

War's Subtle Changes in New York Life

Although the City Is Outwardly Moving in the Same Old Ways,
There Are Marked Differences Just Beneath the Surface

By RICHARD BARRY.

THE war has not meant great outward changes in the superficial ways of New York. Business is going on as usual. Social life is curtailed only in a measure. The theatres are bidding loudly for attention. The newspapers have not reduced their size. The bread lines are no longer than in former years at this time. No other metropolis—London, Paris, Berlin, Petrograd, Vienna, Rome—is so little affected.

But there are subtle changes.

For one thing, the débutantes are not "coming out" this year. In other years the open season for débutantes began with the falling of the leaves. Fashionable social life expressed its lyric genius in a cumulative series of events designed to reveal feminine Spring in its most ardent mood. Not in 1917. For where are the boys of yesteryear? In the trenches—or going there.

For another thing, eating has followed drinking as one of the pastimes no longer in vogue. People began by not serving cocktails and they have ended up by cutting out desserts and having only one vegetable. It is yet most doubtful if the working people or the middle class of the city are going in for rigid food curtailment, but nothing pleases the rich so much—the smart rich—as the fad for economy. No longer are the tables of the wealthy a fair field for an impecunious and personable young man enamored of the casual invitation out. One such requested recently to a luncheon at a fashionable home discovered the meal to consist of an inch-square piece of anchovied toast, a sprig of lettuce, and half a boiled egg with a thin sauce. In former years he would have had at least five hearty courses. In Horse Show week of 1917 he was obliged to excuse himself prematurely and seek a saloon, where for 10 cents he got a plate of beans. To have called attention to his hunger would have been unpatriotic, as well as rude, and he felt, as it was, that his clandestine indulgence on a side street was in some measure an act of treason, if not *lèse* hospitality.

And the knitting! What a field for exploration! There must and will be a literature on the subject. Already two handbooks are out and a work of fiction promised. This extraordinary popular activity has seized the feminine half of the community with a democratic disregard of classes. The servant and the mistress are alike obsessed; it has overflowed the homes, is in the streets and offices, swarming through the hotels and the buses and taxicabs, into the theatres and the churches alike. Any afternoon you can see well-dressed girls sauntering up Fifth Avenue knitting, knitting. The scherzo of this sublime symphony of wartime endeavor occurred on the opening night of the opera, when scores of matrons arrived with their knitting to listen to Caruso and Muzio and Amato.

There are women who refuse to buy new gowns, but specialize in expensive knitting bags. Shops which cannot sell other materials elaborate their knitting bag and knitting silk counters, and from dawn to dark these places are packed. One woman who ordinarily buys a suit every Fall for about \$150, this year made her last year's suit do, on the score of war economy, and then bought a knitting bag elaborately embroidered by hand for \$175. Out of this, in the course of the Winter, she will be able to produce, through patriotic and industrious devotion, probably three pairs of socks worth 50 cents apiece and a boy's sweater that might be purchased better made for \$5.75. Or, deducting the contribution to the "boys over there" of \$7.25, the net to the embroidered knitting bag trust is \$167.75.

But, of course, the knitters with common sense, who don't waste their money, are in the majority.

Just how much the shops are hit would be hard to say. They all keep a stiff upper lip. "Doing very well, thank you," is the invariable reply to inquiries about the state of business. But it requires no uncannily keen observer to note that window shopping is a greater craze than ever this season.

The men have a better alibi than the women for not buying. They, too, indulge in window shopping and a bit of counter prospecting, but they can usually evade the final clincher of the salesman with, "I'll not buy until I see how I come out on the next draft." The salesman is obliged to smile politely, though he may

apartments of ten rooms and only a few baths.

While it may be assumed that most labor is patriotic, the war has afforded an opportunity for high-handedness to that part of labor which is selfish and tyrannical. Wages mount and mount and mount. The fellow we knew as "Jim," who came at our call on a long-established and never-questioned scale of pay, is now "Mr. James." We politely wait his convenience and ask him what is the least he will take. Strikes are in many cases no longer necessary. Merely to hint at one is as good as a 10 per cent. raise. And if the master's table is cut down, the servants' hall won't stand for it. A lady who ordered fishcakes for Tuesday was

into the war. The collector on his rounds talks less of courts and bailiffs and more of partial payments of the most fractional order.

Of course, luxuries are the first to go. There will be only half as many greenhouses on Long Island this Winter as last; the materialists who control our economics declare that flowers form the first line of defense—and must be the first to fall. Candy suffers, too, but not like flowers, for candy is the camouflage of food and the alternative of alcohol.

Ruskin declares that war is the mother of great art. If so, our American art must be little, for it is hard hit. The sales in some lines, like etching, have all but ceased. This is only in its commercial aspect, while Ruskin spoke of the technical and the spiritual. Time may prove again the truth of his observation. Meanwhile, the talent thriving on illustration, on liberal purchases, on inland exhibitions is being nipped in the bud or thrown into the alley to die—or thrive hardily despite the frost.

The effect on the theatres is curious. All ordinary attractions fall almost instantly. In one week seven stars folded their tents on Broadway. Plays that might have prospered in some other season have no chance this year. A few plays and big musical spectacles are breaking all records. Now that the lights of the Great White Way are lessened, this division will be doubtless heightened; greater success for the successes, greater failure for the failures.

In fine, the major effect of the war, if we must search for one phrase to express everything, is that it has intensified our life. And in almost every direction—in food, in clothing, in work, in thrift, in amusement, in aspiration, in determination. It has cured many trifling vicious habits, and some of the dissipated it has hurled into deeper dissipation. The all-night supper clubs were never so prosperous; the rise in the price of liquor has trebled the intake of a few bars, the most expensive bars, while a quarter of the corner saloons are contemplating going out of business.

Another subtle phase of the war's effect is this: It has undoubtedly intensified the racial lines in this city, at the same time that it has been harmonizing them into an American whole. It has revived the Italians and quickened a loyalty to their native land. The New York French never were so French before. The New York Spanish for the first time stand out as an integral factor in our communal life. The Germans, though mostly loyal in all outward manner to their adopted country, and in no sense showing allegiance to the Kaiser or his Government, have in many instances become more alert to the Teutonic racial influences than they were before the war. The circulation of German newspapers has not decreased, it is said. German theatres are thriving and German societies, though expressing patriotic purposes, and that evidently sincerely, are increasing.

We see the outward manifestation of these undercurrents on every side. A Spanish play is one of the sensational hits of the day. A French company of actors has arrived, to find a new theatre and a new house waiting for them and a wider and more fashionable public than existed for French plays before, which is saying a great deal. In the Fifth Avenue shops English antiques are the vogue.

The war has done it. The war has cleansed, heightened, exalted the streams from other soils, and they are washing through ours with multiplied power, not to carry us away, not to disintegrate us, but to accentuate the fact that the American is the component of all, the audience for all, the jury for all, the customer for all, and the alleviator of all.

A GRAVE IN FRANCE

By Nora Moore



I CANNOT bring you flowers, for always
round your grave
The guns unceasing rave;
But, oh, Beloved and Best,
Upon the Cross of wood that marks the place
you died
My heart is crucified,
And watches o'er your rest.
I cannot bring you flowers.

—From *The Graphic*.

confront a gray-head with fallen arches, ten inches excess girth, bad eyesight, and false teeth.

As a general thing, it is the middle class that is hardest hit. It is only natural that the well to do set the pace in curbing show. They force or persuade their help to eat less; they keep their jewels in the safety deposit vaults; instead of half a dozen new gowns they have but one. It is fashionable to eliminate liquor, cut down on meat, and otherwise observe the canonical law. It is easier this year for the Pittsburgher or Chicagoan to break into the grand tier of the opera on opening nights. The Horse Show can exist only as an auxiliary to the Red Cross. The foreign-built limousines, so exclusive that only a few are built in any one season, are paroled in custody of the Government. Many of the town mansions that formerly housed families of two are closed, and the inmates have abandoned themselves to

startled by Bidy's defiance, "Ain't fish on Friday enough? No working person is going to stand for fish twice a week."

But the middle class! Wages are being raised plentifully, but who has heard of a general raise of salaries? The man who used to get \$4 a day is now getting \$6.50, but the man who used to keep books at \$25 a week is still getting the same \$25. Wartime conditions are such that even a generous employer does not feel justified in increasing his payroll unless it becomes obligatory.

In the professions the almost-arrived and the would-bes are as badly off as the has-beens and the never-weres. The struggling lawyer can't pay his rent. The beginning doctor has plenty of work, but bad collections, and France looks good to him. The often-but-not-always actor is studying the rules of the quickest union. The nearly author has dropped his club and is asking how he can get