

10 YEARS IN ENTERTAINMENT



(Continued from page 14.)

Boots." George Gee's singing of "Keep Your Eye on the Ball" kept New Zealand chuckling for weeks. An American football comedy, "Leave it to Jane," was next.

An important theatrical event about this time was the arrival of Pauline Frederick to present a series of straight plays. Miss Frederick was enjoying a considerable success as a screen star at this time, and her advent "in the flesh" was eagerly anticipated in the Dominion. Her first play was presented in Wellington—Frederick Lonsdale's "Spring Cleaning." "Madame X" was the second show of the season, and the first one in which Miss Frederick appeared when she made her debut on the London stage at the conclusion of her Australian tour.

Anna Pavlova was next, and many were the columns of rapturous praise that the New Zealand Press bestowed on her glorious art. She arrived in the middle of winter, but she had nothing but praise for a country that was turning on its coldest and wettest weather. She took a lively interest in everything—our race meetings, our hotels, the way our women dressed. Five years after her visit she was dead—the slender creature who had danced to Saint Saens's lovely music.

At the end of 1926 Leon Gordon crossed the Tasman with his own play, "White Cargo"—and one of the two plays presented in New Zealand to cause the Police Department a little apprehension. The other was "Chu Chin Chow." "White Cargo" was cer-

tainly strong meat, dealing as it did with the demoralising effect of tropical Africa on white men. Gordon later returned to New Zealand with the American play, "The Trial of Mary Dugan." He is now in America, and his name frequently appears among the script writers for talking pictures.

Elsie Prince and Jimmy Godden were the next on the scene with the big musical comedy success of the year—"No, No, Nanette." Elsie Prince was an actress with "lots of everything." She had been discovered singing in a pierrot troupe at Blackpool in 1917; by 1920 she was one of the leading artists at the London Hippodrome. After the "No, No, Nanette" season she paid several returns visits to New Zealand, appearing in such popular plays as "Sunny," "Archie" and "Mercenary Mary." Jimmy Godden, her co-partner in mirth and song, has since made a name for himself in English talkies.

The day of the thriller was at hand. It was about this time that Moscovitch paid the Dominion a return visit with the Edgar Wallace plays mentioned above, while Arnold Ridley's "The Ghost Train" was puffing its spine-chilling way through the country. Another Ridley play, "The Wrecker," was presented a year or two later.

The big event of 1928 was the production of "Rose Marie," the musical play that had then been running at Drury Lane for heaven knows how long and had already broken musical comedy records in Australia. An interesting name among the "gentlemen of the ensemble" was that of John Batten, brother of the famous "Flying Jean"

and film actor of some note. "Rose Marie" introduced something new to the Dominion in the way of lavish settings and ballets—who is likely to forget the Totem Pole Ballet? The hero of the play was Reginald Dandy, who later achieved fame in American talkies under the name of John Garrick.

Soon after came "The Student Prince" and, while "Rose Marie" was memorable for its ballets, "The Student Prince" is remembered for its

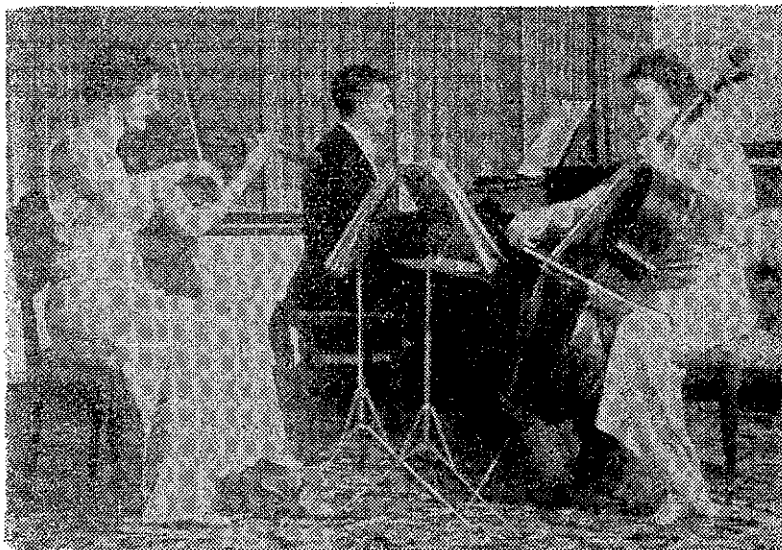


MARGARET BANNERMAN, famous London star, who rather shocked New Zealand audiences with Maugham's play, "Our Betters," a year or two ago.

male chorus, the finest ever heard in light opera in New Zealand. The play was a musical version of "Old Heidelberg," and it played to huge houses everywhere. The music was glorious, there was nothing slipshod about it—nothing to make one suspect that it had been written to "tickle the ear of the groundlings."

A play that left New Zealand and Australia slightly shocked was "Our Betters," Somerset Maugham's brilliant satire on modern society, and presented in this part of the world in 1928 by Margaret Bannerman. This famous London actress presented three other plays during the New Zealand season. The Christmas attraction of that year was "The Girl Friend," a bright and tuneful comedy with Annie Croft and Reginald Sharland in the leading roles. Reginald Sharland is well known to New Zealand listeners to-day as the "Honourable Archie" in the "Japanese Houseboy" recordings. May Beatty, who was born in Christchurch and received her early stage training in Pollard's Opera Company, was with this company. Miss Beatty has been in Hollywood for some years.

And now the spectre loomed large. The talkies had become an accomplished fact, and thousands were fight-



THREE OUTSTANDING MUSICIANS.—Misses Mary and Adele Bucklin, daughters of the American Consul-General at Wellington, and Mr. Frederick Page, who will perform from the two South Island national stations this month. They will be heard from 3YA next Sunday and Tuesday evenings and from 4YA on the following Friday.