

# A CARDIGAN NAMED DESIRE

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“Oh, I’m sick of Gerald!” My wife spoke the words with bitterness.

“Who is Gerald?” I asked in some alarm.

“This pullover I’m knitting,” she said. “A real pain in the neck, he is.”

I had a look at her knitting book.

There was a picture of the pullover called Gerald being worn by a grinning small boy.

“Gerald doesn’t look much harder than Ada,” I said.

Ada was the cable-stitch bedjacket she made herself last month.

“Ada didn’t have a red-and-yellow steam-train across her chest,” she replied.

Turning the pages of the knitting book, I remarked: “That’s a job I’d like to have.”

“What job?” she said.

“The chap who thinks up the names for the patterns in knitting books.”

I pictured myself in a luxurious office ...

A beautiful secretary came in, clad in form-fitting knitwear.

“A rush job, sir! The directors want a name for the new batwing sweater.”

She laid the sweater on the desk, and I gazed at it with intense concentration.

Suddenly, I cried: “I’ve got it! We’ll call it Dracula!”

“Oh, bravo, Mr Campbell! You’ve hit the bull’s-eye again!”

Well pleased with the morning's work, I strolled out to lunch ...

My wife's voice broke into the reverie.

"Would you mind counting these stitches?"

I counted them twice, making them 74 the first time and 66 the second. Taking the average, I said: "I make it 70."

"Oh, good! That's just what I wanted."

I don't mind lending a hand to count stitches or wind wool.

The only thing I object to in the knitting season is going messages to the bedlam of the wool counters in city stores.

I wandered around them once for hours to get my wife the pink wool for Mona, an evening cardigan.

Last winter she made me a red sweater named Cyril, and I had a neck-band put on it at one of the shops.

"This neck-band looks too small," I said.

"Will you try it on, sir?" a girl assistant asked.

I tried to get Cyril over my head, but his neck jammed round my ears.

I stood in front of a group of women calling: "Let me out!" Believe me, I was glad when that girl pulled the wool over my eyes.

But since Cyril's neck was fixed I have grown quite fond of him.

It might be a friendly idea to give names to other garments as well as knitwear.

I'd like to have a suit named Lawrence and a hat that answered to Winston. And why shouldn't a woman call her girdle Ava if she pleases?

## OYSTERS AND US

Judging from published interviews with Noel Coward, he is a very agreeable and amusing man.

But one of his remarks I must take up. Before flying away, he said: "I like Australia and I love those wonderful oysters."

Though he meant it kindly, Mr Coward lined himself up with many other visitors who have bestowed praises on the animals here rather than the people.

We have come to feel touchy about these zoological pats on the back. No people have played second fiddle to their own fauna so much as Australians.

Tourists are captivated by our koalas. They adore our kangaroos. They love our lyre-birds. Some, like Mr Coward, are ecstatic over our oysters.

But rarely does one of them say: "I'm simply crazy about your humans."

Certainly the animals here are unusual and interesting. They have that custom of carrying their young in a built-in cuddle-seat. It attracts attention to them.

Australian humans have no special features to compete with it. We rear our offspring in much the same way as anyone else. Among so many strange furred and feathered creatures, we tend to pass unnoticed.

To some extent we have ourselves to blame. Our stamps and coins and travel posters are covered with animals.

We encourage foreigners to think Australia is full of sheep, koalas, platypuses, and emus. Often they get the impression that the people are here only to look after the animals – curators, so to speak.

"I didn't really make much impact as a writer until I started to write about trivia. I seem to be one of those people who are doomed not to be noticed very much when they are talking on serious matters."  
ROSS CAMPBELL

What can we do about it? How can we steal a little limelight from our marsupials and oysters?

I don't think we should rush visitors off so fast to the zoo to be photographed with a kangaroo or koala. They could be introduced to some humans instead, perhaps photographed with a business girl or footballer.

It would help to attract attention if Australians wore exotic costumes and had picturesque customs – like the Hawaiians with their grass skirts and hulas, or Mexicans with their sombreros and tangos.

Unfortunately we are not very good at being exotic and picturesque. Probably the best course is just to be natural and friendly toward visitors.

But there is no harm in dropping them a hint.

After all, when we go to other countries we take an interest in the people. We don't say: "I liked Scotland. It has such wonderful cows." Or: "We loved the USA. The bears are fascinating."

## THE GARBAGE CODE

Women have a strangely stubborn objection to carrying garbage tins. An instance of it came to my notice last week. Our neighbour Rhonda Waffle, whose husband was away on a business trip, came in looking very miserable.

"I miss Albert terribly," she said. "If I have to carry the garbage tin to the front gate again I'll scream."

She is typical of the many women who believe one of the main functions of a husband is to carry the garbage tin out.

Certainly the job has to be done by someone. The only

way to get out of it, in our district, is to produce for the garbage men a doctor's certificate that everyone in the house has general paralysis of the insane. In that case their hearts are touched and they come inside the gate to get the tin.

We are not in this privileged class, so I have to carry the tin out. My wife's inflexibility in the matter was shown the other night, when I stayed out late with some fellow-workers.

She knew that when I came home I would probably forget to put out the tin. But did she put it out herself? No; that would have been a breach of the Garbage Code.

In the early morning darkness the garbage collectors descended on the street, sounding as usual like a team of howling dervishes. Although I was in a low state after my night out, the harsh rules of the Code demanded that I perform the grimmest of all garbage duties – the pre-dawn dash. I staggered to the gate with the tin just in time.

Later, brooding on the unfairness of the system, I tackled my wife about it. "Our garbage is something that we have made together," I said. "Isn't it fair that we should both help to dispose of it?"

She replied sharply: "That's not the way you talked before we were married. You didn't tell me: 'We could make wonderful garbage together!' Oh no."

True. But in those days I did not know so much about garbage.



## HANDS OFF!

I have been reading about a woman artist who has a clever way of dealing with marks on her walls.

She whips out her brushes and with a few strokes, turns the mark into a picture of a horse.

We could use her talent at our place. There is a part of the kitchen where she could do a mural painting of the Melbourne Cup.

I suppose nearly everyone has trouble with marks on walls.

Some people actually put extra marks there to show how tall the children are. The Fishers in our street do it. You see on their wall: Harold, Christmas 1958 – Harold, Easter, 1960.

They seem surprised to find that Harold is growing taller. But it is surely what you expect a child to do.

If you put marks on the wall and found your child was growing shorter, there would be something to make a fuss about.

We don't go in for height marks. The wall gives enough evidence that the children are growing by the way their fingermarks rise.

They are specially noticeable at corners. Children usually turn corners by holding on as they go round. It enables them to corner like Stirling Moss, but it leaves a mark each time.

Another zone of peak finger traffic is around the light switches. I can give a good tip on this.

A few years ago, we repainted one of the bedrooms. We heard it was the thing to have one wall darker than the others and call it a feature wall. So we painted a wall dark

green – Tropic Verdure the colour was called on the tin.

We learned soon afterwards that feature walls were already out of fashion. Once again we were a jump behind the Joneses.

But I'll say this for our feature wall – not a fingermark shows around the light switch. For hiding marks, you can't beat Tropic Verdure.

The rest of the room, unfortunately, was done in Bagdad Dawn. This is a pale colour that shows footprints all too clearly. I don't mean that we walk up the wall. But the occupant of the bed had, until lately, a habit of lying with bare feet on the wall while reading comics.

One day I found the words "Mervyn is mad" written on the kitchen wall in green crayon.

It was very annoying. I knew how Belshazzar must have felt when he saw the writing on the wall. His first thought was probably: "How on earth will we get it off?"

I made such an uproar that there has been no more wall-writing since. We bought a blackboard, and encourage the children to use it for any rude messages they want to send.

Some reader may ask: "If there are marks on your walls, why don't you paint them?"

My answer is: Because it's hard work and it's messy.

Last time I got Bagdad Dawn all over my pants.

The thing would be to stop people from putting their hands and feet on the walls. But how?

"I think there should be an exhibition of 10-year old houses, inhabited by fairly large families. They would be displayed complete with children's footmarks above the beds, scratches on the bath... The show would be called 'The Dream Home's Awakening'."  
ROSS CAMPBELL

## ON THE SKIDS

In an office it always raises your standing to have a secretary.

A few years ago I used to have a full-time one. She was taken away because I didn't have enough work for her to do. In the few months she was working for me she read all the novels of Dickens.

It was my own fault. If I had been smart I would have told her to file all newspaper items about Black Orpingtons, or something like that.

For a long time now I have shared a secretary with nine other people. One of her duties is to bring me a cup of tea in the morning and afternoon.

A series of girls have occupied the post.

Some of their tea was too weak. Some of it was too strong. But generally speaking they have been efficient secretaries.

One of them took a motherly interest in me. She would scold me when I stirred my tea with a pencil. She even stole a spoon for me from the Accounts Department.

I liked to think that these secretaries held me in a good deal of respect. But lately my eyes were opened.

A secretary was going away to get married. She left for her successor a sheet of instructions on how and when to make the tea for different people.

I picked it up from a desk, and read this: "Mr. Campbell: tea at 10.30am. Don't give him more than one biscuit."

It comes as a shock, after years of service to the firm, to find that you are still a one-biscuit man.

My new one-tenth of a secretary, an attractive girl, lets me have an extra biscuit sometimes. Yet in her heart I don't

think she considers me in the two-biscuit class.

Maybe I'm not. But I'm determined to make a comeback.

I'm not finished yet. The time may still come when I can demand three biscuits.

## I'LL TAKE A MESSAGE

Where do plumbers go in the winter-time?

I have been forced to think about this question lately.

We needed someone to fix a rusty downpipe that was blocked up.

When I rang Mr Faucett, the plumber, his wife answered. "He's out just now, but I'll give him the message," she said.

Days passed, and I rang again. "He said he's coming round to give you a quote," said Mrs Faucett.

Week after week went by, the great rains came, and water poured dismally from the choked guttering on to the path. But there was no sign of Mr Faucett.

His wife still said he would come. Plumbers' wives are gallant women, staying by the phone to fend off all the frantic people who want their husbands.

My wife grew depressed, listening to the rain and waiting for Mr Faucett. Like the sad lady in Tennyson's poem, "She only said 'The night is dreary, He cometh not,' she said".

We began to realise that Mr Faucett would never come. I tried two other plumbers, Mr Tapp and Mr Piper, but they did not come either.

Where were they all? Perhaps with the approach of winter plumbers migrate to a warmer climate, like birds, leaving their brave little wives to answer the phone.

I was desperate when I saw an ad in the paper for another plumber, Mr Gully. It said “Prompt attention”, so there was some reason to hope he might come within a week or two.

Actually only six days had passed when a knock was heard at the door.

“It’s Mr Gully, the plumber!” I called to my wife, and she rushed out in amazement.

He was a nice man, too. He said he would do the job in a few days, and went away. He hasn’t come back yet, but I feel sure he will come – perhaps he will, anyway – perhaps—

## ON THE TILES

Getting on the roof is one of those things, like carrying garbage tins, which the man of the house is expected to do.

I have never heard of a woman getting on the roof. Yet when a wife has stronger nerves than her husband (and many do) it should be all right to send her up there.

Some men, like Sid Hopkins, don’t mind getting on the roof. You see Sid strolling over his tiles every weekend, without holding on. I think he is showing off – he has an irritating “Look, no hands” expression.

I admit I don’t like getting on the roof, but now and then it has to be done. A tile is blown loose, or something.

There is no question of sending my wife up, as she hates climbing anything higher than a chair. In fact, her attitude has helped to undermine my own confidence.

When I announce I am going to clear the leaves out of the guttering she carries on as if I were about to climb Mount Everest. She wrings her hands, saying “Be careful!” and

“Remember what happened to Uncle Perc!”

It is true that Uncle Perc fell off a ladder and broke his arm, but he was not sober at the time.

Anyhow, I can hardly be accused of recklessness on the roof. I lie flat on my face and wriggle slowly along like a worm. There is none of the nonchalant no-hands stuff.

If possible I prefer not to get right on the roof, but to lean over from the top of a ladder. In order to be able to do this on the high side of the house, I bought myself an extension ladder for Christmas.

I did not have to wait long before giving it a tryout.

One of Lancelot’s birthday gifts was a rocket missile named Nike. You shoot Nike into the air and it comes down by parachute.

I warned him that if he weren’t careful Nike would land on the roof. He assured me this would not happen, but it did, inside five minutes.

I dragged out the extension ladder. It weighed about a ton and swayed alarmingly when I extended

As I climbed up cautiously there were shouts of “Hold on tight!” and “Can you see my tennis ball?”

I got hold of Nike and brought it down, relieved to be on the ground again. But Lancelot said: “You didn’t get the nose-cone!” So I went up again for the nose cone.

A heavy extension ladder is not an easy way to get up to the roof.

Also, I don’t like Nike.

## LOST RINGS

My wife held out her left hand, a startled look on her face “My wedding ring’s gone!” she said. And it undeniably had.

The alarm was sounded. Parties of volunteers searched the bathroom and kitchen and crawled under beds, but with no result. We had to face the fact that the ring was lost.

The children were unhappy about it. They seemed to think it reflected on them. Perhaps they felt insecure, as the psychologists say, without a wedding ring in the house.

I told them I would buy another one. But that did not quite put their minds at ease, or mine either.

The lost wedding ring was a narrow one. It was bought soon after the war, when narrow rings were the fashion. Today wide ones are in, some of them as big as knuckledusters.

The children want their mother to get a wide ring because they like modern things. Lancelot says his hobby is being modern. But I would rather she had an old-fashioned, narrow ring like the lost one.

She thinks it may have come off while she was in swimming. Years ago it got too tight and she had it made bigger. Then it got loose, but she didn’t have it made smaller. As a result, no ring.

The evening after she lost it we went to a small party. Three other women there said they had lost wedding rings. One had lost an engagement ring as well.

They all told the same story. Early in married life, when they were bouncy young mothers, their rings were too tight. Later, when they went on diets, their rings became loose.

Then one day the rings quietly disappeared.

I was surprised to learn that wedding rings were lost so often.

Now and then I have met married women who did not wear their rings. I thought they were absentminded, or perhaps a bit gay. The truth was, no doubt, that their rings had fallen off.

It is sad, because a ring received on a wedding day can never really be replaced, even if the new one is more stylish.

I remember the shop where we went to buy my wife’s ring, and the salesman who said it was very smart (he did not foresee the change in styles), and how nice and important it looked when she first wore it.

Now it has joined the legion of lost wedding rings. The world must be sprinkled with them.

## GREAT JUMPING MANNEQUINS

The other day I got an unexpected invitation to lunch.

It was a party being given to launch a new model of the Singer Sewing Machine.

Gazing at the letter, I wondered why they had invited me. Was it a gesture of appreciation at the way I had kept up the monthly payments on one of their older models? Yet many others must have done the same without being honoured in this way.

Then, lower down, came the explanation.

The lunch, they said, had special features that might interest me.

“Mannequins, for instance, will not simply parade on the

“During the alterations my office was moved around from one floor to another. For a while I was a boarder in the headquarters of the company’s television network, where I heard new commercials being tried out. A strangely haunting one began: ‘Is your dog too fat, too fat, too fat?’”  
ROSS CAMPBELL

stage, they will burst through paper panels like trained circus dogs.”

The implications of this sentence were disturbing. What sort of a person did the Singer Company think I was?

Evidently, they pictured me as a blasé man-about-town, satiated with ordinary mannequin parades.

The only way to tickle my interest, the Singer crowd reckoned, was to turn on something queer and decadent, like mannequins jumping through paper hoops.

Actually I had seen only one mannequin parade before. That was in a shop window in Castlereagh Street. A lady there was yelling through a loud-speaker: “Note the bridesmaid’s bodice has the same ‘diamonty’ treatment to match HER bride.”

If the sewing machine people only knew, I was no bored connoisseur of mannequins. I would have gone to the lunch even if the mannequins were not jumping through paper like dogs.

Indeed, as the lunch was free, I would have gone there without any mannequins at all.

So I went along early and got a good seat between two sewing-machines.

But the big moment proved disappointing.

The mannequins had to get through a sort of paper wall. Instead of leaping out with wanton cries, as I hoped, they stepped through in a cautious fashion.

Circus dogs would have considered it a timid, amateurish performance.

After the show, I went up to the mannequins and had a talk to them about it.

They seemed very nice – just hard-working girls doing a job that keeps the wolf at the door.

“The trouble was,” said one earnestly, “the paper was too thick.”

It is to be hoped that the show is produced better next time.

When I go to another sewing-machine lunch, I want to see mannequins jump through paper as if they MEANT it.

## HOW SIMPLY SMASHING

We had a small shivoo the other night.

As usual, I counted the plates and glasses first to see if they would go around. I found we were three plates and two glasses shy.

“We’ll have to use the children’s bunny plates,” my wife said. “And some of those glasses with giraffes that the peanut butter comes in.”

I didn’t like the idea. Our guests included the Boomchicks, who move in smart circles.

“I hate giving bunny plates to sophisticates like the Boomchicks,” I said.

“You might as well face it – we need a new dinner service,” she replied.

Our dinner service was a wedding present from Uncle Fred and Auntie Nan.

At first it was much bigger than we needed. But piece by piece it has withered away.

It’s the old story. We started married life with lots of plates and no children. Now we have children and hardly any plates.

“We can’t get a new dinner service,” I said. “We’re pulling

“It is surprising that so little attention has been paid to Miss Australia’s petticoats. When she returned from America this young lady said she was wearing nine petticoats. The remark was treated casually by the public. Yet if a man said he was wearing nine shirts all sorts of questions would be asked.”  
ROSS CAMPBELL

in our horns since we got the TV set. The children will have to stop breaking things.”

“What about all the things you break when you’re drying up?”

“That’s not true,” I said. “You’ve seen the brilliant catches I make when I drop cups. I’ve based my style on Keith Miller’s fielding.”

“It looks more like his bowling,” she said.

At the shivoo that evening, the Boomchicks were quick to notice our shortcomings.

When Mrs Boomchick was given a drink in a peanut-butter glass, she said: “How amusing!” Looking at the giraffes on it, she said, “I adore giraffes.”

She remarked that the bunny plates were “most unusual”.

Her husband, who got his coffee in whistle-mug, kept blowing the whistle.

After they had gone, when we were drying the dishes, my wife said: “I felt humiliated tonight.”

“Never mind,” I said. “Remember we’ve got television. The main thing is not to break the crockery that’s left.”

Just then, unhappily, I dropped a large plate.

I dived for it, but missed, and it smashed to pieces.

“You see what I mean?” she said.

“It wasn’t my fault,” I said. “The floor was slippery. Keith Miller himself would have missed it.”

“But we’ll have to get a dinner service now.”

“Couldn’t we get some of those paper plates they use at picnics?”

“Life here is no picnic,” she said tartly.

Still, the idea is worth looking into.

## POKY LITTLE RUMPUS ROOM

This is a great period of home building.

There is also a boom in the weekend pastime of stickybeaking around partly built houses.

Some of the visitors just stare vaguely while their children throw the sand about and get cement on their boots.

Others are more well informed, like Mrs Peeking. I met her on a job last Sunday.

The walls were only a foot high, but she took it all in quickly.

“Nice little set-up here,” she said. “13 and a half squares, sunroom, 3 bed, kit. with dinette, carport. I wonder if they’ll get the roof on.”

“Why shouldn’t they get the roof on?” I asked.

“Finance,” she said ominously. “I believe they’ve only got enough for the walls. No good without a roof.

I agreed.

“Let’s see. The hot-water storage tank will be above here, between kit. and bathroom,” she said. “I hope they don’t make the same mistake as the Dottles.”

“What was their mistake?” I asked.

“Their tank’s too small. Herb Dottle has a 20-minute shower in the morning, and by evening poor Mona’s run out of hot water.”

I asked Mrs Peeking if builders or homeowners ever objected to her inspection tours.

“No,” she said. “It’s all a matter of doing it the right way.”

She gave me a few hints for successful exploration of building jobs.

“It was teeming the day we moved in. Pouring rain. And we had stained floor-boards which were unbelievably unfashionable then but we couldn’t afford carpets. Little realising, of course, that X years on, houses would be advertised with polished wooden floors.”

RUTH CAMPBELL

“One thing is I never pinch anything,” she said. “Now see him,” she added, lowering her voice. She nodded towards a man who was gazing thoughtfully at a pile of bricks. “That’s Ted Filcher. He’s building a barbecue. I bet you he’s back with a wheelbarrow tonight. I keep out of the sand, too. Not that I want to play with it at my age,” she said.

“Another thing: I don’t criticise a house when the owner is about. Olive Natterly got into bother that way. She was looking over a place and she said, ‘Rather poky little rumpus-room,’ when suddenly a man called out, ‘It’s the TV lounge, madam.’ He nearly bit her head off.”

Mrs Peeking warned me of the dangers of skylarking in partly built houses.

“Last week one of the Rompworth girls locked herself in a built-in cupboard,” she said. “She’d have been there all night only her boy-friend noticed she was missing.

“You want to be careful when you’re walking through a new place. WeeeeeOW!”

Mrs Peeking gave a shriek as she fell between two floor joists.

She had trodden on the end of a loose plank.

I helped her up again. She was shaken, but had lost none of her keenness for her hobby.

## CHAIN-STORE REACTION

“Did you buy the safety-pins?” my wife asked.

“No. I’m very sorry, I forgot.”

“Oh, dear. And what’s that thing you’ve bought?”

“A magnet.”

“What on earth do you want a magnet for?”

“Oh, for... for lifting things,” I said uncomfortably.

It was hard to explain why I wanted a magnet, but I did want one.

I was seized by the impulse in a chain store. A peculiar mental weakness comes over me in those places. Doctors might call it *Dementia Colesworthii*. I forget what I went there for, and start buying things I’ve never thought of. One time I was asked to get some daffodil bulbs, and came back with a plastic yo-yo.

Those shiny brass arrow-heads for curtain rods are especially tempting. I have bought a number of them. It is a pity, because we haven’t any curtain rods.

The day I went into Colesworth’s for the safety-pins, my attention was distracted by a chap who engraves names on things. I got him to engrave my name on a bottle-opener.



Then I drifted off again. I browsed among some Chinese fans, rubber gloves, axe-wedges, and marbles before I came to the magnets.

They were a special line at ninepence each. I did not really need one – magnets are a luxury. But they looked pretty good magnets.

After all, I thought, why shouldn't I have one? Other people have magnets.

As I was buying one somebody nudged me. It was Bill Gland, a pal of mine from the office. He was buying a magnet, too.

I took mine home eagerly, but I was a bit disappointed by its performance. It lifted nails, all right, but it couldn't handle the heavier stuff like toy cars.

After a week or two, it even seemed to be battling to lift nails.

I went into Bill Gland's office one morning. "Bill, I'm worried about my magnet," I told him.

"Sit down," he said, and I poured out the whole pitiful story.

"Well, I suppose you can't get a million-dollar magnet in a five and ten cent store," said Bill. "But look at this."

He took out of a drawer a small blue plastic elephant that could walk down a slope.

"They're only sixpence at Colesworth's," he said.

It seemed a wonderful buy, and it might take my mind off my magnet. I intend to get one next time I go there.

"At my request [Patrick] showed me how to put a bottle-top on a shirt. First you pull out the cork lining of the top. Then you push the cork in again behind the shirt. The thought of wearing a few bottle-tops to the office crossed my mind; but I suppose it might make the management think I was eccentric."  
ROSS CAMPBELL

## BOOKLET REVIEW

One of my daughters had to do a school project on glue.

"Sounds as if you'll be stuck," I said waggishly.

"No, it's easy," she replied. "You just write to the Klingtite Glue Company and they send you this book called *The Romance of Glue*."

It is amazing how successful children have been in getting big business firms to do their homework for them.

If I went to the Klingtite Co. and asked for a free pot of glue they would laugh in my face. But the young folk only have to show a flicker of interest in glue and company executives fall over themselves to help.

My daughter has a book with a long list of business concerns that provide a free homework service.

Giant companies will supply project material on *The Pageant of Peanut Butter*, *What Rubber Means to You* and *The Thrilling Story of Sticky Tape*. The soap-makers have come clean, the camera manufacturers are in the picture, and the sugar people are very sweet.

Their only stipulation is "Please don't forget to give your name and address". Some of the more impatient project planners omit these details.

Yet I wonder what businessmen think about it in their heart of hearts? It must be a thundering nuisance, with all the ringing of telephones and licking of envelopes involved.

Say, for example, the managing director wants Mr Smithers, a trusted subordinate, to take over an urgent job at the new factory.

He finds Mr Smithers can't go. He is busy preparing the

new school project booklet, *Cake-Mix Through the Ages*.

I suspect that these firms are not really keen on the idea. They go on with it simply because the children have them scared.

They remember the sad case of the *Fruito Jam Co.* This firm made good jam, but the boss was too conservative. He would not come in on the project stunt.

“When I was a kid we did our own homework,” he said. “We didn’t ask hard-working manufacturers to help us.”

The result? Children began saying to their mothers: “Don’t get *Fruito Jam*, Mum. They wouldn’t help me with my project. Why don’t you get *Yummy Jam*? They gave me a beaut book called *The Magic of Marmalade*.”

Sales fell off. Soon *Fruito* was on the skids. They had to bring in a new manager, who saved the firm by writing the brilliant project booklet *Cavalcade of Jam*.

Yes, the little ones are a power in the business world today. I only hope they don’t carry their demands too far.

They say boys in sixth class have asked the *Wizard Adding Machine Co.* to provide an electronic brain to do their sums. Otherwise they will take their business elsewhere.

## NIGHT MUST FALL

“How can you keep five children amused on winter evenings from 5.30pm till 7.30 without television?”

“*Country Mother*” has written from a farm in Victoria asking me this.

The question is a tough one.

In the grim situation described by *Country Mother*, there

is no hope of keeping the children really quiet. But you can try to keep them still.

I don’t suggest you should drug them, although this used to be done in the olden days (with soothing syrups laced with opium).

It is good tactics to get the children into pyjamas, dressing gowns, and slippers as early as possible. These clothes slow down their movements and are less suited for running, wrestling, etc. They also lower bed-resistance, though not very much.

As a general evening sedative there is a lot to be said for colouring-in. One of its advantages is that children can do it on their own.

Now and then they ask for advice: “What’ll I do the cow in – purple or green?” Apart from these questions, all you have to do is show appreciation. Special praise should be given to anyone who colours-in in without going over the lines.

Reading books is a good idea for older children; it immobilises them and quietens them at the same time. The danger with readers is that they run out of books. For safety you should always have some games handy.

In choosing games, remember: the fewer pieces the better.

With dominoes, draughts, and chess, stray pieces are sure to be left lying around. And babies have a habit of swallowing the marbles used for *Chinese Checkers*.

*Snakes and Ladders* makes less trouble; but children are apt to grow tired of it, specially after a bad run of snakes.

If you can get them to come at it, good old noughts and crosses is still worth a try.

Plasticine is popular. But it raises the question: which do you value most – quietness or your floor coverings?

I haven't any simple answer to Country Mother. But if it's any consolation to her, the trouble is not over when you have television.

The job then is to get the children away from their evening amusement. "Why do we always have dinner in the middle of The Three Stooges'?" "Can't I please stay up for Hawaiian Eye'?"

And I've seen rows over will-we-watch-Maverick-or-the-other programme that would equal anything down on the farm.

## PLASTIC IS A MAN'S BEST FRIEND

My wife was reading Barbara Hutton's memoirs in The Australian Women's Weekly.

"Barbara Hutton says, 'I like to look well dressed and jewelled as much as any other woman,'" she remarked.

"Well, she can afford it," I said.

My wife put the paper down and looked thoughtful.

"Barbara's right, you know," she went on. "A woman does like to look well-jewelled. I wish I was well-jewelled myself."

"I wish I owned a chain of five-and-ten-cent stores," I said.

"It isn't just that I'm not WELL-jewelled," she continued. "I'm not jewelled at all. I haven't got a diamond or ruby to my name."

"The Bible says a good woman is above rubies."

"I'm not above them. I wouldn't knock a few rubies back

– even small ones."

I began to feel uneasy.

"Look here, do you think I'm Aladdin?" I asked.

She gave a rather hollow laugh. "Hardly," she said. "But there's no harm in mentioning jewels for once."

"Do you want me to buy you a diamond necklace instead of paying for the washing-machine?"

"No. But I think you've got too used to me being unjewelled. Just remember I'd like to be well-jewelled if I got the chance."

In town next day I looked in some jewellers' windows.

The prices were most discouraging. Nobody seems to supply cheap diamonds and sapphires for the working man. It's small wonder that the masses are so ill-jewelled nowadays.

To cheer myself up I went into a chain store. There I noticed a line called the Beautee Do-It-Yourself Necklace Kit.

It was a box of little white plastic links. You can string them together to make your own necklace. Price 1/6.

It wasn't exactly jewellery, but I thought the plastic necklace would look pretty, so I bought a kit and took it home to my wife.

"Thanks, Aladdin," she said. "You've excelled yourself. They'll call me the plastic Barbara Hutton. The Rich Little Poor Girl."

"There's no need to sling off," I said. "Remember, you don't get such a bad time as Barbara got from Count Haugwitz-Reventlow and Porfirio Rubirosa."

She conceded this point and unpacked the box of links. I

"Ruth was a very compelling beauty, most unusual. She had an idiosyncratic way of dressing, like Katharine Hepburn. I remember her wearing a boy's navy blue mackintosh when she was first at Australian Consolidated Press as a young reporter. She cut quite an exotic figure."  
FAMILY FRIEND  
GWEN DEAMER

helped her to make the necklace. It looked quite good.

“Oh, well,” she sighed, glancing in the mirror, “if I’m not going to be well-jewelled, I suppose it’s something to be well-plasticed.”

## A PATIENT WHO TELLS

I am a regular reader of the articles in the papers by doctors who tell. They have a breezy tone that cheers you up.

For instance, there was one I enjoyed recently about the Furred Tongue. It said a furred tongue is not necessarily a sign that you are sick. Some people’s tongues just naturally have fur, like silver foxes.

You can get handy information from medical writers on all sorts of subjects. There is one thing, though which I have noticed they never discuss.

I mean the magazines in doctors’ waiting-rooms.

Some doctors, of course, do a fine job in this department. I used to go to a reliable man who took *The Australian Women’s Weekly* and *The Saturday Evening Post*.

The issues were up to date. He even kept them in the right order.

I had to get a course of injections from him for catarrh, so I started reading a mystery serial. To my disappointment the injections stopped before I got to the end.

I said to him frankly: ‘If you don’t mind, Doctor, I’d like to come back and find out who killed that beautiful starlet.’

He thought for a moment. Then he said: ‘Have you got any warts?’

‘One or two,’ I replied.

‘Come here on Friday and I’ll take ‘em out,’ he said.

So I went along and enjoyed the last instalment. (The girl was killed by her postman because she got too much fanmail.)

He was a thoughtful doctor of the old school. But with some of the young fellows it’s a different story.

I had a typical experience during a bout of lumbago. I went to a doctor and found nearly all his magazines were old numbers of *Business Review*. You could have got better reading in a barber’s shop.

The only thing worth while was a *Ladies’ Home* journal, which a man with a broken arm was monopolizing.

I hoped to get it when he went into the surgery. But it was grabbed rudely by a big woman with mumps.

Naturally, I decided to take my business elsewhere. That doctor lost a good customer – the next week I came out in boils.

It served him right.

## SNAKES AND LADDERS

I have been playing snakes and ladders with Little Nell.

The game went on and on because neither of us could get to the finish. On the last lap I kept running into the dreaded snake of laziness (square 97), which drags you back to poverty (29).

My counter rolled off the table and got lost just after I had climbed the ladder of obedience (25) to respect (55). That held the game up till we found a trouser button to use instead.

I enjoy this grand old game, and it teaches moral lessons. The ladder of punctuality (8) leads to advancement (26); the snake of gambling (79) leads to ruin (22), etc.

Little Nell is a good player, except that she has a tendency to go down the ladders and up the snakes. This gives her an advantage, because the snakes are longer than the ladders. But then, so they are in real life. I said to my wife after the game: "Does it ever strike you that life is like snakes and ladders?"

"How do you mean?" she asked.

"Take this week," I said. "We got the income-tax refund – that was a ladder. Auntie Gladys said she was staying here for Christmas – that was a snake. A taipan, in fact."

She agreed that there was something in the idea.

"The worst snake I know is breakfast," she said. "Boiling eggs and cutting lunches and stopping fights and deciding who's going to wear what."

"What are your ladders?"

"Watching TV while I shell the peas is one. It's only a little step-ladder, but I like it."

I think it is time they brought snakes and ladders up to date. Why not put some ladders like these on the board?

Wage rise (square 4) leads to washing-machine (23).

Cut out smoking (36) leads to radiogram (55).

Uncle Ted's will (18) leads to trip to Surfers' Paradise (41).

Lottery win (46) leads to car (81).

As for snakes, there are many to choose from. A few obvious ones are:

Hole in trousers (28) leads to buying new suit (13).

No radio licence (53) leads to fine (31).

Broken fridge (62) leads to new, bigger fridge (40).

Behaviour at party (47) leads to disgrace (13).

Lottery ticket (53) leads to nothing (0).

(NB – These snakes and ladders are copyright and must not be reproduced on any snakes and ladders board without permission.)

## WHICH?

I came across pictures of two interesting women in a book last week.

The book is *You and Heredity* by an American, Dr Amram Scheinfeld.

One woman is said by Scheinfeld to be the "socially desirable" type—that is, the kind the boys go for. I have called her Dolores.

Dolores is beautiful, and has delicate features, small waist and hips, dainty wrists and hands, slender limbs, slim ankles, and tiny feet.

She is vivacious, but has no deep intellect.

The other one, says Dr. Scheinfeld, is the "eugenically desirable" woman – the sort that makes a good mother and worker. I have called her Bessie.

Beauty (he says) is not important to Bessie, but she is intelligent and serious. She has a sturdy figure, ample waist, broad hips, strong wrists and hands, sturdy limbs and ankles, and fairly large feet.

Dr Scheinfeld has tossed up this theory without giving a hoot about the trouble it will cause.

"[TV host] Mike Walsh said: 'I'm going to ask each of you what was the worst experience of your life.' The person ahead of me was a beautiful fashion model. She said: 'The worst experience of my life was when an Algerian tried to rape me in the Paris airport.' Then she burst into tears. It was a hard act to follow. I could not think of anything to say except to mumble that I didn't like the scrambled eggs in the army."  
ROSS CAMPBELL

Yet it's enough to get any young single man worried. He probably hankers after Dolores. But he knows that after marriage he will need Bessie. There's no hope that Dolores will turn into Bessie. Her mind won't become serious. Her legs won't get thick enough. Her feet won't grow large.

His alternative is to start taking Bessie out. But the idea leaves him cold. He can't stand her clumping around with those big feet.

A solution, I suppose, would be to marry them both, and keep Bessie for work, Dolores for play. But that's not allowed. Anyhow, Bessie mightn't stand for it.

The only advice I can give a young man is to look for a bride who is halfway between the two.

He should keep an eye out for a girl with a beautiful face and big feet, or a shallow mind and thick wrists.

Above all, he should beware of getting someone without the good points of either type.

I knew a chap who did this. He married a girl who was as useless as Dolores and as plain as Bessie.

But to tell the truth, he was no bargain himself, either.

## MUM À LA MODE

An English fashion model, Barbara Goalen, gets toggged up in special clothes to bath her baby.

The papers say she puts on "Oriental smock-jackets in parrot-coloured waterproof poplin, emblazoned on the back with Chinese dragons, and wears them over waterproof narrow pants."

She must look pretty good. But I feel she has overdone the

waterproofing.

I have bathed babies now and then and I never found it necessary to get myself up like a frogman.

Bathing a very young baby is a tricky business.

First you have to see that the water is the right temperature. You think it's too hot, so you put some cold in. Then you think it's too cold, so you put some hot in.

By now there is so much water in the bath that you have to be very careful the baby doesn't drown. You certainly don't have time to worry whether you look chic.

No doubt Ma Goalen dolls herself up from sheer force of habit. She can't face the thought of being unchic.

When her waterproof poplin outfit is at the cleaners, I suppose she says: "I can't bath the baby today, I simply haven't a thing to wear."

Yet what does she get out of it all?

There is probably nobody around to admire the Chinese dragons on her back, unless the baker pokes his head in the door.

The baby couldn't care less.

To show off her waterproof clothes, Ma Goalen could bring the baby out and bath it while she was giving a buffet luncheon or cocktail party.

But that would leave her no time to pour the drinks.

The outfit would be more practical if a single girl used it to impress her boyfriend.

She could make herself a waterproof smock and matador pants, then borrow a baby and bath it in front of him. He might be so charmed by the sight that he would propose at once. Either that or he'd be out of the house like a bullet.

"That is a typical present-day attitude. There is not nearly so much disposition to punish a woman for her Past. Pasts don't cause the excitement that they once did. Perhaps there are too many of them now, like aeroplanes."

ROSS CAMPBELL

As for Ma Goalen, I don't really believe that she will keep it up.

By the time the baby is six months old, she will be sick and tired of climbing in and out of those waterproof pants every morning.

She will probably bath the baby wearing the same old Hartnell housecoat she used for the rest of her chores.

## ON TOAST

When I got off the scales my doctor looked at a ruler with figures on it.

It was one of those tables that show the weight you ought to be, but aren't. He shook his head and said: "You're a stone overweight."

"I don't trust those tables," I said irritably. "They're invented by thin men to annoy fat men."

But you can't argue with doctors, so I promised to eat less.

When I told my wife she said: "You'll have to cut down on toast." And though I hated to admit it, she was right.

I am a toast lover. I took a leading part in the campaign to get motels to serve more toast with breakfast. (Some of them give only one slice if you don't watch them.)

After we got the pop-up toaster my toast-consumption went up, because it was easier to make. My attitude was: you pop it, I'll eat it.

Since the doctor's warning, however, I have cut down to one and a half slices at breakfast.

The less you get of it, the more desirable toast becomes – even burnt toast. I sit at the table in misery watching it pop



up for other, thinner people.

Sometimes my control breaks down for a moment and I snatch Baby Pip's crusts, which she leaves. I have to avoid my wife's reproachful gaze.

At the office, too, I practise self-denial. I told Jacqueline, the secretary of whom I have a one-tenth share, that I would not have biscuits with my tea any more.

Jacqueline was amazed. "But you were at me so much to give you two biscuits instead of one!" she said.

Then one cold day, as I was drinking my tea, I noticed the smell. It came from a nearby office, and there was no mistaking it – toast.

A group of slim young people had installed a toaster and were recklessly eating the delicious, odorous product.

Since then I have suffered the same ordeal repeatedly. One day I may crack, and burst into the toast club pleading: "Toast – give me toast!"

There should be a Toastics Anonymous to help people who are trying to break the habit. You never know when the craving will come.

Last night Theodora, sitting near the radiator, said: "I'm warm as toast." And there it was on the mind's plate again – freshly buttered.

## HARDWARE IS HARD

As I left for work my wife asked me to "get a couple of things in town if you have time".

I looked uneasily at the list she gave me.

Half-pound cheese. Fair enough. It is not hard to find

cheese.

Two yards half-inch elastic. Not bad. Elastic is usually sold by women who will stretch a point to serve you quickly.

But I groaned when I read Things for chair legs.

We needed some rubber gadgets to put on the ends of chair legs to stop them making holes in the linoleum. That would mean going to a hardware store. In my experience it always takes longer to buy hardware than softgoods.

I went out to do the shopping at lunchtime.

The elastic was no trouble. I was served promptly by a woman with a vast knowledge of elastic.

But, as I feared, the pace slowed down inside the hardware store.

I didn't know which was the counter selling rubber gadgets for chair legs. Around me were vast numbers of nails, nuts, and knobs; mortice locks, mushroom-head rivets, and mop sockets; steam cocks, swivel gambrels, and gasket spanners.

I went up to a salesman who was standing in front of some drawers labelled 'Stair Rod Eyes' and 'Hex. Nipples'.

He was talking to a customer. That is what holds things up in hardware shops – all the talk that goes on.

The salesman was showing the customer a snib for a cupboard.

'You just fasten this flange to the jamb with counter-sunk gutter screws and see that your fish bolt is flush with the socket of the mandrel tube – and she's right,' he said.

When my turn came I asked if he had rubber gadgets for chair legs.

'They're over at that counter next to the grommet heads,'

he said.

At the next counter another salesman and a customer were talking thoughtfully.

'If you want them for four-be-twos, the best thing would be bicentric cotter-pins,' the salesman said.

My chance came at last, and I told him I wanted some of the rubber gadgets next to the grommet heads.

'What size? Half, five-eighths, three-quarters or seven-eighths?' he asked.

I realized that I did not know the size.

'Never mind, it doesn't matter,' I said.

You need to be an iron man to buy ironmongery. I had to get back to the office, and there was no time to buy the cheese.

I still don't know what a grommet head is. I must find out – it might be handy doing crosswords.

## TWO-FOOTED FRIEND

A remarkable number of books are being written by people who live with animals.

A Husky in the House, Leopard in My Lap, and Born Free are a few of them.

The surest way to literary fame today is to get hold of some wild creature and offer it your hospitality.

The trend has caught me at a disadvantage, as I do not make friends with animals easily. There have been no leopards, lemurs, otters, or ocelots under my roof. I can only claim to have shared the place with a wife.

And yet – perhaps that in itself is a story. Could one crack

the best-seller market with a book called *A Woman in the House*?

I would begin it in the usual way, like this:

When I told my friends I intended to catch a woman and take her into my home, they were not encouraging.

'They're impossible to tame,' I was told, and 'feeding a woman will cost you a fortune.'

Nevertheless, I was determined to carry out the plan.

One night at a party I came across a fine specimen, young and well nourished. But she seemed shy, and drew back swiftly when I came closer.

My first task was to gain her confidence. This took some weeks.

I accomplished it by talking to her and giving her food. She came to accept oysters, spaghetti bolognese, and claret from me without hesitation.

Gradually the young woman, whom I called Susie, became friendly. I was able to induce her to live inside the house.

She was nervous at first among the saucepans, brooms, and other equipment. When left alone she seemed to be fretting, and I feared she might run away to rejoin her old companions.

But I bought her a portable radio, and the effect was beneficial at once. When music played Susie would stand in front of it tapping her toes. Relations who dropped in said she was becoming 'quite one of the family'.

Although I have often heard that women are dangerous, Susie never attacked me. Now and then when I came home late she would growl, and I had to approach her with caution. But generally she is sweet-tempered.

She has learned many tricks such as knitting pullovers and

"I don't think Ruth has the concentration needed to watch boiling milk. She lets herself be distracted too easily by other things, like cutting lunches, frying eggs, switching on the washing-machine, giving advice on hair-styles, pulling the baby away from the radiator, paying the milkman, filling in forms from the Parents and Citizens' Association, inspecting fingernails and finding garters. I told her she should try harder to remember the milk on the stove."

ROSS CAMPBELL

making omelets...

That is roughly the line I would take in writing my book.

It might have a good influence. It would give encouragement to bachelors who are frightened by stories of the intractability of women.

Authors may like to keep wolves, pythons, possums, and armadillos in their homes. I still think that for companionship a woman is hard to beat.

## THE LAST LAP

"It's not fair! You always clean out the dish!"

A dispute was going on in the kitchen for the privilege of scraping a pudding-bowl.

My wife settled it efficiently.

"Did you clean up the custard dish?"

"Yes."

"Then it's HER turn to clean up the chocolate pudding."

Why is there such keen competition to scrape the last bit out of a dish?

We called it "having the lick" in my youth. You wiped your finger in the dish and then licked it. Spoons are more generally used for the purpose now. I suppose it is the march of progress.

Why does a little bit of something scraped from the bottom of the dish seem more tasty than a helping on your plate?

I think the reason is that it represents a bonus – something extra which you didn't count on. I confess I am strongly drawn to the practice.

Scraping or wiping dishes is frowned upon by etiquette experts, so the safest thing is to do it when nobody is looking.

My great weakness is the gravy left in the frying-pan after lamb's fry and bacon.

I sidle up to the stove, give a furtive look to left and right, and swish a piece of bread and butter quickly across the pan. It is inelegant but yummy.

Little pieces picked off pies and things have the same attractiveness. It is the bonus quality. You need iron self-control to refrain from sneaking those extra bits of pastry from the top of a steak and kidney pie.

Picking is illicit, of course. It can land you in more trouble than licking.

I remember the row when one of my brothers pinched some letters from the inscription on a birthday cake. He changed "TO THELMA" to "O HEL."

The urge to do these things is very widespread.

Last month we were asked to dinner with the Orpingtons, most refined people.

When the roast pork was put on the table I was painfully tempted to snap off a bit of crackling. But I was on my best behaviour and held back.

Imagine my surprise when I saw Mr Orpington slyly pop a piece of crackling into his mouth as he was carving.

After the pudding, a whipped-cream bowl invited a scrape. While the others were talking I quickly ran a spoon over it. But Mr. Orpington saw me. "Bags I scrape the pudding-basin!" he whispered. And scrape it he did.

As Robert Browning said: "The little more, and how much it is!" I bet he enjoyed scraping a whipped-cream dish.

## LIVED IN

There is a house I sometimes pass that interests me. It always has things on the roof.

One week there is a coloured ball and a plastic aeroplane. The next time a cap and a skipping rope are lying on the tiles.

It is an ordinary house, not big and modern or tasteful. What I like is its air of activity.

On the lawn, boys and girls chase about making noises and throwing things. They spill over into the old-model car parked outside. Small boys sometimes peer out of the car windows at me and say "Hello." Girls in dressing-up clothes mill around in the back seat.

On wet days they get in the car and lock the windows, while shrieks of mirth or sounds of dispute come from within.

Their mother must have a job trying to keep the place tidy. On the veranda one sees a sock or two, coloured pencils, frayed Little Golden Books.

Yet there is a charm in the untidiness of a house like this which people tend to underestimate.

I was reminded of it when I looked at a new book called 200 Home Plan Ideas.

This book contains pictures of handsome, up-to-date houses. They have split levels, double carports, sun galleries, dotted lines marked "future bedroom". They are "designed for uncluttered living".

That is just the trouble – they are too uncluttered.

They don't look occupied and messed up. There is never a

"We had a lot of bush out the back; there would have been a few hundred metres of it. We'd congregate there when we were very young. We'd take teapots and china and stuff out there to our cubbies to enhance our fantasies. You were quite hidden away."  
PATRICK CAMPBELL

garbage tin or ironing board in sight.

In one picture a lady is sitting on a patio while a man in smart casual clothes hands her a glass of beer. In another a girl reclines in a Japanese-style garden while a young man hands her a glass of lemonade. In another a woman carries a tray of glasses.

You get the impression that Australians at home do nothing but hand drinks to each other.

That might be fun. But I found these scenes too remote from real life to be interesting.

I would like to see a book called 200 Untidy Homes.

From the outside of the houses, buckets, dinkies, boxes, and garbage tins would be visible. There would be one or two things on the roof.

In the indoor photographs you could study various arrangements of socks, singlets, comics, magazines, and sewing machines.

The average house is designed for cluttered living. Why not show us some really outstanding examples of clutter?