

ON THE STAGE

(By "Comus.")

OPERA HOUSE.

FULLERS' EMPIRE COMPANY.

The Fuller Co. closed down for a short rest before the Christmas season on Saturday night, when there was a full house, and the various items in the long and excellent programme were received with genuine applause. The season will be resumed on Christmas Eve (Saturday next), when, in addition to the efficient company now under engagement, there will also appear Mr Kellman (card conjurer), Miss Margery Atherton (balladist), Messrs Scott and Wallace (Irish comedians), Messrs Connor Bros., and Leonard (acrobats).

HIS MAJESTY'S THEATRE.

THE STEPHENSON MUSICAL COMEDY CO.

"THE ROSE OF THE RIVIERA."

The interest already evinced in the forthcoming appearance of Mr George Stephenson's English Musical Comedy Company promises to give Auckland playgoers much more than the ordinary excitement associated with the advent of a popular combination, whose merits have been enthusiastically commented on through the columns of the English and Australian Press. Mr Stephenson's company will appear on Saturday next, December 24th, at His Majesty's, in "The Rose of the Riviera," a musical play which has attained remarkable popularity throughout England and the Commonwealth. The play has been most favourably noticed by the critics of England and Australia. In Sydney it ran for nine weeks to crowded audiences, whilst in Melbourne it enjoyed an equally prosperous run of seven weeks at the Princess Theatre. Some months ago Mr Stephenson deputed Mr Edward Lauri to proceed to England and select a musical company and plays calculated to please the critical Australian audiences. With what measure of success Mr Lauri carried out this task may be gauged from the popularity the Company has achieved in Australia. Miss Beatty has, according to reports, delighted her most captious critics in the parts allotted to her. Most of the other principals, save Mr Edward Lauri, have graduated from one or another of Edwardes' Variety Companies, and include among others, Misses May Garstang, Alice Nixon, Ada Page; Messrs Charles Macnaughton, Fred Twitchin, Chas. and Will. Bovis, and Roy Sidney, a full chorus of fifty voices, the famous Gibson, Pink and Rose Ballarins, and opera orchestra. The plans are now in constant requisition at Wildman and Arey's.



MISS ADA PAGE and MR. CHAS. MACNAUGHTON, in "The Rose of the Riviera."



MR. EDWARD LAURI and MR. WILL BOVIS, in "The Rose of the Riviera."

THE J. F. SHERIDAN COMPANY.

Mr Alec Verne writes me on board the s.s. Ninevah, under date December 3:—Dear "Comus,"—We have just concluded a very successful season in South Africa, having played in the following towns:—Pietermaritzburg, Johannesburg, Pretoria, Bloemfontein, Naauwport, De Aar, Beaufort West, Capetown, Port Elizabeth, East London, King William's Town, Queenstown, and finished in Durban on the 12th of last month. We then took ship for Capetown, and the members of the company left there by the Medic on the 19th of last month, and Mr Sheridan, Miss Barlow and myself on the following day on this steamer, which is a most comfortable boat, but rather small. We have had a very pleasant trip and have enjoyed the rest very much, the only thing that has marred the enjoyment of the trip being the sudden death of one of the saloon stewards from consumption, which upset Mr Sheridan very much. I do not at present know our movements in Australia, as Mr Sheridan's intention was to go to England for a brief period, but he was frightened of the cold weather, and wisely decided to come back again to Australia and then go home in the summer later on, but I think it will be in 1906 that he will go, as I think that when he starts to work again he will not like to leave, as

Australasia is now more his home than England. We have one or two new plays for production, "The Girl from Venus" and "King Dodo," an American play from which Mr Sheridan expects very big things. Frank Weathersby, whom you will remember as our business manager, has severed his connection with the company and gone to England, after an absence of six years, and he, of course, being on the spot, and knowing what Australasian audiences require, will be able to select new musical comedies much better than Mr Sheridan can do himself from this distance. Things generally in South Africa at the present time are in a very bad condition, and I am afraid it will be some time before the country is in a flourishing state again. I should be obliged if you would wish my friends the compliments of the season for me. I will write you further as soon as anything definite is settled with regard to our future movements. Mr Sheridan joins me in kind regards. To this he adds a P.S.:—December 8: Arrived yesterday; all well. Hope to reach Sydney on Monday next.

The Knight-Jeffries Dramatic Company, under the management of Mr J. C. Williamson, brought an extraordinarily successful season to an end on Saturday last, with "The Silver King." The performance was a pronounced triumph in all respects. The Company opens at Wellington on Saturday.

Spenser's "Theatroscope," now appearing for a brief season at the Opera House, is well worth going to see. Some of the pictures are much above the average, and the management have been wise in including a number of the comic variety.

Miss Ella Morris, the English opera chorus singer, and a native of Melbourne, who is a member of the Tivoli Company at San Francisco, recently became the bride of James Conanty, a mining expert, from Nevada. Mrs Conanty says: "Leave the stage? No, why should I? Although my husband is fully able to take care of me and to supply me with every comfort I have no intention of retiring from the stage. The ranks of prima donnas are far from being overcrowded, and the few thousands I shall shortly earn annually will come in handy, if only to buy dresses. I hail from Melbourne, Australia, the same city Nellie Melba came from, and before long I think she will discover that other singers come from there too."

The well-known Black Family of Musicians had an experience in the Otago backblocks of the roadless north the other day, which (says "Pasquin," in the "Witness") they do not wish repeated. Leaving Pongoroa with their coach and four, they made good progress for some little distance on their

journey, when they suddenly plunged into a sea of mud. The coach sank to the axles, and the horses were unable to extricate the vehicle. After four hours had been spent, the task set the horses was found impossible, and a team of bullocks was brought into requisition, and with their aid, the coach was got out and the journey resumed. Further along the "road" the coach was again bogged in the mud, and, to make matters worse, a swingletree broke. The bullocks were again hitched up, but this time they pulled so erratically that they ran the coach over the bank. Mr Black, who was the only passenger on the coach at the time, jumped off the box as the vehicle went over. Fortunately, it struck two dead trees, which broke its fall and prevented it falling headlong into the river, 100ft below. To haul the coach up the bank was the next problem. An expert, who had a team of bullocks five miles away, volunteered to assist. Off he hied for his team, arriving back in due course with the bullocks and block and tackle. The tackle was placed round the body of the coach, the block to a tree on the top of the bank, and the bullocks hitched on to the end of the rope. In a very short time the bullocks had walked the coach up the bank, and on examination, it was found that not even a fiddle string had been broken in the fall. Without further accident the entertainers arrived at their destination 24 hours late, more than satisfied with their adventure.

Here is a little story that will specially appeal to musicians (says "M.A.P."). At the end of one of Mr Mark Hambourg's concerts in Melbourne the people wildly demanded another encore. Many of the audience suggested the names of favourite pieces, the loudest voice coming from the back of the hall, and persistently demanding "Chopin's Be-cause!" Mr Hambourg was greatly puzzled. Schumann's "Why" occurred to his mind, but that did not help him out of his difficulty. "Play us 'Be-cause!'" shouted his unknown admirer again and again. Suddenly the pianist was seized with an inspiration. He commenced to play the "Berceuse," and instant silence showed him that it was a correct guess.

Past and present royalties on plays: "Masks and Faces" brought only £150 to Chas. Reade and Tom Taylor; Bulwer received less than £200 for "The Lady of Lyons"; H. M. Blossom, for the American play "Chickers," has been receiving from £100 to £150 per week throughout the season, and it promises to run as well for the next two seasons. J. M. Barrie received over £20,000 from "The Little Minister," and Hall Caine exceeded these figures with his royalty from "The Christian."



MR. CHAS. BOVIS, In "The Rose of the Riviera."