

5208 Glenwood Road
Bethesda, Maryland
Dec. 31, 1948

Dear Helen and Pop,

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Thank you, thank you, thank you! You sent so many things it's terribly hard to put enough thank yous down on paper! I didn't interrupt the calm course of L.J.'s thoughts by showing him the bond, but he was very interested indeed in the cuckoo clock, as were we all. William singlehandedly got it working, but after a few days it stopped again much to everyone's sorrow, because we all became very fond of the sudden, cheerful voice of the tiny little "boumlaut", as L.J. calls it. It's hard to transcribe exactly the way Laurence John pronounces bird, but it is something like the German o with an umlaut over it or the French "eu". Well, I'll have to take the clock down to Bethesda next Saturday to be oiled and set correctly. I think it lacks oil, because it will go for short periods and then sort of relax. We put it high up on the wall in L.J.'s room, from whence the gay bird song can be heard all over the house, if there is reasonable silence. As for the two dolls, we were discussing them today, L.J. and I. He said he "can't seem to imagine a name for them" - "can't imagine" being one of his current phrases. Another current phrase is "there's an old saying". He announced the other day that, "here's an old saying that says Laurence John should always have two pieces of candy after his lunch", so you can see that the boy has appropriated the phrase for his own little uses. But as for the dolls, he wasn't in the least insulted by receiving them, and on the contrary became incensed when I put them on the highest shelf of his toy shelves for more-or-less safe keeping. He refuses, however, to admit that one of them is a girl doll. "I have two little boys with green hats on, and I don't have any little girl." That's his story, and he sticks to it. He also has a teddy bear, by the way - his first. Santa Claus brought it in his stocking, by request. He takes it to bed with him, and says that the teddy bear takes good care of him at night. He named it Brownie all by himself, but has since changed his mind and wants it called nothing but Teddy Bear. He was fascinated by the leather trousers, and has dubbed them the "shoe trousers" because he knows that shoes are made of leather. They are currently too big for him, and anyway it would be too chilly right now for that sort of garment, but come Spring they should fit and be warm enough. And THEN how elegant he'll be!

Well, all in all it was a most successful Christmas with us, as I hope it was likewise with you people, waltzing around the capitals of Europe bathed in champagne as you were! Our tree was pretty, L.J. was delighted with the whole thing. He hung his stocking the night before, only protesting that his stockings weren't very big and didn't we think he ought to put up two of them? The next morning we were awakened betimes and he came downstairs in a most businesslike way, showing quite a contrast in reactions with the year before. He allotted about five minutes each to each new package, "and spoke not a word, but went straight to his work". He didn't display the same overwhelmed awe that he had last year, and indeed was quite sophisticated about everything, employing his special little manner that ~~xxxx~~ Virginia Davis calls his "cocktail party behavior", full of little artificial laughs and posy remarks such as "Well, my dear," and "Do look, dahling." Yes indeed, he is greatly addicted to calling us all "dahling", and

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even at times calls me "Dear Girl"- ever since the time he first called me that, and had such successful reactions from his audience. His Uncle John and Aunt Dona sent him, dear me, a most efficient little tool chest full of dangerous weapons such as pliers, hammers, saws, paint scrapers, etc. - which he dotes on, naturally, and which scares us to death, not being as uninhibitedly destructive as he is.

As for whether or not damask is back, my only thought on the matter is that it's never been away, has it? I was delighted to get the tablecloth, which is now resting in a place of honor in the brand new million dollar dining room "scot", and which will very soon be called out again on active-service, come next party. And speaking of parties reminds me that we are going to go out to various friends' houses tonight celebrating the arrival of the New Year, and I shall be dressed in a gorgeous new gown of heavy damask silk in light gold threaded through with black. I went down and bought it the other day in a rash moment, after having made up my mind that I would put father's check to some excellent use such as a new set of aluminum pots and pans, or a pair of lamps for the guest room. ~~Alas~~, for human frailty! A very elegant dress shop here in Bethesda caught my eye, and weakly I went in on the pretense of looking for a few serviceable sweaters. There is not a penny left for pots, pans, lamps, or charity.

We had a fairly busy Christmas season. On Dec. 19 Uncle Albert called up from New York to ask if they could come down and see us. Well, what a question! So they did come, the very next night, or rather I should say the very next morning, at three A.M.- having driven all the way from New York in a blizzard (sp.?) They were with us for two glorious days, and the night they left grandmamma appeared from New Jersey at last. It was wonderful to see them again. Dear Piet is the same incorruptible paragon as ever, for my money, and Uncle Albert busied himself fixing things all over the house, so that after his well-meant efforts had caused a huge flood in our bathroom toilet, Laurence John piped up tactfully, "Please don't fix the other toilet, will you, Uncle Albert!" and dear Albert was crushed to earth. We will now have to get a new toilet, but in a way it was worth it. Well, as I said, the Gaans left in a blaze of glory (early in the morning at one P.M., after trying hard to get away at dawn) and grandmamma arrived. During the short time between the departure of the Gaans and the arrival of grandmamma, L.J. was in a blue funk. "I'm all alone now, mamma!" "No you aren't, I'm here, aren't I?" "No, I'm all alone and very sad, because there's no one to talk to and poor mamma has gone down the drain. I pulled out the plug and down went poor mamma, down into the drain, and then into the sewer, and out into the ocean! I'm so lonesome!" Well, grandmamma hadn't been here more than four or five days when we learned that Tom Mann was coming up from Caracas and would be in Washington the Next Night. The Next Night we were having a dinner party for some Stuttgart friends of William (now on leave from post in Switzerland), but fortunately Tom's plane didn't get in until midnight, so after the guests departed William dashed down to the National Airport and collected Tom Mann, and we all went to bed at two A.M. after hashing over the revolution. I slept with mamma in the guest room, Tom slept in my bed. He was here for three nights, and left yesterday morning. It

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was really quite a busy season, and the house now seems ominously quiet and empty with only three people in it. I hardly know what to do with myself. I only wish they had all spaced themselves out a bit more, instead of arriving all in droves just after Uncle Albert had "fixed" the toilet!

In the midst of everything I simply had to take time out to read a book that grandmamma brought down, ostensibly for L.J., actually for our own delectation. I've finally read Kenneth Grahame's "The Wind in the Willows", and I now see that my previous life has been without savor, practically meaningless. Why, when I knew he wrote well, didn't I read it sooner? Ah well, at least I had the great pleasure of reading it for the first time. It is certainly imperative to know about Mr. Toad, and at last I do! We were rather surprised to find that Laurence John enjoyed hearing parts of it read aloud also, though it is definitely not a book for children. He now goes about the house shouting "Oh Mr. Mole! Oh Moley dear!"

Oh my, it's time and past time for the boy to be awakened. So much has happened since I last wrote that I could go on for innumerable pages, but time and thank-you notes still unwritten press about me mercilessly. In any case, our love and thanks to you both for your patient collecting of trophies for L.J.- and just WAIT till you see ME in that DRESS!

Much love, and Happy New Year!