

January 2, 1950
Bethesda, Md.

Dear Janie et al.,

We were all pleased as could be by the Christmas presents you sent us, and will continue to be pleased as we read on. Of course daddy and mamma were most delighted by the dictionary, which we needed badly and never quite got around to buying, what with this and that. It certainly is a good one, too; the best I've ever seen. Someday I'm going to retire to a convent or monkery of some sort and sit down and read it from A to a note on the type in which, etc. I tried to read it tonight for a moment, but the boy climbed up on the chair with me and demanded to know what an aardvark was, and so on. I shall begin "The Miracle of France" as soon as I've finished a book William gave me (a history of Spain) translated by a lady friend of ours who works at the Department. Since we are going to have her over to dinner soon, I thought it would be prudent to read her book beforehand. Now I have the delightfully rich feeling of having plenty of books on hand, so I won't run out of reading matter for a long while. We are both pleased with "The Great Duffy", too, and the children seem to like it also. I read it to Coit Meleney and Laurence today, and they were fascinated by all the things the Great Duffy could do, in his dreams, at least. William has already read it 90 times.

Christmas went off well this year, but the effort involved makes me glad it comes but once a year. I thought we would never stop writing Christmas cards, and every day a new batch came in from people we hadn't sent ours to. I thought for a moment of inserting an advertisement in the Foreign Service Journal to the effect that while we wished everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, we hoped no one would take offense if we had neglected to send him or her a card.

By the way, on his birthday L.J. said: "From now on, Daddy and Mamma, you must call me just Laurence". So, since the ukase has gone out, we will obey. Don't ask me why he didn't want to be Laurence John any more, but he doesn't.

William is going away on or about March 5, to visit his "territory" in Colombia, Venezuela, and Ecuador. I was miserable to think of being left for a month or more to my own sad and lonely devices, but now it turns out that my father and Helen will be coming back the middle of February and plan to live in Washington for two or three months, so all is once more well. Oh, how I wish, however, that I could hop on the plane with William! If I only had a silverblu mink to hock!

Our joint love to the small fry and yourselves, and many thanks for the wonderful books.