

Footlight Flashes.

BY THE PROMPTER.

THE Gourlay and Stokes Company open in 'Revels' at the Auckland Opera House on Monday, July 15th, and judging by the Wellington correspondent's letter they should draw good houses during their stay in the Northern capital. The Company has been greatly strengthened lately, and 'Revels,' as the big posters say, 'is enough to make a dog laugh.' Comedy burlesque has become all the rage in London and America, and gives clever artistes special opportunities for the display of their abilities, and Mr Stokes has left no stone unturned in engaging the best possible talent to give the patrons of the Opera House a really first-class performance. Crowded houses may be expected during the Company's season in Auckland.

A PICTURE of Irving in 'Don Quixote' appears on this page. It is from the *London Graphic*. I propose to give from time to time portraits of great European authors and actresses, as well as of those with whom we are more intimately acquainted.

THE Francis Ross Dramatic Company are working their way north steadily and fairly successfully. At latest advices they were in Christchurch, where 'Caste,' 'The Player,' and other standard comedies were staged, preceded usually by a Shakespearean scene, in which Miss Ross starred. In the critique on 'Caste,' the gentleman who does the notices for the *Lyttelton Times* calls Eccles a *thankless part*. I always imagined Eccles was admittedly *the* best part in Robertson's comedy.

THE six-night season of 'Maritana' by Auckland amateurs terminated on Saturday. The performances varied so extensively in merit and character, owing to the fact that there were two or more castes of principals, that it is difficult, if not impossible, to venture opinion on the season's production as a whole. Yet even if space permitted of detailed criticism of each caste in these columns, the task is not one I should care to undertake. The first night's performance drew from the morning paper a storm of ridicule and somewhat cheap wit. Unquestionably that evening 'Maritana' was not a success as grand opera. The caste—the male caste—was weak in voice, and absolutely no attention had been devoted to stage management. The result was certainly somewhat appalling, and a rowdy pit made confusion worse confounded. Subjected to a merci-

less fire of rough comment and rude wit, the performers struggled on with commendable bravery, and the opera was carried through to a termination. On each succeeding evening the performance was greatly

improved, and at the end of the season the opera was more than creditable from a musical point of view. The want of a good stage manager appeared, however, to the end. The material was excellent, but it was entirely untrained. The chorus knew neither how to come on, or to get off the stage, and committed all the thousand and one faults which can only be corrected by a good stage manager. If the precaution is taken to procure one before the next production, I feel assured the promoters of 'Maritana' will score a big success next time.

THE Wellington Dramatic Students made a great hit on Tuesday evening with their performance of Piner's comedy, 'The School Mistress,' in aid of the Benevolent Institution. As this was the first production of the piece in New Zealand, the performers had had no opportunity of seeing it staged by a professional company, but amongst the little band of amateurs were some clever and experienced actors and actresses, and the fun was kept up with a dash from start to finish. Mr Morris Fox, as the Hon. Vere Queckett, and Mr Nicholls, as the grumpy old Admiral, would have been a credit to any company. Miss Newton and her sister, Miss Jessie Newton, both had difficult parts to play, and played them excellently. It would be unfair to individually criticise any of the performers, as the success of the piece rests on its combination, and I think the Dramatic Students are to be thoroughly congratulated on the success their of work.

IRVING (writes a *Bulletin* correspondent) made a capital chairman at the Savage Club annual dinner at Holborn restaurant. He closed the Lyceum for the night to be free. He made a really capital, witty speech, and was unanimously elected a life member. Certainly his chairmanship at this particular juncture will give a great filip to the old Club. Amongst those present were Poet Sladen, Gov. Billrobinson, and Phil May. It must have cost Irving at least £350 to close the Lyceum that evening.

'THE FATAL CARD' appears to be doing the trick for Bland Holt at the Melbourne Royal. A well-written story which opens with a roaring night in a bar-room, and is finally blown up by an infernal machine, could hardly fail to attract attention, apart from its first-class murder, the incident of a desperado's escape from Judge



HENRY IRVING AS 'DON QUIXOTE.'



SCENE IN 'DON QUIXOTE.'