

Music and Drama.

HIS MAJESTY'S THEATRE.

THE LAST THREE NIGHTS
OF THE
THORNTON COMEDY SEASON.
WEDNESDAY AND THURSDAY.
The Illustrious Farceful Comedy.
THE STRANGE ADVENTURES OF MISS
BROWN.

"As Funny as they Make 'Em."
FRIDAY, 13th.
OUR FAREWELL APPEARANCE.
PINERO'S WORLD FAMOUS PLAY,
"SWEET LAVENDER."
"A Huge Success Everywhere."

"The best thing Frank Thornton has given us." Such has been the universal verdict passed by Auckland theatre-goers on "A Little Ray of Sunshine," the singularly sparkling comedy which was staged at His Majesty's last Saturday. The secret of the success this play has achieved throughout the present New Zealand tour, and before in Australia, is easy to discover. It lies in the spirit of genial good humour which characterises it in every part. A delightful story, with delightful characters, and admirably told—that is the comedy with which Mr Thornton may go far afield and always be sure of a warm welcome wherever he goes. My regret is that he did not open his season with the play, instead of reserving it for the eve of his departure. It was surely a mistake to keep the best wine to the last. I would like to sound the praises of "A Little Ray of Sunshine" longer and louder, and it is only because the opportunity for my readers to verify my encomiums will be past by the time these notes are read that I am brief. However, I can promise theatre-goers something scarcely less charming in Pinero's "Sweet Lavender," which is billed for Friday. In the meantime, tonight (Wednesday) and tomorrow ("The Strange Adventures of Miss Brown") will hold the stage, and I imagine fill the house, too, for nothing surer than Miss Brown's adventures has been written or played.

Miss Fitzmaurice Gill's Company, at the Auckland Opera House, continues to demonstrate the public's affection for the strong meat of melodrama. Nightly the lovers of the sensational gather in force, and depart with an appetite whetted for more. "Harbour Lights," a drama typical of the class this company rejoices in, was staged for the last time on Monday, and was succeeded on Tuesday by "East Lynne," that old-time favourite. "Dr. Bill" and a revival of "Man to Man" are announced to follow.

Mr. Alfred Hill, the well-known New Zealand musician and composer, intends to settle at Palmerston North.

Buffalo Bill, now in 'Frisco with his Wild West show, is making arrangements to visit Australia.

The Anderson Dramatic Company's new touring representative will be Mr Fred Duval, late general manager for Mr P. R. Dix.

Madame Melba has given Mr Walter Kirby, the New Zealand tenor, a letter of introduction to Jean de Reszke. Mr Kirby, who is going home to Europe to study, received £300 from a concert organised in his benefit at Melbourne.

At the final meeting for the season of the Christchurch Musical Union, the secretary intimated that he was in communication with Mlle Antonia Dolores (Trebelli), who contemplated a further visit to this colony.

News from America announces the engagement of Mr Howard Chambers (an Auckland boy) as basso by the Bostonian Opera Company, an old and well-known organisation. Mr Chambers is at present on tour in the States.

Fitzgerald's circus has just concluded a most successful season of a week in Dunedin. The combination, which com-

prises many new attractions, will tour the colony.

Miss Florence Young was prostrated by the great heat in Sydney, and was very ill. She stuck pluckily to her work, but a medical man was in attendance, and stimulants were administered in the intervals.

Harry Rickards has decided against sending any more shows to New Zealand. His three last shows there only made a small margin of profit, and that, when you come to take in the worry and risk, doesn't compensate in the least little bit.

There is a note of over protest in Musgrove's latest advertisement of "The Fortune-teller." "I pledge my word," says he, "that this will be the finest and most expensive production of comic opera ever given in Australia." (Signed) George Musgrove.

The first great musical event of 1903 will be the first appearance in Australia of Mr Edward Lloyd, England's one great representative tenor will sail from London by the China on 16th February, and will open his Australian season in Melbourne with concerts on 13th, 15th, and 18th April, whilst his Sydney dates will be 21st, 23rd, and 25th April.

An Australian paragraph says of theatrical business in the Commonwealth at present: "It is atrocious; one leading manager is said to be losing one thousand per week with all his shows. It is said that he played in Melbourne not many weeks ago to a £16 house, and his salary list alone was over £500 per week. Other Sydney theatres are doing the same class of business, though not quite so bad."

Jacques Inaudi, the lightning calculator, now showing at Sydney Tivoli, cannot do a fairly simple sum on paper, but, fronting the audience and with his back to a blackboard, he can simultaneously work out sums which have been recited to him, in addition, subtraction, division, multiplication and cube root. The figures for these sums are dictated from various parts of the auditorium, and written down on an immense blackboard.

Madame Melba must have a special commission to find promising pupils for Marchesi, says the Adelaide "Critic." Another Sydneyite soprano she has recommended to go to Europe to study is a Miss Hilda Mulligan, who has got the usual letter of recommendation to Marchesi, and who will have the usual benefit concert to equip her with funds for the battle.

A Sydney paper is responsible for the rumour that Mr. Allan Hamilton, when he returns from the East after the disbandment of the Brough company, will enter into partnership with Mr. Cecil Ward. It is suggested that their venture will be drawing-room comedy and other pieces of the type which the Broughs introduced here.

The Greenwood family of artists and their company are retarding through New South Wales towards Sydney, having completed a most successful tour of Victoria and South Australia. The pieces to be produced in Sydney are "Camille," "Leah the Forsaken" and "Little Lord Fountleroy." As Camille and Leah Miss Maibell Greenwood has appeared all over Australia, while her son, little Charlie Williams, is said to be an ideal Lord Fountleroy.

It is not generally known (says the "Witness") that but for the courtesy of Tom Pollard in foregoing his dates in several theatres in New Zealand, J. C. Williamson's "Sherlock Holmes" and "If I Were King" Dramatic Company would have been blocked out of a Maoriand tour. Also, New Zealand playgoers have to thank the same gentleman for yielding to Musgrove's "Sweet Nell of Old Drury" Company, with Nellie Stewart at its head, which tours this colony in April, beginning at Dunedin on Easter Monday.

One London critic headed his notice of Edwardes' new musical comedy, "The Girl from Kay's," "All the Indelicacies of the Season." By a standing agreement Mr Williamson gets first offer of the Australasian rights of all Edwardes' pieces. In the course of a year or two, therefore, the colonials will have a chance of passing judgment on this moral production.

Mr Musgrove has completed arrangements for Melba's New Zealand tour. The diva's season here will open at Dunedin on the 18th inst. Christchurch, Wellington, Wanganui and Auckland will be visited in succession. The prices have been fixed at a guinea and half a guinea a seat. Mr Barnes, who is acting as advance agent, expects to be in Auckland about the 22nd of this month. Madame Melba is leaving Hobart for New Zealand on Saturday next.

The trump card of the Williamson Dramatic Company, now moving northwards, is "Sherlock Holmes," and the most striking impersonation, that of the great detective, by Cuyler Hastings. The company have had great success in the South. In addition to the dramatisation of Sir Conan Doyle's popular series, they play "If I were King," "The Christian," "On Active Service," etc. The Auckland season opens on Monday next.

Some of the lady members of the Musgrove Opera Company have, according to Sydney "Newsletter," been lucky enough to find a diamond mine on the stage of the Royal. May Beatty discovered a £30 diamond ring, and Josephine Stanton also struck it rich, but Alice Mitchell had the bad luck to strike a duffer. All this new-found wealth emanates from an American gentleman, who nightly sits in the orchestra stalls, and when not smiling at the "dear girls" throws diamond rings of more or less value on to the boards. Naturally, the Yankee play-goer is a very popular item just now with the female section of the Musgrove Company.

Mrs. Bland Holt relates how on one of their New Zealand tours they played of Gisborne, which possesses a very poor theatre. There are only two dressing rooms, so the mechanist had to rig up a temporary one from the scenery for

herself and Mr. Holt. While the artists were not on the stage, they generally went out into the back yard for fresh air. One night when one of the men went out he found a baby in a perambulator with a dog beside it. The company did not know to whom it belonged, so Baker, Norman, Harrie Ireland and Frances Ross took the baby in turns to look after it. At the conclusion of the performance the mother arrived and claimed it, saying that as children in arms were not admitted, and she wished to see the show, she had left the baby with the dog in the yard.

Many comparisons have recently been instituted between Mlle. Dolores and Madame Melba, says the "Australasian." As a matter of fact, except at one or two superficial points, no real comparison between them is possible. With a voice of peerless equality and a technique that is perfection itself, Madame Melba is, within a recognised school of art, on an eminence beyond all other sopranos of the present day. Mademoiselle Dolores is not really supreme in any school, but is an admirable artiste in several styles of composition. Even in the compositions outside her particular range, the voice and art of Madame Melba always invests her rendering with a distinction that is quite her own. There is nothing of this uniqueness in the singing of Mademoiselle Dolores. Notwithstanding, however, the incontestable superiority of Madame Melba, the ultimate impression of her visit to Australia will probably be less valuable and less durable than that of Mademoiselle Dolores.

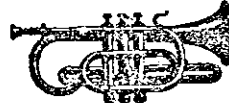
Dolores has profited largely by the Melba visit to Australia. The interest evoked by the appearance of the Queen of Song is so great that it shakes up the musical public, and concerts prosper in her immediate vicinity, and Dolores prospers more than the rest. She has deliberately planned to be always on hand where the diva is singing, and after hearing Melba at high prices the people rush to hear Dolores at low prices, and then make comparisons—not necessarily odious. The fact that Dolores provides so strong a contrast to Melba probably accounts for much of the former's success. Dolores' sweet simplicity is found very refreshing after the splendour of "the greatest dramatic soprano on earth." The Dolores season in New Zealand is a foregone success.

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