

THE MANILA THEATRES.

SPANISH OPERETTA THE CHIEF FORM OF AMUSEMENT.

Jokes That the Americans do not Understand—Flinging by Spanish Soldiers—Nightly Trouble Over the Demand for a Spanish Song—Filipino Acrobats.

Theatricals in Manila are not in a very settled state yet, owing probably to the uncertainty that still seems to exist as to whether the population is to consist of Americans or Filipinos or Spaniards, or all three.

Outside of one or two purely Tagalo theatres, the only steady place of amusement is the Circo Filipino, which is occupied part of the time by a stock company of Spanish operetta singers. During the last few weeks there has been quite a run on zarzuela, or Spanish comic opera. The company is composed of Spanish singers, who probably drifted in from Spain when the Philippine archipelago was a colony of their nation. The productions are not at all extravagantly got up, but the dialogue seems to please an audience of two or three hundred Spanish residents each night, and the singing and dancing are enjoyed by Spaniards, Americans and Filipinos alike. The place is advertised to open at 8.30 every night and the bill generally is composed of three one-act operettas. There is a change of bill nightly and a continuous performance. The latter feature is made possible at present by the assistance of a glee club composed of fifty Spanish soldiers, who occupy the stage between acts and sing songs of their native land. To the Americans this is one of the big features of the entertainment. No accompaniment is used, the men all relying on the pitch given by the leader at the start and his baton throughout the election.

The Circo Filipino on the outside appears to be a jumble of sheds with corrugated iron roofs, but within there is a fair-sized auditorium with a cement floor. The butacas or orchestra seats are wide mahogany arm-chairs with cane bottoms, and arranged with an aisle down the centre. At the sides are a couple of rows of chairs extending the length of the place, and directly above these are the balconies where the box parties sit. Seat checks are procured at a little window outside the door, and presented to one of the ushers, who finds the seats indicated.

The members of the audience smoke as many cigars and cigarettes during the performance as they choose. Although the place is fairly well ventilated at the sides, the atmosphere sometimes gives a hazy look to the stage, which in the regulation small theatre stage fitted with curtains which do not roll up, but are simply gathered and whisked above by the ropes, which run puckering string fashion. Directly in the centre of the stage at the front is the prompter's cage. The prompter stands three-quarters beneath the stage, libretto in hand and the actors depend on him to get through their lines. He reads every line of the dialogue, indicating the man who is to say it with his finger, and keeping a neck ahead of him all the time. To an occupant of a front seat the performance is made highly absurd.

The orchestra is an up-to-date organization of Filipinos, directed by a wise-looking, gray-headed man who wears glasses and smokes cheroots throughout the performance. The bass viol is stationed directly behind the director, who occupies the centre, and the first and second violins are arranged on either side. The reed instruments and horns fill out the ends. The orchestra is composed of fifteen pieces and handles fairly difficult music with much grace.

Eighty-three is a little early for regulation Spanish diners to reach the theatre, so it is usually the case that the audience is not complete until near the end of the first act. A jangling bell gives warning that the show is about to begin, and at the second ring the footlights are turned on and the orchestra plays up the curtain. Perhaps the operetta deals with Spanish police in pursuit of villains wearing the old style Spanish knickerbockers, sash and turban, and are counter-parts of the average creation of the American cartoonist who wishes to caricature Spain. The women of the play wear Spanish shawls and have their hair arranged in dizzy towers on top of their heads.

At the Filipino theatres of Manila it is the custom to show appreciation by tossing coins on the stage in lieu of bouquets. The Spanish soldier chorus is a pleasing innovation, and the members seem to enjoy their songs, which are given with gusto. Nearly everyman wears a white drill coat adorned with a small knot of Spanish colors. Some of the men have saved enough of their pay to enable them to don white trousers, but the majority of them appear in the blue madras affairs in which they probably fought against the Americans six months ago. Gloria Espana is one of the

favorite songs of the Spanish soldiers, and the peseta gallery is each night filled with Spanish prisoners out of the walled city on permission, who demand vociferously that the glee club sing it. Whether it is considered that the singing of "Gloria Espana" would not be pleasing to the Americans under the conditions that exist or not is not known, but it is a noticeable fact that the chorus invariably declines to sing it. The Spanish soldiers listen to the chorus through a song and then scream and applaud for an encore. When the curtain goes up for the encore the din breaks out again and the cry is "Gloria Espana." The opening notes plainly tell that "Gloria Espana" is not to be on the bill. Indignation breaks forth and the leader is compelled to silence his men until the racket subsides. He makes a fresh start on the same piece, but the crowd will have nothing if not "Gloria Espana" and breaks out afresh. The leader dismisses the men in disgust.

Some of the presentations are decidedly artistic and replete with sparkling musical dashes which the leading people take in a nappy style. But every time a Spanish joke is cracked between songs it relates to Americans. Then there are looks of regret among the Americans when the leading lady glides smoothly over a road of lip words, strikes a lot of "z" creations, which she rolls around her tongue and then fairly hurls herself in a glorious climax of articulation at the villain. The secret of the play is out and the English speakers are not in on it.

Between the acts the audience gets up and walks back to the foyer, which has a dirt floor, to get drinks of citric acid lemonade and handfuls of peanuts. The women invariably sit upstairs and gaze down at the crowd of smokers below. It is often midnight when the Circo Filipino curtain goes down for the last time, and sleepy coachmen wake up and prod their steeds homeward with their patrons.

STAGE SCENERY IN SOME HOUSES

It is adjustable and can be Taken Down Quickly and Easily. Although all well-appointed theatres keep competent scene painters, stage machinists and carpenters employed the year around, there is such an ever increasing interest in amateur theatricals given in private houses and small halls as to give employment to several men who furnish everything needed in a theatre in the way of scenery costumes and properties, and by properties is meant furniture, armour, and in fact every loose article, from a sheet of of writing paper to a steam launch that may be called for to 'dress the stage' or assist the actors in the play.

A great many of the 'props' are made out of papier mache and various other substances, but not so many as formerly. Of late years there is a demand for the real thing in stage settings. But this is a mis-

take. The imitation shows up better under the glare of the electric or calcium light, just as tea made-up complexion on the leading women's face looks more real than would her natural skin under the same circumstances.

There are almost frequent calls for these New York dealers in scenery and stage properties to go into the smaller cities where there is not sufficient business to warrant the employment of such talent permanently. One man in the business says that he has furnished houses from Florida and Texas in the South to Woodville in the extreme northern part of New Hampshire and across the continent all the way from New York to San Francisco with complete outfits for their stages. But their specialty lies with halls that have only a stage, and sometimes not even that, but no scenery at all, and in private houses where amateurs are ambitious to 'strut their brief season on the boards.'

When it comes to putting stage scenery in private houses the times are few and far between when they can furnish everything that is required without adding to their stock, for amateurs have a way of digging up unheard of or forgotten plays which require scenery of antediluvian times, the 'Aztec Period' or some other equally perplexing design. Clubs are also their patrons.

The question of stage scenery in private houses is a simple enough matter. The room selected for the stage is usually a back parlor. A stage that is one foot and a half high and is made in sections, so that it is easy to handle, is placed immediately back of the sliding doors, the frames of which make the permanent proscenium. Back of this comes the stage carpenter's proscenium, forming a second frame, upon which is adjusted the 'drop' curtain, forming one side of a square, the other three sides being formed by an open framework from which are suspended the 'drops for the backing of the various scenes, as also the 'borders' that finish out the picture overhead. On the sides are the wings, also supported from the frames, so that not any part of the arrangement comes in contact with the wall or ceiling, thereby avoiding all possibility of marrying their decoration. The footlights are on a line with the door frames in the back parlor, protected with reflectors between the audience and the lights, with a chain between the lights and players, as in a theatre. The gas connection is easily made by the means of a rubber tube. The whole thing can be put in position in a couple of hours, and when finished is really a complete little theatre.

As soon as a scene comes off the stage, if it is not again required, it is placed near the rear windows, and once the final curtain is rung down it is passed through the window to the back yard below, followed



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as rapidly as possible by piece after piece of the remaining parts, till all is out of the room.

The room can be cleared and ready for the dancers in just twenty minutes after the curtain falls. But to do this all hands must hustle and devote themselves exclusively to getting the room cleared. Later they can pack the stuff at their leisure and remove it through the basement way.

SPRING MEDICINE.

It is Absolutely Necessary to Give Some Attention to the Blood at This Season.

In the springtime the blood needs attention. The change of the year produces in everyone, whether conscious of it or not, some little heating of the blood.

Some people have pimples, a little eczema, or irritation of the skin; others feel easily tired and depressed and have a poor appetite. A tonic is needed, and the best tonic—the best spring medicine for man, woman or child is Dr. Williams' Pink Pills for Pale People. These pills do not purge and weaken like other medicines. They make rich, red blood, build up the nerves and make weak, depressed and easily tired people feel cheerful, active and strong. No other medicine in the world has offered such undoubted proof of merit, and what Dr. Williams' Pink Pills have done for others they will do for you if given a fair trial.

Miss Ella M. Kelly, North-West Harbor, N. S., says: "I can cheerfully recommend Dr. Williams' Pink Pills to any person suffering from any form of weakness, as I have proved their worth in my own case."

Remember that pink colored pills in glass jars, or in any loose form or in boxes that do not bear the full name "Dr. Williams' Pink Pills for Pale People" are not Dr. Williams'. No one was ever cured by a substitute. Sold by all dealers or direct from the Dr. Williams' Medicine Co., Brockville, Ont., at 50c a box or six boxes for \$2.50.

Thought He Knew.

Of the stories of unsophisticated relatives on their first visit to their city cousins, and the mistakes they make, there is no end. The blunders of city visitors to the country are equally amusing, no doubt, but do not so often get into print. Uncle Hiram, having accepted an invitation to

spend the Christmas holidays in Chicago, had arrived. It was a bitterly cold morning, and Uncle Hiram, to whom the heating of a house by a furnace in the basement was something entirely new, held his hands over the register in the floor, from which the heated air was coming up in gratifying volume.

"Well," he said, beaming with satisfaction, "it's a wonder to me you get so much heat in a cold day like this, when everybody else is trying to keep his house warm!"

"Why, where do you suppose it comes from, uncle?" asked his nephew.

"Of course I don't know exactly," replied Uncle Hiram, "but I know you got your water from the water works, and I've always had the idea that you got your fire from the fireworks."

ELECTION CARDS.

To the Electors of the City of Saint John:

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN—At the solicitation of a large number of citizens, I have concluded to be a candidate for the office of

MAYOR.

If elected I shall endeavor to administer civic affairs in a prudent manner and with a view to advancing the commercial and other interests of our city.

Soliciting your favor and support, I am, yours sincerely, WILLIAM B. WALLACE.

To the Electors of the City of Saint John:

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN—I will be candidate for

ALDERMAN AT LARGE

In the coming civic elections. If you think I am sufficiently interested in the welfare of the city to represent you in the council and elect me I shall try and merit your confidence.

Sincerely yours, J. W. KEAST.

To the Electors of the City of Saint John:

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN—At the solicitation of a large number of citizens, I have concluded to be a candidate for the office of

ALDERMAN AT LARGE

If elected I shall endeavor to administer civic affairs in a prudent manner and with a view to advancing the commercial and other interests of the city.

Soliciting your favor and support, I am, yours sincerely, J. B. HAMM.

To the Electors of the City of Saint John:

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN—At the solicitation of a number of citizens, I have decided to accept nomination for

ALDERMAN OF KINGS WARD,

and respectfully ask your support. W. C. R. ALLAN.

To the Electors of the City of Saint John:

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

At the last Civic election I received from you a vote as Candidate for Alderman for Lansdowne Ward, which in view of the fact that I was then unknown to many of you, and that I was also somewhat late in entering the field, was so large that I am encouraged to yield to the wishes of many of the electors, and again offer as a Candidate at the coming election.

Respectfully soliciting your support, I am, Yours faithfully, JOHN M. SMITH. St. John, March 30th, 1899.

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