

Kangaroo and Wattle

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panist, and much heavy work fell to her lot when the famous Maori issues by Anna Hato and Deane Waretini were in preparation.

As an accompanist she is equally in her element, and like many other proved artists she is the essence of modesty.

Harold Williams

IN 1893 Harold Williams was born in Sydney. Beginning as a boy soprano, he was able to buy his first suit of clothes out of his earnings. This was when he was eleven, and he



was very proud of this because his parents at that time were living in rather straightened circumstances. Like most healthy boys, Harold was, however, much more interested in sport. In 1913 he played for New South Wales against the All Blacks. He played

cricket for the famous Sydney Waverley Club, and in 1925, at the annual match for the benefit of the Musicians' Benevolent Fund, he made a flawless century for the Dominion Artists against Kennerley Rumford's XI. This was the first time he had played since 1914!

He served in the Great War, and after the Armistice, while awaiting repatriation, he took up singing lessons for amusement. After three months, his master seriously suggested to him that it was worth his while to take his hobby seriously, and stay at home. Not having the remotest idea what he was letting himself in for, or realising the big fight a young singer has to undergo in England to obtain recognition, Williams agreed.

His rapid successes were extraordinary. He staked the whole of his modest capital on three London recitals, after which engagements literally flowed in. He has sung at Covent Garden on numerous occasions—also the title role in "Hiawatha" on the occasion of the Royal performance at the Albert Hall. His records must be among the most popular of any on the market.

Essie Ackland

THE ambition of Essie Ackland's father was that she should be in a position to be independent in case anything happened to him. So with this object she learned typing and shorthand, and eventually, at the age of 17, obtained employment at the Victoria barracks. At one time she was in charge of a section of some 40 girls, and about this time she started singing at concerts, mostly given to Australian soldiers. Then for four



years she did not sing at all, feeling that her voice wanted maturing.

In 1920 she started singing again with the Welsh Choral Society, and for two years did solo work in various States, touring both Australia and New Zealand with the late Jean Gerardy, the famous Belgian 'cellist. In 1924 she gave a farewell concert in the Sydney Town Hall, the audience numbering about 4000. Going to England absolutely unknown, she sang to Leslie Boosey, who promptly engaged her for his ballad concerts at the Albert Hall. Her growing success is a matter of history.

The Late Nellie Stewart

NO programme could be termed truly representative of Australian artists if it did not include some reference to the late Nellie Stewart, "The Idol of Australia." Although she will principally be remembered, particularly by theatre-goers of the past three decades, for her greatest stage triumph as Nell Gwynne in "Sweet Nell of Old Drury," she was in her earlier life a very gifted singer, and achieved fame overseas both in grand and light opera. Her work in Gilbert and Sullivan operas stamped her as an artiste of rare gifts, and during an American tour she achieved a triumph such as has rarely been vouchsafed to a visiting artist.

As "Sweet Nell" she became the idol of the Australian public, and for many years a full house was always assured when she was billed to interpret the character of the kind-hearted, impulsive and lovable Nell Gwynne. Shortly before her death, which occurred toward the end of last year, she recorded three excerpts from "Sweet Nell," and in one of these—"Nell Gwynne's Entrance, in Act I"—she will be heard in the all-Australian programme. In this particular scene she is assisted by her daughter, Nancy Stewart—also an accomplished actress—as Lady Olivia Vernon.

Molly de Gunst

MISS MOLLY DE GUNST is claimed to be the natural successor to the late Dame Nellie Melba. Her teacher, Madame Christian, prophesied fame for her, and although her experience on the operatic stage has been brief, she is already acknowledged to be a star of the first magnitude.

Madame Christian trained Melba, as well as scores of other famous singers. Miss de Gunst has been an excellent student indeed, a great worker and most receptive, said Madame recently. Miss de Gunst scored a magnificent triumph at the opening Gala performance by the Imperial Grand Opera Company in Melbourne.

For an artiste of years of training and experience her interpretation would have been a notable achievement, but for a girl appearing for the first time in grand opera during the season in Sydney her success was remarkable. Whatever doubts J. C. Williamsons might have had about her ability they completely vanished by the end of the first act. Miss de Gunst's performances during the New Zealand tour of the Imperial Grand Opera Company have been in the nature of a triumph for this gifted Australian artist, and those who have witnessed her superb interpretation of the role of Tosca will agree that she is deserving of all the encomiums heaped upon her by the critics. Miss de Gunst is still in her early twenties. She was born in Bundaberg, Queensland, which was also the birthplace of Gladys Moncrieff.

Australian Native Birds

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able to care for themselves almost immediately after hatching, and do not remain long with their parents.

The sole means of defence is speed or a heavy kick which it is capable of administering if cornered.

New South Wales is the only State in which the emu is at present protected by law. However, settlers at times disregard the law by smashing the eggs when discovered. Stock and rabbit fences have taken heavy toll of the bird; they run against the fences and kill themselves, or in attempting to jump these become entangled in the netting or wires, hanging suspended even for months after death.

Unfortunately in Queensland some years ago the Prickly Pear Commission was responsible for the destruction of over 130,000 emus and over 100,000 eggs by means of the bonus system, after which the persecution ceased, it being discovered that the emu was not altogether responsible for the spreading of the pear, but on the contrary destroyed millions of insects, grasshoppers and caterpillars.

Australia is rather fortunate in her song birds; there is no denying that to go into the bush land in Australia the bird life becomes at once apparent, beautiful birds of all colours and size and songsters, too, compel you to stop, look and listen.

The lyre bird, or menura, which is classed with the wrens, is the master feathered mimic of the world, and can imitate any bird it hears. It is a very stately bird with a beautiful tail of delightfully coloured feathers, and whilst mimicking it struts about and turns, lifts and lowers its glorious tail whilst performing the graceful evolutions.

In May the male forms new dancing mounds and repairs last season's. These mounds are situated amid bracken on hillside or in a thicket of disagreeable dogwood or nearby creek. They are not content with one playground, and often have several, going from one to the other to broadcast repertoires of borrowed pieces during the morning, or perhaps when in the mood. Strangely enough, it is very seldom that the lyre bird has an audience—although it has been said that he has had his actions viewed and songs listened to by admiring females.

Wooling time is early winter, and not spring, as with most birds. One egg only is usually laid, and very rarely have two eggs been discovered in a nest. The egg is large and beautiful, the ground colour, a rich purple grey, flaked and spotted with dark brown, and sepia or light purple slate hue; some eggs are dark and polished.

The young bird begins voice production with ear-grating sounds, and if disturbed its siren call brings the mother back home quickly from foraging nearby. The male is quite unconcerned and keeps out of view. The mother, however, will boldly approach and even enter the nest while the intruder watches at close range. These birds are, of course, protected all over Australia, and in tourist resorts such as Jenolan Caves Reserve, N.S.W., they may be frequently seen either quite close to the Grand Arch or up McKeown's Creek.

It is reported that a lyre bird has

lived on the far South Coast of New South Wales for over 24 years, and, further, that this particular bird was heard to give a realistic imitation of the sound of a circular saw cutting through wood, this occurring in a mountain gully about a mile from where a sawmill had been erected and worked for years. The mill was destroyed by fire 24 years ago—so it was a long time for the bird to remember the sound. This, however, is common to the lyre bird.

THE kookaburra or the great brown kingfisher or laughing jackass is perhaps one of the best known of Australia's birds; he is a universal favourite and I have known visitors to Australia making a trip of 100 miles just to hear him in his natural surroundings. It has also been my pleasant experience to be awakened every morning for a number of years by several kookaburras perched on a tree just outside my bedroom window, when residing at Jenolan Caves, and later on in the day these same kookaburras would await my visit of inspection to the meat house in order to be fed with small pieces of raw meat.

The kookaburra has a very powerful bill or beak and is very quick on the wing; he waits alongside a stream on a nearby tree and swoops down like a flash to fly back into the tree with a small fish in his bill.

He is well known as a killer of snakes, and his method is to pounce on the snake, take it to a great height, and drop it; pick it up again, and repeat the dose until the snake is dead.

He lives mostly on small mammals, and lizards, large insects, and even young babies of other birds.

Kookaburras have been known to attack a goanna up to four feet long, in the act of climbing a tree, where apparently he believed he would be rewarded by a feast of birds' eggs or perhaps nestlings. The birds took it in turn to attack the marauder, striking him on the tail and partly lifting him from the tree, while in between times sending out SOS to other birds, who quickly arrived to assist in the attack. When several birds are present, some strike the head and others the tail with their strong beaks until at last the goanna desists and retreats back down the tree more dead than alive.

The kookaburra laughs alone and in company, but the solo is entirely different from the duet. Both are gloriously mirthful, but the duet is far better than the solo, and it is easy to distinguish one from the other. Kookaburras laugh solo, in duet, quartettes, sextettes, and full orchestra. The heartiest laugh of all, however, and the one that the birds seem to like best, is the duet.

U.S.A. Hears 2ZW

TWO letters have been received by the last mail, one from Berkeley, California, and the other from Chicago, Ill., which commented on reception of 2ZW. Naturally with such a great distance, a certain amount of fading might be reasonably expected, but these reports praise the modulation and tone quality.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS IN RADIO.

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