

CHRISTCHURCH NOTES.

My Christchurch correspondent writes: Dix's Gaiety Co. have had a stormy time of it (meteorologically speaking) since they opened here. But despite wind, wet, dust, mud, frost and fog, large audiences have been the rule at the Royal nightly, since the Co. in question put in an appearance here. The present bill is a capital one. Ventriloquist Dickie's imitations of musical instruments are extraordinary, and his manipulation of his family of figures particularly clever. The Angelos supply an amusing turn. One does the lighting pictures (portraits of celebrities), while the other enacts the part of a comic flunkey. The left way in which the wielder of the brush produces a portrait of her late lamented Majesty "Victoria the Good," and then with a few magic touches transforms it into a likeness of Edward VII., brings down the house every time. In fact, every turn is good, and the same commendable absence of vulgarity continues to be a feature of the entertainment.

Tod Callaway continues his triumphal career at the Opera House, and is acknowledged to be one of the very best artists in his line of business ever seen in Christchurch. The Nawns, too, are very popular, and earn the high salaries they command. Fuller's Show draws packed houses all the time.

Mel. B. Spurr plays a return season here (his farewell appearances) of three nights, at Canterbury Hall, on Saturday, Monday, and Tuesday. The local Yorkshire society have engaged the entire D.C. for the last night.

Glad to be able to announce that Comedian Will Watkins is now convalescent. He has had a bad time of it, and deserves a benefit in one or more of the big centres.

The new Theatre Royal scheme seems to have fizzled out. We hear nothing of it now. Pity, too. New Zealand towns of half the size of this, and less than half the size, are better off for show places than Christchurch.

We are looking forward to "The Marriage of Kitty," and Harold Ashton when he comes along to arrange for the nuptials will have the usual warm welcome.

At the Tivoli, Sydney, Mr Harry Rickards introduced, on July 23, a charming serio-comic artist, lately arrived from London, in the person of Miss Nellie Kilburn. She quickly established herself in the good graces of her audience, and her new song, "Riding in a Motor Car," is likely to become speedily popular. Miss Maud Fanning was warmly welcomed on her reappearance; while the star turns of the Uessem, the Levinos, and the Burke, Teller, and Moller trio, together with the clever musical act of Mr Will Von Allen, were all enthusiastically received by a crowded house. At the Royal, Mr Bland Holt's company attracts large audiences each night, to witness "The Union Jack," which will be withdrawn on July 30, in favour of a revival of "The Prodigal Daughter," one of the most popular of Mr Holt's repertoire of dramas.



MISS ALICE NIXON,
Of George Stephenson's Musical Comedy Co.



MISS MAY GARSTANG,
Of George Stephenson's Musical Comedy Co.

The "American Travesty Stars" have firmly established their popularity at the Sydney Palace, where large audiences assemble each evening, and at the Wednesday and Saturday matinees. The many novel and amusing features introduced, the skill of the actors united under Mr Henry James' management, the satisfactory staging of the new burlesque, "Fiddle-De-Dee," combine to please playgoers, and to provide a pleasant stimulant for the most jaded palate.

At the Sydney Lyceum, Mr Walter Sanford and his company of American players appeared on July 23 in a new and exciting melodrama, "The Struggle of Life." As was the case with the opening piece of the season (says the "Town and Country Journal"), the staging and mounting leave little to be desired, the many fine scenes including Battery Park, with a view of the Statue of Liberty and New York Harbour by moonlight in the background; Rutgers Slip, East River, during a snowstorm; St. Patrick's Cathedral, and the Duncan Mansion, with an illuminated view of Fifth Avenue; and others.

"His Majesty the King" is the title under which a skilfully-dramatised version of Marion Crawford's charming romance, "In the Palace of the King," was produced at the Criterion, Sydney, on July 23, by Mr Ernest Knight, and the members of his English company, supplemented by local artists. The critic of the "Sydney Mail" thus refers to the production:—"The play is superbly mounted, the various scenes showing the Terrace, the Eastern Chamber, the Throne Room, and other parts of the King's palace in Madrid; while the costumes worn by the actors of both sexes

are rich, handsome, and eminently becoming. Those to whom the story is familiar will hardly need to be reminded that it relates the return to Madrid after a successful campaign against the King's enemies, of Don John of Austria. He loves and is loved by Dolores, daughter of the stern General de Mendoza; but Philip, who is jealous of his half-brother's popularity, has other plans for him. In a quarrel, the King stabs Don John, and leaves him for dead, but on his recovery from his deathlike swoon Don John sends for a priest, marries Dolores, and presents her as his wife to the King, and the assembled Court. Mr Knight himself presented a careful portrait of that very unamiable monarch, Philip II., while Mr Clarence Brune, a young and handsome actor, showed a gallant figure as Don John. Miss Nellie Fergusson, as Dolores, played with girlish grace and vivacity in the earlier scenes, and showed dramatic force in the interview with the King, in which she wrings from him the acknowledgment of his crime. Miss Watts-Phillips, as Dona Ana, showed her accustomed grasp of character, and was appropriately imperious and vindictive; Miss Myra De Lissa made a handsome and dignified Queen Henrietta; while Miss Mary Milward was well suited as the gentle blind girl, Inez. Mr J. Douglas Henry, as the court jester, Adonis, a hunchback, made a genuine hit. Mr Frank Harcourt gave a convincing picture of the military martinet, General de Mendoza, while the rest of the cast was capably filled. Mr Knight announces matinees for Wednesday afternoons, and the season thus happily opened should prove a prosperous one."

A. H. Whitehouse's Biograph Entertainment will be given at Coromandel to-morrow (Friday) evening, and on Monday a tour of the Taranaki Province begins at New Plymouth, with Inglewood, Stratford and Eltham on the three succeeding nights. The Show has been meeting with the success it deserves.

Pollard's Liliuputian Opera Company opened a season in Brisbane last Saturday week.

Wallace Brownlow, at present in New York, has been engaged by Whitney Brothers for an opera season.

Miss Fitzmaurice Gill and her company were at Castlemaine and Maldon at latest.

During their season at the Princess' Theatre, Melbourne, the Stephenson Musical Comedy Company will produce "The Dandy Doctor" and "The Skirt Dancer," in addition to "The Rose of the Riviera."

Geo. Stephenson's American Comedy Company has just concluded a very successful Westralian season, and opened in Adelaide on Saturday week with a new play, "Other People's Money," which will be the opening production of the return season of the organisation in Melbourne, to start early in September.

The Williamson Dramatic Company (Cuyler Hastings) have started rehearsals for "Sunday," which will be a big production. Miss Tittell Brune, who will make her local debut in the principal part, has returned from Sydney, where she put in a short holiday.

Henry Hallam and his wife (Miss Josephine Stanton), who have left for England, as things go, will go into vaudeville in London.

The Fuller Proprietary are to be congratulated on introducing to New Zealand Mr Harry Pearce, Australia's champion wrestler. Since his first appearance business at His Majesty's, Wellington, has been of the "record" order. Mr Pearce, who is one of the most humane wrestlers that has ever visited New Zealand, has had a few tough nuts to crack, but he has so far come through the ordeal in a most successful manner. In the course of conversation with "Lorgnette" (of the Wellington "Mail"), Mr Pearce said that he was thoroughly satisfied with the New Zealand product. He says that in the most unassuming way they say they "don't know much about the game," but for all that they "carry a lot of trumps" up their sleeves.

The last night of the famous Weber and Fields' Company, in New York, happened on May 28, and furnished an extraordinary scene. After many years Weber and Fields, idols of the playgoing public, were dissolving partnership, some small business matter being the motif, and a great house was in evidence, very big prices being paid for seats. After a performance, during which sorrowful regrets bore down the usual jollity and life, the band played "Auld Lang Syne," the audience singing the old song heartily, and calling out wishes and au revoirs to the performers. Weber and Fields tried to speak, but broke down, whilst Miss Lillian Russell and several ladies of the company turned their backs to the audience and sobbed. It was a memorable scene, albeit a regretful one, inasmuch as two good friends were separating. Efforts are to be made to bring the comedians together again.

Wirths' Circus was at latest on the Westralian goldfields doing big business. The receipts for the opening night in Kalgoorlie were £520. The Howard Brothers are still a big attraction with the show.

By the last English mail Miss Alice Crawford wrote to "Punch":—"I am enclosing notices of Wilson Barrett's new play, 'Lucky Durham,' produced last week at Liverpool, and was a great success. Unfortunately I was not in the cast, as I have been away for four months ill. Mr Barrett intends producing it almost immediately in London. We go to Africa in February for a season of twenty weeks. Before rejoining Mr Barrett I have accepted a 'starring' engagement at Aberdeen of eight weeks." The notices are very hearty and encouraging. The Liverpool "Mercury" says the new play (of which I gave the outline some weeks ago) "opens up a world of thought," and praises the writing and acting. The "Daily Post" declares Mr Barrett's latest effort "to be of exceptional interest and strength," and speaks highly of the actor-manager's performance, whilst the Liverpool "Courier" states that "Mr Wilson Barrett in 'Lucky Durham' has constructed a comedy-drama full of interest, enthralling at times, and yet picturesque and amusing." All the journals are as one in their estimate of the acting, Paul Belmore and Ambrose Manning sharing the honours with the star and Miss Lillah M'Carthy. (Since this letter was written the sad news of Mr Wilson Barrett's death has been cabled.)



MISS MAY BEATTY, as "The Rose of the Riviera," in George Stephenson's Musical Comedy Co.