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FOR CONSTIPATION

## Short Story

Written for "The Listener" by E.P.

# AND "YAH" TO HIROHITO, TOO!

THE atmosphere of home rather than that of a hospital, which marks small town maternity homes, pervaded Nurse Davidson's establishment. The only patient in bed gave her baby its 6 p.m. drink; in the kitchen the maid rattled the tea dishes in the sink; in the little white labour room Nurse Davidson whistled cheerily as she prepared it to receive one of the waiting patients in the sitting room. Here the only departure from what appeared to be an ordinary fire-side chat was the turn round the room which one woman took at regular intervals. The intervals had become shorter in the last hour, and the woman paused in her walk each time and gripped the back of a low arm chair.

THAT chair was an old friend now to Dora Barry. For Terry, for Lois, for Janice, she had leaned upon it. Now she wanted solitude and the chair, and soon the little white room and Nurse's voice saying over the telephone "Come to Mrs. Barry now, doctor!"

But all the time she was aware of Elsie Langley watching her. When she went to the little white room, Elsie Langley would be listening. Elsie was waiting for her first labour, and in Elsie's eyes Dora saw all the doubts and fears that come clutching in unguarded moments at the minds of all young mothers-to-be. She knew that in some measure the courage which this other woman would carry with her into the little white room when her turn came depended on her own deportment now. So all that long afternoon Dora had chatted normally, reassuringly, and finally confidentially.

NO, it wasn't so bad as some people would have you believe. No, not just because you got a reward for suffering. Maybe it was because birth was a natural process and a natural courage came to your aid—a courage you didn't even know you possessed until you needed it. Perhaps it was there waiting for us at other times, too; but because we didn't know we didn't expect it and so we didn't receive it. The "horror" stories some women told of childbirth? Mostly exaggeration! After all, childbirth was the most dramatic experience in a woman's life. Some women just couldn't resist overplaying the role of heroine.

But it was more than the pain that Elsie feared; more even than the fear of being afraid when the ordeal was upon her. It was the future of her baby. She and Dick had wanted it so much, so that when he had to leave her she would still have that little share of him. Then the Japs had come into the war, and the baby was on its way. It was too late. She and Dick had been selfish.

Elsie was surprised at herself confiding thus to Mrs. Barry—homely,

THIS frank sketch has been sent to us by a reader in the backblocks, who felt that our recent article, "Having a Baby in War Time: A Fine Way of Saying 'Yah' to Hitler!" left a lot of doubts and fears unanswered. She wrote this sketch, she said, for the mothers who "ask questions in their hearts" that no one else hears



jolly Mrs. Barry, whose husband wouldn't be called in the ballot for a long time yet; Mrs. Barry, who was so domesticated that she hardly knew there was a war on! Or so Elsie thought.

BUT Elsie was even more surprised to find that Dora Barry really understood. Dora Barry *did* know there was a war on. She'd lost one brother in Greece and another in Libya, and at the very beginning of the war she had given away her baby clothes. Better to look after the poor little mites already in the world than to bring others into it, she had thought then. And then she had changed. She had two pre-war children, but Janice and this one were "war efforts, or peace efforts, which ever way you look at it," she said. Why?

"Well, partly because New Zealand is still a safer place to rear children in than most. And partly because it's no use men suffering and dying for privileges which the next generation cannot hold because its numbers are too few."

DORA'S lips trembled. Elsie remembered the brother in Greece and the brother in Libya. This wasn't jolly little Mrs. Barry now—the Mrs. Barry who chatted about the children's funny sayings and joked about her ungainly bulk in her dressing gown. This Mrs. Barry was serious, intense, but her face was alight with the glow of conviction. She took another turn round the room, gripped the chair, hard and long.

Then she said, "Your fears are the fears that clutch at all mothers' hearts, all mothers who think, all mothers who look into the future. They aren't yours alone. They were mine, too. Still are

sometimes. But in spite of them, we must go on having children. I don't want to sound pious, or preachy. Heaven knows I'm a very ordinary mortal and no saint, but this I believe with all my heart—God meant us

to have children. And He Meant us to trust Him to look after them. It isn't in our power to do it ourselves. We can't save them the hard knocks of life. He may not save them the hard knocks of life either. But He'll give them that courage to take them. If we have children because God wants us to have them they'll be in His Care. You may call this blind, unreasoning faith. Most people do. They think it's childish. It is! But there's something in the Bible about becoming as little children, and something, too, about the faith that moves mountains. If my children have that faith, they'll never, no matter what they have to face, regret that I bore them. It's the very reason for being. It's the most important thing in the world."

SHE turned to the chair again, gripped it longer, harder this time till perspiration oozed from every pore of her body. Then, as a cloud passes from the face of the sun, the pain passed away. She straightened. "I think I'll be going to Nurse now. I'm often quick at the finish."

Her step was buoyant in spite of her bulk, thought Elsie, who just then felt the first small whisper that her time, too, had come. She smiled, for suddenly she realised that her burden, too, had lightened, and that she was ready to say "Yah to the Emperor Hirohito!"

## Book Review

CANTEEN MANAGEMENT. Catherine MacGibbon, B.H.Sc., M.S. (Whitcombe and Tombs—2/-).

THE clear arrangement of material and the abundance of diagrams and illustrations make this book a particularly valuable one, not only for those who wish to train for canteen work, but also for those who wish to conduct such training. The book deals primarily with organisation and general management. There are chapters on Supervision and Management, Food Storage and Protection, the Iceless Icebox, the Fireless Cooker, and Equipment and its Arrangement. Cooking for Canteens will be dealt with in a companion booklet.

The problems which the emergency canteen may be called upon to face are dealt with fairly comprehensively. There are suggestions for dealing with every type of catering from emergency rations (tea and bread-and-butter), to a full three-course meal, as well as ideas for the use of petrol or camp cookers if gas or electricity is unobtainable.