



THE STAGE

(By "Footlight.")

HIS MAJESTY'S THEATRE.

"BILL ADAMS."

Mr. George Stephenson's English Musical Comedy Company opened at His Majesty's Theatre on Monday evening with what is very aptly described as the musical extravaganza "Bill Adams, the 'Ero of Waterloo.'" A large audience assembled in honour of the occasion. A trifle critical at first, laughter soon enveloped all parts of the house, the mirth-provoking incidents of the play affecting the occupants of the family circle, the stalls and dress circle alike. It was Bill Adams' night out—the first of many such nights, we should imagine, for there is a piquancy and zest about this play without a plot, and almost without a theme, which has its irresistible side for the multitude, and since a good laugh is a better tonic than the average medical prescription, and "Bill Adams" abounds in laughter-provoking incidents, the comedy should have a healthy run and delight Auckland audiences for some time to come, unless, indeed, the management withdraw it in favour of some of the other items of their repertoire. It matters not that the play is ridiculous to a degree, that the story will not bear even the most cursory inspection, or that the incidents are as mythical as the stories of a Rougemont. The absurdities of the extravaganza are almost too funny for words; the situations with which it abounds are so alluringly enticing that even the old-time undertaker's mute would be impelled to laugh were he paid to keep a still, sad and tearful countenance. The bright, sparkling music, the pretty dresses and costumes, the brilliant uniforms, the graceful posings and swift movements of the ballerinas, the merry and, in some instances, eccentric dances, the varied limelight effects, adding to the many colour schemes, and the rich solo and chorus singing, all delight and entrance the eye and ear alike, and complete the evening's enjoyment.

There is a freshness and vivacity about Miss May Beatty's impersonations which make her a favourite wherever she goes, and her re-appearance on the Auckland stage was marked by an outburst of applause which sufficiently attested her popularity. As Margot she was the life of the play, acting spiritedly, singing well and dancing to perfection. She was heard to advantage in "Irish Molly" and "The Pretty Troubadour," and in the comical situations in which she was called upon to lead or second Bill Adams' (Mr. Edward Lauri) in amusing the audience she was particularly successful, the love scene being not the least delightful of these. Miss May Garstang made a good impression as Minette, dancing well and scoring one of the successes of the evening in her song, "Moon, Moon." As Lady Bingo Barr, an eccentric elderly female who fancies that all the men have succumbed to her charms, Miss Ronald Watts-Phillips was also very successful, acting cleverly and with a sense of healthy contagious humour, which sent ripple after ripple of laughter through the house. Miss Alice Pollard, too, sang well and sweetly, and as Marguerite was distinctly popular, her the greatest misanthrope in Auckland had graceful acting and charming moods being enough to dispel the melancholy of he chanced to be present. Mr. Lauri, of course, although ably seconded by Mr. Charles McNaughton and others, was easily first amongst the male members of the company in his efforts to amuse the audience. The sublimely impudent character of the mythical Waterloo "Ero" could hardly have found an abler exponent. He was intensely funny in his impersonation of the elderly female exchanging confidences—and scandal—with Lady Bingo Barr, over something stronger than the afternoon cup of tea, and in the mirthful interlude in which he took the part of the shopman he was also good. The troubles of Major Brussels Sprouts gave Mr. Charles McNaughton a particularly favourable opportunity of getting on good terms with his audience, and this he succeeded in doing admirably, his eccentric dancing adding greatly to his popularity. The character was responsible for many ludicrous scenes which simply convulsed the house. Mr. Harold Reeves, as the Duke of Brighton, filled one of the minor

parts of the play so far as mere acting was concerned, but his really capital baritone solos, and especially his "Dream of Love" won for him the enthusiastic approval of his hearers. Mr. Charles Bovis as O'Malley, Mr. Arthur Lissant as General Sir Bingo Barr, Mr. W. Bovis as the Rajah of Poonah Bey and Lightning, and Mr. Charles Albert as the Farrier, all performed well, and added greatly to the success of the play.

The solo and chorus singing were alike excellent, the music, indeed, being of a bright, sparkling character, admirably adapted to the play and yet in a sense removed from its absurdities. In combination, however, the music and the absurdities proved as the very champagne of life, exhilarating and refreshing. The musical director, Mr. Alfred Hill, is to be congratulated upon the excellence of his orchestra. Excellently staged and well mounted, he would be a captious critic indeed who looked for better things in an extravaganza of the "Bill Adams" variety.

HOLLOWAY DRAMATIC COMPANY.

The Holloway Dramatic Company concluded a most successful season at His Majesty's Theatre on Saturday night, when the "Two Little Vagabonds" was



MISS MAY GARSTANG, of Stephenson's Musical Comedy Company.

revived as a complimentary testimonial to Miss Beatrice Holloway. The piece was followed with keen interest by the large audience, the touching and dramatic incidents of the story being faithfully portrayed and calling for frequent and unstinted applause. Miss Beatrice Holloway, who took the part of Dick, played most naturally, and completely won over her audience. The company left by the s.s. Rarawa on Sunday for a tour through the South.

OPERA HOUSE.

FULLER'S ENTERTAINERS.

It was quite like old times to find the genial John Fuller and his popular entertainers back once more at the Opera House. The tour of the Rickards' company proved a great success, and Mr. Fuller has returned from the trip South intent on making the Opera House programmes even better than heretofore. Extensive arrangements are already being made for the steady importation of the best talent to be obtained from abroad, and the new year promises to be full of good things for patrons of this popular place of amusement. Saturday night's house was a bumper one, and Monday night proved very little behind it in point of audience. Mr. Frank Crowther presided as of old over the orchestra, and the curtain was raised with a lively overture on the company, who gave a rousing open-

ing chorus. A dainty serio and dance item, "My Lulu," was then given by Miss Ivy Goodwill, who made a first appearance in Auckland. She was followed by Mr. Lal Logie, who had already distinguished himself in the opening chorus, and who gave a good comic song entitled, "Pulling 'Em Out." A vociferous demand for more brought him to the front in an A.B.C. song, and he was called forward twice again before the audience would let him go. Miss Nellie Power next gave a bright serio item, "A Picnic for Two," which evoked an encore. She has one fault in her singing, which is that the words are rather indistinct, a failing that somewhat spoils an otherwise good turn. Mr. Will Stevens then took the boards in a capital budget of songs, gags and parodies that caused much hilarity and applause. He was followed by Miss Dorothy L. Estrange, whose fine soprano voice was heard to considerable advantage in "Queen of the Night." Her rendering of "Comin' Thro' the Rye," which song she gave as an encore, was very good indeed, and evoked long and hearty applause. Miss Elsie Brown, whose coon songs were such a feature of the evening's entertainment when she last appeared in Auckland, sang "From Egypt to the Zululand," and in demand to a vociferous encore gave

charmingly. As an encore she gave "The Old-fashioned Cottage," both songs being loudly applauded. Miss Gertrude Emery, who next appeared, did some very clever work on the trapeze, and came in for considerable applause. She was followed by Miss Viola Price, whose Highland dancing was much appreciated, her sword dance being excellent. The evening's entertainment concluded with a clever sketch by the Driscolls that made an excellent finish to a first-class programme.

Mr. Frank Grist and his newly-formed dramatic company of Australian artists will shortly tour the Northern Wairoa, afterwards visiting Auckland. Mr. R. J. Oswald has been engaged to pilot the company through New Zealand.



MR. WILL BOVIS, of Stephenson's Co.

Kubelik leaves America in March for a 13 weeks' concert tour in Australia.

Madame Melba is taking a long holiday in Spain. She returns to London in April.

Miss Marie Narelle, of Sydney, who has been in America since the St. Louis Exhibition, returns to England early in March, and on the 17th of that month will make her reappearance in London at the St. Patrick's Day concert, for which she has been specially engaged.

Mr. Victor Kelly, the clever eccentric dancer who was here with the Rickards' Company under the direction of Mr. John Fuller, considers that the life of a theatrical artist in Australia is much easier than in England or America. He fears, however, that the customs prevailing in those countries will ultimately be introduced into the colonies. He considers America the best country to work in from a financial standpoint, although one has to hustle for it there. Mr. Kelly intends visiting America again at the conclusion of the Australian tour. His wife, who is a native of Sydney, accompanies him to the land of the Stars and Stripes.



MR. EDWARD LAURI, of Stephenson's Company.