



Spencer Digby photograph
MAURICE LYNCH: Not the mysterious one

THIS is not Mr. Lynch—the mysterious one—of Max Afford's radio play. It is Maurice Lynch, a gentleman of the stage, with memories of the stage when living people walked upon it, a trouper, and proud of it, with 72 years of yesterdays to remember, and still saying "damn'd be him that first cries 'Hold, enough.'"

He does a great deal of comedy and character work for the NBS in plays and serials, and can turn his hand with as much felicity to the part of a Chinaman as he can to the part of an Irishman, or a Cockney, or an American, or just about anything else.

However, he disclaims versatility as a special talent. When he first walked the boards, actors were not asked if they liked a part or thought they could play it. They were given a script and expected to put the part over. If they objected, or could not do it, there was always someone else to take their place.

All Tickets, Please!

He started as a ticket-collector, or "first-robber," as he called it, giving the position precedence over all others in that category of theatre management in days which seem from his description to exemplify nothing so clearly as Darwin's theories of the survival of the fittest (and the slickest). Mr. Lynch, however, remained honest; and did not get rich, although he survived.

From the ticket office he progressed quickly to the stage simply by pointing out to the manager that a lad of his size (he then weighed five stone, no more), would be excellent as a street urchin or newsboy, or beggar. Street urchin he was appointed, forthwith, and made his first appearance in "Lights o' London."

In Cobb and Co's Coaches

This started a most extraordinary history. In these days, Mr. Lynch's trouping seems close to the incredible. He tells many a tale of travelling with different companies through the back-blocks of Australia.

They travelled by coaches hired from that same Cobb and Company that ran the first efficient stages in roadless New Zealand, when gold was found in

MEET MR. LYNCH

A Gentleman Of The Theatre With Picturesque Memories

Central Otago and in Westland. The coaches carried the company, the props, and food for the immensely long journeys. One of the company, day and night, stood guard with a rifle, for much of the country through which they travelled was wild, and the aboriginals often inhospitable. If there was no need to use the rifle on a human enemy, it came in handy for supplementing food supplies.

Much of his work in these early days was done in Queensland. "You will be surprised," he suggested, "if I tell you that we could go for three years without feeling rain on our heads. We slept in the open, with a blanket to keep out the breezes, and a bundle of the horses' hay for a pillow."

Hardly a Drop to Drink

Water was their greatest difficulty. They carried what they could over the long crossing of waterless country, and made do as best they could with such waterholes as might be encountered. Sometimes, if dead animals shared the holes with the precious water, it was necessary to boil and strain and boil and strain again before it could be made fit to drink. Watering the horses was more difficult still. The coaches were drawn by teams of six, three abreast.

They played in station barns, or where they could, usually following the magic gold, as it was discovered first here, first there. In the diggings audiences were by no means easy to please. Isolated as they might be, they still demanded its very best of the company, and made their disapproval known in no gentle fashion if the best were not forthcoming.

"But they were good days," says Mr. Lynch. "We had no worries—not a care in the world. We were happy, and free. When we'd finished a tour and were back in Sydney we spent our earnings and set off again."

A Very Special Hiccup

But Australia, large and all as it is, was not to be the end of Mr. Lynch's wanderings. He went to America, appeared with great success on Broadway, where, he recounts, he introduced a special sort of hiccup to an admiring audience in the part of a drunken Irish Bailiff. "Imagine it!" says Mr. Lynch: "Drunk! And not only drunk, but Irish, too! And what is more, a bailiff!" Those were the days!

In three years he had toured all over America, and summed it up in the end as a place he did not like. "I don't like the place, or the people, or their customs, or anything much about them." So he went back to Australia, and from there began his journeyings again.

He toured in China. He toured the Malay States. He toured India, and Japan, and New Zealand. When he was not playing he was sightseeing and meeting people.

He Liked it in China

In China, he found, they had a most excellent method of arranging a tour. Weeks before the company arrived an agent would be sent ahead with box plans covering the whole season. These he would fill with bookings, so that by the time a show opened the company would know almost exactly how much each house would be worth.

This essentially gentlemanly arrangement, made with the co-operation of the heads of big firms, was considered very satisfactory, and tours in China were well liked, not only because finances were so well managed, but also because audiences were very discriminating. "They could understand us all right," Mr. Lynch says. "In fact, they do business in four or five languages, and do it well; while we can only do business in one, and that badly, and be pretty conceited about it at the same time."

In India they chased the seasons and the soldiers in the barracks.

Fan-Tan and Films

In the Malay States they tried what Mr. Lynch describes as "the fairest

game in the world." This was *fan-tan*. He described it: Bets are placed on the numbers, one, two, three, and four. There is a pile of small beans. Over the pile a small porcelain bowl is placed, and drawn away, dragging with it as many beans as it has covered. These beans are then counted out, four at a time, by means of a stick on the end of which only four beans can hold. The croupiers, or their Malayan equivalents, were very expert at this counting, said Mr. Lynch. The bank paid out according to the number of beans left after the last complete four had been removed.

Mr. Lynch now lives at Petone, far from *fan-tan*, far from Cobb's coaches, far from China and Japan and the Malay States. Companies now travel from theatre to theatre in square tin boxes, labelled "Films, Urgent," at 1/6 a time. Mr. Lynch preferred the days when fifty and a hundred travelled together. "These things," he says, "are only photographs and gramophone records. They leave no lasting picture on the memory. It is better to see the flesh before you. That gives you something to carry away in your mind."

A TRAGIC COINCIDENCE

Death of Ava Symons

FOLLOWING closely on the announcement from Auckland of the deaths of F. E. Egerton and L. R. Brakenrig, both well known local musicians who had been associated with the Centennial Festival, last week came news of the sudden death of Ava Symons (Mrs. W. Prouse), who had been touring with the Centennial Symphony Orchestra. She had been taken ill after the orchestra's final performance in Auckland and died there just before she was to come to Wellington to lead the Wellington Symphony Orchestra during the Centennial Celebrations in the Capital.

By a tragic coincidence, the programme of the Wellington season of the music festival contained Cesar Franck's "Symphony in D Minor," which was the work being rehearsed in Auckland when Mr. Brakenrig died suddenly. At this rehearsal, "Nimrod," one of Elgar's "Enigma" Variations, was beautifully played as the orchestra's tribute to Mr. Brakenrig, and in this Ava Symons played with the first violins as usual.

At the Wellington concert (on Wednesday, June 26), before Cesar Franck's Symphony was played, it was preceded by spoken appreciations by Messrs. Wm. Page and D. A. Ewen, and once again the orchestra most expressively played "Nimrod," this time as their tribute to another departed comrade.

Ava Symons was undoubtedly one of New Zealand's outstanding musicians.

Her studies in New Zealand had been elaborated on two visits to Europe.



AVA SYMONS

Her fame as a musician was not confined to New Zealand. As a member of the Symons-Ellwood-Short trio she was known as one among three musicians whose performances were regarded as almost unequalled this side of the Equator.

It was this trio which first introduced her to broadcasting. They played on the opening night of 2YA, and continued giving regular performances for 13 months before the 2YA Orchestra was formed. Miss Symons became leader. Mr. Ellwood was conductor, and Mr. Short began an eight-year term as official accompanist for 2YA. When this happened the trio had performed no fewer than 80 major musical works, and Miss Symons was to continue with season after season of outstanding recitals.