

March 22, Tuesday

Dear Mamma,

Not much to write about, but you want a letter and here it is. It's a lovely spring day, and the daffodils in our front lawn have opened up since yesterday, when I looked at them and saw them apparently tightly furled. I'm so glad the spell of cold weather seems to be over so we can resume our walks, which were interrupted both by the cold weather and the colds in our heads. I like our walks, though they make it necessary to work more concentratedly in the mornings to make up for the time spent outside in the afternoons. There is plenty of work for every minute of the day, but I try to ignore those things which can be forgotten most easily!

L.J. was sorry when he heard that you had called while he was taking his bath. "But I want to TALK to my grandmamma!" he said in a hurt voice when I told him about it afterward. I'm sorry to say we have been having more trouble with him, resulting in a great need for discipline. We bought him some rubbers on Saturday, and today he wandered off after Peachie (though told not to leave his play area) and went far away, losing his rubbers somewhere along the path. I'm pretty sure he could lead me to where they are if he cared to, but he doesn't want to show me, for some reason. His memory is excellent, and he is pretty certainly simply not in the mood to show me where he jettisoned the rubbers. As a result he will have to spend this afternoon in his room with the door closed. Ah, for the perfect formula, to teach him that the path of happiness is reached by obedience! It's a hard lesson for human beings of all ages. But at his age I can't have him wandering around irresponsibly. For one thing, my nerves suffer tremendously when I don't know where he is. When I finally found him this morning he announced with unctuous, hypocritical sorrow, that "That naughty little dog led me astray". A simple paraphrase of "That dog did it!"

So now we need those boots even more.

I was so glad to hear about Jimmy's success and happiness. When all's said and done, I feel that I was not only horrid to you and daddy in my late teens and early twenties, but also pretty callous with Jimmy. By his own standards he was kind to me while we were married, and at no point did I feel mistreated by him. As the years pass and I grow up little by littää (what a slow and agonizing process it has been with me- some people grow up much earlier than others, and everyone grows up spottily, being mature in some ways and childish in others) well, as the time passes I begin to remember the good times Jimmy and I had together, and I begin to realize how much he taught me. He himself was very young too, though and made many mistakes through ignorance, just as I did. We were both thoughtless, but events proved that I was more so than he was. I dealt him an awful blow by leaving him for another man, but at the time I didn't see it, or didn't want to know what I was doing to him. I'm sorry for that. It's one of the thousand things I have to be sorry about, and regret. I seem to have passed through about ten years of my life ruthlessly hurting people who loved me, without thinking what I was doing to their love and their feelings. Now that I'm at least partially awake to this fact, I must try to make up for it. It's hard, not to say impossible. I can never "un-live"

-2-

those years, nor repair the wounded feelings, nor restore the sense of security that you and daddy lost while I was behaving like a jackanapes. I can just try not to hurt any more feelings ( I don't mean this in the petty sense of minor snubs and small losses of pride, but in the sense of hurt or dead illusions). Thank goodness I have never meaningfully hurt William. I have a clean slate there. About the only way I can make it up to you and daddy is by not repeating any of my foolishness and thoughtlessness. I'll never be able to restore what I owe to Jimmy, among others, but I can try to be kind to other people in other ways, and thus partially redress the balance. As for the thought that "Jimmy deserved it"- it never enters my head; rightly. It took a good deal of hard thinking on my part to think up reasons for divorcing him other than that I wanted to marry some one else. Jimmy was a carefree, f otlose individual with the usual collections of faults, not much more and not much less than the next individual. I married him knowing all about the faults. They didn't particularly bother me at any time. He was always kind to me, loved me, and trusted me to be the same. The troubles we had were no more his fault than they were mine, a fact which I know in my heart. "The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, but in ourselves, that we are underlings." Nor is the fault to be found ever exclusively in some one elses behavior, in some scape-goat for our own consciences. In my own case at least, I can usually always see that I have been as much or more to blame than the person on whom it would be delightfully easy to heap the blame. So as I said before, I was glad to read that article and find out that not only did Jimmy come out of it well, but superlatively and after his own special pattern. And now he has a wife and a baby to love, which should help enormously. I wish you would send me the article if you still have it, because I have to return my copy to the library on Saturday and I'd like to keep it, for some strange reason. I think because knowing he is now prosperous and happy eases my conscience. William (who, by the way, has felt as badly in his conscience all along as I have only just recently begun to feel) was also delighted to read that Jimmy recovered from the blow we jointly dealt him, whom we both liked so much.

I said I didn't have much to write about, and here I am talking thirteen to a dozen. But I've had this whole business on my mind for several months. Ever since I started to re-read and put in chronological order those letters I wrote from Paris and Lisbon. I horrified myself by the spectacle of my own sins and misdemeanors, and in short the whole business set me to thinking things out from a new angle.

Laurence John is awake, so I'd better go up and drain him.

Love,