

THE STAGE

HIS MAJESTY'S THEATRE

MR FLEMMING'S NEW ENGLISH COMPANY.

"PETER'S MOTHER."

After a run of four nights "The Red Lamp" was replaced on Thursday last by Mrs Henry de la Pasture's charming play "Peter's Mother." This was a really excellent production, the plot being interesting and the acting a long way above the average. The story tells of a young wife whose natural impulses towards gaiety are constantly checked by an elderly husband and, on his death, by her son. It contains a strong lesson against the unconscious selfishness with which many people treat their relatives. Here this son, well meaning enough even if somewhat of a prig, returns from South Africa to find his father dead, and at once commences to make arrangements for his mother to continue on her humdrum existence at home, while he sees more of life. The mother, however, has fallen in love with a cousin of her dead husband, and is keenly anxious to see for the first time, something of the world as his wife. Peter is utterly horrified when he learns this, but is ultimately reconciled to the idea by his fiancée. Miss Beatrice Day has often shown evidence before that she is a strong emotional actress, but as Lady Mary Crewys (Peter's mother) she gave a rendering which must surely entitle her to be considered one of the finest dramatic artistes that have ever visited the Dominion. Nothing better could be imagined than her conception of the trying role. At the close of the first act, when Lady Mary is torn by the conflicting emotion of love and duty desiring above all things to say farewell to her idolised son, who is leaving for the war; yet compelled by duty to remain by her husband who is to undergo a very serious operation, Miss Day was simply magnificent. She was indeed no longer the actress, but the heart-broken woman with the tears streaming down her face, checked, as she had been all her life, from doing what she wanted, yet responding nobly to duty's call. Truly it was a great triumph. Mr A. S. Homewood gave a very fine portrayal of the role of John Crewys, Q.C. His great chance came in the last act in which he points out to Peter the utter selfishness with which he has treated his mother. Here the great lawyer, after incisively giving the points to be said on either side, passionately pleaded the cause of the woman he loved, the actor thoroughly deserving the outburst of applause which followed. Mr Aubrey Mallalien, although somewhat silted, did well as Peter. Mr Winter Hall gave a clever study of the elderly husband Sir Timothy Crewys, Mr J. Forde was admirable as Canon Birch, Mr Montgomery well suited the part of Dr Blundell. A vein of pure comedy was imparted by Miss Nellie Mortyn and Miss Joan Blair as Sir Timothy's sisters, the constant wrangling for precedence being most amusingly done. Miss Guildford Quin was somewhat too artificial in the ingenu role of Sarah, while the other characters were well placed. The piece was admirably put on and it seemed more than a pity such a really fine production could not have been staged for more than two evenings.

"OLIVIA."

On Saturday, Mr Herbert Flemming's Company produced "Olivia," Mr W. G. Wells' dramatisation of the Vicar of Wakefield. This classic was the favourite play of the late Sir Henry Irving and one can well imagine what he would have made of the role of the kind-hearted but sorely-tried cleric. Everyone has read the book, or they ought to have done so, and therefore it is quite unnecessary to give the plot. Its theme is one on which countless plays have since been written, the luring from home of an innocent country girl by a wicked young man whose villainy is ultimately confounded and a happy ending brought about. In this story, however, the villain is a very half-hearted specimen of the kind who repents of his misdeeds and endeavours to make full reparation. Mr Herbert Flemming, of course, essayed the role of Dr Primrose, giving a particularly impressive study. His make up as the dignified white-haired old clergyman was excellent and the per-

formance was one of great merit, the only flaw being an occasional lapse of memory as to his lines. Miss Beatrice Day was always in drawing as Olivia. She is ever to be relied upon for a thoroughly sound rendering of any role entrusted to her, so that, although somewhat inferior to her previous great effort, Miss Day gave a rendering of the title role which was eminently satisfactory. Mr A. S. Homewood lent valuable assistance as the profligate Squire Thornhill, giving a very consistent rendering of a somewhat thankless part. Mr Winter Hall, as Sir William Thornhill, was perhaps a little too cold for the warm-hearted friend of the family, but withal was a prime favourite with the audience. Miss Nellie Mortyn gave a capital character study as Mrs Primrose, while Miss Elsie Carens as Sophia, Mr Varna as Farmer Plumbrough, Mr Forde as Gipsy Leigh, Miss Guildford Quin as Mary, Mr Mallalien as Moses and others of the company all lent valuable aid.

A special feature of the production was the dressing and mounting, which showed an attention to detail unfortunately all too rare. The orchard scene was a beautiful set, while in the library scene there were the old spinnet, the antique high-backed chairs, the silhouette portraits, the cuckoo clock, the lattice window and other

in an immensely amusing fashion. The bout was responsible for the carrying out of a number of some exceedingly funny hits which had the effect of sending the audience into roars of merriment. The popular artists, Watts, and Lucas, are seen in an Irish speciality, which is both clever and original, and draws forth much applause. Their comic gags are of a high order, and in the hands of the talented pair cannot do other than make a hit. Mr Joe Watts' Hungarian dance is deserving of special praise, while Miss Lucas gives a decidedly creditable exhibition of contortion. The comedy jugglers Lesso and Rexo, are held in high favour by Opera House patrons, and this week sees the skilful duo accomplish a number of new and difficult feats. Their display of cushion throwing is a particularly expert piece of work. Mr. Tod Galloway enjoys unbounded popularity as a result of his comic items, which he sings in his usual able manner. The Franklins (Will and Ruby) meet with a fair measure of success with their comedy act, the acrobatic feats introduced into the performance by Mr. Will Franklin fairly bringing down the house. Their singing and dancing items are good, but the fault lies in the fact that their witticisms are for the most part old and of a character hardly calculated to "catch on."

Francisco at the time of the earthquake, but fortunately received no injury. Leaving Frisco, they journeyed to Japan, and whilst there visited Yokohama, Kobe and Nagasaki. The trip to China was then made, and among the towns they stayed at were Shanghai, Chefoo, Tientsin, Hankow and Peking. From there they went to the island of Hong Kong, thence to Siam, and afterwards visited the French settlement of Saigon. The Malay States formed the next move, after which Penang, Java and Sumatra were visited in turn, and the voyage back to Australia made. It is interesting to note that when in China Mr. Watts obtained a one cent. British Guiana stamp from a Russian Count, and it has since transpired that he is one of the only two individuals who can number that particular kind of stamp among their possessions.

CARTER, THE MAGICIAN.

Next Monday, Carter the Magician will commence a short season at His Majesty's Theatre, when he will give exhibitions of modern magic. His chief items are the Chinese Wizards the Mysteries of the Yogi, the Magical Divorce, Flyto, Corinne's Impersonations, the Astral Hand, the Mystery of L'Hasa, all of which are said to be particularly clever. The box plan is now open.

CHRISTCHURCH CHATTER.

OPENING OF THE THEATRE ROYAL.

My Christchurch dramatic correspondent writes:—The new Theatre Royal was opened on Tuesday evening last, 25th February, and seems to have pleased everybody present. It is certainly a fine theatre, probably the best in the Dominion. The house was packed from floor to ceiling, "The Blue Moon" being in itself an attraction, although the opening of the new place of amusement doubtless was responsible to some extent for the extraordinarily large audience. The advance booking for the opening night was very heavy, people assembling as early as 5 o'clock outside the box-office on the morning the booking of seats began, and by 9 a.m. there was quite a large crowd of persons anxious to secure places. The boxes, circle and stalls of our new temple of the drama, are upholstered in dark green plush, and the back stalls in brown leather. The seats are separate and distinct, and every seat commands a fine view of the stage. The dome is beautifully decorated in the scenes from "A Midsummer Night's Dream." The acoustic properties of the house are excellent. Miss Daisy Wallace as "Millicent Leroy" made a great hit, her song "She Didn't Know" was encored three times. Miss Wallace's dancing too, is of a very high order of merit. Miss Celia Ghiloni, who has rendered such good service in the Gilbert and Sullivan operas, and in scores of other pieces, was as good as "Lady Brabashan" as the part allowed her to be—but she had no songs! Miss Alma Barber as "Evelyn," made a success of the character, and sang "Sometimes" very pleasingly. Miss Amy Murphy made a satisfactory "Chandra Nil," but might have been a little more "forceful," perhaps. Mr Victor Gouriet was the life and soul of the piece, and divided honours with Miss Daisy Wallace. There will be frequent changes of bill during the short remainder of the season.

Wirths' Circus, located at the huge King Edward Barracks, is drawing enormous houses, the seating capacity of the house, large as it is being taxed to the utmost nightly. Mr S. Batty gives a wonderful performance with wild beasts, and shows how completely he has got his savage pupils under control. The Flying Herbers are perhaps one of the cleverest companies of acrobats the Dominion has seen. Their trapeze performance is thrilling. The performing elephants, under Captain Burrows, contribute one of the best "turns," and other notable items are those given by "Tomato" (foot juggler), Osado, a Japanese contortionist, and the Ozzipardi Trio. The menagerie is much larger than usual in circuses, combining as it does the best animals from Fitzgerald's circus, Woombuell's circus, and several others. The Messrs Wirth are to be congratulated on



MR. TOD CALLAWAY, COMEDIAN, NOW APPEARING AT THE OPERA HOUSE.

things beloved of our forefathers. Altogether "Olivia" with its quaint old-world flavour, made a most charming play which found great favour with Auckland audiences.

Last night (but too late for review in this issue) was produced William J. Locke's four-act play "The Morals of Marcus," this being the first time it has been seen out of England. It will be repeated on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, when the season comes to a close.

OPERA HOUSE.

FULLER'S ENTERTAINERS.

The programme being presented by Messrs. Fuller at the Opera House this week is one of exceptional merit, and is attracting large audiences nightly. It is doubtful, indeed, whether anything more humorous than the turn in which the negress, Miss Eva Lee and her two picanninies, make their appearance has ever been witnessed in Auckland. Miss Lee sings a coon song in good style, after which she directs the picanninies in their quaint antics and novel boxing act. Donning the gloves the dark-skinned juveniles, after going through the customary preliminaries of the prize-fighter, step into their corners, and commence to do battle

Mr. Rud Peterson is always sure of a hearty reception with his numerous vocal items, which he renders in a way which pleases the audience immensely. Miss Jennie Johnstone displays her soprano voice to good effect in a couple of taking numbers which are greatly appreciated. As knockabout acrobats, the Banvards prove themselves to be in the front rank, their exhibition plainly showing that they are not found wanting in the matter of elasticity. The Twin Sisters Lucas make a good impression with their singing, while their dancing is carried out with no little cleverness and grace. Miss Gerie McLeod, the pretty little comedienne, is heard in a number of new songs, which she makes her most of. Master Rupert Christie comes in for no end of applause each night, his boyish voice showing to great advantage in several tip-top songs. The biograph pictures are of a high standard, and conclude a first-rate entertainment.

GLOBE-TROTTERING FOR A LIVING.

Prior to their New Zealand engagement, the clever pair of artists, Watts (Joe) and Lucas (Madge), at present successfully appearing at the Auckland Opera House, completed a three years' tour, which was not, however, unattended with exciting experiences. They were stationed in San