

capacity ; the result being that we had a first-class representation of "The Child Widow" and "The Queen's Proctor," both of which were worth going a long way to see, especially put on as they were.

The closing week of the year was made pleasant by a couple of operatic concerts at which Madame Albani was the centre of attraction, De Koven and Smith's new opera "The Mandarin," and the apparently still popular "Wang." "The Mandarin" is light, clever, well played, and admirably mounted. It has done unexpectedly well here, the Princess Theatre having had eight large audiences in it during the week. Of Madame Albani it is needless to say much, except that her voice is in a marvellous state of preservation, and it is only a trained and critical ear that can detect those changes which must exist in the voice of a singer who is well into middle age. Madame Albani's reception in Toronto—both in public and private—was most flattering. Of "Wang," we need only remark that, considering how often it has been given here and how little there is in the production in either a literary or an artistic sense, the popularity with which the public continue to patronize and support it is surprising. Still I am pleased to think, from the substantial support given to Madame Albani, to "The Mandarin," and to "Wang," that we may hope for better houses during the rest of the season than the initial months led us to expect. Another thing, too, seems certain : it is not, perhaps, satisfactory, but we may as well face plain facts—the public just now do not want grand opera, and they will not pay for it ; but comic opera is in demand, and apparently can be made to play to paying business. This being so, our theatre managers should see that we have it—bright scenery and costumes, light dialogue, light songs, light music, and pretty girls, appear to be the collective theatrical necessity of the hour ; perhaps it may not be art, but it certainly is business.

Amateur Associations and the Profession.

The question as to what extent the theatre proper is being interfered with by amateur vocal and elocutionary societies is, from a theatrical point of view, an important one. These amateur associations are, to a certain extent, probably, good things ; at any rate, whether we think them good or bad, we have them in constantly increasing numbers, and as they are conducted at little individual expense and afford a fair amount of amusement to the members, we cannot expect them to decrease. But they interfere undoubtedly with the theatres, as they provide a certain number of entertainments during each season at a low per capita charge for admission, and as each performer and all the members of the society in addition, become personal and usually persistent canvassers for the sale of tickets, it is not at all surprising that the patronage is almost always numerically large. That these societies turn out among us an undue proportion of young ladies and gentlemen, who labor under the impression that they each possess great artistic capacity for the stage in one form or another, is a circumstance from which the public suffers to some extent but from which the persons more immediately concerned suffer most in the long run. This, however, is a side issue ; but the point at present is—do these amateur associations lessen the attendance at our theatres ? And I think that at times like the present, when money is scarce, they do so to an appreciable extent. But the most serious opposition the theatres have to contend with is the prevalent practice of giving "entertainments" of very varying kinds at the different churches throughout the