

# DAPHNE MARLATT

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## ARMS ALARMS

*We are not supposed to be particularly good riflemen now that we are so preoccupied with machine guns, but it is up to us to compete with the Asiatic boys, who are not machine gunners. We got an extraordinary notice round this morning giving us orders what to do on the proclamation of a Precautionary Warning – where to report, suggestions as to what to do with wives, children, jewelry, furniture etc. & finishing up by pointing out that any delay, occasioned by not taking these hints, would “not be tolerated in the event of a general mobilization.” I don’t know whether there is any particular object in all this, or whether the instructions are merely of a general nature. The position in China looks serious in the extreme (I hope it will have sorted itself out peacefully by the time you are reading this, but I fear there can be no lasting settlement) but I cannot imagine that it would affect us here with any suddenness.*

*The prestige of Britain in the Far East now stands at a discount – we missed our chance in stopping (or failing to stop) Japan’s entry into Manchuria. At that time we should have accepted the offer of collaboration with [the] U.S. We turned it down – chiefly because popular opinion at home had this wretched “isolationist” policy drummed into it. The result now is that Japan is the dominant power unless we care to combine with Russia – wouldn’t the yellow press at home howl if we suggested doing so?*

*June 11th 1936*

here a crowd of crows  
caw-caw incessant  
insane warning at  
the bandit-eyed raccoon  
prowling a neighbour's roof

as if that were the only alarm  
to be raised these days of  
history intensified

oil wars, drought, & famine  
fished-out parts of ocean  
coral die-off, Arctic thaw

Australia burning

will strident crow-gang cries  
outlast us?

(only if trees do)