

THE STAGE

(By "Comus.")

HIS MAJESTY'S THEATRE.

"WHY WOMAN SINS."

Mr Holloway's second venture of the season, "Why Woman Sins," is proving almost as great a draw as "Two Little Vagabonds." The play is well calculated to attract, being cast on strong melodramatic lines, and having the tragic and comic elements balanced with remarkable skill. The average public likes a medley. Sustained sentiment wearies, and unchecked merriment palls, and so the dramatist who knows his business combines the grim and the mirthful, just as the music hall manager does. "Why Woman Sins" is a play of incident pure and simple. There is no development of character in it; the characters are all made up and labelled at the start, and nothing occurs in the action of the piece to modify a single trait of disposition or temperament. Wicked and virtuous people in these melodramas are born so, and never by any possibility change. If anybody were to make an honest attempt to solve the problem posed in the title of the drama he would say "in the case of this particular woman it is because she really can't help it." Having said this, it is right and proper to add that Mr Holloway gives us a very fine production. The whole of the parts, and particularly those of Mr and Miss Holloway, Miss Gresham and Mr Stanford, are all filled with much more than ordinary ability, and the mounting is in several cases superb. So long as melodrama holds the popular taste, so long, I hope, will we have an opportunity of seeing it staged so adequately, so splendidly, as it is done by Mr Holloway.

OPERA HOUSE.

"TEMPEST TOSSED."

The Sanford American Players are showing the best that the States can produce in the way of romantic drama, and there is a breeziness about their work that harmonises well with the atmosphere of "Tempest Tossed." I gave an outline of the plot last week. The story deals with the fisher folk on the coast of New England, and in a series of beautiful living pictures, some of the problems that afflict humanity, in America as elsewhere, are displayed. It is a good rousing, healthy play, that sends the blood of the spectator tingling through his veins, and causes him to make a temporary surrender of his actual surroundings. Mr Sanford gives another capable presentation of a seafaring hero, and Mr Henderson gives further reliable evidence of his capacity for cool, calculating villainy. Miss Laura Wall adds another laurel to her wreath, and the rest fill their respective parts with conspicuous ability. It is a thoroughly satisfactory representation, and the scenery is beyond all praise. The storm scene is something to be remembered. It is one of the most realistic things ever put on the stage here. The good scenery is the more noticeable, perhaps, because Mr Sanford does not lean his whole weight upon adventitious aids of this sort. His plays would go well with the minimum of good setting, because they contain so much good acting.

"The Sidewalks of New York" will be the next melodrama to be produced by the Walter Sanford Players at the Opera House on Saturday next. This is a story laid in the great metropolis of America. The daughter of a rich merchant of New York City marries against her father's will, and he disinherits her and casts her off. She and her husband sink lower and lower in the social scale, until finally the husband dies, leaving her in abject poverty, with a little blind daughter to support. Worn out with privation, to which she was unaccustomed, and disheartened with the result of her efforts to become reconciled to her father, her proud spirit becomes broken and she dies, after having sunk from the sight of her former friends, leaving her blind child, Marie. Her father, finally repenting his harshness, makes a will on his deathbed leaving his fortune to his grandchild, Marie, if she be still alive. When the play opens, Philip Lyndon, the next of kin, having discovered that Marie has been adopted by a retired merchant

living in a small village on the Hudson, plots to separate her from her adopted father, and then to murder her with the aid of an Italian padrone, Franzetti. The plot shows the overthrow of his plans by the hero, Harry Burton, an express messenger in the New York Central R. and R. and several exciting scenes take place. The gradual growth of the love between Harry and Marie is interestingly told. A number of side lights are thrown on the main picture in the characters of the Italian padrone and his hag of a wife. These sinister characters hold the attention while the comedy element is very strong and is supplied by Conn, the Irishman, a policeman, Nimrod Keyes, the negro porter at the railroad station, and Kitty Wilson, the lunch counter girl. The drama is full of action, and contains many exciting scenes. Mr Walter Sanford will appear as the hero, Harry Burton, Mr Bart. Wallace will play Conn, the policeman, Miss Maude Barber will present a strong characterisation of the Italian hag, Malachetti, Miss Laura Wall will be the heroine, Marie, and pert little Adelaide Boothby will play Kitty, the lunch counter girl.



MR E. S. WILLARD, as the Cardinal, and MISS HELEN FERRERS as Claricia de Medici, in "The Cardinal."

"THE LIGHT THAT FAILED."

My Wellington correspondent writes:—I was unfortunately not in town when J. C. Williamson's powerful company put on "The Admirable Crichton," but the verdict on all sides is that the production is a delightful one, and something quite out of the ordinary. Auckland playgoers can look forward with confidence to a rare treat.

The combination, with that popular artist, Mr Cuyler Hastings, in the lead, has been drawing great houses here. They now work up the coast, and open in your town on March 7. I reckon the capacity of your beautiful theatre will be strained to the utmost, for these pieces they are staging are worth going a long way to see.

"The Light That Failed" is a strong play in every sense of the word, and the audience is affected to a great degree. No production could be imagined where the sympathies of every man and woman are so worked upon. Bright flashes of hu-

mour, distinctly Kiplingesque, that bold and free language so well known to lovers of this writer, serve to relieve the tension. Kipling's realistic touches abound through the piece, brightening the atmosphere of sadness which naturally surrounds the blindness of Dick Helder. Mr Cuyler Hastings, as the artist, unselfish and brave in his misfortunes, gives a beautiful and powerful rendering of a difficult character. Carrying the audience with him, as few actors could from the rise of the curtain to the end, he proves himself again an ornament to the profession he has adopted. Miss Chevalier, a warm favourite wherever she appears, gives a fine rendering of the difficult part of Maisie, selfish and wrapped up in her art. In the last scene where she comes to poor blind Dick and refuses to be driven away by him, who would in his unselfish love sacrifice himself, her acting is pathetic and moving to a great degree. The mounting is done in that complete manner which distinguishes all of Mr Williamson's efforts, and I can confidently recommend your readers to renew their acquaintance with Mr Cuyler Hastings and his clever support on this visit.

things all their own way just now in consequence of the shutting up of the Theatre Royal, and Denis Carney, the Stagpoles, Keilderson, Millie Herbert, and others are providing a most alluring bill. . . . Things theatrical are as flat as 'corked' soda just now in this dusty town. More news for you, I hope, next week.

My Napier correspondent writes: "At the Theatre Royal, on Tuesday and Wednesday, Messrs Cooper and Macdormott's Imperial Biograph Company appeared, and on the first night the show was run in conjunction with the Napier and Spit Fire Brigades, in order to send representatives to Geelong for the demonstration there. The house was crowded to the doors, and the theatre proprietor proclaims it the biggest in Napier since 1898. The Company has a fine set of pictures of our firemen at work. The films of our navy and army and marvellous illusions are particularly good. The ventriloquist act by Mr Delno Fritz was a great success, he being the best ventriloquist seen in Napier for a long time. The second house was also very large, and a matinee on Wednesday was well attended by children, about £13 14s being taken in 3d and 6d. The company appeared at the Port (Spit) last night to a good house. . . . Miss Fitzmaurice Gill's Company opened a three nights' season on Thursday to a good house in spite of the big run on playgoers in Napier lately. The piece staged was 'The Bank of England.' Miss Gill had a great reception on her re-appearance in Napier, likewise did Mr C. Blake. To-night 'The French Spy' is to be staged."

Twenty-four pantomimes were produced at the London theatres at Christmas time.

Mel. B. Spurr has just concluded a most successful season in Sydney, and now goes to Hobart.

Miss May Beatty and Mr Fred Graham are dividing the honours in the "Belle of New York" at the Sydney Royal.

The "Pelican," referring to the production of "Aladdin" at the King's Theatre, Hammersmith, says:—"Of the men folk, Mr Sidney Bracy (son of Mr Henry Bracy), as the Emperor, sings admirably, though it comes as a surprise, even in pantomime, to hear a Chinese monarch singing an Irish song 'with a rich' Hibernian accent!"

Hawtreys' comedy season at the Sydney Criterion, commences on the 20th inst.

The Gisborne "Times" of the 8th, has the following:—

"The Miss Fitzmaurice Gill Company concluded a most successful season at the Academy of Music on Saturday evening, when 'East Lynne' was presented. There was a crowded audience, and the play was well received, Miss Gill especially coming in for a most enthusiastic reception. The Company left for Napier last evening."

One of the principal attractions in the repertoire of the Royal Comic Opera Company for the New Zealand tour, which commences at Dunedin on Easter Saturday will be the musical piece "A Country Girl," which is at present being played at Her Majesty's Theatre, Melbourne, to crowded houses. "The Sportsman" says:—"A Country Girl," with its bright lines, pretty and tuneful songs, has had the tribute of much laughter paid it throughout the week, and it must be admitted that the laugh is the thing. Mr Williamson promised to surpass his own records in the production of this delightful comic opera, and a visit to Her Majesty's fully satisfies one that the manager has accomplished his object. In England and America it made fortunes for all concerned, and here it would seem likely to have a great run. The characters include aristocratic ladies who ape rustic ways for election purposes; a heroine who, from a village maiden, has blossomed into a great actress; her lover, a naval officer named Challoner; his man Barry, who is a sort of nautical Mickey Free, from Devonshire, and runs the universe around him according to his own mischievous ways; an Englishman, who has become rajah, his princes, and a host of others."

My Christchurch correspondent writes: "Fate, in the guise of the Christchurch City Council, cut short the Willoughby-Geach season abruptly. The license of the ancient and rather dilapidated Royal expired December 31, and the City Fathers, mindful of the Chicago catastrophe, refused to permit any more performances at the theatre, pending the alterations recommended by the inspector being attended to. These alterations are now being carried into effect, but the Willoughby-Geach Company had to turn out one night earlier than they had arranged to go, so the advertised 'farewell' show didn't come off. It's about time the syndicate concerned made a start to erect the new Royal, but they don't seem to be in a hurry, and it looks as if we should have to put up with the present shabby old temple of the drama for a bit longer. . . . P. R. Dix's Company was to have opened here on the 13th, but will be unable to do so now owing to the alterations to the Royal. . . . Fuller's Entertainers are having