

REPERTORY, MUSIC AND DRAMA.

Looking Over The London Season

A Sheaf of Theatre Programmes — Coward's "Conversation Piece" and Jack Buchanan in "Mr. Whittington" — Marie Ney's Part in "Touch Wood" — "Late Christopher Bean" in Wellington.

A TRAVELLER returned from the gaieties of London brings back a sheaf of theatre programmes—memories of bright nights in the company of world-famous stars. They are lying on my desk now—"Conversation Piece" on the top. It is described as a "romantic comedy with music" by Noel Coward, while a full-page photograph of Yvonne Printemps who played the



GLADYS COOPER.

Her part in "The Shining Hour" is being played in the Australian production by a New Zealand girl, Elaine Hamill.

part of Melanie informs the theatre-goer that "Mlle. Yvonne Printemps est toujours habillée par Jeanne Lanvin, Paris." The first person to appear on the stage, according to the programme, is Heather Thatcher, who has a brother living in Christchurch. The scene is Brighton in the Regency period. A giddier and less romantic play is next on the list—"Mr. Whittington," the show which starred Jack Buchanan and Elsie Randolph. The programme is here too for the musical comedy which succeeded it at the Hippodrome—"Yes, Madam," starring Binnie Hale and Bobbie Howes. This play is being produced in Sydney shortly by J. C. Williamsons, and will later be seen in New Zealand.

The "straight" plays are interesting. Here is "The Late Christopher Bean," which is to be presented by the Wellington Repertory Theatre in a few weeks. It was staged at St. James' Theatre, and was adapted from the French play, "Prenez Garde a la Peinture," by Emlyn Williams. The leading role was played by Edith Evans, the star who, in the past five years, has played such widely different roles as

the prima donna in "Evensong," the king's mistress in Shaw's "The Appie Cart," Florence Nightingale in "The Lady of the Lamp," and Gwenny in "Christopher Bean." The part of Dr. Haggett was played by Sir Cedric Hardwicke, who is better known to New Zealanders for his roles in talkies—he had a prominent part in the technicolour film, "Becky Sharp." Next is the programme of "Touch Wood," the third play written by C. L. Anthony, whose "Autumn Crocus" was produced in Wellington a week or two ago. It was staged at the Theatre Royal, Haymarket, and is interesting inasmuch as it starred Marie Ney, the famous actress who spent her girlhood in Wellington, and got her first chance in amateur shows at Wellington's old Opera House. Incidentally, Miss Ney will be heard in the shortwave programmes from Daventry next week. Also in the cast of "Touch Wood" were Dorothy Hyson (daughter of the famous Dorothy Dickson), Ian Hunter, and Oriel Ross, whose sudden marriage to Lord Poulett, London socialite, was the sensation of last month.

A notable programme is that telling of Elisabeth's Bergner's appearance in "Escape Me Never," the film version of which is now released in New Zealand. The play, which is by Margaret Kennedy, author of "The Constant Nymph," was produced by C. B. Cochran and directed by the famous Komisarjevsky. The play itself was not a good one—but Bergner's acting made it the most memorable of the 1934 season. Two programmes have more than a passing interest for New Zealand—"The Wind and the Rain" (still running and nearing its 1000th performance) and "Men in White." The former, as everyone now knows, was written by Merton Hodge, of Wanganui; the second was "anglicised" by Hodge and starred Lewis Casson (in New Zealand with Sybil Thorndike) and Jill Esmond, who is well known to talkie fans. The cast also included E. Bellendon Clarke, who played the part of the heavy father in "The Barretts of Wimpole Street" when it was staged here some years ago.

Two more interesting programmes are those for "Murder in Mayfair" and "Moonlight is Silver." The first, written by Ivor Novello, who also played the part of Jacques Clavel, starred Fay Compton, Edna Best and Zens Dare, and had a remarkably successful run at the Globe Theatre. Several scenes from the play were recorded and have been broadcast from the New Zealand national stations lately. The other, "Moonlight is Silver," starred Gertrude Lawrence and Douglas Fairbanks, junr. It is interesting to note that "Miss Lawrence's dresses were executed by Molyneux." The play was written by Clemence Dane, the writer of the immensely successful "A Bill of Divorcement." Leslie Henson, Debroy Somers, Gwen Ffrangcon-Davies, Sey-

mour Hicks, Claire Luce, John Gielgud, Laura la Plante, Athene Seyler, Lillian Braithwaite and Gyles Isham are other names featured in this bundle of programmes. At the bottom of the pile is "The Shining Hour," the play by Keith Winter, which starred Gladys Cooper and Raymond Massey. This play was produced by J. C. Williamsons in Melbourne last month, the leading part being played by Elaine Hamill, the Taihape girl who is "going over big" in Australia.

OF "The Late Christopher Bean," which is to be produced by Leo du Chateau for the Wellington Repertory Society from October 30 to November 2 the late Mr. J. T. Grein, the noted London critic, wrote: "This is a comedy in which scenes of wild farce intermingle with those of tenderest sentiment, yet there is never a sense of incongruity. The plot itself is decidedly farcical. The late Christopher Bean was an artist who, addicted to drink, died in the direst want, leaving behind him a collection of paintings so little thought of that his benefactor, with whom he also lodged, Dr. Haggett, utilised some of them for roofing a chicken house. Years after Bean's death his genius is recognised and pro-



IVOR NOVELLO.

Wrote and played in "Murder in Mayfair."

claimed, and extracts from his letters to a friend, together with reproductions of some of his paintings, appear in an art magazine. Dealers suddenly descend upon Dr. Haggett, seeking to secure what pictures he possesses. The attempts of two dealers to double-cross each other and the transformation of the little country doctor from a poor contented soul into a mercenary trickster who, aided and abetted by his wife and daughter, tries to swindle his Welsh maid, Gwenny, are pure farce; but farce with a difference."