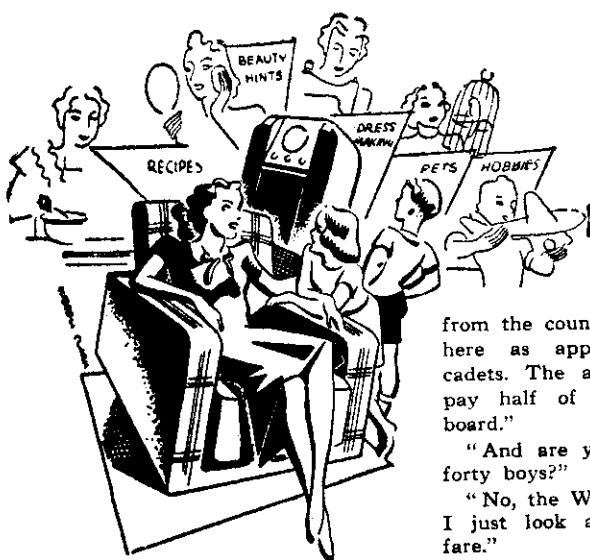


# Women and the Home

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



from the country and have come down here as apprentices or government cadets. The arrangement is that they pay half of whatever they earn as board."

"And are you in sole charge of all forty boys?"

"No, the Warden is really in charge. I just look after their physical welfare."

### Lazy Boys and Sick Ones

"And what does that involve?"

"Rather a lot. First, I have to supervise all the meals. I even cook them on the cook's day off. Then I have to bully them into keeping their rooms tidy and getting up in the mornings."

"I thought a bell rang and everybody leapt out of bed."

"No. As a matter of fact I go round and wake each one—if necessary drag him out of bed. You see we don't want this to be an institution—we want it to be like a home. But we do insist on punctuality in getting up and punctuality for meals."

"And if they are sick you look after them?"

"Yes. That is why a job like this requires someone with considerable nursing experience. At present I've only one boy home—with tonsillitis—I'm glad to say we haven't had any cases of measles or mumps here yet—but I get lots of little jobs of binding up cut fingers and treating boils and sore throats. On most nights of the week there's quite a little procession of boys requiring treatment. And now that so many have taken up boxing and wrestling I have to deal with an increasing number of bleeding noses and miscellaneous bruises. But often the actual treatment isn't so important as the opportunity it gives for a good chat."

"The boys aren't afraid of you, then?"

"No. Only the ones who won't get up the mornings or who won't come to meals punctually. I don't mind speaking my mind to them, even if I have to use terms I wouldn't use in a girls' school. But I think on the whole the boys are quite attached to me. Look at this," Miss Bonner held up a black swan with violets in it. "One of the lads brought me that—with the flowers in, too." She went round the room picking up an ashtray, a papier mache tray, a pin-holder. "They gave me these too. They make things like this at their hobby class, and they always bring me something. But I forgot that you hadn't seen over the building yet. Come along."

### "You Just Can't Have Nerves"

First the laundry. "We do all the washing here," said Miss Bonner. "None of it gets sent outside. That means we have to wash every day of the week." I gazed in awe at the lines of shirts and pyjamas. Then downstairs to the

## MATRON OF BOYS

gym, with its rolled mattresses, punch-balls, and festoons of skipping ropes. "They will come down and skip at six o'clock in the morning," said Miss Bonner resignedly. "But if you're the matron of a place like this you just can't have nerves, and in time you get used to anything. One of the boys has a Jew's Harp and one's learning the ukulele and another the saxophone. There are several gramophones and a radio and everyone plays everything at once. But now it scarcely worries me."

"And this is the shower room. Each boy has a hot or cold shower night and morning. The boys aren't allowed into the shower room till the dishes are washed so that we'll have at least enough hot water for that. From then till bed-time the place is thronged. The place is thick with steam, and the noise is terrific. Unfortunately I am not allowed in to drag them out. So they just play around there till the water runs cold."

### Jimmy "The Cherub"

"And here's the common room." It was a large pleasant room with easy chair, many windows, a piano and a radio. We paused in front of a group photo on the wall. It showed a group of typical boys, ranging from about fourteen to twenty or so. Several of the older ones were in uniform. "That was taken a year ago," said Miss Bonner, "when the home was first opened. Several have left now. That" (she pointed to a youngish boy with a round ingenuous face and curls) "is Jimmy. I used to call him Cherub because he looked so angelic. Then one day I found drops of blood in the corridor. 'That's your Cherub,' one of the boys told me. 'He's just cleaned up Frank.' They were only practising, of course, but after that we felt that 'Cherub' was rather an unsuitable name. And that's Henry. He was rather a strange boy. None of us could ever get near him, and he didn't seem to fit in here. But now that he's in camp he's the only one, surprisingly enough, who writes to me regularly."

### First Birthday Party

The dining room was gay with streamers. "Last Saturday we celebrated the first birthday of the home," explained Miss Bonner. "The streamers are still up from the party." Then through to the kitchen, where I inspected the evening's dinner and the pantry. "Inadequate pantry space," Miss Bonner commented. "I always say that a woman should have supervised the planning of the kitchen and laundry."

Then outside to the vegetable store-room. "Many of our vegetables are sent to us by the Women's War Service Auxiliary," Miss Bonner explained.

"The only snag is that quite often we don't know what they are. What would you say that was?" She held up a vegetable shaped like a spinach plant but of a cabbage-like texture and size, and another like a cabbage with traces of cauliflower at the end of long stems. "But the boys eat them all right, and they have probably the same amount of vitamin in them as those of normal shape. Which reminds me that as cook is away I had better start getting dinner." We turned back to the kitchen. "The old adage about the way to a man's heart applies to boys as well, you know."

"And what are your other secrets of success?"

"Of course, the great secret is staying young yourself, or at least remembering the way you felt when you were. If you've got that knack then you can take charge of four hundred boys instead of forty and never notice any difference, except that the more there are, the more interesting it becomes."

## In Dreams

I HAVE seen it all  
In dreams—  
Blue hills and little tawny streams

Gold poplars, and crimson barberry trees  
That run like tongues of fire in all  
The valleys—and I have heard the fall  
Of rain, dripping desolately  
From the gloomy pines.  
Like the after sorrow of a small child's crying.  
The sea sighs wearily.  
And drearily.  
The small winds fret the branches of the firs.

A rain-bird cries,  
A cricket stirs,  
And bull-frogs croak in chorus loud and high;  
And poignantly the thrushes call;  
I hear the wood-hens cry—

Crickets still are singing  
'Neath an apricot moon.  
Grey duck still go winging  
And still the pixies croon.  
Singing cheerily—  
Dancing eerily—  
'Neath a mellow moon.  
And I  
Have wakened laughing  
To a half-forgotten pain—  
Have wakened laughing:  
For in my dreams  
I see again  
Blue hills, and tawny streams.

—N. J. Monro