

# WELCOMED BACK TO AUSTRALIA

## Gladys Moncrieff to play in "Southern Maid"

**H**UNDREDS of friends went to the Hotel Australia (Sydney) to welcome Gladys Moncrieff last month after her New Zealand tour, and the long spell she had in Dunedin following her accident. Hugh Ward, who was responsible for starting her on her brilliant career, was one of those reminiscing for the occasion. Lady Fuller was one of the hostesses.

Soon after came first rehearsals of "Southern Maid," which the ABC produced for studio broadcasts. With Miss Moncrieff in the first broadcast on January 4 was Claude Fleming, who is as determined as she to follow religiously the ideas of the late Oscar Asche.

Both had intimate personal memories of the author-producer. During re-

hearsals they talked about Asche—his genius as a producer, his warm friendship, and the happy days they had all spent together.

"Do you remember, Claude, the premiere of 'The Southern Maid,' when Oscar, after finishing the curtain of 'Cairo,' came over in full make-up to make a speech?" asked Miss Moncrieff.

"And what about that marvellous evening at Carrum, near Melbourne, where we both had seaside houses! I can still see Oscar, after spending the whole afternoon swimming, enjoying that Sunday dinner. We sat down at 7 p.m. and did not rise until midnight—eating and talking. I think that night we all told the story of our lives!"

### Drinks Match Wigs

Talking about his methods of production, Miss Moncrieff said she had been most impressed with Asche's eye for detail. She could scarcely believe her eyes when she heard him order cocktails

to match the girls' wigs in the supper-party scene.

But there was just one detail he overlooked, and both he and Gladys were taken to task after the first night, by one of the critics, who expressed astonishment that it had evaded the notice of so magnificent a producer as Asche and such an artist as Miss Moncrieff.

During the rehearsal Miss Moncrieff had suggested that in the finale of the second act, when she had to drop the dagger after singing to it, it would create an effect if she were to throw it down to make it stick and shake. Asche was delighted.

### "Just Too Hard"

However, each forgot that the stage cloth was designed to give a cobblestone effect, and, therefore, that the idea of a dagger piercing stone and shaking was "just too hard to take."

The next night, the dagger was dropped on to a supper-table instead.

Before he left Australia, Asche presented Miss Moncrieff with a beautiful case of fish knives and forks, which he had brought with him from London, as he always travelled with quantities of cutlery and culinary requirements.

## In London Premiere

Claude Fleming played in the London premiere of "The Southern Maid," at Daly's Theatre, directed by Asche.

"During the season in Sydney," he said, "a small party of us often went off in Oscar Asche's old Rolls Royce, complete with his 'cooker,' which he invented, to the cliffs near Dee Why or Palm Beach.

"He would bring enough food for a banquet, and I have an unforgettable picture of him, cooking three dozen potatoes in sea-water (that is how he considered they should be cooked) and covered with seaweed.

### Lavish Repasts

"Then he would bring out half a dozen lobsters and make most marvellous dishes with any number of sauces.

"After a colossal meal, we would drive back to his flat in town, and to our amazement—at any rate, the first time—he would invite us to sit down to another feast."

Even in his productions, Oscar Asche insisted on real food and wines being used, but the wines in "The Southern Maid" proved so heavy that they were eventually replaced by cold tea.

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## HOW MUCH DID YOU KNOW?

These are the answers to the questions on page 23.

**SUNDAY:** Olive Groves, soprano (1YA at 9.37 p.m.).

**MONDAY:** "Aloha Oe," by the late Queen Liliuokalani, of Hawaii (2YA at 8.27 p.m.).

**TUESDAY:** Syd Howard (3YA at 9.32 p.m.).

**WEDNESDAY:** Geraldo, conductor (1YA at 9.55 p.m.).

**THURSDAY:** Keith Falkner, baritone (4YA at 8.17 p.m.).

**FRIDAY:** Clarence Raybould, conductor (4YA at 9.49 p.m.).

**SATURDAY:** Haydn Wood, composer of "Roses of Picardy" (1YA's Dinner Music).

Recorded Personalities in Caricature (2): Brian Lawrance, vocalist.

## "Shakespeare of Music"

Probably few titles for Ludwig Van Beethoven are more apt than the "Shakespeare of Music." Like our poet, he reached the heights and depths of the human spirit. When he was about thirty, at the peak of his creative period, deafness began to appear. Yet he struggled against the growing disability, and as the malady became worse, he continued to produce great music. Much has been written, for and against, Beethoven the man; but his vindication lies in the greatness of his works. The world's finest symphonies and overtures are amongst the nine of each that he wrote. Beethoven's seventh symphony, in A Major, will be presented at 3.18 p.m. on Sunday, January 21, from 1YA Auckland, played by Arturo Toscanini and the New York Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra.