

# "NOT 'ARF A ROW"

## Gracie Fields On Her Own Voice

(An interview for "The Listener" by BEULA HAY)

YOU probably wouldn't think so, but Gracie Fields comes in for as much criticism as anybody in the public eye.

I was talking to her in her suite at the Dorchester Hotel, Park Lane, recently and casually mentioned that I had never heard any unkind criticism levelled at "Our Gracie."

She threw back her head and laughed. "You should see some of the letters I received again this week about that song 'Out in the Cold, Cold Snow' which the troops like so much. Some dear old souls seem to think that it has a very bad moral for young people."

"But," continued Gracie, with a sweep of her hands, "you'll always find someone, wherever you go, who will take the wrong meaning from anything. Anyone listening to the emphasis I put into some of the words in that song would realise that, if anything, it should have a sobering effect on girls' morals. Heaven only knows I don't encourage that kind of thing. I'm looking after enough people's

babies as it is." (Miss Fields has a country home for children, where she is "Auntie" to them all).

"When girls come to me with such troubles I say, 'Well, you're not the first one it's happened to, so snap out of it and look at the matter in its right perspective and make up your mind what you're going to do,'" said Gracie.

### The Stuff to Give the Troops

Since her return from America and her marriage to the film star Monty Banks, she has been continuing with her marvellous work entertaining the soldiers. The mothers feel that there is a connecting link with their sons when they are all listening-in and enjoying the same entertainment.

Gracie Fields looks a new person since her illness. I was amazed to find such a young-looking woman after seeing so many unflattering press photographs. She has golden hair swept back from her forehead and ears and her complexion is fresh and lovely. However, as some of the most beautiful schoolgirl complexions belong to Lancashire girls, this is not

so very surprising. It is a constant wonder to visitors in Lancashire that girls who work in mills and factories should not have pasty-looking faces.

### A Voice Over Wellington

When Gracie returns to her own country she receives a welcome equal to that given to Royalty. She said that she had often wanted to see Australia and New Zealand but could not say whether she would ever have the opportunity of doing so, especially now that the war had upset so many plans.

I mentioned that six years ago one of the Wellington picture theatres had amplified her records from the roof to advertise one of her films and that I used to pause and listen on the Terrace to the haunting tunes floating up to the hills.

"Haunting!" exclaimed Gracie. "A damned awful row I should say, and not 'arf a row at that! It's a wonder the Wellington people put up with it. And I suppose they were those awful old songs I sang at first, which sound so hideous to me now."

### The Humbug About Gracie

Seeing that she apparently doubted my appreciation I hesitated before adding that I wondered whether she, herself, could possibly realise the full extent of the great war work she was doing to make people happy with her songs.

To which she answered simply, "Yes, thanks to God's great gift." There is no humbug about Gracie Fields.

## PATRIOTISM

By G.D.H.

Scene: A meeting of the Ladies' Patriotic League in the Erewhon Public Hall. A dozen women are sitting round a table, which is covered with buttons, pins, scissors, needles, etc. Everyone is talking at the top of her voice.

**CHAIRWOMAN** (shouting): Silence, ladies. Now, have you all got something to do? That's right. Those that can knit make way at the table for those that can not knit, so that those that can not knit can do hussifs instead. All set? No, Mrs. B, the safety-pins have to have four brace, four fly—

**Mrs. C.**: A brace is two, isn't it?

**Mrs. D.**: I can't see what this two-inch nail can be for. My husband said—

**Mrs. E.**: Oh, that's for cleaning their pipes with.

**Mrs. F.**: Is it? I thought it was for picking teeth.

**Mrs. G.**: No, scraping out a gun.

**Chairwoman** (shouting): I thought we discussed all this last time.

**Mrs. B.**: Yes, but did we come to any conclusion?

**Mrs. C.**: I think we decided it was to act as an emergency button.

**Mrs. D.**: Then what are the buttons for?

**Chairwoman** (shouting): Now, ladies, I think we had better begin our meeting. I call upon Mrs. E. to read the minutes.

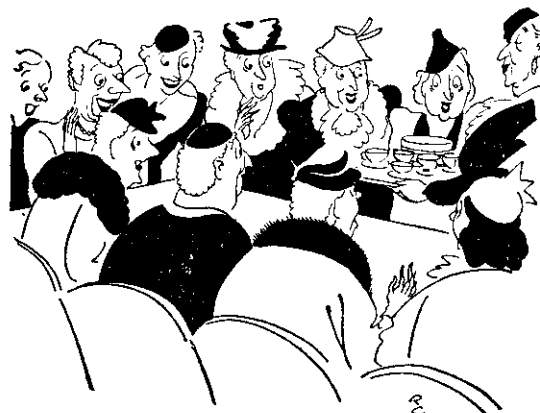
**Mrs. E.**: Well, I'm afraid there's only one minute. It was decided not to have any afternoon tea. Can anyone remember anything else happening?

**Mrs. H.**: I believe we spent the rest of the time discussing the two-inch nail.

**Mrs. G.**: Well, what my husband says, is—

**Chairwoman** (shouting): All those in favour of these minutes being correct—

**All:** Aye!



**Mrs. F.**: All the same, I do think it would have been nice to have just a cup of tea!

**Chairwoman** (shouting): The next business is, should some effort be made to raise further funds?

**Mrs. M.**: Well, where do the funds go? I heard that the Government—

**Mrs. H.**: Really, Mrs. M, I won't sit here and listen to you calling His Majesty's Government a set of thieves.

**Mrs. M.**: Of course, I never meant anything of the kind, Mrs. H. But I do think we ought to get the credit for any effort we make.

**Mrs. L.**: I should think it would be sufficient if the boys got any comforts we make.

**Mrs. M.**: No, but you see, it's the principle of the thing. Now my husband says he heard that the Government—

**Chairwoman** (shouting): And we are asked to appoint one lady, a very tactful and discreet lady, to be on the Advisory Committee in case of any distress amongst soldiers—er—dependents—or—

**All:** Oh, I shouldn't like that. It's not—

**Chairwoman** (shouting): The whole thing must be treated extremely confidentially.

**Mrs. E.**: Oh, by the way, I had a request from Porky Peabody that we should supply him with a pair of pyjamas.

**Mrs. F, Mrs. G, Mrs. B and Mrs. D.**: I wonder why Porky hasn't any pyjamas?

**Mrs. C and Mrs. H.**: But surely they don't need pyjamas?

**Mrs. A.**: Well, I think with the high wages they have been getting, they ought to be able to provide their own.

**Mrs. M.**: Of course, it's the Government—

**Mrs. L.**: I was told the other day there are enemy agents at work trying to sabotage the war effort.

**Mrs. B.**: Did you really? But of course, we are all completely loyal. We just shouldn't take any notice.

**Mrs. H.**: Yes, you would. You all lap up anything that is said against the Government, however wild a rumour it is.

**Mrs. M.**: Well, we didn't put it in power. It's not our Government.

**Mrs. H.**: Whose is it then? Do you mean to say you think you are fit to fight for democracy, if you won't support a Government duly and constitutionally elected by the majority, the vast majority, of the people, just because you didn't vote—

**Chairwoman** (it is the first time she has not had to shout, for a horrible silence has fallen): I think, Mrs. H, it would be better if we did not allow this to become a political meeting.

**All but Mrs. H.**: Yes. Bringing in politics, when all we want to do is help to win the war.

**Mrs. C.**: Will you clear the tables please, ladies, I have made a cup of tea.

**Chairwoman** (shouting above the pleased exclamations): Oh, but Mrs. C, you shouldn't.

**Mrs. C.**: It is quite simple, just a cream sponge and a few scones. Oh, I'm sorry, Mrs. L.

**Mrs. L.**: I was just in the middle of counting my strong black threads. Now I've dropped half on the floor, and the large-eyed needles as well.

**Chairwoman** (shouting with her mouth full): I propose a hearty vote of thanks to Mrs. C.

**All:** Yes, yes.

**Mrs. M.**: What delicious scones.

**Mrs. H.**: Isn't it a treat to be able to forget about the war for a bit?

CURTAIN