



Women and the Home

Radio is the slender wire that brings the world and its affairs into the tiny kitchens and living rooms which hitherto had isolated so many housekeepers in the performance of their duties
—Margaret Bondfield

BETTY EXPLAINS A Reply To Her Critics

THESE last few weeks a storm of criticism has fallen on my poor defenceless shoulders. The Editor has given me the privilege of writing these few words in reply. It is not an expiation—for, in honesty, I am unaware of that necessity—let's call it an explanation to "clear the air."

It all started when some well-meaning reader wrote to *The Listener*, criticising Betty's attitude towards life. The writer objected to Betty's snobbishness and seeming affluence—as indicated by mention of cocktails, peach Melbas, and such delicacies, to say nothing of a car, a refrigerator, and a maid-of-all-work.

The Listener was just going to press when this letter was received, and, hurriedly, on a facetious impulse, but I assure you, without the slightest hint of malice or intent to offend, I penned the footnote that was to bring such a storm about my ears. Let me say first that, if quite innocently, I have hurt any of my readers' susceptibilities, I offer most sincere apologies.

The chief point in this first letter received seemed to be disapproval of Betty's apparent prosperity.

Something About Betty

Let me tell you something about Betty—which her own diary does not appear to have made clear.

In the first place, she is not a grouser—and all her little anxieties and private cares, which none of us are without, are locked secretly within her. Not even to her diary does she reveal them. You see, Betty strives to be constructive—to build up, not to pull down, and she attempts this in her own feminine way by stressing the gay little moments of life rather than the gloomy ones.

She Has Her Worries

Don't you believe that Betty is without worries—she isn't; but she simply doesn't talk about them. She could tell you, perhaps, of the early struggle of her married life—before and after Bill-Jim arrived. . . . I think she has already mentioned "Julia," the battered, second-hand car that Jim bought for £20 on their honeymoon, and which still holds pride of place in the little garage that Jim built with his own hands during spare week-ends.

If Betty were a snob she would disdain to ride in such a dilapidated vehicle. But she regards each trip in it as an adventure—and, in view of its association, a romantic one at that. She and Jim are proud of "Julia."

They are not grand people—just everyday folk. They have their little

home which is steadily being paid off, a garden which they share and love—and they go to the pictures nearly every Saturday night.

Betty's Husband

Jim is a decent, hard-working bloke, whose chief incentive in his married life has been a very deep love for his wife and small son. Maybe some people are luckier than others, but Jim stuck at his job—worked furiously—and by merit won a step up the ladder.

To-day he is comfortable, but he is far short of being a wealthy man. He has been able to give Betty, though, small comforts—extra facilities in their home—and a maid to help with the work. That has been his part. The ten pounds he gave her for her birthday represented the extent of his capability. I am not going to pry into the personal sacrifice that lay behind this gift. I know that if he could have made it twice the amount he would have been happier.

You see, Betty adores her home, and every penny she has been able to save has gone into it. She is very much of a woman—she likes pretty things—and like all other women, stares in at shop windows and longs for things she cannot have. But she does honestly try to make the best of what she has got, to keep herself nice and attractive—even in renovated frocks—so that she will always remain the girl Jim first married.

Betty feels for Jim pretty much the same as he feels about her. She strives to make life bright and gay for him—to plan little surprises—and to be a good companion and helpmate. She has gathered about her a little group of friends—pretty much in the same circumstances as themselves—getting along in the world, and their little feminine gossips and friendly exchanges are quite without pretension—and entirely without snobbishness.

She's Not a Snob

If Betty had to tell you what a snob is, she would have to look up for the correct definition in Webster's Dictionary; and if you suggested its application to herself, she would be bewildered and uncomprehending.

That is why, in justice, I have written to state her case—and the case of Jim and Bill-Jim. I hope you will accept it for what it is worth.

She is sorry about that cocktail—and, incidentally, that little dinner party she planned for Jim's chief cost her two weeks of her household savings. She thinks it was worth it though, for it was for Jim.

Secret Knitting

There is a brand new vice in London, not secret drinking, but secret knitting. Every woman longs to have one of the latest hand-made wool evening frocks, but only the most brazen dares to knit one for herself—in public, at any rate. She feels so unpatriotic when the men at the front are needing socks and mufflers. So many women sit up knitting frocks for themselves in the privacy of their own rooms—or when the rest of the family have gone to bed.

INTERVIEW

HOSPITAL MATRON

IT wasn't like a great public hospital—more like a big business building—with the clerks behind their plate-glass sliding windows—and the long bare corridors. The hurrying crowds of people who entered and passed out through the swing doors added to the illusion. The only distinguishing trait was that all of them bore parcels or baskets of some description. Then one got a hint—a young man came out of a side office swinging a stethoscope in his hand. Further on one came upon a hurrying nurse, her red cape a flag of colour over her white apron. Round another bend one came upon a white-coated attendant wheeling an empty stretcher. One climbed a flight of stairs—and then the unmistakable odour of hospital drifted to one's nostrils—iodoform—pungent, antiseptic. . .

Everybody Busy

There was evidence now to the eye. Through every doorway a vista of crowded wards. A glimpse of sterile dressing rooms, X-Ray and Massage Rooms, the Clinics, the Dental Room, and the Outdoor Department. One drifted on, bewildered by this sudden transition from office to hospital life. It was as busy and ordered as an ant's kingdom. Everyone darting about, intent on his own business. One marvelled at the complete orderliness of it all. Those busy nurses and attendants—all contributing towards one single objective—the care of the sick, and alleviation of pain. Well, it was a business, after all—a great office—inspired by mercy.

Convalescent patients wandered along the corridors—still with the pallor of recent experience on their faces. On beds in side cubicles, prone figures; apathetic, fretful, many faces drawn with pain. It hung over everything. Pain.

The Babies' Ward

A turn of the corridor brought me into a small ward. The beds here were so

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These Should Interest You

Talks prepared by the A.C.E. Home Science Tutorial Section, University of Otago:

"Planning Spending to Fit Needs." Monday, July 22, 1YA 3.30 p.m., 2YA 3 p.m., 3YA 2.30 p.m.

"Use of Left-overs." Wednesday, July 24, 4YA 3.15 p.m.

"Comparisons of Food Values." Thursday, July 25, 1YA 3.30 p.m., 3YA 2.30 p.m.; Friday, July 26, 2YA 3 p.m.

"Renovation and Re-modelling of Clothing." Friday, July 26, 4YA 3.15 p.m.

"The Home Hygiene Study Circle": Representative, St. John Ambulance. Tuesday, July 23, 2YA 11.30 a.m.

From The ZB Stations

"The Guest Announcer": All ZB Stations, Thursday at 8.0 p.m.

12B Happiness Club, 1.30 p.m. Mondays to Thursdays

"Songs at the Piano" (Reg. Morgan). 22B Tuesdays and Thursdays 3.30 p.m., Wednesdays, 4.15 p.m.

"A Miniature Concert," 32B, Sunday, July 21, 9.30 p.m.

"What I'd Like to Have Said." 42B Saturday, July 27, 8.30 p.m.

"Fashions": Ethel Early. Tuesday, July 23, 3YA 11.15 a.m.

"Cooking by Electricity": Miss D. McStay. Wednesday, July 24, 4YA 11.0 a.m.

"Outdoors in Australia" (C) The Platypus: Althea Solomons, B.Sc. Thursday, July 25, 1YA 11 a.m.

"Speaking Personally (1) These Things Belong to You": Phyllis Anchor. Thursday, July 25, 2YA 10.45 a.m.

"British Children in Wartime": Miss M. G. Havelaar. Thursday, July 25, 3YA 11.15 a.m.

"Mary Makes a Career" (5) "The House is Started." Saturday, July 27, 2YA 10.45 a.m.