

AUSTRALIAN HAPPENINGS.

(From Our Sydney and Melbourne Correspondents.)

A curious result of "The Quaker Girl" success in London is that the plot has become a fact in real life. In the piece which the J. C. Williamson management will introduce in due course to Australia, Madame Blun, a French dressmaker, sees Prudence in a quiet little English village in a quiet little quaker dress, and declares that she will make the quaker costume the rage of Paris. She does so, but it is a very idealised and charming dress that is evolved at the Madame Blun establishment. The curious result referred to is that the quaker dress has become the rage of London. There is good reason, too, for with its soft white cap, lace fichu, and mittens, it is certainly a charming attire.

Mr Vybert Stanford, who has "The Balkan Princess" production in hand, tells a story of a young girl being once recommended to him for a chance on the stage. She was said to be very pretty, and with a voice above the ordinary. On the strength of this he asked his friend to send the girl to the theatre, the Company was then appearing at Manchester. "On my honour," he says, "she was the worst chorus girl I ever saw in my life. When I would ask her to do anything she would burst out crying. She kept her job through crying, for I hadn't the heart to put her off. Last year when I was in New York for Mr J. C. Williamson," continued Mr Stamford, "I met a girl in Broadway, whose face was familiar, but I couldn't place her. "Don't you remember me?" she said. "I was in 'San Toy.' Then she gave an imitation of herself, crying, and I remembered her as the girl who had cried herself good in my chorus. She said she was appearing in emotional roles in a touring Dramatic Company, and from what I gathered, she was making a good living out of crying parts."

The phenomenal success of George Marlow's venture in the Princess Theatre, Melbourne, has been the talk of the theatrical profession here ever since Mr Marlow opened here with "The Bad Girl of the Family" on Boxing Night. For many years the Princess has not been regarded as the best situated house in Melbourne, but Mr Marlow on top of the fact that his new Sydney Theatre would be opened early in March, took a long lease of the Princess Theatre, as advised, and his initial venture has

proved a big success, so much so that "The Bad Girl of the Family" is now in its sixth week, and people were turned away again on Saturday evening. The piece is such a success that pantomime gags are even given about the Bad Girl every evening.

People who visited "Our Miss Gibbs" at the 120th performance in Sydney, found Mr Bertie Wright had altered, so they thought, his reading. "He's excruciatingly funny," said a man in the interval to a group discussing the English comedian. "Yes," agreed one of the party, "he's so woe-begone." As the evening progressed he became even more sorrowful, and the audience laughed at his melancholy in the most unrestrained manner. What really was the case, it seems, was that Bertie Wright could hardly hold his head up for a cold contracted by the unseasonable weather of the past week in Sydney. And the more the audience roared, the more unsympathetic he thought them, and the worse he felt.

The biograph show managers in Sydney admit that "The Whip," now in its fourth week at Her Majesty's, is the strongest opposition they have yet encountered. One of the biggest men in the moving picture field remarked on the subject, "The Drury Lane Drama so completely fills the eye with its continually changing scenes—their colour and completeness of detail that it would make an ideal film. As a dramatic entertainment it has the advantage over moving pictures that the characters are all articulate and comedy, humour and pathos reach the audience by the spoken word as well as by the acting. Picture managers can never hope to screen anything quite so exciting as "The Whip."

Mr John Lemmone, who has been practically round the world with Madame Melba, and is intimately acquainted with all the details for the Melba Grand Opera season in Australia, arrived back here on the Orontes last week as enthusiastic as ever about the great Diva, and also the Company, which has been engaged for the big season that is to eventuate in September.

At the conclusion of "The Christian," at The King's Theatre, Melbourne, William Anderson will probably present a new version of Marie Corelli's renowned work, "The Sorrows of Satan."

One of those consistent patrons of the theatre whom managers love to

meet, was overheard discussing "Jack and the Beanstalk" in the foyer of the Grand Hotel in Melbourne the other day. Evidently he was a gentleman who spoke with knowledge, as he confessed to having seen all the other pantomimes—from "Mother Goose" onwards, and to liking the latest as well as any. Pressed as to the number of times he had seen each, he owned to something between 50 and 75 visits to "Mother Goose," "Jack and Jill," "Humpty-Dumpty," and "Aladdin," and asked what his total was for the present season, he considered a moment and then replied, "Well, I have not been to any matinee yet!" leaving it to be understood, of course, that each evening performance had seen him at the theatre.

Some idea of the immense hold that "Our Miss Gibbs" has established may be gauged from the fact that no less than 6,000 copies of the vocal score have been sold in Australia, since the first night of the opera in Sydney. This total (which is from an authoritative source) exceeds that of the total sales for any three years of any opera ever played in Australia. The record is enhanced even further by the fact that the opera has not yet finished its run in Sydney, and has never been played outside that city, and when it comes to Melbourne it may confidently be expected that the total of 6,000 will be very nearly if not quite, doubled, while it is certainly difficult to estimate what the grand aggregate will be when the piece has completed its tour of Australasia.

Foreigners aver that the English take their pleasures very seriously. As a proof of this, Mr Redgrave, when playing John Storm in England, almost daily received letters from people in distress, asking his advice and guidance. The following are a few extracts from some of the letters:—"Dear Sir,—Seeing you are such a kindly man, can you find me a situation?" "Dear Sir, God bless you for the good work you are doing amongst the unenlightened." "Dear Father Storm, would there were more to spread the Gospel as you are doing it." "Honoured Sir, I was always a religious man, and last night you moved me. I am a stoker on board H.M.S. —, and any time you'd like to look over her, I shall be only too honoured."

Having so triumphantly passed its 50th performance at Her Majesty's Theatre, Melbourne, "Jack and the Beanstalk" is now reaching out after

the century, and if present appearances go for anything, the big extravaganza should have no difficulty in achieving that coveted distinction. The J. C. Williamson shows in the two big centres just now, are evidently inoculated with whatever bacillus induced long life. Of course "Our Miss Gibbs," with its 120th performance in the rear, towers head and shoulders above the others, but "Jack and the Beanstalk" and "The Whip," both of which started on the same night (December 17), are each going strong. The former with a matinee, a week extra, has forged a little ahead, but "The Whip" has just reached its 50th performance, still without losing its grip on public favour.

Bert Levy tells in an American newspaper a delicious story of an encounter between Henry Arthur Jones and "a stout autograph pest." All three—cartoonist, dramatist, and lady afore described were passengers aboard the "George Washington," bound for New York. "Oh, Mr Jones," said the lady, "I enjoyed your lovely play "The Whip," at Drury Lane, so much. It was just bully! Won't you autograph my book?" The dramatist without a smile, wrote this quotation from Raleigh and Hamilton's play, "I want to see Charlie Peace!" under this he wrote the names of the two authors of the big sporting drama (large) and his own signature (very small).

CHRISTCHURCH NOTES.

My Christchurch dramatic correspondent writes:—To-night, February 2, the Plimmer-Denniston Co. open a seven night return season at the Theatre Royal. The pieces to be staged, viz., "A Message From Mars," "Lovers' Lane," and "The Passing of the Third Floor Back," have all been seen here before, (the first-named, of course, many times), and as the company has only recently been showing in Auckland, it is unnecessary to say more concerning it at present. Fuller's Opera House continues to draw big audiences nightly. Just now the bill is an exceptionally attractive one. Miss May Dahlberg is not only a clever vocalist and comedienne, but an accomplished dancer; Martinetti and Grossi, billed as "the American surprise and novelty entertainers," are well named, for much that they do comes as a surprise, and is of a distinctly novel character; Daphe Leslie is a capital serio; Alf. Holt is a wonderful mimic, with a style all his own; the two Denos are

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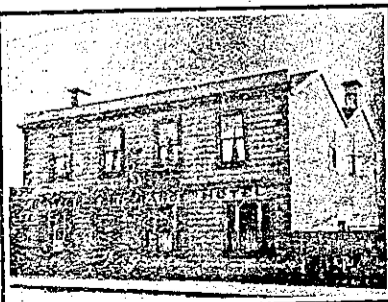
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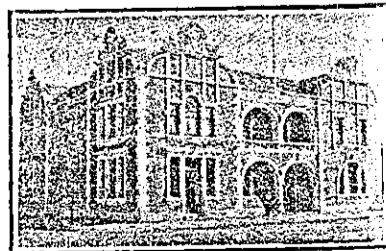
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