

**Music and
The Drama**

IN MUSICAL CIRCLES.

There has been a death of local musical events of late, and the only concert of note that is mentioned is a month distant. The St. John Vocal Society through its Honorary Secretary, announces two grand concerts in February, under the direction of W. Edgar Buck. So far as particulars can be gleaned from the advertisement, there will be "80 trained voices in unaccompanied part songs and choruses." Eighty trained voices! Where will they come from? Not that so many good voices could not be found in this city, but the task of training them must be stupendous.

Mr. Buck also promises to make his bow to a St. John audience for the first time as a bass soloist. He must mean in the opera house for if I mistake not quite a distinguished company had the pleasure of hearing him on the steamship Gallia at the luncheon given by the manager of the Beaver Line. He left no question of his ability upon that occasion and equal pleasure will no doubt be the portion of those who hear him in the opera house.

By the way, speaking of the Gallia luncheon—though an event of the past now—what good singers were present upon that occasion! Mr. Mayes was there and had two splendid selected songs, then Prof. Buck and Messrs Sutherland and Vroom. The last named gentlemen are in demand at every social gathering at which they are present and they are always ready to respond with something old and popular or something new.

I notice that the Hispanic club of Halifax which, we know, came to St. John a year or two ago, is still active and preparing to give the comic opera Prince Tommy Aitkins in the Academy. One of the newspapers, commenting upon their work says that most every night something is being done at their rooms, either in the way of scenery construction or in practice of choruses and solos. The scenery in two acts represents a sort of colonnade and courtyard of a palace. The principal features are of course pedestals and columns and panels, but the details are carefully provided for, so that the impression is quite Grecian, although the plot of the piece is laid in the moon—a sort of anachronism, one would almost say. In the third act the scenery presents the steps and massive door of a temple relieved by heavy pedestals. The musical and literary part of the opera is full of the genius of R. P. Greenwood and W. E. Delaney. With the exception of two finales the music is entirely the work of Mr. Delaney. Some of it is catchy, other portions beautiful and bright, and all is arranged so that the part is thoroughly adapted to the artist. Every voice is studied and music made to suit it so that the voices, individually and jointly, will be heard to best advantage. The finales of acts one and three are the only portions of the music borrowed, and these are popular marches which Mr. Delaney has arranged for voices.

Boston Musical critics are talking about John Philip Sousa's new opera, 'The Bride Elect' which was presented in the Boston Theatre last week. One critic says that every one in town is talking of the emphatic success which "The Bride Elect," is now scoring on the stage of the Boston theatre. Its reception there at the hands of as many people as the big playhouse could possibly hold was the most cordial, and the applause accorded it the most enthusiastic ever given to an American operatic production. The entire credit for the book and music belongs to "The March King" himself, Mr. Sousa. On the opening night every solo and every concerted number was applauded and redemanded until the singers themselves rebelled from sheer weariness.

The scene of the opera is laid in the Island of Capri in the Bay of Naples at a mystical time when that small bit of land was supposed to be divided into two kingdoms. The excellent opportunities offered for the display of picturesque scenery and beautiful costumes have been taken the utmost advantage of by the producing managers, and at the beginning of every act the curtain rises on an artistic and effective stage picture.

The plot of the opera revolves about the misfortunes of King Papagallo in his attempt to reap the reward of his victory over the Queen of Capri, which was the hand of her daughter Minutizza, who is in love with one Guido, and in order to escape becoming the wife of the impecunious and unattractive king, she bargains with a party of brigands to have him abducted. The end of it all is that the lovers are of course united after many complications



THE LITTLE MISSIONARY.

and tribulations, and the curtain falls finally on the third and last act on a scene of happiness for all.

The music calls for the highest praise. It is of that ear-catching jingle and rollicking kind so admirably adapted to gratify popular taste and combines a number of the best march rhythms that the genius of Sousa has ever evolved. This is particularly the case with reference to the march at the finale of the second act, the most striking composition of all which invariably brings forth veritable frenzies of applause. The orchestration of the opera is vigorous, and the chorus singing fine.

Now, just to show you that authorities on opera are as widely different at times as authorities in law, I will give the opinion of another critic who says that The Bride Elect was a disappointment. It was not what was expected from the "march king" and the composer of "El Capitan." The most obtrusive fault is in the book. Mr. Sousa might better have been content to share the merits of his new opera with some one of a more literary or poetic turn of mind than his. The plot is so obscure and

disconnected as to have practically no claim upon the interest.

Mr. Sousa seems to have set himself to work very seriously and very conscientiously to produce the most ambitious product of his career. A higher plane is set for everything in "The Bride Elect" than is usually expected from comic opera, and the result is not altogether satisfying. There is practically no humor, the music of the first two acts is unimpressive, and there is nothing to bestir the risibilities, or even to set the feet tapping until the finale of the second act.

It's the best thing in the whole opera, this military finale, a march song equal to anything Sousa has ever written,—full of the martial spirit, vitality and melody, imposing and picturesque in its mounting, magnificent in its rendering. Just what one expects from Sousa—what he has been waiting for through two acts.

The last act is a conglomeration of popular airs from all sources which give it a strong variety flavor and unpleasant contrast to the would-be dignity of what has gone before.

"You pay your money and you take our choice."

Miss Marie Barna whose beautiful voice delighted the people of the maritime province during the visit of Sousa's Band in 1894 (Mr. McLaughlin's engagement) has since reached the bright pinnacle of operatic success and is at the present time appearing at the Academy of Music, Philadelphia, in grand opera sharing the honors with Melba and Gadske. The performances are under the direction alternately of Walter Damrosch and Signor Bimboni and in the company appear such names as Toronto, Ibos, Kraus, and Standige. The three great singers appear as prima donna on different nights. The parts assigned to Marie Barna are Brumhilde in Siegfried and Sieglinde in Die Walkure which are sung in German. Melba appears as Juliette in Romeo and Juliette in French, and Gadske as Elizabeth in Tannhauser. In this opera Barna appears as Venus. Since singing in St. John, Marie Barna has appeared with the Philharmonic Orchestra of New York, and Boston Symphony Orchestra. She also studied in Paris with Ziska

and Sbriglia. In Italy she filled an engagement during the winter months singing in Faust, Lohengrin and other operas and was presented by Puccini with a handsomely bound edition of his opera La Bohema including some of the original manuscript, so well pleased was he with her singing. The many friends of Marie Barna in the provinces will await with interest further news of her musical triumphs and will anticipate with genuine pleasure a second visit, should they be so highly favored.

"I yield to no one in my admiration for Wagner's genius, and I further think that I hold the record in financial appreciation of his works," remarked John Philip Sousa a few nights ago. "Six years ago, when I was travelling in Europe, I had the pleasure of paying at the rate of \$1 a minute for the privilege of listening to 'Tannhauser,' and I feel confident that not even the most rabid of all Wagnerites could do more. Before sailing for Europe I had confidently promised myself the pleasure of attending at least one performance at Bayreuth, but, owing to some change in my plans, I did not reach Nuremberg until the day before the final performance. From this quaint old town I telegraphed to Paul Miersch, a New York musician, who was playing 'cello in the Bayreuth orchestra, to secure seats for me. Not hearing from him the next morning I did not deem it advisable to take my wife with me, with the possibility of not being able to secure a seat staring me in the face, but went alone.

"Arriving at Bayreuth I walked up the hill to the theatre, only to find that my friends had been unable to purchase a seat for me. Here I found many Americans I knew, but their commiseration was all the solace for my disappointments they could offer. When the first notes of the overture to 'Tannhauser' sounded I retired to the rear by frame structure where very admirable beer and sausages are dispensed for a modest sum, and endeavored to appreciate the humorous aspects of the occasion. There I was an American musician to whom a Wagner performance at Bayreuth had been a long contemplated treat, obliged to sit outside the theatre after travelling so many miles to be present.

"After the first act my American friends all came out to tell me how great the performance was. They meant well, no doubt, but I could not appreciate their kindness and refused to be comforted. Among those present was a German-American from somewhere out West, who, seeing my really great disappointment, finally offered me the temporary loan of his ticket on the condition that I should remain only for one number. I accepted with thanks of course, for a crumb of Wagner at Bayreuth is better than no Wagner bread at all. Just as the heralds appeared before the theatre to sound the announcement of the second act my new found friend apparently repented of his rashness in trusting his precious ticket to a stranger, and in order to sustain no financial loss through any possible neglect on my part to return he hurriedly said:

"That will cost you \$5, Mr. Sousa."

"Without a murmur I handed over the amount in German currency and hastened to my seat. I took several good looks around the theatre, listened to one number of 'Tannhauser,' and then, summoning an usher, I pretended to be suddenly ill and left the theatre. My new friend appeared vastly relieved when I came back to him and returned his ticket. A glance at my watch showed that I had spent five minutes in the Bayreuth theatre, and \$1 a minute, even for Wagner, is a pretty good price to pay for opera. My German-American good Samaritan received from me the exact price of his ticket and as he heard all of 'Tannhauser,' with the exception of one number, his philanthropy was not unprofitable."

TALK OF THE THEATRE.

Speaking locally there is no talk of the theatre. The opera house has been closed for two weeks. No doubt other companies will soon arrive just as soon as the management think the people have recovered from the shock that holiday expenditure gave their pockets, but nothing is advertised as yet. The only thing of local note was the annual meeting of the opera house company which was spoken of in last week's issue.

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AN AFTERNOON CHAT.