London Letter.

My present news is mainly theatrical, having to deal with two "premieres" of first-class importance. To begin with the new Savoy opera, "The Beauty Stone," the story is romantic, the music often lovely and the scenery, even for the Savoy; yet one is oppressed by a sense of "puzz'ed(e)m" that interferes with complete enjoyment. One suspected Gilbertian "quips and cranks," when none were intended. And The Devil was so disconcerting. He was not frankly funny; and yet one saw that he was meant to be grotesque. Also the spoken dialogue interfered dreadfully with the music; and the lyrics were very bad verse—bathos, in fact. But let me quit grumbling and tell you the story.

An old weaver and his wife (Simon and John), have a deformed daughter named Laine, who, however, is by no means woolly as regards her head (excuse the pun!) When the old pair have sung a very quaint duet, "Click, Clack, the Shutter Flies," we see the poor girl bemoaning her lack of beauty. Her prayer, "Dear Mary Mother," in which she begs for death, is sweet and haunting, and was given by Miss Ruth Vincent with charming expression. The Devil (Mr. Walter Passmore), disguised as a monk, comes to Laine and persuades her to accept and wear the Beauty Stone, when she is instantly transformed into the loveliest maiden in Mirlemont. Now Philip, Lord of Mirlemont, is a lively young noble who, having been to the East, has brought home with him a certain lady, by name Saida, concerning whose presence the author sententiously remarks that the world was "no better in the beginning of the fifteenth century than it is at the end of the nineteenth." But Philip when he sees the improved condition of Laine, falls madly in love with her; whereupon Saida, not unnaturally, becomes jealous, and complications ensue. So disgusted is innocent Laine at the methods of Philip in wooing, that she again addresses the Madonna in dispraise of the gift of beauty, and begs her to "take this thing away, away!" (I told you that the lyrics were not immortal poetry.) And she throws away the fatal stone. Her father picks it up, becomes young and handsome and enamored of Saida, who leads him on for a while in order to get the stone, thinking thereby to win back Philip. When she gets it, Simon of course, becomes old again. Saida awaits in triumph Philip's return from the war, whither he has been absent during this little flirtation; but he comes back blind, and her charms are powerless. No sooner does he hear the voice of Laine—now once more a cripple—than true love awakens within him; he sends for the girl and makes her his betrothed. The Devil resumes possession of the stone.

Among the worthy numbers, besides those mentioned, are The Devil's song, "Since it Dwelt in that Rock," which contains a curious imitation of a bell; Saida's song and dance, with a quaint eastern chorus; a love-duet between Philip and Laine; and a duet, with a dance, between The Devil and Jacqueline, a sort of familiar of his, played by Miss Ermine Owen. Indeed, this latter number was so much like the old Savoy style of thing, that when His Satanic Majesty and his agile little friend started a "break-down" caper of the orthodox pattern the house burst into applause. This suggested that the audience would have preferred more of that kind of thing! No doubt the piece will go much better presently, when it has been compressed. As for the cast, it is excellent. Pauline Joram makes a splendid Saida, singing and acting like the artist she is. Walter Passmore is a dryly humorous Devil. Mr. Devoll, as Philip, and Mr. Isham, as Guntran, made successful debuts. The former has a fine tenor voice, and both sing and act with great verve and effect. I think they will become favorites here; and I should like to see the last named in a better part. Everybody was "called," and the usual first night enthusiasm prevailed; but—it is not safe to predict what the general public will say about "The Beauty-Stone."

A Savoy production being such an event, I have been obliged to devote a good deal of space to it, therefore I shall defer my account of "John Oliver Hobbe's" comedy, "The Ambassador," until I shall have seen it again. So brilliant is the dialogue that a first hearing does not enable one to pick out all the "plums" There will be controversy over "The Ambassador." I find that those who don't like it are uncompromising in their hostility, while those who do—and here I include your correspondent—call it one of the best bits of writing that the stage has had for a long time. Well, we shall see what the verdict of the box-office will be. For one thing, the feminine world will go once, at least, to see the frocks. They are simply wonderful; and there are fifteen actresses in the cast. Fay Davis has made a great hit as the heroine.

The Hon. Margaret Hennikee, who has just made her debut as a professional singer, is the eldest daughter of Lord Henniker, Governor of the Isle of Man. She is a nice girl, with a pure, sweet mezzo-soprano voice, which has been very well trained. She is, I believe, the first English titled lady to adopt the musical profession, but she says she only means to sing at private houses, at least for the present. Her elder brother is the Prince of Wale's godson; and her mother was the sister of the Earl of Desart (the one who was compelled to divorce his wife and afterward married Mr. Bischoffsheim's daughter.) Her aunts are the Hon. Mary Henniker, of Primrose League fame, and the Hon. Mrs. Henniker, (Lord Crewe's sister), whose clever stories are so well known. There is a good deal of talent in the family.

Everyone is sorry for Lady Londonderry in her anxiety about her younger son, Lord "Reggie," who full name is Charles Stewart Reginald Vano Tempest Stewart, and who is threatened with consumption. He is a nice, bright boy of nineteen. A voyage to the Cape and a long stay at Cecil Rhode's hill Sanitorium was pronounced the only thing for him; certainly consumptives far advanced in the disease have been cured there, so the redoubtable Cecil has taken him over and means to look after him. Lady Londonderry does not mean her worry to prevent her from doing her social duty, so she will, if she keeps well, give a ball after Ascot, as both her only daughter and young Viscount Castlereagh (who come of age next year) are devoted to dancing.

Poor Eric Mackay's death was very sudden. No one knew that he was ill when the news came that he had succumbed to acute pneumonia. Marie Corelli is plunged in grief, of course, for the two were mutually devoted. Eric was forty-seven but looked much younger. He will be best remembered by his "Love Letters of a Violinist", of which 40,000 copies have been sold. He thought out all the "Love Letters" while wa king in the country lanes.

THE COURIER for sale at all newsstands

It is to be hoped the club women assembled in Denver will take spirited action in regard to rechristening the Spanish flounce.

Remarkable Pigs.

When the pig is not only a domestic animal, but a family friend, as he appears to be in the Marquesas islands, he develops unsuspected cleverness. "In the South Seas," one of Robert Louis Stevenson's last books, gives many instances by way of proof. "Many islanders live with their pigs as we do with our dogs," Mr. Stevenson observed; "both crowd around the hearth with equal freedom, and the island pig is a fellow of activity, enterprise and sense. He husks his own cocoanuts and—I am told—rolls them into the sun to burst; he is the terror of the shepherd. Mrs. Stevenson, senior, has seen a pig fleeing to the woods with a lamb in his mouth; and I saw another come rapidly—and erroneously—to the conclusion that the Casco was going down, and swim through the flush water to the rail in search of an escape. It was told us in childhood that pigs cannot swim; I have known one to leap overboard, swim five hundred yards to shore, and return to the house of his original owner. I was once, at Tautira, a pigmaster on a considerable scale. At first, in my pen, the utmost good feeling prevailed. A little sow with a bellyache came and appealed to us for help in the manner of a child; and there was one shapely black boar, whom we called Catholicus, for he was a particular present from the Catholics of the village, and who early displayed the marks of courage and friendliness. No other animal, whether dog or pig, was suffered to approach him at his food, and for human beings he showed a full measure of that toadying fondness, so common in the lower animals, and possibly their chief title to the name. One day, on visiting my piggery, I was amazed to see Catholicus draw back from my approach with cries of terror; and if I was amazed at the change, I was truly embarrassed when I learned its reason. One of the pigs had that morning been killed; Catholicus had seen the murder, he had discovered he was dwelling in the shambles, and from that time his confidence and his delight in life were ended. We still reserved him a long while, but he could not endure the sight of any two-legged creature, nor could we, under the circumstances, encounter his eye without confusion."