

WHAT a night it was for Irmelin! She spent all afternoon sitting on her bed in an old blue dressing gown reading a detective story called "Flowers for the Judge." Then she was turned into a fairy princess by a wave of Sir Thomas Beecham's baton—and lo, there were flowers in her dressing room for Irmelin.

Twenty-seven-year-old Edna Graham came from New Zealand on a scholarship to the Royal Academy of Music. Since Carl Rosa's last opera tour a



IN "The Listener" of April 24 we published a report from London on Sir Thomas Beecham's plan to present the Delius opera "Irmelin" at Oxford in May, and his selection of the Christchurch soprano Edna Graham for the title role. Here now is a report on the performance, airmailed by J. W. GOODWIN

"Nobody ever asked me if I wanted to sing this opera," she reflected. "It just happened." And now she has been booked to sing at Glyndebourne this summer.

For the singers, however, this was a disadvantage, because the music critics have all been more interested in the music and the libretto than in the performance. *The Times* critic wrote that the singing of the two principals, Edna Graham and Thomas Round, was well matched and "was exactly the sort required, light, smooth."

It is scarcely the stuff of which opera is made, even when produced at some cost complete with a rippling stream.



It is scarcely what a sophisticated audience now expects, especially when its one week at Oxford is sandwiched between a season of Ruth Draper and of Fred Emney in a New Musical Frolic. However, the supreme enchantment was conjured up by Sir Thomas Beecham and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra—which had to be back in London 60 miles away by midnight to avoid subsistence payment.

For the conductor it was as great a transition from the gold and white dignity of Covent Garden to the orange light and air-conditioned opulence of Oxford's New Theatre as it was for one of the leading singers snatched from *South Pacific* at Drury Lane.

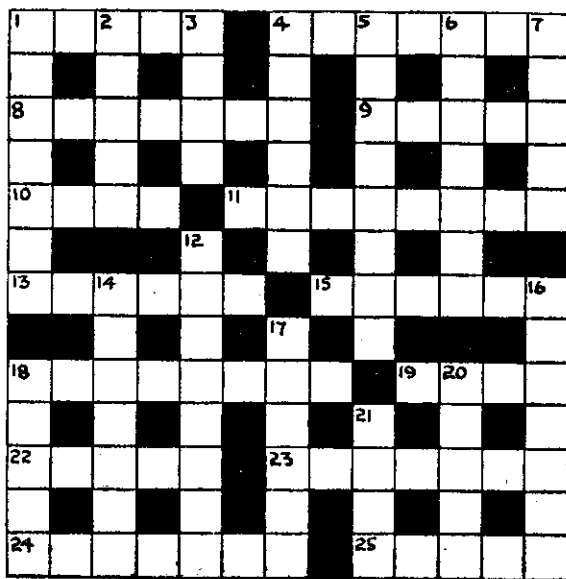
For the audience, asked to pay 3/6 to 21/- instead of the usual 1/6 to 8/6 and then disappointed to find that rumour was wrong and that the swineherd was swineless, it was a surprise to see Sir Thomas entering from a door labelled "Bar and Toilets."

For Oxford this Delius' disinterment suggested that the university town is still loyal to, if no longer the home of, lost causes. But for Beecham it was an act of piety and for the New Zealand singer a great occasion.

21. "The heir of all the —, in the
foremost files of Time" (Tennyson).

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1. The doctor has his own Scotch, apparently to drink it to the last drop.
4. Samuel Pepys, for instance.
8. One's art (anag.).
9. Behead a small hound to get the bird.
10. Capable, even without the headgear.
11. Some of its inhabitants dispute the form of the Queen's title.
13. Danger (anag.).
15. Tendencies.
18. Astonishes.
19. Daily fruit?
22. A branch of this tree is an emblem of reconciliation.
23. Drag gin backwards from a stingy person.



THE well-known sports commentator Winston McCarthy is to provide radio coverage for the NZBS of the coming All Black tour of Britain, France, Canada and the U.S. He is re-joining the service under contract, and will be covering the trial matches later in the season which precede the overseas tour.

Mr. McCarthy has had extensive experience of sports broadcasting, both at home and abroad. He travelled with the Kiwi Army Rugby team in Britain and Europe in 1945-46, and with the All Blacks in Australia in 1947 and 1951, and in South Africa in 1949. His New Zealand assignments include the Empire Games at Auckland.

