

To
all Friends
of
Unforgettable
Claire



Sydney, 14th August, 1963

You have known her. But you may not know what she meant—and still means—to me. Therefore I am sending you in these pages a little poem which I wrote to her on the 29th November 1939 from London. When I was in Dachau and Buchenwald she had fought fearlessly the Gestapo. Many times the blackguards warned her that she—a “German Aryan”—brings herself in mortal danger by fighting for a Jew. “He is innocent!” she cried, “he is innocent!” In the end she won. I was released, but had to leave immediately for England.

From London I made frantic efforts to get her over to me. But the war broke out. I tried desperately to get her out of Nazi Germany, and to save her, as she had saved me. I sent her to my family in Czernowitz Roumania. But the authorities did not allow her to stay there indefinitely. Then, writing in desperation to all my friends in the world to help me to help her, I found true friends. My old friend Ing. Simon Klein and his good wife Berta, invited her to Greece. Then Mussolini attacked Greece. In the meantime, the Russians had attacked Roumania and my poor family in Czernowitz was declared “capitalists”. The small shops of my brothers were taken away from them, and they were not allowed to get work anywhere.

I could not help them, but I could still help Claire. There was only one way for us to come together, and stay together, come what may. We had to go around the whole globe. After surmounting great difficulties I managed to go West across the Atlantic, Canada, the Pacific and Japan, and then on to Shanghai in China, where my cousin Paula lived with her husband Kurt Beck.

Claire went East, travelling alone from Greece to Turkey, then across the Black Sea to Russia, then across frost and snowbound Siberia and Manchuria, and then across the Yellow Sea in a tramp steamer, sitting on the bare floor among Japanese soldiers on the open deck.

She was then 58. She had marshalled all her strength and all courage to stay alive, and follow all my directives, in order that I could complete the masterpiece of my life: to bring her to me across the warring countries, across the hostile continents and across the cruel seas. On Christmas Eve 1940 we embraced each other, after 3 years of terrible separation.

Then her task completed, all her strength ebbed away, and she broke down. I nursed her back to health, until she was her old cheerful self again.



This was our New Years card which we sent out to all friends in the world, and to our family in Russian-occupied Czernowitz. Here you can see us both, how we made a living with our beloved hobby of Vienna. We made movies to order and edited and titled movies of Shanghai residents. This picture card is the one which was received by my family, and they all were very happy to have good news from us. We received news from them too.

But life in war-torn Shanghai was hard. Disaster came to Claire. She contracted typhoid fever. I refused to give her up to a hospital, but nursed her day and night until she was out of danger. Then she broke her arm, and had to lay in a heavy plastercast during the horrible heat of a torrid Shanghai summer.

As if all this was not enough, the Japanese drove us into the Hongkew Ghetto. Then American bombs fell among us, killing many people and setting the houses around us on fire. Somehow we lived through it all, even cheerfully, because we were together. Then peace came, and my cousin Karl sent us and his sister Paula and husband Kurt an entry permit for Australia. On the 14th July 1946, we joined you all here in happy Australia, and lived together here for 15 happy years. But her heroic heart was damaged by all her worries for me. On the 14th August 1961 it could not go on any longer.

Claire died as she had lived: fearless and full of love. Can you imagine that a person, who knows that she is going to die, could be radiantly happy, could sing and laugh and love in ethereal exuberance? When I saw her in this state of euphoria, I did not (and did not want to) realize its true meaning. Instead I took it as a good sign that the crisis is over, and that she is again on the road to recovery. But Claire knew it better.

The name given to her by her parents is Klara in German, and Claire in French and English. The word comes from the Latin "clarus" meaning clear, clean, pure, lucid, bright, luminous, cloudless, serene, hence unclouded by passion. These words do indeed describe her character.

But there is a word in German which is formed by her name, and which has quite a different meaning. The word is "verklaert." It means that state of being, in which I saw Claire in her last conscious hours. It means "transfigured", a supernatural change in the appearance of a person who seems not to belong to this world any more. Claire was indeed "verklaert."

When she woke up after an injection, she was radiant with beauty and happiness. She laughed like a young girl, and was exuberant with joy. Then she began to sing an old melancholic Viennese song, but there was no melancholy in her musical voice. She sang:

*"Es wird a Wein sein
Doch mir wern nimmer sein!
's wird schoene Maederln geben,
Doch mir wern nimmer leben!"*

*"A wine will be,
But not we!
Nice girls will be,
Dead we shall be!"*

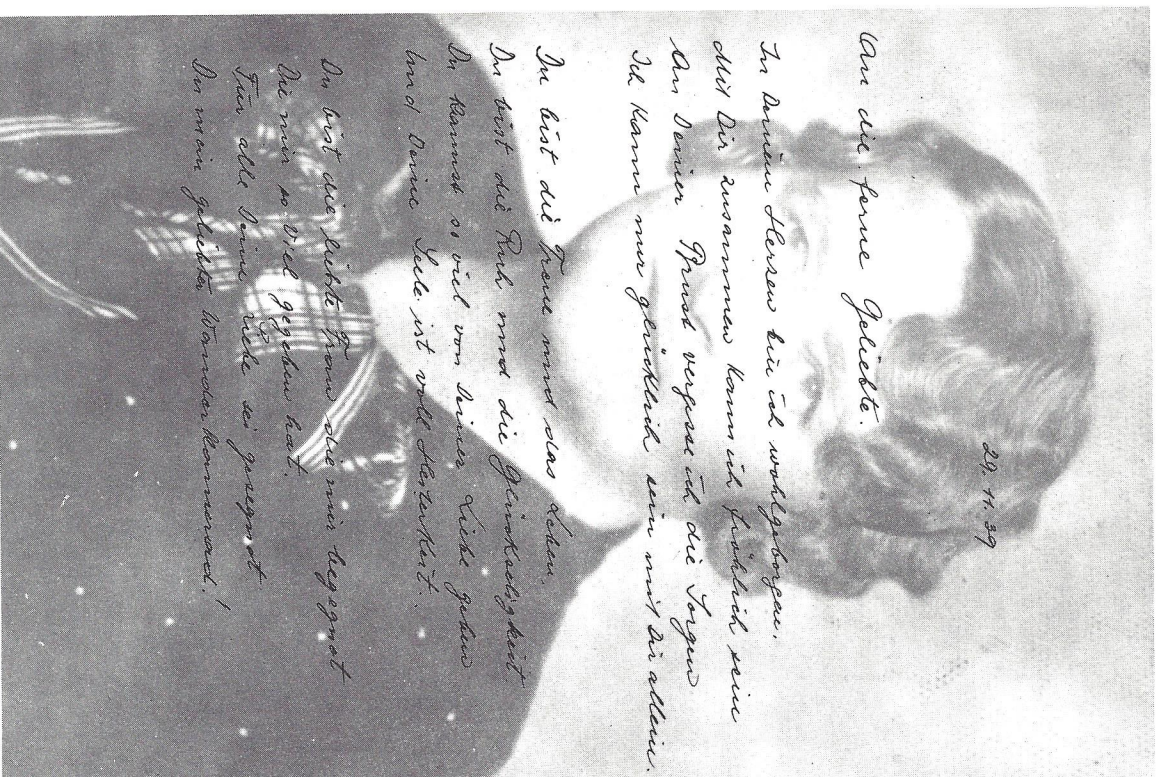
And then she took my head into her hands, looked deeply into my eyes, and said to me in English:

"My Darling! I am going to die! I loved you all the time, and I am going to love you after my death, until your last day, and your last breath!"

And then she kissed me for the last time.

I am not a writer, nor a poet, and I never indulged in poetry as a means of emotional expression. Moreover, in 1939 I was past middle-age, and past romance. The more so are my words, which follow, witness to that wonderful creature which was Claire. I had completely forgotten my little poetical love letters from London. I found them after her death in a secret pocket of her wallet. She had carried them through Greece and Turkey, Russia and Siberia, Shanghai and Sydney for fully 22 years. And herebelow is one of them. For those who don't understand German I add a translation, which however cannot express the emotional intensity of the words in our mother tongue.

Carl, a refugee in England to



Claire, a refugee in Roumania

London, 29th November, 1939

AN DIE FERNE GELIEBTE

In Deinem Herzen bin ich wohlgeborgen.
 Mit Dir zusammen kann ich frohlich sein!
 An Deiner Brust vergesse ich die Sorgen.
 Ich kann nur glücklich sein mit Dir allein!

Du bist die Treue und das Leben.
 Du bist die Ruh und die Glückseligkeit!
 Du kannst so viel von Deiner Liebe geben.
 Und Deine Seele ist voll Heiterkeit.

Du bist die liebste Frau die mir begegnet,
 Die mir so viel gegeben hat.
 Für alle Deine Liebe sei gesegnet,
 Du mein geliebter Wanderkamerad!

Translation

London, 29th November, 1939

TO MY LOVE—SO FAR AWAY

*Within your Heart there is my loving nest.
With you together I feel joyous too
My worries vanish at your loving breast.
I can be happy only when I am with you!*

*You are my Strength, my Faith, and all my Life!
You are my Rest, my Peace, my Blessedness!
You are my Life Companion and my Wife.
And in your Soul is Heaven's Happiness!*

*You are the finest Woman whom I found,
Who gave me all the fullness of her Heart.
For all your Love be blessed beyond bound,
You my beloved "Wanderkamerad!"*

The meaning of "Wanderkamerad", as we understood it, is most difficult to translate. It does not mean "wander comrade." It means much more than "hiking companion".



For us, it meant walking hand in hand through flowering mountain meadows up to the towering mountain peaks.



But it also meant walking hand in hand through the dark abyss of despair, and through the valley of the shadow of death.

Wanderkameraden forever!



Claire when she was 70

Not even Death do us part!