

Bethesda, Feb. 12, 1950 ← 1951

Dear Pop,

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Ever since I wrote my blistering tirade to you I've been busy repenting at leisure my harsh-seeming words. I'm afraid the surprise of learning about your operation acted on me in a kind of reverse way, and my flurry and fluster emerged as a scolding instead of the sympathy and tender words which I now wish I hadn't hidden under all that oratory. I've been hoping you would have immediately seen the sympathy under the scolding, and would somehow perceive that I was only being mean because I was so surprised. William disapproved of my scolding you, by the way, gently pointing out that it was your nature. But I was still under the effect of the sudden shock and belligerently insisted on sending you the lecture-letter. William is practically always right, it's amazing! But do bear in mind that I do always want to know how you are, even if it involves a lot of contradictory symptoms. That's my nature, just as it's yours to hold back on the symptoms. Just bear it in mind, and remember what horrid reactions I'm subject to when presented with surprising facts-accomplis! Well, I'm glad it's all over and that you emerged triumphant over high-blood pressure and erring doctors, but I'm awfully sorry about your pipe! That was the most unkindest out of all. And the indigestion, and the cruel nurses whom you threatened to drag around by the hair. Now I hope you will have a nice peaceful time of it at home.

Later

I wrote the above while waiting for the garageman to come and fix Mrs. Watkins flat tire. She was going to take me to the doctor at four, but when we went out to the car we discovered an unusually flat flat tire, so I set to on this letter while I had the time. Now I have come and gone and been, and am able to report progress once more. Last week we resumed the shots, and I had three of them. Well, my dear from that Monday to this my dear old hemoglobin went up from 63 to 70, after having descended from 65 to 63 in the previous two-week period. Since I've been eating up those enormous pills conscientiously three times a day right along, this last blood count would seem to be strong circumstantial evidence that I get more out of the shots than I do out of the pills. The book says the pills are better, according to Dr. Norton. I say OK, let's look at the record: first week, with two shots and the usual pills: a ten-point rise; next two weeks, with pills only and no shots: no rise, in fact a slight decline; this last week, with three shots and the usual pills: a rise of seven points. Maybe the book just doesn't know about me and my quirks. So I'm going to have one shot next week, and if the blood count hasn't gone up enough to suit me I shall probably kick and scream for shots twice a week, book or no book. I have an urgent desire to be a red-blooded, upstanding woman again, and quick. By the way, Dr. Norton thinks it might be possible to convince Dr. McCune to do this around the first of April, rather than the tenth. Every little bit helps. I'm going to have so darned much to do once I get on my feet again that the sooner I can safely get it over with, the less of a mad rush I'll have to be in come May and June. Of course, it all depends on Dr. McCune's thoughts. I think little X is a vigorous, fat little character already, but I don't want to take any chances unless the Dr. is in agreement. The Little Character

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continues to romp and play in a highly muscular fashion at all hours, continues to rejoice when I wake up, continues to prod me into waking up when ever he/she thinks we have been lazing around too long, and is just as fond of company and excursions as ever. He/she has taken to punishing me by repeated kicks and ticklings, especially ticklings, whenever I make the mistake of crossing my legs while sitting in a straight chair. My best guess is that in that position Little X feels sort of constricted, and gets revenge by tickling. In any case, it always happens whenever he/or she is awake and I cross my legs while sitting on a straight chair. Regular as clockwork, tickle tickle, until I uncross my legs! It's sort of amusing. By the way, Mrs. Melaney reports that Coit was very quiet pre-natally, Betsey and Tommy quite active. But Tommy got in a bad position toward the end and couldn't move his feet, just his head, arms, and shoulders. The doctor says that was what happened to little Tommy's feet- you know he had to wear corrective shoes. They are getting better now, however. All I can say is we are in for some early hours if Little X continues to want to wake up as early as he or she now does! The infant cad has been waking me up at five or six quite regularly lately, happily twisting and turning and kicking and generally reminding mamma that it's almost time to get up, wheee! Such behavior in one so young!

Heavens, here's William all ready and no supper made!

Feb. 13, Tuesday

Well, we crossed that bridge safely. I don't understand why I don't have time to write a whole lot of letters, but on the contrary, I find it difficult to finish just one. What I do with all my time is a mystery to me, but it seems to go fast. I do very little, and am forever resting up after accomplishing that little. When I start to contemplate all the tasks that lie before me I am really appalled. Or is it appalled, or appaled? I want to have Laurence come back, if only for a short time, but so far I've been hopefully waiting for a good blood count. Of course, I must realize that even with a high blood count I won't feel like jumping through hoops at this stage of the game. One day I feel pretty good, next day I don't. One day the morning headache disappears with two aspirin, next day it won't go away. One day my nose doesn't bother much, next day nothing I do for it will placate it. One night I sleep pretty well, next night the baby and the nose gang up on me. But I do so want to see old Laurence before April first or thereabouts!

Brother John would be delighted to know that according to Dr. Norton spinal anesthesia is being used in "sections" these days, so that the baby doesn't get anesthetized at all. And mamma knows what's going on too, more or less. I was pleased to hear it myself, because I know that too much anesthesia isn't good for babies who haven't learned to breathe by themselves yet. I suppose that's why they do it that way. Poor old Laurence managed to survive beautifully in spite of everything, but it's nice to know little X won't have that hurdle.

I have, alas, finished "The Age of Faith". Wonderful reading all the way through, but the sections on the Moslem civilization were new and strange and a revelation to me. I have been forced to begin "Our Oriental Heritage" over again. I think I can detect more mature thought and better writing in the latest book than in the first. Perhaps I merely imagine it.

Love to you both,