthy condition. The following officers were elected for the coming year:—Patron, the Right Rev. Dr Lenihan; president, G. E. Mueller, Esq.; vice-presidents, Peter Dignan, Esq., J. J. Holland, Esq., Dr Dawson, V. E. Rice, Esq., Rev. Dr Egan, Hon. J. A. Tole, Theo. Cooper, Esq., Professor. Egerton, Professor Tubbs, Dr Fox, Dr Hooper, Dr Lewis, Rev. Mitchell, J. P. Hooton, Esq., D. Goldie, Esq.; conductor, Mr Arthur Towsey; hon. secretary, Mr J. R. Simpson; hon. treasurer, Mr A. Trenwith; librarian, Mr F. Parish; hon. auditor, Mr H. W. Taylor; hon. pianist, Mr Alf Bartley; committee, Messrs H. Davy, G. Roberts, T. Allan, M. Trenwith, and F. Wright.

THE Pollard Opera Company will open at the Opera House on Boxing Night with "The Gay Parisienne," a musical comedy by Mr George Dance (librettist) and Ivan Caryll (composer). It was first produced at the Duke of York's Theatre, London, where it had a run of over 300 nights. The rights for the colonies were purchased by Messrs Williamson and Musgrove, and the Pollard combination bought the New Zealand rights, also the scenery, wardrobe, and effects as used in the Australian production. "The Gay Parisienne" is of that style of entertainment that has almost supplanted comic opera. The music is bright and sparkling, and some of the situations are farcical in the extreme.

THE POLLARD OPERA COMPANY OF TO-DAY.



BACK ROW—(5)—E. O'Connor, H. Gleeson, F. Gardner, G. Walker, H. Smith.  
 SECOND ROW—(10)—B. Russell, J. Friend, Alf. Stephens, W. Percy, G. Young, E. Nable, C. Bunz, G. Cleaver, H. Quealy, J. Thomas.  
 THIRD ROW—(15)—C. Buckingham, Herr Bunz, J. O'Sullivan, J. Gardener, E. Fitts, F. Duval, W. O'Sullivan, T. Pollard, H. T. Harrison, Prof. Ashton, C. Vaughan, J. Quealy, T. Quealy, H. Poore, H. Sinnott.  
 FOURTH ROW—(17)—Misses M. Hewson, Z. Karkeek, E. Metcalfe, E. Ziegler, C. Palmer, L. Stephens, N. Wilson, M. Mitchell, Mrs Pollard, Misses Maud Beatty, May Beatty, N. Foord, Mrs O'Sullivan, Misses W. Karkeek, J. Ramsay, A. Curtice, Mr D. Williams.  
 FIFTH ROW—(13)—Misses A. Halle, B. Mercer, R. Stephens, M. Metcalfe, A. Smith, A. Pollard, N. Rede, N. Borthwick, L. Ericson, J. Campbell, K. Lewis, L. Harmston, B. Harrison.  
 FRONT ROW—(4)—Albert Stephens, Eily O'Sullivan, Jack Pollard, Charley Albert.

charm, and precision. The Misses Minnie Lye and Ethel Boulton fill subordinate roles very well indeed, and, taken all round, the ladies are eminently a strong cast. Mr Archdale Tayler plays, for the first time, Don Bolero (the Grand Inquisitor), and adds another to his already long list of triumphs. His reading of the part quite eschews burlesque; and humor and excellent singing are artistically blended throughout with consistent dignity. For a first appearance as the Duke del Plazzo-Toro Mr Em. Keesing made a very creditable show, but will, with more practice and confidence, do much better work in the future. Mr Robin Hay's Luiz is worthy of all the praise bestowed upon him in former productions. He sings and acts up to Casilda capitally, and their joint efforts are the bone and sinew of the piece. Mr G. Tracey Hall's Guiseppe always makes its mark. His fine voice, stage presence, aplomb, and natural ease fit him for the role, which he plays *à merveille*. Mr A. L. Edwards, as Marco, also wins laurels, but, being new to the role, will improve at every performance. Mr A. G. Murphy's Antonio proves how much can be made of a comparatively minor part, and the same may be said of Messrs E. S. Fort (Giorgio) and F. P. George (Annibale). So numerous were the encores that I must only mention some:—"There Was a Time" (Casilda and Luiz), "Take a Pair of Sparkling Eyes" (Marco), "Rising Early" (Guiseppe), the Duke's opening song and quartette, Don Bolero's "I Stole the Prince" and "There Lived a King," the Duchess' song and "Highly Delighted" duo, "When a Merry Maiden" (Tessa), "Kind Sir" (Gianetta), Tessa and Gianetta's farewell songs and ensemble with Marco and Guiseppe, etc., etc. By the time these lines are in print the operas will have started the final four alternate nights, and, being then letter-perfect, no one should miss hearing "Gondoliers" and "Mikado" so well staged and performed, especially as in all probability no

much to praise. Of Mr John Prouse's Lucifer I need only say ditto to my last praises of his splendid conception and interpretation of the many opportunities in a grand role. Magnificent was his Mephistophelian mockery of the Pilgrims chanting a psalm in "Here I am, too, in the pious band." The diabolical humor of the devil singing a hymn, with sardonic comments of his own interpolated, is a neat dramatic stroke. Mr John Hill's singing of the powerful and dramatic passages in Prince Henry's role displayed a marked advance on his previous performance. In capital voice, and with a greatly-improved orchestra, he let himself go, making his points with artistic effect. The vigorous treatment of a part which is a great deal more than the breathings of a love-sick swain, richly deserved the enthusiastic applause bestowed on the singer. Passages such as "Purge with your nostrums and drugs infernal; the spouts and gargoyles of these towers. 'Not me! My faith is utterly gone in every power but the Power Supernal;" and "Through every vein I feel again the fever of youth," were forcibly delivered. Miss Large surpassed herself in the music allotted to Elsie, and sang the number, "My Redeemer and My Lord" (Mr Radcliffe, obligato on Cor-Anglais), with refined taste and effect. Madame du Rieu, although not quite in voice, displayed marked improvement, and was applauded for Ursula's pathetic prayer, "Virgin who lovest the poor and lowly." Mr J. W. Ryan again acquitted himself well in The Forester's brief part, "Your daughter lives and the Prince is well," being admirably declaimed. I trust that "The Golden Legend" will be repeated at least once more.

Cecil Ward, now under engagement to The Firm, is appearing in the new line of a low-comedian, and plays Tom Dossiter in "Harbour Lights."

MELBOURNE WAXWORKS.—The popularity of the above entertainment is still on the increase. If matters go on as they have been during the last few weeks, our only John will be obliged to petition the building commissioners to extend his premises, or else run the risk of a summons for overcrowding. Apart from what might be called the "stationary" entertainment—in the shape of every "diversion," bar a "shindy," that at Old Country fair ever offered—there is a continuous change of programme in the way of new comedies, new songs, new dances, etc. On Saturday evening last a minstrel entertainment was given, and as we have seen nothing of that kind of a really high-class character in Auckland for some time, it goes without saying that it went well. New attractions are promised for the holiday week, and we do not exaggerate when we say that even the canniest of Scots would consider he had received his full "sixpen'orth" of amusement after leaving this kaleidoscopic combination of every variety of amusement. John seems to be almost as much pleased as the public, for at the present time his face continually wears the happy expression of one who has successfully catered to the pleasures of his fellow citizens and whose efforts have been appreciated.

ON Saturday week last the members of the Auckland Liedertafel, at the kind invitation of Messrs Reed Bros., journeyed to Motutapu. The party left in Mr Bradney's launch Presto, and, after a pleasant run down to Home Bay, were met by Mr Reed, who showed them round the island. The members then, under the trees, regaled Mr Reed with a choice selection of part songs and, after a little light refreshment, re-embarked for home. When the Presto got alongside H.M.S. Tauranga the members treated the crew of the war ship to a few suitable part songs, which were received by ringing British cheers. The Presto arrived at the wharf a little before 9 o'clock, and all declared they had had a good time.

APPROPOS of the staging of "The Mikado" at the Auckland Opera House. This opera was first produced in the colonies at the Theatre Royal in Melbourne about thirteen years ago, and the title role was entrusted to Johnny Forde, whom Auckland playgoers will recollect as having last appeared here with Maggie Moore some six or seven years ago.

PADEBIEWSKI, the great pianist, also the man with the marvellous head of hair, has at last finished his long-promised opera. Unfortunately it will be produced first in Dresden during this month. We don't know what our Exhibition committee were thinking of not to have made arrangements for its production in Auckland just now. It would have been such a lift for Paderewski, too!!!

In the issue before last we reprinted in our stage columns, from a Napier paper, the statement that The Firm had booked dates at the Napier Theatre Royal from March 10th to March 17th. We have since found out that the statement is entirely untrue. Mr Reynolds telegraphs from Dunedin that The Firm has booked no dates for Napier, and we are credibly informed that Napier will be passed by Messrs Williamson and Musgrove until the dispute between the Opera Company referred to in the Napier paper and the lessees of the Theatre Royal is settled.

The Payne Family are doing very fair business in the Greytown district.

All the latest shapes in hats are sold cheap by Geo. Fowlds.