

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. BROWN FROM EGYPT

That Settled It

"My American accent? That's quite accountable," she explained. "You see, I was born and brought up in Philadelphia. My mother is an American, and my father is Scots—MacPhee. Somehow, I have always considered myself British. All through my girlhood I dreamed of one day visiting England. But it was not till I was 18 that I actually got there."

So Miss MacPhee-cum-Mrs. Brown settled down to English life, and settled matters finally by marrying an Englishman.

Flight-Lieutenant Brown was stationed in Egypt when the war broke out, and his young wife and daughter decided to go out and join him.

"Janet and I set out from England," she said, "in a small cargo boat carrying a limited number of passengers. I had with me all my linen and silver, and special treasures for setting up house out there. Then the disaster happened. Our boat caught fire. The blaze started in the engine room and spread rapidly. Fortunately everyone was saved, but Janet and I were left with just what we stood up in. My household treasures—my clothes—my jewellery—everything was lost. We were rescued by a coaling ship, and the kindness of the crew compensated for everything."

So Mrs. Brown returned to England from her unfortunate trip, and next time she set out she took no risks—she flew to Egypt.

Life in Cairo

Cairo she found a delightful city with a predominance of French influence.

Nearly all the shops are French, and the French residents outnumber the British by several thousands. There she lived for two full and happy years, joining in the pleasant (almost communal) European life of the city.

The native bazaars she found specially fascinating. To be appreciated, she thinks the Pyramids should be seen by moonlight. The daylight robs them of a lot of their glamour. While in Luxor, she visited Tutankhamen's Tomb, and she described to me the eerie sensation on entering these underground vaults, with their fabulous golden caskets and other mute reminders of a past age and culture. The Tomb of the Bulls she found more eerie still. Cut far down in the earth's rock, these massive tombs that house the remains of the ancient sacred bulls of Egypt are lit by torches set at intervals along the dim stone corridors. She confessed she was relieved to escape from this weird place.

En Route to New Zealand

When the British residents were being evacuated from Egypt—the majority to South Africa — Mrs. Brown decided to come to New Zealand instead.

"The evacuation orders concerned only the married people with families," she explained. "One of my closest friends in Cairo was a staff officer's wife, herself a New Zealander. When she decided to return to her people here I planned to accompany her."

From Cairo they travelled through Jerusalem, Haifa and Beirut to Damascus. She would have liked to linger in Damascus, which she found all that the poets sing of it, but the Nairn Transport was waiting to take them on to Bagdad. The Nairn brothers hail from Christchurch, and after the last war, they decided to stay on in the East and start an overland transport service. Mrs. Brown met the Nairn brothers, and while in Bagdad they showed her the sights: the mosques, that are unlike any others in the world; the famous Copper Bazaar; the Kurd porters — wiry little chaps whose backs are bent in permanent humps from carrying constant loads. Even though the temperature was 120 degrees in the shade during their stay there, Mrs. Brown enjoyed the experience.

At the Chinese Opera

From there they went by train to Basra, where the dates come from—and where they almost sizzled in the overpowering heat; thence by boat through the Persian Gulf, with its quaint little stopping places, to Bombay, where they stopped six weeks, taking advantage of the lovely swimming beaches within a few miles distance of the town; then on to Singapore.

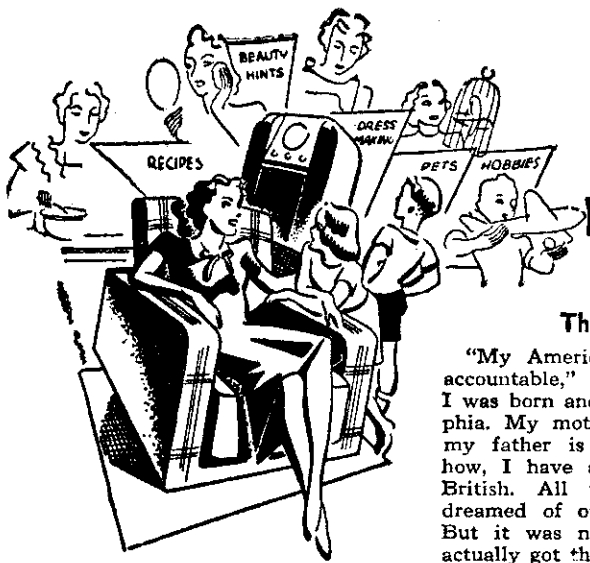
Journey's End

From Singapore they came down through the Strait of Sunda, passing by awesome jungles on their way through Java and Borneo, and thence on to Aus-

tralia and New Zealand—their journey's end.

Mrs. Brown's husband has taken part in the recent drive through Libya with the British and Empire forces. She read me part of a letter in which he described the lovely English-looking country round Derna. Apart from its native inhabitants, he wrote, one might imagine oneself in an English countryside. Each cluster of farms has its own colonisation scheme, and the people appear self-supporting and prosperous. He spoke of the luxury of dining in good hotels in the captured towns—of being waited on by smart Italian waiters and drinking sunny wines.

Mrs. Brown looked wistful as she folded the letter. The future? What did it hold for her? Only this certainty that some time this all must end. Her mind is already busy with the future, planning a life with her husband and small daughter.



MRS. BROWN from Egypt? What a fascinating association. One thinks immediately of white-walled native cities, of sand dunes and sphinxes, pyramids and desert skies.

I first heard the name mentioned at a women's reception. It intrigued me at once. The lady was present at the reception, but when I went to look for her, she had disappeared. I managed to pick up the trail, and a day or two later spoke to her on the 'phone. Her voice sounded fresh and young, and with the faintest trace of an American accent. We arranged a day to meet and talk.

Mrs. Brown's voice was not deceptive. Its owner was young and attractive. Besides having a nice voice and looking attractive, Mrs. Brown has a husband attached to the R.A.F. in Egypt, and a baby daughter, 3½ years old, with her in New Zealand, which, if you saw Mrs. Brown, you would consider quite unusual accomplishments in one who looked like a debutante newly emerged from high school.

Book Review

HEALTH OF CHILDREN

CHILD NUTRITION IN A RURAL COMMUNITY. By H. C. D. Somerset. New Zealand Council for Educational Research, 1941.

THIS book is the outcome of investigations carried out in a South Island district high school between February, 1934, and May, 1938.

The investigations began towards the end of the three years' depression. The regular medical examination of the pupils failed to disclose any trend towards malnutrition, obviously because subjective means were employed. An objective standard (the Toronto height-weight-age scale) was therefore set up and regular tests were carried out. These revealed 25 per cent. malnutrition.

That this was due not to the poverty of the parents, but to their ignorance of food requirements was shown by the fact that malnutrition was spread over all sections of the community.

An intensive campaign was therefore launched in school and among parents. A free milk scheme was introduced (be-

fore the Government scheme came into being) and school lunches were revolutionised. After a twelve months' campaign the trend towards good nutrition was well established, the malnutrition figure having dropped to 8 per cent. in May, 1938.

This book should be read by all citizens interested in the health of their own and other people's children. It is no merely technical publication but provides stimulating reading for the layman. It should certainly be read by all teachers. The method used by Mr. Somerset is clearly set out with a wealth of tables and diagrams and may well prove a model for the carrying out of similar investigations, e.g., testing the results of the "Apple a Day" scheme. The percentage of malnutrition and various deficiency diseases (e.g., dental decay) is still too high among our children. Only by the conscientious carrying out of investigations such as this can the position be made clear and the right steps taken to remedy it.



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