

BETTY'S DIARY

SUNDAY:

Intended to go out for a day's drive, but Julia got temperamental at the last minute and refused to budge. Decided to spend the day in the garden instead.

My special dark velvety snapdragons still making the wall a splash of colour, and by the side of them the marigolds spendthrift with gold. . . Funny thing, nearly all our choice seedlings seem to fade out, while the cheaper variety thrive and flourish. The passion vine, heavy now with ripening fruit, cost us exactly one shilling, while our precious rhododendrons at 3/6d a time, and an aristocratic japonica, failed ignobly. But a garden is full of surprises—that is half its charm.

MONDAY:

Grace rang this morning and asked to come over and cook a cake in our electric oven. Her brother is in Egypt, and she is sending him a parcel—with his favourite rich fruit cake. She got in touch with a canister-making firm and secured a tin 6in. square and 3½in. high to bake the cake in; also a lid for soldering on for safe transport overseas. Grace says a 2lb. fruit cake is the standard weight for sending to the troops, and I am making a note of the recipe: Cream together 2oz. butter and 2oz. sugar. Add three small eggs alternately with the sifted dry ingredients, consisting of: 4oz. flour, ½ level teaspoonful soda, 1 level teaspoonful mixed spice, 1 teaspoon essence, 1 teaspoon

brandy. Finally add 12oz. raisins, 4oz. sultanas, and 5oz. of currants, dates and peel mixed. Bake for an hour and a quarter for about 320° for the first fifteen minutes, and 250° for the remaining hour. If baking in a gas or fuel oven, use moderate oven to begin with and slow for the last hour. Grace cooked hers with a meat tin full of boiling water in the bottom of the oven—an excellent tip when baking fruit cakes.

TUESDAY:

An amusing experience in the bus to-day when I took Bill-Jim into town. A Chinese woman next to me who saw that I paid half-fare for him explained that on Chinese railways children's fares are determined, not according to age, but to size. The guard carries a ruler which he runs over the small passengers. If a child is under 2ft. 6in., it travels free. If over 4ft. it must pay adult fares.

WEDNESDAY:

Had tea in town to-day with Mamie, Grace, and Jane Brown—all done out in our glamorous best. Mamie fascinated us with her overseas news. When in Hollywood, she met Steve Trilling, casting director and talent scout. He told Mamie that a perfect personality can never be found in one person, though it does exist in a composite of several picture stars. Personality, he said, is no mystery. A faulty one can be remedied as easily as an attack of measles. The perfect personality, he says, is a combination of poise, graciousness, taste in dress, sincerity, ability to converse, neatness, alertness, and a good voice. "Now girls," said Mamie, "let's go to it!"

THURSDAY:

Mother and the Browns came over for cards this evening. Had an annoying mishap while preparing dinner—which turned out to be helpful. Splashed some grease on my new silk stockings. Ellen flew for the eucalyptus bottle, and dabbed the marks with a piece of cotton wool soaked in the oil. It dried almost immediately—with no trace of a stain. Had a further call on the eucalyptus bottle that night. Bill-Jim came home with a croak, so I prepared a warm bath for him with a sprinkling of eucalyptus. Tucked him up warmly—he appears too lively to be sick. Nice evening. Won ninepence at bridge. Jim says I'll soon become a wage-earner.

FRIDAY:

Perfect day. Spent most of it in the garden, alternately working and taking peeks at my book—collection of short stories by America's Dorothy Parker called "Here Lies." How that girl can write. Her studies are all of American life, full of subtle humour and gentle ironies — of folks who go on bluffing themselves for years and imagining they bluff other people, too.

SATURDAY:

Raining to-day, so busied ourselves indoors—Jim reading, me sewing, and Bill-Jim dividing his attentions faithfully between us. To-night saw the much boosted picture "Mr. Smith Goes to Washington." It certainly justifies the eulogies. Wonderful study by James Stewart of a young boy scout leader, an inarticulate idealist, flung into the political turmoil of Washington by a bunch of racketeering Senators. A fine picture, sensitive, sympathetic, and delightfully acted by a perfect cast. One of those films that leave us in debt to Hollywood.

WHILE THE KETTLE BOILS

Dear Friends,

For the past week (at the time of writing), all New Zealand has been doing a shiver. Winter has been hiding behind a deceptive sun, and now suddenly has put his tongue out at us—and we all shudder away from his first chilly blast. Still, where would we poor mortals be if we didn't have something to talk and grumble about—be it only the weather.

With my toes half baked in the fire, I have been pouring over some interesting facts about cold. Not our mild N.Z. chill, but the real icy blast of the Arctic Circle.

Recently an American newspaper man in Finland got a message from his home office: "Send hundred words how newspaper men keep warm Arctic." His reply came back—"They don't."

Further on among my collection, I came across an interesting paragraph describing the actual clothes worn by members of a scientific expedition to the North Pole. And if that newspaper man had known the ropes, his reply telegram would not have savoured of such chill irony.

This is what the men of the expedition wore:

Silk underwear next to their skin covered by woollen underwear. Over this they wore sweaters of the finest merino wool, then leather trousers and leather shirts lined with flannel. Over these again were worn fur trousers and shirts made from skins of young reindeer. Topping these, came long lamb-skin coats lined with fox and great fur collars. Moleskin masks protected their faces against cold winds—with special goggles for snow glare.

On their feet they wore dog-skin stockings over woollen ones, and boots of reindeer skin. To make their nights comfortable, they had sleeping bags lined with sateen and a special fleecy inner lining. Their mattress under this was of pneumatic rubber.

These scientific men certainly knew how to look after themselves. Even if they did look like a wandering tribe of bears, at least they could snap their fingers at the Arctic freeze.

Once set on my "icy trackings," my curiosity led me on to another jotting—

this time not so reassuring. At least, it may serve as an extra tit-bit in your next discussion of the weather.

Experts report that the average temperature of the world is slowly rising. An American scientist works out that this rise (if it did materialise), would melt the two-mile deep ice-cap of the North and South Poles, whereupon the average depth of the ocean would be increased by 50 feet—with dire results. The eastern seaboard of America, including most of New York, would be flooded. So would Denmark, Holland, the Baltic States and East Poland. Finland would entirely disappear (one way of settling international disputes). But the story still goes on. Scandinavia would become an island, and England and Wales would be transformed into a group of islands. The learned professor, however, holds out a ray of hope. He does not expect the ice to melt for another 15,000 years. And that will be somebody else's business.

In the meantime, dear friends, I wish you a happy winter, a minimum of chilblains, and the needed courage to spring out of bed these early mornings and brave the frosty world!

Yours Cordially,

Synthia



Did you **MACLEAN** your teeth to-day?



Of course we did

Make Macleans a daily habit and keep your teeth dazzling white. Macleans quickly removes stains and keeps the gums strong and healthy.

