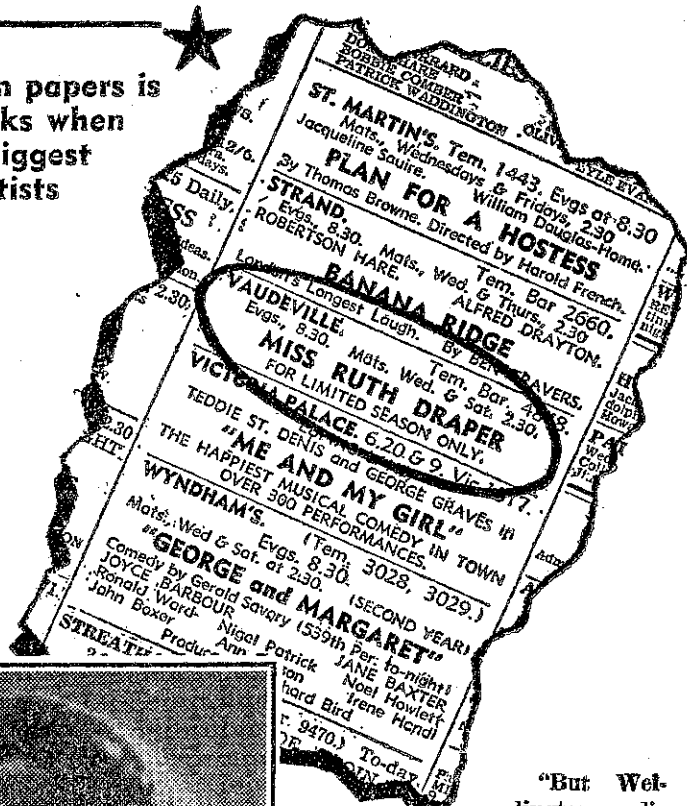


A small advertisement in the London papers is sufficient to fill the theatre for weeks when Ruth Draper appears in the world's biggest city. She's one of the greatest artists of to-day . . .

14,000 Miles . . . And Failure Became Success

BY

TREVOR LANE



IT needed a journey of 14,000 miles to turn failure into success.

Round about last Christmas Ruth Draper was putting on her world-famous character sketches at the Vaudeville Theatre in London.

I saw her act, heard during the interval that she was contemplating a tour of New Zealand and Australia, and applied to her manager for an interview.

But he was firm as a rock. Miss Draper did NOT give interviews. Yes, he was sorry . . . but there was nothing could be done about it.

That was eight months ago.

The other afternoon Ruth Draper and I were guests at a very enjoyable function at the Wellington Travel Club. In my little speech I mentioned that I numbered Miss Draper among my literary failures in London—she smiled at the time and afterward told me that she really hated giving newspaper interviews. ("In print one so often looks egotistical.")

But this time Miss Draper was willing to oblige the "Record."



"But Wellington audiences—the first I've played to in this country—have been simply wonderful. Enthusiastic and responsive. . . . I'm not taking all the credit for that. . . .

"I put on a certain type of performance which either appeals or it doesn't. In this case Australia and New Zealand have been every bit as happy about the character studies that I am giving as America and Europe. And that makes me very proud indeed.

"For a long while I have toyed with the idea of visiting this country, and now I feel like a woman who, after a great deal of deliberation, has changed her dressmaker and is more than pleased with the result.

"Of course, I'm coming back—and more than once, I hope."

IT'S like telling you about the lamented death of Queen Anne to start talking about the type of work Miss Draper does. But she's every bit as good as the enthusiasts would have you believe.

RUTH DRAPER is as much a part of London life as the Changing of the Guard or the dress parade at Ascot. People don't ask you if you've been to see her—they take it for granted that you have. All her old fans flock along faithfully year after year, and each season sees batches of new devotees marvelling at the charm and freshness of this exquisite artist, who confesses quite frankly to 25 years on the stage.

"This is the first time I've tackled Australia and New Zealand," Miss Draper told me. "I use the word 'tackled' because I must confess I was a little dubious of the success of the venture. That doesn't mean that I consider you slow-witted or unresponsive, but mostly because I felt that perhaps some sort of preparation was necessary before people in the Antipodes would sit for a whole evening watching one performer. Europeans have had generations of one-woman shows and are accustomed to them.

See her in the English house party sketch—first the hostess, worried about the mixed bag she has invited for the week-end . . . then as the simpering little niece, feeling rather a little devil about her first week-end away from the vicarage . . . as the bored Mayfair-ite who has two labels for all the people who don't interest her, poisonous and dreary . . . as the American woman, terrific as Roosevelt's spending programme.

Then watch her as the Dalmatian peasant woman, meek, bewildered, pathetic.

And all the more credit is due her when you know that she hasn't seen many of the types she portrays. It's probable that she's never been in Dalmatia . . . but you feel that her character drawing is right, you say to yourself, "Ah, that's a perfect cameo of a Dalmatian peasant." And I'll bet you've never seen a Dalmatian peasant, either. I know I haven't.