

can interviewer. Lauri had newly arrived in Chicago and found some of the papers publishing stories of his alleged meanness and frugal methods of living. The Editor of one of these papers wrote asking to be favoured with an interview. Lauri replied, naming an evening upon which he was resting, making an appointment at his supposed lodgings and giving as his address a house in a squalid portion of the city in which he specially engaged a room to receive the interviewer. The latter arrived to time to find Lauri, poorly dressed, seated at a crazy table in a meanly furnished room lighted only by a tallow "dip" stuck in a bottle. The interviewer glanced scornfully around the apartment, muttered something not very complimentary about skin-flinted Scotchmen, and was invited to draw up his chair to the table so that he could write more freely. "I never take notes, my memory serves me for all such interviews as this," he said somewhat loftily. "In that case," Edward Lauri replied "we may as well talk in the dark and so save the candle." And, suiting the action to the word he blew out the light, and stealing gently out of the room left the interviewer to his fate. The story says nothing of what happened when the pressman discovered how he had been victimised.

#### THE WILLIAMSON DRAMATIC COMPANY.

The holiday attractions at the Wellington Opera House have been the performances by the J. C. Williamson Dramatic Company of "The Cheat" and "Brewster's Millions," both plays drawing crowded houses. Last evening "Sherlock Holmes" was to have been staged and on Saturday the first performance of "The Flag Lieutenant" is to be given. "The Dominion," speaking of Mr. Thomas Kingston's performance, says: "Mr. Kingston is fitted to a nicety in the role of the apparently irresponsible "Monty Brewster," infusing a reckless dash and an inconsequence of action into the part that was a leading factor in the success of the performance." The company opens in Auckland about the second week in February.

#### PICTURES VERSUS VAUDEVILLE.

Pictures still predominate in the evening amusements patronised by the Wellington public. At His Majesty's Messrs. Linley and Donovan are running the Royal Pictures, the Star Pictures are drawing well at St. Thomas' Hall, Newtown, and the inimitable and only West's Pictures are at the

Town Hall. At the Theatre Royal, however, Fullers' Vaudeville Company is in full swing, and crowded houses testify nightly to the public appreciation of this form of amusement. A good programme is provided, the artistes engaged including Armstrong and Verne, George and Leslie Scott, Nellie Leslie, Heath and Lamb, the Tossing Testros, Delino, etc.

#### VAUDEVILLE COMING.

Mr. Allan Hamilton spent the Christmas-New Year season in Melbourne. He leaves the Federal capital about the middle of the month, and is down to pilot another of Harry Rickards' Vaudeville Companies through the Dominion. The dates will probably be to hand next week.

#### THE HACKENSCHMIDT SEASON.

Mr. George Hackenschmidt and his company began their tour of the Commonwealth and New Zealand at the Melbourne Town Hall, on Boxing Night. Accompanying the famous wrestler are Gunner Moir, Herman, and a generally efficient company of artists. The entertainment consists in the main of all of the admitted forms of wrestling. Included in the general athletic scheme which Hackenschmidt gives are exhibitions of physical culture, posture plastique and training methods, in addition to which Gunner Moir and Herman engage with the Russian champion in a series of wrestling bouts. Cinematograph pictures are displayed, illustrating Hackenschmidt's chief international contests, which a lecturer explains in detail. Several notable vaudeville artists appear and give variety to an excellent evening's entertainment. The company opens in Auckland shortly.

#### MILLIONAIRE THEATRICAL MANAGERS.

When Milton Bode arrives in Melbourne to confer with Rubert Clarke and Clyde Meynell, the interesting probability will occur of the amalgamation of the richest theatrical manager in England with the millionaire theatrical manager in Australia. Milton Bode (says Melbourne "Punch") is interested in thirty theatres in England with a company at each, in addition to which he has a number of touring companies. Last Christmas fifteen pantomimes were produced under his management. He is known as the "Rothschild of the theatrical business."

#### MISS AMY CASTLES.

Few people are aware that Miss Amy Castles, the brilliant young Aus-

tralian soprano, can display the greatest indifference to pain, and on occasions has sung in public when suffering acutely from some illness or other. A very noteworthy instance of this indifference occurred during the singer's last tour of the Commonwealth. She was singing in Melbourne at the time, and was unfortunate enough to contract an abscess in her side. Yet, despite the agony and inconvenience the disorder caused her, she carried out the whole of her public engagements and later appeared in Sydney, when the trouble was developing most dangerous symptoms. Then the services of a doctor were secured, and such was his diagnosis, that he called in a colleague to assist him in performing an operation at once. After the operation which was successfully carried out, the distinguished patient was told that she had just escaped a bad attack of blood poisoning. Miss Castles, however, was not daunted in the least by her unpleasant experience, for on the following evening she was singing again according to contract.

#### THE HAMILTON-MAXWELL COMBINATION.

The Allan Hamilton-Max Maxwell Company to which reference was made in these columns some weeks ago, will stage Bland Holt's dramas only, arrangements having already been made for five of the most popular plays in the actor-manager's repertoire, together with all scenery, costumes and effects.

#### THE NEW PANTOMIME.

Mr. J. C. Williamson's promised pantomime, "Aladdin," was produced, for the first time, at Her Majesty's Theatre, Melbourne, on Saturday, December 18th, before a packed house. "If," says the Melbourne "Punch," "one may be permitted to reverse the usual order and sum up at the beginning before entering upon the evidence, it should be recorded that this new version of "Aladdin" is the absolute limit in the way of Christmas entertainments. For scenic splendour, handsome dresses, novel spectacular effects, acme of stage mechanism, attractive music, bright and lively acting, genuine fun, always laughable, yet never vulgar, and general entertainment for a holiday-making public, it stands out far above all its predecessors. It is a case of "Eclipse first, the rest nowhere." This may read, perhaps, as fulsome praise; but it is written deliberately and advisedly, and is but the echo of the opinion universally expressed on Saturday night. It was voted on all sides "the

very best that we have yet seen," and that vote was carried nemine contradicente.

#### THE BESESSES O' TH' BARN BAND.

It is not generally known that the Bessees o' th' Barn Band, which is now touring South Africa with tremendous success, gained its first two prizes in connection with the coronations of George IV and Queen Victoria. On the first occasion, the band was participating in a procession, and, in order to while away the time during a tedious wait, entered with other bands into a friendly competition for a prize that had been mutually subscribed by the bands themselves. The Bessees chose "God save the King" for their piece, and, at the end of the contest, were adjudged the winners by general acclamation. On the second occasion, they were again taking part in a procession at Farnworth, (England), which was celebrating the crowning of Queen Victoria, and competed for a prize of a crown set with precious stones, which was to be awarded to the band rendering a test piece of its own selection best. The "Bessees" played "Hail, Smiling Morn" then a favourite band composition, and on the judge of the competition declaring his decision, they learnt with pleasure that they had obtained the prize.

#### MADAME CALVE.

Newspapers have been so ready to assign a romantic history to Madame Calve, the distinguished soprano, that it would be as well, in view of her approaching tour to Australia, to give some simple particulars of her life. The singer's real name, is Emma de Roquer, and she was born in Doozeville, Department of Aveyron, France, where her father was sidely known as a civil engineer. M de Roquer, however, died early, and as he left no fortune, the beautiful Emma decided on a musical career in order to assist in the family's support. Her voice had already shown great promise at the Convent of the Sacred Heart, Montpellier, where she was being educated; and, when she made her first public appearance in a charity performance at Nice, she created an immediate furor. After that, there was nothing for it than to repair to the best tutors to finish her musical education, and she became the pupil of Puget, the great Marchesi, and Madame Rosine Laborde, a lady who has ever taken the most affectionate interest in her progress. Naturally Emma, a born virtuoso, was particularly brilliant at her studies, and such was her precocity that she was enabled to make her debut as Marguerite in "Faust" when only eighteen years of age.

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