Love, Clarence

The Rhetoric in a Single Letter

As I read this letter over and over again, I realized that Clarence Clark is a great writer. Some situations he describes makes me feel sympathy for him, or makes me feel as though I'm looking at what he wants Evelyn to picture. The images he attempts to create for Evelyn makes a reader see what he is describing. In one paragraph, Clarence outlines what the terrain looks like in Italy:

"Every thing was dry and brown when we came here and now it doesn't look like the same place after the rains. Its all green now. See a few trees or some sort in bloom every now and then and the road into camp is lined with rose bushes which are now in full bloom. It feels like it should frost about any evening but so far hasn't yet. Looks more like spring than fall."

Clarence attempts to illustrate for Evelyn the weather and seems as though he is enjoying the warmer climate. The phrase that stood out to me was "it doesn't look like the same place after the rains." No one today would say something like that. Clarence is trying to have Evelyn picture what he sees everyday when he goes into the camp. He comments on how it hasn't been that cold, even though it's November. Clarence paints a nice picture for Evelyn; I just think he wants to enjoy these sights with her.
"It really would be nice to be some place for a few days where I could talk with my mouth with[out] having to use my hands. I don't know any more of this language than I did the first day I came here. And I plan on leaving the same way."

Clarence makes it clear that he does not take a liking to the language barrier that he is dealing with. He is currently stationed in Italy when he writes this letter, and he is referring to the fact that he does not know Italian. He indicates that he does not want anything to do with the language, as he hasn't learned any of it. I think Clarence had gotten so frustrated with the lack of communication that he has no desire to want to learn Italian. I think Clarence looks for sympathy from Evelyn when he writes her this because he wants Evelyn to show him affection.

In one part of the letter, Clarence displays some sarcasm. He states "...but I'd rather have a letter from you than any one else I know. Wonder why!" We know that Clarence and Evelyn dated before the war, but Clarence still enjoys letters from her than anyone else. He then adds some sarcasm with "Wonder why!," implying their past relationship, though Clarence does not seem to be over his love for Evelyn. We can see that as he closes all of his letters with "Love, Clarence." Short and sweet, but it still leaves an impact, compared to just "From" or "Sincerely." The "Love" proposes a big statement, and gives the obvious clue that Clarence still wants Evelyn, though Evelyn has been entertaining many men throughout the war.

Clarence does his best to keep his relationship with Evelyn through his detailed letters, using humor and affection to keep her reading.
The History in a Single Letter

In the two page letter that I transcribed, Clarence Clark mentions topics that I was able to research further. Clarence himself was a soldier in the 34th Infantry during World War II. During World War II, the soldiers of the 34th Infantry were known as "the Red Bulls." The Germans gave them that nickname because of the logo on their uniforms. In World War II, the 34th Infantry was the first division to be shipped overseas on January 1st, 1942, less than a month after Pearl Harbor. The Red Bulls were on the top of the list for deployment because of their skills in the Louisiana Maneuvers, which were trial runs for war battle conducted in September of 1941. Most of the soldiers in the 34th Infantry came from South and North Dakota, Minnesota, and Iowa, which is where our friend Clarence resided.

Clarence indicates in one part of the letter that "We really had a good dinner Thanksgiving..." I decided to research about Thanksgiving dinners during World War II. The military would try and provide dinners to the soldiers overseas on Thanksgiving. Some American soldiers would say that the meal was good, "But the feeling of Thanksgiving wasn't there." Some Britain soldiers would remark at how surprised they were when they would see the food that was served during the Thanksgiving celebrations, "I'd never seen so much food, as we were all living on rations." Thanksgiving during World War II was a
special time, when the American soldiers would have a full meal and be somewhat reminded of home.

Clarence mentions to Evelyn, "I haven't heard Bob Hope for months." I had heard the name Bob Hope before, and wanted to research about his accomplishments. Hope was an all-around entertainer throughout the 20th century. He appeared in numerous movies and television series, including his own TV show. Hope also hosted the Oscars fourteen times between the 1930s and 1970s. One of his achievements that made Hope different was his USO shows. He made 57 tours to entertain the troops, beginning in World War II (1939) and ending in the Persian Gulf War (1991). Bob Hope was named an "Honorary Veteran" by President Bill Clinton in 1997.

Clarence tells Evelyn that he went into town and saw the show *Sun Valley Serenade* with the Glenn Miller Band. *Sun Valley Serenade* was a movie released in 1941 starring Sonja Henie, John Payne, Glenn Miller, etc. The movie tells the story about a band that arrives at a ski resort, where the pianist falls for the new girl, which his girlfriend doesn't take lightly, and drama ensues. The Glenn Miller Orchestra formed in 1938 and
produced many hits, including "Moonlight Serenade" and "Chattanooga Choo Choo." Some of the stars of the film had interesting lives. Sonja Henie was a Norwegian figure skater and a three-time Olympic Champion in 1928, 1932, and 1936. The orchestra's leader Glenn Miller was on his way to entertain troops in 1944, when his plane disappeared. His current status still states "missing in action." Theories about what happened to Glenn Miller still circulate today.

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References:


