



His Majesty's.

The "Merry Widow," Franz Lehar's masterpiece and one of the most charming operettas ever written, is being performed highly at His Majesty's before crowded houses and delighted audiences. The fact of Ada Reeve, South Africa's great favourite and popular vaudeville artiste, taking the title role lends additional attractiveness to the production. It is true, she interprets the part somewhat differently to what we are used—or should I say to what the composer intended?—but nevertheless, taking her personal charm into consideration, she undoubtedly makes the portrayal of Sonia an acceptable one and she excels in the famous dance with Danile in the second act. This, as everybody knows, is the leading valse theme, with its bewitching and tuneful rhythm and yet, only one of the many airs which have made "The Merry Widow" famous and popular. Joseph R. Cunningham as Danillo, does not let himself "go" sufficiently, his acting is somewhat restrained but having a fine stage appearance, a *sine qua non* for Danile, he, nevertheless, makes an ideal prince. To Bert Beswick, in the part of Popoff, falls the task of representing the comic element and I have nothing but praise for him. This also applies to Jess Sweet, as Nish, the former's worthy lieutenant. Elsa Craig's Natalie is a praise-worthy piece of work and Marjorie Kennard is a charming Frou-Frou, filling this part with great credit to herself, including her dance with Jess Sweet in the second act. Myrtle Wedgewood's *pas de deux* with Jess Sweet at "Maxim's," is one of the outstanding features of the whole performance, the tuneful music for which has been specially composed by Mr Stamford. Among others who deserve praise are Geo. Burdett, Harry Hanson and Geoffrey Pike. The chorusses are well trained and contribute considerably to the success of the performance. Some of the dresses are superb creations and surpass anything hitherto seen on any local stage. Mr. Gordon Stamford very ably conducts an efficient orchestra, whilst Miss Vivian Tailleu

is responsible for the dancing arrangements and Mr. Frank Tyars for the fine scenery and from all appearances "The Merry Widow" has a long run before it. P.J.

The Empire.

If I were to pay the tribute to which the present programme is entitled, I should require far more space than is accorded to me for my notice, and so I shall content myself with dealing with just one or two items in a list amongst which there are no "dud" turns and where each item is equal to, if not an improvement upon, its predecessor. Dorothy Lena is a comedienne of rare ability and I have certainly not seen anything equal to her since the Beth Tate season. Her songs are bright and sparkling, her appearance charming and the way she gets her stuff over the footlights shows not only the born, but also the trained, artiste. Harry Thurston and Company show "Old Bill" in a new sphere of life and I am not a bit surprised that this bright little sketch has been presented in Great Britain and America over a thousand times. For the Albert Vivian Peake Company I have nothing but praise. It is indeed a charming and refined entertainment and the dressing and staging enhances its beauty and charm. If I dared to be critical, it would be to ask why Mr. Cormac O'Shane dresses himself up as the "Knight of the Holy Grail" from "Lohengrin" and stands in a statuesque position surrounded by swans, when the rest of the party and the entire scenery is obviously eighteenth century. But one wonders at this incongruity only for a few moments, forgetting it when his beautiful bass voice is listened to. With a distinctly Viking appearance it seems a little strange to listen to a nautical song of obviously present-day appeal, but here again one loses sight of the difference between the appearance and the words while appreciating the voice. Miss Ryan has a lovely soprano which is beautifully trained and her renditions are a treat to listen to. The rest of the company are musicians of no mean order and, as I learn that they were commanded to appear before the King and Queen, I can only trust their Majesties experienced as much pleasure as I did while listening to them. Other items are Carvet and Verena who make an art of dancing, the Three Nitos who are really clever comedy acrobats, as well

as three or four other turns; all of which go to make up one of the best vaudeville programmes that I have seen of recent years and on which I venture to offer the popular manager of the Empire my heartiest congratulations. L.L.G.

Standard Theatre.

There is no doubt that there is a large section of the population of Johannesburg to whom melodrama appeals and it is equally certain that the excellent company which Mr. Rayne has brought together is able to portray these pieces in a manner which makes an unflinching appeal to the large audiences which throng the Standard Theatre. "The Two Little Vagabonds" is one of those productions that makes a strong appeal to the elemental sympathies and the acting was so good as to successfully carry out the lesson which the author intended to inculcate. The plot of this play is too well known to need recapitulation and the story of the complex careers of the two little vagabonds, so ably portrayed by Miss Eva White and Miss Dorothy Hope, is nightly followed with remarkable interest by large and enthusiastic audiences. Miss Annie Leaf still plays "Biddy" in her own inimitable manner and the rest of the cast is adequately presented. The staging is good and the frequent changes of scenery do not entail any long waits, while the intervals are interestingly spent listening to a capable orchestra under the baton of Mr. Max Weinbrenn. L.L.G.

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