



[By Orpheus.]

"Orpheus" will be glad to hear from those managers of theatrical companies touring New Zealand who desire that the public shall know the movements of the companies. Any information as to dates, etc., will be acknowledged in these columns, as well as any other items of interest to the theatrical world. All letters should be addressed—"Orpheus," SPORTING AND DRAMATIC REVIEW, Vulcan Lane, Auckland.

A CONCERT, tendered by the Auckland Lieder tafel to Mr Walter Kirby, takes place this (Thursday) evening at the Choral Hall. Mr Kirby, whose fine tenor voice and cultured style have won golden opinions here, is leaving shortly for Europe to continue his studies. Besides the Liedertafel (under Mr A. Towsey), the Misses Lorrigan, Maud Howard, McIntyre, Quinn, Stella Alexander, and Messrs Wilfred Manning and Walter Kirby will render choice selections. So attractive a programme, and the popularity of the beneficiaries, should ensure a crowded house.

I WOULD remind readers that the benefit concert referred to last week takes place to-night (Thursday) in St. James' Hall. A tempting programme and a deserving object should fill the hall.

MR ERNEST TOY, a young violinist of exceptional talent, is probably by this time on his way to New Zealand with a concert company of Victorian artists, including Miss Renee Lees (pianiste), Mr Hahn (tenor), and Miss Maud Dalrymple, a contralto who is most highly praised by good judges of singing. Miss Alice Simmons was to be the soprano. The company was to open in Wellington.

YEAR after year pantomime and extravaganza builders, at their wits end for new material, are driven to the time-honored "Forty Thieves," "Aladdin," "Dick Whittington," "The Babes in the Wood," etc., etc. What about the New Robinson Crusoe in the shape of Louis de Rougemont, whose adventures are still continued in The Wide Wide World Magazine? Surely, before next Christmas, an enterprising librettist will have constructed out of the abundant materials to be culled from his history a new and original pantomime, extravaganza, or melodrama—perhaps all three—which should achieve unbounded popularity. He may, or may not, be a Munchausen. He may be Gries, and not De Rougemont. But, if a fraud, he is at least splendide mendax. In the last number of The Wide Wide World the editor, in a head-note, very sensibly says: "His story was told in these offices over a period of several months, during which time he never contradicted himself once. But, after what has transpired, we wish it to be understood distinctly that we do not publish it as a true narrative, but only as it is given to us the author, leaving it to the general public to believe as much or little as they please. It is admitted that portions of the story are founded on his own experiences. In any case the story is so crowded with vivid, graphic, and consistent details, that it marks its author, if not a speaker of truth, at least as a master of fiction who has had no equal in our language since Defoe. As The World says—

"Truth is stranger than fiction, But De Rougemont is stranger than both."

In the present number, however, there is a discrepancy which the clever illustrator endeavors to put right. The hero, with his faithful lubra (Yamba) and the performing dog (Bruno) is making a perilous journey into the unexplored interior. Suddenly Yamba cries "Up a tree, quick!" and suits the action to the word. De Rougemont skins up another tree and asks Yamba what is the matter. A huge army, composed of myriads of rats, answers the question by sweeping all before it—slaying and devouring lizards, snakes, and even large kangaroos. No living thing is spared. One is tempted to say, "Alas, poor Bruno!" for the letter-press has not a word about his fate. A few pages on it is a relief to find Bruno standing on his head, while his master propitiates a hostile tribe by dancing a fandango to a reed pipe. Turning back to the rat picture we find De Rougemont high up in the fork of a big tree with Bruno in his arms. Now, how did the master get his dog up? To have climbed the tree with the dog in his arms is a manifest impossibility. For the dog unsaid to make the ascent is ditto ditto. Here is a hint for the next addition: Bruno, being a trained dog, makes a leap at his master's bow—the picture appropriately draws a very long bow—and is hauled up safely ensconced between the string and the stave. Of course, De Rougemont leans over the fork of the tree, with the bow as near as possible to the ground, and exclaims "Jump, Bruno, jump!" But, to return to our mutt, the wealth of incident and sensations in this marvelous tale would really open quite a Klondyke of opportunities for play-wrights, scenic artists, and stage-carpenters. Just imagine, for example, the obarge of an army of rats! "Orpheus" generously makes a present of the idea. Of course, the proprietors will have to be consulted as to dramatic rights.

GREENROOM GOSSIP.

[By Agnoros.]

The Payne Family of Bellingers have gone to South Africa.

The Heller Company left Wellington for Australia, en route to India, a few days back.

Mr Rawei, the Maori lecturer, starts on tour on the west coast of the South Island this week.

Miss Ada Woodhill, of the Maggie Moore—Roberts Company, is said to be a Naseby (Otago) girl.

According to southern exchanges, Albert Lucas has again "retired from the stage." This time in Dunedin.

To stage "The White Heather" in Melbourne costs Bland Holt £100 per night. But he gets there just the same.

In my last critique of "A Royal Divorce" I neglected to make mention of the singing of "The Little Corporal" by Mr Rosevear. The selection was excellently rendered and deserving of praise.

Mr A. Hamilton Hodges, late of the MoAdoo Jubilee Singers Company, has decided to make his home in Auckland, and is at present giving lessons in voice production and singing, his headquarters being at the Central Hotel.

A son of Actor Wilson Barrett is sheep-farming in M.L. He took up a small parcel of land at the outset, increased his holding as he gained experience, and is now said to possess a valuable property. He married in Paris before he set out for the Britain of the South.

Mr Macconnachie informs me that the Lucifers, with a vaudeville company, will open at the Opera House on April 1st. The company will include Daisy Chard, Prince Godfrey (lately from England), Will Wallace, Messrs Stowe and Edmonds, Miss Edie Wright, and others.

The Henry Dramatic Company is booked for Auckland for May 20th. It is their intention to open in "The Shamrock and Thistle," following it up with "Blind Justice" and two or three other new pieces. The manager reports good business from one end of the country to the other.

With regard to the Williamson and Musgrove season at the Opera House, there is one point where I think an improvement might be made, namely, in the make-up of the programmes, which were got out by Mr McDonald. In very few cases has the name of the dramatist been given. It is usual to do this, and although the author may be known by a few he is not known to the public generally.

The following leaf from an actor's diary would give the impression that the profession of the stage, at least in some parts of the world, is not a happy one:—"Complimentary press notices received, 11; uncomplimentary notices received, 501; floral tributes received, 53; paid out of my own pocket, 52; sent by mistake, 1; amount of salary due to me, £733; expect to get out of this amount, 0; have borrowed £230 3s; hope to pay £230 3s; expect to pay 0; my weekly salary, as stated in the dramatic papers, £100; my actual weekly average salary, £2 10s; number of living actors who can equal me, 0.

On Monday evening next the Moore—Roberts Dramatic Company open at the Opera House in "Struck Oil," one of the first pieces Mrs Williamson made her appearance in, in the colonies, and in which she scored an immediate success. Mrs Williamson, or, as her admirers love to call her, Maggie Moore, is as charming off the stage as she is on, and that is saying a great deal, for I never heard of any who knew her personally who was not fascinated with her genial and utterly unaffected manner. Mr Roberts is a New Zealander by birth, and a native of Otago. I have not seen him as yet, but I understand that he is a very capable actor. The company includes a veritable galaxy of talent, amongst whom may be mentioned our old friend Miss Madge Corcoran. "Struck Oil" will be followed by "The Silence of Dean Maitland."

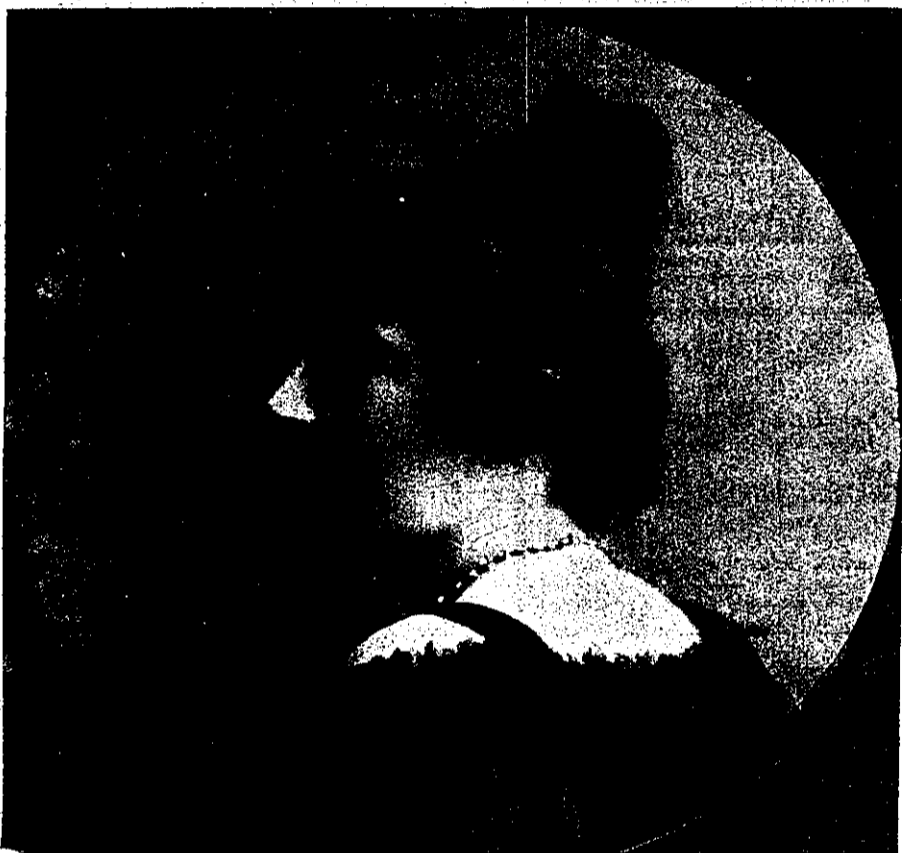


Photo by W. H. Bartlett, Auckland.

MISS LINDA RAYMOND (MRS OLLY DEERING) OF "THE SIGN OF THE CROSS" COMPANY.

I regret to be obliged to chronicle the death of Alice Atherton (the wife of Willie Edouin) last month in America from pneumonia.

On Friday night "The Lady of Lyons" will be staged at the Opera House, and on Saturday (the last night of the season) it will be succeeded by "Pygmalion and Galatea," in which Miss Marie d'Alton will appear as Cynessa.

Harmston's Circus will be in Auckland again this week and play two nights before leaving for Sydney en route to Brisbane. When I last heard from Mr Robert Love he intended giving a benefit for the Grey Memorial on March 24.

The Sydney Referee publishes the picture of Mr Howard Chambers in a recent issue, and gives him a very complimentary notice. Mr Chambers, it will be recollected, left Auckland with Mr Harry Rickards' Company to appear at the Tivoli in Sydney.

Mons. de Willimoff returned from San Francisco on the Moana. He was offered several engagements during the brief time he was there, but concluded that the work was a little too hard there. As he said to me, "There is no difference between night and day there. They go on all the time."

Mr M. B. Curtis, the American manager who brought Dante out from America, has sued the latter gentleman in Sydney for breach of contract, and got out an injunction against him restraining him from using the paraphernalia. The matter has been compromised so as to allow Dante to go on with his performances, by the conjurer giving a bond for £1000, and the court to exercise a supervision over the paraphernalia.

The No. 2 "Sign of the Cross" Company is playing to good houses in Newcastle, N.S.W., and the local Press speaks in the highest terms of our old friends, Mr Harry Plimmer and Miss Emily Hughes who appear respectively as Marcus Superbus and Mercia. The prophesy of my colleague, "Orpheus," that Miss Hughes would make herself a very popular actress in Australia, seems to be fulfilled.

Edwin Geach writes from India—Flying Jordans did well at Calcutta, and go to Burmah shortly, with Far East to follow; Tommy Hudson's Variety Company also doing well; a South African company is playing "The Sign of the Cross" at the Corinthian Theatre, Calcutta; Taylor—Carrington Dramatic Company playing the Punjab towns. Geach prophesies a big business for the Bruggs next Indian tour.

On Friday evening last the dramatisation of Anthony Hope's romantic novel, "The Prisoner of Zenda," was staged at the Opera House by the Knight—Ferrar Company. From the point of view of smoothness of action, brilliancy of color, and intensity of interest, I think it surpasses anything that the company has yet staged. From start to finish the attention is rivetted, and although the numerous dramatic situations are well worked up to and artistically sustained, it has been done without any sacrifice of the slightest detail, which has been carefully attended to throughout. The production consists of a prologue and four acts, one hundred and fifty years being supposed to have elapsed between the prologue and the first act of the drama. The plot, in brief, originates in a scandal which was given rise to in 1733 in London, in which the names of the Countess of Rassendyll and the then Prince Rudolph (the Red Elphberg, Heir Apparent to the Throne of Ruritania) were implicated. Prince Rudolph fights a duel for the honor of the Countess, and with his departure for Ruritania the prologue closes. The action of the play opens in the forest of Zenda and introduces Rudolph Rassendyll, a young Englishman travelling for pleasure and a descendant of the Countess. By a strange coincidence he is in appearance an exact fac simile of the present Red Elphberg (Rudolph the Fifth), who is to be crowned on the morrow, and who is being plotted against by his cousin, Duke Michael (the Black Elphberg). Rudolph (the King) is celebrating the day before the coronation by extra libations, and through the machinations of Michael his wine is drugged, and he is unable to journey to the capital for the ceremony. In this emergency Rassendyll is persuaded by

Colonel Sapt (an old soldier) and Fritz Van Tarlenheim, two staunch retainers of the King, to personate His Majesty for the time being, and thus defeat the Black Duke. He enters into the scheme and is crowned, but his personality is eventually discovered by Black Michael. The latter, who has imprisoned the real King, is unable to expose the pseudo one, and while things are in this state Rassendyll falls in love with the Princess Flavia (the affianced of the true King), and his affection is returned. She finally gets an inkling of the truth, and he makes a clean breast of matters and, after rescuing Rudolph, resigns her to her betrothed. Mr Julius Knight appears in the prologue as Prince Rudolph, and, in the piece, he doubles the parts of Rassendyll and the King. The duel scene in Lord Rassendyll's house in London is splendidly set, and the acting excellent, but it is in the piece proper that Mr Knight shows to the best advantage. A careless young Englishman, with a sense of obligation resting on him for the defence of his ancestress' honor, undertaken by the former Prince Rudolph, he entertains the idea of personating the King at first as an exciting adventure that will, at the same time, confer a favor on the Red Elphberg and afford himself sport. So, in the earlier parts, his by-play with his coach (Colonel Sapt) and his humorous mistakes afford considerable amusement. But as he becomes more accustomed to his assumed position, and his love for the Princess Flavia develops, the inherent nobility and really kingly qualities latent in him, come to the surface and he insensibly changes until the grim old Colonel himself recognises in him a fit occupant for the throne, and, in a moment of enthusiasm, hails him as the true Elphberg, and begs that he will retain the position. From that on the element of comedy disappears, and in the scene with Captain Hentzau and when he bids Flavia adieu, his emotional acting is worthy of the highest praise. Miss Ferrar's Princess Flavia is interpreted in her best style, and proves her an actress of no mean ability. Her love scene with Rassendyll; her conception of noblesse oblige, which renders their parting necessary; and her description of her mother-love for the people, are ably carried out. Miss Linda Raymond, as Antoinette de Mauban, who sacrifices all for love, is a fine portrayal, and this clever artist is to be complimented on her versatility. Miss Marie d'Alton performs the task of personating the thankless role of Frau Teppich in an excellent manner, and the smaller parts are well sustained. Mr Oly Deering is particularly amusing as the British ambassador, Lord Topham. The Colonel Sapt of Mr Hawtrey is the best thing I have seen him in. He was the typical old soldier, rough at times, but thoroughly capable of appreciating the abilities of others. Presuming occasionally on an intimacy, born of long service, but quick to render the deference due to real or assumed rank. Mr Cecil Ward was the reckless and unprincipled Hentzau to the life, and Mr Keightley showed to decided advantage as Black Michael, Duke of Strelsau.

"Harbour Lights" followed "The Prisoner of Zenda" at the Opera House, on Monday night last. The change was a radical one—from the really high-class productions which were previously staged to a pronounced type of melodrama, and I think that most of the theatre-going public will agree with me when I express the opinion that the Knight—Ferrar Company is just a cut above ordinary melodrama. However, as a company, they gave a harmonious interpretation of the production, and are to be complimented on the evident interest individually displayed in the various roles. The plot is too familiar to make it necessary to give a detailed description, and I will confine myself to dealing with the scenic effects and the different parts played by the members of the combination. One of the most effective scenes was the deck of H.M.S. Britannic, showing the two big guns mounted in the foreground; the drill of the volunteers who appeared in this scene was well performed. The rapid changing of sets in act fourth and the final light-house scene were particularly good; the top and foot of the cliffs being worthy of special mention. The stage manager, in a heavy piece like "Harbour Lights," is deserving of compliment when everything goes off smoothly. The two most prominent roles are those of Lieutenant David Kingsley, R.N. (the hero), and Miss Dora Vane, the lady with whom he is in love. These are filled respectively by Mr Julius Knight and Miss Linda Raymond. Miss Ferrar, as Lina Nelson, the betrayed girl whose love for the villain, Frank Morland, has resulted in her ruin. Although the part at first seems a simple one for the leading lady, Miss Ferrar makes it prominent and carries her audience with her throughout. Miss Raymond gives a splendid exhibition of her versatility and emotional powers in the part of Dora Vane. She is at times winsome, courageous, and scornful, and her scenes with David and her adopted sister are pathetically realistic, while her dialogue with Frank Morland shows very cleverly the pure, heroic girl who risks everything to save her sister's honor. I have watched this little lady's acting for several years, and I predict for her a brilliant future. Miss Florence Terris is also worthy of praise for her impersonation of Peggy Chudleigh, and the comic element is introduced and sustained by her, Miss Merton (as Mrs Chudleigh), Mr Cecil Ward (as Tom Dossiter), and Miss Marie d'Alton (as Bridget Maloney). The latter lady always does well in low comedy parts, and her playing of the part referred to gained her a warm and merited applause. Mr Knight naturally played the part of the hero well—I may almost say that I don't believe he could play it bad if he tried, but I like him better in roles of a more classic character. The duo of villains were presented in the most approved style by Messrs George Majoroni and David Glassford respectively, and Mr Hawtrey scored another success as Captain Hardy, R.N. Mr Oly Deering was quite up to his form as Captain Nelson and Mr Cyril Keightley made the most he could out of the part of Mark Helstone. In conclusion, I must pay a well-deserved compliment to Mr W. Rosevear, who appeared as Jack Larriper, for his efficient singing of "Sons of the Sea."