

Bethesda, Thursday, Oct. 5, 1950

Dear Francesca,

Thank you for your last two letters, which should have been answered sooner had circumstances been more propitious. We enjoyed getting them and hearing how you are getting along in your new surroundings.

Circumstances as far as I am concerned have been far from propitious, in fact although ostensibly I am writing in answer to your two kind letters and to tell you of the fate of the clothes you left with me, I wonder if a strict search of my conscience wouldn't reveal instead a horrid and merciless desire to back you into a corner and tell you all my symptoms. As a matter of fact you might be the perfect victim for an underhanded attack of that sort because you're way down there in Rio and if I gave you fair warning you could simply throw this letter away without reading all the gory details, and in the meantime I would have satisfied the urge to tell everybody how frightful I feel.

Maybe I'd better get right down to the clothes now, as a sportsmanlike gesture, and thus you will have read all the meat of the letter without having to wade through a single symptom. I have done absolutely nothing about the clothes since I last wrote to you about them, and they are still with us instead of at the Thrift Shop where they belong. That is just one of the scores of things that should have been done in the past month and a half and have not. Most of the things concern the Krægs only, but since this is your affair, I'm doubly sorry to have failed you. It occurs to me right at this moment that perhaps I'd better turn the clothes over to Jane Dawson, who has kindly offered to help in any way possible. I hadn't thought about it before, but now it seems a good idea.

What's the matter with the Scholarship announcements? I expected to see them in the latest F.S. Journal. I do hope they didn't keep you waiting all this time for official word, but since your letters didn't mention any official word- or the scholarship at all, for that matter, it appears likely that you hadn't had any word. Mrs. Chalmers mentioned some grave disagreement between the committee and the Trustees of one of the funds concerning one of the winners- not Sheila, of course. Perhaps that could have held them all up, I suppose.

Now I will begin on my symptoms, with grim determination. My better nature hopes that by this time you are on the beach under an umbrella reading a novel, but nothing will stop me from going on about my symptoms. As the Hoovers must have told you, I am going to have a baby in April, but I am beginning to hope I won't live that long. Or rather wish, because other than feeling too dreadful to mention practically all the time I am disappointingly healthy. At first I had the hope that I would perish of starvation due to losing immediately everything I ate, but that prop was taken from under me after a few weeks. Now I just want to lose my breakfast, lunch and dinner, but usually am unable to. I can't smoke, drink, nor chew tobacco. I can't even get near the people who do. All I can eat is oatmeal, and chicken and pot toes once a day. Oatmeal eight to ten times a day, which is too much, in case you were wondering.

I both loath and love the stuff, because in spite of its sticky faults, it has proved more effective than all the sixty nine miracle drugs with which the doctor and the specialists whose aid he has enlisted have found listed in the pharmacopoeia. However, I shall never eat oatmeal again, because the effect wears off in about an hour and I have to have another bowl, ready or not. I can't cook except for oatmeal because of the dire effect of the smells, with the result that Laurence has been up with his grandmother for a month or more and father and Helen are down here acting as general slaveys, poor dears. The prospective infant and I will probably end up as non-smoking, non-drinking people whose only vice is the dope habit. This is because the only worthwhile thing the doctor has been able to do for me is to provide the nembutal with which to eliminate four hours or so out of the middle of the day, which is a great help as long as it lasts. Riding in cars is a disaster, even walking over ten minutes or so is a mistake. I am so ferociously anti-social that William has told everyone of the kind friends who offered to do all possible that the only possible help is to keep away from me, in person and by telephone. Pop, Helen, and William have to sneak out into the cold outdoors to have a cigarette and I've been repaying their kindness with an unbroken series of gloomy looks, deep silences, and hasty retreats of an obvious nature.

With the result that I plan, in my next incarnation, to be either a Protestant old maid (of unimpeachable virtue) or else a Catholic nun of unusual fervor.

Due to my inability to type for long at a time it is now Saturday, Oct. 7, and I see by the papers that you are going to have Getulio with you. At least his present majority seems so huge that it looks that way. I hope you like him.

William says he can take care of the clothes without bothering Jane, so that might be better.

Excuse me for all these symptoms. I remind myself of Mr. Moffitt and his operation, about which we heard all the details several times. At least you have the comfort of knowing that I won't write again until all or most of the symptoms are gone (which the doctor happily predicts may be in anywhere from one month to six months) because typing makes me seasick like just about everything else you can mention.

We were so glad to hear that "Grandfather" has room for a miniature garden. Give him our joint regards.

Affectionately,

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