

Excellent Women (1952), by Barbara Pym

The Characters

Mildred Lathbury, our narrator and heroine
Dora and William Caldicote, Mildred's school friend and her brother
Julian and Winifred Malory, the priest of St. Mary's and his sister
Allegra Gray, Julian's fiancée
Rockingham and Helena Napier, Mildred's downstairs neighbors
Everard Bone, an anthropologist

Talk Points

An unmarried woman "must expect to find herself involved or interested in other people's business" 1

Jane Eyre 3

Excellent women

Social / work 29

Anthropology

The war

The observers of life 61

The ceremonial devouring of human flesh 82

A keen sense of the ridiculous 99

Marriage was really it 100

Hawaiian Fire 117

A large white rabbit 130

"Perhaps you meet a person and he quotes Matthew Arnold or some favorite poet to you in a churchyard" 203

The kind of question that starts a landslide in the mind 205

"Nothing can ever be really the same when time has passed" 211

There can be no greater sorrow than to remember happiness in a time of misery 214

The ending