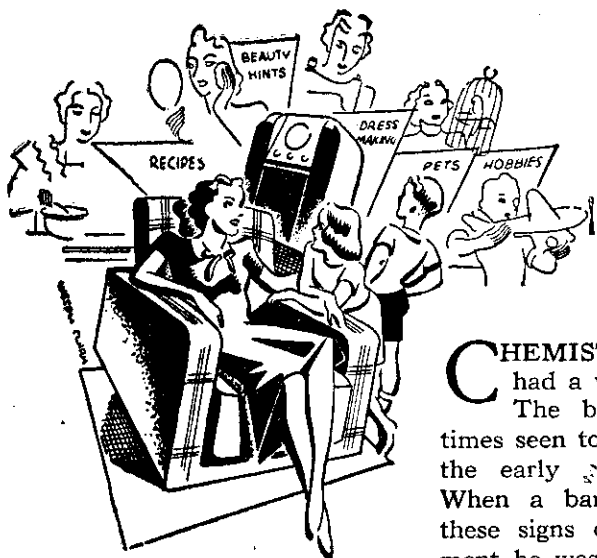


Women and the Home

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

WOMAN CHEMIST



These Should Interest You:

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

"Economy in Wartime (4) More Aspects of Buymanship." Monday, November 11, 1YA 3.30 p.m., 2YA 3 p.m., 3YA 2.30 p.m.

"How to Plan the Family's Diet." Thursday, November 14, 1YA 3.30 p.m., 3YA 2.30 p.m.; Friday, November 15, 2YA 3 p.m.

"When the Children Won't Eat." Wednesday, November 13, 4YA 3.15 p.m.

From The ZB Stations

12B: 12 noon, Sunday, November 10: "Picked-Blind Request Session."

22B: 10 p.m., Saturday, November 16: Craig Crawford's Dance Band from the Prince's Cabaret, Sydney.

32B: 3 p.m., Wednesday, November 13: "Organ Moods."

42B: 7.15 p.m., Sunday, November 10: "Radio Parade."

"Six Weeks Till Xmas." Friday, November 15, 4YA 3.15 p.m.

Talk by a representative of St. John Ambulance. Tuesday, November 12, 2YA 11.30 a.m.

"Cooking by Electricity": Miss D. McStay. Wednesday, November 13, 4YA 11 a.m.

"Across the World in a Thirty-five-footer" (2): Interview with Miss M. Graham. Wednesday, November 13, 4YA 7.19 p.m.

"Just Good-byes": Major F. H. Lampen. Thursday, November 14, 1YA 11 a.m.

"More Bits and Pieces" (1): Isobel. Thursday, November 14, 2YA 10.45 a.m.

"Pros and Cons in the Family: Punishment": Miss D. E. Dolton. Friday, November 15, 3YA 7.15 p.m.

"A Few Minutes with Women Novelists: Jane Austen": By Margaret Johnston. Saturday, November 16, 2YA 10.45 a.m.

CHEMISTRY, like medicine, had a very crude beginning. The barbers' poles, sometimes seen to-day, are survivals of the early practice of medicine. When a barber sported one of these signs outside his establishment he was telling the world in terms of red, white, and blue, that, in addition to wielding a trusty razor, he could blood-let and concoct pills with equal facility.

As for chemistry—or more particularly woman chemists—I'm afraid we will have to go back to the days of witchcraft for their beginning. Anything from a love philtre to a herb pack, guaranteed to ease the most diabolic of pains. Unfortunately, many of these poor harmless old "witches" were burned for their labours. In their own way, they were martyrs to science. Many of their simple herbal remedies still survive.

Barbers' poles and witches are however a long way removed from an up-to-date 1940 woman chemist. When I mentioned to this particular woman her pharmaceutical ancestry, she raised her eyebrows in amused surprise—

"Witches? Yes, I suppose you're right."

She was slim, of medium height, with brown eyes and a short, wavy mop of red hair. Her white uniform looked spotless against it.

What Smells Most — ?

We exchanged greetings across the counter, then she found an unoccupied corner in the dispensary where we could talk for a few minutes undisturbed. Further down a young man was doing things with scales and sundry bottles that emitted a powerful odour of drugs.

"Do you ever get used to that smell?" I asked.

"What smell?" she said.

I didn't press the point. She clearly was used to it. For thirteen years she has been practising as a chemist. She qualified in 1927, when men looked askance at a woman challenging their particular field. She admitted that it took some time and effort to overcome their prejudice. She had the advantage, however, of a practical training during the four years she spent at a Public Hospital.

"I think I always wanted to be a chemist," she said. "The study of it engrossed me. At the Hospital it meant hard work, but we had our amusing moments. It was not, however, till I became assistant at a chemist shop that I was allowed to use my own initiative. At the Hospital, everything was set out and prepared for us—it was just a matter then of knowing your work."

Care in Handling Drugs

In a chemist's shop, it appears, a great deal depends on one's initiative. Life and death are secreted in that gleaming array of glass bottles, and it is the chemist's skilful hands that control their destiny.

"You know," she said, "in pharmacy, you develop an instinct as to what is right or wrong. One glance at a prescription—and unconsciously your mind registers its accuracy or error. When we handle narcotics or other powerful drugs they are always checked and rechecked before dispensing."

At the mention of doctors' handwriting her smile was eloquent.

"Doctors are proverbially bad writers, and some of the scripts we handle might be penned in Greek, for all they con-

Cooking Under The Thames!

A little shopkeeper in London once wagered that he could cook a pudding ten feet below the surface of the Thames. The wager was laid for £100, and the shopkeeper got to work. In the presence of an interested crowd, he mixed his pudding, put it in a large tin vessel, enclosed it in a sackful of lime, then lowered it to the required depth in the river. ...Two and a-half hours later, report says—but you need not believe it—he hauled the sack to the surface—and there was the pudding, beautifully cooked—if anything, declared the judges, a trifle overdone!

vey. When there is any doubt, of course, the doctor who wrote the prescription is consulted before the medicine is made up."

Girls are Better than Boys

This chemist once ran her own shop, but she found the responsibility too heavy. Good assistants were not always easy to find, and more often than not, she would be doing their work in addition to her own. Nothing in pharmacy can be left to chance. Girl assistants, she thinks, are superior to boys. They are much more thorough and whole-hearted in their work. "Ask a girl to clean out a cupboard or a window," she said, "and she'll make a job of it. With a boy—well—if you're lucky..."

So she works all day and every day on her job. She juggles with mystic symbols—H₂O, plain water; HO, our familiar old friend Hydrogen Peroxide; H₂SO₄, Sulphuric Acid, and so on. She has them all at the tip of her fingers like the ABC.

"Some people imagine," she said, "that a chemist has an easy life. On the contrary, we are always on the go. Take our shop. I often have to dash from a prescription to answer a shop call, then dash back again—to find, perhaps, another urgent script waiting to be made up first. We have lots of amusing experiences, of course, and it all goes to make up a really interesting life."

The Glamorous Side

A chemist shop, however, is not without its artistic—even glamorous side. At the Christmas season, particularly, there are things to delight a very feminine chemist's heart.

"It's fun," she said, "opening up the cases of novelties and really lovely perfumes as they come in. Then there are our cosmetics: powders, rouge, creams and lipstick. It's extraordinary how popular lipstick has become. We have dozens and dozens of varieties, and they are all in demand."

"Do you think people shop intelligently?" I asked.

"In some ways, yes. There are many people, though, who are satisfied if their purchase merely answers to the name. Take olive oil or quinine. In olive oil, there are fourteen different grades—and in quinine as many as twenty-four. Some people are content to jot these products down on their weekly grocery list, without thinking of the quality they are getting. Actually they are cheating themselves."

Since the War, she told me, it has been increasingly difficult to procure certain drugs. Germany was the source of supply and now we have to fall back on substitutes.

In Her Spare Time

The clock chimed five-thirty, and the last customer drifted out. My woman chemist rose, pulled on a little green hat over her red hair, and slipped into a smart belted coat.

"What do you do in your spare time—if any?" I asked.

"Keen on golf," she said, "but not to the extent of walking around on a rainy day. Play bridge—mah jong—anything that goes, and reading—lots and lots of it!"

She ran for a tram, waving a backward hand. I decided that women chemists, particularly red-haired ones, were an acquisition to the pharmaceutical fraternity.

Her Musical Platform

GRANT EGE, a Kansas City music store manager, tells of an amusing incident that happened recently. One morning he received a letter and a money order from the wife of an Iowa farmer. It read:

"Please send me phonograph records of 'God Bless America' and 'Let the Rest of the World Go By.' That's how I feel about things."