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Outline.

The Last Night.

Erika Mann.

The article is to be based on notes I actually took down during my last night in London. For certain reasons I had to walk through bombarded streets a great deal during the nightly "concert" and I was not at all sure whether this would be my last night in London or just my last night.

I am to describe this night with all its perfectly phantastic and miserable adventures as something quite normal and very familiar.

I begin with a conversation between a friend of mine and myself, who invites me for dinner, but since he happens to live somewhat out of town in a residential district of Golders Green, this invitation means that I will have to find my way back through hell, for during the "concert" there wont be a taxi and most of the tube stations will be closed. Yet I accept his invitation.

I shall describe the exact sound of the "concert" composed of ten different "sound effects", with all of its "fortissimos", its "retardandos", its desceptive "piantissimos" which the "composers" put in merely to make the "fortissimos" more impressive.

The friend whose invitation I accepted in spite of the concert is a Dutchman. I shall give interesting news about present conditions in Holland and about the way the Dutch deal with the Nazi occupation.

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I must leave my Dutch friend around nine o'clock for at 10.15 I have got to broadcast to Germany. I am to describe my journey to the B.B.C., then a short description of the B. B.C. at night is to follow. There are posters displayed all over the place saying: " The concert hall is your refuge" and I am given a little printed passport saying " your bed: concert hall Nr. 19, please fold your blankets in the morning."

I am to describe my broadcasting to the Germans and the strange feeling it arouses to speak to them while their " heroes" are throwing down their deadly stuff and while the sky outside is red from their fires.

I cannot, however, take advantage of my " refuge", the " concert-hall", for this last night. I must go home, get home somehow to pack and to arrange my papers for the censor.

On my lonely and adventurous way home I stop at the hospital in order to talk to a girl friend of mine, a dress designer who happens to be a night warden. Three times a week she can be found at that job, any time between 8 in the evening and 6 in the morning.

In my article I shall reproduce the conversation I had with her . (I took it down in my notes almost literally).

Finally I shall describe the strange night life in my hotel on Berkeley Square, where I eventually arrive.

I do not, however, stay in the shelter, but go up to my room on the third floor to do my packing. I shall describe the amazing psychology of a person during a serious bombardment. When the bombs fall very near by, I used to decide that I simply had to do something in the interest of my security. Then I used to go to what I called " my shelter", but which was nothing but a chair I had moved out of my room, and placed in a little corridor separating my

bedroom from my bath-room. It goes without saying that the chair in this little corridor was not any safer than my bed itself. In spite of this it gave me a feeling that something had been done, that I was quite secure.

Every morning at a quarter to six two or three Nazi bombers,- they were always the same and our roof spotters clearly recognized them by the curves^a they described regularly and by ~~the~~ a few other peculiarities of theirs,- used to fly over our house on their way home and throw down every single bomb still at their disposal. It was this "finale" of the "concert" which angered me most of all, for it showed, more clearly than anything else, the complete cynicism with which Mr. Goering's obedient heroes went after their job. "Our", the British pilots, would sometimes return with their whole bomb-load; they would explain: "for this or another good reason we could not hit the target in question,- here are our bombs,- we'll use them properly tomorrow."

The night,- the last night,- has passed. I am to leave from Waterloo Station. I hate leaving,- but I'll soon be back. Waterloo Station has been hit during my last night. Its telephone doesn't answer in the morning. But in the afternoon Waterloo is already repaired. My train leaves on time, carrying me through a quiet, lovely and peaceful landscape, while the "concert" re-begins in London.