

THE STAGE

(By "O. P. Cyde.")

HIS MAJESTY'S THEATRE.

THE MAUD HILDYARD COMPANY.

The Maud Hildyard Dramatic Co., after some unfortunate delay, owing to the Mokoia having to return to Sydney with the disabled Monowai, opened at the above theatre last Saturday night to a packed house. The play produced, "A Warning to Women," has nothing to recommend it. It has not one redeeming feature in object, reason, structure, or compensation. The motive of the play is unnecessary and meretricious; the subject is one totally unworthy the pen of a true dramatist, and the reason utterly inadequate. That Mr. Watson Mill, who, I must confess, exists in the public mind only as an entity, should think fit to issue his "A Warning to Women," as a serious object-lesson to womankind, is an insult to the sex, unpardonable and indefensible. To place a drunken and morphia tortured woman on the stage and point to her as being one of the common objects of our every-day life, is to produce a false postulate, and to urge an utterly erroneous conclusion. To my mind it is a matter for congratulation to the human race that female dipsomaniacs and morphomaniacs are as rare as, aye, and even rarer than the philosopher's stone. We are aware that they exist, but in a far away remote, hidden and infinitesimally small ratio to mankind. To burden society with the accusation that a dipsomaniac and morphia slave is the common order of our woman kind is to insult the reasoning intelligence of man. Where our knowledge originates there are we sure of our foundation. "A Warning to Women," I repeat, is meretricious, and if intended for a moral lesson, fails most miserably in its object. For a man to hold the wantonness of his mother up to the eyes of the world, to boast of his heredity, and to brag of his desire for revenge on an absolutely guiltless society, is a meretricious and utterly unpardonable hypothesis in the plot of a dramatist's work. That Mr. Watson Mill can find no better hero and heroine than the vicious son of a fallen woman, and the wretched daughter of a drunkard, to illustrate his moral lesson, is a subject for pity. The world does not re-

quire the extreme and rare to illustrate its moral peccadilloes; nay, rather does it require the universally common and everyday vice to be held up for a warning. The whole play is a gruesome mass of inconsistencies that jar our finer feelings, and ring false in every tone. It is a mass of absurd improbabilities that could never be reality. The drunken daughter is allowed both by father, lover, friends and everybody to continue her debaucheries; the vicious spawn of a betrayed woman is allowed to enter the best society, and to behave like the brutal cad that he is attempted to be, without any check or interference. The ruined father and the insulted lover stand by and utter maudlin platitudes, the degraded daughter raves and behaves in a manner that would find her in a lunatic asylum within ten minutes, if such a position were possible in real life. I have never seen quite so insensate, so falsely showy and so feebly ineffective a melodrama as "A Warning to Women," a play, I may safely take it, to the general public, in the most deliberate and strongest contrast to such human dramas as "The Silver King," "Home, Sweet Home," and "Cheer Boys, Cheer."

The piece is well mounted with very handsome scenery, all of which is artistic and worthy of praise. The scene of the Thames in London is as good as anything of the same kind that we have had. Miss Maud Hildyard proved, in the disgusting part that she was called upon to portray, that she is capable of great possibilities. I have no hesitation in saying that Miss Hildyard is an emotional actress of the very highest order. In manner, speech, deportment, feeling and expression, all those important essentials to the really great actress, she is perfect. And it is a matter of deep regret to see so fine an actress playing so lamentable a part. Mr. James Lindsay, as Dr. Marcus Dread, was rather too stagey as the "heavy" of the piece. He accentuates his mannerisms, and shows a stiffness incompatible with free and natural acting. At times he returned to his old self and showed us once again the graceful, polished Lindsay of old; but the loathsome burden of his heavy part evidently overshadowed his personality. Mr. Conway Wingfield presented a true and charming Shaun, a part he filled with love and romance, and



THE QUEALYS, SKETCH ARTISTS, NOW ON THE FULLER CIRCUIT.

a touching tenderness that instantly attracted his audience to him, and made him deservedly popular. The Fergus McNaughten of Mr. Boyd Irwin was too watery and very unlike what an Irish squire should be. The Lord Evesleigh of Mr. Halley was ditto, and rendered more so by an insufficient grasp of his lines on the first night. Mr. Halley has as yet not overcome his amateurism, and but for the fact that the Johnnie part of Lord Evesleigh practically plays itself, it would have been an indifferent performance. Mr. Walshe made a rather pathetic figure as the unfortunate father of Moira, the morphia fiend. He, too, was apparently suffering from the burden of the playwright's sins. The Mike McQuade of Mr. W. Bovis was well played, but the Ferdinand de Joues of Mr. Tracy Barrow was very indifferent. Surely Mr. Barrow can have seen, or studied, but few Frenchmen. Even his attempt at a stage Frenchman, linguistically, is a failure. The other male parts were fairly well filled. Miss Violet Dene made a good cripple, and Miss Guilford Quin was a taking squire's daughter. The company, taken altogether, is a powerful one, and given suitable material would doubtless be one of the best organisations that have toured New Zealand. "The Great Awakening" is the next piece announced for production.

CHORAL HALL.

MADAME ALBANI.

This gifted French-Canadian prima donna made her first appearance before an Auckland audience at the Choral Hall last Friday night. There was an overflowing and enthusiastic gathering. The great soprano, though only known in New Zealand by reputation, has so popularised herself by her world-wide renown, that one was quite prepared for the enthusiasm of the reception that awaited her. It is true that Madame has survived a long, brilliant and arduous career, and that her voice is not so youthful as it once used to be. It is true that the once exquisitely glorious soprano voice shows signs of hard work; nevertheless the surpassing brilliance of her vocalisation remains yet undimmed, and the treatment of it and its production and control still remain under the sway of her great genius. At

her first concert Madame Albani chose as her opening number that glorious aria from Mozart's "Il Re Pastore," entitled "L'Amore," which she sang with exquisite taste, tone and delicacy. The aria was rendered all the more magnificent by the masterly and artistic violin obligato of Mr. H. Wood. In response to the most imperative of encores Madame Albani sang "The Meeting of the Waters." Among other numbers given by the prima donna were Wilby's "Crossing the Bar," with a fine organ obligato by Mr. T. E. Midgley. The Gounod-Bach "Ave Maria," with accompaniment of piano, violin and organ, supplied by Messrs. Flint, Wood and Midgley, was one of the finest efforts of the evening. Dvorak's "Songs My Mother Taught Me," was delightfully rendered; and Ardit's "Rosebuds" was given with all the electrical abandon of brilliant vocalism which forms one of the chief and most delightful charms of Madame Albani. Yet in spite of all the classical beauties of these glorious gems, and of their magnificent treatment, in my humble opinion I do not think that any one of them appeared with half such hypnotic force to her audience as did the perfect pathos and feeling in her rendering of "Home Sweet Home." It is in such simple domestic ballads as the above that the truly great artist can absolutely wring our heart strings. Madame Albani always has our deepest admiration, but she wins our hearts with the sympathy that reminds us that "our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought." On Saturday evening Madame Albani sang Handel's "Angels Ever Bright and Fair," "Non Temer," with violin obligato by Mr. Haydn Wood; "Within a Mile of Ednboro' Town;" "Daffodil's A-Blowing;" the glorious waltz song from Gounod's "Romeo and Juliet," and Tosini's "Good-Bye." Each and all of these numbers were received with the very highest marks of appreciation and delight, and the prima donna was made the recipient of very many flattering floral offerings. There is not a doubt but that this gifted singer scored a very decided triumph in Auckland.

Miss Mildred Jones, a contralto of exceptional purity and power, proved to be a most delightful acquisition to the concert company. She is an educated and talented singer, with an exceptionally beautiful voice, and all her numbers were



MISS MAUD HILDYARD, NOW APPEARING AT HIS MAJESTY'S THEATRE