

ILLUSTRATED BY DAVID PASCAL

if he can help it. Promptly at quarter to twelve, Alice and I locked our front doors behind us, and drove off in the station wagon comfortably loaded with both family best luggage. It was a beautiful day, especially as we got off our own quiet, snowy roads and into the sweep of traffic along Lake Shore Drive. We pulled up at the best hotel, turned car and luggage over to a doorman in plum-colored livery, and went to meet Sally and another city friend at Riccardo's, which is a rather arty version of the European indoor-outdoor cafe. In true Italian style we took two hours over yermouth and antipasto and hot cheese pie, and then we went on to Orchestra Hall to hear the famous French pianists, Robert and Gaby Casadesus in a program of Ravel and Poulenc. Afterward, still swept by the cascading final chords of the "Concerto for the Left Hand" we strolled back through the glittering, amethyst twilight to the hotel. As luck would have it, we got there just as our husbands came in, bearing sentimental orchids for each of us. At seven-thirty there was a champagne send-off in the Shaw suite, and bathed, napped, dressed to the nines and beflowered, we stepped out on our husbands' arms like a pair of honeymoon queens to the Empire Room at the Palmer House. There, *la gloire de France* blazes in cuisine, décor and elegant service. Edith Piaf yelled out her wonderful songs of the Paris streets, and by the time we got to the coffee and brandy we were in a collective struggle to wrest our own French out of cold storage. Vocabularies were weak, but accents were, as the French themselves say, "all there is of more," and we couldn't have felt better in Paris.

Saturday we slept late, undisturbed by the tramp of tiny feet, but on waking we felt we had been away a long time and after breakfast—rolled into the sitting room on a table covered in white damask—we put in a thirty-cent "long-distance" call to Grandma. We spoke to her and the boys; like all stay-at-homes they inquired politely but perfunctorily about our adventures and then went into lengthy detail about their own affairs.

On a trip, time expands deliciously. Our party separated for the afternoon, and Bart and I wandered about window-

shopping. We picked up some Swedish hand-woven towels for Grandma, two dynamo flashlights for the boys, and a small green turtle to keep Rover company and were back at the hotel in time for early tea and hot buttered scones in our sitting room, while outside the snow started swirling onto the windowpanes.

Our reception for ourselves was a brilliant affair, and as the door closed after the last rare-treat guest, "the staff" appeared to clear up the ash trays and

smoked salmon and we proceeded tranquilly to our stage-side box at the Schubert. We were in our seats to hear the orchestra strike up the overture for the most glowing musical ever, "My Fair Lady," and how we rejoiced in Henry Higgins' before his gramophone, and Eliza Doolittle at Ascot! We went out whistling "The Street Where You Live" and proceeded to the Pump Room at the Ambassador East for late dinner and dancing. The place is patterned after the famous restaurant of the same name in Bath, England; you find yourself in a warm, white-satiny ballroom where a dance orchestra plays alluringly and scarlet-coated young men in knee breeches wield flaming skewers

of fragrant, black, roasting meat. Indeed, we "could have danced all night."

I could go on and on about our winter holiday but no trip can last forever. We went to church Sunday morning and walked along in the peaceful noonday crowd to Sally's luncheon party. Good food, good company and relaxation—it was a lovely party. I still remember the anemones and yellow freesias she had in the hall to greet us. In the afternoon we headed for the Art Institute where we concentrated on a new collection, the early Van Gogh brush drawings of Holland.

By four-thirty we had started for home. Pulling up at Grandma's we found one snow man, one snow fort and one snow rabbit on the front lawn, and everybody doing much better than might have been expected.

"I feel as if I had been gone three weeks," Bart said that night.

For my part, as I said before, I am looking forward to this winter's slump, and another holiday, de luxe, twenty-five miles from home.



Bright Lights and Dance Music,

Orchids and Chefs' Masterpieces—

The City Was Wonderful for

a Wonderful Week-end

