

was calculated to make workmen dissatisfied and to excite class hatred. "Up to the present moment," says Mr. Raleigh, "Mr. Shirley has not altered his play. Probably he will not do so; he will prefer not to waste his time and preserve his self-respect." Mr. Raleigh thinks that the absurdity of the situation will not be realised until the Lord Chamberlain prohibits "Hamlet" on the ground that it is a condonation of suicide and an incitement to disloyalty.

Mr. Herbert Flemming, chatting with the *Launceston Examiner*, says:—"The day after the contract with Mr. Spurr (who is coming to New Zealand shortly) had been signed I met an Australian commercial traveller in Bloemfontein in the market square, and told him of my new venture. He asked me when and where we should open, and I replied that I was coming to Melbourne to secure the Athenaeum Hall for Derby night, October 30. He then said: "If you succeed, old fellow, book me three seats numbered 17, 18, 19, row C." I laughed, and, like the maid in the song, promised. We opened in Melbourne on Derby night, and ten minutes before the commencement of the entertainment, the commercial, with two friends, came to the hall and claimed his seats, which I may say had been reserved for him. That, I think, is a record in booking—7000 miles away from where the performance was to take place."

It would appear that "The Flood Tide," which is having an enormous success in Melbourne, is an attempt to follow "The Admirable Crichton" lines with regard to melodrama. A writer in the *Australasian* says: "Mr. Cecil Raleigh, when he wrote 'The Flood Tide,' knew what he was about; he styled it a 'melodrama.' This barbarism exactly fits a piece that is relieved with spasms of melodrama, and which the author wrote with his tongue in his cheek. At one point after another the audience is led to expect drama of the most poignant description, only to discover a moment later that the real purpose of the author is to provoke laughter, not draw a tear. In fact, Mr. Raleigh has appeared in the light of a parodist of his former self; and, on that account, is not to be taken seriously. There is not an honest character in the play; even the hero, a banker and V.C., is mixed up in the shady transaction of 'selling a race' with his old father, apparently the finest type of rustic virtue, but really a thief and a forger."

The following "patter" concerning "The Flood Tide" is so amusing (and so smart) that no excuse is needed for quoting it "in extenso." It is, of course, from the "Bulletin"—no other paper in the colonies owns a critic who drops into verse occasionally:

THE FLOOD TIDE.

The wondrous tale of Thompson we will wondrously sing—
Denny Thompson known in Chili as the Dotty Diamond King.
The story has a moral which is very old and tough.
If the world believes you wealthy it will furnish you with staff;
If you've not got Thompson's riches—well, his name is good enough.

There's a steamer bound for London, from the Valparaiso port.
The passengers are mostly of the silent, snuff sort.
But two are lady-spielers, a Mama and her daughter pair.
Who tell the sad dream of Thompson, the eccentric millionaire.
For a secret, worth the keeping, in their mental safe is stored—
The fact that Denny Thompson, King of Diamonds, is abroad.
Now he travels as M'Naughton, and he roams the quarter-deck
In a chronic state of liquor, with his boots slung round his neck.
Until he sees the chapter of his abject jumble
By jumping off the vessel when she's ploughing through the sea.
"Lord help him!" says the captain—"he can get no aid from me."

Then the younger lady-spieler, with her mother at her side,
Assesses the rank and station of the Diamond Monarch beside.
Believing him a dead 'un, they dissemble their belief,
And speak of poor M'Naughton as the fool and the cheat.
The pair of cats pretenders state that Thompson's coming soon
To their swell hotel at Brighton to complete his honeymoon;
They level in excuses, but the landlord doesn't kick;
They order gowns and jewels, horses, carriages—on tick—
Intending should their creditors grow furious and shy
To gather up the pounder and politely do a guy.

It happens that a stewardess, to save her coat from shame,
Conceives another scheme of working Denny Thompson's name.
She knows that all his baggage has been sent to the hotel,
And thinks her own Young Man might pass for Thompson very well.
Whilst she plays secretary and provides the common sense,
He'll need for raising money by this fraudulent pretence.
So young man, Clips, and Polly, fly to Brighton right away,
And find the lady spielers are already on the lay;
And each pair knows the other for the biggest fraud in life,
But silence suits them better than an interecine strife.
'Twas a bogus Denny Thompson and his bogus carrying wife.

O! the joy of getting credit for whatever you desire,
When you seem to walk on ether, though your feet are in the mire!
The Jews will cheer, bless 'em!—strike a Hebrew for a loan,
And the masculine impostor makes ten thousand on his own.
By signing an agreement re the floating of his mine,
And then he buys a racehorse. This is Polly's pet design;
For her father owns a gee-gee who is entered for a race,
And can win it (if he loses it means "ruin and disgrace")
Provided "Thompson's" purchase isn't fligging for the stake.
So "Thompson," quite unconscious of the risk he has to take,
Agrees to stretch the favourite for Polly's father's sake,
And the angry mob assaults him till his inmost feelings ache.

In the meantime Thompson (proper) re-appears upon the scene.
He goes first from out the ocean ere the water washed him clean;
His legs are torn and lacerated; there are bayonets in the hair
Of that homeless, cashless, friendless, drunken, dotty millionaire.
When he comes to Polly's father for assistance in his plight,
Now, "the King's" return is awkward, so, to keep him out of sight,
They bid him seek seclusion by the peaceful English lakes,
With his boots upon his shoulders, just to keep 'em free from snakes.
There a villain tries to drown him (tis the spieler mother's plan);

But this purchased desperado is a sleep-pointing man.
For his slight attack on Thompson proves the wisest of plans;
Himself is left to perish when the Flood Tide waters rise,
And the other schemers mostly get rewarded for their lies.

When Thompson's mine is located for a million pounds or more,
Which is five times what the property is, He offers half the money to the fraudulent vendor
And reckons him his dearest friend on earth.
Thus the sin of wily Polly makes the fortune of her joy,
And puts her father straight again, of course;
For the old man's bitter sorrow was converted into joy
The day they worked their swindle with the ease.
Nor does the spieler daughter ever suffer from regrets;
She leaves her wicked mother in the lurch—
And the frisky King from Chili duly liquidates her debts
When she's booked as Mrs Thompson by the church.
Alas! poor, wicked mother! Of her daughter now bereft,
Her world seems dark and desolate and cold;
The other frauds are happy, she's the only one that's left
To expiate the sin of growing old.

AN INTERVIEW WITH MR J. C. WILLIAMSON.

"Australian artists in London," said Mr. J. C. Williamson, while speaking to an "Auckland Star" interviewer, "I don't think they improve their positions much by going to London as a general rule. It is an over-supplied market, and a man's luck as well as ability has to be exceedingly great for him to get a foothold. I don't want to discourage anyone, and there is no doubt a trip Home helps an artist—it reduces his vanity a good deal—but no artist should go Home unless he has the best of reasons for confidence in himself. I found a great many Australians there, and most of them would have been only too glad of any chance to get back to the colonies. For one thing, the seasons at Home and therefore the employment are shorter than here, and the actors don't have so good a time as here.

"I went to England for a four months' rest," he said, and added with a laugh, "but I've been going like a machine the whole time! Fortunately, the steamer voyage did me good. I spent every day and night of my time looking at new plays in England and America. I secured the Australian right for five years of all George Edwardes' plays, and have obtained the right for Pinero's plays, past and present. I engaged a new comedy company at Home, which I hope to put in the place so long held by the Broughs. While they were in existence here I didn't interfere, but now they have departed I've got a nice company together which will play 'The Marriage of Kitty,' and other comedies of a like standing. It will be like most of my other companies. I am still of opinion that the Australian people are the best catered for in the world. The material they have is picked from the best markets of the world, and as for my own companies, they are probably not able to do in any one work better than those selected for the London theatres, but they have a bigger range than any

similar company at Home.
"Things theatrical in England and America," went on Mr Williamson, musingly, "have not been too good during the last season, and America has been particularly bad, the latter part of the season being very disastrous. When I was there three years ago they were talking in millions—now they are content to mention much smaller sums. The big firms and in particular the big syndicate in America, have been very heavy losers. Presuming they get over the failure, you will see what huge capital they have! But it is a sign of the times; nobody escaped!"
Talking of his own companies, Mr Williamson said that he would be in the thick of his work as soon as he landed in Australia—had indeed begun here. He has many troupes in the fire, and they take a good deal of management. He sees rehearsals of his new comedy company in "The Marriage of Kitty" and Beerholm Tree's Company in "The Darling of the Gods." The former opens in Adelaide on Saturday week, the latter in Melbourne on the same date, as also the Hastings Company in Sydney. The Comic Opera Co. opens in Dunedin on Monday week. It includes some of the most expensive people in the musical way, and the biggest attraction in Australia just now—"The Country Girl," which has broken the "Moradora" record for run in Melbourne. The company plays other successful pieces while on tour, and will stage Alfred Hill's long-deferred opera, "Tapu," with all the accessories.
"If the New Zealand public support me in the generous way it has done for some time past, I shall continue to send all my best artists over here, provided the expenses don't 'stamp' me," he said. "It's a heavy speculation to run a show through New Zealand!"
Mr Williamson said he had engaged one of the big Frohmann companies of America to play a season of musical comedy in Australia. It has also played for George Edwardes in England, and includes George Huntley, "the finest eccentric comedian of the present day, and the legitimate successor of Fred Leslie." It passes through here on the Ventura in six weeks' time.

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