

(Last letter) You haven't read it!'

Jan 7 39 40

Dear People,

*It's been years since I last wrote you – all of a week! I should have written sooner, but James “came down” with a ripsnorter in the way of a cold, and has to be taken care of zealously. Also because of that, nothing extraordinary has happened. I've been devoting myself to my duties in the approved way, and experimenting with the recipes Helen and Mama sent. The books came a few days ago, (thank goodness they were only 40 francs!) So I read the mystery story and set to the cookbook, which is better and more modern than the one I was borrowing from the Library. I have been having some great successes with the puddings therein, as well as the sauces. My tapioca pudding with sherry sauce is wonderful (Cockadoodledoo!) So is my chocolate floating island. I like the different ways of serving vegetables given in Fannie's little chef d'œuvre,<sup>2</sup> because the variety of légumes in Paris in the winter is far from enormous, and James becomes morose when he sees Brussels sprouts more than once a week. The soup recipe Mama sent has been tested, tasted, and approved by Jimmie the Great. Next on the experiment list come Oatmeal cookies, but at present I'm stumped by inability to distinguish between baking soda and bicarb – or are they the same?<sup>3</sup> And how do you say it in French? Same goes for cornstarch. My rice pudding is good, said she modestly.*

*Today I bought a hat! It's the first article of clothing beyond stockings & warm gloves that I've purchased since September, so it's all very exciting.*

*While Jimmie was incarcerated with his cold, he rummaged about and found some personal letters from Wallis W. Simpson<sup>4</sup> in a book. They were addressed to one of our proprietors here, an American. Naturally, Jimmy read them! One was written before the great Episode, telling of what she was doing with her time, and how she was planning to live apart from her husband that winter. Another thanked him for a “brides handkerchief,” which she alleged she wore “a week ago today”. She has a beautiful handwriting.*

*The apartment continues to be a miracle of beauty, and is so even more now, because I had a femme de ménage<sup>5</sup> in to do some heavy cleaning. She had worked here for a year under two previous occupants, and told me that one of them, as ever a photographer, had taken pictures of every angle of the jernt, so as to have it copied in New York. Great old place for \$11.50 a month, I assure you.*

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<sup>1</sup> This note is in a different handwriting, probably Dorothy (ex-Campbell) Middleton's. If so, it is doubtless addressed to John W. Campbell, two whom Philinda had asked Dorothy to send on her letters.

<sup>2</sup> chef d'œuvre 'masterpiece'

<sup>3</sup> Baking soda is indeed the same as bicarb[onate of soda]. (I know because my mother told me so.) In French, bicarbonate de soude or simply bicarbonate

<sup>4</sup> **Wallis, Duchess of Windsor** “(previously **Wallis Simpson** and **Wallis Spencer**, born **Bessie Wallis Warfield**; 19 June 1896[1] – 24 April 1986) was an American socialite. Her third husband, Prince Edward, Duke of Windsor, formerly King Edward VIII, abdicated his throne to marry her.

“Wallis's father died shortly after her birth, and she and her widowed mother were partly supported by their wealthier relatives. Her first marriage, to U.S. naval officer Win Spencer, was punctuated with periods of separation and eventually ended in divorce. In 1934, during her second marriage to Ernest Simpson, she allegedly became the mistress of Edward, Prince of Wales. Two years later, after Edward's accession as king, Wallis divorced her second husband in order to marry Edward.” (Photograph at end of letter) She died at the age of 89 in Paris, fourteen years after the death of her husband. From [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wallis\\_Simpson](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wallis_Simpson), accessed 2014-12-14.

<sup>5</sup> *Femme de ménage*: 'cleaning lady'

*My masterpiece is all finished, and ready to be shown to some of the many professional writers strewn among our acquaintances. It will be on its way to face the world soon, and I hope it doesn't sound as silly to the editors as it does to me by this time, because I want to get filthy rich by my writings.*

*Talking about writing, tomorrow I go to see Mr. Heinzen, Jimmie's boss, about doing some fashion articles for him. I know nothing whatsoever about this year's feminine foibles, but I'm not telling him that, and in any case I know more than the boys in the office, and can learn by reading this year's Vogues at the library. Everything can be arranged with effort, when there are golden sheckels awaiting. In my present state of mind (induced by living in quiet, tasteful luxury for two weeks) I would be an authority on higher mathematics if it reaped in a sufficient sum of francs.*

*I can't remember whether or not I had gotten Helen's missive containing a big, fat, juicy check for ten dollars, before I wrote to you last. (Money is all I can think of now. I'm getting to be such a cold materialist!) In case I haven't, let me assure you, you nice "mamma-in-law" (you said it, I didn't!) that it was regarded lovingly by this low money-grubber, and cherished fondly, and will be spent not all in one place, (because you couldn't spend all that money in one place!*

*All I can think of to say isn't about money is that I love my husband very much, and that I am reading Point Counter Point,<sup>6</sup> on his suggestion. We read Mme. de Sévigné's<sup>7</sup> letters aloud while he was sick. I still think she's a charming lady.*

*Why don't you lazy people ever write to me? I know the air-mail was cut off for several weeks, but boats still ply to these shores. I sound just like you, don't I?*

*Now I must feed James the magnificent.*

*Love to all.*

*Me*



Wallis Simpson in 1936  
Published in *The Sketch*,  
1936-12-09  
(Public Domain)

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<sup>6</sup> "**Point Counter Point** is a novel by Aldous Huxley, first published in 1928. It is Huxley's longest novel, and was notably more complex and serious than his earlier fiction."

"The novel's title is a reference to the flow of arguments in a debate, and a series of these exchanges tell the story. Instead of a single central plot, there are a number of interlinked storylines and recurring themes. Many of the characters are based on real people, most of whom Huxley knew personally." From [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Point\\_Counter\\_Point](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Point_Counter_Point), accessed 2014-12-14.

<sup>7</sup> **Marie de Rabutin-Chantal, marquise de Sévigné** "(5 February 1626 – 17 April 1696) was a French aristocrat, remembered for her letter-writing. Most of her letters, celebrated for their wit and vividness, were addressed to her daughter. She is revered in France as one of the great icons of French literature." From [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marie\\_de\\_Rabutin-Chantal,\\_marquise\\_de\\_S%C3%A9vign%C3%A9](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marie_de_Rabutin-Chantal,_marquise_de_S%C3%A9vign%C3%A9), accessed 2014-12-14.

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Just Little Jimmie's new name!

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