

**Left everything he owned to her**

**T**HERE were plans when Monty was alive. Coming down on the train to Capri just before he died we were talking of his ideas about going back into film production. And then there was the restaurant on my property in Capri that Monty had been busy on during the past few months. It was his own enterprise. It has been redecorated and was to open this summer.

It would have been a venture we could have both taken part in later on, but now I suppose I shall never open it, although he has left everything he owned in the world to me.

I have been deeply touched by the thousands of messages of sympathy which people have sent me from all over the world—even from tiny islands in the Pacific where I sang during the war.

Once before when I was seriously ill in 1939, the same thing happened.

**'Don't talk so stupid!'**

**N**OW I cannot claim that Monty was the only person who has really understood me, for I am easy to understand.

I am a simple person, and in

### **They Said I'd Be Sorry**

Back here, too, I've been pretty busy with one thing and another. I've had some family things to see to and I've managed to fix my mother up with a little house near Brighton. Then I want to get down to Peacehaven to see about my orphanage. It's doing grand. We have a fine matron and the 25 children are happy and fit.

But to get back to work. I guess that I'll go on until my voice conks out, but I'd like to cut down a bit on the stage shows.

Val Parnell wouldn't hear of me turning it down when he approached me about the Palladium, and so here I am again. It's the greatest show place in the world, and you know that when you talk to them in America. It's worth a lot of titivating—even at my age—to please that audience.

### **I'm Feeling Fit**

Considering all things, I'm feeling fit. After my operation they told me not to work again for two years, but I started bashing the songs out long before that. They told me I'd be sorry for it, but I never have been.

When you come to think about it, I suppose that's the answer to life. Don't start feeling sorry for yourself, but keep bashing on at what you do best. And if you're a singer and the public like it, you ought to feel grateful and—without wishing to sound soft—give them pleasure as long as you can.

I'm really feeling fine apart from a little tummy trouble I had over in Capri. But that's nothing to the tummy trouble I'll be having just before that curtain goes up to-morrow.

Good-bye for now—I'll wipe the muck off my face and get back to the titivating.

★ In an interview with GRAHAM STANFORD

# I Shall Go On Singing As Long As You Want Me

By GRACIE FIELDS ★

**I**'M 52, and not fussy if you know the fact. My hair is grey; my dresses take more fitting than they did, and yet here I am perming my hair, fiddling with my eye-lashes—titivating myself up just as I did years ago for any opening night.

I'm worried about this sequin dress I picked up in Milan. Will it burst at the seams? Will those spangles stay put? I'm worried about the dress, the shoes and the songs, and if anyone tells you that show business gets easier as you get older just don't believe them.

If anything, it gets harder—and the higher you get the harder it gets. First of all you don't want to let yourself down and along with that you don't want to let the public down because they made you and you owe them a lot.

After a while the public out there over the foot-lights become very near and dear to you—like a close relation. You know what they expect of you and you get scared stiff sometimes that you won't be able to give it to them.

I've been singing for a living since I was a kid, but it gets no easier. And you can be sure I'll be fussing and fiddling about before the curtain goes up to-morrow night just as I did 20 years ago.

I'll think that I've lost this and mislaid that and then the curtain will go up and you'll know that it's too late to worry and you'll just hope that everything goes all right. People will wish you luck and you'll know that you'll need it, just as you always have.

### **A Wonderful Dream**

Lots of my friends say that I work too hard; that it's time I eased up. I've been saying that to myself for a long time now, but somehow it never seems to happen. So I don't even talk of retiring any longer.

Once, while my husband, Monty Banks, was alive, we had ideas that we'd open a restaurant in Capri and that I'd sit back in the shade and watch him run the place and do all the perspiring. It was a wonderful dream was that; but, as you know, it just didn't happen.

I have rented the restaurant to someone else (it opened in July), and now I'm back to the old routine and there'll be a load off my mind when all the sequins are fixed on the dress.

Mary, my secretary—she's been with me so long that she's one of the family now—has sewn so many spangles on the darned thing that she must go to bed dreaming of them.

I like to think that my voice is as strong as ever. But it's all the



OUR GRACIE

“... so I don't even talk of retiring any longer.”

At 52 years of age, Gracie Fields remains Britain's best known, best loved artist. Since the death of her husband, Monty Banks, she has thrown herself into a welter of work. And here on the eve of opening a new London show she gives her recipe for finding peace of mind in troubled times.

titivating you have to do for stage shows that takes it out of you when you get to my age. Eeek—there's so much fussing about, it's all right when you're young, but it takes it out of you when you get older.

That's the great advantage of recording. You just take some old slacks, throw on a coat, get into some quiet studio and stand up and sing. No one cares a darn how you look. Now, bless your life, I'm getting perms and manicures and titivating all round.

### **Keep On The Go**

Then again, it's not so easy these days to find songs, particularly when you've got scores to make up for recorded radio programmes. But I think I've got a smasher for to-morrow night. It's called “Forgive Me, Lord,” by Orde Hamilton, and they loved it in Canada. I'm also doing the new Walt Disney songs from Cinderella, and some new comedy stuff.

Maybe I'll give them a cartwheel or two, but we'll have to see how I feel. The last time I did cartwheels was at a charity show before the Duke of Edinburgh, and

afterwards he said that surely that was taking too much out of myself. Anyway, we'll see what happens. The point is that I guess I'll go on singing as long as my voice lasts—and you, the public, want me.

Every time I have talked of retiring or easing up I have had a flood of letters asking me not to pack up altogether, so that I feel that if I did I'd be letting people down. Nice letters they have been—from people who have said: “We know you must want to take it easy, but please don't go altogether.”

**It's a nice feeling to know you're still wanted.**

I flew more than 30,000 miles on my last Canadian tour and lived out of a suitcase. We'd play in a great sports arena one night and then fly on through the night. Eeek—you didn't know whether you were coming or going, but the reactions of those audiences was certainly good to feel.

I'd sooner do that than play a week at a time in a town. Then you only get the illusion that you've settled down.

My idea is either settle down once and for all, or keep on the go. And I have moved pretty fast in the last year or so.

### **It Was Pretty Hectic**

At the end of this perhaps I'll be able to snatch a fortnight's holiday—I only said perhaps.

After the Canadian trip I thought I'd go back to Capri for a couple of months' rest before returning to London. Rest? Why, we had 21 guests every day for over three weeks, so that at the end of it all I thought that to come to London would be like taking a holiday.

It was the feeding that was the problem—almost like a cafeteria we turned out to be. In between times I was bashing out songs with two accompanists, and all the way round it was pretty hectic. Not that I'm grumbling. We had a fine time.

### **Gracie—An Inspiration**

**O**UR greatest stage personality, Gracie Fields, has again been selected for the Royal Command variety show. What a great performer she is. To one of many thousands bedridden her voice is an inspiration. How I wish we could hear her on the finest of all variety nights.—Mrs. J. B., York.