

The Birmingham Eccentric

PART TWO

SIXTY-THIRD YEAR—NO. 20

BIRMINGHAM, OAKLAND COUNTY, MICHIGAN, THURSDAY, AUGUST 15, 1940

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"Tea for Two"

By NELLIE HURLEY MINIFIE

THE stark and terrible horrors of a war that is raging and burning in nearly every corner of Europe were recounted to me this week by a woman in Birmingham for a few days ago on the last western trip of the Manhattan, painted in graphic simplicity a picture of her and her husband huddled against a wall in their apartment on the outskirts of Paris during the first wholesale bombardment of the French capital.

It was the fifth day of June when the air raid sirens screamed eerily throughout the city to send thousands scurrying to underground shelters. But it was only another false alarm, the Clarks reassured themselves as they stood peering out of their window into a clear and cloudless sky.

Bomb Raid for Hour
Then almost immediately there came a barrage of screaming bombs that jarred the very foundations of the city. Together, now it was too late to escape to safety, the man and woman huddled flat against the wall for an hour while hundreds of bombers in formations of sixes and eights streaked across a 25-mile wide path from one corner of Paris to another. At each end of this diagonal path were armament plants constituting a military objective, Mrs. Clark pointed out.

They lay there feeling the foundation of their building quake with each bomb that fell, they heard the staccato barking of anti-aircraft artillery, they saw streams of fire and saw the vibrations from the sirens attached to each bomb. The bombardment continued for 45 minutes and for another quarter of an hour they lay waiting for the planes' return.

"That 15 minutes seemed to stretch into an eternity," Mrs. Clark exclaimed. "During the raid there was little time to think—we only felt. But after the bombing had ceased we were able to take stock of the situation. Only then did we realize the full seriousness of the attack."

In reality this raid was more serious than they imagined at first, Mrs. Clark explained. As they lay huddled together in their tiny apartment they knew the bombs were dropping close by but not until they ventured from the building did they realize the full seriousness of the situation. Two hundred yards from their apartment a bomb had burrowed some 12 feet into the ground leaving in its wake a crater as large as an ordinary sized living room.

First Air Raid
This was the first air raid of any consequence in which they were directly involved, Mrs. Clark told me, although it was not the last. A few weeks later they were camping on the outskirts of Bordeaux when that city was bombed. At



Mrs. Trevor Clark

that time as they lay flat on the ground they listened intently as the planes flew across the city again in formations of sixes or eights.

These squadrons always flew in waves, she explained to me, and one formation would be completely out of hearing distance before another group became audible. She vouchsafed this information to illustrate the exactness of the formations and the precision with which everything military is executed.

A research engineer, Mr. Clark went abroad with his wife three years ago to accept a position in Paris with the International Telephone and Telegraph company. When France entered the war last fall and the government immediately commandeered all communication systems, he continued in his capacity as an engineer.

On June 6, the day following their first air raid experience, Mr. and Mrs. Clark received company orders to leave Paris immediately and proceed south to Bordeaux where they would receive further instructions. The stream of refugees pouring out of Paris for the south of France was tremendous. Mrs. Clark informed me. Traffic was heavy and at first automobiles jammed the highways. But as they continued further into the southern part of the country the cars began to thin out due to the scarcity of petrol. Then hundreds upon hundreds continued on the long hopeless journey afoot.

France is Starved
The Clarks had been in Bordeaux two weeks before Paris actually fell into German hands. And even then they had no notion of the seriousness of the French cause. Communications had been cheerful and heartening. France was being pushed back, true, but the Maginot line was still impregnable, they were told. The German war machine would advance at blitzkrieg speed to the under-ground fortresses then would be

annihilated in one sweeping blow. Mrs. Clark and her husband were sitting in a sidewalk cafe when the radio carried the news that France would sue for an armistice. Nearly 500 persons were jammed into this cafe and when told of the armistice of France they sat calmly and stoically, tears of incredulous despair filling their eyes. Only one or two broke out in sobs, the rest maintained a grim silence. Immediately a heavy storm arose and great bolts of lightning and flashes of lightning rolled across the heavens. It was as if the gods, too, were unleased their fury. It was obviously the most dramatic moment in her life, Mrs. Clark told me.

Ordered to Madrid
The Clarks had been in Bordeaux only a few short weeks when they received orders to leave for Madrid. The traveling from Paris had not been easy. Mrs. Clark said, but she and her husband were completely unprepared for the hardships which they faced in crossing the border from France to Spain.

The traffic at the border line was terrific she told me and she and Mr. Clark waited 48 hours without water, without shelter and without food in a torrential downpour. During this wait three women went insane and two committed suicide.

When the Clarks finally passed through the customs offices at the border and went into the interior of Spain they reported immediately to the embassy office at Madrid. Mrs. Clark volunteered her services and was given an office and typewriter in the embassy building and told to assist in evacuating some 500 women and children, who she was trying to sail for Spain for the Western Hemisphere. Ironically enough, as badly as she wanted to remain abroad, the International Telephone and Telegraph company later insisted that all wives and children return to their homes in America and there

... Visits with Birmingham and Bloomfield Hills Women ...

considered safe for them to return to Europe.

The food shortage was not acute in France, Mrs. Clark said in answering my question. The quantity was never at any time faced, with strict rationing, she reports. It was true, though, that there were meatless days in each week but in reality it was something of a farce, she says, for one could go to the meat market the preceding day and buy enough meat to carry over the fast day. Sugar and butter were rationed to a certain extent, she informed me.

She is anxious to return to her husband, Mrs. Clark says, even though it means returning to a continent that is gradually burning itself out with a certain and destructive fire of death.

Presbyterian Synod To Meet in City October 8-9-10

Presbyterian ministers from all parts of Michigan will meet in Birmingham Oct. 8, 9 and 10 for the annual Synodical conference, it was revealed this week by the Rev. W. Glen Harris, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church.

Two distinguished preachers from the East will be present. John A. MacKay, president of the theological seminary in Princeton addresses on Oct. 9; and Dr. John S. Bonnell, pastor of the Fifth Avenue Church in New York City, will also speak. Dr. Joseph A. Vance, well known former Detroit minister and other Michigan leaders, will also speak.

About 150 delegates are expected to meet here.

Dondoro Urges Serious Thought On Draft Proposal

Rep. George A. Dondoro, 17th Michigan district, speaking on the floor of the U. S. House of Representatives on Wednesday, took occasion to compare enlistment records during the Civil War and World War and urge careful consideration of the draft proposal.

"Mr. Speaker, we in this body are soon to be confronted with a question which perhaps will be one of the greatest questions ever to confront the American people and the American Congress. That question is whether or not we shall surrender individual liberty and freedom as we have known it in this country, and in its place establish a despotism never before known in this Nation in time of peace.

"It is interesting to note that during the Civil War in this country, out of 2,690,000 men enrolled in the Union Army, only 255,000 were secured by the draft. The issue then was the preservation of the Union. In the World War, during the first three weeks of voluntary enlistments in the Eastern States having a population of 184,000,000, when men were asked to fight on foreign soil only 3,504 volunteered.

"It seems to me a question which proposes to extend the strong arm of the Government into every home in the United States ought to be approached with the greatest caution on the part of the American Congress. We are taking a long step to bring to the United States a policy that has dominated Europe for more than 1,000 years. Let us beware before we substitute force for patriotism.

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