

August 23, [19]40

Our man came back from Lisbon today. He only got 59 francs to the dollar, unfortunately. That gives us enough to pay off debts and rent, and have about 800 francs left over. Ho-hum.

We had Hulot and Babs over to dinner last night, and a fine merry time was had by all. Babs and the Baron (he is one, actually) are well matched, both being successful, gay, snappy and unintellectual. Babs is good and generous, and efficient at almost everything she does, which latter fact is belied by her person. She has approximately all the clothes that Bergdorf Goodman can put out, and acts like a flighty babe. She's not as dumb as she first appears, by a long shot. She used to design high heeled shoes with marked financial success, she tells us... for she is never unwilling to beat her own drum. As I said she is nice and generous with it all. Hulot has acquired the same variety of Flashy Americanism, after 14 years residence there. They are both characters.

For dinner we had pork chops (which I had to wait in line 1½ hours to obtain, because I had chosen the wrong time to go to market) and *corn on the cob*!! It was delicious sweet corn complemented with gobs of butter, and Jones obtained both items at the Embassy, thus relieving me of the onerous task of food-hunting. If you saw me every morning at 11:30 you would think I was a French-woman, for I go out with my black market bag on my arm, carrying back the wine bottles, pinching the melons, feeling the lettuces, standing in line patiently (but as seldom as possible) and looking out sharply for articles that are rarely obtainable but *cheap*.

We now spend fifty francs¹ a day on food and wine, because we eat more meals and food has gone up slightly. Thank goodness for price fixing! Merchants can charge no more than the former price even if their articles are the only examples of that thing in Paris, which is a Fine Thing. But for instance the usual red wine is very scarce, and no one can stop the merchants from selling better and more expensive wines in its stead, with the result that one's food bills go up.

Hulot told us he had a gun for two weeks out of five months. Previously a man who joined the Foreign Legion 6 months ago, told me that during the worst part of the war, his regiment had only a few guns issued in 1874, and some new guns but the wrong sized bullets! Everyone agrees that the only visible planes during the alertes over Paris were always German, (although we assumed that they were French.)

Our friend Kay Herrick (Phi Beta K. from Colby College) was on the radio. Yesterday she called on the Kommandantur, to see if she could get another similar job sometime soon. The man she was sent to encouraged her somewhat, and bought her a drink. She saw some "anti-Semitic" riots on the Champs Élysées, where a few windows were broken. Promptly a corp of light armoured trucks (German) came up, and a platoon of the Garde Reublicaine with their handsome horses and plumed silver helmets. They restored order. Today the Paris Soir² said that there

¹ 50 francs at 59 to the dollar = 85¢. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' inflation calculator, that amount in August, 1940 corresponds to \$14.80 in March, 2017. (<https://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/cpicalc.pl>, accessed 2017-05-07)

² *Paris-Soir* was a large-circulation daily newspaper in Paris, France from 1923 to 1944. Its first issue came out on 4 October 1923. After 11 June 1940, the same publisher, Jean Prouvost, continued its publication in Vichy France: Clermont-Ferrand, Lyon, Marseille, and Vichy while in occupied Paris, it was published under German control from 22 June 1940 until 17 August 1944. Immediately prior the occupation of Paris, *Paris-Soir* boasted a circulation of two and a half million - the largest circulation of any newspaper in Europe at that time. (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paris-Soir>, accessed 2017-05-07)

should be no more of that for any excuse. “With France in the unhappy condition she is now, more destruction is criminal and traitorous.” The papers are all Anti-Semitic, however. All the foolish young boys who have been longing for some sort of noisy trouble like anti-Semitic riots are going to be frustrated, nonetheless, which is a very wise thing. Disturbances, all the newspapers and the authoritative groups agree, are the last things that are needed at this time. Kay has been to the Préfecture and announces sadly that the Germans have not interfered with its management at all, for it is in the same state of <over-organization> {over-organized disorganization} as ever, and it still takes three hours and three hundred documents to turn around inside the sacred precincts. She gave me her sugar card because she always eats in restaurants! If we could only get coffee and the precious oil that way!

Lillian Mowrer’s article in the July 20th *New Yorker* was good, fair, and I give my approval “Fiesta in Lisbon”.

Our friend Kay Herrick went around to see some more Germans. She had an appointment at 9:00 A.M., and turned up at 10:30 and was astounded when she came in the big “Propaganda and news center” of the Authority to have three or four people rush up to ask if she was the young lady with the appointment. She had merely come to ask for a job! The Radio Man for occupied France she found to be a man who has lived for the past 20 years in Rhode Island, and so she said he amazed her by clicking his heels and wearing a Feldgrau³ uniform then bursting forth in American. He said alackaday there was no radio work in France, but that he was sure that she could get some kind of good job in that line in Berlin. She said if there was something definite, it was O.K., and he said he would call her if he heard. They talked for two hours, and he invited her to lunch: “If I were pretty I wouldn’t have been so flattered” said Kay. Of course, one still doesn’t do such things, for the sake of tact. She asked him why they didn’t turn out some snappy, interesting broadcasts from Occupied Paris. “All the big sending stations like Paris Mondial, were too effectively ruined by the French”. Well then, they could just send written stuff through Berlin. “We have been doing a little of that, putting our whole souls into what we thought was interesting stuff, then none of it gets published.” Stadler, of the U.P., told us the same thing; he wrote 20,000 words for sending (in abbreviation for cheap cabling) and four or five lines by him have been published in the U.P. papers in a month. He’s mad, because he thinks his stuff is interesting. As Stadler put it, bitterly “they’d rather publish rumors about France originating from our London Bureau – they are more blood-curdling.” Well, Kay Herrick is a nice girl so I hope she doesn’t go away again, although it would be interesting to go to Berlin.

Why don’t you write through the State Dept.??? Everyone else is getting letters, we feel like orphans. Do you think it is bad or something? Because it *isn’t*. Please.

I have invented a lovely stew for meatless days: Mange-tout Beans⁴ (like string B. only with pea-like insides...one eats it all) onions, mushrooms, and/or eggplant, a tomato, a bouillon cube, thyme, laurel, mustard and garlic (for ten minutes only) I cook it with ¼ inch of water and a large amount of butter, for an hour. It turns out Absolutely incredibly wonderful, and looks ghastly. Jones always weeps when he finishes the pot, and I shed a happy tear myself. It is really good and cheap. The fact that it is good for meatless days and uses up none of our precious stock of noodles, spaghetti, etc., wouldn’t interest you as much as it does me.

³ **Feldgrau** (field-grey) has been the official basic color of military uniforms of the German armed forces from the early 20th century until 1945... (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Feldgrau>, accessed 2017-05-07)

⁴ **Mange-tout beans:** French ‘eat-all’ beans. The name refers to snow peas and/or snap peas.

At the party at our neighbors, we met a man who is ½ Andalusian, so I spoke Spanish, much to my joy. He gave me some records to listen to also. Unfortunately they are too Spanish (i.e. oriental) for even my tastes. I wish I had my own.

Schmittty finally came, and recounted some of the wildest tales imaginable. He went with Paris Mondial radio to Tours and Bordeaux, and made 15,000 francs in one week broadcasting Military stories of the war's progress. He knows a lot about military history and tactics, and is very interesting on those subjects. It is odd to hear a man whose grammar is slightly shaky tell you about Marlborough, the Leipzig campaign, and his experiences in China and Abyssinia. Although he fought in Spain on the wrong side and broadcasted for the French, he is now seeking a job with the Germans, being completely unprejudiced and uninterested in causes. He is not a hypocrite at all, it is just his *métier* to fight, and he never bothers about the "ideals", supposedly behind the wars. Because of that fact, one feels that he tells the truth about this war.

Someone gave him 3500 francs in Bordeaux, just like that, because it was "no longer needed". He went to a flying school in Stuttgart in 1922. He thinks a plausible explanation of the ex-government's care-free attitude toward refugees is this: The more refugees on the roads, the slower the German advance. I think this explanation is too cold-blooded even for that cold-blooded government, and that they neglected to say anything about "voluntary evacuation" just as they neglected every other pressing problem except the safeguarding of their own skins and pocketbooks. Nonetheless the streams of refugees *did* serve to retard the German advance somewhat, because it is physically impossible for two armies and an ever increasing horde of refugees to exist on the same spot. Schmittty says he is doubtful of Germany's ability to win a direct attack on England. But he has been so surprised by all the German moves since Poland, that he has come to expect miracles and perhaps with control of the air it could be done.

We try and try, but we can't understand why you don't write % the State Dept. like other relatives. Have we offended you somehow?

Schmittty saw Flip in Marseilles, and says it is *very* semi-concentration he is in. As a matter of fact, Flip is in clover – getting £3 a month from some fund, a room in a sailors' home and plenty of sun and company. The only trouble is that he has to be in his room by 10 at nite. Flip has an ingrained aversion to toil, and loves the sunny south, so he is very happy.

I think this letter has gone on long enough so this noon I will give it to James J. to put in the pouch. Also, today is washing day and the day for me to play racquet at the Church. So au revoir my pets.

Lovingly

Me