

Margherita Zelanda—New Zealand's Queen of Song

(Written for the "Radio Record" by W. J.)

ON this page we give an informal interview with Madame Margherita Zelanda, the world-famous New Zealand soprano, in the grounds of her own delightful home, among the native birds and bush which she loves so well. Madame Zelanda, who is one of the most popular radio artists on either side of the Tasman, is to make a tour of the YA stations toward the end of September, so that listeners may look forward to a musical treat in the near future.

IT is probably the lot of very few journalists to gather such an inspiring story as came my way recently.

I accidentally trespassed upon Madame Margherita Zelanda's private home park while poaching rabbits with some friends, little thinking of back-stage stories, or the home life of great radio artists. When we hear an artist before the microphone we can think of nothing, perhaps, more than the song, or whatever is coming through the set, and very seldom does it occur to listeners that there is always a human side-light attached to life. It is this side-light on the life of Margherita Zelanda, New Zealand's Queen of Song, that has come my way.

Margherita Zelanda, known to radio listeners the world over as New Zealand's song-bird, is a fragile beauty with a voice that sparkles like the summer sunshine. To me she seems a human lark with a lark's song always on her lips. She is a personality of the stage (concert and operatic) and also of radio, for this wonderful coloratura soprano is the greatest broadcasting artist in the Southern Hemisphere; beloved by all, this little New Zealander has in rare measure that quality of presence and address we call charm.

My chance meeting with Madame Zelanda took place close to a pretty fern glade, where she was sitting by the rippling waters, singing softly to the native birds; her beautiful voice came ringing through the bush—what a combination of vocal gift, the bird-like clarity was phenomenal, the crystalline purity and lilt, the beauty of her timbre, and, more,



MADAME MARGHERITA ZELANDA, famous coloratura soprano, examines her catch. Fishing is one of this popular New Zealand singer's favourite pastimes.

the golden voice of a gifted hostess eager to entertain her guests. On this occasion her guests were the little bush birds—wrens, tuis, and the little mocky-mock—the great diva absorbed in her own domain.

Here are the beautiful words, fitted to the surroundings:

*Ah, a paradise, a birdland true,
Robins, wrens, and wood-pigeons blue,
Here the clarion note of the bellbird rings,
While up in the rata the mocky-mock sings.*

*Gently ripple waters softly through the glade,
Dancing in the sunlight, swirling in the shade,
Here the little wren, warbling to his mate,
Echoes tiny robins o'er the great estate.*

"Thank you, madame, I shall never forget it." At the finale of the little act the prima donna sprang lightly to her feet, and invited my party to her home, a short distance away. "Yes," she said in response to a query, "I am fond of out-door life and

nature, and I spend the greater part of my leisure in this way." Is it any wonder that she can sing? The environment must surely lend inspiration to such a talented lady. Madame informed me that soon she will bid *adios* to her old home; it will be a sad parting. "I shall miss all the lovely life, the birds and the charm of nature, but I shall treasure my memories, and it is from this source that I give to my audiences some little taste of these sweet memories in song."