

seemed to happen. She could have done with a Morning Session in which to share her experiences. There was, for instance, the time the burglars called. The night before payday each week, Fred Basham, county engineer, kept the men's payroll in the house. He had a revolver to protect the cash, but Daisy, of a nervous disposition, flinched at every living thing that bumped in the night.

Trouble came, however, in the daylight. Daisy rode out in the gig with her husband to distribute the wage packets, but returned to find the house had been ransacked. Missing the payroll, the robbers had had to content themselves with Daisy's jewellery and the grand total of 6.6 in cash. Both items were returned by the police soon after when they caught the two culprits.

Even then Daisy showed the compassion for the underdog that was later to colour her work in radio. "They owned up and were put in jail," she says. "They were very young and they had their girl-friends with them. I remember feeling very sorry for them."

WITH plenty of space in the garden at Hawera, Daisy took to raising chickens, nicknaming the birds after her friends according to personality. One she remembers was a small and bustly bird called Mrs Malcolmson. Throughout her life in the country, Daisy continued her poultry farming. It was fun, and not unprofitable. "I used to sell the eggs and keep the money," she says. "And Dad paid for the fowl food. It was a very nice idea."

For journeys about Hawera, Daisy and her husband travelled in a gig drawn by Darkie, a temperamental horse which shied at any unusual object. Later it became Daisy's turn to shy at an unusual object—the vehicle in which Fred Basham met her at the station following a visit to Rotorua. He had bought his first horseless carriage.

Named by its makers the Phoenix, the vehicle showed little of the renewed

youth with which the mythical bird is said to have risen from the ashes. The name may have been suggested by what appeared to be a perforated ash-can, which did duty as a bonnet. From this jutted an enormously long steering column, mounted with a collection of horns not unworthy of a small orchestra. The player sat behind in a high-backed double seat of the ornate kind found normally between the horses on merry-go-rounds. The whole was mounted on four large wire wheels fitted with the flimsy, puncture-prone India-rubber tyres of the day.

"Ooh! Can you drive it?" asked Daisy.

"I hope so," said Fred.

So the "dreadful motor-car" they were afterwards to give the affectionate nickname of Feeney, bore the couple home. Daisy was not to know her husband had driven it just twice before. That news was kept from her till the initial fright had subsided.

"For motoring we ladies wore wide hats tied on with tulle," says Aunt Daisy. "I'd climb up beside Fred and he'd drive down the street waving to his pals from the club standing at the kerb yelling, 'Here comes Bash!' Oh, ho! That was a wild one! Oh, he was glorious, was Dad!"

The clubmen gathered round, too, during Fred Basham's bouts of what he called poor-man's gout. "They would stand round his bed and grin because he couldn't have any whisky," says Aunt Daisy. "But I used to love it when he had gout. He was as good as gold when he was ill, and I could have him at home and do anything I liked for him."

In the streams around Hawera Fred Basham used to fish, sometimes taking with him his diminutive young wife, and carrying her pick-a-back across the creeks. "But mostly he lived his own life," she says, "and let me live mine. Except, of course, that he didn't like me going on with music. He liked music

in moderation. I liked it in immoderation! Dad used to say, 'Oh, get Leo to take you.' Leo was my accompanist—Leo Whittaker—he's still playing in Auckland. Leo was young in those days, of course, and he was very pleased to take me everywhere."

AT Hawera and later in Eltham, Waipukurau and the Hauraki Plains, Daisy took pupils for music and singing. And she performed at concerts in and out of those towns. The programme for Wellington Choral Union's *Messiah* of Christmas Night, 1918, lists the contralto Miss Daisy Basham, of Waipukurau, as one of the four guest soloists. The performance was conducted by Robert Parker, one of the country's most renowned musicians of that time.

The Bashams moved after the birth of their first child to Eltham, where Daisy bore her next two children, Geoffrey and Barbara, while her husband, as County Engineer, built the country's first strip of tar-sealed road. The two new babies were little trouble to the now experienced young mother. Truby

King's methods were more widely known, but Daisy felt she could modify them as she thought fit. She recalls that her son Geoffrey, then four years old, was asked by a neighbour, a Plunket enthusiast, whether his baby sister Barbara was fed by formula. Young Geoffrey considered the matter solemnly for a moment, then declared, "Sometimes she has the formula, and sometimes she has Mrs Basham."

In these years Daisy Basham acquired something of the poise and bearing necessary to please a large audience. At home she had been forced out from under the sheltering umbrella of Victorian authority and restraint. She developed the assurance that was to serve her well in the hectic, disorganised, ad libbing early days of radio. When she thought back to her London childhood it was to render thanks that her mother had not married the German fiancé she remembered. One morning she opened the paper to find the headline: "EUROPE ABLAZE!" The Kaiser had decided to go to war.

(To be continued)

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DAISY, Fred and their first baby ("Plunket was then in its own infancy")