

AUSTRALIAN HAPPENINGS.

(From Our Sydney and Melbourne Correspondents.)

The lectures delivered by Mr H. B. Irving on "Hamlet," before the professional staff and students of the Sydney University, was so highly approved by the Chancellor of that seat of learning, that he has ordered 1,000 copies to be printed and circulated as a University publication.

Florence Imeson, the vivacious sou-brette of the Clarke and Meynell's "Gay Gordons" Company (which will open its tour of New Zealand in Wellington next month), who has made herself extremely popular wherever she has appeared, was tendered a matinee benefit at the Criterion Theatre, Sydney, prior to the departure of the Company for Brisbane. Every theatre in Sydney sent artists to contribute to a magnificent programme, and the occasion was rendered all the more notable by the appearance of Mr H. B. Irving.

Her Majesty's Theatre, Melbourne, is an absolutely transformed building—interiorly that is, and the first night audience which welcomes H. B. Irving there will find a great deal to admire before the curtain rises and in the intervals. The huge proscenium arch, curving out and over the auditorium, is treated delicately in browns and creams and gold, with the modelling in low relief, and the panels running in elegant lines from a broad base to a narrow point. In the sides of the arch are the boxes with furnishings and furniture, harmonising excellently with the color scheme of the house. The lighting is also entirely changed, and the soft amber glow from the hidden bunches imparts an air of illusion and grace to the whole of the vast auditorium.

New Zealand play-goers will find the "Gay Gordons" to their taste, whether they have a predilection for pantomime, comedy, drama, or musical comedy. It has a dash of each of these in its composition and the result is attractive, interesting, and entertaining. There is also a good deal of dainty sentiment in it, involved in the love story of Peggy Quainton and Angus Graeme. The songs are catchy and full of "business"; the chorus is brought on to assist in every number, and there is plenty of spectacular brightness throughout. Moreover, the characters are more lifelike than generally characterises a musical play, and the "Book" is bright and clever. The beautiful dawn effect is one of the scenic features of the piece. It

is certain that the most hardened playgoers will find in "The Gay Gordons" enough brightness and comedy to chase away the wrinkles of care.

Over two hundred Sydney first nighters have booked for the first performance of each opera of the Melba season in that city. Of these a big percentage have reserved the same seats for every Saturday and Wednesday. Some have taken as many as ten seats for every first night, and forty applications had been received up to last Saturday for seats for every night for the eight weeks. Already great interest has been aroused in the season in Melbourne. An application for accommodation for 200 Adelaide music lovers for one night is in the hands of the J. C. Williamson management. It is proposed that a special excursion from Adelaide to Melbourne be arranged to meet this order.

Mr H. B. Irving, had he been in Australia to collect representative specimens of our fauna, might have been well on the way to a small menagerie by now. He has been offered a kangaroo, a parrot, and a cockatoo by three different admirers. One wrote that it was difficult to know what to hand across the footlights to an actor. Flowers seemed out of place, but if Mr Irving would like to take back a young kangaroo to England with him he would be pleased to send it to the mail steamer by which the visiting star intended returning. The visiting star has been rather perplexed as to the framing of his answers to these embarrassing attentions, but he has managed to tactfully avoid acquiring any animate trophies so far.

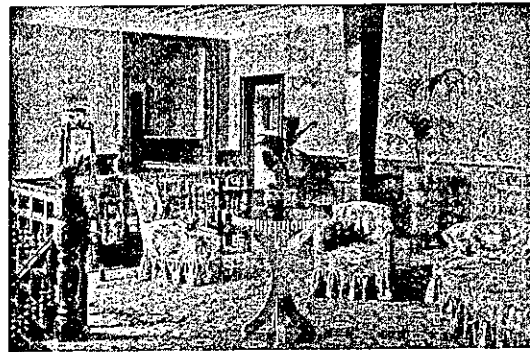
There was a good deal of sensation on the Interstate express between Sydney and Melbourne one day last week. The two snakes which had been in the fond care of Mr Roche Phillips for months past, learning their parts in "The Speckled Band," were coming over to make "their first appearance on the stage" in charge of Roy Seaton, who plays "Billy." One of them grew lively in the night watches, and finding a slab loose in his box, worked about a foot and a-half of his rather substantial body into the open air. There happened to be a very nervous gentleman in the vicinity, and the yell that went up woke nearly everybody in the sleeper. It took some little time to convince him that the snake was neither a delusion nor an intruder.

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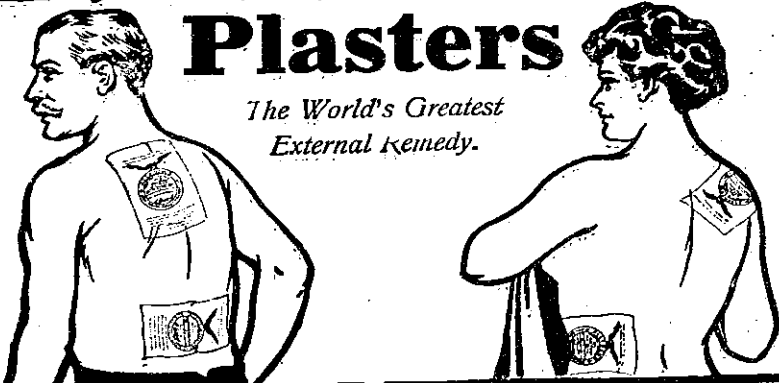
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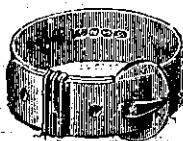
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