

OUT OF THE STAGE

(By "Comus.")

HIS MAJESTY'S THEATRE.

THE WILLIAMSON REPERTOIRE
OPERA COMPANY.

On Thursday last and three following nights (excluding Good Friday) "The Mikado" was produced by the Williamson Co. with all the original magnificence of orchestra, cast and mounting, and the theatre was crowded each evening with playgoers, more curious perhaps than enthusiastic. Some wanted to renew their acquaintance with an old-time favourite, and others to acquire, at first hand, a knowledge of that which their fathers and mothers used to rave about. It is, of course, useless to pretend that the bloom is not of those pieces in the Gilbert and Sullivan group which were meant to be either burlesque or satire. Nevertheless, there are beauties enough inherent in these trifles to justify their revival, and Mr Williamson has certainly done all that was possible to make the past live again. It may be doubted whether the measure of success achieved would have been attained without the aid of Mr Howard Vernon. Splendidly supported as he is, it is, nevertheless, mainly upon him that the task lies to make "Patience" and "The Mikado" something more than echoes. His Ko Ko, like his Bunthorne, has improved with age, and is perfectly admirable all through. Miss Castles' Yum Yum and the Nanki Poo of Mr Charles Kenningham are thoroughly artistic conceptions, both in singing and acting. Their vocal contributions, indeed, stand out and claim generous recognition. These alone would almost justify the revival. Miss Gilhoni, too, is strikingly successful as Katisha, and, indeed, the whole cast is good. The chorus and orchestral work could not well be bettered, and it goes without saying that the stage arrangements were as near perfection as possible.

Last night the company appeared in "The Pirates of Penzance," in which the librettist approaches more nearly to the ideal of true comic opera.

On Good Friday the members of Mr Williamson's Company gave a sacred concert, every number in which reached a remarkably high level of merit. The salient items were: "In Native Worth," by Mr Kenningham; "Jerusalem" (Guonod), Miss Dolly Castles; and "Ave Maria" (Mascheroni), Miss Aggie Thorn, but all the principals' efforts met with hearty and enthusiastic recognition. In the cases of Miss Thorn, Miss Gilhoni ("The Better Land"), Mr Walter Whyte ("Star of Bethlehem"), and Mr Howard Vernon



The Williamson Co. Scene from "Pinafore."

("The Holy City") the audience insisted upon a repetition, while Mr Ralston was obliged to comply with a similar demand for his version of Mr A. Hill's "Tangi," the composer also being compelled to come forward and bow his acknowledgements. The chorus work was splendidly done, and included the famous sextette from "Patience," Sullivan's "Funeral March," "Comrades in Arms," and the prayer from "Mose in Egitto." The full orchestra rendered "Le Sentinel du Sepulchre" (Sullivan), the War March of the Priests, from "Athalie" (Mendelssohn), and the March from "Le Prophete" (Meyerbeer). Altogether the concert was one of the most distinguished given in Auckland for a long time.

OPERA HOUSE.

THE ANDERSON DRAMATIC CO.

A good, full-blooded, romantic melodrama of the most fetching type is "A Sailor's Sweetheart," with which Mr Anderson opened his season at the Opera House on Saturday night to a crammed auditorium. The play, without being original, has some special merits. The interest never flags from the beginning to the end, and the means taken to attain this are reasonably legitimate. Even the arm of coincidence is not stretched to undue length. Virtue and its antithesis are painted in broad primary colours, so that there is no mistaking them; indeed, they never mistake each other. The vil-

lain, one Pemberton (played with conspicuous ability by Mr Godfrey Cass) has been cut off without a shilling by his uncle, in favour of a certain Lieutenant Clive, R.N. (Mr Geo. Cross), who has also supplanted him in the affections of Grace Mayland (Miss Ada Guildford), and the play shows how the wicked person tried his best to "get even" with the eminently brave and respectable young couple, and failed. He is assisted by an unscrupulous lawyer, impersonated cleverly by an old favourite, Mr Wilton Power, and several others, and opposed in a way that is most effective, by a humorous handy man of the name of Tim Kelly (Mr J. P. O'Neill). The acting of the principals leaves little to be desired. Both Miss Guildford and Mr Cross have parts singularly well suited to their talents, and both shine in numberless striking situations. Miss Georgie Leighford and Mr Edmond Duggan create a great deal of merriment in the elucidation of the under plot, and the whole of the cast is capable. Not the least merit of the play is its elaborate mounting. It may be said to be a triumph of the stage carpenter's art, and Mr Rege Robins is to be complimented on the result. All the scenes are admirable, especially that representing a West African jungle, while the tableaux call for unstinted praise.

On Saturday Mr Anderson will produce "Through the Divorce Court," a play that has been enthusiastically received everywhere.

STEELE-PAYNE BELLRINGERS.

This eminently popular company, who have been appearing to remarkably full houses throughout the colony, gave a special sacred concert in the Opera House on Good Friday. The programme had been selected with great care, and every member of the company, including the Misses Lizzie and Maud Payne, Miss Lena Fisher, Messrs Steele and Elston, and Master Claude Steele, came in for a large amount of applause. The new silver-toned handbells, just imported from England, were played on for the first time, and gave general satisfaction. The concert, which was numerously attended, was in all respects a success.

The cable announces the death of the veteran American actor, Joseph Jefferson, the original Rip Van Winkle. Mr Jefferson, who had attained his 76th year, only recently made his "farewell" appearance in conjunction with his two sons. Many years ago he visited Australia and New Zealand, appearing in a number of plays, including, of course, "Rip," but though pressed to return, he always refused. He could not bear coming back and failing to find the fast friends he had made.



MR. FRANK WILSON, as Col. Calverley, in "Patience."



The Williamson Co. Scene from "The Pirates of Penzance."