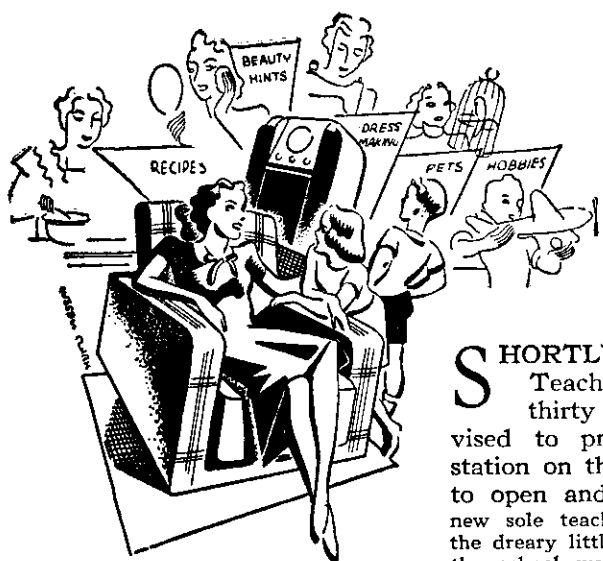


# Women and the Home

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

Stories From Life (1)

## TEACHER TELLS—by R.B.F.



### These Should Interest You:

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

"Washing and Putting Away Wool-lens." Monday, October 7, 1YA 3.30 p.m., 2YA 3 p.m., 3YA 2.30 p.m.

"Nature's Tonic: The Leafy Vegetable." Wednesday, October 9, 4YA 3.15 p.m.

"Home-made Cheese for Everyone." Thursday, October 10, 1YA 3.30 p.m., 3YA 2.30 p.m.; Friday, October 11, 2YA 3 p.m.

"Economy in Wartime: Facts that the Purchaser has to Face." Friday, October 11, 4YA 3.15 p.m.

Talk by a representative of the Red Cross Society. Tuesday, October 8, 2YA 11.30 a.m.

"Fashions": Ethel Early. Tuesday, October 8, 3YA 11.15 a.m.

"Cooking by Electricity": Miss D. McStay. Wednesday, October 9, 4YA 11 a.m.

"Just Welcomes": Major F. H. Lampen. Thursday, October 10, 2YA 10.45 a.m.

"Help for the Home Cook": Miss M. A. Blackmore. Friday, October 11, 3YA 11.15 a.m.

"Cooking by Gas": Miss J. Ainge. Friday, October 11, 4YA 11 a.m.

"Mary Makes a Career: The Last Year at School." Saturday, October 12, 3YA 11 a.m.

"Mary Makes a Career: The House is Started." Saturday, October 12, 4YA 10.50 a.m.

### Welcome Home!

The recent marriage of the Woolworth heiress to film star Cary Grant recalls this story of the new Mrs. Grant.

When she arrived in New York from London the boat was met by a crowd of workers from Woolworth's bearing placards on which was printed: "Babs, we live on 15 dollars, 60 cents a week. Could you?"

The comment of the then Countess Reventlow was short—and to the point: "Welcome home—I don't think!"

**S**HORTLY after I came out of Teachers' Training College thirty years ago I was advised to proceed to a railway station on the Otago Central line to open and take charge of the new sole teacher school. I arrived at the dreary little settlement to find that the school wasn't there. Orders had been given that a room of a too-large school in a neighbouring township should be removed to the railway settlement. The schoolroom had therefore been placed on a horse-drawn sledge, towed a little way, and then abandoned because of the depth of mud and slush on the road. The contractor had calmly unyoked his horses and gone off to his home miles away, presumably to wait till the road dried out. The school commissioner hired another and bigger team and the schoolroom at length arrived at the creek two miles from its destination. Actually it got halfway across the creek, then swollen to a small river. There it stuck for a further three days in full view of the country hotel where I had got board. Education Board carpenters and painters were also waiting the school's arrival. It was a relief when after five weeks of waiting I was able to organise the classes.

### "Roughest of the Rough"

By request of the parents I remained on at the school for two years, and in that time saw many strange things. The country hotel was the roughest of the rough. It had no water laid on—not in the kitchen which was minus the usual sink. There was no bathroom and no bath. An antiquated well just outside the kitchen door was supposed to be used for pumping water, but it was much easier to scoop buckets in the little stony-bedded creek that ran across the backyard from the swamp. The well was rat-infested, anyway. I have seen the hotel staff and others about gathered round the kitchen windows to watch a fight between a cat and a rat, the stage being the well-cover.

### Belle the Cook

Belle was the hotel cook. She was an enormously fat and greasy woman—very jolly when things suited her, but vitriolic when they didn't. When a visiting football team was entertained to dinner, Belle would get flustered over the dishing-up. To begin with, each separate basin of vegetables, and sweets, such as custards and stewed fruits had its own spoon. Soon Belle would have the spoons mixed up. In the end she would be ladling everything out with her hands. When remonstrated with she would declare "What the eye don't see the heart don't grieve."

### At the Dance

The first dance ever given in the new settlement was to be held in the new school. Belle looked forward to the

event. She decided to wear "me white," but it lacked a belt. A hawker happened to turn up in time and Belle tried on all his belts but none would meet anywhere. "You've got to find something," said Belle. "Me body and skirt don't meet." The hawker suggested a sash and Belle bought a pale blue silk suitable for a child. Stockings came next. Black openwork or black lace stockings were in the fashion but as Belle was XXXOS there was no hope there. The hawker obligingly found a stretchy white cotton pair that did nicely. Dancing slippers were easy because "the boss" bought a new pair of pumps, and Belle appropriated the old ones. The boss remarked waggishly, "Belle will be belle of the ball, you'll see, in my number nines."

### Belle's Successors

Belle was succeeded by Katie. The contrast was ludicrous. Katie was tall, lean, and melancholy. She had taken the place because her "boy" was on a carpentering job at the next siding. They made an odd pair. He was rosy-cheeked and cherubic and not quite up to Katie's shoulder. When he went on to another job Katie followed in his wake.

Then the agency sent a "lady cook," the well-educated and accomplished daughter of a supposedly wealthy city publican. When he died there was no money and his daughter turned to cooking. She was really very good and very clean and seemed quite happy at the hotel. She was a splendid horsewoman and rode at all the shows about on mounts provided by enthusiastic admirers. After I left she married a well-to-do farmer.

The hotel had only four bedrooms. Mine, the only single one, was unfortunately opposite the bar slide. In those days of 10 p.m. closing an all-night session was not uncommon. The door had a crack running from top to bottom. When the light was on anyone outside could get a good view. I used to undress in the dark till I had the gumption to put a strip of sticking-plaster over the crack.

### Hawkers

I found it a nuisance to have numerous hawkers pull up on the vacant ground outside my window, but they were a boon to the country people. They carried a great assortment of wares and were reasonable enough in price. The Scotsman, Andrew Soutar, was well-known as a wealthy man who made hawking a sort of hobby. Known all over Central Otago was Ahadbox Malloch, the Hindu. Farm lads and others used to tease him to see him gnash his teeth in rage. One night after I had gone to bed I heard a racket outside and guessed that it was "the gang" throwing stones on the closed van in which the Hindu slept among his wares. The goaded hawker opened a half-door and shot off his gun. It was loaded with powder only, but the boys got a fright. So did I who expected to hear of a gruesome murder in the morning.

Ben, the Syrian, was a gentle soul. He used to bring his shy 18-year-old son into the dining-room in the evenings and sit there in preference to joining the noisy element in bar and smoke-room. He would talk of his gentle wife, Mary, who had died in far-off Syria before he came to New Zealand. He had not been long in this country and said he could not get used to our food. He longed for tempting dishes of eggfruit stuffed with olives, tomatoes with rice, nut-filled pastry and bread flavoured with sesame seeds, instead of uninteresting "meat all the time."

## TELL US A STORY

To-day we print the first of our real life stories—some experiences by a school-teacher in Otago 30 years ago.

You will notice that it is not the story of a whole life, or of a long stretch of one life, but of one quite brief period.

Some of our readers have supposed that we are asking for autobiographies. This is a mistake. We are asking for experiences — one episode or a series of related episodes.

It may have lasted a day or several days. But it may just as easily have been packed into half-an-hour, or less.

Use a fictitious name if you don't wish to reveal yourself. Conceal the place, and be as discreet as you like about the circumstances.

But tell us the story and we shall pay you for it if we use it. Get it into a thousand words or less. Write or type on one side of the paper. Enclose a stamped and addressed envelope if you want us to return the MS.

But don't think that you are too ordinary to have a story, and too simple to tell it. The simple will collect most of our guineas.