

5208 Glenwood Road
Bethesda, Md.
November 15, 1948

Dear Pop,

Your letters finally came, one from Westfield and one direct. The letter from Westfield came too late from the point of view of Christmas shopping (it was the one with Helen's note to Santa Claus in it) for the deed was already done. Knowing the unexpected delays involved in sending parcels anywhere at all, I thought it best to seize the opportunity of Christmas shopping when it occurred, and William was able to stay home with L.J. Had I waited any longer, I should have run into far worse crowds than on a normal Saturday afternoon, too. I trust the things I sent you will be useful or at least pleasant, even though they were not what was asked for.

You mustn't think I am languishing, my dear daddy, and need or ask for sympathy. I was certainly rushed off my feet for a good three months, and I wasn't well prepared for it, but things are settling down and righting them selves beautifully now. I must learn not to try to do everything at once, and expect everything to be done by merely wishing it could be done, all in a day. Now that the ordeal of fixing up the house is over, I have the house to enjoy, as I do enjoy it- very much. I prepared myself to expect so much work that now the daily tasks seem much lighter (as indeed they are), and I like to do them. Every moment of the day is occupied with some project or another, and I'm better able to appreciate the moments of leisure at the end of the day. Naturally, I always wish there were more time to read, but I can look forward to reading to my heart's content after we leave Washington, and meanwhile I'm not entirely bookless. Now that I have a little more time to think about it, I can see manifold advantages to being in a place where I must fend for myself. As for Laurence John, he is slowly learning to stay out and play by himself, although naturally he needs frequent attention, and always wants to be sure I'm there nearby to listen to his stories and comfort him. My main problem with him now is to see that he doesn't wander off the home base. He will stay in his play yard for hours at a time on some days, and on other days is tempted to stray by the slightest thing, let alone something fascinating like a truck passing by. He howls in pain when the gate to his play yard is closed, but I can use the lock as a threat to keep him inside very often. He is like the elephant, and knows he is tied when he is told he's tied. Then nothing but a garbage truck can dislodge him.

I keep trying to remember his remarks so I can tell them to you, but it's difficult. He was a fireman for three days in a row last week, and acknowledged the duration of the state each morning by waking up and saying "Good morning, mamma, good morning daddy, I'm STILL a fireman!" When he was Fireman Small, he often called me Mrs. Krieg rather than mamma, for then he wasn't my son. Often when he's a big dump truck I'm made a mamma dump truck, but not so when he's fireman Small. This morning he became a little kitty, and said "I'm a little kitty today, because I haven't been a kitty for a long time. I say meow now and then. Mew means 'thank you' in cat language, mamma." He has taken to asking me suspiciously each morning if the milk I give him is homogenized. For the last two times we have been out at

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night he has been very good, unexpectedly good. He says things like "Are you going out this day, this very day? Are you not going out today to a cocktail party? Is Carol Not coming?"- all in a small voice that tears our hearts out. We went out last night, but he was an angel boy about it. "You are going to be back quite soon, aren't you daddy? I'll be all bathed and in my beddy-bye sound asleep when Carol comes, won't I daddy?" That's all he asks, on those terrible occasions when Carol Comes- just to be already in his bed with the nightly ritual taken care of. He is apparently suspicious of Santa Claus, for some reason, because although he says he wants Christmas to come, he says he doesn't want Santa Claus to come and bring him toys. "It will be Daddy who comes! Daddy will come and bring me toys. He'll come down the chimney on a sleigh to bring me toys if I'm a good boy, but Santa Claus won't come." Perhaps he thinks Santa Claus sounds like too much of a good thing, -perhaps a sitter in disguise! I must say I hadn't expected that reaction to all our reading of "The Night Before Christmas". He still weeps very genuinely over any song of a serious nature, though he will also cry in an artificial way over other unfamiliar songs which aren't really serious. Any hymn or any faintly serious song he listens to with mounting horror and finally breaks into real, uncontrollable sobs. Hymns affect him most of all, and Christmas songs about Jesus are quite impossible to sing within his hearing. I can't understand it, but it's real. He doesn't mind music on the radio, or even singing, perhaps because it doesn't seem like real singing to him. When I thoughtlessly sang "Dixie" one night he listened very seriously, though without crying, and finally asked me if that was about a poor lady named Dixie who fell down, and did she hurt herself badly?

We had a pleasant time at a party last night, given by our old Venezuelan friend Austin J. Tittenhouse, who was Vice Consul in La Guaira in 1944 and 1945. He is now in the Department. We didn't know anyone there except Rit, but enjoyed the novelty of being out at a party and of meeting new people. It was our first outside party in several weeks. Rit and his fellow bachelor-apartment-er put on a fine spread, with ham and turkey and apple salad, so all the ladies vowed they had no idea men by themselves could do so well, which of course pleased Rit.

William has been reading aloud to me from "The Decline and Fall," which is always enjoyable, while I made the famous guest-room bed-spread. It is finished now, and I am back to reading on my own. I am currently in Huxley's "The Perennial Philosophy"- not a novel, and certainly very unlike his novels, but it reflects his religious thinking, for it's a compilation of various quotations from Eastern and Western religious and moral thinkers. Having previously read "The Screwtape Letters" by G.S Lewis, I got from the library another one of his things, called "Beyond Personality", which is a collection of his radio talks (for the B.B.C.) about Anglican doctrine. He has a wonderful knack of making things clear.

Well my dear papa, I must now write to mother, before the boy wakes up. Very little typing gets done when L.J. is around to supervise!

Lovingly,