



[BY PAUL PRY.]

"Paul Pry" will be glad to hear from those managers of theatrical companies touring New Zealand who desire that the public shall know the movements of the companies. Any information as to dates, etc., will be acknowledged in these columns, as well as any other items of interest to the theatrical world. All letters should be addressed—"Paul Pry," SPORTING AND DRAMATIC REVIEW, Vulcan Lane, Auckland.

The Steele-Payne Bellringers have been having a right royal time at Dunedin during their season in the Scottish City.

The Rev. Charles Clark opened his Wellington season on Monday night in last week. He had good audiences for every lecture.

A dramatisation of Marcus Clarke's "For the Term of His Natural Life" was to have been staged at the end of last month at the London Princess.

At Saturday's matinee of "The Geisha" the public rolled up in goodly numbers, taking full advantage of Tom Pollard's generosity in making special prices for the Saturday afternoon people.

Miss Ada Ferrar played *Hermia* in "A Midsummer Night's Dream" at the London Lyceum during Mr Benson's season of Shakesperian revivals. As I mentioned once before, the advance booking for the eight weeks' season amounted to over £4000.

Latest reports from Fuller's Waxworks Company state that the shows at Wellington, Christchurch, and Dunedin are all progressing most satisfactorily. A frequent change of programme and popular artists cause undiminished patronage from the people.

Mr William Paull leaves Melbourne for England on the 17th of the present month. His last public appearance at Melbourne was in "Klijah" at the Philharmonic, on April 18th, when he was overwhelmed by the heartiness of the applause accorded him for his fine singing.

"What Happened to Jones" is running very successfully at the Melbourne Princess. Mr Charles Arnold, as Jones, has delighted Melbourneans with his clever and amusing performance. After Mr Arnold's season at the Princess has concluded, the theatre will be re-decorated and re-furnished by Mr George Musgrove.

Tom Browne, the whistler, who travelled New Zealand with the Hoyt and McKee Company, is now appearing at the Sydney Criterion, under Mr Harry Richards' management. At the conclusion of his engagement at the Melbourne Bijou he had a big reception, for his turn was one of the most popular on the programme, and night after night he was received with great enthusiasm.



MISS GERTIE CAMPION, as Fifi Fricot.



MISS MAY BEATTY, as Violet Grey.



MISS M. O'SULLIVAN, as Mamie Clancy

The committee of the Wellington Operatic and Dramatic Society has, at the request of Mr Tom Pollard, consented to forego the dates secured for the projected performance of "The Grand Duke" in May, and the Pollard Opera Company has taken them for a season of fifteen nights, from May 18 to June 5. The amateurs will, therefore, defer the presentation of "The Grand Duke" until the third or fourth week in June.

A funny incident according to an exchange, occurred on tour in America recently. A special rehearsal was called for the Earl of Yarmouth. The company assembled, all save the noble Earl. At last he arrived. "What does this mean, sir?" asked the indignant manager. "Rehearsal called for you, and you keep all the ladies and gentlemen waiting." "I am really very sorry," was the reply, "but, you see, I had to take Lady Augusta for a walk." The company looked interested. But, later on, they were somewhat disgusted when it was discovered that "Lady Augusta" was the Earl's favorite dog!

Mr Alfred Hill's opera, "Lady Dolly," ran to paying houses (writes "Leipsic" in the *Sydney Mail*). The work was excellently placed before the public by the Liedertafel, and no doubt excels all previous amateur attempts in the same line in Sydney. The orchestra, staging, and chorus have all had the utmost care devoted to them, and the result was praiseworthy. The success of the week originally contemplated led to extra performances on three days of this week—no small accomplishment just now when people

are staying away from the theatre. A graceful compliment to a brother musician was paid to Mr Alfred Hill during the season, when Mr John See presented him with a laurel wreath from Signor Hazon.

Mr Dion Boucicault and Miss Gertrude Elliott are both appearing at the London Criterion.

The Bland Holt combination have been enjoying a most successful time in Queensland, the theatres in some cases being far too small to accommodate all who tried to gain admittance.

When the mail left there were quite a number of Antipodean favorites on the programme at the London Tivoli, among them being Frank Lawton, E. G. Knowles, the Poluskis, Peggy Pryde, and the Kallino Family.

To-morrow (Friday) and Saturday evenings "The French Maid" will be staged at the Opera House. There will be a matinee of "The Geisha" on Saturday afternoon to enable Aucklanders to see once more the dainty Japanese opera.

Notwithstanding the presence of the Pollards and Fitzgeralds Circus in Auckland, Dix's Gaiety Company has been well patronised during the past week. On Saturday there were the usual changes on the bill-of-fare, and the new items were certainly greatly appreciated by the crowded audience present. The "On Guard" scene was of course repeated, and the khaki-clad young ladies delighted everybody with their accuracy in marching. The songs, dances, and sketches contributed by the members of the company in the first part were all well received. In "The Demons and the Frog" Messrs Lennon, Hyman, and Lennon created much diversion, and had to repeat a part of their very clever performance. Mr Frank Yorke amused everybody as "The Hypnotist," and, later on, scored with "She'll Never Bump Any More," and, of course, was not let away till he had given "What Ho! She Bumps." As "The Gordon Highlander" he was immense. The Williams Sisters got through their smart cycling feats very nicely, and their songs and dancing were also pleasing. Miss May Marlow, Miss Annette Bodin, Mr Johnny Collins, and Mr Walter Rivers were all well received for their respective turns. On Saturday next several new things are promised, so it is quite certain that Mr Dix will not allow the popularity of the City Hall to wane.

On Thursday, Friday, and Saturday "The Gay Parisienne" was revived at the Opera House, and the sparkling musical comedy went extremely well in the favor of Aucklanders. The work is always popular, and the attendance on Friday and on Saturday was large. Miss Gertie Campion was again in her old character as Julie Bonbon, and she sang and acted with grace and vivacity throughout the piece. Miss Campion has made considerable improvement in her profession, and she has lost that nervousness that sometimes used to mar her best efforts. Miss May Beatty was as drolly amusing as ever as Ruth, and in the stage-struck scene with Major Fosdyke (Mr Harry Queally) she was very good. The pair gained much applause for their clever work in this scene. Mrs Honeycomb—a part formerly played by Miss Maud Beatty—was enacted by Miss Marie Metcalfe, who gave a capital representation of the strong-minded wife of the "shining light," Ebenezer. Miss Metcalfe acting naturally, and pleased with the little singing she had to do. The "Cock-a-doodle" quartette, in which Mrs Honeycomb, Julie Bonbon, the Major, and Auguste take part, went capitally, and gained a double recall. As Nora, Miss Lily Stephens looked very dainty, and that adjective fits her performance. Mr W. S. Percy was inimitable as Auguste—his make-up was admirable—and whenever he was on the stage the audience were convulsed with merriment. As Ebenezer, Mr Alf Stephens was as good as he always is, and Mr Ernest Fitts was in fine voice and sang "I Dream of Thee" and his other music most grandly. Mr Young as the self-sacrificing Dingle, Mr Nable as the innkeeper, and Mr O'Connor did capable work, and the orchestra (under the control of Mr Arthur King) performed excellently.

On Monday night "The Belle of New York" made a very welcome re-appearance at the Opera House, and needless to say that the revival of the popular musical comedy was attended with the highest success. To playgoers considerable interest was attached to the performance, for Aucklanders had their first opportunity of seeing Mr Alf Stephens in the part of Ihabod Bronson,

the character Mr Whelan played so successfully while he was a member of the Pollard Company. Mr Stephens gave an excellent representation, and though, necessarily, his conception of the part was something of an imitation of Mr Whelan he came through the ordeal most successfully. Miss May Beatty (as Violet Grey) was, of course, admirable. Her singing was excellent, and her acting quite up to her usual high standard. Miss Gertie Campion played Fifi Fricot, the part formerly played by Miss Maud Beatty. Miss Campion, though not quite at her best, did very well, and in the "Teach Me How to Kiss" duet with Harry Bronson (Mr Harry Carter) scored a great success. Miss Nellie Wilson filled her old role of Cora Angelique, and Miss Wilmot Karkeek was the Kissie Fitzgarter again. Both displayed their cleverness and sense of humor. The Mamie Clancy was Miss M. O'Sullivan, who proved herself a very capable successor to Miss Tilly Woodlock. Her dancing was very neat, and her bye-play with Blinky Bill very effective. Mr Harry Queally was as good as ever in the latter character, and Mr W. S. Percy just as comical a Karl Von Pompernick as he was before. Mr Fitts as "Doc" Snifkins, Mr Young as Kenneth Mugs, and Messrs Nable and C. Albert as the twin Counts were very amusing. The piece was, of course, staged in splendid style, and the choruses were very effective. They went with great spirit and swing, that concluding the first act being especially well rendered. The bridesmaids, servants, dancers, etc., all looked well, and all round the revival was a triumph. Mr Arthur King's finished leadership gave the orchestra an opportunity that was not lost. "The Belle" will be played for the last time to-night (Thursday).

Our Christchurch dramatic correspondent writes—Walter Bentley's second week at the Royal didn't pan out such a dazzling success as it might have done. The rain spoiled the attendance on several evenings. Seasons can only be extended with safety in Christchurch by the very strongest shows, and candor compels me to say the Bentley show is not too strong. There is rather too much Walter Bentley in it. I saw Walter as Hamlet, and reckon he did fairly well. I also saw him as Matthias in "The Bells." The last time I attended a performance of this piece was at the Grand Theatre, Islington, London, when Henry Irving enacted Matthias. Dare I say that, in my opinion, the eminent tragedian's reading of the part was inferior, by a long way, to that of the late Frank Oates? Irving's acting is marred by mannerisms. So is Bentley's. And the latter poses far too much for effect. This is plain speaking, but plain speaking is generally best. \* \* \* We are all looking forward to the return of the Pollards. \* \* \* Northcote's Kinetograph pays us a return visit shortly. \* \* \* On Monday next Montgomery's Kinetograph and Variety Company opens at the Royal. The show includes what is said to be the largest and best Theatrophone on tour. This contrivance, I hear, reproduces songs, speeches, and instrumental music as faithfully as possible, the effect being much the same as if the performer was actually on the stage doing a "turn." One of these days I suppose it will occur to some enterprising showman to fix wax figures of celebrities with phonographic "records" of their voices, and give us talking "portrait models." \* \* \* Mrs Howie, the Christchurch vocalist, who has just joined the Rev. Charles Clarke for his New Zealand tour, is a gifted lady with a wonderfully sympathetic voice and the power of charming her audiences. She ought to do really well anywhere.

After a most successful season Fitzgerald's Circus has left Auckland for a tour in the Thames and surrounding districts. It is on the cards that the company will pay a return visit to Auckland, for the support accorded it last week was sufficient to warrant the company playing at least another six days. The weather last week was disgusting from a showman's point of view, still it did not deter people from visiting the big circus tent. Every "turn" was greatly appreciated. The clever contortionist, Miss Rose Aquinaldo, tied herself up in a most marvellous manner, and really her wonderful contortions made one feel creepy. The pony Commodore—a very popular favorite—created much amusement. The lions and the tiger got through their performance every evening with every appearance of enjoyment. All the other "turns" were met with great applause, and I am sure Aucklanders are longing for another opportunity of seeing this excellent circus.



Photo by Sarony Studio, Auckland.

MR W. PERCY, as Wun-Hi in "The Geisha."