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Lisbon, Portugal
July 10, 1941

Dear People,

Last week being a memorable one in the history of the United States we celebrated at two American Colony parties, one at the Minister's lovely old mansion, and the other on board the coast guard ship in the harbor. On the latter there was lovely free ice cream and cake, while at the former they gave out free whisky, if you cared for it. I don't. On the other hand Jones won't let me eat cake for fear I will get buttery and bouncy. Other than that the parties were fine, over flowing with handsome young men in white uniforms who were decorative but who were not too bright, and young women in sweet summer dresses, who were of course smart as whips as all ladies are, just ask one. I have a theory that all military and naval gents are stunted mentally, and while I might back out of my position as far as to say that perhaps it is not entirely true, I will maintain that the general run of military men in any part of the world have nice manners and handsome faces but they always leave their brains at home, if at all. The Portuguese Naval officers were invited also, but no one spoke to them and they spoke to no one except themselves. I felt very sorry for them. We met some very nice people.

There is unfortunately very little for us to do in Lisbon, especially since we have no house and hesitate to get one on account of the expense. On the other hand I am nearly dying of (That's not how you spell that word, is it? it doesn't look natural to me) boredom. I miss the days at Sintra when we were in a happy group in the mountains idling away the golden days in play, etc. etc. To make matters worse they have a funny social system here, by which the ladies hardly ever leave their house, and when they do the gentlemen stare at them as though they had never seen a woman, but had read about them. The nice air-conditioned cafés were formerly patronized exclusively by men, but since the foreigners have come you see ladies in them now and then! I am waging a one-woman campaign to get them used to it, because I dearly love to sit in a café and watch the world go by. I am rapidly acquiring lady friends who want to help in the good work. Yesterday four of us braved the tender glances of the local boys and went down town to have tea, not because they don't feed us in the Pensão, but because there was nothing whatever to do, and the walk did us good.

As a matter of fact the men make me very mad, almost fighting mad.

We went to the beach last Sunday with a boy from Paris and a French girl who has been here eight months. We all got fined a hundred escudos for having indecent bathing suits! An indecent bathing suit is one which is considered perfectly all right in any other portion of the civilized world. Here you must have a skirt that comes down four centimetres on your leg (and they measure it right on the beach if there is any doubt about the matter) you must always wear a top if you are a gentleman, and the skirt business applies to men as well as to women. Last year a man went in swimming with tails and a top hat, and he was fined for making fun of the law, so you see you can't win.

The latest pictures of the baby were rushed to me by mother. What an enchanting baby she is, even more so than in the pictures taken last January! I have two in my mirror.

We were taken aback that nothing of world-shaking importance should have happened since we heard from you last. Perhaps it is all to the good, since world shaking events are usually of an unhappy nature. We thank you for your kind offers of help on the influence

front, and want to assure you that merely because Jones has hooked himself a job there is no reason to suspect that he can't get a better one with effort. However, may I repeat that what is needed is much subtlety. If you don't know your victim of a pal of his it is perhaps better to sit tight and hope for genius to be recognized unaided.

Our ~~KAKAA~~ pensão is very nice indeed, and quite cheap for Lisbon. For Paris, alas, it would be exorbitant. We eat our breakfast in bed, and our lunches and dinners on an awninged terrace. There is a beautiful pea-green bar to retire to after dinner, and a group of international fellow pensioners who are interesting to know. Unfortunately the personnel speaks only Portuguese, which is a language that reminds me only of a sick Spaniard gargling morosely. The fact that I have bought a grammar book and am now studying it undoubtedly influences my opinion of the language.

I went to tea the day before yesterday at the home of a very charming Portugese lady who speaks fair English and excellent French. Her apartment is furnished with lovely director's furniture that was made in London and sent to the home of the lady's family in the Azores around 1800. She, who likes the French better than I do, gets quite hot and bothered about what she calls their inexcusable conduct in 1940.

I, who seldom rush to their defense, did so to some extent because I think the outside world has a tendency to become too virtuously indignant in their cosy armchairs. A crisis is a crisis, and it is so much easier to say what should have been done than to do it yourself at the time. I had no idea that people outside France were hurling so much abuse at that unfortunate nation, and am a little shocked.

Philinda Jones is happy as a boid'er a flowah, because Jones' boss' wife, who ~~is~~ is a Frenchwoman, asked me after a fifteen minute conversation in French, whether I had ever been to the United States. Whee whee, on the other hand I have almost completely forgotten my Spanish.

This is a remarkably noisy city, as I think I have told you before, but then it is still true. Especially at this moment, when two merchants are screaming in competition outside my window, accompanied by two dogs and a singing beggar. The ladies who carry enormous baskets of fish on their heads have a particularly gruesome cry that ends in a muted wail. The theory seems to be that that sort of thing encourages customers. And this is supposed to be an unusually quiet quarter, according to the recognized authorities of Lisbon. I long for the motorless streets of Paris.

All of a sudden eight or nine copies of the New Yorker have arrived for us from Vichy, where I suppose they spent a very pleasant winter all among the politicians. We have read them all by this time. I was pleased and interested to see that John's friend and mine, Sprague deCamp, had written a book, which must have been considered fairly worthwhile if it was advertised and reviewed in the New Yorker. I should very much like to read it, and I hope it was popular enough to be sent over to the meager bookstores here. They are stocked only with things like Gone with the Wind and The Kings Rains Came usually. I got so tired of ~~hearing~~ hearing people ask for GW and the other one that I almost wanted to throw them out of the library when I was working there.

Please don't forget to write to us quite often, because we love it, and because we love you.

Your wandering children, represented by