

Cropley, Ralph E. "Doc"
1945-52

Remind

W

March 19, 1945

My dear Doc:

You need not feel sorry for me. I assure you that being FDR's wife is no handicap and I never think about being "First Lady"! That is a silly title.

I shall be glad to have you come to lunch or tea at my apartment in New York City when I have some free time in New York, but that won't be until the end of the month.

Sincerely,

Mr. Ralph E. Cropley
18 Euclid Avenue
Summit, N. J.

O/h

Dear Doc,

You need not feel sorry for me. I assure you that being H.P.'s wife is no handicap & I never think about being "First Lady"! That is a silly title.

I'll be glad to have you come to lunch or tea at my apartment whenever you have some free time in New York, but that won't be until the end of the month.

BR

A ROUND ROBIN LETTER FOR MARCH, 1945.

Dear American Friendships,

There are lots of things today that I might write you about, with the Moscow guns booming every night at nine pm, and with that extraordinary Bear getting nearer to Berlin, hour by hour, but, because I'm so sure your papers will regale you with more war news than you want to read about, I think I'll forget it and talk of the weather...M'yes... we've certainly had it, the worst in fifty years, with 28 degrees of frost here, just a short week ago...With no running water in the house at all, for just short of a week...a coal supply such as made you PILE UP THE FIRE, with niggardly ounces of fuel...with no potatoes in any of the shops, and ever the surprise of finding either gas or electric... or both cut right off, to save fuel, you may rest assured that everyone soon found that leisure was the best spent in bed. Most folks for a time kept this a dark secret, lest another might think them slothful, but sooner or later, as when the war news was bad in days long past, each took the other into their confidence, and with a wreathlike smile, the rejoinder would come out, "YES...we are doing the same, and do you know... John is wearing his sweater over his shirt, IN BED...Never ever done a thing like that before in his life."

So, it kept on freezing, and snowing...until the roads were ripe for all those things that Dean Swift never thought about when he wrote in his Journal to Stella, in 1711, "We are now in high frost and snow...the largest fire can hardly keep us warm...I make short steps and walk slow, and I never tread on my heel. 'Tis a good proverb the Devonshire folk have:-

"Walk fast in snow, in frost walk slow,
And still as you go, tread on your toe:
When frost and snow are both together,
Sit by the fire and spare shoe leather."

If I remember aright, even after writing the above comments, the Dean himself fell, "breaking a shin in the Strand," but still he had no bicycle to ride, or car to drive, which made life last week so hazardous for blue blooded one and commoner.

Well...the week prior to this, was bad enough so far as the roads were concerned, and in this manner I had three, nay four, experiences...

The first was a road accident at 6:30 pm at night, when a very old and shrewd Jew, nearer eighty than seventy, passed through this village, taking a load of old hens to Leeds Market...It licks me where he collected them, for a local inhabitant would never know where to seek for a boiling fowl for the pot, in these times...still, he had them there, crated up...and, in the hurry of his getting home, he collided with a stationary vehicle, and plastered the whole of the North of England with lime and feathers...He was happily, without a scratch, and when I got to the incident, he must have made his plans pretty accurately, for I couldn't get a word out of him, apart from Yiddish...

questioned him, took read measurements, everything that is part of the process of preceeding against the wronging party, and the whole of that hectic half hour was I regaled with the most charming sample of Old Testament language, that I have every heard...Eventually...(and he had been at my elbow the whole of the time, missing nothing)...I came to the part of the job when he had to be told that he would be summonsed for a traffic offense, and even as I went through the formula of words, telling him so, I felt inwardly he wouldn't know a word about it, and that I should later have to send him notification through his City Police, that he would the better understand...To my intense amazement, after I had ended my speech, he replied, in the plainest English a Jew has ever uttered, "Thank you...You have been very fair...I will give you an egg!"

Bribery and corruption looming high in my mind, I repulsed the inuendo, and the egg, though dearly would I have treasured a shell egg, and I went home amazed at the perfidy of the race.

Because the frost continued, and was in fact banking up to a climax, I was not surprised a few days later, to be called out to assist in another road accident, where a double decker bus had left the road, had crashed through a hedge and had overturned. In this crowded bus, it transpired, an American soldier had travelled, and although suffering from a broken ankle, had WITH SPEED, gone to a nearby house where there was a telephone, and having possessed the instrument, rang up the only telephone number he remembered...a neighboring American military hospital, with the electric result of bringing to the scene exactly as I arrived, such a mess of ambulances that one would have thought they had been shot there from the barrel of a giant gun...It was marvellous to work with them, as they hacked and sawed through the wreckage to the trapped persons within, handing them as they were extricated, one to the other, where another gang of American ambulance workers awaited them, either with ready brewed fresh tea, the morphia needle, or the intricate regalia of the transfusion unit, in which fresh plasma had been already mixed with the sterilized water...So they ministered in their several ways, methodically, kindly and reassuringly...and as our local doctor afterwards said, "Without a word,..and yet, never stopping their chewing." The Dr., a sound wizardly Irish student said, "And begorror, they are a hundred and fifty years ahead of the medical profession here, that bunch of American ambulance workers..." I agreed, so I pass on the laurels to you over there.

The third of my chapter about accidents, was my being summoned to an accident where a private car had been caught in a skid, colliding with another stationary vehicle on the road...damaging the car, and tearing the handles from the two doors on one side. There they stood, as I arrived, the occupant of the car still seated in the rear of the car, with his driver, waiting at the front...Again particulars and measurements were the order of the moment, with a statement from the driver of the car, and then to finish the report, I moved to the rear door of the car, where the passenger, a dignified elderly man in much beribboned uniform, still waited. I opened the door, for I wanted his name and address, as a witness to the accident, and, asking him for his Identity Card, which he produced speedily, I in a whirl of amazement

...I realized that he was King Haakon of Norway...So, was I introduced to His Majesty, King Haakon...and found him as most of us... Yes...It WAS a thrill.

Of my last misfortune to report upon, I must state that it was a sticky business, for a lorry laden with of all things, "Black Treacle", ran away, and disgorged its turgid stream upon the highway, close by to the day school...

What followed as inevitable, and needs little description, for the children from round and square ran out with spoons and tins, and the treacle deluged road quickly took upon itself the appearance of a fly-paper, in a grocer's shop window at midsummer. It will not do to ponder this too long for many a mother is still for the fourth and fifth time, woefully sponging down sticky banisters, querulously repeating to her neighbor the question put to the Dormouse by Alice at the tea party, "But I don't understand. Where did they draw all the treacle from?"

No, it is sufficient for you to regale yourselves with the thought that this heaven sent orgy of treacle must have served a little to compensate the youngsters in some measure for all the joys they were compelled to forego last Christmas. Alice, you may remember, suggested that the three little children who live on treacle must have been ill. "So they were", said the Dormouse, "very ill", and it may be in the present instance that anxious parents found it necessary to take other syrups from top shelves of a less delectable nature, but what of that? No fatalities have so far been reported, and the children, even if they are bed ridden for a day and a night, have had their hour...a gloriously sticky hour at that.

Closing...sadly may I relate that I too had an accident...I fell from my cycle nine days ago and am just up again, having wrenched the back muscles. Still, I'm up and about again, gingerly...and your letter is ready for the posting.

With affectionate regards...and sincerely your friend,

TED.

I find she is not being honored ^{not}
just with a Liberty - but with a
big C-3. Transport. Hope Laurel
gets one too. Both are really
deserving.

But Edith still wants me to say
something to you. It can't be
written otherwise you'd had it long
ago. So if you have a free moment
- if you'd like a meal with an old
friend who likes you for yourself
alone & is rather sorry for you
in your handicap as first lady,
ring me up at the U.S. Maritime
Commission ^{in Mexico} & I'll cancel engagements
I have.

Doc.

My dear Doc. You need not be sorry for me. I know
that being Top's wife is no handicap & I have things
about being "First Lady"! That is a lily row!
I'll be glad to have you ^{come} to the apt. when I
have a free moment at 4. I'll be glad to be accompanied
I'll send a few minutes =