



THE FOREIGN SERVICE  
OF THE  
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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Dear Pop,

My, but you are an unsatisfactory person to gripe to! Here I am working my little head and feet off with just one pleasure in all the world- griping to you alone, and what do you do, pray!? You worry; you fret; you're sure I'm making life miserable for my spouse; you probably feel I beat my son; you are silent, ominously so; or you utter a deep tch tch, and send me back a very brief, but touching sermon on the Domestic Virtues. Ah pop, pop. Should I rather have smiled bravely at you, o'er the intervening storm-tossed ocean, and said, hiding my work-reddened hands, my haggard brow the while, "It's all right father, don't worry about me, please! I'm all(sob)right, really I am. There's nothing much to do, just a little moving in, just a touch of baby-care, just a soupcon of laundry, the merest pinch of housecleaning now and then, a delightful interlude of cookery from time to time, and then the clean, warm feeling of multi-colored soap suds on my wrists as I make a few dishes sparkle!- But as you know, dear father, it's all pure, unalloyed pleasure to me! I just love those first few months of moving in, especially when destiny allows me to accomplish it all in serene solitude!" How's that, Pop? More to your fancy? Ha ha, I thought I'd finally please you!

Well my dear, you can rest easy now. I promise not to gripe more than a teentsy weensy gripe just once in a while from now on, much as I enjoy a good hearty gripe now and then. I'll forego that pleasure, if you will give in on one point of your argument. (There now, that's a fair exchange, isn't it?) I claim there is a technique in housekeeping, and it isn't born in you. You have to learn the tricks before you can do it efficiently. Just for instance, I didn't learn till three weeks or so after we had been here, that perfectly neat and clean people like Virginia Davis didn't clean house thoroughly every day. I had been doing so, thinking it was de rigeuer to sweep, dust completely, scrub the floors, and even wax them every blessed day. Virginal had to tell me not to. I didn't know about Clorox, and hadn't understood why soap and water didn't remove L.J.'s little prints from my woodwork satisfactorily. One day I tried Dutch Cleanser, and it worked like a charm. The lady who sold us the house told me about using Clorox in the laundry. Mrs. Hoppe across the street was amazed to learn I had sewn all my curtains up by hand. But since that was the only way I knew how, that was how I did it. My education as far as housekeeping goes, had been grievously neglected, and it still hasn't come to me all of a flash just because I am now technically a housekeeper. I'm getting there, little by little, and now that the greater part of the actual moving-in process has been accomplished, I have more time to learn ways and means. But I will have no snide remarks about income tax payments, and wish to point out that Rome wasn't built in a day, nor are housekeepers created complete and adept as soon as they come into their house. Poor pop, you give me one small snatch of lecture, and I counter with a two-hour dissertation. But never fear as to old William. I have read all the books about how you



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should run to the door as your husband comes in, with a smiling face, a clean apron, and fresh lipstick all ready to smear over him, and I never neglected my book-learning, anyway. As to the dear old housekeeping, now that I've learned a few secrets it is coming much easier, but I am plagued in that matter as I was in many others, by a keen desire to make it all perfection quick as a flash. In short, at times I worry. It pains me ten times as much now that I am doing my own work, to see a dusty under-side of a chair than it ever did in Caracas, where all I had to do was call Rita's attention to the matter. Ah well.

We are having a simply magnificent fall, with the leaves all sorts of happy colors. Right in front of me as I type is the dining room window, which looks out onto the woods. Gracious me, what a sight! But it's bitter cold, bitter cold. I shall soon have to transfer the clothes line into the cellar to prevent my hands from freezing as I hang the laundry to dry. Many a morning has L.J. asked me if it was snowing out. But our trusty oil heater keeps the house remarkably warm, and it certainly is an easy process. All we do is turn the thermostat to seventy, and there we are. I bought L.J. a pair of red wool gloves and a handsome red wool helmet the other day to keep his Dumbo ears warm. He looks wonderful in it, I think. His cheeks become just as red as his hat after a morning of outdoor play. He's sleeping now. Talking about that famous dust ruffle I made, he knew immediately what I had made it for as soon as he saw it on the bed. "That's so the squirrels won't hide under your bed, isn't it mamma!" So from now on it is to be called the Squirrel Ruffle.

I've been so empty-handed that I've been able to do quite a lot of reading lately. Or rather, I've read anyway, in spite of all the tasks awaiting me. I've read Virginia Woolf's "To the Lighthouse", and two Anthony Trollope books. I do love dear old Anthony, he's in possession of some of the dearest delights of ~~Thackeray~~ Thackeray and Jane Austen, as far as I'm concerned, with a bit of Dickens here and there. No deathbed scenes, though. Also I read "The Loved One", old Evelyn Waugh's latest contribution to hilarity and morbidity. As far as we were concerned, the whole book was worth the price for one line in it: He was describing this fancy Hollywood cemetery, where every prospect pleases and any connoisseur could be happy to find eternal rest. The brightly-made-up young lady who guides the hero through on his first visit takes him to what is known as The Poets' Corner, a small area of only an acre or two devoted to the lyric muse and those of her disciples who had Passed On. "Statues of poets abound, you see" says the brightly-polished young lady, "and over here is one of the prominent Greek poet, Homer." William and I nearly passed on ourselves when we read that one. He was kindly reading to me while I sewed.

We haven't gone out for some time, due to a hiatus in the social scene and a cold of William's. Neither the boy nor I caught it, due to right living and clean thinking on our parts. I'd better start doing some more right-living now, though, and make supper.

Please don't forget about H's Christmas suggestions. Love to you both,

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