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# I Learn an American Custom



As You Were Saying...

I recently arrived in the United States from the "old country," and almost immediately my Air Force husband was shipped overseas again, leaving myself and our small daughter alone.

On one of the first Sundays I noticed a steady stream of visitors to neighboring homes and, being unfamiliar with American holidays, I assumed it must be a day when it was the custom for people to visit each other. Frantically, I began baking cookies to be prepared for a visit. But no one came.

A few days later, with my cookie jars filled to the brim, I got up enough courage to ask the woman next door about it. She was very kind and explained that Sunday was not a special holiday but the day when most people went to church and did their visiting.

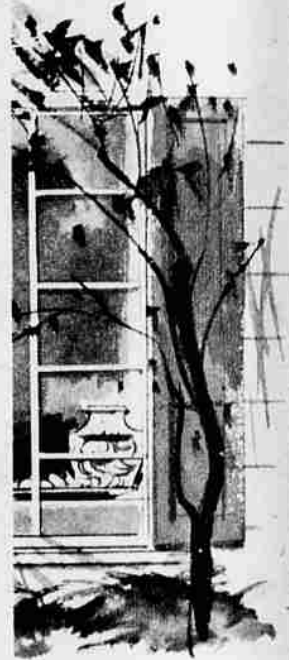
I forgot about the incident until the following Sunday when this same woman appeared at my door with 10 other neighbors. She had told them my story and they had come "to visit" and try my cookies. I thought it was a wonderful gesture.—Mrs. M. K. Henri, Rapid City, S. D.

**Fictitious Characters.** Friday night was story night in our home when we were young. Father would beguile us with fabulous tales of two rollicking boys called "Johnny and Mike." Their adventures were wondrous and so filled with imagination that we'd look forward eagerly to each new chapter.

When my brother and I entered high school we were amazed to find our old friends between the covers of our literature books. Only now their names were Ivanhoe, Ulysses, the Count of Monte Cristo, and others.

Father had been teaching us the classics in terms we could enjoy, and when we met them later in their original form it made the road of learning much smoother for us.—Mrs. Harlan Wehrung, Pomeroy, O.

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## I Was Just Thinking...

We are the vanishing Americans.

We are the quaint survivors of an era passed. We are the graduates of the girls' schools.

Sometimes they have been labeled boarding schools or finishing schools, but few survive in this new age of rock 'n' roll and the fast buck.

My school was Ward-Belmont, now as defunct as its way of life. My mother was a Ward-Belmont girl in a day of prim uniforms and cottillions. My sister was a Ward-Belmont girl when the end came.

At Ward-Belmont, freedom was an intangible. We went sedately in groups into Nashville, we received telephone calls with written permission and, when young gentlemen from Vanderbilt came to call in the

Red Room, a chaperon was within earshot. And some of us rebelled and ran away beyond the stone lions where the world turned, but it was another world.

We dutifully heard concerts in the auditorium and never went forth without white gloves nor the burden of being Ward-Belmont girls regardless of time and tide.

When some of us transferred to coeducational schools, we discovered independence. We relinquished with joy the cradle of our confinement. It was not until long afterward that we remembered the subtle formation of our minds and manners.

The W-B girl is a ghost now, as much a wraith as the gray lady who walked the tower at midnight. And

Ward-Belmont has crumbled like the noses of its statues which had been shot away in the Civil War. The closeness among us, the sweet scent of magnolia, the tradition, the charm and the ivy are all gone.

Perhaps it's true that some of us mistook courtesy for class-consciousness. And some mistook good breeding for superiority. And others found a prison within the pillars.

But I mourn the passing of learning with love. And of the fostering within us of other loves. Tradition, gracious living, beauty, gentleness, poise and propriety.

It was another world. In it and from it came neither girls nor women. Only ladies.

And ladies are long out of fashion.

Patsy Johnson

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