

The many faces of Clare Boothe Luce

by IRENE CORBALLY KUHN



ONLY A RARE individual can do many things well. Clare Boothe Luce is such a person.

A woman whose accomplishments must be considered extraordinary even by the most demanding standards, she has found the secret of squeezing many lives into one lifetime. At 56 she can look back on successful careers as an editor, author, journalist, lecturer, politician, diplomat, wife and mother. The facets of her life are endless.

Besides finding time for all this, she has managed to learn five languages, has become an amateur painter of distinction, has mastered the elusive secrets of good cooking, become an imaginative photographer, become expert enough to teach mosaic art and even to excel in the intricate art of needle point.

Her horizons are limitless. Whatever this beautiful woman sets out to do, she does well. She has proved that there is no such thing as a "man's world"—and she has done it without compromising her femininity. She commands the intellectual attention of world leaders, yet is admired by housewives for her womanly qualities.

Clare grew up in the frenetic '20s, the sophisticated F. Scott Fitzgerald era. For a time, she could have been one of the directionless characters in one of his novels. When she was only 20 she married socialite George Tuttle Brokaw and got caught up in the mad whirlpool of gay parties and dances. She lived every day as if it were her last.

But soon after her daughter Ann (who was

killed in an automobile accident when she was 19) was born, Clare rebelled at the futility of her life.

"I purged myself of the glittering and wasteful embroilment in an act—divorce—and a book—'Stuffed Shirts,'" she says of those days. "This, and the play, 'The Women,' which I wrote 10 years later, were my own small, bitter commentaries on that diamond-dusted but shoddy Park Avenue boom-time scene."

Once her life had direction, Clare's careers raced along at breakneck speed. She became managing editor of *Vanity Fair* for two years and left behind a magazine famous for its witty and elegant flavor.

She turned to the exacting world of the theater, and her first play, "Abide with Me," opened on Broadway in 1935. It flopped, but it was her first and last failure.

Hardly discouraged—the word doesn't exist in her vocabulary—she came back to Broadway two years later with "The Women," a solid hit that played 657 performances, was made into a movie and exhibited all over the world. And as if to prove that this play had not been a freak, she followed with two more hits, "Kiss the Boys Goodbye" and "Margin for Error."

Clare had married Henry Luce, the millionaire editor of *Time-Life-Fortune* in 1935, four days after "Abide with Me" met with such a frosty reception. She admits he has guided her over the rough spots ever since, encouraging her to go on

to new challenges no matter how formidable they appear. Together this busy couple has proved that people can enjoy a completely happy private life while actively participating in world affairs.

THE FIRST YEAR the U.S. was in World War II, Clare traveled 75,000 miles as a war correspondent. Her incisive articles from Europe, and later the Far East, were expert enough to appear in the best national magazines.

Following her stint as a correspondent, she turned to politics. Characteristically, she devoted herself to her new interest with such zeal that she was promptly nominated for Congress from Fairfield County, Connecticut, and won handily.

Those who knew Congresswoman Luce weren't at all surprised when she toured the battlefronts. As a result of her overseas visit, she was a major factor in legislating for a rotation and furlough plan so troops wouldn't be stationed at the front for periods that often totaled more than a year.

When Mrs. Luce was converted to Catholicism, she quit active politics, returning only briefly to campaign for President Eisenhower.

She had filled the only lack in her life—inner peace and serenity.

Her appointment as ambassador to Italy put her back in the spotlight. She was the first woman to be assigned an ambassadorial post to a major nation, and while her critics pooh-pooh her record in