



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

FROCKS FOR SALE

These Should Interest You:

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

"Care of the Hair and Skin After the Hot Weather," Monday, February 24: 1YA, 3.30 p.m.; 2YA 3 p.m.; 3YA 2.30 p.m.

"How Some Country Women Cope With Harvesting," Thursday, February 27: 1YA 3.30 p.m.; 3YA 2.30 p.m.; Friday, February 28, 2YA 3 p.m.

"Hints on Autumn Food Preserving," Wednesday, February 26, 4YA 3.15 p.m.

"Let's Learn to Spin," Friday, February 28, 4YA 3.15 p.m.

From The ZB Stations

12B: February 26: 10.30 a.m., first episode of new serial, "The Silver King"

22B: February 25 and 27: "Song Hits of To-morrow" (Reg. Morgan). 3.30 p.m., Tuesday and Thursday

32B: February 24: "Cheer Up Tunes," 3 p.m. Monday

42B: February 27: "For Ladies Only," 4 p.m. Thursdays

"The Lost Empire," all ZB Stations, at 9 p.m. Sundays

THE other day I went into a frock shop to buy a frock and emerged a short time later with an interview instead. A satisfactory transaction.

I was examining a frock with a speculative eye, when a pleasant voice addressed me:

"It's nice just drifting round and looking at things, isn't it?"

I agreed with the speaker; a small, smartly dressed woman with humorous grey eyes and red hair neatly waved. The present-day manageress of a frock shop is no martinet. The girls like her, can joke with her, but she commands their respect.

"I really came in here with the intention of buying a frock," I said, "but you've given me another idea. Can you spare a few minutes to tell me something of your work?"

"An interview? Well, if you like, but let's call it a chat."

"This is your life, isn't it?" I said. "It fits you like your frock."

"Well, it's my job—and I'm happy in it. I suppose it's in my blood. My mother was a very well known dress designer. People used to come to her from all over the Dominion. In 30 years of work she never duplicated a dress design. She was an artist."

"And you?"

"The Business Man"

"Oh, I'm the business man of the family. Commerce and salesmanship always attracted me. The human side of this work appeals to me, too; meeting fresh people all the time, studying different types. It is fascinating."

Outside the little fitting room a woman's voice was lifted in a plaintive note—

"Thanks, I'll take a seat. I get that tired since I had my goitre operation."

The manageress's grey eyes twinkled.

"Operations?" she whispered, "hundreds of them. If it is not goitre—it's an appendix. They only need a word, a slight encouragement, and they are off."

"That must be trying at times?"

"Well—if you allow it to be. I usually suggest that if they throw away their medicine bottles and buy a couple of smart new frocks, they will have the best kind of tonic. That's not just sales talk, either. A new and attractive frock does things to a woman. Makes her surer of herself—gives her a new awareness of her charm. When women come in here and grumble, as they do, about

their indifferent husbands, I always advise them to buy a couple of expensive frocks—and to send in the bill. It is a sure way of waking up indifferent husbands. It makes them realise they really possess a wife—and that it is possible for her to look as charming—well, as that other woman."

"You wouldn't be Dorothy Dix in disguise?" I asked.

People's Troubles

"Well, I suppose we are all Dorothy Dixes in some way—trying to straighten out other people's troubles. The sorriest example is the woman who comes in here and asks to see a cheap little frock."

Not A Contest

Here is another story of the spirit of the British people. A Londoner was driving home in a cab one evening, when a bomb dropped about 75 yards back along the road. The passenger called to the driver: "If you want to get to an air-raid shelter, go ahead. I'll pay you off and try and find another cab." "Guv'nor," said the driver, pointing his finger in the direction of the 'planes, "e's up there doing 300 miles an hour I'm doing 20 down here. If he can hit me, he's entitled to it."

She can afford a much better one, but her early habits of economy and money-saving still cling. Her husband has gone on to success—is spending the money they both helped to build up—while she remains behind; drab, humble, and forgotten. I usually manage to send her away with the more expensive frock—and a little free advice thrown in. Some people just need that word to set them on their way."

"Do many men come into help choose their wives' frocks?"

"Quite a number—particularly country men. I had a very amusing experience like that the other day. He was a tall, lean old chap from the outback, who had come along to see that his wife was not taken in by the city slickers. He had no hesitation in telling me so, either."

"What nonsense!" I said. "We're here to give your wife value for what she buys. You're a country man, aren't you?" "Yes," he replied, wonderingly, "how did you know?" "Never mind," I said, eyeing his work-worn hands, "maybe it is because you are natural and human. But if I came along to you

and wanted to buy a cow, you wouldn't try to take me in, would you?" "Not on your life!" he said. "Well, that goes for your wife's frock, too," I said. "Come on now, let's have your opinion on this one." They left me like old friends."

"Do you think women are keen buyers?"

"All Kinds"

"Some of them," she said, "but we get all kinds. The most trying are those that just remain dumb. You have to be occult to know what they require. Others talk too much—and then you don't know what they want. The most satisfactory customer is the one who comes in and says, without fuss, what type of frock she wants—and what price she is prepared to pay."

"You must be an expert on figures—I don't mean the mathematical type?"

"Another case of contrasts," she said. "I had a poor little woman in here yesterday who weighed 5 stone. It was like fitting a sapling. Equally difficult, of course, is the very large type of woman, though the correct cut of a frock usually solves her problem. So many of them try to disguise their weight. An XOS will come in and swear she is only a WX. I bring out the XOS, snip off the size label, and she goes away with the frock fitting her perfectly—and patting herself on the back that she has actually fitted into a WX!"

"It must be hard to be nice to everyone, all the time. Doesn't your patience ever run out?"

Part of the Job

"Not really—that is part of the job. I do get exasperated however, when I meet with small jealousies and meannesses amongst women. For example, two or three women will come in together, and one of them, a little better equipped financially than the others, will decide to try on a frock. She may look delightful in it, but I have heard her friends turn round and deliberately try to put her off it." "My dear, it doesn't suit you in the least! Not your type of frock at all, my dear!"

"That gets my back up. I usually tell the woman to take a look in the glass herself and see how really attractive she looks in it. The poor thing never seems to suspect her friends of jealousy."

A tap on the door called the manageress away to an irate customer. She went with a gleam in her eyes, unconquerable, and prepared for any emergency.

Saleswomen are born—not made.