



WONDERFUL: Hairdressers were allowed to open from Friday after the relaxation of lockdown measures

Happy days – I look like myself again

HALLELUJAH! I am restored to glory. First thing Friday last I was through the hairdressing salon door like a ferret up a drainpipe for a double-length appointment, colour and cut.

I look like myself again – so enamoured of the result I've been sleeping sitting up, sooner than dent the perfection of my coiffure. Crowning glory indeed.

Oh, it was wonderful. All the 'regulars' out in force, shouting through our masks to each socially-distanced other above the roar of the hairdryers, most of us heads shrouded in foils – a harem of downmarket Cleopatras. An uneasy silence fell when a camera crew came in and asked permission to film. Fortunately, I was done and dusted by the time they'd set up, thus escaping public ignominy by being exposed 'en deshabille' on telly.

I left the salon almost walking on air (memo to self: make appointment with podiatrist) towards the unusually crowded car park. Omigawd. The parking. Nearly a year of short hops between home and the local convenience store has made me more timid. Truth to tell, I need the length of two Lough Swilly buses and a minimum of three goes to get in or out of a space large enough to accommodate a transport lorry. My spatial awareness, rarely accurate, is rusty with lack of usage, but my euphoria guaranteed successful reversing without denting anything.

For some, (me included) it's been a year of doing little and achieving less. For others, it's the year they renovated the entire house, re-modelled the garden, got fit, took up bridge, learned Italian and co-existed in familial harmony, mutual support and unanimity of purpose. I don't

Anita ROBINSON



know any of these people. Dreary resignation and diminishing reserves of 'thole' more accurately describe the public mood.

How we yearn to get back to being normal. Which is not to say there haven't been advantages to lockdown. Working on the self-justifying principle, 'if I can't go out, at least nobody can come in', it's a slattern's character for backsliding and self-indulgent lassitude. We well-intentioned but 'professional procrastinators' as we prefer to be known, have sought solace in making 'to do' lists to salve the conscience. viz. (a) clean the silver – now gilt with neglect and gilt on the part of its keeper, but the silver polish has congealed with age to unusable gunge.

Brian the postman must think I spend all day in bed. Brian calls with alarming frequency, bearing the fruits of my online shopping habit. Online shopping is initially and dangerously exciting

(b) sweep and/or weed the outdoor paving – but it's too wet/cold/windy and the yard brush required is buried behind a pile of stuff in the garage and anyway it's too heavy for a fragile creature like me to wield.

(c) turn out kitchen cupboard (singular – let's not lose the run of ourselves). Sauce bottle bottoms have formed a series of crusty Olympic rings that would need a chisel to remove. No, not today. Let's have a coffee and watch 'Salvage Hunters' instead.

Routines of early rising, regular housework, impeccable personal maintenance and 'proper' cooking are sadly eroded. I've taken to keeping the good velvet dressing gown (previously reserved for hospital stays) over the hall chair, so I can fling it on over my 'disablers' when the doorbell rings. Brian the postman must think I spend all day in bed. Brian calls with alarming frequency, bearing the fruits of my online shopping habit. Online shopping is initially and dangerously exciting. Queueing in the Post Office with the returns less so, as is the Day of Reckoning when the credit card bill arrives. If only the retail trade were allowed to roll up their shutters, we

could rediscover the joys of variety of choice, browsing, of trying on and a smiling wee shop assistant saying, "S'lovely on you, so it is," even if it patently is not.

Straws in the political wind indicate that this may be, not the end of our term of trial, but the beginning of the end – so long as we behave ourselves. My spirit quails before the forensic degree of cleaning this house needs before admitting visitors. But for the moment, if I could get an eyebrow tint'n'tidy and my feet done, I'd have nothing left to wish for.

ON THIS DAY

APRIL 27 1921

Craig's Call to Arms

COLONEL James Craig's long-promised address is addressed 'To the loyalist electors of Northern Ireland'. He writes: "... Those for whom I venture to speak place in the forefront of their ideals and aspiration devotion to the Throne, close union with GB, pride in the British Empire and an earnest desire for peace throughout Ireland'.

Calling for votes for the Unionist candidates, Sir James states: 'The first Parliament will be faced with problems gravely affecting the future. ... Upon that majority will rest the responsibility of nominating the Northern quota in the Council of Ireland where our representatives will be charged with the important duty of protecting our interests and of guarding the rights and privileges of the Six Counties against encroachment by the Southern Parliament. To put it plainly, failure to secure an effective working majority would mean immediate submergence in a Dublin Parliament. ... The fate of the Six Counties hangs in the balance ...'

Funerals of Murdered Brothers

THERE was a striking display of sympathy when the remains of the victims of Saturday's shootings at Clonard – Patrick and Daniel Duffin – were removed from Clonard Gardens, the scene of the tragedy, to St Paul's Church. Thousands assembled [as] the remains, enclosed in massive oak coffins, were borne on the shoulders of Volunteers who also supplied a guard of honour. ...

During the progress of the cortege to the church an armoured car and two lorries on which were armed military were in attendance and left the scene after the remains had been taken into the church. The funeral takes place today to Glenravel.

Effects of Partition in Derry

IT IS understood that a sworn inquiry is to be held in Derry by the Local Government Board to consider the propriety of returning Derry Number Two Council (which is in Donegal) as a separate unit instead of amalgamating it with Letterkenny as proposed under the Government of Ireland Act. The Derry Number Two Council ceased to function as from 1st April and the Nationalist members have already taken their seats at Letterkenny. The Unionists object to the council being taken over on the ground that it would be detrimental to their interests to be linked to a poorer union.

Craig's election manifesto was the first of many to use the threat of 'submergence in a Dublin Parliament' to rally the faithful. Meanwhile the separated Unionists of the Laggan in East Donegal suddenly found that their cultural and commercial links with Derry were being severed. The city now lost its importance as the economic hub and administrative capital of north-west Ireland.

EDITED BY ÉAMON PHOENIX
e.phoenix@irishnews.com