MUSIC, STAGE & FILM

KING'S THEATRE—GAY DIVORCE.

Exquisite Dancing and Clever Dialogue.

Sophisticated Romance.

For long has the cinema lured the multitude of those between sixteen and sixty to its palaces with the appeal of sophisticated stories, embellished by the artifices of photography. Gay Divorce, staged at the King's Theatre on Saturday, with Billy Milton, Madge Aubrey, Gus Bluett, Mona Potts, Leo Franklyn and Dulcie Davenport in the principal roles, proved to be a sophisticated dancing and musical comedy of audaciously modern vintage, and one of the spiciest shows seen in Melbourne. The dialogue, clever in its selection and snappy simplicity, tells a story brilliantly; the piece has one or two catchy numbers, and the dancing suffuses romance, based on a questionable theme, with something that makes an audience vaguely conscious of having thoroughly enjoyed itself.

In the first act of two scenes, the audience could not make up its mind whether to be shocked or elated. Possibly the loose construction of what is described as an "intimate musical comedy" was responsible for this indecision. But the decorous bedroom suite scene of the seaside hotel settled any doubt. Mimi is the wife of "a geologist named Pratt;" Touet is an Italian family man of Putney, and idealised as a "professional co-respondent," and Guy Holden is a novelist who coins the boomerang password "Chance is the Fool's Name for Fate." They meet at a hotel ostensibly run by a waiter, the prototype of the shop assistant who, when you ask for a pair of cotton hose, gazes thoughtfully into your eyes and says: "I can tell that you have great trouble with your feet!" Yet in this queer hotel apparently nobody drinks anything stronger than tea or eats anything more indigestible than crumpets.

Unhappily, Iris Kirkwhite, who was to play Mimi, met with an accident on Thursday while dancing on her toes, which will disable her for a month or longer. Mona Potts, a recruit from the Australian ballet, however, stepped into her shoes, and with the encouraging co-operation of Billy Milton, the English dancer and comedian, won the plaudits of a critical audience. The grace and refinement of Miss Potts, combined with her self-assurance in the second act, inspire confidence that she will romp right into her part to-day with the spirit of a seasoned actress. It did not need the very gracious tribute of Mr. Milton, that she had mastered five dances, forty pages of dialogue and three songs in two days, to stimulate in Saturday's audience an enthusiasm on the actress's behalf which her amazing performance completely justified. Her waltz with Guy in the final scene was superb in its artistry, and throughout she played the principal character in an affair of "flagrante delicto" with an ingenuous charm which saved the theme from any gross implications. Mr. Milton, as Guy Holden, fulfilled expectations in the polish and finesse of an artist in his line, and if vocally he could not do justice to the song Night and Day, he caught the romantic mood of it in the method of his singing. Charming Madge Aubrey (as Hortense) re-established herself in favor, and her dance with Leo Franklyn was one of the most popular contributions to the evening's fun. She sang the notable lyric Where Would You Get Your Coat, excellently. Gus Bluett is always popular, and in spite of his bizarre costume, he made of Tonetti a convincing puppet, and infused humor into the song How's Your Romance. The Waiter gave Leo Franklyn, however, the best opportunity for genuine humor in the piece, and he revelled in the character. As Barbara, Dulcie Davenport exhibited further stage improvement. It is a pity that the three or four beautiful bathing girls who had speaking roles do not possess some of Miss Davenport's versatility. Frank Leighton was too restless for the role of Egbert, the solicitor; his excessive bluster and lurching gait in the character placed Guy, with his quietly effective manner, at a disadvantage in the early scenes. Something will certainly have to be done by the producer, Charles A. Wenman, to speed up the first act, for its brilliant curtain shock is not alone sufficient.

Gay Divorce is staged in settings which are simple rather than spectacular; the bedroom suite is delightful in its soft tones. The play is produced by Charles A. Wenman. Arrangement of the ballets proved difficult for Edward Royce, jun., but the slipper dance in the corridor was exquisite. Will Quintrell conducted the orchestra in music which is always rhythmic if not colorful. The waltz You're In Love should become very popular.

Matinees will be given to-day, to-morrow and on Saturday. The booking today will be at King's Theatre.

COLLITS' INN.

A Splendid Success.

Australian audiences have become so accustomed to seeing reproductions of English and American musical romances, such as Rose Marie, The Maid of the Mountains and many others, and to relying upon such proved popular successes overseas for light entertainment, that it would seem to be a particularly daring project to present an all-Australian musical play. There is, of course, no earthly reason why that should not have been done long before now. The talent, both literary and musical, has undoubtedly been here all the time, but the main trouble has been to find someone with sufficient imagination and faith in Australians (and sufficient money to back his faith) to be the pioneer. No doubt the growing success of the Australian film industry has encouraged Mr. F. W. Thring, managing director of Efftee Attractions, to make the attempt, and on Saturday night an audience that packed the Princess Theatre to the doors saw the result, when Collits' Inn was presented. The almost uproarious enthusiasm with which the play was received from start to finish, and the gasps of amazement and admiration that resounded through the theatre as that ingenious novelty a revolving stage revealed several scenes of spectacular color and beauty, left no doubt at all as to the success of the show. The libretto, lyrics, music, ballets, scenery and production were all the work of clever Australians—it was with ample justice described as an "all-Australian" musical romance—and the impression undoubtedly made upon the first-night audience, at any rate, was that this play was in every respect as successful as the overseas reproductions seen in Melbourne in recent years. It will be very surprising if Collits' Inn does not enjoy a long run.

The story of Collits' Inn, which was written by Mr. T. S. Gurr, deals with that colorful period of Australian history when convicts were engaged, under military supervision, building the road from Penrith across the Blue Mountains of New South Wales to the Western Plains. About eighty miles from Sydney, on the western side of the range, stood Collits' Inn, and here most of the action of the play has been set. The daughter of the innkeeper falls in love with a young officer of an infantry regiment which was sent to the locality, but her father refuses his consent to the marriage. The presence of a romantic bushranger in the vicinity, who is also in love with the girl, complicates matters, and it is against this background of a picturesque inn and of soldiers, of bushrangers, aboriginals, &c., that the play is unfolded.

Probably the most effective scene in the play, and certainly the one that evoked the most enthusiasm, was that showing the aboriginals' corroboree, in which ballet girls, attired in the fearsome-looking native costumes, presented a weird but singularly stirring dance. The distant calls of Australian bush birds added to the effectiveness of the scene.

Several tuneful musical numbers, by Mrs. Varney Monk, who wrote and composed the lyrics and music, caught the fancy, the best being The Red Coats (sung by the soldiers), Stay While the Stars Are Shining (the theme song sung by Gladys Moncrieff and Robert Chisholm), and Australia, a fine rousing patriotic piece, fit to be adopted as a national anthem.

Gladys Moncrieff (as Mary Collits) and Robert Chisholm (as Captain John Lake) play the main romantic parts, each giving an intelligent representation of the character, and both being heard in several good vocal numbers. Claude Flemming, who was responsible for the production of the show, takes the part of the outlaw Robert Keane, and others who are prominent for pleasing work are Byrl Walkley (as the housekeeper at Collits' Inn), Marshall Crosby (Pierce Collits, landlord of inn), Harold Meade (who makes a capital Governor Darling), George Wallace (as Dandy Dick, a rouseabout) and Phyllis Baker (as Sally a serving maid at the inn).

There will be matinees to-day, to-morrow and on Saturday.

PHILHARMONIC SOCIETY.

Handel's Messiah.

The Christmas performance of Handel's Messiah is a splendid bulwark against the inroads of an excessive modernity. The new music, the new morality and art without direction are all steadied by reactionary influences long tested and too sound to be discarded with outworn traditions. Music must inevitably draw upon the past while creating history. Elgar and Strauss have spent their forces. Brahms and Dvorak have not yet received their due. Mendelssohn is annually demanded in Melbourne. Schubert and Schumann have still more to say to the world of to-day, despite the impatience of the blase with romance. Further back there are the dwellers on Olympian heights, universally esteemed, against whom impressionists and transition experimenters dare not measure themselves. Handel is sublime; but the sublime is not for everyone. It is not for the proud or the conceited, for the technician or the altitudinarian. The sublime is for the true of heart, the guided and the sincere. The Philharmonic Society, loyal to Handel and Mendelssohn, should have numberless subscribers in this great city of Melbourne.

With all our supply of musical talent and much study, Melbourne is not rich in highly competent artists for special occasions. Opera here is in its infancy, and prima donnas are not numerous. Oratorio singing needs special gifts and training. Leadership in the several departments of the orchestra could be strengthened, and conductors are admittedly few. We are not acknowledging poverty when making statements like these, but only our youth. Opera and oratorio demand artists of the highest skill and resourcefulness. Professor Heinze and the Philharmonic Society have done much to assist singers in gaining experience in their art. An even quartet of oratorio soloists is essential for a good performance. A good chorus is not enough. And the accompanying orchestra, safe with the chorus, is not always found willing to efface itself when supporting a soloist.

The performance on Christmas night in the Town Hall, without the stimulus given it by Professor Heinze, would have shown inequalities minimising the effect of some of the special pleading legitimately desired by Handel. Miss Violet Jackson's clear tones, occasionally unsteady in their ring, served admirably in the coloratura aria Rejoice Greatly, the pastoral recitatives and the consolatory themes Come Unto Him and I Know That My Redeemer Liveth. Her earnest style touched the hearts of the listeners.

Miss Etta Bernard has every desire to employ her beautiful contralto voice expressively. As yet a limited experience holds her back from making a profound appeal, such as the air He was Despised creates when interpreted by a finished artist. She excited sympathy in her singing of He Shall Feed His Flock.

Mr. Norman Bradshaw sang with ease and resonant tone, always musical in quality, in the tenor role. His faults are due to an individualistic style. He is swayed by emotion. A steadying influence gained through finer musicianship would enable him to attain certitude that a living tradition could fully respect. The florid arias gave the singer no trouble.

Mr. Newstead Rush, in the bass solos, was vigorous, but not specially sensitive. A monotony in production reduced his opportunity for eloquent phrasing. His vowel sounds were unduly broadened in some cases, but he was the only singer imperfect in diction. Clarity in execution marked the singing of But Who May Abide and Why Do the Nations?

The chorus gave great satisfaction to the audience. The society is so well versed in the Handelian text that the voices invariably accomplish tehir work with certainty as to time and tone. But familiarity is a danger, especially in the singing of oft-repeated words. Principals and chorus could have been more particular in their enunciation of final consonants. The vigilant conductor saw to the entry of the voices in leads. The tempo of Behold the Lamb is still too slow. A few numbers are not omitted without regret. The choruses, And With His Stripes and All We Like Sheep Have Gone Astray, have not been heard from the Philharmonic for some time. The Lord Gave the Word is a fine vocal study as well as a brilliant concert number. He Trusted in God, rehearsed legato at a slower tempo, would probably leave the right degree of emphasis and fall in with the reflective character of an oratorio chorus.

The text concerning the sanctification of the human race, announced by the message of an angel and potentially fulfilled in the Incarnation, provided the inspired composer with a number of highly impressive periods of climax. The Hallelujah Chorus, one of these, found the singers and players at their best. The sequential choruses, Worthy is the Lamb, Blessing and Honor, and the final Amen Chorus, in content and value adequately sum up the entire masterpiece. Very willingly the audience embraced the ideas and themes of the oratorio, leaving it clear to the performers that their spiritual energies and resultant effects were an inspiring uplift. Isabel Matthews, with deft hands, gave finishing touches at the organ. Professor Heinze kept the orchestra well in hand. It was unfortunate that frequent applause seriously broke into the continuity of the work.

CINDERELLA.

Delightful Production.

The story of Cinderella is as old as the hills, but notwithstanding its age and the countless times it has been told and retold, it never fails to charm and to please. Mr. Frank Neil was indeed well advised to use this well-loved tale as a basis for his pantomime, which opened at the Palace Theatre, Bourke-street, on Saturday. The pantomime does not keep strictly to the original plot, but then, what pantomime does? It embodies, however, all the really necessary essentials. There is Cinderella, charmingly winsome, delightfully portrayed by Josie Melville (it seems a pity there are not more Cinderella-like roles in present-day drama for Miss Melville to play, for she looks enchanting); Dandini, arrogant and bombastic (Dorothy Dewar); the bad Baron (Elton Black), the Demon King (Henry Ratcliffe), the two ugly sisters (Syd Beck, superbly funny, and Bert Ray, also most amusing), and of course, Prince Charming, played by Miriam Lester. They are all here, the fairy-tale folk, charming or funny as the case might be. There are delightful ballets, by a number of exceptionally clever youngsters; a dog and monkey circus, which appeared to intrigue the small folks especially, and the five Famous Whirlwind Cleverers. The lastnamed are particularly well worth seeing—their turn is one of the finest of its kind yet presented in Melbourne. Then, last, but by no means least, there is Cinderella's fairy coach, drawn by real white ponies. When these appeared upon the stage on Saturday, a gasp of wonderment went up—"how marvellous" gasped the young audience, enthralled. Yes, Cinderella is a very good show, but—there is unfortunately often a but, in these productions some of the rhymes and jokes are in somewhat doubtful taste, and might well be left out. A pantomime is, after all, intended mainly for children, and to introduce vulgar quips and jests—which one would like to point out were not even funny—is hardly wise. In every other way Cinderella is as charming a pantomime as we have had.

Bijou—Mickey the Mouse Revue

To those who have no inherent antipathy towards seeing children performing on the professional stage, the Mickey the Mouse Revue, which opened at the Bijou Theatre on Saturday, should prove an amusing and enjoyable entertainment. In it 250 children, many of them of the kindergarten age, take part in ballets, sketches, tap dances and other items, which have, on the whole, brightness and cleverness, if not originality, to recommend them. Moreover, with a few exceptions, the artificial note which so often mars children's productions is avoided. They are allowed to be natural, and there is in many of the numbers a naive unconscious simplicity which is infinitely appealing. The children will love the revue, in which their beloved Mickey and Minnie Mouse play quite a large part. The woodland scene and the children's party in the nursery are especially delightful. Some of the acrobatic stunts, on the other hand, lack the ease and natural grace which is essential if they are to be entirely pleasing.

Pantomime at Temperance Hall.

Some clever tap dancing and attractively arranged ballets marked the first production of the Snowdrop Pantomime at the Temperance Hall on Saturday. It was pantomime played for children by children and young people. About eighty took part in the production, and they played all the traditional pantomime parts. There was the principal boy, who waked the principal girl, "Snowdrop," from sleep; the Fairy Queen in glittering white and silver; the handsome but wicked Queen, who condemned Snowdrop to die because she was considered more beautiful than the Queen herself. There was a pantomime dame, and, most fascinating of all, a pantomime cow. This cow, "Strawberry" by name, happened to be a dancer, and her dancing was an extremely clever item on the programme. The producer, Miss May Downs, deserves special praise for the careful drilling of her young actors and actresses, some of whom were extremely young.

Carol Service.

The carol service at St. Paul's Cathedral on Saturday evening diffused sweetness and light among the large congregation. The mingling of pure human joy with reverential awe, characteristic of carols in contrast with many hymns, constitutes a charm appealing to almost every type and variety in the social order. Carols sung consistently with their simple spirit afford pleasure, while satisfying those deep instincts stirred by the universality of the Christmas message.

The Cathedral choir, under Dr. A. E. Floyd, sang an extensive list of carols. Specially beautiful were those by long-forgotten authors, such as Come, Rock the Cradle for Him and Unto Us is Born a Son. Several carols were from the pen of the Cathedral organist. A variety of sources was drawn upon to enhance the selection and provide the greatest amount of interest and pleasure for the listeners.

The singing was in exquisite taste. Beautiful effects were obtained by solos, the sopranos alone—sympathetic expression of early modes of musical and poetic thought. Perhaps the most memorable numbers were Hark! the Herald Angels Sing, The Carol of the Star, The Coventry Carol, and Away in a Manger, but others could be mentioned of almost equal charm.

PICTURE THEATRES.

State Theatre—Blonde Bombshell.

Whether Blonde Bombshell, one of the principal attractions on this week's programme at the State Theatre, may be classed as an addition to a number of recent American talkies intended to make fun of, or point a moral at their own institutions, there is, at all events, a definite suggestion of satire or burlesque about the picture. With Jean Harlow in the star role, supported by Lee Tracy, Una Merkel and Pat O'Brien, Blonde Bombshell is a "talkie" about the "talkies." The plot deals with the life of a screen star, whose family and energetic publicity agent seem to thrive on her reputation as an artist of the "it" type, while she herself develops a hankering for a normal, unexciting home life. The screen star runs away for a holiday from the studio. Her indefatigable press agent at once gets busy, his most effective bit of work being the ruse by which he gets his star back to "location" and the screen public. It is the theatre audience and not the story public, however, who are treated to a mild surprise in the final development. The other picture, The Little Giant, features Mary Astor, Edward G. Robinson and Helen Vinson, and deals with the experiences of a notorious Chicago identity who is aided in a "break into society" by a society girl, whose house he has leased. Incidentally the "hero" makes use of his former society associates for the purposes of revenging himself on a section of the upper social strata, which has "trimmed him." Sam R. White's concert orchestra and Arnold' Colman's Yuletide were entertaining stage interludes.

Regent—Paddy the Next Best Thing.

The latest programme at Hoyts Regent Theatre is an excellent entertainment. The well-known comedy Paddy the Next Best Thing, is presented with Janet Gaynor and Warner Baxter in the leading roles. As Paddy, Janet Gaynor is wholly delightful with her winsomeness and her vivacity and her repartee, and Warner Baxter, physically, is perhaps a little out of place as Lawrence Blake, a rich visitor from the tea plantations, but he is such a sterling actor that the defect is scarcely noticeable. Walter Connolly gives an excellent sketch as Major Adair, Paddy's father. The picture is splendidly produced, a feature being the many charming Irish scenes. Facing The Music is a Stanley Lupino "whirlwind" farce, and a very amusing one, in which the comedian is well supported by Jose Collins as Calvini, an operatic singer, and by Nancy Brown as Madame Rivers. Enjoyable features of this picture are the excerpts from Faust in the operatic scenes. Other very acceptable items are a Terrytoon Christmas novelty Toyland, selections by the Regent orchestra, under the baton of Stan. Porter; organ solos by Lionel Correck, and Clarrie Collins in a unique musical presentation, in which a trombone is skilfully exploited.

Majestic—Night of the Garter.

A jewelled garter given innocently as a mere mark of esteem to a lovely girl is the cause of frenzied doings in Night of the Garter, a British Dominions film. The dainty circlet, with its damning import, comes to light on the day the girl is married—to another man. How to dispose of it? This is a question that drives both the bride (Winifred Shotter) and the giver (Jack Melford), who, by the way, is now married to a jealous wife almost frantic before they are through with it. This bright comedy begins with a wedding, passes on to a sequestered country house, and ends in a burnt-out barn, where Bodger, the deputy butler, who is none other than Sydney Howard, preternaturally grave as ever, prepares for sleep on a comfortable bed of hay. It maintains the reputation of Sydney Howard and Winifred Shotter, and earns high praise for Elsie Randolph and Connie Ediss.

The First Mrs. Fraser is not worth the degree of technical skill lavished on it. It is scarcely more animated than a play reading. The players exhibit a Red Indian immobility of countenance and enunciate "pansy" English with the most irritating slowness. One of the most bloodless affairs a high-class English studio has sent us for a long time, drained of all passion where everything should be passion.

Capitol—Marlene Dietrich.

The new programme at the Capitol caters for all tastes—for those inclined to be critical as well as those who are content with the average "night at the pictures." The Song of Songs, based on the story written by Sudermann, the German novelist, gives ample scope for the undoubted ability of Marlene Dietrich. Judged by the standards of real life, the story itself is impossible, but screen stories are like that, and, after all, the average picture gazer is entertained by the incidents that pass before his eyes on the screen, and does not analyse too closely the logic or the probabilities of the plot. Brian Aherne, a well-known English actor, makes his screen debut in this picture. Gary Cooper is featured in the supporting screening of One Sunday Afternoon. The musical side of the programme, including several numbers by the orchestra, is excellent, and a gazette of events in other parts of the world is not the least interesting feature.

Lyceum—Supernatural.

How Hollywood likes to base its plots on the great problems of the age. One of these days a solution to all that science and psychology does not know will slip out of a back-stage door in filmland. Maybe. But not in Supernatural at the Lyceum Theatre this week. It is a picture, with a plot based on the supernatural, and but for its dramatic effect would make all but the credulous people smile. Carole Lombard as Roma Courtney, heads a cast which includes H. B. Warner, Randolph Scott and Vivienne Osborne. The story is of Roma's wish to communicate with her dead twin brother; of intervention of an unscrupulous spiritualist, and of Roma's sudden subjection to the murderous spirit of a woman strangler, who died in the electric chair. The dramatic effect, produced in the reaction of the characters to the vague invisible is considerable, although it is laid on like a poultice at times. The supporting picture, Diamond Cut Diamond, featuring Adolph Menjou and Claude Allister, is an amusing and rather complicated account of two jewel thieves at work, well done with an appropriate ending.

Auditorium—On Approval and Say It With Music.

In accordance with the festive spirit of Christmas, a programme of merriment and music is beign served for the holidays at the Auditorium, where a policy of reviving pictures of exceptional merit and proved popularity has been adopted. The outstanding attraction in the new programme is On Approval, one of the successful British productions, with Tom Walls as the chief comedian, and Winifred Shotter, Mary Brough and other capable artists adding to the fun. Adapted from Frederick Lonsdale's play, the screen version of On Approval is a film production that can be enjoyed more than once, and should make a successful revival. The second feature of the programme is Say It With Music, a musical drama, in which Jack Payne and his band are the central figures. Into the story are introduced a number of popular songs, Oriental airs and other items that help to make the picture a bright musical attraction. This also is a British Dominions production.

Athenæum—Thark.

The popularity of Thark, with Tom Walls and Ralph Lynn in the leading roles, is filling the Athenæum Theatre. The picture has entered on its eighth week. The Love Contract is the supporting comedy. In this Winifred Shotter and Owen Nares appear.

Plaza—Secrets.

So successful has been Secrets, in which Mary Pickford is featured at the Plaza, that the season has been extended. It is a powerful love drama. Also in the programme are The Shadows (Henry Kendall) and the cartoon Babes in the Wood.

Hoyts de Luxe—Hayseeds.

Humorous situations are provided in Hayseeds Come to Town, which has entered on its second week at Hoyts De Luxe. In this Cecil Kellaway, Shirley Dale, John Moore and Tal Ordell are grouped in amusing and exciting scenes. The Pride of the Force is the supporting picture.

Mayfair—Falling for You.

Falling for You is in its fourth week at the Mayfair. That Jack Hulbert supplies the leading role is sufficient to say that the comedy is good. The dramatic element is provided in F.P.1.

Times Theatrette.

The latest news films, local and abroad, are on release at the Times Theatrette. These include romantic white man's paradise, pleasure aboard a luxury liner, views of the Great Barrier Reef, Chinese floods, Welsh choir in Sydney, and Melbourne wool sales.

Melba—Broadway to Hollywood.

The story of high life, Broadway to Hollywood, is on show at the Melba, and is supported by Elmer the Great.

Suburban Theatres.

Among the feature pictures to be shown this week at suburban theatres, mostly for three nights, particulars of which are advertised, are the following:—I Loved You Wednesday (Warner Baxter and Elissa Landi)—at Waratah (Ascot Vale), Austral (Collingwood), Regent (Fitzroy), Newmarket, Cinema (Richmond); The Keyhole (Kay Francis and Geo. Bent)—New Ascot (Ascot Vale), New Essendon (Essendon), Waratah (Ascot Vale), Crystal Palace (Carnegie-Caulfield); Hard to Handle (James Cagney)—Empire (Brunswick), Fairfield, Ivanhoe; Adorable (Janet Gaynor and Henri Garat)—Lygon (East Brunswick), Canterbury, Barkly (Footscray); Tugboat Annie (Marie Dressler and Wallace Beery)—Crystal Palace (Carnegie-Caulfield), Empire (Brunswick), Newmarket; Peg o' My Heart (Marion Davies)—Alhambra (Brunswick), Trocadero (Footscray), Canterbury; Best of Enemies (Marion Nixon and Buddy Rogers)—Town Hall (Coburg), Westgarth (Westgarth); Rio Rita (John Boles and Bebe Daniels)—Clifton (Clifton Hill); Strangers Return (Lionel Barrymore)—Fairfield (Fairfield), Lygon (East Brunswick), Ivanhoe (Ivanhoe); When Strangers Marry (Jack Holt)—Merri (North Fitzroy), Regent (Thornbury), Westgarth (Westgarth); International House (W. C. Fields)—Plaza (Newport); Parachute Jumper (D. Fairbanks, jun.)—Barkly (Footscray); Another Language (Robert Montgomery)—Palace (Glenferrie); Secret of the Blue Room (Paul Lukas)—Rialto (Kew), Regent (Thornbury); College Humor (Bing Crosby)—Northcote (Northcote), Regent (Thornbury), Palace (Glenferrie), Rialto (Kew); Mama Loves Papa (Charlie Ruggles and Mary Boland)—Port (Port Melbourne), National (Richmond), Palais (St. Kilda), Austral (Collingwood); Midnight Mary (Loretta Young)—Williamstown (Williamstown), Plaza (Newport), Empress (Williamstown); Whistling in the Dark (Una Merkel)—Empress (Williamstown); Secrets of the French Police (Frank Morgan)—Alhambra (Brunswick); Radio Parade—Town Hall (Coburg); Say It With Music (Percy Marmont)—Fairfield (Fairfield), Ivanhoe (Ivanhoe); Turn Back the Clock (Lee Tracey)—Regent (Fitzroy), Cinema (Richmond); Loyalties (Basil Rathbone)—Merri (North Fitzroy), Port (Port Melbourne); It's Great to be Alive (Gloria Stuart)—Rialto (Kew); Blondie Johnson (Joan Blondell)—Regent (Thornbury), Westgarth (Westgarth). Other pictures to be screened at these theatres will include Radio Parade, Below the Sea, Life in the Raw, So This Is Africa, Cabin in the Cotton, Secret of the Blue Room, Good Companions.

Garrick—Dear Brutus.

The Gregan McMahon season of Dear Brutus will open at the Garrick Theatre to-night, with popular prices of admission. A strong company has been provided to present J. M. Barrie's popular comedy. The box plan is at the theatre.

ON CHRISTMAS MORNING—BATHING AT ST. KILDA.

Yesterday morning everyone who was near the bay seized the opportunity for a cooling dip. St. Kilda foreshore was particularly well patronised, as this picture shows.

ON CHRISTMAS AFTERNOON—FLOODED STREETS.

Two pictures taken yesterday afternoon at the height of the thunder and hail storm which broke over the city at five o'clock. The picture on the left was taken from the steps of St. Paul's Cathedral looking across Swanston-street, the storm water had nearly reached across the pavement to the coping stone edging the path and lawns around the Cathedral. The fire alarm and the ambulance call standards which are shown well in the flood water, are really at the edge of the pavement. (Right)—Rushing to shelter after leaving a tram, a picture which indicates the size of the heavy rain drops that fell at the beginning of the storm.

IMPORTANT VISITORS AT THE CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL.

Father Christmas accompanied by his twin brother arrived at the Children's Hospital on a Fire Engine driven by real firemen yesterday, the extension ladder enabled them to reach the top balcony of the hospital very easily.

THE NURSES' CHRISTMAS.

After the patients had enjoyed their Christmas dinner, the nurses had theirs. A picture taken at the Alfred Hospital yesterday in the gaily decorated nurses' diningroom.

WOMAN STRUCK WITH CHAIR.

Having been struck with a chair during an alleged quarrel, Mrs. Ellen Davies, 46 years, Church-street, West Footscray, was taken to Melbourne Hospital on Saturday night and admitted suffering from facial lacerations and a broken arm.

William Joseph Fitzgerald, 29 years, laborer, was charged at Footscray watch house with having inflicted grievous bodily harm.

THE WEATHER.

High-pressure control which was shown on Saturday over the southern half of the continent has moved east to the Tasman Sea during the last two days. Its influence was apparently breaking down during the last 24 hours owing to the combined movement of monsoonal dips from the north and west. Very few reports are available to indicate the position or extent of the inland trough that has been formed. In Melbourne yesterday temperatures ranged from 73.6 deg. at 9 a.m. to 89.3 deg. at 3 p.m. and 85.1 deg. at 4 p.m. Heavy rain in the city fell between 4.45 p.m. and 5.45 p.m., and 160 points were registered. Sultry, thunder-storm conditions should pass to the eastward, with cooler south-east to southerly winds becoming more general, with some showers on and south of the ranges.

FORECASTS FOR TO-DAY.

(Issued 9 p.m. Monday, 25th December.)

VICTORIA.—At first sultry and unsettled, with further rain and thunder, but becoming cooler with S.E. to southerly winds and some showers in the south.

AIR ROUTE FORECASTS.

(For Tuesday, 26th December.)

Melbourne to Adelaide, Hay.—Scattered thunder storms, then broken cloud. E. to S.E. and southerly, 10-20 m.p.h.

Melbourne to Launceston.—Scattered thunder storms to broken cloud. N.E. to S.E., 15-30 m.p.h.

Melbourne to Sydney.—Scattered thunder storms to broken cloud. N.E. to S.E., 15-30 m.p.h.

OFFICIAL RAINFALL RECORDS.

MELBOURNE.—Monday, 25th December.

	Pts.
Rainfall for 24 hours ended 9 a.m.	—
Rainfall for 12 hours ended 9 p.m.	160

RAINFALL COMPARISON FOR MELBOURNE.

	Pts.
Average, 77 years, 1st Jan. to end of Dec.	2561
1933—1st January to 25th December	2074
1932—1st January to 25th December	2108

The following are the official rainfall records where the points registered were 10 or over for the 24 hours ended 9 a.m. on Saturday:—

NEW SOUTH WALES.

Byrock, 46 points; Grafton, 24; Sydney, 22; Kiama, 31.

NORTH AUSTRALIA.

Darwin, 73 points.

QUEENSLAND.

Thursday Island, 29 points; Willis Island, 30; Port Moresby, 90.

TASMANIA.

L. Margaret, 27 points; Queenstown, 14; Gormanston, 19; Hythe, 19; South Bruni, 10.

NEW SOUTH WALES STATION REPORTS.

Received by the Australian Estates and Mortgage Co. Ltd., 23rd inst.:—Overflow, Nymagee, 48 hours to 9 Friday: Wirlong 26, Priory 56, Moothumbil 20, Overflow 32.

MELBOURNE OBSERVATIONS.

(Monday, 25th December.)

	Corrected Barometer.	Dry Bulb.	Wet Bulb.	Relative Humidity. P.C.
9 a.m.	30.091	77.3	65.2	49
3 p.m.	29.870	87.2	71.0	42
9 p.m.	29.876	63.5	62.4	83

TEMPERATURES AT CAPITAL CITIES.

(Saturday, 23rd December.)

	Max.	Min.		Max.	Min.
Brisbane	83	71	Melbourne	66	54
Sydney	76	64	Adelaide	78	53
Canberra	—	—	Perth	—	72
Hobart	57	40			

(Sunday, 24th December.)

	Max.	Min.		Max.	Min.
Brisbane	—	68	Melbourne	75.6	51.3
Sydney	67	64	Adelaide	84	56
Hobart	64	43	Perth	82	67

(Monday, 25th December.)

	Max.	Min.		Max.	Min.
Brisbane	—	69	Melbourne	89.3	54.0
Sydney	67	64	Adelaide	84	56
Hobart	62	45	Perth	82	67

ASTRONOMICAL MEMORANDA.

December 27.—Sun rises, 4.58; sun sets, 7.41. Moon rises, 3.53 p.m.; moon sets, 1.10 a.m.; new moon, 15th January; full moon, 1st January.

MAJOR PLANETS.—December 27.

	Rises.	Sets.
Mercury	4.0 a.m.	6.45 p.m.
Venus	8.23 a.m.	10.13 p.m.
Mars	6.51 a.m.	9.20 p.m.
Jupiter	12.55 a.m.	1.42 p.m.
Saturn	8.7 a.m.	10.5 p.m.

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CENSUS OF ABORIGINALS.

Increase of Half-Castes.

Each State Statistician, in co-operation with the protector or board of protectors in his State, obtains in June of each year data regarding full-blood and half-caste aboriginals. In all States police act as collectors, and the heads of mission and Government stations supply information regarding aboriginals under their care. The difficulty of making an accurate count of the aboriginals is due to the wide area over which they are scattered, their nomadic habits and the fact that they are not all under the control of the authorities. The latter obstacle to obtaining authentic figures is particularly marked in West Australia, where each year since the first systematic aboriginal census was taken twelve years ago, the estimated number living outside Governmental control has not varied from the original number of 10,000. The annual figures relating to full-blood aboriginals for the period 1921-33 have been roughly about 60,000. In some years the recorded number has been a little over 60,000, and in others slightly below that figure. The number of full-bloods as at 30th June, 1933, was 60,101. It would appear therefore that the number of the full-blood aboriginal population is stationary. Half-castes, however, have shown a consistent increase since 1921, when they numbered 12,630 up to 1933, when the total reached 19,467. Regarding the employment of aboriginals, the information obtained may be considered fairly accurate. In 1933 about 9225 full-bloods and 3374 half-castes were in regular employment. These figures show a decline of about 2100 on the total for 1930, the falling off no doubt being due to the prevailing depression affecting the employment of aboriginals.

Based on information supplied by a large number of police officials the aboriginals in regular employment are almost exclusively engaged in primary industries, the largest number being employed on sheep and cattle stations; others are occupied in clearing, farm work, trapping rabbits, dingoes and foxes, in fishing, corn pulling, potato digging and so forth. The females engage largely in domestic work. Those police officials who express themselves on the matter testify to the good conduct and satisfactory state of health of the aboriginals, and to the fact that quite a large number of aboriginal children—full-bloods and half-castes—attend State and mission schools.

RIVER GAUGINGS.

(Saturday, 23rd December.)

(Above Summer Level.)

	Flood or Critical Stage. Ft. In.	Height at 9 a.m. Ft. In.	Change in 24 Hrs. Ft. In.
DARLING and TRIBUTARIES—			
Yetman	36 0	5 6	—0 3
Boggabilla (F)	22 0	5 0	—0 3
Mungindi (R)	22 0	11 7	+0 9
Mogil (R)	20 0	2 9	+0 3
Collarenebri	12 0	2 7	—
Walgett	22 0	15 8	+0 6
Brewarrina (F)	25 0	6 0	—0 3
Gunnedah	23 0	5 0	—
Dubbo	34 0	6 4	—0 4
New Angledool	8 0	Low	—
Goodooga (F)	10 0	2 10	—0 4
Brenda (F)	17 0	6 0	—1 0
Bourke (F)	41 6	25 3	—1 2
Louth (F)	38 0	27 3	—0 1
Tilpa (F)	42 0	29 3	+0 1
Wilcannia (R)	30 0	28 10	+0 3
Menindie	23 0	23 2	+0 1
			2 days
Pooncarie	23 0	18 4	+0 3
Wentworth	22 0	15 5	+0 1
LACHLAN—			
Cowra	40 0	3 0	—0 7
Forbes	27 6	6 6	—0 10
Condobolin	23 0	5 8	+0 1
Euabalong	20 0	5 0	—
Hillston (F)	28 0	6 7	—0 3
Booligal	8 0*	7 0*	—
MURRUMBIDGEE—			
Burrinjuck Dam	—	9 6†	+0 1
Tumut	10 0	3 8	—0 2
Wagga	20 0	4 6	—0 3
Narandera	23 6	9 6	—0 8
Yanco Creek	19 0	5 0	—0 5
Hay	20 0*	7 0*	+0 5
Balranald	16 0*	5 7*	—0 3
EDWARD—			
Deniliquin	26 0	5 4	+0 1
Moulamein	15 6	6 7	+0 1
MURRAY and TRIBUTARIES—			
Wangaratta	16 0*	6 11*	—
Benalla (A.S.L.)	14 6	0 2	—0 1
Seymour	15 0	2 10	—0 1
Shepparton	33 0*	7 5*	—2 0
Hume Reservoir	—	11 9†	—0 2
Heywoods	18 0*	9 9*	—
Albury	14 0*	7 2*	—
Wahgunyah	23 6	10 10	+0 2
Yarrawonga	25 0	11 4	—
Tocumwal	22 0*	11 8*	—
Barmah Township	22 0	11 4	—
Echuca	29 0	12 2	+0 2
Barham	19 0	12 8	+0 11
Swan Hill	15 0*	11 3*	—0 0¼
Wakool Junction	29 0*	20 1*	—
Euston	22 0	14 11	+0 1
Mildura	21 0	15 2	+0 1
Lanecoorie	14 0	2 2½	—0 1¼
SNOWY—			
Jindabyne	20 0	1 4	—0 1
Orbost	17 0	7 0	—

(R) Signifies river rising. (F) Signifies river falling. *Height above zero on gauge; zero being about the cease to flow (not summer) level. †Below top-water level. A.S.L. above summer level.

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