

5208 Glenwood Rd, Bethesda
November 21, 1948

4-47 p.1/2

Dear Pop,

Things are getting out of hand, and I shall have to write down Laurence John's remarks the moment they merge from his mouth in order to remember each and every gem. William and I have been trying hard to remember some which we vowed we would remember in order to tell you, but only a few remain with us. He is coming to the point where everything he says is worthy of quotation.

Last night in the bath he asked me if I knew who he was. Being naturally very caggy about saying anything definite (he sometimes becomes violent when wrongly identified) I said, no, who are you now? "I'm Mr. Come-in-a-brush!" I asked who Mr. Comeinabrush was. "He's a tiny little man who carries tiny little milk bottles, and delivers them." That's all. This morning he was another man who delivered milk. "Not our Mr. Herb the Milkman, though", he added- for many times he plays that he is our own Milkman, Mr. Herb. "I'm another milkman, named Mr. Wastebasket." Occasionally he will enact plays-within-plays, and announce "I'm Fireman Small pretending to be a doggie!" or "I'm a great big truck pretending to be a diesel locomotive". Being only human, L.J. prefers the old-fashioned steam locomotive usually to the soulless, streamlined diesel engine, but he can be impartial at times. For several nights he pretended he was daddy, and when he heard William's car come up the driveway, rushed down from his room shouting "Where's my boy? Where's my dear little boy? I've just come back from my office. I've been typewriting and typewriting and typewriting!" His being daddy caused endless confusion though, for of course we had to remember to call him daddy, and daddy "Little Boy". The other night when William came home L.J. had a rare moment of self-realization, and came down the stairs shouting "It's I, Laurence John Krieg In Person!" You would be pleased at his grammar - "Whom are you talking to, mamma?" and "It's I" come naturally to him. He pronounces every syllable of "Weally", and uses the word often right now. "I can't seem to do it, weally, mamma." He has invented two words for his own delectation: Something like "Wumpah", which he told us is... "Well, let's see, something you put over your shoulders." The other day at lunch he said "What is a gunk, mamma?" I said I didn't know, off hand. "It's an animal that puts things into things," announced the boy, patronizingly. He quotes extensively from all his books, and has pet phrases from each. "I can't do things for the likes of you" is his current rage, and is gleaned from the pages of "The little Engine that Could". I recently bought him the book "Tell Me About God", which I now think is for older little children than he, but in any case it resulted in the following conversation at lunch one day: "Go ahead and eat, dear, you're just staring into space." "No I'm not just staring into space, mamma. I'm thinking about God, so please don't bother me." I told him one day when he asked me what the sun is, that it is a star, only we are very close to it so it looks big. "Do we see the sun at night with the other stars?" asked he, logically enough. He seems to be growing more and more negative every day, instead of less, as the book says he should. He disagrees about almost everything, and announces at least every other day, "Now don't contradict me, please!"

-2-

4-47 p.2/2

I'm never tempted to project my own wishes and desires into his personality, because it is so completely, manifestly, separate from mine. He has aggressively shown himself to be himself every since he showed anything at all. "Daddy dearly loves squash, son, and so do I- don't you?!" "Yes, I like it too, I weahly do, but I like milk better." or the answer may be, "Well, I don't dearly love it!" On the other hand, he is normally interested in being like other people, as for example the time I told Wil iam that the unaccustomed dry heat of the furnace was making my scalp dry and giving me a case of dandruff, and L.J. piped up from his room "I've got bad dandruff, TOOO!" He made up a joke the other day while he and I were on a walk. He asked what the large building we saw in the "distance" (as he calls it) was, and I remarked that it was the Bethesda-Naval Hospital, which he had seen on his Sunday ride. He thought for a moment, and then laughed. "Hospitals don't have navels, do they, mamma!" He is still ultra-suspicious of hospitals and of doctors, and will often remark, when told not to put things in his mouth, "Remember the other day when we were in Caracas?" - he can never bring himself to go on from there, as the poor boy apparently still has too vivid a memory of having his stomach pumped after "putting things in his mouth". We haven't taken him to a doctor since Newark, Ohio, but one day when an innocent character from Sear Roebuck came to see about installing venetian blinds, he asked me fearfully if he was a doctor. I have always tried to be most careful about presenting the best side of doctors and hospitals, but his many injections and the famous two trips to the hospital in Caracas overrule anything I may say in favor of doctors. He has a vindictive streak, though, and will sometimes ask me if Carol is sick, and if the doctor has come to help her?- all this said with a patently hypocritical attitude of sorrow and compassion. Carol is our main sitter.

William intended to wirt to you yesterday, but in the meantime Venezuela had a Crisis, so he couldn't. He wants to tell you that he sent a check to your bank. He also wants to tell you that he prefers to do it monthly, as that is how our poor beleaguered budget runs- monthly. I have to compress the rest of the news, for it is getting late and we have to go down to the Department this P.M. to look into the Crisis (L.J. enjoys seeing the outside of Daddy's Office). I've been to a tea, heavenly days. It was as usual. I've reread a book, for the first time since I re-read J'hn's book due to inability to absorb it the first time. I re-read Huxley's "Perennial Philosophy". Also read Charles William's "All Hallow's Eve", an adventure story about resurrection and regeneration before and after death. Found Huxley more interesting, though less active, and on the same general topic. Now I really must stop and get dressed for our ride downtown.

Much, much love to you and Helen.