

DERNIER CONFORT  
ADRESSE TÉLÉGRAPH.  
OTÉOPÉRA - PARIS  
TÉLÉPHONIE  
PROVENCE 83-91  
R.C. SEINE 531.966

HOTEL DE L'OPÉRA

16. RUE DU HELDER

Paris

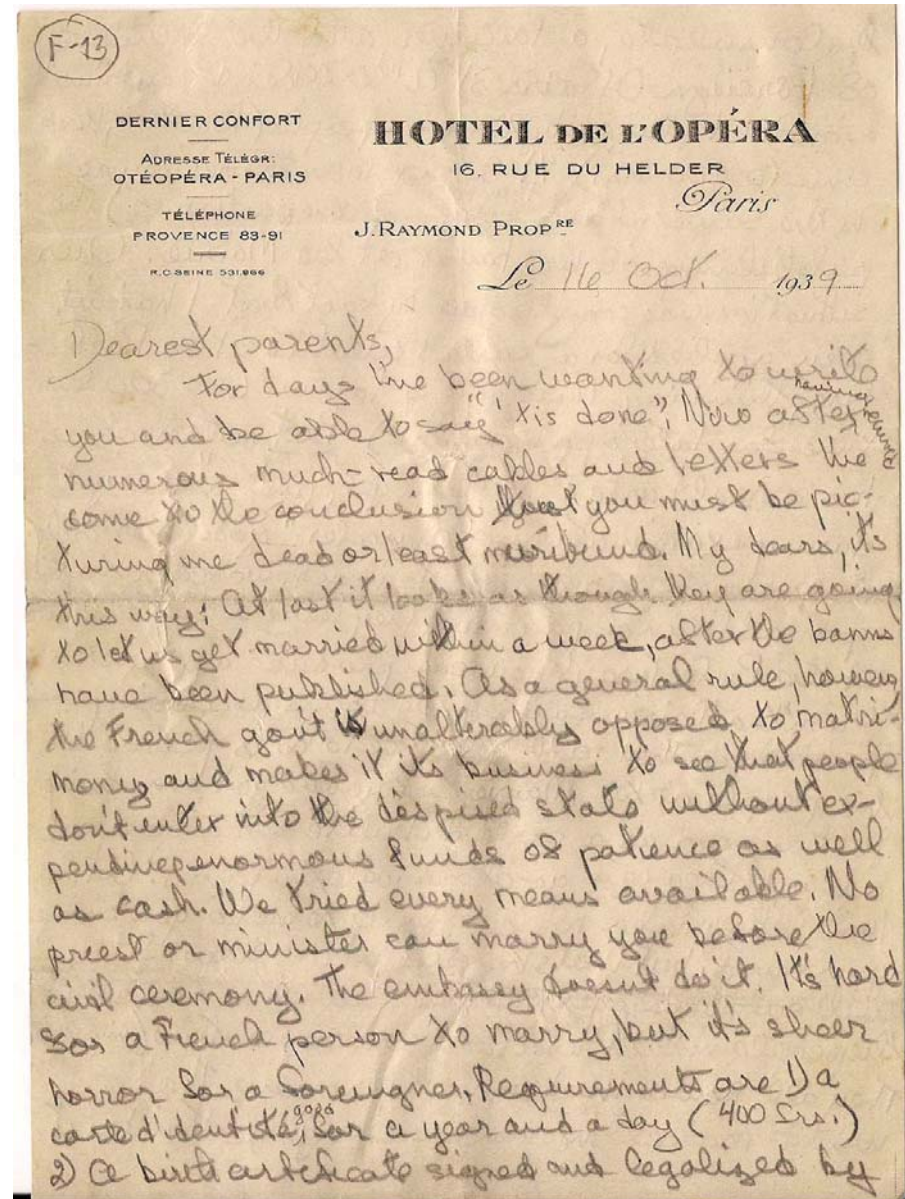
J. RAYMOND PROP<sup>RE</sup>

Le 16 Oct , 1939

Dearest parents,

For days I've been wanting to write you and be able to say "tis done". Now after having received numerous much read cables and letters I've come to the conclusion that you must be picturing me dead or at least moribund. My dears, it's this way: at last it looks as though they are going to let us get married within a week, after the banns have been published. As a general rule, however, the French gov't is unalterably opposed to matrimony and makes it its business to see that people don't enter into the despised state without expending enormous funds of patience as well as cash. We tried every means available. No priest or minister can marry you before the civil ceremony. The Embassy doesn't do it. It's hard for French person to marry, but it's sheer horror for a foreigner. Requirements are 1) a carte d'identité<sup>1</sup> good for a year and a day (400frs.) 2) a birth certificate signed and legalized by

<sup>1</sup> Carte d'identité: Government-issued identity card.



the consulate, a lawyer, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs 3) a "certificate de coutume"<sup>2</sup> signed & legalized by the same people (together these come to 500 frs.) 4) a six months residence in the same place in France by one of the parties. 5) The publishing of the banns at the Mairie<sup>3</sup>. Our situation was complicated by the fact that I hadn't even applied for a carte d'identité at the Préfecture<sup>4</sup> thinking I was going to leave (so 300 frs. fine for late application). But neither of us has a real a carte d'identité yet, just a "receipt during examination of the character" good for only 2 months, so no go. However, we learned that upon additional payment they issue a dispensation at the Préfecture, if you can produce a paper from the Mairie saying the banns are being published. Then all you have to do is persuade the people at the Mairie that you've got something just as good as a carte d'identité for a year and a day, if they can go ahead with the banns. At the Mairie they make noble efforts

<sup>2</sup> According to French Wikipedia,

Le certificat de coutume est d'après le glossaire du site du Ministère des affaires étrangères une « attestation d'un juriste étranger relative à l'existence, au contenu et à l'interprétation d'une loi étrangère. Lorsque, à l'occasion d'un litige, il y a lieu de faire application d'une loi étrangère d'après la règle des conflits, le plaideur qui entend s'en prévaloir produit au juge français un certificat de coutume.

Les juges ont le pouvoir de vérifier le sens et la portée d'une loi étrangère qu'ils interprètent souverainement. » ([http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Certificat\\_de\\_coutume](http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Certificat_de_coutume), accessed 2014-05-25)

Translation:

The Certificate of Custom, according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Web site glossary, is a "Certificate of a foreign lawyer regarding the existence, content and interpretation of a foreign law. When, on the occasion of a dispute, it is necessary to apply a foreign law by the rule of jurisprudence, a litigant who understands its meaning gives the French judge a Certificate of Custom. Judges have the power to verify the meaning and scope of foreign law, which they then have the authority to interpret."

<sup>3</sup> Mairie: City Hall or Municipal government center

<sup>4</sup> Préfecture: "There are 101 prefectures in France, one for each department. The official in charge is the prefect (French: *préfet*). The prefecture is an administration that belongs to the Ministry of the Interior, and is therefore in charge of the delivery of identity cards, driving licenses, passports, residency and work permits for foreigners, vehicle registration, registration of associations (creation, status modification, dissolution), and of the management of the police and firefighters."

([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prefectures\\_in\\_France](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prefectures_in_France), accessed 2014-05-26)

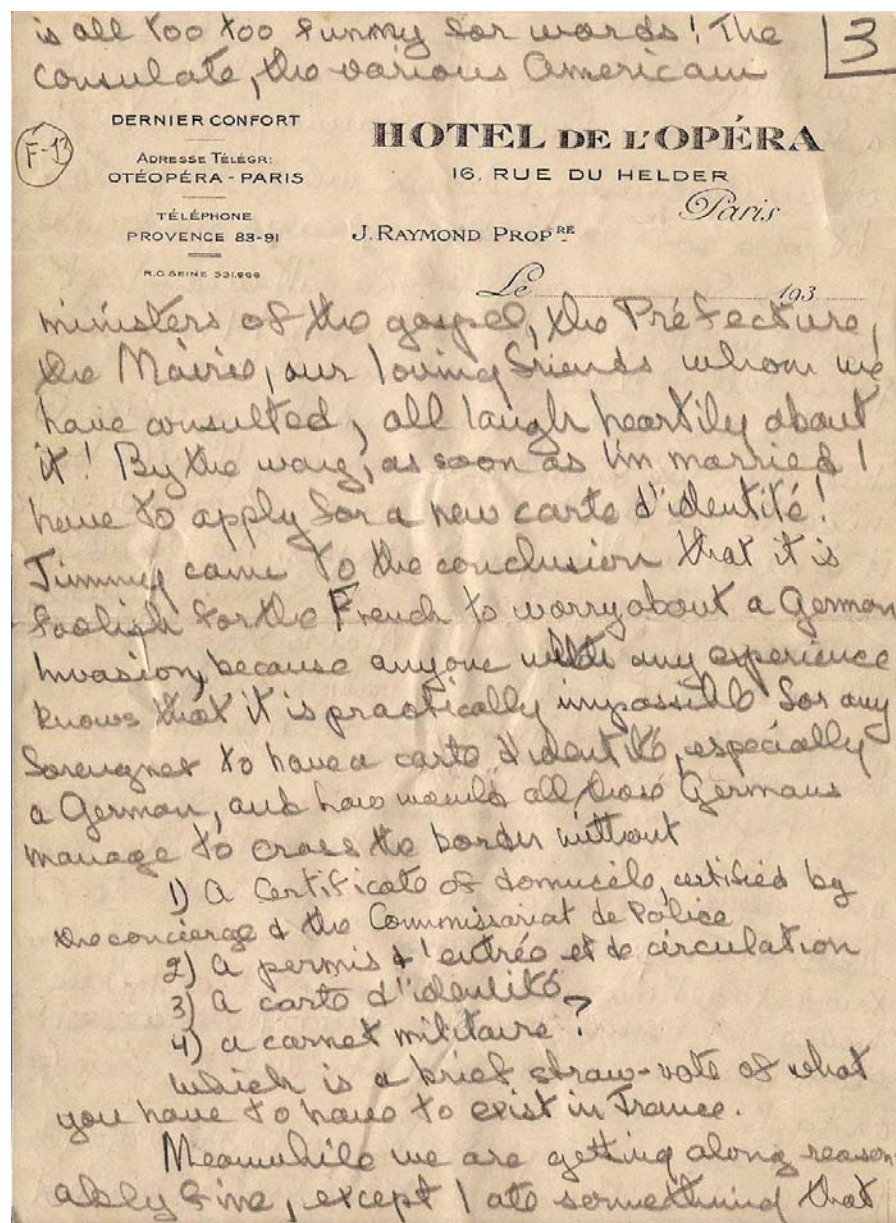
the consulate, a lawyer and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs 3) a "certificate de coutume"<sup>2</sup> signed & legalized by the same people (together, these come to 500 frs.) 4) A six-months residence in the same place, <sup>in France</sup> by one of the parties. 5) The publishing of the banns at the Mairie. Our situation was complicated by fact that I hadn't even applied for a carte d'identité at the Préfecture, thinking I was going to leave (so 300 frs. fine for late application). But neither of us has a real carte d'identité yet, just a "receipt during examination of character" good for only three months, so no go. However, we learn that upon additional payment, they issue a dispensation at the Préfecture, if you can produce a paper from the Mairie saying the banns are being published. Then all you have to do is persuade the people at the Mairie that you've got something just as good as a carte d'identité for a year and a day, if they can go ahead with the banns. At the Mairie they make noble efforts to make you change your mind, but that's the situation now. So we will eventually get married, maybe in a week, if the people in the Préfecture are cooperative (improbable). They all know us down there now. That's what makes me mad - everyone thinks it

is all too funny for words! The consulate, the various American ministers of the gospel, the Préfecture, the Mairie, our loving friends whom we have consulted, all laughed heartily about it! By the way, as soon as I'm married I have to apply for a new a carte d'identité! Jimmie came to the conclusion that it is foolish for the French to worry about a German invasion, because anyone with any experience knows that it is practically impossible for any foreigner to have a a carte d'identité, especially a German, and how would all those Germans manage to cross the border without

- 1) a certificate of domicile, certified by the concierge & the commissariat of police
- 2) a permission to enter and circulate
- 3) a carte d'identité
- 4) a military carnet

Which is a brief straw-vote of what you have to have to exist in France.

Meanwhile we are getting along reasonably fine, except I ate something that

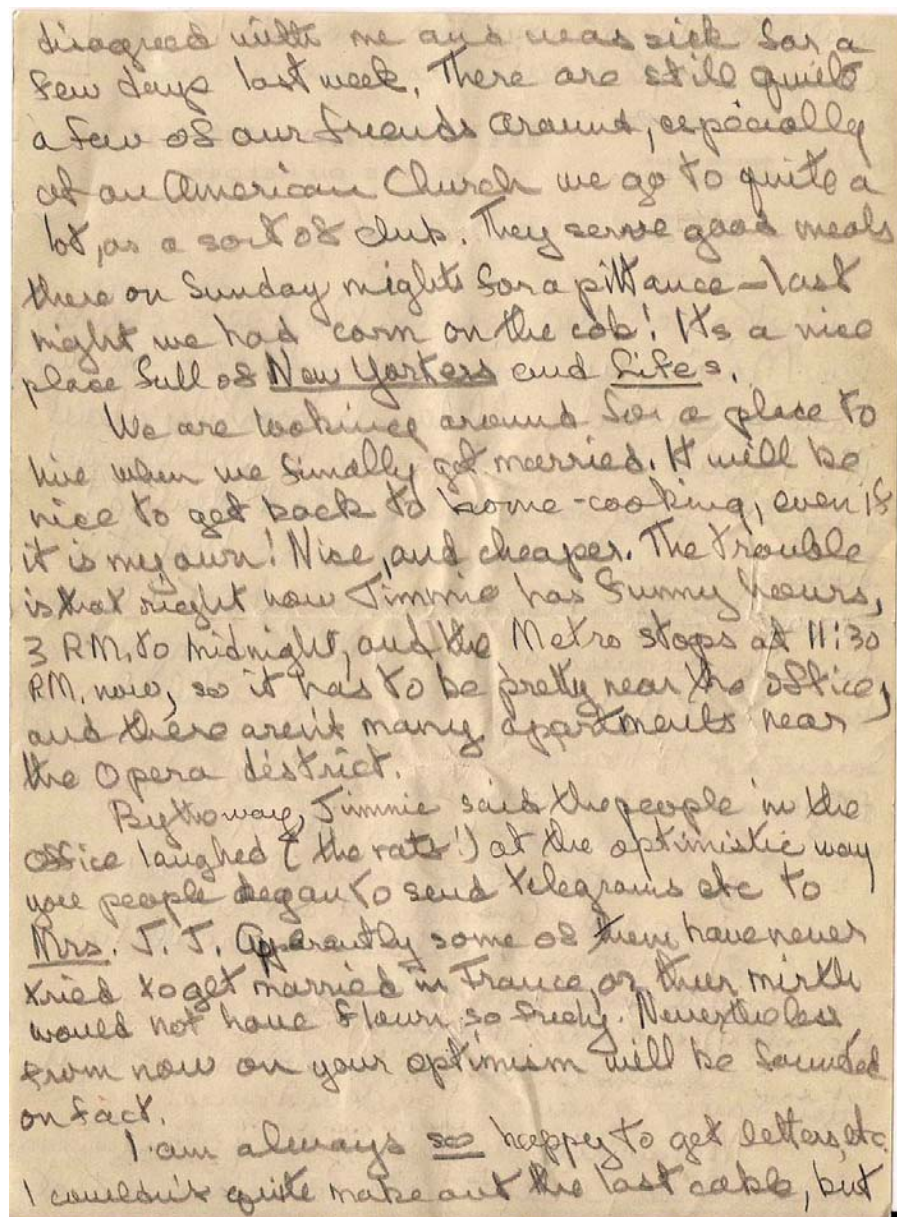


disagreed with me and was sick for a few days last week. There are still quite a few of our friends around, especially at an American church we go to quite a lot, as a sort of club. They serve good meals there on Sunday nights for a pittance – last night we had corn on the cob! It's a nice place full of New Yorkers and Lifes.

We are looking around for a place to live when we finally get married. It will be nice to get back to home-cooking, even if it is my own! Nice, and cheaper. The trouble is that right now Jimmie has funny hours, 3 PM to midnight, and the Metro stops at 11:30 PM now, so it has to be pretty near the office, and there aren't many apartments near the Opera district.

By the way Jimmie, said the people in the office laughed (the rats!) At the optimistic way you people began to send the telegrams etc. to Mrs. J. J. Apparently some of them have never tried to get married in France, or their mirth would not have flown so freely. Nevertheless from now on your optimism will be founded on fact.

I am always so happy to get letters, etc. I couldn't quite make out the last cable, but



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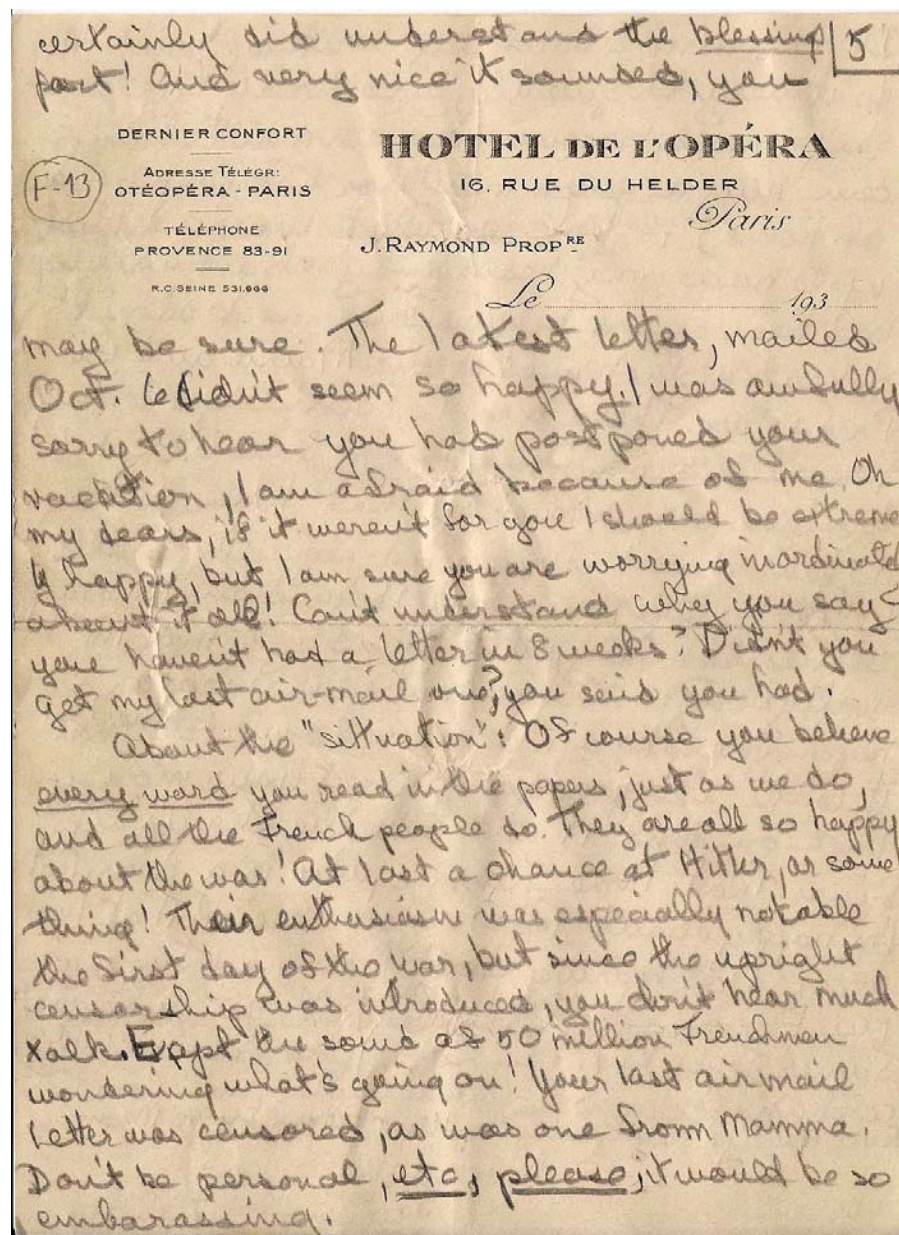
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certainly did understand the blessing part! And very nice it sounds, you may be sure. The latest letter, mailed Oct. 6 didn't seem so happy. I was awfully sorry to hear you had postponed your vacation, I am afraid because of me. Oh my dears, if it weren't for you I should be extremely happy, but I am sure you are worrying inordinately about it all! Can't understand why you say you haven't had a letter in 8 weeks? Didn't you get my last airmail one? You said you had.

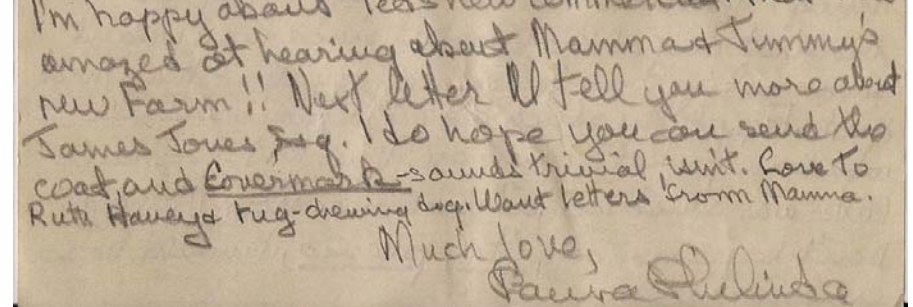
About the "situation": of course you believe every word you read in the papers, just as we do, and all the French people do. They are also happy about the war! At last a chance at Hitler, or something! Their enthusiasm was especially notable the first day of the war, but since the upright censorship was introduced, you don't hear much talk. Except the sound of 50 million Frenchmen wondering what's going on! Your last airmail letter was censored, as was one from Mama. Don't be personal etc., please, it would be so embarrassing.



*Don't worry about my writing you! I'll do it very frequently, especially by steamship mail, because an airmail stamp can buy a good meal for two people (cooked at home) if you see what I mean. But up to now my hesitancy about writing has been caused by unwillingness to admit defeat at the hands of the Mairie and the Préfecture. There are 12,000 things to say, heaven knows. Chief among them is that I love you people muchly. That I am sorry to hear about Doña and hope she is all better by this time. That I found an Amazing Stories for July, no Astoundings. But I'm really very contrite about your vacation, & hope you take a nice one in the winter. That it looks like you're going to get your money back on one if not both the Steamship Lines. That I love Jimmie, who is a dear. That I'm happy about Ted's new commercial. That I was amazed at hearing about Mamma & Jimmy's new farm!! Next letter I'll tell you more about James Jones, Esq. I do hope you can send the coat and Covermark - sounds trivial, isn't. Love to Ruth Havey & rug chewing dog. Want letters from Mama.*

*Much love,*

*Laura Philinda*

A photograph of a handwritten letter on aged, yellowed paper. The handwriting is in cursive and matches the text in the typed transcription to the left. The text is partially cut off at the top and bottom. The visible text includes: "I'm happy about Ted's new commercial. I was amazed at hearing about Mamma & Jimmy's new farm!! Next letter I'll tell you more about James Jones, Esq. I do hope you can send the coat and Covermark - sounds trivial, isn't. Love to Ruth Havey & rug-chewing dog. Want letters from Mama. Much love, Laura Philinda".


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Later

Dear Daddy,

Today I have last succeeded in getting a refund on the Anchor

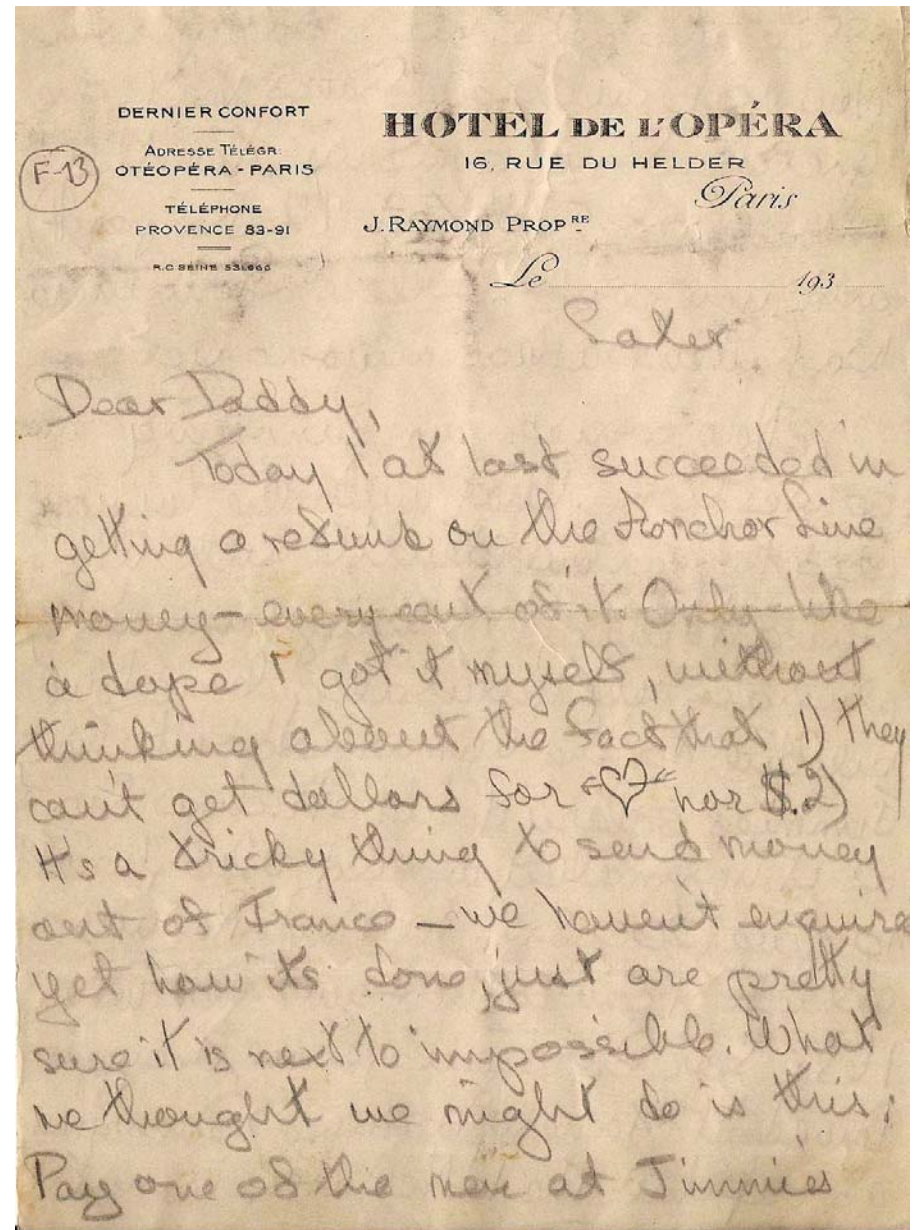
Line money - every cent of it. Only like a dope I got it myself, without

thinking about the fact that 1) they can't get dollars for  nor \$.

2) It's a tricky thing to send money out of France - we haven't inquired

yet how it's done, just are pretty sure it is next to impossible. What we

thought we might do is this: pay one of the men at Jimmie's



office who gets his salary from New York with our francs that the Anchor Line gave us to the number of 085700 (at 42 frs. per \$), and you could collect it from there. We haven't asked anyone yet.

Now comes an annoying confession. What with the lawyer and the a carte d'identité with the fine attached, and things and stuff, plus our unnaturally large hotel bill due to the unmarried situation, Jimmie's salary didn't stretch as far as it normally would. Also, I wanted to give 200 frs. to Mrs. Rouvier which I could not give her when I left for Bordeaux, even though I owed it to her, because of shortness of capital. The latter item is not

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our bill, it is yours. The other items are ours, and will mount up to 9000

frs., which we appropriated from the amount we received from the

Anchor Line. Now Jimmie & I fully realize that this is not our money

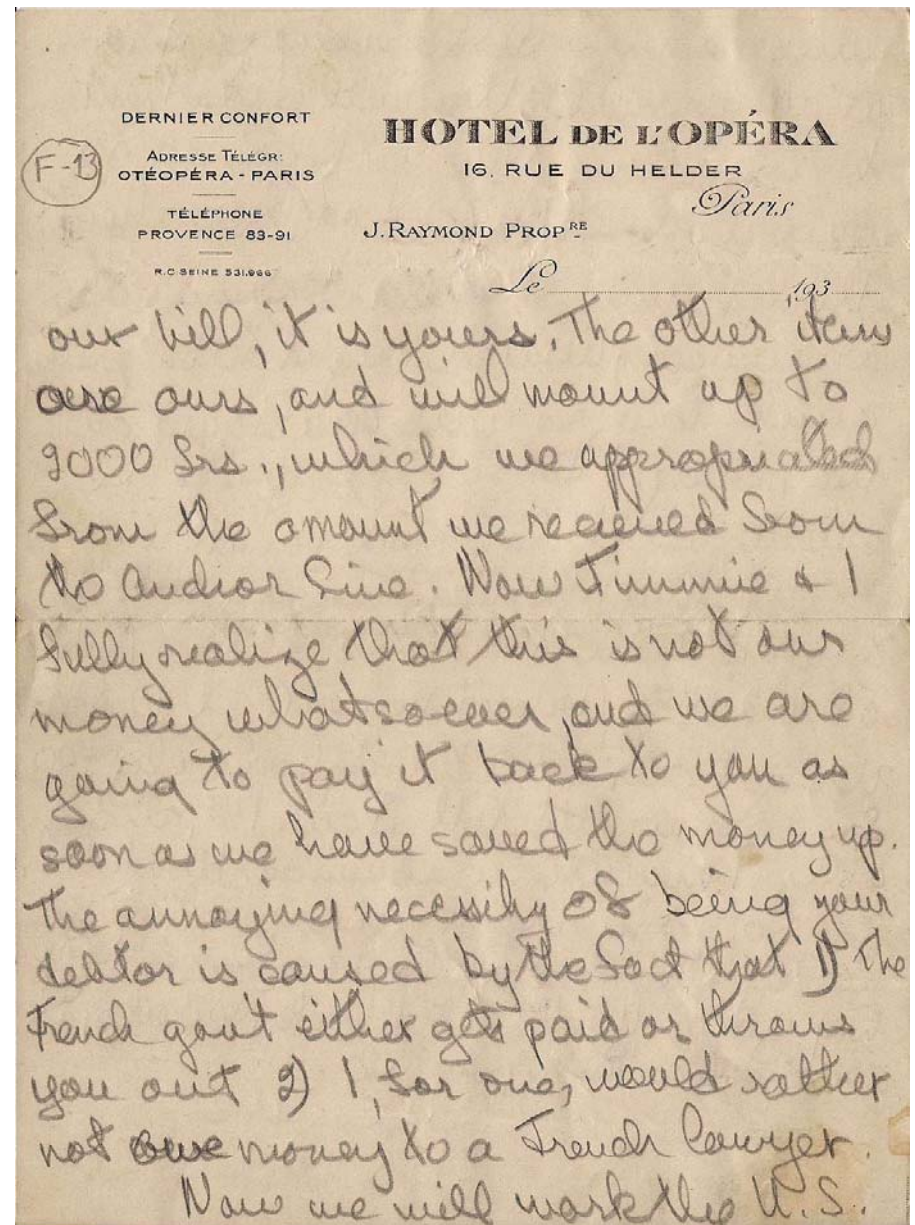
whatsoever, and we are going to pay it back to you as soon as we have

saved the money up. The annoying necessity of being your debtor is

caused by the fact that 1) the French gov't either gets paid or throws you

out 2) I for one, would rather not owe money to a French lawyer.

Now we will work the U. S.



Lines refund differently if it is at all possible: we will ask them to wire their New York office to pay you - \$167 or thereabouts. I'll let you know as soon as it's arranged, which ought to be pretty quick now, so you can figure on the money. I do so hope you'll be able to use it for your vacation.

Getting married Tuesday Oct. 31, a week from tomorrow, in the Mairie of the 14th Arrondissement, at 10 AM. We got our apartment, for only 500 frs. per month till Jan. 15, and only one month in advance.

Wonderful!

So sorry about appropriating the money like that without even consulting you. You'll get it back, however, as soon as humanly possible.

Love etc.

LPC

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