

Playgoers throughout New Zealand will regret to learn of the sudden death at Peckham (London) of the justly celebrated conjurer, Carl Hertz. Originally arriving in Australia in the early nineties under the spirited management of Mr George Musgrove, in company with Caicedo (the king of the wire), Rose Dearing, the late Freddy Mason, he proved the van of the London music hall artists to come here, and the outset of a policy that has so successfully been carried on by Mr Harry Rickards. Hertz returned to the colonies, this time under Mr Rickards' management, in 1896, and upon the conclusion of the engagement started a world's tour under the management of Mr Edwin Geach, which proved a series of triumphs. In addition to all parts of the Commonwealth, Hertz penetrated the wilds of Ceylon, visited India, explored Burma as far as Mandalay, Straits Settlement, Cochin China, Japan, Borneo, Sumatra, and Java, where it is stated he contracted a fatal disease. At the time of his demise he was negotiating with Messrs Willoughby and Geach for a tour in Africa, Australasia, and the East. Starting life humbly in Frisco (of which town he was a native), by his talent he amassed a considerable fortune.

Mr Alec Middleton writes to the "Referee" from Hongkong: "Pollards' Comedy Company opened Manila to the capacity of the theatre. The initial piece, 'My Friend From India,' went splendidly, and the company made an unmistakable hit. Future arrangements are to open here on August 10, Shanghai September 1, then India."

Mrs Patrick Campbell has brought back to England with her from America a bit of stage business which may be described as "head-rubbing." It is employed by her in "The Joy of Living" as a mode of expressing tenderness and affection. The gentleman either bows and keeps his head down, his lips pressed on Mrs Campbell's hand, while she gently strokes his hair with the other; or kneels at her feet and presents his cranium to her, which she caresses in the same way. The first of these methods was employed by Mr Charles Bryant, as Norbert, and, according to the "Era," created much amusement in the audience; the second was made use of by Mr Martin Harvey.

Mr Tod Callaway has made a big hit with Mr Dix's companies here, and his engagement has been extended as a consequence.

Miss Pattie Browne, according to an exchange, is to play the part she created in the London production of "The Admirable Crichton" in Mr Charles Frohman's American presentation of the play, with Mr William Gillette in Mr H. B. Irving's role.



MR. J. C. PIDDOCK, In "The Serenade."



MISS MAY BEATTIE, in "The Serenade."

Mr Joseph Jefferson, it is reported, has sold the English rights of "Rip Van Winkle" to Mr Van Biene.

The "Era" reports that Sir Charles Wyndham has authorised Mr T. Edgar Pemberton to undertake the compilation of his—Sir Charles'—biography. The book will be liberally illustrated, and should prove interesting reading.

The Westminster Abbey Glee and Concert Party commenced a Brisbane season, limited to five nights. The press notices are excellent.

"The Lady Slavey," to be produced by John F. Sheridan's Company at His Majesty's Theatre, on September 19, is a bright, musical comedy written by Geo. Dance. The music is by John Crook, Fred. W. Wierter and others. Exchanges say "a plurality of cooks has not spoiled the broth."

"Little Gulliver," who accompanies the Sheridan Company, is described as "a midget in stature, but a giant in comic-alities."

The song, "In Friendship's Name," sung in "The Lady Slavey," is in the original score of the piece, despite the fact that it has been sung by other people in New Zealand.

Theoretically (says the "Era") the stage is simply a picture, the scenery forming the background; the effect being gained by exactly the same means as that employed by the artist with paint and canvas alone. It is possible, in a tableau vivant, to present almost an exact equivalent of a painted picture: but this can only be done (a) if the spectator is placed in the centre of the theatre; (b) if all the figures on the stage remain

perfectly still; and (c) if the contriver of the tableau is given carte blanche as regards lighting. When we come to deal with the drama in action we are met at the outset by many difficulties. It is obvious that the interest of the picture must be concentrated on the principal figure, not distributed amongst the accessories. Whatever we gain or lose, the actor's features and figure must be clearly visible; and to this necessity everything can safely be sacrificed. In the last generation, this requirement was met by a method similar to that of Rembrandt. The light, which came, for the most part, from a large chandelier, was concentrated on a spot on the stage, which was technically termed the "focus." We read in memoirs of one actor manoeuvring to work another "out of the focus," and the habit of "taking" the stage—that is, the centre of it—led to practices which seem to us curious and conventional. The scenery was conceived in harmony with the system of lighting; it was broad, artistic, but rather suggested than realised. The eye, resting intently on the actor in the "focus," could only dimly discern the background, which was, therefore, painted more than "set."

"Checkers," a dramatisation of Henry M. Blossom's book of the same name, has had a successful career in the West, and the play will be produced at the American Theatre, New York, in the autumn. The interest of the story depends largely upon the original dialect of the hero, whose name is Checkers. He is a race track tout of an accentuated type, and is master of the most remarkable slang vocabulary ever heard. In the play the scene is laid at the race track, where all the exciting elements of that institution are depicted. It is promised that the scene will rival the chariot race in "Ben Hur." Mr Thomas W. Ross will take the title role.

Mr Kyrle Bellew, who played Romeo in New York recently, has made the following remarks on his reading:—"So much has been lost to the play by leaving out all suggestion of Rosaline—Romeo's first love—before he saw Juliet, that I have restored the allusions to her in the first act by Benvolio, and subsequently by the Friar. Shakespeare introduced the character of Rosaline on purpose to emphasise the sudden changing Italian nature of Romeo, which without a thought passes from the unresponsive Rosaline—turning to the pure and passionate Juliet, Romeo, as I read him, and as Shakespeare wrote him, believes him to be 'star crossed,' and in frequent scenes 'fears some consequence yet hanging in the stars.' For this reason, and following such an idea I play the part as a man fighting against fate until it overwhelms him, when he turns at last with one desperate effort at revolt, and, taking his fate in his own hands, cries out from his soul, 'Then I defy you, stars!'"

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