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18.

We found out that we lived in the "department" of TARN-ET-GARONNE. We really had everything necessary. Now more about Serignac.

Serignac was a sleepy quiet village. The peasants are peaceful, and go about their own business. In a few weeks I became used to a "peasants way of life". I mean that I didn't think about going to a movie or other place of enjoyment. Very often we took a "walk" to a neighboring town, where we bought some important articles. The nearest town was "BEAUMONT-de-Lomagne", which was about seven kilometers, close to five miles away. I always hated to go there by foot. (Now I think it was a very nice walk). A few times we rode by bus, which came every Thursday to SERIGNAC. There is one thing about walking like we did, and that was the scenery. It was really beautiful. Far away one can see the village or town which they are going to. You very seldom meet an auto on the sandy road. My Mother, Father, Sister and I rest every time we become tired, and sit down by the wayside. Then we start again. Soon we begin to see some red-roofed houses which belong to the town of BEAUMONT. We walk through the streets until we reach the Place de l'hotel de ville" or market place. We usually go to the same Cafe every time we are in BEAUMONT. There my father drinks French wine which comes from the neighboring fields. Often he drinks beer. My mother, sister and I drink lemonade. Then we leave the cafe. In the marketplace we always see a "market", where peasants sell their fruits and vegetables. My mother sometimes buys something. Since we do not cook like the peasants do (we use an alcohol burner) my father stops in one of the hardware stores to buy alcohol. In 2 or 3 hours we buy everything needed, including some straw hats for my sister and I. If it is thursday we probably take the bus back. Soon we reach SERIGNAC where my mother prepares the meal.

When my mother goes to the village washing pool, we always go with her. It's about a half mile down the road.

As time passed my father realized that SERIGNAC was not the place for us to stay too long, so he began to arrange for us to leave ^{the} the large city of TOULOUSE, which was about 40 miles to the South. It was now around the end of the month of june. My father always arranged things beforehand. I mentioned before that there were 3 sisters, also refugees. They decided to go with us. The day of our departure was nearing. We bade farewell to the peasants, especially to Marie-Therese, and her mother. They were really sorry that we left, since my sister always took care of her. Our luggage was all ready. We walked toward the market place where our bus was to come. My sister and I ran over to the village "Epicerie" - grocery store. We wanted to buy some candy. As we reached the door we remembered that it was not the day on which candy was sold. I still don't know why tuesday and friday were the only 2 days on which candy is sold in this province of France.

Anyway, I went without the candy.

Our bus soon arrived. The girls were all there. We boarded the bus, and were on our way to MONTAUBAN, 20 miles away. In a few hours we arrived in MONTAUBAN, Capital of TARN-ET-GARONNE. The bus stopped near the railway station. We didn't get out of the bus. In another half hour we were on our way again. I myself did not know where we were going. I tried to sleep a little. I believe we travelled for over 2 hours. Then we came to a stop. Some of the passengers began to go outside. Again my father decided to get out here. We carried our luggage outside, and laid it on the grass in front of the church. Some of the peasants came toward us and looked interestingly at us. In a few minutes the bus left. I was sitting on one of the valises. Then a man came toward us, I believe he was the mayor of the village. He tried to speak to us, while we were walking down the main road in the village. It didn't look like we were going to live in a big city. We reached the other end of the road in the village. One of the men asked us to come in his house. He then asked us to sit down, and wanted to know if we could eat anything. The whole family was really so nice to us. I guess the rest of the people were also in some peasants house. Finally we came out again and walked back to the church, to get our packs. The 3 girls that we came with were still sitting on their bags, on the grass. Finally they got up, and came with us. Our house was shown to us. It was right next to the family who had invited us in. The first thing we did was unpack. My sister and I went outside. Near our house was a small road. I don't know where it led to. We began to walk until we reached the other end, and that was near the grocery store by the church. We walked back on the main road.

There were 3 other refugee families besides us and the girls. One day my sister and I decided to walk to the girls house. We had never been there but we knew to follow the road. We arrived there later, laughing when we saw where they were living. It was a house alright, but so far away from the main part of the village. By now I knew the name of this place. It was "VARENNES". The girls took us inside to show us their home. Then we went outside to talk. Once in a while they were able to ride into the village. On the left side of our house we had a good family, and now on our right side there lived an old man by the name of "Kazimir". He and my father became good friends. On the second day in VARENNES we learned of another peasant family. They lived a short way across the road. Their name is Vidal. We used to visit them frequently, and sit near the fireplace, and talk. I played with their dog. More days passed. My father and I often went to the woods miles away, and there we picked mushrooms and firewood. My father did not know how to speak french much. One day he, I and Monsieur Kazimir went to the forest to pick mushrooms and wood. While looking for mushrooms my father showed me a dead snake on the ground. Now he was trying to explain to Monsieur Kazimir that there probably were snakes in the woods; so he said "Il y a de crocodiles au bois" which means, that there are crocodiles in the forest. Of course he did not know how to say "snake" so the nearest similar reptile is a crocodile. Monsieur Kazimir had understood what he had meant. My father visited M. Kazimir's one room house, next to us. From one end of the ceiling to the other end were dried mushrooms hanging down.