T. Africa

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YOUR COLONIAL HOUSE

I WONDER what sort of house your first one will be, and whether I should devote a whole letter to telling you about the sixteen or so that we have had, warning you of the worst, which we dubbed The Biscuit Tin, or describing to you just how charming and spacious a house in the tropics can be with its long polished rooms, dark wood, bright flowers, deep verandas, and devoted slaves to come at your lightest whim. A house in the colonies may be anything that your wildest guess could picture. It may be stone, or brick or even hollow concrete blocks if it is new. On the other hand you may be living in a rented Victorian mansion, with fretwork frills, in a pretentious suburb in one of the older colonies. You may live in a tent for a time, which is better than a Biscuit Tin, or in a wooden bungalow on piles, or in a thatched mud roundavel, called 'wattle and daub' in East Africa, 'swish' on the West Coast. You are unlikely to have any choice in the matter. Planters and mining folk can make their own houses, but 'civil service personnel have quarters allocated to them', as the jargon has it, and that may mean anything, anywhere.

Some friends of mine in the Service did actually build their own home once. There were no married quarters at all, and they wanted to get married, and he was a policeman, and after a lot of humming and hawing, he was allowed a small sum, and his prison labour, and told to go ahead. With great wisdom, they found a village carpenter and told him to make

two great round native huts. One was the bedroom with a lean-to bathroom attached. The other was a living-dining-room with a big rough stone fireplace, which actually drew, and the fire crackled away most satisfactorily at the house-warming.

The two huts were connected by a long thatched veranda which was the sitting-room in all but the coldest and wettest weather. When the house was done, and the morning glory had begun to climb over the thatch, it looked like the second act of *Hansel and Gretel*, needing only a wicker bird-cage to complete the set. It was most attractive and very comfortable, and they were as happy as the end of a fairy story.

I remember that the bride's first task with scissors and pins was to devise a muslin ceiling to fit under the thatch. It was most necessary, to catch the borer dust, and lizards and bats. It also made a nest for the night-ape (lemur) which was one of their wedding presents. They called him Frederic (after Chopin who was also nocturnal) and he used to come down at dinner time and sip the sherry, and swizzle his ears at them, one at a time—which is most disconcerting—and fix them with his glowing red eyes and chatter *krr-krra-krra*. He would cling to all and sundry with his twenty cold little india-rubber fingers. Each has a proper finger-nail, except for the two claws on his hind feet which he uses for hanging upside down in trees. They are the most charming pets, and if you are ever offered one, do accept it. It is not, however, a good thing to ask for one, as eager hunters will go out and kill the mother in order to bring you the baby.

Kathleen's problem with the ceiling, into which Freddie crept by day, was how to make the muslin, which is narrow and comes by the yard, fit a round thatched roof that tapers up to a point. The ceiling had to be flat, partly for economy, and partly because gathers harbour dirt. To cut it in tapering sections like an umbrella meant wasting the adjacent triangles. We all gathered round to help, and finally the schoolmaster worked it out with dividers and an impressive

array of a^2 and b^2. Just before the scissors began their irrevocable snip, one of the women said, 'Yes, but what about the seams?' I always thought that rather typical—I am not just sure of what—the men with their theorems and dividers, and the women remembering the extra for seams.

I cannot hold out any hope that you will live in a house like the end of a fairy story. Indeed, you will probably live in some very odd and uncomfortable places for a few years. By and by, when you are old and fat and full of cares, you will probably have a grand house where fifty people can gather comfortably for cocktails—that is if anyone is ever comfortable at a cocktail party even when they have discovered a place to put the olive stones. The joke will then be that you are hardly ever in it because you are at home with the children. Your husband will be camped in one corner of it, tiptoeing across the echoing rooms to a solitary place at the end of a vast empty dining table, wishing you were there.

One of our nicest governors, a small bachelor man who lived alone in a palatial Government House, remarked gloomily to me once, 'I hardly ever have tea. I ring. Quarter of an hour later a boy appears. I say, "Tea". He goes away, presumably to boil a kettle. Half an hour later he reappears with the tea, by which time I have forgotten him, or got past wanting any, and have gone away.'

His problem, poor pet, was not insoluble. It was just symbolic of the penalties of grandeur, which will not trouble you for a long time yet. Your problem is much more likely to be how to live in a house that is so small and open and noisy that you cannot get away from the servants at all, and they appear to be doing the washing up and settling all the affairs of their dark universe just behind your chair.

My sister-in-law's first house in Hong Kong, when they were very junior indeed, was a flat in a tall dwelling that had been very badly converted. The lavatory, an earth closet, had been carved out of the living-cum-dining-room. You can imagine the embarrassment when people came to dinner, and

the unpleasantness when the coolies removed the night-soil down the front stairs. Protests to the authorities were unavailing as the houses were past repairing and were going to be torn down anyway. Meantime there was 'no alternative accommodation'. I wish I could tell you that those days have gone and that you will be properly housed, but yet another war has intervened. Anything can happen, and most of it has. Indeed, most of the Service in Hong Kong at present are living in hotels. There, before the war, they used to say that you had your house on the Hill, at a height 'proper to your husband's age and station'. Now that is a phrase that will creep into this epistle with some frequency, so you may as well get used to it. Perhaps only in Hong Kong is the general method of allocating houses as obvious as a chart with pins, where people at the top of the official tree live at the top of the Hill, and the juniors on a sliding scale to the area below the club, which is to say, below the salt.

Your husband's age and station will govern a good deal more than his salary and allowances, or even your place at table when you dine in state. Perhaps I should say his seniority in the Service, because such funny things have happened to 'age and station' since the war. The newest recruit may be an elderly retired Lieutenant-Colonel of some twenty-six summers or a dashing Wing-Commander of twenty-nine. He may be 'junior' to an old-fashioned cadet straight from the university with the ink of his schools examinations hardly dry on the paper. Seniority in the Service goes by time within grades. The grades have been created according to the jobs people do. In big stations the houses are often grouped according to departments: Medical, Legal, Surveys, Agriculture, and so on. Perhaps you remember in Deneys Reitz's book *Commando* that he, with his African background, described the cathedral close at Salisbury as 'a kind of *compound* for the clergy'.

Within the compound, or what another Governor of ours called a Zoo of Civil Servants, houses are allocated according

to seniority. A junior officer, with a large family, may be living in the smallest house, and the head of his department in the biggest one even though he has no family at all. This will seem odd to you, and even unfair at first, until it is your turn to reap the reward of long years of hard work and to rejoice in a little well-earned spaciousness, not to say grandeur. The added responsibility of spare rooms always full of visitors, or a guest house for juniors on transfer, or people assembled for a conference, is part of the price paid for 'enhanced status'.

In Africa in my day the normal junior house was three rooms in a row with a veranda all round. Three double doors opened on to the front veranda, one end of which was screened or curtained off as a sleeping cage, and the other end more or less adapted as a place for tables and deck chairs where one had tea, and drinks in the cool of the evening, and possibly dinner as well if the lighting was adequate and windproof, and if it was screened with gauze to keep flying ants and the larger and pursier creepies out of the soup. When a guest came his camp-bed was erected round that corner, and if it rained in the night he shouted for a boy and moved inside. The back veranda was bricked up at the bedroom end to make a bathroom, and at the dining-room end to make a pantry and store, which locked.

Down the steps of the back veranda and along a few yards of brick path, you would come to the kitchen and ironing-room. These are usually built together but separated from the house to keep the noise of chattering servants and rattling saucepans, the smell of cooking and the heat of the fire at a distance.

The ironing-room is next door and contains another big table. If it is not screened, you must allow the boys to iron on the back veranda during the early rains. There is a particularly loathsome fly which lays its eggs on warm laundry. The maggot is waiting to get under your skin where it will develop into a fat white worm as big as your little finger-nail. Only a

hot iron will kill him on the clothes, so if they have been airing in the sun the tops must be ironed again.

Some few yards farther on from the kitchen block, perhaps at the side of the house, perhaps at the bottom of the garden, perhaps backing on to a sanitary lane in a town, perhaps decently shrouded with shrubbery and perhaps not, is the earth closet. Of these relics of the Middle Ages I will say nothing except that they are to be done away with as soon as possible, either by having one built on to the house with a well-ventilated passage and double doors, or by purchasing one of the patent affairs that can be kept in the bathroom. The ordinary old-fashioned detached variety are quite unsuitable for women and children. They have contributed to a great deal of avoidable illness, and made unavoidable illnesses, like dysentery, into hells of unnecessary suffering and embarrassment. Away with them! We endured them for twelve years, but then in my day rising to the glories of water-borne sanitation put one practically in the gubernatorial class. Wherever you are, do insist that you should be able to retire in decent privacy.

Another thing you can insist on is having running water, both hot and cold, in the bathroom. The bath itself may be a fixed galvanized iron coffin, or a porcelain sarcophagus, but with a good deal of insistence and very little trouble and expense you can have two tanks on brick structures fixed to the outside of the bathroom, one with a fireplace under it. Husbands do not mind the boy staggering in with cans of water, testing it with their hands, and running in and out with more hot or more cold, but you will. On the West Coast we were amused to discover that our bungalow had a thermostatically-controlled hot tank at our end of the house, as well as a push-and-pull. At the guest-room end there was only an earth closet off the veranda, and only a cold tap in the bath. We thought it very pessimistic, like the man who carries matches as well as his lighter, but after the first of the water shortages we saw the point.

Many houses in West Africa have wide verandas partially glazed, partially shuttered against the glare and the driving storms, on to which the rooms open, either with double doors, or preferably with arches. This necessitates big box mosquito nets over the beds, as large as a small room, reaching from the picture rail to the floor, where they are weighted with sand-filled hems. The nets are pulled back by means of rings sliding on taut wires during the day. When the beds are turned down for the night, and your pyjamas laid out and a thermos of iced water and a glass put ready, the net is lowered and sprayed thoroughly all over inside, particularly under the beds. It isn't the flock of mosquitoes one minds so much. It is that lone wolf howling!

Wire mosquito gauze right round the house is not popular in West Africa. The perpetual damp destroys it very quickly, and it does make the house even more airless and humid. East Africa, being on the whole higher and drier and cooler, takes more kindly to mosquito wire.

Not that our first house had any. We slept inside under a big square mosquito net. The cat loved to climb on to it in the night, and we woke to find pussy only a few inches from our noses. Fortunately, when she had kittens, she took to a basket. Our predecessor had a fine bull-terrier that slept under the window in that room. A lion hopped in one night and carried him off before his master could get out from under the net, grab his gun and save the dog. I never liked putting the baby's bed, which was a light tobacco basket, in that spot, although it was the coolest. On our next leave we were staying with friends in Sussex Place, Regent's Park. In the night my husband half woke, grabbed for his gun, knocked the telephone off the bedside table, and broke the lamp. The lions in the Zoo were roaring and, like them, he was remembering Africa.

I wish, too, that I could assure you that you at least will no longer have to keep your linen in a tin trunk raised on bricks, and your clothes on a rod sufficiently far from the

wall so that the white ants will not build their castles through the nearest garments. The battle against devouring creepies, ants and fish moth, cockroaches and damp, is never-ending in the tropics, even in proper houses, should you be lucky enough to have one. On the West Coast of Africa, and in parts of the Far East, an electric lamp burns day and night on the floor of the wardrobe, to keep mildew from forming.

Do what you will, cockroaches will get into the drawers. You will be glad to learn that they do not eat nylons. Perhaps they dislike the taste, or find them indigestible, but they walk over them to get at the tastier 'real' fabrics and pull the threads with their prickly feet. So you keep your stockings screwed up in a glass jar, and hardly ever wear them anyway. Your clothes and your husband's will be hung in the sun almost every day, you will sprinkle D.D.T. and camphor hopefully, and learn to turn over everything in the drawers at least once a week in case the creepies are an unconscionable time a-dying.

Housing varies enormously from colony to colony. In the West Indies, I understand, you will find your own accommodation according to your means and your government allowances, and they are never adequate. In Africa, housing varies from East to West, and from colony to colony. Rich colonies have built more and better houses than poor ones. Yet again, what with shortages of things like hinges and doorknobs and electric fittings, to say nothing of baths and stoves and three-inch pipe, and of skilled labour, both black and white, you are quite likely to be told that you would have had a better house if—*if*—. The same applies to repairs to existing houses, neglected for the duration.

Again, in some colonies, out-stations with nice big comfortable old-fashioned bungalows have been closed for lack of staff, and you may find yourself living in an overcrowded post-war boom town, where your husband is badly needed and overworked, and will come home to a semi-detached villa in a parched suburban street that you will be making

the best of, too. What you may also find hard to take is being asked to live in one of the worst ones because there aren't enough to go round. It would be mean to ask Mrs. A. with all her children to move again, and will you please set the community a shining example of the pioneer spirit, and like it, and forget that Mrs. B. and Mrs. C. are better housed than you for no reason that you can see.

Staff housing is such a headache to everyone—and women will fuss and bully their husbands into protests and rows—that in most colonies the Public Works Department has handed the allocation of quarters over to a committee of the Secretariat which is supposed to be allergic to opprobrium.

The allocation of furniture comes under this heading too. According to General Orders, civil servants are presumed to require a sofa and four club chairs, which you yourselves will fit with cushions. There will be an occasional table, called that, so I am told, because they are only occasionally where you want them. There should be a bookcase and a writing-table with its chair. Dining-tables are designed to seat six, and there is likely to be a sideboard and a serving-table, possibly with a lock-up cupboard for drinks. There should be a couple of beds with or without mosquito nets, a dressing-table for you and a chest of drawers with a mirror for your husband, and a wardrobe, built in or not. I hope, without much conviction, that it is wide enough to take coat-hangers endways on. You might think that was elementary? Not a bit of it, even in England!

In the kitchen there should be a kitchen table and an ironing-table and a wire meat-safe. On this you will hang wet towelling with its ends in narrow water-filled troughs. Water evaporates at a temperature lower than the air. Therefore the damp towelling cools the interior of the safe. It also keeps the dust out. You will always find it difficult to explain this principle of evaporation to Cook—for instance, that butter keeps cooler or jellies set quicker in shallow water under a cloth with the ends immersed than in deep water. It is not

at all obvious and there is unlikely to be a word in the vernacular for 'evaporation'. 'Small water plenty cold, plenty water not so cold' you say. He will stare blankly at you and do as he pleases for a long time, but keep on trying.

Some people like meat-safes cased in double chicken-wire in which charcoal is loosely packed and wetted daily, and where mosquitoes must not be allowed to breed. The legs of any safe stand in water-filled tins on which you pour oil or liquid D.D.T. so that mosquitoes cannot breed therein or ants crawl up to the food. Refrigerators are supplied in many colonies under varying schemes of hire, or hire-purchase. I can hardly remember how we existed without one for fifteen years—but we did.

In due course you and your husband will acquire various domestic treasures of your own—some little occasional tables and some big ones for your sewing-machine and his type-writer. You will probably have to buy a laundry basket, waste-paper baskets, an ironing board for your frocks, and possibly lamp-stands or standard lamps. Here again these things vary according to where you are, and what stage native arts and crafts, or in official language 'local industrial development', has reached.

I hope your husband has been able to find out whether or not it is advisable for you to take your curtain material out with you, or whether you will be able to buy it locally. What with the export drive, and the English purchase tax, I should imagine that you will take the chance of being able to buy what you want at the local shop abroad. The trying part about that is that you will see 'your' curtains in all your friends' houses, and other people's arrangements always seem to be a kind of caricature of one's own. If you see some lovely curtain material in a London shop, and feel that you must have it in your first house, the shop may be able to export it for you free of purchase tax, and it will have the virtue of being yours, and different from your neighbours'. No dockets are required now and it will be waiting for you at the other

end. For an unspecified number of windows, doors and cushions, believe it or not, thirty to forty yards are not too many.

If you do take the chance of buying material in your colony, and your husband is going to meet you at the port, where you will be trotting off together to choose materials and other comforts of home which he has been wanting, ask the dear boy to measure the windows, and glass doors if any, before he comes to meet you, and to greet you with a list of measurements. Width matters little, but it is safe to allow a third more than the width of the window or door, so that the curtains hang in adequate folds when they are drawn. All tropical curtain-rods should extend at least a foot on either side of the window or door, so that when the curtains are open, they push right back and the casements or doors can be flung wide. They hardly ever do. Many a battle and oft have I had with the local Inspector of Works explaining that I do *not* want tasty drapes tacked over the glass, and that I wanted the windows or doors to open to let in air, with the curtains drawn against the glare.

When your husband arrives with his list, you can assume that, man-like, he did not allow for those seams we were talking about, which in this case means hems or ruffles or pelmets, so you can pencil in an extra foot to each curtain without a qualm, and without hurting his feelings. A normal double door takes two and a half yards for each curtain, and you will be well advised to allow as much for the windows, so that the curtains will hang to the floor. I know this sounds extravagant for a bungalow, but if your curtains are cut short, sooner or later you will be transferred to a house with longer windows, and false hems will come into the picture. A recollection of London skirt-hems when the New Look came in will have convinced you that this particular dreary economy is really false in the long run. Any curtain material should of course be fadeless, and not too dark in colour, as tropical houses usually have deep verandas. The curtains

will not be lined, and must as I have said be heavy enough to hang well, thin to let in air and thick enough for privacy.

If your sitting-room has the statutory door and two windows, and a settee with six cushions, and four chairs with two cushions each, you can see that thirty yards will just do it, without 'occasional' cushions. If there is a piece left over, it will cover a cushion on a box to make a fire or sofa stool, or even a humpty-dump made out of straw-stuffed sacking.

The same quantity, alas, applies to the bedroom. Seven yards each for the bedspreads, five each for the windows and door and you are sure to want the extra for an odd corner curtain, or a stool for your dressing-table, or a cover for an ottoman made of your trunks and packing-cases, and a dressing-room or bathroom curtain as well.

This is for a house as Government wishes you to have it. I must add that our first house had two rooms. The living-room contained a dining-table, six straight chairs, and a long set of office shelves, and that was all. There was a double bed in the bedroom, 'stuffed with dead hens', and another set of office shelves on which my husband had been laying his shirts. Nothing more. We were able, however, to buy pretty native mats and wicker chairs for the sitting-room end of the living-room. I had a wardrobe trunk with drawers, and on it I propped a looking-glass, and that was my dressing-table. I told you about baby's basket on a box.

I should like to be able to tell you that those days are no more, but only last week a friend of ours who had recently been transferred to Borneo remarked that she was glad she had a wardrobe trunk, as it provided the only drawers in their house, which had been only too recently 'occupied'. Even if you live in a properly furnished house, a wardrobe trunk provides the extra drawers for your sewing muddles and the clothes you are storing away. You need not, of course, buy one, especially if there is a purchase tax involved, but they are treasures for a lifetime of going abroad.

It is fair to say that furniture in most places nowadays is more or less organized, and I must restrain myself from telling the tale of hardships twenty years ago. I say 'organized', not without amusement. Once upon a time, when we were young and gay, my husband found himself in charge of housing and furniture in a biggish station. Rumour had it, and indeed complaints had reached him, unofficially (which means handed to you with a whisky and soda), and officially (which means having the honour to be, Sir), that the furniture was most unfairly divided. Mrs. J. was known to have sixteen occasional tables at the big house, and Mrs. G. had none, and was he aware that—etc., etc? With a naïve and masculine faith that all could be sorted by an appeal to justice and reason, he sent round a letter with a list of what everyone was entitled to, and asking those who had more, or different, or dilapidated pieces to bring them to the office on the following Saturday morning. They did. Dear innocent. I believe he still looks back on that morning as the blackest square in a not unchequered career. At the appointed hour lines of house-boys with strange and wonderful relics upside down on their heads streamed into the office compound followed by housewives in various states of hope, possessiveness and sheer bad temper. Justice and Reason had unaccountably fled, and so, I fear, did our administrator in the end, leaving the redistribution to the ladies themselves, and the repairs in the hands of the station carpenter. To this day he declines to intervene in housing or furniture disputes with less than a committee of six.

It is indeed difficult to tell you what to expect. You might find yourself in a flat in a converted palace in Zanzibar with bricked-up slave dungeons in the passages. You may find yourself in temporary quarters in a Nissen hut in an ex-army rest camp on the mainland. You may even live in the capital of your colony and be asked to move from one senior house to another while the lordly ones are on leave because there just isn't a junior house which you can call your own. For

the African colonies proper, three rooms in a row with a veranda all round remains the Ideal, to distinguish it from the Real, as the philosophers put it.

Pioneering has returned as a factor in this era of post-war planning, and you must be prepared for it, as I know you are. Your husband will like it best of all. If he were not the adventurous type he would not, presumably, have chosen the Colonial Service. The men who elect to give up at the end of their first tour because their wives cannot take it are rather pitiable. A suburban existence, with the office all day and a villa to come home to, is not the ideal for a young man, however satisfactory it is to his wife.

If you begin your married life in a tent, with a grass bathroom attached to the back, and a grass veranda erected in front, it will at least be memorable and at best lovely fun, for camp is at once the worst and best of Africa. The early tea tastes of wood-smoke from the new fire. There is always an early-morning walk on some ploy of your husband's, or even a shoot. Then there is breakfast; and the day's work in the heat for him, letters and sewing and books for you, and the meals to devise.

Perhaps you will be moving camp. It will always astonish you, the speed with which camp is broken. The tent comes down, and in a flash the fire is scattered, and your loads are on the carriers' heads, vanishing over the horizon. Perhaps you will walk to your next camp, or bicycle, or be carried in a machila. This is a hammock slung on poles, and it is not a comfortable way of travelling unless the porters are trained to break step. It is quicker than walking, as they go at a dog-trot. When baby comes he will have a Noah's Ark in which to sleep and travel. It is made of light wood and mosquito gauze with a roof, and red-lined canvas curtains to keep the sun and rain out. His mattress fits the floor of it and it is comfortable and cosy, and he will be so enchanted to live in it on tour that you may have to persuade him back into the duller and more static cot and pen of home. You will be

equally astonished when you get to your next camp to find a replica of the one you have left risen like magic out of the blue. Under another big tree will be new grass shelters for kitchen and bath and sitting-room, your chair and table ready for you and the kettle already on the boil.

It will be a perpetual wonder to you that Cook can produce such delicious and relatively elaborate dishes on a camp-fire. Bread and scones and cakes appear magically from an oven carved out of the ground. Soups and entrées, sweets and savouries will not defeat him, and the best of the sauces is your appetite from the fresh air and exercise. Camping in Africa is not at all like an English picnic.

After your siesta, and tea, there will probably be another expedition for birds or game-meat, or a nearby village to visit, or a river to explore, until the witching hour of sundown. You have your bath, thick or clear, with its dash of household ammonia. You put on night gear and mosquito boots, and sink into deck-chairs for your evening drink. Soon there is dinner, and afterwards perhaps your husband is at home to the local worthies. The leaping fire paints its own cave wall in the hollow of the dark trees. Grave matters of policy are discussed in a proper post-prandial mellowness of spirit. Dark skins gleam in the firelight. Dark eyes smile, heads nod, laughter flows, and at long last, 'Good night, sleep well'. The sleepy birds are still, the sleepy carriers murmur from their blankets, and a sleepy man, marvellously at peace with himself and his job, yawns and stretches blissfully. Tomorrow he will look at that bundle of papers from headquarters, or next day maybe, or next week.

These remain for us all the happiest memories of Africa. I do hope you will see some of it before it is all bulldozed away. May your blankets never get wet, and the paraffin keep out of the flour. May your lamps not blacken, nor the glasses crack. May the red ants eschew your bath sponge, and the scorpions your slippers!

May you learn to love sun-up as well as sundown. You creep

out of bed in the dark, scramble into marching kit, wash with a (for once) cold sponge, emerging from the tent just before it is dismantled over you. The sky is clear and green. The moon still sleeps with Endymion. Venus is awake and blazing on the horizon. There is a delicious chill in the air and the heavenly smell of wood smoke, and bacon and coffee. Breakfast is by the fire, and the plates are whisked away, washed and packed as the last mouthful disappears. Your husband and Cook and the hunters are watching you and the east, for if you linger over a second cup of coffee they may miss the game that is already seeking safety before sunrise.

May you see lion, and an elephant, and giraffe before you have done, and a school of hippo with their babies on their necks. By and by when you, too, are old and fat and full of cares, you will be glad you did not miss it.

3

WHAT YOU WILL WEAR

In my last letter I began to tell you about living in a Biscuit Tin or a tent as a horrid warning of the irreducible minimum which you must expect in the way of houses, and finished by being nostalgic and lyrical about how lovely it can be when you have no house at all. *Mea culpa*, I am doing what I vowed I should not do in these epistles. The idea was to beg you to sit lightly to creature comforts and possessions. I hope I can be more sensible about clothes. I need not tell you, after a girlhood in wartime England, not to mind too much about clothes, though whether that dreary old battle with cash and coupons made you more particular, or less, I wouldn't know. You will now, perhaps for the first time in your young life, have a greater quantity of clothes than you ever dreamed of possessing, more fragile finery, dresses in half-dozens, and fewer of the expensive good clothes that have always been proper to an English wardrobe.

Most colonies are in the tropics, and you will be taking all your old summer cottons, and as many new ones as you can afford.* English summer clothes, especially the heavy linen ones, are too hot for West Africa except in the 'cold' weather! On the other hand muslins and crêpes and the thinner fabrics require reinforcement in the way of a petticoat or slip underneath. Whatever you wear you are likely to be jolly hot most of the time. If your dresses are sleeveless and collarless

* See Appendix, page 238.

you will get sunburned, and if they are not, you will drip. Pyjamas with collar and cord are far too hot for comfortable sleep. The collar gets soaked against the pillow and the pyjama cord wrinkles and chafes. On the other hand, pyjamas of some sort are better for the nights when it is too hot even for a sheet. Well-cut ones, with a button or a bow on the hip, are perhaps best of all. The same thing is true of elastic and whalebone in your daytime garments. Buttons are the thing. I personally have always avoided slacks because they cling. Your generation is more trouser-minded than mine was, regardless of Beverley Nichols's remark that they enlarge a woman's charms without enhancing them. If you have some linen slacks, do take them, but skirts are cooler, as any Scotsman will tell you. At least you will not be bothered much with stockings and the contraptions that roll on to keep them up!

I do not imagine that you will have collected much in the way of exquisite underwear that you must wash and iron yourself. Crêpe-de-chine and satin can be far too hot for the hottest weather. Fine lawn and tricoline that you can cast to the wash-boy are much more satisfactory, and they need not look like Little Orphan Annie's. The wash-boy will pound them on a box, wash them in cold water and strong soap, leave the soap in, which rots them, and iron them with the same zeal that he applies to your husband's khaki bush shirts. He is probably primarily a man's manservant. You are going into a man's world, and your feminine fripperies will be the first to suffer. You will be for ever making new underclothes, and learning the routine of turning nighties that have gone at the top into petticoats, and the latter into panties.

I hope you have taken a good plain pattern for new undies. If you have not got a sewing-machine, never mind. You may be able to buy one at the other end of the export drive with one of your wedding-present cheques. In any case hand-made underwear is daintier and oddly enough more durable, as there is more elasticity in the seams, against both wear and

washing. I am sure that by now you can run up a cotton dress if you are so minded. If you have not attended one of the sewing schools held by the makers of machines and dress patterns, you must buy yourself a book that tells you all about it. French seams and flat seams and rolled edges and button-holes and pin-tucks and shirring and how to space gathers with pins! I hope your first efforts will not have too many gores and panels cut on the cross. The ironing routine to which I referred before can do the most astonishing things to a circular hemline. One of your first jobs if you find your husband with one of the batman tribe as a personal servant, is to show him how to iron fine fabrics the way of the weave. It is a compensating thought that you will also be able to have as many frills and organdie ruffles and as much crisp lace as you choose, because the patient boy enjoys the extra work on madam's pretty things, especially if he is thus too busy to do some heavy task!

I hope I am not condemning you to a lifetime of home-made clothes. I do advise you, however, to know enough about it to be able to direct a tailor in the Far East or on the East Coast or one of the mission-trained sewing maids of the West Coast who can copy good English models without much supervision.

One of the most valuable possessions I ever had was a pattern of ME. It was cut out of calico by a very good dress-maker, fitted carefully, marked and then unpicked. The edges were then turned in and stitched, and the tucks at the shoulders and waist and hips indicated in red cotton. When I did embark on a dress-length, with a paper pattern, the calico ME prevented the worst disasters in the way of dropping shoulders, sagging waists and skirts too tight to sit in. If you are lucky enough to be stock size you will not need one yet, but you must verify every measurement, every time, with a tape-measure for dressmaking without tears. You must remember the seams, and the right way of the stuff, and not to cut two right sleeves for the same dress—in fact, to avoid

all the mistakes of the beginner, which may I tell you every one of us has made at least once.

Even if the washing is done every day, as it is by your own boys in East Africa, you will need at least four of everything, and six is safer. In West Africa the wash-man appears once a week with his tub and his irons and his charcoal, and a remarkable team of friends and relations to help him to slosh and pound and shake. So you will need more clothes of the less precious variety, and a heart of oak.

As for finery, it is most important for your morale and your husband's. It is all too easy, in hot countries, to become used to faded cottons, dim linens of indeterminate colour and pattern and crumpled voiles. First thing you know, you are wearing them once too often, and that is the beginning of the Sad Story of a Slut. If there is any doubt, there is no doubt. Into the basket!

You will always change in the evening after games and a bath and the general heat and burden of the day. What into is a very nice problem. Just another thin dress for you is very dull, and not very comfortable. Housecoats are the thing, looser than the strictest *couturier* would allow you, but decently cut, faintly glamorous, which is to say not too much like a dressing-gown. When I was first married all dresses, evening as well as day, were hideously short. The concomitant was mosquito boots after six, loathsome things. Mosquitoes love the backs of your knees if they can get at them, and the mosquito boot has yet to be devised that does not hit your calves when you walk and make a noise like a hippo on a mudbank. Men don't seem to mind them, but I have always fancied that the general discomfort of male garments, of collars and ties, links and studs, and waistcoats and trousers have inured the whole sex to relative discomforts. But to return to your own clothes, or rather mine. Long dresses came in again, round about 1929, after a hesitant dip at the back. As soon as evening dresses reached the floor, into the box went my mosquito boots, where they have re-

mained for twenty years, except for touring. Dark satin dinner pyjamas of unimpeachable cut and swagger had their day, and they will tuck into boots; but a skirt to the floor, not the ankles, and full enough to wrap round and defeat the mosquitoes if you are sitting on the lawn in the evening, does as well, or better, and is much more comfortable.

Your husband will be changing out of shorts, or his crumpled office suit, or his games clothes, into a fresh shirt, and 'longs' and boots. If he has a pair of washable black alpaca trousers cut for a belt, not braces, he will be able to forgo a coat, or at least to discard it after dinner. I never quite got to the point of adding to informal dinner invitations 'R.S.V.P. Black Tie. No Braces', but I was awfully tempted. The look of smug relief on the faces of the wise men when they are invited to cast aside their jackets and settle down to bridge in comfort, is only equalled by the agony on the faces of the braced and foolish, who cannot follow suit.

As for your party frocks, taffeta or tulle tends to rot and split, and metallic fabrics tarnish, nor have I ever lived in a place in the colonies where dry-cleaning was convenient or really satisfactory. This does not mean that you are necessarily confined to washing cottons, or even to blouses and long skirts, though they are always useful. Dresses with little jackets are useful for dinner parties, and for dances, where one often wants something extra to put on between the dances, to avoid a chill.

It remains true that one gets less tired of plain fabrics than of patterns. On the other hand you will be glad to be away from the severely practical colours of grubby old England into gaiety and colour. I don't know what it is about the excessive heat and light in the tropics that leads one to develop a taste for bright colours. Perhaps it is the same principle that makes scalding tea the most refreshing of all drinks when you are very hot and tired, and curry the most sustaining of all foods. Cool greens and blues in a room send one flying to the garden for cannas and marigolds, and sprays

of bougainvillea to cheer it up. Most African houses have deep verandas or shutters to keep out the glare, and you will be surprised at the amount of time you spend in a dim religious light. Indeed, in some houses you will be hard put to it to find a place for your dressing-table, or your writing-table, or your sewing-machine where you are not actually in the sun, and yet can see to write or sew or powder your nose.

Talking of face powder reminds me to warn you that in hot damp climates you will not be able to put on much make-up. Your skin and hair will need some care and attention, cleansing and feeding, and gallons of mild astringent. Vanishing cream, alas, does not vanish. It gleams. Powder cakes, and colour runs, and you can soon look a fright. You may find that you must keep cold cream and your lipsticks in the fridge, along with any coated pills you may have. The latter otherwise melt to a most sinister lump! Even if your lipstick lives in the fridge, it will run if you put it on with a heavy hand, and it runs *up* for some doubtless very abstruse scientific reason, so you must stay your hand or the result will be unfortunate.

Sitting about a good deal in loose garments is not good for your figure either, and it is all too easy to fail to take enough hard exercise because it is too hot. Gardening, if you take it seriously, is marvellous exercise, but not if you stand about waving the seed-packets while a boy does the bending. If your husband is ever alone on an out-station he may find hard exercise a problem, too, especially if there is no occasion for going out with a gun after tea. A friend of ours once discovered that the station gaol was about the size and dimensions of a squash court. He was wise enough to give himself a hard game every day, while the prisoners were doing their evening tasks, and indeed suggested to headquarters that it would be a good thing if all out-station gaols were built to those measurements. Deck tennis is the best game for two, and your African friends may like to play with you. If you go to the West Coast you may be lucky enough to find

4

SERVANTS IN THEORY

Your mother would wish me, I feel sure, to talk to you a little about servants. She knows that she has given you some very odd and contradictory ideas about them when she has been talking of the palmy days before the war, with 'the servants' as an important part of English households. You, of course, hardly remember them, and I do not know whether you have gathered that resident domestics made life quite blissful and untrammelled; or contrariwise, that they were such a tyranny, such a responsibility, in short, such a nuisance that many people who have had some experience of both modes of existence say 'Never again!'

Some people in these years of readjustment try first one scheme and then the other. You can do that in England, but not in the colonies. It is possible here to send the laundry out, buy your own food, cook it, wash up after it, push the vacuum cleaner round and dust the tops. Then when it begins to be too much for you, and the corners silt up and your hands crack, you can call in a flock of charwomen like a fire-brigade to spring-clean. Or, slightly more methodically, you can parcel out the work between a series of part-time daily helps who do the more dreary chores erratically in rotation. At length you decide to employ a proper resident maid, whereupon the fifth and sixth freedoms vanish unaccountably, and freedom from toil is revealed as being not at all the same thing as freedom from care. She goes. Everybody says how

lovely to have Mother's cooking again. How pleasant to have meals when we like! How nice to have Father's writing-table left undisturbed, and who cares about a little dust on it? So you are back where you started from.

Meantime, you and your generation are left not a whit wiser about the pros and cons of the servant problem, and certainly have no clue to countries where you cannot do without them in the same way, even temporarily. There is nowhere to send the laundry. In some places you cannot buy anything ready-made, not even a loaf of bread. A small brick kitchen with a corrugated-iron roof in which you must wear a hat, and which contains at best an open wood stove, is no place for a white woman for any length of time. There is wood to fetch and chop for the fire, possibly water to fetch and carry and to heat on the stove in drums. The heavy cleaning, which probably includes polishing cement floors, would be quite beyond your strength. Anyway, none of this is necessary in the colonies because servants are relatively cheap and plentiful, and as much a part of the tropical landscape as palm trees and the heat. So you must come to terms with them and learn the art (all but forgotten in England) of calmly giving orders to people which are obeyed without more ado.

Good servants can make life marvellously smooth and pleasant. Bad ones can create such utter hell, such a sick dread of meals, tears from you, curses from the master, such a domestic climate of frustration and despair that you will presently begin to hate colonial life, and see nothing for it but to cut and run. They can be stupid, malicious, thieving rascals. They can be savagely destructive of your pretty things, careless and then defiant about it, unteachably stupid, erratic, or at the worst, drunken lying villains. They can also be utterly dependable, calm and silent and efficient, indeed so quick to anticipate your every wish that in the end there is some question as to who is enslaved to whom. What you generally get is some compromise between these

extremes, according to the infinite mutabilities of human character, world without end—of the servant problem! For good or ill, there they are. You cannot get away from them, and presently you will not wish to.

Let's have a look at them. There is your cook, and there is your house-boy. Those are common to every colony—the pillars of the household. There may also be one or two 'small-boys', or apprentices who are learning, but who do the work after a fashion when the others are ill, or away, or you are 'making a change'. When I say 'every colony' I realize that there are exceptions. In the West Indies, for instance, the indoor servants are women, but boys are more usual elsewhere, and there are at least two. Their relative status and authority over the small fry again varies according to where you are. In East Africa with its affinity to India and the Far East, and also on the West Coast, the butler or chief steward is a kind of major-domo. It is he only who is supposed to take your instructions. He in turn directs the others. His authority over them can be so absolute, even to the extent of paying the wages of the underlings, and deciding who and how many they shall be, that if you were unwise enough to give an instruction without at least consulting him, you might find your command unaccountably disobeyed, or executed badly, and the offending underling dismissed, just to remind you who is the real boss. This, I gather, is the Oriental scheme of things and applies to large households everywhere.

It also applies to the smallest household of all—the bachelor's. His boy runs his entire establishment. He is probably able to do all the work, cooking, cleaning, waiting at table, valeting and even the mending, only calling in as much additional help in the way of small-boys as his laziness and his master's pocket will allow. He and his kind are the Jeeveses and Bunters of the bachelor's paradise, and many a man has hesitated on the brink of matrimony when he contemplates parting with the willing slave and tyrant he is used to, for the uncertain devotion of a mere wife.

It is often said that no bachelor's staff survives the intrusion of a woman in the house for more than a few weeks. A young friend of ours brought his bride-to-be round to see us the other evening. We chatted about her trousseau, and the equipment for the house, and then the young man said ruefully, 'I am told that I should sack all my boys and start fresh. I shall be sorry, because they are pretty good, and they have been with me ten years.' The girl looked a little dashed, not having viewed herself as a potential menace to her future husband's peace and comfort. They turned to me for advice, and I pass it on to you for what it is worth.

I suggested to her that she should regard herself as a guest in her husband's house for a few weeks; that her husband should explain to the servants that their new mistress would be too busy unpacking, and getting used to the heat and the new surroundings to give the orders for a bit, and that they must carry on as they always had, doing their best to please her. After a short time, I went on diffidently (for the young man probably considered them paragons), you will doubtless discover whether Cook is amenable to instructions, and likes learning new things, and whether or not the house-boy has been working on the theory that what master doesn't see won't worry him. This is usually considerable. Then when you have got your bearings, and some advice from your neighbours as to local conditions, you can begin to take over, gently and firmly. Meanwhile, you will also be learning something of your husband's domestic fads and fancies.

I shall be interested to hear whether or not my advice was sound. The young people looked vaguely pleased and comforted, she because it sounded easier than having to do everything at once, with no domestic or colonial experience to fall back on, and he because it might be that this really was the perfect wife, and he could keep his other slaves as well.

If they are really nice boys, they will respond. Probably they are delighted that master has taken a wife. His temper will doubtless improve, and anyway they will no longer bear

the brunt of it. Also, his status is enhanced, and theirs with it. Presently there may be sons. 'That be fine and proper.' If they are scallywags however (and this, too, I did not say), who have been battening for years on the domestic helplessness of the average European male, or lazy types who prefer a household in which for six long office hours they can do practically nothing, then indeed they will go.

I have taken this line myself several times when I followed my husband to a new place. Sometimes they stayed. Sometimes they didn't. I have never thought it quite fair to revolutionize my husband's household if for any reason I was not going to be with him for the whole tour. I disliked our last steward-boy intensely. I thought him servile, sullen, a snob and a sycophant—qualities I dislike in any human being. Yet I knew that when I went home to be with the children he would be more than willing to take over the household management to his master's satisfaction. A new servant might work well under my eye, but be quite hopelessly irresponsible when I was not there. So I bore with him. He was master's devoted friend and servant, as the obituary columns put it. Cook was mine, and we all knew exactly where we stood.

I once asked my husband how he could bear to live with that sullen face and surly manner when he was quite alone. I was told blandly, 'Oh, I never look at him. We sometimes went days without speaking, except when I said, "lunch for eight", or "dinner jacket tonight", or "uniform Thursday". He kept the store book meticulously, and the market money was reasonable. I hardly knew he was there. And he remembered my keys! And he filled my cigarette case for me!'

'Probably his own, too!' I said spitefully, wondering why women bother to work so hard.

'I daresay,' says my lord, 'but *not so I noticed!*'

That's bachelor's paradise for you, and it is a very nerve-saving attitude to remember just before *you* begin to get over-fussed and irritable.

You will soon learn what to leave to the servants, and what

to do yourself. This again varies from colony to colony, and sometimes from district to district. Some whole tribes make excellent domestics. Some refuse even to try, and trained servants must be imported from elsewhere. If it is necessary to train raw villagers from scratch, you should have at least one competent 'cosmopolitan' to help you over the initial difficulties. With the best will in the world, you cannot be in two places at once.

I am not going to tell you anything at all about training a cook, or about market money, or about keeping your keys. I have already written all I knew, after fifteen years of trial and error. I did assume that the bachelor cadets for whom that book was written knew absolutely nothing. I sincerely trust that is not the case with you. There is no slavery in the world so abject as the helplessness of a woman who is entirely ignorant or incompetent in the house, and at the mercy of the villains her very helplessness attracts.

Perhaps you have taken a Domestic Economy Course at school, or at a special college. In my day it was called 'Domestic Art', and was so regarded. The final examination was the preparation of a complete dinner party. For the soup, *consommé Julienne*, one took four pounds of rump steak for the stock. It was strained, and the meat discarded. Then the stock was cleared with the white of an egg. The rest of the meal was on a similar scale of excellence, but it was not much preparation for marrying a poor man, or going to live in a land of shortages. Nowadays, we talk of Domestic Science. If the change in nomenclature implies that guesswork, improvisation and inspiration are frowned upon, and that calories and Fahrenheits and thermostatic controls are part of the drill, that won't be much help to you either.

I hope you have learned to make bread, and soup, and at least six or eight different breakfast dishes. I hope you have learned to make good plain white sauce, and that you will never, never in your life make it plain! I hope you are fussy about salads and vegetables, and about good tea and coffee.

Above all, I hope you like cooking. If your school has left you with a bewildered feeling that cookery is just another lesson, or an esoteric Art or Science or Economy practised by learned ladies in uniform, and is not for the likes of you, God help you, and your poor husband, and your wretched employees.

The best way to learn cookery is from your mother. Yet I remember the day you and I stood over her to learn how she made her excellent pastry. There in a flash were the flour and salt, the fat and cold water, and the big yellow bowl. She went on chatting about the nieces and nephews who were coming to lunch, and presently, by some sleight of hand, there was a sift, a cut, an arpeggio with the finger-tips; then a roll, a trim, a prick, a pinch, and behold, the pie! We did interrupt to ask how much flour she had used.

'Oh, just what was left in the packet.'

'But how much fat does one use?'

'Oh, rather less than one would wish in these days of rationing.'

'Water?'

'Until it feels right!'

Then, do you remember how sweetly she smiled as she said, 'The secret of good pastry is being very, very quick', and you and I crept sheepishly away and had a cigarette, not a whit wiser for our cookery demonstration. I am afraid mothers are like that.

Perhaps, like me, you will have to learn the hard way. In that case I hope you are a greedy girl and like what the children call 'lovely grub'. Then at least you will be inspired, by however low a motive, to go on trying until you have acquired the minimum of skill that makes cooking a pleasure. After that it won't matter whether you call it Domestic Art, or Science, or Economy. It is, of course, something of each. It will be just fun to do, with immediate results, however ephemeral, as rewarding as any in the other arts and sciences. Don't imagine that your husband will rise up and call you

blessed. Not a bit of it. He will take it all for granted, like all the other contributions to his purr of general well-being. It is the ones that aren't there that he notices! You are now in the realm of art for art's sake, or even approaching the fringes of philosophic idealism, for you are pursuing the good as an end in itself!

Speaking seriously again, what you are aiming at is a degree of competence in yourself, in which you know how things should be done, and are determined that they shall be properly done, even if you have to do them yourself. You are more than prepared to teach a willing servant to do it for you, and to pay him well for doing it well, but ideally your servants should feel that you could do everything they do twice as well in half the time, if you chose. If such an ideal were attainable, your servant troubles would be three parts solved, because you would have won the greatest of the freedoms, freedom from dependence on them. There is, as I said before, no slavery so abject as dependence on ignorant, incompetent underlings, whom you can neither help nor direct nor avoid, but only complain of, and at.

Not that you will need to do their work for them, except in moments of crisis. Indeed, you are embarking on a mode of existence in which you will be spared the drudgeries of cooking and housekeeping that darken English life at present, but you will not be spared anxiety or the most miserable or frustrations until you have mastered their craft yourself. Their attitude to the work in the house will be exactly what yours is, to wit, 'Here is a domestic problem to be tackled, a dinner to be got, or a room to be turned out. It must be properly done. I can do it, or if I cannot, I mean to learn, and to practise until I can do it well and quickly. After that, the drudgery will be behind me!' When your servants see that attitude in you, they will adopt it. They will help you at first. They will also come to you for help, if they feel that you understand the difficulty and will try to answer them reasonably, if necessary by consulting one of your books. You are

not the embodiment of European superiority and wisdom, but you do have access to it. They respect that.

Never be afraid of saying, 'I don't know. Let us find out'; or, 'I am sorry, I have made a mistake'. That, too, is an attitude they will soon catch from you, and it is far more comfortable to live with than if they hide things up for fear of your tongue, or pretend to be cleverer than they are to save trouble, and flounder from disaster to yet another row, knowing that all they can expect of you anyway is nagging or threats or—and I am afraid you will meet this in some households before very long—sarcasm and sneers at 'native incompetence'. When a white woman is rowing at a boy, the chances are that he is not listening to a single thing she is saying. He may be trembling with fear or nerves, or sullen with rage, but he is chiefly hoping you will soon have done and go away, while he reflects on the ways of *his* people with nagging women, wishing the white masters would take a leaf from their book. So bad temper is useless, as well as exhausting. If you pose as a superior being who knows everything, it won't wash. You are all too soon found out, and you lay yourself open to the most humiliating of all relationships, when much-tried servants try to get back at you by catching you out, or showing you up, or scoring off you, even seeing how far they can go before you lose your temper and swear, or cry, or refer to the master.

Good servants appreciate thanks and praise for their successes like other human beings, especially if you know what you are talking about. They feel it is worth working for. They also understand the twinkle in your eye when they are caught out in some trifling matter, and also your stony refusal to accept slackness over important things like dirt or pilfering.

I realize quite well that I am describing the ideal, and that it may be different from the real. What I am chiefly concerned about is your attitude to domestic chores: first, negatively, that you shouldn't think that because you have servants you can know little and care less, and are prepared

to accept their standards because you can do no other; and second, more positively, that the work is something outside you both which is going to be done, and done well, if necessary by you, by you both together while they, or you, are learning, and finally, through them at your command when they prove to be willing and capable.

But to begin at the beginning. Let us suppose that you and your husband have arrived at your first station, and it is all new to you both. You probably stay with your kind seniors for a day or two to rest from your journey and to wait for your heavy luggage. You visit the empty shell of what is to be your first home. I hope it has been scrubbed out for you. At best it will look bleak enough with its staring windows, and the chairs uncushioned and uninviting. You try to visualize it as it will be when you have settled in, wandering through the rooms to the pantries and the back veranda, and there, lined up by the kitchen steps, is a row of hopeful shining black faces. Some are already in uniform. They are all holding their books, dog-eared documents which combine the function of identity cards and references. You look at them all.

The first boy has never worked for anyone for more than six weeks. No good. The second worked for a bachelor for five years. That may mean anything. He is probably a good wash-boy and valet, and an indifferent cook, but he may drink. Bachelors will tolerate that, but you must not. Your husband asks him straight out if he drinks. Perhaps he says, 'No, I am a Mohammedan'. You can accept that. Perhaps he grins and says, 'Sometimes on my holidays, but not on duty'. You can accept that, and cope with it. If, however, he rolls up his eyes and says, 'Oh! no, master, I be too good boy', ignore him. He is probably a congenital liar as well.

The third candidate worked only three months for Mrs. Somebody, and left of his own accord. The book will say that. It may only mean that she was a nagging shrew and he could not stick it. Before that he worked for somebody else for a

year. Then they went on leave. The book will say that. They were not prepared to pay him a retaining fee while they were away to make sure of him on their return, and it probably means that he was a tolerable worker, but they hoped to do better with a fresh start. If, however, he worked more than one tour for the same family he was dependable and teachable. He will be skilled in the things his mistress was good at, or fussy about. They may not be the same as yours, but he has possibilities. You put him on the short list with others of like history.

Meantime you notice at the back of the group an older man. He did not thrust himself forward. He has been watching you and your husband with a shrewd and cynical eye. There is nothing he does not know about the vagaries of Europeans as employers. He has been sizing you up, and has probably already decided that your husband is a potential Governor, or Director. He has been giving you marks for steadiness of temper, sweetness of disposition, and sense of humour, and is wondering if *you* are healthy, energetic and teachable. If you look as if you might be hysterical or bossy or unmethodical, inclined to blame the servants for all shortcomings, including your own, he will slip away without presenting his book. He is more than a little snobbish, with an unerring eye for 'Beggars on Horseback'.

You will look at his book and see that he has worked for one family for five, eight, ten years. Now they have been transferred to another colony, or retired, and they have pensioned him off. He is not yet ready to embrace the simplicities of village life, and has come to look you over. Unfortunately his wages were enormous. They rose year by year of faithful service, and of course you cannot afford him. He understands that, but perhaps he is tired of a large household with too much entertaining to see to. The work of a small house will be child's play to him, and he may consent to come to you for an average wage. I am not going to tell you which to choose. Your host and hostess will advise you. They probably

know most of the employers of all the boys on your short list. You already know your own capabilities and whether you will need a servant who, for the present, can do all *your* work twice as well in half the time and is prepared to teach *you*, or at least to run the house while you are learning, especially while you are learning the language.

Again, much will depend on where you are. If your husband is going to be travelling a good deal, and you cannot always accompany him, you must have a staff that divides easily, which means two average boys rather than one expensive one. Your husband must have a tolerable cook to take with him. You can manage with the help of the other boy, by yourself. Most African servants can do all the different kinds of domestic work after a fashion, and have chosen to specialize according to their taste. A cook's work is hard, and hot and exacting while it lasts, but his hours are short, fixed by meal times and baking days. He has a good deal of free time when you are invited out. Probably he also has the highest wages. The house-boy's duties are less exacting. Half his heavy work is over by breakfast-time and the other half soon after, except on wash days and the brass-and-silver day. On the other hand he has less free time and longer hours, because he is about the place to answer your bell from early tea to nightcap. Both boys understand that they must do one another's work when the household divides. Cook will be doing master's washing and ironing, and waiting at table with the help of a small-boy in camp. The house-boy, with the help of the kitchen-boy, will prepare as well as serve your meals. If he is a Jeeves and has gone with his master, cook must put on a butler's uniform and wait on you in the house. Now is your chance, incidentally, to potter in the kitchen without upsetting anyone's routine. With someone to fetch the basins, butter the tins and wash up after you, you can get out your books and explore the higher reaches of the culinary mysteries. If the failures go into the dustbin, no one will suffer or be the wiser.

Above all, I hope you like cooking. If your school has left you with a bewildered feeling that cookery is just another lesson, or an esoteric Art or Science or Economy practised by learned ladies in uniform, and is not for the likes of you, God help you, and your poor husband, and your wretched employees.

The best way to learn cookery is from your mother. Yet I remember the day you and I stood over her to learn how she made her excellent pastry. There in a flash were the flour and salt, the fat and cold water, and the big yellow bowl. She went on chatting about the nieces and nephews who were coming to lunch, and presently, by some sleight of hand, there was a sift, a cut, an arpeggio with the finger-tips; then a roll, a trim, a prick, a pinch, and behold, the pie! We did interrupt to ask how much flour she had used.

'Oh, just what was left in the packet.'

'But how much fat does one use?'

'Oh, rather less than one would wish in these days of rationing.'

'Water?'

'Until it feels right!'

Then, do you remember how sweetly she smiled as she said, 'The secret of good pastry is being very, very quick', and you and I crept sheepishly away and had a cigarette, not a whit wiser for our cookery demonstration. I am afraid mothers are like that.

Perhaps, like me, you will have to learn the hard way. In that case I hope you are a greedy girl and like what the children call 'lovely grub'. Then at least you will be inspired, by however low a motive, to go on trying until you have acquired the minimum of skill that makes cooking a pleasure. After that it won't matter whether you call it Domestic Art, or Science, or Economy. It is, of course, something of each. It will be just fun to do, with immediate results, however ephemeral, as rewarding as any in the other arts and sciences. Don't imagine that your husband will rise up and call you

blessed. Not a bit of it. He will take it all for granted, like all the other contributions to his purr of general well-being. It is the ones that aren't there that he notices! You are now in the realm of art for art's sake, or even approaching the fringes of philosophic idealism, for you are pursuing the good as an end in itself!

Speaking seriously again, what you are aiming at is a degree of competence in yourself, in which you know how things should be done, and are determined that they shall be properly done, even if you have to do them yourself. You are more than prepared to teach a willing servant to do it for you, and to pay him well for doing it well, but ideally your servants should feel that you could do everything they do twice as well in half the time, if you chose. If such an ideal were attainable, your servant troubles would be three parts solved, because you would have won the greatest of the freedoms, freedom from dependence on them. There is, as I said before, no slavery so abject as dependence on ignorant, incompetent underlings, whom you can neither help nor direct nor avoid, but only complain of, and at.

Not that you will need to do their work for them, except in moments of crisis. Indeed, you are embarking on a mode of existence in which you will be spared the drudgeries of cooking and housekeeping that darken English life at present, but you will not be spared anxiety or the most miserable or frustrations until you have mastered their craft yourself. Their attitude to the work in the house will be exactly what yours is, to wit, 'Here is a domestic problem to be tackled, a dinner to be got, or a room to be turned out. It must be properly done. I can do it, or if I cannot, I mean to learn, and to practise until I can do it well and quickly. After that, the drudgery will be behind me!' When your servants see that attitude in you, they will adopt it. They will help you at first. They will also come to you for help, if they feel that you understand the difficulty and will try to answer them reasonably, if necessary by consulting one of your books. You are

year. Then they went on leave. The book will say that. They were not prepared to pay him a retaining fee while they were away to make sure of him on their return, and it probably means that he was a tolerable worker, but they hoped to do better with a fresh start. If, however, he worked more than one tour for the same family he was dependable and teachable. He will be skilled in the things his mistress was good at, or fussy about. They may not be the same as yours, but he has possibilities. You put him on the short list with others of like history.

Meantime you notice at the back of the group an older man. He did not thrust himself forward. He has been watching you and your husband with a shrewd and cynical eye. There is nothing he does not know about the vagaries of Europeans as employers. He has been sizing you up, and has probably already decided that your husband is a potential Governor, or Director. He has been giving you marks for steadiness of temper, sweetness of disposition, and sense of humour, and is wondering if *you* are healthy, energetic and teachable. If you look as if you might be hysterical or bossy or unmethodical, inclined to blame the servants for all shortcomings, including your own, he will slip away without presenting his book. He is more than a little snobbish, with an unerring eye for 'Beggars on Horseback'.

You will look at his book and see that he has worked for one family for five, eight, ten years. Now they have been transferred to another colony, or retired, and they have pensioned him off. He is not yet ready to embrace the simplicities of village life, and has come to look you over. Unfortunately his wages were enormous. They rose year by year of faithful service, and of course you cannot afford him. He understands that, but perhaps he is tired of a large household with too much entertaining to see to. The work of a small house will be child's play to him, and he may consent to come to you for an average wage. I am not going to tell you which to choose. Your host and hostess will advise you. They probably

know most of the employers of all the boys on your short list. You already know your own capabilities and whether you will need a servant who, for the present, can do all *your* work twice as well in half the time and is prepared to teach *you*, or at least to run the house while you are learning, especially while you are learning the language.

Again, much will depend on where you are. If your husband is going to be travelling a good deal, and you cannot always accompany him, you must have a staff that divides easily, which means two average boys rather than one expensive one. Your husband must have a tolerable cook to take with him. You can manage with the help of the other boy, by yourself. Most African servants can do all the different kinds of domestic work after a fashion, and have chosen to specialize according to their taste. A cook's work is hard, and hot and exacting while it lasts, but his hours are short, fixed by meal times and baking days. He has a good deal of free time when you are invited out. Probably he also has the highest wages. The house-boy's duties are less exacting. Half his heavy work is over by breakfast-time and the other half soon after, except on wash days and the brass-and-silver day. On the other hand he has less free time and longer hours, because he is about the place to answer your bell from early tea to nightcap. Both boys understand that they must do one another's work when the household divides. Cook will be doing master's washing and ironing, and waiting at table with the help of a small-boy in camp. The house-boy, with the help of the kitchen-boy, will prepare as well as serve your meals. If he is a Jeeves and has gone with his master, cook must put on a butler's uniform and wait on you in the house. Now is your chance, incidentally, to potter in the kitchen without upsetting anyone's routine. With someone to fetch the basins, butter the tins and wash up after you, you can get out your books and explore the higher reaches of the culinary mysteries. If the failures go into the dustbin, no one will suffer or be the wiser.

The boy with the more responsible character of the two is left with you while your husband is away, and you are, so to speak, in his charge. He will not leave the premises without telling you, or without seeing that there is someone there to take his place. You, too, will not go out without saying where you will be, and he will escort you if you are invited out to dinner, carrying a lamp or torch, and wait to bring you home, open the house, and see that all is in order. If it is necessary, a soldier or a messenger or a policeman will come to sleep within call, to guard you against marauders, or snakes, or all the ill things that go bump in the night.

For goodness' sake don't get the idea that the minute your husband's back is turned 'they' are waiting for opportunities for robbery, assault and rape. It is a hard fact of sociological statistics that 'black peril' is only rife in more civilized places where the white people have lost or thrown away the respect of the coloured races. You must not be over-familiar in your manner, or display nerves or fear, or wander about lightly clad. That may sound odd to you in these days, but modern European fashions have not penetrated the dark continent very far, and would meet a good deal of distaste and disapproval if they did. I am told that even in old Egypt European prestige has dropped yet another few yards since sight-seeing parties from the tourist ships took to wandering ashore dressed—or rather undressed—for the heat, the women hatless, in shorts or sun suits, not hesitating to explore the mosques and to sit on the steps of the high altar chattering and laughing with lighted cigarettes in their mouths. The local women only enter the sacred places heavily veiled. Other races are rigid in their code of propriety for women. We must respect other people's susceptibilities if we wish them to respect ours. So don't wander about in next to nothing, no matter how hot it is, thinking, 'It's only the boy'. This is by the way, but it is important.

I have mentioned small-boys, as they are called on the West Coast, *piccanins* or *totos* in the South and East. You will

be wondering who they are, and how many, and what they do. There is probably a kitchen-boy who wishes to learn to be a cook. He helps to prepare the vegetables, scrubs the kitchen, washes the pots and pans and waits hand and foot on Cook. There may also be a second house-boy who runs errands and who is learning to sweep and polish, to wash and iron and do the boots, and to wait at table. While they are learning they are usually paid little more than pocket-money, with, of course, their food, housing and uniforms. Don't let them run about the place in grubby rags, as all small boys like to do. Their most important lesson is to learn to be clean and tidy, so they must have at least two shirts and shorts and to be proud of looking smart. They are, in a very old-fashioned sense, apprentices, and their number, status and wages vary enormously from colony to colony, but wherever you find them, it is these little chaps who appear to do all the hard work under the unsympathetic eye or hand of their task-masters, the big boys.

5

SERVANTS IN PRACTICE

After such a long letter on the Servant Problem in general, which inevitably involved a certain amount of theorizing, and most deplorable excursions into the realm of the Ideal, I feel it is only fair to descend to the Real and to describe one or two of our households to give you some idea of the variety of the actual arrangements.

When we first set up housekeeping in a two-room bungalow with a veranda all round, believe it or not we employed nine servants, whose total wages came to five pounds a month. There was Cook and his piccanin, called Sukampika because he washed the pots. There was a house-boy-cum-valet and his Sukambale who washed the dishes and helped with the laundry. There were also two hulking great wood-and-water-boys who fetched loads of firewood from the forest, and carried the great forty-gallon drums of household water from the local stream, and the drinking water from a spring five miles away. They also put on clean shirts and carried our golf bags in the afternoons, while Sukampika and Sukambale ran ahead and marked where our golf balls fell. There was a garden-boy who swept the compound, cut the rough grass, and watered the flower beds morning and evening. In due course there was a nurse-boy to push the pram and wash the nappies. The ninth was an egg-boy who scoured the countryside for eggs and reappeared at long intervals with dubious offerings. He was paid five shillings wages plus a penny for every egg that did not float or explode.

Twelve years later, at the end of our time in that colony, we had moved to a town. There was hot and cold water laid on, and a real push-and-pull! Our fuel was delivered in a lorry by a contractor. The cook still had his kitchen-boy, but he happened to be an ex-batman and said he liked to do master's washing, especially boiled shirts. The house-boy cleaned the house, waited at table and washed the household linen. Our second-boy, who would normally have been a *dhobi*, was in fact a devoted ex-nursery-boy. He washed the children's clothes and mine in the bathroom where there was hot water and 'flakesoap', as they call it, under my eye, or rather under my testing finger. I was doing war-work at the time. There had always to be someone at home to guard the house in our absence, and someone to do my little jobs, and at least two on duty when the third was having his day off. There was also a garden-boy who had some assistance in the way of casual labour, when it was necessary, for major landscape gardening. We were thus down to five, but the cost of living, theirs and ours, had risen, and the wages bill was up to seven pounds ten a month. The servants were by this time old trusties. The arrangement with regard to the laundry was, I imagine, peculiar to our family, but if it suited them to divide a *dhobi's* work and wages I did not mind as long as the work was done happily and well.

I should imagine that as time goes on, and labour-saving devices become more common, the tendency throughout the colonies will be to employ less and less unskilled labour, but under the lash of inflation wages will remain a large item in the budget.

I have always insisted that my servants should take a proper day off each week and one Sunday in three, or even occasional week-ends to visit their families, if they were not domiciled on the premises. I found it better than assuming that they were always there, and then finding they were 'never there' because they had sneaked off to do some shopping, or to attend a beer drink, or to go home. This was

regarded as strange when we went to the West Coast. In the bachelor establishment of a 'man's country' there is so much free time anyway that taking a day off was presumably never necessary, or a matter of special permission. This, if it is erratic, can lead to favouritism and consequent jealousy in the compound. Seniority, or what Jane Austen called 'consequence', is so much the breath of life in these areas throughout society that I felt it did them good to respect one another's equal rights to free time, and some private life of their own, even the smallest boys whom they considered of no account. Perhaps the tradition of slavery dies hard!

Mohammedan servants receive special consideration at Ramadhan. They are fasting for many days and tire easily. At the end of the fasting time there is a feast day, which they have free. I also made it possible for the Christians to go to church. This was not piety on my part so much as hoping their characters would improve. You might call it enlightened self-interest, which acquires no merit! I have also, before now, given a Roman Catholic boy who was caught stealing whisky a second chance, provided he truly repented, and brought me a letter from his confessor. His reform lasted a whole six months.

With regard to drink generally, here again the customs vary in all colonies. In East and Central Africa where the missionary tradition is strong, your servants are forbidden by law to buy European liquor, or use it. You keep it locked in a cupboard, and your guests help themselves, as the boys do not even handle it. The West Coast has a worse tradition. Trade gin has been currency to seal all bargains for centuries, back to the days of gold and slaves. Oddly enough, although anyone can buy it, there was no more conspicuous drunkenness among the population than in the East. In Central Africa they make their own brew from maize or millet. Once fermented it makes a sour and refreshing drink, and is harmless. Twice brewed it becomes strong beer and they can, and do, get drunk on it. Distilled through a piece of piping or

even a tree trunk, it turns into a raw spirit which will serve to drive a car on, and makes for madness, like their drugs. In most urban areas a licensed beer-hall is part of every community centre and serves to control the traffic. Illicit brewing is punishable. The profits from the beer-hall are used for 'welfare' purposes.

Servants, like their masters, drink or refrain according to their characters, and are equally nasty under the influence, and hardly ever funny. At least if men find them so, you will not. Cooks are particularly prone to it, and one sometimes feels after a domestic crisis, the better the cook, the worse way his genius takes him. As I have already said, you enquire about this when you engage a servant, and if he replies with some saw worthy of Omar Khayyám, you know where you are at once.

If a boy is a chronic tippler, have none of him. What a boy does on his days off is presumably no concern of yours, but make it quite clear from the beginning that while he is free to ruin his liver and waste his money in his free time, he must on no account come into the kitchen, or into the house, or even on to the premises having drink taken. It will probably be against the law for you to fine him, or dock his wages or sack him without notice. The law has been made to protect labour generally from the kind of bad employer who has been known to fine employees for every peccadillo until at the end of the month his wages have all but disappeared; or from the employers of large gangs who sack their casual labour on the 29th of the month. Nevertheless, with my employees I have always made it part of our agreement that once drunk on duty off they go, out, finished, gone for sack, no money, no house, no job, no character. They understand and agree, because if one of them does come home drunk in the evening, there will be a noisy row in the kitchen, the wrong boy gets the benefit of master's annoyance, as well as the extra work, and it is all very unpleasant for everybody.

Once we had a new second-boy who came back drunk at

half-past five. He tottered into the bathroom, carrying the water for baby's bath, slipped, and flung the scalding water all over the place, missing the naked toddler by inches. It was after that that we made our rule about drink, and made it adamant. One cook whom we had nine years was inclined to drink. He was always sorry for himself on Monday mornings, but he did not come home in his cups after the first time. My husband called him in next day and asked him if he wished to stay. 'Yas'r.' Would he agree that for this lapse, five shillings should be kept from his wages, and carried forward in a 'suspense account'? 'Yas'r.' Next time ten shillings? 'Ma-wé!' Next time fifteen and the sack? 'Yas'r.' It did not in fact happen again, and that first five shillings was carried forward until we parted.

Custom with regard to food, clothes and housing for servants varies from colony to colony, and sometimes from district to district. In the urban areas of Central and East Africa we bought rations for our boys, to wit, fourteen pounds of meal and a shilling's-worth of butcher's meat each week. In the country districts a fixed additional sum for each boy was added to his wage. In West Africa they fed themselves. Post-war import controls were in force, and some things were in short supply. I allowed the boys to buy from me certain things that I could get at the controlled price more easily than they could. This helped to prevent cadging and pilfering. Cook bought coffee and sugar and some wheat flour. The others wanted cloth and matches and soap in addition to their allowance, and paraffin for their lamps. In normal times one can give these things to them in reasonable quantities, but goods in short supply quickly become 'currency'. Their own black market was a shocker.

You will be expected to supply at least two complete uniforms for each boy, and aprons for Cook, and soap all round if you are going to insist that they are always spotlessly clean. They do not as a rule wear shoes in the house. They expect presents at Christmas, and usually prefer clothes. You do not

usually throw away clothes or shoes, or old household linen. This gives whoever empties the wastepaper basket an unfair advantage over his fellows. You save up until there is enough for something for everybody all round, and any old cloth for dusters and rags, which they like too. You must not expect them to 'find' their floor-cloths and towels. Cook wants his hand-towel and dish-towel as well as an oven-cloth, scrubbing-brush, scouring-powder and D.D.T. for the shelves. The house-boys want floor-cloths and shoe-brushes, and decent dusters, as well as their own hand-towel, and two or three dish-towels. These are washed daily with the towel soap. Don't let them wear the towels or 'borrow' them, or wash the dishes with their pocket-handkerchiefs which they will do if you have not equipped your pantry properly.

With regard to their leave pay, you must begin to think about this as soon as you have decided that you are 'suited'. A week's holiday with pay is not unreasonable. You may ask your boy to find some trusted friend to do his work while he is away at his village. Perhaps he lives too far away to go home every year, and prefers to take long leave when you do. In that case his fare home will be a large item, and you and he should start saving for it in good time. You may consider that a week's or a fortnight's wages for each year's work is your fair share towards his leave. If you wish him to return to you after your long leave, he will expect a retaining fee, from half pay to full pay, according to the length of your long leave and, of course, according to local custom. Perhaps he does not want to go home, or is what the sociologists call 'detribalized', and will go to work for somebody else on full wages. That does not excuse you from his retaining fee, but you must write in his book that he is still in your employ, in order that the position is quite clear to his temporary employer. 'Masters and Servants Regulations' are usually strict about luring good servants from other people's employ. If he prefers his new place, he must of course return his retaining fee.

At the end of your time in one colony, or years hence when you retire, the servants whom you are abandoning after long years of faithful devotion will expect a large present. They may not care to work for strangers, and are hoping to retire also, and to set up a small business, or to buy a smallholding.

A friend of ours devised an admirable scheme for this contingency. When, early in his career, he discovered 'the perfect servant', he opened a Post Office Savings Account in the boy's name. Into it each month went five shillings, of which half-a-crown was, so to speak, the boy's contribution and half the master's. When I heard of the plan, it had been working for fifteen years, and there were two to go. My friend pointed out that he could not possibly afford to give that boy a cheque for fifty pounds just as he himself was getting ready to take his pension, but between them they would have saved it quite painlessly. This arrangement seems to me to be an admirable one, and might be applied to less permanent employees in places where the Post Office Savings habit is beginning to be established. Africans are not thrifty or provident as a race. The climate is not conducive to 'saving for a rainy day'. Their tribal customs often make it almost impossible for them to put aside money for their own future, or their children's, and they might take kindly to a scheme by which you and the Post Office do it for them.

One of the greatest sources of trouble in the house is the failure of your servants to understand you. Showing them how is always better than merely telling them, even if they appear to follow what you say. I must tell you the classic story of the boy who did exactly as he was told. There are several versions of it. Roast sucking pig figures in some, a large baked fish in others—and it goes something like this. Once upon a time there was a bride who was given a lovely present of a sucking pig. She hadn't the least idea what to do with it, but after consulting her books she unearthed the traditional method of cooking and serving it. Rather unwisely she decided to give a dinner party, and to trust the

boys to do *exactly as they were told.* Her command of the language was still limited to a few nouns, but with the aid of much descriptive gesture, pointings and head-shaking, she explained that the pig must be stuffed so, sewn up and roasted just so. When it came to the table it must be left whole, with a lemon in its mouth just so—and she pointed to her own mouth, with parsley between its ears, just so, and she indicated the top of her head.

It was having no pronouns that let her down, because when the great moment came, and the pig, all brown and crackling, was borne to the table on its lordly dish, the earnest boy was holding the lemon between his own teeth, and the parsley was nestling coyly in his woolly hair.

So you set about learning the language! In the newer colonies with a healthy young tradition it is considered *infra dig.* to speak English or the bastard lingoes like Kitchen Kaffir. There may be a *lingua franca* like Kiswahili for large areas, or a local language for your province or district which everyone, including your servants, is using daily. Your husband will be battling with language examinations which are efficiency bars for him. You will probably enjoy the preliminary wrestlings with grammar together, even if presently your vocabularies diverge, his into the wide fields of law and custom, yours into the homelier depths of domesticity.

I tried to pick up a smattering of our first language on board ship going out, from a primer I had bought. I did not get further than the translation exercise at the end of the first chapter, because none of the words seemed to bear the slightest resemblance to the vocabulary at the back of the book. When I arrived at my destination and confessed plaintively to defeat, I learned that all inflections in that tongue come at the beginning of the word; not a bit like the case endings to which I was used. 'Where is my baby?' for instance went: *Alikuti mwana wanga*, but 'Where is my piece of white string?' went: *Chirikuti chingwe changa chachoyera*, and it was no good looking up any of these words under 'ch', except *chingwe* (string) which governed them.

In the older colonies most servants from long acquaintance with Europeans do speak some English, or at least the pidgin variety which has developed locally. In Sierra Leone pidgin has achieved the dignity of a recognized tongue, with a grammar of sorts, and the blessing of age and custom upon it. It is still being tortured to meet new needs. I am told that during this last war anti-aircraft artillery became 'Plenty humbug steam-chicken for up', which being interpreted means 'That which annoys the mechanical fowl, or flying machine, in the air'.

I have never thought it kind or clever to speak bad English to foreigners, even my servants. If they wish to speak correctly, and most of them do, they will be glad to learn from you, and you will notice that little by little they will begin to replace their pidgin with your idioms. If you must use their crude phrases at first for clarity or emphasis, you can usefully repeat what you have said then and there in correct English. I did not encourage our Nigerian steward in the Gold Coast to say 'I pass chop' for 'dinner is served', and I was at least saved the embarrassment of a friend of mine whose boy, having served the soup, came and stood by her chair and asked quite audibly for the benefit of the whole lunch party, 'I pass water now?' Even on the other side of Africa, where I tried to speak the language, I found that if I said something to Cook in correct Chinyanja, he would reply in it without thinking, but if I garbled what I was saying, he answered me in garbled English or Kitchen Kaffir. I had, so to speak, set the standard for him.

Perhaps I am the last person to advise you about servants generally. One is told that one must choose between the slick, clever, over-knowledgeable ones who are so good at their work that you put up with their dubious characters and unpleasant personalities, and the other sort. I have occasionally employed these super-boys when my servants and their masters were on leave. Alas! I have always preferred the other sort when it was necessary to choose—boys who were devoted to me, or to the master, or the children, or the garden, or the work generally. I like people whom I can spoil a little, if they in turn spoil me a great deal, and I have doubtless been imposed upon. Yet it seemed to me the only tolerable atmosphere in a home to have nice people about, when you perforce have to see so much of them. I daresay there was some sacrifice of finesse.

I shall have a good deal to say to you sooner or later about race relationships. Theorizing and idealizing in this vast and thorny area of the sociological field can become very unreal. Your home is a microcosm of the world in which you live, and your attitude to the whole race will be determined, or at least affected, by your contact with it at first hand. You may not, of course, generalize from your narrow experience in the kitchen about the intellectual and spiritual capacities of other classes of their society who resemble them only in colour, but if you are a romantic and inclined to idealize people less fortunate than yourself, any illusions you have will be quickly dispelled by hard facts, as we are learning in socialist England. If, on the other hand, you have any class or race prejudices (and there will be plenty of people to fill you with horror stories) those too will be modified by your own cheerful experience. The people who 'hate natives' and those who sentimentalize over them are equally wrong, and incidentally equally dangerous to the colonial future.

I should perhaps finish by telling you something of our last household. I had been away from Africa for five years, and returned to the other side of it, which is different 'as East from West', and I had to learn almost from the beginning, as you are doing. It was lovely to be back! I knew I was at home as soon as we touched down at Bathurst. There was the heat, like a blanket. There was the damp smell, like the smell of fresh corn silk when you strip the leaves off a mealie cob. There once more were the smiling black faces in spotless white uniforms, padding about with trays. There at the bar were a couple of old-timers, probably mining engineers,

blue-eyed, bronzed—or was it the stain of mepacrine?—hard-bitten, and friendly. There in the corner was a cadet, resplendent and a little self-conscious in his new tropical suiting. Over in the corner at a writing-table was a dim figure in spectacles, almost hidden by a pile of green files with—ahoy!—a piece of red tape dangling over the edge.

When we went in to dinner and I saw the table decorations, a soup-plate with hibiscus heads in it, a bottle of Worcester sauce, and a salt-cellar which would not pour, I could have cried with joy. I was nearly home.

The house when I got there had four rooms in a row, with a veranda all round. We were very old and grand by now. Someone had even built on an extra room, a study for 'big master'. I was introduced to Cook, who became my friend. There was master's boy whom I have described. There was a second-boy. He was trying to get from Standard V to Standard VI in the local school. His hours were peculiar, much more of the housework had to be done before breakfast and in the afternoons. He was nephew to the steward-boy, who tolerated his absence out of duty to the family, probably took a dash from his wages for 'influence', and still expected him to do all the hard work.

There was a chauffeur who took me shopping, and introduced me to the turbulence of a West African market, and the mysteries of the bazaar. There was our precious garden-boy whom I loved as much for his merry eye, his simple Mohammedan piety and his quaint turn of speech (pidgin was new to me) as for his green thumb. We spent about four hours of every day in one another's company, so it was as well for both our tempers and efficiency that we should both enjoy it. He was a primitive type from the far, far bush, quite uncivilized, and as far as I ever gathered, quite unspoilt.

There were also, from time to time, strange youngsters whom I would discover scrubbing the kitchen while Cook went to market. Enquiries elicited only the cold reassurance that 'he belong to cook'. They may have been paying for

their apprenticeship. Certainly they were not on our pay-roll, which was as well, as it came to thirty pounds a month, or more than our entire salary when we began our time in Africa.

Recently in that colony there has been a servants' strike. They formed a Union, and drew up a manifesto. Wages were to be increased all round, and the scale determined by the salary of the employer, regardless of the skill of the employee. There was no provision for apprenticeships, no allowance for good faith and length of service, no real responsibility for one another. They appear only to have borrowed the weapons of trade-unionism at its worst, which is to get what you can, under the threat of force. All the shibboleths were trotted out, black-leg, lock-out, intimidation of the satisfied, a bewilderment of the catch-phrases. How a proper and useful union of domestic servants should work I cannot say, nor where wise leadership is to come from. It will certainly not be from the top of the profession at present, while they are still chiefly concerned with their own superior status and privileges, and their colossal wages. Here it appears is the Sorcerer's Apprentice indeed. I borrow the phrase from Elspeth Huxley, who has used it for the title of a book describing other ways in which the Africans of the East Coast are imitating European institutions without properly understanding, or being able to control them.

When I told her that I was writing to you, and asked her to tell me what every young wife should know about living in the colonies, she did not, as she might well have done, suggest that you should adopt her approach to the great sociological problems, which is intelligent, wise and well-informed. She said, without a second's hesitation, 'Do beg her to be careful about Ayahs for her children!' Then she explained the reasons for her admonition and described the pram parade in an East African town, which I shall tell you about in another letter on children generally.

7

LEISURE

You will have gathered from my last letter that making a garden in the colonies is often a necessity for food, always admirable for fresh air and exercise and desirable beyond all other forms of recreation as a source of pleasure and satisfaction, not to speak of the good and lovely things that come out of it. All the human virtues come out in a garden, too, and if the vices pop up, as they will in the best-regulated characters, surely it is in their most harmless form, only little imps of Pride and Sloth and little demons of Covetousness. Nor is a garden a lonely place, not if it is your own, and you are working in it. You will dream a lot, and talk to yourself, no doubt, and to all the growing things, especially the beetles. Occasionally the garden-boy will say, 'Madam speaking?' and you will have to laugh at yourself.

Loneliness is a very special problem for women in the colonies. You are inevitably by yourself for hours at a time, even in the settled areas. You will be cut off from your own family and your old friends, and not always inclined to make new ones. There will be few if any of the amenities and diversions of so-called civilization, and you will be thrown back on your own resources. I have asked a good many of my friends and acquaintances what to say to you in these letters, since I agreed to write them. Each of them had a separate message for you, a special enthusiasm, or a pet bogy, or a warning, as you will see, but what they all said immediately and emphati-

cally as with one voice, was 'Do beg her to keep herself happy and occupied, with a hobby, or some interest or other, or even a job!' Idleness leads to boredom, and boredom to discontent, and sometimes to actual illness.

We have all seen it in our time. Nothing is so cruelly disheartening to a man, when he is prepared to enjoy his life and his work in what is still largely 'a man's country', than a miserable wife. It spoils everything for him, his home, his leisure and inevitably his work. Nor is there much he can do for you when it is the very fact that he has an absorbing job to do for the greater part of the day, that seems to be the cause of your unhappiness.

Most government office hours are from eight to twelve and from two to four. These are the hours that you must fill for yourself, when you are alone and there is 'nothing to do'. In some colonies where extreme heat dictates, and the nature of the community permits, the statutory six-hour day is put in from seven-thirty to one-thirty without a break. Lunch is late, and officers can take a well-earned siesta with the happy thought that they need not go back to the grind any more that day. In practice, they tell me, most hard-working men regard the hours when the office is closed to the public as a splendid opportunity to get some real uninterrupted work done, and the empty offices tend to fill up with quiet toilers after hours, and on Saturday afternoons and Sundays too, if you do not take care. I mean you, in the singular, because it may be your duty, sometimes, to insist that your husband does not work too hard.

Everybody in the colonies is working too hard these days. There is so much to be done, and so little time to do it in. During the war the normal peaceful processes of colonial development came practically to a standstill, the opening-up of non-military roads, the building of schools and hospitals, housing, town planning, industrial and rural development and the guidance of social and political evolution.

Most of the young officers joined up, and such work as

could be done by those who were left was curtailed from lack of staff, or lack of material. Each task that presented itself was examined with one idea. Is this a direct contribution to the war effort? If it was not, it was as like as not shelved. The end of the war found most colonies with seven years' arrears to be made up, mountains of repairs and replacements to be put in hand, and a host of new plans waiting to be developed as soon as staff and material were available. Political development did not, of course, stand still. The healthy fermentation in society which, when it is properly handled, leavens the loaf, was bottled up like live yeast, and left on the shelf where it is ready to blow up. The political explosions in Europe and Asia had and are still having repercussions right round the world. The task of the present colonial administration is to make up the time lost in the war, to try to carry on the normal work proper to any current year, and to plan for an uncertain future in an atmosphere of political and economic unrest which adds anxiety to the normal burden of the day.

Some, but not enough, of the experienced staff have returned to duty, and the new recruits, like your husband, while they are generally considered to be made of the right stuff, will require time and experience before they can pull their weight. The result is that everybody is overworked, and if they are not, they feel that they ought to be. The specialists in the departments are clamouring for staff, for materials, and for scope, each with the passion for his own job proper to specialists. The administration, understaffed, overburdened with 'paper', tries to keep the balance, to devise policy and to see that it is carried out in circumstances that sometimes seem to change from hour to hour.

The trouble with overwork is that in the end it defeats its own purpose. It creates a vicious circle. Long hours of intense concentration, or even dogged plodding, cannot be kept up for any length of time in a climate that at its best does not help. The more the machine is driven the less thoroughly and quickly it works. The officer who carries papers home, works

late, sleeps badly and wakes feeling tired, frustrated and driven, soon becomes no good to himself, or to anybody else. That extra drink enables him to go on a little longer, and a couple of aspirins put him to sleep, but this is dangerous folly. Yesterday he and his extra work were indispensable. Today he is in bed with a temperature, or perhaps gone to hospital. His colleagues must add his burden to theirs and the pattern of vicious circles re-forms. The very people who like to say that the trouble with marriage in the Service is that it distracts men from their work now turn round and say 'What is So-and-So's wife about, that she allows him to get into such a state?'

So it may sometimes be your duty to make your husband stop, to insist that he take time off for games, to laze in the garden, to go for a picnic, to take a day or a week-end off, perhaps just quietly at home, perhaps with local leave, and to remember that no one is indispensable, especially a fratchetty and overworked official. To relax, to take proper exercise and fresh air, to read a book, to recharge spiritual batteries, to delve a little into the past—for 'time remembered is grief forgotten'—to see the present and the future in some sort of perspective, these are necessities of mental and physical health. Your husband must take time to play, for his own sake, and the work's sake, as well as for yours.

Even if he is not working the clock round, and is only putting in a normal six- or seven-hour day, you will be spending that time alone and with nothing to do unless you can devise some interest for yourself. It will surprise you to learn that in our experience we were both less lonely and bored when we were quite by ourselves on an out-station than we have sometimes been in small communities or even in the capital. The station, when you have it to yourself, begins to feel like your own private property. Your husband will of course talk endlessly of 'my' roads, my bridges, my aërodrome, 'our' council, our school, and our hospital.

May I tell you about a humdrum day on an out-station

where there is 'nothing to do'? With luck, and some seeking in the villages for a retired soldier, you may have a bugler. Reveille is sounded at six, and the flag goes up, as your early tea comes in. The sun is still behind the trees. The air is still fresh, the garden cool and dewy, and the colours of earth and sky, leaf and flower are clear and distinct before the heat and glare have blurred them. The world is still a cool and friendly place and it all belongs to you. Breakfast is at half-past seven. The routine office hours are of course strictly kept, and you are going to be alone for four whole hours. Your husband leaves for the office. You may pause for a second cup of coffee, or take it out into the garden to enjoy the early sun on your bare head, and to collect your thoughts for the day.

The house-boys are already busy in the bedroom. Cook is tidying his kitchen, or getting his bread ready for the oven, or has gone to market, and does not want to see you yet. You hope so. Garden-boy is sunning himself on the kitchen step waiting for you, but he has been hard at it watering since six so let him wait. There is a length of uncut crêpe-de-chine on your sewing-table. The mail goes tomorrow and you had hoped to answer the last of your Christmas letters this week. It is already June, so they can wait another week. Only when the sun begins to remind you gently of its power do you carry your cup in and begin your housewife's chores. Lunch, tea, dinner, breakfast. What vegetables has garden-boy brought? You explore the meat-safe and the refrigerator, open the store, fill the house-boy's tray and the cook's tray with necessaries and order the meals. There are the hens to feed, and the cat, and with luck, if you are not in tsetse-fly country, the dog.

Perhaps there is a new recipe to try, and you embark on it before it gets too hot. Perhaps cook can carry on by himself, and you can depart to the garden with a clear conscience. There are the flowers to gather and arrange even if you are saving the serious gardening tasks for after tea. The sun begins to be a bit too much presently, you hear the office tea

being arranged on a tray, and you come in from the kitchen or the garden, glad to sit down and cool off and have some tea or a cold drink yourself. Now what about that crêpe-de-chine, or those letters? Well, perhaps. Shall you darn those awful holes in your husband's socks or go on knitting his new ones? If you are darning you can put the gramophone beside you, taking care not to scratch the records with your thimble. If you are knitting, choose a straightforward pattern and teach yourself to read and knit at the same time. I am at this moment wearing a plain ribbed jersey that took me through the whole of Mr. Churchill's *Marlborough*. The Battle of Blenheim occurred just as I began to decrease for the shoulders and poor Sarah's troubles with her children finished with the end of the sleeves. Only a man could have invented Madame Defarge with her impossible woolly shorthand, but all my family's socks and cardigans have hours of reading knitted into them. Perhaps knitting and reading and music belong to the afternoon, and a more serious task is proper to a pious morning. Your conscience is your own, but it behaves awfully well on an out-station!

Your husband will come in at twelve. Perhaps you have gone out to dress the salad or see that the pudding has set. He will want a cold drink in a comfortable chair, then his lunch, and perhaps a rest before he goes back to the office. You will certainly rest, flat on your bed, and if you think you can't, you must teach yourself. It is part of the discipline imposed by hot climates. You may read if you like, and sleep if you can. An old friend of ours who had had a good deal of enforced rest in his time because of a wound from the First World War gave me a valuable piece of advice. If you are likely to fall asleep, copy the wise routine of a good nursing-home, wash, brush your teeth, and put on your nightie. You will wake up feeling really refreshed.

Perhaps there will be a quiet hour when you are awake before tea. It will be quite uninterrupted by the servants. They are neither mad dogs nor Englishmen. This is your time

for washing your hair, or setting it, time for cold cream and a manicure, and those odd jobs that importune you from the drawers and cupboards. It is a time for those letters. You will be ready for the master's return at four, changed for tennis or golf, or into something fresh for a walk or for the garden or whatever he likes best. The rest of the day is his, or his and yours, to share the tastes you have in common. You will be discovering new ones all the time, especially if you are much alone together.

When the sun sets you will come in for a bath. Perhaps you had yours early when you woke up. If you have been playing a strenuous game you will both want one. Then for those pretty, comfortable, long garments I wrote to you about before, and for long cold drinks in long chairs, and salted groundnuts. Perhaps cook has been making pastry and sends in some savouries or cheese straws for a surprise. Men like this the best of all food. If his lordship complains presently that for some obscure reason he has little appetite for his dinner and perhaps the climate is telling on him after all, do not remind him that it might be because he has just eaten a whole plateful of stuffed eggs or sardines on toast and most of your groundnuts as well as his own.

I have described to you the most humdrum of days on an out-station with your husband busy in the office and nothing for you to do. Of course that does not often happen. Tasks like ordering stores and seeds and books and records, which you might think were very occasional, hang over you pleasantly. I have in my time planned a dozen libraries before sending for half-a-dozen Penguins, and a thousand lunch and dinner parties before beginning that list that runs 'salt, vinegar, mustard, pepper, paraffin, soap, toilet paper, candles'. Again, one of the nicest things about an out-station is that your husband is not so closely tied to his office. You will be much closer to his work and to him, and the work is of absorbing interest to any intelligent adult. Much of his duty is out in his district on short tours or long ones, and where he goes you

can usually go, too. A visit to a road or a bridge or a village turns into a picnic lunch or tea. There will be times when the station closes: you pack up and go off on long tours, taking most of the comforts of home and all the office paraphernalia with you; for where he is there is the administration, and where you are, and the teacups and the gramophone, the books and the long chairs—there is home.

The feudal atmosphere of an out-station is in part created by duties for which you should be prepared. There may be a school (if there isn't, there ought to be) and the village schoolmaster will be glad of your friendship. He may be the one who is giving you lessons in the local language. He may like to consult you about equipment and text-books and English lessons for the children, and also his own efforts with correspondence courses in higher education for himself.

You might, if you could, help with the morning clinic, and a rudimentary knowledge of first aid will be useful. The morning clinic may only be a row of sufferers waiting for the master on the office steps for the routine 'Iodine or Epsom Salts?' There may be a medical orderly. He too will like you to help him if you can, especially with the women and children. We once found an out-station with its surgery consisting of a row of shelves at the end of the grain store. We left it with a home-made eight-bed hospital made of mud and thatch, in charge of a very proud orderly. On another occasion my husband removed all his court work to a comfortable circle under the flag-pole, so that the little three-sided courthouse could be turned into a school for the station children. Later we built a mud-and-thatch schoolhouse. The children puddled the bricks, the schoolmaster moulded them and the sun dried them. We all took a turn at bricklaying. The mothers gathered the long thatching grass, and there was a celebration when the roof went on. 'Wedding the roof', the Dutch people call it.

This was all very long ago. We worked by rule of thumb, the light of nature and good intentions, hoping for the best.

Nowadays you will no doubt have all kinds of help from the over-all planners, Public Relations Officers, the Mass Education experts, mobile libraries, cinema vans, surgeries and agricultural instruction units. The rule of thumb has had its day, quite rightly, and the light of nature dims beside high-candlepower expertise, but good will is always in short supply, and I hope you will have some for whatever needs your help or your initiative wherever you are.

I have been speaking, too, of life on an out-station in the sparsely populated bush country of East Africa where the people were primitive, where there are as yet too few educated Africans and where we were really alone. Life is very different of course in the so-called one-man stations of the West Coast. There you will be in or near an old teeming African town, or a Walled City. Your husband's colleagues will be educated Africans who will be his friends, and who will be invited to the house. Perhaps their wives will speak a little English, and you a little of the vernacular, and they will like to come with their husbands. They may not, if European ways are too foreign to them. They may even be in purdah. It will not be difficult to discover which is the case, and what part you are to play.

Even so, you may still be very much alone but that is not the same as loneliness. If you have time to cultivate a private interest, or indulge in a hobby, you will be the envy of your friends at home who can hardly remember, or perhaps have never known, real leisure unharassed by chores. I wonder what you will choose. One couple we knew ordered a motor car in pieces, from a catalogue, and assembled it in the compound. And it ran. Others less ambitious made those fascinating model Spanish galleons. One friend of mine worked in leather and it was profitable as well as interesting. Pottery, clay modelling and other handicrafts offer themselves to the amateur who has not the gift or courage to essay one of the arts, as Mr. Churchill did. The Colonel of our regiment (who is now a General) made wool rugs. Anybody can do *gros point*.

I met a Danish lady, during the war, on a ship bound from Durban to Buenos Aires. She had spent a lifetime in Singapore, and had worked twelve chair seats for the dining-room chairs in the house in Copenhagen to which they hoped to retire. She had finished all but the last corner of the twelfth when the Japs came. She was put into a plane, and got away to Java, but there was no room in the suitcase or 'panic bag' for chair seats. When I met her, Copenhagen was of course in German hands and her daughter was there at school. Believe it or not, when we stopped at Cape Town she went out and bought more *gros point* and sat every day in the ship's saloon, silent, polite, a little aloof with her long, long thoughts, fashioning some lovely design with her needle and bright wool.

I have been casting back through the years for things to suggest you might enjoy doing, that are not dressmaking and not writing and not reading. If you like writing you will want to keep a big diary, and a commonplace book for material, and to make your letters more than excuses for not having written before, complaints that there is nothing to say and good wishes to all at home. That is the way you begin to teach yourself to write books, they tell me. Arnold Bennett did it, and Somerset Maugham, and if Mr. Churchill taught himself to paint when he was forty, Sir Walter Scott began to write his novels when *he* was forty, so you have plenty of time for an apprenticeship if you care to begin it now.

You must find the thing that makes you happiest and see that it continues to do so. It is whether you are happy or not that matters, to you, and to your husband and to everybody in your world. It is obviously no good caring only for ballet, or symphony concerts or collecting antique furniture, or foxhunting, or fly-fishing, or any of the things that do not 'keep' or 'travel'.

If you like reading you will be well away, as I was. I hesitate to commit you to a lifetime of books, because that was my answer to loneliness, and I know that it has its limitations.

For one thing, the books give out. I belong unashamedly to the 'escape school' of readers. I have never taught myself History or French or Greek, though for twenty years they have reproached me from the shelf below the fiction. Each time we have moved they have been packed and then unpacked, and I have said to myself, 'This time'. There they still are, waiting for my sons, and probably their sons too.

I am sure I have read more trash in the last twenty years than any more or less educated adult ought to confess to. This was a taste developed when the books sent out to us as presents did give out, the new ones and the library books that came and went with the mail, and the much-read treasures we have carted about with us over three continents and an archipelago. When there was 'nothing to read'—a phrase that rings as flat as our old friend 'nothing to do'—there was always the out-station library to explore. How typical they are, how like one another! They are of course the cast-offs of one's predecessors, from histories of the Crimea to last year's best-seller. What you find are books that were not worth anyone's purloining or troubling to take away.

I remember best the library at Mumbwa because we were most alone there and I needed it most. The station was old, and the third house, from the palmy days when it was a three-man station, contained some rough shelves made of petrol boxes, with a hundred books or more, warped, smelly and chewed by ants and borers. There was a 'book of the month' of 1902 and 1906 and 1920. There were Whitaker's Almanacks, and guides to silver-fox breeding, which was much written about after the First World War. There was a dear old copy of *Freckles* and *The Four Feathers* and *The Rosary* and *Graustark*. There were glorious early thrillers by William Le Queux. In those days the wicked spy was always a Frenchman with a twirly moustache. The heroine was for ever meeting the hero in the moonlight by the sundial, with a rose at her waist. When the chase for the missing documents got really desperate, she swathed her hat in motoring veils,

he flung on a yellow duster (don't laugh, it was a long coat with capes), and roared across Dartmoor through the night at a breathtaking fifteen miles an hour. I read them all, and it was heaven.

It was at Mumbwa that I knitted my way through *War and Peace*, and the *Kreutzer Sonata*, and I read *Anna Karenina* so many times that I dare not see the film—I have made the perfect scenario already in my own mind. There was time there for *Religio Medici*, and the whole of George Meredith, once one had got the hang of him. 'Out of the smoke of his muttered enchantments, a character emerges,' as Barrie said of him. At last one had read them all, and had thumbed through even the discarded school prizes and text-books, with the crib scribbled in, of all those generations of previous District Officers. There was a Chaucer, which had some dim year's set passages marked. We carried it away, and I read it all. I remember driving my poor husband nearly demented by reading out juicy passages of wit and wisdom to him, stumbling with the scansion and quite regardless of his scowls.

Those were the days before there was a British Council. The librarian at headquarters was a kindly soul, and sent us three books every week with our mail, and the butter packed in salt, and the tin of tropical chocolates for which we had allowed in the budget. What a moment it was when the mail arrived! Sometimes it came at midnight, by lorry; sometimes, and more dependably, by carrier on foot. One shook the dry salt out of everything and plopped the butter into a basin of water to wait until it was once more firm enough to handle. The chocolates were counted out, one of each sort for each of us, two by two, and four for Sunday, leaving the marzipan to the end, the absolute end. There were the letters to read—you could read most of them through the buttery envelopes. There were the papers from another world, and the library books—a thriller, a novel and a big book. I probably finished the thriller by dinner-time. The novel might last two days,

and the big book three, but when I had finished it (or if my husband had not), down we wandered to the third house, to see if there was something to read.

It was there that we established the 'out-station test' which we still apply as a standard of criticism. Is this a book I could read twice, even on an out-station? Very few of the ones about who is in love with whom and who cares, pass the test. Others become as much a part of one's experience as one's friends and relations. I was glad I did not discover Margaret Irwin until I could read her books one after another. When I had done, it was all as vivid to me as my own girlhood. As for the people—the Queen of Hearts, Montrose, Rupert, Minette, the Electric Sofa herself, indeed the whole Stuart family—it was as if I had been staying with them. They were as real to me as my own family. I was certainly more in touch with them, if thinking about them for hours and days at a stretch is any criterion.

After John Buchan's *The Blanket of the Dark* or *Fanfare for Elizabeth* by Edith Sitwell you may find that you prefer Tudors to Stuarts. *John Inglesant* belongs to that time. Charles Morgan writes of it as 'a book to live by'. That is yet another category of criticism in which you may have already placed Charles Morgan himself. C. S. Lewis writes of George MacDonald in the same way, and Henry Williamson of Richard Jefferies.

Soon you will collect your own 'books to live by', books that pass the 'out-station test'. If you can take George Meredith's prose, Clara and Diana will join your circle of acquaintances as if they were here yesterday, or have just been transferred, and you will think of them and refer to them in your thoughts all your life. Knowing such women well is a privilege seldom offered to us in the flesh, though I do not agree that their quality, either of conduct or principle, vanished with the world in which they lived. You would not need to travel far, even in the strange world to which you are going, to find one of them, or an Emma or an Elizabeth

Bennett, or Anne Elliot. Believe me, Mrs. Elton and Mrs. Bennett and Mrs. Price, and of course Miss Bates, will soon be leaving cards with the corner turned up in your colonial card-tray.

I thought I was cured of recommending the great Victorians to the younger generation, but I see I am not. My youngest was battling with his first Sir Walter Scott, curled up in a chair with his legs over the arm, scowling and ruffling the pages. Officious mother, full of sympathy, said:

'Darling, you can skip the big black paragraphs if you like, it won't spoil the story.'

'H'm,' he growled, 'I don't mind them. It's the other bits I skip—lot of grown-up nattering.'

It is time this grown-up stopped nattering about her twenty years of voracious reading in the escape school. Perhaps your generation really likes these impressive new studies of Politics and Economics, Protein Deficiencies in the Far East and Co-operatives under the Hammer and Sickle and Fifty-seven Varieties of Factory Management. How should I know? Why is a Social History of England a best-seller? Where can we meet? Perhaps I should just leave it that if and when your world seems narrow or isolated or bleak, there *is* an escape, and you might care to try it, before you take the next plane home.

8

PLEASURE

I HOPE I have not said too much to you about loneliness. Actually, a good deal of the time you will both be complaining that you never have a moment to yourselves, and when you do you will feel rather spoilt and selfish. Once upon a time we were quite cut off from the rest of the world for four months. It was in the rains, and we learned that the road had gone in, seventy miles away, at our turn off. That was that, until our neighbour could do something about it! Not even a lorry to a distant mine had rumbled past us on the horizon. One day while we were having tea in the garden we thought we heard the mutter of an engine. It came again. Was it? Could it be? We sat still as mice until it was unmistakably a car, and then to our mutual surprise and amusement burst out with one voice, 'I hope it doesn't stop!' That is what living alone does to you.

Indeed you may find, as we did, that you sometimes feel lonelier in a small community of Europeans than you do on an out-station. Perhaps not. Perhaps you are the kind of person who likes any company rather than none, whether it is congenial or not. There are many women who seem to, and they arrange their lives accordingly. You may always be in a place where there are enough other women to enable you to get your housekeeping over by ten o'clock, and take your knitting to somebody's house for morning tea and a gossip. After lunch you rest and read a magazine. Then you give

your husband his tea, play some tennis and have a drink at the club, dine late, discuss the day's doings, play some bridge (they do play in the mornings, too, and the afternoons, and the whole week-end) and go to bed. It is conceivable that such a life yawns ahead of you for twenty years or so, and that you will never need to devise a happy occupation for yourself when you are by yourself, or turn your eyes inward or think a thought beyond Mrs. A.'s dress pattern, Mrs. B.'s recipe for drop-scones, Mrs. C.'s new hair-do, and Mrs. D.'s extraordinary laugh, and of course 'the sins of the servants and the high cost of living'. I was about to say that I cannot imagine it, but I can, because I have done it myself, now and again. I didn't find it a very rewarding kind of life but lest you think I am both anti-social and self-sufficient I am going to shock some of the more earnest of our Empire-builders and suggest that you do learn to play bridge.

The other evening one of the most attractive of our young friends from West Africa came round to say goodbye before he went away. I told him that I was writing to you and begged him for a message for Priscilla, knowing that no one is more critical, or prone to lay down the law about wives, than a nice, ignorant and popular bachelor. He was delightfully pontifical.

'Do warn her not to drink too many cocktails at parties,' said he. I do.

'Do warn her not to pig it, or to keep the house little better than a camp,' he went on, 'but to make a home.' I hope I have.

'And of course she mustn't play bridge in the mornings,' he added, as if it were the eighth deadly sin.

'Fancy that, now,' says I, very sinister.

I am sure he is one of those people who, in theory, believes in a five-day week for everybody, although I happen to know that he needs a wife to keep him from putting in an eight-day week himself. He would be the first to agree that, in theory, a day off is a good thing even for wives and mothers. Every-

modern art as they seem to be at the moment theirs is a glorious opportunity. The unschooled, unstylised, 'primitive' approach to the visual world may be to a modern Renaissance what the primitive approach to the ancient world of classic mythology and the Scriptures was to the Italian Renaissance. What an opportunity for you if you have the gift or the courage to join in the fun! You may discover in yourself an unsuspected talent that was not guessed at by the art-mistress who set you to draw perspectives, or an apple on a book. It will be worth trying, if it only develops in you an artist's eye.

If you feel that you have neither the gift nor the courage, let me recommend to you Mr. Churchill's book *Painting as a Pastime*. To your generation it will seem incredible that he once had to battle with frustration, with defeat, and with a political wilderness as bleak as any geographical one you may essay. The value of the book to you, as it was to me, may well be the creative spirit in which he attacked this very problem.

9

THE SILENT PARTNER

YESTERDAY one of our friends from West Africa came to see me. She is a London girl, a real 'city mouse' and has not, so far as I know, any special gift for music or art to enrich her life. Yet she is one of the happiest people I know, and she enjoyed her years in the farthest corners of the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast where she was often the only white woman on the station. I sat her down in a deep chair, plied her with tea, and said to her firmly, 'Now what shall I say to Priscilla?' Here was a person accustomed to every amenity of civilization, every comfort and luxury at home, who is an admirable housekeeper, a charming hostess. Incidentally she plays an excellent game of bridge. If anyone could tell you the secret of adaptability, surely here she was.

She told me that her only regret in her first tour was that her mother had given her an exquisite trousseau in dozens. Lengths of silk and lace would have given her more with which to occupy her days. She spoke feelingly of the time one spends alone. How quickly the books are read, the tasks done, and the hours stretch on and on, so easily filled with boredom, with a caged squirrel's thoughts, and with discontent. The petty troubles of house and servants loom large when there is no one to share them with in a 'man's world'. She, too, begged me to advise you to cultivate the kind of interest that will absorb you happily while your husband is away, but that can be dropped in the time it takes to fold your sewing, put a marker in your book, or your pen away.

I am to tell you not to grumble, or to wait for the master with a headful of petty annoyances to pour into his lap, especially the sins of the servants. He will have had six or eight hours of the problem of the African, and does not want to hear any more. Home at tea-time, for him, is a rest and an escape. He needs peace and quiet in an atmosphere in which everything appears at least to go according to plan. He wants to shake off care, take some exercise, or a change of work which is as good as play, or some mild gaiety or other. These you must plan and provide for him, not he for you. He has had enough for one day, without adding your entertainment to his responsibilities.

Some soldier friends of ours retired after the First World War to a farm in Rhodesia so far from their neighbours that often for weeks at a time they saw no one but each other. Every day at twelve, at the end of the farmer's long morning, the backgammon board was set out on the veranda, and the sherry decanter. He and she played one game before lunch. They kept a meticulous scorebook, and I forget which of them took the other to France with the winnings, when at last they had a hard-earned leave. Even when one stayed with them the pleasant ritual was observed. One was asked to join in, and expected to decline, so gravely did they regard this barrier they had erected against 'going bush'. Piquet would have done as well, or cribbage. It is the little gracious determination to entertain one another that counts, and in the long run it will be a matter for your devising.

I thought of those two yesterday when my friend from the other side of Africa was describing her recipe for domestic happiness. The master certainly came first in her scheme of things and I was more than a little impressed that she should emphasize the fact so strongly. It is a fact that out there the men can get along without us. It was the rule rather than the exception in years gone by, and the rule still runs that there is little we do that cannot be done after a fashion by somebody else.

We were recounting yesterday the comic things our husbands had had to do for us, and we for them, at one time or another when there just wasn't anyone else to turn to for hundreds of miles. Cutting the fingernails of your own right hand you may have mastered, but cutting your own hair is more difficult. Nursing one another in sickness goes without saying. Trying to do one another's jobs on these occasions also has its moments. I hope you will never have to pay the station wages at the end of the month, when your husband is laid low, and find that you have made such a hash of it that the piles of coins on the table have come to an end and the queue has not, and you are being stared at accusingly by those whose wages have vanished, and nobody will tell you which lot you have paid twice over and they all look alike to you. It is less distressing when your husband is trying to do one of your jobs, even if it is only draping himself with the tape-measure, filling his mouth with pins and turning up a recalcitrant skirt hem while you stand helpless and immobile on a table.

I shall never forget the first time Father bathed the baby. It was five months old, and we were on tour. It was March, wickedly hot in the sun, and I had caught a bronchial cold from getting too hot and then sitting about in the shelters which at that time of year are made of long wet green grass. When six o'clock came my temperature was a hundred and two, and baby must have its bath. The tub was brought in and set on the ground by my camp-bed. I could not lift my head, much less the baby, nor did I wish to breathe on it, so Father volunteered. Now a man has no lap. He sat on a box and put his knees together. Very bony and uncomfortable they looked in bush shorts. Then he laid the baby across them, grasped it firmly by the ankles, and reached down for the soap-dish which was also on the ground. Of course, as he leant forward, his knees sprang apart, down went baby's head, away went the soap, and up went Mother's temperature another degree or two. Only delighted chuckles from

the baby which was hanging upside down by its ankles and not at all astonished restored us to ourselves.

I remembered also the time that both my sons had whooping-cough. For weeks it seemed that when one of them was not coughing, and fighting for breath and howling with terror and distress, the other was. This went on day and night, so we made a time-table. After the children were both tucked up at six o'clock, we had a nursery supper and I went to bed at the other end of the house, with a hot drink to force me to sleep. Father was on duty until twelve, and I got five or six hours of undisturbed rest. After midnight it was his turn to sleep, and mine to wake, light the candle, hold the terrified sufferer while he fought, pacify the other who had been disturbed by the noise and was also crying and coughing and being sick, mop up, and try to sleep again. 'Those were the days', we tell one another now, when the sons retire to the kitchen to do the washing-up for us.

My friend who was here yesterday and her husband are among the closest-knit couples that I know, not so much because of the tasks they shared, as they had no children, but a kind of mental companionship that is the admiration of their friends. She was saying that it came about during the years when hers was the only white face he saw, and she the only person with whom he could discuss the day's doings in his own idiom. There was endless talk of local problems, and personalities, some headaches from headquarters, some court cases, especially the funny ones, schemes and plans for the people, and their own small essays into anthropology in action. Between them they learned when to laugh, what to puzzle over, and a good deal of what is worth while in any life you are building together.

At that point she mentioned that one of the most difficult lessons for a wife to learn is to know a good deal of what is going on, and then to forget it. You must, she went on, keep right away from the office. Nor must you have ideas of your own about the problems of the station or the department, or

if you have, you must keep them to yourself. Yours must be a domestic anonymity as absolute as purdah. To the world you reveal no more than polite attention and interested ignorance. Never, never to chime in with 'Oh, but I thought——' or 'Oh, but my husband says——'. We nodded our heads sagely over women we knew who talked out of turn. Do you remember Hamlet?

> That you . . . never shall,
> With arms encumber'd thus, or this head-shake,
> Or by pronouncing of some doubtful phrase,
> As, 'Well, well, we know', or, 'We could, an if
> we would';
> Or, 'If we list to speak', or, 'There be, an if
> they might';
> Or such ambiguous giving out, to note
> That you know aught . . . this not to do,
> So grace and mercy at your most need help you,
> Swear.

The ghost in the cellarage echoed, 'Swear'.

You may feel from what has been said that if you could adopt so difficult a role you would be no wife at all in the modern sense, but be relegated to the status of third concubine with none of her compensations. Do I hear you quoting Brutus's Portia to confound the argument? There is much that is very old-fashioned in what has been said. Some of it is as ancient and timeless as the last half of the thirty-first chapter of Proverbs, and may seem to you to be dated as Ibsen's *Doll's House* or Barrie's *Twelve Pound Look*. I have been wondering while I have been recounting to you these pearls of ancient female wisdom whether I need put them down at all, whether they have a special application to Colonial Civil Servants' wives, or whether it is just 'what every woman knows'. You would not need to go out to the colonies to learn that women who gossip and discuss their husbands' affairs, especially the personalities and incapacities of his colleagues,

can be a menace to the community. Perhaps it is only diplomats, or politicians, or dons, or schoolmasters or clergymen, the professions that are a life rather than a skill or a job, that require the kind of wife who is her husband's silent partner.

Maybe at this point I should recall another couple we knew, who did not make a go of things. When she finally gave up the unequal struggle to enjoy life with him nobody felt that it was altogether her fault. He was a throwback to the *Kinder, Kirche, Küche* school of husbands, and from some curious idea that his status as a man of affairs was enhanced by an atmosphere of sacrosanctimony, he never told his wife anything about the work, even on an out-station! She was a wiser and kinder person than he was, not at all stupid or inclined to gossip, even if there had been anyone to gossip with. After a little she found him out, that there was little behind the façade of self-importance except an enormous self-conceit, and like the stuffed lion and the light and the voice in *The Wizard of Oz*, that was the end of that story.

You will see at once why you will be closer to your husband and his work when you are on an out-station. There he is working with the people. At headquarters he will be working with paper and problems and policy and politics. I do not think that women are on the whole much interested in the machinery of officialdom, administrative methods, files, red tape, the paraphernalia of a bureaucracy or even the interplay of personalities that forms so large a part of the office work of the Service. We are on the whole more practical than men. Matters of policy determined at the centre only begin to interest us when they reach the circumference, affecting the day-to-day lives of individuals we know—real families, real schoolchildren, real sick people in hospital beds, real shopkeepers and taxpayers and debtors and sinners and saints. These often seem to be a very long way from the high levels at which policy is determined, and you are unlikely to know or care 'what went on at the office today'.

I have said perhaps too much about the extent to which you will share one another's interests. It varies of course with every individual, and with every couple, whether there is a marriage of true minds or not. The one I was hearing about yesterday may be unusual. The importance of real companionship in the colonies arises from the fact that there is so little 'laid on' for women to enjoy on their own. It is also true that there is a large body of opinion, vociferous and powerful, that holds that women are much better kept in their place, which is a negligible one in what is still a 'man's world'. Indeed, many people hold that women have no place in the colonies at all, and for what appears to them to be a very good reason, borne out by years of experience. In the days when the Empire was ruled by men on their own they sank into the life of their district, made friends among the people, and spent the hours after the office was shut learning the language and using it, learning the customs of the people, sitting over the camp fire or over the cups exploring the byways of alien cultures. They knew everything that was going on in the country, the gossip of the market-place, where So-and-So had made his fortune, why this ruler was a Catholic and that one a Mohammedan, and whose stubbornness in the face of change was conditioned by a powerful mother-in-law.

Older folk in the administration will tell you with regret that the advent of wives like you, who provide the domestic paradise I have been describing, has taken the officer away from his people, to the great detriment of the quality of British rule. You provide a cave, my girl, a lovely comfortable cave, and an escape. Instead of asking his colleagues, both African and European, to tea or drinks or dinner out of sheer loneliness, it is so much nicer for your husband to have you all to himself, to get away, and to forget it all—and that will not do, either!

No sooner is the office shut, the cash locked up and the files put away than another facet of this life I have been talking

about comes to light. It is now that your house is open to his colleagues, both black and white. A man who has been banging on your husband's table in the office and telling him just where to get off, may, if he is the right sort of person and you are a tolerable sort of hostess, wander vaguely and sheepishly up to the house just to show that there is no personal ill-feeling. He may even be ready to admit that his particular point of view, although it seems to be the reason for his existence—indeed he is prepared to die for it (or to write to headquarters, which is almost as devastating)—can be made to fit into circumstances over which nobody on the spot has any control. Perhaps there is a way out, or a way round, and it will be discovered at the bottom of the garden, or the bottom of the cup. I do not mean to write as if the administration were the whole story. It is less and less so as specialized techniques multiply and divide. What I have said applies equally to the departments. Technical experts are very properly entrenched in their special projects. They will tell you that they are paid to be narrow and hidebound. They would not dream of hazarding an opinion or taking a risk, on paper or in the office, but they are really useful, and they know it, in proportion to their accessibility as people, not only to their own staff and colleagues, but to their neighbours.

A committee in an office, so they tell me, is a formidable affair, each member entrenched in his special subject, bound by professional loyalties not to yield an inch. The same people round the fire, or under the trees, talking cricket scores or the news from home or the remedy for lumbago, and sooner or later the business of the day, become persons, with hopes and fears and worries, kindnesses and shynesses of infinite concern to themselves and of interest to anyone who likes just people. Not that they should be encouraged to talk shop—just allowed to if they wish. Especially doctors! You will notice that your medical officer, unless he is a close personal friend, seldom asks you how you are, in case you tell him. He, too, has had a long day in his surgery and is tired of bodies

and their woes. Our first and dearest doctor friend told me once that he dare not go into the bar at the club, except with a face of iron. Too many people would sidle up to him, or hail him with 'By the way, doc.—' and expect an impromptu consultation over a drink.

The Public Works Department is equally vulnerable, as I have said, apropos of repairs and furniture and other domestic comforts which are incidentals to you, but the daily grind to them. Agricultural Officers frequently know little and care less about what they ponderously refer to as horticulture or arboriculture, and it means that they are probably the only folk who are *not* happy to talk about your garden with you. The men of law may not discuss court cases even if the daily papers are blazing with them, and policemen must not discuss crime. Nor will the Customs Department tell you about the comings and goings at your port of entry, or the Commissioner of Income Tax reveal his mysteries. Mercutio tells us that only Queen Mab can induce the professions to disclose their secrets and their dreams, and then it is in uneasy sleep. As for Senior Administrative Officers who hold the keys to transfers, promotions, leaves, and privileges of all sorts, they are cloaked in official invisibility on social occasions—or they would like to be. One must never, *never* talk shop to them.

I was a little depressed at the end of our tea party yesterday, wishing I had never agreed to write to you. So much of what we were saying was negative that you would never have guessed that we had both spent long happy years in a world we both found romantic and rewarding. Neither of us would have changed places with the rich or the secure or the humdrum stay-at-homes. What you will make of all I have said, I dare not think. If I have a pretty shrewd idea of the capital your husband will make of it, let us agree to give him his quiet fun with a good grace.

According to this gospel, you must be serene, reposeful and silent, but also chatty and stimulating. You must be happy to be alone, yet glad to put everything aside and be at anyone's

disposal. You must be interested in the work, and yet a refuge from it, knowing nothing and yet everything about it. You may shed the light of your charming personality on the company, but more often sink into a shadowy corner, still, anonymous and non-existent, concerned that these creatures are fed and refreshed, with everything arranged so that your triumphs are unnoticed and you are utterly taken for granted. You may be witty, but you must never be unkind, a depository of gossip and a spreader of none, fascinated by roads and drains and court cases all about a goat, indifferent to nothing but your own concerns. Does this seem like an echo from an older world of 'women and children last'? The colonies are still remote in time and space from the world you know in which husband and wife both have jobs, and both share the domestic duties in the time that is left over from wage-earning, as many of your friends in England are now doing. Your husband is 'the master', the work is his life. You really are going to a man's world in which you will be very much the lesser half of this imperial partnership.

What will also seem strange to you after a girlhood in war-time England, and some experience of the post-war existence without servants, is that although you now command half a dozen pairs of willing hands and are thus relieved of the actual drudgeries of cooking and cleaning and queueing, merely running a house is presumed to be a full-time job, the be-all and end-all of your feminine existence. You will be equally surprised that it does take so much time and spirit when the actual work is done by others, partly because you ought to be able to do most of this work twice as well, in half the time, yourself. Your mother's generation, with its vociferous nostalgia for the days when they had a full complement of domestics, have perhaps forgotten to tell you all they did do in the days when they hardly saw the stove and the sink. If you have ever read *The Elizabethan Home* by Muriel St. Clare Byrne, or Robert Graves's *Wife to Mr. Milton* which describes an Oxfordshire farm in the seven-

teenth century, or Mr. Pepys's Diary, or *The English House-wife in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century* by R. M. Bradley, you may have some inkling of the occupations of a woman who was 'merely' a wife and mother, in the days when her duties were largely 'administrative'. The herb-garden, the still-room, the surgery, the cellars, the pantry and the linen-room constituted her domain, and it was not inconsiderable, nor was there a tin-opener to be found in it.

Something of the flavour of that life remains in the far corners of the Empire, even where a tin-opener is a most valuable piece of kitchen equipment. I was reminded of it one day with a pleasant sense of shock when our Colonel's wife, a dainty little person, always impeccably *soignée* and fashionable, remarked as we took our places at the bridge-table, 'Bill and I turned a pig into hams and bacons before breakfast this morning'.

Have you ever read *Anthony Adverse*? It is a book that passes the out-station test. It is of a more than comfortable length, and I commend it to you. There is, in the ninth book, chapter sixty-four, a description of the duties of the mistress of Silver Ho, the great house of a sugar plantation in colonial New Orleans. There were twenty house-servants and over a thousand slaves in the compounds. One might imagine that the lady of the manor had nothing to do. The author remarks rather severely, 'She did not divide her life into separate compartments of unpalatable labour, bored leisure sweetened by frantic amusement and exhausted rest', and again, 'Neither did it occur to her that she had the "job" of running the house'!

In the course of describing in fascinating detail the Southern hospitality that has long since become proverbial even in hospitable America, and the secondary industries, spinning and weaving, candle- and soap-making, doctoring, nursing and account-keeping that were part of the life, the author writes, 'In her room there was a keyboard with a hundred and eighty-three keys on it. With the use of each,

and with their combinations, she was familiar. With this "keyboard" she played upon Silver Ho as upon a splendid instrument, providing those complicated domestic harmonies which are seldom even noticed until discord ensues.'

I have been told that the late Hervey Allen was staying at Government House in one of our West Indian colonies while he was writing *Anthony Adverse*. The life there would not be strange to him, for he was a Southerner and the deep south is still very colonial in atmosphere. It is more than a little obvious from the characters he drew that he preferred leisurely, 'feminine' women, to whom home-making is a sufficient life, to the crisp, modern North American types who consider themselves unfulfilled if they are not managing a house, administering a nursery, expressing their individualities by doing a job, perhaps estimating their value to the community by the size of their salary cheques, and of course doing a good deal of intensive social work for the less fortunate in their spare time. His prejudice is a respectable one even if one does not entirely share it. It will be a very long time, dear Priscilla, before you have a splendid instrument to play on, but I like to think that even your first one will be a 'well-tempered clavier'.

10

LIVING ON YOUR PAY

I CAN imagine that after my last letter you are already saying to yourself, or to your husband, 'That is all very well! If I were mistress of Silver Ho, I too could play on it as if it were a splendid instrument. There is nothing I should like better than to have the money and the facilities with which to create a lovely home, with guest-rooms rarely empty, and "menus from the products of the place, ample, elastic, well-cooked and dainty", as the book so glibly puts it. I, too, should like well-trained servants, a well-stocked larder, and no part to play except the lead, the lady of the manor whose task is to conjure up new and lavish ideas, knowing that they will be carried out to the letter!'

Actually you will be playing not only the lead, but stage manager, props, scene-shifter and mistress of the robes, as well as producer and accountant, and the stage setting is so very different! The house is small and will be for a long time. The servants are raw and you will not be able to afford the expensive well-trained ones for years. Food is costly and difficult to come by. Still you may be expected to provide hospitality, both casual and formal, not only for your neighbours, but for an endless stream of visitors, official and unofficial, and on very meagre pay.

No doubt you and your husband have already made a budget. So much for wages, so much for instalments on a car,

II

OPEN HOUSE

WELL, there we were, back again, to the question of hospitality, and I am afraid it is the skeleton in the colonial cupboard that makes it almost impossible for any of us to live on our pay. As it is going to be one of your major problems, affecting your leisure, your pleasure, and your domestic contentment, indeed your whole attitude to life in the Colonial Service, I should perhaps go into the whole question with you.

Hospitality is such a precious commodity that it must not be allowed to disappear in a world of austerities. The evolution or devolution of the very word evokes pictures of kindness and cheer that are part of the fabric of our civilization. Hospitium, hospitaller, which is a very order of chivalry, hospital, hostel, hostelry, hotel, hospitable, hospitality; they sound lovely until you are expected to provide them all! We are told that hospitality has practically disappeared in post-war England, yet only the other day your mother said to me as we scrounged in the cupboard for a tin to make a supper party with, 'When you do ask people to a meal nowadays, it is a real compliment. They know what it entails in the way of contrivance and sacrifice and it is the more appreciated.' So it should be in the colonies.

It is the colonial tradition that makes American hospitality such a byword even in these days. Similarly, one of the good effects that proximity to South Africa has had on their

northern neighbours is the custom of open house to wayfarers. There is a charming Afrikaans phrase for it that means 'food and shelter for man and beast', recalling the days of the pioneers. It used to mean chimney-smoke on the horizon, a roof, a stockade, a light in the window, an island of safety and kindness in the uncharted wilderness. It was not so much a matter of entertaining visitors. The woman of the house was merely always ready to lay an extra place at table, offer a bath, a bed with clean sheets, medicines and comfort to anyone who came.

I remember a South African Dutch-Reform missionary's wife telling me that when she came to Nyasaland as a bride in the early years of the century, the fact was impressed upon her that in hot countries she must always be prepared to have a bath ready for travellers. Her first caller was the local trader, who kept a bush store. He had probably not seen a white woman for many months, but he dug in the recesses of his memory for what is done on these occasions, and arrayed in his best shirt and shorts, with his hair wet and plastered down, his hat brushed and pinched into some semblance of shape, presented himself shyly on the *stoep*. Mrs. Pauw, equally shy and desperately anxious to do the right thing, said 'How do you do? Won't you come in? Will you have some tea? Would you like a bath?' I thought of her not so long ago when a friend came to tea in my London flat, in the middle of the July heat-wave, hot, tired and dirty after a long day of shopping. She gratefully accepted a bath while I was getting tea ready.

That was the kind of hospitality that each of the countries with a tradition of pioneering claims as its own—America, both south and north, South Africa, Rhodesia, and I have no doubt Australia and New Zealand too. It began to decline in Europe as Europe became more 'civilized'. I have been wondering while I have been writing where in the long history of English hospitality the colonial variety does come. There is something of the whole story to be found if you look

at it. The earliest safety and shelter of castle and monastery in the Middle Ages survives in out-stations and missions. It is odd to reflect that domestic hospitality began to fade in England almost in direct proportion to the ease with which one could get about the country, and perhaps it will be true of the newer countries too. Some of it vanished centuries ago with fortified houses. More went with the improvement of roads and the establishment of coaching inns, more still with the advent of railway hotels, and now, since the last war, it has all but vanished, together with resident domestics and full larders. I have before now recalled with amusement the practice of Jane Austen's day when someone came to tea with us in Africa and stayed for six weeks! The tradition of private hospitality is still so strong in the colonies that it is a very risky venture for anyone to open a small hotel. To all intents and purposes such things do not exist on the West Coast, and they are rare enough on the other side.

In West Africa there is a system of rest houses with a caretaker, provided primarily for government servants. There the tired wayfarer repairs, to spend a dreary evening alone, trying to read by lamplight until the flying creepies drive him under his net. It seems a very bleak practice to those accustomed to the hospitality of the East and South. As you may be expected to provide a good deal of that from the day you unpack your new tea-cups and sherry-glasses until the day you retire, you may well ask whether it is a necessary evil, or a ghost from the past that should be exorcised with bell, book and candle, or a vital and pleasant part of the life on which you are embarking and on which you should have some sort of perspective. I think it is a little of all three.

You will find a certain amount of casual 'cutlet for cutlet' entertaining among your friends and neighbours. That is a vulgar phrase for an old-fashioned habit of the middle classes which has almost vanished from the world in which you grew up. It is almost as dated as being 'at home on first Thursdays'. It survives in the colonies but it is a manageable item

on the programme. You can at least ensure that at your house 'pot luck' means what it says and that any temptation to display or emulation of the great, or competition with your contemporaries is strangled at birth. Cocktail parties, or 'sundowners', are more than the prevalent fashion with which you are familiar. They are the custom of the country, a tradition in the family so to speak, like a nice old wicked uncle. Nor are they in the least like the dry-sherry-and-an-olive parties which you have been attending. Because of the climate, and the consequent 'sundowning' habits of your predecessors, taken together with the recent fashions among the young about which I do *not* need to tell you, they can become quite lavish, expensive and unmanageable affairs unless you take care. These two categories cover, so to speak, the give and take of ordinary social life. Over them you will have some control.

What is the 'official' entertaining over which you seem to have no control? Well, to begin with, if you are on an out-station, your Governor, or the Colonial Secretary, will probably visit the station once a year, as will the heads of some of the departments. Your Provincial Commissioner drops in more often, and if he doesn't, he jolly well ought to. The auditor used to come once a year, unless he had been sent for like a fire-engine because the accounts had got into a muddle. Nowadays if he is busy training the Native Authority to keep their accounts, he, or one of his minions, will come more frequently. If there are labour troubles, or a crime wave, if there are experiments, or projects afoot in the realms of Forestry or Agriculture or Industrial Development or Public Relations, the experts will descend in succession, sometimes hardly giving you time to change the linen.

Very welcome they all are, too, provided that there is an occasional let up, and provided that the expense is not a souring anxiety to you. In some colonies a tactful scheme has been devised whereby if the traveller is staying with a brother officer, a suitable sum is deducted from his travelling

allowance which his host can claim from Government. In one capital that we know, where there is an acute shortage of housing and decent hotel accommodation, whenever guests of Government are billeted in private houses a sum which does not always cover the expense can be claimed by the host. You need not feel that your hospitality is 'for sale'. No question of profit arises. Far from it. You are simply helping to make the wheels go round. Travelling, visiting 'the field', establishing contacts that often incidentally turn into lasting friendships—all go towards improving the quality of government generally, serving to break down all kinds of misunderstandings and the cramping division into water-tight compartments which is the curse of bureaucracy.

In the old days when travelling was difficult and leisurely, the Governor's visit was the great event of the tour. You probably evacuated your house so that His Excellency could have a comfortable bed after a bone-shaking journey, a proper bath, and the deep chairs suitable to his age and station. You and your husband retired to a tent. Your servants were replaced by his. Probably as a result your servants sulked in the compound, refusing to co-operate with the hostile strangers in their domain, or else they greeted old friends in the entourage with whoops of joy, and the work for the lordly ones became a kind of minor adjunct to a domestics' jamboree, which was equally trying.

Your efforts to facilitate the smooth running of the kitchen department consisted of furtive visits to the pantry to explain local sources of supply, or the lack of them, and to give out yet another tin. Presently you reappeared at your own front door, calm and tidy, as if you had not a care in the world, a guest in your own house, tactfully oblivious of all domestic contretemps, surprised and pleased, you hoped, at all that was set before you. Sometimes if the cortège was making a grand tour, it was practically self-contained as to stores, linen and china. You dined with the Governor, and he with you. It was all very formidable, and stately—and valuable.

Some of the informality that has overtaken all society since the First World War has crept out to the colonies in recent years. I have heard of a Governor who asked if he might be given the spare room like any other guest. The difficulty might be to provide him with a sitting-room that is not a passage for you and your staff, that is not cluttered up with your possessions, and in which he can work at his mountains of papers, or meet people privately, or just rest and be quiet and alone which he probably longs to do. The aide-de-camp is there to help you to make all arrangements. He is also the one you consult about time-tables and menus and other details.

A proper aura of royalty surrounds the King's Representative. It will tax all your skill and charm to rise to these occasions, nor is it the least use my telling you not to be over-anxious. One just is, until one has grown old and used to them. I may say, however, *don't* appear to fuss, *don't* apologize for your shortcomings or the servants' and *don't* try to cut a dash! Don't imagine that your husband's career depends on any impression of grandeur or elegance you may make and that all is lost if the soufflé falls or the jellies melt. Domestic disasters are an old story even to Governors. It is a safe bet that if you are not very careful to be *very* calm and matter-of-fact, the servants will go to pieces. This is certainly not the time to fluster Cook with new recipes, or the table-boy with much alteration in the routine to which you have trained him. What will be particularly trying is that when you have commanded your safest recipe, one that Cook has produced a hundred times without a failure, he now proceeds to lose his head. Imagining that he must do something very posh and peculiar for such a great occasion, he puts in not only twice as much effort but also twice as much butter or baking powder or anchovy essence to make the dish twice as good, and the result is a quite unpredictable ruin. The great thing, if you can manage it, is to be able to do your best and then to relax, to be yourself and to enjoy yourself. It will come with time, and practice.

decide that the social life of the community has become too rigidly official, and that it is time to give it a shake, to cut through the barriers of age, station and salary levels, to mix people up and infuse a little friendliness and informality into a society that has become dreary and artificial. How shall they begin? With a pin, or names in a hat, or the alphabet, like the telephone directory, A to D, E to K, L to R, S to Z? Chasms of envy and jealousy will have been opened by them, all unwittingly. Woe betide them if they chance to ask the A.'s to dinner twice before they have remembered the M.'s, or the Methodists before the Presbyterians, or the Bank before the Company. Favouritism is the least of the charges that will be levelled at them. The favoured guests may also find themselves criticized for being the spoilt darlings of the great, and come to feel that they are paying dearly among their contemporaries for being, perhaps unconsciously, singled out. Only too frequently disgruntled officials are set to wondering whether a certain promotion was accelerated because of a more intimate acquaintance. Those passed over reflect bitterly that they might have been the lucky ones if they had been better known. It is probably far from true, but it is more consoling to wounded pride than the real reason.

A senior official or his wife, who chances to hear that some carelessness, or even some act of kindness has been misinterpreted, and has caused real pain and bitterness in some undreamed-of quarter must often wish to sink into the blissful anonymity, the decent obscurity and relative privacy of a London bus. For years their clothes, their manners and their home life have been held up in the light that beats upon a throne. Their remarks are quoted and misquoted, their tastes and attitudes criticized, and, what is worse, copied. Their house has been treated as an hotel, their comings and goings scrutinized by everyone. It is true that they may be enjoying, temporarily, some hard-earned domestic comfort, even luxury, but over them Retirement is already casting its long shadow. They will be lucky indeed if after a lifetime of

distinguished service they have saved enough money to enable them to buy a house and to furnish it, to pay their taxes, and to employ a domestic to dust and wash up, carry the coals and do the boots for them. I need not tell you that living in England on a suddenly reduced income is not easy in these days for those who essay it unprepared, and who remember the comforts of the pre-war world you have heard so much about. A pension used to be taxed as 'Unearned Income'. Whatever it is or is not, *Unearned* is not the word for it.

Their problems will not be yours for many years to come, but the standard they set will be there for you to judge and to conform to or not, and to that extent it is your business. I am woefully aware that I appear to be doing the very thing we all deplore. I am gossiping with you about your elders and betters, their private lives and their practices in the matter of entertainment. After some years in the Service, and some practice in changing the subject without actually saying 'Let's mind our own business, shall we?', I approach this matter with more than a little reluctance, fortified by the hope that one young woman may stop to reflect on the facts before she joins the chorus of criticism.

If your seniors are snobbish, pretentious and extravagant, for goodness' sake don't think that you must imitate them. The old Indian Civil Service used to call such people 'Beggars on Horseback'. It is a beastly term, and was applied, I believe, to those who were trying to leave their humble origins behind them. Perhaps they were employing servants for the first time and enjoyed nagging them and ordering them about. They were supposed to derive some compensatory satisfaction to inbred feelings of social inferiority by being very 'proud and great'. Here, in new surroundings, they could wallow in official snobbery, pride of purse and of precedence, race prejudice, and all the other luxuries of the *nouveaux riches* that are comic on the stage or at home where they are seen in proper perspective, but which are sheer

poison in the colonies where the perspective is upset by distance and an exotic background.

If your senior lady is unassuming, unpretentious, given to good works, if she dresses simply and entertains modestly, I do hope you will pay no attention to those who say she doesn't know the ropes or is not doing her stuff, or is not living up to her position. One end of the scale is illuminated by a story told of a small provincial headquarters. The senior lady sent down to the store one morning for two tins of asparagus. By lunch-time it was common property that there was to be dinner for eight. *Who was being left out?* At the other end of the scale is the better known fact that a candidate for a governorship accepted his post with the condition that he should be paid no salary at all. If his Government would pay the bills of the establishment, for which he was prepared to account as if it were any other item of public expenditure, his small private means would thus be left intact against his retirement, and not be squandered along with a salary and allowances, in the public service.

Perhaps this pitiless discussion of the problems and responsibilities of senior officials is not so far in the future for you as it was for us in our day. Not long ago we met some young people who were on leave after their first tour. They came round to see us one evening and I asked them how they liked the Service and the life. They told us frankly that the cost of living had been the only blight on an otherwise happy and interesting tour. It seems that in their case some convulsion in staff arrangements, some congestion of accumulated leaves and sick-leaves had rocketed the young man into the anomalous position of Cadet-acting-District Commissioner. Because of the war, the numbers of officers of eight or ten years' service is very small in all the colonies, and Government in this case was doubtless glad enough that a cadet who had been an army officer was equal to the emergency.

It was a busy station. There was much coming and going of official visitors, and they were expected to provide hospi-

tality for them. At that level in the administration there is no fixed salary attached to any post, nor did the young man receive half the difference between his pay and the pay of the officer whom he was replacing, as he might have done if he were acting for the head of a department. It was a conundrum, and I was prepared to be more than sympathetic with them. We have done the same sort of thing ourselves in our time, not wisely, but too well. To my surprise, and candid admiration, I learned that although they had worried a good deal, they had actually done the trick. I asked her, with you in mind, how they managed.

It seems that the people for whom they were acting were the type we all know and like so well. Drink and good cheer flowed through the house, parties were frequent and lavish, and the senior lady by precept and example declared that it was the done thing, carped ruefully at the parsimony of the salary scales, grumbled at their own overdraft and, with some parting shots about pulling one's weight and isn't life difficult, took herself off, leaving our young friend with a pretty problem. She and her husband are older and wiser than most of their year, and they have courage and a sense of realities born of a not too easy war. They made a careful budget, actually stuck to it and didn't talk about it. She makes her own clothes, and what she saved in that column went over cheerfully into the entertainment column for the good of the cause.

And it was a good cause. Governments do have periodic attacks of staff shortage, and this one was no doubt relieved to find a newcomer who could pull so much weight. It was also an opportunity for a young man to shoulder responsibilities more proper to his age than to his status. He probably enjoyed himself and was glad to have the kind of wife that made it possible.

Food was relatively cheap and plentiful. Therefore they decided to limit themselves to small lunch and dinner parties. I was told that for one period of three months during an

the fish-boy themselves and sent him on to you with a note saying, 'Don't pay him more than a shilling', in case he tries to exploit a newcomer. These people will be your friends in the oldest and best sense in that they know all about you and like you just the same. Such friendship is an admirable discipline for you or for anyone, and it is so useless to try to be anything but yourself, to be affected or pretentious or unreal, that it was probably silly of me to mention it.

The only other aspect of this living in glass houses which is different, and intensified under an alien sun, is the fact that some of your husband's friends and colleagues will be local people. To these you are more than just a brother Civil Servant and his wife. You will be judged by them as typical of your race. In you, so to speak, they will be looking for the evidences of the fine flowering of two thousand years of the Christian civilization which they have had held up to them as an ideal. Your every fault of mind and heart will be a reflection not only on your birth and breeding and education, as it would be at home, but on the nation and the race of which you are an example. You know how it is when you are abroad, how jealously you regard the behaviour of your compatriots even in an hotel or a railway station lest they betray some lack of consideration or breach of manners for which you as their fellow-countryman do not wish to blush. Like other foreigners, the peoples to whom you and your husband are still representative of an alien authority will be unable to make fine distinctions to explain or excuse your failings. Any good opinion they hold of you will be credited to the race to which you both belong, the human race. Any fault will be debited to your colour and your nationality. So you will often be deterred from careless unkindness lest you cast a very long reflection on your forebears, and undo the good work of your immediate predecessors and their wives who have been building up a happy relationship with the people.

The wives of the men in the Services have been much dis-

cussed of late, in these days when the quality of British rule throughout the world is in the limelight. Far too much has been said of the Beggars on Horseback and not nearly enough of the Silent Partners who not only made it possible for their men-folk to carry on, but made direct contributions themselves to the welfare and happiness of the communities in which they lived. I have met dozens of them, and loved and admired them, and tried not to let them down, and so will you.

Novelists and playwrights who descend upon the outposts in search of scenery and fresh copy pass them over and make great capital of the funny bunnies and the incongruities of this our life. The artificialities are immediately obvious to any visitor from an older world. What a romp they do have at our expense! Their comedies are uproarious and the tragedies pitiful indeed. If, when we read them, we are occasionally led to see ourselves as others see us, we may be excused for retorting that the authors and journalists do not penetrate very deeply into the life, nor can they understand all the factors from which they have lightly skimmed the material for a good story. One could write a yard or two of nonsense from their titles alone, or string them into verse or set them to swing, if one were so minded. The rains came and the sun was my undoing. There have been many inventions about the day's work, the traffics and discoveries from which spring plain tales of the hills. Mandoa! Mandoa!! What a scoop to make black mischief under a jacaranda tree by the lake of the royal crocodile. Cosmopolitans are creatures of circumstance east of Suez. Murder at Government House anticipates more goings-on in a walled city. A clever American glances behind God's back and a scientific Englishman takes an Africa view. Africa drums, Africa speaks and Africa dances, Africa notwithstanding! We are still waiting for an account of God's stepchildren north or east or west of the Victoria Falls, and for the story, comparably autobiographical, of a tropical African farm. Perhaps we must wait a

generation or two for a native voice to cry the beloved country. No one from the outside really reaches the heart of the matter.

Have you ever watched anyone pan gold? Perhaps you will try it yourself one day. You take an iron pan, like a deep skillet without a handle. Then you scoop a panful of gravel and water out of a stream bed. Almost any stream in Africa will do. Then you roll the pan from side to side, and shake it up and down slowly and deliberately, allowing some of the water and the lightest of the dirt to slop over the side with each shake. The wrist movements are exactly like the ones you will often use when you are washing dubious butter or taking the red skins off roasted groundnuts. When the pan of gravel is nearly empty—and it begins to get exciting at this point—you watch for a tell-tale gleam among the heavy stuff at the bottom. At length the gravel is all but gone, and you may pick out a minute speck of gold with a pair of tweezers if you happen to have one handy. Far too many books about the colonies are like that. A casual panful of water and soil scooped out from anywhere, a good deal of slop, and shock and noise, and when all is gone a grain of truth remains as a residue. It is what they call 'pay dirt', but it is hardly worth the trouble. Serious gold-mining is a very different affair. I will not labour the metaphor beyond saying that the real pay-load is usually found a long way beneath the surface, and it takes time and experience to extract it. No writer has yet struck a deep shaft into our colonial life.

I should like to tell you the story of the wife of one of our first D.C.'s, not because she founded schools or built hospitals or sat on dozens of committees. She was much too humble and ordinary and matter-of-fact for that. Nor does she merit a volume of Life and Letters like Gertrude Bell or Mary Kingsley, or even an entry in a sociologist's notebook. Indeed, she was a South African with a good deal of inherited prejudice against what is called the advancement of the African. It would no more have occurred to her to give him a

higher education or the franchise than to give a loaded revolver to a child, and she did not mind saying so to modern young things like us with different ideas. She had her own tradition about dependants, and the best way of improving the African which she practised with admirable fidelity.

When I knew her, her cook and her head house-boy, who adored her, had been with her all her married life, and would be retired at the end of their service with a generous pension. Each year, however, she took on two new small-boys from the bush. At the beginning they earned, and were worth, five shillings a month with their food and clothes and soap. One of them was kitchen-boy, and learned to cook. The other was second house-boy. At the end of a year's apprenticeship their wages had risen by a shilling a month, and when the new cadet arrived from England, she was prepared to hand on to him the nucleus of a trained staff worth a pound a month each, knowing that he would be well fed and cared for by two decent, cleanly, skilled, self-respecting servants. 'That is my contribution to African education,' she would remark to me severely, and as she was prepared to start the weary business of training two raw beginners every year, I could only be humbly silent with respectful admiration.

She was just an ordinary District Officer's wife, a trained nurse who had dashed home to England at the beginning of the First World War to do her bit. She married one of her patients and at length they returned to the Colonial Service, to 'the black north', as it was then called, glad to be alive, and together. She was a topping person, in the slang of her day, small and redheaded, stout and merry. I might have put her into my letter about clothes, especially hats. Hers was a swathed helmet, or sometimes an ancient terai belonging to her husband. In either she looked like the enchanting animated mushrooms of Walt Disney's 'Nutcracker Suite' in *Fantasia*. I might have mentioned her apropos of gardens. Hers was always a tapestry of colour and succulence.

They had had two babies. She lost one from stepping through an ant-eaten bridge over a bush stream. The other was delivered prematurely, with great difficulty, by an untrained missionary, hundreds of miles from a doctor or a hospital, again, in the rains. She survived the ordeal, but there never was a next time, for better luck. Her grave is in a sandy sun-scorched cemetery near the Zambesi, and I hope there is purple salvia growing on it. She would perhaps like to be remembered as the woman who took the first salvia-roots north of Broken Hill. We were wandering about her garden one morning admiring the long grey-green fronds tipped with sprays of soft mauve blossom, when she told me the story. I believe all the stations up in the Wemba country have it now in every garden. It is nice to think it all grew from her plants.

It seems that she and her husband had returned late from leave. They spent Christmas in the capital and then started off on their long trek north from the railhead at Broken Hill. Six weeks of it, twenty miles a day, and an empty station waiting for them. They had a supply of flour and sugar with them in sacks to last for three months, until more could get through. There was also a lovely present of salvia-roots from Government House garden in another bit of sacking. It certainly did not need daily damping at that time of year. It rained every day, but mostly after four o'clock when they were safe in camp, and so it wasn't too bad at all.

Except for one night. They had been delayed on the march, and when they got to the lake shore the canoes had vanished. It was too late to recall them and to cross over to the prepared camp-site on the opposite shore. For miles behind them lay marsh and long grass, shoulder-high. There was nothing for it but to camp in their tracks, to wait for the rain, and the night, and the morning, and the canoes. Unfortunately, those same tracks were also used by the hippo for their nightly promenade to and from the water. They dared not make a fire. It would have brought the hippo stampeding,

and with them their friends the crocodiles. So they flattened the grass at the side of the path and pitched the tent.

The flour and sugar had the driest place in the middle. There was no room for beds, so they hung the mosquito net from the ridge-pole over two camp chairs. They scratched together a meal of sorts. There was of course nothing hot, no baths and no undressing. The carriers went back to the last village, leaving one boy curled up at their feet. Just at sunset the storm broke, and the rain descended in floods and buckets. Presently the forward tent-pole subsided in the soft mud, and they left it, perforce sitting almost enveloped in canvas, with no light. And still they were only concerned to keep the flour and sugar dry.

Long before dawn the hippo, having grazed, began their ponderous promenade to the lake for water and a bath. It was necessary to keep very still, hoping not to be noticed. For hours the heavy bodies swished galumphing past them, snorting and snoofling and sniffing the morning air, quite untroubled by the presence of the little bivouac which must have looked and smelt like a drenched ant-hill. At length, as dawn broke, the carriers and district messengers appeared, and peeled the tent off the stiff and shivering occupants. There they sat, leaning against the precious sacks of flour and sugar, frightened, cold, wet and hungry. They were glad to see daylight, to have some tea, and glad too that home was only a few days farther on, and that the inevitable malaria would not come out until they had dry beds to creep into, under a roof. That was the story of how purple salvia was introduced into the Wemba country.

Another of our D.C.s' wives was telling me casually one day not to bother to buy one of those large, expensive omnibus guides to amateur doctoring. They are not much help unless you are trained, and if you are trained you don't need one. They serve to frighten the ignorant with their gruesome pictures and horrific analyses of symptoms, and if you turn to them when you are really in trouble, they can easily be mis-

leading. It seems that she nearly came a fearful cropper, trying to use one on an out-station. Their baby daughter, aged ten months, suddenly developed a sore and swollen throat. It went on for days and weeks. The child could not swallow, she was running a high temperature, and at length she began to waste away. They looked up all the symptoms in the index of their medical handbook, and by a series of cross-references that used up the fingers of two hands, arrived ultimately at the dread word diphtheria. A messenger was dispatched to the nearest hospital. Again it was in the rains and medical aid was a couple of hundred miles away on foot, or on a bicycle. He was to bring back a letter and some drugs, and the dread apparatus. Fortunately, before he returned, courageous mother felt inside the tiny throat with an exploratory finger. There were three back teeth, come through before their time. The fourth was hot, swollen and just ready to emerge, if the baby didn't die of fever, starvation and diarrhoea first. So my little friend the D.C.'s wife took her husband's razor and lanced the swelling, and the baby recovered. The medical compendium was consigned to that out-station library I told you about, to the borers and the white ants. The drugs and apparatus went on to the back shelf of the station dispensary, and I hope they are there, unused, to this day.

Stories like these, told casually apropos of salvia-roots and medical handbooks, are not likely to appeal to a visiting novelist, even if he chances to hear about them. Anyway, he could probably invent better ones that were more marketable. They may fail entirely to impress a member of your generation. Since my time, and theirs, yet another war has intervened. Danger, anxiety, discomfort, even courage under torture, have been the currency of our thoughts for ten years or more, and the burden of the news. The daily terror in which the wives of the airmen lived throughout the war, the patient loneliness of the wives of prisoners, or soldiers or sailors who have been your friends will have accustomed you to hazard as part of the climate of marriage.

As for the artificiality at which the novelists sneer, of course colonial society is artificial, not only on the face of it, but by the nature of it, especially in places that preclude the making of real homes with children growing up in a stable community of which they are an abiding part. An arbitrary collection of people is set down in a given place by the powers that be, or by the exigencies of breadwinning for the adventurous. A group of aliens is making a life, making the best of a strange new world, making a temporary home of sorts, trying to make friends only to lose them, transplanting cuttings from an old garden, so to speak, only some of which will strike. Relationships tend to become superficial if the cuttings are for ever being pulled up and stuck in somewhere else, just as the roots begin to grow. In every place you live you know that you are only there for a short time and you will be asking for unhappiness if anything outside yourself and your immediate family is vital to your well-being. It seems that no sooner have you made your home and planted your roses than up you get, and off you go.

Perhaps your station is a happy one until some newcomer arrives and then—oh, dear! Perhaps there is already a local menace and his wife. Never mind, they will go, too, presently. They are the purple cows of this world. Do you know that verse?

> I never saw a purple cow,
>   I never hope to see one;
> But I can tell you, anyhow,
>   I'd rather see than be one.

It is a piece of very ancient wisdom that trouble-makers who impinge slightly on your life giving you bad moments, which pass, live themselves in a perpetual climate of the trouble and unhappiness they create. One would rather see than be one, indeed.

But perhaps you are in a rather happy station. The office has swung into a routine with a division of duties that suits all

to say 'Never again', or 'What's the use?', it will not be easy to pick up the pieces and start again but you won't be let off.

Nor will it do to withhold your talent, to bury it in a napkin fancying that in some other place you will be more richly and fruitfully your best. It does not even do to say, 'I should be a happy person if I were elsewhere'. If you do create a minor domestic revolution in your own life and your husband's, and move on, behind you for the rest of your life will lurk the shadow of the girl who failed—failed in happiness and adaptability. She is not very easy to live with for either of you. I do not know which is the hardest to leave behind you in this world of transfers and transitions—the failures which can never now be put right, or the triumphs which have been left to the not very tender mercies of your successors. What matters to you is the quality of the effort, the faith and spirit that you put into your life what time you are, as your grandmother would have said, growing in grace.

As you grow older and hardened to separations from people you care for both at home and abroad, which may presently include either husband or children, you will find it more and more difficult to make friends at all, unless you practise it almost like five-finger exercises. Waiting for inspiration never made a genius in any of the arts, even the art of living. It is so easy to withdraw and to wait for something or somebody outside yourself to bring you out. When you have withdrawn into yourself because spending your talent is too much bother, too wasteful or even too painful (just look at what that last effort came to!), after a time you will begin to treat everybody the same, which when you come to think about it, is as if they didn't matter as persons. You and the impression you are making matter, but they don't! Horrid, isn't it, and what it leads to by and by is the official manner.

Some women, and you will meet them, cultivate deliberately the cordiality that is a little unreal, the welcome to strangers that is a trifle hollow, the handshake that is

mechanical. It is even recommended as a *modus vivendi*. They begin by telling you brightly that they never say anything to anybody about anything. 'I treat everybody exactly the same,' they continue, and you are expected to gather that their benevolence is universal. What you do gather is that they have long since lost or thrown away all taste, discrimination or judgment with any inclination to warm-heartedness they may once have been endowed with, and if they are surprised into a burst of genuine feeling they must not express it. Actually the quality of the friendship they offer to all and sundry with such touching confidence, and friendship is hardly the word for it, is quite valueless. Fortunately human frailty is such that nobody really lives up to such a code, even if it were worth living up to. When the façade does crack, what is behind it is not always very pretty. I agree that it would be rather devastating if life were one long game of Truth and Consequences, especially the consequences. Being determined not to be a purple cow and never to say an unkind thing regardless of what you think never really comes off, and we are back again to an older piece of wisdom. What you are shouts so loud I cannot hear what you say. If you are going through life determined only to say kind things you must think them, and if you think them you must first feel them, and if you want to feel them you must find them, and presently you develop deep down inside you a selective intelligence and good will, a fund of grace and charity which flows through you from a source beyond the bounds of mere human personality and is not only rewarding to you but lovely to live with.

These moralizings are pretty general, not to say preachy. Wild horses would not drag them from me if you and your husband were going to start life in your native country where you could take most things for granted, and where everybody from the duke to the dustman knows you for what you are, and there is nothing for you to do except be yourself and do your best and let the community mould you, because it is

older and stronger and *gooder* than you are. In some of the colonies the quality of the life for generations to come is being created almost from scratch, and what you and your husband, and his colleagues and their wives put into the foundations will determine the soundness of the whole structure. Perhaps it does want thinking about and talking about at this stage, difficult as it is.

It seems to me that the differences between the older colonies bear out what I am trying to say. The West Indies and Canada and Australia, New Zealand with its happy relationship with the Maoris, India with its military and commercial tradition, South Africa with its quartet of mutually distrustful races, and among the younger members of the family, Nigeria, Malaya, Ceylon, Burma, Nyasaland, all bear the stamp of the quality of the life begun, and in some cases ended, by people just like you and me. America, the oldest colony of all, was founded by God-fearing Puritans. It was developed by rebels, and adventurers, by grateful refugees, by hard-working home-makers, by slave-owning planters in the south, and in the north the liberated wage-slaves of the agricultural and industrial revolutions from nineteenth-century Europe. All the elements of its beginnings survive in the national character, recognizable after three hundred years, even though it is only a stamp on a second-generation Irishman or Pole. That nation, too, is being judged nowadays not only by the size and speed of its agricultural and industrial and military prowess, but by the attitude to questions of race and colour. For a hundred and fifty years the doors were open to the unfortunates of Europe, but the credit on that side is weighed in these days against the debit to the coloured races.

Harold Nicolson tells the story of a lecture he gave once to a Women's Club in the United States. He had been explaining to them that the British Empire is not as bad as they had been led to believe by the Irish and the other disaffected persons who throng their lecture platforms. At the end when

questions were invited a woman got up and said, 'Yes, but what about the poor Indians?'

'To which Indians do you refer, madam?' Mr. Nicolson tells us he retorted. 'You slaughtered yours. We educated ours.'

With all that is admirable in the American way of life, and much of it is enviable and exemplary, one would pause before wishing to be born black, under the Stars and Stripes. It is equally true that one would hesitate to choose Liberia, where the African is presumed to have it all his own way. A friend of mine once had occasion to travel from New Orleans on a ship that called at Liberia on its way to South Africa. Among the passengers was an American negro and his wife. They had lived in a Chicago slum all their lives, working in the stock-yards under all the disabilities imposed by poverty, ignorance and race prejudice. At long last they took the savings of a lifetime and embarked for Liberia which they had heard of as a haven of peace, prosperity, freedom and equality for the members of their race. Their disembarkation was pitiful to watch. It wasn't the Green Pastures after all!

These are large questions and comparisons are ever odious, and one must be practical, and again practical. Your personal standards of behaviour in these matters might well be governed, however, by this thought. If some new soul were standing at the pearly gates waiting to be born, leaving the Green Pastures on the threshold of reincarnation into one of the coloured races, and choosing a birth-place, would he be likely to point to your small corner of the world, saying, 'I should like to be put down there, please, because Priscilla will be there, and where she is there is opportunity, and happiness, and friendship'?

13

DOING WHAT IS NEEDED

Do the words 'social work' have a very old-fashioned ring to modern ears? So many of the tasks that used to be done voluntarily by high-minded women in their spare time have been transmuted into functions of the State with paid workers properly trained and equipped, that when I mention social work to you, and add that I imagine you will be doing a good deal of it, I do not quite know what the phrase conjures up in your mind. Is it Elizabeth Fry with a Bible and a covered basket? The Lady with the Lamp? Or do you picture an efficient young party with a typewriter filling up forms that read: 'Indigent persons colon, indigenous semi-colon, PJX774259 bracket, rehabilitation of, close brackets, full stop'?

The colonies vary so enormously that either picture may be accurate, or any of the intermediate stages between those extremes of sociological technique. In many places all over the Empire, you may find yourself in a backward area at an almost prehistoric level of culture. In a modern city like most colonial capitals, you may be working in one of the highly organized welfare departments staffed by educated local people as their paid employee. What I am sure I need not impress upon you is your duty to do what you can for the good of the community, and therefore 'the good of the cause'. It goes without saying that if there is a job crying out to be done in child welfare, or the school, or the hospital, or the British Council, or the W.V.S., or the Women's Institute, or

even the club, or one of its subsidiary committees, jump to it and give what you have of hand or heart wherever you seem to be needed. If we could double or treble the men and women of goodwill by waving some Imperial wand, there would still be not enough for the work. Incidentally, you will be a much happier person with a job of work to do.

The colonies have been slow to recognize that an educated woman of your generation assumes that she is expected to work at something in these days. She also expects to be told what to do and how to do it. The idle society girl who metamorphosed from a débutante into a 'mere' wife and mother is no longer even fashionable, and I doubt if you have ever met one. It will be a pity if the diehards of both sexes among the older colonial types corrupt or dishearten your ingrained aptitude for a job of work of one sort or another, by trying to keep you in what their mothers told them was a woman's place, and then providing you with servants so that there is nothing to compel you to occupy yourself in it.

They must also realize that you are more accustomed to being organized and directed than their contemporaries were, because you have grown up during a war, when joining up, followed by conscription and other compulsions under national duress, were the order of the day. You are probably more accustomed to performing distasteful tasks obediently than they ever were, but as a corollary you are also less inclined to have bright ideas of your own and to develop them. They must not accuse you of lack of willingness if you 'sit about waiting to be told', or criticize you for failing to display initiative and inspiration. Those flowers of the spirit only blossom in the atmosphere of freedom and peace which you have never known, or cannot remember.

You may be asked straight away to take a paid post in government, and this will seem quite natural to you. Nor need you feel that if you do so, and are thus earning a little wherewithal towards balancing your budget like an ordinary clerk in an office in Whitehall, that you are not contributing

to 'the cause'. If one of the lordly ones is freed by you from some of the routine drudgeries of the office and can give his mind and his time to the creative side of his job, to travelling, or to those contacts of which I have said so much, your contribution to the overall picture may be greater than if you were, say, weighing babies or district visiting on your own. You may thus find yourself a silent partner to *two* of His Majesty's pro-consuls, and what more does a right-minded woman ask of life?

For a long time after the war officials' wives were encouraged to take jobs. Indeed, the only ones who were allowed a precious passage out to join their husbands were those who were prepared to turn to as soon as they arrived. They were hardly given time to unpack, and to measure up the curtains, so urgent was the call to stop the gaps left by the war. Now, of course, those gaps are filling up and you may find it not so easy to get a proper job, and to keep it. If you do, you may again find yourself 'on sufferance' and not allowed to forget it regardless of the facts of the case, since married women in a man's world are not supposed to wish to be gainfully employed, or to need it.

You might, *pace* Miss Nightingale, be allowed to do the work unpaid, if it had not been for the experience of this last war. In 1939 most wives volunteered to fill the posts of the men who had joined up, and to staff the war-time controls, the censorship, and so on. Presently it was discovered to be a most unsatisfactory arrangement. Mere volunteers would fail to turn up on the day after the club dance, or on the day they had their hair done. It was a little trying to their employers to say the least of it. Volunteers who were here today and somewhere else tomorrow neither accepted responsibility nor, after a little, were they offered any. That annoyed the serious workers. Quite soon, after some facing of facts and one of those spasms of reorganization at high levels, paid posts with proper discipline, proper responsibilities and some reward became the general practice.

Nor, as time went on, did many women find they could afford to work for nothing. A woman's salary is never pure gain. There is inevitably some waste in the kitchen, some neglect in the house, and neglect in the tropics swiftly involves destruction and loss. Then, too, you must buy your clothes at three or four times the cost if you have no time to make them. You may have to take on extra domestic staff in the house and garden or nursery, to do the jobs you are not there to see to, nor will you be let off any of your duties as an official's wife and hostess. If you are too tired at the end of the day to go out or to entertain your husband's friends and colleagues it will be a loss, and the subject of some criticism. You must try to make it as small as possible.

If you are given a job, of one thing you may be sure. You are most unlikely to be working in any department closely allied to your husband's, even if that is what you can do best. The sinister mixture of the personal, the social and the official again! You are also unlikely to be given anything but a very junior post, probably clerical. Any administrative or executive talent or experience you may have, if you exercise it at all, must be hidden under a bushel as big and dark as a tar barrel. You are now an even more silent partner, a small cog in the machine, anonymous! I need not remind you that you are even more unlikely to receive equal pay for equal work than you would be in England, regardless of your qualifications, diplomas, or an alphabet of degrees as impressive as those of the Brushwood Boy's Provostoforiel. The single women fight that battle almost unaided in every country. The married women's hands are tied by the fact that they are being kept by their husbands. The fact that they are doing two or even three jobs is presumed to show how easy, not to say negligible, those jobs must be.

There may also be racial complications to add to the personal and official ones. You will be on a temporary local agreement that will be terminated if a man, or an unmarried woman, or one of the local people can step into it. There are

certain jobs that your employers would prefer to entrust to a responsible European wife with some knowledge of service matters, however discreetly concealed, rather than to an African clerk. If, however, racial or political pressure is brought to bear, you may find the fact that you are white militates against you, as well as the fact that you are a woman, and married to someone already on the Government's pay-sheet.

One of the surprising things that emerged during the war, when married women entered the ranks of the employed, was a curious difference in their attitude to their work. It was true that domesticity now reprehensibly intruded into the office sanctum. They did occasionally borrow the office telephone to order the groceries or settle some complication of nannies with regard to the disposal of the children they had abandoned. On the whole, however, it was discovered that while they were in the office they were more willin' Barkises than their colleagues with careers. If the office wanted polishing and the corners dusted, if the ash-trays were full, or somebody needed a kettle or a clean handkerchief or the pencils sharpened, there was no question of trade union rules about what was whose proper work. Something needed doing and it got done for that reason alone. Can it be that domestic discipline destroys false pride and breeds adaptability? Or is it, rather unfairly, that a temporary employee does not mind being put upon, because she knows she is starting something that need not go on? In the last resort she can retire gracefully, or even go and have a baby! Again, I seem rather plaintively to have described enough of the difficulties to discourage you from trying to do a job at all. Actually, you may be much happier and healthier with some work to do, and all these complications will fall into place as part of the pattern, once you have recognized them for what they are. They are hardly ever reasons why not, at least from your point of view.

When it comes to voluntary unpaid social work you will

soon discover how much every ounce of general capability which you can contribute is needed, even if there is no field for your particular gifts or talents. You may find yourself undertaking work for which you are neither trained nor equipped, and just doing the best you can because the need is so great. First, of course, you will have to make up your mind what seems most worth doing, how much time you can freely give to it, and what sacrifice of your own interests, pleasures, and domestic efficiency you are prepared to make. It will always be just a little bit more than you can conveniently manage, but there again, as we discovered in the war, the more you have to do, the more you can do, and for some extraordinary reason it all gets done twice as well.

Don't be discouraged by the apparent futilities and inefficiencies that attend the voluntary efforts of 'the ladies'. It is not always easy for you to judge what is a waste of time and what is not. A West African friend of mine, with whom I was discussing the problem of the barriers between the women of our respective races, and how to set about breaching them, told me how easy it had seemed in the war, when sewing parties had been organized for war work. The Chief Commissioner's wife had collected the knitters and the needlewomen once a week for morning tea. Now it is doubtless true that each of the workers would have accomplished more actual stitches if she had settled down to her task alone and undisturbed in her own house. Yet my friend recalled with pleasure the atmosphere of the gatherings, the chatter and laughter, and the absence of self-consciousness, indeed of all distinctions of race, colour, class, age and seniority. How good it seemed to her to be able to pop into the Chief Commissioner's house at odd times to have the pattern of an army sock put right! We reflected ruefully that it seemed to require a World War to achieve these ends, or rather these beginnings, and that it is rather like burning down the house to roast a pig! So don't be too ready to say what is a waste of time, and what is not, or even what is meant by useful social

work. Is it tea parties or work parties, cooking lessons, discussion groups, or play readings? Is it sherry parties that slash through barriers of race, creed, politics and salary scales? Is it highly organized committees with budgets and annual reports and five-year plans? Is it bricks and mortar on inscribed foundation stones? Is it hospital visiting, or educational needs heard and answered? Is it two blades of corn where one grew before, or water in a thirsty land? Is it a hundred organ voices singing in the St. Matthew Passion music on Good Friday, or a Nativity Play in which the Magi are properly cast from their respective races, with angels adoring? These are questions that you will be answering in every new station to which you are sent, and sometimes in between when the kaleidoscope is shaken and the pattern changes.

The varieties of the practical tasks to which you will set your hand are so enormous that I find it impossible to describe a typical picture into which you will fit, or typical spheres of usefulness to which you can contribute. Here are out-stations among primitive villagers, barely emerged from the Bronze Age, in spite of the headman's chromium-plated bicycle; there a modern African city with all the refinements of civilization, and sometimes little will to use them. The variations at the circumference are so enormous that I return again and again to the hub of the wheel, which is yourself, confident that if the hub is sound and turning smoothly, the spokes and the rim can stand any amount of readjustments after wear and tear, by which I mean discouragement and frustration and the chances and changes that seem always to attend good works. It is only on the remote out-stations of the newer colonies that you will be set down amongst village people at their most primitive, where social welfare is to be started from scratch. Yet I should be sorry if your time in the colonies did not include some contact with tribal life at that level, lest you fall into the trap of generalizing about Africa from your acquaintance with charming African under-

graduates whom you may already have met, or the budding statesmen who would be your husband's colleagues at headquarters. I wonder where it will be! Perhaps among the nomads of the Upper Sudan, or the tent-dwellers of the desert, or the walled cities of Northern Nigeria, or the subsistence farmers of the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast, or the Native Reserves of the East African colonies, or an atoll in the Pacific, or just undeveloped hinterland anywhere in the world where the people are all but untouched by contact with ourselves. Mud huts with grass roofs, grass clothes, or none, dirt, disease, periodic famine and drought, ignorance, superstition, prejudice and savage custom will all be there; but so will romance and beauty, time and space and leisure, and human interest if you have the will to seek it, and it will probably require the courage and faith and vision of an early missionary to make a beginning in the field of social service.

The first step is to learn the language. It may be the *lingüa franca* of a large area, or the dialect of your district, but until you have twisted your tongue, and sometimes your soft palate and epiglottis, and above all your mind, round the idiom of a truly elementary language, the people will remain a closed book to you. You will begin to understand really simple folk when you have conversed with them in a language which, for instance, has as yet no names at all for abstract ideas. They have no word for thanks or honesty, let alone faith, hope and charity, but only names for tangible objects and a few verbs to describe actions and states of being, or even occasionally bewildering variations in the sound of the same verb to describe quite different functions.

While you are learning their language, you will be gaining their confidence and your own. Soon you will be learning the needs of the people, and how to set about answering them. Not what you have to offer, or what you and, or, the sociologists and anthropologists think they want, or ought to want, but what they already feel they would like to have, and are prepared to accept. At first it may be only a present of seeds,

or some old cloth to play with, or some soap, or quinine, or an old blanket, or a petrol-box to put things in. It will be a long time before they agree to make a baby's cot with one, and to tuck a mosquito-net round it!

I wonder if you will ever be the first white woman to be seen by a group of African women. I was once, and it was a very odd experience. We were on tour. There had been a drought and a famine. The grown-ups in the tribe were subsisting on a meal of sorts on some days, and eating wild yams and roots. They were already making inroads into their seed-corn, and the rains were weeks away. It was tsetse-fly country. There was no milk, no vegetables, and a tribal fertility taboo against eggs. Did you know that the reason Europeans have such small families is that they eat eggs? You will often be told that as a fact based on evidence which is the origin of many a taboo. We met it on this occasion in the course of the discussions of famine relief.

The children were dying in ones and twos, enough to make an entry called 'Statistics of Infant Mortality' in the tour report. They were dying, not so much of starvation as of acute constipation. There was no milk even from the hungry mothers, no porridge, no vegetables, let alone roughage and 'water-soluble vitamins' as the text-books have it.

We gave enemas where they were needed, to ease the fever which was probably accentuated by malaria, and hoped for the best. In this case it was a readiness to accept and digest the famine relief which we had brought with us. It was nervous work. The ignorance was not all on their side, and a death on our hands would have been a major disaster.

On we travelled until finally we were at the edge of beyond, where no white person had been for years and years, and never a white woman. My husband and the African medical orderly were out visiting the neighbouring villages one afternoon. The baby and I had our rest, and there was an hour or more to spend in the grass shelter before tea. I decided to make some coconut macaroons, as there were

indeed plenty of eggs, but no butter or milk. Presently a little cluster of village women came and squatted on the grass, murmuring to one another, pointing at all our gear. The rotary egg-beater roaring away in the white of an egg was especially admired. They pointed at me, and my clothes, and then at the baby kicking away in his screened Noah's Ark. Then they swung their babies round from their back cloths on to their laps, looked at them and then at each other, then at me, then at my baby, commenting freely with intense interest. Their dialect was strange to me. After some time, a panic dislike of being stared at began to crawl up my spine. My heart began to thump a little. Finally, to break the spell, I stammered foolishly in the *lingua franca*, 'I make food for my man, do you?' It didn't seem to help at all, while they were there watching me. My most reassuring smile felt as if it had been painted on and then dried. My whole body seemed to turn stiff with panic, all but my hands, which were shaking. The oldest of them, a gaunt and flabby grandam with old, old eyes, understood me. She was covered with bracelets and anklets and bangles, the trophies of a successful 'wise woman', and with a shake and a rattle of self-importance, she answered 'E-e-e-e-h', and translated my idiotic remark to her neighbour, whence it was passed from mouth to ear right round the group. The silence was resumed, and the stares.

Come, come, said I to myself, get out from behind your panic defences. Try the extrovert's trick of thinking with them, and seeing what they see.

At last my little heaps of meringue were ready for the oven. I called Cook, and told him to ask the women gently to go away, as baby was going to sleep. They looked dismayed at my obvious lie, and disappointed—like closing time at the Zoo—and moved off slowly to continue their speculation and discussion. My heart took a long time to settle itself! Not that there was any real cause for nerves or fear, just the rather awesome experience of being looked at as a completely fresh phenomenon. It was the extreme of being examined as an

example of *Homo sapiens*, female, European, with young. It was not very cheering either when I tried to see myself as my observers saw me. You know how odd and ugly surrealist paintings can be when the face is elongated, when there is a green pyramid for a nose, a purple cheek and an orange one, and misplaced, misshapen eyes. Could it be that I looked as strange and ugly to them? They were accustomed to the comforting warm chestnut tones of the African skin, the full brown eye, the soft wide nose, the big dark generous lips and square white teeth. I could imagine their distaste for a bleached, reddish-whitish woman with eyes the colour of the empty sky in the time of hunger, with a long thin nose, a thin pale mouth, orange hair and freckles to match. Distaste was probably too mild a word for their reaction. It took me some time to achieve that effort of the imagination, to see myself in quite so detached a way. Then it occurred to me that they probably thought my beautiful baby was all wrong and discoloured too. My little spasm of panic had faded into amused speculation about myself, but when it came to the baby, a tigress's rage and resentment swept over me—a feeling as primitive as any of theirs, and close to pure hate. I was glad presently to hear the click of the master's cyclometer on the bush path, a shout for tea, and that I could regain some sense of proportion over the macaroons. The whole incident was a short sharp lesson to me in the nature of colour prejudice from both sides. It has often occurred to me since, on more complicated social occasions when I have seen the same dark stare, directed at one of my compatriots who was being noisy or patronizing or affected, or just plain thoughtless and rude. How quickly one's hackles rise!

Can you see the handicaps under which any social work could be attempted at that level, even had we been remaining among those people for longer than it took to dispense famine relief? Actually, the bangly grandam followed us to several camps. I learned at length that she had noticed that my baby's eyes were not sore. Theirs were gummed and fly-

infested. Europeans carry medicines. Could I help? My tiny bottle of mild boracic was no use, but down in the corner of the office box was a dirty old bottle of silver nitrate, unopened, and the label just legible: 'One in one hundred parts of water. POISON—Not to be taken.' Oh, dear! Cook had a tablespoon and a pint measure. There are two tablespoons to an ounce, so a tablespoon of concentrate goes to fifty ounces, which is a pint and a half of water. The old woman brought me a great black cooking-pot, new, well-fired and clean, to hold perhaps four gallons. We made the solution, and then I doubled the amount of water until I daresay it was weak beyond the limits of efficacy, but I was anxious lest after I was gone someone should try a swig of white man's magic for a stomach-ache! I supervised the eye-baths until they caught on, and then, with some trepidation, left the old woman to carry on until the pot should be empty. No one will ever know how many new bangles she acquired with it. Imagination recoils at the uses to which it may have been put, or the state of the cotton wool in, say, a week's time. It was all quite useless. There was nothing better to do. A report was going in, worked out to three places of decimals, and would doubtless swell some already over-stuffed file, for all the good that does. We were moving on.

I had forgotten the whole story until today, except for that lesson in colour prejudice. You can see that any good that might be done in such a place would be safer in hands of a familiar colour. I should like to think that those villages are visited regularly nowadays by a travelling dispensary on wheels or wings, with a doctor and a nurse and two African apprentices. I doubt it. The daughter or grand-daughter of my beldame should have been there in 1929, trained and equipped; not me with my egg-beater and my tremulous tablespoon. She was not there in 1939. It is unlikely that she was there in '49, or that '59 or '69 will see much change, try as we will with our long-term overall planning and our bulldozers. In East Africa almost anything that is being done in

the realm of social service is, as yet, from the outside, and all too often from scratch. The needs are overwhelming, the surface broken here and there in the last fifty years by missions and schools and dispensaries, but the growth of true social welfare from roots among the people themselves may take a generation or two to get started so that it can function as part of the life of the people, as ours, with all its faults and imperfections, does at home.

I was discussing these things last evening with a friend of mine who told me the story of a former pupil of hers, the wife of a missionary in Kenya. Missionaries approach the African along a different avenue from ours, but I was enchanted to hear how this woman and her husband had made friends among the village folk in their province. They used to go calling on one family or another every day after tea with great ceremony. When they were invited in, they would sit in the circle on the floor, share the refreshments of bananas, sliced and fried, and swap stories from their respective mythologies. *Jack and the Beanstalk* was a great favourite. Whether

> Fee, Fie, Fo, Fum,
> I smell the blood of an Englishmun,
> Be he alive or be he dead
> I'll grind his bones to make my bread

trolls so effectively in Kiswahili, I did not ask.

We spoke inevitably of the discouragements that dog social work, and then of the pace at which changes are taking place. It seems that when these people first took up their posts, the wife started a primary school for little girls. They were most rewarding to teach, merry and eager, ambitious and full of promise. Then when they turned thirteen all was wrecked. The sexual initiation rites of the tribe, which are a prolonged affair lasting many days and involving all the horrors of female circumcision in conditions of unspeakable filth and cruelty, intervened. When the girls returned to school, often ill and exhausted, they were different creatures. From eager

children they had changed into sloe-eyed initiates, furtive, stricken and over-wise, absorbed in the mysteries of sex, mentally, physically, and it seemed incurably apathetic to anything but the preoccupations of the breeding animal.

There's heartbreak for you! For a long time it seemed as though no headway with such people could be made at all. Christian precept in these matters falls on solid rock, and European example is invalid to their minds. In days gone by, sterner measures of attempted interference had led to bloodshed and defeat, and the martyrdom of at least two people. But, at long last, one African girl had the courage to refuse her initiation. We can only faintly imagine the degree of courage it took, and what batteries of superstition and fear, threats and ill-wishing were brought to bear on her, and on her parents. The story ends happily. Her education continued unchecked. Not only that, but she actually found a husband who dared and cared to marry her, and best of all, her first baby was born alive, completely confounding the prophecies. The conversion of that one girl, whose life bears witness of something better among the people in their own cultural idiom, is only the beginning of effective social change in a real sense, although it represented the culmination of a generation of missionary sacrifice and endeavour to create the conditions that made it possible.

We went on to speak of the length of time it takes to achieve even so small, but so potentially effective a beginning, and of how time is racing, and how in other fields the democratic ferment is not allowed time to feed, or to mature, or to wait for the conversions of individuals, for deeds and proofs of the new values that will give it strength and body. I have told you this story to give you some inkling of the nature of a real success, on the second level so to speak of social endeavour. I was asked whether officials and their wives worked in this way and to these ends. The answer is that some do, and some don't, according to their calibre. Our function in the colonies is not the same as missionaries. That is not

what we are there for, at least up to the present. And yet, as time goes on the Service will attract more and more of the kind of people who can do that kind of thing, and one hopes there will be enough of them.

In many parts of the Empire we are there less to rule than to guide already, and the old-fashioned agenda, to keep the peace and adminster impartial justice, and to collect revenue and govern its expenditure, is already a task of educating others. It is an accepted fact, and has found a voice among the policy-makers at high levels, that our value to the colonial peoples will be more and more in terms of the quality of our friendship, the number of the people who know us to trust us, and who turn to us. An ounce of co-operation however faltering is worth a pound of authority however beneficent. We are back at the hub of the wheel which is ourselves and the kind of people we are!

So don't be discouraged at small efforts, or turn away from one friend or two. When real social progress is made—and this is the experience of new countries as different from one another as colonial America and Imperial India—it is when the women want better homes and better lives for their children. It is axiomatic that educated men can do so much and no more for the community if the women are idle and enslaved, or ignorant, or prejudiced and self-satisfied. Your efforts to befriend the women, to open doors for them and for their children and their children's children, may have a more lasting effect on 'development in backward areas' than the more scientific efforts of the lordly ones.

Here is a sphere in which the handicaps that beset you when you try to work in an office in a man's world, turn miraculously to your advantage. You are white, it is true. You have a shocking amount of authority in your household, and a reprehensible amount of freedom from your parents and your husband's parents, and even from your lord and master himself. But you are a woman. You have attained the dignity of marriage. You will be, let us hope, a mother,

and no doubt in time a grandmother. 'That be proper', as they say on the West Coast of Africa. All that means everything in life to you also means everything to the women among whom you work, and that is a common bond of inestimable advantage. You will be speaking with them, working with them, not speaking to them or working on them, because you are, in the oldest and most inescapable sense, one of them.

When they call you 'Missis' or 'Madame', or 'Memsahib', it is only because they have learned their manners, but when they call you 'Mama'—and I mean everybody from your own cook to the urchins in the village school, or the tearful mothers with ailing babies, or the bearded chiefs who come gravely to call—that is something; and as for 'Mai' or 'little Mother', that is indeed a crown of honour to be proud of.

I have, of course, been speaking of the far bush of East Africa which I knew first, and best, when my babies were small. The end of the other story about the missionaries was that when they had their babies and sent away to England for a trousseau, and a cot, and other furniture for the nursery, they agreed to order only the simplest patterns of every piece of equipment, the idea being that they should have nothing that the local mothers could not copy if they were so minded. There's social service for you, among primitive people! Social work in the more highly organized communities of the older colonies is so very different that I must put it in another letter.

14

COMMITTEES AND KINDNESS

In the older colonies you will, of course, be entering the field of social work at a different level. The fundamental needs are there, as they were in my East African village, and are, no doubt, in the larger village of Westminster, but your part in them will be of a different order of usefulness. I am speaking, as I must so often, of the African colonies that I know, and which differ enormously from one another. I have no reason to doubt, however, from what I have read and what I gather from people I have met from other colonies, the West Indies, the Far East, and the Pacific Islands, even from India and Burma and Ceylon, that the same divergences are true of social work at different levels of what we call advancement, anywhere in the Empire.

Not that the age of a colony or even the length of time it has been in contact with Europe is any kind of index of its progress in social welfare. The West Coast of Africa, for instance, has been known for centuries, but as for a long time the only intercourse between the races was trade in slaves and gold, the association was not very creditable to either party. Climate and tropical diseases forbade all but the most superficial encounters. Trade was carried on as far as possible from ships. That is why your head boy in those parts is still called a steward. There were a few trading posts and shore garrisons in castles and forts. These were slightly more permanent until the periodic bouts of malaria, black-water, or yellow fever wiped them out. Then they would be started up afresh.

As for the missionaries, their record is no mean chapter in the history of Christian martyrdom. It is a standing source of wonder, even to us of the last war generation with our sheet-anchors of prophylactic medicine, that they survived at all, or that they cared to try again. Nevertheless they did, and the result is that there are educated Christian sons and daughters, and even grandchildren of early converts, bred in the tradition of European ideas of social betterment, and eager for improvement in the various public services which we identify with civilization.

Nowadays, as in other parts of the world, governments are more wide awake to their responsibilities and opportunities in the realm of social welfare, and, working with mission-educated personnel, as they would put it, they are taking over and expanding the educational and technical services that were for so long only the extra-curricular studies in the mission schools. You will, then, be meeting African lawyers and doctors, teachers and artists and merchants, and some of them have educated wives. You will also meet some professional women, teachers and nurses and welfare workers, often the daughters of educated mothers. These women govern the African society in which the social work is being done, and to which you will attach yourself, by invitation I hope, as a working partner.

Much of the initiative still rests with Europeans, but the executive responsibilities, the committees and the administration are in African hands. It is a good thing that it should be so, for it is their country, and they will not be able to move forward with confidence until they are standing on their own feet, taking responsibility, suffering for their own mistakes. They too must learn the hard way, by experience, doubtless with some initial sacrifice of what we would call efficiency and method, but in the end relating the work to their own needs in what is, after all, their own life in their own country.

One of the governing factors in the relative usefulness of European social workers in East Africa, as compared to the

West Coast, is the length of the tour of service. In the East, two-and-a-half to three years is the normal time between leaves. A project or association created by some energetic visionary can be well started in a year, mature in the second, by which time there is a successor in training, and in the third be firmly enough established to survive an absence, or even a transfer of the founder to fresh fields. On the West Coast the climate and the fell diseases have precluded, until very recently, a tour of more than eighteen months for a man and perhaps six or less for his wife. Suppose she too is an energetic visionary, and plans to start a Women's Institute or Guides or a musical society, or to get up a play. Hardly has public opinion been sounded among her acquaintance, which takes time, or created by her *ab initio*, which takes longer, then a meeting convened, a committee formed and a minute-book purchased, before leave and its preoccupations loom on the horizon. So-and-So would love to help, and indeed doesn't mind starting, but they are off in six weeks. One hears only too often that somebody else had the same sort of idea years ago, and made a start, and then when they went on leave she didn't come back for his next tour, or he was transferred, and it fell through. Mrs. Green kept a very firm hand on such-and-such a committee, but when it was handed on to Mrs. White or Mrs. Black, things didn't go so well, and somehow the initial effort faded away. 'Lack of continuity' is the official phrase for this particular blight on European efforts throughout the colonies, and one borrows the phrase for voluntary social work with a sigh.

It is the more disheartening on the coast, because the other disability from which good works generally suffer does not on the whole obtain, namely, lack of funds. It seemed very strange to us to find ourselves in a really rich community, where money could always be found for a project, and all that appeared to be lacking was vision, goodwill and continuity of leadership. One is so used to that old excuse, 'If only we had the money', that it is a shock to discover that

money isn't everything, but human character is, and that the deadliest of the sins, pride, sloth, *accidie*, flourish among the flesh-pots. One never quite believes the story of the Poor Little Rich Girl, glutted with toys, and unable to be happy and good with them. The stringent discipline of having to earn the means of continuing one's work is a healthy thing. One ought not to grumble at it, but of course one does. Necessity is the mother of more than invention. The rest of the children that live in her shoe, co-operation, give and take, common sacrifice, friendliness, vision shared, tasks apportioned, seeing a goal and being prepared to work for it under the disciplining hand of poverty, bring people together in a common effort of unselfishness that makes Necessity's family a healthy and a happy one.

Again I seem to be giving you a very confused idea of social work in the colonies, and if you ask me in some bewilderment, 'Yes, but what do I do? Where do I start?' I can only say again, that it depends on where you are and what needs to be done. If you do start your career alone on an out-station you will do what you can, and to a certain extent what you please. If you are in a small station you will have others whom you can help at first, and who will be there to help you if presently yours is the plan and the initiative. If you are in a large, flourishing, well-established community you will start as a junior, do the donkey work, learn the ropes, and train yourself to take the responsibilities of an experienced senior when it is your turn, learning like the rest of this world's administrators to handle money, and, above all, people.

Yesterday a very great little lady, a former Governor's wife, came to spend the afternoon with me. We talked at length about your practical problems, of the importance of living simply on your husband's income, about the temptations to extravagance and ostentation that beset one in colonial life, and how valuable a healthy public opinion on reasonable austerities can and should be. We recalled Mrs.

Elton, and her description of the wedding in the last paragraph of *Emma*, 'a poor affair, very few lace veils', and agreed that it should be the standard for any society in these hard times.

Then I asked for her advice about social work, because I knew that she had had more practical experience of it in the colonies than anyone else of whom I had ever heard, and I wanted to ask her what she did, and how she set about it, so that I could give you a clear picture of real achievement in this field. I was a little anxious lest she might be talking well above my head and yours, because as Governor's lady her influence and power were enormous, and what she could accomplish by waving a wand to command services and funds might well be beyond our means. Not a bit of it! I needn't have worried. Her first message to you, and her last as she went down the stairs, was 'Tell her to *start small*'.

After years of work with committees, and with powers and principalities at her beck and call, her conclusion is, without any shadow of doubt, that personal relationships, friendships on the level of affection and trust and inspiration are what really count in the long run. The torch is handed on from one inspired leader to another, and not down the draughty corridors of hollow social structures, humming institutions and elaborate organizations.

I was, I confess, a little dashed after our conversation. Perhaps a little weakly, I had hoped that she would have at her finger-tips some doctrinaire panacea for the social ills of colonial communities which you and I could apply like any of the other 'isms' that are bedevilling the world at present, or at least a policy, or a blue-print for some machinery. Nobody with long experience of social machines set going in a burst of enthusiasm expects them to function like perpetual motion, or even an eight-day clock. They just don't. Human individuals can have bright ideas about jobs that need doing, and they can collect their friends to help them, and pool their brains and good will, and set up machinery which will go,

but only if it is driven. The human factor, the springs of self-sacrifice, the capacity to carry on, especially when you are hot and bored and frustrated and fed up, are the oil and the petrol and the hands on the steering-wheel, and the feet on the accelerator and the brakes! You cannot collect a hundred Africans and a hundred Europeans and create a hundred friendships between the races. This modern passion for organizing, which is to say thinking in terms of masses and classes and income-brackets and race-groups, and what have you, is full of snags, as the denizens of any over-organized society will tell you. Ours is the hard way, and one prays that we are willing to live it and to die for it. What does that mean in the colonies? It means that you in your small corner and I in mine, here a little, there a little, can do a kindness, make a friend, bridge a barrier, share a joke, a cup of tea, a problem of the house or the garden, or on a larger scale the care of the sick or the needy, in a word, of my neighbour. I need not answer 'Who is my neighbour?' It has been done already.

This bears out what an African friend of mine told me once. I had asked her what qualities she would wish for in the wives of the officials who come out to her colony, and without a second's hesitation she answered, 'Sincerity'. So there you have it again, straight from the horse's mouth.

'But this is so difficult', I wailed yesterday. 'It is practically impossible to direct another soul in matters of what you are, rather than what to do!' You see, Priscilla, you might be a Becky Sharp, or a Scarlett O'Hara, or Forever Amber (and aren't they forever!), and it is no good trying to build an empire by telling *them* to be themselves. Nor would it be fair for me to assume that all colonial wives are potential Mary Kingsleys and Gertrude Bells. Indeed, I do not in the least wish you to turn yourself into some worthy type who 'lives for others, and you can tell it by the hunted look on the faces of the others'! What women are in themselves does matter so much more than what they say and do. I don't think the same is quite so true of men. A man can be a pretty poor

creature in himself, and provided he does his job well and says the right thing at the right time, he can get away with it. If that same standard is applied to a woman, what a sorry creature she can be. She, too, may do her job well, and sew and cook and run her house with flawless efficiency, and pour out good works, and Oh, dear! while her sister who lives in a glorious muddle of incompleted tasks, sewing and writing and reading, and toffee-papers and ash-trays, wispy hair, funny clothes and quite remarkable tactlessness, may be a most valuable and endearing person, an inspiration to everybody—in short, everybody's darling!

'But do let us be practical,' I went on yesterday, 'do give me some details of how these social miracles can be achieved by quite ordinary mortals.'

My little visitor smiled, and said, 'Surely nobody needs to be told how to like people, and to make friends.'

Her great gift, which may or may not be communicable, is a ''satiable curtiosity' about the lives of strange people in strange places—a tremendous zest for adventure and romance, and a complete indifference as far as I could gather to defeat and discouragement, to physical discomfort, dirt, smells and the other distasteful facts about the uncivilized world. She assured me that even after many days of the ultimate discomfort, which is travel by pony or camel across mountainous desert country, waterless, foodless, shelterless, deadly nothingness, she could still say at the end of the day, 'This is fun', without adding a dubious 'I suppose', or 'Never again', or 'I tank I go home', or even, with the Elephant's Child, 'This is too buch for be'.

I believe she tells all the young things she meets who, like you, are going out to build the Empire with their husbands, how lucky they are. Not for us the humdrum securities of suburbia, but a new world of romance and adventure. I found while I was listening enthralled to her experiences in places as diverse as India, Iraq, Ceylon, as well as East and West Africa, that I was asking myself what qualities must

have sustained her, how many of them were purely personal to her, and which were generally useful and communicable to you. There was imagination, certainly, and the ability to see a walled city or even a native village as a microcosm of life, entering its alleyways and compounds, its hidden doorways and secret gardens with an anticipation of interest, with the hope of beauty, or at least an eye for colour and design, and an ear for nuances of expression and language. She must also have had a positive gusto for the inexhaustible riches of human experience, a patience with human nature bordering on the divine, above all, a never-failing sense of humour and an absence of preconceptions about what will in the end turn out to have been rewarding.

A sense of humour, even general cheerfulness and good temper are not perhaps communicable, and are often a matter of good health, fundamental well-being, living at peace with yourself, with your body as your servant, not your master, your mind turned away from yourself (and that runnel of sweat between your shoulder blades), alive to what is going on around you. You are the amused and interested observer, your spirit sustained by an abiding faith in goodness and truth and in the future.

Many of these qualities can be learned with practice, and indeed, as I remarked in my first letter to you, your generation astonishes us all in that you seem to have been tempered in the fires of war to a wholly admirable indifference to temporary denials and discomforts in the physical realm, and a fine impatience with whimsy and humbug, snobbery and injustice, the pomposities of temporary greatness, all the things you hated when you encountered them in the other services. I hope it is a tempering that will abide with you, and that I needn't say another word about 'good temper', because that is just what it is.

My visitor yesterday told me a few of the things she did that were different from the ordinary labours of the social worker in the field, and the woman-of-affairs on committees.

It seems that one of the rewards of really making friends with the women from every level of colonial society was discovering what they were really interested in, what desires for a better life they already had which did not need to be cultivated. For instance, on one occasion she was asked if she would be kind enough to show the wives of some of the semi-educated men how to make a pleasant home on the European model. Of course it was not the slightest use asking them to Government House to show them round the great rooms there, nor could she visit them individually to advise them on their particular domestic arrangements. So she got the P.W.D. to rig up two rooms, with one side missing, like little stage sets. One was labelled *Do* and the other *Don't*.

Making *Don't* was the greatest fun. There was a shelf with a dusty velvet drape on it, dotted with grimy ornaments. There was a centre table, covered with a dubious tea-cloth, and some tea-cups set about, turned upside down. There was a tarnished brass vase from the bazaar with some withered zinnias in it. There was a curtain sagging on a string, much stained from blowing over the floor. There were some over-stuffed chairs with broken springs, and the marks of greasy hands and heads.

Do was the same room, article for article, only the shelf was polished and held books. The table was also bare and polished. The teacups were right side up because they were washed, and not just turned over to shed the dust. The vase was polished and held fresh flowers. The curtain was on a straight rod clear of the floor. The chairs were covered with clean starched print. Displayed conspicuously on the exhibit was a sign to say that the cost of the difference between *Do* and *Don't* was just one pound. Apparently the women were enchanted with it all. Here was something they knew all about in their daily lives. They passed from *Don't* to *Do* again and again, and one of them, gazing sadly at *Don't*, was overheard to murmur, 'Just like home'. I thought of another 'Before and After' display which I had seen very

recently in the Ideal Home Exhibition, called 'How to Modernize your Kitchen'. The difference between the domestic problems of the women in both our countries seems to be one of degree, and not of kind!

On another occasion my mentor received a Round Robin letter asking if she would mind having a dinner party to teach them their way about among the complications of a European table; also how to behave at a ball; also, and this was a postcript from the heart, would she mind teaching them how to send their men to the office in the mornings, 'in good happiness to do good work!' Again a formal dinner party and dance at Government House was neither feasible nor useful, but she asked them all to tea, and she and her guests took turns at being hostess. It seemed to surprise them that order of precedence and the relative wealth and importance of the guest were not matters of moment. They were to seek out the shy ones and those of no worldly account, to make them feel welcome and at home. The women giggled like schoolgirls playing house when it was their turn to be hostess, accepting the fact that the drill at such a function was not some complicated pattern of strange procedure like the lobster quadrille, but only spontaneous kindness and thoughtfulness, and being natural. They had also learned something new about 'the master race' as well!

I gather that the pathetic request for instruction in the difficult art of sending your man to the office 'in happiness to do good work' had to be dismissed with the rueful confession that this is not a question for which Europeans have discovered a universal answer. European wives also have to learn about decent coffee, and toast, also when to scold and when to be silent, when to be firmly cheerful and when to be sympathetic, and that the imponderables of this particular problem are as much a matter of temperament and the individual with us as with them.

I do not for a moment suppose that you will ever be asked to do these things in any station you are in, and you would

certainly wait until you were asked. After all, this was a Governor's lady, her powers were equal to her opportunities, but she created her opportunities by an apparently inexhaustible store of humour and goodwill.

What did impress me was her availability, and that these African women could, and did, ask her with complete trust and confidence to meet them on the level of their real interests and their needs. That is a rare and valuable quality, and while you may not ever need or wish to do things in her way —to poke about the slums, to call on obscure and out-of-the-way folk in your husband's district—I should like to feel that your store of humour and good will is available where it is really needed, and that like her you are prepared for anything.

I must warn you that you must not attempt to make friends holus-bolus among the population in a big way until you have learned your way about. Indiscriminate contacts may sometimes be politically dangerous and socially disastrous. You may find that some simple encounter in your house is used as political or financial or social 'collateral' for sharp practice and chicanery, in a way that you never intended, and cannot check once it has started. Again, your husband should be your guide, not you his, and his seniors will in turn guide him away from the more obvious pitfalls. You must beware of the people who might use your acquaintance to gain access to the power and influence which your husband represents. 'Contact men', as we have learned to call them recently, flourish in the purlieus of a civil service. You must certainly not turn into one, and it might be very difficult and embarrassing to have to explain the limits of your powers as a private person.

Nor must you lower your own standards of behaviour in a misguided attempt to meet people more than half-way. I inquired yesterday whether there was any general rule, or particular advice that I could give you to save you from dropping the more obvious bricks when you do meet these people

on their own ground. Here was a great store of experience among a variety of peoples, from Pashas and Emirs and Imams and their womenfolk in purdah and harem, to market mammies, waifs and strays, and the humble homes in the shanty towns, and I wondered to what extent you should adapt yourself to their ways. You cannot quite say 'When in Rome . . .' and you may often be puzzled by questions of etiquette. The advice again is to abide by your own standards of good manners. They are never misunderstood so long as they are good manners, and natural to you. In many places other than China, one sits on the floor and dips into the dish with one's fingers, but if a chair and a plate and spoon are provided for you, don't refuse them in a misguided attempt to be more Roman than the Romans.

For instance, apparently in the women's quarters of some Mohammedan households it is good manners to approach a newcomer and finger her garments and comment on them. On one occasion my friend had to remove her party of European ladies very hastily. They were trying to do the same, and the bricks were flying in all directions. It is not done by us, and it is generally a mistake to try to adopt a strange custom and to make a hash of it, thereby giving great offence. It is fatally easy to appear to mock a ceremony if we imitate it badly. That can be really insulting. You will remember from your nursery copy-books that true politeness is to do and say the kindest thing in the kindest way. That is understood in every social idiom, and you are usually safe with it.

That does not mean that we can treat every foreigner as if he were English, and as if all our customs were universally understood. For instance, we treat strangers with a certain reserve and formality, but, as acquaintance ripens into friendship, the highest compliment that we can pay our friends is to treat them without ceremony, as a member of the family, as one of ourselves, so to speak. That attitude, to a person who is not a blood member of the immediate family is not understood by people whose social code is more rigid,

more ceremonious, more old-fashioned than ours. With them, it is always an honour and a privilege to be asked to your house, and it always should be. You will be expected to put on a pretty dress, to spread a cloth, to get out your best cups, to provide some special dainty in the way of refreshments, and to treat the whole affair as an occasion. The informality that would be a compliment to another European might be deeply resented by a sensitive foreigner as a slight, or an indication that you regard him as of no account. Nor do they take kindly to familiarity, to the casual or off-hand manner which has become common with us in recent years.

Apropos of that, an African chief remarked once to a friend of ours, 'When I go to pay a call on the District Commissioner I put on my best robe, and see that my followers are decently turned out as befits the occasion. I do not think young So-and-So, when he knows I am coming, and he always does, need receive me in shorts. He might even put on a clean suit for our meeting!' The same old gentleman recounted another experience he had which offended him deeply. He had been invited up to a junior officer's house. There was a new baby in the nursery, and the young father brought it out and displayed it with paternal pride and delight. Now nursery matters do not intrude into the affairs of the lordly ones in these parts. 'I looked at it, as I appeared to be expected to,' said the old man with deepest scorn, 'then gave it half a crown. I believe it is the custom in your country!'

My visitor yesterday told me another amusing story of one of her early lessons in local etiquette. It seems that among the old-fashioned people of the West Coast of Africa it is the height of ill manners to leave food untouched on a table, and therefore, as it were, unappreciated. On one occasion she had arranged a garden party to allow a large number of the local people to meet some distinguished visitors from abroad. The guests were ushered into the garden where the tea-tables were spread, and presently were invited to take their places

at the tables. The hostess stood chatting to the visitors, waiting for everyone to be seated before making an appropriate speech of introduction and welcome. To her horror, when she turned round, every crumb on every plate had already vanished into the laps and folds and pockets and bags of the company. There was not so much as a sandwich to offer the guests of honour. After that she learned to keep something in reserve to replenish the tables as the plates were emptied.

The Bishop of Accra was in worse case on a similar occasion. His was a vast missionary treat, so large that it was necessary to have tea in relays. Alas! when the first sitting rose there was nothing left at all for the second relay, and there was more than a little indignation among those who had been invited, but got nothing. For such a public affair, I understand, it is quite in order to put out one of everything on individual plates, and something to take home in a parcel. That is also their kindly custom. Do you remember *Ameliaranne and the Green Umbrella*? Similarly, at a cocktail party in an African home you may find that the toasties are not handed round in entrée dishes, but that you are given a dish of nuts and a saucer containing one of everything which will be replenished by the servant. Your hostess understands that it is not our custom to eat everything in sight, so you do not need to eat it all lest she be offended. None of these things that I am telling you are general rules. I merely hope that I am indicating to you that there are things to be learned, and it is important for you to go slow, and feel your way into your new surroundings, and to be prepared for some surprises and shocks.

My own experience in these matters is very limited. I have known very few Africans between the extremes of the quite primitive East African villagers whom one treated as if they were children, and my friends among the educated women of the West Coast who were indistinguishable from the other senior wives in the Service in education, manners and mental outlook. They may have been a shade more domesticated,

but then, they were at home and I wasn't. I should defy any of them to outdo me in domesticity if we were neighbours in Kensington at present. Perhaps the very contrast between those extremes entitles me to say with greater force, 'For goodness' sake don't generalize about the African woman, or imagine that I or anyone else can give you a ready-made code of behaviour or method of approach to them'. I know quite well that whatever I tell you, before you have been in your first colony five minutes, you will be sure to meet people who do know *all* about the African, and are prepared to tell you in sweeping generalities what they are like. I was the more pleased to learn yesterday from a person whose experience was longer and wider and deeper than mine that the more one lives and works among them, the less one is inclined to know it all—to 'sum it up in one', and to describe whole peoples with a casual catch phrase or generalization.

15

RACE RELATIONSHIPS

THERE used to be a fourth-form school-book, a geography of some sort, or perhaps a primer, in which the chapter on France began, 'The French are a polite nation, fond of light wines'! I do hope you will soon leave behind you a fourth-form attitude to Africans, or indeed to any of the so-called native races. Native race, yourself, if you remember my first letter to you. I do not mean that you are to idealize them, or sentimentalize them, or imagine that if they were only given a chance, politically, or educationally, or socially they would all turn into saints and heroes, or even English public-school types, in a generation or two. A soft sentimentality about them is not only irresponsible and stupid, but it is dangerous and cruel to them and to yourself when your illusions about them are shattered, as they soon will be.

They are different from us, of course they are. Climate, geography, history, tradition, blood, breeding, their whole physiological and psychological make-up contribute to our differences, but do realize that they are as different from one another as we are from each other in character and temperament, and that you will not be let off being intelligent about them as individuals because they are all of one colour. This is a positive builder's yard full of bricks for you to drop.

Once upon a time there was an Agricultural Officer whose only acquaintance with African women was up-country

farmers' wives, and the market mammies in the villages of the far, far bush. When he came to headquarters he was asked to a dinner party, and found himself seated next to an African. During the soup he turned to her and said in what he fancied was her language, 'Missis like chop?', to which she replied sweetly, 'Yes thank you. I became quite accustomed to European food when I was at school in England.'

You too must be prepared for shocks, and they will not always be pleasant ones. It will distress you to encounter cruelty among the common people, indifference to pain in themselves and in other people, and in animals. You may be wearied of their insatiable greed for the crumbs from the white man's table, coupled with fulsome servility and with ingratitude to you, and to each other. You will be depressed by their insensitiveness to your standards. It appears to be a complete ignorance of or indifference to the ten commandments, all but the second, as well as to the two great ones that sum them up. That is not to say that they have no code of their own, but the divergences between theirs and ours are often painful. It is our job to understand them, and to change what needs improving, by teaching the best we know, and by patient example.

These things will get harder, not easier as time goes on, and as we see the things we have built up and cared for come to pieces in their hands. Let me give you an extreme example. A friend of ours handed over the job of Senior Medical Officer in a flourishing hospital to a very clever African doctor. The man understood that his was the last word in matters not only of medicine but of discipline. He was not, however, bred in the traditions of English hospitals, and at first he appeared to be taking a delight in his new position by throwing his weight about over details of administration, and even to slanging the nurses of both races in front of the patients, which is just not done. It sometimes seemed as if he were working off some grudge against the white race by being especially rude to the European nurses whenever he

got the chance. Presently, of course, none of the English nurses would stand for it, and when the row did blow up there would be much bitter recrimination and race-hatred flying about. Our friend could see all his years of patient labour in the hospital on the brink of destruction, because it would be dangerous at present to leave any large hospital entirely staffed by Africans. Yet the doctor was 'ready' for his new position from every other point of view.

The Army faces a similar problem with regard to giving commissions to Africans. They must, indeed, be very carefully selected if they are going to exercise military authority over their fellow-countrymen, who may or may not be prepared to take it from them. Government Departments have to consider all these questions every time they make an appointment or promotion from a list of candidates of both races. Mere skill or efficiency is not all that is required, and if a European is preferred because of his additional capacity for taking responsibility, or exercising authority, there is certain to be an accusation that the colour-bar has been applied. It is almost impossible to convince local public opinion that we are not judging their race as being all of a piece, because most of them have met race prejudice at one time or another and have been hurt by it. It is a wound that does not heal, and creates an even more bitter colour prejudice in them.

You will indeed hope that the Africans you meet, and whose good opinion of your own people you quite rightly value, will not judge you, or the English, by some of your compatriots whom they see about them. The European society of any colonial community is a pretty good cross-section of the middle class. There are remarkably few dukes or dustmen about! Just because it is removed from its proper background, where fine distinctions of conduct place people in the moral, social and cultural scale at once, the picture is distorted. For the local people, it is like trying to judge a tree from a slice of the trunk, or a handful of leaves.

It used to warm my heart that the African wives I met, with their soft voices, their gracious manners and their unfailing charm, should greet yet another newcomer to the kaleidoscopic European society of a West Coast capital with any sort of welcome at all. They know us as a type all too well, and are still prepared to like us when we are genuine, sincere, and free of patronizing airs and affectations. I often thought they saw us, the older ones, at our worst, in circumstances that were unfair to anyone. It was all too often at a large cocktail party, standing about with a glass in one hand and a cigarette in the other, chatting idly to one another about the heat and burden of the day, clothes and food, the sins of the servants and the high cost of living, or perhaps about home, our last leave, or the children at school. They neither smoke nor drink. Their homes, their husbands, their children and the family in its widest sense are their first concern. They are the silent partners *par excellence*, and it is a standard they apply to us. It surprised me often that they had any opinion of us at all, seeing us thus uprooted and detached from almost every value in life that we have in common with them.

It does not do for us to imagine that because of the colour of our skins we may assume superiority in their eyes which they must accept without other evidence, nor is it too much to ask us to provide the evidence when we can. We are supposed to represent two thousand years of Christian civilization for which we should be grateful, and to try to express it in our bearing to one another, and to them, and not to lower our standards because we are away from home. One hopes, naïvely, that *they* don't apply the word 'typical' to nasty Europeans, that *they* trust that the nice ones are the average! Yet how difficult it is for any of us to learn our way about among an alien race.

Many of the more bumptious, aggressive and unpleasant young Africans that you meet, as well as the whiners, the cadgers and the cringers, may quite well be the sons or grandsons of slaves, and display the slave's mentality, with its lust for revenge on society, its self- and safety-seeking, the cringe before the blow, and snarl before the snub, and the craving for a turn at being King of the Castle, to strut and pose as 'big Master'. These are the ones who so easily discover an affinity with the Russians, whose background is not dissimilar, and whose doctrine of revolution is the passion of the oppressed to turn oppressor. No wonder the easy-going freedoms of a bourgeois democracy are anathema to them! You will recognize the same traits and tastes among Europeans with generations of inferior social status behind them, if they are vulgar or pretentious, and use every opportunity, however temporary, for a pathetic or contemptible self-importance.

On the other hand you will meet some Africans of a different breeding altogether. Like the *noblesse* of the *ancien régime*, only their feudalism is more recent, they will display the arrogance of the slave-owner, the same disregard of *hoi polloi*, the same selfish greed and lack of social conscience which asks for the tumbrils. Again, among them you may discover the traits of the true aristocrat, the same care for dependants and the poor, the same willingness within their code to take responsibility, and to balance duty with privilege—even the same sureness of touch, the ability to command service and to give it. Alas, as with us, these are few and far between, and even of the ones you do find you dare not expect too much too soon when they have so much to lose in a democracy. Your husband will see more of this feudal conservatism than you will, among the chiefs and elders who are the traditional rulers of the people, and it wants very careful handling.

Africans, like ourselves, are not all prepared to be martyrs to ideals and ideologies. Whenever you do come bang up against their aggressive hostility, which will be supercharged with racial distrust and hatred, they may show you a menacing savagery which is bewildering at first, and when

you do begin to try to understand it, it is not the less unpleasant to live with for all that. They are not slaves and savages because we made them so. They were that before they ever saw us, an integrated society of great men and small, slaves, slave-owners, slave-dealers, warriors, torturers, chieftains and clansmen, wise and witty, good, bad and indifferent, gracious and surly, industrious and lazy, arrogant and fearful; and, of course, pagan in outlook. I hope I have said enough to dispel any romantic illusions or snap judgments you may already have made, to prepare you for any of the generalizations that are handed to you on a plate when you arrive in your colony, and also to give point to the message from my visitor the other day—'Tell her to *start small*', she begged as she bade me good-night, and I do!

I hope, too, that in describing some of the differences between the races and pointing out similarities and parallels when I could, that I have not given you an idea that we have nothing to do for the African except to understand him, and to set him free. I mention this, and it would surprise most members of my generation that I should need to, because of an experience my husband had which shook us to the core. He had been lecturing at a famous African school, telling the boys how to set about learning from their European masters and friends the difficult lessons of democracy in preparation for the day when they would be sharing in the duties of citizenship and government.

At question time a young Englishman, newly recruited to the teaching staff, rose in his place and said, 'Would you agree that European civilization has nothing to offer Africa except its mechanical processes?' That, as a point of view, was more than a little shattering! Some of the older generation might well have said that anyone who could think it, let alone express it, should have been sacked and sent home on the next boat. Perhaps it is sufficiently widespread among your generation to deserve serious attention, and some correction, if I may venture to say so.

We are all, of course, more chary than we were twenty years ago of transplanting full-blown institutions wholesale, and hoping that people will grow into them, like father's boots. If it is true that we now know that handing out a ready-made constitution, a system of bicameral legislation and a code of law is not the answer to political problems in any continent, we also know that, in other fields, starting a school does not create an educated community, starting a trade union does not necessarily ensure solidarity and peace among the workers, and even that starting a Women's Institute does not create a happy sisterhood of efficient wives and mothers. If we have also learned by very recent experience that making allies does not necessarily induce international trust and friendship, similarly in the realm of race relationships founding a club or an association so that people can get together will do just no good at all if further acquaintance does not increase understanding and affection. These social techniques, so to speak, prepare the ground, but what gets planted in it wants a little more careful examination.

We do believe in the British way of life. Our institutions are sturdy, adaptable ones. The Commonwealth itself is a good thing, 'a brotherhood of nations', as the King now calls it. It is free and kind and generous, vaguely amateur and easy-going, so that all kinds of queer people can do and say what they please in it, like our young schoolmaster who was not sacked and packed home on the next boat, or sent to a labour camp, but left to grow out of his intellectual adolescence.

We *have* got something to teach Africa beyond mechanical processes, something of what we have learned in our long history, something of our faith, even some of the reasons for the apparent failures in our *modus vivendi*. What has changed in the last generation or two is that we are not quite so sure of ourselves as we once were. This is understandable enough when we contemplate the physical wreck of a large part of our much-vaunted European civilization after two savage

wars, and look with apprehension into a future in which, unless we can prevent it, a third war may blot the whole thing out for ever.

Thirty or forty years ago it seemed natural that the white man with his achievements in the realms of science, engineering, art, architecture, education, medicine, the law and the domestic arts of gracious living should be regarded by the raw savage, or even the Asiatic, as a superior being. Under his white skin was a better brain, a richer personality, a heritage of wisdom and knowledge, a capacity for unselfish kindness, and other standards of personal conduct which were based on long, if sometimes erratic obedience to the first and great commandment, and some practice in the second which is like unto it. 'The word of an Englishman' was the synonym for absolute honesty in every language under the sun, and in many parts of the world, notably Spanish America, it is still a solemn oath to swear by. We had everything to give to less fortunate races: peace under the law, protection under the flag, material gifts to wonder at and to desire, agricultural and industrial techniques, opportunities to earn a better life, both in the realm of material comforts and cultural opportunities. Freedom from slavery, freedom from fear and freedom from want really seemed to be gifts to be attained at the hands of the white man, and the rulers of Africa when they made their treaties with the Great White Queen knew exactly what they were doing.

Now the picture has altered. Something has happened to peace under the law and protection under the flag. European civilization has been shaken to its foundations, taking with it in its fall the unquestioning faith of people like our young schoolmaster. Bitter rivalries have twice all but destroyed it, savage cruelties, only refined by our much-vaunted scientific techniques, have been disclosed at places other than Dachau and Belsen. In large areas Christian civilization is seen to have been only a veneer. Meantime, we have educated the less advanced peoples. Now they stand with us asking the

great questions, not opposite to us, expecting us to have the answers.

That does not mean that we are not better equipped than they are, both in body and mind, to seek the answer where it may be found, but that we too are examining afresh the roots of our civilization, trying to sort out what was evil, examining afresh our own standards of what makes a good life, and facing the fact that periodic wars, savage economics, political rivalries and social inequalities when they are based on another sort of slavery, are no part of it. Nobody nowadays would ask the most untutored savage to accept European culture wholesale. They can see with one glance at our ruins what came of it. Whatever else Europe is at present, it is not a model, nor, incidentally, are the Americas.

Perhaps I can put it like this, though it is difficult to puzzle out, and one is not used to thinking much about these things or talking about them. The foundations of our civilization contain a bomb-proof shelter carved out of the living rock. Any political or economic or social structure that is built on that rock will survive and is worth perpetuating. Reduced to its lowest terms it is accountability to God who is our Father, who once was Love incarnate, and is now and ever shall be the Holy Spirit of Truth and Goodness at work in the world. There, as you yourself would say, we have 'got something'. As the basis for a civilization it bears comparison with any known Asiatic or African system of beliefs, quite regardless of the degree to which we ourselves may have betrayed it. The principles of Christian conduct and their corollaries, justice, mercy, absolute honesty, respect for the individual who is equal with us before God, the pursuit of truth for its own sake —all these fruits of the spirit still grow from their indestructible roots in the Christian faith when they are allowed and encouraged to do so. These are indeed the roots of European civilization, and what we nowadays call the British way of life is no mean part of it. To put it another way, these things have been bred in the bone of the average Englishman for

over a thousand years, whether he happens to be a practising Christian or the most modern of agnostics. When he misbehaves he knows exactly whom and what he is letting down, even though he may no longer express himself in the Christian idiom.

The colour bar is a very questionable thing. Our ideas about it will probably alter from generation to generation as Europe changes and develops in new ways, and as the alien races change and develop too, but the conduct bar, if I may put it like that, or better still, the culture bar in the deepest sense of that much-abused word, will remain constant, because it is so to speak fundamental. If at present we wish to claim more places on the right side than other races, so we jolly well ought, with nearly two thousand years more discipline under the rod, more refinement of conscience in the fires of experience.

Or let me put it yet another way. The visible part of European civilization is a pretty sorry-looking object at present. It used to be a fine-looking plant whose flowers we were proud to display, and whose slips and seeds we were delighted to give away to be carried to the far corners of the globe to be replanted in alien soil. Now it looks so starved and withered and knocked about that there seem to be few branches from which to cut healthy slips, and some doubt whether the seeds will ever do any good. We are digging up our own garden and replanting it in every aspect of life, political, social, economic, international, but in the process we are discovering that no matter how disreputable it may appear on the surface, most of the roots are sound and have life in them. Like an old clump of Michaelmas daisy, which will stand any amount of neglect and rough treatment, you can dig it up, cut away the withered leaves and dried-up stems, and pull the roots apart, leaving some of the soil when it sticks and wherever there is a bit of healthy live green and the tiniest pale shoot, you can replant it anywhere. It will grow.

This is pretty serious stuff to be discussing in a thoroughly

practical letter about life in the colonies, but I am constrained to say what I think about these things, because a very representative group of your generation have been asking, very practically, whether we have any official policy with regard to the religion of our colonial charges, and, even more practically, what they are expected to do about it. You yourself will find that you are asking yourself all kinds of surprising questions about missions and missionaries when you have met a few, and seen them at work, and your answers may surprise you even more. In my day they were not very popular members of the community, and that in itself was a surprise to me.

They are so to speak the *tertium quid* in this business of empire building. As trade follows the flag, so both are likely to follow missionary endeavour, so perhaps I should have said *primum*, not *tertium*. I am sure you have often had Livingstone's great speech at Cambridge quoted to you, and I hope you have read some of the stories of the missionary pioneers. It will prevent your dismissing the subject too cheaply. Some of them are moving in the extreme. Somebody, possibly a Jesuit, possibly an evangelist or teacher from one of the numerous Protestant sects, has gone out alone, with small backing from home, often with inadequate supplies of cash, goods, medicine, information—and what is not at all the same thing, knowledge—and has set up his tent, or his table, or even just his Bible and the Cross, and has borne witness to the Gospel. I wish we had biographies of the other folk too, some record of the impression made on the chiefs and villagers who saw this strange pale creature for the first time. What did he want? Nothing, it appeared except the common courtesies to a traveller, shelter, food, and water. Like all wayfarers he had a story to tell, and he probably found gracious listeners. Then his story unfolded. Christ crucified—a strange tale of the way the white man treats his gods! Love your neighbour. Love God. A gospel of love to replace a gospel of power and fear, fear of the wind and the storm, the

spirits of earth and air, the known and the unknown. Here was a very strange catalogue of the blessed: the poor in spirit, the mourners, the meek, the humble, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers and the persecuted: Very odd! If the stories of those beginnings were as well written as they were well lived, what a library of books-to-live-by we should have! They would indeed survive that 'out-station test' that I told you about.

I don't know what it is about the mention of missionaries that seems to bring out the worst in ordinary lay folk. People who are quite tolerant of drunkards and pilferers and adulterers, and others with less picturesque human failings, become quite stupid and unreasonable about missionaries. I have sometimes thought that it may be that the command which they are obeying was laid upon us all, and when they fall short of the ideal, theirs and ours, we take a perverse and self-defending pleasure in having at them. So you will hear a lot of unkind criticism of them, both true and untrue. One of the typical ones is, 'I don't know why missionaries come out here and impose our religion on these people who were much happier in their own ways before.' There is not a single phrase in that remark that will bear a second's serious examination or cool thought, but you will often hear it said.

Another old chestnut is, 'Pity all natives can't be Mohammedans. All my boys are Mohammedans. Wouldn't have anyone else. Had a Christian once. Had to sack him.' A little further enquiry elicits the information that Mohammedans do not pilfer the drink. Their relapses into original sinfulness can be timed to the end of Ramadan, and 'you know where you are'. Another querulous remark that you will often hear is, 'What do they want to teach these people Christianity for? Much better teach them a trade', or more violently, 'Education does more harm than good. I wouldn't have them in the country.' Then you will hear, 'I can't stand missionaries. They don't smoke, don't drink, ruin any gathering.' And this from people who are most mild in their own indulgences!

Contrariwise you may hear, 'I can't stand Padre So-and-So. Smokes, drinks, makes himself pretty comfortable. Never think he was a parson. I do like a man to be what he is.'*

Does all this surprise you as it did me, Priscilla? Yet there is a grain of sense under all the prejudice taken piece by piece. If we examine it we will discover a good deal about people, and about missions, and about ourselves.

Mohammedanism does often produce a very attractive kind of servant, disciplined and philosophical. My favourite garden-boy was one. He was merry as well as faithful, and with the gentlest green fingers. I had to slaughter all the grubs! If I were early at tea-time, and a persistent call of 'Garden' elicited no reply, I might catch sight of him kneeling under the hibiscus, prostrating himself and saying his evening prayers. Many people will say that Mohammedans take their religion more seriously than do Christians. The discipline is strict and the appeal direct. But you have already seen the flaw in the argument. Either there is one God and Mahomet is his prophet, or Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. You could not possibly wish a continent full of people to be taught what you believe to be untrue just to suit your convenience.

We all know that converting an individual or a community to Christianity relaxes the old tribal fears and restraints, removing one very rigid moral code and substituting for it another, a freer one, the freedom to choose between right and wrong, guided by the very still, very small voice of conscience. Who should know what a dangerous freedom that is better than we? And if the African embraces this new freedom, and having cast off the fear of his elders imitates his betters rather badly, who is to blame if he is not a very satisfactory kind of person?

That is not to say that it would have been *better* to teach

*The Bishop of Accra told me that one of his wealthiest subscribers withdrew her support of missions when she heard that they had actually purchased a porcelain bath.

him a trade. That point of view towards him expresses with brief carelessness a problem that both governments and missions have handled with no great sureness of touch even in my short life-time. Twenty years ago the education at mission schools was largely limited to the three 'R's'. Governments subsidized the missions already established on these lines, which were already turning out clerks and teachers, the first products of a purely academic education. The example of the Baboo class in India, the 'failed B.A.'s', whose education seemed to result in a superficial storming of the learned professions, the creation of political agitators, and a sharp cleavage between a highly educated minority and the untouched millions of their countrymen, caused a fresh examination of educational policy. Now we are hearing more of mass education which may or may not include mass literacy, and of technical and trade schools on the best modern lines. The man who wanted the African taught a trade or European 'mechanical processes' has a good deal of official backing.

The dilemma is a false one. It is not a question of either-or, a question whether you would rather endow a promising African schoolboy with the book learning of Europe, or teach him a trade by which he can earn his living, and support his family. Character and citizenship for them, as for us, are of the first importance. What and how he thinks about himself and his neighbour, what kind of person he becomes, what kind of carpenter or engine-driver he is, how he spends his evenings, how he treats his wife and children, whether he will give freely of his time and thought to the community, how he votes—these will be the important results of his education.

The missions themselves had long since discovered that preaching the Gospel was not enough. It was no good trying to make saints, let alone decent hard-working Christian citizens out of diseased bodies, handicapped by poor living conditions, poverty in their homes and in the community, as well as ignorance and superstition. The new sciences of sociology and anthropology cast their net over the mission

field, and there was an enormous influx of lay workers, doctors, nurses, agricultural experts, and instructors in the trades. Some missions nowadays are hardly to be distinguished from the non-sectarian government schools and technical colleges. From their point of view it must seem like putting the cart before the horse, and in the end perhaps trading in the whole vehicle for a streamlined internal combustion engine. It is already doubtless as apparent to them as it is to governments at home and abroad that industrial techniques are not enough. You may educate an African, enable him to earn his living, dress in European clothes, discourse learnedly of plant viruses, intelligence quotients and political ideologies, and then wonder that he is an unsatisfactory person to you and to himself, and to his country. We ourselves lost something when we substituted classes in citizenship for catechism in our schools, and if you think I am being stuffy and old-fashioned, get out your Prayer Book, read the answer to 'what is my duty toward my neighbour?' and compare it with other charters for the conduct of human affairs.

Alas! there is no time nowadays for the single dedicated man or woman to go out among the heathen, win their confidence, make friends, spend a lifetime doing hard social work, and watch the slow growth of a Christian soul or two, who, in their turn, would convert their fellows. It was all the earlier missionaries dared to hope. Now we appear to be about to attack the heathen world with bulldozers! All the speed and disruption of modern agriculture and industrial techniques are going to crash through the bush, and in a few years' time, if the planners have their way, the typical African scene will be a tarred road, flanked by scientifically terraced fields and hillsides, model villages and garden cities, the forest turned into plantations, and the fauna, from mosquito and tsetse-fly to elephant and giraffe, either eliminated or kept in national parks. It is a dismaying thought, particularly when you wonder about the people who are going to live in the houses.

The Bishop of Liberia summed it up for me in one. He is

a charming American of African descent who comes from Virginia. We were talking together about this new scheme for developing the hinterland of Liberia with the help of powerful American financial interests, wondering how it was likely to work, and whether it would be streamlined with all the usual speed and efficiency of similar American projects elsewhere. The Bishop was in one way looking forward to some help in his weary battle against ignorance, poverty, dirt, disease, cruelty and heathendom, but he could not help saying to me sadly, 'What about the people? You can process industry, and you can process agriculture, but, Mrs. Bradley, you *cain't process men!*'

Did you happen to see that film *Men of Two Worlds*? It was brilliantly conceived and superbly executed, making the most—a bit too much, perhaps—of glorious Technicolor. It is an attempt to state something of this problem with the broad outlines of a film story, and with the inevitably vague locale 'somewhere in Africa'. The plot, too, is an administrative problem that is commonplace enough whenever a European plan to help a native people meets their stubborn, ignorant, prejudiced, and powerful refusal to be helped. The hero over whom the conflict rages is an African who has been educated in England and has become an accomplished musician. He has returned to his own people to be an Assistant District Commissioner. He embodies the struggle between the forces of the two worlds, which is competently stated except for one major omission. At the crisis, when the witch doctor, the drums, the ancestral fears, the evil eye, and the mass suggestion of the tribe have brought him to the very gates of death, he is saved by the children of his music school singing one of his songs. Now I thought that particular climax more than a little hollow. Christianity may have seemed to the authors and producers 'bad box office'. I don't know. But when they showed us an educated African gentleman who had been elevated above the grosser of his tribal beliefs and fears meeting the great spiritual crisis of his life

as if neither he nor they had ever heard of Jesus Christ, it seemed to me to be just plain cheating. Not only is it impossible that he should have built up a civilized character in a British colony without a Christian education, but from the point of view of an honest dramatic conflict which Aristotle could have approved, it was wrong to place tribal politics in the one scale, weighted with religion, and in the other the force of European civilization weighted with a piece of music. I believe that at the moment when the sweat poured, and the eyes glazed, and the forces of evil tore at him on his bed, he would have cried, 'Lord Jesus, save my soul alive'. How could he not? It seemed to me to be typical of the modern tendency to play out the drama of European civilization, even if it is the last act, without the Prince of Peace.

I have gone to some length in this discussion, and as deeply as I know how, because those of us who have actually felt the hurt when some of the bonds between ourselves and our colonial charges were ruthlessly and painfully snapped, have asked ourselves, 'When the others break, what is going to be left between us?' It is a question that you will hear discussed sometimes lightly, but more often seriously wherever you go in the Empire. The parallel with Rome is often drawn. The fact that, as the military and political and racial domination of that other Empire receded, the Church (which in those days was the custodian of every activity of civilized man) kept the torch alight is not very often or very hopefully remembered. You may hear the British Council proffered as a modern link, or secular education, or technical advisers on mechanical processes. European culture will always be needed where thoughtful men are at work.

You will have to make up your own mind about the part, however small, that you are going to play in providing the answer to these great questions.

Not that we need all be missionaries. The three estates are not so sharply divided as they once were. Not all the saints and martyrs are missionaries. Not all the great administra-

tors are in the Civil Service, nor are all the Matthews in the commercial community. Sometimes social work is being done on a mine or farm or in a factory that puts governments' efforts, and those of the missionaries, to shame. Many of the missions are well established in the several functions of government and commerce. Some missionaries, with a particular bent, transfer to the secular arm. Some lay folk who have given a lifetime to their vocation in the service of the people through government, or in a commercial firm, return after retirement to spend their remaining years in not dissimilar work on a mission, simply because they love Africa and the Africans, or India and the Indians, or because they love the life. I hope you too will love the life. Indeed I am perhaps over-anxious, painting the picture with such slashing strokes and crude colours that I may be putting you off altogether, even without having mentioned as yet the chief reasons why you may not like it at all.

16

CHILDREN AND HEALTH

THERE are two reasons why you may not like life in the Colonial Service. Both of them are valid ones. The first is your health, and the second is the effect on your children. I hope you are not unduly anxious about your health. Your mother is, I know. It would be so much nicer for her if she had only to help you to choose between a house in Hampstead which is high and dry, and one in Chelsea which is more convenient but less salubriously situated from the point of view of the climate. Not such good air, they say! Instead, your husband may be taking you off to the West Coast of Africa, or to Malaya where sometimes it seems as if there were no air at all, and what there is feels like porridge on your skin and in your lungs, where fell diseases lurk in the earth and the water, where something bites you and you've had it. I should imagine that your husband has taken a short course in tropical hygiene, and may by now, like my friend the D.C.'s wife with her medical dictionary, be alarmed for you if not for himself by the multiplicity of diseases which are lying in wait for you.

I am not going to make light of this aspect of your life. The Colonial Empire, at least in the tropics, is no health resort. Keeping well will be one of the problems, and is a major part of the larger business of keeping happy. Sometimes the simplest things you know about to keep you fit, like lots of fresh drinking water, fresh fruit and salads and vegetables,

part of the cure is psychological as well as physical. You will be surprised at the number of times you ask to have your leave put off if you happen to be enjoying life on some particular station.

The psychological part of the problem is one that only you can tackle. In that connection I should perhaps tell you a rather shaming story out of my own experience. We were very young, and poor, and stationed in the capital. It was gay and expensive as well as hot, low-lying and exhausting. In those days it was very malarial. My husband was busy, enthralled by his work and glad to do little else. He did not seem to mind the heat, and romped through his short bouts of fever, eager to get back to the fray. But it began to get me down. One of the nastier aspects of congenital poverty is that it imposes on the shopping member of the family the dreary duty of doing less and less. Enforced economy cultivates only the negative virtue of self-denial, and it seemed impossible to find something to do that did not involve spending money. We gave up first one thing and then another: ice, interesting food, and entertaining our friends. It was up to me to make no new clothes, to cut down amusements, petrol, the club, books, records, and to see if I couldn't spend less and less on the house and garden. I began to be bored and restless, to feel trapped 'in the fell clutch of circumstance', and then to take my temperature in case there was a reason for feeling so flat. If the thermometer said ninety-nine, and it often did, there was a day in bed, or just 'loungin' roun' and sufferin',' as Uncle Remus puts it. One day I was inspired to ask for a job on the staff of the local school, on the principle of kill or cure. The extra money would get us out of debt it seemed, and perhaps take me and the baby to a temperate climate where I should be my cheerful energetic self again.

Luckily for me there was a vacancy, and we found a European nurse-girl whose wages were only half my salary. I began to get up early for a hasty breakfast and the eight o'clock bell. Teaching carries its own mental and spiritual

rewards. The work was so interesting and enjoyable that I tended to avoid that thermometer even when I did feel extra hot. I blush to tell you that I only missed one day's work, and a long week-end with a short bout of fever that entire year. I was tired and hungry by lunch time, ready for a sleep, a bath, some tea, and to whisk through my housekeeping with great speed and zest. It was lovely to have the nurse and to be free for games occasionally, and the wherewithal for some of the fun we had been denying ourselves. Indeed, it was the breadwinner's turn to wait for me to stop being so busy, to sit down and relax. It was the cake-winner who said, 'Must we?' to late nights and the time-filling pleasures which had seemed so important when there was little else to do. The targets of solvency and early leave were reached, and I had learned a salutary lesson about myself, and about good health in the tropics. Many women with a similar experience of war work at home, as well as abroad, will bear me out. Having 'far too much to do' is a wonderful panacea for all but the most unavoidable illnesses.

Just as your husband will probably not worry much about his own health, but will be concerned about yours, so you, if you are busy and happy and reasonably fit, will not mind the climate except as it affects your children. Perhaps it is a bit soon to talk to you about children, but while I am telling you as much as I can about being a good wife to your Colonial Civil Servant, I must not leave out any of the complications, and children do complicate a life without a settled home.

Here again you cannot make the assumption that your mother did, and probably still does, that the nursery wing or floor is as much part of the house as the roof and the foundations, and that children will come along to fill it in God's good time, at sufficiently close intervals to provide economies in prams and woollies and Nannies, as well as companionship for one another. I am afraid you must plan your family more carefully than you would at home, adding to the normal

considerations of health, temperament, and our old friend the budget, the additional prospect of separations from your husband or your children from time to time, and the how and where of their education, as well as the when and how much. Nevertheless, you will begin thinking about having children much sooner than you imagine in spite of the inconvenience, perhaps sooner than you would if you were settling down in England, where there is much more to do and to think about outside your home, and where you might both necessarily be wage-earners for longer than you would wish.

Indeed, I am old-fashioned enough to hope that when you were making up your mind to marry, you decided among other things that here was the perfect father for your babies—a pattern worth repeating in miniature, the kind of person who could give them that judicious mixture of detachment and devotion that is the prerogative of good fathers. I do not know the answer to 'Do shrimps make good mothers?' but I do know the answer to 'Do Colonial Civil Servants make good fathers?' It is an emphatic 'Yes, if they are given half a chance!' Long before this last war and the revolutions which have succeeded it—not the least of which has been the domestication of the average Englishman—colonial husbands could boast of their skill in nursery matters. There were servants, however primitive and incompetent, to do the other domestic chores, but the care of the baby, which is a twenty-four-hour business, and is far too much for one person, was a shared task in the colonies because it could not be delegated.

All nice people want lots and lots of lovely babies. Nothing makes up for them in the beginning or the middle or the end; not arts or gifts, or achievements, and certainly not careers or securities. You may be told that you cannot afford them. Actually you cannot afford not to have them, for any sake, your husband's as well as your own. A childless couple is always a sad case. The men, all but the very nicest, tend to become self-important in the worst way. Childless women

are at best just rather sad and unfulfilled, even with all the good works in the world to their credit. At their worst they become even more hard and self-centred and peculiar than the men. Only the loveliest women can grow to real maturity without what someone has called the sculpturing hand of motherhood to shape their souls. That's a fine phrase, isn't it? Next time you see one of your friends head down over a wash-tub of steaming nappies, or scraping porridge up a small chin with a spoon, just tell her that the sculpturing hand of motherhood is shaping her soul, and see what happens.

But seriously, most women would agree with me about childlessness, especially the ones who couldn't. The saddest ones you will meet are those who put off having a family because they were stationed in the bush, far from medical care, and when at last they could plan to have a family, found it was too late. The maddest are those who said 'We can't afford it', and then found, again too late, that they had been able to afford all the wrong things—a better leave, a bigger car, bigger and better parties, freedom from care, freedom from ties, freedom indeed, and for what?

I have said, categorically, that Colonial Civil Servants make good fathers, and I am prepared to say equally flatly, that good fathers make better colonial administrators. I know I am taking issue with many distinguished persons who will argue on the high levels of policy-making, about housing problems and costs to governments and costs to officers. There are even, as I have said, powerful and vociferous seniors who argue that a man does better work unencumbered by a wife and family—even a silent partner, a category into which children do *not* fit.

It is my experience that governments have a wonderful way of changing policy to fit facts. In one of the older colonies the stations were opened many years ago on the assumption that a single man would lose himself in them for a whole tour. When, between the wars, wives accompanied their

husbands to these remote places and could not take it, government altered its policy and larger European communities were developed. The tribal centres were administered as occasion offered by flying visits in a lorry. This did not make for good government, but seemed then the lesser of two evils. Now I understand that all-weather roads and aerodromes are making it possible to decentralize again, and the old stations are to be reopened.

I have every reason to believe that when it is necessary to provide houses for happy families to attract the best type of men into the Service, and to keep them there, it will be done. As for the other matter, the assumption seems to be that more and better work for the local people is accomplished by the undistracted attentions of a careerist. By careerist I mean a man who puts his work ahead of his happiness, his domestic comfort and his personal relationships, and that word 'sculpturing' is going to pop up again if I am not careful! In my opinion the local people might well profit by less attention from *more of a person*. The ideal administrative unit is not a single-minded devotee, or even a team of experts, but a Christian home, which continues to be the most civilized and most civilizing unit we know of, not only on its environment but on its inmates.

17

CHILDREN AND SEPARATIONS

I WAS startled one day when an African friend of mine told me that she was not very enthusiastic about the new University that was being planned for their country. This surprised me as she is a great friend of the school from which the University is to grow. 'I don't want my children's education to be finished out here,' she said. 'I want them to go to England as I did.' Lessons are the least part of it as she well knew. She herself had come to England and had lived with an English family. She is an accomplished musician. No string quartet or choral society is complete without her. She has an inexhaustible store of time and energy for good works, for the Church and for her neighbours. She knew that her young people would be getting a very odd idea of European civilization from the society of a colonial capital. It was she who told me that she wouldn't allow her children to belong to a mixed club, even if there were one. Somewhere in her own background she had received an education that she wanted to repeat for her own children. Some English family had opened its doors to a little African girl. There the give and take of family life had rubbed the corners off. Perhaps there had been music round the piano in the evening, possibly family prayers, certainly lessons shared and homely pleasures. As she was speaking I silently saluted whoever had forged so strong a link between our races. If she wishes to send her children to England to complete their education, how much more do we want ours to grow up in the surroundings

that have given us so much, and which cannot be got in any other way.

Her point of view with regard to education was in sharp contrast to one expressed only the other day at a conference in Cambridge by an African student. One of our Dutch visitors was having tea with him, and in the course of the conversation asked him what he and his people wanted of the English. 'We want them to finish educating us, *and then get out*,' he was told. Isn't it pathetic? To *finish* educating us! Somewhere or other he had gathered that education, civilization if you like, was something that could be imparted, rounded off with a certificate, and done with. Perhaps he picked up that virus that Europe has nothing to give Africa beyond her mechanical processes. Perhaps he thinks that political and social institutions are mechanical processes for governing a country, or even that an education is a mechanical process for equipping a man to earn his living, or to raise him in the cultural scale.

We fell to pondering, as we lay about in the soft summer sunshine on a Cambridge lawn, what it was that the boy had missed in his contact with us as a race. In the atmosphere proper to conferences one scans the far horizon for the ideal, contemplates with some dismay the real, the sorry little heap of failures and achievements at one's feet, and gives a cursory survey of the intervening landscape with mingled feelings of hope and misgiving. We pulled up the grass on our Cambridge lawn, chewed a blade or two of it, and after some exploratory discussion decided that far too much of this business of empire building is being done by middle-aged-people-on-the-make. Obviously nobody's grandmother had ever looked at that young African student over the top of her spectacles and imparted to him the beginnings of wisdom about book learning, which can only be gathered from grandparents, and a few elderly dons. His point of view towards education is not unusual among young people in any country, but our own adolescents of all ages have a better

chance of growing out of it. Nor, perhaps, had he had an opportunity to see the whole picture of where an Englishman gets his education, and how small a part of it his school work is. We know where anyone first learns that 'manners makyth man', how character is formed, where personalities develop, where corners are rubbed off, and those very early lessons in 'enlightened self-interest' over toys and games, to say nothing of the first essential democratic process which is not mechanical at all, but is developing the ability to be a good loser. Having come to the profound conclusion that what the Empire needs is more Nannies and more Grannies, we got up and shook the grass out of our clothes and went away to find some tea.

It has always been apparent to outsiders that the best part of the missionary work done by the Protestant sects, possibly more valuable in the long run than the preaching or teaching, is the influence in the community, either rural or urban, of the missionary's home, which he opens to his flock as a matter of course, and which is both their example and their ideal. But can we, *will* we do the same? Are we prepared to make our real homes in foreign parts, and bring up our children there? I have been speaking of children as if they were just part of the colonial picture, good for the country, part of the background of the administration, an adjunct to a man and his work, and a harmless occupation for his wife.

Once they appear, of course, they soon cease to be any of these things, and their welfare quickly begins to outweigh any of the lesser considerations. A man may be prepared to take risks with his own health and well-being in the cause of Empire, and his wife's as well. She has, after all, said 'for better or for worse' of her own free will. But when it comes to making the same kind of sacrifice of children for whom one wants only the best, that is something else again.

Ideally, every Englishman would like his sons and daughters to be brought up in a settled home, vaguely ancestral for choice, preferably in the country, with proper nursery life,

and a garden to grow in. An early acquaintance with safe green woods, with streams and hills, with sands and the sea and ships all come into the picture. Then a gentle preparatory school, a tougher or toughening public school, but above all a background of security that is summed up for him in that good old Saxon word, 'Home'. It seems at first that these things are to be denied to the children of Colonial Civil Servants, particularly since this last war, when the grandparents' rooftree as a part-time substitute, comfortably overstaffed and with empty nurseries, has all but vanished from the English scene.

Many people will tell you that separation is the most sinister word in the colonial vocabulary, whether it is applied to father or mother or children or home or just England. The efforts to alleviate its dire effects on everybody, but particularly on the children, are a major anxiety from the beginning to the end, when it is all 'too late' anyway. In the old days, the climate and diseases of the more tropical colonies precluded having children out at all. Almost as soon as a baby was on the way, Mother returned to England, and perhaps only spent a few months of every tour with her husband until after the children were grown. The children regarded their father as an interloping stranger, who took Mummy away from them on leave, and for longer periods during his absence abroad.

It was this last war which accelerated the revolution in these practices. Many of the men had been separated from their wives for most of seven years, and had had enough of it. Army wives had an admirable way of 'turning up', regardless of administrative considerations like housing and climate, wherever white women could follow their men, and if they couldn't leave the children, they brought them along. Presently prams, with Ayahs in uniforms, began to be a familiar sight in places where European children had been rare enough before.

Meanwhile, again largely through the efforts of the military authorities in several countries to keep their men fighting fit in the tropics, the development of the new prophylactic drugs was also accelerated, and the high-handed and large-minded methods of the military in clearing bush and mosquito breeding-grounds invaded the colonial scene. The returned servicemen in civilian posts, as well as the newcomers who had married during the war, were as unwilling as the soldiers to face separation from their wives just yet, so the children came too. The hardships attendant on problems of accommodation, relatively poor health, or administrative convenience were of secondary importance for the time being, and now part of the general post-war reconstruction and readjustment is to provide for the fact that there are wives and children to be thought of. Not the least of the readjustments will be financial, but that is another matter called 'Expatriation', and we needn't go into it.

What has happened is that the West Coast and other places which used to be forbidden to children for so long, now have a set of problems similar to those which have long been familiar to the East. There in the places with better climates the children could be kept out longer. Quinine, with a sweetie to take after it, was as much a part of the supper tray as biscuits and milk; one grain for every birthday until now we were five!

The actual business of having a baby is said to be easier in hot countries than in cold ones, but the recovery takes a little longer. As for the babies themselves, they don't usually mind mere heat. They like it, and if they are properly fed and lightly clad, and kept from insects, their first year or two should be comfortable enough. When they begin to eat solid foods and need fruit and vegetables, the natural products of the tropics—oranges and fish and chicken—are quite likely to be easier and more plentiful, in all but the most impossible places, than they might be in colder climates. Keeping them from being bitten is also not so difficult at that age, as they are under a net in any case when they are not in someone's arms.

Queer things do happen to the four-hour feeding schedule laid down in the books. The statutory six, ten, two, six, is sometimes more conveniently altered to five, nine, one, five, or what I preferred on one station for my eldest: seven, eleven, three, seven. The baby didn't know what either the clock or the book said, so all was well. Children are probably not so fat in the tropics as they might be at home, but fat babies went out of fashion, in favour of sturdy ones, more than twenty years ago, together with long robes, lace caps and starched ruffles. Tropical children will also not have red cheeks, but as I have said, we are assured that this is not an indication of ill-health, as it would be at home. The blood is just busy somewhere else inside.

When the children begin to want to run about, there is more to be thought of. Tropical sun is not good for anyone, and they ought not to go out in it more than you can help. A play shelter in the garden is sometimes the answer, or the shady end of the veranda, with a thick hat or helmet. They should still be under the net at six, for safety.

The real problem at this stage is that of an attendant. Somebody should be with them constantly, and who is it to be? You will remember that I told you that I was not going to discuss Ayahs with you, apropos of servants, but I would save them for my remarks on children. Again, I am not competent to lay down the law in those matters. Not having had any daughters, it was never necessary for me to employ another woman, white or black, to share nursery duties. I gathered from my friends who did employ European Nannies that there were many snags. All the problems of leisure and pleasure applied to them as well as to the mistress. There was no opportunity for them to have any sort of social life of their own apart from their employers. They were part of the family, belonged to the club, and Mother and Nanny took turn about playing games, or attending the club dances. African servants made difficulties of discipline over another white woman in the house whose position they didn't quite

understand. Like resident domestics in post-war England, European nurses often seemed more trouble than they were worth, and many of my friends have, from time to time, taken over their own nursery drudgeries with a great sense of freedom and relief.

Nursery drudgeries are not onerous in the tropics because of the many willing hands to do the heavy work. It is being tied to a time schedule and unable to leave the children that presents the problem. The social hour of sundown coincides with baby's bath and bed-time. Most young people take turn about going to parties, and the great treat is when some-one offers to be a baby-sitter, and Father and Mother can go out together. Again, the neighbourliness of colonial life comes into play. Many a New Year's Eve have we set off for the ball, with every bed in the house containing a small occupant, our most trusted William sitting in the passage, and a second runner asleep in the kitchen to come for help if one of the children woke. Our house was the nearest to the club, and it was not difficult for one pair or other of the parents to slip over between dances to see that all was well.

Some of my friends with young children devised an admir-able scheme to enable them to play games in the afternoon. They took turn about having half a dozen children to tea, and a walk, or games in the garden once a week, which meant that on all but one day they were free for golf or tennis, while the other mothers were taking their turn. I believe that in some colonies this scheme was expanded into a co-operative public service on positively socialist lines, with at least one trained European to supervise not only the children but the Ayahs.

Because, and this I have gathered from my friends in the I.C.S., as well as those from East Africa, most Ayahs need almost as much supervision as their young charges. Properly trained children's nurses are almost non-existent in Africa. On the East Coast, with its kinship to India, untrained or vaguely 'nursery-trained' women do seek this employment.

Anthropologically or sociologically speaking, a young African woman of good family does not take up children's nursing as a career. Her life is governed by her family from the cradle to the altar, within rigid tribal codes, and a few years of independence between her parent's home and her husband's is as unthinkable to them as it was in our society not so very long ago.

East African women who are free to seek this work are more than likely cast-offs, or cast-outs, because they are bad lots. I was given a horrifying picture of the pram-parade in an East African town with the nurses and their charges drawn up on the roadside, the young women chattering and giggling, surrounded by their clientele, and one of them merrily offering the baby's bottle to her circle of admirers for a swig all round. As venereal disease is not uncommon among such people, the picture is not a pretty one. The present categorical imperative is, 'Don't employ Ayahs', which might possibly be modified as time goes on, and education increases, to 'Do be absolutely certain that you know exactly what is going on'.

In many places you will send all new employees to the local clinic for a routine examination for venereal disease, tuberculosis or infectious skin troubles. Vigilance in the nursery is not, of course, confined to the coloured countries, and I daresay your mother and her friends had a good deal to say to one another in these matters thirty years ago, but I doubt if it has been passed on to you, since you have grown up in a virtually servantless world, uninstructed in the unofficial agenda of the strong but equally unofficial 'Mothers' Union' which had so firm a place in pre-war English life.

In West Africa, as I have said, there are more girls who might be eligible for employment, because there are more who go to school in the ordinary way. The most promising ones, often the daughters of educated mothers, take up teaching or nursing as a career just as we do. Some of the others become shop assistants or seamstresses and sewing-

maids, and there are certain posts in the public services which are open to them such as the telephone exchange. There has been no occasion until very recently for any of them to go into domestic service. The cooking and housework is done by men. There were no European children to be looked after, and the nurseries of the great African families were as full of relations as a Victorian household or a feudal castle.

The policy of Government with regard to the training of nurses has, up to now, been directed to equipping the cleverest for work in the hospitals, clinics, district nursing and welfare work among their own people. Whether any of them, or of their friends who are not quite so good at passing examinations, would ever be available as Nannies it is too early to say, but I hope devoutly that the prejudice against domestic service on snobbish grounds which is afflicting England at present will not creep out to the colonies, and certainly that it will not be fostered by official policies. There is no finer training for a wife and mother than some practice in the domestic arts in her own home, or in a better one if she can rise to it. Domestic service is an infinitely better preparation for life than using a modicum of literacy as a passport to selling stockings or licking stamps.

Perhaps one day there will be training-schools for children's nurses in the colonies, with proper graduates' uniforms to be proud of, similar to ours in England. If there are, they will probably have to be started by voluntary workers, and privately endowed. The wife of one of our former Governors told me that she did something of the sort for the training of ordinary domestics during one of her husband's governorships. All servants in that colony were imported from a neighbouring island. The local girls had no opportunities in any of the professions, save the oldest one. It did not take long to establish a proper domestic science school, and presently the local girls were competing with the foreigners for respectable, well-paid jobs.

I have been speaking of nurseries from the point of view of mother and nurse. The effect on children of colonial life generally, which includes someone to wait on them hand and foot, from cradle to school, poses a number of larger questions. Even when it is possible to employ a nurse-boy or a nurse-girl who is absolutely trustworthy in all physical matters relating to food and cleanliness, snakes and insects, sun hats and mosquito-nets, it remains true that it is not good for growing children to have someone just behind them to pick up everything they drop, tidy the toys away, and obey small master's slightest whim, especially if one howl of frustration brings agitated Mother at a gallop.

Africans tend to adore their masters' children and to spoil them unmercifully, which is surprising, as their own children are often models of deportment. They are not at all like a very starchy Nannie we employed on our first leave. I blush to tell you that she once had occasion to remark rather severely, in spite of an impediment in her speech, 'When Nanny saysh "No", it ish "No", but when Mummy saysh "No", itsh "perhapsh".' The phrase (I almost wrote phrashe) has remained in the family dictionary of quotations to reproach us on many subsequent occasions. The over-indulgent nurse-boy who tires of the tantrums and rudeness his methods have encouraged, may understandably enough get fed up with his charge, and when Mother isn't looking take his revenge in harmful neglect or spite. We found that the presence of our young imposed a severe discipline on us in the matter of saying 'please' and 'thank you', and minding our manners with all the servants. There is nothing more salutary than hearing your own tones echoed in the playroom or the compound.

It is difficult to teach the young white master not to whine for what he wants, failing that, to scream or shout commands. It is even more difficult for him to develop habits of tidiness, of independence and self-help, of give and take, which he will need straight away at school, and certainly in after life, as

well as to avoid the serious faults that are easily picked up in the compound, such as white lies, or telling the grown-ups only what is likely to please them.

I seem to be delving very freely into our own shady past, but one day we were trying to combine small son's walk with a desultory game of golf. It was not a success. He would talk, and get in the way, and he was very, very bored. At last, when we had played round to a hole close to the aerodrome where the plover were wheeling, Father said 'I'll give you a shilling for every plover's egg you bring me.' He scampered off, but came back very shortly to trail after us once more. On being questioned he produced one empty egg-shell, and an urgent demand for a shilling. This was nonsense until we discovered that 'according to the custom of the country' he had found a willing piccanin to do his job for him, and split the profits. It was high time that young man went away to school.

I am not going to discuss with you whether, when the inevitable time of separation comes, your first duty is to your husband or your children. It depends on so many things: their health and yours, where you are stationed with regard to medical care, and a school for the children; or companionship for a deserted husband. And of course, the budget. Most men and many women are readier than I to lay down the law in these matters, and sometimes the results from which they induce their premises are not so convincing to others as they like to think. 'Look at us,' they say, and one does!

I think it is a mistake to have a hard-and-fast policy, even a five- or ten-year plan with regard to these things. Rigid schemes, like those hoops of steel we were quoting earlier, are so much less useful than short lengths of elastic. It may be that the most valuable lesson your children will ever learn from you is cheerful adaptability. The best-laid plans of Colonial Civil Servants are subject to 'circumstances outside their control', that fond official phrase. The changes are as like as not for the better. So much can happen in so short a

time in these days that it is more than a little foolish to make decisions because of what may happen a few years hence. When we went to our first station the journey took six weeks. That meant forty-two days, even for a letter to go one way, and three months to get a reply. Now, if we were still there, an aeroplane could bring our children out to us for their school holidays in as many hours.

Again, to draw on our own experience, we sent our elder boy home far too soon for reasons of health, and because we thought he needed companionship. He promptly succumbed to measles, double pneumonia, mastoid, bronchitis and anaemia. As for the companionship, the only apparent result of our decision is that from that day to this he has preferred the society of his parents and their friends to his contemporaries. Schoolmasters whom you consult have a good deal to say these days about the orphans of the Services, and it is well worth listening to. On the other hand we did not send our youngest boy home nearly soon enough, because of this last war, and he also complains mildly, but to a different tune.

The ideal is a united family. The 'real' is the next-best thing you can manage for the present. How nice it would be for everybody if all the officers with young families could work in the healthy climates for long tours, and all the older men, whose children are at school, could be stationed in the jolly unhealthy spots with frequent leaves and flying trips by parents, singly or together. How nice for everybody, that is, except the men and the colonies concerned! One would hesitate to suggest that so domestic an issue should be raised at the policy-making level of Imperial administration, lest the official eyebrows should rise right out of sight, but it is already governing applications for, and refusals of, transfers at lower levels, while this so-called period of post-war readjustment seems to be turning from a storm we have weathered into a characteristic condition of climate.

I find myself longing to say with little Phillippa Raleigh half a century ago, 'the goodest thing you can do is to be

happy'. Her father, the late Sir Walter, said the remark gave him a kind of fright. The goodest thing you can do about your family is to love them a lot, and not think about them too much, or worry over them, but just to enjoy them. But that point of view applies very generally to the whole of your life in the colonies, and is so alarmingly grandmotherly in tone—a state to which I am not nearly ready to aspire—that I hasten with some trepidation, just before I begin to dodder, to say this correspondence must now cease, what time I sign myself,

Your affectionate godmother,

E.B.

APPENDIX

HERE is a list of suggestions for what to take out with you. You certainly need not rush off to buy them all at once. I doubt if undergarments of nylon would prove very satisfactory for general use in hot countries, as nylon is not absorbent.

1 Dressing-gown and slippers, washable and not too glamorous.
2 Four to six nightgowns or pairs of pyjamas.
3 Four to six panties and b.b.'s.
4 Four to six slips.
5 Two or three roll-ons.
6 Two or more button-through overalls for morning chores.
7 Four to six cotton or linen or washing-silk day dresses.
8 A smart day dress for official occasions and lunch parties.
9 The accessories—gloves, hat, shoes and bag to match. White is most useful, and you will not be tired of it yet.
10 Games clothes and equipment.
11 A housecoat.
12 Three evening dresses; one for formal occasions, one white or black as official and Court mourning is observed in most colonies, and one or two washable ones for a start. A long skirt and blouses if you like.
13 A light evening jacket or cloak.
14 A light coat or jerseys for games.
15 Your warm travelling top-coat and coat and skirt or dress.

16 Shoes:
  A Stout shoes for walking on rough roads. Take old ones.
  B Washable linen or tape sandals for house and garden.
  C Smart white shoes.
  D Games shoes.
  E Mosquito boots.
  F Evening slippers and sandals.
17 Hats:
  A A good thick felt with a brim is considered sufficiently sun-proof these days.
  B Your travelling hat.
  C A smart straw (see 9 above). Hats are not much worn at cocktail parties.
  D A ridiculous straw for garden or beach.
  E A scarf for the wind.
18 Bathing dress and cap.
19 Sun suits; don't wear them in the house.
20 A bath or shower cap.
21 Your stockings and thin short socks.
22 Sewing kit; you must now add strong khaki and black and white thread, shirt, pyjama and trouser buttons and mending plaits.
23 A compendium of knitting patterns.
24 A compendium of underwear patterns.
25 A couple of good plain adaptable patterns for a day dress or evening dress.
26 Knitting and needles.
27 A nice useless piece of needlework, gros point or a luncheon set or tea-cloth, or rug wool and canvas, to fall back on if you are ever idle.
28 Scissors: Nail, embroidery, desk, kitchen (for the servants), garden (sacred to you), dressmaking (not too big) and, in due course, pinking shears.
29 A travelling iron.
30 A hand drier for your hair.
31 Engraved calling-cards.

Dearest Priscilla

EMILY BRADLEY

PARRISH

Dearest Priscilla

Letters to the wife of a Colonial Civil Servant

Emily Bradley