



## Humour in Times of Trouble

I HAVE TOLD YOU SOMETHING about our hardships in Britain during wartime. Yet we still tried to keep a sense of humour in those days.

Because of the shortage of food, housewives would queue up outside shops in the hope of finding some food on sale, just as Hong Kong people queue for buses at peak hours.

We liked making jokes about our hardships. One joke was about a man who, seeing a queue of housewives, decided to join the queue, hoping to find some delicacy to buy for his family. After waiting for about an hour, he reached the front of the queue and was shocked to find that there was no shop: the housewives had been queuing up for the Ladies' Toilet. The disappointed man made a hasty exit from the queue!

In 1941, when our cities were being bombed, many parents sent their children to the villages, where life was safer living with farmers and villagers. There were funny stories about city children living in those quiet villages. Two brothers were sent to a farm, where the villagers caught rabbits because other meats were difficult to buy. The boys were given rabbit pie every day. At the end of a week, the farmer's wife gave them a laxative to clean out their stomachs. One of the boys said, "Ma'am, I don't think we need a laxative. We need a ferret." (Ferrets are animals

used as rabbit catchers, but not in the stomach!)

Another story tells of a city boy whose mother used to warm his milk on their gas stove. When he went to live on a farm, he was given warm milk directly from the cow. He was amazed, and asked the farmer's wife, "How did you lift the cow on to the stove to heat the milk?" (Milk taken directly from a cow is always warm).

For a short time I was sent to the west of England to teach in a village school where the children of our city had been evacuated for safety. One day, a little girl from the city told the Headmaster, "Sir, me brother can't come today 'cos 'e's fell in the clarts." The Headmaster asked her several times to repeat, but finally he called me to interpret. I do not speak our local dialect, but I understand it, so I explained that she meant: "Sir, my brother cannot come today because he has fallen in the mud."

Yes, we found plenty to laugh about in those sad days. Keeping a sense of humour is very important when we face hardship.