

# 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

## INTERVIEW

### A GIRL FARMER



#### These Should Interest You:

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

"Young Mr. and Mrs. Jones Make Toys." Monday, September 23, 1YA 3.30 p.m.; 2YA 3 p.m.; 3YA 2.30 p.m.

"Disposing of Eggs." Wednesday, September 25, 4YA 3.15 p.m.

"Rolls and Fancy Yeast Breads." Thursday, September 26, 1YA 3.30 p.m.; 3YA 2.30 p.m.; Friday, September 27, 2YA 3 p.m.

"Washing and Putting Away Woolens." Friday, September 27, 4YA 3.15 p.m.

#### From The ZB Stations

All ZB Stations: "The Melody Storyteller" at 7.30 p.m. on Thursdays and 8.0 p.m. on Saturdays

12B: "Child Psychology" (Brian Knight) on Monday, September 23, at 4.43 p.m.

22B: Studio presentation by the Wellington Crippled Boys' and Girls' Club, at 6.30 on Sunday evening, September 22

32B: Daphne Judson, and the 32B Instrumental Trio, will present a programme on Sunday evening at 7.15

42B: "Professor Speedee's Twisted Tunes," at 8.15 p.m. on Saturday, September 28

"Remembered Trifles." Ngaio Marsh. Sunday, September 22, 1YA 3 p.m.

"First Aid Questions and Answers." Representative of St. John Ambulance. Tuesday, September 24, 2YA 11.30 a.m.

"Fashions." Ethel Early. Tuesday, September 24, 3YA 11.15 a.m.

"Speaking Personally: Listen Ladies" (5). Phyllis Anchor. Thursday, September 26, 2YA 10.45 a.m.

"Women's Voluntary Services of Great Britain: Latest Bulletin." Miss M. G. Havelaar. Thursday, September 26, 3YA 11.15 a.m.

"Help for the Home Cook." Miss M. A. Blackmore. Friday, September 27, 3YA 11.15 a.m.

"What Shall We Eat?: Fads and Fancies." Dr. Elizabeth Bryson. Friday, September 27, 4YA 7.30 p.m.

"Music and Flowers: Flowers and Architecture." Rollin Caughey. Saturday, September 28, 3YA 11 a.m.

**H**ISTORY and fiction abound with heroes and heroines, yet the humble heroes of everyday life wear no medals—they go unheralded and unsung.

I met such a heroine the other day—though she would smile incredulously if you suggested the term. She doesn't look a bit like a heroine, but few of them do.

She answers to the prosaic name of Mabel. She is of medium height, with a round, laughing face, wavy brown hair and dark blue eyes. The description might fit any average, attractive girl, but Mabel's life story is different. It is a tale of epic courage; of loyalty and endurance that sits strangely on the shoulders of a young girl in her teens.

At that period Mabel was in England, recovering from an illness. While there, she received word that her mother had died suddenly in New Zealand. Mabel returned immediately to take care of her father and small brother, who were trying, not very successfully, to run a small farm.

#### Plenty on Her Hands

Three years later Mabel's father died, and this young girl was left with a run-down farm on her hands, a heavy mortgage, a stack of unpaid bills, and a young brother to rear.

Those early years on the farm taught Mabel something, and after her father had gone, she resolutely refused to give up the farm.

"After a hard struggle," she said, "I finally received permission from the trustee and our family solicitor to carry on. They tried so hard to dissuade me. If your father couldn't make it pay, they said, how can you possibly expect to do so? But I pleaded for a chance to try—and they gave it to me."

So Mabel became a farmer in her own right.

#### Bad Beginning

Things went wrong from the start. Every month or two this young pioneer marked a steadily increasing loss on her books, but she refused to admit defeat.

A manager had been engaged just before her father's death, and he agreed to stay on. It was a dairying farm, and most of the returns came from milk and cream delivered round the district. Mabel realised that her one hope of success lay in getting a good herd together.

"When I took over," she explained, "the herd was run-down, but we had some young stock coming on. So I sold these—also the empty cows, which I fattened up and sent to the local butcher. During the winter months the manager and I attended all the clearing sales in

the district. I usually made these occasions an excuse to wear my glad rags, but on one or two wet days, when I had to sit on the fence of the stockyard to avoid the mud overfoot, they did not look so glad. When I purchased, I was given time to pay, and so I built up our herd to 68 good milking cows. Our stock also included four farm horses, calves, pigs, poultry, dogs of course, a horse-float, and a car for the milk-round."

#### Round with the Milk

The details of that milk-round would send chills down the spine of a city-bred person.

had breakfast, then the real work of the day began. I had to make the beds, do most of the washing and cooking, keep the weekly accounts, and do the ordering and shopping for the men on the farm. When the hands were busy, I used to wash my own cans—and round up the cows in the Puick, with the help of my dog. If the men were delayed, I often started in on the milking."

"But didn't you ever rest?"

"No," she said simply. "I never got a chance. I was always on the go—and I always seemed to be tired. You see, it was my show, and I had to make it go; sorting out differences, doctoring the



Waiting till the cows come home—hard-working girls on a New Zealand dairy-farm

"Our farm," Mabel explained, "was about a mile from where the first house started. Each morning I was up at 4 o'clock, made toast and tea for the men—then filled a thermos of tea for myself and the round boy who assisted me. The car was fitted up with a wooden platform at the back to hold a 20-gallon milk can, and as the ordinary serving cans were too heavy for me to handle, I bought a number of four-pint billies. The car usually got loaded by 5 a.m., and we set out on our fifteen-mile trip."

"How many calls would that include?"

"About a hundred—we delivered 30 to 40 gallons every morning for three long years. In good weather my young brother would come along to help, and we got it down to a fine art. When we reached a delivery 'spot' I would stand on the running board and measure the milk into the billies, the boys would scuttle off in one direction and I in another. We never wasted a second, and in the cold weather, with the milk frozen in our tins, activity was welcome. At 7 a.m. we stopped to drink our tea. We finished up about 8.30. I got home at nine o'clock,

men, and keeping a watchful eye on everything. It was all work and no play. Nobody visited us—and we visited no one. Very occasionally we went to the pictures on Saturday night, and rabbit drives were our only attempt at sport."

#### She's a Town Girl Now

"Did you like the farm life?" I asked.

"No," she said spiritedly. "I think a serving-can is the most revolting sight on earth—but I won out—and for that alone it was all worth while. I did what they all said I couldn't do—make a success of the farm, and when I sold it, the purchase price was £400 above its market value. I cleared the mortgage, paid Pa's bills, and damn near killed myself in doing it. But I did it—I'll always be glad of that."

She smiled suddenly.

"Now I'm a town girl. I'm in a cushy job, get up at 7 o'clock each morning, stay in bed on Sunday, wear a dress instead of strides, receive a cheque every fortnight—and can spend it all on clothes if I feel like it. And best of all—not a darned bill in sight!"