



### THE GAIETY THEATRE.

The Gaiety *redivivus* and although we cannot exactly say that it has, Phoenix-like, risen from its ashes, yet it has opened its doors, after a very long interval, once again, as of yore, to musical comedy; this time under the *auspices* of Mr. Howard Dow. Who of the old Johannesburg residents does not remember this old landmark of the good old times, when sovereigns, halves and lesser coins rolled on the stage, thrown there by enthusiastic audiences as a practical (and no doubt welcome) demonstration of their appreciation of some favourite—lady by preference, of course. To-day Johannesburg audiences have sobered down, not perhaps in the spending of applause, but certainly in the other "spending" mood. At any rate, the present-day kind of applause was there right enough to welcome Mr. Dow's Company, who opened their season on Monday night last with the American musical comedy extravaganza,

#### "A KNIGHT FOR A DAY,"

by Robert B. Smith and Raymond Hubbell. This musical comedy is about the last word in "light" comedy, as it "shines" through an almost total absence of any plot whatsoever. There are two lockets, one is held by a lady, the other by a gentleman; and according to the will of an eccentric man they must marry to inherit his money. However, they don't marry, for two very sound reasons; the one is that the gentleman holder of the one locket is already married and the other, well, there need be no other, but if another were required, the lady in question loves another man. Around this "plot" two acts are spun, and we make bold to say that the merit to keep the audience in good humour and from being bored falls more to

### THE ACTORS AND ACTRESSES,

than to the authors. The palm in this respect must unhesitatingly be given to Miss Toby Claude, a very talented low comedienne who kept the audience in roars of laughter from the moment she appeared on the stage till the drop of the curtain at the conclusion of the piece. This is her first appearance in South Africa, and there is every likelihood that this talented lady will become the same great favourite out here that she was in other parts of the world. Mr. Lionel Howard, in the title rôle, contributed his share to keep up the fun of which the piece is full, and he, too, earned rich applause. Another principal character is that of Marco, acted by Mr. Arthur Geary, an old Johannesburg favourite who delighted on this occasion his hearers anew by the beauty of his splendid baritone. He was ably assisted by Miss Lily Lyton, the "Affinity," in whose search he was, and these two performers scored heavily all along the line, earning in particular, enthusiastic applause for several duets they sang. Miss Marjorie Clifton was also very acceptable as Elatyne, whilst Mr. Lynwood Roberts (under whose management the piece is produced) made it plain that he is an old "stager," acting his part with his usual skill. The other rôles were filled by Miss Kate Walbran, Mr. H. Graham, Mr. Edwin Frazer, and Mr. Edgar Hill. The orchestra is under the direction of Mr. Ernest Thiel. Whoever wants a couple of hours genuine and harmless merriment should not fail to pay an early visit to the Gaiety.

### THE EMPIRE.

This is the last week of the present admirable *ensemble* of artistes at our premier music-hall. There have been good houses throughout the season of the present company, so there can be but few who have not seen them by now. To these few, however, our advice is to utilise one of the remaining opportunities of witnessing a "show" such as has been rarely excelled in the local entertainment world. La Estrellita's dancing and singing we imagine will never be forgotten by those who have once seen and heard this very clever artiste, and the reputation she has achieved among us is a very enviable one. She was tendered a benefit performance last (Thursday) night, when in addition to her usual repertoire of songs and dancing, she appeared in a pantomime sketch entitled "La Danse de la Revanche," assisted by Senor Garcia. The dancing, the music and the acting in that piece, which La Estrellita considers as the best in her extensive repertoire, were very clever and fascinating, and breathed with passion in every turn of the sinuous figure, in every note of the music, and in every gesture of the artiste. The Pantzer Troupe of acrobats are as popular as ever, and, which is not always the case, they thoroughly deserve their great popularity. The Doherty Sisters sing and dance their way into popular favour which is not slow in evincing itself. Those old favourites, the Sisters Casseli, provide a "turn" that is

greatly enjoyed by the Empire's patrons, and Rob, Ivy and Lyn give a vocal and instrumental entertainment that is the recipient of enthusiastic and well-deserved applause. The other artistes—to whom detailed reference has already been made in these columns—add materially to the success of a good all-round programme.

### THE NEW COMPANY

The new company that will make their bow to an Empire audience on Monday evening next includes "stars" of the first magnitude in the shape of Clark and Hamilton, a famous comedy duo in the forefront of the English music-hall profession. English and Australian papers are unanimous in their praise of this "turn," which is an entertainment entirely new and novel, and so amusing that it is one long laugh from start to finish. Pretty scenery, tuneful numbers, and dainty dancing are introduced with excellent effect. Another new-comer will be Datas, the "Human Almanac," otherwise the memory man, who will answer questions correctly concerning the history of the world. Other new "turns" will be Devon and Earle, dancing act, Miss Sadie Wade, and Miss Mildred Bryan; so that there should be crowded houses during the coming season.

### STANDARD THEATRE.

The last performances of that most successful drama, "The Prince and the Beggar Maid," are announced at the above renovated theatre, and to-morrow (Saturday) evening this thrillingly-interesting play will say farewell to Johannesburg audiences, who have been coming in such vast numbers to the Standard during the last few weeks. Another of Walter Howard's great plays, "Two Little Sailor Boys," will be produced on Monday next, and the production will be a very fine one. It has achieved a great success in England, and there is no reason why it should not do the same in Johannesburg, especially as work from the author's pen has already met with such unsurpassed popular favour. The play has been in rehearsal for some time, and Mr. Paumier, Miss Lilian Hallows, as well as other members of the excellent company have very good parts therein. In short, "Two Little Sailor Boys" deserves to have a lengthy season before it.

### THE GRAND.

There was a crowded house at this best of local bioscope theatres on Monday to witness the change of programme. It was the commencement of the second week of the excellent company of artistes now engaged at the Grand, and the popularity of each and all of them was evinced by the applause their clever "turns" received from a delighted audience. Sid Doody and Edie Wright are excellent comedy artistes and they are daily the recipients of enthusiastic encores, while Bert Erroll, the female impersonator, gave a very-much-liked contribution to the evening's entertainment. Miss Phyllis Ray and Miss Ray Hartley are both good artistes and add materially to the success of the programme as a whole. The films shown are all excellent, including "Wild Australia," depicting life on the cattle ranches; "The Mexican," a very interesting drama; "Lieut. Gray," a story of the American Civil War; "Thrown to the Lions," a powerful Roman drama; and Tripoli war pictures. The programme is one that should not be missed seeing.

### THE CHERNIAVSKY ORPHANAGE CONCERT.

Sunday night's concert at the Niagara was a notable one in many ways. It was a charity function in aid of one so deserving and unanimously praised an institution like the South African Jewish Orphanage, it was the farewell performance of the distinguished Jewish musicians, the Cherniavskys, who have so warm a place in the hearts of the local music-loving public, and it was organised by the Jewish Guild. In spite, however, of these three factors which should have ensured a "bumper" audience, the Niagara hall on Sunday night was by no means filled, and representative members of the Jewish community were conspicuous by the absence. An excellent musical

### PROGRAMME

was given by the brothers Cherniavsky, consisting of the following pieces:—Trio, "Arensky," Leo, Jan, and Mischel Cherniavsky; cello solos (a) "Cantabile" (C. Cui), (b) "Tarantello" (Popper), Mischel Cherniavsky; piano solo, "Andante Spinato Polonaise" (Chopin), Jan Cherniavsky; violin concerto (Tchaikowsky), Leo Cherniavsky; trios (a) "Kol Nidrei" (arranged by Cherniavsky Trio), (b) Norwegian Dance 1 (Grieg), Leo, Jan and Mischel Cherniavsky. Leo played Tchaikowsky's violin concerto—difficult as it is—in a manner that made the performance a notable one, and which fully earned for him the applause he received from an appreciative audience. Popper's Tarantello given by Mischel was exceptionally well rendered, the executant's art deservedly meeting with a great deal of admiration. Jan at the piano is a great musical delight to hear, and if his mannerisms were not so markedly accentuated to see him would give equal pleasure. He played with great effect and was deservedly well-applauded. In the trios, too, the Cherniavskys showed



themselves skilful executants, their rendering of the "Kol Nidrei" coming in for enthusiastic applause, as was only appropriate considering the nature of the gathering. During the evening Mr. Edie (agent of the tour) announced that, as that was the farewell concert of Messrs. Cherniavsky, they wished him to express their gratitude for the generous support given them on their various visits to Johannesburg. The Cherniavskys are about to undertake important tours in England and on the Continent.

## BONTZYE SHWEIG\*

BY ISAAC LOEB PEREZ.

(Translated from the Yiddish by Helena Frank.)

Down here, in *this* world, Bontzye Shweig's death made no impression at all. Ask any one you like who Bontzye was, *how* he lived, and what he died of; whether of heart failure, or whether his strength gave out, or whether his back broke under a heavy load, and they won't know. Perhaps, after all, he died of hunger.

If a tram-car horse had fallen dead, there would have been more excitement. It would have been mentioned in the papers, and hundreds of people would have crowded round to look at the dead animal—even the spot where the accident took place.

But the tramway horse would receive less attention if there were as many horses as men—a thousand million.

Bontzye lived quietly and died quietly. He passed through *our* world like a shadow.

No wine was drunk at Bontzye's circumcision, no healths were proposed, and he made no beautiful speech when he was confirmed. He lived like a little dun-coloured grain of sand on the seashore, among millions of his kind; and when the wind lifted him and blew him over to the other side of the sea, nobody noticed it.

When he was alive, the mud in the street preserved no impression of his feet; after his death, the wind overturned the little board on his grave. The grave-digger's wife found it a long way off from the spot, and boiled a potful of potatoes over it. Three days after that, the grave-digger had forgotten where he had laid him.

If Bontzye had been given a tombstone, then, in a hundred years ago or so, an antiquarian might have found it, and the name "Bontzye Shweig" would have echoed once again in *our* air.

A shadow! His likeness remained photographed in nobody's brain, in nobody's heart; not a trace of him remained.

"No kith, no kin!" He lived and died alone!

Had it not been for the human commotion, some one might have heard Bontzye's spine snap under its load; that Bontzye (also a human being) went about with two extinguished eyes and fearfully hollow cheeks; that even when he had no load on his shoulders, his head drooped earthward, as though, while yet alive, he were looking for his grave. Were there as few men as tramway horses, some one might perhaps have asked: What has happened to Bontzye?

When they carried Bontzye into the hospital, his corner in the underground lodging was soon filled—there were ten of his like waiting for it, and they put it up to auction among themselves. When they carried him from the hospital bed to the dead-house, there were twenty poor sick persons waiting for the bed. When he had been taken out of the dead-house, they brought in twenty bodies from under a building that had fallen in. Who knows how long he will rest in his grave? Who knows how many are waiting for the little plot of ground?

A quiet birth, a quiet death, and a quieter burial.

But it was not so in the *other* world. There Bontzye's death made a great impression.

The blast of the great Messianic Shofar sounded through all the seven heavens: Bontzye Shweig has left the earth! The largest angels with the broadest wings flew about and told one another: Bontzye Shweig is to take his seat in the Heavenly Academy! In Paradise there was a noise and a joyful tumult: Bontzye Shweig! Just fancy! Bontzye Shweig!

Little child-angels with sparkling eyes, gold thread-work wings, and silver slippers, ran delightedly to meet him. The rustle of the wings, the tap-tap of the little slippers, and the merry laughter of the fresh, rosy mouths, filled all the heavens and reached to the Throne of Glory, and God himself knew that Bontzye Shweig was coming.

Abraham, our father, stood in the gate, his right hand stretched out with a hearty greeting, and a sweet smile lit up his old face.

What are they wheeling through heaven?

Two angels are pushing a golden arm-chair into Paradise for Bontzye Shweig.

What flashed so brightly?

They were carrying past a gold crown set with precious stones—all for Bontzye Shweig.

"Before the decision of the Heavenly Court has been given?" ask the saints, not quite without jealousy.

"O," reply the angels, "that will be a mere formality. Even the prosecutor won't say a word against Bontzye Shweig. The case will not last five minutes."

Just consider: Bontzye Shweig!

When the little angels had met Bontzye in mid-air and played him a tune; when Abraham, our father, had shaken him by the hand like an old comrade; when he heard that a chair stood waiting for him in Paradise, that a crown lay ready for his head, and that not a word would be lost over his case before the Heavenly Court—Bontzye, just as in the other world, was too frightened to speak. He is sure it is all a dream, or else simply a mistake.

He is used to both. He often dreamt, in the other world, that he was picking up money off the floor—there were whole heaps of it—and then he woke to find himself as poor as ever; and more than once people had smiled at him and given him a friendly word and then turned away and spit out.

"It is my luck," he used to think. And now he dared not raise his eyes, lest the dream should vanish, lest he should wake up in some cave full of snakes and lizards. He was afraid to speak, afraid to move, lest he should be recognized and flung into the pit.

He trembles and does not hear the angels' compliments, does not see how they dance around him, makes no answer to the greeting of Abraham, our father, and—when he is led into the presence of the Heavenly Court, he does not even wish it "good morning!"

He is beside himself with terror, and his fright increases when he happens to notice the floor of the Heavenly Courthouse; it is all alabaster set with diamonds. "And my feet standing on it!" He is paralysed. "Who knows what rich man, what rabbi, what saint they take me for—he will come—and that will be the end of me!"

His terror is such, he never even hears the president call out: "The case of Bontzye Shweig!" adding, as he hands the deeds to the advocate, "Read, but make haste!"

The whole hall goes round and round in Bontzye's eyes, there is a rushing in his ears. And through the rushing he hears more and more clearly the voice of the advocate, speaking sweetly as a violin.

"His name," he hears, "fitted him like the dress made for a slender figure by the hand of an artist-tailor."

"What is he talking about?" wondered Bontzye, and he heard an impatient voice break in with:

"No similies, please!"

"He never," continued the advocate, "was heard to complain of either God or man; there was never a flash of hatred in his eye; he never lifted it with a claim on heaven."

Still Bontzye does not understand, and once again the hard voice interrupts: "No rhetoric, please!"

"Job gave way—this one was more unfortunate—"

"Facts, dry facts!"

"When he was a week old, he was circumcised . . ."

"We want no realism!"

"The Mohel who circumcised him did not know his work—"

"Come, come!"

"And he kept silent," the advocate went on, "even when his mother died, and he was given a step-mother at thirteen years old—a serpent, a vixen."

"Can they mean me, after all?" thought Bontzye.

"No insinuations against a third party!" said the president, angrily.

"She grudged him every mouthful—stale, mouldy bread, tendons instead of meat—and *she* drank coffee with cream."

"Keep to the subject," ordered the president.

"She grudged him everything but her fingernails, and his black-and-blue body showed through the holes in his torn and fusty clothes. Winter time, in the hardest frost, he had to chop wood for her, barefoot in the yard, and his hands were too young and too weak, the logs too thick, the hatchet too blunt. More than once he nearly dislocated his wrist; more than once his feet were nearly frost-bitten, but he kept silent, even to his father."

"To that drunkard?" laughs the accuser, and Bontzye feels cold in every limb.

"He never complained to his father," finished up the advocate.

"And always alone," he continued, "no playmates, no school, nor teaching of any kind—never a whole garment—never a free moment."

"Facts, please!" reminded the president.

"He kept silent even later, when his father seized him by the hair in a fit of drunkenness, and flung him out into the street on a snowy winter's night. He quietly

\* The Silent Bontzye.