

THE STAGE

AUCKLAND FIXTURES.

HIS MAJESTY'S THEATRE.

June 25 to July 6—"Ben Hur" (J. C. Williamson, Ltd.)
 July 22 to August 3—"The Blue Bird" Company
 August 26-31—Miss Margaret Cooper
 Sept. 23 to Oct. 12—Oscar Asche-Lily Brayton
 Oct. 14-19—Plimmer-Denniston Co.

PICTURE SHOWS.

Queen's Theatre (Continuous).

OPERA HOUSE.

Fuller's Vaudeville

HIS MAJESTY'S.

"BEN HUR."

A MAGNIFICENT PRODUCTION.

"Ben Hur" is a great triumph. The great spectacular religious romance centring round the story of the house of Ithamar has been looked forward to by Auckland playgoers as something apart from the usual stage production, and its remarkable triumphs in other lands have buoyed people up with such intense expectation that they certainly would have been grievously disappointed had "Ben Hur" not exceptional qualities. No one who witnessed the opening production of the powerful drama at His Majesty's Theatre on Tuesday night could have anticipated anything quite so unique at once in its spectacular excellence, vivid mounting, impressive scenes, thrilling incidents, and striking characterisations. In a word "Ben Hur" is strongly acted amidst scenic splendor.

The play opens with a striking desert scene wherein the three wise men of the East are led by the Guiding Star to Jerusalem. Next we are introduced to the palace of Hur, amidst the glories of Jerusalem, where the domestic felicity of the house of Hur are shattered in a moment by Judah (Mr Eric Maxon) accidentally dislodging a tile from the parapet which wills the Procurator. Messala (Mr Leonard Willey) until a few brief minutes before the fast friend of Ben Hur, falsely accuses him of intentional murder. Judah is enslaved and cast on a galley ship, while his mother (Miss Susie Vaughan) and Tizrah (Miss Alma Phillips), his sister, are imprisoned in a living grave. In the galley ship Ben Hur, after three years at the oars, finds favour in the eyes of Arrius, the Tribune (Mr Winter Hall), saves his life and is ultimately adopted. On returning to Rome Ben Hur's Jewish identity is lost by assuming the name of his foster father, and he becomes a Roman soldier. After Arrius' death Ben Hur sets out in quest of his mother and sister. He arrives at the house of Simonides of Antioch (Mr Eardley Turner), a wealthy Jew friend of the house of Hur. Here Judah learns of the presence in Antioch of Messala, his betrayer and deadly enemy, who is representing Rome in the chariot race at the circus. Ben Hur forthwith decides to compete against Messala and triumphs over him. Having conquered in the chariot race, the fact is disclosed to him that Simonides and his daughter Esther (Miss Dorothy Dix) are really slaves to the house of Ithamar, although now fabulously wealthy and consequently all the wealth comes to Ben Hur, who meanwhile becomes infatuated with Esther, although for a time he comes under the influence of Iras, an Egyptian enchantress (Miss Gwen Burroughs). The final scene, which is particularly impressive, shows Ben Hur finding his mother and sister, who, as a result of their incarceration in a loathsome prison, had contracted leprosy, but are miraculously cured by the Nazarene.

Mr. Eric Maxon, in the name part, achieves a signal success. His portrayal of a most difficult character was admirably done and unstinted praise is due to him for the manner

in which he enacted a particularly exacting part. Mr. Eardley Turner made a striking and cultured Jewish patriot, acting the part of a deeply afflicted man with much tenderness and forbearance. Mr. A. Styan, as the Sheik Iderim, impersonated a bold and generous son of the Desert with rare ability, while the lesser male characters were enacted with uniform success. Miss Dorothy Dix, as Esther, was a retired and gentle Jewess, whose natural charms and grace of manner created a delightful

ingly represented a devoted nurse in the family of Ithamar.

One of the most attractive features of a wholly artistic production was the sumptuous mounting of no less than seventeen impressive scenes. Further charm was added by the introduced songs, dances and grouping of the vividly attired populace, which was something quite unique in stage craft. "Ben Hur" will remain the great attraction at His Majesty's Theatre this week and next.

who specialises in comedy, and makes things merry for a few minutes. Miss Flo D' Orville sings character songs with taste and feeling and makes good at once with her admirers. Miss Beaumont Collins and her clever company (Messrs D. Baird, J. R. Spurling and A. Scarlett) are seen to capital effect in a sensational dramatic sketch entitled "The House of Terror." Whatever role Miss Collins takes, she handles it with knowledge and artistry, being as versatile as she is talented. Wong Toy Sun in his Eastern setting again mystifies all with his sleight of hand tricks and magic arts, while the "King's College Boys" are winning golden laurels by their delightful singing. That graceful trio of athletes, Hanley, Marguerite, and Hanley, are again to the forefront and earn reams of applause. Maurice Chenoweth, Misses Mamie Ellis, Peggy Roma and Beryl Nicholls have new songs which meet with general approval, and the singers have to pay the penalty in numerous encores. Altogether it is a programme warranted to please.

QUEEN'S THEATRE.

Shakespeare's immortal story "Romeo and Juliet" has enthralled thousands at Queen's Theatre this week, a magnificent series of pictures familiarising the spectators with the thrilling incidents in that famous Montague-Capulet episode. The balcony scene, the secret wedding, the fatal duel, the flight of Romeo and the tragic ending of the lovers were depicted with wonderful realism, and the appreciation of the audience was expressed in rounds of applause. "The Punishment" was the title of another star picture that ranked high in the audiences' favour. It told the tale of a wealthy landowner who married a peasant girl, but allowed jealousy to spoil their happiness and lead indirectly to the death of his only son and subsequently his own demise. "Child of the Ranch" was an exciting story of the West, showing how a little girl was the means of saving a woman's life and honour. "Mackerel Fishing" gave scope for some beautiful scenes on the coast of Cornwall, also various phases of the industry. An amusing subject was "The Diamond Earrings," and provided everyone with a hearty laugh. The orchestra adds its quota to the general enjoyment. As a token of respect for the late Sir John Logan Campbell, the theatre closed for a couple of hours on Tuesday afternoon. Visitors to town should on no account miss calling in at Queen's. It is a pleasant rendezvous.

Admirers—and they are legion—of Miss Grace Palotta will be pleased to learn she is back in Australia. The popular actress who has been in Vienna for some months, has been engaged by J. C. Williamson, Ltd., to play in the Melbourne season of "The Quaker Girl."

A "fatal case" of stage fright has been reported by the manager of the Grand Opera House in Paris. M. Magnere, a tenor, who, after careful training, had been accepted for leading parts and who, according to the report, had "appeared to good advantage at dress rehearsals," was so overcome by fright when he faced his first audience that "he trembled in every limb and his voice could not be rescued from the tremolo of fright." On the day following he appeared as Lohengrin, and again his voice forsook him because of nervousness, and after the second act his case was pronounced incurable and his colleague, Herrman Fontaine, took his place. "I shall pursue a less dangerous profession," said the man with stage fright, "and shall begin with aviation."



MR ERIC MAXON,
 Who plays the title role in the great spectacular religious romance "Ben Hur" at His Majesty's Theatre.

impression. Miss Gwen Burroughs was well suited to fill the part of Iras, an Egyptian enchantress, whose enticements allured Ben Hur into a hopeless passion. Subsequently her jealousy at the preferment of Esther was excellently portrayed. Miss Susie Vaughan made an admirable Jewish matron, showing the most tender affection for her son, and gentle fortitude in extreme suffering. Miss Alma Phillips acted simply and effectively the part of Tizrah, sister of Hur, while Miss Alma Vaughan most feel-

OPERA HOUSE.

Old and new artists are making vaudeville go with a swing at the Opera House, and its popularity is undoubtedly on the increase. Messrs Fuller see to it that the programme is well flavoured with top-notchers, and the result speaks for itself. Newcomers include Roya and Rejan, two prodigies in step dancing and terpsichorean novelties, whose turn is doubly encoered. Jack Bonny is another performer of outstanding merit