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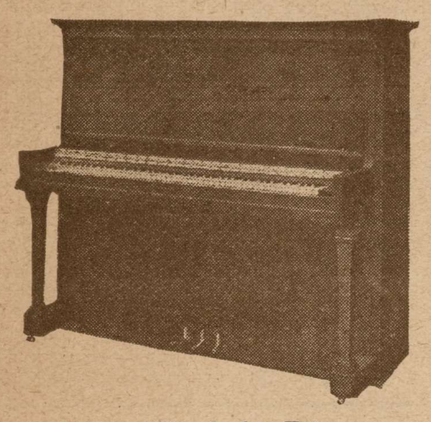

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IN BELGIUM.

When I left America for Belgium, the American Better-Homes Week had reached a successful conclusion. The thought of better homes and what they meant in the life of a nation was supermost in my mind.

In Belgium I found two things that are contributing in a wonderful way to improving the homes of that country; first, the program of reconstruction and improvement going on busily; second, the leadership of a queen who is first of all a wonderful woman.

What can be back of all this tremendous activity in a nation that has just had another of those terrible shocks from which Belgium, the cockpit of the world, has suffered from time to time throughout history? The answer is in the national policy of encouraging the ownership of property, no matter how small the parcel.

These people had something of their own to return to, to strive to recover and to hold. This has led to an all-absorbing program of industry and perseverance. Their cheerfulness is equally marvelous. It is, however, the result of a fundamental trait: the satisfaction of the natural instinct of possession.

When the war was over and even the house and home gone, there was the bit of land to hold their affections—a nucleus of interest, a center of possession about which once more to establish a home.

It is a saving grace that next to the instinct of self-preservation comes the desire for a home and an effort to protect it. There is a pleasure which comes eve nafter destruction and devastation if a home can be rebuilt on the spot about which the associations of a lifetime cluster.

The second force at work in this nation is the queen, who has at once the qualities necessary to make her a rare queen and is a woman who would stand out at any time and in any nation as a remarkable woman. She is an illustration of the result of practical, scientific training for women. Her father, a noted oculist, trained her in his own laboratory and clinic. She brought to her duties as queen the interest and knowledge of a scientist. This she has used in directing the lives of her three children. She has followed the development of nutrition as a health factor and has applied it to their diet.

When the war broke out, the queen was ready and able to take her place as a nurse in a hospital, to help in the surgical ward, to give practical direction to the scientific care of the sick an dwounded.

Her people recognize her as a friend, a rare woman, a mother, a home-maker of a kind to be emulated. Not infrequently her subjects seek her help, not as a queen, but as a woman who has had the training and experience which they have missed and who can advise them how to care for and feed their children and how to direct their homes.

It is her ideal to give to these women more of that knowledge which will enable them to feed and care for and to train their children well. She would have them freed somewhat from the routine of their daily lives so that they might have a broader view of life as a whole.

In sum and substance, are not these two things that are affecting so profoundly the life and welfare of little Belgians the same things that all nations must seek if they are to prosper? First, the responsibility, the industry, the stability which come with the ownership of a house, in which centres the nucleus of civilization, the home. Second, the education of women to make them able to handle successfully and well the most important problems that any nation has to face—the bearing, rearing and training of efficient human beings.

Belgium, though not giving it the name of "Better Homes Campaign," is certainly not ot be found lacking in stirring activities for better homes. Such knowledge and such building are the greatest incentives to universal peace.

—o—

THE WELL-DRESSED WOMAN.

For her morning walk, shopping expedition or for traveling, the smart woman wears a well-cut tailored suit of plain or plaid wool material, a small hat of the cloche or beret order (the cloche with a sectional crown is new), and a low shoe with a strap, a pump or an Oxford. A few smart women wear very thin gun-metal colored silk stockings with their tailored costumes, but most women prefer the lighter nude or Indian skin shades. A flesh-colored wool stocking or merino spat worn under the silk stocking enables one to wear transparent hosiery with safety in cold weather. The blouse, which keeps very much to itself, is unusually collarless, hip length and worn over the skirt.

At luncheon at the Ritz or Pierre's one notices the greater elegance that is creeping into dress. One sees it in the metallic fabrics brilliantly beaded or embroidered that are used for the bodies of velvet dresses and for the new Russian blouses, in the fur bandings on straight Chinese blouses, in the cut of many of the smartest dresses, which, while retaining th eslender silhouette, adds to it the flare of the minaret peplum, the plaited flounce at the bottom, the straight or circular tiers that break so many skirts. Velvet is used a great deal. Hats are very small, just the size of the head. Sleeves are usually long and frequently close-fitting, though one also sees an excessively short sleeve.

In afternoon dresses one sees the very short sleeve as well as the wrist-length close-fitting sleeve. Both are correct for the more formal type of dress. Dresses of this character are worn slightly longer than street costumes, but even indoors eight inches from the floor is long enough. Except for coat dresses and the simple morning frock, the collarless bateau neck is used almost to the exclusion of any other style. Velvet is much worn this winter, but the crepe silks and crepe satins accentuate the much-sought-after slender silhouette.

Evening dress is extremely brilliant with beads, metallic fabrics, metallic, cire and dyed laces, silver and gold slips under black lace, lacquer shades of green and vermillion, and white and flesh colored dresses illuminated with crystal and rhinestone trimming. Dresses of black crepe silk, so useful for dinner and the theatre, are enlivened by girdles and hip ornaments sewn with rhinestones. Evening gowns are entirely sleeveless and are worn almost to the ankle, with slippers or sandals of silver or gold brocade, bronze satin, silver cloth, etc. The slipper varies, but the stocking is always nude, peach or banana color and extremely thin.

The evening wrap may be a coat or cape, but if a color is used for it the color should be brilliant—ruby red, emerald green, deep rose, American Beauty or raspeberry red, Chinese, royal or sapphire blue. Black is extremely elegant in elvet embroidered in silver and with a silver lining.

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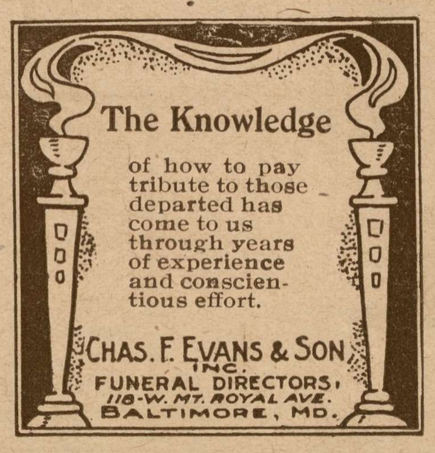

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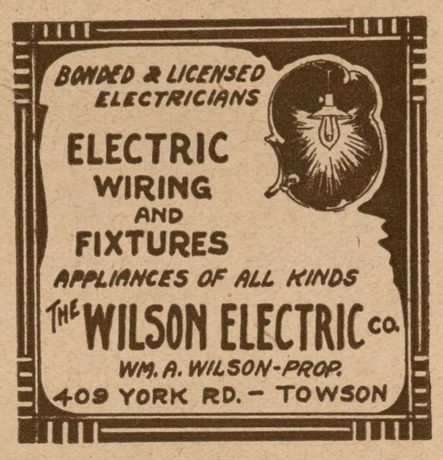

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