

Bethesda, Aug. 15, 1949  
Monday

Dear Mamma,

The thundering herd has departed, the halls echo, the fields are vacant, the day is silent. Annie and Norman et al. left quite early yesterday morning, and behind they left the memory of one last frantic dressing period, one final surge toward food, one parting dash for the bathroom or the mop, as the case might be. I have never, really never, been so feverishly active from early morning till late at night as I have been for the past two weeks. I can remember very few single incidents, only a large, complicated general canvas full of meals, baths, squabbles, laughter in equal measure with violent weeping, frantic dashes of rescue, great heavings and straining toward rides, a perpetual babble of childish voices accompanied now and then by the lower tones of a few hurried instructions from adults, a mountain chain of laundry, an endless pattern of dirty dishes, and sand everywhere. It was an experience which has sobered me, and has left me exhausted but not unhappy.

What we would have done without the dishwashing machine I shudder to think. Likewise, of course, the Laundromat.

Fortunately all the children were very good, although my only little cherub reacted often against the serried ranks of the invading children. In general, however, he seemed more pleased than displeased that they were there to play with him, and strangely enough it was the baby, Robert (aged 19 months) whom he resented more than the children his own age. He couldn't understand why that baby was allowed to play with his toys. He didn't mind Barbara and Laurie playing with them if he didn't happen to want them at the time, but he couldn't bear it when Robert started to play with one of them. Yesterday when they had gone, however, he remarked, "Did they feel they had to go back to their house?" Well, I have emerged with the feeling, probably only temporary, that I'll never again feel really, really busy unless the same situation is repeated. I can't understand how Annie bears up, but it might be because like the boy with the calf, she just started out fairly easily and worked up to her present difficulties.

We didn't have many minutes to talk, because by the time they were all bathed, read to, put in pajamas and beds, and finally settled for the night, it was usually nine o'clock. Dinner took an hour, and then we were so tired bed was the only thing we wanted to discuss. They all bathed together in one noisy tub, and that, my dear, was quite a sight to see and hear. We did manage to have a few minor parties as I remember, but toward the end we ran out of energy and gave up. Annie is a wonderful girl and a fine, patient mother in spite of her trials. Always cheerful, generous and good natured.

While they were here a distant relative who used to live near them in Newark and who was very fond of William and Annie, died of cancer in Florida. She left all her silver in her will to Annie and William, and Annie is going to let us take the set of dinner ware or whatever you call it - knives, forks, spoons, etc. So we will finally have a set of matched sterling. I am anxious to see what it is like. Annie is also letting us take our pick of the various unmatched pieces of odd silver, and we will send on the

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rest to her. She did that, she says, because she already has her mother's wedding silver. But I thought it was very nice of her to use the same. We can certainly use that set- you know the story of our own so-called "silver", and ours isn't the sort of business in which you can get away with funny old house furnishings for very long. We would have had to buy a set of silver before we left the United States, for sure, and the horrid part of it is that we wouldn't have had any money to buy it with.

Also in the news columns is a letter from daddy announcing that he isn't coming back to the U.S. right away after all. It appears that he has accepted an offer to go to Spain for from four to six months to be with the International Tel. and Tel. there as an adviser on cable distribution, whatever that means. I presume it will be a paid job, and since his pay with the army will have ended and his simple pension from the A.T. and T. will have begun, I suppose financial reasons entered in as well as the interest of the job. The letter doesn't mention this, however. I am glad he is doing this, even though I was looking forward to seeing him finally, because I know he hates the thought of retirement just as much as before, if not more so. And I'm sure it bolsters his ego to be asked by General Harrison (who used to be president of the AT&T, and then went into the Signal Corps as a General during the war, and is now Pres. of the International Tel. and Tel.) to come and "help them out" there in Spain in spite of the fact that he can no longer work for the AT&T because of his age. I hope he gets a good fat fee for it.

William has nearly killed me by announcing that a plan to send him on a months trip through northern South America sometime this fall has once more been presented and this time approved. There are more details as to his future job after the reorganization has gone through, but since they are top secret and anyway subject to changes at any moment, I can't tell you about them now. In any case the fact that he will be going away at some time quite soon makes me unwilling to leave home now or in September, much as I should like to do something about those peaches. Contrariwise I hope and pray that either you can come down here or I can go up there when he does go away, because a month all by myself here without my darling William would be unbearable, as you can easily see.

Between now and the beginning of September I am going to have to make arrangements about getting L. . . to his school, and also about his clothes for school. His wardrobe is in a sad state of disrepair. We'll just about have to start from scratch if he is going to that school, as I hope. From seeing how he acted with the Dake children I've decided that he desperately needs to have lots more contact with other children, to learn how to play with them and especially "give in" and "take turns" and share. His being an only child makes him react selfishly with others, and I hope that he might unlearn some of that attitude in nursery school. Apparently his contact with Betsey and Coit etc. isn't enough nor is it intimate enough to teach him that he can't always have his own way about everything.

High time to stop and get to work.

Much, much love,