

While The Kettle Boils

Dear Friends,

The War is now a year old. We have come to look with stoicism on the newspaper headlines; we have accepted the burden of war, and everyone—in some way or other—is contributing towards winning it.

But when it is all over, what vital and fundamental changes will have been wrought in us?

Here are two that suggest themselves, though they concern more the people of Britain than ourselves, isolated as we are, from the theatre of war.

The first arises out of the evacuation of children from city areas in England. It is not the country going to the city—it is the city going to the country; and the answer to that will be found in the next generation; those men and women of the future.

A large number of these city-bred children are poor, and till now they have never glimpsed an English field. Their

world has been shut in by dingy tenements, traffic-crowded streets, and a fog-laden atmosphere.

For the first time they will see the open sky and the green countryside. Nature is the Great Teacher, and who can tell what new doors will open in these small children's souls. Youth is impressionable, and the stirring events of these stirring times cannot fail to leave their mark. Spiritually, these city-bred children are being given their chance, however deplorable may be the means of its happening. Physically, too, they are being built into stronger, healthier boys and girls. For the first time they are breathing really fresh air into their lungs; for the first time many of them are eating good, wholesome country food. It must reflect itself in their future years.

The next vital change is also in process. For a number of years past home life has been steadily on the wane. Picture shows, sport meetings, popular dances, and other sources of entertainment have drawn members from their family circle. The day when all the family congregated in the living room after dinner—amusing themselves with music, round games, cards or conversation, is as remote as the age of Victoria in which it flourished. Nowadays, Mum and Dad are left to keep the home fires burning, and even they sometimes fall down on the job.

In London, with the black-out regulations, home life is slipping back into its ancient fastness. There are the more hardy souls, of course, who brave the air raids at theatres, dances, and social gatherings, but for the main English families are keeping behind their home doors.

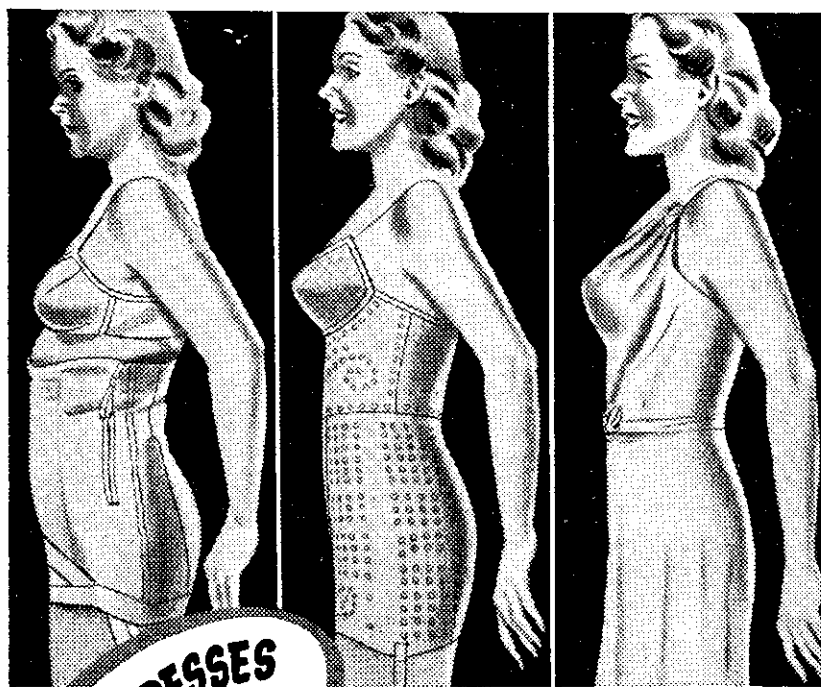
What is going on behind those doors? Home life is being successfully revived. Social arts are being re-cultivated. Hostesses who before shone only in their salons, are discovering that they possess kitchens in their establishments. Cooking and planning of meals have assumed a proper importance. Music, needlework, and other small arts are being cultivated as a means of dispensing with a long evening at home. Debutantes, whose lives before the War were one continuous social round, are now beginning to shine in their own homes. They are learning to be good housekeepers, and young men these days are given the opportunity of seeing their best girl in her own home setting.

King George and Queen Elizabeth are setting a royal example in this revival of the home circle. Since Court functions have been discontinued for the duration of the War, the King and Queen spend many quiet evenings together in their favourite gold and ivory drawing room. Their Majesties were among the first owners of large establishments to "pool" their home with relatives. In order to simplify the question of male servants who have been called up for service, both the Duchess of Gloucester and the Duchess of Kent have an open invitation to use the guest flats at the Palace when they come to stay in town.

So life goes on in spite of the War, and the British people are making the best of it in their own inimitable way.

Yours cordially,

Cynthia



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MUD AND BLOOD

(Written for "The Listener" by WANDA HALL)

IT was winter, and winter meant knitting socks and jerseys, washing socks and jerseys, sitting behind socks and jerseys while they steamed into the fire, and—mud. The mud was always there. It was hopeless to try to do anything about the verandahs, but indoors she must attempt to keep things clean, so she removed cat's footprints from window ledges, and impatient puppy paw-marks from the doors; then the children had to be dealt with.

"Darling, could you wipe your feet before you come in?"

"I did."

"Please, darling, could you remember to wipe some of the mud off your shoes before you come in?"

"Of course."

"Darling, could you use the other door? I don't seem to mind the mud so much in that part of the house."

"All right, mummy."

"Please use the other door."

"Use the other door."

"Go round to the other door at once."

"Couldn't I go in this way, just this once?"

"No."

"But it's so silly to go all the way round now I'm here," he argued, balancing on the verandah post. He brought his hands down, palms up, in an oratorical gesture, pleading with her to use mercy and common sense, and with the movement, fell flat on the concrete path below. She ran to pick him up, but before she could reach him, he turned to her a scraped and bleeding face, and then ran from her along the path. She caught him up in the bathroom, and as she patched up his wounds, she said, "Why did you run away?"

"Well, you said I was to use the other door, so of course I did!"