

# THE WOMAN WHO MOTHERS THE MOTHERS

## Enid Maxwell And Her Radio Mission

*EVEN remote listeners are apt to find the "Children and Parents" programmes of the British Broadcasting Corporation among the most emotional of all radio features—those programmes which link the British children who have been evacuated overseas, to their parents at home. It is still more moving to be in the British studio where the parents are hearing their children's voices for perhaps the first time for two years, and getting their first opportunity to ask or answer questions. Here is a sketch of Anne, the woman who is responsible for these features, supplied to "The Listener" by the BBC:*

**A**NNE is the microphone name which conceals the identity of Enid Maxwell, a woman with a mission. She regards it as her job, by means of radio, to stop the war from doing what it threatens to do—break down family life. She wants to develop this radio link with home, so that the children do not forget their old associations and their old homes; she wants to keep the parents so closely in touch with their children that they can understand and take part in their growth and new interests, instead of feeling—as so many of them tend to do—that their children are slipping away from them and growing up as strangers.

That is Enid Maxwell's mission, and she fulfils it in two ways—first the two-day "live programme" *Children Calling Home*, and secondly the *Hello Children* programme in which recorded messages from parents are sent to their children; both programmes can be heard in the BBC's North American, Pacific and African Services. It is Enid Maxwell's job to organise these, to steady and mother the parents so that they can control themselves before the microphone. In the *Children Calling Home* programme her assistant and compère is Roy Rich.

### MY WEEKLY WOMAN

(Continued from previous page)

up—if you need building up," she added, glancing at my ample girth. "No, I don't like brown bread. Never did hold with these new fangled ideas of vitamins and such. Chaff and straw, that's what it is. Never did no one any good." I brought out a piece of Wheatgerm.

"What's that. Wheatgerm? Looks dirty to me. Got a germ in it, all right," she said, as she hacked the loaf to a crumbled heap. "No good bakers these days, not like old times."

**A** COUPLE of hours later the Man of the House came home. "I'm sorry," I said. "No dinner yet."

From the nursery came squeals of delight as the children exploited the newly-polished floor.

"What did I say?" remarked the W.W. as she left. "It ain't no good polishing a nursery floor. They're playing to-day, but they'll be breaking their necks on it to-morrow."

Born, brought up and educated in Scotland, Enid Maxwell is now a woman in her thirties, dark and good looking, almost petite in figure, and as trim and tidy in mind as she is in appearance. She has an exceptionally attractive voice. Trained at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, she did a fair amount of producing for amateurs, but never herself wanted to go on the stage. She reached radio some six or seven years ago, first in Edinburgh, where she started by taking a one-line part in an early radio play. She drifted into the Children's Hour, went to London, and then went at short notice to Birmingham to take over the Children's Hour there. She went to Birmingham for three weeks and stayed for three years, was there when war broke out, and came off the air in the Midland programme at three minutes to six—three minutes before the Regional programmes were abandoned and the wartime wavelengths came into operation.

The Ministry of Information then claimed Enid Maxwell, sending her back to Scotland. A year later she was transferred, at forty-eight hours' notice, back to the BBC to take over her present job. Incidentally, she has not been at home with her family for Christmas, except in 1939, for many years, since she has always been concerned with broadcast features to link other people with their homes.

She packed up her meat, and swept a large pile of scraps for the fowls into her sack. "It's a long walk home over the hills, but it's grand getting away from other folk, and the cats and the fowls and the bantams are fine company."

**A** COUPLE of hours later, the telephone rang. The house was nearly straight. The gas oven, which had been wrongly reconstructed after a "thorough clean," now had at least two jets that worked. Saucepans, cloths, scrubbing brushes had been retrieved from the garden and the washhouse. The frying pan had at last turned up under the oven, and the soap from under the bath. My husband was busily trying to disperse the cats from the back garden.

"I'm sorry," I said into the 'phone. "I can't come out. I'm still cleaning up. I had a Weekly Woman this afternoon."

"A Weekly Woman! My dear, how too marvellous! How did you get her? You are lucky!"

I hung up and went to bed.



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16

## Nursing under fire

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