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A MESSAGE FROM THE  
**LIFE ASSURANCE OFFICES**  
IN NEW ZEALAND



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## Judgment Day on the Stage

### We Visit the Competitions

LONG before Noel Coward thought of imploring Mrs. Worthington NOT to put her daughter on the stage, Queen Victoria had professed her fears of the realm that lies behind the theatre curtain, and its pitfalls for the susceptible. In a letter to the tutor of Prince Arthur (afterwards Duke of Connaught) she "hoped and trusted that he NEVER went BEHIND the scenes on his visits to the theatre." Whether young Arthur occasionally slipped round to the stage door and into the dressing room of the favourite of the day, we are not told. But we ventured behind the scenes the other night and came out uncontaminated.

The guardian of the stage door was a good guardian. He knew that when "The Competitions" were in full swing at the Wellington Town Hall the dressing-rooms must not be cluttered up with admiring relations. He was up to all the dodges. Parents were barred. Only people actively and intimately connected with the work of the competitors could pass.

A member of the staff of *The Listener*, accompanied by a photographer, who was accompanied by his assistant, wished to write something about the competitions and photograph back-stage incidents. The president was helpful. A word from him and the stage manager said in effect, "it's all yours."

### Following the Famous

Dressing-rooms at the Town Hall have accommodated many a famous artist—Gracie Fields the latest. Their mirrors have reflected the bulging torsos of wrestlers, the rippling muscles of boxers, and the aesthetic features of great musicians. The rooms have echoed to the notes of famous singers (as they took a final run through) and have attracted countless autograph-seekers. During the competitions that are the subject of this article they housed representatives of almost every branch of the art of entertainment.

Here were very young people. And there were some getting on a bit—all preparing to face judgment. Possibly

some had in view the stage or concert platform as a career; others were there just for the fun of it. There were the old hands who were competition-minded, and who had, possibly, performed at various times in the four main centres. But all knew that the main reason for their appearance was to make the greatest impression on the official judges, and on the even sterner critics, their relations and friends, and their teachers.

The stage manager had told us we could prowling about where we pleased, so after knocking loudly we peeped into one dressing-room. We left, with sincere apologies, followed by a feminine voice, "It's all right; you can come in now." A photographic bulb flashed and then we made for a door marked "male competitors only."

Every room was occupied. Ballets were limbering up, a baritone stood in the corner, mouth wide open, and doing his "mee, mee, mee; mo, mo, mo," sucking a throat lozenge and making sure he remembered the words. Not far away piano duettists were reassuring each other that there was no need to be nervous—"it's only one man's opinion, you know"—and a young man with a piano-acordion was making certain that the keys and stops of his instrument were up to the mark.

As elsewhere in New Zealand, the competitions in Wellington were conducted on strictly business-like lines. Long experience has contributed to the working out of a system that makes for smooth running. The stage is occupied all the time, while in the wings the fateful numbers which tell of a competitor's success or failure are laid out neatly on a table, ready for display. There is a lot of coming and going. Some competitors are anxious to see the whole programme. As soon as their item is over they hurry in to the audience. Others prefer to do their turn and go home or on to some social engagement.

### Endurance Tests

If one were to make a guess at who were the hardest-worked officials, the answer would probably be the secretary



A young character actress receives the final touches