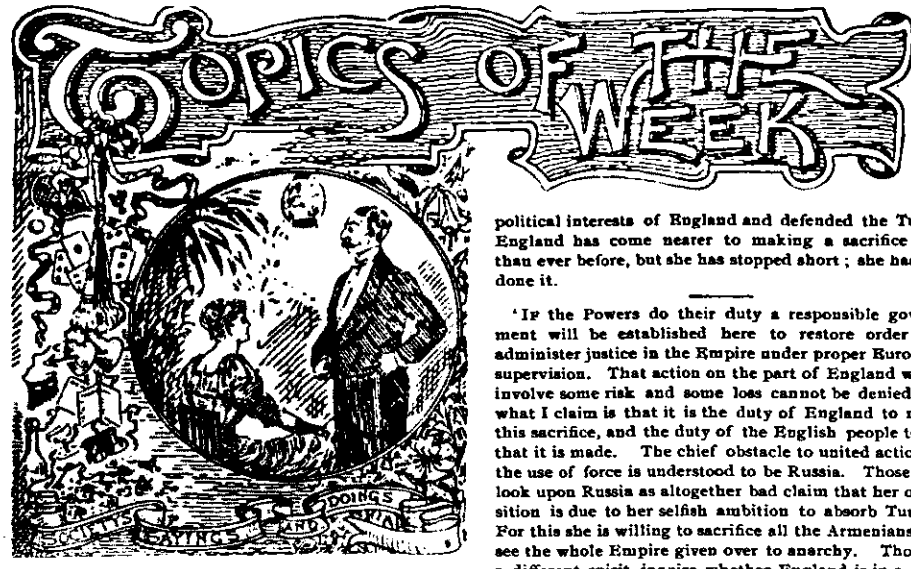
POLLARD'S OPERA COMPANY.

IT is a long time—a very long time—since I have seen a better performance of a comic opera than that of 'Paul Jones,' with which Pollard's Opera Company opened their New Zealand season in Auckland. It is not only fifty per cent. better than anything the Pollard's have produced during the last five years or so, but it is without any question a better all-round performance than that given by the 'firm's' Opera Company last year. With the single exception of Marion Burton, I have never heard the music of Paul Jones's own part so well and effectively sung as by Miss Maud Beatty, and in acting Miss Beatty excelled Madame Burton in every emergency and in every scene. She threw herself into the part with an earnestness and thoroughness which did one good to see in these days of spoiled favourites. If anything, indeed, Miss Beatty takes the part somewhat too seriously. Her acting is admirable and most conscientious, but it would be none the worse for an infusion of the devil-may-care, buccaneering, and debonair air which one associates with the name of the famous Paul. So greatly did the improvement Miss Beatty has already made impress me, and so delighted am I with the careful and thorough manner in which she goes to work, that I hesitated before setting down the above suggestion for improvement. It is no wish to pick a fault in an admirable performance on her part, but a hearty desire to see her achieve that perfect success which must surely be hers if she works and improves in the future as she has done in the past. Miss Sandford, who first made a hit in 'The Rose and the Ring' about a year or eighteen months ago, shows wonderful improvement, and thoroughly fulfils the promise then held out. Her Chopinette was a fine performance. The Rufino of the cast, Miss Emily Metcalfe, is likewise a distinct success.

It is a little surprising that the one disappointment of the cast should be Miss Marion Mitchell. And this is also irritating, for it is abundantly evident that Miss Mitchell's *powers*, both in voice and of acting, are as good as ever when she takes the trouble to use them. Miss Mitchell's voice is what it has always been, one of unusual brilliance, and she can when she chooses act with a dash and spirit quite irresistible. But on the evening I witnessed 'Paul Jones' Miss Mitchell did *not* choose. Her ideas were centred less upon the play than upon Miss Mitchell. Now, a reputation is a very good thing, and Miss Mitchell has earned a big reputation in New Zealand, but though it is *hard* to kill a reputation, the thing can be done. It seemed to me that perhaps the lady did not like playing second fiddle, which unquestionably Yvonne had to do to Paul Jones, but it is surely better to play second fiddle well than by sheer carelessness and affectation to play fifth or sixth, coming in after the ruck of secondary characters. If Miss Mitchell likes she can play Yvonne as well as that character has ever been played here, and she will do extremely well to 'like,' and the sooner the better. For the rest, the performance was a most excellent one in deed, and the production reflects the very highest credit on Mr Tom Pollard. That gentleman is a genius where stage 'business' is concerned. His hand is very clearly seen throughout, and always to his credit.

'Girofle-Girofla' has also been played very successfully.



COLONIALS, many of them at any rate, have scarcely been able to understand or endure the protracted delay in the setting straight of affairs in Armenia. Now we know fairly positively that Lord Salisbury—usually none too pacific a leader—has decided that even the terrible outrages on a defenceless people must be tolerated rather than England should be dragged into a great war. One supposes that a Government which has proved itself so well able to deal with American bounce and German impudence knows what is best for the national honour, but somehow many of us out here feel a sting of shame from the open acknowledgment of the fact that England *dare not* resist or resent the frightful atrocities which continue in Armenia. Nor is opinion in the Old Country unanimously in favour of the 'peace at any price' policy of our dealings with the Turk. One passionate writer thus delivers himself:—

'MEANWHILE, now that Lord Salisbury's attention is not engrossed by Washington, we are outwitted by Russia, contemptuously insulted by Turkey, and pleaded to in vain by the people whose great mistake was in trusting to our good faith. A war with Turkey in face of a watchful Russia might be dangerous, but it would be honourable. If we cannot hope to keep India except at the cost of our good name and our prestige, it is worthy of serious consideration whether we should not let it go. Everlastingly thinking about our Indian rupees, we dare not call our soul our own for fear that Russia should object. We make fine speeches, but stand by trembling while wrong is done—wrong, too, for which we are primarily responsible. We dare not lift a hand in defence of the right, we dare not move to fulfil our pledged word. We cry to other nations to help us to come and do our work. Lord Salisbury is earning the laughter of Europe and the contempt of his own countrymen.'

THAT is strong, and I think somewhat undeserved. Lord Salisbury is in a very awkward position. A war of defence would be a tolerably simple matter for England, but it is quite possible that his advisers have informed him that a war of aggression would infallibly end in disaster—that England, in point of fact, is not powerful enough to interfere any more. It is not pleasant to think of such a possibility, but the extraordinary apathy of the Salisbury Government with regard to Armenia would certainly seem to justify the fear that it may be so. If we are powerful enough, then it is a lasting shame and disgrace that we have not interfered long ago. Here is a portion of a letter written from Armenia at Christmas time. The writer, it will be seen, admits that England has some right to hesitate; that it means a sacrifice to interfere. But how can Englishmen or *colonials* sit *sts* and listen to such pleading as this:—

'SURELY, at this Christmas season, with the life of Christ before them, the people of England ought to realise that sacrifice is the very essence of their faith, that without sacrifice we can do nothing for humanity, and they ought to remember that thus far England has never fired a gun or made any sacrifice for the Christians of the East. The English people have expressed much sympathy for them. They have tried by diplomatic pressure to make their condition tolerable under Turkish rule. They vehemently protested against the Bulgarian atrocities, and last year against those at Sassoon. They have tried to persuade the Turks that it was for their interest to be reasonable and just; but whenever a crisis has come they have sacrificed the Christians to the political interests of England and defended the Turks. England has come nearer to making a sacrifice now than ever before, but she has stopped short; she has not done it.

'IF the Powers do their duty a responsible government will be established here to restore order and administer justice in the Empire under proper European supervision. That action on the part of England would involve some risk and some loss cannot be denied, but what I claim is that it is the duty of England to make this sacrifice, and the duty of the English people to see that it is made. The chief obstacle to united action in the use of force is understood to be Russia. Those who look upon Russia as altogether bad claim that her opposition is due to her selfish ambition to absorb Turkey. For this she is willing to sacrifice all the Armenians and see the whole Empire given over to anarchy. Those of a different spirit inquire whether England is in a position to cast a stone at Russia for her ambition to extend her Empire, and claim that she is playing the part of the dog in the manger in refusing to allow Russia to occupy Armenia as far as Alexandretta. There are evidently two sides to the question as to who is sacrificing the Armenian nation to their political interests or traditions. At any rate, of whatever sins Russia may be guilty, they furnish no excuse for the neglect of England to do her duty. I have always been an anti-Russian, and have always hoped that there might be some future for the Armenian nation; but under present circumstances, if England does not dare to act alone, I should rejoice to see her come to terms with Russia by making necessary concessions. Anything to put an end to the hellish work now going on in Turkey!'

WOMAN still continues to advance and to snatch from the weakening fingers of man new professions and occupations. I learn from a Home paper that there is another new career for the sex, that of bell-ringing! Chime-ringing is old, but chime-ringing by women is entirely new. It is left to Mrs Griffith, of Atlanta, U.S.A., to lead the innovation. She will ring the Vangugen chimes at the Exhibition, the largest and most complete set of chimes ever hung. The story of how she studied chiming is interesting. Always a musician of exceptional talent, she found in the Chicago chimes a line of music with which she was totally unfamiliar, and immediately set about mastering it. She secured an interview with the gentleman in charge of the bells; and, as a result, although he assured her women were scarcely strong enough to undertake the work, she was soon practising daily, and by the end of the World's Fair had quite mastered the technical part of the operation. The heaviest work in connection with chiming is the transposing of tunes from the key in which they are written to the key of the bells. Mrs Griffith, however, being an educated musician, finds this no task, and during the summer has been filling her music books with transpositions from Southern and national airs.

I HAVE always (says a writer in an amusing contemporary) taken a special interest in that department of the post-office which has to do with the deciphering of enigmatic addresses. Instances of the cleverness of the clerks in this department are numerous and marvellous, too; but I think the following, related to a group of men the other night by Lord Playfair, a sometime British postmaster-general, shows an intuition that almost amounted to genius. The department in England is called the blind man's department—a peculiarly British appellation, it seems to me. Any other nation would call it the department of the eagle eye—and not very long ago a letter with the following cryptographic address was sent there to be put on the right track: John Jones, I.C.S., Orlsware. It was immediately turned over to the blindest man in the office, who made this out of it: John Jones, *High seas or elsewhere!* But there was still an indefiniteness about John Jones's whereabouts, so recourse was had to the marine directory—another British institution—and it was found that there was a John Jones, able-bodied seaman, on H.M.S. 'Trafalgar,' stationed at the Cape of Good Hope, to whom the letter was forwarded, and, as turned out afterwards, correctly. Now, this may be a tale of Lord Playfair's to show the special efficiency of the British post-office under his administration, but it sounds impossible enough to be true.