

The New Order to the Manila Woman

By FELICIA L. GAMBOA

THE advent of the war in the Philippines or more specifically our induction into the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere has wrought in us a number of changes. A series of human interest stories appearing in the local papers show how private individuals have coped with the emergency. One writer has shown "How Our Girls Face the New Situation". I shall try to give the average housewife's reaction to the new order in the City of Manila.

The eve of the war found our housewife with at least two house-girls and much leisure on her hands. She had social plans for the coming week, shopping and movie engagements with other idle friends. She had read in the Sunday Tribune of Ambassador Saburo Kurusu's conferences in Washington, but she was too busily engaged in less serious pursuits to realize that a crisis was at hand.

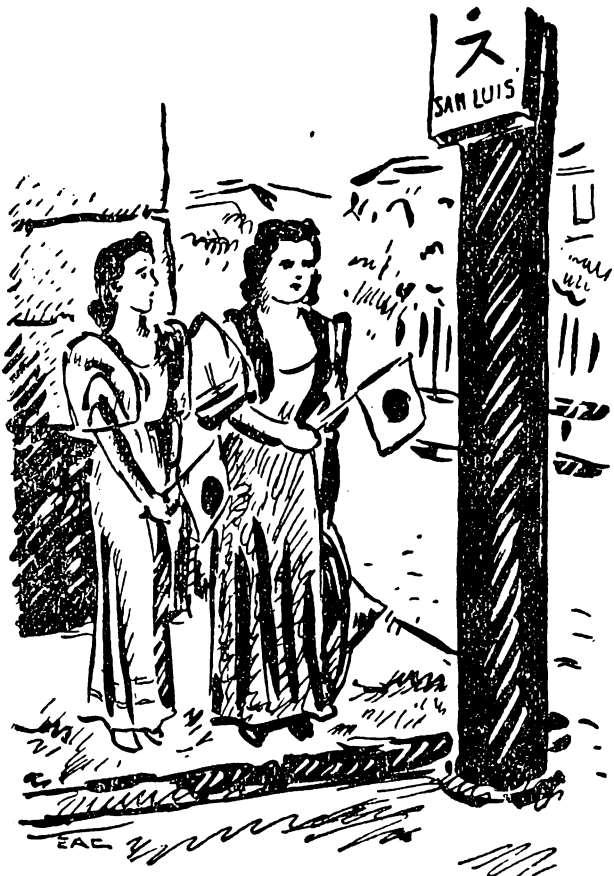
As she dressed for church early Monday morning, December 8, her husband telephoned her. He was excited. Japanese Eagles had bombed Pearl Harbour. Naturally, she was incredulous, but outside on the street she heard newsboys shout "Extra".

The week that followed was a nightmare of panic. Neighbours evacuated to adjacent provinces and our housewife, torn between fright and discomfort chose the latter. She moved to her sister's house in the suburbs, but returned home in a few days convinced that destruction was aimed only at military objectives. Barely a month later the Imperial Japanese Forces made an orderly and peaceful entry into Manila. Life and property were protected. Normal life and business were fairly well restored. But for the average City housewife things did not go on as before. At the very outbreak of hostilities her maids developed an overwhelming longing for the sight of their parents. Evacuation with all the additional work entailed by a crowded and strange abode were borne without the assistance of a domestic. It took some time to get help.

However, we shall pass over this interval as a minor unpleasantness and take a good look at the matron of the New Philippines who has learnt to get along with a single servant.

She Adjusts Herself to a New Life

We asked a young man of our acquaintance whether things were much changed in his household as a result of the war. "Not much", was his reply, "except that my wife is home most of the time." This statement has far greater depth of meaning than one would



credit it with on sight. This husband does not notice any difference in his home because his wife has taken over the work that would otherwise go undone. It signifies that she has adjusted herself to their reduced income. No longer can she afford to fritter away time and money downtown or at places of amusement. Nevertheless, she has cheerfully adapted a fuller, more estimable life, and enjoys it. Having adapted herself to a new routine she has found more suitable pastimes to occupy her leisure hours. We know of a woman, who having to do her own cooking, prepares tastier meals than her salaried cook used to serve. Encouraged by her family's praises and hearty appetites she has taken up culinary lessons in her spare time. Many matrons go in for the

same hobby, learn recipes in class, from experienced friends, out of long neglected cook books and from plain common sense.

She Finds Food Substitutes

The vitamin value of various native products is a favorite topic. The possibility of substituting them for imported foods is the object of frequent experiments. As a result, excellent white bread and fluffy butter cakes are baked with rice flour. Carabao milk butter as fresh as any received from abroad is churned here. Scraped green papaya provides a cheaper sauerkraut, while the same fruit stewed and sweetened is almost as good as apple sauce. White sweet potato boiled with a little vinegar is scarcely distinguishable from the real Irish potato. Popular, too, are the calamansi marmalade, the tomato preserve, and the ripe papaya and tamarind jam. Last Christmas we received a present of glazed "condol" but not the candied specimen sold at "sari-sari" stores. Our friend had colored the fruit red and green and shaped it into glittery sugared balls.

She Takes Up Gardening

THE kitchen garden, too, has come into its own. At the start of the war the roads to Manila were closed. The citizens, fearful of a vegetable shortage, took to planting for their own consumption. Later on when the public markets overflowed with truck from the provinces housewives did not give up this hobby altogether. They still economize by growing white and yellow squash, patola, papaya trees, banana plants, camote tubers, parsley, talinum and the like, greens which require neither watering nor care.

On the other hand, flowers and ornamental plants have never ceased to be of interest to woman. She

feels that a house without a few pots is as bare as one without paint. And there is the enthusiast who boasts the ownership of eleven different tints and shades of lavender bougainvillaea.

She Solves the Clothes Problem

The high prices of dress materials and of articles of clothing are yet another test of the resourcefulness of Manila women. For once husbands are thankful for their wives pre-war extravagance in this line. Feminine wardrobes will surely stand up against the emergency. Unfortunately, children quickly outgrow their garments. It is here that the mother's ingenuity is taxed. One girl blest with an abundance of unused percale pillow cases cuts some up into shirts for her three year old son. Another married woman stocked on balls of coarse blue thread. She will crochet stronger and cheaper socks for her family.

Social Work Another Hobby

While most housewives find such domestic pursuits sufficient to occupy them, there are women who per-

form social welfare work. Not satisfied with contributing membership fees and voluntary donations, they ungrudgingly offer their personal services. The latest field opened to them is the "social aid service", a unit of the office of the city health officer. The group will strive to rid the city of mendicants. Actual work in this line has not yet begun.

Last But Not Least

IN conclusion we must mention the loyal wife who bravely shoulders part of her husband's responsibilities. It may be that the firm for which he worked is no longer in business, or his salary has been reduced to a mere pittance, or he is a released war prisoner still physically unable to cope with a full time job. We meet this woman everywhere, employed as a clerk, a salesgirl, or a commissioned agent; bearing with the dull work, the worry about the children at home; thus she fulfills her duty of fidelity "for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health."

