



# THE STAGE

(By "FOOTLIGHT.")

HIS MAJESTY'S THEATRE.

"MAGDA."

CAST OF CHARACTERS.

MAGDA.....Miss Nance O'Neil  
Colonel Schwartz.....Mr. Gaston Mervale  
Marie.....Miss Jane Marbury  
Augusta.....Mrs. Henry Bracy  
Hefferdingt.....Mr. John Glendinning  
Dr. Von Keller.....Mr. Andrew Robson  
Gen. Von Klebs.....Mr. Geo. Friend  
Prof. Beckman.....Mr. Mario Majeroni  
Max.....Mr. Maurice Nodin  
Franziska.....Miss Ricca Allen  
Theresa.....Miss Peg Bloodgood

An Auckland season, which is to extend to a fortnight, was commenced by Miss Nance O'Neil on Saturday, the opening piece being Suderman's play, "Magda." It is a peculiar play, perhaps the greatest drawback to it being that it has no beginning and no ending. So much is this latter the case that after the final curtain was rung down, most of the audience remained seated expecting the story to further develop itself. We are, however, left to conjecture what the future will hold for the various characters, as except for the death of a somewhat tiresome old man, nothing happens in the play itself, and everything is left very much in *statu quo*. One writer has said that the story of Magda contains a sound moral...the disobedience of parents to their children, for it is a father's neglect to study his daughter's wishes, carried to an almost incredible pitch of rebellion against filial requests, which causes all the trouble in the Schwartz household. Colonel Schwartz is a domestic martinet who constantly plays the tyrant with his adoring women folk. His elder daughter, rebelling against such a narrow life, has been driven from home, and not unnaturally becomes seared in the struggle for life. She returns to the town of her birth a great singer, but most unfortunately for everyone, betrays a desire to see her family, and especially her younger sister Marie again. The Colonel, however, insists on Magda leaving her hotel and staying under his roof, and then demands an explanation as to her past life. On hearing the particulars, he raves, and while in the act of trying to shoot, Magda dies from a paralytic stroke. The Colonel has been praised by some writers for his high moral code, but most people will question whether this is deserved, for contempt should be the right portion for a man who would sacrifice a woman—who with all her faults is still his daughter—by forcing her into a marriage with her old lover, a man who has treated her with heartless cruelty, merely that he, the Colonel, may hold up his head again among his neighbours. To use a slang term much in vogue just now, the ordinary individual will have no time for such a man. His death would no doubt mean a period of future peace, if not happiness, for his household, and therefore no regrets are felt at his sudden ending. Miss Nance O'Neil, of course, essayed the title role, and in it she achieved a considerable measure of success. She makes Magda a somewhat penitent woman, who, having through bitter experience found life to be something of a hollow sham, is irritated by the narrow views of her own people. It is later on she shows her true colours, and in the scene where it is proposed that her child should be taken away from her, the real ability of the actress is disclosed, her passionate denunciation of her betrayer fairly rousing the house. All through the sympathy of the audience was with her, and if in the opinion of some she failed to reach the greatest height, yet the portrayal marks a big advance on anything Miss O'Neil has shown here before.

Mr. McKee Rankin having left for America, his part of Colonel Schwartz was taken by Mr. Gaston Mervale, and but little was lost by the change. The impersonation was in many respects an admirable one, although it wanted toning down somewhat. The character has at times an irritating effect on the audience, but this is rather the fault of the author than the actor. Although Mr. Mervale has done better work, as Tig-

man, for instance, in the "Sign of the Cross," yet his Colonel Schwartz left but little to be desired. Mr. John Glendinning did good work in the part of Hefferdingt, making the character a very manly one, and therefore a refreshing change to the other male characters. Mr. Andrew Robson, as Dr. Von Keller, was somewhat wooden, and was moreover in constant trouble with his hat and gloves. Glimpses of his former character should have been allowed to peep out, and this would have greatly heightened the effect. Miss Jane Marbury was decidedly good as Marie, the only flaw being a wholly unnecessary amount of screaming at the sight of her sister. Mrs. Henry Bracy was excellent as Augusta, while the other characters were efficiently filled.

Last night "Queen Elizabeth" was staged, but too late to allow of any criticism in this issue. It will also be seen to-night and to-morrow, and as it is a fine spectacular play, the title role of which suits Miss O'Neil to perfection, there should be a record of good houses.

## MRS. MALCOMSON BOULT'S EXHIBITION OF DANCING.

Mrs. Malcomson Boulton was perhaps hardly well advised in taking His Majesty's Theatre for two nights for the exhibition of fancy dancing by her pupils, as by so doing a financial loss was almost inevitable. A considerable amount of trouble had been taken to "stage" the dancers properly, and the costumes were in most instances very pleasing. The best item was the Floral Torchlight March by all the pupils, but the effect of this was somewhat spoilt by the stage being overcrowded. Miss Queenie Boulton gave three dances, the best of which was perhaps the Eastern Dance, but it has to be admitted that as a whole they were somewhat disappointing, this remark especially applying to the Gaiety Dance, while in the Skirt Dance there was far too much effort. Some of the other dances were nicely arranged, but their success was marred by one or two of the performers being invariably out of time. During the evening Mrs. Boulton gave two readings, "The Flag of England" and "The Parting of the Columns," but she was for the most part too inaudible to enable one to judge whether justice was being done to Kipling's fine poems. The dances were invented by Mrs. Boulton, who hopes to bring them out in London. As they cannot be said to have been extraordinarily successful in Auckland, the prospect for much good to be achieved in the world's metropolis is not very bright.

## OPERA HOUSE.

## FULLER'S ENTERTAINERS.

There was a good house at the Opera House on Monday evening to view the usual weekly change of programme. The opening chorus, "Midshipmite," was well rendered by the company, and then Mr. Chas. Moody stepped to the front with "Break It Gently." Recalled, he sang "Don't You Feel Peculiar?" for which he was warmly applauded. The house would not let him go at this, however, and a persistent demand brought him out once more with "On Top," and finally "Knick, Knock" quietened them down. Mr. Moody is a warm favourite with Opera House patrons. Miss Eileen Murray, who next appeared in a serio and dance, went through her performance very well, and was recalled for her dancing. Following her our old friend Sam Wilson started the fun going with a fresh budget of gags and songs. Sam seems to have an inexhaustible store of humour to draw from, and never fails to captivate his audience. He kept the house in roars of laughter throughout his turn. Mr. Fred. Rosevear, who is the possessor of a good voice, sang "The Skipper," for which he was warmly applauded and recalled. Sam Wilson took the boards again with some fresh items at this juncture, and started the merriment afresh. Following him Miss Cecile Stephano sang "Asleep in the Deep" most pleasingly. Recalled, she sang "Somebody," her fine voice rendering the song very well indeed. Miss Elsie Brown, who enjoys much popularity through her coon songs, sang "What's the Matter with the Moon To-night?" The song was well rendered,

although the words were somewhat indistinct. Prince Olrac, who appeared in the first portion of the programme, sang "O, What a Lovely Dream," and recalled, gave a couple of other songs. He is the possessor of a powerful voice, which would possibly have been heard to better advantage had he sung a trifle more quietly. The first half finished with a burlesque by the company, in which Sam Wilson received all the knocks.

The second half of the programme commenced with a "serio" turn by Miss Malvena Moore, who went through a sand dance very creditably, and received considerable applause. Cleopatra, who next appeared in glittering Eastern garb, performed most weirdly with a large assortment of snakes. She handled these creepy-looking individuals with great skill, allowing them to coil about her body and around her arms. Finally she stood with the whole assortment wreathed about her, making a most striking picture, and bringing forth loud applause from the audience. The snakes having been dispensed with, she next introduced three lively-looking members of the saurian tribe, who were made to show their smiling jaws, and perform sundry evolutions. The pick of the bunch was a healthy-looking baby alligator, who, attired in a pink ribbon, gazed placidly out at the audience from the top of the wire enclosure. Cleopatra and her pets should on no account be missed. Her performance is a most unique one, and as this is her last week we advise those who have not yet seen her to make a point of doing so before the end of the week. The Stephanos, Cecile and Lulu, next gave a delightful rendering of "Larboard Watch," for which they received an emphatic recall. "In the Dusk of the Twilight" was then given, the voices blending very sweetly.

Bonita's fine shooting act followed this item, and was received with hearty applause. This splendid little shot did some most remarkable shooting, shattering small white discs with the utmost precision, shooting clay pipes from the hand of Carlos, the human target, and also breaking the bowls of several pipes placed upright on the latter's head. She also broke a row of discs placed between the stems of a line of wine glasses, without injuring the glasses in any way. After shooting with the same precision from the front of the dress circle, she finally shot out her name in white discs with rapidly repeated shots, and also did some clever pistol shooting. She is described as the "Champion Lady Rifle Shot," and her claim to that title is well justified by her deadly precision with that weapon. Following this splendid turn Miss Viola Price gave a fine exhibition of Scotch dancing. Her concluding item, the sword dance, was loudly applauded. Bob Scott and Kitty Beresford, whose last week is announced, gave an original travesty that caused much amusement, and the performance concluded with a farce by Mr. Sam Wilson, entitled "The Coming Man," that sent the house off in high good humour.

Several new people are billed to appear shortly at the Opera House, and the Messrs. Fuller are sparing no pains to give their patrons plenty of fresh attractions.

My Christchurch correspondent writes.—The rain, it raineth every day, and also every night, which makes playgoing less pleasant than it would otherwise be, and causes an unexampled demand for umbrellas, macintoshes, raincoats and four-wheelers. Nevertheless and notwithstanding, the public rolled up right merrily to see the last performance of the Nance O'Neil Company. "The Fires of St. John's" is an interesting piece, but the last act is—er—ahem! Just "a little bit near the knuckle," as Miss Bessie Bellwood, the one-time London music-hall star used to say. Nance O'Neil made a great hit here, and would perhaps have done better to leave "The Fires of St. John's" unlighted, or unstaged. Still, opinions differ somewhat, and if I haven't aroused your curiosity by this time aent this particular production, why, then, I am very much mistaken. Amateur shows are not much in my line, but I must say the Christchurch Amateur Operatic Society is putting on "The Gondoliers" at the Royal very creditably; in fact, the pro-

duction is equal to professional form. I must say a word for Mr. Sydney Hawker (an old acquaintance), whose Duke of Plaza Toro is really excellent. Mr. Hawker's talent is doubtless hereditary, because he is the son of an old "pro," and a true chip of the old block.

We are all looking forward to the opening of the Brough-Fleming Company here, whose success with "Beauty and the Barge" up North fills us with yearnings to see that much-admired production. The season opens very shortly now. . . . Jessie MacLachlan was induced to appear at a local bazaar this week, and so much homage was done to the gifted daughter of Scotia that an old lady evidently hailing from the Emerald Isle and fearful lest it should, so to speak, be left out in the cold, suddenly shouted: "An' phwat about Ould Oireland?" A very awkward pause ensued, and then the songstress saved the situation by tastefully remarking, with a beaming face, "Dear old Ireland—I raise my hat to her." Whereat the old lady subsided, evidently satisfied.

The Westminster Choir Boys follow the Nance O'Neil Company at His Majesty's.

The MacMahon Dramatic Company have dates from November 18 to December 9 at His Majesty's.

"The J.P." will be seen here on December 11. Good news, this, as a good laugh is certain.

The Auckland Shakespeare Society will to-night give its final reading for the season. "Hamlet" is the play chosen, and some of the other members are to be given a chance other than the regulars.

Miss Florence Young was a passenger from America by the incoming steamer Sonoma, which arrived on Tuesday.

The fine shooting of Bonita has caused quite a wave of enthusiasm at the Opera House, and she and her sister Cleopatra, the snake charmer, are drawing big business.

Fred. Rosevear is the latest addition to the ranks of Fuller's Entertainers. His singing of "The Skipper" is nightly applauded.

Miss Violet Mount is coming over to Auckland shortly. She is a soprano of no small ability.

It is said that Alfred Hill has completed another opera.

Mr. and Mrs. Fred. Graham having completed a thirty weeks' engagement with John Fuller and Sons, will next appear at the Tivoli, in Sydney.

"Beauty and the Barge" has been going in great style in Wellington. "Standing room only" is the usual legend.

The North Island Band Contest takes place at Hawera on January 22 and 26. Among the eleven bands entered is the First Battalion Auckland Rifles.

Miss Nance O'Neil's season, which terminates on November 13, will be taken up as follows:—Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, November 1, 2 and 3, "Queen Elizabeth;" Saturday, Monday, Tuesday, November 4, 6, and 7, "Trilby;" Wednesday, Thursday, November 8 and 9, "Marie Antoinette;" Friday, November 10, "Ingomar;" Saturday, November 11, "Hedda Gabler;" Monday, November 13, "Fires of St. John." Miss O'Neil and her company then returns to America, where the young artiste has several important starring engagements to fulfil.

Miss Florence Young, the operatic prima donna, is on board the Sonoma, which arrived here on Tuesday. Miss Young is returning under engagement to Mr. J. C. Williamson, and will probably open in "Veronique" at Her Majesty's, Melbourne.

Mr. Harold Ashton leaves Auckland in a few days for the South, to make arrangements for the tour of the Knight-Jeffries Company, which opens in Christchurch on November 22. Dunedin, Wellington, and Auckland follow, the season here commencing early in February.