

Plays & Players

AT THE CITY THEATRES.

NOTWITHSTANDING the difficulties created by the wreck of the Scotsman, a very striking performance of Wilson Barrett's famous Sign of the Cross is being given at the Academy of Music this week. The company contains great deal of genuine talent, and the mountings of the play are excellent. At the first production on Monday night, there were repeated calls before the curtain, and unmistakable evidence was given that the dramatic situations and strong acting took a deep hold on the imagination and feelings of all present. The play is worth seeing even a second time, and no one should miss this opportunity of witnessing the most talked-of drama of recent years.

NOT hitherto this season have Montreal's music lovers had such a treat as that provided at Her Majesty's this week. Miss Alice Nielsen, in Victor Herbert's Singing Girl, took a large and critical house by storm on Monday evening, and well did she and her company, as well as the composition they interpreted, merit the generous applause that came from every part of the theatre. If Cyrano de Bergerac was but a partial success, The Singing Girl more than compensates for it, and everyone who has had to do with the latter, from its first conception onward, may justly congratulate himself or herself on the result. The stage manager, Mr. Julian Mitchell, has risen to the occasion and produced something that from an artistic point of view, is beautiful and graceful throughout. Prettier ballets were never evolved than those which have delighted the patrons of Her Majesty's this week. As for the music, Mr. Herbert has given us something which, while decidedly superior to the average opera comic score from a musician's standpoint, is, at the same time, simple, sweet, charmingly melodious. The Legend of the Danube, we may be sure, has a long life before it, for it is tuneful and has positive musical merit. It created the utmost enthusiasm.

Miss Nielsen is singing better, if anything, than at any previous time. She is popular with her audiences, and has free scope in The Singing Girl for her winning manner, as well as for her vocal talents. She is ably supported by Eugene Cowles, Ritchie Lang, Joseph W. Herbert, Joseph Lawthorn, John C. Slavin, Miss Lucille Saunders, Miss Jennie Hawley, Miss Ursula Gurnett, and the minor members of her company. The opera is not strong in humor, but more than repays for its lack in this respect by the beauty of its music, and the grace and charm of its general conception and setting.

PINEROS. The Amazons is receiving an adequate production at the Francais and makes, on the whole, a capital entertainment. The question of physical culture among women is treated in a farcically satirical manner, but no particular conclusion is hinted at. In their several parts the Francais company give a performance against which no criticism can be urged. The whole play is well done, and, as a mirth-provoker, nothing better has been seen here this season. The vaudeville performance this week is scarcely up to the average of such performances at the Francais.

COMING ATTRACTIONS.

THE attraction at the Academy of Music for the week commencing September 16 will be The Devil's Auction. Manager Yale is introducing many novelties, special acts, etc., in this long-lived spectacle which has been so popular in the past. Among the many acquisitions will be the brothers Deltorelli, the brothers Lorella, James A. Kiernan, Victoria Walters, and others, who will introduce a number of novel features, which, with beautiful scenery, good ballet dancing, etc., ought to make a very pleasing performance.

JOHN PHILIP SOUSA'S latest and most brilliant comic opera, The Bride Elect, will have its initial hearing in Montreal at the Academy next Monday night. Sousa has now unequalled eminence as a writer of stirring and popular music. In The Bride Elect, he has written the book as well as the music and appears to have found equal success as librettist and composer. The Bride Elect was for several weeks the chief musical production of last season in Boston, and it afterwards finished a particularly successful six weeks' engagement in

Philadelphia. The scene is laid on the beautiful Island of Capri, in the Bay of Naples, which gives abundant opportunity for picturesque effect to the scenic artist. Mr. Sousa has imagined on this island, two small kingdoms, and the story tells of the intrigues, passions, and martial struggles of the two petty potentates. The opera will be magnificently mounted.

AN exceedingly pretty English story is told in Robert Drouet's comedy drama A Woman's Power, which is to be presented at the Theatre Francais next week for the first time in Montreal. Mr. Drouet has written a number of charming plays, including Doris, which made such a distinct hit at the Theatre Francais a few seasons ago. A Woman's Power deals with a roving artist's life. The artist arriving at a little country village is seen by a lady of society, who, out of pique, and not because she loves him, marries him. After years of many trials and tribulations she finds that she loves him and of course all ends happily. There are, however, a number of intensely interesting situations, and Mr. Drouet has not forgotten that theatrical audiences are fond of humor. The part of the artist will be played by Mr. Lucius Henderson, and the lady who weds him will be in the hands of Miss Helen Byron. There is a large vaudeville bill already engaged for the week, including Bernice, the famous swimmer, who appeared at the Toronto Fair, Stanley and Wilson, singing sketch team, and Higgins and Leslie, who are said by the newspapers of New York to be humorists of the first-class.

THE STAGE IN GENERAL.

BECKY SHARP has been the subject of much difference of opinion amongst the theatrical critics of New York. Vogue says, however, that even those most disposed to severity admit that the play is destined to have a long lease of life. "It may not suggest Thackeray's 'Vanity Fair' in the least, in fact it may travesty the classic, but it cannot be gainsaid that the story, the setting and the costumes are such as to captivate the average theatre-goer."

Another attempt to dramatize Dickens' "Tale of Two Cities" has been made. The play is presented at the Herald Square Theatre, New York, with Mr. Henry Miller in the star role of Sydney Carton.

The most successful of the new plays in New York is said to be The Tyranny of Tears, played by Mr. John Drew. It is a picture of present-day life, and the dialogue is said to be exceptionally clever and vivacious.

A stronger denunciation of the present condition of the theatrical profession in America than the following, from The New York Dramatic Mirror, could not well be conceived: "No one that says that the stage in this country at this time needs a censorship of the right sort, maligns the stage. The stage itself is in hands that would paralyze its higher and more healthful operations, and devote it to the baser uses that correspond to the lower impulses and overmastering greed of its enslavers. It is not in a normal condition, because its sources have been and are being polluted by controlling interests that make ostentation, sensation and vulgarity primary, and all that concerns true art secondary."

In conversation, John Philip Sousa impresses one very much as does his music. He inspires one and gives one fresh interest in the world and in life. As he talks his originality becomes dominant. You know he is ambitious, so that doesn't impress you, but with all the promise the future holds for him, Sousa is not a man of conceit. A friend said to him the other day: "But success is an old story to you." Quick as a flash he replied: "Success is never an old story. When a man is sure of himself, when he regards himself as infallible, then he is beginning to decline." The Bride Elect, he confesses, caused him more worry and anxiety than any opera he has ever produced. "I was responsible for both the words and the music," he said. "I had a new and original proposition to make to the public. How would it be received? Already my music has pleased, but how about my book, my songs, my satire. It is subtle. Its humor is more like the lancet than the battle-axe. You see, I have no man knock another on the head with a club, or throw him through the window, in order to make a point. I think the day of horse-play in opera is over. At any rate it is nearing its end. America has been a great commercial country. We have been a busy nation, but, in my opinion, the art centre of the world is to be America. The American people have a keen appreciation of art, and America is turning out good artists, writers and musicians." The Bride Elect has not been thought out in a day. The composer has had it in his mind for a long time, and scraps of it have been committed to paper from time to time. For instance, that most original of topical songs, "The Musical Goat," was suggested before El Capitan was a reality. In Washington, one day, Sousa was in a phonograph shop, when a goat passed. Sousa fancied he sniffed at the thought as he went by, and the thought flashed across his