

A London Air Raid "Close Up"

MARY BRITTEN WRITES

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MY DEAR SISTER:

I would have written before in regards to the late air raid, knowing you would be in a way about us all here in the midst of it, as the saying is; but what with Alfred bein' laid up with his old complaint of V.D.H., which he has been subject to ever since buried in France, and Flossie getting rid of her gentleman friend, there seemed almost more than one pair of hands could do, let alone letters. Well, when the police whistle went, Alfred must needs contradict me.

"You're always agoing to meet them," he said, and up he got and went out and ast. We was just setting down to supper, and he left as tasty a piece of haddick as you could wish for in his hurry to put me in the wrong. But you know Alf. Back he came.

"You're right, as usual, old lady," he says; "Fritz is aloft. My tea's got cold," he says.

"Never mind your tea," I says; and Flossie began putting on her things.

"Oh, mother, hurry," she says. We must remember that F's nerve was a bit gone on account of her young man, him being her first, and a terrible scene with him only three nights before.

"Hurry nothing," her father told her. "Mother's got to hot up my tea," which I did, me legs shaking a bit, I don't mind telling a relation. Mabel and young George they was for going on the roof, but their father put a stop to that, and no more said.

"Ain't we agoin' to the Tube?" ast Flossie. It did seem as if we ought to be doing something besides sit around and watch father eat that haddick.

"Are we agoin' to the Tube, old lady?" says Alf, speaking to me. "Along of them aliens," says he,

"where you'll like as not hear German talked," says he, "and see things not fit for publication," he remarks.

"Well," I says, "it ain't as if there wasn't a floor and a God above us," I says, "and these buildin's ain't too badly built against a bomb," I told him.

"No," says he, "that was why you took this place ten years ago, wasn't it?" he says. You know Alf. On that he lighted his pipe.

"Young George, you go to bed," he said, but I wasn't having none of that. "Don't go breakin' up the family," I told him.

"I won't if Fritz don't," Alf said, and that set Mabel off. Being in the T-and-T, she don't hardly care what she laughs at.

Well, by now there wasn't hardly a sound, not so much as a footstep. The buses was all stopped, and if a train come along, it was in an awful hurry and seemed to wish to get to its destination. Young George up and lifts a corner of the blind.

"I can see a special goin' down Scrubb Lane," he says.

"You come away from that window, or it'll be the worse for you, sonny," says Alf. So Young George come away, and we set quiet.

"There!" says Flossie. "Was that a bomb?"

"You hold your noise," says her father. "That was one of ours. They're beginning." Like a door shut heavy in an empty house it was.

"Not much in that," says Mabel.

"You wait," says Alf, so we set and waited.

"Look here," I said, "while we are waitin', why not have a bit of a prayer?" I said, and Alf he remarked that he didn't see it would do any harm.

"Which one, mother?" says Young George. "The Lord's Prayer?"

"No," says I, "that's for every day. It'll have to be just what comes. There's no time for lookin'," I says, and I opened the book, my hand shakin' a treat, I've got to say. Father he knocked his pipe out and come and set beside me on the sofa. The girls was anywhere, and only Young George had the sense to go on his knees.

It wasn't the right place, but I read as follows:

"I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh even from the Lord."

Just then the guns began close by, and I missed some, but Alf took hold of my hand, and I went on:

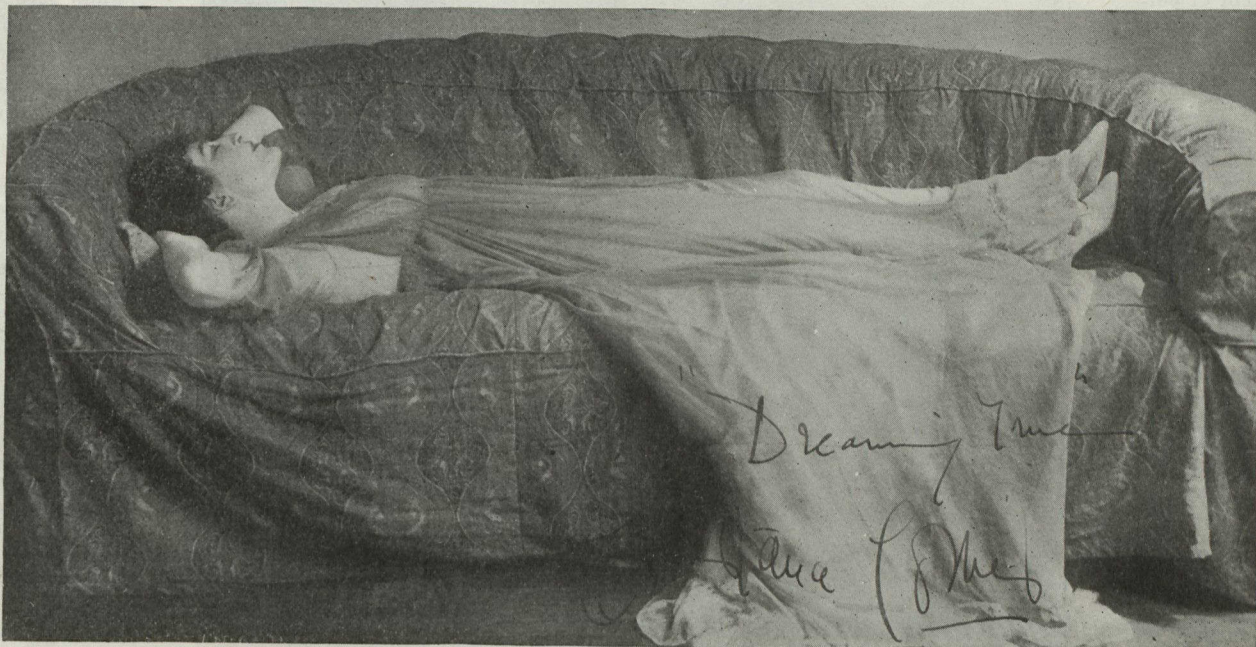
"The Lord Himself is thy keeper, the Lord is thy defence on thy right hand. So that the sun shall not burn thee by day, neither the moon by night. The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil—" and there I give up and drop a tear, and Alf said, "That's enough, old girl," and put it away. And just on the top of that came the one close by, that you've read about in the paper, and broke the windows in the next street. I didn't scream, but I must have went pretty white, for Young George he gets his arms round me, and "Sit tight, mother," he says; "we've said our prayers, and there's nothing more we can do."

His father looks at him kind of proud, and "Well, if that don't put the lid on," he says. I can't think why Alf said that.

We was none of us hurt, and next morning kippers had gone up a penny.

Your affectionate sister,

MARY BRITTEN.

By
KATHERINE
HALE.Illustrated from
Photograph.

Would You Learn to Dream True?

WOULD you, in the darkest hour of the world's history, glimpse a secret of light? In an hour in which life and death are interwoven so that we can hardly tell where one ends and the other begins, would you search a strange magic which annihilates space, distance, time—even death itself? Then learn to "dream true."

Most of us know Du Maurier, son of a French father and an English mother, who wrote, after the age of sixty, three of the most remarkable English novels: "Trilby," "The Martian" and "Peter Ibbetson."

"Peter Ibbetson" contains much of Du Maurier's biography, though the famous illustrator and story-writer went afield for his plot, as he never killed an objectionable guardian nor fell into danger of hanging. Still, he might easily have done so under like provocation. And, after all, the murder and Peter's subsequent imprisonment for life are necessary as the banishment from an encroaching world which every soul that attains a cosmic or spirit consciousness must undergo.

It took twenty years for the dramatist to reduce the singular novel, "Peter Ibbetson," to what he considered a successful play. Part of the time Du Maurier himself worked with him, but by a strange irony of fate, the aged novelist had died, and also the young dramatist before the play was bought and produced by the best loved of English actresses, one who carried out the Du Maurier tradition more fully than would be possible to any other woman in the theatrical world to-day. After a warm reception on its first appearance in London, the play was enthusiastically received in New York, is now touring Canada, and will be seen in the Western States the beginning of next season.

Do you remember the lovely old story—a perfect picture of the early eighties? An English-French family were living in Paris, Ibbetson, his beautiful wife and the little Peter, and their great friend was Madame Seraskier, her wee daughter, Mimsey, being the adored playmate of Peter. And there was old Major Duquenois, who used to tell them wonderful stories. Then Peter is left an orphan, and falls into the hands of the dissolute rake, Major Ibbetson, his father's cousin. Transplanted to London from his beloved Paris, and longing for the haunts of his boyhood, he meets by chance his old-time Mimsey, disguised under the title, "Mary, Duchess of Towers." They meet and love just as naturally as of old, but Mary is not free. What might have been a tragedy is averted by the fact that she tells him how, without even touching hands, they may meet in the loveliest companionship in dreamland—that silvery country that is called the astral plane. Only, to "dream true" one must be true—the soul must remain as white as a pure and selfless flame.

Constance Collier, a wonderful Duchess of Towers, shows Peter how to dream. "It's quite easy," she says; "my father taught me. You have only to go asleep with your feet crossed and your hands behind your head. You must never leave off thinking where you ought to be in your dream, and when you fall asleep you get there."

They experiment, and find that they possess the inherent power which opens a magic gate of enchantment.

Then comes the tempest, in which, to avenge an insult to his mother's name, the boy kills the black maligner and is condemned to imprisonment for

life. The sentence is too awful for him to bear until Mary reminds him of the power they both possess.

Then occurs a succession of the most exquisite stage pictures ever seen since play-acting began. Peter and Mary are able to summon the vision of pure love, and again they are children in the woods of Passy, time is discounted, distance is defied, they live again in that golden, golden light of faith and love and joyous purity, for all sweet things, all true things are deathless—that is what this dream-play keeps saying over and over again. When at last Mary dies, and Peter feels that for a moment he has lost her, she comes back in spirit to tell him that he is really just beginning to live, because she has found that death is a joyous going on, that "we fly away with our memories about us" to a very dear and wonderful beyond.

It is one of the extraordinary revelations of the time that great audiences everywhere should accept what would have been called pure phantasy a few years ago, with a realization that the whole drama is symbolic of experiences that human hearts are actually undergoing to-day.

The youth of our country, boys, many of them as unusual and poetic as Peter Ibbetson, have gone out to kill. They, too, have murder in their hearts against a blackness that would stain pure love. We are all banished from normal joys to-day. Death stands beside sweet life, the two seem to draw closer and closer as each moment goes by and the apparent darkness thickens about us.

What of the outcome if souls must remain speechless through earth's enveloping grey mists to the bright beyond? Shall we, too, learn to dream true?