

GREENROOM GOSSIP

Mr. and Mrs. Beaumont Smith left Sydney last month for a six months' trip to America. Mr. Smith will spend the most of his time in the picture atmosphere of Los Angeles.

A recent cable from Paris stated that Gaby Deslys, the well-known actress, has been operated on three times for a growth in her throat. Her condition is now satisfactory.

While in New Zealand the J. C. Williamson Grand Opera Company will add to their repertoire "La Tosca," "Manon Lescaut," and "Louise."

Marriott Edgar, the dame of J. C. Williamson's pantomime, "The Sleeping Beauty," comes of an old theatrical family. His grandmother, Miss Marriott, was the first woman to play Hamlet, at the Sadler's Wells Theatre. Her leading man was H. H. Vincent, well-known in Australia.

"Theodore and Co." has been packing the Theatre Royal, Melbourne, since the opening night. The popular Royal Comicos have been very proud of their "Katinka" record, but it looks as if "Theodore and Co." is going to put this well in the back-ground.

Advice has been received in Dunedin that Mr. Harry Cohen anticipates leaving Vancouver by the Niagara at the end of January for Australia, with a specially selected company to produce "Scandal" and other English and American successes. "Scandal" was still doing capacity business in New York when the mail left.

The English Pierrots, under the direction of Messrs. Will and Rob Thomas, opened their summer season on December 18 at St. Kilda Beach, Melbourne, before a large audience. It is two and a-half years since the company left for a prolonged visit to Western Australia, and as each member of the original troupe was recognised a warm welcome was given. The company has been considerably strengthened by the inclusion of Miss Ena Gordon, soprano, and Miss Maxine McKenzie, soubrette. The remaining contributors are Messrs. W. P. Turner, Leslie Austin, David Lyle, Fred Earp, Charles Lawrence, Roy Cooke, and Misses Joy Rolls and Vera Jury.

The other day the six beauties selected for "As You Were," in Sydney, caused a veritable sensation on the Coogee beach, says an Australian paper. It was a nice warm Sunday, and the beauties decided that a little surfing would be nice. Quite unconscious of the interest they had caused, they wandered off down to the beach and started to attack the big blue waves. Presently a photographer appeared. Then half the male population of Coogee passed the word round that six reincarnations of Venus were on the beach, and, finally, a huge crowd collected, and the modest girls had a most uncomfortable time. Incidentally, four-fifths of the Sunday dinners in the neighbourhood were kept waiting that Sunday.

Miss Eve Lynn, the principal girl of the J. C. Williamson pantomime, "The Sleeping Beauty," first attracted the attention of a New York manager by her phenomenal whistling when a little girl. The manager was a discerning person who foresaw that a little girl who could whistle so divinely, and follow the music so correctly, must have a musical gift. So he had her taught by one of the best masters, and, later on, when she developed a "voice," his efforts were rewarded. Eve Lynn became a noted concert artist in New York as a young girl, and when she subsequently took to a career on the stage she added to her turn the whistling of the refrains of her songs. The novelty of this feature added to her attraction for both audiences and managers, so that while still in her teens she was drawing an enormous salary, and saw her name in electric lights on Broadway. For nearly four years Mr. George Tallis endeavoured to secure her for J. C. Williamson, Ltd., for Australia, but her engagements ahead—which managers refused to forego—debarred her from accepting his offer and making the trip to Australia that she desired.

The most expensive "gag" ever introduced into a pantomime in Australia is featured by the Brothers Egbert in the J. C. Williamson extravaganza, "The Sleeping Beauty," at Melbourne. It might be aptly entitled "The Tragedy of a Violin," or "The Broken Melody," for in the course of their fun-making in this item a violin is hopelessly smashed beyond all repair at every performance—not a "fake" or "property" violin, but a real "honest to goodness" instrument that is actually played by one of the orchestra. The J. C. Williamson management, however, view the expense involved with equanimity, for the "gag" is the funniest that has ever been done in pantomime, so they are quite content to grin and bear it.

Mr. Irwin Cobb once prepared a list of sure laugh-getters at a show, and they were published in "Everybody's Magazine" as follows:—When a performer starts to move and the trap-drummer in the audience scrapes a resined piece of cord so that the comedian thinks his clothes are splitting. When a clown acrobat poises himself to jump a tremendous distance, and then suddenly changes his mind and walks off. When a comedian starts to sing and a trombone-player sounds a discord, causing the comedian to stop and look at him threateningly. When a low comedian, in leaving the stage, walks against something solid and hits his nose. When a monologist looks in the window of a house painted on the scenery and pretends to see something funny going on. When the black-face half of a musical team takes off eight or nine waistcoats of different colours in rapid succession. When a dancing comedian trips on something, and then stoops down and picks up an ordinary pin. When a character comedian turns round and shows a red bandana handkerchief pinned in the tails of his frock coat.



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MR. HARRY B. BURCHER, the gifted J. C. Williamson producer, whose worth is evidenced in the performances of the Musical Comedy Company at His Majesty's Theatre, Auckland, in "Yes, Uncle," "Going Up," and "High Jinks."

Before the Gilbert and Sullivan revival season started at the Princes Theatre, London, on September 29, with "The Gondoliers," the advance booking totalled over £35,000. The following was the cast of "The Gondoliers":—The Duke of Plaza Toro, Mr. H. A. Lytton; Don Alhambra del Bolero, Mr. Leo Sheffield; Marso Palmieri, Mr. Derek Oldham; Giuseppe Palmieri, Mr. Frederick Hobbs; Duchess of Plaza Toro, Miss Bertha Lewis; Casilda, Miss Helen Gilliland; Gianetta, Miss Elsie Griffin; and Tessa, Miss Nettle Briercliffe. Miss Jessie Bond, Mr. Rutland Barrington, and other former Savoyards were "in front" on the first night.

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Mr. W. S. Percy appears in "The Girl for the Boy," a musical adaptation from the French, presented by Mlle. Gina Palerme at the Duke of York's Theatre, London, as her first experiment in management. The same French play, "La Petite Chocolatiere," had already been adapted as "Tantalising Tommy." Opinions on the present piece and on the acting differ remarkably, but a good many are favourable. One critic says that Mr. Percy's "sound humour as the chauffeur sweetheart helped considerably," and there are similar comments from some other quarters.

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Melba at Covent Garden in 1913 received £500 a performance, and booked a five months' United States tour the same year for £40,000. She signed with Kubelik, the violinist, for a joint tour in Canada, 100 concerts, for £100,000—money guaranteed. It was estimated in 1913 that Melba had earned over £500,000 in opera and concert platforms. To this must be added a sum of between £30,000 and £50,000 for singing into gramophones.

"Aisle Seat" writes to the "Bulletin":—Ben Fuller is acting as a repatriation agent in the U.S.A. Australian vaudeville acts which have acquired foreign polish are getting his first consideration. Ben's initial contract, made in San Francisco, was with an Australian girl, Rita Murphy, who has been engaged to book acts for the firm's vaudeville circuit. Probably she is the first woman to butt into the vaudeville agency business—certainly the first to book acts for a continent.

"Heartbreak House," described as "a fantasia in the Russian manner on English themes," is the title of a new play written by Mr. Bernard Shaw during the war. It will shortly appear in book form, and Mr. Shaw explains in a preface why he withheld it from the footlights during hostilities. "It is nearly 20 years since I was last obliged to introduce a play in the form of a book for lack of an opportunity of presenting it in its proper mode by a performance in a theatre," he says. "The war has thrown me back on this expedient. I have withheld it because the war has completely upset the economic conditions which formerly enabled serious drama to pay its way in London. The change is not in the theatres nor in the management of them, nor in the authors and actors, but in the audiences. For four years the London theatres were crowded every night with thousands of soldiers on leave from the front. These soldiers were not seasoned London playgoers." The cultivated soldier, Mr. Shaw continues, who in time of peace would look at nothing theatrical except the most advanced post-Ibsen plays, found himself, to his own astonishment, thirsting for silly jokes, dances, and brainlessly sensuous exhibitions of pretty girls. "The author of some of the most grimly serious plays of our time told me that after enduring the trenches for months without a glimpse of the female of his species, it gave him an entirely innocent but delightful pleasure merely to see a flapper. A violent reaction is setting in against the crude theatrical fare of the four terrible years of the war. The higher form of art will once more come into its own."