

ON THE STAGE

(By "Comus.")

HIS MAJESTY'S THEATRE.

"ROSE OF THE RIVIERA."

The opening production of Mr George Stephenson's season of mirth and (let me hope) money-making at His Majesty's has been modestly labelled "a musical something to laugh at," which description, however, is not quite so modest as it seems. For it assumes that the "Rose" is musical, and that it is fitted to make us laugh, which is, after all, no less than can be claimed for the best comic opera. Yet the claim is well based. The "Rose" is not first-class comic opera, it is not even the best musical comedy, but it certainly is musical and extremely diverting. Without plot or leading motif, it may be conveniently described as glorified vaudeville, with a long series of "star turns." The slender thread of connecting story that just suffices to hold it together has already been indicated in previous issues. A Cook's tourist, a flower girl, and an actress impersonating a Ducal family in order to save the reputation of a Nice hotel-keeper, and the complications that ensue, provide the occasions for numberless outrageously funny situations, a profusion of bright and melodious music, and no end of the most fascinating ballets. The chorus and ballet are without doubt among the best we have ever seen in Auckland, and every other detail making for spectacular effect has been attended to with scrupulous care. It is a bright and lively performance from beginning to end, with hardly a pause for reflection. Mr Lauri, who is responsible for the brilliancy of the general effect, also does most of the work as Brisket the Cockney Cook's tourist, a creation that would make the fortune of any musical comedy. It seems to combine nearly all the phases of comicality, and Mr Lauri is perfect in every phase. Mr Macnaughton and the Bovis Bros. are worthy lieutenants of the principal comedian. The singing and dancing of the first-named are in the first-class, while the energy and "go" of the Bovis duo are amazing. Miss May Beatty as "The Rose" is as bewitching as ever, and nightly receives a warm welcome from her host of admirers in this part of the colony. Her songs are especially pleasing, particularly "Egypt" and "My Cosey Corner Girl," while her acting grows in winsomeness every day. Miss Garstang, Miss Page, Miss Nixon and Miss Bessie White are all more or less admirable. Miss Garstang's musical numbers are extremely pleasing, and Miss Nixon's "Little Yellow Bird" has to be repeated. But the most delightful and refreshing, perhaps because the most original, items in the play are the ballets of the Gibson Girls and the Rose Ballerinas. The Champagne Ballet is daintily beautiful, and the ballet of the "Four Pretty Little Maidens" (with song by Mr Macnaughton) is just ravishing. There are so many good things in the play that it is impossible to give an adequate list even of them, and a satisfactory description is out of the question. I advise everybody to go and see it, and to those who are not hopelessly tired of this world, or extatically enamoured of the next, I can promise three hours of hearty and perfectly innocent amusement.

THE SKIRT DANCER.

Mr Stephenson will replace "The Rose" with "The Skirt Dancer" on Monday, New Year's night. This musical novelty has attained vast popularity in Australia. The music is by the famous composer "Trotter," whose delightful compositions in "In Old Madrid," "Asthore," etc., are ever fresh in the recollections of all theatregoers. It is claimed for "The Skirt Dancer" that it is one of the most lavishly staged productions ever presented in the Colonies. The mounting, dresses and accessories, I am assured, cost Mr Stephenson over £3000. Musically speaking, "The Skirt Dancer" stands out prominently as one of the most successful of latter-day musical comedies. The principals, who have already become favourites with the Auckland audiences, are all congenially cast, and

something even more delightful than the present running musical success may be expected. The plans are now open at Wildman and Arey's.

OPERA HOUSE.

FULLERS' EMPIRE COMPANY.

Those who fail to go to the Opera House of an evening just now will miss something worth seeing. For the company has come back strengthened and refreshed after its brief holiday, and is now ready for anything. In the brief interval the scenic artist has been taking no rest, but grafting for all he is worth to produce what is undoubtedly one of the prettiest stage sets ever seen on the Opera House boards. It represents a wittily realistic glade in the woods, with a cascade of actual bona fide water at the back, and so perfect is the illusion that hundreds of John Fuller's patrons regret the pounds they lost last week looking for a quiet spot in the country not half so good as they get at the Opera House for the maximum price of two bob. Into this fairy scene come a

capable artists, including Kellman, an accomplished manipulator of cards, Miss Atherton, a very pleasing soprano; Connor Bros. and Leonard, sprightliest among acrobats; Scott and Wallace, fine ripe Irish comedians; Miss Gertrude Emery, trapezist; Miss Edie Burke, serio; Master Charles Hayes, contortionist; the bright little Bertotos, Will Stevens, and last, but not least, the rattling Stagpooles. It is a capital show, and I am glad to see that the enterprising Fullers are reaping a reward in well-filled houses.

CHRISTCHURCH NOTES.

My Christchurch correspondent writes: The showmen are beginning to roll up, and holiday-makers in this wind-swept and dust-choked metropolis are likely to have plenty of fun for their money in the shape of "entertainments." Dix's Gaiety Co. opens Xmas Eve, and as Harry Shine, Percy Denton, Howard Bros., and other bright, particular stars are in the show, it ought to catch on with the grip of an octopus when he meets a man out bathing.

up and put a little life into us as a restorative after our perpetual nor'-westers!

"Blind Man's Buff; or, Her Own Way," was written for Maxine Elliot by Clyde Fitch, and has been a great monetary success.

Rostand's "L'Aiglon," with Miss Tittell Brune as the youthful Duke of Reichstadt, was produced at the Princess's, Melbourne, on Christmas Eve.

The backer who finds the money for a new theatrical enterprise is called in New York slang an "angel."

Two very recent musical comedies, "The Isle of Spice" and "The Royal Chef," were unqualified failures in New York.

The Edouin Musical Farce Company, which will occupy Her Majesty's Theatre, Ballarat, during the holiday season, includes a number of well-known vocal and dramatic artists, and has been formed



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

party of picnickers, whose sole fault is that they make the audience ravenous by their evident enjoyment of real picnic fare, including lemonade and bananas. Otherwise their behaviour is quite irreproachable, and they sing and dance in a manner most agreeable. Two bluejackets drop in, and one of these, being Tommy Kadwell, of H.M.s. Penguin, shows by his marvellous manipulation of the clubs, tomahawks, sailor's knives, and bar bell, what a good man is wasted on the Navy. Tommy gets as much applause as Will Stevens, which is saying all that is necessary. The new first-part is, altogether, a great improvement upon the old, and John Fuller was wise to make the change. But he is always making changes, and each is better than the one that went before. The second part contains a number of new names and many

The Williams' Dramatic Co. are at the Choral Hall, where they are serving out sensational drama, piping hot, in sixpennyworths and shillingworths. "Falsely Accused" is to be followed by "East Lynne."

At the Opera House the special Xmas attraction provided by the Fuller's for Boxing Night is the old favourite, "My Sweetheart," in which the bewitching Minnie Palmer and Carry Swain have both shone. I understand the Fullers' are going to stage the famous comedy-drama in first-rate style. And on Boxing Night Fred Rivenhall makes a welcome re-appearance here, and a host of popular favourites will assist in making thing hum. More anon anent these gay doings. We want something to liven us

for the purpose of presenting several of the successful productions of the Strand Theatre, London, with which the name of the famous comedian, Mr Willie Edouin, is associated. The Australian rights of these pieces are vested in Mrs G. B. W. Lewis (Rose Edouin), who superintends the Ballarat performances, and also appears in the cast. "A Trip to Paris" was the opening piece. The engagements include Mr Charles Rose, tenor, late of Madame Melba's concert party, Mr John L. Forde, Mr H. Scott, Miss Julia Spencer, of Colonel Mapleson's Opera Company, New York, Miss Pearl Dudley, and Miss Athena Claudius. The libretto of "A Trip to Paris" is by Messrs Cooper and Edouin, and the music by Mr George F. Lewis, R.A. The season is under the business management of Mr Joseph Brown.