

musical, yet all us children, of whom there are 17, are fond of music. But my grandfather was a celebrated organist, and I suppose it was from him that we inherited our musical abilities. As far back as I can remember I was always able to sing." At the early age of 10 Madame Arral won the first prize both for pianoforte and singing at the Brussels Conservatoire, and continued her studies there for some years under distinguished professors. This was succeeded by a course of study at the famous Conservatoire of Paris, and for some time she was a favourite pupil of the celebrated Madame Marches. At the end of a three year's course at this institution she secured the first prize for singing and stage deportment. The opera Comique of Paris, where the lighter serious operas, such as "Mignon," are sung, have the right to choose their stage recruits from the prize-winners each year at the Conservatoire, and after this success Madame Arral was at once engaged. She made her first appearance in the title role of Ambroise Thomas's well-known opera "Mignon," and therein scored a great triumph. For three years she remained at this theatre, and sang the leading roles in "Carmen," "Faust," "Manon," "Romeo and Juliet," "Herodiade," "La Dame Blanche," "Lakme," and other works. During this engagement at the Opera Comique, M. Millocker secured her to create the role of Laura at Paris in his opera "The Beggar Student." She was specially lent to the composer by the direction of the Opera Comique, and the work was so successful that it ran for 150 nights. At the expiration of her engagement at the Opera Comique the French prima donna went to the Gaité Theatre, where she continued her success, and she subsequently appeared at many of the leading theatres of France. She sang in nearly 30 different works and various houses, and many of the lighter ones were written especially for her. After these years of hard work, and wishing for a change of scene, Madame Arral accepted an engagement to go to Russia under the direction of the celebrated Raoul Gunsburg, the director of the opera at Monte Carlo. She scored a great success at St. Petersburg and Moscow, which culminated in her being engaged as one of the principal artists at the Imperial Theatre in the former city. This lasted for two years, and during that period the clever French soprano sang several times by invitation at the private theatre of the Royal Family at the Krasnoe Selo Palace, and was decorated by the Czar with the Order of Oldenbourg. After leaving Russia she sang at Cairo and Alexandria for a season, and was decorated by the Khedive with the Order of Medjidie, which is said to be a rare honour. On returning to Paris she was engaged by the famous American impresario Maurice Grau for the Metropolitan Opera Company, of New York, where she appeared in many of the best known works of our time. She subsequently made a tour of the States as a member of a concert party

which included such great artists as Ysaye the Belgian violinist, Psigné, the French pianist, and Gerardy the cellist, who is well known in this city. After a holiday in Paris, Madame Arral did a six months' engagement under the direction of the French Government at the theatre at Tonkin, where she proved immensely popular. This theatre was destroyed by a typhoon, and wishing to continue her tour around the world the distinguished artist proceeded to Shanghai. Visiting all parts of interest, she continued her journeyings through China and India, where she was induced to change her plans and to come to these States by an Australian gentleman. She brings with her an enormous wardrobe containing costumes for all the numerous roles that she enacts, which are described as being both beautiful and costly.

The Box Plan for the season is now open at Wildman and Arey's.

**WIRTH'S CIRCUS AND ZOO.**

**OPENS AT AUCKLAND, FEBRUARY 26.**

The annual visit of Wirth Bros' circus and menagerie of performing wild animals has again come round. The circus has grown to such a size that the proprietors have adopted a policy of uniting a number of different kinds of entertainments under one management, for the one ticket. They not only give a genuine circus, but more than a circus, a combination of seven shows, viz.—a circus, a hippodrome, museum, vaudeville, menagerie, huge elephant herd, and grand oriental parade. Newly imported star artists have arrived from America and Europe, including the world's greatest exponent on the tight rope or corde elastique, Hugh Lloyd, and it is useless to attempt to describe what he can do. It would be easier to ask what can he not do, for he turns somersaults, jumps through hoops, and seems safer on the ropes than most people do on terra firma. He uses no balancing apparatus, and concludes a marvellous performance by turning somersaults while playing the violin, which does not cease playing. We can only say, go and see him. Roars of applause greet his performance everywhere. Middle Phillipina, the only somersault rider and boundary jockey in the world; Miss May Ringling, an equestrienne of unusual daring. The aerial department is in the hands of the world renowned "Flying Herberts," the human skyrockets, and the Leon Sisters, aerial dental performers. In the hippodrome highly schooled horses and world's champion high jumping ponies, camel races, etc., will take place. The museum contains many interesting curious freaks of nature. The Vaudeville, which is a new departure, will produce jiu jitsu wrestlers, Spanish dancers, musical comedy acts, wire walkers, equilibrists, and others in a bewildering jumble, for as many as nine different acts are going on simultaneously at times. High jumping horses and ponies, including Playmate, 13 hands, the champion



SCENE FROM "THE SQUAW MAN," OPENING HERE ON THE 18TH INST.

high jumping pony of the world, and Maori, the New Zealand champion, in exciting contests. The menagerie, which includes many trained wild animals, is now one of the largest travelling in the Australian States. The elephant herd is a feature this year, performing wonders for such ungainly beasts.

and the Bicknell's performance was so much appreciated the house would hardly let them go. The clever pair are off to South Africa directly, so that it is to be feared we shan't see them in this colony again for a long time to come.

My Christchurch Dramatic Correspondent writes:—The walls of the new Theatre Royal are beginning to rise. Some time before the present year of grace has run its course, I suppose, the Theatre now in course of erection will be formally opened by His Worship the Mayor, or Sir Joseph Ward, or somebody, and the usual speeches will be made, and the usual healths will be "honoured." And then the present T.R. will retire into the background and take a back seat for ever more. Some interesting memories cluster round the old house, too. It was there that the late Wm. Hoskins reigned, once upon a time, away back in the dim and distant seventies. This colony has never seen the equal of Hoskins as an actor, and possibly never will see it. The chronicles of the ancient building, which now does duty as a Theatre Royal, would make interesting reading. Since my last the MacMahons have inaugurated another season at the Royal, with the much-advertised and be-postered "Price of Sin." This piece is in four acts, and all of them as brimful of sensation as a to-be-continued-in-our-next. As the virtuous hero our old friend Chas. Blake has a congenial part. How, as a young officer who has charge of regimental trust-moneys to the value of £200, he is tempted by the wicked Boothman to squander the same in horse-racing, and how (as a matter of course) he backs the wrong 'un; how the villainous Boothman then tries to give him away for sealing the money entrusted to his keeping; how the bewitching heroine (Miss May Granville) refunds the misappropriated coin and so saves the hero from penal servitude, and foils that bad Boothman; how the latter is eventually clean bowled (lbw), and shot dead (in the last act), all this and a heap more the plot of the piece reveals, and when the curtain falls for the last time the audience gives a long sigh of relief, and rejoices that virtue is rewarded in the good old fashioned way, and that vice is vanquished, as it invariably is (in melodrama). On Friday night there will be a change of bill, when "The Rogue's Daughter" will go on. This is the Adelphi drama the Australasian rights of which are held by the Messrs Macmahon, and report speaks very highly of it. More concerning it anon. I dropped in to the Opera House last Saturday evening just in time to hear the rag-end of a ditty by Mr Bob Lloyd, and the applause which greeted the singer on his exit. Miss Millie Bertoto followed with "My Merry Automobile," which the little lady sang with any amount of vivacity and "go." Miss Millie has greatly improved since I last had the pleasure of hearing her. Miss Rosie Bertoto sang something sad (and rather long), but appeared to please her audience. Then came the popular Percy Denton, whose make up as a Scotchman (in a black face and carrot hair), set the house laughing at once. He was recalled until he declined to come on any more. Master Norman Mudford, a young shaver of about ten years of age, sang the ballad "Teach Me to Forget," very prettily. Percy Denton's illustrated song "Just a Little Rocking-Chair and You," went splendidly, the pit-boys joining heartily in the chorus. Then "The Apollo Belvidere" appeared, and posed as "The Dying Gladiator," "Atlas," "Mercury," and a heap of others. Billed as "The Living Bronze Statue," the Apollo's turn is modelled on that of "the Modern Milo." The Driscoll's met with a great reception,

Writes my Hawke's Bay correspondent:—Do the public like melodrama? and the answer is easily given, in the affirmative, judging by the excellent houses that the Holloway Dramatic Company drew during their three-night season here at the Theatre Royal this week. The pieces staged: "The Coal King," "Shadows of a Great City," and "Under Remand" were all produced with strict attention to all matters of detail, and showed convincingly that the hand of a past master in the art had been assiduous in his efforts, though Mr C. Holloway did not face the music. Signs of his work were apparent in the productions, as is the case with all melodramas, there was a terrible number of improbabilities opposed in the construction and development of the plots. But still the good old public cheered, and consequently appreciated the exponents of the various characters; what always puzzles me, and I suppose will do so to the end of my time, is why are all the villains addicted to wearing black hair, and the comic men red ditto; this is a fallacy, which does not find room to rest in the every-day life, for some of the hardest lots I have ever struck were men with hair of a light hue, and some of the few of mankind were of the clan whose hair and whiskers were of an inky hue. As regards the latter's breed, they were real white fellows, the only thing that was black about them being their hirsute appendages. But this departure is only by the way. Miss Beatrice Holloway as usual was charming, her sweetness of manner and artistic displays drawing forth hearty recognition from patrons, though other leaders of the Company Misses Conroy, Russell, and Gourlay ably assisted in the support of Miss Holloway. Mr R. nman was an ideal juvenile lead, his fine voice and good figure helping to fill the picture with good effects. Messrs Godfrey Cart, Jefferson Tait, Frank Kennedy, Milton Welch, and J. Hesford, all did yeoman service in their different portrayals. It set me guessing when I saw Mr Hesford appear—guessing this way—to think how old he was, for it is quite 32 years ago since I first saw Hesford in the old Princess Theatre, Dunedin, and though I was only a youngster then, he at that time gave the appearance of well set man.

Great tales are told of Wonderland—William Anderson's latest venture in the theatrical line. Thousands were spent in the outlay, but the management is credited with having cleared initial expenses within the first two weeks. A large scope on the Bondi beach, Sydney, has been given up to the mysteries of Wonderland. Business people, on leaving the city, flock out to Bondi, where their families await them; Gipsy teas are partaken of in the grounds, and then the whole evening is spent in viewing the wondrous sights. Even then people depart without having seen half there is to see. Manly is deserted, except for continental bathing purposes, and Wonderland draws the crowd like a magnet. Mr. Anderson's latest move to satisfy Sydney lovers of the romantic and sensational is the engagement of the scion of Russian bureaucracy and her amorist, over whose adventurous flight from the Czar's dominions the Australian papers have been making such a fuss.



MISS ALMA BARBER AS NANOYA, AND MR. J. RALSTON AS HARRY VEREKER IN "THE CINGALEE."