

THE STAGE

[BY COMUS.]

OPERA HOUSE.

BOOKINGS.

OPERA HOUSE, AUCKLAND

June 27 to July 10—Harry Rickards Co.
 July 14 to 18—Mark Hambourg Concert Company
 August 10 to 20—Sheridan Comedy Company
 September 8 to 28—F. Duval's American Company
 October 30 to November 18—J. C. Williamson
 November 16 to 21—Willoughby and Geach

HIS MAJESTY'S THEATRE, AUCKLAND

July 21 to August 5—Hawtrev Comedy Company
 August 6 to 26—G. Stephenson's American Attractions
 September 19 to October 9—Sheridan's Comedy Co.
 October 12 to 26—J. C. Williamson
 November 23 to December 5—J. C. Williamson
 December 26 to January 22—J. C. Williamson

OPERA HOUSE, WELLINGTON

July 11 to 25—J. C. Williamson
 September 9 to 29—American Musical Comedy Company
 October 30 to November 13—J. C. Williamson
 November 23 to December 12—J. C. Williamson
 December 23 to January 23—Anderson's Dramatic Co.

THEATRE ROYAL, CHRISTCHURCH

July 13 to 18—Hawtrev Comedy Company
 July 27 to August 4—Williamson's Opera Company
 August 5 to 15—Christchurch Amateurs
 Sept. 23 to October 7—American Comedy Company

PRINCESS THEATRE, DUNEDIN

August 6 to 15—J. C. Williamson

HIS MAJESTY'S, DUNEDIN.

August 6 to 15—J. C. Williamson
 November 4 to 14—J. C. Williamson

OPERA HOUSE, WANGANUI.

August 22 to 25—Hawtrev Company
 September 5 to 10—J. Sheridan Company
 October 14 to 18—American Comedy Company
 November 19 and 20—Taylor-Carrington Company
 December 18 and 19—J. C. Williamson

OPERA HOUSE, HAWERA.

October 17 and 19—American Comedy Company
 December 21—J. C. Williamson

THEATRE ROYAL, NEW PLYMOUTH.

August 15 and 17—Hawtrev Company
 September 16 and 17—J. F. Sheridan
 October 22 and 23—American Musical Comedy Company (pencilled)
 October 27, 28, and 29—G. Musgrove
 November 27 and 28—Willoughby-Geach Company
 December—Show dates Taylor Carrington
 November 16 to 21—Willoughby-Geach Company (pencilled)
 December 23 and 24—J. C. Williamson (pencilled)
 March 4, 1904—J. C. Williamson (pencilled)

THE RICKARDS COMPANY.

This excellent combination of mirth and melody have during the week been making the atmosphere of the Opera House shake with laughter, with pauses of strained stillness during the most exciting incidents of the 'cycle act, which is the great attraction of the show. Miss Gracie Emmett and her company put on a new play-let on Saturday night, entitled "A Countess for Revenue Only," and the leading lady as a maid-of-all-work transformed into a blue-blooded German Grafyn, must be seen to be appreciated. With the assistance of her compatriots from the States she succeeds in so tangling up the relationships of an estimable family that the audience almost get to believe that they are in some way connected with the household, and feel the woes of the members most acutely. Messrs Seeley and West have lost none of their bouquet, and the musical instruments and the stools and the other things, including the mooring of the "caaow" have lost none of their gloss in the process of the rough handling to which they are nightly subjected. "Clive" mystifies with the same bland ecclesiastical manner, and the singers warble sweetly, and get encores as per usual. The season closes on Friday night, and it will be highly necessary on that evening to go early to avoid the crush.

HIS MAJESTY'S THEATRE.

THE FITZMAURICE GILL COMPANY.

Melodrama resumed its sway in Auckland on Saturday night at His Majesty's, under very happy auspices. There was a packed house—not packed in the daily paper meaning of the word, but literally filled to the doors—and Miss Gill and her capable company succeeded in rousing the enthusiasm of the audience to a very high pitch. "The Prodigal Parson" is fully up to the standard that



MESSRS SEELEY AND WEST, of the Rickards' Company.

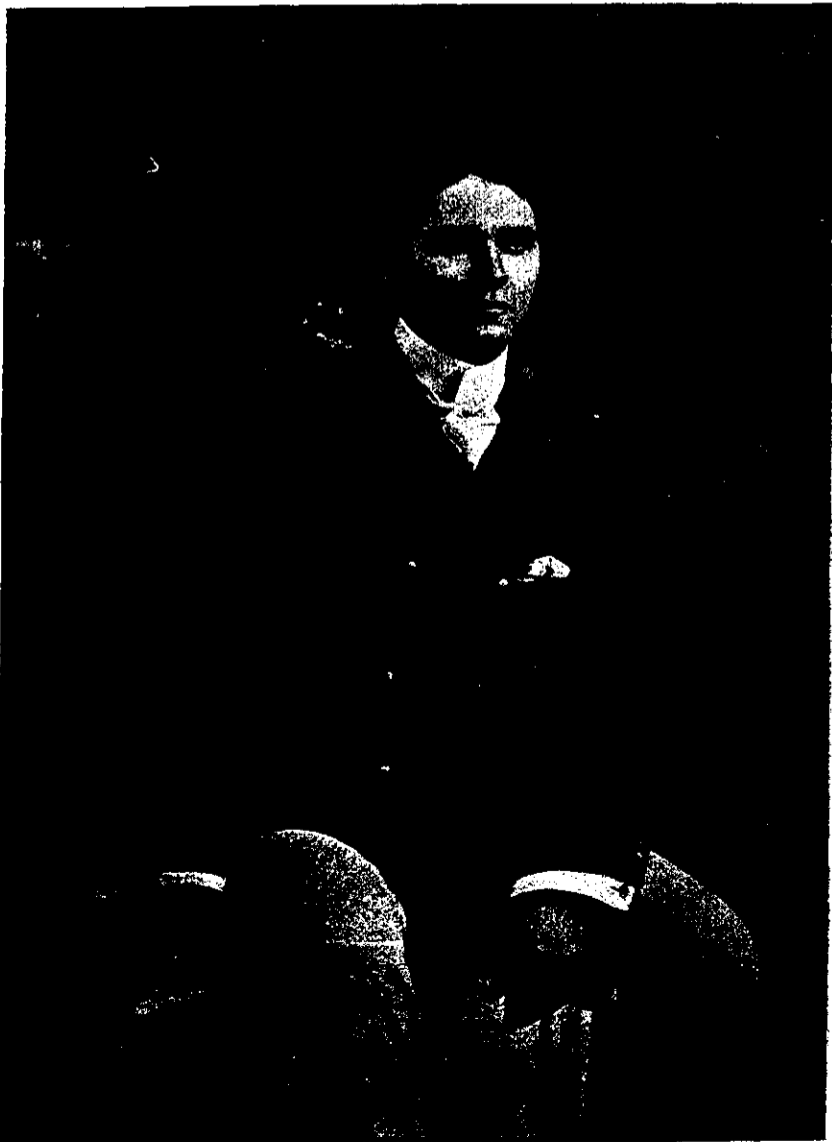
suffices for the Adelphi and the big theatres in Melbourne and Sydney. It is quite as good even as most of the melodramas that have appealed to the critical mind in Auckland, while it is infinitely better than some. The story of the play is not original; a new plot in melodrama is not within the range of possibility, but "The Prodigal Parson" does not make so many demands upon our credulity, as many another does. A poor woman with a secret, marries a good man, and an evil man making a vile use of that secret, sows discord and separates the man and his wife. There is nothing improbable in this; it happens in daily life. A blackmailer is murdered by an accomplice of the villain and the hero is accused of the murder, which is another not improbable circumstance; and after many vicissitudes the wronged husband and wife meet and are reconciled in Germany. An author with a keener eye for effect would have sent them to Manchuria, or Borneo, or the North Pole, but the man that wrote "The Prodigal Parson" was animated by an honest desire to make the story appear natural, also he did not depend wholly upon dramatic surprises in the shape of cosmic upheavals, but mainly upon rational dialogue and the good sense of his audience. Miss Gill is to be heartily commended for giving us a clean, well-proportioned play, which appeals to the hearts rather than to the nerves of her patrons. As the heroine, Fern Kingstone, wife of Parson Kingstone, she herself admirably interpreted the playwright's idea of a sweet woman bravely struggling under unmerited shame. She invested the part with those qualities of sweetness and grace which we have learned to associate with all that this graceful actress does. In the emotional passages she is a woman and not a syren or a petroleuse, or a fish wife in a temper, as some people expect the heroine to be when her feelings overcome her. Mr Blake is a fine, manly personage in every role he undertakes, and as parson Tom Kingstone he gets through a difficult task with distinction. I am glad to say that the audience, and especially that critical part of it next the ceiling, knows how to appreciate this clever actor's methods, which, like Miss Gill's, make for naturalness rather than blatancy. Mr Leo De Chateau is an admirable comedian, and in "The Prodigal Parson" he has a more than ordinarily good opportunity to show what stuff is in him. Mr Wilton Power, Mr

Gus. Neville, Miss Dina Cooper, and the other members of the company do more than well. What little hitches there were on the first night have since been overcome, and the piece flows smoothly. The scenery is singularly good and appropriate, and the mechanical effects all that could be desired.

"THE FRENCH SPY."

This (Thursday) evening the second production of the season will be staged, when "The French Spy" will be presented at Auckland for the first time. Miss Gill has secured the New Zealand rights of this fine military drama, and the company have made a great success of it in the South, where it has been highly spoken of as being above the ordinary style of drama, with a most interesting plot. New scenery has been specially prepared on an elaborate scale, and a very fine production can be looked forward to. The plot is strong and interest is well sustained through the many scenes from the rise to the fall of the curtain. The mounting of the piece is said to be exceptionally good—in fact, the company has the reputation of staging all their pieces in first class style.

My Christchurch correspondent writes:—"Under the very capable direction of that experienced and popular showman, Mr Chas. Macmahon, the Majeroni Dramatic Company are having a most successful season at the Royal. Their first production, 'The Flight for Life,' proved a real attraction. The company is a strong one, and produces popular pieces only. The other night it revived 'Jealousy,' the four-act drama in which the late Signor and Signora Majeroni (the parents of the talented brothers) were so successful. Needless to say, this fine play found much favour with the audience. For tonight (Saturday) the bill is to consist of a new dramatic version of Mrs Henry Wood's evergreen story, 'East Lynne,' in which the Majeronis will make their last appearance (for the present) in Christchurch. . . . Our old friend John Fuller is apparently striking it rich at the Opera House; full houses every night. John's personal popularity contributes in no small degree to this fortunate state of things."



MR CHAS. BLAKE, leading man of the Fitzmaurice Gill Company.