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COVER PICTURE: In peaceful contrast to the current conflict is this houseboater on Dal lake in Kashmir, not far from Srinagar, ancestral home of Prime Minister Nehru.

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Before . . .

There has been a good deal of talk lately about life in Washington as it affects Foreign Service people and their families. This has interested me very much, because I consider myself something between a case history and a horrible example when it comes to living in Washington after spending several years in other parts of the world. People who are shocked by my confessions will be pleased to learn that I have been reformed, regenerated, reactivated, and generally made over like new. In short, my case history has a happy ending. But since there was an astounding amount of reforming to be done, I can still only consider myself on parole and not yet a completely integrated part of American life. I am hopefully awaiting further moral development.

To begin at the beginning, I'll show you a picture of that alarming young woman, me, with the ominous word "Before" written underneath it. She emerged from college equipped for life in the Foreign Service with a supposedly profound knowledge of 16th Century French poets (which proved to be extremely transitory), an intimate acquaintance with the careers of such worthies as Roger the Second (long since forgotten) and a really enduring skill in a type of dance step then known as "The Bounce" (which appears to have gone completely out of style).

The young woman known as "Before" doesn't have the faintest idea how to clean a house, do a large laundry, care for a child, or whip up a supper for eight. She can converse haltingly in French or Spanish on the subject of 18th Century thought, should anyone care to discuss it, but she finds it extremely difficult to buy clothespins or eggplant in either language. She tries to save face by hoping the wind won't blow the clothes down and purchasing nothing but beef steak, which she providentially discovers is the same in nearly all languages.

Since the wind is really quite often tempered for the shorn lamb, this ignorant young woman soon finds that the easiest way of doing things in foreign lands is to say "Oh, anything

BEFORE and AFTER

By PHILINDA KRIEG

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you know how to make well will do perfectly!" when the cook asks what to have for dinner. To stave off the pangs of conscience, she convinces herself that this procedure makes the cook happier, too. The Primrose Path was never more flowery. Transferring her experiences in the field of cooking to housekeeping in general, "Before" often attempts to flatter her servants by asking their advice as to how to make the curtains look whiter, the silver brighter, the kitchen cleaner. But she doesn't listen to the answers. She really couldn't be less interested. She merely wants them to do it for her.

Thus, you see, "Before" managed to sidestep many a vital issue which her compatriots had learned to deal with long ago, although she was learning to cope with some situations with which they are happily not faced at all. "Before" knows how to live with a gorgeous tiled bathroom from whose gleaming silvery taps not a dribble of water emerges for days on end. She rises to the occasion when a large party is expected and the cook announces that there is no water with which to make dinner. "Before" is likewise ready for action when the gas stove puffs out dismally at six A.M. and refuses to heat the baby's bottle. The uninitiate might think of calling the gas company, but "Before" knows the futility of such gestures and has developed her own methods. "Before" has learned to stifle consternation on discovering that the plumber has never seen a bathroom in his life, the carpenter has never heard of chests of drawers, the refrigerator repairman has been, until yesterday, a taxi driver, and the hired waiter is firm in his belief that old fashioned brown sugar is exclusively made for use in Old Fashioned cocktails.

"Before," despite her faults, is not the woman to dither just because she asks for a package of cigarettes and is promptly presented with a raw carrot. Nor is she unyieldingly attached to hot running water, mechanical aids of all varieties, and the electric Light That Failed. "Before" is the girl who thinks any garment under three years of age is very new indeed, and whose greatest delight is the mail order catalogue fresh from American presses only two or three months ago. All of which merely goes to prove that "Be-

Philinda Krieg says the highlight of her career was "two glorious weeks as fashion correspondent for United Press in Paris in 1940—until they caught on." More prosaically then she worked at the Carnegie-financed American Library in Paris until all Americans were evacuated during the war. She met FSO William Krieg in Lisbon, "where the train stopped." The Krieges were married in Lagos, Nigeria in 1943. They have one son, now three years old, whose mechanical interests account for the fact that her typed manuscript was bereft of "J's."

fore" is a specialist of sorts. Outside her field she is hopeless. Off her Primrose Path she is likely to stumble.

But even "Before" knows where the Primrose Path generally leads, and very soon she begins to ponder, to contemplate the rocky country which must inevitably lie ahead. What should she do, she thinks gloomily, if she were suddenly transferred to Washington in her present state of abyssmal ignorance? The thought transfixes her with horror. "I am a parasite, an ignoramus, a character without character! I shall commit hara-kiri rather than face the consequences of my own lazy conduct in the past!"—such is her lament. But she becomes fascinated by the whole subject of life in the United States, nonetheless. She bores those of her friends who have recently returned with questions as to the enormous and painful business of real, honest-to-goodness American housekeeping. "How could you bear it? How did you find time to read, live a life of your own, and have patience left for your children?" As these were all leading questions, fairly sitting up and begging for the desired answer, many of this young woman's kinder friends stopped the discussion by answering as "Before" had shudderingly expected, "But I couldn't bear it at all—it was simply dreadful." This served to calm her somehow by being every bit as bad as she had always believed. "Before" never stopped to think that these friends of hers had all managed to survive the grim ordeal mysteriously well, all things considered, and even found time to read a book or two.

When there is a "Before," at least in the advertisements, there is also an "After" peering smugly out of the other picture. What the advertising people usually omit is a picture of "Between." But I am confessing, not writing advertising copy. Therefore I must at least show you a few kaleidoscopic photographs, not for publication, of the horrendous scenes that lay between. Quite in the manner of the Greek tragedies, her onrushing fate overtook "Before" in short order, and the most that can be said for that rather obnoxious person is that she really tried quite hard to manage a brave, beautiful smile as the blow fell.

"Between" is another woman entirely. She is in the United States, washing out diapers in hotel rooms most of the time. She is a nervous type, and has lived up to her expectations in regard to loss of patience, sleep, peace, and sound reading matter. Fortunately, a kind of numbness has stolen over her, so that the worst scenes are vague both in memory and at the time they occurred. Later, she can recall being alone with an unusually seasick child, being out late at night with a tired child whose irritability is only matched by her own, and being perpetually in the act of saving said child from imminent death quite unaided. Many recollections come to her later of wild scrambles in other peoples' houses during which her only hope is to move fast enough to keep her child from overturning the ormulu clock, smashing the hurricane lamps, or crashing downstairs and making their nice carpet all bloody. But as I say, it's all misty in her memory later on, because "Between" had so many things on her mind. Her one object in life was strange, considering how hard she had been trying all her life to get out of housekeeping: she wanted to get a house of her own in Washington, and settle down!

It sounds as if she had become "After" already, but no. She still has a residue of the ashes of "Before" which she carries around in a kind of mental funeral urn. For one thing she still doesn't have the least idea how to keep house once she acquires one, nor how to move into it unaided, either. For another, she has conceived the odd idea that it would be much easier if she could send over for her old steward boy from African days. It doesn't occur to her until

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much later that a large black African straight from the bush might look distinctly peculiar padding about a small brick colonial in Bethesda, Md.

The atmosphere in American kitchens and American supermarkets, in which "Between" is soon thoroughly immersed, is not at all rarified. On the contrary, it is a thick, healthy, sea-level sort of atmosphere, rich in common sense and salubrious normality. For several months "Between" is dead certain that it is far too rich for her, and that she must surely stifle in it. But from necessity she has mustered a feverish energy to which she had never laid claim or sought previously. She has discovered, moreover, that she has slowly been growing a third hand which helps enormously around the house. At least she supposes it must be a third hand, because she knows perfectly well that *she* could never do all she has been doing with her own two hands, unhelped. In any case, the one thing she knows for sure is that she is cruelly overworked and put upon by an unkind destiny. Her worst fears, formulated when she was that lucky girl "Before" have been amply and awesomely justified.




Between . . .

And so it goes, from day to weary day. Then one afternoon around three, Presto! We are happy to announce that the photographer has come once more, to take the second picture. "Between" has changed considerably, and can now be called by the lilting name "After." We find her sitting in an armchair reading a book! Her household chores have all been accomplished, the evening meal is prepared as far as it can be at that point. "Between," unaware of her new identity, looks up from the book quite startled. It has suddenly occurred to her that she has been rather enjoying the past few weeks, callously getting pleasure out of doing a lot of household tasks, going against all her former principles! What goes on? Slowly her expression changes, and by the time the photographer is ready she is looking positively radiant, though perhaps the smallest bit self-satisfied.

The picture the photographer takes of "After" is not a wholly true one. She is not always the eager domestic beaver she appears to be, and at times is almost schizophrenically split between the insouciant fliberty-gibbet she was in the first picture and the well-adjusted American wife and mother

(Continued on page 54)



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BEFORE AND AFTER

(Continued from page 13)

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she makes herself out to be in the second. There are dark days when she spans her child, deliberately neglects the dust under the what-not, opens a can of tomato soup for dinner instead of creating a vichyssoise, and leaves the laundry on the line to moulder. But on the whole she is a fair testimonial to the morale-building qualities of life in Washington. It has gotten so that she sometimes wonders what on earth she did with her time in the old days.

I fear my confessions are almost frighteningly moral in tone. Change a few details and I'll admit you'd have Horatio Alger on your hands.

I can't help that; I've been as factual as I could. Is it my fault if all this experience, so desperately avoided and so ill prepared for, has made a finer and a better woman of me? Other people may not notice any difference at all, but my story is that they just aren't the sensitive type. I'm convinced that I'm now one of the most reformed characters in forty-eight states and, of course, the District of Columbia!



After!

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