GREENROOM GOSSIP

A sketch of Harry Lauder as he is upon the stage to-day, written by a specialist for the "Sydney Daily Telegraph," gives a photographic picture of the effect of this "tremendous personality," as the writer puts it: "This short, broad, startling figure has something to tell you, something he knows that you will shriek with laughter at; but his own appreciation of its humour is so great that he simply cannot utter a word. He is brimming with mirth and good humour, and though the insistent music compels him to break into song—his soul is dancing to it all the time—he cannot begin. You smile, he grins; you laugh, he beams; you roar, and he cannot get a word out for laughter. But the music persists and perforce, as he and the music are one, he has to sing. But all the while you know he is singing almost automatically; he is merely chuckling in time to the tune; he is too absorbed in the exquisite humour of his inarticulate joke. It is all about a lassie who is going to marry 'Arry on the 25th of Janujanujanujanu-ary, but in the middle of the chorus his laughter smother his words. That is Harry Lauder, the inimitable Harry Lauder, knighted by His Majesty the King, and that was his first appearance in Sydney on his present world tour."

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Speaking of Mr. Harry Dearth, the English baritone, who is to tour New Zealand under the banner of Messrs. J. and N. Tait, Mr. Andrew Pace, light comedian of the "Dandies," says that without any doubt Mr. Dearth is one of England's leading baritones, and in a certain line he was absolutely supreme. "In such songs as 'Lighterman Tom,' 'Laddie Boy,' and 'The Sergeant of the Line,' he is wonderful—there is no one in England can touch him," said Mr. Pace. "I have worked with him a good deal in the old days, and know what a sterling performer he is. In Melbourne they criticised his style. He is peculiar. He will come on the stage, then walk over to the piano and lean up against it in quite an easy, offhand manner, but there's no doubt about it, he does paint the picture!"

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Muriel Window, the dainty little American who is appearing with Harry Lauder under the J. and N. Tait management, has been frequently reproached by other professionals for her defiant use of stuffed peacocks during the course of her turn. To the average actor the peacock is an unlucky bird, and there are few people connected with the stage who would not shiver superstitiously at the sight of a mere peacock's feather in a show. Miss Window has no feeling of nervousness, however, though the dead birds in her possession are alleged to have had a strange eventful history. When they subsequently died, they were stuffed and passed into the custody of a taxidermist, who is said to have been killed in a street car accident the day after they arrived in his shop. On account of the legend attaching to them, Miss Window acquired them cheap; but they have never brought her any misfortune. On the contrary, she declares they have doubled her good luck.

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"Vaudeville Veteran," in a paragraph in the "Bulletin" gives some interesting news about one of the most popular duos on the Fuller circuit: The "Mr. C." (Sergeant Currie) who is telling stories to Fuller audiences was the originator of the masked-man idea in vaudeville. When he married the American girl Maud Courtney and appeared at the London Palace, he wore a red mask and scandalised the austere stage-manager, John Damler, by asking permission to sing from the royal circle. Anyone who remembers the Palace in its best Vaudeville days will understand John's horror. "Mr. C." however, dressed the part well enough to come in contact with dukes and things, and Damler overcame his objection; so for the first time in Palace history a performer invaded the sacred circle. The ushering-in of an act at the Palace, by the way, is more dignified than any Peace ceremony. Two be-wigged and silk-stockinged gents appear at the centre opening of the tab cloth, bearing cards on which are the performers' names. With stately tread they take these to either side of the stage and fix them in their slots. Then they slowly return to the centre, meet, wheel, and shoulder to shoulder, bow and exit, the cue for Fincke's band of 45 to burst into melody.

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"Sleeping Partners," a recent London production, is (according to one scribe) a comedy written for and appealing to a class that dines late, cares not to hurry itself, and wishes, above all things, not to be bored with too long a strain upon its attention. It requires to be titillated delicately and made to smile understandingly rather than to laugh out loud and long. Hints are appreciated where blunt statements would offend. The fragrance of the dish, or at most a morsel of its substance, suffices. An appetiser, not a meal, is sought. "Sleeping Partners," cleverly adapted from the French and retaining pretty well of the Gallic flavouring, however adroitly camouflaged, answers these purposes. The characters are three—the husband, the wife, and the would-be lover. There was no need to name them; they are as trite folk as harlequin and columbine in old Italian plays. The intrigue begins with a visit paid to the bachelor's flat by husband and wife. For a little while the two chief people, He and She, as they appear on the bill, are alone. Out of pique and curiosity she consents to pay him another visit, alone, that evening if her husband should be dining out, an unconfessed reason being that the Argentine millionaire he professes to be in tow with is, she suspects, rather a lady whose wealth resides in her charms. The visit is paid, She is overcome with faintness almost on arrival. He thinks to administer sal volatile as a restorative and blunders on to a sleeping draught instead. In a few moments She is asleep. "As a gentleman" he must take a similar draught. Morning finds them both asleep, She distraught and He still ready to act as a gentleman. A slyer way out is hit on. The husband, too, has been out all night. The lover fobs him off into telling a story of being drugged in just the way that is true of his wife, and so the fooled husband's tale finds gracious acceptance at her hands. The lady has little more to do than look lovely, puzzled, curious, and yielding, which Miss Lydia Bilbrooke did perfectly. Mr. Seymour Hicks acts with a fervour which is touched with buffoonery, however, to take off the raw edge.

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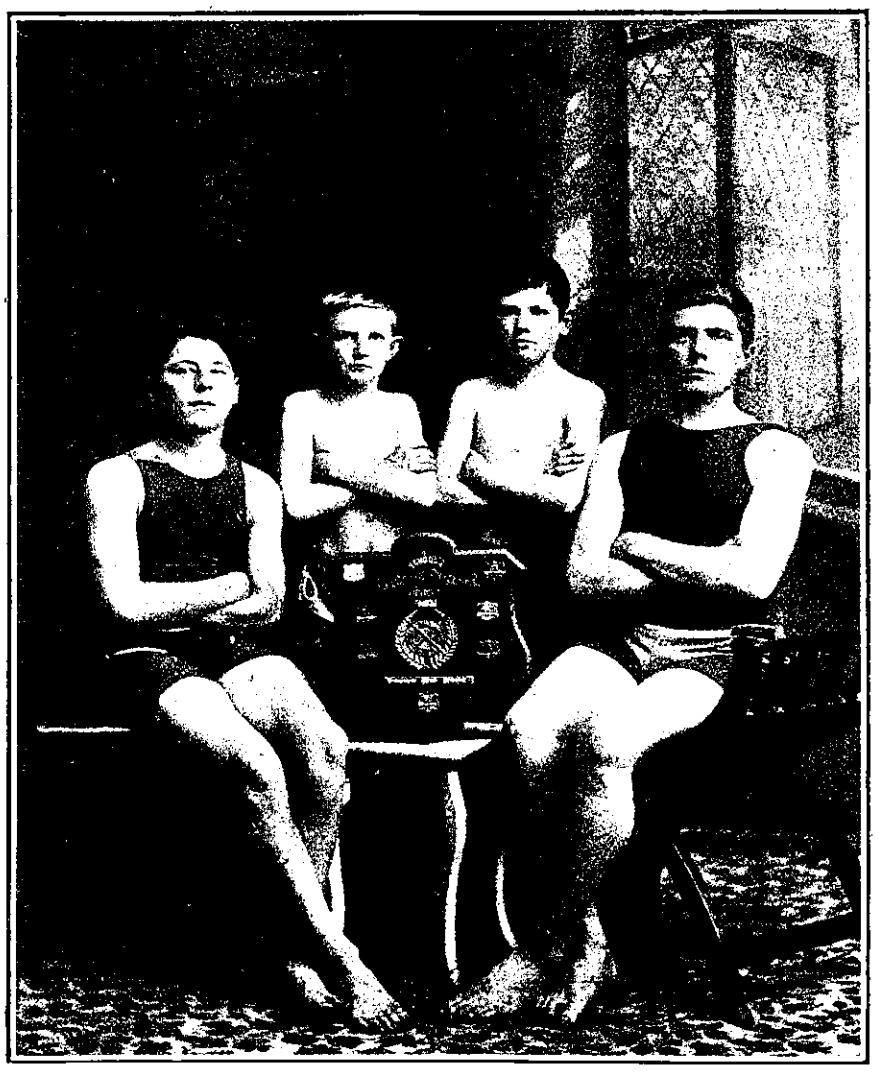
Fuller's Theatre in Sydney was the scene of an unrehearsed hilarity recently, judging from the following account in the "Sun":—As a wind-up to the University students' great procession it was decided by the Engineers that vaudeville would be just the end of a perfect morning. But the crafty sons of Aesculapius, the "Medicals," booked the front seats at Fuller's Theatre early. All the morning this rankled in the minds of the Engineers, and many bitter threats and jibes were bandied from lorry to lorry, and between little groups of the Montagues and Capulets on the street corners. The Medicals, far-seeing fellows, went early to the theatre and took their seats in a most decorous manner. Then came the Engineers and sought tickets. Through the doors they heard the loud bassoon and the cries of enjoyment of their hated rivals. They burst into the theatre, and fell upon the Philistines with little bags of flour and pieces of those tickets which coldly stared up at them from every seat and said "Reserved." Call and counter-call and cat-call resounded through the theatre. Three policemen looked, like startled fawns, into the theatre, and then, realising that "it was only them University bhoys," like "The Cop" in O. Henry's story, left the heroes to it. Some of the audience were also startled fawns, but others enjoyed the battle and urged on the combatants. This was better than vaudeville. An appeal from the stage soothed the savage breast a little, and the students became as quiet as students on commemoration day have any right to be. The curtain rose, and the performance went forward.

In many ways Mildred Harris (Mrs. Charlie Chaplin) is typical of the spirit of Movie-land, says Mr. Fred Goodwin, once her leading man. Movie actors are as different from the accepted idea of them as chalk is(or should be) from cheese. They are like a playground full of emancipated school children; they live for fun, and, with a few celebrated exceptions, know little of the meaning of the word poise once the camera has ceased to "grind" upon them. The first time I set eyes on Mildred Harris she was 15, doing "little sister" stuff in the Griffith studio. It was between scenes, and she and two other adolescent movie queens were "playing horses" with Mae Marsh! And, so I imagine, it always will be—Mildred Harris Chaplin is about as unlikely to ever grow up as is the genius which life she now shares. I know that wifely duties take a world of time—but I do hope that some day, when a certain happy little event is well past, Mildred Harris will come back to the screen. All that she lacked in her character in the days of her maidenly stardom was that which experience in life's real purpose alone can give. The pictures in which she is now being billed as "Mrs. Charlie Chaplin" are nothing of the kind—they are the work of Mildred Harris, a maiden of seventeen. If I am any judge, the pictures she will, I hope, grace with her talent after a few months of her married life, are going to be better, more virile, and full of a new psychology that had perforce been an unread chapter to her before.



QUEEN'S PARK SCHOOL TEAM, WINNERS OF THE ROYAL LIFE-SAVING SOCIETY'S (WANGANUI HEAD CENTRE) SHIELD, 1918-19.—From left: F. Hogan, D. Moore, L. Berthold, J. Johnstone.