



there was a duet by Miss Evelyn McLean and Master Cyril Towsey, followed later by a duet by Mary and Cyril.

One of Arthur's last performances in Dunedin, was a Grand Concert for Mozart's Centenary.

In January 1892, Arthur moved up to Auckland, where he gave his first performance with the Orchestral Union in April, to a packed house.

At about the time that Arthur was moving to Auckland, Cyril went over to study music in Germany with Heinrich Lutter, a pianist who had studied with Liszt.

As shown in the article below, from the gossip page, the rest of the family did not follow Arthur to Auckland until May. In the meantime, Jessy and Mary seem to have been touring around the South.

We see from about this time, a more relaxed journalistic style appearing in the newspapers. Certainly those in Auckland, anyway.

The 1890s is generally regarded as the decade where society started to loosen up a bit, after so many decades of rigid Victorian etiquette. However such a social trend developing in London, would undoubtedly have still taken a decade or so to filter out to the remote colonists, who would be more inclined to cling to whatever traditional symbols of 'Home' they

Friday night was a great one for the Auckland Orchestral Union, when they gave the opening concert of their season at the Opera House, and played for the first time under the baton of Mr Arthur Towsey, their new conductor. Mr Towsey was warmly received by the audience, who crowded the theatre to excess. He is a firm conductor, with plenty of decision, as well as confidence. For a great part of the time he directed from memory, seldom referring to the scores before him. Three movements from Mendelssohn's "Italian Symphony," including the salterello; four movements from Moskowski's suite, "From Foreign Parts;" a selection from one of Wagner's operas, "Lohengrin"; an overture di ballo by Sir Arthur Sullivan; an overture by Flotow; and a trifles for flute, 'cello, and strings by Lange, formed the orchestral programme. Madame Goldenstedt sang Donizetti's "Il segreto," and the romance from 'Faust,' "When all was young." Songs were also given by Messrs T. M. Jackson and Reid. During the concert, Mr Towsey was presented with a handsome bouquet.

*8th April 1892*



The complimentary concert tendered to Mr Arthur Towsey by the members of the Auckland Orchestral Union took place on Tuesday evening, and was unquestionably one of the musical events of the season. It was a success from every point of view, and Mr Towsey must have been gratified that such a large and fashionable audience had assembled to do him honour. The stage had been charmingly decorated for the occasion, ferns and flowers being arranged with artistic effect, and festoons of lilies being placed along the front. Mr Charles Hemus made his first appearance since his recent illness, and was very cordially received by the audience. It was a voluntary tribute to his popularity, and a graceful and appropriate one. The orchestral items were all very good. 'Light, Calvary,' the first number, was played in splendid style, the cornet parts by Messrs Hunter and Wright being ex-

ceptionally good. 'A Reverie,' by Drinkler, was a complete contrast, being interpreted by stringed instruments only. The selection from 'Lohengrin,' at the beginning of the second part, was splendidly played, the weirdness of Wagner's very weird music being given full effect to. The orchestra also rendered a pretty little gavotte from 'Mignon,' a good deal of which is played with muted strings. It was so much admired by the audience that they insisted upon a repetition. presto agiato. It was interpreted with good expression and the execution was excellent. Mr Towsey was enthusiastically encored, but bowed his acknowledgements, whereupon the audience gave further expression to its appreciation and pleasure by a shower of bouquets and the presentation of several beautiful baskets of flowers. Some interest attached to the first appearance of the newly-formed Liedertafel, or society of male singers, and short though their existence has been they made a most favourable impression. There were twenty-five members present, and they contributed four items, the best of which were 'Maiden, Listen!' and 'Hark the Merry Drum.' Mr Towsey deserves great credit for the admirable precision with which the pieces were rendered, considering the short time the members have been practising together. Miss Rimmer sang 'The Crescent and the Cross' in charming style, and Mr Tapper's sweet tenor voice was heard to advantage in 'My Queen,' which was rendered most acceptably. 'Goodnight, Beloved,' was sung by Mr Reid, with orchestral accompaniment. The concert on the whole was an admirable one.

*17th September 1892*

could manifest.

This cultural conservatism is always the way of things with any group who have been removed from their own culture.

A month after Mary and Jessy arrived in Auckland, there is a report in the society pages about what various women are wearing for day wear, or as the newspaper called it 'walking costumes'; "Miss Towsey; Fawn dress, large fawn and brown hat. Mrs.A.Towsey; Pretty light brown striped tweed costume, dainty little fawn and brown bonnet". Not very informative, but perhaps they had not yet got the hang of writing trivial gossip columns.

On the 20<sup>th</sup> July, 1892 Arthur arranged the first practice for those wishing to join the Auckland Liedertafel Society. As he later remembered; "The first rehearsal was held in the studio of Mr. Frank Wright, in the Victoria Arcade. We were rather handicapped for music, but managed to rake up some old standard part songs. Amidst easels, paint and palettes, and other necessary adjuncts of an artist's studio, we sat or stood. The majority of those present had reason to remember

that practice, for they took away with them self-imposed donations of paint on their clothes, but they did not seem to care. As they said, it lent *colour* to the meeting”.

There was also an interesting argument going on in July of 1892, when Arthur tried to introduce chorister boys to the St. Matthew's Choir. The rest of the choir did not want them.

It was reported on 23<sup>rd</sup> September, 1892, in the Dunedin and Auckland newspapers, that “The friends of Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Towsey will be pleased to hear that they have received very satisfactory accounts from their son in Germany, and that his master speaks in glowing terms of his musical ability. He also writes himself in good spirits and delights in his work. Mrs. Towsey and daughter were to have left for home this month but have postponed leaving until news of the cholera abating”.

In the society pages that month, it was reported amongst the descriptions of what the ladies were wearing at an orchestral concert; “Mrs. Towsey, handsome evening dress of black lace and jet, Miss Towsey; crême frock.”

The report from the Auckland society page, shows that Arthur was very well received in Auckland. It is unlikely that this is because they were more culturally deprived than the towns to the south. Perhaps the good people of Auckland were just more generous of spirit or, maybe, more open to enjoying themselves.

By resorting to cultural stereotypes, we might deduce that the predominance of dour Scots in the South, made them less likely to throw themselves into entertainments, than the population of the north, containing a higher proportion of English and Irish settlers. To continue the stereotype further, the Northerners might therefore be a little more generous not just with their artistic support, but with financial patronage as well.

It was reported in November 1892, that the steamship *Habsburg*, had cleared Sydney on 5<sup>th</sup> November, bound for Bremen, in Germany, via Melbourne, with Mrs. And Miss Towsey aboard.

### THE AUCKLAND SESTET CLUB

Has the honour to announce its  
FIRST CONCERT  
OF  
WIND-INSTRUMENT CHAMBER MUSIC  
AT THE  
CITY HALL ON FRIDAY, 30TH INST.

#### MEMBERS:

A. TOWSEY	...	Pianoforte
SAM JACKSON	...	Clarinet
J. JACKSON	...	Oboe
F. INNES	...	Flute
J. GREEN	...	Horn
J. P. COOK	...	Bassoon

The valuable co-operation of Mr A. H. GEE has been secured for the occasion, and other vocalists have promised their assistance.



7 April 1894

The first concert given by the newly-organised Auckland Sestet Club attracted a small but highly appreciative audience to City Hall. The fact is the city is hardly large enough to 'run' so many musical societies. The Sestet Club has been formed with the object of giving due prominence to wind instruments, and certainly it would have been hard to draw up a more attractive programme than that presented at the club's initial appearance in public. Mr Towsey presided at the piano, while Messrs F. Innes, S. Jackson, J. Jackson, W. J. B. Green, and J. P. W. Cook, performed on flute, clarinet, oboe, horn, and bassoon, and Mr J. Mackenzie assisted on the contrabasso. Miss O'Sullivan, Miss Kate Best, and Mr Gee contributed vocal items. The programme was a very high-class one throughout.



5 May 1894

At the last Orchestral Union concert, Mr Towsey received enough floral tributes to fill a cab. Seemed to quite embarrass him. He deserved them, of course, every one of them. But really this floral business is becoming a little bit overdone. Why don't the people who are so fond of lavishing bouquets and huge baskets of flowers on public entertainers lavish a few on unfortunate hospital patients who certainly need, and would appreciate them infinitely more than musicians and favourite of the footlights?



5 May 1894

—If Mr Towsey expected those bouquets on Thursday evening last.



22 Sept 1894

The benefit concert tendered by the Orchestral Union and the Liedertafel to Mr Arthur Towsey last week at City Hall proved both financially and artistically successful. A feature of the programme was the performance of Felicien David's Symphonic ode 'The Desert,' for orchestra and male voices. This magnificent work, full of Oriental life and colour, charmed the audience. The work is an ambitious one for amateurs to attempt, and yet they acquitted themselves, one and all, admirably. The chorus (25) voices could hardly have been better. Mr Towsey conducted with characteristic skill and accuracy, while the fine orchestra was led by Mr Charles Hemus. The orchestral accompaniments were perfectly played. Messrs Tapper, Trenwith, and Morath distinguished themselves in the vocal part of the performance. The connective readings were delivered most effectively by Rev. L. FitzGerald. The second part of the programme was devoted to orchestral selections and songs by Mrs Shoemith and Mr Gee. The Liedertafel contributed three vocal selections, which were all most successful. The National Anthem wound up a thoroughly good concert.

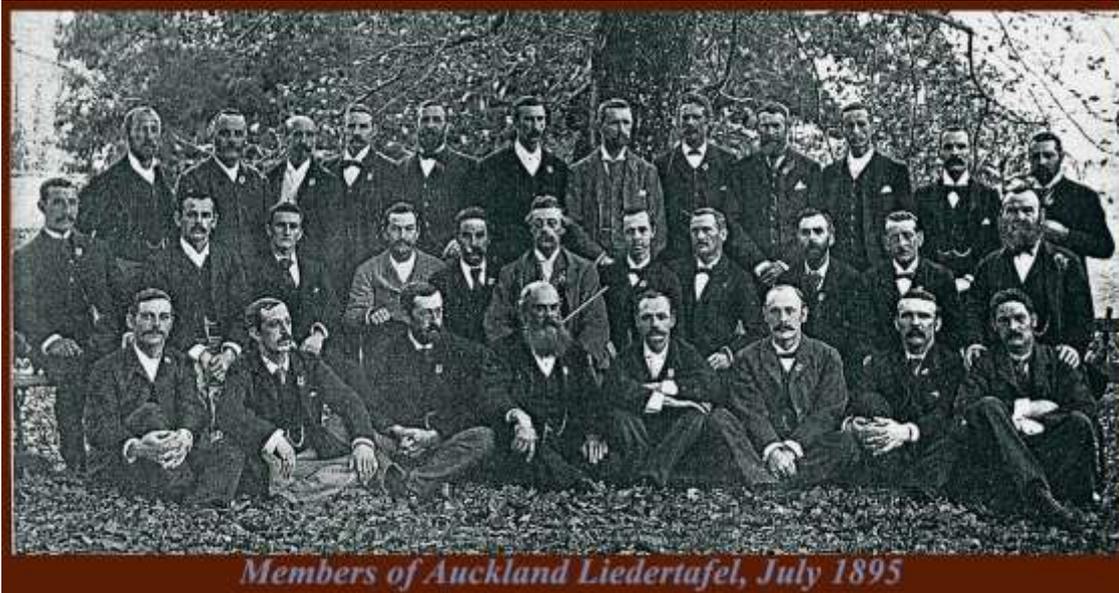
### DEVONPORT MUSICAL SOCIETY.

Mr ARTHUR TOWSEY, Conductor.  
The First Concert of Season 1893 will be given in the Devonport Hall on MONDAY, the 2nd September, at 8 p.m., when the 'Ancient Mariner' will be performed.

Madame Chambers, Mrs Coates, and Messrs G. H. Broughton and George Reid will sing the solo parts.

A limited number of tickets may be obtained at the doors.

E. CAVE } Hon. Secs.  
G. M. REID }



*Members of Auckland Liedertafel, July 1895*

how long Mary and Cyril stayed in Europe that time, but we know that Cyril was in a school play back in Auckland at the end of August, 1895.

On the fourteenth of August, 1895, at their home in Hobson Street, Auckland, Jessy Hawkins Towsey died of Typhoid, after an illness of just fourteen days, the last eight of which had been in a coma.

The fourth concert of the season by the Auckland Choral Society, conducted by Professor Schmitt and attended by the Governor's wife, with the large hall crowded by a fashionable audience, occurred on 20<sup>th</sup> August 1895; "The Dead March was most impressive and beautifully rendered by the orchestra; the audience, in response to a request by Professor Schmitt, standing meanwhile, as a tribute to the memory of the late Mrs. Towsey".

The recently - formed Auckland Ladies' Liederkrantz promises to prove one of our strongest musical societies. The roll of membership already includes the names of nearly 100 of Auckland's leading lady vocalists. The Liederkrantz has been formed for the practice and performance of part singing by the lady members, and its success seems almost assured. Mr Arthur Towsey has been spoken of as its conductor, whilst Mrs J K. Simpson has accepted the office of secretary, and Mrs Alexander that of treasurer. We wish the Society every success. *14th March 1896*

There are reports from that time, of an organ and piano configuration being used by Arthur and his son, Cyril, particularly in the performance of what is claimed to be the organ/piano duet from Lohengrin.

Now, despite not being an expert in such matters, I am still pretty sure that Wagner never put any keyboard duets into any of his operas. But then, being a long long way away from Bayreuth, they could no doubt get away with such a claim in Auckland. And let's face it, that was probably about as much

One of Mary's daughters, told me that one of her memories from that trip was that her auntie in England wore very strange clothes.

This would of course have been either her Aunt Gus or her Aunt Connie; Arthur's two unmarried sisters who stayed behind in England, and who did not make careers out of music.

I do not know

**AUCKLAND LIEDERTAFEL**  
 SEASON 1896.  
**FIRST CONCERT OF THE SEASON**  
 Will be given in the  
**LECTURE HALL OF THE Y.M.C.A.**  
 ON  
**FRIDAY EVENING, MARCH 27.**  
 PROGRAMME—  
 Part I.—  
 1. Part Song, 'Warrior's Song'...J. L. Hatton  
 LIEDERTAFEL.  
 2. Instrumental Trio for Flute, Clarinet, and  
 Piano (air and variations)..... Galteman  
 MESSRS F. INNES, S. JACKSON, A. TOWSEY.  
 3. Vocal Quartette, 'Sleep, Thou Wild Rose'  
 .....Abt  
 MESSRS MCCOSKRIE, SIMPSON, PARISH AND  
 DAVY.  
 4. Part Song, 'The Goslings' (Piano, Cyril  
 Towsey).....Dr. Bridge  
 LIEDERTAFEL.  
 5. 'Love in the Rain' (first time in Auckland)  
 ....Molloy  
 G. M. REID.  
 6. Vocal Duet, 'The Wind and the Harp'  
 .....Glover  
 THE MISSES MAXWELL.  
 7. Part Song, 'Integer Vitæ'... ..Fleming  
 LIEDERTAFEL.  
 INTERVAL.  
 Part II—  
 8. Serenade, 'Gentle Sounds are Floating'  
 .....Mueller  
 SOLO, G. M. REID; QUARTETTE, MESSRS.  
 MORATH, TAYLOR, WALROND, & WARNER.  
 AND LIEDERTAFEL.  
 9. Trumpet Solo, 'The Lost Chord' Sullivan  
 (With Organ and Piano Accompaniment)  
 MR GIBBIN.  
 Organ, A. Towsey. Piano, Cyril Towsey.  
 10. Part Song (A) 'O Sanctissima'  
 (B) 'Hark Above Us'...Kruetzer  
 LIEDERTAFEL.  
 11. Song, 'Good Bye'.....Tosti  
 MISS MABEL MAXWELL.  
 12. Oboe Solo, 'Berceuse'.....Norton Wight  
 J. JACKSON.  
 13. Vocal Quartette 'The Sweet Creature'  
 .....Hatton  
 MESSRS. TRENWITH, WRIGHT, ROGERSON  
 AND GEORGE.  
 14. 'An Old Rat's Tale'.....Bridge  
 LIEDERTAFEL.  
 Parting Song ... A. TOWSEY.  
 Doors open 7.15 --concert at 8. The box-plan  
 will be open at Wildman's on Monday at 10  
 o'clock.  
 Tickets for non-subscribers to be had from  
 Wildman's and Eady's, 1s. Seats can be re-  
 served by non-subscribers upon payment of 1s  
 extra.  
*March 1896* J. R. SIMPSON, Hon. Sec.



2nd May 1896

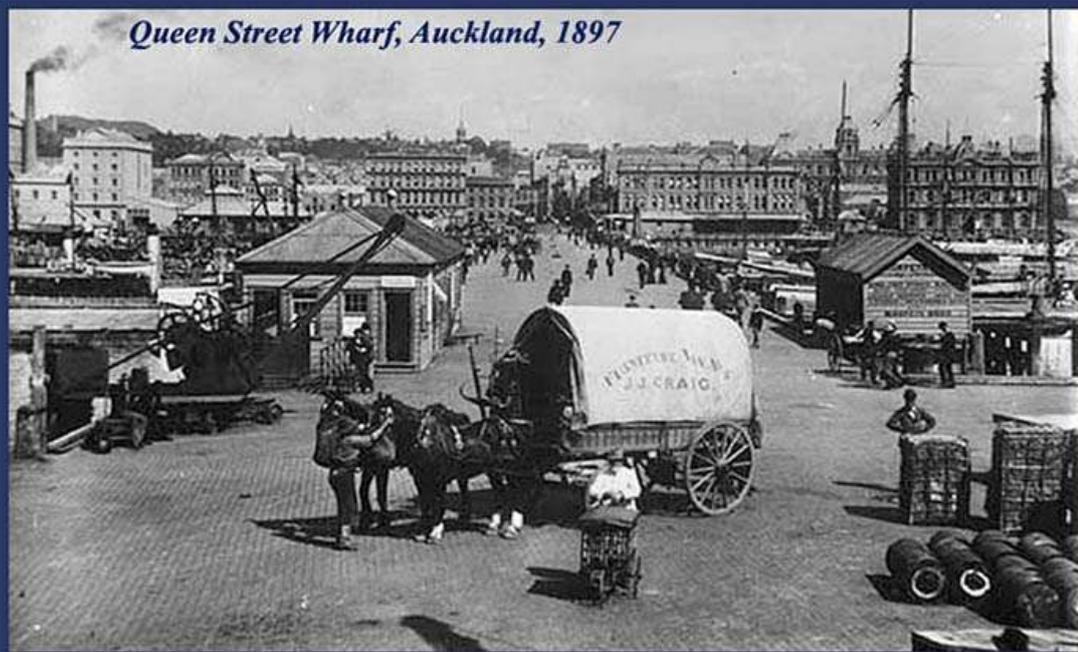
—That relations between the incumbent and organist of St. Matthew's have been none too smooth for some time past, and that Mr Towsey will shortly vacate his position.

There seems to have been some conflict between Arthur Towsey and the minister at St. Matthew's; the church in Auckland at which Arthur was organist, though the finer points of this dispute have not been specified.

Whatever the specific issue, it probably came down to a conflict of personalities. Nevertheless, the conflict did seem to cause quite a division in the church and, judging by the newspaper reports, it would appear that Arthur was the

one with the wider support.

By 15<sup>th</sup> July 1896, we see that sympathy for Arthur Towsey has reached a point where the mayor has become involved; "Mr. Arthur Towsey, leading musician in Auckland, whose treatment whilst organist at one of the churches in the city was strongly condemned by sections of the community, was presented last week by the mayor, on behalf of a number of friends, with a purse of sovereigns, and by a number of members of the church in question, with an illuminated address, expressing sympathy with him in his position".



Queen Street Wharf, Auckland, 1897

**Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee Celebrations, 23rd June 1897**  
*"The scene at Queen Street Wharf at 11.30 last night, when the National Anthem was sung, was one of the wildest enthusiasm, from 8 to 10,000 people being present. A choir assembled under the triumphal arch and when the signal gun was fired led the Anthem, conducted by Mr. Towsey, followed by the Doxology. The immense crowd then marched homewards, up Queen Street, singing Rule Britannia".*

The number of sovereigns given this time, was not specified, but it is likely that by then, Arthur was having to allocate a specific cupboard in which to keep all of the purses that he had thus far received from his friends and fans.

The following report appeared in the newspaper on 28<sup>th</sup> July: "The action of the Vestry of St. Matthew's, Auckland, in dismissing Mr. Towsey from the position of organist and giving him three months' salary in lieu of notice, was warmly discussed at the annual meeting of parishioners on Thursday, the Rev. L. Fitzgerald in the chair. Dr. Hooper, who had resigned the position of church warden, as a protest against the dismissal, was again nominated but failed to secure re-election".

It is probably coincidence that it was at about this time that Arthur Towsey became interested, if not increasingly obsessed, with lawn bowls.

Arthur had actually been a founding member of the Dunedin Bowling Club in 1874, but there are no further records of his playing the game until the mid nineties in Auckland. Probably just too busy. Anyway, he certainly made up for it throughout the rest of his life. There are in fact, about five hundred newspaper references to matches in which he played over the coming twenty or so years.

1897 was the year of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee; sixty years on the throne.

There were celebrations all over the colony, including the one above in Auckland on 27<sup>th</sup> June, when a signal was sent from London, via telegraph, indicating the exact moment when the National Anthem was commenced at St. Paul's Cathedral, so that all of Her Majesty's subjects, around the world, could sing it at the same time.

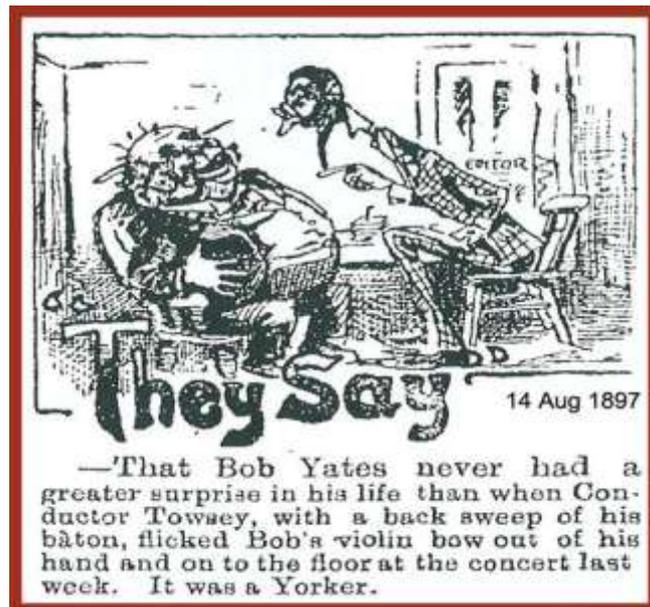
Well, let's face it; we just don't get that sort of nationalistic fervour anymore. Not since we so tragically lost The Empire, except of course, at the Last Night at The Proms each year at The Royal Albert Hall.

There seemed to be all sorts of musical groups springing up at that time. There are several reports of Arthur conducting concerts by the Banjo, Guitar and Mandolin club in Auckland.

The family in Auckland, now consisted of just Arthur and Mary. As would have been expected in those days, Mary would have taken over the duties of lady of the house, though they also had a maid to do the dirty work, whilst Mary devoted her time to a range of charities and to singing, for which, having received the best of coaching from her father, she was receiving very good reviews.

We see also at this time, that Mary is usually in attendance at the various society functions, including a couple at the Governor's mansion.

There is a revue from this time, of a concert in which Arthur participated, lamenting the fact that most of the



*Queen St. Auckland, 1898*



audience preferred the comic songs to the serious classical pieces. But then, it has always been thus. The crème of society should not be confused with the intelligencia. It is my opinion, in this regard, that chamber music was developed as a form of entertainment for the gentry, played quietly so as not to interfere with their innane gossiping.

1898



"THE GOLDEN LEGEND."

(A DRAMATIC CANTATA.)

Words from Longfellow's Poem.

Music by Sir Arthur Sullivan.

SOLOISTS.

Miss Large (Elsie) Soprano. Mr. John W. Hill (Prince Henry) Tenor.  
 Madam Du Rieu (Ursula) Contralto. Mr. John Prouse (Lucifer) Baritone.  
 Mr. J. W. Ryan (A Forester) Bass.

PIANISTE—MISS ADA YATES.

AT THE ORGAN—MR. ARTHUR TOWSEY.

CONDUCTOR—PROF. CARL SCHMITT.

PROLOGUE.—*The Spire of Strasbourg Cathedral.*  
*Night and storm. LUCIFER, with the Powers*  
*of the Air, trying to tear down the Cross.*

LUCIFER.

Hasten! Hasten!  
 O ye spirits!  
 From its station drag the ponderous  
 Cross of Iron, that to mock us  
 Is uplifted high in air!

VOICES

O, we cannot;  
 For around it  
 All the saints and guardian angels  
 Throng in legions to protect it;  
 They defeat us everywhere!

THE BELLS.

Lauda Deum verum!  
 Plebem voco!  
 Coegrego eorum!

LUCIFER.

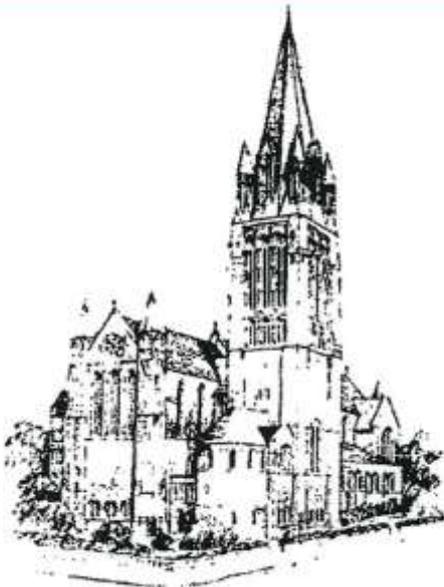
Lower! Lower!  
 Hover downward!  
 Seize the loud vociferous bells, and  
 Clashing, clanging, to the pavement  
 Hurl them from their windy tower.

VOICES.

All thy thunders  
 Here are harmless!  
 For these bells have been anointed  
 And baptized with holy water!  
 They defy our utmost power.



There is quite a little flutter of indignation amongst certain circles in St. Matthew's, because of the return of Mr Towsey to the position of organist. It is quite a little time now since St. Matthew's and Towsey parted company, the latter taking Dr. Hooper in his train, and making it incumbent on the burly doctor to tramp all the way to St. Paul's for his weekly spiritual consolation. Since then, however, the Rev. Lyttelton Fitzgerald has resigned his charge, and Dr. Hooper has lately overcome his fit of pique and put in a regular appearance at 'His Church.' The last act in the little comedy is the return of Mr Towsey, to the ill-concealed chagrin of the Fitzgeraldites.  
 21st July 1900



ST. MATTHEW'S NEW CHURCH.

ST. GEORGE'S DAY, APRIL 23, 1902

HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR  
 WILL LAY THE FOUNDATION STONE.

The M.W. the Grand Master of N.Z. Freemasons, assisted by District and Provincial Grand Masters of English, Irish, and Scotch Constitutions, and Brethren will conduct the Ceremony.

The Primate and Clergy, with Choirs of City Churches, are invited to take part. Former Members of St. Matthew's Choir are specially invited to assist, and are requested to send their names to Mr Towsey at once.

I saw a report in another paper from about that time, of another conductor who was tired of having to plough through the constant hum of audience chatter, so arranged for the orchestra, at the peak of a loud musical passage, to all just stop dead. When they did this, rising above the general hum of collective intercourse, could be heard one particularly loud individual exclaiming that: "I like to fry it in lard!"

HIS MAJESTY'S THEATRE.  
 GOOD FRIDAY NIGHT.

A GREAT MUSICAL EVENT.  
 GRAND  
 SACRED AND CLASSICAL CONCERT,  
 Including  
 ROSSINI'S FAMOUS ORATORIO.  
 "STABAT MATER."

Madame  
 LILIAN TREE, LILIAN TREE,  
 LILIAN TREE, LILIAN TREE,  
 LILIAN TREE, LILIAN TREE,

MR FRANK GRAHAM,  
 MISS MAUD TOBIAS,  
 MR RUPERT MANTELL,  
 MR WILFRED MANNING,  
 MISS DORIS BOULT.

GRAND CHORUS AND ORCHESTRA,  
 Under the direction of  
 MR ARTHUR TOWSEY.  
 Box Plan at Wildman, Lyell and Arey's.

11th April 1903