



NO THANKS: They say the 'cleaning gene' skips a generation. I'm glad it was mine

Prospect of visitors the only thing that'll galvanise me into action

REMARKABLE isn't it, how in this prolonged period of nothingness individual days seem so long but Tuesdays come round with frightening rapidity. I wonder if many 'working from home', or merely confined to it, feel as I do? Perhaps though, they are disciplined, well-organised and conscientious souls. Without structure to the day, my sense of purpose is flabby as an old rubber glove. Without a framework created by someone other than myself, I will do diddly squat. By nature I'm a creature of pathological idleness, saved from perdition by 35 years' reliance on the supportive scaffolding of the education system, when every teaching day was challenging, rewarding and exhausting and at the end of it I came home to clean, cook, rear a child, please a husband, enjoy a vibrant social life and write for radio and this fine newspaper – and all in high heels. In retrospect I'm amazed at myself. Surely I'm entitled to rest upon my well earned laurels. It's not as if I'm entirely idle now. The house is polka-dotted with fluorescent post-its – lists of things to do, stuff to buy, people to write to or ring – all ignored while I address the urgent matter of rearranging the magnets on the fridge door or assembling an aesthetically pleasing bowl of fruit, rather than removing toast crumbs from the spoon drawer or collecting the washing from the conservatory where it has hung for three days. These are merely displacement activities. My priorities are all wrong. Unless issued with a schedule of tasks dictated and supervised by others, I have a tendency to flit from one another, never quite completing any. 'Pootering about', my mother called it. Excuse me

Anita ROBINSON



a moment. The postman has just delivered a parcel – a quirky modernist vase, an Easter gift from Daughter Dear. I need to try it out in several different locations to decide where it looks best. Back shortly. Talk among yourselves...
Sorry about that. Where was I? Oh yes – the only thing that'll galvanise me into panic-stricken action is lockdown being relaxed enough to let anyone into the house. When I lost the Loving Spouse, I got a cleaning lady, my excuse being our brute of a Hoover, too heavy for me to cope with (nb: never send a man out unaccompanied to buy a vacuum cleaner). She arrived with her own Hoover and cleaning products. I took refuge in the utility room. She went through the house like a whirlwind leaving everything gleaming and fragrant, exiting in a cloud of Zoflora fumes. I look forward to welcoming her back. Meanwhile I'm pickin' an' dabbin' round with a trug of environmentally friendly products recommended by Daughter Dear, a demon cleaner, (she didn't catch it from me) and devotee of Mrs Hinch, who scrubs her kitchen grouting with a toothbrush. I mooch about aimlessly – here a desultory wipe, there a random swipe of Ken Dodd's tickling stick, ("dust leaps onto its magic rainbow fibres" it says on the label) Yes, but then you have to batter it clean against the backyard wall.
My chief nightmare is changing the bed linen. I'm a small person of weak resolve. The bed is king-size. I rupture myself wrestling with the four tight corners of the mattress cover and undersheet. I pummel pillows into their cases till my arms ache. Then I tackle the kingsize duvet and its cover, an acre in area. Every trick in the bedmaking book has been told to me. None of them work. I'm purple with frustration and despair and seriously tempted to buy a sleeping bag and just lay it on top of the mattress.
They say the 'cleaning gene' skips a generation. I'm glad it was mine. I open the sideboard to my modest inheritance of dusty china, dull crystal and tarnished silver thinking, "I'll do it – but not today." Alternatively, "I'll leave it in my will to Daughter Dear.
However, I'm not entirely lacking in integrity. Today, my sole motivation is meeting a deadline. Better get a move on and write something, otherwise you, Dear Reader, will be looking at a blank page.

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ON THIS DAY

APRIL 6 1921

RIC Foil Hold-Up

A HOLD-up of the most daring character occurred on Belfast's Falls Road yesterday afternoon and was followed by a sensational chase by two detectives. Five men participated in the hold-up and three of them were captured. They were: William James Casey (22) and Patrick Begley, Abercorn Street North and Laurence Maguire (21), Derby Street
The affair occurred opposite Willowbank Huts. A paymaster was driving on a sidecar with about £600 to pay men employed at Glinalina when five men rushed out and presented revolvers. As the raiders were endeavouring to relieve the man of the money, he clung tenaciously to the bag. Realising that matters were becoming too hot for them, the raiders made off across the fields in the direction of the Donegall Road.
Detective Sergeant M Concannon happened to be passing and was informed of what had happened as was Detective Constable Slowey. The two detectives commandeered a motorcar which was passing and, sighting the men making across the Bog Meadows, drove into the fields at a fast pace. The policemen alighted and called upon the fugitives to halt. One of the men halted and turned and Sergeant Concannon, suspecting the man's movements, fired on him, missed and closed with him effecting his arrest. Two other men were arrested and loaded revolver recovered.

Coalisland Barracks Bombed

COALISLAND (County Tyrone) Police Barracks was attacked last night. Bombs were thrown at the building which is a substantial and protected structure. The bombs had little effect and were followed by rifle fire. The police replied vigorously.

IRA Drill Instructor Shot

MR R S Heron, Deputy Coroner for South Down, held an inquest yesterday in Castlewelling Courthouse on the remains of James Johnston of Castlewelling who died on Sunday from a gunshot wound.
It was stated that Johnston, originally drill instructor of the Unionist [Ulster] Volunteers and later of the Irish Volunteers (IRA), had been imprisoned and was released on hunger strike and had been 'on the run' recently. Accompanied by two men he went to a field near the town on Sunday. As he pulled a concealed rifle from the ditch, it exploded, wounding him. He died two hours later. The jury found that he was accidentally shot by a rifle which he was handling himself. The funeral to Aghlinsfin and was restricted by the military. (Willowbanks Huts had been erected on the Falls Road to house Baden-Powell's troops during the 1886 riots. They were later used by the Irish Volunteers, reviewed there by Patrick Pearse in March 1916. James Johnston, a Castlewelling Protestant, had left the UVF to join the IRA.)

EDITED BY ÉAMON PHOENIX
e.phoenix@irishnews.com