

MELODY RESUMED

THE aircraft slid down through the early morning mists at Whenuapai like a great blue-and-silver kingfish. The last of the passengers to leave her was carried in a canvas sling-seat down the gangway, placed in a wheel-chair, and taken along to the reception quarters.

Those of us who were watching could not help being touched by the contrast between the extreme mobility of the aircraft, which had just hurtled across the Tasman at 300 miles an hour, and the laborious progress of the figure in the aluminium chair. But as Marjorie Lawrence drew near to us that feeling was dispelled. Her vitality and cheerfulness took possession of the scene straight away. Eight years ago, at the height of her career as an operatic singer, she was struck down by poliomyelitis. When fortune tossed her into that ditch she might have been forgiven for accepting defeat, and retiring to a life of obscurity. She did nothing of the sort. With superb courage she began fighting her way back.

That she has triumphed over such a great personal disaster is due partly to her own strength of character, and partly to the devotion of her husband, Dr. Thomas King, a tall, smiling, slow-spoken American in his middle thirties, whose part in the affair is perhaps well enough indicated by the name by which she refers to him—"my angel." Later, as we were going out to the Wellington aircraft, I asked Dr. King, who was pushing Miss Lawrence's chair, what branch of medicine he was specially interested in. "Nothing special—just general practice," he answered. "But I gave it all up when this happened. She is my practice now," he said with a smile, and pointed to Miss Lawrence, who was carrying on a lively conversation with one of the other members of the party. He has certainly made great progress with it. With his help, his wife has regained much of the mobility that paralysis took from her; and both seem confident that she will make further steady improvement as time goes on.

Poliomyelitis prevented Marjorie Lawrence from walking, but it could not stop her from singing. One feels that nothing short of a cosmic disaster could bring that about. She was born to sing, if ever any woman was. During the past year or two she has carried out strenuous tours in America, Britain and Australia; and when she gets back to the United States after her five weeks' tour of New Zealand she will return, after a short rest, to the Metropolitan Opera House, the scene of many of her past triumphs. Her unsentimental attitude towards the disability she is struggling



MARJORIE LAWRENCE
Will not "sing down" to her audiences

against, and the great spirit she shows, are refreshing to come into contact with, even if one never heard her sing a note.

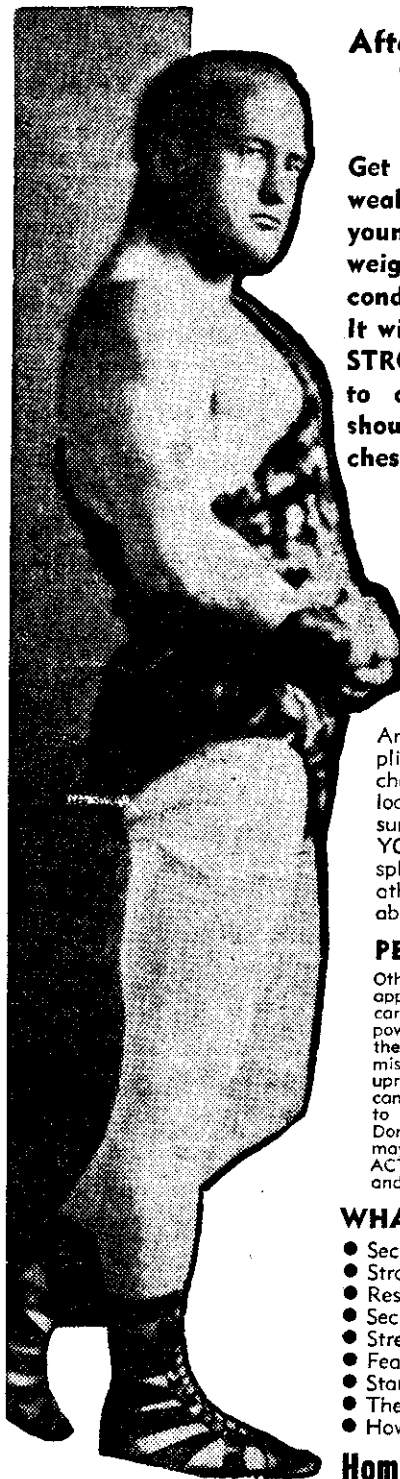
During the 40 minutes or so between her arrival and the taking-off of the aircraft for Wellington Miss Lawrence had a busy time. She had some programme-arranging to do first. Then the newspaper reporters kept her answering questions for a while. The NZBS had brought out a portable recorder and in the short time that was left Miss Lawrence did two radio interviews, one with Marina, of 12B, and the other with John Gordon, of 1YA. There were goings and comings inside the reception room, and a good deal of noise going on outside—aircraft warming up, or taking off with a roar—and I was impressed with the calm way in which the interviewers went about their business. Miss Lawrence was still sitting in her chair, and they had to lean over her, mike in hand, and ignore all distractions. She on her part was perfectly self-possessed, and carried on conversation as naturally as if she were sitting in her own drawing-room.

Marjorie Lawrence is not interested in "singing down" to her audiences. She is prepared to accept the reports she has heard about the great development of musical taste that has taken place in New Zealand during recent years, and to give the public an opportunity of hearing some of the world's finest music. Nor will she hug the beaten track. Some of her songs will come from works that are unfamiliar to most members of the New Zealand public.

—A.R.D.F.

(Otago listeners will have the opportunity of hearing Marjorie Lawrence on Tuesday next, August 16, when 4YA will broadcast the second half of a public concert beginning at 9.0 p.m.)

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