



# OTAGO GIRL WHO 'MADE GOOD'

Special to the "Record"

by

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MISS JESSIE McLENNAN, DUNEDIN.

... She applied to be announcer "for fun" and found herself in the radio game for life.

**I**N a spirit of holiday fun, Jessie McLennan made application while she was in Sydney three years ago for a vacant job as announcer to station 4BC Brisbane. She never seriously expected to get it, but the station officers thought otherwise. They knew enough of their radio to recognise charm when they saw it. They were not deaf to the Dunedin girl's really beautiful voice—clear as crystal with all of crystal's sparkle.

Jessie McLennan suddenly found herself on the Brisbane station's payroll.

In the beginning, she was announcer in the sessions for children and for women, also in special sessions. Very soon she became Kitty of the team, "Keith and Kitty," which won tremendous popularity by discussing over the air, as Average Young Man and Average Young Woman, a host of topics from frivolous nonsense to matters of real and far-reaching significance.

But "Kitty" had not been long with 4BC before her ability in another direction was realised. Jessie McLennan had not been a leader in the Dunedin Repertory Society for nothing. Her star began to shine with clearer lustre when Australian listeners showed signs of tiring of the American transcriptions with which the stations had been mainly feeding them. Flesh-and-blood came into its own—the advertisers liked it and the public liked it even more.

So "Kitty," of "Keith and Kitty," changed to "Mata Hari," then to "Queen Victoria." ... Jessie McLennan took the transformations calmly.

**I**NDEED, this Dunedin girl who has so definitely "made good" across the Tasman, is strangely reluctant to talk of her success. Modesty is a rare quality in radio stars. But when I interviewed her after her recent arrival home in Dunedin, I could coax her into telling very little about herself. Only by surreptitious scabbling in a few

of her old copies of "Teleradio," an Australian publication similar to the "Radio Record," did I discover that her "Mata Hari" was something of a sensation—"a lesson to all aspirants for microphone fame," said the critic. When it ended, the station showed its appreciation generously by the gift of three handsome volumes—Galsworthy's Plays, Ibsen's Plays, and Marie Tempest's Biography.

Even Fay Compton praised Miss McLennan's "Queen Victoria," which she played in a specially-written version of the Queen's life.

But those were only two successes. In two years Miss McLennan played in some 24 serial plays, some containing as many as 40 episodes, none less than 13. At one time she was taking leading roles in five major productions.

By this time, Jessie McLennan was a national favourite. Then, suddenly, she resigned from 4BC, returning hurriedly to Dunedin because her father was ill. He died just after her arrival.

And now? Miss McLennan does not know. The job

at Brisbane is waiting for her, but she is not sure whether to go back or to try new pastures. She would like to link up with radio in New Zealand, and she has a shrewd eye on the United States. Of course, if she goes there, it will probably be good-bye to New Zealand. The Americans don't let talent slip through their fingers!

Whatever happens, there is one thing of which Miss McLennan is sure. Radio is her career. She will never do stage work again. "I'd be frightened of the

crowds," she told me. "The microphone is my friend."

**T**HAT was all she would say about her successes in the past or her hopes for the future. Adroitly, she turned the conversation to impersonal subjects, talking of the progress of radio in Australia and of station 4BC in particular.

When she joined the Brisbane station it was independently owned, the principal of six stations scattered through Queensland. Later, Mr. Stuart Doyle, genius of Australian commercial broadcasting, arranged for 4BC to become one of about 40 in the Commonwealth commercial network.

Miss McLennan had much to say in praise of the progressive methods of the Australian commercials' policy. When they first started, she said, there was considerable animosity between them and the (Continued on page 38.)

**W**HEN a woman, of no radio experience whatever is appointed above more than 200 applicants to be announcer of a station as important as 4BC Brisbane, you are fairly safe in supposing she possesses more than her fair share of that important virtue called "personality."

In this case, you would be right. Miss Jessie McLennan, of Dunedin, is an "it-girl" who has climbed by sheer merit very near the top of the ladder of Australian radio fame.