

MADAME MELBA.

At last we are to hear the melodious Melba, the woman with the voice (says our Dunedin correspondent), of whom all the music-loving world have been reading of, speaking of, and hearing of for many months past. That Melba's visit to this Colony has been eagerly looked forward to by a very large number of people was demonstrated in a practical manner on Wednesday, by the immense audience which assembled to hear the Queen of Song. Melba is a much-photographed lady, and per medium of the illustrated papers, every one who is in the habit of keeping in touch with the current topics of the day has a good idea of what kind of an appearance the famous songstress presents to her audiences, but the photos fail to convey the winning nature of the woman whom they endeavour to portray. Melba is evidently a very womanly woman and graciousness personified, as was evidenced in several ways during her brief stay in Dunedin. In taking the stage, she comes on with the easy grace of one holding an assured and unassailable position. She smiles at her audience at the right time, and naturally, and not in the innane fashion of some artists who try to win their audiences by trickery and guile, only because well endowed dentally. She sings without any apparent effort, and her exhibition or test pieces. The aria from Lucia (Ardon gl'incensi), and her aria from Hamlet (Ophelia's Mad Scene), may be classed as the greatest exhibition of vocal jugglery imaginable. Her voice is full of sympathy and melody, and never fails to stir that indefinable something which true artists have in common with their audience. She creates a desire to hear her again and again, and at the conclusion of her concert the audience did not display the slightest desire to go home, and one may be said to be the first artist whom I have noticed absolutely hold an audience. Her concluding song was Tosti's "Good Bye," and her rendition of that well-known melody was a revelation. In her last verse she put such feeling into the song that her histrionic power slightly interfered with her vocalisation, and she did not fully sustain the last crescendo passage of the chorus. One would give a great deal to hear her in opera, but it is a very great treat to hear her in anything. She is undoubtedly a very great artist, and any one who hears her is sure to look back with extreme satisfaction to the red-letter day that they heard Melba.

The Auckland musical population will have the opportunity to hear this talented lady, on Tuesday and Thursday even-

ings, at the Opera House, and a bumper house is absolutely certain for each night.

DIX'S GAIETY COMPANY.

Despite the counter attraction, Dix's Gaiety Company are doing good business at the City Hall. The programme is an excellent one. The first part, "Our Rustic Bower," includes:—Overture, "Tally Ho!" by the Gaiety Orchestra; the Sisters Smith (May and Ethel), in their celebrated song and dance, "Birds and Butterflies"; Mr Geo. Gardner sing an acceptable Coon song; Miss Annetta Bodin contributes a ballad, "The Working Girl"; the Gilardi Sisters (Beaty and Ivy), score a hit with their song "Ran Dan"; Mr Frank York makes fun and merriment with his comic songs and sketches; Little Millie Bertoto, who is keeping up her reputation as first favourite with the City Hall patrons, sings several ballads in a very pleasing style, earning encores each evening; Mr Frank Graham delights his hearers with his splendid voice, singing "The Prison Scene" from ("Il Trovatore"); "The Great Statute Ballet" is a feature on the programme, and brings forth storms of applause, the whole being invented and arranged under the supervision of Madame Ethel Clifford. Miss Emmie Smith who made her first appearance in Auckland on Tuesday night, sings some very pleasing coon melodies and popular ballads. So well are the City Hall patrons catered for, that further new faces and items are promised for next week.

Our Christchurch theatrical correspondent writes:—"Fitzgerald Bros." great circus has been doing magnificent business here. The most novel item in a bill full of novelties is "the Cycle Whizz," in which first of all two, and then four cyclists ride at break-neck speed round the sharply sloping sides of a sort of basin formed of wood pickets, similar to those of a garden fence. This side-ways racing is a marvellous performance, and the cyclists (including one pretty girl) get hurricanes of applause for an act that must be witnessed in order that you may form an idea of its daring and unusual character. . . . Jameson's Popular Entertainers, who have been appearing so successfully at the Oddfellows' Hall, go on tour next week, commencing at Ashburton. . . . The Melba concert—only one—was an artistic success. Approximately the house held £1500. . . . The Hawtrey Co., at the Royal, is doing well. Business is excellent, in spite of the strong counter-attractions. . . . The Pollards commenced a farewell season of six nights at Canter-



MR F. G. ROBSON, Manager of the Westminster Abbey Glee and Concert Party.

bury Hall, on Monday, February 23. "The Toreador" will be followed by "Tapu," the new Maori opera. The well-known (and much-liked) Mr Frank O'Sullivan is in advance. The season ought to pan out splendidly. Mr F. O'Sullivan tells me the Company is likely to be absent from New Zealand for about nine months. They will be missed."

Our Wellington correspondent writes under date February 20th, that Pollard's Opera Coy. are staging "Tapu" at the Opera House this week, for the first time anywhere. The piece was written some years ago by Arthur Adams and Alfred Hill, and was passed on to J. C. Williamson for production, but unfortunately was put aside time after time, until its production this week by the Pollard's. Mr. Alf. Hill conducted the performance throughout in good style. "Tapu" introduces the cannibalistic native in his element, and is prepared to eat his fellows with a good grace. The dialogue is very weak, and the humor is not infectious, and a careful use of the blue pencil would tend to raise the tone of the production. The musical portion of the work is very fine, Mr. Hill having made something of a study of song-writing, and there are some airs that will outlive the work. Taken all round it is a fairly creditable performance. Dix's Gaiety Coy. are in their last nights at the Theatre Royal, and the J. C. Williamson Coy. will occupy the Royal to stage "The Circus Girl" for a short season. How it will be possible for the J. C. Williamson Coy., Circus Girl, Madam Melba, Fitzgerald's Circus, (and Frank Thornton on Tuesday night), to make both ends meet on Monday night, is a problem I, at present, cannot solve. . . . Dean's Waxworks are in full swing at the Choral Hall.

Miss Gill has just purchased another new play, "The French Spy," from Chas. Holloway, which will be produced during her New Zealand tour.

STAGE-DOOR NOTES.

"If I Were King," by Mr. J. C. Williamson Dramatic Co., at His Majesty's Theatre.

"Sherlock Holmes" drew large houses at His Majesty's for nine performances.

Mr. P. R. Dix has been in town for the past week, and is now quite convalescent.

Madam Melba sings at the Opera House next week, Monday and Thursday.

Miss Nance O'Neil, since leaving London, has been playing at the Grand Opera House, San Francisco, to enormous business. Miss O'Neil was to leave Frisco on the 16th February for an extended tour through the states. In the early autumn she is to open in New York. The Americans, it is said, have greeted Miss O'Neil with open arms, and, notwithstanding her recent London failure, she has seemingly entered upon a great boom

Mr. Geo. Musgrove is sending a strong company to New Zealand, headed by Miss Nellie Stewart. The pieces produced will include "Sweet Nell," "Zaza," "Mice and Men," "The Country Mouse, A Modern Magdalen," "A Royal Rival," and "The Pantomime Rehearsal." The company opens at Dunedin on April 11th.

Athas and Collins, who several months ago did the Dix circuit, were appearing at the London Pavilion when the last mail left.

Mr. Charles Carter, "Pollard's" popular tenor, has left New Zealand for England per the Tyser liner Indvaghiri.

Miss Fitzmaurice Gill's Dramatic Co. open in Wanganui to-night.

The Steele-Payne Family of Bellringers has had a fairly successful tour of the South Island, and have now commenced a tour of the North Island, starting in the Wairarapa district, working through to Auckland.

The Hawtrey Comedy have had a very successful season in Dunedin. "The Lady of Ostend" was played for six nights, the revival of "A Message from Mars" ran for six nights, and a matinee "In the Soup" was staged for four nights, while for the last two nights of the season "Tom, Dick and Harry" and "A Highland Legacy" were revived.

An Exchange gives us news of our friends the Haytors (Arthur, Frank and Edie). They were in the cast of the pantomime "Dick Whittington and his Cat" at the Grand Theatre, Islington, London, when the last mail left. Arthur was playing Alderman Fitzwarren and Frank Idle Jack, while Miss Edie was cast for the part of Prince Ahmed.

At the City Hall, Mr. Frank Graham, the gifted tenor from the Carl Rosa Opera Company, still continues to attract large audiences.

Walter Rivers, well known in these parts, is assistant stage manager for Anderson's Dramatic Company, now working the South.

After completing the tour of New Zealand, Madame Melba sings at a concert in Melbourne Exhibition Buildings on March 28, starting for England immediately thereafter.

SPECIAL MATINEE

SATURDAY NEXT AT 2 P.M.

"IF I WERE KING."

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The Sarony Studio, photo.

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