

audience, and her items are always sure of a good reception. "Somewhere" was a pretty little ballad, sung by Miss Rubie Illingworth. Mr. Harry Linden really is funny. There's as much difference between genuine comedy and shouting a comic song, as there is between chalk and cheese; Mr. Linden is a comedian of some ability, and is likely to enjoy a successful season at the Opera House. The Four Rosebuds continue to high kick and sing, creating a furore each evening. "Lovely Girls," however, is a song into which a little more vivacity might be infused. Miss Ida Berridge is a bright little artist, and her singing of "Kiss all the Girls," "Come and Make Love," and "He Kissed I Once" was excellent. "Packing Up" is the talk of the town. It is a really clever sketch, and a cut above the ordinary. This fact, combined with the superior talent engaged in presenting it, makes "Packing Up" one of the most delightful comedies ever produced in Auckland. Mr. Fred. H. Graham, as John Chugwater, plays the part of the irascible hubby, and Miss Nellie Dent that of the patient partner of his joys and sorrows. The scene presented is one of confusion, the time being the morning of their departure for a holiday. Chugwater has spent rather a bad night of it, and makes things lively next morning. The sketch simply reeks with humour, and from the time the unhappy lord and master takes a lump out of himself during the process of shaving until he finally makes his exit in his pyjamas, a dilemma he is placed in through having packed up his trousers and sent them on to the station, the audience knows no peace, but rocks in the arms of incessant laughter. A feature that is missed, however, is the musical element. Master Norman Mudford is back again. The voice of Auckland's boy vocalist has lost none of its mellowness, and "My Nellie Darling" and "Believe" were most enjoyable contributions. Mr. Slade Murray, the comedy vocalist, appeared in several gems from his original repertoire, including "Mr. Brown of the Crown," "Gather Round Me," and "The Shipwreck." Next Saturday see some important changes.

CHORAL HALL.

THE BLANCHE ARRAL SEASON.

Madame Blanche Arral, the talented French prima-donna, whose recent appearances in Melbourne and Sydney took the musical world completely by storm, has been repeating her triumphs in New Zealand, the successes she has achieved being simply phenomenal from the artistic standpoint, though it is to be feared so far as Auckland is concerned, public appreciation of her marked powers of song leaves a good deal to be desired. The attendance at the Choral Hall on Monday evening when Madame Arral gave the first of a series of three operatic recitals, was not at all in keeping with the merits



MR. RAPLEY HOLMES AS BIG BILL IN "THE SQUAW MAN."



MR HARDEE KIRKLAND AS THE UTE CHIEF TABYWANA IN "THE SQUAW MAN."

of the performance, although the gifted cantatrice could not possibly have had a more appreciative and genuinely enthusiastic audience than that which assembled in honour of the occasion. Madame Arral is, without doubt, one of the most gifted singers that have ever visited New Zealand, possessing a voice the timbre and quality of which is remarkable for its flexibility, musical range, cultivation and adaptability to every class of operatic music. It comes as a revelation to Madame Arral's hearers to find that she is equally at home with the G in alt, which she reaches with perfect ease, as she is with her middle and lower notes. In ascending or descending the scales, in the gay sparkling music which proves so irresistibly attractive, and in the graver, more passionate and tragic moods of song, Madame's tones are full and rich and sweet, and there is no perceptible break in the registers. Madame Arral is undoubtedly a great artiste—one to the manner born—and a veritable Queen of Song, swaying her subjects at will. Those who neglect the opportunity of hearing her miss an unparalleled treat.

Monday's programme in other

hands would have been more than ambitious. But Madame Arral is so much at home in every branch of operatic art that what to others would be a severe task is to her pleasant pastime—such at least it seems. The opening numbers from Meyerbeer's "Les Huguenots"—"The Page's Song," was splendidly given, and gave place to Saint Saen's "La Timbre de Argent," which seemed to be even more perfectly rendered. Then came Laura's song from "The Beggar Student" (Millock's), and incidentally it may be noted that Madame Arral created the role of Laura at Paris, where the play ran for 150 consecutive performances. Here, again, the singer proved eminently successful. In the selections from "Faust," Madame, attired as "Marguerite," gave further proof of her versatile powers, the recitative and song "King of Thule," and the brilliant "Jewel Song," being given with a power and abandon that was simply overwhelming. In the selections from "Mignon," the artiste gave further proof of her brilliant powers, the contrasts afforded by the recitative and romance "Connais tu le pays," "The Swallow Song," and the recitative cantabile "Elle est la! pres de lui," giving the singer ample scope for demonstrating her remarkable powers of song, which she did to the delight and admiration of all hearers. Attired as "Titania," Madame gave the final programmed number in the recitative and polacca "I am Titania," singing with a dazzling brilliancy beyond all praise. In each of her numbers Madame had been encored in the heartiest fashion, but at the close of this gem the audience overwhelmed the singer with their enthusiastic applause, and graciously enough, tired as she must have been with such an exacting programme, Madame responded with Varney's delightful "Bird Waltz"—an exquisite piece of vocalisation which made everyone loth to let the talented cantatrice go, the audience rising spontaneously and cheering her to the echo. Other of Madame's encore numbers were Gounod's "Serenade," a characteristic sketch "Manola" (Vasseau) and a selection from "Faust."

Madame Arral's company comprises some talented musicians, who make up a capital little orchestra, as perfect in its way as the prima donna is in hers. Signor Torzillo, the harpist, has a wonderful command over and perfect knowledge of his instrument. In his opening solo "La Hiron-delli Perdu," and in the succeeding number, a Scotch fantasia, he played with exquisite taste and precision, both solos being much appreciated and warmly commended. Herr Paans, the violinist, is also a very capable player, and was heartily applauded. His mannerisms, however, somewhat spoil the effect of his otherwise excellent performance. Mr. Harold Proctor (pianist), and Mr. J.

Stewart (flautist) complete the company.

The second of the series of recitals takes place this evening at the Choral Hall, when we hope to see a house full to overflowing. A rich musical treat may safely be anticipated.

Interviewed down South, Mr. J. C. Williamson gave a list of the companies which he would send through New Zealand during the next twelve months. The present Royal Comic Opera Company is being followed by the American company, playing "The Squaw Man" and "The Virginian." Andrew Mack, the Irish comedian and singer, will open in Wellington on Easter Saturday with "Tom Moore," "Arrah Na Pogue," and "The Way to Kenmare." Later in the year Julius Knight plays a return season, his repertoire including "Robin Hood," "The Scarlet Pimpernel," "Raffles," and "Brigadier Gerard." Then follows the pantomime "Mother Goose" at present being played with enormous success in Melbourne. Finally the New Zealand attraction for next Christmas will be "Peter Pan," now being revived for the fourth time in London.

Saturday next sees some important changes at the Opera House. The Herz Bros., trio vocalists and comedians, make their first appearance before an Auckland public. A vivacious serio in Miss Lillian Loftus will make her debut. Maxwell and Roberts come with good reputations as serio and dancers. Shaw and Gilbert, known as "the Sketch Team," appear for the first time; also Miss Lorraine Tansley, a charming contralto. The ever-popular Bicknells are making their reappearance, and Rex, the india-rubber man, comes back to further mystify Opera House patrons.

It is 25 years since the popular manager, Mr. J. C. Williamson, was last in New Zealand. He declaims any intention whatever of retiring from the eminent position he occupies in the theatrical world.

It is certainly not too much to say (writes Mr George Tallis) that "Parsifal" has proved itself the most successful play in the whole extensive repertoire of Miss Tittell Brune a position it has secured no. only by the triumphs of stage craft and the artistic beauty of its setting, but also because of the admirable rendering its poetically expressed plot receives at the hands of Miss Brune, Mr Thomas Kingston and the rest of their associates. The company are now in the last weeks of their Sydney visit which ends on the 1st March, and before they leave for Hobart (where they are due on the 4th of that month) they will stage revivals of "Dorothy Vernon," "Sunday," "Leah Kleschna," and "Merely Mary Ann."

Mr G. L. Peterson is in Auckland making arrangements for the visit of Wirth's Circus, which opens here on Tuesday, the 26th inst.



MR. G. L. PETERSEN, THE POPULAR ADVANCE MANAGER FOR WIRTH'S CIRCUS.