

THE STAGE

HIS MAJESTY'S THEATRE.

CHARLEY'S AUNT.

"Men may come and men may go" but "Charley's Aunt" goes on for ever. Revived again and again the lady "from Brazil" where the nuts come from" never seems to lose her popularity. On the play's original production in London it ran for two thousand nights, a record never likely to be equalled, and made a fortune for its author, Brandon Thomas, and for Penley, who first appeared in the leading role. Just how many times Frank Thornton has enacted the role of the aunt it is hard to say, and probably the popular actor could not tell us, but it must run into thousands, yet despite it all there seems a perennial freshness about it that appeals irresistibly to even the most hardened theatre-goer. On Saturday night "Charley's Aunt" replaced "When Knights were Bold," and rarely has the theatre witnessed such a scene of continuous hilarity as was then the case. It was the writer's sixth time of seeing the famous comedy, yet it proved just as mirth-provoking as on the first visit. As for some of the audience, their sides must have ached for hours afterwards and one lady sitting close by seemed as though she would need medical attendance when the imitation Dona Lucia was being chased by old Spettigue, so irresistibly comical was the scene. Mr Thornton, of course, resumed his old role of Lord Fancourt Babberley, otherwise Charley's Aunt. He must surely have learned the secret of perpetual youth, for he looked not a day older than when he first drove us to the verge of hysterics with his conception of the ancient but coquettish dame, and many moons have waned since then. Nothing more genuinely funny has ever been shown on the stage. Miss Belle Donaldson (Kitty Verdun) and Miss Lily Willis (Amy Spettigue) were the two girls and played very brightly. Miss Harriet French, who has become quite a favourite, made a stately Dona Lucia D'Alvarez, the real aunt from Brazil, and Miss Clara Manfield was a very winsome Ella Delahay. Miss T. Powell and C. Stone played the parts of the college chums, Jack Chesney and Charley Wykehan. Mr Douglas Hamilton was Sir Francis Chesney, and Mr K. Stephenson the college scout Braset. Mr Harry Ashford imparted a good deal of humour into the role of the unctuous solicitor, Stephen Spettigue, all the members of the company playing up to the lead capitally. Altogether the revival was a great success, and each evening saw a good house.

THE PRIVATE SECRETARY.

This evening Charles Hawtreys masterpiece "The Private Secretary" will be staged. This gives Mr Thornton a rare chance as the milk and water curate, a character which, by the way, is said to be taken from real life. It is a laughter maker extraordinary and is fairly certain to fill the house for the remaining nights of the season, which comes to an end on Saturday. If there is any truth in the assertion that a good laugh is one of the finest tonics imaginable, then of a surety the doctors must be having a dull time while Frank Thornton remains at His Majesty's. The company leave for Sydney on Monday, opening at the Palace Theatre on September 5th, where they will remain until October 9th. Afterwards a tour of Queensland will be undertaken, the company eventually opening in Melbourne on November 28th.

THE MERRYMAKERS.

The Merry-makers, whose season of six nights is to commence at His Majesty's Theatre on Monday, August 31st, have established a big reputation since their initial performance in Melbourne in May last. "Bright, humorous, and clever" are the three cardinal points in Messrs J. and N. Tait's new attraction. The Merry-makers have been selected for this tour by Mr G. P. Huntley, the noted English comedian, and Mr Herbert Clayton, of London musical comedy fame.

J. M. Campbell, a well-known London comedian, Sam Walsh, music sketch artist, Gavin Wood, Eric Blore, Misses Betty Ohls, Elsie Williams, and Doris Lind are all names prominently associated with London vaudeville and musical comedy. The latest English song successes, bright sayings, burlesques on modern plays, ballads and part singing, quaint dances, and monologues form a part of the Merry-makers' attractive programme.

This new form of entertainment, consisting as it does of high-class vaudeville, bids fair to become as popular in the colonies as it is proving in Great Britain.

The bookings are very good, and the season promises to be most successful.

A tour of the larger Waikato towns is being arranged, with Gisborne to follow.

A short extract from a Christchurch writer's impression of J. M. Campbell, of the Merry-makers:—"Jimmy" Campbell is so Scotch that he says porridge sprouts on his whiskers.

He has no whiskers, by the way. He hates Invercargill, and is impossible to interview, because he will persist in telling funny stories. Mr Campbell is as funny off the stage as he is on it, and has 'a way with him' that would make him decidedly Irish if he were not so Scotch."

OPERA HOUSE.

FULLER'S ENTERTAINERS.

The popularity of Messrs Fuller's vaudeville entertainment continues unabated, and each night sees the Opera House well filled with patrons. A particularly attractive programme is being submitted this week, the various artists appearing comprising a decidedly clever combination. Alberto, the expert conjurer, mystifies the audience with a series of magic tricks, which he performs with wonderful dexterity. Altogether his performance is one of unusual merit, while his taking manner and amusing pleasantries immediately brand him as a popular favourite. Maud Fann-

ing is heard in a couple of her coon dities, her singing of which is followed by vociferous applause. Master Herbert Wilverton displays his boyish voice to great advantage in a couple of tip-top songs, and but for an ungainly motion of the arms, leaves little to be desired. Hagan and Fraser are a couple of artists possessed of no small degree of talent, as their humorous turn serves to prove. Their funninesses are of a highly original character, and do not fail to cause shrieks of laughter. The popular pair introduce a couple of bright musical items into their sketch which makes it one of the most enjoyable seen in Auckland for some time. Arthur Elliott has a budget of comic songs with which he delights the audience, while his elastic movements show that he is an acrobat of no mean order. Scott and Beresford make their appearance in a sketch, and that their efforts are nothing short of successful is evidenced by the hearty reception which is accorded them. Verey causes no end of laughter with his "Two-Headed Policeman" act, which is distinctly original. Verey is a ventriloquist of a high order, and his witty sayings and exceedingly funny movements are carried out in a most praiseworthy manner. Little Violet Elliott has quite captured the hearts of Opera House patrons with her song and dance items which are given in a style that would do credit to the most polished artist. Albert Lucas, the talented monologue entertainer, gives an excellent recitation of "Christmas Day in the Workhouse," and is greeted with warm applause. Carlton and Sutton, patterists and dancers, score heavily with their harmonious singing and clever witticisms, while their dancing forms a very neat exhibition. Julia Longman's illustrated ballads come in for a fair share of appreciation, and never fail to elicit an encore. The Cambry Sisters make their appearance in song and dance items, and are favourably received. They also contribute a couple of mandoline duets which are highly appreciated. The biograph pictures shown this week include two side-splitting films that send the house into uproars of laughter.

Mr G. Portus, the well-known advance manager, who has been in the Dunedin hospital for some weeks with a split heel, has so far recovered as to sail for Australia. He will be over here again with Mark Hamboorg.



MR. J. M. CAMPBELL, a comedian with "The Merry-makers," appearing at His Majesty's next Monday.



MR. CHARLES SAUNDERS, the famous tenor, who will be heard at the Choral Hall on Friday, Saturday, and Monday.



MISS CLARA ROBSON, the Scottish contralto, now in Auckland.