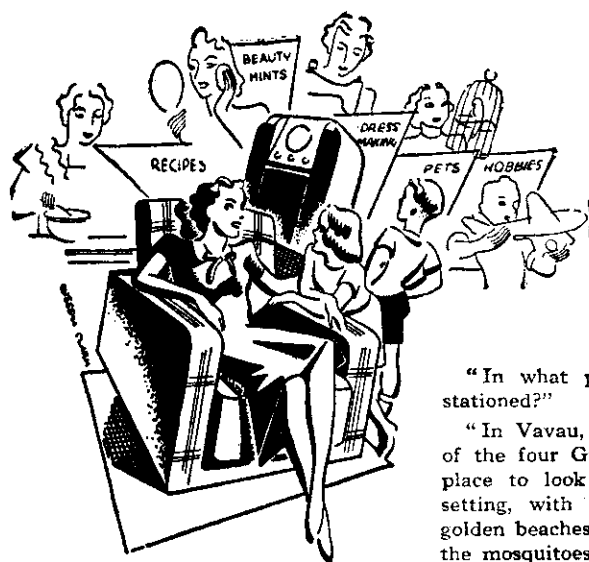


Women and the Home

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

DOCTOR'S WIFE

THEY form a little fraternity of their own throughout the world. Maybe the secret of success is that doctors' wives are born—not made. The calling requires special qualifications. Apart from being charming, successful hostesses, good wives, good mothers and housekeepers, there are other attributes that are called into service. They must possess a special store of understanding and patience. They must be prepared for sudden disorganisation in their households, and, through emergency night calls, to face nights of broken sleep.

They must see the profession as the doctor sees it—a selfless and continuous service dedicated to the healing of mankind. All this requires a special vision—and a special kind of understanding.

Three Years in Tonga

When I met Mrs. J. C. Lopdell, of Tonga, I seemed to see mirrored in her all these qualities of a successful medico's wife. A slight, gracious woman, with a quiet reserve of strength, and a natural charm of manner.

She had with her their small daughter Bruce—a tiny sturdy maiden of four years, who gravely insisted that she was "perfectly grown up."

We had tea together, and Bruce devoted herself to a plate of cakes, while her mother and I chatted. Both Mrs. Lopdell and her husband are New Zealanders, and have recently returned from a three years' stay in Tonga.

"That sounds rather a fascinating experience," I remarked.

"Well—on paper, yes, but not actually when you come to live it. I had the same idea before we set out for Tonga—romantic islands, waving palms, tropical flowers, and all the rest of it, but I am afraid I have very few illusions of that kind left. The beauty is there, of course, but it's all on the surface. It becomes a rather uncomfortable reality when you move in on such a setting and adopt it as a habitation."

"In what part of Tonga were you stationed?"

"In Vavau, the second largest island of the four Groups. It was a charming place to look at—the genuine island setting, with its dense tropical green, golden beaches, and vivid blue sea—but the mosquitoes rather spoiled the effect. We waged a constant war against them. They are not the malarial type of mosquito, but they are responsible for the spread of filaria, a half-sister to malaria—and nearly as bad."

The Local Rich Man

Mrs. Lopdell described her home to me in Vavau: a big, high-ceilinged dwelling, with old-fashioned furniture that never quite succeeded in looking home-like. A saving grace was her garden, which she cultivated diligently, but here again she was hampered by the fact that all the water had to be transported—and the soil always seemed thirsty. Her servants were native girls from the Mormon Mission who spoke quite creditable English.

"There are only six European families living in Vavau," said Mrs. Lopdell. "Three store-keepers, one Government official, the doctor—and the local Rich Man."

She laughed at my look of surprise.

"Everyone on the island knows him by that name. He is a very nice person, really, and extremely wealthy. We had to thank him for our Saturday night picture shows. He is very keen on motion pictures, and keeps a regular supply of films on hand. They are mostly old films, but very acceptable on an isolated island.

"One depends absolutely on oneself for amusement out there," she went on. "We all used to band together for picnics, walks, and tennis parties. Reading, of course, was our main recreation, though the lack of a library rather restricted one at times. The highlights were visits from pleasure yachts and trading schooners that used to call in at Vavau at regular intervals. This was always an excuse for a festive celebration—apart from the pleasure of seeing new faces."

"Did the climate agree with you?"

"Not really—I dislike the heat. But Bruce flourished on it. It seems to agree with children, as they can run round with very few clothes and are constantly in the open air."

She Liked the Natives

"Is there a hospital at Vavau?"
"A very crude idea of one," she said, "but it had to suffice. My husband tried to avoid operating whenever possible, as

there were very few proper facilities to hand. He had two trained native medical assistants, and boys to do the nursing and the rough work. Though, usually, when a patient arrived in the hospital his relatives practically moved in with him, helping to nurse him and providing all his meals. Like all natives, they have great faith in their own herbal remedies—some of them were quite effective, too."

"What was your impression of the Tongans?"

"I like them. They are a clean, happy, friendly, laughing people. But they are shrewd with it. Since they have learnt the ways of the white man, their wits appear to have sharpened considerably."

"Where does the Queen of Tonga reside?"

"Queen Salote? Well, her official residence, a big ornate Victorian-looking dwelling, is situated in Nukualofa. Then she has what one might describe as a country house in Tonga Tapu. The Queen, like all her family, is extremely tall, and is a finely built woman with a love of rich colours—particularly on ceremonial occasions. Ceremony plays a big part in all the royal activities, and the natives, who love pageantry and colour and symbolism, enthusiastically support it."

The Queen's Husband

Fugi, Queen Salote's husband, has a rather complicated and arduous office. He is not only Premier of Tonga, but Minister for Public Works, Health, Agriculture, and Education.

"Actually," said Mrs. Lopdell, "he is an extremely hard-working man. One of their sons is being educated at Oxford

at present, and the other is at school in Sydney. This young Prince is a very charming boy."

These three years spent in Tonga Mrs. Lopdell has found an interesting experience.

"You know, the first year I spent in Vavau, I loved everything. During the second year things began to grow slightly monotonous, and by the end of the third year I was just about ready to go home. I think it is the lack of comfort and service that one feels most in these isolated posts. No bitumen roads—no running water—none of the amenities which make for easier and more civilised living.

"It seems strange," she added, "after living for so long in the tropics, to be turning one's mind to the thought of woolies. My husband has just received a medical appointment in Dunedin, and we are moving south very soon."

A doctor's wife? Yes—and a successful one; sharing his job, always a good help-mate, ready by his side.

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