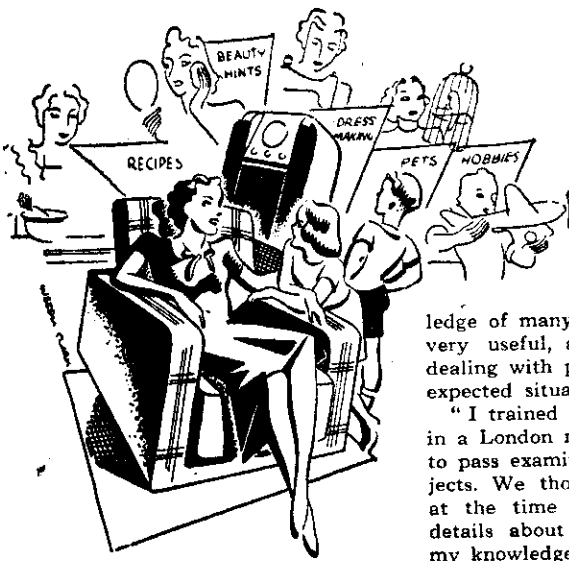


# Women and the Home

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

### SHE MARRIED A PARSON

THE desk in the study was an impressive piece of furniture. We sat on either side of it. There was silence for perhaps a minute. Perhaps it was a certain awe of the Church implanted in childhood and not yet completely eradicated which made me hesitate to break the silence, for normally I am seldom at a loss for a conversational opening.

"When you asked if you could come to see me you told me that all I had to do was to answer a few questions, and that you would do all the talking," said Mrs. Brown.

"But I'm sure you must be much better at talking than I am," I reminded her. "Think of all the bazaars you've had to open and all the Mothers' Meetings you've had to address."

"That's all the more reason why I should not be expected to do any more talking out of business hours."

"But can your life be divided into business and leisure hours? I suppose you seldom get even as much as an hour of uninterrupted time to yourself."

The 'phone rang, as if in ironic agreement. I was left alone for several minutes.

"Another person wanting my advice," said Mrs. Brown. "I once tried to make a list of the various questions people wanted to know the answers to, but I found I didn't have time to keep it up to date."

#### "People Expect So Much"

"What happens if you don't know the answers?"

"After twenty-odd years as a clergyman's wife you learn a great deal about the problems people have and the way to deal with them. I can't imagine how those people who are completely new to the job manage at all. People expect so much of you. Your husband, of course, has undergone a fairly comprehensive training before he begins his work, but you are expected without perhaps any of the necessary equipment, to undertake such jobs as producing plays for the church concert, captaining a troop of Girl Guides, or taking a Sunday School class. I was very fortunate, for I had been a teacher for some years before I was married, and this gave me a know-

ledge of many things that later I found very useful, as well as experience in dealing with people and in meeting unexpected situations.

"I trained as a teacher for two years in a London residential college. We had to pass examinations in twenty-five subjects. We thought it rather superfluous at the time to be expected to know details about drainage, but I've found my knowledge of housing and sanitation quite useful to me on the various welfare associations with which I'm connected. And then there was my actual teaching experience. During the last war there was naturally a shortage of teachers and I took various relieving positions in London. One month I would be teaching a class of secondary school girls, the next I would be doing kindergarten work with the under-fives, the next month I would find myself somewhere in the East End faced with a class of fifty boys whose natural rowdiness a procession of relieving teachers had done little to tone down. When you've had several years of that sort of thing you can quell with a glance the spoilt child at the Sunday School picnic."

#### No Longer "Unpaid Curates"

"Do you find that there's a danger of the clergyman's wife becoming so tied up with the Church that she has no time for other activities?"

"No. I don't think there's nearly so much danger of that nowadays. At one time she was regarded as a kind of unpaid curate, and her home and church work took up all her time. But now it is no longer taken for granted that she should teach in Sunday School and attend church three times on Sundays."

"I think it is very important that the clergyman's wife should not confine herself solely to those activities connected with the church. If she does that, her outlook tends to be narrowed. There are many social and political activities open to her, which give her the chance to come into contact with other trends of thought, and provide opportunities for helping in a practical way. The Church is, after all, not a separate entity but one aspect of the community life. The clergyman's wife should, as far as her leisure permits, take an active interest in those organisations which promote the good of the community, not only because such organisations are good in themselves, but also so that she can present the point of view of the Church on the various social problems dealt with."

#### So Much To Do . . .

"There are so many things one would like to do, and one has so little time for doing them. And I suppose I am luckier in this respect than most women, now that my family is grown up. But I think it's simply wonderful that wives with young families manage to take part in



"Think of all the Mothers' Meetings"

so many of the social activities of the Church. And the scarcity of domestic help makes it so much more difficult."

"Do you think there's any truth in the saying that clergymen's sons usually turn out badly?"

"Very little. A few years or so ago when the parson was a figure of great importance in the community his family was very much in the public eye and any deviation from ethical perfection on their part was commented on and noted for future reference. If the wife didn't attend the morning service, for instance, everyone wondered why. If the boys went fishing on Sunday afternoon, the parishioners wondered whether the vicar could be as sound as he appeared to be. All this was, of course, a great strain on

both children and parents, for the reputation of the parents depended upon the conduct of their children. Naturally, when the children were free from parental control, they tended to kick over the traces. But now that people are coming to realise that the parson is a human being like themselves they attach less significance to the details of his private life.

#### One Danger

"There is one danger that still exists, however, and that is that the children of the clergy are often forced into the outward profession of religion before they are spiritually ready for it. Religion is a thing that must come of its own accord—it cannot be forced from without."

"Are you looking forward to the day when you can retire and start living a life of your own, freed from the necessity of attending meetings you don't want to go to, always being nice to people you don't want to be nice to, and listening sympathetically to the problems of those who haven't nearly as many problems as you?"

"But I'm living a life of my own now. All these activities have come to be a part of me. I enjoy them. And I'm sure that after having had the fun of being a clergyman's wife I should hate to go back to the job of being a full-time housewife."

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