

GREENROOM GOSSIP

Nat Goodwin, who is at present playing a San Francisco engagement in "Why Marry?" evidently knows why, inasmuch as he is going to do it again—his sixth essay into the turbulent sea of matrimony. At least that is what San Francisco wise-aces aver. A wire received from the Pacific Coast metropolis by the "Mirror," at the time of going to press, says there is no doubt about it, and mentions as the prospective bride Georginia Gardner. Miss Gardner is a member of the company supporting Mr. Goodwin in "Why Marry?" having been engaged as understudy. She was not seen in the New York production.—New York "Dramatic Mirror."

Mr. George Tallis (J. C. Williamson, Ltd., director), who has just returned from America, states that most Australian actors in the States are in the film business, and Los Angeles (Screenland clearing house) is almost an Australian city.

The Bishop of London, speaking at a meeting on behalf of the Theatre Girls' Club, said that the theatre was an integral part of the life of a great city. It was a tremendous engine for good or evil in the life of the city, and he wanted to claim it for good. They had a public service to do in backing up the great actor-managers and all who wanted to give them a good stage. It was a mistake to regard the stage as a class apart. If it was true that the people got the Government they deserved, it was also true they got the stage they deserved. The stage was one of the most hard-working and toilsome professions—one which left one least time for oneself. But though the life was one of great temptations, a girl of good principles could always live up to them on the stage.

I remember the time when women in orchestras were scarcely looked upon as a serious proposition, and were only considered "stop gaps" when the men went on strike, and when they were mostly condemned unheard; but la guerre a change tout cela (says an English writer). Today they are to be found in prominent places all over the country, and have proved their worth. Some 20 per cent. of the Queen's Hall Orchestra are women, and the fears of some critics that the changes might involve a less finished performance have proved groundless. The first violinist, Lance-Corporal Arthur Beckwith, having been called away to military duties, a lady (Miss Dora Garland) has taken his place.

DOROTHY BRUNTON IN LONDON.

CHEERS AND COO-EES.

New Zealand theatre-goers will be interested to read the following account by the Melbourne "Argus" correspondent of Miss Dorothy Brunton's first London appearance: Some months ago Miss Brunton went to New York, where she met the Misses Castles and other Australian singers. Miss Brunton had secured an American engagement, when the offer of a part in the Drury Lane autumn production tempted her to leave America for a while. With her mother, Miss Brunton came to London, and commenced rehearsals in a musical spectacle called "Shanghai." The entertainment might be described as a musical "Chu-Chin-Chow," containing a series of remarkable scenes and ballets, as well as an ordinary comic-opera plot. The low comedy element arises from a certain Hoo Doo, a Chinese, born in Poplar under an unlucky star, whose fortunes bring him to Shanghai. Those who remember Mr. Lester's part in "The Arcadians" as the unhappy jockey will guess the type of fun he extracts from the role of Hoo Doo. It is Miss Brunton's part to play the foil to Mr. Lester, and she carries out her task admirably. Indeed, she was so successful on the first night of "Shanghai" last week that the "Daily Mail" hailed her coming to London as the rising of a new musical comedy star. "Miss Dorothy Brunton had a good reception, and bids fair to become as great a favourite here. A clever actress and graceful dancer, she has youth

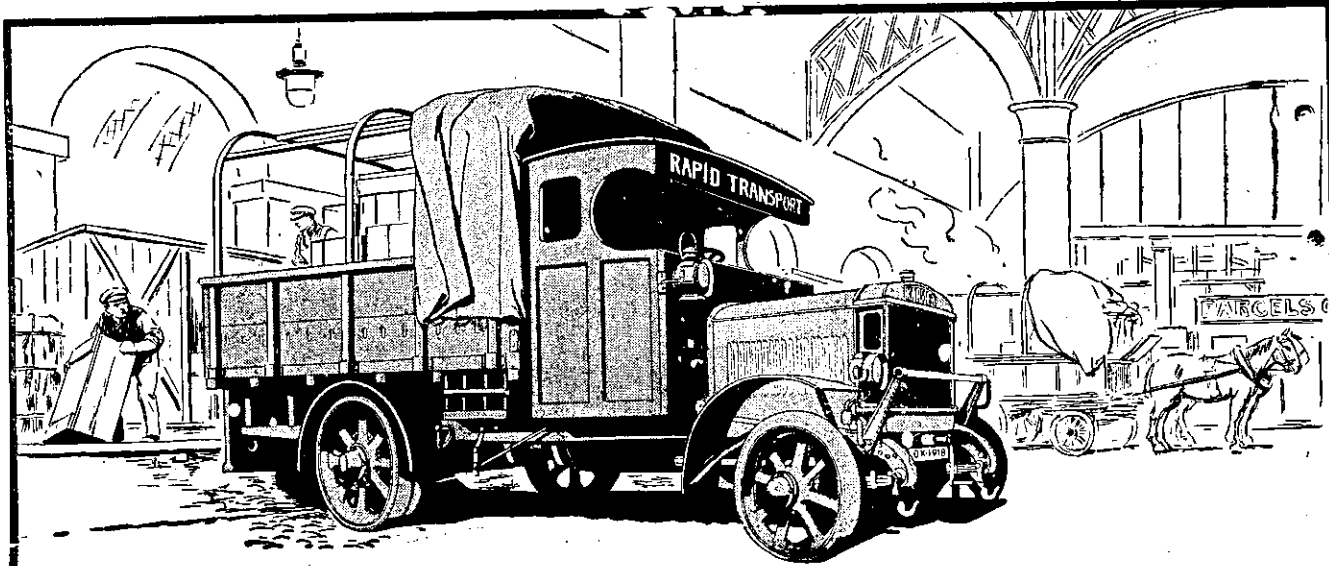
and beauty and charm. By the attraction of opposites, the girl Miss Brunton played loves the unhappy youth, so happily represented by Mr. Alfred Lester. Dull of aspect, but ready of wit, his dry humour was set off by her sweetness, and in spite of his comic desertion to the front at the end Mr. Lester obviously found in her an ideal partner." The other theatrical critics were scarcely less kindly. The "Daily Telegraph" commented upon the welcome extended to the Australian as thoroughly earned by virtue of her vivacity and jolly humour. "The Times" says: "Mr. Lester, as a Chinese from Poplar, bringing his devastating ill-luck to Shanghai, Mr. Lester enlivening this Drury Lane China with telling references to the land of his birth, Mr. Lester ill-treated, miserable, ragged, and invincible, was Mr. Lester at his very funniest. And in Miss Dorothy Brunton he had a delightful little sweetheart, whose charm and merriment were an admirable foil to his Lesterism."

Dorothy Brunton was not the only Australian in the cast, as Ivy Shilling was engaged as principal dancer. With two of their favourites at Drury Lane the Australians on leave naturally patronised "Shanghai" liberally on Wednesday evening. They cheered, clapped, and coo-eeed when Miss Brunton made her first appearance, in a manner that proved conclusively that the Australian soldiers do not forget their friends. There is a great opportunity at the present time for a musical comedy actress of real ability, and it may be that Miss Brunton will be tempted to remain in London for some time.

SHOULD COMEDIANS GAG?

Whether comedians should or should not gag, they generally do, at any rate on the variety stage, and it is a recognised fact that no production is complete until the comedian has time to bring in a choice selection of his own gags. To such an extent is gagging sometimes carried that it is related of a certain author that he went to see a piece he had written after it had got into full swing and failed to recognise a word of the original script. Gagging is much encouraged by the habit of producers of giving all their attention to the musical and spectacular portion of the show and leaving the dialogue to take care of itself (says "The Performer"). This neglect of the spoken part induces a haphazard method on the part of the author, who too often relies on the comedian, or comedians, to provide the humour of the piece. Nearly every big revue produced of late years has shown a lamentable lack of the humorous element, and the daily papers, in commenting on this fact, are remarkably unanimous in pointing out that when "Mr. So-and-so, the comedian, has got into his stride and had time to 'work up' his part, the comedy will be more noticeable." "Gagging" does not prevail to anything like the same extent on the dramatic stage. Here a comedian would not dream of taking liberties with his author; but then the author takes care to provide him with all the humorous business which is needed in his part. An actor who is playing in a piece written by one of the leading dramatists of the day

would as soon think of tampering with the script as he would of introducing his own wheezes in a play of Shakespeare's. Dramatic authors are very jealous individuals, and usually attend rehearsal and watch what is going on with a critical eye. Woe to the unhappy mummer who leaves out one of the author's choicest morsels or interpolates a witticism of his own. The late W. S. Gilbert was a martinet in this respect, and he was no respecter of persons, either. He would have every line of his piece spoken, and spoken in his own way, and if you would not fall in with his views he would very soon find someone else who would. The writer of a revue or musical comedy provides the plot; when there is any, and, having led up to a comic situation, leaves the comedian to his own resources—at any rate, that's how it seems to be. Of course, in an irresponsible, go-as-you-please kind of thing, like a revue, a comedian can, without detriment to the action, take all sorts of liberties, and usually vastly adds to the humour of the situation by doing so. Still it throws on him a responsibility he ought not to bear. In the case of small shows, the authors are not paid at a very extravagant rate, and it is not unreasonable that they should be helped out by comedians in the providing of the comedy scenes. In big productions the case is different, but in some instances the principal elements of humour are the comedian's own introduction. Probably the best results are achieved where comedian and author combine to work up the comedy situations.



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