



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

MRS. ENGLISH AT HOME

These Should Interest You:

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

"Facing Up to the Future," Thursday, February 13, 1YA 3.30 p.m., 3YA 2.30 p.m.; Friday, February 14, 2YA 3 p.m.

"Health Habits for the Children," Wednesday, February 12, 4YA 3.15 p.m.

"Care of Skin and Hair After the Hot Weather," Friday, February 14, 4YA 3.15 p.m.

"Our Natural Heritage and What We Are Doing With It," by "Belinda," Monday, February 10, 1YA 10.45 a.m., 2YA 11 a.m.

From The ZB Stations

"The Bachelor Girl" from all ZB stations at 9.0 a.m. Saturday, February 15.

"The Home Service Session," conducted by Gran, from 1ZB at 2.30 p.m., Monday and Friday.

"String Time," 2ZB Tuesday, February 11 at 3.15 p.m.

"Film Hits, Past and Present," 3ZB Wednesday, February 12 at 3.0 p.m.

"America Calling," 4ZB Monday, February 10 at 4.0 p.m.

"Doctor Mac," 2ZA Monday and Wednesday at 8.0 p.m.

Talk by a representative of Wellington Red Cross Society, Tuesday, February 11, 2YA, 11.30 a.m.

"On Tour in Southern Ireland," by Diana Craig, Wednesday, February 12, 1YA 10.45 a.m.

"A Woman's Letters from England," by "Monica," Wednesday, February 12, 2YA 11 a.m.

Talks by Major F. H. Lampen, on Thursday, February 13:

"Just Our Village Again," 1YA 10.45 a.m.

"Just Some More Travels," 2YA 11 a.m.

"Just Jumble Sales," 4YA 10.40 a.m.

"Help for the Home Cook," by Sara McKee, Friday, February 14, 3YA 11.15 a.m.

"A Few Minutes with Women Novelists," by Margaret Johnston, Saturday, February 15. Featuring "Harriet Beecher Stowe" 1YA 10.45 a.m., and "Edna Ferber and Fannie Hurst," 2YA 11 a.m.

WHEN I rang Mrs. Robert English, wife of the newly arrived American Consul, and requested an interview, quite unconsciously she was putting herself on test. She made the appointment for 9.30 the following morning, and how few women shine at that hour?

Quite fairly, and of unbiased mind, I can quote Mrs. English as the shining exception.

I found her in her suite at her Wellington hotel, busy straightening out a domestic upset. The children's nurse was in an adjoining room, down with a severe attack of influenza, and Joe, her baby son of three and a-half years, was also suffering from a chill. While Mrs. English was on the 'phone contacting a doctor, Anne, aged five, wandered round the room playing a little game of her own. The hotel room, even in this short time, had taken on the character of its occupants. It looked home-like, lived-in. A couple of fat, pink-cheeked dolls sat propped up against the bureau. Stray toys were cluttered about. It was a room where children could move freely and happily.

While her mother was speaking on the 'phone, Anne, her small brown face grave and engrossed, asked me to disentangle a toy 'plane from the overhead wireless cord. She directed my progress in her attractive little voice with its faint trace of American accent.

"A Real American"

Mrs. English, as she apologised for our interrupted talk and offered me cigarettes, had the same soft lilting accent; though, she remarked, considering she was a real American, she had spent a very small portion of her life there.

The life she described to me sounded like the answer to every woman's secret and cherished dream.

She was born in Europe. Her father is a member of the Consular Service, and she spent all her girlhood moving from one European capital to another. Her marriage prevented her joining her father in Japan, where he has been stationed for the past nine years.

It was while they were living in Turkey that she met her husband, who was also a member of the Service. Following her marriage, she moved on to Budapest, a city that she described as lovely beyond imagining. Their next post was in Paris, where her daughter

was born. From there they were transferred to Ottawa, where they were stationed till Mr. English's present appointment brought them to New Zealand.

"As you describe it, it sounds idyllic," I said. "Which of these countries did you like best?"

No Preferences

"It would be impossible for me to say," she said frankly. "I loved them, and was happy in them all. That rather restricts one's preference, doesn't it? In all of these places I had my home and



S. P. Andrew photograph
MRS. ROBERT ENGLISH
A study in organisation

my little circle of friends. Sometimes I found it hard to leave and move on to fresh fields. In Ottawa, I remember, I even begrudged spending holidays away."

"I suppose it wouldn't be fair to ask you yet what you think of New Zealand?"

She gave me her frank, disarming smile.

"But it would—and I can answer quite truthfully. I love it — everything we have seen so far — and the people we have met, they have all been charming. We were really thrilled at the prospect of coming to New Zealand, and now we are here — well, it is living up to expectations."

She spoke with enthusiasm of the home being prepared for them at Wadestown. Mrs. English is a home lover — and a home woman. She was looking forward to the experience of settling in.

She confessed to me that she had no special hobby or talent. She liked sport,

but in moderation. She did not paint, or write, or do any of the things that lots of women do.

"I'm afraid," she said, "I'm not a very interesting person. My hobbies are my children and my home — oh, and I should include the Service. That has always been of engrossing interest to me."

A New Hobby

I warned her she would, without doubt, find herself shortly with a brand new hobby on her hands.

Laughingly she inquired what?

"Flowers," I said. "New Zealand is a garden country, and a nation of flower-lovers. You won't be able to escape it. If you have a garden, you must become an enthusiast. It's one of those inevitable things."

She confessed herself quite willing to become a victim. She remarked especially on New Zealand hydrangeas and their amazing range in size and colour.

A little fair-haired boy wandered uncertainly into the room. This was Joe, and to all intents and purposes he did not approve of being kept in bed just for a bit of a cold. He gave me a friendly, confiding smile, as if asking my co-operation.

Mrs. English is tall beyond the average, with a slender, graceful figure; fair-haired, grey-eyed, and with the same clear, golden-tan skin as her two children. She has an individual charm, and a delightful repose. It was a study in organisation to see her dispose, with an economy of word and gesture, of her momentary domestic upset. You felt her entire life would be like that. No fuss, no outward signs of stress or strife.

Life will be as happy for her here as it has been in other countries.

BBC Girl Executive

FOR the first time in its history the BBC has promoted a girl secretary from the ranks to an important executive position. She is Ruth Bratt, 25, of Torquay, secretary to Felix Felton, West Regional programme director.

She is now junior assistant for programmes on the staff which went to establish the service of the Malayan Broadcasting Corporation in Singapore for the Colonial Office.

Miss Bratt, who had never previously been out of England, told the "Daily Mirror":

"It is a big plunge to take a job like this in a war, but I feel it will be really important war work. We shall broadcast in 12 different languages, and I am now busy learning Malayan. The BBC has never previously given a girl of my age an administrative appointment like this."