

ONCE HE PRACTISED HIS SINGING ON THE SHEEP

Once upon a time a tall, strapping young man rode behind a mob of sheep in New South Wales.

As he rode across the dusty Australian plains, he raised his voice in song.

The sheep paused, stood in a huddled group. They seemed to be saying to themselves: "That young man will go far."

Clem Williams, Australian singer, who arrived in New Zealand last week to tour for the NBS, was practising voice production on his sheep.

HE has been to New Zealand before. With Gladys Moncrieff, he is the best-known of all Australian radio artists in this country, and is always sure of a warm welcome.

But that did not save him from the roughest Tasman trip he had ever gone through. He was still swaying with the rocking of the boat when the "Record" saw him on the afternoon of his arrival.

Far Journey

This time he is travelling far. First he tours New Zealand for six weeks with the NBS. Then he goes on to Canada and the U.S.A., where his wife, well-known Australian pianist Enid Conley, who plays all his accompaniments, joins him; then together they go on to London and South Africa before coming back to Australia.

He misses his wife, regrets that she is not here to play for him. They do all their work together and have cultivated a complete understanding.

While she is in Sydney, however, she is working in a good cause. Last week, says Mr. Williams, she was to start rehearsals with Gladys Moncrieff.

Her Accident

LISTENERS know that Gladys Moncrieff has been over eight months off the stage and off the air through the motor-accident that cut to ribbons her plans for her last New Zealand tour.

For a time, she was desperately ill, her shoulders, arms, thighs and ankles being very badly injured. At one stage her life was in danger.

Will-Power

"Only her indomitable will and her constant sense of humour saved her," said Clem Williams. "But now the long rest has done her so much good that her voice is better than ever."

SHE TOLD HIM AT DINNER THE NIGHT BEFORE SHE LEFT FOR NEW ZEALAND: "MY VOICE IS ALMOST RUNNING AWAY FROM ME!"

Now she is walking at times without the aid of her stick and looking forward with delight to coming back to New Zealand in the near future. She told him she hoped to come at the end of January or the beginning of February.

His Only Prizes

CLEM WILLIAMS himself began singing as an amateur at the age of eight.

"It is the only thing I ever got a prize for, and I got four prizes for singing in four consecutive years."

Then came a farming interlude and the episode of singing to his sheep.

War cut across his farming career and he joined up with the Australian Light Horse.

"I transferred my vocal energies to tough troopers."

On Gallipoli

His regiment, the Drunken 7th., together with the New Zealand Canterbury, were among the troops of occupation on Gallipoli after the Armistice.

They were happy times, he said, except for one evening when he had to make a speech in French to the French troops on the Peninsula.

"As I went on I was discouraged to find the French stuffing their handkerchiefs in their mouths and trying not to laugh. And then my brother came up to me and said furiously: 'Good Lord, I could do better myself.'"

In Business

WHEN he came back to Australia he went into a pastoral firm and tried to join singing and business, soon found the cross-pull too much, and took up singing about ten



PARTNERS. — Clem Williams and his wife, Enid Conley. She plays all his accompaniments.

years ago as his full-time profession.

It is one of his few vanities that he was the first artist to broadcast in Australia at its inaugural programme of national broadcasting.

Ever since, he has been singing constantly in concert work and radio, mainly lieder and art songs, but also in musical comedy and vaudeville.

While He Sang

BBROADCASTING in those days, says Clem Williams, was free and easy.

"It used to be nothing for people to bring in cups of tea and rattle them while you were singing at the microphone."

"And they wouldn't hesitate to ask you to step off something you were standing on, in the middle of a song."

Today, radio is a very different thing and it has brought about something of a renaissance in music in Australia.

Boom In Artists

"The visits of famous artists to Australia," says Clem Williams, "have made people concert-minded. Dr. Sargent, Gilda Bustabo the violinist, Dino Borgioli the tenor, Kirsten Flagstad, the Norwegian opera singer, and Georg Szell, Czechoslovakian conductor; are a few of the famous artists who have visited Australia in the last few months. Each time people have wondered whether the public support would still continue and each time every artist has drawn good houses."

WHEN VETERAN STAGE MAN SAW THE WORLD

TENDENCY of the NBS to centralise the production of plays in Wellington and record them at headquarters was deplored by well-known radio actor J. M. Clark, Auckland, in a "Record" interview on a recent visit to Wellington.

The stage has been a big part of the life of Mr. Clark ever since the days he knew William Hoskins, best all-round London actor of his day, in New Zealand many years ago.

In fact, it was armed with a letter from William Hoskins, Irving's old tutor, that he set off as a youth to London, where the great man took him to his heart and where he had glimpses of



—Barle Andrew photo.
J. M. CLARK.—He discovered Marie Ney.

Ellen Terry, the famous Duse, Oscar Wilde and Whistler as they came into the green-room to pay tribute to the master.

And to-day Mr. Clark still finds that the stage holds a large-sized part of his affections. These days, however, his work has not been given on the boards but through the microphone from 1YA.

"Our radio plays from 1YA have had a special audience of their own," Mr. Clark told the "Record." "People used to meet on play-night at their homes to listen to us."

"They were keen followers, learned to know our actors and actresses, sent us fan mail,

sometimes praising the cast and sometimes candidly critical. The main thing was they were deeply interested.

"It is a pity to see this personal interest lost by broadcasting more and more recorded plays. And recordings lose some of the freshness of the living voice over the microphone, lessen the personal touch."

The stage claimed Mr. Clark from the time he was a boy. He used to belong to a debating society. Thirty or 40 other boys belonged. They sat round and mercilessly criticised one another's efforts.

"When I recited to them they said I was the biggest dud they had ever heard. The chairman said to them, 'What you say may be true but Clark has a style of his own and when you are all dead and forgotten he will be doing this sort of work.'"

Full of ambitions, Mr. Clark worked his way home. In England he was invited to a country home and asked if he had ever heard of Shakespeare.

They were astonished to learn that people knew of Shakespeare in a place hardly visible on the map.

They asked the boy Clark to recite some Shakespeare. When he went back to London he found a cheque for five guineas and a note saying he could have an introduction to any home to recite Shakespeare.

For a time Mr. Clark earned his living by reciting Shakespeare in various homes, then joined a company to tour the provinces at 12/6 a week and board. The juvenile lead was drunk one night and Mr. Clark stepped into his place at a salary of £3 a week.

"I was on velvet," he says.

After 12 months of touring he came out to the Southern Hemisphere again.

One memory Mr. Clark dwells on with delight. In Wellington he discovered a young actress and introduced her to Shakespearean actor Allan Wilkie, who gave the girl her first engagement.

Her name—and to-day one can read it in the electric of London—was Marie Ney.