

# THE GODS LOOK DOWN

## A Bird's-Eye View of "The Kiwis"

THE Gods were happy that night. Everyone sat eating and laughing and talking. Then the orchestra filed in, in white coats and black trousers, and struck up "Lady Be Good." The crowd swayed and jiggled in time. "Isn't this lovely," whispered the girl next to us. But when the curtain went up and we saw the chorus, seven of them in blue coats and grey trousers, the girl squealed "gorgeous," and kept on squealing the whole evening.

She had reason to. The concert had pep and finish and polish. There were no moments of waiting, nothing that dragged. Each item dovetailed neatly into the next. In fact the changes were rung so quickly that we had no time to savour the pleasures of anything in retrospect, for in a minute we'd be knee-deep in the next item. And behind it

all was the thought that this was our own Kiwi Concert Party, that these were the boys who had cheered up the other boys in all those hot and sandy places.

"[T]S rather sad in a way," said a woman in front. Our programmes told us that the last performance for the Division was given on the sand beneath the blue gums of Suani ben Adem, a little village on the outskirts of Tripoli. We were asked to imagine that we were sitting out there in the desert, in front of a rigged-up portable stage, a marquee dressing-room and four three-ton trucks, with the sand and the flies swishing round us and the chilly stars gleaming down—and the boys sitting round who had walked across from widely scattered trucks and dug-outs. In reality, watching them perform, we felt as though we were in a slap-up, fast-moving show on Broadway, except that it wasn't American, but very much New Zealand. There were the "leading ladies," very glamorous, very svelte, with figures to make a girl green with envy and voices as feminine as their figures; there was the precocious child "Shirley Temple of the Forces," with ringlets, frills and baby voice—a brat; there was a down-at-the-mouth Hamlet trailing an out-size sword and a miserable voice. There was a tango by Terry Vaughan and Madame X, and it took us a little while to realise that Madame X was not all she should be, in fact a well-stuffed dummy. But she and Terry tangoed with abandon, and no flesh and blood could have out-done her in verve and vitality.

AND of course there were magic, music and high-steppings. One or two of the jokes may have been heard before, and one or two of the items may have been risqué, but everything was done with such exuberance that there was no room for offence.

And of course there was the orchestra. The orchestra was good. It was rhythmical and tuneful, and the conductor, Leopold Popovskv (alias Terry Vaughan), easily out-Stokowski-ed Stokowski. Most of the members were versatile enough to play two or three different instruments, and did so throughout the evening.

And, of course, there was the frocking. The dresses of the "ladies" were up to the minute in modernity, the costumes in character were really in character, and the chorus and the orchestra were really professional in their slick uniforms. We watched the well-padded, operatic soprano sing "Il Bacio" at the Village Concert, we heard "Song of India" from violin, two clarinets, trumpet, guitar and accordion. We trembled for Olga Pulovskv, the beautiful spy, and we cheered when the firing squad shot itself and the hero walked off with the baggage. We heard the Can-Can girls telling how "Minx got minks," and Aunt Mav and Uncle Dick giving birthday greetings to all their dear little listeners. Then we clambered down and down and round and round the stairs again, jostling one another and humming gems from *Show Boat*, and the only thing to be sorry about was that so many people had had to be turned away.

## More Voices of Yesterday



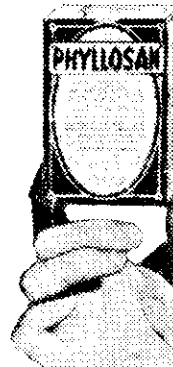
LISTENERS will hear the actual voice of Ellen Terry (above) from 2ZB on Wednesday, October 27, at 8.45 p.m. in the series *Voices of Yesterday*.

Ellen Alicia Terry was born at Coventry on February 27, 1848, and died on July 21, 1928. She came of a theatrical family, for her father and mother and her brother and sisters were all members of the acting profession. Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson has said of her: "Everything she did was invested with great charm. I do not suppose there ever was such an Ophelia. Nor do I think there ever will be again. In the theatre she was adored. In the public estimation she became a fetish. Take her for all in all, she is one of the most remarkable figures in the history of the stage."

From the other Commercial Stations, James J. Corbett, former heavyweight champion of the world will give his views on health in 1ZB's session on Monday, October 25, at 6 p.m.; from 3ZB on Friday, October 29, listeners will hear William Hooker Gillette, who will give reminiscences of Mark Twain; and from 4ZB at 6.30 p.m. on the same day the late Amelia Earhart, aviatrix, will speak on the possibilities of flying for women.

NEW ZEALAND LISTENER, OCTOBER 22

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