

Again After 24 Years

skyscrapers, smooth thoroughfares and efficient services—a metropolis of the Southern Seas.

The first presentation of "Miss Hook" in Wellington (on June 26, 1909) was the first Dominion venture of a new theatrical concern, the Meynell-Gunn Musical Comedy Company. Both Meynell and Gunn later became directors of J. C. Williamson's. The first night was a great affair—the city turned up in its carriages and cabs—satin evening dresses were brought out for the occasion—diamonds sparkled in the hair, at the wrist and throat—"tails" and white "weskits" were there in abundance. And the pit had its jokes about the celebrities, and the celebrities had their jokes about the pit—but in very refined tones, of course.

The play was described by a critic of the day as a "genuine Rubens," as the music, lyrics and (in collaboration) the book are all from the industrious fancy of Paul A. Rubens, a noted playwright of the day. The critic was not wholly kind to the show; in fact, he would probably have been rather surprised could he have foreseen that "Miss Hook" would be carrying on like a famous brand of whisky a quarter century after it was first produced. "Intrinsically," said the reviewer, "Miss Hook of Holland" cannot be said to be any better or any worse than Mr. Rubens's other plays, for his music, though catchy, bright and often melodious, never pretends to soar above simply-written, easily-learned musical comedy music.

"POSSIBLY he realises that it would be folly to throw good stuff into plays that are ostensibly written for a particular class, and similarly it might be indiscreet to indulge in melodic subtleties with the knowledge that much of the success of such plays depends on the capacity of

the players to be entrusted with them. So Paul Rubens writes musical comedy for the million at the rate of about one a year, and knows no failure.

"These remarks are applied only to the musical side of his work. From another aspect he is entitled to much credit, as in 'Miss Hook of Holland' the consummation of his bright imagination is altogether a happy one. He has peeped into a quiet little Dutch town by a sleepy canal, and has obtained clear-cut characters and a wealth of colour. No prettier setting to a musical comedy could well be conceived. There are pretty Dutch maids clattering round in clogs, and looking most sweet in their neat, square-cut bodices, full skirts and starched caps 'a la Hollandaise'; there are smartly-uniformed Dutch bandmen, and Dutch loafers, busy Dutch cheese merchants, merry Dutch vintners and voluble Dutch market women; and behind them all are the sunny flats of Deutschland, with the meandering canal receding into the distance."

Here, obviously enough, is a musical comedy that cannot age. Holland, to the average New Zealander, is still a country of clogs and canals, tulips and cheeses, and, for stage purposes, we would like it to remain so for ever.

The story is slender, but not nearly so slender as some of the shows that have passed for musical comedies in the last decade. Mr. Hook, a successful distiller, has lost the recipe for his famous liqueur, "Cream of the Sky," which had been evolved by his brainy daughter. The loss occurred in the market-place at Arndyk, and the recipe had been found by one, Simon Slinks, whose chief occupation appeared to be the holding up of the canal wall. Slinks knows the value of the recipe, but, fearing that he would be branded as a thief if he gave it

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SOME OF THE PRINCIPALS.—(Top row, from left to right): Ida Gustofsen, Rita Kemp (Miss Hook herself), Dorothy Newman. (Bottom row): Doug. Stark, L. M. Cachemaille, Ray Kemp and Gretta Stark. —S. P. Andrew photo.