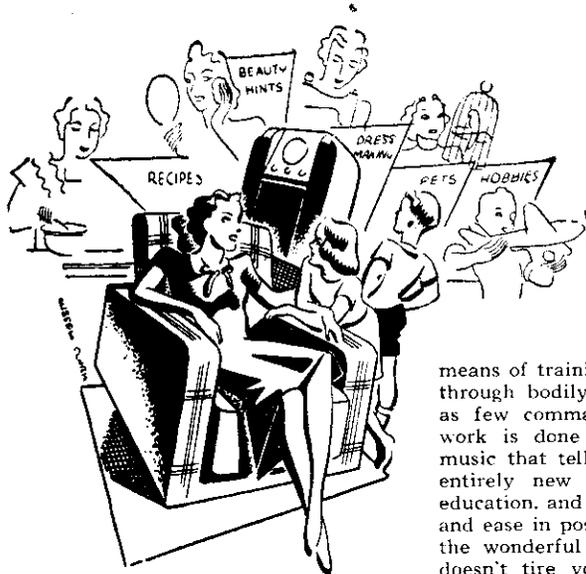


Women and the Home

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

WALK WITH CARE!

I COULDN'T take my eyes off the gloriously streamlined figure confronting me. And she stared back at me from her poster in the Y.W.C.A. vestibule, a poster which bore the following words:

1. A healthy body means a healthy mind.
2. Physical fitness creates joy, alive and conscious of itself.
3. Fitness is a duty to yourself and life.

See Miss Helen Macdonald to-day!

"Exactly what I'm here for," I told the poster girl, and proceeded upstairs.

Miss Macdonald's name is probably familiar to many listeners, because in her capacity as physical instructor at the Y.W.C.A. she helped to judge the recent Apple Bride Competition.

"Good morning," said a pleasant voice with an attractive American intonation. Miss Macdonald came towards me. Her walk is one of the loveliest things I've seen, and she overflows with what she would call "pep." She had just finished one of her classes and she was wearing a short white tunic with the MacGill crest.

"Yes," she said, "I took my diploma course in physical education at McGill University, Montreal, and then took a further course at Columbia, New York."

The Girls of McGill

"Do you agree with some comment in the papers recently that McGill girls are three times as attractive as New Zealand college girls?" I asked.

"I certainly agree that they carry themselves better," said Miss Macdonald. "Of course in Canada physical education is a compulsory part of the ordinary university course. And it includes special corrective treatment for students who show signs of flat feet or spinal curvature. And in Canada the ordinary girl leaving school takes it for granted that she will continue her physical training. Perhaps it is the fault of the old-fashioned drill they used to be given in primary schools. The girls disliked it so much that they never even considered continuing with it afterwards."

The Old and the New

"There is a world of difference between the new physical education and the old physical drill," Miss Macdonald went on. "Drill required nothing from the student but blind obedience. All the exercises (e.g., arms bending and stretching) were ends in themselves rather than

means of training us to express ourselves through bodily movement. I try to give as few commands as possible. All our work is done to music, and it is the music that tells you what to do. It's an entirely new development in physical education, and aims at developing beauty and ease in postures and movement. And the wonderful thing about it is that it doesn't tire you. Girls come in fagged out after work and leave feeling on top of the world. It gives you a wonderful feeling of exhilaration, and your joyousness is expressed in movement."

Exercising at Home

"I do think people are becoming more aware of the need for physical fitness," I said. "And I'm sure a lot of us exercise at home, even if it's only so that we can get into last year's frock."

"Yes," agreed Miss Macdonald, "but there are difficulties about exercising at home."

I concurred, remembering the time when the owner of the flat below had rung me up to complain of the effect of my boundings on his living-room ceiling.

"First there's the monotony of doing the same exercises at home. Then it's not always possible to get the right music. And the social aspect is so important," explained Miss Macdonald. "You put on a distinctive uniform and become part of a group. And there's the music to spur you on. It's difficult touching your toes, but when everyone else is trying you find it's easy."



Spencer Digby photograph

HELEN MACDONALD

"Posture reveals personality"

"I do think posture reveals personality," she went on. "For instance, one can be immediately repelled by a person with an aggressive head-thrust-forward walk, or by a person who bounces and has loose ends everywhere. A controlled body indicates a controlled mind. Unfortunately very few women walk correctly."

I Try it Out

I began to wonder just how I would have the courage to walk out of the room at the end of our conversation. Would it be possible to go on sitting

till Miss Macdonald was forced to take a class?

"You should walk like this: Head up, tummy in, knees close together and feet straight ahead." She demonstrated. It looked marvellous. "Now you try." I tried. "You want to get that feeling of uplift all through you."

The ice was now definitely broken. Soon we were both having a wonderful time doing arm-swings and flattening ourselves bit by bit against walls.

"You must come to my class to-night," said Miss Macdonald. "You can't get any idea at all from this."

"But I feel a different woman already," I said. "You were quite right about the exhilaration." I took my leave and floated out of the room and down the stairs. There's something in that uplift idea.



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