

CHRISTCHURCH NOTES.

My Christchurch dramatic correspondent writes:—The George Marlow Dramatic Co., which has been having a good time at the Theatre Royal since my last, "farewelled" on 22nd June, when "East Lynne," the weepful, formed the bill-of-fare, and was served up with the usual trimmings. The preliminary announcements in the papers promised "an original treatment" of the famous old piece but the originality was not marked, and a full house (chiefly composed of ladies) sobbed the usual sobs, and dropped the customary pearly tears when little Willie departed in the orthodox manner for the golden shore. Theatrical managers ought to raise a statue to the memory of Mrs. Henry Wood. . . . No sooner had the Marlow Co. vacated the Royal than the Allan Hamilton-Max Maxwell people took possession. This company has secured the rights of a series of Bland Holt melodrama, and opened with "Woman and Wine." Bland, as everybody knows, has made a fortune, thanks to his policy of producing all the Drury Lane successes in Australia, and his lead may safely be followed. Several former members of the B.H. Co. are with Hamilton and Maxwell. The next production will be "In London Town. . . . The Marlow Co. play Oamaru and Timaru after leaving Christchurch, and then visit the wild, wet West Coast, where the gold comes from. . . . Thursday matinees are now the order of the day at the Colosseum, and as our weekly half-day "off" falls on Thursday the new departure will doubtless prove a gilt-edged success. . . . A Christchurch photographer talks of installing the necessary plant for the production of biograph films. He ought to do well, considering that we have three picture theatres all coining money here. . . . July 4 will witness the opening at the Royal of the Hugh J. Ward Co. The season will extend to July 12, and on the following night the Williamson Grand Opera Co. opens at the same house for a ten-night season. It is rumoured that our fashionable modistes are already busied in preparing war paint for the use of the ladies during the stay of the combination in this city. . . . The Opera House continues to do immense business. What a gold mine! . . . I hope to have a bit of special news for you next week.

MELBA IN LONDON.

THE GREAT DIVA'S PLANS.

Mme. Melba, on arriving in London last month, spoke of the enjoyment with which she had visited her native country. "It was," she said to a "Standard" representative, "hard work for a time—nine months' incessant touring—then a glorious rest. I have never felt in better health and spirits than now, and feel ready for anything. "As to my plans, after I have finished at Covent Garden I go for a six months' tour of Canada and the United States, beginning in September, and, later, one through the United Kingdom. So you see, I shall not be idle till the new opera season comes round. It is very gratifying to me to hear that the halls are already sold out in most of the big cities in the Dominion." Asked as to her project for establishing an opera season in Australia, Mme. Melba said: "I have been working out the scheme the whole time I have been away. Things have so far advanced that we have already fixed the time and place of opening our first season. That will be in Melbourne in September next year. Mr. Lemmone, who engineered my tour in Australia, has come over with me to engage artists in Europe. We are not taking back with us the first talent that comes to hand. Australia is going to have the best opera I can give her. Among those with whom I am most encouragingly negotiating are Signor Zenatello, the famous tenor; M. Plancon, the great French bass; M. Gilbert, M. Renard, and even Miss Emily Destinn—" "And Mme. Melba herself?" "Yes, and myself. We only intend, so far, opening in Melbourne and Sydney, giving six or eight weeks in each. "The season will be entirely devoted to Italian opera. The idea has received the most enthusiastic support in Australia, where the keenness to hear opera is so great that at a concert of operatic scenes which I gave once the stalls sold for three guineas each."

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THE STREET SINGER.

MADAME CALVE'S APPRECIATION.

PRETTY INCIDENT IN SYDNEY.

A very pretty incident happened last week in connection with the visit of Madame Calve, the great singer, to Sydney, says the "Sydney Morning Herald."

There is in Sydney a street singer who is often heard in the city of an evening, singing without accompaniment, by name Madame Bel Collins. Fortune has not done all that it might for her, and of late her slender means had been more than usually straitened. And this is the story as she tells it:—

"I happened to sing in Macquarie-street on Wednesday night," she says. "It was the first time I had ever sung here, and I don't know why I went there that night, except that I thought that I might try new ground."

"I was singing 'Love Me and the World is Mine,' when a lady came up to me in a black cloak and slipped two half-crowns into my hand. I looked up at her in astonishment. People don't do that sort of thing often; and at the moment, for some reason, I felt sure that it was Madame Calve, the great singer. I thought, the wonder of the great singer coming and listening to me. I am an English woman, and I heard her years since in Covent Garden, in London."

"The lady stood by my shoulder there whilst I sang. That night had somehow been a very happy one for me. There were four or five gentlemen there, and I had got about 11s, and I thought that I might go home."

"But when I finished that song the lady asked me if I would sing another. I sang 'Annie Laurie.' I don't believe I ever sang it so well in my life. She waited till I had sung it. I thought I would go home then. But she spoke to me."

"Ah, Madame," she said, 'what a sin to hear a beautiful voice like yours in this street.'

"But, Madame," I replied, 'I cannot help it, you see.'

"You are not Australian," she said. 'You are English.'

"Yes, Madame," I said, 'an Englishwoman.'

"You see me at the Hotel Australia at half-past 11 in the morning," she said, as she left me. 'Ask for Miss Hulten,' she said."

"But, Madame," I protested, 'I am so shabby—'

"Never mind," she insisted. 'You come.'

"Even though she gave another name, I thought she was doing so because she did not wish me to know. But I was convinced it was Madame Calve. I went to the hotel in the morning, and sent up a note to Miss Hulten to say: 'Madame, by your request I have kept your appointment.' Imagine my disappointment when the boy came downstairs and said: 'Miss Hulten says she doesn't know you.' I thought—Oh, this is another disappointment. But I asked the boy to lend me a pencil, and I wrote: 'You gave me five shillings last night in Macquarie-street.'

"Directly afterwards a maid came downstairs—it was she that was named Hulten—and gave me a sovereign."

"Madame Calve is very sorry that she is so busy—she leaves this morning," she said, 'but she asks you to leave her your address. She says you have a beautiful voice.'

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