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Music & Drama.

Spectatum admissi risum teneatis amici?

A PACKED house on Monday evening listened with rapt attention to Mr. Bentley and his excellent Company. "Hamlet" was indeed capitally staged and performed with a success almost miraculous when we consider that actors and scenery only landed in Auckland at 10 a.m., and yet everything was ready at 8 o'clock in the evening. Mr. Bentley's Hamlet is a great and original conception of perhaps Shakespeare's noblest character, and I regret that space will not permit me to notice the many fine and delicate touches he imports into the rôle. I quite agree with the view he manifestly takes—that the madness was feigned all through in order to wreak just vengeance upon the incestuous murderer. One of the most strikingly fine points occurs in the scene where Ophelia returns the love-tokens. The struggle between the lover and the avenger is most powerfully indicated. To be compelled by stern necessity to spurn and revile his beloved mistress lest his plot should be unmasked and his revenge baffled is indeed a bitter task. The dutiful son conquers the lover in the end, but by the most delicate hints of tenderness Mr. Bentley plainly shows his true meaning. From this one example we can realise the amount of study and thought which such a rôle demands. Mr. Bentley's elocution, voice, presence and gestures are all admirable. He delivers his lines in the most natural tone imaginable, and following Hamlet's advice to the players, never "tears a passion to tatters." Still he can be powerful, as for example in the splendid scene where he brings his wretched mother to a proper sense of her degradation. Again in the "Play" scene his echoing in tones of suppressed passion the lines delivered on the sub-stage—working himself towards the conscience stricken king the while—until the sublime climax of denunciation is reached, made a stupendous effect. The many cuts in the text seem to rob us of familiar passages, but to bring the play within reasonable limits, much must perforce be omitted. I missed, "Well said, Old Mole! can't work i' the earth so fast?" and other favourite lines, but most of all the exquisite passage in which the Queen describes Ophelia's drowning—

"There is a willow grows aslant a brook

That shows his hoar leaves in the glassy stream."

However, as an innocent playgoer once remarked, "Hamlet is a clever play—but too full of quotations!" I notice that Mr. Bentley does not accept the emendation of "henshaw" "for handsaw." In so doing he is consistent with his reading of the character. For a man who could not distinguish one species of hawk from another would not necessarily be insane, but he who confounds a bird with a carpenter's saw cannot at the time be *compos mentis*, and Hamlet undoubtedly wished to imply that at times he was perfectly sane. Turning from such interesting points to the various impersonations, I will, as far as space permits, say a few words about the characters. Mr. Charles Holloway made a fair King Claudius, but was

perhaps scarcely dignified enough. Mr. A. E. Greenaway's Laertes is a really strong performance, and he does not suffer, as most do in the rôle, by contrast with the star. Graceful in figure and gifted with a good voice and great intelligence, he has an undoubted future before him. Mr. Stevens as Horatio also deserves high praise, and displays experience, finish, and culture. Mr. Harry Hill made a satisfactory Guildenstern, and Mr. Porter's Bernardo proved him a competent actor. Miss Alice Holbrook made quite a feature of Osrie, the "Beau Nash" of the play. She spoke her lines admirably, and evidently appreciated, as her audience did too, the humours of the part. Miss Alice Deorwyn's Queen Gertrude is a really good performance, and in the chamber scene with Hamlet she displayed true emotional power. One of the best-played characters in the cast was Polonius. Mr. Lachlan McGowan hit off the rôle to a tee, and made a splendid feature of the queer combination of wise old man and pedantic old ass. His lines throughout were excellently spoken. Mr. A. Mony satisfactorily filled the minor part of Rosencrantz. Mr. Clifton Alderson, who enacted the Ghost, has an appropriately sepulchral bass voice and a faultless enunciation. His ghostly bearing was mystic and impressive. "I am thy father's spirit" was magnificently rendered. Mr. Morrison as the "actor" and Miss May Thorne as the "actress," made the most of their small rôles. The grave-diggers—Messrs. Russell Crawford and F. Royson—were both admirable, and played up to one another with telling effect. Mr. Dennison's priest was excellent in regard to his lines, but I should like to see the part better dressed. The parson at a Court burial, even though a monk, should wear a good gown. Miss Julia Nelson looked very nice as the page. A special meed of praise must be reserved for Ophelia. Miss Laura Hansen not only dressed and looked the part *à merveille*, but won the sympathy of her audience by the grace, pathos, and tenderness of the gentle girl who innocently suffers for the evil deeds of another. In the flower scene she rose to a high pitch of excellence, and sang the snatches of pathetic nonsense with a wild tenderness that brought tears into many eyes. From the above criticisms it abundantly appears that Mr. Bentley has with him an exceptionally strong company, and that the legitimate drama is being presented with all the accessories requisite to adequate performances. The season promises to be a great treat and a big success in every way.

ON Friday evening I attended the concert given by the Auckland Orchestral Union under the direction of Mr. Towsey. Other demands on our space compel me to do but scant justice to a successful concert. The orchestra played some selections for the first time in Auckland and acquitted themselves well. "Lohengrin" was especially interesting, but I scarcely think that Wagner intended the march which follows the "Bridal Chorus" to be taken at quite so slow a tempo. It is not meant to be a funeral march. Mr. T. M. Jackson sang a difficult number in a style that augurs well for his future success. Mr. Geo. Reid also sang well. But undoubtedly the artistic success of the evening was achieved by Madame Goldenstedt in her operatic selections. There was an overflowing house, and the entertainment was

a success notwithstanding that some of the selections were perhaps "Caviare to the general." But it is right to strive to educate and elevate the popular taste, and not to frame programmes carefully lowered to the level of amiable mediocrity.

ORPHEUS.

Athletics, Etc.

NORTHERN ATHLETIC CLUB.

BAD luck seems to follow professional running in Auckland. The Northern Athletic Club's inaugural meeting was originally fixed for St. Patrick's Day (17th inst.); but Jupiter Pulvis would appear to have no special regard for Ireland's Patron Saint, for on that day he has of recent years put in his unwelcome claim oftener than on any other public holiday. This caused the postponement of the above sports till Saturday last, when the weather was everything that could be desired; but the counter attractions of the Interprovincial cricket match, the Papakura races, and several aquatic picnics proved too much for the newly-formed club, and the attendance at Potter's Paddock was meagre in the extreme—there being only between 200 and 300 persons present. Every possible arrangement had been carefully attended to by Mr. G. Robertshaw, the secretary. A number of new hurdles were on the ground; as was also jumping posts, etc. A circular track, a quarter of a mile round, was laid off, and the straight run of 200 yards was taped carefully, and was in splendid order. Tilting the ring posts were erected round the $\frac{1}{4}$ -mile circle, and indeed everything was excellently managed, and the contests close and exciting. A little trouble was caused at the start by a refractory pistol, which persisted in not going off when wanted; but Mr. Foley, the starter, got over the difficulty by borrowing a fowling-piece from Jimmy Wattie. Impy's band was on the ground during the afternoon. W. C. Walker, Esq., was judge, and had some remarkably close finishes to decide, and gave general satisfaction. He was assisted by Mr. A. H. Trubshaw. Mr. E. G. Sandall was judge of walking; Mr. Geo. McBride timekeeper; and to Mr. P. Quinlan, who was handicapper, special praise is due, the finish for the 300 yds being a treat to witness, all the competitors finishing within a yard of each other. There is no doubt but that the failure of the meeting was greatly contributed to through not being properly advertised. The following are the results:—

150 YARDS NOVICE RACE.—1st prize, £2; 2nd, £1.—S. Roberts 1, Jno. Moore 2. Won in a walk. No time taken.

100 YARDS BOYS' RACE (under 16 years).—A. Long 1, J. Tunny 2. Won easily. No time taken.

75 YARDS SPRINT.—1st prize, £3; 2nd, £1.—First Heat.—H. Simpson 1, E. P. Good 2, A. Pearson 3. Time, 7 3-5ths secs.

Second Heat.—S. Murphy 1, W. Purdy 2, R. Keenan 3. Time, 8secs.

Final Heat.—R. Keenan 1½yds, 1; A. Pearson 1yd, 2; T. Shelly, 6½yds, 3. Time, 7 4-5ths secs.

HALF-MILE HANDICAP.—1st prize, Mr. G. McBride's suit of clothes; 2nd prize, £1.—D. Somers, 26yds, 1;