

years with Madame Kirkby Lunn, the talented English contralto, Messrs. Tait have secured this brilliant artist for a tour commencing next August. Madame Lunn has won a remarkable reputation as an interpreter of Kundy in "Parsifal," and Dalila in Samson and Dalila. To Messrs. J. and N. Tait we also owe the distinction of hearing that eminent pianist, Leonard Borwick.

Theatrical Records.

The present seems to be a time specially adapted for establishing theatrical records, and among the current J. C. Williamson attractions there are not a few which have gained prominence in this direction. For instance, the Grand Opera season in Sydney is playing to phenomenal business. "Our Miss Gibbs" holds pride of place for length of run. The H. B. Irving run of "Hamlet" in Sydney established a record for Shakespearean drama, and "The Arcadians," in Adelaide, holds an absolute record for "first night" business there.

H. B. Irving.

Within the next few weeks Melbourne playgoers will have had an opportunity of seeing Mr H. B. Irving in the full range of the repertoire he decided on for his Australian tour. The current week was devoted to "The Lyons Mail," and on Saturday (September 30th), "The Bells" was staged for the first time. A fortnight after comes "Louis XI," to be followed in its turn, a week later, by "Dr. Jekyll and Mr Hyde," which piece, of compelling realism, will be the last production of the season.

A name that clings.

It was not until 1909 that Mr H. B. Irving made his first London appearance in "The Bells," though he had previously played it in the United States. Londoners, perhaps, more than any other body of playgoers, are loyal to favorites, and for them there had been for years no other Mathias than Sir Henry Irving. But the son won out from the first performance, and now-a-days his performance is acclaimed as the very finest that ever existed. The story of the old inn-keeper, who murders his guest for money, and is haunted ever after by the sound of the sleigh bells, until reason loses its sway and confession to the crime and madness come together, is one that has always appealed to "character" actors. But out of all those who have essayed it, only two names cling to the memory—Irving (father and son) and Richard Mansfield.

A Brilliant English Actress.

Sydney playgoers, enthusiastic though they were over Miss Ethel Irving's magnificent handling of emotional role of Stella Ballantyne, found a still higher degree of eulogy and acclaim to lavish on the brilliant English actress, when she appeared in "Lady Frederick," at the Sydney Criterion last Saturday (September 23rd). The exquisite humour of her interpretation, the delicate gradations of comedy, the little flashes—so womanly and therefore so adorable—that invested her characterisation of the fascinating widow with the touch of the brogue, took Sydney, always keen for the lighter side of life, by storm, and a triumphant success for the second piece in Miss Irving's repertoire has to be registered.

The Melba Craze.

As usual with big theatrical successes, Sydney trades-people are "catching on" to the Grand Opera season there as a means of pushing their wares. Their windows are full of all manner of articles, named after Melba herself, and there is a wonderful crop of Melba tea rooms, Melba millinery establishments, and Melba photographers, and other small businesses which have been renamed in honour of the diva. Madame Melba has, moreover, been approached by many manufacturers who have heard of her eulogistic references to Australian-made goods, with requests that she shall visit their establishments, so that she may have some real hard facts to talk about when she resumes her self-imposed task of advertising Australia's resources on the other side of the world. Just as soon as the arduous work of the preliminary weeks is over in Sydney, Madame Melba intends to devote quite a considerable portion of her time to complying with these invitations.



The mysteries of a lady's toilet as revealed by Claire Forster (ELINOR FOSTER) in "The Woman in the Case," to be produced at H.M. Theatre on Monday next.

"The Gay Gordons."

Unlike most modern comic operas, "The Gay Gordons," which created a furore in Wellington, can boast about its narrative. There is a central thread of motive, requisitioned for the purpose of knitting together dainty scenes and pleasing incidents, of making possible smart sayings and pretty dialogue, and of introducing spectacular effects to please the eye and musical embellishments to tickle the ear with sweet sounds. It succeeds in its object most admirably. "The Gay Gordons" open here in November.

Grand Opera Artistes.

Mr. John McCormack, the lyric tenor of the Melba Company, practises every day and never less than a couple of hours. He brought with him from England an accompanist, for although he is a skilled musician himself, he says that it is a bad habit for any artist to get into to play his own accompaniments. Mr. McCormack considers that his voice is growing every year. He is only now twenty-eight, and vocal experts say that Caruso's voice was not as big as McCormack's at the same age. Mr. Edmund Burke pays an accompanist by the hour to go over his roles. While the piano is going he does his correspondence, dresses and reads. In this way, he says, he simply absorbs the music. When he appeared in the opera "Thais" he studied his role for eighteen months. This is apparently not unusual, for it is on record that when Jean de Reszke was cast for Romeo in Gounod's opera he worked at it for three years before making his premiere.

Some Pretty Numbers.

There are some very pretty numbers in "The Gay Gordons." Amongst them may be mentioned "Daddy Do" and "Molly O'Hara," by Miss Florence Imeson; "The Regiment of Gordons" and "My Heart's in the Highlands," by Mr. Frank Oakden Brooks; "The Dawn," "I Love you" and "Heather Bells," by Miss Olive Jahn; "Come Along Little Girls," "Miss Innocent," and "Everybody's Fond of me up in London," Miss Nell Finnis.

Tenors and Caricaturists.

It seems to be a particular gift of dramatic tenors that they are able to caricature in black and white. Caruso, as is well known, might have succeeded in this amusing art field had he not been endowed with a golden throat. In the same way, Signor Zeni, the dramatic tenor of the Melba Grand Opera Co., has a remarkable facility for transferring to paper a good humored exaggeration of a man's personal characteristics. Since he has been in Sydney he has drawn all the artists of the

Company with distinctly amusing results. The knowledge of his gift in this direction has led to the tenor being inundated with autograph books asking for a caricature of one or more members of the Company.

Japan Wants Irving.

Mr H. B. Irving can now boast of the unique experience (for an actor of his distinction) of being offered an engagement at the Imperial Theatre, Tokio, where an enterprising management is evidently striving to inculcate Western ideas and methods as to histrionics. By last mail came a request to Mr Irving to appear in a special season there, together with a whole budget of printed matter concerning the Theatre, its aims and objects. Unfortunately, most of the latter was in Japanese characters, a language which nobody in the theatre could interpret, but from the illustrations and the English paper comments, it would appear that the whole institution is on very up-to-date lines.

IN PERSONAL TOUCH.

Miss Nellie Stewart is to be pictorialised in a number of her plays. The first picture series will be "Sweet Nell of Old Drury."

Mr Edwin Geach has engaged "Hugard," the illusionist, to take his "Shooting to Kill" sensation through New Zealand.

Miss Mabel Trevor and Miss Elinor Foster are said to give intensely thrilling expositions of their parts in "The Woman in the Case." The Company open on Monday.

Mr H. B. Irving's repertoire for New Zealand will be "Hamlet," "The Lyons Mail," and "Louis XI."

Another Theatre for Sydney! Mr William Anderson's proposal has been adopted by the City Council for erecting a new play house on a portion of the site of the Victoria markets.

We regret to record the death of Mrs Atkinson, wife of Mr Val. Atkinson, stage manager of the Auckland Amateur Operatic Society, which occurred on Sunday after a three days' illness. The late Mrs Atkinson was well-known in musical circles, both as a pianist and vocalist.

Miss Maggie Knight, whose father was at one time theatre manager in Auckland, is with "The Gay Gordons" Company. Old playgoers will have pleasant recollections of her fine performance of Nellie Denver in "The Silver King." For many years Miss Knight, was leading lady for Bland Holt.

J. M. Barrie, author of "Peter Pan," "What Every Woman Knows," and several other plays that have been seen here, is said to be engaged on a big play to be produced by the American, Daniel Frohman.

Miss Amy Murphy, the New Zealand prima donna, was Miss Winifred O'Connor's substitute in "The Chocolate Soldier" during the latter's indisposition in Melbourne, and scored a great success.

The late Oscar Wilde was famous for his oral criticisms on the theatre. Asked what he thought of a certain play, he replied in his bored, tired voice, "It was the cleverest play I ever slept through."

"H.M.S. Pinafore" is in active rehearsal by the Auckland Amateur Operatic Society. Following is the cast which should ensure success:—Sir Joseph Porter, Mr Laurie Abrahams; Captain Corcoran, Mr Abel Rowe; Ralph Rackstraw, Mr T. Adeane; Dick Deadeye, Mr Jas. Lonergan; Bill Bobstay, Mr A. Warbrick; Bob Becket, Mr Forgie; Sergeant Maemis, Mr F. Cofton; Josephine, Miss Ethel Rae; Hebe, Miss Burke; Little Buttercup, Mrs Abel Rowe.

Thus the Feilding "Star":—Last night there were people waiting in doorways for the opening of the box plans at Cole's, Palmerston, at 9 o'clock this morning for "Our Miss Gibbs." The dozen in waiting were wrapped in rugs, lying in doorways and on the ground in the cold. What a business—what pleasure!

Adelaide is to have a magnificent new theatre built to the order of the J. C. Williamson management. It will accommodate 3000.

Another veteran actor in Mr Stirling White has joined the great majority, his death occurring at Sydney this week. Deceased was 60 years of age, and had often toured New Zealand with Messrs. J. C. Williamson's and Allan Hamilton's Companies.

Miss Florence Baines, the comedian, who will be well remembered out here, is still touring England with her popular farce, "Miss Lancashire, Ltd."

Miss Nellie Stewart is now enjoying a well-earned rest in Sydney, after completing the longest one-piece tour in the history of the Australian stage. For eight months continuously she has been playing the title role in "Sweet Nell of Old Drury" through the "smalls" in New Zealand, Tasmania, New South Wales and Queensland.



Miss VIOLET PAGET, of "The Woman in the Case" Company.