

Bethesda, Dec. 16, 1948

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Dear Helen, and Daddy,

Thank you for the nice letter about the calendar-picture, which arrived, alas, too late! Laurence John received the picture as I told you, at the height of his cold, and therefore at a time when I did not stand on ceremony, but let him do as he pleased. He pleased to take all the little windows off at once, the better to see you with my dear. However, since he doesn't as yet know about the days of the month, but does know about tiny pictures, I suppose it pleased him just as much to do it his own speedier way. It was certainly a fascinating thing, and reminded me of the illustrations in Anderson and Grimm.

We are now both restored to health and vigor, whether due to our own native resiliency or the sulfa is hard to say. L.J. took it very hard indeed when he was no longer allowed to take his pink pills, though, for which I thank medical science. I'll never forget the struggles Virginia and Hoover and I had to make poor little Johnny Hoover take sulfa tablets (it was when Virginia had gone away for a few days and left me in charge of Johnny, and he came down with Something). We almost decided it was not worth trying to force him to take the dreadful things. So I'm glad they have now prepared it in palatable form, in case we ever have to give it to him again. His birthday celebrations were somewhat marred by the fact that he was convalescing and his mamma was deep in the heart of it, but we managed to have a fairly good birthday just the same. He was deeply honored by the cablegram, and carried it about with him till it wore into shreds; and I was finally able to take it out of his pockets while he was asleep. In fact the whole birthday made a serious little boy out of him. As he sat eating his soup that evening he was silent for several long moments, abstractedly stirring a cracker about in the bowl of soup. At last he locked up and solemnly announced, "A three-year-old boy put that cracker in this soup!"

You are probably technically correct to say that L.J. has forgotten Putty, but not completely right nonetheless, as is witnessed by the following conversation, which occurred at lunch yesterday:

Boy: "Mamma, what does once upon a mean?"
 Mamma: "Well, etc.etc."
 Boy: "Once upon a time there was a Putty."
 Mamma: "That's right."
 Boy: "No, don't say that's right, because you don't know what I mean. I mean once upina Tom."
 Mamma: "Well, what does once upina mean?"
 Boy: "What does once upina mean, mamma?"
 Mamma: "It's your word, it's not mine. You have to know what it means."
 Boy: "Don't you know what upina means? Does Abuelito Campbell know what upina means? Does Putty know what upina means? Ask her what it means. Write it to her in a letter and say Dear Putty."

...But as you see, I forgot to write DearpPutty. Still, the question still holds. What does Opina mean?

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Laurence John celebrated his new-found health with a libation, consisting of all my remaining perfume, which he dumped on the three beds. When he came down the stairs later he seemed surprised that I immediately knew what had occurred, but he quickly recovered himself and in no time at all had me softened. I am at a loss to know whether it is his dexterity with words which prevents me from carrying out the proper punishments or my own weakness of mind, which permits me to listen to his blandishments and be overcome by his arguments. "It's all right mamma, don't worry. Daddy will earn lots of money and buy you some more perfume. Anyway, see? -the boxes are still there! and so are the bottles!"...."Are you still unhappy, mamma? Don't be unhappy about the perfume, please, I only wanted to smell it. See, I'm not worrying, don't you worry either.".... "Have you forgiven me? Please forgive me. I'll NEVER DO IT AGAIN. I just wanted to smell it, I didn't mean to spill it. Only the bottles spilled on your bed, and then they spilled on daddy's bed, and then those naughty bottles spilled on my bed, too!"

Our Caracas friends, Earl and Catherine Breuer (the ones whose house the Davises lived in) lost their smallest child last Sunday. He was not quite two. That must be the bitterest thing in life. Vicariously, it was bitter for me. I didn't have to go to the funeral of little Kenny Mann last year because I was taking care of Clifton Mann, but this year I had to go, and did. But since the funeral was on Wednesday, I had regained my equilibrium somewhat and was not a disgrace to myself and the Krieg family.

L.J. always calls the young girl next door "Lauwa Wowse", and though I'm ashamed to say it, I find myself imitating him many times. But since L.J. is a purist (after his Abuelito's heart!) he objects strenuously to obvious mispronunciations like that. The other day as we were reading a favorite book of his called "Katy the Kangaroo" his pent-up purist instincts burst forth, and he cried, "Mamma, stop saying Lauwa Wowse, and stop saying Kangawoo! You should say Lauwa Wowse and Kangawoo!" which reminded me vividly of the old family joke about the grabby, and father has probably told you that one a hundred times.

I'm glad my Pa thinks I'm well adjusted to my harsh surroundings. At least I'm at the stage of good adjustment where you dearly love to laugh uproariously at the unfortunate ones who haven't reached your peak as yet. I remind myself of people who have just tripped and fallen violently over a banana peel, and consider nothing quite so funny as the sight of the next feller sliding down hard. But it is nonetheless a consolation to see the latest Foreign Service wives to arrive in Washington. Invariably, they put their heel on the same perilous peel, and bewail the loss of their Hilda or their Ana or their Ali. "I just don't see how I can possibly do it all." -is the monotonous consensus. "and look at my nails!" It's a horrid, snide kind of consolation, but I'm thankful for small gifts.

It's high time the boy awoke. Oh but, before he wakes up I must tell you about his latest: "Mamma, I'm daddy. It's Sunday, so I don't think I'll go to the office today. I'll sit down in my chair and smoke a cigarette and tell Mamma about the Revolution I had down in Caracas in my office the other day. It was a BIG revolution, and daddy did it ALL BY HIMSELF!" I can hear shouts of Intervention! all the way up here in Bethesda.

Love to you both,