

Bethesda, Monday, August 22, 1949

Dear Pop and Helen,

We were both saddened and delighted by the news of your next assignment. I had been looking forward, as you know, to seeing you both within the near future, and we had even gotten so far as to buy the paint to paint the house with and, almost, the calf to fatten for your arrival. However, I am so delighted by the sound of your new job and new place of residence that I have managed to control my disappointment and, contrariwise, be positively glad that you got it. I am happily, happily envious, of course. William wanted me particularly to express his pride and delight in his papa-in-law. He is really proud as he can be, as I am myself, only I'm used to being proud of you. I am sure you will enjoy it enormously. Norman was here when we got your letter enclosing the copy of Harrison's letter, and he said he had heard a lot about the dear old General, in the days when he was in the signal corps. Norman expressed much delight in knowing the daughter of the man whom the redoubtable General called by his first name, so you can see that people for miles around are just as impressed as we two are. I can't get over what a wonderful thing your whole retirement has been so far, and especially, how restful it has been!

To console ourselves for the fact that you aren't coming home right away after all, we decided to paint the house anyway. It certainly needed it. Once we started we found that we had to paint practically every square inch of the front, including the shutters and the trim. So we have been violently painting for the last sixty hours or so, and there is still more to go. That, even though we are only going to do the front. The other side that shows is by the driveway, which is so steeply inclined that an amateur can not get his ladder safely placed upon it, and the right side is facing nothing but the woods, so doesn't require immediate painting. Our neighbors are congratulating us on the appearance with such vehemence that I am beginning to suspect they couldn't wait for us to get the painting done. I am doing the painting of the shutters and the lower trim. I am repainting the shutters in French grey, which I hope will look nice and calm and quakerish against the dead white of the bricks. I couldn't bear to do it in blue or green, for every other white house in the neighborhood has green or blue shutters.

This summer has gone far too quickly for all I had planned to accomplish. I am way behind in my letter-writing for the same reason. The Hovers arrival, our visits to Flemington, the cocktail party, and then the visit of the Drakes! Somehow the summer has vanished before it quite arrived. Now it is time to think about buying the boy his school clothes. We think we have arranged to have the wife of the Peruvian desk officer take him to his school and back in the mornings, in exchange for William's taking Mr. Lobenstine to the office and back daily. I fervently hope so, because I think the nursery school will be a big help to him in his social development. I had a great opportunity to see exactly how far he has evolved when it comes to relations with other children while the Drakes were with us. What a difference it makes, to have three small children in the same family! Laurie and Barbara Drake know all about taking turns and sharing and giving up toys to the baby, whereas Laurence John was hurt beyond measure to see his toys being used by baby Robert, and he reacted violently to the whole invasion. I didn't like it, although I could

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understand it perfectly well. He is not used to having smaller and more "privileged" children around him, he didn't like having to give up his own room to them, and the final blow was to see us all fawning over that darned baby! Strangely, he didn't seem to resent Barbara and Laurie half so much as he did the baby. On the contrary, he really enjoyed playing with them and having someone always on tap, as it were. But that baby took his bus and broke it, made off with his precious flour sifter and lost it, rode on his fire engine and couldn't be gotten off, and then everyone sympathized with Robert all the time! Laurence Hohn knows now what it means to be lost in a crowd, rather than being the center of an admiring family group. I think it's high time he went to nursery school and really learned to live with other children. It's also high time I had another baby myself.

The Drakes were here longer than we had expected, and at the time I thought I wouldn't survive the ordeal. From early in the morning, when I rushed downstairs lickety split in order to have my breakfast before the Thundering Herd of children descended, till about nine at night, when the four of them were finally packed off into their beds, Annie and I never sat down except to grab a bit of lunch whenever we could find time to put two pieces of bread together. I don't understand how Annie manages to keep her good temper and her cheerfulness so beautifully intact. I began to suspect toward the end that it was because her Thundering herd had grown on her unaware, as it were. Like the boy who started to carry the calf when it was a mere heifer, she is still carrying it now that it is a very large piece of cattle. Just as I was swallowing the last sip of coffee, I would hear the clatter of many small feet on the stairs, and the piping of many small voices shouting "Aunt Philinda, we want our breakfast!" "Aunt Philinda, we want our lunch!" "Aunt Philinda, we want our dinner!" "Aunt Philinda, we want our supper!" "Aunt Philinda, we want our breakfast!" "Aunt Philinda, we want our lunch!" "Aunt Philinda, we want our dinner!" "Aunt Philinda, we want our supper!" and up I would dash to get it for them as fast as I could. Robert would sit in his high chair (the one Laurence Hohn used to use) and pound on the tray imperiously with a wooden spoon until he was satisfied that there was nothing more he could pack down his small gullet. After a feverish hour of feeding in the morning, we would have a feverish hour of cleaning up, a hasty hour of laundry, a continual procession in and out of the bathroom, and always a dab here and there with the mop for those who hadn't quite made it to the bathroom. Robert practically never made it, but when he did we all stood around and applauded vigorously. Then cops, it all began again: "Aunt Ph'inda, I EAT NOW!", "Is it lunch time yet, Aunt Philinda?", "Dear Aunt Philinda, how I love you!" (This from Barbara, who is a lovely, dreamy, affectionate child, though a most materialistic little eater) "Dear, darling Aunt Philinda, what are you making us for lunch?" The three older children ate on the porch with the rug turned back, and we would mop up in the kitchen after Robert had signified his final satiety. Then it would be nap time. Each sleep period entailed a story, of course. Before you knew it Barbara was down, because she really didn't nap at all. Then it was time to wake them all up, so they would sleep at night. During the afternoon we were kept busy separating contestants, saving would-be suicides, umpiring in friendly little massacres, and preparing their and our evening meal. Oh, also, taking down the laundry and ironing part of it. Before you knew it Robert would be around the kitchen door shouting "IN! I want IN! I Eat! EAT!" Laurie would be coming in, flinging his arms around one's legs and wailing piteously, "But if Wobert can have his supper, why can't I have my supper?" When in a good humor, Robert would call to Laurence Hohn

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and shout "Hello, Baby!" This infuriated the boy at first, and added to his dislike of Robert in general. "I'm not a baby! I'm a big boy!" Robert was delighted to have such a warm response to his gambit, and would try it all over again, "Baby!" "I'm not a baby!" "Baby!" "I'M NOT A BABY!" After the first week of this, during which my poor young man was driven to tears many a time, he finally saw the humor of the situation and would shout back "Baby yourself! YOU'RE a baby!" When he saw that Laurence John was no longer responding so actively to his taunt, Robert switched to the words "Biggy boy!", and every time he saw Laurence John after that he would shout "Baby! Biggy Boy!" and he was really delighted by the laughter his remark provoked. To everyone except my son, Robert was a source of great delight in spite of his lack of civilization when it came to some matters. Robert is a canny little dumpling, and when I told him I would give him a chocolate cookie if he made his pipi on the toilet, he did. But then he wanted another chocolate cookie, so he immediately announced with great seriousness that he had "More pipi, Aunt Ph'inda!" I saw through his ruse, much to his loud discomfort. He is an angelic looking child, with tow hair and very large brown eyes. Barbara is still a real beauty, with lovely brown rigglets and dark brown turned-up eyes. Laurie is much better looking than as a baby, but still resembles a very small prize-fighter. In spite of that, he has a gentle and affectionate nature. According to Annie, Robert is the most canny, subtle, devious, and stubborn of all her children. At twenty months, it's hard to tell, but he certainly is a lovable little morsel whether or no.

As I said before, I didn't think I would survive the ordeal, but I managed to do so, and of course when it was all over I missed them all very much and the house seemed empty and joyless. The more I see of Annie the more I love her. I couldn't have picked a better family to marry into if I had searched for years. Both brother and sister are completely admirable.

I have talked so much about the family that I haven't left any time nor space in which to thank you for your kind birthday gifts. But I want you both to know that I appreciate them very, very much. When I have the time I shall do something wonderful about both of them. But right now you must know that I'M very grateful for the time and effort spent on both the lace and the check, when you were in the midst of such an incredibly fine trip.

Much love,