RTÉ WRITTEN ARCHIVES RADIO TALK SCRIPTS

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Days and Places No 1 9/2/8/57

From Dorothy Macardle, ~~Crosby Hall, Cheyne Walk, London, S.W.3.~~

First of Six Talks on "Days and Places."

ON BREAKING ONE'S JOURNEY

Having fled south, like a ninny, to escape the winter, I am now pining with envy of hardier people whose budget for this year's travel is still unspent and who are spreading out maps and planning journeys, with or without a car.

Well, good luck to the travellers and to those, also, who, like myself, must do their travelling this summer, only in memory or in dream.

Some of you perhaps will be taking long continental ~~holidays~~ journeys by train. May I out of old experience, offer this word of advice? Do not spend money on sleeping-berths, with the first-class ticket that these, as a rule, entail. Instead, book corner seats when you can and, in any case, travel by daylight. Spend a little on porters, the luggage-room, sometimes a taxi, and rest a couple of nights at an inn, however simple, at some chosen place on your way. Why submit to being rushed through fascinating landscapes, past vineyards and olive-fields, alongside splendid rivers and over mountain passes in the dark? And why forego

the opportunity of making some interesting or beautiful place your own, adding it to your collection of memories, by just one day's loitering?

By going only a little way off ~~any~~ my route I have taken possession of the Forest of Fontainbleau. Always I shall see it in early May, the leaves of the beech-trees still translucent letting powdered sunlight through to the smooth floor; still I can breathe the fragrance of the painters' village, lovely Barbazon, smothered in lilac-bloom.

I would by-pass Paris, I think, to revisit these.

As to Paris, I hesitate to advise. Think three times, and count your foreign currency four times over, before deciding to break your journey there. I stayed for a few days in November and my budget didn't recover for weeks. My friend, Jessica, who lives in Paris and runs a car, told me, firmly, that the fault was my own. One is not being cheated. Those unforeseen charges which so dismay you are quite correct: they are legal and regularized. "Only," she said, "outside the restaurant window you must put on your glasses and study with care, not only the menu, but also the words in

the corners written, perhaps, in the faintest violet ink, or almost obscured by some other affiche. You will find all the entire charges set out." Driving me to Chantilly on Sunday, she prepared to give me a lesson, by good example, on how to travel in France. It is important, she insisted, to carry the Michelin Guide; what is more, those six pages of signs, symbols and cryptic picture-writing ought to be learnt by heart. At midday she stopped the car outside a small town, studied her Michelin Guide, turned several pages, then drove on. The precise restaurant for our means and our needs was six and a half kilometres ahead. ~~Two~~ "Two forks, "S.T.C." ~~etc.~~, ~~and~~ Boisson compris, for five hundred and fifty francs.

Wine included! Wonderful, I agreed.

The restaurant looked attractive. Jessica led the way in, the red Guide-book conspicuous in her hand. We enjoyed our lunch and our wine very much. But when the bill was presented Jessica frowned.

"Mais, non," she murmured, then rose, smiling, and, smiling, approached the fat manageress, who presided in Sunday black at the desk. The waiter joined them, the Guide-book was displayed, a polite pencil was pointed, bows and smiles were exchanged, and Jessica

returned to our table looking somewhat abashed. "Wine not included on Sundays. I forgot about the small figures," she explained.

That lesson proved insufficient to protect me. Later, dining alone and determined to keep the price down, I ordered the cheapest dish on the menu and drank only water. The bill came to five hundred francs, nevertheless. "It is written here at the foot of the menu," the waiter explained gently: "an extra charge to clients who do not order wine."

But the light, the air, the river and great buildings, the vistas and gardens of Paris, are free; and at night, in the wide Champs Elysées, it is still la ville lumière. On Saturday evenings they floodlight the fountains and the Arc de Triomphe and the ~~monument~~ obelisk in the Place de la Concorde. Every shop window is a picture, aglow with colour and light. The wide street is lined with cars, groomed and gleaming as if on exhibition, while vivacious groups of people sit sipping their drinks at tables in the open, or enjoy their dinners behind the wide windows of restaurants; stroll up and down or turn into those theatres and cinemas which please the élite. With smooth, orchestrated movements,

streams of cars and buses flow on or pause. When one recalls what miseries France has suffered with the endless strain of major and minor wars, it all seems ~~impossible~~ improbable, and yet - there it is: enjoyment, elegance; no great display of wealth, but the gesture of a high-spirited people in whom the joie de vivre is not easily quenched.

From Paris to the Mediterranean at Marseilles, a journey of hours in the express which rockets along at so fierce a speed that some people hate to travel in it.

But why pay the supplement for that rapide? And why leave behind one, unvisited, such ancient and fabled towns as Orange, Avignon, Arles and Nîmes? By breaking my southward journey now and again I have become acquainted with them all.

I shall never forget my first day in Arles. Wonderful, to arrive in the dim evening and waken next morning to the southern warmth, the vibrant light, see those red, rippled roofs and gilded poplars against the radiant sky of Provence. How it lifts the heart! (And, oh, how one shivers and freezes and flies into tempers if the wind called the Mistral blows!)

Heaven may send one of those days when the sunburnt countryside shines, as Vincent Van Gogh saw it and painted it, alive with colour and light. Here are those long, level fields cultivated in strips; black, writhen trees; colour-washed houses and rough ochre roads. I wanted to see the little yellow house that seems, in his painting, to emit from its stones the heat of the sun - the home where, for a brief spell, he knew joy - but it is gone, destroyed by a bomb; so I turned to the far past.

Arles has two thousand years of recorded history stored within the girdle of its walls. It is called, "little Rome on the Rhône." Here, Romans drove back the barbarian hordes. They built their fortifications with stout towers; a forum, a theatre and an arena. Huge and formidable, restored and maintained with the care France gives to her historic treasures, that arena stands; you enter it through dark, chill tunnels in the thickness of the walls where a fearful excitemeht seems to lurk still. I am always uneasy in Roman ruins, aware of the savagery with which those world-civilizers entertained themselves. Bullfights of a sort still take place here: but it is the Provencal sport in which the bull is not killed. It pleased me

to see placards on those ancient walls announcing that a troop - a troupe formidable of comics and acrobats would presently perform there.

The morning in Roman Gaul made me hungry. I lunched early in the cosy little Restaurant Thévor, near the Forum, where in a low-ceilinged room, bright with red lamps and table-cloths, I was served with an enormous bowl of soup to occupy me while my omelette was being prepared. Then I had a long afternoon to spend in medieval France.

Here the past is still recorded in stone, as in the Roman park, but how different a spirit inspired the Christian builders and sculptors and architects! It was too bad that the sky clouded over, because they must have had the scorching sun of this region in mind when they adorned with their rich and intricate carvings the stones of their churches and the beautiful quadrangle cloisters of Saint Trophîme. Sharp light and shade are needed to show all the detail, the humour and sanctity intertwined, of their urchins and beasts and gargoyles and gaunt saints.

When the rain began to fall I found refuge in the Musée Arlaton.

I had been reading the memoirs of the poet Mistral and I realised that this folk-museum, rich, untidy, unfinished, is, as it were, the child of his spirit and a shrine to his memory. It is the Treasury of the old Provencal traditions and language that he did so much to preserve. I think any ~~lost~~ Irish traveller could spend happy though envious hours there.

The winter passed over me gently in sheltered corners of the Riviera, the days going by as they do in those resorts to which few people, except the tired and the elderly and the convalescent, go before Easter now. I am fond of Rapallo, where February was soft and green, but, by the time I was ready to ~~travel~~ start homeward I had a great wish for the high snows and to see young people, tearing around on skis.

Good! The route goes over the Alps of Savoy.

Many people travelling from the Italian Riviera to Paris take a sleeping car but I decided, instead, to spend the day in one of those new, jolting and crowded second-class compartments, sleep in Chambéry, and then spend two nights in Aix for the sake of a day up on the summit of Mont Revard.

I had been present at the opening of a new ski-ing ground there more than thirty years ago. We had zig-zagged up the mountain in motors - a long drive. One flies up to the crest in just seven minutes now. The cable car lifts you a distance of about four thousand feet. Awaiting your turn at the station near Aix you watch it swing up above the plain and valley, until it looks like a wasp in the air and the cables from which it hangs are no longer visible. It was Thursday, and children on holiday packed the two cars that swing up and down, up and down.

On the rampart of hard snow ridging the crest of the mountain the young skiers stood ranked. It was a race. Their instructor was timing each one. Gay as young parakeets, they ~~were~~ looked, in ski-ing trousers and hoods and wind-cheaters of scarlet and emerald and gentian-blue. But they were quiet with childhood's serious joy.

A ring of snow-covered peaks and ridges - a hundred kilometres, somebody said, ~~ringed~~ encircled the immense white scene. The valley below us was mapped out for skiers - experts ~~or~~ and débutants. Beyond it towered, gleaming and ghostly, the massif of Mont Blanc.

The trees were of crystal; the air like the breath of Paradise; the whole sky a dome of light. Down sped the children, graceful and swift and free and came on again on the skis, holding like little trains to ropes slung from a travelling wire overhead. Though so filled with movement the scene was quiet.

The day might have been cloudy, or the snow not in condition for ski-ing. To be as lucky as that can make one feel virtuous - a vestige of nursery days, and absurd. But those children had been such a delight to see - their absolute fearlessness and their skill. It had been an experience well worth the cost - just the fatigue of having to stand in the corridor for part of the journey, next day, in the Paris train.

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16/9/8/57

Days and Places No.2

from Miss Dorothy Macardle,
Crosby Hall, Cheyne Walk, London, S.W.3.

Second Talk of the Series : Days and Places

A STORY-TELLER ABROAD

Writers of fiction are used to being asked questions about their craft. "How do you get your ideas?" is a frequent one. "Do they just blow from nowhere into your head?"

I am inclined to suspect that every great novelist, whether he is aware of it or not, is constantly influenced from one source within himself: an acute insight into one aspect of human nature which informs all his works, making them variations upon a single theme.

I heard a reader questioning Kate O'Brien in this way, and Kate, not without heart-searching, tried to define what she feels to be her recurrent theme. I felt somewhat abashed because, lecturing on her work in Holland, I had stated my guess at it in different terms. I confessed. Kate reflected, then, to my relief said, tersely and firmly: "Same thing." I daren't, I'm afraid, relay to you her definition. She might be listening.

But no perennial spring of inspiration aids dabblers like myself. I like to write stories, some middling short, some long, but I have to beg, borrow or steal my material as I can. It is not often I find it at home.

What a gift an encounter with a stranger can be! Amazing, the intimate things that a stranger can confide to somebody who will listen, then move on! Something heard in a train, grown and changed out of recognition, was the origin of at least one story, for me.

It is my own fault if nothing has come of the French schoolmistress who walked and talked with me at Le Lavandou. Her head was Roman; her bulk, too, worthy of Imperial Rome; she hung upon my arm, exhausting me, as we walked. Her talk was about the predicament of young people, growing up in this sceptical age. She heaved a huge sigh as if remembering sorrows and joys of a bygone epoch. Then, in a low confidential tone, she told me that, in reality, she was: a reincarnation of Marie Antoinette.

My response was inadequate, I am afraid; and it is feeble, surely, not to be able to do something with her. She could, perhaps, meet the reincarnation of Louis... or should it be Richelieu? ....

I know places in which the past, melancholy and gracious, seems to breathe. One is a low, old house, its walls covered with ivy and wistaria, on the lip of the Mediterranean, in France. There I have lived, more than once, for a month or two, and felt myself existing within a story that the spirit of Turgeniev might brood over and desire to write. The soul of old, White Russia informs it still. One of the Grand Dukes came to his friends to end his days with them here. A Princess Romanoff, working for her living, comes when she needs a rest. My host, whose title is never revealed now, was in the Czar's School of Pages when a boy, and my hostess, attached to the Court, was a friend of those princesses so ruthlessly killed. When these ageing people talk with their friends in Russian there is gaiety and laughter, as if pre-revolution days had returned; but when they talk in English or French a serious, gentle courtesy prevails; one is aware of a hidden history of exile, of loss and struggle, and of self-pity kept at bay. For the sake of a fair, over-sensitive little

/grandson,

grandson, the most slenderly graceful boy I have ever known, not one hint of bitterness is allowed to intrude. Aloysha must feel, always, that life is sweet. The house is an oasis in the desert of cynicism which Southern France has become.

In stories of her childhood which my hostess told me there are unexplained, mysterious happenings. When she was thought to be near death from the incurable bite of a poisonous snake, her nurse seized a moment alone with her to smuggle into the room an old peasant woman who sat by the bed and chanted an incantation - a long incantation to the snake, bidding him take his poison away. Gradually, the fever left her; the sickness eased, and health and life came back to the dying child. But her stories were not of the kind which one would be justified in turning into fiction, nor could one write of that nest of gentle-folk truly with less than Turgeniev's delicate skill.

Down there, in southern France, I made a friend who has been my luck-bringer indeed. A painter, living in a remote cottage in the Maritime Alps, he seemed to attract wierd occurrences and characters to himself and was never without some curious tale to tell. When I visited him in that cottage he was being pestered by the woman who owned it: she thought she was being cursed by a witch - an old hag who came and went with live animals writhing in a sack. And a goat had perished for no ascertainable reason. And a black cat had been slinking about.

It was all much worse, he told me, among the mountains to the West. There a young man had recently stood trial for shooting and wounding a woman who, he declared, had been cursing his wife to death.

That story haunted my mind for nearly a year. At last I was free to go south again. I resolved to be very correct and scientific if I wrote about the superstitions of those remote regions. For the more incredible the fantasy which conditions a tale, the more logical I like its treatment to be. But I failed to discover any books on the subject. I was in a fix.

I have found more than once that when your whole mind has been seized of a single purpose, you may have what seems an astonishing run of luck.

It began in Paris.

"Well, now, can I do anything for you?" our kind Ambassador asked.

"Nothing," I sighed, "unless you can find me a witch!"

He feared he could not promise to do that.

Next morning, however, there was a telephone message from the Embassy, with an address in a street in Paris to which I was directed to present myself at four o'clock. I found the house in a quiet old street with trees. A small, black-eyed woman opened the door and led me upstairs to a room lined and piled with books, where a lavish tea, with creamy pastries, was spread. My hostess talked. There seemed to be nothing she did not know about the pagan beliefs which linger in isolated parts of France. I tried to make my brain a tape-recorder as she talked. There was a good deal about healers: the <u>guerisseurs</u>. I challenged her.

"You believe some of this!" and she answered frankly, "I do."

How had our Ambassador contacted her? He had just rung up the Musée de l'Homme and they had told him that she was the authority on these subjects.

What valuable people Ambassadors are. But, I ask, would an English one have responded so promptly to such a request?

I went away loaded with monographs, and more learning than any novel could contain.

My story proliferated in note-books, but I was uneasy. It lacked a crisis, a precipitating incident - something which might conceivably happen in one of those old walled villages in the Alps. The village I selected to work in was Biot, above Antibes. I went up there on a day of rain. To my dismay, the hotel was closing in a few days for the winter months. Among steep, cobbled alleys with runnels down the centre, and up winding flights of steps between stone walls, I went, seeking a lodging. I was drenched by the time I arrived at Les Jarres d'Or. It was an inn which had two rooms, in all, for guests. I took one of them. It had a millionaire's view. Then I joined my host and hostess before a great fire of logs in the dining-room. They were entertaining an acquaintance. Over hot coffee, stories were told.

The visitor told of a thing that had happened in Spain. He said the newspapers had been full of it at the time. It was during a bull-fight.

A certain rich young man had secured a seat on the shady side of the crowded arena. A young lady came to him who claimed, politely, that there must have been a mistake, for the seat was hers. To the anger of the chivalrous

/Spaniards

Spaniards who witnessed it, the young man refused to give up his place and the lady had to sit on the other side, suffering the heat and glare.

In the course of the fight a dart thrown at the bull rebounded from his hide, turned in the air and flew as if from a bow at the young man, piercing his breast. He fell back, dying, there, in his shady place.

What a tale! But one for a Hemingway, not for me.

When the men fell silent my landlady began - "My step-mother used to tell me ....."

You might have heard the same thing in Aran, but then she began to relate a much stranger tale: "Outside the village a woman lived ....."

I held my breath as we went on to describe a wild and ominous scene. Here it was: the crisis; the turning-point; the incident I had failed to invent. Immersed in her vision, she told it in strong, dark words. Every phrase etched itself in my memory. There was scarcely a detail or word I would wish to change. When she ended I went to my bedroom and wrote it down.

But, of course, for one story that falls in one's lap in this way, one hears scores which are no more than anecdotes, interesting in so far as they seem veracious, but lacking the elements which could be developed into an entertaining and shapely story.

One of this sort was told me last winter in Italy by a lady with blue hair.

It was after a long period in which the only " conversible person" I'd met with had been Marie Antoinette, and I was longing for rational company.

She had such a charming, vivacious, face, this newcomer to the hotel - I was sorry that her hair was violet blue. She must be another eccentric, I supposed, and therefore refrained from seeking her out.

But she joined me on the terrace. Her conversation was most engaging. She told me about her hair - the result of a helpful daughter's little mistake, making me laugh as I had not laughed since I'd left home. What led to stories of hauntings I can't remember, but I shall not forget the one she told me.

She joined some friends in an old house in the Cotswolds which they had taken for the hunting. She arrived to find that the son of the family was feeling ill: pneumonia, it seemed to be. A heavily furnished panelled room was prepared hurriedly and there he was put to bed. A quest for nurses was unsuccessful so she offered to sit up with him that night. The patient's condition wasn't alarming. She sat peacefully by the fire in an armchair. Hours passed; then although she had neard nothing, she felt that a third person was in the room. With a sense of reluctance, she looked round. It was a man. He was in a shadowed corner, and he was in mid-air. By the firelight she saw that he was red-haired and wore a smock; then he was gone. The next night he appeared and vanished again.

"Good heavens! You sat there the next night?" I exclaimed.

"Yes - The nurse didn't come for two days."

"What did the family say about it?"

"Oh, I didn't tell them. It would have made them uneasy - quite spoilt the pleasure in the house - but I did hear, from their neighbours, some months afterwards, that the

/red-haired

red-haired farmer was often seen. He had hanged himself in that room!"

To say nothing, and sit up in that room the second night!

That is what I call rational. No eccentric; this Scottish lady with blue hair!

Her story gave me no plot for a novel, but it saved me from missing something more precious - a friend.

Days and Places No. 3

Third Talk of the Series: Days and Places

by Dorothy MacArdle.

"TALKING ABOUT COINCIDENCES"

"Talking about coincidences," someone began. How invariably to do that produces more stories of coincidences! I heard wonderful stories of actual experiences, which tempted me, lifter of plots that I am, but I realized they were useless. No writer of fiction could dare to include them. They would be condemned as grossly improbable or contrived.

Indeed, some of my listeners may refuse to believe me if I recount some of the things I told in return - a series of coincidences that befell me in varied parts of Europe some years ago.

It was all good fortune and not a whit of it was due to good management on my part. Before I speak of them, lest I should seem to be boasting and taking credit to myself, let me confess that I am as feckless and absent minded a traveller as you could wish not to meet.

For instance: I was at Victoria Station, starting for Menton, when I found that my railway ticket had disappeared. While I turned out pockets and bags, the boat train left. I dumped my things in the cloakroom and went sadly back to the brother to whom I had just said "goodbye." Lost tickets, I knew, can't be replaced. The Riviera vanished from sight. I sat trying to conjure memory out of a thick fog while my brother and his wife plied me with wine and black coffee in turn. At last I saw myself putting the ticket in a wallet. And the wallet?

"You packed it," they surmised.

To the amusement of the cloakroom attendant I unearthed it at Victoria from a corner of my trunk. I caught the night ferry to Dunkirk.

So I had my ticket handy in my pocket when I waited for a morning train to the South, and my handbags were neatly placed by my feet. At the last moment I realized that my heavy luggage was lying, forgotten, in the hotel. That train went without me, too.

Setting out from Menton for Rapallo I reserved a seat, made sure of each piece of my luggage and my ticket, and settled contentedly into my corner on the right hand side, warmed by the mid-day sun. A chattering group crowded in at Ventimiglia, but I sat in peace, for hours, entranced by the changing views of that radiant coast. But why on earth, now, were we travelling inland? Among mountains? Between banks of snow?

"Rapallo?" I said on an enquiring note, and produced a commotion.

" Milano! Milano!" my fellow-travellers cried. I understood. I ought to have changed at Genoa. I realized, also, that I had omitted to buy Italian lire. Here I was, racing north towards Milan, and no money on me with which to pay porters and the fare south.

But mishaps of this nature don't matter much in Italy, any more than they would at home. With the liveliest pleasure my companions consulted, decided and organized. At the next station but one I was put in charge of porters to whom the situation was volubly explained. I was conveyed with my luggage to the right train, where nobody was to ask me for a ticket, it seemed to be understood. My rescuers waved and called from the windows as their train pulled away.

They begged for just one thing in return - that I would cease worrying.

"Signorina, allegra! ...Un Sorriso! A smile!"

When I travel for health or pleasure, mis-adventures of this sort pursue me and they are easily understood. My thoughts are in one place while I'm in another, that's all. But those happy chance encounters that came about while I travelled with a serious purpose, I shall never be able to explain.

It was less than a year after the end of the War. I went traipsing round war-shattered parts of Europe alone, without adequate introductions, without reservations, not knowing where bridges were still down and railway lines closed, collecting material for a book. I wanted to write about the children of the countries that had been occupied. The job really needed a journalist with all the rights and facilities that a commission from a newspaper gives. I hadn't any commission from anybody. My books could not be expected to smooth my way, for one had been blasted out of circulation by an incendiary bomb, and, on this side of the Atlantic, the others were scarcely known. This was an ill-judged and precipitate enterprise in which I deserved to fail.

During the winter in London I had collected all the information I could. Hard facts, dates and statistics for some of the countries were available there. I could learn very little, however, about Poland or Hungary, and to these I would not be able to go. Sensational propaganda was plentiful, but first hand, reliable information it seemed impossible to obtain. About Poles, I was strongly advised to write to just one man, who was working, now, in Germany,

/among

among displaced persons. I sent a long questionnaire but got no reply.

At last, at the end of April, I flew to Holland with permits for currency to cover four months abroad.

Our plane flew low and the tulips were in bloom, but they are grown in rectangular patches, each of one colour and looked from the air like plain, bright carpets laid out to dry.

In Holland I didn't need luck. The concern of the authorities for the children was intense. I was given a car, an interpreter and a programme and everyone who could help me at all did so much that in less than two weeks I was able to move on.

Remarkable men and women I met: people who had risked or suffered the horror of the concentration camps in order to save Jewish children, and had saved thousands.

In Belgium it was the same. But the trouble taken to help me made me nervous. After all this I dared not fail: yet how could I ever make such a book complete?

Luxembourg, next, and then a journey by night to Geneva. I booked a sleeping berth, but such luxuries were scarce on the railways then, and the train that came in at ten o'clock had no sleeping accommodation at all. I had to share a dingy compartment with a young man in battle-dress.

"I got on at Brussels and haven't seen Luxembourg," he said. "What are things like here? I suppose the city hasn't been damaged much?"

I replied, "Not much, but the annexation pressed hard on the children. They have had a bad time."

"Are you a children's doctor?" he wanted to know.

"No, I'm only writing something about them," I answered, a little surprised.

His next remark surprised me more.

"O my! And that letter of yours still on my desk in Germany, unanswered," he said.

He could not tell me how he had guessed the connection, but he could and did tell me a great deal about Polish children, before I allowed him to go to sleep.

A little far-fetched, but true.

I was given in Switzerland fine introductions to be presented in Prague. I was to be met at the airport there. High hopes sustained me in the crackpot old army plane in which I flew on through an electric storm. Nobody met me: those V.I.Ps were away. I felt rather helpless. To speak German in Prague was a grave offence; and, of course, I didn't know one word of Czech, and Ireland had no representative there. Next day heavy rain splashed down on those ancient streets. A girl was sheltering under an archway and I, too, took refuge there. She looked alert and I asked her in English the way to the British Embassy. I had to engage an interpreter, I explained. Shyly she pleaded, "Oh, please, may I?"

She came every day and was helpful in everything. So, also, were the authorities; and, most of all, the teachers; but the schoolmasters, one and all, looked to me like men on the edge of death. The Nazis had rightly regarded them as most dangerous opponents. I think that in Prague I saw nobody smile. That was in July, forty-six.

I must go on to Vienna, I was told. I wanted to, but it had seemed impossible. The Four Powers who ruled it

/allowed

allowed no outsider in. Nobody had held out to me any hope of penetrating those controls. Then entered an Australian who was an Irishman.

"I was in Australia," he said resentfully, "when that book of yours came out. I hadn't twenty-five shillings, only fifteen. I knew a man who had the book and I offered a chap the fifteen shillings to murder him, but he wanted more. And now it's not to be had."

He wrote a letter for me to the secretary of Unrra in Vienna. With that, I set off.

I walked in the early morning between skeleton houses and piles of rubble, among people who looked like ghosts.

Possessing no ration card and no permits, I was refused food in the cafes, refused a bed in the hotels. I arrived at the Unrra office exhausted; Miss Milrod looked up from the Irishman's letter in bleak dismay. I simply had no existence, she explained.

"If you were attached to a newspaper I could get you into the Press Club, but you are not. I can give you a meal but that is all I can do. It is just too bad, but I'm afraid you must take the next train back...." She checked herself; glanced again at the letter. "Macardle? Not <u>The The Uninvited</u>?" she exclaimed.

I was definitely the uninvited, but, bless her, she was thinking of a harmless story of mine!

"I was mouldering with 'flu and somebody gave me that book! ... <u>Of course</u>, you represent the Press. Obviously, you go to the Press Club," she said.

And I did.

My tour wound up in France. I was fairly happy, although one or two of my files were thin. About Hungary I had outlines only. Personal, first hand evidence from someone who had endured with the children and understood their reactions to the War and the terrible so-called "liberation" by Russians - this I had failed to find.

My last afternoon in Paris was free and I had a great longing for pictures. I decided to go to the Louvre.

Outside the gate a young woman was standing, frustrated. "Fermé!" she said. She looked disappointed and friendly and at a loss. I suggested "un petit promenade?" and we walked in the sunny gardens and talked.

She was a young Hungarian teacher who had worked among her pupils throughout the war. She had tea with me, and, later, supper, and all the tragic story came out. She was thankful that someone would write about these things.

That is not the whole tally of the strange coincidences which helped me to complete my task, compensating at every turn for my own shortcomings and mistakes. But it is all I have time to describe.

Vague though my memory is about many things, it is clear about these, because of the sharp, startling impress they made on my mind. I am not dreaming, nor adorning a tale. They did happen, just like that.

30/8/57

DAYS AND PLACES No. 4. A Traveller's Luck

~~AMERICAN~~ COMMENCEMENTS.

Our ship entered the port of New York at sunrise and what met my gaze when I came up on deck was beyond all my expectations. That array of towering, narrow structures, rising airily out of silver mist, awed the mind, like some work of primordial nature rather than anything made by the hand of man.

The March morning was blowy and cold but even while the tugs were jollying our liner into her berth the sun put forth strong warmth and light.

For me, this was the suspicious start of a challenging enterprise; the fulfilment, too, of a wish so unhopefully cherished for many years that its attainment was spiced with surprise.

It was nineteen-thirty-nine, the year of the World's Fair in New York. I had been asked, all of a sudden, in an office in Dublin, whether I could arrange to go out and give lectures on Irish Poets and dramatists in the Irish Pavilion there. I would receive no fees: it takes twelve months to organise a fee-paying lecture tour, but I would be subsidized for a visit of about two months. Our Consulate in New York would arrange various engagements for me.

Eagerly I agreed. I had so much enjoyed, so much missed, a lecturing post held for nine by-gone years, while to return to literary preoccupations would be pure delight. I spent industrious weeks intensively reading the works of my favourite Irish writers again and preparing lectures on them. Then came a check. Engagements were proving difficult

to arrange. The project might have to be cancelled or postponed. But I was ready and rearin' to go: brimming with my subject, as a lecturer ought tobe. I had agreed that for me it was now or never and, finally, was allowed to sail. So here I was, in dock, and someone had come aboard, and was asking for me. It was the Vice-Consul and he gave me bad news.

There were no facilities in the Irish Pavilion for lectures, and it was not easy to make the necessary contacts for other engagements. In fact, there was nothing for me to do in New York.

Breakfast in an automat did nothing to restore my uprights; nor did the long ascent in an elevator, nor even the panorama below the windows of the Irish Consulate.

The one hope, it seemed, was Washington, where Robery Brennan was our Minister. While, in some inner sanctum, a conference went on as to what could be done for me, I sat in the secretary's room, too despondent to talk.

The worst of it was, I myself was to blame. I had insisted on coming too soon, and I hadn't even written to ask the co-operation of my friends in America. Even to kind, capable Mrs. Winchester I had sent only an excited scribble when the project was first suggested, then no more. And she would have helped. Where was she? Somewhere near Cold-Spring-on-Hudson. I had her address in my trunk... This was stale-mate and I was miserable.

The Secretary was busy and left me to my brooding. Her telephone rang. She listened and, smiling, said, "I think I can help you", and passed the receiver over to me.

The thing crackled a little:

"I can't get in touch" ... It was a woman's voice, insistent. "I happen to be spending the day in town and it suddenly occured to me that you might have some imformation as to whether she is coming or not. Dorothy Macardle is her mame".

I responded, "Can you lunch with me, Mrs. Winchester?"

We laughed together, but scarcely ate, there was so much to talk about. She couldn't explain that sudden impulse that had made herr feel she must find out where I was. She was my senior, trim, perceptive, alert: one of those active, travelled American women who maintain a host of contacts and command good-will and good offices far and wide. During that sparkling afternoon she made me acquainted with her great city: the proud exuberence of Madison and Fifth Avenue civilization in its most modern and wealthiest aspect, I suppose: the noisier, lostling animation of Broadway and the ripe, gracious quiet of Washington Square. And she planned contacts for me - a whole chain of them. In no time, she declared, a skedule of lectures would be fixed for me. I hadn't a thing to worry about.

That evening I travelled to Washington with a heart so light that it felt ready to fly away.

Mr. Brennan lost no time. He simply pulled a few of his multiple strings and things began moving: there were lectures, luncheons, readings, informal talks, press-conferences. parties, all in brillaint weather, and all against the background of that majestic city whose reason for being

is order, government, law. It had an air of freshness, then in Spring, with its wide streets, fine white buildings and, everywhere, trees. Magnolies were opening in the gardens and the cherries around the lake were in flower. At night, the dome of the Capitol. flood-lit, seemed to float like a round, white cloud. Pland were being made for me to return and give a series of fee-paying lectures nextvyear, a prospect that delighted me.

One invitation for a future visit, which came to me without official sanction or cognisance, was from the President of the Coloured People's University, who wanted me to spend a fortnight there, lecturing on the Irish Literary Renaissance, which was an encouragement to their own, and producing with the students some Irish plays. I thought it would be an extremely interesting thing to do.

Meanwhile, there were engagements in Boston, Providence Philadelphia, New Jersey, and towns of which I have forgotten the names.

There are phases and facets of life in the United States which to me would be exceedingly uncongenial, but I never encountered them. The people with whom I had contact were thoughtful, many of them engaged in education or some other line of intellectual work; people whose understanding and sympathy would have influence. Their questions were penetrating. Their interest in Ireland was keen and sincere.

And how lavish their hospitality! My recurring problem was to secure a few hours alone sometimes, in which to read and write.

One party I enjoyed more than all the rest. It was in New York. The audience that night was a large one

and so charmingly responsive that I went on for an hour, reading scraps of dialogue from Abbey comedies. I cant, from a platform, observe individual faces, but I was aware of chuckles and smiles. When I ended, a lady stood up and, in a voice that cast a spell on me, made a warm, witty speech of thanks. Then I knew that voice, and heard myself gasping at the conclusion, "Goodness, I'm glad I didn't know you were here!"

There was a chorus of laughter for it was Sara Allgood - and I had been reading from her parts!

She swept her friends together and, in her little apartment, gave us supper. It was a Dublin party, everyone arguing, gossiping, demanding news, laughing and telling stories till all was blue. When we fell quiet at last, Sara lit candles and recited a grave, lovely poem in memory of the leaders of Easter Week.

That was an evening I shall not forget.

Quickly, my little subsidy melted away. I was preparing for departure when a long telegram came. It was from Mrs. Lucas, whom I had met in Dublin. She had wired from San Francisco, where she lived. I was invited to speak on Ireland there at the Golden Gate Exposition and give the Commencements Address at Mills College. All my ezpenses across the continent there and back would be paid.

So for three nights and days I travelled West in the Wake of the pioneers and at last ran down from the High Sierras into San Francisco when the setting sun was firing the Golden Gate.

I love a city with water and ships, bridges and fogs hills ever visible and a changeful sky - a Dubliner's predilection, naturally - and here are all these, on a noble scale, glorified by intense colour and light. I felt at home there, and among the people, with their easy, casual western ways and generous friendliness.

I was to be the guest for a fortnight of Mills College, taking part in an international conference there. Mu hostess was that renowned lady, Auralia Henry Reinhardt, its Principal. I found her impressive. She came to my room to say good-night and delayed to tell me a story of Abraham Lincoln.

"An Englishman told Lincoln that a gentleman in England never cleaned his own shoes." Lincoln replied, "Whose shoes does he clean?"

I did not leave my shoes outside my door.

I thought I could spend years happily in Mills College. Its campus is beautiful. Low-built houses, with red roofs and thick white walls and entrances arched in the old Californian-Spanish style, stand in green lawns: homes of members of the faculty; music-room; printing-house and the various schools. Long avenues of eucalyptus gave out tonic scent, and shade from the summer sun. There are swimming pools and a lily-pool fringed with willows. I was filled with admiration for the world of work, imaginatively conceived and conducted, that exists here and the happy confidence with which its students go out to their chosen vocations. I liked "Commencements" as the name for Graduation Day.

My address was given in an open-air amphi theatre that seats about a thousand people. Then followed the conferring of degrees. No one had warned me and there was a gale of friendly laughter when, hearing my own name called I started, scattering pencil and manuscript. Over my borrowed gown the Principle placed a gorgeous hood. The Honorary Degree was really in Honour of Ireland, as the citation showed:

> A tribute from
> "a young land indebted to her gifted people
> as an exempler in love of freedom and sacrificial courage, for American soil planted and factory wheels turned, for gaiety of wit and the refreshment of laughter".

Now I was one of the proud Alumnae of Mills, and arrangements were planned to bring me back for a year, with certain tutorial functions in the College and a routine of lectures elsewhere. I would be asked to spend Christmas with the Duvenicks at Hidden Villa Ranch.

But that was nineteen-forty. I had to be back in London this August.

"Go back through Canada. At all costs, see the Rocky Mountains", I was advised.

That would require an extension of my passport. I had one of those bright ideas which, afterwards, can look so very dim. I posted my passport, with explanations, to our Consul General in New York, asking him to hold it for me, then, full of happy anticipations, made reservations for my eastward journey via Victoria, Vancouver and Lake Louise.

I suppose that is the only international frontier in this world that it is possible to forget about. I was still oblivious while we were crossing Pugel Sound to Victoria. I was wondering about someone who was to meet me and concerning whom I had no recollections at all.

She had seen my name in an newspaper and written. She had been Nursey Governess to me and my two younger brothers when I was about six years old. She promised to wait for the Ferry on the landing stage, waring a red rose. I had wired in reply that I would be waring the Tricolour, and now I pinned the ribbon conspiciously on my dress.

As we landed on the Canadian shore I was confronted by a placard :

"Pastports to be shown here" and, with a dragging heart, joined the slow-moving queue.

Had they an Ellis Island, I wondered! What did they do with unauthorised emigrants here? Send them back! What would become of my reservations, so tightly interlocked? To the stout little inspector, I confessed: "I simply forgot the frontier. I posted my passport for alterations. Its in New York."

He looked me up and down, then asked, and what sort of a passport would it be?"

"Irish"

"And which part of the ould country do you come from? Ah, well, go on in."

And I walked, free, on Canadian soil.

Mrs. Maguire gave me tea. She was old and pretty and very sweet. I felt abashed in her presence, nevertheless, becuse I was possessed by the conviction that I had been a horrid child, Why else this sense of guilt towards my brothers ? I had sneeked on them? Or bullied and bossed?

Mrs. Maguire might have been reading my thoughts "You were a nice little girl; delicate, of course; all the same, I never could see why you had to have an egg every morning for breakfast, while Dick and Jack never had anything except porridge or hominy or bread and milk."

So that was it. I had waited for decades and travelled six thousand miles to have that prick of conscience explained at last.

The emigration authorities were not quite so informal as their Inspectors, but they were amused, tollerant and efficient. I arrived in England towards the end of August, to be astounded and confounded by the emminence of war.

I looked back at those months in America through the smoke and stench of war-riven London and they shine like a landscape seen through a tunnel. That land, in my memory, glows in an air always luminous and serene, under a sky clear of clouds, as if it had been high summer there all the time.

But I never went back.

I.

Co-5. 6/9/57

DAYS AND PLACES - No. 5.

Surprises & Acquaintances

~~Foreshadowings of Catastrophe.~~

Dorothy Macardle.

4129

To a generation which has been shaken to their hearts' roots by the shock of the first World War "Geneva" became a word with emotional over-tones. If the abomination of recurrent war was to be averted it would be here, in the conclaves of the League of Nations, that peace and a new world order would be born.

There was a moment - it was scarcely more, when, sitting in the gallery while the Council of the league voted, I believed that the crisis had come; had been passed safely; that we were witnessing the quiet beginning of an era of peace and justice for mankind. Although the sequel convicts me of political blindness and ignorance, I like to recall that hour.

It was October the seventh, nineteen-thirty-five.

The anxieties of thirty-five have been dimmed in memory by the glare of what followed in thirty-nine, but at the time, in Geneva at least, the Abyssinia crisis was recognised for what it proved, later, to have been: the supreme and final test of the validity of the League.

I was in Geneva as Special Correspondent of the Irish Press. It was my duty to write or telephone to Dublin an account of all proceedings in which the Irish delagation took an important part. Mr. De Valera had won high prestige in the Assembly; he was Chairman of the Sixth Committee and his opinion was sought in the corridors where, around low tables, vital questions were thrashed out and agreements

reached by small groups. His speech to the Assembly was unique in its realism and directness.

"Make no mistake", he gave warning: "if on my pretext whatever we were to permit the sovreignty of even the weakest State amongst us to be unjustly taken away, the whole foundation of the League would crumble into dust".

The impression his words made was profound.

It was the clear duty of all States members of the League to decide whether Italy, by mobilizing against Abyssinia, had become an aggressor, defying her engagement under the Covenant. The Ethiopian Emperor, Haile Selassie, had appealed with confidence to the League, of which his nation was a weak, yet proud and faithful member, for the protection that he and his people had the right to expect.

The discussions, vacillations, pretexts for inaction, formation of committee and sub-committees to debate details, wore slowly on. Often the great issue appeared to be losing itself in a sea of verbiage, as the river Rhone loses itself in the lake.

September is a pleasant month in Geneva. After the heat and strain of the debates it was refreshing for the Delegates to walk among the gardens, beautiful with dahlias and cooled by fountains, or along the shore of the lake. This city is felt to be a good place for Conferences becuase the tranquil scene with its distant peaks and wide horizons helps tense nerves and minds to relax.

A firm note was struck by the chief British Delegate, Sir Samuel Hoare. Anxiety centred around the French man, Monsieur Peirre Laval. France's leaning towards

Mussolini and Italy was recognised. But his speech promised faithfulness, too.

The Assembly adjourned for a time, for the Delegates were required in their own countries, and the question was left to be voted upon by the Council of the League. On the fourth of October Ethiopia was invaded. Towns without defence against air-attack were bombarded by low-flying planes; soon, Italian tanks were crashing through villages, breaking down the clay-walled homes.

I had remained in Geneva when our Delegation left; that is how it happened that I was in the gallery when, on the seventh, the critical meeting of the Council took place. Baron Pompeo Aloisi, Italy's impressive representative, was easily distinguished among the men who occupied the rising, crescent-shaped tiers of seats. So was Monsieur Laval, with his thick features and heavy, powerful build. Tecle Hawariati, the Ethiopian, alight, black-skinned, with ~~his~~ his head of curls, stood confronting their massed ranks, to plead for his people, looking like a desperate boy.

The thirteen men appeared to listen impassively. His speech was a plea, not a demand for a right. He offered assurances, promises; tried to speak quietly of his nation's anguish; he spoke as if unaware of the political currents and interests whose undertone menaced the sentiments of human brotherhood embodied in the Covenant. One felt that in the person of that small, coloured pleader, idealism was fighting for life. If those representative of powerful and arrogant white nations voted unanimously, committing their States to use sanctions, against one of their own caste and colour, for the sake of justice to a weak African member - if that

happened, the League could be expected to stand, a secure bulwark against tyranny and aggression and war.

So it seemed, indeed, when the voting began. The suspense was indescribable.

The members of the Council voted verbally, in turn.

"Yes"; "oui"; "yes"; "yes" -- they spoke the affirmative, one by one.

Italy not included, it was unanimous.

Lamps were lighted, globes hung from the roof, and those strong, intelligent faces looked very white. Aloisi lit a cigarette.

Perhaps the chill of dread that came over me was irrational. I only know that I felt it: it is no retrospective fancy. He half closed his eyes, leaned back in his seat with a gesture of indifference, and lit a cigarette. A natural act in a man under great strain, and trying to outface humiliation. But his action was reproduced, immediately, by Monsieur Laval. Instantly I realized what evasions, what betrayals, what compromises, might undo that day's work. I was as little surprised as the most cynical when, before the Winter was over, the Hoare-Laval Pact was made.

How quickly did Mr. De Valera's foreboding prove true, and "the whole foundation of the League ... crumble into dust!"

Three years later, Neville Chamberlain could return to London from Munich, waving his scrap of paper to cheering crowds. One French General shot himself because of the dishonour, and that was about the only salute fired over the grave of the League.

I enrolled with a team of relief-workers going out from London to Czechoslovakia, but was in hospital when their palne went. So it was not until July I946, that for the first time I visited Prague.

Admiration for Thomas Masaryk and for the way in which the Czechoslovak people had built their Republic had led me to read a good deal about that historic city, and I felt at home in it at once. It is quite without the sophisticated air that Vienna kept, even in defeat. A picture of grand, old simplicity is composed by the wide river, the Charles bridge with its statues, the wooded hills that rise on the far side, with the Hrad, the famous Castle crowning the highest point. That silhouette is wonderful against the evening sky.

My mission, however, was not to enjoy the beauty of the city, but to discover how its children had been affected by the German occupation, and the intense Nazification of the schools, which had lasted for six and a half years.

The Russian troops to whom, by allied consent, the Liberation had been entrusted, had behaved well and been received with enthusiasm. Perhaps this was why I saw, in every office I visited, and in nearly every restaurant, a big portrait of Stalin, where I had thought Thomas Masaryk's would have been. It even hung in a convent next to the crucifix.

When I asked the reason, the answer I received was always the same.

"They make these conditions. We have to trade with them".

Not a spark of joy did I see in Bohemia; the people looked sick and bewildered. Had the horror of Lidici sunk irremediably into their beings - or were they unable to believe that their freedom would last? Even the children of Prague didn't play or smile.

It was Mr. Slansky - since excuted - who insisted that I must see a brighter aspect of the national life and had me conducted South - to Bratislava in Slovakia, where a Pan-Slav festival was being held.

There, in Slovakia, I found humour, laughter and lightness of heart. "It is becuase we drink wine," they told me. "In Prague they drink beer". But I learned that the Nazis had kept Slovakia as a sort of recreation ground. Forced labour, deportations and torture, executions and massacres, had not been so frequent here.

The festival, founded in honour of St. Cyril and St. Methodius, was celebrated, traditionally, on the banks of the Danube, where the huge Devine Rock towers up out of the grain-land, with a ruined castle on its crest. All peoples of Slavic races had been summoned to semd their dancers to the festival, this fifth of July. The eraction of victory columns in honour of the Russian liberators, and certain measures of decentralization, bringing Slovaks into official positions, as well as other measures of political significance charged the atmosphere with peculiar excitement. As a back-cloth to the dancing-floor, an immense map had been stretched across the face of the rock. It showed Asia and Europe as a vast continuity and all the regions occupied by the Slav people were painted red. From the Bering Strait to the frontier of Italy, the red Torrent seemed to over-run most of the map.

The sun was so high that the great rock cast only a fringe of shade. African splendour and heat beat on the scene. The sunburnt people crowding the tiers of the amphi-theatre mopped sweat from their faces and held out eager hands to the boys who carried pails of water along. The fiddlers of the Tzigane band were burnt almost black. In that glare and heat, all the morning, troup after troup of Slavonic peasants, shepherds and wood-cutters, men and boys, with girls and middle-aged women, performed their regional dances in traditional dress.

The peasant costume of more motherly countries are plain and drab in comparison with the panoply in which these came arrayed. It was as if, in ancestral rivalry, each district had tried to impose one more coloured garment - apron, jerkin, stole, kerchief or belt. Skirts of rich silk in multiple pleats had over them aprons woven in yellow and gold; bodices embroidered with myriad-tinted flowers were half-hidden by scarves that glittered with silver thread. Sleeves were immense and as vari-coloured as butterflies' wings. The men swaggered in garments which would make the weediest youth look virile. The trousers of the shepherds were of rough wool with the fleece still ragged; their sheep-skin jerkins, elaborately patterned and coloured, had the full fleece still inside. In these costumes they performed dances full of such violent gesture, such acrobatic contortions, such bounding and smacking and leaping, that one marvelled at the endurance and adaptability of the human frame, and they danced then until high noon with unflagging relish and joy.

Poles were present, and Yugoslavs, Bulgarians,

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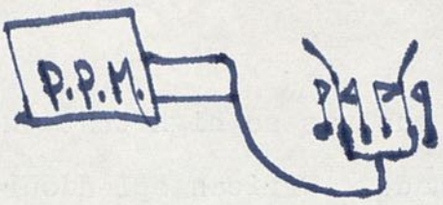

DAYS AND PLACES no.6.

13/9/57

A 4129

Last of six talks by Dorothy Macardle.

~~The World of Dreams~~

~~AN ORIGINAL STORY OF THE OCCULT~~

stet

~~THE SHUTTERED ROOM~~. stet

It was in a book I picked up second hand - True Tales of Haunted England, that I first read about Rowlands Great Hall. Then there was an article in Country Life with beautiful photographs of the interior. And Lady Patience Musgrave, in her Memoirs of an Edwardian Hostess, continually reverts to her childhood home and her tragic family, the Delisles, who had possessed it for centuries, or been possessed by it, you might almost say. So when my niece married her archeologist and settled in that part of Sussex and I went to spend a leisurely month with her, one of the first things I asked was whether Rowlands was open to the public sometimes.

"Thank goodness, no! It isn't a half-crown house! But you shall certainly see it," she replied. "I'll ring Constance up."

Over tea in the garden, I asked Nelly how much she believed of the macabre legends that clung around the name of the Delisles.

"Which one?" she wanted to know. "The old man who walks in the north wing? About him, I don't know."

"The other - at the window," I said.

"Yes: I've never seen it, but one night last winter, the Vicar's wife did. It's high up in the gable, overlooking the stable yard and the lane. It has been kept shuttered up for generations. But she saw it, open, with a red glare streaming out, and a thin man waving his arms. It lasted only a moment, she says, but now she never goes by that lane."

"I can believe in apparitions," I mused aloud: "vibrations produced by some fierce emotion absorbed and given out again by the walls; but nothing would make me believe in the curse."

"I'm afraid it works, Beatrice," Nelly said.

"Now, look," I argued. "I read in the papers about those deaths: both Sir Henry's sons killed in the war and the eldest grandson drowned - wasn't he - saving his young cousin? But many families suffer losses like that! The young men go into the Services, and hunt and sail and climb mountains - take risks habitually. There's nothing improbable ...."

"For ten generations," Nelly broke in, "the direct heir has never lived to inherit. They seldom attain their majority."

"That's rather grim."

"It's grim for Constance. Maurice is her only child."

"I'd take him to Australia!" I exclaimed.

"The old man's wrapped up in him, and for Maurice - he's mine, now - Rowlands is his world."

"Heartbreaking," I commented.

"Yes."

"What is supposed to have brought down that ghastly curse?"

"I'm sorry - I've promised never to tell."

I said, "I don't want to go, just out of curiosity, now."

"Still, you must meet Constance," Nelly insisted; "I'll ask her to come here. She's interested in Charlie's fossils and sherds."

But that isn't how it happened. A day or two later, while we were getting supper, the telephone rang. Nelly answered it. As she listened, her eyes stretched wide.

"I think perhaps I can," she said quickly, "if someone who's not a professional will do? .... Tonight? Yes ... Hold on."

Lowering the receiver, she turned to me.

"Maurice Delisle's had an accident, jumping his pony: some ribs broken: no danger, the doctor says: still, of course ... The local nurse says she can't take night work. You are such a good nurse, Beatrice! Would you go?"

Sunset light poured into the Great Hall. One looked up through it to the rafters of the roof. About half-way up a gallery, reached by a wide staircase, ran along one side. The light and shadow, all the proportions and details of the place

were graceful and satisfying.

I was presented to Sir Henry in his bedroom which opened off the library. Though white-haired, he was not very old, but he had been partly disabled by a stroke. His speech was slow, but he found words to express, with touching earnestness, his sense of gratitude and relief. Lady Delisle said little, but there was trust, I felt, in the soft, candid regard of her dark eyes. She led me upstairs, showed me her own room at the south end of the gallery, next to her son's, and the charming room I was to have, separated by a bath-room from his.

"There's a fire-escape ladder from the linen-closet along here," she explained. From the narrow corridor off which the closet opened an inner staircase ran down to the kitchen quarters. The corridor ended in a heavy, ancient door with wrought-iron lock and bolts.

"That is the gable-room. You may have heard about us," Lady Delisle said.

"Yes: I have: but not the cause of it all."

She spoke quietly.

"Then you will understand why it isn't always easy to find a woman to help me with Maurice. They are afraid. I don't like to leave him, but my mother needs me in Freshwater sometimes, and it upsets her to see him. She has never got over our darling Roger's death. You see, the boys were staying with her."

I told her I would be free for a month, until my boy and girl came home from their schools, and that she could count on me.

"That is wonderful," she said. "Come and see Maurice now."

Little nursing was needed. The chief qualification for success in my job turned out to be a knowledge of the features of different species of aeroplanes. Fortunately, Bobbie had given me a sound education in this branch. Littering the bed, we cut out parts, assembled them, and hung model planes all over the room. When Maurice exclaimed, "Gee! You are an expert," I felt an absurd glow of pride.

Later, he apologized for what he called his "craze for planes" and, with a sweet confidingness, told me the secret reason for it.

"You see, there's that old curse. And, well, you know the sort of family we are. I mean, we do things. So, if that beastly curse is going to work out, I've got, somehow, to cram things in, haven't I? And I think flying aeroplanes is the best way, because, even if there isn't a war, they let you start flying rather young."

I repeated this to his mother. There was something in the breadth of her forehead and the reposeful set of her lips that made concealment seem foolish.

"I know. I am thankful for it," she said. "It means that his boyhood won't be shadowed by fear. His thoughts will be focussed on something he can hope to do. Air-sea rescue is

what he dreams of now. That should be encouraged - don't you agree, Beatrice?

Smiling, she added, "Isn't it time you and I used first names? You know, Maurice has nick-names you 'Queen Bee'."

As soon as he was allowed to be up, Maurice paid formal visits, first to his grandfather, then to his friend Kate, the Irish cook, who would keep him entertained for hours. It was then that Constance asked whether I would stay on for a few days longer, sharing the care of Maurice with Kate, so that she might go to her mother, who was feeling lonely and depressed. Of course I agreed and the next morning, she left.

Nelly came, and we dressed up and read scenes from "A Midsummer Night's Dream". To play Puck gave Maurice no trouble at all. It was a happy day. We both went to bed early and I slept well. I woke before seven because something was wrong. I snatched my bath-robe and ran to Maurice's room. He was fast asleep. A smell of burning came from the corridor. It was horrible. "It's from the kitchen," I thought, and, rushing down, found Kate already at work. She was mixing dough.

"Get help! Come upstairs!" I urged. "There's a fire somewhere," and started up the stairs again. In a soft voice she called me back.

"Whisht, now, Ma'am! Don't be disturbing Sir Henry. There's no fire."

"I smelt it upstairs! There is!"

Kate made the sign of the cross. God help you! It means you are one of those .. one of those who do feel it ... Ma'am dear, that fire is out two hundred years and more."

"I can't believe it!"

"Go and look for yourself in the gable room. The key has been lost time out of mind. You have only to stand on a chair and pull the bolt."

I did that. I entered the room. The darkness was thick; stifling. The room was without electricity and the single window was shuttered and barred. I could see white-washed walls and a narrow bed: no sign of fire; no smoke, though I gasped and choked in the noxious atmosphere. It seemed to swell in the room like a rising tide. Sickened, I rushed out and bolted the door.

That afternoon, when Maurice was sleeping in the garden, Kate found me there, and sat down.

"It is owing to you," she said, "to explain. The child knows all about it. Why shouldn't you? 'Tis the old man, loose out of Hell. He was what they called an apothecary, and he had this clever son. A great scholar, the lad wished

to be, and he came here. He came for the sake of the library. He was tutor to the boys. It was in the kitchen the fire started, at night. The back stairs and that passage caught and the tutor was cut off in his room. A stable boy put up a ladder, but it was too short. Nobody else thought of the poor lad. They were looking after the children and pulling down the tapestries and so on. He jumped and he broke his neck on the cobbles. So next day his father stood on the blood-stained stones and he put his curse on the whole seed and breed of the Delisles. "Cowards!" he called them. "Cowards, not fit to live."

I could not control a shudder.

"And you believe, Kate ...It means that he ... that ..."

"It means," Kate replied, "that evil's loose."

I was consumed with a passion of pity and wrath. That night, I did not undress. While the child slept I knelt by his bed and prayed. An hour or so after midnight it came again. I opened that door and went into the shuttered room. Inside, I choked and struggled for breath. I was aware of smothering waves of blackness and foulness; aware, too, that it was not smoke: not an emanation from any physical thing but from a rageing emotion, a pulsing, beating, fury of contempt. It came from the corner between the window and the head of the bed. He was there, present to my consciousness - possibly to my sight: I don't know. His scorn and loathing reeled and seethed against

me, breaking my purpose, crushing my will, until I had no thought or wish except to escape. Then, for a single moment, I gathered up pity and love as a force, a weapon, and fought back, and, in that instant, was restored to myself by a cool voice near me, a small hand seeking mine.

"Why, Bee, dear, I was worried about you. What in the world are you doing in this room?" Then, shrill and angry, "Who is that old man?"

I was silent. I held him. He was trembling from head to foot, but his voice was clear and strong.

"What an ignorant old nuisance you are! You don't know a thing. Those people are dead and gone years ago, just like you! And they were not cowards! They just forgot. It was awful of them, of course, and we're sorry, but it's simply silly, calling us cowards. Do you know about Grandpapa on the Matterhorn? And my cousin? And my father's V.C. Do you know how they died? And do you imagine, you old fool, that we are afraid of you? Leave us alone! Go where you belong!"

He relaxed in my arms, at last. The tension in the air was released; the smothering pressure ebbed and one could breathe; it was as if a gust of fresh air flowed in. There was nothing - emptiness, where concentrated evil had been.

I half carried Maurice back to his bed. He was white,

but not fainting, just half asleep. He opened his eyes and gave me a wondering look.

"It wasn't a dream, was it?" he asked.

I answered, "No, Maurice, it wasn't a dream."

He chuckled.

"We've scared him off for good and all, haven't we, Bee?"

"For good and all."

I believe it.

"What a surprise for Mummy," he murmured drowsily. "What a lovely surprise!"

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