

Isaac Nathan.

A South African Reference by S. A. Rochlin,
of Johannesburg.

In 1941 it was a hundred years since the "Father of Music in Australia" and the writer, composer and producer of the first opera ever to be performed in the Antipodes, Isaac Nathan, landed at Sydney,* where he passed away on 15th January, 1864, at the age of 74 or so. He was a Jew born at Canterbury, England, some time in 1790-2, and came to the land of his adoption at the height of his musical career.

Like many another who had travelled to Australasia before the opening of the Suez Canal route to the East, Nathan first rounded the Cape of Good Hope on his voyage to his new home. And thus it happens that the earliest reference to him in the Southern Hemisphere is to be discovered in a Capetown newspaper. I refer to the 25th December, 1840, issue of *De Zuid-Afrikaan*, the then leading Dutch organ of opinion in this country, wherein is to be found the following item of news published in both the English and the Netherlands version :—

We feel pleasure in announcing the arrival of Mr. Nathan, the celebrated composer and author of the "Musurgia Vocalis," the "History and Theory of Music," the "Hebrew Melodies," etc., etc., who was the intimate friend of the late Lord Byron, and the musical theorist and historian to George IV., and the professor of singing to the late Princess Charlotte of Wales. This gentleman with his wife and family are going to Australia; himself, wife and son as cuddy passengers; some of his children we find are immediate passengers. We can only remark, that the immediate berths that give shelter to the children of such a highly respectable and talented professor as Nathan, will in future be on a level with the berths for Princes.

*According to publications Nos. 47 and 57 in our Centenary Library, Nathan landed first at Melbourne on 5th February, 1841. The publications are each entitled *Isaac Nathan*, and are by Charles H. Bertie and Olga Somech Phillips respectively.