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MUSIC AND THE DRAMA.

AT LAST Victorians are to have an opportunity of witnessing first-class plays at popular prices. The gentleman who has undertaken to confer this great boon on the public is Mr. John Ward, a well-known theatrical man, and the place which he has made the base of operations is the old Philharmonic Hall, Fort street. Under Mr. Ward's management, the new departure cannot be aptly termed an experiment, from the fact that he has gone the very best way about making it a pronounced success. The hall has been completely transformed, and, no doubt, many, who will visit it in future, will be surprised to find that the place could have been so wonderfully changed from a hall to a neat and comfortable theatre. The new house will be known as the Imperial Theatre, and will be opened on Monday night, Nov. 30, by the Belmour-Gray Imperial Company.

The improvements consist of a new floor laid on a slope of one inch to the foot from the front of the stage to the rear of the theatre, and strongly supported and built in sections which can be removed any time occasion calls for. A fine proscenium box will be put in on either side of the stage, two stories high, which will command a good view and will be handsomely draped with plush and covered with pretty bell tops. Thirty-six feet from the front of the stage, a circle of open boxes, suitable for parties, etc., are being put in. These will be nicely upholstered and divided by small, hanging, plush curtains; the partitions and fronts will only be 26 inches above the floor, giving, by this means, the people sitting in the rear pit seats a chance to see everything on the stage. Coming

in the entrance hall, which will have a cheerful appearance, will be, on the right, the ticket office. On the same side, will be the ladies' parlor, entrance being had from the theatre to it. On the other side of the hall, will be the gentlemen's smoking and lounging room, which also opens into the theatre. Inside of the vestibule doors, will be a neat confectionery stand, and from this is a runway to the main floor of the theatre. The drop curtain is a beautiful scene of a deserted Roman villa in the evening, showing the partially ruined building, the increasing swamps, with a lonely peacock surveying the remains of former grandeur. It is the work of Mr. Halton, late of the Gaiety Theatre, London. The walls and ceiling have all been repainted and tinted and the ceiling nicely stencilled. Mr. J. L. Hopfenitz, of San Francisco, has been busily engaged in painting scenes fit to grace an art gallery, and one cannot help being impressed with the beautiful work he is turning out. Among others, we might mention a street scene admirably executed; also a mountain and lake scene, originally sketched in California, and a very good interior, which few architects could find fault with. Mr. Ward, to whose enterprise the people owe their new place of amusement, is working with might and main to get it ready for next Monday evening when the Lady of Lyons will be produced.

It is to be hoped that all amusement lovers of Victoria will turn out and help Mr. Ward to make a complete success of his enterprise.

The contractor for the carpenter work is Mr. Wm. Lorimer. The walls and ceilings and general painting were given to Mr. Joseph Sears. The Sehl-Hastie-Erskine Furniture Company have the contract for all the upholstering throughout the theatre as well as providing the carpets and furniture, whose name alone is a sufficient guarantee for good and effective work. The whole of the work is being done under the supervision of E. Mallandaine, jr., Victoria's rising architect, from whose drawings, etc., the alterations have been made.

The opening play will be the Lady of Lyons, written by Lord Lytton, father of the late British

ambassador to France. The play is a strong one, and in the hands of the Belmour Gray company, should prove a drawing card. It is unnecessary to speak of this company. We have spoken of it in previous issues of THE HOME JOURNAL, and we believe still that the people composing it are all capable of producing the best modern plays. The orchestra will be under the leadership of Mr. J. J. Cross, a gentleman with a national reputation. He has already secured his assistants, and is rehearsing them every day. Mr. Cross intends to contribute his share towards making the Imperial popular.

It is now almost a settled fact that the veteran theatrical manager, Mr. James Collins, will, in the course of a few days, take control of The Victoria. To discover when Mr. Collins began his theatrical career, one must go back almost to ancient history. Long before the first shot was fired at Fort Sumter, he was a member of the Theatre Varieties, New Orleans, which, by the way, produced first-class plays by one of the best stock companies of ante-bellum days. The leading man of the organization was George Jordan, with whom, it may be said, originated the modern school of acting. But the war broke out, and Mr. Collins, being a loyal son of the Confederacy, took arms to defend state rights, and with the 6th Louisiana, under Stonewall Jackson, participated in some of the most stubbornly contested battles of the late civil war. But it is not of Mr. Collins' war record we intend to speak. When Lee surrendered, Mr. Collins turned his sword into a ploughshare, metaphorically speaking, and returned to the stage. He joined Lawrence Barrett, and for three years was a member of the Olympic Theatre company, St. Louis. With the Gomersal English Opera Company, he travelled one year, and when Lydia Thompson's famous English burlesque company came over from the old country, Mr. Collins joined her organization. He next became attached to the Chestnut Street Theatre, Philadelphia, then under the control of E. L. Davenport. From Philadelphia, he went to Niblo's Garden, New York, and for one year played leading business with the Vokes family. Briefly speaking, Mr. Collins has been a member of some of the best theatrical organizations in the United States, among which may