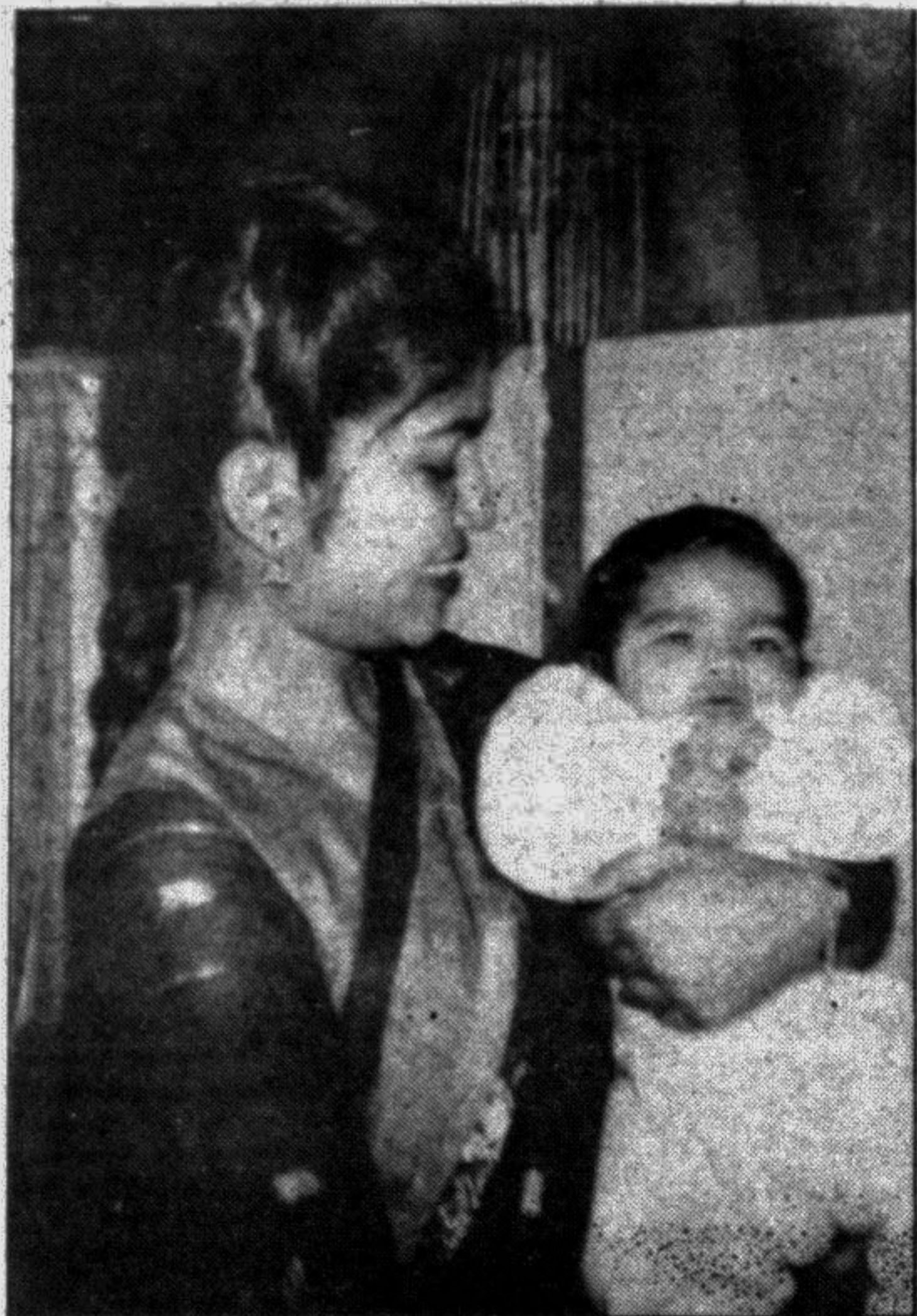


LIVING

Life with Mother

by Fayza Haq



It is sometimes believed, both at home and abroad, that mothers can sometimes be callous. The recent TV show of "Mother Love" went against all psychological conceptions of motherhood, until the denouement of the serial, for instance. It has been, at times, complained that mothers, working ones, more often in the west, sometimes fail to give their offspring the time that is naturally due to them.

Yet the cases that one has studied has been otherwise. I know of working mothers at Brisbane, Adelaide, Melbourne, New Jersey, London, and Ontario, to be able to cope both with their jobs and their offspring with admirable ease. They may have kept baby-sitters, might have put the child in a day-care centre, but they have guarded, caressed and cosseted their little ones and even teenagers, with the instinct of lionesses and leopardesses. The maternal instinct, which is so strong among birds, animals, fish and reptiles is surely not missing in human beings, who are

gifted with larger brains and natural intelligence. When underwater fish, hawks, chicken, cats, dogs and cattle have always tended to the needs of their offspring, it is only rare when the husband has had to play the role of both the parents at the same time in the case of homosapiens.

Did not Oedipus's mother love her son — unwillingly as it was — to the point of distraction? Was not Telemachus the anchor sheet for Penelope when she was constantly pressed into marriage for years, while her husband was away fighting the Trojan War? Did not Mrs. Bennet in "Pride and Prejudice", or the wife of "The Vicar of Wakefield" go "tizzy" trying to get her family adjusted, and did not Jo's mother in "Little Women" do the same? And do not films and TV serials, unless they are perverted and distorted ones, usually depict the mother as kind, comforting, understanding and loving? One cannot go by one single bestseller "Momma Dearest" by Joan Crawford's ingrate daughter. One believes it to be an unkind

cut, cheap sensationalism, and little more.

The women talked about today, like Mary Shelley, George Eliot, George Sand, Virginia Woolf, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, Mrs. Margaret Thatcher, Benazir Bhutto, Princesses Caroline and Stephanie of Monaco, Princess Anne of UK, have always had supporting mothers or aunts, who helped them out. If not, there were "mammies" as in case of Scarlett O'Hara in "Gone with the Wind". The mother figure has always played an important role in moulding a child's mind and manners. Surrogate mothers, in the form of grandmothers, in the case of death or mental illness of the actual mother, have always held a huge umbrella over the goings-on of children — whether they be male or female offspring.

Mothers, the world over, have been known to sacrifice their own comforts, deny themselves many pleasures that their hearts and souls have hankered after, simply to see to it that the meals are adequate, the education is as immaculate as possible, and the clothes are as good as the neighbour's children's ones, or those of the colleagues and friends at school, college, university and the office. They not only carry the offspring in their womb for nine months, go through with its nappy changing, teething, bed-wetting, adolescent whims and fancies, but have also to shelter the young man or woman who has been jilted, or divorced, with a couple of under threes. A mother's tenderness and sympathy is nonpareil, except perhaps when compared with that of a caring father. Teaching, feeding, cooking, sewing, curling hair and tolerating a bouncy string of girl friends, or questionable suitors, are all taken care of and tolerated by mothers.

I know of a mother of three, who has never enjoyed the pleasures of conjugal life, due to having a dissipated husband, who constantly did the disappearing act, and lived apart, so that the woman had to play the role of both the parents, being married at a tender age. Today, at 45, in Bangladesh, she does a nine to seven job, copes with shopping, cooking and the rest of the household chores. Her son, having married abroad, as a student, brought home a wife, and child who bully and brow-beat her. Her other two children pursue their own interests in the

manner they best think fitting. Her life has been a series of sacrifices, with no thanks in return. Yet, uncomplaining she plays her role as a mother, grateful that the children have now grown up, even though they have not flown the nest. What this woman needs is respite and companionship or comradeship of a member of the opposite sex, even if it is simply on a platonic basis. She has sleepless nights and feverish days. There is no rest for the wicked," she chuckles through her pangs of agonies that fate has thrust upon her. One wonders at her endless patience and undying humour.

One knows of a young mother of two, who wanted the best of clothes, toys, food and education for her children. Not being able to cope with her penny-wise husband, she now slogs from dawn to dusk, with teaching and tutoring. Had she not wanted to give her time, love and material possessions to her children, she could have saved her marriage, and the endless cruel comments that Chittagong society heaps on her. She does not rely on servants and her own parents alone. She teaches, sings and reads her children, seven days a week. One is amazed at her constant sacrifices and her courage in bringing up her two young ones.

One has, similarly known a mother in Rajshahi to dress only in white cotton "sari" for decades, despite being the wife of a bureaucrat — just so that her four children could have the best of education, successful careers and ultimate happy marriages. She has a mentally sick daughter, at present to cope with, and a physically handicapped son too. Her other children lead their own complacent life abroad. Yet the mother works harder than any maid in the house, despite her repeated strokes, and prays beyond midnight. "She is alive today, at the age of sixty-five, only because of the children she must live for," was the comment of a family friend, who was once a colleague of her late husband.

Yes, mothers can be strict and dictatorial, reading one's private correspondence, and treating one like some four-year-old, even when one is forty-five. But these are all well meant checks. When a mother corrects or admonishes her child it is always for his or her own good. It is only when the mother dies that one realises that the tongue-lashings were only well meant.

The "good earth" produces good mothers on the average, and the female parent is never to be ignored or undermined by anyone, even in a mood of zest.

Agonies of a Young Maid's Existence

by Fawzia Haque

EVEN before the sun rises in the eastern hemisphere, it beckons her to return from the land of the nod. It is already time for her to get to various gardens, parks and little places of blossoms, to collect flowers. It is a chilly morning outside and she is wearing a tattered dress which she has outgrown. She always cherishes the dream of having beautiful dresses, which she finds that her mistress's daughter wears. Once she was provided with a beautiful party dress which was discarded by her mistress. She keeps it with great care, she wears it only when a party takes place at the house where she works.

Her name is Noorjahan. Maybe her parents wanted her to be "the light of their own world." Her father, who is a hawker, has already left home to work. Her mother who works as a part-time maid at a nearby house, had also left with the coming of dawn. They are three sisters and two brothers. Again, her mother is three months' pregnant, feeling the brunt of her labour and sweat. A frown has made its permanent wrinkles on her forehead, as an after effect of her endless thoughts on mouths to be fed.

As Noorjahan leaves for work, she notices her brothers and sisters, all younger than her sleeping with innocent looks on their pale faces, which is unbearable. The melancholia of her heart knows no bounds, as she trudges with her basket, moving like a pendulum.

Her birthday is probably May 2, '82 and that makes her eleven years old. But then again, who remembers the birthday of the neglected poor? Only the religious teacher of their village school once mentioned the date, which she never forgets. Ever since she learned to understand, she has only encountered hunger and misery. Her family live in a small thatched one-roomed mud hut with nothing else, but mats and pieces of polythene for covering their skeletal



frames. Some nights have passed when she has had to go to bed with pangs of hunger restraining her sleep. But as far as she can recall her infancy they were quite well-off having some landed property in their village home near the bank of the Padma. Suddenly, an unexpected calamity came over their life — the house ruined by floods rendered them homeless, and their peaceful happy life was frustrated and shattered, and they had to leave their village home and come to the capital town, Dhaka.

Noorjahan really envies the wealthy people who have so much facilities and amenities to use and enjoy. She goes out early in the morning to collect flowers and sell them to flower-dealers. However, the money she earns is not enough even to feed herself. So she goes to a house where she works as a cleaner of the house and the garden. Her mistress is neither extremely cruel nor too generous. She has shortened her name by calling her Noorie. She never scolds her, but Noorie has to follow

strict rules while she works there. Her mistress provides her with lunch, daily made by the cook — after all "beggars can't be choosers" — so she sometimes holds her tongue. The money which she earns here, with that she buys food for her younger brothers and sisters, who always seem to be waiting for her with patience. The gleamer of gratitude in their eyes make her sad and yet hopeful.

When she comes across the rich and educated children — children of her age — tears appear into her eyes. Oh! How she longs to be educated like them, but her wish is only a castle in the air. Her father cannot afford it, in fact he cannot dream of it — they are hardly the persons to live in comfort and luxury. Sometimes she asks God why they were born so poor and helpless. Noorie understands their agony even though no one else has ever tried to. She simply cannot bear their suffering any more.

After finishing her work at the house, and the fence of the

garden in the evening, she strolls to a restaurant near by, and devotes her time to dish-washing. She dreams her dreams amongst the laughter and conversation of the customers, and the clatter of pans and drinks of glasses. It almost becomes midnight by the time she finishes her chores there. She is provided with the dinners, there, which she loves to take home for her awaiting family. Sometimes she is allowed to take home the left-overs of the restaurant with her.

On her way home, she is often teased by the pedestrians. After a long day's work, when she goes to sleep, she observes the small oil lamp burning in the hut, and she feels as if her life was like the same small flame which flickers faintly in the blowing breeze. Just as the flame strives to stay afloat, she struggles on with life. Trying to think of better future, she tries to get a good night's sleep, to regain the energy needed to carry on with her work for the next day.

Bangladesh Food Festival in London

BANGLADESHI'S to London in March to launch the biggest ever showcase of Bangladeshi cuisine in Britain. The chef was Sonargaon Hotel's Head Chef, Albert Gomes. The festival was hosted and organised by Amin Ali, a Bangladeshi entrepreneur and

founder of the Red Fort, one of London's leading restaurants. The festival was jointly sponsored by Sonargaon Hotel and Biman Bangladesh Airlines. The opening day was attended by many senior dignitaries, including shadow cabinet ministers, diplomats, celebrities from television, radio and members of the printed media. The festival was officially opened by Dr A F M Yusuf, the Bangladesh High Commissioner to the United Kingdom.

In his speech Dr Yusuf said: "This is a proud moment for Bangladesh's history in Britain. With such a large proportion of India restaurants around the country owned and staffed by Bangladeshis, this festival serves as a tribute to all those people and their hard work over the years."

From March 15th to 21st the menu was prepared exclusively by Albert Gomes. Some of the delicacies he prepared for customers that week included Panchash, Padmamoni, Boal doplaza and Jhal Goadla Chingri.

Speaking at the launch, Amin Ali said: "This festival will help establish authentic Bangladeshi food as a major player in the field of internationally recognised cuisine. Albert is one of best chefs Bangladesh has to offer and we are very excited and honoured to have him with us." The following is an extract from the



Sonargaon Hotel's Head Chef, Albert Gomes with British Member of Parliament Frank Dobson at the Bangladesh Food Festival in the Red Fort Restaurant.

monthly magazine "BUSINESS", printed in the February-March issue.

One of London's most renowned Indian restaurants, the award-winning Red Fort, situated in the heart of Soho, celebrates its tenth anniversary in 1993. Managed by Amin Ali with his head chef Naresh Mattha, the restaurant has always attracted its area's film and television celebrities and its clientele has grown to include many politicians and international personalities. The recently formed Red Fort

Parliamentary Privilege Club consisting of nearly 1,000 MPs and Lords often assists The Red Fort in the numerous charity functions it hosts. Regular clients include Anthony Hopkins, David Puttnam, Lenny Henry, theatre director Trevor Nunn, UK home secretary Kenneth Clarke, former and current leader of the Labour Party respectively Neil Kinnock and John Smith, Gene Wilder (The Red Fort is Wilder's favourite restaurant in Europe). (Sonargaon Tattler)

Illness stalks the Family

by Sylvia Saleem

TONIGHT, they were clinging to each other, tired, frightened about their father and unable to understand why I had left them for so long without explanation. I took them home for so long without explanation. I took them home. I told them everything was going to be all right and they could stay home from school the next day. Perhaps, I was wrong in trying to protect them.

Years later, all three of them accused me of not telling them the truth about their father's health. My daughter, particularly, had been accepted for a university place some distance from home. She told me she would have stayed at home and given up on her education. This was one of the reasons why I didn't tell them how seriously ill their father was. To this day, I do not know if I was right or wrong. I don't think I will ever know. Mr Qudus was a truly good man. It was several days later that he admitted that he had called the hospital telling them to re-route any distressing phone calls about Salman to him rather than me. He was sure

ing. It was one of the unhappiest times of my life.

At last, the consultant said that Salman could come home. How we celebrated! I cooked festival food and the children bought presents. It was like a re-birth of the family, a new start. Salman's heart attack had made us all aware that people dear to us can die. At least, to the children and me, that had been the effect of Salman's coronary. For him, it was completely different.

Two days later, Salman collapsed. He showed all the symptoms of a second heart attack. I sent the children to bed early and sat up all night with my husband struggling for air. The doctor had told me that victims of coronary thrombosis should lie down but Salman was struggling to sit up. He asked for extra pillows and I tried to force him to lie flat until the doctor came. It was, of course, a different doctor, a man I will never forgive for his brutality. Salman was not suffering from a second coronary but had contracted pleurisy. Again, I had not been warned about the possibility of secondary illnesses. My husband lay in bed gasping for the breath that would keep him alive and the new doctor stood beside him. It was, then, I went through one of the most painful experiences of my life as I heard Steven say,

"My wife does her best, but it's not the same as being safe in hospital." I had, just, struggled through three nights without sleep. I was, at the same time, trying to hold down the important job that could give my family financial security. The doctor decided that Steven should go back into hospital and, then, without any warning said to me,

"Of course, he has less than a year to live!"

I went hot, nauseous and fainted.

Salman was a fighter and lived for a further five years. Our family died. But that is another story.

the children and I needed a good night's sleep to face whatever the next day might bring.

Salman continued to make progress but it was slow. The festival time came. He remained in hospital and I was able to visit every evening. He would not be home for the festival. Salman's mother, herself a widow, came to visit with Salman's family. It was a joyless festival for the children so my mother-in-law took them to her home, 200 miles away, for two weeks. They left me on the first day of the festival. There were several more to go. I cried a lot and visited Salman. Friends who would have invited us for meals and parties as a couple, now, invited me for a cup of tea. I had turned into a woman on my own. It was not suitable for me to be invited to dinner parties and social events in mixed company. It hurt. I spent the festival visiting Salman in hospital, cleaning the house for his return and listening to friends telling me what a marvellous festival they were hav-



"Blue Devil" — from "Star Plus" with Gus Valentine, J.C. Swift and Rod Sandusky.

Beauty Tips

THIS will help to give a rounder effect to the face.

Oval Face. Apply the rouge in a small triangle near the eyes, along the cheek bone accentuating the classical type of face. (See also Make-up)

Scalp. Lack of proper care and attention to the scalp can lead to dandruff and other scalp disorders. Hats, combs, or brushes should never be lent or borrowed, as dandruff is infectious. This should be treated without delay, as apart from the unsightliness, neglect can lead to unhealthy or falling hair. Dandruff appears as white flakes or scurf in the hair and on clothing, it must be loosened and cleared away by regular massage with a spirit lotion containing sufficient oil to prevent any drying effect. The best way of applying the tonic lotion is to soak a small pad of cotton-wool in the lotion and rub it in at the roots. This is more easily done by parting the hair into small sections all over the head. Then follow with vigorous massage with the finger-tips. Wrap the head in a hot towel for fifteen minutes;

then shampoo. This treatment should be carried out once a week until all signs of dandruff have cleared up. In between treatments the hair should be massaged with a little lotion and brushed well each night. (See Hair; Shampooing.)

Skin. Dry. Wash the face once daily (in the morning) with a mild toilet soap. The water should be just warm, not too hot or too cold. Use a cleansing cold cream for removing make-up at night, and before hopping into bed apply a very fine film of nourishing skin food. It is an excellent idea to apply nourishing cream when you are in the bath or when washing and drying the hair as it will offset the skin-drying effects of the heat and steam. Eat plenty of green vegetables and carrots, fruit, butter, fats, and milk. Cook with olive oil for frying and use in salads. A course of cod-liver oil will also help.

Oily. This is a difficult condition to overcome for it is largely constitutional. Drink plenty of water between meals. Avoid oily and fried foods. P.E.

(to be continued)



(concluded)



Scene from an Australian Fashion show.

— Courtesy: Photo concern