

For the Junior Members
When Grand-dad was a Boy

In a previous issue I told you of some of the changes that have occurred since I was a boy at school. Perhaps you would like to hear more of that story, so let me tell you first something about the homes of the people. These were mostly wooden buildings with a tall steep roof. Between the ceiling and the roof there was often enough space for a room known as the attic. This attic required light so it was provided with a window placed in a small bay jutting out from the roof. Some of these very old houses may still be seen and many of them still have these attic windows.

In your homes, you can turn a tap and get either hot or cold water, or you press a switch and at once the room is lit up ; but the houses formerly had no hot water cisterns and no hot water taps except perhaps on a boiler which formed part of the coal range. If you wanted a bath, you had to light a fire under the copper in the wash-house, and then cart the water to the bath in a bucket or kerosene tin. Many of the houses did not have a bath such as you have, and a large tub had to take its place. When you went to bed, there were no spring mattresses to lie on but just slats of wood or iron bands. The mattress you slept on was often filled with straw, or feathers if you were lucky. Hot water bottles of rubber and electric blankets did not exist, so on cold nights mother put a pig in your bed. The pig, however, was not an animal but an earthenware jar filled with hot water. Everybody went to bed in a night shirt or night-dress for pyjamas were not in use.

Very few houses had indoor toilets or flush-down cisterns, and so every now and again someone had to dig a hole and bury the night-soil. In the "front room" all the chairs had an antimacassar tied over the back so that they would not be soiled by the hair oil then in use. These antimacassars also served as ornaments. In the corner there would be a what-not on which small ornaments were displayed and from the ceiling would hang a large kerosene lamp often with ornamental glass prisms. Very commonly a circular mahogany table was placed in the centre of the room, a sofa by the wall and perhaps an organ. Every house had one or more 400 gallon tanks in which rain water was stored for house use, and often a well. A pump was provided to lift the water from the well, and to get it started it was often necessary to "fang the pump" by pouring some water into it. In each bedroom there was a stand on which sat an earthenware washbasin and standing in it a ewer containing water ready for your morning toilet. Outside both the back door and the front door it was usual to find an iron scraper so that mud could be removed from your boots before you entered the house.

What about the people themselves ? The women wore long dresses reaching almost to the ground, and the older girls wore longer skirts than girls do to-day. Women and girls always wore their hair long. The girls commonly wore it in a plait down the back and the women wore theirs in a "bob" on the top or back of the head which was one reason why bonnets were commonly worn rather than hats. In the evenings the older women often wore a lace shawl over their shoulders and a "mutch" on their heads—a sort of small white hat. Instead of shoes most women as well as men wore boots. These often had elastic sides or else had to be buttoned up with a button hook.

Most of the men wore whiskers because razors were often unprocurable ; of course safety razors and electric razors had not been invented. Young boys often wore blue galatea blouses and on Sundays broad white starched collars. Straw hats were very common, and were often prevented from blowing away by an elastic strap under the chin or a string attached to one's coat by a clasp. Most of the men wore a "bowler" on Sundays, a hard black hat more often termed a bun.

When someone died, everything was done to make people as miserable as possible. The blinds were kept down to shut out the sunlight, the women wore black dresses and the men wore a

black band of crepe on the arm. The coffin was black, and the hearse was a horse-drawn coach, black in colour and often with black ostrich plumes mounted at the four top corners. The horses too were, black. Fortunately all this has been done away with to-day.

We are to-day so used to seeing and using all manner of laboursaving devices that we take them for granted ; but your grandmothers had no electric toasters, or sweepers, or even a "fridge". Meat and butter were put in a safe on the shady side of the house. Toast was made by holding the bread over a fire with a toasting fork. Everyone had a coal range and it was necessary for the boys to see that small sticks had been cut the night before to light the fire in the range in the morning, and that coal had been brought in for mother to use when cooking the breakfast. The cutlery was easily tarnished and so every week it was someone's duty to clean the forks and knives with a cork and a suitable paste. Boots had to be cleaned with a cake of blacking wetted with water, and it took a long time to get a nice shine even when the boots were dry.

To-day, we are so used to seeing tractors, bull-dozers, scrapers and similar heavy machinery at work that we scarcely give them a glance ; but a hundred years ago men had to do similar work with pick and shovel. A stone-crusher at a quarry is a commonplace to-day but formerly all road metal was broken by men using a large hammer. Tractors have taken the place of the sturdy old farm horses, motor cars have replaced the buggy, and instead of Auckland being a week away, we can go from Otago to Auckland and back in a day. I hope boys and girls you will realize how well off you are to-day compared with people when grandfather was a boy.

—GRAND-DAD.