

Bethesda, Jan. 9, 1949

Dear Pop and Helen,

It has been so very long since I wrote a solid news letter that as usual I hardly know what to say. I sincerely trust that the holiday season is over, really over, now, and that I can sit down, collect my thoughts, do all the things I've been putting off till after the holidays, and above all be efficient. There is a great need for efficiency, and even before efficiency, there is a great need to know where to begin to be efficient. And the worst of it is that now the holidays are over and the guests departed, I have another cold. So does L.J. So does William. So now we shall have to wait till after the colds to be efficient, and to find out where to begin.

William and I went out New Year's Eve (I in my Golden Gown)- having snared Carol Hoppe to sit for us. First we went to Herve L'Heureux' house, where were forgathered quite a few of the old Stuttgart people I've been hearing about for so long. A little before midnight we left there and went on to the Dawson's, where we stayed, alas, till two thirty in the morning. Jane's parents were visiting her from California- they have left Caracas for good. So on New Years Day something strange prompted me to have the Dawsons and the Hodges over for supper, and somehow or other I managed it. I'm glad I did manage to get them over, because Mrs. Hodge is a great one for counting up the number of times she has invited you to her house and then balancing it by the number of times you have invited her to your house, if you know what I mean, so I'm always scared stiff I'm behind in her little book.

On Monday, the Day after the holidays were officially over, (except for Epiphany, which I don't count) I took down the Christmastree while L.J. was asleep. He took a dim view of the matter when he found out what had gone on. "But now I don't have a Christmas tree, mamma! There are no decorations on it!" (The decorations are what count, for him. He objected to our buying the tree in the first place, because he pointed out there were no decorations on it at all.) But fairly soon Laurence John saw how the land lay, and submitted to fate. The Gay Days were over. He expressed it all in one really great remark: "Now the Revolution is all over, and the Christmas is all over, too."

Dr. Corrigan was in town for a few days this week, just back from the U.N. and Paris. He came out to dinner with us on Friday, as did Shelly Mills and Francesca and the Davises. We had quite a nice time of it. We all came to the conclusion that there will be enormous changes in the State Department set-up, and in the Foreign Service, and all we can do is hope they won't be too bad from our point of view. It's hard to determine just what the Hoover Commission wants, but apparently it wants to have no separate Foreign Service, just one State Department with every State Dep't. employee eligible for the Foreign Service. For people who have passed difficult exams in order to get in the F. S., this new plan is about as popular as would be a move to call every one in the armed services a Marine. However, time will tell, and as I said before, no one really knows just what the Hoover Commission did recommend. They're just gloomy, very gloomy.

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While Tom Mann was here we heard about the state of Nancy's health. Dr. Ribero found amoeba, treated them, and said they were gone. Then when she went up to Wawa, she had fifty nine tests, and it developed that among other things she still had amoeba and a round worm to boot, as well as general lassitude due to anemia. The last word was that her brothers thought she could be made whole and bug-free in time. Her brothers are both doctors. Poor Nancy!

I got a Christmas card from Kitty de Coup-Crank saying she thought you were going to be with them in the Spring. Well, well, well, Does this mean just another one of your side-trips, or are you thinking of coming home by way of England? I should dearly love to see you naturally, but on the other hand you are having such an interesting time over there that I should feel inclined to stay as long as I could, if I were you.

Aunty Piet wants me to come out and stay with her at Mrs. Terpenning's house for a while. Albert is down in Texas for a month or six weeks, on the job. I'm afraid it would cost too much money, coming right after Christmas, and I don't know how L.J. would react to a strange house. I'm terribly sorry about it though, because who knows when I shall have another chance to gossip with Piet again?

I read an interesting book by Sylvia Townsend Warner, the New Yorker woman, called "The Corner That Held Them", about a nunnery in 14th century England. Our friend Boise Hart loaned me it. Also another C.S.Lewis one, "The Great Divorce". Am now in the market for a good book, as well as a sure preventative for colds.

Love,