#### SIR HENRY IRVING.

On the 16th of last month Sir Henry Irving brought his short but highly successful season at the National Theatre, Irving brought his short but highly successful season at the National Theatre, London, to a close, when a huge audience assembled to give "the Chief" an enthusiastic farewell. Thanks to the fine acting of Sir Henry Irving and Miss Lena Ashwell, M. Sardou's dull and loosely-constructed play "Dante," again evoked frequent and hearty applause, and at the close of the performance Sir Henry, in response to an affectionate demonstration, thanked the public in his graceful and infimitable manner for the great favour with which the piece had been received in London. "We have mow," he explained, "to fulfil contracts for its production in Great Britain, and in the United States and Canada. These travels, which will begin early in September, will occupy us for the next twelve months, during which time we shall, I trust, he sometimes in your memory. I am not likely to forget this sojourn in Drury Lane Theatre—the courtesy and help of Mr Arthur Collins and his staff before and behind the curtain. Above all, the abundant sympathy and favour with which you have rewarded our efforts. With these grateful retain. Above all, the abundant sympathy and favour with which you have rewarded our efforts. With these grateful remembrances, and with the belief that your constant goodwill can never be impaired by our absence—for one and all I thank you—and respectfully and affectionately bid you good-bye." The tunultuous cheering that this happy little speech evoked must have convinced "the Chief," if he required assurance on the point, how deeply "rooted and grounded" he is in the affections of his loyal public.

### MADAME MELBA AT COVENT GARDEN.

Madame Melba is so great an artist, and her glorious voice is always so comand her glorious voice is always so completely under contol that it is almost impossible to judge her as one judges other singers, or to say that on such a role she is at her best. But after hearing her and seeing her again—for Melba's histrionic ability entitles her to be ranked as a fine actress as well as a perfect vocalist—in Gounod's "Romeo et Juliette," on Monday night, I am tempted (says a London critic) to commit so daring an indiscretion. She has, this season, sung the death scene in "La Boheme," the "jewel song" in "Faust," and the famous duet in "Rigoletto," as she alone among living artists can sing them, but they did not charm my ears as did her rendering of the waltz song in Gounod's masterpiece. or thrill all my senses as I was thrilled by her impassioned, tear-compelling singing of the music in Juliet's chamber. Few Juliets of the stage have ever looked so sanchantingly girlish and happy as Mdme. Melba in the opening scene, and few Romeos have made a deeper impression than M. Alvarez. In the balcony scene the idylic sentiment of the love passages pletely under contol that it is almost imthe idyllic sentiment of the love passages vas beautifully conveyed throughout, and Romeo's closing solo, "Va. . . Repose



. . en Paix . . . Sommeille," brings down the curtain on a variant of love's young dream that one does not soon, if ever, forget. In the chamber scene, as I have said, both Melba and Alvarez were have said, both Melba and Alvarez were at their best, but here, as Juliet listens to her father's plans for her marriage, and in the following scene, in which Romeo hears the Duke's decree of banishment, both these superb artists act with an intensity and depth of feeling that is all too seldom seen on the operatic stage. As Friar Lawrence, M. Plancon's massive and magnificent voice filled the theatre with sound like the peals of an organ. Mdlie. Bauermeister as Gertrude, M. Fassin as the fiery Tybalt, and M. Seveilhac as the philosophical Mercutio added to as the philosophical Mercutio added to as the philosophical mercutio added to the charm of the performance, while Mdlle. Helian's singing of the brilliant screnade in the third act was not the least delightful solo item of the performance. Although Monday was the night of the State Ball, the Opera House was filled with a brilliant audience and the abuntant with a brilliant audience, and the abundant enthusiasm they displayed was a worthy tribute to a perfect representation of a truly great work.

My Christchurch dramatic correspondent writes (under date August 22) :- A leading member of the Caste Comedy Coming member of the Caste Comedy Company, the plucky band of amateurs who recently played throughout Grand National week at the Theatre Royal, tells me there is a possibility of the company producing "Jane" at Ashburton. The Christchurch season just about paid expenses, I understand. There would have been a small balance to the good but for the heavy fee demanded by the Dramatic Authors' Society, or Mr J. C. Williamson's agent (I am not sure which), for staging "The Magistrate," and which amounted to £5 per night. The familiar features of Maggie Moore have been smiling upon all and sundry from been smiling upon all and sundry from the hoardings for the last week or two, and Maggie in the flesh (as fascinating as ever) is appearing nightly at the Royal in a number of capital pieces. Her songs are always acceptable, and never more so than during the present season, now al-most at an end. Mr Michael Joseph is business managing the show for Mr Wm.
Anderson. Fuller's Varieties, at the Opera House, continue to go with a

bang. Fred Bluett re-appears on Monday. Lots of shows are booked for Christchurch between this and Christmas. More about these anon.

"Brother Officers," one of the plays which the Frawley Company will probably stage here, is a comedy in three acts by Leo Trevor, and has the distinction of having run an entire season at the London Garrick, while it also enjoyed an exceptional success at the Empire Theatre, New York. Next to "Arizona," the production was certainly the best of the season The story is interesting, and well son. The story is interesting, and well told, and the artists are given plenty of scope, with the result that the reception which it had was markedly warm. The pivot of the play is Lieutenant John Hinds. By his courage and good conduct he has won his commission and his V.C., and the esteem of his fellow-officers in the 1st Lancers, because he, at great risk, rescued Lieutenant Pleydell from a tiger. Hinds has the instincts of a gentleman, and desires to have the manners of one. and desires to have the manners of one, and desires to have the manners of one, and he appeals quite pathetically to Pleydell, who has the manners, rather than the instincts, to coach him. The close of the first act shows that the colonel of the regiment humiliates Hinds on account of a solecism. The beautiful young Baroness Royden, cousin of Pleydell, adroitly con-verts the humiliation into a compliment. Hinds thereupon falls in love with her. The Baroness, however, is infatuated with Pleydell, who has played unsuccessfully for unpayable stakes, and is in the power of a vulgar millionaire, who wishes to use his victim's social position to enter society. By the rules of the playwright, Hinds is compelled to act unselfishly, and in a big scene in the third act he forces the millionaire, whom he catches napping, to give up his prey.

The brilliant success of Mr George Musgrove's production of "A Midsummer Night's Dream" at Sydney is meeting with patronage commensurate with its merits." A finer production has never been seen there (says the "Referee"), and it is gratifying, in view of its educational nature, that parties of school children are attending the performances. Such a treat is thoroughly enjoyed by the youngsters, and before the production is withdrawn it is to be hoped it will have been seen by the representatives of every school. There is no better way of acquainting them with the works of the immortal dramatist. The staging of the piece is most lavish, and the artists enpiece is most lavish, and the artists entrusted with the interpretation are a very capable lot.

Mme. Amy Sherwin, the Tasmanian artiste, has been invited to represent English singers at the unveiling of the Wag-ner monument at Berlin in October, and to sing at the International concert which will be held on that occasion. This is a big compliment to the vocalist.

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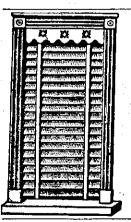
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