

December 8, 1948

Bethesda

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Dear Pop and Helen,

I couldn't get around to my usual weekly letter before because of Christmas-card time, and latterly because of the illness of the small boy. He had and still has either a very bad cold or flu, poor baby, but I think he'll get over it quickly now, for he is taking his sulfadiazine like a man. Since I felt the beginnings of the same thing, I too am guzzling down sulfa tablets. I shudder to think what would occur if both of us should be "horses de combat" at the same time, but I think we are licking the problem. I have been throwing out pre-birthday and pre-Christmas presents to him frantically, trying to gain some time for my regular work, till now I feel like the old Russian on his perilous journey across the bleak steppes, throwing things back out of his sleigh to slacken the speed of the onrushing wolves. Fortunately, the doctor prescribed some pink sulfa tablets which taste like Necco wafers, so there is no problem to getting him to take them. When I asked the doctor what I should take to better myself, he recommended the same pink tablets, so I find no difficulty in taking them either! The main problem is getting him to drink as much water as is recommended, and to allow me enough freedom of movement to wash the dishes between nose-blowings. We seem to be over the fever stage, as well as the touch of vomiting we suffered. However, since he refuses to submit to any indignities, I haven't taken his temperature once since the first time, when he was off his guard. He suffered from sleeplessness due to a cough one night, so we gave him some "delicious syrupy elixir of nembutal", and since that time he has gone to sleep immediately he was put to bed, without a word. All we have to do is say "Now remember, if you can't sleep, don't worry about it. We can give you some nembutal," and he replies hastily "I'm going right to sleep now. I don't need any nembutal. I-honestly am very sleepy indeed!" Apparently he isn't going to be a drug addict, if nembutal in elixir form is the drug offered. But he has been a pretty unhappy and droopy little child, so the usual flow of bright remarks has been stilled. The only thing I can remember occurred several days before his illness, when he was being put to bed. William said "Now I'll give you a big kiss, then you give me a big kiss." But L.J. just hid his head behind William's neck and refused to demonstrate any affection whatsoever. William said "Now that's not nice, that's rather mean of you, not to kiss daddy!" But Laurence John replied "I'm not being mean, it's just that I'm so shy!"- and gave a very convincingly-put-on shy look.

Before we knew that L.J. was really sick we went out to a party at the Dawsons, and had quite a time of it. Our friend the Press Attache from Caracas, Joe Ries, was there with his new Venezuelan wife, so I did as much talking with her as I could, since she speaks very little English. I also talked with a few of Allan's fellow students at the War College, for whom the party was given, and listened in on some conversation with Ambassador Lane, who used to be in Poland. Allan is enthusiastic about the War College, as he is about so many things, and he recommends it

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highly as a tonic for aging intellectual faculties. They had been over to our house the week before with Jesse Knox, at which time we spent a most pleasant evening discussing things in general.

L.J. saw his first snow about a week ago, and was most impressed, although it was a very piddling snow indeed, and melted away within a few hours. He ran about from window to window, and finally shouted "Daddy, the snow is on THIS side too! Daddy, daddy, the snow is EVERYWHERE!" He was particularly struck that it should have settled on some bushes near our door, and on the top of a parked car across the street. Apparently he hadn't realized that it came down like rain and went over everything. I'll be glad when we have a really good dry snow, so that he can play in it.

We are expecting grandmother down here on the 11th - his third birthday, so I hope he will be much better by that time, so he can come down to the station with us and meet her. How he will enjoy seeing all those trains! He is in a train phase right now, and would be hurt beyond measure if deprived of the joy of seeing Union Station.

We have been sticking close to home, naturally, for the past week, and I have been going to bed early to pamper my impending cold. Nonetheless, and L.J. ~~was~~ to the contrary notwithstanding, I have read a few books. All one tracked: C.S. Lewis' scientifico-religio-fictional stuff about trips to Mars and Venus, plus my old friend Bishop Fenelon's "Christian Perfection", plus William James on "The Varieties of Religious Experience."

It's high time the boy were awake. I shall now spend the rest of the afternoon running the mechanical train I bought him in a heedless moment.

Lovingly,