

A TALE FOR THE TIMES

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then 'phoned the local dealer for three more cases of apples. It was five o'clock next morning before Deborah got to sleep, and the smell of fermenting apples still pervaded the flat.

It was surprising to Deborah that so many of her friends at work who had hitherto declined her invitations to come up for a quiet cup of tea now made a point of dropping in to see her on the flimsiest of pretexts. And it made no difference when she explained that she was afraid that unless they'd brought their own tea and sugar she wouldn't be able to give them a cup of anything. They merely replied, "Oh, don't bother making tea—a glass of anything will do," and Deborah would find herself pouring out a couple of tumblers of her home-brewed cider. And after that she found no difficulty in talking to her new friends as if she'd known them all her life, and they in their turn wondered why they had not cultivated her acquaintance from the first moment of meeting.

Now Deborah had little leisure to retire to bed early with a good book. Her life was a constant whirl of gaiety. Those who did not know the secret of Deborah's social success marvelled that one who had been always a wall-flower should now be the life of any party she attended. But in spite of all the inquiries of outsiders, Deborah's friends kept her secret, for they felt that the fewer people who formed the habit of dropping in on Deborah the better.

Deborah herself felt a new woman. Late nights and a restricted sugar ration had done their work, and gone were her former too voluptuous curves. And the sallowness of her complexion had lightened to a warm olive.

IN addition she had a new interest in life. She had happened to meet at a party a handsome young man rather like Don Ameche, and though she was too busy going to parties in aid of members of the forces to see much of him, she couldn't fail to be impressed by his obvious admiration. And by the time he proposed, she had got rather tired of entertaining soldiers and sailors and even of brewing home-made cider, so she decided to accept him.

It turned out afterwards that he was president of a smallish South American republic, but Deborah said she didn't really mind, though of course she was a democrat at heart, so they got married and caught the next boat to South America. And Deborah was a great success as First Lady because she did so much enjoy giving little dinner parties and being patroness of various societies, such as the one for the consolation of the wives of ex-presidents. And she enjoyed her new life so much that she found that her own natural sparkle and vivacity was sufficient, and anyway she was far too busy to carry on any home-brewing. But although she cancelled her order for three cases of apples a week from New Zealand she was far from being unmindful of her country's internal economy, and as there was still an apple surplus she insisted on importing three cases of unfermented apple juice instead.

Deborah had seven children, four boys and three girls. She brought them up according to the strict letter of the Plunket System, except that instead of giving them swede or orange or carrot or rose-hip juice, she gave them Unfermented Apple Juice, and such was the success of her system that new and revised editions of all baby care handbooks had to be brought out.

And although Deborah's husband was compelled to retire from the political arena quite soon after he had had a disagreement with his Minister for War, he and Deborah managed to live quite comfortably on the profits of the Apple Juice Bar they had opened in the capital's main street. And they both lived very happily to a ripe old age.

—M.B.

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