

## 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.

