

## ***A New Find: Previously unknown 1907 booklet by the Alexanders***

### **Background:**

Jeroen Staring made another new find. On Wednesday 13 August 2003, he and his wife Corry visited the History of Medicine Library at the Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP) in Sydney. Librarian Brenda Heagney showed them an exhibition, *The Irregulars: Some examples of complementary medicine in Australia*, prepared by Richard Travers and Bryan Gandevia for the 1999 RACP Annual Scientific Meeting, held in Perth in May.

On page 43, in the "Respirology" section, they found a 1907 booklet:

*The Theory and Practice of a New Method of Respiratory Re-Education  
by F. Matthias Alexander:*

*Method Imparted in its Entirety by Mr. A. R. & Miss Alexander*

The booklet appears to have been compiled by A. R. Alexander (and perhaps his sister Amy) with information sent to him by F.M. Alexander, who by then was in London.

The cover notes that A.R. and Amy Alexander are "imparting" the Alexander method "in its entirety" at the Australian Building, 48 Elizabeth Street, Melbourne. The booklet publisher is H. Hale, Melbourne.

Travers and Gandevia, in all probability medical doctors, note that "*The physiological concepts are inaccurate. The modern adoption in some quarters of the "Alexander method" may well be based on his other publications*" (page 43).

In making a PDF from a scan of a photo copy, to make online viewing a little easier, I have enlarged the pages slightly (from about 4 x 5-1/2 inches) and added pagination. Otherwise, it is as it was printed in 1907.

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THE THEORY AND PRACTICE  
OF  
A NEW METHOD  
OF  
RESPIRATORY RE-EDUCATION

BY  
F. MATTHIAS ALEXANDER

'Whoever hesitates to utter that which he thinks the highest truth, lest it should be too much in advance of the time, may reassure himself by looking at his acts from an impersonal point of view. . . . It is not for nothing that he has in him these sympathies with some principles and repugnance to others. He, with all his capacities, and aspirations, and beliefs, is not an accident, but a product of the time. He must remember that while he is a descendant of the past he is a parent of the future; and that his thoughts are as children born to him, which he may not carelessly let die.'

HERBERT SPENCER.

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METHOD IMPARTED IN ITS ENTIRETY  
BY  
MR. A. R. & MISS ALEXANDER,  
AUSTRALIAN BUILDINGS,  
49 ELIZABETH STREET, MELBOURNE.

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MELBOURNE :  
H. HALE,  
AUSTRALIAN BUILDINGS, ELIZABETH STREET  
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## **EULOGISTIC LETTERS FROM LEADING LONDON ARTISTES**

Concerning Messrs. ALEXANDER'S new method of

### Vocal and Respiratory Re-Education

F. M. ALEXANDER, Victoria Street, London.

**A. R. ALEXANDER, 49 Elizabeth St., Melbourne.**

**Copy of letter received from the late Sir Henry Irving.**

*19th January, 1906.*

DEAR MR. ALEXANDER,

I am sorry that for a time I am obliged to suspend my interesting experience. I am sure your method makes only for good, and I look forward to an opportunity of meeting you again. With all good wishes.

(Signed) HY. IRVING.

**Copy of letter received from Miss Lily Brayton.**

*Adelphi Theatre, 26th January, 1906.*

DEAR MR. ALEXANDER,

I have been wanting for some time to write and thank you for the great benefit I have derived from your method. I think your system simply wonderful. It enables one to do the greatest amount of work without fatigue. Before I took lessons from you the slightest cold used to affect my voice; now I am able to play a long part even when suffering from a severe cold without it being noticeable in my voice. Please accept my very grateful thanks.

(Signed) LILY BRAYTON.

**Copy of letter received from H. B. Irving, Esq.**

*2nd February, 1906.*

MY DEAR ALEXANDER,

It gives me great pleasure to have an opportunity of saying how much I appreciate the good you have done me both in my work and my health. You have made a new man of me. I don't think I can say more than that. With all good wishes.

(Signed) H. B. IRVING.

**Copy of letter received from Oscar Asche, Esq.**

*Adelphi Theatre, 23rd January, 1906.*

DEAR MR. ALEXANDER,

I think your system marvellous. As you know, when first my wife went to you on account of throat weakness, I was more than inclined to scoff, but before long I recognised that you were doing her good. Now I have no hesitation in saying that to you alone is due the great improvement so apparent in her. Whereas before she went to you the slightest cold affected her voice, now she is able to go through the most exacting part, even though suffering from a cold, without strain and in perfect voice. Your system has improved her health and her art. I should certainly advise anyone who suffers from loss of voice to go to you for a "cure." However, your system is a sure way of removing the gasping so prevalent on the English stage. In conclusion, please accept my heartfelt thanks for what you have done for my wife.

(Signed) OSCAR ASCHE.

**Copy of letter from Mrs. H. Beerbohm Tree.**

*His Majesty's Theatre, 21st November, 1905.*

DEAR MR. ALEXANDER,

My daughter, Miss Viola Tree, is so anxious to go on with her treatment. The great good you have done her must of necessity widen your connection; but I daresay it is already larger than you can cope with.

(Signed) MAUD B. TREE.

## Extracts from "THE ONLOOKER" and "DAILY CHRONICLE"

Concerning Messrs. ALEXANDER'S method of

# RESPIRATORY RE-EDUCATION.

All unknown to the man in the street, or, for that matter, to the man about town, there has been working in our midst for the past eighteen months an enlightened Australian, who has completely overthrown the Dagon—in the form of their ideas and theories on that profound and immense subject, Breathing—of the London Medicos. The giant who has brought about this revolution was led by his own observations on the physical differences between the so-called civilised white races in general and the refined Englishman in particular, and that most perfect race, the Maoris; and, as the result of ten years' humble study, has made the apparently astounding statement that, with few exceptions, all the evils of hyper-civilisation are due to imperfect and incorrect respiration. To thinking minds it will be patent on reflection that he is in a great measure right.

### SOME EMINENT PUPILS.

And the practice has proved his theory. The fact that he brought about a complete restoration in a case of spinal curvature, pronounced incurable, by means of perfect breathing, *via* perfect posture and carriage, will serve to show that the success that has attended his efforts is not confined to disorders of the lungs, throat, and respiratory organs; while the fact that many of our eminent actors and vocalists—including the late Sir Henry Irving, Mr. H. B. Irving, Mr. Lewis Waller, Miss Lily Brayton, Miss Viola Tree, and Miss R. Barton—have derived incalculable benefit from this authority's instruction, goes to prove that his system is as far removed from the quackery of the so-called voice producer as the proverbial mountain from the molehill.

**BREATHING AND HEALTH.**

**PHYSICAL (Body) DEVELOPMENT  
and BREATHING.**

*Leading members of the Medical Profession of London  
have expressed the opinion that the Messrs. Alexander's Special  
Respiratory Method, as applied in*

- (1) **The Treatment of Human Disorders, under Medical supervision,**
- (2) **The Cultivation and Development of the Human Voice,**
- (3) **Physical Culture, without dumb-bells or apparatus,  
*Surpasses all methods at present known to them.***

The employment of the **Alexander Method**, under medical supervision, has shown that it restores the control over the true **Thoracic** mechanism; prevents "**Sniffing**" and "**Gasping**" in breath-taking; ensures perfect **Dilatation** of the nasal passages; removes all strain in respiration and vocalisation from the region of the throat; prevents thoracic rigidity in physical effort; eradicates **Mouth Breathing**, and makes **Nasal Respiration** possible in vocal and physical efforts at all times, and under all reasonable circumstances; and renders a **Rigid Thorax** adequately mobile, thereby greatly benefiting the general health, and materially assisting the vital organs in the proper and full performance of their functional duties.

The above Methods are imparted in their entirety by

**Mr. and Miss ALEXANDER,**

**Australlan Buildings, 49 Elizabeth Street, MELBOURNE.**

**SPECIAL BROCHURE MAY BE SEEN AT ABOVE ADDRESS.**