

A Tie-Pin From MELBA and a Voice Like a Gift from THE GODS

IF you see in the next few weeks a quaint tie-pin shaped rather like a bishop's mitre, look more closely. You will find that the mitre idea is really a decorative M. On the left of the centre-stroke are the letters EL, and on the right, BA. Then, if you haven't been asked by the owner of this tie-pin to move on, raise your eyes, and you'll find yourself looking Browning Mummery in the face. If he likes the look of you this popular Australian tenor will explain that the pin was a gift from Dame Nellie Melba in appreciation for the performance of Browning Mummery in "La Boheme" with the great prima donna at a Covent Garden farewell the night the King and Queen were present.

But Browning Mummery doesn't carry his personality in a tie-pin. A tenor with such an enviable career, particularly in opera, has to have more than just a fine voice. Listeners to 2YA and 1YA by now have been treated to several broadcast performances by this artist, who has provided sufficient variety of well-sung operatic and ballad numbers to convince those unacquainted with him that the brand of fame has been burnt into his name with good reason.

He admits that he started work as quite an ordinary young fellow in Melbourne—he was originally an engineer's apprentice. He had just finished his "time" when an early Fuller-Gonzales Opera Company disbanded in Australia, leaving a bass and a couple of tenors in Melbourne. These men decided to form a company of their own. A cousin of the young Mummery's suggested that the budding engineer should let the Italians try out his voice with a view to joining them. The test was successful, but the young fellow was canny about leaving a job for the chance of a living in singing.

He had a little leave due to him, and his manager was sympathetic toward musical affairs, so the latter offered to keep the job open for the engineer-cum-tenor. But after two weeks, an influenza epidemic broke out, and the singer returned to his bolts and nuts. When the epidemic was over, J. C. Williamson took over the company, and Browning Mummery



Chummery Mummery

BELOW is a poetic tribute to Browning Mummery by Percy Merriman in the "Radio Times" (London) just before the tenor left for Australia. The ingenious writer could hardly have dug more rhymings out of the alphabet!

*Come troll me a ballad of Browning Mummery—
Gallant and debonair, bright and summery.*

*Music for him must never be strummery—
Bach is the fellow for Browning Mummery.*

*He doesn't care for tunes tum-tummery—
Bit of a highbrow is Browning Mummery.*

*Not that he scorns a melody hummery—
Modern the culture of Browning Mummery.*

*But it must not be sugar and plumery—
For the critical ear of Browning Mummery.*

*Rather likes opera—not at all slummery—
A touch of Beau Brummell for Browning Mummery.*

*He doesn't work by rules of thummery—
Bold and bizarre is Browning Mummery.*

*Diction delightful—not at all gummery—
Free open methods for Browning Mummery.*

*Gifts mediocre leave him nummery—
Art with an A for Browning Mummery.*

*Cheery and volatile—he's never glummery—
Looks on the bright side, does Browning Mummery.*

*Fond of the lassies, but never yum-yummery—
Broth of a boy is Browning Mummery.*

*Never a trace of fribble or flummery—
Solid the structure of Browning Mummery.*

*So here's to an artist chippy and chummery—
And the glorious name of Browning Mummery.*

*Born in the land all wattle and gummery—
The pride of Australia is Browning Mummery.*

said farewell to engineering. In small parts he toured New Zealand. His first principal part was undertaken when the company was in Auckland in 1919-20.

From here he went to England in opera, receiving engagements there with the National Opera Company, a co-operative concern. For four years he toured England, and did seasons of opera in London, all the time building up his reputation and improving his work generally. Eventually he joined a company with Dame Nellie Melba. With the great soprano he toured Australia and America in 1928. In the United States he spent four years singing in concert work and broadcasts, two years of which were with the N.B.C. in Chicago. Since then he has been in opera in London, in performances for the British Broadcasting Corporation, thence to Australia about two years ago. From Australia he has come to New Zealand.

"Opera is always interesting," remarked the tenor to a "Radio Record" representative. "There are so many things which might happen during a show, and even if we do the same operas time after time, it is not as dull as having to perform in just the one show for weeks and months on end. Noel Coward seems to be one of those who tire of playing the same thing for too long, and he is fortunate enough to be able to afford leaving a show."

At many an odd hour during (Continued on page 18).