

The Prince of . . . Concertina Players.



A Chat with Alexander the Great. .

It is an absolute fact that Mr. Alexander Prince has attained the giddy height of perfection in his line of life without having any recourse to the egg diet. It may sound like heresy to certain modest (?) newspaper owners to say it, but it is nevertheless true. It may also seem wrong to say that he has no rival, for he has and good rivals, too, but their rivalry only adds lustre to his kingly crown, as it were. The reason is not far to seek, for it is talent, absolute talent, that makes him *facile princeps*. Of course, everyone knows that Mr. Prince is acknowledged king of the concertina world, and those who would like to follow the fashion and belittle the same instrument as a musical instrument have but to hear him play, say, the Tannhauser Overture or the Poet and Peasant, to have the foundations of that disbelief seriously undermined, whilst the experience of hearing any other excerpt from his large selection is guaranteed to completely shatter the remnant remaining.

A FORTUNATE ACCIDENT.

A genius like Mr. Prince starts level with a poet—that is, he has to be born not made. Development comes later, and in order to get a few interesting particulars as to this I recently ran Mr. Prince down, and submitted him to the more or less agreeable reference of an interview. Those readers of the "T.M.N." who have had the pleasure of hearing Mr. Prince's artistic efforts, either on the cylinders of the Russell Hunting Company or the discs of another well-known house (the only two record-making firms who have an exclusive lien on his services in this capacity) will be glad to hear that Mr. Prince survived the ordeal well, and with due care will soon be able to get about. "Tell me," I said, with a large note of interrogation in my voice, "how you began in this course. What was it that induced you to select the concertina in preference to more popular instruments, and what have you to say for yourself?" With somewhat of a sigh, he said, "I am, or was, alas an infant prodigy." Noting my air of sympathy, he continued, "It was an accident, primarily. I was 8 years old, and I broke my leg. I had to lie in bed, and that was the start." "As how," said I. "Well, I used to be fond of pottering about with the instruments in my father's music shop, and when I was fostered up in bed they gave me a concertina, on which instrument I assiduously practised."

WHAT FOLLOWED.

Then followed the natural sequence. At the age of 20 he performed at the Glasgow Exhibition, and this was the forerunner of a series of engagements that culminated in appearances at the London Pavilion, Crystal Palace, and other abodes of high-class

talent. In the latter part of 1904 Mr. Prince had an extensive tour in the land of promise, South Africa, where his experiences were many and varied. He played in Cape Town, Johannesburg, Bloemfontein, Mafeking, Durban, Pretoria, Indive, King Williamstown, Queenstown, Heidelberg, Pietermaritzburg, and Worcester, and travelling all night in a mule wagon through the celebrated Zwaartberg Pass gave the dwellers at Oudtshoorn (a place untouched by electric car or motor 'bus) a great musical treat. On the way to the latter place they, that is, Mr. Prince and the party of which he was a member, gave a show at another unfamiliarly named place, Prince Albert, and the journey between

the two last places named was done in the mule wagon mentioned before. All night in a mule caravan is only part of the penalty of a successful concert artiste, but there are plenty of persons who would be glad of a chance of such an outing.

WHAT A CONCERTINA IS.

Mr. Prince pointed out to me that the concertina was built fundamentally on the same principle as the organ. Enlarge the concertina, said he, and you have the organ. When I asked if he could explain why the concertina had not been so seriously treated as it deserved to be, Mr. Prince stated he thought one of the reasons was that no musician had ever taken it up, and another that practically no music was written for it. As a matter of fact for the English concertina there was none. He uses for his purposes the average instrument, but of a very superior make, one has 51 keys and the other 71, and it is the latter that he uses when organ effects are required, principally on account of its greater range of bass. His is the variety known to concertinists as the duet concertina. On this the two higher octaves have their keys on the right of the instrument, whilst the rest are on the left. A peculiar feature of the Anglo-German concertina is that the keys of all the notes which appear on the staff are on the one side, whilst the notes in the spaces are on the other. Mr. Prince has a remarkable

knowledge of the theory of music, exemplified by the way he makes an adaptation of classical music to the needs of his instrument. He never bothers to write out the music, but goes ahead from the ordinary score, indelibly planting the adaptation in his mind at the same time.

RANDOM RECOLLECTIONS.

"Give me a few experiences" I asked, "tell me how you've been received, for instance: have you any exciting adventures to trot out. Why man," said I, "You ought to be able to spin cuffers that would paralyse your hearers, after the



Alexander Prince, the "Prince" of Concertina Players, has made some fine Sterling Records for the Russell Hunting Record Co.

journeys you've had." Mr. Prince modestly disclaimed any ability in the De Rougemont line. He had been very kindly received, he said, everywhere, and the Press notices he had received were particularly kind. (By-the-way, Mr. Prince has not developed any of the successful concert artist's swagger; he still talks and acts like an ordinary rational being, a fact due, I should guess, to the Scotch strain in him.) "I shall particularly remember the South African tour, and the friends I made," said he, "the climate is beautiful and the moonlight nights are incomparable." There are several other matters our interviewee mentioned with pleasure in the same connection. He spoke, for instance, of the big hole at Kimberley, of the ricksha boys at Durban and with a different emotion entirely, he mentioned the terrible state of the roads when he had to journey by cart. The bumping his instruments received did not do them much good; in fact, he had to spend some time setting them to rights for his show, but fortunately that was within his power. Another experience, not of the best, was that of waiting and sleeping on waiting-room tables to catch some South African train in the small hours, and there was another of this category, the rushing from a hall after a show to catch a train, without time to change from conventional evening dress. Six weeks, said Mr. Prince, was the length of his turn at the Tivoli, Cape Town. That's a remarkable testimony to his popularity, and speaks well of his hold on an audience. Of course, there have been longer turns often in a city like this London, but for a small place such as Cape Town, with a nearly settled population, six weeks is the hall mark of an excellent turn. A funny thing is that in the colony under discussion—where the racial question is of an acuteness not to be understood here—the black man is a devotee more or less of the cheap, common concertina, and he generally rests content with his talents if he can produce the first three notes of Three Blind Mice. For a concertina player to conquer that prejudice is a sure and certain sign of the artist, and that, as you can see, Mr. Prince did. I haven't time to refer to his popularity in London, where he has appeared under the ægis of such musical authorities as the Legal Musical Society, the Chough's Club, the Old Acquaintance Club, and in company with such turns as the Meister Glee Singers, among others. Mr. G. R. Sims too, who should be an experienced judge of artistes, thinks a good deal of Mr. Prince, and, in fact, when I conclude by saying that he has had more engagements offered him than he can possibly fulfil, I give a fair idea of the well deserved popularity of my subject.

A PERFECT RECORDING TRUMPET.

MANY amateurs have found the recording horn a stumbling block in recording singers' voices and piano. Given a suitable recorder sensitive to a faulty or high note—a good fault is easy blasting—and my trumpet will be found admirable for vocal and piano work. Sheet zinc, No. 8 or 11, will do, or its equivalent in any other metal suitable for soldering or tap jointing, though the latter method is, perhaps, beyond the average home mechanic. Cut out pieces of wood, or measure off on the zinc, and cut out

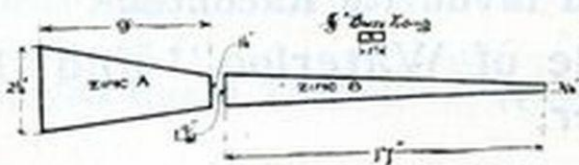


FIG. 1.

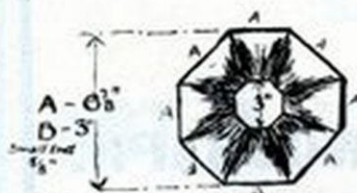


FIG. 2.

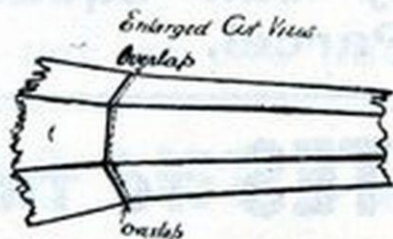


FIG. 3.

two patterns from same to sizes and shape given in Fig. 1, A and B. Off A cut eight pieces and off B cut eight pieces. C is a piece of 1/4 in. tubing, brass or zinc. An old ferrule off a walking-stick will answer the purpose. These pieces of zinc are to be joined at the edges to make a tapered octagon tube. The large pieces form the mouth of the horn, and the smaller pieces the body of same, eight to each. A careful job will result in finished articles like

Figs. 1 and 2. The sizes of the A and B parts should be carefully noticed. They must overlap so as to be sound-tight, and the lap must be as in Fig. 3. Complete horn is shown in sketch Fig. 4. It is not yet complete, though, a final touch is necessary. Procure a ball of thick twine—about the dimensions of ham twine (1/2 in.) is



FIG. 4.

essential to success and—commencing at the small end, wind round the stem of the horn. While doing so pour liquid hot glue on the completed coils so that they will remain bound and when set will be in close contact. A second layer over the first will make a surer insulation and deaden any vibration when in use. Instead of glue use black japan, or enamel, or thick paint to embed the string in and form a dead outer covering. Always connect the horn to recorder or machine with a rubber tube of good quality to ensure a satisfactory result.

J. WHITE.

THE Portable Accumulators Limited draw our attention to the fact that phonograph makers and agents are often in want of accumulators for driving phonographs, penny-in-the-slot machines, duplicators for making records, etc. In the ordinary way they buy a cheap accumulator, which is most unsatisfactory, whereas if they communicated with them they could supply them with an accumulator, at a very low figure which gives the best results. Their Price List No. 1 should be applied for. They are further prepared to supply well-known makers with phonograph batteries on hire at very low terms, arranged in such a way that they pay a fixed sum for every filled and charged accumulator supplied them; the batteries will be collected, filled, charged, and returned if the customer is in London. Should the customer be in the provinces, in addition to the small cost that he would have to pay for the hire, there would be carriage to pay both ways. The advantages of this course are obvious, and this innovation is being well taken up.

A VERY interesting and interested company gathered at the Edison Bell concert last month at the Holborn Restaurant, and Mr. Hough had quite a family gathering under his paternal care. Besides the principal members of the Edison Company, including Mr. F. Fox, of Charing Cross Road, there were present Mr. Hesse (Hesse and Company), Mr. Louis Sterling, Mr. Russell Hunting, and Miss Bryant (Russell Hunting Record Company), Mr. Balcombe (Barnett, Samuels, and Company), Mr. Fulton (Murdoch and Company), Mr. C. Howell (Howell Brothers), Mr. Ross (Messrs. Stockall and Company), and a large number of other persons prominent in the talking machine world.

THERE are many people, says a writer in an American paper, like myself who make an effort to get out to church at least once a year. Some of us were due to make our annual visit last Sunday evening. When we entered the sanctuary of the Presbyterian church our first impression was that there was a halo around the head of our pastor. A closer inspection developed a phonograph, and it was the beautiful horn of this instrument that formed the halo. We were shocked at the innovation, but after it had rendered, The Glory Song, we straightened up in our seats and concluded that we would contribute a dime instead of a nickel. After, When the Mists Have Rolled Away, we let the nickel follow the dime. The sermon made us wish we had put in a quarter. Brother Hauptert told of the strange work made by a singer under the influence of spirits fermenti, but it did not apply to, Beulah Land, as poured out by the phonograph. Silent Night, was simply grand. The climax came when the whole congregation joined in, All Hail the Power of Jesu's Name.

E. J. H. (FARINGDON), in renewing his subscription, writes: "I wish to say how pleased I am with the TALKING MACHINE NEWS. It is just what I wanted. I wish you every success."

NEOPHONE LIMITED report some entirely new departures in Records, and invite all dealers to give them a call during the next fortnight.