

April 15, 1950
Bethesda

Dear Mamma,

It has been so long since I have had a spare moment to write a letter that I've almost forgotten how to type. We have been busy in just about all possible ways- entertaining ourselves, or being entertained, or getting ready to do one thing or the other. I am "all behind" as Jimmy always used to say, and I hardly know where to begin telling you about things.

Well, as I wrote on my postcard, William was promoted to class three in the Foreign Service, and that will, ironically enough, make it easier for them to push through his salary rise in the Department itself- to him ~~hath~~ hath, it shall be given. I think that if we are able to get Laurence into public school next September we will finally be able to start saving up a little for the day when we are transferred and have to pay out thousands of dollars to enable us to leave town. In any case, I hope so, because at present we are going from bad to worse each month. Our chief aim right now is to get William a new overcoat without a hole in the back, but it looks as if he'll have to wait till fall. If we finally begin to get some warm weather the problem will be shelved for a few months, at least. Father offered to make him a present of one month on our re-payments to him for the money he loaned us for the down-payment on the house, but William didn't approve of the idea. I respect his principles, but I agree with father that the sight of that awful twelve-year-old overcoat with the large moth hole in the tail is not one calculated to impress the ambassadors, etc., with whom William deals, during working hours. If I had been a little less self-centered and clothes crazy myself poor William could have afforded to buy himself a coat long ago, so I feel pretty mean, and I'm determined to concentrate on that overcoat all summer. Well, to return to the pleasant subject of the promotion, he was as happy as could be, and received many nice letters from his friends congratulating him, including one from Ass't. Sec'y. of State Ed Miller, which was particularly flattering and kindly worded.

Shelley Mills has been transferred to Rio de Janiero as Counselor of Embassy, so the Mills family are in a state of uproarious preparation. Francesca is going to stay until June, when the twins and Shiela will be through with school. William will miss Shelley very much, and so will I. They are such a fine, honest couple that it is a pleasure just to know they are around.

I've been having a series of huge parties (huge for me, that is,) with ten people at each stroke, and at last I feel reasonably caught up socially. I suppose the feeling won't last long. Then the entertaining stopped last week before Easter when Peedee came down by train, very happy and feeling grown-up. Father didn't know until the last couple of days that she could come, but it all worked out well. John wrote and asked us to get her some spring clothes, which she badly needed. We went to Woddies and picked up a really impressive amount of clothing - two dresses, a skirt, three sweaters, two jumpers, a sun dress, a pair of shorts, six or eight pairs of socks, and two pairs of shoes for under seventy five dollars. We had to restrain her from picking out the satin numbers,

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the confirmation dresses, and Junior High graduation gowns, but she was reasonably amenable to persuasion. She came and spent two nights with us, and the day in between I gave her a permanent wave which she craved. I do feel most dreadfully sorry for the poor little thing, so alone in a strange world she never made! While we were down town getting her wardrobe they had the parade featuring the two presidents, and she and I went to watch it. At first I thought that she was a little bored by the thing, although she had begged me to take her to see it. But that evening she told father that she was going to tell all her friends she had seen the president himself, "and not just on television, either!" She was also apparently impressed by the fact that I knew some of the Chileans in the parade of cars, and begged to be taken to the reception on Friday! But she is also very anxious to appear sophisticated, in a nine-year-old way. She is, as John said, very much in need of plenty of affection, what I should call loving-kindness. Charity is certainly needed badly in dealing with her, because her manners are fairly bad, and it is a temptation to be continually at her about the amount she eats. I'm sure she could easily lose weight with a sensible diet and no more of the indiscriminate and continual eating between meals. And she is much, much too fat! I wish John hadn't told her that when she is "cleared" she will be able to eat all the fattening things she wants--it's no way to build character, and I can't help thinking that "cleared" or not "cleared", the Lord still helps those who help themselves. Eating so constantly is nothing but a bad habit, and one which she could grow out of with a modicum of will power and plenty of assistance at home. I know perfectly well it's a nervous habit which results from her emotional insecurity, but it's just plain not good for her body and not good for her soul. She's going to suffer for it even more than she is suffering now, when she begins to reach the boy-stage. Father and Helen and I did our best to make it easy for her to eat moderately and at the right hours, but since we were all also anxious to make her feel loved and not badgered, the problem was difficult. I am afraid that in addition to being emotionally anxious for the consolation of fattening food and candy, she is also inclined to fat. I do wish I could talk to John about it, because being so fat and not wanting to do anything about it could ruin her life. Apart from the lack of training in regard to the parrot-like kind of good manners that children should learn as early as possible, she is a sweet, friendly, and amenable child. Beginning right now, she should be taught to "mind her manners" so that it will become second nature. But of course, for us the first thing to do is to win her affection and trust--manners have to wait, or at least not be over-emphasized. I think problem no. 1 is the weight. She and Laurence got along fairly well, with the usual differences of opinion now and then. John says Dona is going to have a six weeks' "vacation" in the Virgin Islands, so I take it the matter of the divorce is settled.

We were so very, very pleased to hear that you had seen Leslyn and given her a little outing, also. Otherwise she might have felt too left out of things. Poor children! Peedee also indicated that she would love to visit grandmother's farm. By the way, she told us how "Uncle Jimmy" was so much better at fixing things than anyone else, and gloated happily over the fact in a proprietary way. By the way again, I think she ought to read more

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good books and fewer comics if she is going to grow up to be a literate woman- less television would probably help her general knowledge, too. However, all I seem to be doing is criticizing. But since John is so busy and is only one person, I know of course that he can't give much attention to the girls. Father and Helen want to get a house on Long Island for the summer, mostly in order to have the two girls out there for the sun and the personal attention.

We went to the Grand Reception given by Gonzales Videla on Friday night, and it was the biggest mob scene I've been in since we attended the Inaugural Ball in Caracas. But we did have a fine time at a dinner given by the Grace Line beforehand- cocktails and then wonderful roast beef at the Metropolitan Club. I don't have an evening dress at this point and couldn't afford to buy one for the two evening-dress affairs we have been to in the last two weeks, but fortunately I fit into one of Helen's, and also borrowed her black short fur coat for the two occasions. I trust the day will eventually come when I'll be able to afford one, but of course the overcoat comes first.

Last night we went to dinner t the Lobenstines, and met some very nice Peruvians, mother, father, son and daughter in law. The son is stationed at the Peruvian Embassy in Washington, and the father has just returned from being Ambassador in Paris and Rome. His Senora was beautifully dressed in brown silk faille and a rich dark brown mink coat- all from Piguet. She was most charming and conversable, as you know many Latin American women aren't. It was a pleasure to talk to her.

Father finally got his car, just this week, and we celebrated by going to the zoo. Unfortunately it was cold as blazes. Today he is taking Peedee back to Westfield in the car, and they will drive on up to Long Island to look for a summer house- it appears the chances of getting one aren't too very good, however. I hope so, however. Mrs. Putnam arrived yesterday from Florida and we went in state to call. He is as lively as can be, although only a few months away from 80 years old.

I'll miss having father here so often this week- they don't plan to come back till Thursday or Friday. He is very kind about sitting for us, and stayed the entire night of Friday when we went to the reception, which not only solved our sitter problem (they hate to stay till two or three AM) but also saved us a good deal of money. Sometimes we take Laurence over there when we go out, but the boy himself prefers to sleep in his own bed and there isn't the room for him to play in that there is here. But Abuelito reads to him and discusses trains and engineering with him, so he far prefers it to getting a sitter to come here. It has been fine for me to be able to go out and even downtown in the afternoon more or less when I wanted to. I didn't realize myself how house-bound I've felt for the past six months. I was considerably cheered to learn that Laura Rowse is going to stay home this summer after college closes around June 9, and is looking for work as a sitter. It will be fine to have her around again- I feel that the boy is perfectly safe with her.

Love,