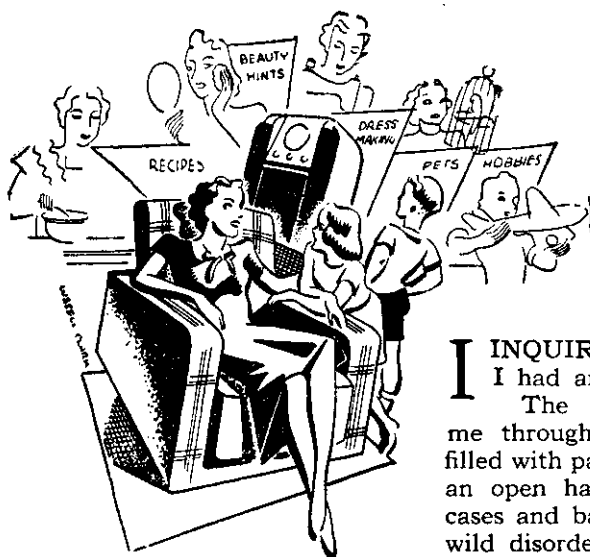


Women and the Home

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

LADY MISSIONARY

These Should Interest You:

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

"Economy in Wartime (2) How to Stretch the Pound." Tuesday, October 29, 1YA 3.30 p.m., 2YA 3 p.m., 3YA 2.30 p.m.

"Economy in Wartime: More Aspects of Buymanship." Friday, November 1, 4YA 3.15 p.m.

"Cost of Food Nutrition." Wednesday, October 30, 4YA 3.15 p.m.

From The ZB Stations

"Concert Hall of the Air": All ZB stations, 9.0 p.m., Monday, October 28.

"The Happiness Club" (Joan): 1ZB, Monday to Thursday, 1.30 p.m.

"Storytime with Bryan O'Brien": 2ZB, Sunday, October 27, 5.0 p.m.

"Tenors and Love Songs": 3ZB, Monday, October 28, 3.0 p.m.

"Oliver Twist": 4ZB, Tuesday, October 29, 5.15 p.m.

"Breakfast Session": 2ZA, 6.30 a.m. to 9.0 a.m., Mondays to Saturdays.

Talk by a representative of the Red Cross Society. Tuesday, October 29, 2YA 11.30 a.m.

"Speaking Personally (6) Beauty from the Sea": Phyllis Anchor. Thursday, October 31, 1YA 11 a.m.

"Home Making in New Zealand (5) The Interior Decoration": Vernon Brown. Thursday, October 31, 1YA 7.35 p.m.

"Just Snags": Major F. H. Lampen. Thursday, October 31, 2YA 10.45 a.m.

"News from the International Council of Women": Miss M. G. Havelaar. Thursday, October 31, 3YA 11.15 a.m.

"Pros and Cons in the Family: Do all Habits Last a Lifetime?" by Miss D. E. Dolton. Friday, November 1, 3YA 7.15 p.m.

"The Morning Spell (6) Changing One's Mind": Mrs. Mary Scott. Saturday, November 2, 1YA 11 a.m.

"Some Remarkable Women I have Met": Mrs. Vivienne Newson. Saturday, November 2, 2YA 10.45 a.m.

I INQUIRED for Miss Z. Sowry. I had an appointment.

The stenographer showed me through into a larger office filled with packing cases, hat boxes, an open haversack, parcels, suitcases and bags scattered about in wild disorder.

A figure came forward to meet me with rather a harassed and apologetic smile. It was Miss Sowry—the lady missionary.

Next time you read in some novel or other that women missionaries are thin, sharp, and forbidding, don't believe it. If Miss Sowry is a fair representative of women missionaries, then the fiction writers should go to school again.

To Be or Not to Be

Miss Sowry is a charming person, with a sense of humour that has possibly carried her over some very rough moments. At this moment she was trying to solve the problem of her departure for India. It was a case of to be or not to be? Her boat was due that day—she was to leave the next day. Whether it would come in and whether she would leave on it or not was problematical.

"It's this business of the Burma Road," she explained. "A Japanese boat was to have taken me on from Singapore to India—now, with things as they are, I don't know. . ."

She pointed to the array of luggage. "My china is in there, my medical supplies in that box—I've got things all over the place—and to-morrow we may leave."

Miss Sowry's destination is the district of Dornakal, 300 miles north of Madras, where, for the past twelve years, she has been engaged in missionary work among the natives.

A Lone Woman

"And this is the end of your leave?" I asked.

"Yes, my time is just up. We work in five-year periods with one year's leave in between."

"But don't you get any other holidays?"

"Yes—actually it is a case of necessity. The monsoon weather is dreadfully trying, and we go up to the hills for a few weeks each year to avoid the terrific heat of the plains."

"Are there many other women missionaries at Dornakal?"

"No," she said, "I work alone there."

"But how lonely for you?"

"Yes," she admitted, "it is lonely at times, but I have my gramophone to play at night, and if I am not too tired—I read."

She said it with a smile, as though these things were ordinary, everyday happenings.

I looked at her with respect. There are many other women like her; giving up their homes, their friends and their comfortable existence, to spend hard, lonely years working among natives in some remote corner of the earth.

"Really," she said with a smile, "we can't do much about it. The missionary life, like all vocations, is a definite call,



THE BISHOP OF DORNAKAL

and though you might want to ignore it—you can't. Then once you begin to work—you are lost forever. Even though I hate leaving home again, I'm excited at the thought of being on my way. . . I do hope we get off to-morrow," she added hopefully.

She told me something of her work out there—the Indian Bishop of the Dornakal Diocese, a very wonderful man. I was interested to hear he had visited New Zealand in 1923.

Among the Untouchables

The Missionaries began their work among the outcasts, or as they are better known, the untouchables; and that what diplomacy and politics have failed to do, I was assured, the word of the Missionary has, to some degree, accomplished. There are so many shining lights among the converted untouchables that the caste natives, impressed by their example, sought of their own accord the Missionary's help. Miss Sowry told me it is a common sight now to see the caste natives and the untouchables kneeling side by side in a place of worship.

"Sometimes," she added, "we have whole tribes coming along in a body

to be received into the fold. In each village we have established a Mothers' Union to instruct the native women how to become good wives and mothers. Then there are our girls' schools, where the younger ones are trained in a proper understanding of cleanliness and civilised ways of living. That is something we are fighting all the time; disease, malnutrition, and dirt. One common and most disfiguring disease is what they call 'sagi,' which has its origin in dirt and uncleanness. We have to deal with a fair crop of illnesses, mostly malaria, typhoid, and the common measles and chicken-pox. What makes it all so difficult is their religious beliefs, child marriage and such survivals. It ties them to their unhealthy mode of living."

From Village to Village

Miss Sowry's most arduous work, however, is village duty. She told me she travels from village to village, tending the sick and instructing others. She takes a gramophone with records of hymns in their own language along with her. The natives become so interested, they cluster round and demand an explanation. The magic lantern, with slides of sacred scenes, is always a great attraction, and draws the whole village to her side. She speaks their language herself quite fluently.

These village trips are genuinely hard work. As Miss Sowry has no car, she has to use her feet—sometimes on a ten-mile stretch between villages, with the temperature at 90 degrees. The only mode of locomotion round there is the bullock cart, and Miss Sowry sprained her back so badly while driving one of these unwieldy vehicles that she now prefers walking.

"How do you manage for food? Do you like the native dishes?"

Food is a Problem

She made a little grimace. "Curry and rice? No, I don't like it. Food is a bit of a problem out there. The only fresh meat available is goat's flesh—which also I don't like! Mostly I live on fruit and vegetables. Indian vegetables haven't much flavour, but the fruit is good; mangoes, paw-paws, bananas, oranges, limes and dried fruit from Madras. Oh, I forgot Dutch cheese—that compensates somewhat for the tinned butter."

"It's amazing you keep well on such a diet?" I said.

"My health did break down," she said, "but this year's holiday at home has set me up again. Now I'm ready for work. . . if only that boat goes to-morrow. . ."

I left her amidst her luggage, still anxious, but still with her sense of humour.