

Jan. 25, 1940

Dear people,

Just got two nice airmail letters from pop, which is nice as can be!

First I must tell you the sad news that my fine job is over, and I have been paid off. And how I've been paid off! for five days' work, eleven hundred francs, which is a magnificent (this typewriter is absolutely original and fiendishly different from all others) sum for anyone's five days' work but especially mine. However as you can imagine I would much rather still be working but getting less. Just what annoyed Heinzen I don't know, because everyone around the office was saying I was doing well, even one of the correspondents who had made me quake by saying, before I began, that it was horribly difficult and I probably wouldn't be able to do it. The old newspaper hand Sam Dashiell said it sounded good to him, and the only trouble I had was in the very first day, due to the fact that no one bothered to explain what I was to work at! There were no openings until this week, so it became rather a problem to write daily fashion articles with all the couturiers silent as mice and twice as suspicious, until their opening day. It necessitated some scurrying about. Anyway, one fine morning I came into the office and found Heinzen had hired another lady, and perhaps a third! Very disconcerting for both of us, since the other lady didn't know the situation. Heinzen delegated someone else to tell me, but I foxed him by going right in and asking him what was the score. He said er ah he had wanted to hire this other gal, henceforth to be referred to as Irene Taylor because that's her name, before but she had been sick. Considering my inexperience and her long years of fashion reporting etc. etc. and would I like to go over to the Herald office because he would give me a fine recommendation? I said I would go to the Herald but would much rather work at the UP as he must understand, and what's more that I should very much like to write up an opening once at least, since that's what he had hired me for. He said ask Irene about doing one on the days when there are two or more at the same time. I went to the Herald but it appeared that they had filled the job Heinzen had been told about two weeks before. Most annoying. Everyone was consoling me by telling me about the time Heinzen wired frantically for the man in Budapest to come to Paris for a few months on a special assignment, and when he didn't get anything in the way of an answer for ten hours, did the same to a man in Denmark. Result of course was that both came, and both had done something in the way of hiring substitutes to take care of their usual jobs. In general rather confusing, but of course in my case he had more justification. I just wish I could have done an opening, because know perfectly well I could do it just as well as Irene, having seen her products. I get a certain amount of illicit and inhumane glee out of the fact that he threw away two pages of her copy the day before yesterday. Serves him right. Anyway, twenty five dollars is quite a sum for me, and no little bit consoling. And in any case I have a nasty cold right now which is better nursed than dragged - to openings..

That 150 dollars would come in very handy in case we should ever want to return to the US in a hurry. On the other hand James suggested that it would almost purchase a share of AT&T. I think for some reason I'd rather have it in a bank, perhaps because I have a morbid fear of war and consequent nationalisation of telephones. God knows I would hate to be right. While it would not be lost by such events, it would go down in price, would it not? Or something queer would happen as it always does in such circumstances. Couldn't I always get it out if it were in a bank? Right now I do not need it thanks to this and that in the way of extra cash, and we do want a source of supply in the way of savings. (I seem to be repeating silly phrases today)

I am having the *femme de ménage*<sup>1</sup>, Charlotte, come in every day now because of my cold. It is a wonderful thing to see someone else doing the work. I just sit and stare happily. What amazes me is how perfectly intelligent men just flop around like seals when they are trying to do simple household tasks. James takes off his brains with his hat (or would if he had a hat) and sets to work in the most delightfully bewildered fashion; so that I am reminded of mama's attitude whenever (none too often) I offered to help in the kitchen. Yes dear, you can peel the potatoes – NO dear, not your hand, the potatoes! Where do you keep the milk? – Oddly enough, in the icebox! and so on till I refuse to believe any more of it.

For some reason or other we have managed to collect a hundred dollars in cash on hand. By the time the editors have fought it out as to which is going to be the happy publisher of my brain child, we shall undoubtedly be millionaires. However the brainchild bores me so much by this time that I hardly dare look at it. It is all my work, never fear, James just criticized it for me and read and reread it. Sam Dashiell said he thought I might be able to sell it to some sucker.

So all is well despite my great disappointment in re the job. I hope eventually that something like it will turn up, as well it might. One thing it taught me was how to ask for a job, a thing which is none too easy for a shy person. I don't say at all that I now know the technique, just that the first blush of horror at the mere idea of applying for a job is gone to some extent.

I wrote to Mrs. Putnam a long time ago, before Christmas. Thanks awfully for the nine hundred francs, and I suppose the best method of paying you off is to give you some percentage, since interest doesn't seem fair to me being as how I didn't ask for the money to be liquidated to me at this particular time. The way to pay you off would be for you to remove what you think right from my next rightful heritage in whatever form it may come.

The New Yorker continues to be a source of delight.

I had a very confusing adventure with a friend of Mr. Inamoto a few days ago. We were both going up the elevator into the office, and seeing that he was Japanese I assumed he was going to the Fifth floor where Inamoto works. I said do you want the fifth floor and he said yes. So I said well I go to the fourth but he answered that he went to the fourth too. I said Oh, rather surprised that he should have changed his mind so suddenly. When we arrived at the fourth I got out first and held the door open for him, he smiled very politely and asked if I minded if he went down to the third floor? It made me feel like a boor for having any definite ideas about which floor I wanted to get off at before consulting my fellow elevator rider. The Japanese are a very mannerly people!

Someone just called up and asked if we were the homing pigeon department, so I said no. Do you think I did right? You can see that what with my Japanese friends and my telephone I am kept in a constant state of confusion.

James announces by telephone that there is a letter from Mama. Good!  
LOVE, ME

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<sup>1</sup> *Femme de ménage*: French, 'cleaning lady'

*P.S. Just read Huxley's Beyond the Mexique Bay,<sup>2</sup> in which he lauds Guatemala. Don't like Huxley much, didn't like Point Counter Point.<sup>3</sup> Am reading My Country & My People<sup>4</sup> which is good but not so much so as I had been led to believe.*

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<sup>2</sup> ***Beyond the Mexique Bay*** "is a travel book by Aldous Huxley, first published in 1934. In it, he describes his experiences traveling through the Caribbean to Guatemala and southern Mexico in 1933."

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beyond\\_the\\_Mexique\\_Bay](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beyond_the_Mexique_Bay) (accessed 2015-01-18)

<sup>3</sup> ***Point Counter Point*** is a novel by Aldous Huxley, first published in 1928.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Point\\_Counter\\_Point](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Point_Counter_Point) (accessed 2015-01-18)

<sup>4</sup> ***My Country and My People*** (1935) by **Lin Yutang**, 1895-1976 "This classic gives a unique and sweeping insight into life in China, and in particular the differences between China and the West."

<http://www.amazon.com/My-Country-People-Yutang-Lin/dp/1849026645> (accessed 2015-01-18)

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I am having the femme de menage, Charkotte, come in every day now because of my cold. It is a wonderful thing to see some one else doing the work. I just sit and stare happily. What amazes me is how perfectly intelligent ~~xxxxxx~~ men just flop around like seals when they are trying to do simple house hold tasks. James takes off his brains with his hat(or would if he had a hat) and sets to work in the most delightfully bewildee red fashion; so that I am reminded of manas attitude whenever (none too often) I offered to help in the kitchen. Yes dear, you can peel the potatoes-NO dear, not your hand, the potatoes! Where do you keep the milk? -Oddly enough, in the icebox! and so on ~~ix~~ till I refuse to believe anymore of it.

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