



FEELING FLAT: The sight of former First Lady Melania Trump arriving in Florida in flat shoes perfectly summed up the general graph of life at present

PICTURE: AP

No big spikes on the graph of life during this extended lockdown spell

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LOOKS like we're in for several weeks more of suspended animation, isolation and fed-upness. I must confess it doesn't faze me over much.

I've developed the happy knack of acceptance of the inevitable, living with myself in perfect harmony and a luxurious degree of idleness, knowing that if I can't go out, nobody can come in, thus no need to do more than sustain basic hygiene and spend my time doing as I please – which is not a lot.

What a boost it is to lie on in the mornings, listening to people on the radio work themselves into an apoplexy about things they're unable to influence or control; to read the newspapers thoroughly instead of skimming rapidly through them; to take an hour to get showered, made up and dressed. (We mustn't let standards plummet entirely.)

Besides, cosmetically unenhanced I might frighten the courier who may have a parcel for me, though sadly, many firms are no longer delivering to Norn Iron. Ah well, "as ye vote, so shall ye reap". Think of it as domestic economy.

First time around I vowed not to change my habits. Up at seven, fed, watered and fit to be seen by 8.30, not an hour of the day to be wasted. Within a week my iron resolve melted like candlewax and a severe attack of aimlessness set in.

A solicitous press is churning out daily advice to its readers about how to cope physically, mentally and psychologically with our radically changed circumstances. I'm touched by the concern expressed for our wellbeing by so many health, beauty, fashion and lifestyle gurus, horrified by our steady descent into slovenliness, obesity and self-neglect – or possibly the drastic drop in their profits.

I was never one for running or jumping, choosing instead, like the lilies

of the field, to stand still, less of use and more of ornament. Neither have I taken to brisk walking, yoga or the gym.

Who remembers the Green Goddess, now re-incarnated in the less aesthetically pleasing form of Joe Wicks? A card on my kitchen noticeboard reads, 'If God had meant me to bend down, He'd have put diamonds on the floor'. The only thing I exercise is my mind.

I do so enjoy press statements of the obvious. "Lockdown will re-connect us with food." Too darn right.

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inevitably lead to the kitchen in search of a little something, preferably sweet. A dear friend (kindly, but unwise) sent me a gift of three dozen of my favourite chocolate bars. Naturally, I feel obliged to eat them sooner than cause offence. I have also consumed vast quantities of other people's banana bread and brownies, but mine is a flour-free kitchen. I haven't exactly gone to the dogs. Focus of every day is dinner, made with fresh ingredients or 'inconvenience foods' as I choose to call them.

Reams of exotic recipe supplements included in every paper or magazine go straight to recycling. I have 17 cookbooks, a box file of recipes and my taste buds are set in their ways.

Passionate about fashion, my spirits sink at the current promotion of 'ath-leisure', a mongrel style of sports-related wear for people who watch it from the sofa. It does nothing for even the most perfectly proportioned. A recent article titled *Ten Tips on How to Look Fabulous at Home* offered velvet sweatpants (ugh!) worn with an oversized cashmere cardigan. And why not silk pyjamas for daywear? Somewhere, fashion has lost the plot by announcing the demise of the stiletto heel.

Gawdsaveus from the perversion of trainers (one third of all women's shoe sales last year) twin canal boats with soles thicker each season and now being worn with evening dresses – surely an aberration that cannot last. The average fashion shoot now features models apparently dressed at random by a charity committee in the dark.

Currently the graph of life is curiously flat, without variation or emotion. No better example than Melania Trump, shorn of her status as First Lady and four-inch heels arriving in Florida in flat shoes.

ON THIS DAY

JANUARY 26 1921

Carson abandons Belfast

LORD Londonderry and the deputation of sixty failed to persuade Sir Edward Carson that he was bound to cross the North Channel to help set up the bogus 'Parliament' presented to six Irish counties by the British Coalition Government at his bidding.

The delegates travelled to London on Monday night and lunched at one of Lord Londonderry's clubs. They met Sir Edward at the Constitutional Club. After a protracted interview, the visitors were compelled to acknowledge their failure. Sir Edward's final answer was No.

'Sir Edward Carson [replied] that, having regard to the strain he endured in connection with Ulster affairs since he became leader [in 1910] and his work during the war, he felt he had insufficient reserves of strength at his age to undertake the work involved in bringing into existence a new Parliament ...'

New light on shooting

FURTHER details of a shooting near Ballygawley, County Tyrone on Sunday which resulted in three Special Constables being wounded, go to show that a dance was in progress involving about fifty young men and a number of girls when a party of Specials from Aughnacloy entered the hall. They ordered the young men to one side and lined them against the wall with their hands up.

While the search was in progress a shot was discharged and eyewitnesses stated it was discharged by one of the Specials. As a result, Sergeant Donnell and his brother, William Donnell were wounded, as was Constable Moore. Three civilians, all brothers named Montague, were also wounded. People who were present at the dance stated that it had no connection with politics and it was not, as alleged, held under Sinn Féin auspices.

Partition's blight on Derry

AT the annual meeting of Derry Corporation yesterday, the outgoing Mayor [Alderman Hugh C O'Doherty, Nationalist] was re-elected Mayor by 20 votes to 18.

Returning thanks, the Mayor alluded to the Government of Ireland Bill which had drawn a barbed wire entanglement around six counties. In the interests of Belfast, a deadly blow had been struck at Derry and it was a blow it would feel under in the commercial world. It would directly affect their pockets. The economic aspect of the question overshadowed all others for the city of Derry – which was situated in Donegal – and depended on its commercial prosperity on Donegal. And this Bill would be fatal to prosperity, not only of Derry but of Ulster. (Carson's refusal to accept the premiership of NI reflected, not just age and infirmity, but his sense of personal defeat at his failure to keep all Ireland under the Union Jack.)

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