

Petticoat Diplomacy

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Apart from the fact that this command rendered the whole family hot with embarrassment and apprehension whenever they caught sight of Dixon or his boy, my mother's diplomacy seemed to be successful at first.

IT was not long, however, before trouble started. Dixon had the naive theory that "women fall easier if you grease the step," and to that end used to include enormous hunks of cats' meat with his sausages as unsolicited discount. One night May cooked the cats' portion in error, and we ate it with great enjoyment, under the impression that it was Pringle's rump steak. As the cat was sick that night after the rump, my mother began to wonder whether, after all, she was quite wise in leaving Dixon.

"But I can't give up Pringle so soon," she pointed out in one of her argumentative monologues on the subject, "because he is obliging, and I certainly like his fry. Maybe I should have given Jamieson a trial."

Sooner or later it was bound to end. And it did, one bright Friday morning. Dixon's boy arrived early with his sausages, and May, who was no diplomat, lost her head. She snatched at the sausages and tried to get rid of him before Pringle's roast came. Dixon's boy got suspicious and decided to hang on.

"Why aren't you buying ought but sausages from us?" he asked.

"Master's vegetarian," muttered May, squinting as she always did when embarrassed.

"You're not trying to chuck us, are

you?" he asked shrewdly, just as my mother came into the kitchen.

May glanced cross-eyed at mother, who did not recognise Dixon's boy and jumped to the conclusion from the angle of May's eyes that he was a "follower." These were expressly forbidden to call during the morning.

"Lunch will be at noon, May," said mother coldly, just to bring the girl to her senses.

"Yes'm," said May, glad to escape from Dixon's boy, who was still waiting. But before she could move, up came Pringle's boy, whistling and bouncing the roast.

"Butcher!" yelled Pringle's boy, and stopped dead at the sight of the other's white apron. There was a pause that lasted over endless seconds, while our three cats rubbed themselves familiarly against the butcher boys' trouser legs.

It was just at that moment that my brother Robin came in. "Hey, ma," he said, "Mr. Jamieson says what meat to-day?"

Dixon's boy and Pringle's boy turned their slow eyes on mother and no one spoke. Only father burst into the kitchen on the way to his surgery. "Good-bye, my dear," he shouted cheerily. "Here's your butcher off to work again."

May burst into hysterical giggling, and mother left the room abruptly to speak to Mr. Jamieson.

Next day Mr. Dixon fell ill of a gallstone and called my father in to operate. "Haven't you noticed how his meat has improved since we had that change to Pringle," said mother with deep satisfaction.

More About Swing

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suppressing to the limit any natural inclinations on the part of either the listener or the player to "let go." In the United States a large percentage of band leaders and top-class instrumentalists have been negroes. Their race has probably the highest in-born sense of rhythm of any in the world, so it was small wonder that to them the old interpretation of dance music was as soul-deadening as it was unnatural to their temperaments.

To relieve their pent-up emotions, the players began to "swing" it. First it was in their "off" time. They would go to their clubs in Harlem just to "blow off steam." They applied their own individual interpretation, dictated by the mood of the moment, reckless, happy, sad or otherwise, to anything and everything they played, but always, however far they might stray from the melody—they retained a perfect rhythm. Soon they began to make recordings of these exciting treats of emotional relief, not for any commercial gain and only for limited circulation.

From these beginnings it was not a big step to introduce swing in their public playing. The mood conveyed itself to the listeners, who found that they themselves were being "swung" and decided that it wasn't at all unpleasant to get a "lift." The wave surged rapidly across the vast continent. Swing became the rage.

WITH American influence strong in Paris, the new trend has swept across the Atlantic, but it missed England. It was not until "hot" clubs, as they were called, had been recognised for many months as the places of the moment in the eyes of the French dancing public that England formed her first rhythm clubs.

THREE weeks after my visit to the club the British Federation held its first public concert, with interpretations by members of leading London orchestras. The hall was packed to overflowing. Impressed by what I had seen of swing's immediate popularity, I tried to interest the daily newspapers.

"No," they answered, "The British public would not be interested in a crazy thing like that!"

But they reckoned without the pioneers of the new-found escape from hum-drum worries. Swing clubs spread their influence everywhere—and swing became News! It was then the newspapers devoted large sections of their entertainment pages to it, analysing it, explaining it and welcoming it. "Dance bands became 'swing' bands overnight. Scott-Wood and his Six Swingers at the BBC gained a world-wide reputation in almost as short a time.

Swing had come to Town!

But whether to stay or not is another thing. . .



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