

Orchid," as the forerunner of a repertoire which includes such favourites as "The Country Girl," "The Cingalee," and "La Mascotte."

Miss Emily Soldene, whose matinee at the Palace, London, was most successful, has some interesting reminiscences of great singers. "Mme. Tietjen's corsets were dreadfully stiff, laced dreadfully tight, and audibly creaked. She never appeared without a lace pocket-handkerchief, princess or peasant it was all the same; alike in the agonies of Donna Anna, the grandeur of Fidelio, the dungeon of Marguerite, clinging to the Cross in "Robert le Diable," or frantically entreating her lover in "The Huguenots," she carried her costly monchoir, and her scuffle, under any stress of emotion or danger, was always perfect, not a hair disturbed. On the other hand, Mme. Grisi, so imitable and careful in her art, was careless to a fault as to her personal appearance, and never, even at a morning concert, had her bonnet quite straight."

Miss Ashwynne's recollections of Stephans in "The Sign of the Cross" are serio-comic. She learned how to give the screams of agony of the unfortunate young Christian martyr by stabbing her own arm with a strong needle—a cruel method, but effectual—in the privacy of a room at the top of the house. One night, in struggling with the jealous in the torture scene, her wig came off, and when she fell on the ground there was a space of a foot between Stephans's "proud young head" and his "rich dark locks." Many unknown admirers of Miss Ashwynne used to wait at the stage door when she was playing in "The Sign" to see how she looked after being tortured. On one occasion an old lady, who had been much impressed with the play, said how much she would like to go behind the scenes, to see "the machine that did the screaming." The young actress told her quietly that Miss Ashwynne was the only machine employed by the management.

Mr Julius Knight, now en route for Australia, via the United States, will spend a fortnight or so in New York, looking round and paying particular attention to the manner in which the American stage managers produce their plays. While there he will have an opportunity of seeing Kyle Bellew starring in "The Exploits of Brigadier Gerard," one of the four new plays Mr Knight brings with him to Australia. In two of the others—"Robin Hood" and "Raffles," Mr Knight has already seen Mr Lewis Waller and Mr Gerald du Maurier in the leading characters, so that he has been able to compare his prospective interpretations of the part with those of players already familiar with them, and such a comparison is always a valuable aid to an actor.

Thousands of his admirers throughout Australasia will be glad to know that Mr Adew Mack, the popular Irish-American singing comedian, who has already an enviable reputation out here, is returning in a few months to fill another engagement with Mr J. C. Wilkinson, with a new company and a repertoire of new pieces.

Mr W. S. Gilbert has been telling the "Daily Mail" a story of "The Mikado," that has a piquant flavour. "It was suggested to me," said Mr Gilbert, "that it would be a proper thing to introduce the Mikado's entrance with appropriate music. A friend at the Japanese Legation suggested, 'Why not the Japanese National Anthem, words and music?' A capital idea, I thought. 'You dictate the words to me,' I said, 'and I'll hum the air to Sullivan.' So it was done; and that air and those words have been sung and played somewhere almost nightly for many years in theatres and respectable drawing-rooms, and several church bazaars. But a year or two after the production of "The Mikado," a correspondent sent me a German newspaper containing an interview with a Japanese diplomatist on the recent production of "The Mikado" in Berlin. 'Yes,' said the diplomatist, 'there is much to admire in the accuracy of detail in gesture, costume, and scenery, but I am quite at a loss to understand why the author chose to introduce the sacred person of the Mikado

with the music and the words of the most absurd song ever sung in the most reckless tea-houses of Japan.' A practical joke on the part of my Legation friend."

Nothing, writes Mr. George Tallis, was lacking in the production of "Mother Goose" at Her Majesty's Theatre, Melbourne, on Saturday (22nd December) to make the performance a notable success, and to stamp the pantomime as one of the very best that Mr. J. C. Williamson has ever put on. With excellent foundations, in the shape of a book that tells a connected story in a really humorous way, a superstructure has been built up that displays all the very best characteristics of its type—excellent specialities, artistic novelties, gorgeous dressing and mounting, a strong singing cast, dashing dances, much fine comedy work, and a generally finished stage management which reflected the greatest credit upon Mr. Gerard Coventry. Some of the novelties, notably the very effective Swing Song, in which the chorus swing out over the orchestra on long lines lit by multi-coloured electric lights, were cheered to the echo by a delighted house, while others, and especially the ludicrous imitations of a horse and donkeys by Messrs. Queen and Le Brun, evoked inextinguishable laughter, the first entrance of the assing pair when they are run down by a motor-car keeping the house in a roar of merriment for many minutes. Mr. Harry Plydora, in the name part, more than fully realised the high expectations formed of him as a comedian. Miss Florence Young's principal boy was an instant success, the enthusiasm for her impersonation growing steadily as the evening proceeded. Miss Olive Morrell was dainty and charming as the principal girl. Mr. Harry Shine was intensely funny in a part that suited him down to the ground, and Mr. Victor Loydall scored heavily as a typical Scotch comedian. The singing and dancing were strong attractions, the "Moon Dear" ballad of Miss Young making a specially big hit, while the scenery, the dressing and the mounting generally were on an exceptionally high level of excellence.

To all playgoers in towns to be visited by the Brough-Flemming Comedy Company on the present N.Z. tour (which commenced in Auckland on Boxing Night), this paper confidently recommends "Dr. Wake's Patient." It is a clean, fresh, wholesome comedy of the highest class. The management are indeed fortunate to have so excellent an opportunity of showing their abilities, and the public can be warmly congratulated on being afforded the chance of seeing so clever a specimen of the art of playwriting. The plot has been briefly epitomised in a previous issue, but no such synopsis of the story of the play can do justice to the excellence of the character drawing, which is always firm, mostly original, and in one or two notable instances really brilliant. Homely Farmer Wake is so exceedingly lovable, and has so many intensely human traits, that we easily overlook the fact that he is drawn somewhat on the fanciful side. It is a part which fits Mr. Flemming like the proverbial glove, and he does pretty well what he wishes with the emotions of the audience, now making them laugh, now producing tears, and in the two supremest moments of the play, thrilling them to that chill shiver of the spine which is only produced by perfection, whether it is in singing, acting, art, or the sublimity of nature.

Duff Winterton is also an exceedingly fine part, and it would be "absolutely" fine he would say—impossible to praise too highly the work of Mr. Grogan McMahon. His impersonation is—as he would put it—"absolutely" fine. Mrs. Brough, who was warmly welcomed, has a most excellent part, which she plays perfectly, and the only weaknesses of the cast are the Earl of St. Aubyn—really shockingly weak—and a tendency to buffoon an excellent little part of a pompous bishop.

"Mrs. Goring's Necklac" replaces "Dr. Wake" this (Wednesday) evening, and as it comes straight from Wyndham's, London, is an assured success.

At a dinner of the Old Playgoers, of which he was the guest of the evening, Mr. Hall (late) said: "I will venture to tell you of a few stories from my own experience of the theatre during the last twenty years, and leave you to draw

your own conclusions. Twenty years ago, when I was an almost unknown author, I produced my first play. The conditions under which it was produced were as unfavourable as can be imagined. In spite of this we had on the first night a triumphant success. I do not remember a play which was received with what seemed to be more genuine enthusiasm. The papers the next morning reviewed it with delirious rapture. I fondly imagined I had opened up a new career, my manager thought his foot was on the rung of fortune's ladder. The second night, in a house capable of holding £250, we opened to receipts amounting to £27, and after dragging on a miserable existence for eight weeks, we "shut down" to a loss of £3000. This illustrates the general unreliability of a first-night verdict. Sixteen years later I produced a play under the most favourable conditions of leading West-end management, and it brought me more money than I should care to reveal to the income tax-collector. All the first-night audience said my play was an utter and abject failure. The next morning the newspapers, without any exception, tore my play to rags. On the second night we opened to the record takings of the theatre, and for eighty nights we played to the utmost capacity of the house. I think that we have some reason to be downhearted, not only as to the verdict of some first-night audiences, but also on

the development of the clique on first nights in London, although within certain limits the clique may be necessary, if only as a set-off against the stolid indifference of the occupants of the stalls, or the boozing of the boys in the gallery. Two or three months ago I came to London to produce a new play, and, on my arrival I received a letter from a stranger who ran something like this: "Dear Sir,—Perhaps you remember that I was a super at such-and-such a theatre so many years ago, when you produced such and such a play. I am now out of a billet; but I know a lot of good men, and if you think you would like to make it worth my while, on the first night of your new play, I shall be glad to give you a hand." I handed that letter to the manager of the theatre at which my play was produced, and I have excellent reason to believe that it was my correspondent and not my play who got the benefit of the hand."

Under the spreading Christmas-tree
The little children stand.
But none is happy unless he
Has a box of soldiers in each pocket, as
many apples and oranges and nuts as
he can slip underneath his waistcoat
without being seen, a toy goat, a ditto
monkey, a train, a magic-lantern—
And some sweetstuff in each hand!

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