

# MEMORIES ON PARADE

## Opera Singer Gives the "Record" His Lively Reminiscences

Written by  
"EMILE"



FREDERICK COLLIER.

... Has a fund of memories.

"MEMORABLE nights in the opera?" Frederick Collier, Australian operatic bass-baritone, who arrived in New Zealand last week for a six weeks' tour under engagement to the NBS, stretched out his big frame in his chair.

His mind was travelling back over his operatic career ever since that time he had won all the prizes in his classes, and then the aggregate at the Great South Street Competitions in Ballarat at the age of 21. The local boy had made good.

### Since Then

THERE had been a long journey in opera since then, and some exciting days and nights.

There had been first the singing in Melbourne—doing all the things the local man does—in concerts and oratorio. Then came a spell as concert manager to the Australian branch of the music publishers, W. Chappell and Co., and an engagement under J. C. Williamson's in 1919 and a tour to New Zealand in 1920.

After that came the tour of Australia as assisting artist to the great diva, Nellie Melba, and after that, in 1921, England.

NEXT came 12 years in English opera, six of them with the British National Opera Company. Singing his first role of Escamillo in "Carmen"; singing as Wotan in Wagner's "Valkyries," and as Hagen in "Götterdämmerung," singing altogether in 80 operas.

That time he sang in Melba's farewell performance in opera at Covent Garden had been memorable. She was over 60, and her voice had been as clear as a bell.

Those nights of the grand season at Royal Opera in Covent Garden had been memorable too.

THERE had been singing under Beecham. "He electrified one, you felt you had to do your best under him. He was all the time tense, a live wire conductor."

Frederick Collier had sung, too, under the German conductors, Robert Hager and Bruno Walter. Walter had been quite different from Beecham. He did things in a quiet way and got his effects without effort.

MEMORABLE nights at the opera meant much to Frederick Collier. It meant singing with Melba in a farewell . . . working with world famous conductors . . . and it meant, too, a Jeffery Farnoll fight on the stage in which two singers warmed up so much that one "drew claret" from the other's nose, and the other pitched him from the ring . . .

Goossens had been like that, but not Belezzi, the Italian conductor, who was a great producer as well. He was like Beecham, the vital type.

There had been the other great conductors, Percy Pitt and Malcolm Sargent and Coates. Especially Coates, a massive man six feet two in height.

It had always been inspiring for Frederick Collier, a big man himself, to sing to the baton of this other big man. Coates had been such a worker, a great Wagnerian man, who looked like a giant standing in front of one with his baton.

As Frederick Collier sang the role of Hagen, the sinister role, Coates seemed to be playing the part with him.

### His Lips Moved

"YOU could see his lips going, all the time, as he mouthed the words with you."

ALL that had been memorable, and so had Frederick Collier's first dinner with the English Music Society, sitting between two famous English composers, Sir Charles Stanford and Arthur Somerville, in 1924, when he had just arrived in London, and finding them human just as he was himself.

Frederick Collier remembered, too, the time he was playing with New Zealand's Rosina Buckman in England.

land in "Tristan and Isolde," and Rosina Buckman, waving a torch, had caught fire until a stage-hand had thrown a bag over her.

Once when he had been playing in "Tosca" with Amy Castles, the Australian soprano, she had leaned over a table to take up the knife to kill Scarpia when her ringlets caught fire from the candle flame. There had been a tense moment in the theatre until she took off her ringlets, fortunately false.

"MEMORABLE nights?" said Frederick Collier, and began to chuckle. "This next story is against myself."

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