

## This vulgar age... discuss

The most marvellously titled book recently crossed my desk, *Red Wine on the Carpet: Secret Tips from Country Life's Housekeeper Mrs Danvers\**. Assembling the collected wisdom of this formidably practical lady, the pocket-sized tome covers everything from using geese as watchdogs to making one's home sparkle. Mark Hedges, editor-in-chief of *Country Life*, comments in his foreword: 'this is unquestionably a valuable book and a great tonic to this vulgar age'.

Which got me musing... is it really such a vulgar age? Certainly, I have used this very page to ponder the apparent demise of meaningful human connections due to the rise of social media such as Facebook and Twitter, and yes, I regularly bemoan the prevalence of what I dub 'Primark culture': items bought cheap today and discarded tomorrow. But I feel the winds of change gathering momentum. It's been reported that noted heritage brands, from fashion to furniture, are showing steady increases in sales, museums speak of record attendances and ELLE Decoration has just recorded its highest circulation figures in the entire 21-year history of the magazine (thank you)! Surely this implies an increasing appreciation of quality, value, intelligent content and inspiration? Additionally, pastimes such as gardening, vegetable growing, knitting and painting are on the rise. I'd like to believe that this all points towards the pending achievement of a much-needed balance between rampant consumerism and thoughtful consumption; a love of low-brow entertainment (think *My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding*) balanced with a desire to learn. And therefore a book that counsels on the correct way to dust, remove water-marks from furniture, dry walnuts and cope with guests who break glasses, is indeed most timely!

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