

Bethesda, Tuesday, Nov. 23, 1948

4-48 p1/2

Dear Mamma,

Yes, afterward I remembered about the carbon paper's having been wrongly inserted, but by that time the letter to you was signed and sealed, so it was all for the best.

Laurence John and I were delighted to hear that you are thinking of coming between Thanksgiving and Christmas. How about coming down for L.J.'s birthday on Dec. 11? That's a Saturday, by the way, so perhaps you could start out that morning and arrive in the late afternoon, so that all three of us could pick you up at Union Station. It would be the best birthday present you could give your little grandson, and if you could make it by about four or four thirty in the afternoon it would fit in with his schedule very nicely. We would hold off the present-giving ceremonies until your arrival, and thus even if you couldn't make it for Christmas, you would at least see one Event. We discussed your trip in great detail at lunch today, and Laurence John only amended it to read that you, Gampapa Jim, and the doggies were ALL coming! He only left out the chickens, but he was most insistent that Gampapa Jim would come in the truck. You he wanted to have come by train, though, and he added "the train will come in the station and say Psssssssss... as it puts on its brakes." He said you would come, and that he would give you a big bear hug and show you your bedroom with the new bedspread and that you would take a bath in our bathtub and he would watch everything. He says he is going to tell you a joke he heard on the radio last Sunday, about "tooorkeys". This morning after I read him your letter he told me very sternly to go and write a letter to you on the typewriter. I asked him what to say and he replied, "write 'DEAR Gammamma!'" He asks me frequently "Is gammamma coming today? This day? Is she coming to sleep in her bed this night?" Last Sunday he remembered about Copper Hill, and kept referring to it for some unknown reason. I don't think he's forgotten one single detail of anything that happened to him at Barley heaf this summer. One day he asked me why Gampappa Jimmy had used HIS sand, and shoveled it away.

I've been re-reading Huxley's "Perennial Philosophy" for the last few days. The first time I read it it took me about half the book to understand it's drift, so I started right over again as soon as I had finished it. You would never know it was the same Aldous, who wrote and still writes such secular novels. This book is more than worth the effort involved in reading it, although it is certainly anything but light summer reading. He quotes from Saint John of the Cross, St. Francois de Sales, William Law, Buddha, the Chinese Taoists, and many others all over the world and from all times, and their differing presentation of what finally turns out to be the same "Perennial Philosophy" explained in differing ways, is the subject of his commentaries, which are interspersed among the quotations. It certainly isn't as easy as C.S. Lewis, but I could hardly put it down after I'd read it for a while and gotten into the spirit of it. It is a good thing to see how the Eastern mystics rendered the answers to the old questions, and how the Chinese, in their own humorous, practical way said the same things in a far different way. As he points out, we in the West have ignored the fact that revelation didn't come exclusively in the Mediterranean basin, and as a result we have become narrow and provincial. He says in the beginning that he is not going to quote from the usual sources, and the Bible in the parts that are well known, but from sources that are new to the usual person, and therefore come to his mind with a new impact. It was a good idea. He is quite right to think that from constant propinquity the old truths fade in our minds,

-2-

4-48 p2/2

and we lose sight of their meanings by constant repetition. Put into different mouths with different approaches, the same thoughts come alive for us again. The man he quotes perhaps as much as any of them is William Law, a truly remarkable eighteenth century English Protestant of whom I had never heard. I should like to get a copy of his chief work, called "A Serious Call". His English style is remarkably clear and beautiful, and he seems to have "thought above" his age and times to such an extent that what he says can be read now with as much freshness as ever. It all makes hard reading, but good reading. I got it from the library, but I have ordered a copy for myself from the bookstore, also a copy of "The Screwtape Letters".

I was invited to a tea on Friday. Deary, deary me. I went, of course, bringing some cookies I'd made as a sort of peace offering to my conscience for having had such reprehensible thoughts on the subject of tea parties in general when I was invited. It was given by "Millie" Cowles, the wife of one of the men in William's class in the Foreign Service School. We also went to a party at Austin "ittenhouses" apartment a week ago Sunday, which I think I forgot to tell you about. Last Sunday night we dropped in at the Dawson's for a short time only (since we had the boy with us), and invited them and Jesse Knox to come to dinner on next Friday evening. Last night we had William's old boss from Milan days and his wife in to dinner- Mr. and Mrs. Lester Schnare. Lester is not a popular man with those who worked for him at all, but he has retired now, and is at loose ends. He married a missionary lady in China many years ago (much to the horror of the other missionaries, who thought that American Consuls came and went straight from the devil. They did all they could to prevent her from marrying him, but since she once went out to dinner with him, they felt she had compromised herself beyond hope, so then they did all they could to force a quick marriage, which was the only way they saw of "saving her reputation!") and his wife is generally considered a very nice woman and is much pitied for what she bears from her pinch-penny husband. Mrs. Schnare and L.J. got along together very well. He made her read him a "book!"

We can hardly wait to hear from you about the actual date of your arrival. I do hope, though, that you will be able to make it on a weekend, either the 11th or some other, so that we can come down and meet you at the station. If that doesn't work out, I could come down by bus and street car, with a sitter for L.J., but he would just love to see the station and the trains and meet his MAMMA, so please try to make it on Saturday or Sunday if at all possible. Just by-the-by, do you think it would be too hard a drive, or too long a trip, if both you and Jimmy could come down on Christmas? Perhaps you could work out a deal with the Szatinskis for caring for the chickens and dogs in your mutual absence. Well, we can think about it, anyway. Now it's time for me to make the rest of the supper and clean off the windows that L.J. has dirtied up with his little hands.

Lovingly,