



DEATH OF LITTLE GULLIVER.

IN MEMORIAM.

The curtain falls, and round about  
Is neither mirth, nor joy, nor light,  
As 'Little Gulliver' goes out  
Into the shrouding night  
In sun and shade, from dusk to dawn,  
He lived elate his brief life's span :  
'Tis not in inches or in brawn,

The measure of a man.

We bulky folk may never go –

Along some paths these small feet trod;

The little children truest know

The fatherhood of God.

For him our garish sun has set;

But he, safe gathered to his own,

May by his tiny stature get

The nearer to the Throne.

"Little Gulliver is dead!" Such was the message flashed across the wire from the Hospital to the Princess Theatre on Thursday just as the members of Sheridan's Co. were in the midst of "making up" for the evening performance. Although it was known that day, and for two days previously, that their bright little fellow artist, friend, and companion was lying at Death's door, the news of his passing away came with startling suddenness. "Little Gulliver is dead"; the news quickly spread from principal to chorister, from chorister to callboy, until every member with one accord sorrowfully murmured, "Little Jack is dead." It was too late to cancel the evening performance, for already people had assembled to see the entertainment, but it was a broken-hearted company which bravely attempted to conceal its deep sorrow and almost personal affliction in the lines of the comedy. Why wonder that the play did not go with its usual vim and abandon, and that a cue was occasionally missed and a line forgotten? When tears mingle with the "make up" and course down cheeks masked by grease paint 'tis idle to pretend.

Playgoers everywhere, but especially in Australia and New Zealand, will learn of the death of the favourite comedian with deep sorrow and regret. Little Gulliver was in his usual health and spirits on Friday evening, but on the Saturday, while performing as Tiger in "The Earl and the Girl," he complained of having caught a chill. On Sunday there was a change for the worse, and on Tuesday Little Gulliver was taken to the Hospital, which he was fated never to leave alive. He died shortly before 7 o'clock on Thursday evening last, having been almost unconscious some hours before his death, the cause of which was diabetes, accelerated by a severe attack of pneumonia and pleurisy. Everything was done for him that was in the power of the attending doctors to do, but it was seen at the outset that he was dangerously ill.

#### HIS CAREER.

John Rumbelow (Little Gulliver) was born at White Hills, near Bendigo, Victoria, on January 14, 1876, so that at the time of his death he was just on 29 years of age. He was a natural midget, perfectly formed, and his height was 3ft 4in, while his weight was 4st 3lb. His sister is also a natural midget, who Gulliver used to say "could just stand under his arm." The remaining members of the family are about the average height. The writer well remembers

Little Gulliver when he was first brought under general public notice in Melbourne in 1888. Some time after this he was taken on tour through the Victorian towns, and in 1896 appeared in Melbourne at the Princess Theatre under Williamson and Musgrove's management in the second production of "Djin Djin," in which he did his specialty — a parody on "Home, sweet home." The next year saw "Johnny" as a comedian, when he played the Pigmy King in Messrs Williamson and Royle's "Matsa," which was a huge success. It was then he acquired the name of "Little Gulliver." One day, at rehearsal, the stage manager said, "Here you, Gulliver, Little Gulliver." Johnny turned round at the name and said "Yes?" The name stuck to him, and very proud he was of it. In 1897 he played a little buttons in "Babes in the Wood," '83 a part in "Forty Thieves," '99 a Fat Boy in "Red Riding Hood," '00 a Little Sailor in "Australis," '01 the Cat in "Alice in Wonderland," '02 the Cat in "Dick Whittington." In 1903 he joined Mr John F. Sheridan in Melbourne, playing the ' Buttons in "Mrs Dooley's Little Joke," and has been continuously with Mr Sheridan ever since, touring New Zealand, Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, West Australia, and South Africa. Little Gulliver appeared in the majority of the pantomimes under the Williamson- Musgrove regime, his last appearance in pantomime with that management being in "Alice in Wonderland" in Sydney. He was the star attraction in "Australis," staged by the J. C. Williamson Co. in conjunction with the Pollards in Sydney some five or six years ago. He first visited New Zealand with the Matsa Vaudeville Co. about 1892, which company included in its ranks Misses Gertie Campion, Alice Learmar, Ernest Fitts, Johnny Coleman, and Leoni Clark the Cat King. Of a quiet, retiring, and gentle disposition, Little Gulliver was a fast favourite with his fellow actors, and a special one of Mr Sheridan's, who naturally feels his death very keenly. His diminutive stature specially fitted him for many roles. As a comedian he was sprightly, a good dancer, a capital singer, and otherwise possessed undoubted talent. He became the admiration of the adult play patron and the delight of the children, who will in coming years recollect poor Little Gulliver in the character of Whittington's cat. It was a sad duty for Mr Sheridan to perform in having to cable the news to a friend in Melbourne to convoy the sorrowful tidings to the b

Mr Sheridan has been the recipient of a number of telegrams of sympathy from friends of his own and of the deceased in different parts of the colony.

#### AN IMPOSING FUNERAL.

The funeral, which took place on Sunday afternoon, was a deeply impressive one. The cortege left the Hospital at 3 p.m., and as the casket containing the remains of the little favourite was lifted into the hearse the quiet welling tears of sincere regret were visible in the eyes of many. The popularity of Little Gulliver had been so pronounced and his death so sudden that it was next to impossible for those with whom he had been such a favourite to subdue their emotion. Even the little children stood near-by with sorrowful expression written on their faces, and in one instance a "wee mite" was heard to sob aloud. Leaving the Hospital, the procession, headed by the Citizens' Band, playing the "Dead March" in "Saul," journeyed along Cumberland and Princes streets to the Southern Cemetery, the pall-bearers being Messrs F. W. Winter, Robert Noble, Horace Jardine and T. Curran. Immediately following the hearse came the members of the Sheridan Company, down to the programme boys; the orchestra, together with the members of the Fuller Company; representatives of the musical societies of Dunedin, and sympathisers of the deceased. The first carriage, containing

a large number of floral tributes, was followed by another occupied by Mr J. F. Sheridan, Miss Barlow, and Mr Torrance. The third carriage contained the Misses Massey, Tate, and Leighton, and Mr Stanley Grant. The fourth carriage contained Misses Ray Jones and Merton, and Messrs Collard and Duncan, and other carriages with members of the Sheridan Company. In this order, and accompanied by other vehicles, the funeral was witnessed in the streets of the city and at the cemetery by nearly 10,000 people. At the grave an impressive burial service was performed by Mr Torrance, and at the conclusion of the obsequies an orchestra, under Mr A. I Robertshaw, accompanied the members of the Sheridan Company in the singing of the beautiful hymn. "Abide with me." It was noticeable that the singers were deeply affected at the graveside during its rendition. It was originally intended to engage in a full choral service, but the immense crowd edging in on the open grave prevented the members of the orchestra from being able to perform, and this part of the service had to be abandoned. The last rites performed, the vast crowd moved rapidly away, whilst the members of the Sheridan Company took a long and farewell look at the casket containing the mortal remains of their late little associate, Little Gulliver.

If further testimony to the esteem in which Little Gulliver was held were necessary, it was furnished in the large number of beautiful wreaths sent expressive of sympathy, of which the following is only a portion: Messrs Allan Hamilton, John F. Sheridan, S. Grant, F. Duncan, J. W. Weierter, Avalon Collard, T. Curran, Misses Heba Barlow, Ray Jones, Florence Fanning, H. C. Campbell, Fuller Vaudeville Company, the Brescians,- chorus ladies John P. Sheridan Company, ladies' ballet, gentleman of chorus, boys and girls of Sheridan Company, stage hands, Robertshaw's Orchestra, Criterion Dancers, Mr and Mrs McKewen (Grand Hotel), admirers (Grand Hotel), Citizens' Band, Mr C. Little, passengers s.s. Maheno.

The casket, which was covered with white figured cloth and mounted with nickel-plate, bore the inscription:

JOHN RUMBELOW,

28 years.

Died 11/1/06.

Mr Sheridan wishes us to express his heartfelt thanks to Dr Macdonald and the nursing staff of the Hospital for their kindly and minute attention to their little patient; to Dr Watt for his interest and attention to Little Gulliver before his entry to the Hospital, and to the members of I the Citizens' Band who took part in the pantomime of "Dick Whittington" with Little, Gulliver.

Mr John F. Sheridan writes: — " I would ' like to express my sincere and heartfelt thanks to all those who so kindly assisted in the impressive funeral of Little Gulliver. It devolves upon me to acquaint his bereaved relatives of the great tribute which was paid him, and it should suppress somewhat the great sorrow which has fallen on them to know that here in Dunedin, so many miles away from his home, there were found kind hearts who paid this last token of respect to our dear little friend — beloved by his brother and sister artists, and by all who knew him."

Taken from:

