

Letter number 9

June 24, 1943

L-273

P 1/4

Dear Family,

Last Saturday, after the usual soul-stirring curry lunch, we managed to close our sleepless eyes for the space of two hours or so, and awoke to a radiant blue sky of afternoon, a most wondrous rare thing at this season. Penry Price told us last night that on the three days at the beginning of last week, we managed to score nine full inches of rainfall- and that's one for Poppa's books. Not that it has rested on its laurels since then, either. It has been raining a rain that would make an American rain look like a sunny day, since yesterday morning, with time out now and then for chop. The path to the door is a little brook, and the alley beside the house has only a few peninsulas of land left. But strangely enough, I'm rather fond of it all, especially since all I need to do is look out at it from the cosy shelter of the office or the bedroom, and I am only considering the purchase of an umbrella in a desultory fashion. My two raincoats are forever being left behind in other people's houses, due to the fact that the need for them is so slight. The garage is indoor, the car is always there, and we live above our place of work, so what need indeed? Well, I began to tell about Saturdays sunshine. We had a party for the soldiers of our acquaintance, eating the roast pork I had wangled. At the club afterwards we sat out on the lawn in brilliant moonlight, harmonizing songs, and occasionally dancing. At one thirty we saw a great black bank of clouds coming up from the West, and estimated that it would be raining in twenty minutes. So we gathered our forces together and went home, we in the car and the soldiers in their jeep, which fortunately had one of those tops. Still, I didn't envy them their seven or eight mile drive.

Sunday Anita and Penry and I had planned a beach party as usual- Mr. Lynch was sick. But when we woke up in the morning the sky was very black and threatening, and a code cable had arrived, so we called up Penry and told them to come over here for lunch instead. We imported MacMillian and Bruns also, to help eat up the curry chop. We had fired onions with the small chop this time, at my insistance. William can't eat onions (one of the few consolations of the weeks when I thought he never gave me a serious thought was this fact, and/ also that he isn't terribly fond of garlic). Usually Tom brings in the big bowl of curried chicken with ocras and hard boiled eggs and potatoes, and the other big steaming bowl of unpolished rice. Little Willie carries the big tray of small chop for people to pile on the curry and rice. There is whole pepers sliced (which sane people never touch) and ground red peppers, ...

ground fresh coconut, whole groundnuts, ground groundnuts, pawpaw diced, pineapple same, tomatoes same, oranges same, and bananas. A huge bottle of chutney monopolizes the center of the scene, with a sticky spoon lusciously dripping mangoes and spices coming out of its generous mouth. That is, when we can get the chutney. Which is frequently always, thank goodness.

Wheweee! FIVE LOVELY LETTERS, TWO FROM POP! Just came bouncing in. Time out to read them, savour them! One letter for William. A new "Time" to read! Gosh!

NOW SIX LETTERS!!

Willie is just bringing me my mid-morning tea and whole wheat bread sandwich. Flash!! It is still raining as if the world were 95% water.

My what nice letters! And the bubble bath picture of little Philinda was Much Appreciated by every one who saw it. Mamma, please don't cut the pictures of the baby, because then they wont fit into the frames I want to have made for them. A leather man comes around to the office quite often, and I have had two frames made so far, as well as had some pinch bottles (formerly containing whiskey, and very prettily shaped) covered in red and blue morrocco leather with designs. They will make nice gifts, and can be used for water or wine bottles. He is quite expert at it for the local boys, and ~~KNIBNEXXXIXNAXIXANXXINXAXIXNAX~~ what he makes is ~~aneuof~~ the few things you can get with local color.

L-273
P2/4

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Weather flash: Everyone in the room is clothed in sweaters and coats, the local boys are wearing mufflers (I even saw a little black baby the other day with what looked like a beaver cap on- anyway, warm and furry) and I have on a wool skirt and blouse, with my short-sleeved black sweater on top. The Thermometer, made for other climes, announces that the temperature is 75, and the room is "Too Hot". How little they know. The other day it was 80, and Little Willie remarked as he poured in the petrol tin of hot bath water, "Be too cold for we."

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Well, to return to our mutttons, we had a perfectly lovely curry party on Sunday, with every-one going great guns, ending up with a magnificent argument about politics. Anita and I started our endless bitter battle over Women. She is a black reactionary and silly as can be. We have agreed to avoid the subject during office hours, because Mr. Lynch says the shouting disturbs him. We are separated by our two desks, which is a fortunate thing. Anyway, it was a lovely party

I shall send you a list of local lights, and a further one later by the other mail.

Monday we stayed home and read- I Marquis James' "The Border Captain". It is vol. I of the life of Andrew Jackson, and quite amusing in spots. William was putting the finishing touches on his speech for the Discussion Club, which came off on Tuesday. He read it over to me and we made corrections. The next day we went to Mr. Richardson's house for Dinner. He is Manager of that big company I was grousing about, but in spite of that is very advanced in his thinking, as quite a number of the locals seem to be. He has a absolutely incredibly darling puppy, half Irish terrier and half something else ~~it~~. It is a ball of Yarn, about two and a half inches thick, with a wooly tail at one end, and a moist black button nose at the other end. Occasionally an infinitesimal red tongue appears underneath the latter. The whole thing is a foot and a half long and a foot thick. He also has the mother dog, a cat, and three month old kittens; the last named frightfully curious about everything. His house is as usual around here, with big rooms, open to the breezes. His wife got tired of the enormous distances and lack of privacy, so he built a little room, which is furnished European fashioned, with a comfortable day bed, pillows, pictures of friends on the walls, and an enormous stone

bunny rabbit in the corner. Very nice, and different out here. We had a perfectly lovely dinner of soup, and a casserole of fish with a fine bread crumbed crispy top, a kind of steak, and a pudding for dessert. By that time the discussers had begun to arrive, so we adjourned to the living room. William reviewed Carr's "Conditions of Peace", with the result that there were many hot arguments. Mr. Cooke the Glasgymon is back, so the fur flew. I was proud of William. Home at a sober eleven thirty.

L-273
p3/4

Last night we went to a party at Mr. Lynch's house. He had invited the local naval chief to bring five or six of his officers. Twenty eager officers arrived. He had invited some Frenchman or three. Eight arrived. It was quite a party. We had to leave early to go to dinner at the Hotel (THE hotel) with a man named Jerry Wormal, who has just come back from leave. He is a labor officer, and knows many of the local languages. He once took William around town with him, and W. says he spoke to all sorts of market people, fishermen, washermen, babies, etc, in their own respective language. He is a good type, and we had a good time. Beryl Bartholomew is back from the town where MacSeeney is. She is another girl to have to parties, and always welcome. The other day one of the army men came in and exultantly announced that they had hooked fifteen women for their party and dance, but were afraid they would have to invite their husbands too. I am going to that dance to-night.

By the way, we went out there last Sunday to the camp and saw a wonderful, exiting movie. It was "Air Force", and everyone was absolutely limp after it. I was on the edge of the seat every moment, and had to hold Williams hot little hand to steady my own hot little hand. 't is certainly a thing to be seen. All about the perilous adventure of nine or ten men and a Flying Fortress named Mary Ann.

Justice and Mrs. Butler-Lloyd just came in to say good bye. Everyone thinks they are the loveliest old people in the world.

3:00 P.M.

Just had the most delightful, juicy thick steak, with fried onions, French Fried potatoes, string beans. Also a nice golden ear of corn to begin with. And a chocolate pudding to end with. Lum. Every once in a while (never when we have a party, for some reason) we get those marvelous steaks, as good as U.S. ones, but most of the time our chickens (very frequent) and meat are stringy and tough. There is a legend that the market people double their money on chickens and turkeys by running sweepstakes on all fowl before they slaughter the pretty dears. You know- a hundred mile race for each bird before it becomes fricassee.

L-273
p4/4

We read two of mommas letters and the first of poppa's- the one that came via pouch. I read the first after my steak, accompanying it with a glass of red wine from the deep south-source of all our wines nowadays. It is sort of the same as California. Then I read the next two sitting in the long chair that William had his picture taken in, reading Time. William loves to have them read to him. Then we took a nap.

I simply must put away childish things and go to work. I love you all very much and wish that you are happy. It would be nice if Pop and "amma were here...

A lot of love,

hPK