8
Chez Marion

Chez Marion. Terrified by a horse. False teeth for the King of Spain. A shrewd young lady meets George Bernard Shaw. Doris Duke attacked by a monkey. Churchill throws rocks at the swans. Eluded by Adolf Hitler. The Queen's Garden Party.

PP/KSM: *Marion and W.R. traveled frequently and far, and wherever they went they were entertained in a manner befitting their own style of hospitality. An endless procession of royalty, heads of state, leaders of industry, authors, artists, film stars and celebrities of every kind passed through their lives, either as hosts on their travels or as guests at San Simeon, Ocean House [the Beach House], Wyntoon or St. Donat's. Marion remembers some of them now, along with the parties and other occasions at which they met.*

MD: The longest time W.R. and I were separated was for two weeks in 1937 [or rather in 1936]. I was doing *Cain and Mabel* [with Clark Gable at Warner Bros.] and got held over for more scenes. W.R. went to New York and got a houseboat. It was the middle of summer and very hot in the city, so he went to stay on the water up at New Rochelle [New York]. I got there only for the last two days, and then we went to Europe [on August 8].

When we came back from the European trips, we'd have a party [often at the Beach House]. They were usually wonderful parties.

One was at the Ambassador Hotel [in Los Angeles]. It was planned to be a surprise party. After all the excitement I'd had in Europe and New York, I was supposed to be taken out by my sister Ethel to a quiet dinner.

Arthur Brisbane was along. And W.R. They said, "We'll just stop at the Ambassador and have a quiet dinner."

[I thought, "What? Nobody even at the station? Only Ethel?"]

When we got to the hotel she said, "Let's go upstairs and wash up."

TC: This episode could date from the period when W.R. had a suite of rooms in the Ambassador Hotel; he maintained that address until 1932. Hence, the European trips of 1928, 1930, or 1931 could theoretically apply.

MD: "What's the reason?"

"You've been traveling, and I think you should put a dress on. I brought some things from the beach [the Beach House]."

We went upstairs and got dressed in evening things. I thought it was silly, if there were only four of us going to have dinner.

When we went downstairs, W.R. and Arthur Brisbane were waiting. I thought it was funny that they were wearing tuxedos. I also thought it was ridiculous.

Then I saw a sign, CHEZ MARION. I said, "What's that? A new restaurant?"

TC: The two words are translatable from the French as "Marion's Place," as in the name of a restaurant, hence the question she raised here.

MD: They'd taken over the big ballroom [in the Ambassador]—not the Cocoanut Grove, but the Embassy Room—and it was a wonderful party. Joe Schenck, L[ouis] B. Mayer and all the producers were there. A lot of the stars, too.

Another time when I arrived back from Europe there was another surprise party. I was a little bit wise to that one, but I was surprised at one thing: at the bar they had a big white horse.

TC: Such a party—if held in a public place like the Ambassador Hotel—could only have been following the European trip of 1934 or of 1936. W.R. and Marion didn't go abroad in 1932 or 1933, when Prohibition still held sway.

MD: Everybody knew I was afraid of horses. I took one look and let out a scream. I ran like mad and hid, and I wouldn't go back in until they'd gotten rid of the horse.

That was a western party [evidently as distinct from W.R.'s birthday party at San Simeon in 1933]. I was afraid of horses because when I was about twelve I'd had an accident. The horse started to run and I let go and landed on some logs and broke the end of my spine. I was in a plaster cast for about three months.

I loved horses, but I didn't want to ride them. I was always afraid they were going to rear or turn around and bite my foot.

I used to have Harry Crocker as my master of ceremonies. When I was working, he'd take care of my guests. There were numerous guests. Like Secretary Swanson and Secretary Kellogg.

PP/KSM: *Claude Augustus Swanson had been a U.S. Congressman and Senator from Virginia as well as Governor of that state. He was appointed Secretary of the Navy in Roosevelt's 1933 cabinet.*

Frank Billings Kellogg was the Secretary of State during Calvin Coolidge's administration in the late 1920s. He had been a U.S. Senator representing Minnesota, and an American Ambassador to the Court of St. James[']s] in London, before winning the Nobel Peace Prize in 1929. A student of law, he was later appointed to the Permanent Court of International Justice [the Hearst-reviled World Court of the League of Nations], which meets at the Hague.

TC: Frank Billings Kellogg is not to be confused with Frank W. Kellogg, a newspaper publisher whose name appears with some frequency in the Hearst annals.

MD: [Winston] Churchill was my house-guest [in 1929]. He came with his son Randolph and Randolph's cousin John, who liked to play the piano. They arrived in Charlie Schwab's private car, the railroad car, and they stayed at the beach house [as did Winston's brother].

PP/KSM: *Charles Michael Schwab had started his career as a stake driver at the Edgar Thomson Steel Works [in Pennsylvania]. He became president of the Carnegie Steel Company, then moved to become president of the United States Steel Company for six years, before buying the majority of the stock and being elected a member of the board of directors of the Bethlehem Steel Company.*

TC: *Hearst and Marion: The Santa Monica Connection,* pp. 86-89, covers the Churchill visit in detail; the Churchill party went from San Simeon to the Beach House by automobile.

MD: MGM gave a big reception for Churchill. And he had a sort of lisp, but it didn't come out over the microphone. He couldn't figure it out and I couldn't figure it out, but a lisp just does not register.

We went to the opening of *Grand Hotel* [not made and released until 1932], and afterwards there was a big party at the Roosevelt Hotel [in Hollywood]. I was working then [in 1929, on *Not So Dumb*], so I didn't see much of Churchill. He was a very good guest because he had so many things to do that he didn't become a nuisance. And he stayed quite a while, maybe three or four weeks. Then he went back to England.

He liked his Scotch and his cigars. They were what kept him alive [Churchill was fifty-four at the time].

The Duke and Duchess of Sutherland were guests and also Secretary Forrestal. I think Edwina Mountbatten was there [at the Beach House]. Louis Mountbatten [her husband, "Dickie"] arrived afterwards. He had been at Malta [with the Mediterranean Fleet].

PP/KSM: *James Forrestal was an executive of a New York City investment banking firm until World War II. He was then named Undersecretary of the Navy with special responsibility for procurement and production. He became the Secretary of the Navy in May 1944 and for five years held that position and worked for the unification of many functions of the military services. He resigned in March 1949 and entered the naval hospital at Bethesda, Maryland, for treatment of severe depression. Two months later he jumped out a window to his death. The Navy would later commission a nuclear-powered aircraft carrier in his honor.*

Louis, the first Earl Mountbatten of Burma, was married to Edwina Ashley, and would follow his father into the British admiralty. The Mountbatten family had renounced their German title, Battenberg, at the outset of World War I, but other members of the family had married into the Greek and Swedish monarchies, and this would allow Philip, a Mountbatten, son of Prince Andrew of Greece, to marry Princess Elizabeth, a Windsor, who is now Queen of England.

MD: Well, Harry Crocker took care of them when I was working. And every year that we went to Europe [1928, 1930, 1931, 1934, 1936], he went with us.

I also went to St. James[']s Palace and Windsor Castle. And I had met Sir Ernest Cassel, who was the father of Edwina Mountbatten.

PP/KSM: *Sir Ernest Joseph Cassel was Lady Mountbatten's grandfather. An emigrant from Germany, he became an international financier, reorganizing the government of Uruguay's treasury and acquiring the Royal Swedish railroads. He raised loans for Mexico, China and Egypt, and died in 1921, bequeathing ten million dollars for medical and educational purposes.*

MD: The Mountbattens had a gorgeous house on Brook Street [Brooke House in London] with all the walls done in lapis lazuli. She had an enormous big suite for herself in front, and in the back Louis had a room about a tenth the size. He had a hammock to sleep in.

He was a sailor and he wanted it that way. Just like they have on boats, there were two portholes in his room. You could look out one and see [a picture of] Malta. You could see water in the other one. It made him feel at home.

Edwina was giving a party for the King of Spain when we were in London. The party was at Le Monseigneur's, the same name as my hat shop in Paris. But there was a funny story there, sort of a secret.

PP/KSM: *Alphonso XIII left [in 1931] but never abdicated the Bourbon throne of Spain.*

MD: The King was at the dentist's. After that revolution in Spain they [the Second Spanish Republic] had kicked him out and he had to leave without a thing. When he got to England he wrote and asked for his false teeth. They sent them to him in an envelope, but they were all cracked up. Just like little pieces of salt. He had to get a new set of teeth.

I thought it was pretty lousy for them to do that; but he had just forgotten them when he left. He handed his teeth around and showed

us they were all cracked into little pieces. He couldn't speak very much English and he was practically in hiding.

After all, a diamond ring may be important to you to wear on your hand, but false teeth are awfully hard to get.

Well, we went to one of those night clubs where you go in and you walk downstairs. Now who wants a bomb shelter? But the place was jammed.

I had on a white lace dress that I had brought from Bergdorf's in New York City and it had a little train on it. This Hapsburg character, also from Spain, said, "Darling, would you like to dance?"

I said yes. Well, instead of him going ahead, which is quite proper, I went ahead. He stepped on my train and tore the whole back of my dress out. I was left with a slip in the back.

I picked up the lace and said, "That was nice. Thank you." Then I went to the ladies room and asked for some pins. But this was in England. There was not one pin. They did have some black hairpins, and I fastened the train back on.

Of course he didn't mean to do it. It wasn't really his fault. But I was thinking I should have a long coat. That night I was just wearing one of those short things [a jacket]. I went back and was sitting there and every time I moved, something pinched me in the back. I didn't care for the lobster. I didn't care for the salad. I was so mad at him I said, "You'll pay for this."

He said, "I don't understand."

That was [birdshit]. It was a white lace dress and very expensive and I was naked in the back, practically. A man might not be mad, because he doesn't wear a dress, but any woman would be furious.

W.R. was there, but he was way off. He didn't see that.

MD: Prince George came to the beach house once. He was the Duke of Kent [as of 1934], also, and the eldest of the [Windsor] boys. His brother [Edward VIII] was the Prince of Wales who became the

King [in 1936], because George died in an airplane accident [in 1942] during the war.

TC: Edward VIII became the king of England when his father, King George V, died in 1936, not when his younger brother Prince George was killed in 1942; however, Edward gave up the throne late in 1936 and soon became the Duke of Windsor, the name by which he's best known. Edward was born in 1894, Prince George in 1902. See also the disentangling by PP/KSM further on in this chapter, p. 25.

MD: Sir Thomas Lipton was a guest, and the Lindberghs came up to Wyntoon [in 1941]. Henry Ford never came out. We saw him in Detroit. We had luncheon with him one day and then went to his factory. It was quite amazing to see how they built those cars, all in a row.

PP/KSM: *Thomas Johnstone Lipton left Ireland in 1865 and, after a decade in America, settled in Scotland. He prospered by merchandising cocoa, coffee and the world-famous Lipton tea, and he was made a member of the peerage.*

TC: This footnote about Thomas Lipton was entirely Bobbs-Merrill's contribution—probably written by Gladys Moore, the main editor of *The Times We Had*.

MD: Sir Thomas Lipton was a very good friend of my mother's. When we lived in New York, my mother used to invite him for dinner every once in a while. Sir Thomas Lipton had one trick that I always remembered. He would have dinner for my mother and father and champagne for everybody. I thought he too was drinking champagne, but then I noticed that he would bring out a special bottle—it looked just exactly like a champagne bottle—with the same label on it. One night I said, "May I take a taste of that?"

It was ginger ale. I said, "I caught you that time."

He said, "The reason I do this is because I don't want people to think I'm ungracious. But I do not drink." I thought that was sweet. I've often thought, I could do that myself. But I certainly would not put ginger ale in the bottle.

He had amazing stories to tell. He was very much like George Bernard Shaw, although he didn't have all of the wit. He had the same sense of humor. Even if he was Irish, he was a very fine man. And he was very much the same in looks.

Shaw had that caustic Irish wit which is very detestable, and Sir Thomas Lipton had quite an amount of it. It is very, very annoying, because it is one of those wits that stabs. And nobody likes to be stabbed. Not these days. The mutiny's over.

George Bernard Shaw came out to California [in March 1933] when I was doing *Peg o' My Heart* at MGM. There must have been fifty or sixty people waiting in line to see him. It was raining, and a lot of them didn't have umbrellas. He said, "Can't you get the property department to give them umbrellas?"

We let them in, and he walked up and down asking them questions. He was trying to be nice. When someone said, "Now, Mr. Shaw, what do you think of your picture . . ." he'd say, "Now what do *you* think of my picture?" He was interviewing them, and he was very funny.

Shaw was always caustic. On the set, he said, "I don't think anybody knows what they're doing. . . . They're all stupid."

We went up to San Simeon with quite a big party. All the young girls would sit around him and listen, and I did, too.

TC: Shaw and his wife were on a round-the-world cruise ship that docked in San Francisco. They disembarked there and were flown down to San Simeon by George Hearst, W.R.'s oldest son, who had his own plane. The Shaws stayed at the ranch before George flew them to Los Angeles, whereupon they visited MGM and stayed at the Beach House before rejoining their ship in Los Angeles Harbor. Shaw received several telegrams at San Simeon. The best one came from Upton Sinclair, who wired on March 27: "Just learned your sailing hour. We would love to take you to dinner and drive you to steamer." (Hearst San Simeon Papers)

MD: At dinner on the first night he was sitting on my right. I hadn't had a chance to get acquainted with him, because I had been

working when he was on the set. I said, "I have two great heroes—as far as writing is concerned."

"Who are they?"

You and Shakespeare."

"Why mention me in the same breath with Shakespeare?"

I said, "Well—*Androcles and the Lion*" [a play of 1912].

"Did you read that?"

I said yes.

He said, "I didn't think you had the intelligence."

"I have the intelligence to read it, but I haven't got the intelligence to understand it. Now you can explain it to me."

"Pretty shrewd you are, young lady."

"Thanks for calling me young lady" [thirty-six at the time]. We started an argument, and I said, "I'll bite you for every clever word."

He said, "I'll bite you."

The next day he wanted to sit by the fireplace. All oldish men [Shaw was then seventy-six] like to sit by fireplaces. The girls were all around him.

I said to Shaw, "Would you like to see the zoo?"

He looked around at all the girls. "This is enough zoo for me." Finally he said, "But I do like to walk."

Katharine [Kathryn] Menjou and Constance Talmadge went along with us. I had to shoo the others away. Katharine had a camera and was dying to get a picture of him, but he had said, "I will not have myself photographed. I don't like people who do things like that."

PP/KSM: *[Kathryn was] the wife of actor Adolphe Menjou [married 1928–1933].*

MD: Katharine hid in a bush, but he said, "After I have seen the animals, I will walk backwards until you tell your friend to put that camera in her pocket and walk behind me. She'll never see the front of my face."

He was pretty smart. I told her to come out of the bush. She said, "I'm sorry, Mr. Shaw . . ."

He said, "Just your type. Blondes are always dumb." We were all three blondes.

He was so witty that nobody could ever match him. He'd come back with something twice as witty and make you feel the size of a worm. You'd decide there was no use talking to him any longer.

He got along very well with W.R. Shaw realized he was up against a strong mentality, so he didn't try any tricks. W.R. would never try to outdo anybody; he'd just look at them, and that would be it. They'd fade.

TC: W.R. received a cable dated May 9, 1931, on behalf of his National Magazine Company, London: "Shaw sends personal regards remembrances reiterating determination make you president U.S.A." (G&RH)

MD: I never saw anybody in any conversation beat Mr. Hearst. They were up against a wall when they got to him.

Shaw and his wife stayed about a week and then started down to the studio by airplane. They got stuck in a fog and landed at Malibu Beach. We were waiting at MGM—Louis B. Mayer and John Barrymore and Clark Gable were there. It was raining and we were worried. When they were an hour and a half late, I said to W.R., "You'd better phone."

They had to shoot through a hole in the fog and land right on the beach and wait for a car. Mrs. Shaw [Charlotte], a little bit of a Scotch-woman, was covered with mud and sand.

Hundreds of reporters had gathered outside the [Cosmopolitan] bungalow.

By the time they arrived I was already an hour late getting back on the set. I was thinking about work, not the big luncheon.

Mrs. Shaw came, and I got the maid to get her cleaned up. She asked for a little bit of Scotch. It was her little secret, because he never drank anything. I gave her a little noggin, and we washed her off.

At lunch Shaw sat next to me. I said, "Why aren't you eating?"

"I don't like your food."

"Well, I didn't cook it."

"I'm a vegetarian," he said. That's how it went.

When John Barrymore said, "Mr. Shaw, would you sign a little album for my son?" Shaw said, "And how old is your son?"

"Six months old," he said.

Shaw said no. "He's too young to appreciate it."

Barrymore got sore and left. He went out into the rain and ruined his costume. He was making *Reunion in Vienna* and they had to get another costume for him.

We let the newspapermen come in, all of them soaking wet. But instead of asking him questions, he asked them questions. He wouldn't let them say a word.

We left the bungalow and went onto the set. A crowd followed us. He said, "I don't like this." We dodged into an alleyway and were met by a makeup man, Cecil Holland, in a big cowboy hat.

He said, "Would you sign my hat?"

Shaw said to me, "Who is he?"

"He's an artist—a portrait artist." He was only the makeup man, but when Shaw thought he was an artist he signed his cowboy hat, and we went on.

Ann Harding was working with Bob Montgomery and Alice Brady in a play [a film] called *When Ladies Meet*. Shaw was standing there, with his long whiskers, watching.

Alice Brady said, "Well, how do you do?"

And Shaw said, "I can recognize you by your Irish accent, but I don't know your face."

Ann Harding came up and said to him, "Don't you remember me?"

"No."

"I did *Androcles and the Lion*."

"It must have been a pirated version."

Well, she ran to her dressing room, and we got word that Shaw was to be removed from the set. She went into hysterics and said she wouldn't work any longer.

The next day the *[Los Angeles] Times* had a story, "George Bernard Shaw insults Ann Harding." The reporters had been all over the place, and they'd gotten the story quickly. Shaw was furious. He said to me, "What kind of country is this?"

I said, "It's not quite as bad as Ireland—but I've never been there."

"Then how do you express an opinion?"

"Well, you don't know about Hollywood—you only just came here."

"We'll have no fights."

When they left, they took a boat [the *Empress of Britain*] from San Pedro and through the Panama Canal. Both Shaw and his wife wanted me to go with them, but I was in the middle of the picture and I couldn't do it.

He didn't think making films mattered anyway. He said, "It will never last. It's no good. It's phony."

We wrote occasionally, but I never saw them again.

MD: I guess as long as I knew Mr. Hearst, I'd just sit and listen. Unfortunately the conversations conveyed nothing to me. I always had my mind on something else. I had a one-track mind and that stopped me short. It didn't do me any good.

I wasn't good in pictures, either. I just liked to dabble in this or dabble in that. Of course, I was no genius.

At another luncheon [in September 1927], Mary Pickford was sitting next to [Charles] Lindbergh. He was on my right and Mary was next to him and she sent me a note: "He won't talk."

I wrote her back, "Talk about airplanes." Lindbergh had a one-track mind—airplanes. She did, and then he talked freely. If you talked about things he wasn't interested in, he wouldn't answer. Up to that time his mouth had been closed. It opened to say "No" to the photographers and "No" to the autographers—just like Shaw.

Everybody was very enthusiastic about Lindbergh and thought he was a great person for making the attempt to go to Europe alone. It

was a great feat; it took great courage and a lot of stamina and a lot of stubbornness. And those are things that are quite close together.

He had a straight face, but lots went on behind it. He wasted no conversation on idiosyncrasies.

He was then a big success, but that didn't go to his head. He was a perfectly independent person, but an introvert.

MD: At San Simeon, we enjoyed having a lot of people visit. Yet W.R. would stay primarily to himself. When the spirit moved him, he'd come down and join them.

His mind was always working. You could tell by looking. He had a great broad forehead, and there were so many things going on in there that he had very little time for relaxation.

Over the years thousands of people must have come to San Simeon. But W.R. didn't really select them; I think most of the guests selected him. We'd get a little message, "I'm arriving . . ." But he never mentioned any feeling against sharing San Simeon.

Between my pictures he'd say it would be nice to kind of relax and just have a few people. We'd have about ten guests, and it would be really quiet. The place is huge and you would only feel about so big. When he wanted quiet, I wouldn't invite the ones who wanted constant merriment.

We were never concerned with the service or the food. There was a housekeeper and three butlers, two cooks, two chefs and a third chef for the staff.

W.R. wanted the animals around because it was picturesque. And he thought the zoo might entertain the guests.

He couldn't inspect the animals, because a lot of them wouldn't let anyone near. There were thousands of animals, and I don't know how many cowboys and managers, but the men took care of everything. It just went like clockwork.

Yet W.R. was the clock that made it tick. And it went fine, except for the day a lion got mad and clawed David Hearst's leg [one of the

youngest sons]. He got a scar from it. But there weren't any bad accidents.

A woman from San Francisco, a very good friend of Eddie Kane, said she knew all about the honey bears. She put her hand in the cage, and the bear nipped off the tip of her finger. And she had gloves on. We went for the doctor, and they sewed the end of her finger back. Still, you couldn't keep the people from getting where they weren't supposed to be.

And I was a culprit, too. I used to tease the ape [Jerry the chimpanzee]. Doris Duke had no fear of animals until a spider monkey went after her. We were walking around, and this tiny little monkey got hold of her slacks—she was wearing beautiful gray corduroy slacks—and she let out the most awful scream. I think the monkey was mad at her because she was fascinated by the black panther, which was really a raging animal. She went over and was cooing to the panther. All the panther would have had to do was *whap,* and she would've had no face left. But she was fascinated, hypnotized, by those big yellow eyes and that coal-black face. Maybe she thought the little monkey was the panther because we were walking around and it was so unexpected.

MD: W.R. asked me what he should do with San Simeon, but I wouldn't discuss it. I said, "If you're talking about fifty or sixty years from now, I'll give you an honest answer. You should give it to California, as a museum." Someone else suggested it for the state capitol or the California White House, but I didn't think that was a good idea, because the people were taxed enough. I never saw W.R.'s will, so I never knew what he planned for San Simeon or Wyntoon.

TC: W.R.'s regard of both properties as potential museums is traceable in San Simeon's case to the 1920s and, in Wyntoon's, to the 1930s.

PP/KSM: *San Simeon was presented to the State of California in 1958 by the Hearst Corporation "in memory of William Randolph Hearst, who created the enchanted hill, and of his mother, Phoebe Apperson Hearst, who inspired it."*

Tours are conducted seven days a week all year, except for Thanksgiving and Christmas, and tickets are sold out weeks in advance. Jobs as tour guides are hotly contested among students, for guides are allowed to live at the castle in the summer [a practice discontinued after the 1970s].

If the state was reluctant to accept the gift and to undertake costs of maintenance and operation, the public was not unwilling to reward the effort. The historical landmark is the only one in the state to show a profit—which goes to the California general fund.

Wyntoon is still privately held by the Hearst families.

PP/KSM: *David Lloyd George, the liberal anti-imperialist member of the British Parliament, was first elected in 1890 and served for fifty-four years.*

Prime Minister of England from 1916 through 1922, he became the first Earl of Dwyfor in the last three months of his life (1863–1945).

He was married to Margaret Owen in 1888, and two years after her death in 1941 he married Francis Louise Stevenson, whom Marion met.

MD: We got to know Lloyd George very well, and he invited us down to his house [in Wales]. He was really one of the finest men I ever met in my life. I used to call him Santa Claus because he looked a bit like him.

He had a very nice secretary, [who] he married. Once she and I were at luncheon with Alice Head and the presidents of Oxford and Eton and Cambridge. We were the only women. We sat at a long table. The windows were open, and there were no screens. They were talking and making speeches about the colleges and education when suddenly I let out a yell like a Comanche Indian. A bee was buzzing around my feet.

PP/KSM: *Ms. Head was the director of the Hearst British publications and had assisted W.R. in the purchase of St. Donat's Castle [in 1925].*

MD: We had mead, which was made from honey. It was supposed to be a cordial, but I didn't have a chance to taste it. Everybody else had mead, but the [bees were all around my feet.] I

broke up the whole meeting. I screamed at the top of my lungs, "Get the bee out."

Lloyd George said to me, "Don't touch him. If you don't touch him, he'll go away."

I said, "Heck, he's stung me already!"

Well, right after the luncheon we left, and when I got back I missed one glove. I rang about it, and his secretary said, "Mr. Lloyd George would like to keep it, if you don't mind, as a souvenir.

I was so flattered. But it was the only pair of white gloves I had brought from America. But he was a sweetheart. She sent me the glove, and I autographed it for him and sent it back.

He had been retired then, and he was the kindest man. W.R. thought he was just magnificent. He loved life in the raw; nothing phased [fazed] him. He never had a word of criticism about anybody. He was really a great man. I wondered why he had been dislodged [in 1922 as Prime Minister]. England would have done very well if they'd kept him on.

He said to me, "Your name is Davies. Are you Welsh?"

I said yes.

"There is a Davies Lumber Company in Wales and there's a Davies Street in London."

I acknowledged that—but I didn't tell him my real name was Douras.

Lloyd George came to St. Donat's once on the Fourth of July [in 1934]. The English don't think too much of the Fourth of July, but W.R. had bought thousands of dollars' worth of fireworks and the villagers were there and Lloyd George came down to make the first speech. The skyrockets were going high, and we had wine and supper for all the village. Such a thing had never been known in England: an American acknowledging the Fourth of July while he's there.

PP/KSM: *The Coast Guards objected. The fireworks were disturbing the shipping in the Bristol Channel.*

MD: Lloyd George made a beautiful speech. It wasn't quoted from anything; it came right from his heart. He said that George Washington was a great man.

He said, "We will concede the fact that he was [not] born in England, but let us remember that he did quite a lot for America." There were three cheers.

An American flag flew at St. Donat's, and it was a little larger than the English flag. The Welsh people didn't complain about it, but the English did. They wanted the two flags to be the same size.

The question was brought up: What can you do about it? W.R. said, "Are we to cut out the stars?" He could have taken down the English flag and kept the American flag up. Maybe they wouldn't have allowed that. But what an issue to make! It was just a little bit bigger.

I could understand their viewpoint, but they failed to consider that they were up against a terrific American who wanted his flag, and nobody was going to talk him out of it.

MD: Churchill asked us to come down for the weekend at his house [Chartwell, in Kent]. But it was a customary thing with me not to spend weekends at anybody's house, if I could help it. I always had a strange feeling, even in a hotel, and I had that longing to get back to my own territory.

But we went down to his house. He had a place outside of London, and he had this huge brick wall which he had built all by himself. And he built a brick garage. He was quite an artist. He painted apples and oranges and occasionally a bottle of gin or something like that—but very artistically. And he had a big pond of swans, white swans and black swans. And this one day they were fighting. One grabs the other by the throat and it was horrifying. Churchill was picking up stones and throwing at them. He said, "Oh, you bally bloaters!" And one swan was undoubtedly going to kill the other one. But he couldn't stop it. He kept throwing rocks and stones

and I decided that I didn't want to look any longer. I was chicken-hearted.

I went up to the house with his son Randolph, and we sat before the fireplace. It was always cold in England. When he came back he said, "One is dead, naturally."

I said, "Why do you have swans that fight?" Dumb Dora.

Churchill said, "Just show me one that doesn't fight." I didn't know anything about swans; I didn't even know what the swans know. I only knew Gloria Swanson.

MD: One night [in the summer of 1934] the Aga Khan had a big party at Claridge's [Hotel, in London] for Aly Khan and Thelma Furness. George Hearst insisted that I go downstairs to see the big boy, the old Aga Khan.

He was so fat he couldn't walk. He was seated in a chair and everybody was standing around, bowing, before him. He got paid in diamonds for what he weighed, but I wouldn't bow before a fat load of diamonds, so I just walked by.

He muttered something to me. He wanted me to come back, but I wouldn't go. I danced twice with George and went upstairs. By that time, they'd all gone home. I had no right to leave my party upstairs, and they were disgusted with me.

TC: W.R.'s three oldest sons—George, Bill, and John—were part of the group that went to Europe in 1934; so were their wives.

MD: On another trip Charlie Munn met the boat at Southampton [England]. He said, "I'm entertaining the King of Spain tonight."

PP/KSM: *Munn, known as Mr. Palm Beach, was visiting his daughter—The Countess of Bessborough.*

MD: I said, "I'm sorry; we have an engagement to go down to Sunnydale." That was the Prince of Wales's house, and Prince George was going to be there.

He [Charlie Munn] said, "Would you trade two princes [George and Edward] for a king?"

I said, "I'll try to divide them up." We went to Sunnydale, then back to the embassy, where Charlie was having his party. When I walked in he said, "I think you're the rudest person who ever lived. I had the King of Spain here, and now it's almost one o'clock, and you promised to be here at eleven."

I said, "I took two princes instead of a king." It was the truth, but he was furious with me.

MD: I met H. G. Wells when I was in London [in 1934]. Lady Sybil Colfax was having a tea party at the Chelsea Embankment, which was where all the artists lived. She would have tea parties every Thursday, with the artists and writers mixed in with society. It was all right, but it was kind of boring.

She called me and said, "Now, you have not come to any of my teas, and next week I'm having Mr. H. G. Wells."

She must have known that he was a great idol to me. I had read his story of the other world ["The War of the Worlds"] and everything, and I said, "Of course I'll be there."

Elsie Mendl [Elsie de Wolfe] had just been married and was still on her honeymoon when she arrived with white hair and a purple suit and scarlet shoes and her old husband—no, I think she was older than her husband.

TC: Elsie de Wolfe and the diplomat Sir Charles Mendl were married in 1926.

MD: I had visualized H. G. Wells as a big, virile man with a great deal of character. I thought he was a great writer. When the butler finally announced him, I was one of those who sprang right to the front. I wanted to see him first.

He was a little man, about five feet four, with a high voice. He said, "Hello, Elsie." And he said to me, "How do you do? So glad to see you."

I just went to pieces. I said, "Oh, Mr. Wells, I've read your stories, and I think you're wonderful."

He said, "Ohhh—thank you very much. That's quite divine of you."

I got my coat and went home. I had him built up as a big man, but big men don't always have brains, and brains don't always have a bass voice.

TC: H. G. Wells was a guest at San Simeon in 1935, in the company of the actress Paulette Goddard.

MD: I didn't meet Hitler [in September 1934]. I wish to God I had, but I got skunked out of that one, too. When I was in Germany and everybody was saying, "Heil Hitler!" I wanted to see what that character was like.

There was an aide of Hitler's, a Dr. Hanfstaengl, who used to play the piano for him. His nickname was Putzi.

PP/KSM: *Ernst Hanfstaengl was the press officer for the Third Reich, a Harvard graduate and a friend and advisor to the Chancellor.*

MD: He was kicked out after a while. When he came to Bad Nauheim [the health spa], W.R. refused to see him. W.R. said, "If he's anything to do with Hitler, I don't want any part of him."

I said, "Well, I'll see him."

And I talked to Putzi. He said, "The Fuhrer wants to see Mr. Hearst. He will be glad to come here."

I said, "Wait a minute—wait a minute. Mr. Hearst has no desire to meet Mr. Hitler. But I have."

"Yes?"

"I'll tell you why. When I was in Munich I went with my niece [Pepi Lederer, who was living in Munich then] when I heard that he

was arriving at the Brown House. He wasn't at the Brown House. Then we went to the airfield, and he wasn't there either. From there we went to the Munich Opera and waited. Eventually we went back to the Brown House. I got back to the hotel at three in the morning. I didn't get to see what he looks like."

PP/KSM: *[The Big House was] Hitler's office on the Briennerstrasse in Munich.*

MD: "You want to see him?" [Putzi said].

I said, "Do I!" I didn't tell him why I wanted to see Hitler. The reason was that I'd heard his voice and I wanted to see how he performed, to see what kind of a character he was. At least I could go home and say I'd seen him, just to show off.

I'd missed Mussolini [in Rome in 1931], and I thought I was going to edge in on this one. But every time I found out where he was going to be, I'd go there, and there was no Hitler. He was supposed to be at Frankfurt to see a presentation of *Joan of Arc.* He was going to make a speech beforehand, and they were going to have the play. I hopped into a car by myself and went there. *Joan of Arc* was there, but not Hitler. I got so intrigued I had to see that man. If it killed me, I had to see him.

Putzi tried to set it up, but Hitler didn't want to meet me. He wanted to see Mr. Hearst. I worked on W.R. for three days, and I even got Harry Crocker to work on him, but Harry didn't get anywhere either. Finally I said to W.R., "Have a heart. I've gone every place to see this man . . ." You know a woman can talk a man into anything.

Harry and Putzi and W.R. and I flew to Berlin. I hated to fly, but I wanted to see that man. When we got there, only W.R. and I were to go in. I understood that Hitler didn't understand a word of English. So we wanted Putzi to be the interpreter.

Ruth Selwyn was at the airport, and she said, "Marion, My God, I can't get out of the hotel. Could you come over to the Statler?"

I said, "Look, I have a date."

Harry Crocker said, "Go ahead. We'll go on and then meet you at the hotel."

She said, "I've called up Nicky, but he won't give me a cent to get out of here. The housemaids won't help me pack my things, and I can't get out."

PP/KSM: *Her sister Pansy [Ruth Selwyn's sister] was married to Nick Schenck, the president of Loews, Inc., which owned MGM.*

MD: I said to her, "I'll fix it. How much do you owe?"

It was about seven hundred dollars. We started packing her things. In the meantime I was waiting to get over to see Hitler. He looked like Chaplin, I imagined. Possibly worse.

I was throwing her things into the trunk. The phone rang about twenty minutes later, and W.R. said, "We're in the lobby, waiting."

I said, "I'll be right down." Then I said to her, "Come on. I paid your bill. You can send the trunks to America and come to Nauheim with us." I didn't even know her very well, but I thought the routine must be planned. I got downstairs and said, "I'm ready to go."

W.R. said, "The plane's waiting."

I said, "What about Hitler?"

He said, "I just went in for five minutes and then I left."

I said, "What about me? Harry, you promised."

Harry said, "I couldn't help it. We only had five minutes with an interpreter and then we left."

"Thanks," I said.

I didn't talk to anybody for two days, I was so mad. I just wanted to see the guy. I think it was planned. Harry had wanted to take my place, and he did.

W.R. said, "I didn't understand a word Hitler was saying, and I didn't understand his interpreter either." He was cold on the whole subject.

W.R. was not impressed by him. He wanted to talk about the persecution of the Jews, but Hitler's answer was this: "There is no

persecution of any sort." Hitler said that the Jews should not have taken over the industries that were supposed to be for Germans.

W.R. answered back, "I should think industries would belong to every nationality." Then he said goodbye.

W.R.'s answer came not only from his head but from his heart. He didn't approve of Hitler's theory whatsoever. He said he didn't like it at all, that wasn't fair. He said that created hatred and war.

It was a very clever answer; and he meant it. W.R. never said anything just to be clever. Whatever he said was just him, because he knew what he was talking about. He had a great brain.

Those *Jude verboten* signs were all I saw. I thought that was a very bad mistake. [We were gone before the camps and the violence.]

TC: True, morbid events like the Holocaust lay ahead still; yet Hitler had already shown his true colors earlier in the summer of 1934, during the infamous "Night of the Long Knives," when the Nazis carried out numerous political executions.

MD: I think anybody who is equal to a job is entitled to one. If they [the Jews included] do their work properly, they're entitled to as much as anybody else.

W.R. didn't like Hitler at all. I don't think he cared for Mussolini any too much, either. He did say one thing, though. He said, "Mussolini can be credited for the new roads."

I met Neville Chamberlain that same year [1934]. I think we had luncheon one day at their embassy, Number 10 Downing Street. I didn't pay much attention, because I'd been out the night before.

PP/KSM: *Number 10 is the Prime Minister's residence and office in London.*

MD: I thought Chamberlain was very nice. He was sort of a placid man. But when they talked politics, it was way out of my cycle, entirely. I was thoroughly motion pictures, and I was not even good at that. The politics would just go in one ear and out the other.

When our guests would hear we were invited to a dinner party by the Duke of Windsor or the Mountbattens, they'd try to get in on it.

There were loads of things to see in London—the Tower, the Bridge, the Cheshire Cheese thing—but when you mentioned a duke or some lord, then their ears would perk up. If you mentioned a collection at some museum, they were tired; they couldn't be bothered.

I think W.R. was very patient and very charitable.

When we were in London I used to have an excuse for leaving a party. I would say, "I'm sorry, I have to go back to the hotel. I have to write one of Mr. Hearst's editorials."

That was a joke, but the English can't take a joke. The first thing I heard was that they were saying "Marion Davies writes the editorials." They really believed that. They said, "Isn't it amazing that Marion actually writes his editorials? How amazing. How brilliant she is."

I shouldn't have said it, but I didn't know they had no sense of humor. Nobody ever wrote Mr. Hearst's editorials but himself.

Now I did not have a nose for news, but I could appreciate it when I got it. Everybody was talking about Wally Simpson in the fall [of 1936]. I was at Phillip Sassoon's house [in London] the night I got the word, by the grapevine.

I went back to St. Donat's and told W.R. the story. I said, "They're going to get married." As you see, I was a little ahead of things. He immediately called New York. The operator at St. Donat's said, "What number?" and W.R. said, "New York—the daily *Mirror*." The operator fainted. She couldn't conceive of anybody calling New York from Wales. But W.R. got the call through all right, and afterwards we sailed.

He said, "I think it's a good idea for every member of the party to keep in hiding." And that was the story that broke in the New York *Mirror*.

The paper said they were going to be married, and they got married about a week or two afterwards. The King [Edward] wouldn't talk to me any longer.

By the time we arrived in New York, we heard the speech over the radio [December 11, 1936]. I must say I did cry. I couldn't help it. I almost made a river. "The woman I love." It was so wonderful.

The King was charming. He had a great mind, and he should have been king. No doubt of it. He had great intelligence, but I wouldn't call him a politician. I think he would have been the greatest king of England.

I had gotten the information one night at a very stately party. Prince George was there. He was a very nice boy, too. Afterwards [as of 1934] he became the Duke of Kent. His mother was Queen Mary and his brothers were Prince Henry and George. I think she had five, but one died.

PP/KSM: *King George V and Queen (Victoria) Mary had six children. Edward was king for less than a year in 1936; his brother Albert Frederick Arthur George, the Duke of York, became King George VI. There was Princess Mary, the only sister; Prince Henry, the Duke of Gloucester; Prince George, the Duke of Kent, who died in World War II action; and Prince John, who had died in 1919 at age 14.*

MD: Prince George had already married a countess who was after him.

PP/KSM: *[The countess was] Lady Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon, the daughter of the Earl of Strathmore and Kinghorne.*

TC: Prince George, newly named the Duke of Kent, married Princess Marina of Greece and Denmark in November 1934 at Westminster Abbey (Wikipedia). He became the Duke in October 1934, a detail that may help date the following segment of Marion's memoir.

MD: Another summer I went to the Queen's Garden Party. It was amazing to see. Everybody was imprisoned in Buckingham Palace. The men and girls arrived and had to sit in their cars for hours, twiddling their thumbs, wondering when they were going to get into the Palace to bow before the King and Queen. It was a lovely, lovely way to spend one's time.

The Duke of Kent wanted me to go. I said, "I want a personal invitation." I really didn't want to go, and W.R. wouldn't go to anything of the sort.

I didn't have the clothes anyway. You had to wear white gloves, a garden dress and a big hat. So Prince George went out and got the clothes for me. Of course they didn't fit.

I said, "Don't you dare send me a bill for those. They don't fit." I had to have safety pins in the back. But I went, and it was a very nice garden party, I must admit that. I wore my white gloves and a foulard print dress, in very good taste, and a big straw hat. That hat was so big I thought it would hide me.

We sat there, and finally everybody stood up. The Queen had arrived. The Prince wanted a drink very badly. He had left me two or three times to have one.

I didn't know you were supposed to kiss the Queen's hand. She went around to everybody with her hand out. She went right by my nose. I was horrified. They always say, "When in Rome, do as the Romans do." But I don't believe in that theory, and I wouldn't do it anyway.

You were supposed to stand up, and I didn't. I was sitting with the Prince. He had come back from the bar, and I was afraid he was going to get plastered. Well, the hand went by and everybody was awed. She had on white gloves, too, and she went right by me. I said to him, "Who's that?"

"That was my mother."

Oh God, I thought, I'm ruined; I had better leave England immediately. He said, "That's all right."

"I don't think so. I'm ashamed of myself."

"She didn't even notice you."

Thank God for that. So I never really met the Queen.

MD: When we were in Rome [in 1936], W.R. was invited to see Mussolini, and when you're invited you have to go. If you're in a

country and you want to learn about it, it's a good idea to go and find out what they have to say for themselves; you might want to write a good story about it, when they're not looking.

He told me that Mussolini has this huge room—almost as big as Louis B. Mayer's office at MGM.

Contessa Dorothy di Frasso asked us to a party to meet Ciano and Mussolini's daughter. She had a house high up on a hill in Rome, called the "Villa Madama."

PP/KSM: *The eldest of Mussolini's six children, Edda, had married Count Galeazzo Ciano, who had negotiated the Axis agreement, politically linking Italy with Germany, in the fall of 1936. At the party Marion recalls there were thirteen at the table. The Hearst correspondent in Rome, Frank Gervasi, reports that W.R. was upset by the unlucky number, and annoyed with Gervasi for causing the situation. He had rushed the missing guest, his wife, to a hospital, and the next day, July 24, 1937, their son Tom was born. Later he would become the managing editor of Bobbs-Merrill, and responsible for this book.*

TC: On July 24, 1937, W.R. and Marion were at San Simeon, where they'd been since the first of the month, following a few weeks spent in New York that saw the Hearst empire going into a virtual receivership.

MD: I never met Mussolini. He wasn't at the party [in 1936]. W.R. was sitting on Dorothy's right, and I was way at the other end. Ciano was at the head of the table. I was on his right, and Arthur Brisbane was alongside of me. Ciano did not speak a word of English, and I couldn't speak Italian.

Then I made the famous remark which everybody at the table heard. I said, in French, "Why do you tease the Abyssinians?" I just meant it as a joke. I meant the Ethiopians.

Ciano just looked at me with a kind of funny look. Brisbane left the table and went down to W.R.'s end, and then a note came to me: "I have been informed that you are telling American secrets. Do not talk about American secrets."

It really annoyed me. If I'd known any American politics or secrets, I wouldn't have told them. I didn't even know how to speak

Italian, much less French, but Brisbane had told W.R. that I was giving away military secrets.

Brisbane was mad because he couldn't get Ciano's ear. I sensed that immediately. When Brisbane came back with that note, I read it and said, "Put this in your pocket. You might use it for posterity." The only thing I did understand Ciano saying was, "Hollywood. Hollywood."

Brisbane said, "Why don't you give me a break? We're leaving in the morning, and I have to get an interview with this character—for my column ["Today"]."

I said, "I'll see that you get it, all right."

I knew he had sold me down the line, and I was darned if he'd get a chance to see Ciano. I was determined to keep Ciano away from Brisbane; I could do it by the wink of the eye.

The music started playing when we were having coffee. We danced, Ciano and I. Brisbane the wallflower watched, waiting for his chance to get at him. When the music stopped, I'd say, "Encore." My feet were sore, but I was determined. Finally I got word from W.R. that it was time to go. I left very hurriedly, and Brisbane didn't want to come with us. I said, "Come on! Come on! We're supposed to go home, and you have to leave early in the morning." All the way down the hill he never spoke to me. He was furious that he didn't get his interview. But if he'd been decent to me I would have said, "Move right in. Take my seat."

TC: The beginning of Chapter 11, "Saving an Empire," includes more about Brisbane and the trip to Europe in 1936. Alice Head gave the best summary of the dinner Marion described—this in her memoir, *It Could Never Have Happened* (London 1939), pp. 216-217. See also *Hearst and Marion: The Santa Monica Connection*, p. 182.