



THE GIBSON GIRLS IN THE CHAMPAGNE BALLET.

WIRTHS' CIRCUS.

This famous combination will be with us again shortly. The following notice, from a Sydney paper, will, therefore, be read with interest:—

The canvas amphitheatre in Phillip Park of Wirth Bros.' Circus and Zoo was thronged on Saturday evening, on the occasion of the opening for another season here. The big show returns here with a programme full of thrilling and entertaining novelties. Special care and attention has been devoted to the menagerie section, and an interesting selection of wild and curious animals has been made. All the Zoo exhibits have arrived in excellent condition. On Saturday the baby elephant and the cage full of young jaguars attracted considerable notice.

As to the show in the sawdust arena, its high-class character was sufficiently attested by the plaudits of the assemblage. The Wild West feature is among the most noteworthy. The cowboys are a direct importation from the prairies of America. Wild Friday proves himself a marksman with William Tell-like accuracy, and, aided by Wild Rose, described justly as "a lady of nerve," he proves his dexterity as a dagger-thrower. With the lady standing against a boarded target, he hurls a dozen or so javelin missiles, which stick in the boards close to her without, however, as much as disconcerting her, though, when she moves away from the board she has to do so very cautiously, so as not to come in contact with the sharp edges of the point-embedded knives. The buck-jumping is a particularly stirring item, the rearing and snorting horses making the iron enclosure rattle as they at times madly plunge against it.

A comical bucking pony and a bullock with similar unsettling propensities infused considerable fun into the proceedings. In connection with these, a standing offer is made to venturesome spectators to keep their backs for a stated period.

The champion jumper of the world, Tom Colquett, appears to be equipped with indiarubber, nether limbs, judging by the almost superhuman elasticity which he displays. As he indulged in a flight round the ring over obstacles he reminded one of a kangaroo coming down the side of a mountain in a hurry. Another great novelty is the aerial slack rope performance by Miss Addie Frederic. The serpentine act by Miss M. Wirth on horseback in the air, and on terra firma, elicited hearty applause.

The performing wild animals went through some extraordinary exhibitions. For instance, a tiger rode a tight rope, a lion, dog, goat, and horse posed in tableaux vivants, while a cantankerous camel careered round the circle, wildly trying to unseat two clowns perched in the vicinity of his hump. The boxing horses, Fitzsimmons and Corbett, engaged in a couple of exciting rounds, one feigning at the end to be "knocked out."

The Cossack manoeuvre on horseback was one of the most effective things of the evening, the beautifully costumed riders presenting a picturesque appearance as they wheeled this way and that with incredible swiftness. Equally good was the High School riding displayed by Mr Phil and George Wirth on two beautiful horses, General Roberts and Major King Edward and Emperor, two big, well-trained greys, were put through their paces by the ringmaster in fine style.

The entertainment included thirty items, so that only a few of the most salient ones can be mentioned. It may be added, however, that in all departments that go to make up a capital circus show there is little that is lacking. The acrobatic and trapeze work is of a high order, the equestrianism is daring and at times sensational, while the clowning is funny without being vulgar.

"RIP VAN WINKLE" JEFFERSON.

Playgoers who, like myself (says "Peter Quince" in Melbourne "Punch"), are fallen in the sere, the yellow leaf, will remember Joseph Jefferson, who was here in the "sixties" dying of consumption. Even then he was regarded as one of the greatest of actors, a verdict which forty years of public life has not revoked. Now, at the age of seventy-five, Joseph Jefferson has definitely retired from the stage. In an interview the veteran actor said that he had decided not to appear again professionally, although he might give his services occasionally in stitution. As a boy he was delicate, and fifty years ago he was denied an insurance cause of charity. Mr Jefferson's theatrical career began when he was only ten years old. But he denied that his survival of more than sixty years of stage work was due to a vigorous concance policy. But careful living was the secret of a long life. "We actors," Mr Jefferson said, "like the second round of applause—to be patted on the back around the supper-table in a company of fellow Bohemians after the play. There was poor dear Artemus Ward—he was such a delightful fellow and also such a superb company! When he came to London I said to him, 'Browne—you know, his name was Browne—beware of the stage door and the men waiting to carry you off to supper at Evans'. It's not so much that they'll put you under the table as under ground," and they did. I always had a cab at the door when I was playing at the Adelphi, and got in and put up the window and went home, no matter who was out after me."

The time referred to was when Jefferson visited London after his tour of Australia. Jefferson was then thirty-five. In his interview he recalled how Dion Boucicault remade the old play of "Rip Van Winkle," remarking that he himself conceived the weird second act as it is now played, and related an amusing incident of his London engagement:—"Just before 'Rip' was brought out at the Adelphi I went with Boucicault to that theatre one night to see Ben Webster, who was a very good actor. He was playing the part of a miner, and in the third act he opened a safe in the wall of his house, took out some papers, examined them,

and put them back. There was a very strained moment of hushed attention through the house, but presently a small voice rang clear from the gallery: 'Wot's in 'em, guv'nor?' The house laughed, you may depend upon it, and Webster was very angry, but Boucicault said it was bad art on the part of the author to leave the small boy in the gallery in doubt as to the contents of the papers." Mr Jefferson intends to spend most of his time in Florida fishing, gardening and painting. His son son Thomas will continue to play Rip. He is the fifth of the line of acting Jeffersons from the first, who played with Garrick. In his valedictory message to the public Mr Jefferson said:—"I'm leaving the limelight to go into the sunshine, and I leave a blessing behind me and pray for a blessing before me. It has been dear to me—that life of illuminated emotion—and it has been so magnificently repaid. If I could send an eloquent message to the world I would, but somehow words fail me when I try to say it. I have been doubly repaid by the sympathetic presence of the people when I was playing, and the affection that seems to follow me, like the sunshine streaming after a man going down the forest trail that leads over the hills to the land of morning."

Miss Billie Barlow opens a season in South Africa at an early date.

Wirths' Circus opens a New Zealand tour early in the year.

Miss Maggie Moore, before her departure for Liverpool to start pantomime rehearsals, appeared successfully at the London Tivoli in "The Chinese Question." H. R. Roberts played the leading ing male role.

Abomah, the tall lady, opened a season at the Alhambra Theatre, Dunedin, on Boxing Night.

Mr Alberto Randegger celebrates this year the jubilee of his life in London, where he has resided since 1854. His colleagues in the Royal Academy of Music have presented him with a congratulatory address.

Miss Nina Osborne has been appearing with a Gaiety Company in South Africa. The organisation closed a fine season in Capetown on November 12.

Mrs Brown Potter has entered into a partnership with Gilbert Hare to produce "opera" dramas—that is, plays on the stories of several of the Grand Operas not already taken from novels or plays—at the Savoy Theatre, London. "Pagliacci" to be the first. English experts view the experiment with distrust. Mr Hare, who is a son of John Hare, and has made a name in "old-man" parts, is a clever stage manager, and, with his partner's artistic sense, may do much.

Miss Marie Lloyd was last month divorced from her husband, Mr Percy Charles Coutenay, on a petition filed by that gentleman in which allegations of unfaithfulness were made against his wife and a well-known music hall vocalist.

Miss Evangeline Florence, whose charming voice will be remembered by Melbourne concert-goers, has been seriously ill in London, but is now convalescent, and hopes to be able in a short time to resume singing.

By latest advices George Willoughby was completing his arrangements for a return to Australia with new plays and company.

Music comedy writers have had to fall back on Offenbach to brighten up their poorly-furnished productions. "A Little of Everything," which originated at the Moulin Rouge, in Paris, contains an "Offenbach review" of some of the best of all the things culled from the works of that giant of light opera, played by the characters to whom the numbers are allotted.

M. Gabrielle Rejane, the famous French actress, is in private life Mme. Porel, wife of the manager of the Vaudeville. Her daughter, Germaine, is in training for the stage, and it is her mother's great ambition that the child will one day be able to play English roles. With that object, she is having her thoroughly taught the language.



SCENE FROM THE SECOND ACT OF "THE SKIRT DANCER."