

a day off. "But there's one thing we've forgotten; what are the girls going to think about all this?" I asked.

"Oh," said Mrs. A airily, "you've only got to point out to them that they will have the same benefits when they become mothers. It might even happen that, with reasonable hours and pay some girls might like to continue with this work rather than go into an office or shop or factory."

"Well, I'm sure I wouldn't have minded it," said Mrs. B. "I didn't know the first thing about housework when I married, so I had to learn the hard way. But I do think it would be a good idea if each mother could have the same girl as far as possible. It would be more a hindrance than a help if she had to show a new girl the ropes each time. And of course they would have had some training in housekeeping and child management, possibly at school, so they wouldn't be quite raw."

I suggested that the only disadvantage might be that the girls, having learnt what having a family entailed, might vow to steer clear themselves.

Mrs. B ignored me. "Just think of it," she said, "being able to have just one day to yourself. It's not that I mind



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housework. There is a certain satisfaction in a well-managed house, and in being your own boss, and there are plenty of less pleasant jobs than looking after children, especially your own, but it's just the endlessness of it. Can you imagine what it would be like to eat one meal in your own home that you hadn't planned, ordered, prepared, and washed up after, or just for once to have someone do the washing, hang it out, bring it in, sort it, fold it, iron it, air it, mend it, and leave you with a nice pile of clean clothes ready to go away?"

"I think," said Mrs. A, "that it would be wonderful being able to get out, just once in a while, without having to take the children, or without feeling under a debt to an obliging but obviously busy neighbour, or having to depend on the vagaries of visits from relatives. Think of being able to have an afternoon's shopping, without feeling that you had to rush home the minute you had bought the first thing remotely resembling what you set out to buy—after all, families have to be clothed as well as fed. I think it is the mothers who have most need of scarce things—like wool these days—but what chance do we have to get them?"

"Or to make a dentist's appointment, and know you will be able to keep it," I suggested.

AT the far end of the hall a mother was emerging from the nurse's room. My turn was next. I left the other two gazing into the future. In a minute or two they would be making plans for their day off.



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