

MISS PRESSY PRESTON.

SINGER, DANCER, COMEDIENNE.

There is an alluring alliteration about the name itself that spells attraction. A chat to Miss Pressy Preston confirms this conjecture. It is five years since Miss Preston was in New Zealand. Theatregoers will recall her excellent work as Gretchen in that favourite pantomime "Mother Goose," and will renew their acquaintance with pleasure. One can do a good deal in five years, and Miss Preston has made the most of her time. She has run the gamut of comedy and drama, and confesses to being fond of both. She has played Ancaria in the "Sign of the Cross," and understudied Miss Beatrice Day in "The Breed of the Treshams," while she has also had important roles in "The Girls of Gottenburg," "The Shop Girl," etc.

On the formation of the Wykeham-Nable Company (when Mr Hugh J. Ward joined the directorate of the J. C. Williamson, Ltd., organisation), Miss Preston was engaged as leading lady to succeed Miss Grace Palotta. "That was a difficult place to fill," remarked Miss Preston. "You know what a very great favourite Miss Palotta was all through New Zealand and Australia. To emulate one whose name was an open sesame, was no easy task. But everywhere—and we toured from Melbourne to North Queensland—the audience were so kind, and made my path so easy. 'A Bachelor's Honeymoon,' 'Seven Days,' and 'The Girl from Rector's,' comprised our repertoire, and they all went splendidly." Miss Preston, the writer would like to interpolate, is as fascinating and vivacious as she is modest. Hence her natural charm and ability had something to say in the matter. For there is no royal road to public favour! Messrs Wykeham and Nable's leading lady sparkles with gaiety and lightheartedness. "Playing comedy makes you light hearted," said the lady confidently.

"I'm sure you will all like 'Mr Plaster of Paris,'" she continued. "It is rich in songs, duets, and dances. It contains one of the best collections of musical gems I have heard. Every one of us is pleased with our individual numbers. And that is a wonderful thing! There is such a swing about it! We all sing or dance or do both and weave a plot at the same time."

"Is it funny?" "Why, it would almost give one a sense of humour!" And the writer left conjuring up visions of a delightful play by delightful people, not the least among them being Miss Pressy Preston.

A novel item in the luggage of Messrs Portus and Talbot's minstrel troupe, which is now on its way to New Zealand from Vancouver, was the inclusion of 32 crates of chickens and 30 dozen water melons for the voyage across.



MR MAX MONTESOLE, who will make his first appearance in New Zealand on Saturday night in "Mr Plaster of Paris" at His Majesty's Theatre.

GREENROOM GOSSIP.

"Ben Hur" next month.

Mr Richard Stewart arrives in Auckland next week to work up interest in the forthcoming attraction "Ben Hur," which opens at His Majesty's on June 24. This great play is staged on a magnificent scale and has created an immense furore in Sydney. New Zealanders are to see "Ben Hur" before it is presented in Melbourne.

Real Christy Minstrels Touring the Dominion

For the first time in the history of negro minstrelsy a large company known as "Billy Kersand's Greater American Minstrels" is being sent on a tour of the world, the tour embracing over two years' travel and including a visit to every land where the English language is understood and spoken. The company, composed as it is of the highest salaried artists of the coloured race, will open at His Majesty's Theatre, Auckland, on June



MISS CARRIE MOORE, who is drawing crowded houses at the Opera House.

10, under the management of Messrs Portus and Talbot, Ltd. The troupe has been organised by Hugo Bros. for the sole purpose of showing the people of the Antipodes the wonderful talent of the American negro, and contains, besides the usual singers and dancers, some of the best-known vaudeville head-liners of the race. It includes such artists as the Ten Dark Knights (singing cartoonists), Ed. Toliver (monologist), Happy Young (the wizard with the baton), Quelli Clark (the triple tongued cornetist), Maxwell (and his wonderful comedy bicycle act), Pearl Moppin (the peer of hoop rollers), Miss Lea Clarke (the girl who sings to beat the band), and a carefully trained quartette of Texas Tommy dancers. The newcomers will also have their own band and orchestra and a large and well trained chorus.

"The Quaker Girl."

"The Quaker Girl" has entered upon a triumphal tour after its remarkable season in Sydney, during which it broke the record for the corresponding period of the run of "Our Miss Gibbs." A visit to Newcastle and Brisbane will be followed by a season in Adelaide and the West prior to the season in Melbourne. "Our Miss

Gibbs" will also be staged during the tour.

Exploiting the Boy Scouts.

A magnificent spectacular presentation on military lines will take place at the Kings Theatre, Melbourne, at an early date. Mr William Anderson, the director, has arranged for the exploitation of the Boy Scouts' idea, and a dramatic story involving the doings of these very useful aids to our defence, will be told with wonderful amplitude of detail and magnificence of stage effects. Novelties will be introduced in the production that are bound to make it popular, and the whole play will appeal to the best national aspirations of the people.

The Bath-scene in "Kismet."

A great deal of correspondence has of late been received by the J. C. Williamson management in Melbourne regarding the bath scene in "Kismet." The writers appear to be unaware of the facts when they express the opinion that it is cruel for a young girl to enter the water of the

is revealed. Again, in the Kingdom of the Future the wonderful azure halls are lighted with sky-blue, but more remarkable still is that all the shadows cast are cerulean.

The Kingdom of the Past.

"The Blue Bird" is now in the last few nights of its lengthy season in Sydney. Maeterlinck's fairy play has consistently attracted crowded audiences from the first night of its run. There has been introduced into the play the scene of the Kingdom of the Past—the strikingly impressive graveyard incident. This shows the tombs opening at midnight, and from them a host of beautiful roseate-coloured lilies appearing. "Where are the dead?" asks Mytyl, amazed. And after a search, Tytyl exclaims in wonderment, "There are no dead." Brisbane and Adelaide are to be visited next.

Plays For All Tastes.

Sydney is having a trio of big productions. At the Royal is "Ben Hur," with nearly 300 people engaged; at Her Majesty's "Sinbad the Sailor," with even a greater number, and at the Criterion Theatre, "The Blue Bird," with a big cast and a costly production. "But you will see, on reflection (said Mr Hugh Ward to a "Sun" representative), that big as the three attractions are, each exercises a distinct appeal. "Ben Hur," by its religious atmosphere and the dignity in which the theme is treated, finds a public that is almost non-theatregoing at ordinary times. We have cause to think that this is almost 50 per cent. of the community. When a play reaches this big section of the public there is no doubt about its success. It has, however, to be a sincere artistic effort. "Ben Hur" has not only religious atmosphere and incidents, but spectacular beauty, ballets, music, dramatic interest, and sensational moments, of which the chariot race is one. And with all this violence is never done to the sacred nature of the subject. The pantomime has its claim in spectacle and fun, big crowds, catchy songs, and wholesome frivol. And, like all good pantomimes, it has a moral—that nothing is accomplished in this world without courage. Sydney has also a public that is bigger than the description applied to it would lead folk to imagine. This is the cultured class. "The Blue Bird" has tested this. Maeterlinck's play is now in its fifth week, and still enjoying big houses."

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Stage-craft in "The Blue Bird."

The original producer of "The Blue Bird" in London must have been just as much of a genius in the matter of stage-craft as Maeterlinck in poetic drama. Always there is poetic suggestion in the treatment of the scenes. The Land of Memory is a notable instance. It is approached by a mysteriously lit forest, in which the dance of the mist takes place. The dancers are mere filmy shadows and strangely ethereal. Then the mists are cleared away, apparently dissolving in the warm golden light in which the cottage of the dead grandparents

harem plunge bath and remain in it for some time, as is done in the play. As it happens there is positively no hardship entailed on the young lady, for the water is warmed to an agreeable temperature, and the bath she is able to indulge in each evening is a most exhilarating performance. Immediately she leaves the water, the young swimmer is enshrouded in a warmed bath-gown, and in her dressing-room has every provision made for her comfort. The fact that the position of "bather" in "Kismet" was not regarded as entailing any hardship, was practically indicated by the fact that close upon thirty ladies volunteered to fill it.