

Talks wi' a Mouthfu' o' Porridge

But Dora Lindsay is a Quiet Scots Body When She's off Stage

"I HOPE you don't want me to say anything very funny, because if I do you'll be stealing my thunder for the broadcasts," implored Dora Lindsay, as she lowered herself—although she didn't have far to go—into the chair on the other side of a gas fire in a studio at 2YA. "I'm really very quiet and reserved when I'm off duty. I have to have a bit of peace and quiet to think up new gags and jokes, anyway."

So I didn't press Dora into giving me half an hour's free comedy. After all, why should she exert herself to entertain one man when she gets paid handsomely for keeping the whole theatre-full of people chuckling and laughing from the stage? Not that Dora put it that way, at all, for although she's a Scottish body, the idea of giving something for nothing didn't seem to worry her. The plain fact is that she is not a person who goes about cracking jokes at everyone and excusing herself on the grounds that she is a professional comedienne.

But those who have seen her on the stage, either in England and Scotland, or in New Zealand—she has just finished a tour with the Long Tack Sam Company—probably appreciate her attitude of conserving her resources until the show is on. The fact that Long Tack Sam didn't think it necessary to have another comedian—the usual male—with his company, speaks volumes for his confidence in Dora's ability. There's not much of her, but all of her four-feet-something (she couldn't quite make the grade to the five-foot mark) is a bundle of fun on stage, and now she is starting a six-weeks' tour of the New Zealand national stations with her comic verbal stock-in-trade.

"Every town we visited with the Chinese company produced a few people who turned up to see me," remarked Dora Lindsay with a quiet pride. "They were mostly Scots who had known me on the stage in the Lindsay and Hart team years ago at Home. It became quite a standing joke, in fact, among the company. Whenever any of them saw a stranger in the wings or about the stage during the day looking a little dazed or lost, they didn't even bother, after a while, to ask what the visitors wanted. They just directed them to my dressing-room."

"And I suppose you had to have a reception hall all to yourself in Dunedin?" I asked.

"Not quite," replied the little Scotswoman with a happy smile, "but they certainly made a fuss of me. The place is just nicely full of Scots, and lots of them said they had heard me in Scotland, so the Scottish Society turned out, pipe band and all, to give me a welcome. After all, they did it for Harry Lauder, so I suppose they couldn't see why



Complete with dainty bouquet of soraggy ostrich feathers, Dora Lindsay poses for a special picture for the "Radio Record" as a churlady—one of her most popular Scottish comic characterisations.—An S. P. Andrew photo.

they shouldn't do it for me. I enjoyed the compliment."

By the way, although these snatches of Dora's utterances are written in ordinary spelling, her accent is really a full Scottish one, though not as broad as the one she adopts for stage and broadcast work. If, as the saying goes, she speaks with a mouthful of porridge in ordinary conversation, then when she's getting to work on your funnybone she must be chock-a-block with haggis or something dreadfully Scottish.

Twelve years ago Dora Lindsay was in New Zealand with a Fuller vaudeville company, and most of her time since then has been spent in Australia. She has done a lot of broadcasting there. The first time she ever broadcast was from Warner Brothers' studios, in Hollywood.

"They told me to take it quietly, but

I thought that seeing a baritone stands back from the mike and sings loudly, I'd do the same—except that I didn't sing so much. But it would be a wonderful invention if the mike would laugh when you wanted a laugh. Trouble is, I suppose, some laddie would invent something about the same time which tells when people turn you off on their radios. That'd never do."

Dora Lindsay feels that she was born to the stage—even respectably so, in days when the stage in Scotland was considered to be the awfulest profession ever. Her reasons are that her grandfather, on one side, was a chief disciple of spiritualism, and on the other, was a negro character comedian. So the way Dora works it out is that one gives her the inspiration for stage work and the other an aura of goodness. But Scots have come to the conclusion now that the stage isn't so wicked after all.

"I write my own stuff for stage and broadcasts," continued the comedienne. "And I find that I'm not really in competition with male comedy artists, for there is a distinct line of work for female Scottish character sketches. Scots people don't mind hearing jokes told against themselves. In fact, I fairly rubbed it in to the Dunedin Scots the other week," she added gleefully.

One of her most interesting experiences in Australia was an eleven months' tour undertaken last year with Mr. and Mrs. Frank Hatherley, well known to radio people as Bobby and Betty Bluegum. The whole trip was made by car, and the small band averaged 100 miles a day. Dora Lindsay's husband, Myer Nyman, has been for a long time a performer with Cés Morrison's Band, in Australia, and he does a lot of broadcasting on his own account.

Now you know this little Scotswoman better than you did, you may settle down to listen to her broadcasts: