

Wednesday, Dec. 28, 1949

Dear Pop,

Perhaps the young master will give me leave to type out a few words to you, even though he is on vacation and my time is his time. He is out grading a road in the play area with the brand new road grader that Abuelito Campbell gave him for Christmas- the envy of the neighborhood. Brownie and his new little playmate, Whitey, are watching operations from the dining room window, just like the typical sidewalk superintendents. Whitey's full name is "Brown and White" according to Laurence, but we call him Whitey for short and so as not to be confused with Brownie. Whitey came in the stocking this year, just as his friend Brownie did last year. Brownie is very fond of Whitey, in fact we all are. He can't talk yet because he's so young, but he can whine and bark in a most puppy-like way, and Brownie thinks he may learn to talk when he's older, just as the bear himself did. Laurence is temporarily fonder of Whitey than of Brownie, but the latter doesn't seem to mind so far, and I hope will continue to be as free from jealousy as he now is. As you know, I am very fond of Brownie and I'd be most unhappy if Laurence neglected him for Whitey.

Laurence was made happy by his two grandfathers this Christmas. The beautiful, glamorous garbage truck that we bought for him "de parte de" Grandpa Krieg is used in road-making operations as a dump truck (since it also picks up and dumps a load of dirt) and the motor grader plows straight through the most recalcitrant hillocks in the play area. Coat and Jimmy Ellen and the girls, too, are always bug-eyed when they see that motor grader. It is, indeed, a beautifully made toy-model, and I hope it will stand up a good deal longer than most things. With it came a booklet describing each of the other models made by the same firm, and the boy has often sat himself down with that booklet and just looked at all the fascinating equipment. He tells me he "thought last night while I was dreaming" about being in the factory where they make the equipment. He says the man sold him one piece of equipment for "thirty-one" and he got on it and rode away in it. I said that must have been a wonderful toy store. "Not a toy store, they were weal things I was thinking about". On Christmas night when it was time to go to bed I said "All right, boy, better put the motor grader in its garage for the night, now." but he replied that he would have to put it beside his bed instead, "It's weally too magnificent to go in a garage!" His vocabulary seems to be taking a spurt these days, for some reason. The other day when I was a bit provoked by something he did he looked up at me with false-innocent eyes and asked "Are you fwustwated, Mamma?"

He was pleased by your letter to him, and is keeping it in his filing cabinet (an old wooden box) where he keeps his dog cards from the Puffed Wheat boxes, his postcards from you, the pictures he colors at school, and any other important papers he may want to store away. He can find the word "dog" in your letter, although in general he still doesn't seem to want to read, only write. I thought it was the other way around, but apparently not. However, perhaps by the time you come he will have reached the reading point, and be anxious to figure out what things say. He takes a very dim view of the fact that you always have to spell things the same way. "I get bowed (or would it be bawed?) by always spelling dog with the same letters."

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If you are coming home in February I shall have to get about finding you a place to stay quickly! I'm so pleased about it! I just don't know how to, or rather what to say to the people about when you will want the apartment, when I find one. First of March till when, say? Or if you leave on the first of February, would it be so ner than the first of March? I think I'd better (unless you tell me to the contrary,) make it the first of March, and if you arrive before then in Washington you can spend the days at our house, because I assume Mrs. Putnam wouldn't want to come up north at that season, when it is still cold, damp, and usually unpleasant. ~~xxxx~~ The next problem is how long you can stay in this area- how long shall I ask for the apartment? Two months? Three months? I know you are always averse to divulging your plans until they are thoroughly jelled, but in this case I simply must know, on account of the arrangements for the apartment.

Laurence and I both have what I have dubbed a "Night-blooming Tickle Cough," and are unable to sleep of nights because of it. If I am slightly incoherent, it is for that reason. It isn't a bad cough at all, but in both our cases, it wakes us up just as we are about to settle down to sleep. I called Dr. Norton, Laurence's friend, and he prescribed aspirin-and-nembutal capsules for both of us (which is what he prescribed before). I trust tonight we will both sleep like babies. Laurence insisted on my calling his pal Dr. Norton, and had "hitey bark to him over the telephone. Poor Dr. Norton! I fear He cannot appreciate what a signal honor it is to have so far won the confidence of L.J. Krieg.

I am reading a translation by our friend Muna Lee of Rafael Altamira's "History of Spain". It is rather interesting, but what brought the subject to my mind was the following: in the section concerning Roman Spain, Altamira comments on the wonderful development of plumbing and heating in Roman times, and says that it has not been equaled since Imperial times. William and I both, independently, guffawed at that line, and we both agreed that what Rafael means is that it hasn't been equaled in Spain. I take it from what you say about the chilliness of your hotel that you would be willing to agree with Altamira as far as the heating systems of Spain today are concerned. But I thought it was more than a little naive and insular on the part of Rafael Altamira to assume that what heats Spanish houses today is the best system in the modern world. When you arrive we will have to have Muna Lee over for dinner, and you can discuss the problem with her! She is a most interesting and amiable lady and I know you both will like her as we did.

We plan to spend New Year's Eve with Jane Dawson, taking the boy along with us to sleep there, for we could find no sitter. she has a little subleased apartment in one of the housing developments until she can find a house.

We had Christmas dinner with the Parkes, most enjoyable. On the daybefore Christmas I delivered ten packages of fudge I'd made for the various freinds and neighbors. Among others, we vistied the Kuhlmanns, whose darling little eighteen-months-old daughter contracted polio and is in the hospital recovering from it. "lice is a nervous wreck, of course, but in spite of the child's great pain, doctors say she will not be crippled at all. Love,