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heard her sing them good-bye. Durban-born, Berlin-trained, the daughter of a rich South African ship-owner, Perla Siedle in her youth sang in London for Granville Bantock and Henry Wood, and once gave a recital in New York.

What she calls her "wharfside work" began on April 16, 1940, when she was bidding farewell to a young Irish seaman her family had entertained the day before. Across the water he yelled, "Please sing something Irish," and through cupped hands she obliged with *When Irish Eyes Are Smiling*. That started her on her dockside career and she has sung to every troopship that has come in or out of Durban Harbour since.

In London, New York, Bombay, Sydney and Cairo servicemen talk about her, write her fan letters and send her souvenirs. The first U.S. troops to arrive in Durban threw to the quay packets of precious chewing gum, which Perla promptly sent to her sons in the Middle East.

For security reasons the British Navy won't tell her of ship movements, but from the broad porch of her tiny Dutch-gabled villa on Berea Hill ("my crow's nest") Perla can see when convoys are in or readying to go. When that happens, she speeds to the docks in her sedan with a special entertainment pass issued her by the Navy, who rate her morale-building value high. Usually it is near dawn or dusk, and the men are either glad to come or sad to go. She sings till the ships are docked or beyond the range of her voice, and never turns her back on a departing vessel.

At first, when the ship is untied, the men join in so heartily that when an onshore breeze is blowing the song-feast can be heard in central Durban a mile away. But by the time the ship is out over the bar, Perla is singing alone. Farewells are always charged with heavy misty-eyed emotion on both sides. One particularly touching Durban farewell was thus described by a magazine published on board a British troopship en route to India: "A deeper feeling gripped all of us soldiers, a strange contracting of the throat. A chorus started, wavered, fell away into poignant silence. Gradually the troopship drew away and at the end of the jetty that white-clad figure started *Auld Lang Syne*. As the gap grew, just snatches of the words came to us, and finally, just a picture of that solitary figure in white waving to us, and we swear she was still singing. We may forget many things of this war, but never the songs of Durban's Lady in White."

Says the Lady in White: "I'll go right on singing as long as ships keep sailing, and when our boys come back after victory I'll be here to sing them welcome home again."

Folly To Be Wise?

A TALK on the German radio to the women of Germany recently constituted a stern warning to them against recourse to fortune-telling and superstitions. An excerpt from it, later broadcast in the BBC European Service, was to this effect:—"If you knew what you might have to face in the future, you might lose your assurance, and life in many cases would become unbearable."—(From the BBC London Letter).



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