

IN REPLY REFER TO

FILE NO.

AMERICAN CONSULAR SERVICE



DEPARTMENT OF STATE

AMERICAN CONSULATE

Milan, Italy

March 19, 1940

Dearest Janie:

Your letter of February 23rd arrived March 13th, which is not bad time for these days. It did not appear to have been opened by the censor at Gibraltar. If the censorship of American mail for Italy is definitely stopped, I'll let you know so that you can send my letters by regular mail instead of the pouch. If not stopped at Gibraltar, the regular mail is quicker.

No doubt by this time you have my letter of March 7th which contains the answer to many of your questions about Milan. Regarding the city itself, I will only add now that I have already seen the cathedral from the outside, but so far I haven't visited the interior. Sunday morning Perry Laukhuff left for Berlin, and the same afternoon I put my suitcases together for what I hope will be the last time for some time and moved over to the apartment. It certainly is a roomy place, with plenty of room for two. There is a good sized living room, with a grand piano and two fairly comfortable chairs in addition to a fairly uncomfortable divan; and a dining room with a long refectory table in what might be walnut. I feel a little like the poor old rich man, sitting alone at the head of a long and empty table, but that can't be helped. The maid, who is staying on, would lean over the back of one of the chairs and talk to me if we knew any language in common; as it is, I'm afraid that it will be pretty quiet at home. She does know a few words of German, however, and that is a help, although her knowledge is by no means conversational. My radio is still in hock (customs), and that adds to the restful atmosphere.

The sleeping part of the house is divided off from the rest by a strong partition. The bed room is large, and has twin beds and plenty of drawer space for two people. It was therefore not hard to find room for all my sheets, pillowcases, towels, etc., which I will not need, as well as my supply of shaving cream, toothpaste, and so on. There is a large and modern bathroom with all necessary and some unnecessary fixtures. The kitchen opens into a passageway of its own leading directly into the front entryway, and the maid's bedroom and separate bath are next to it. On the whole, I believe it is going to be quite satisfactory, although I suspect the kitchen and refrigerator are not as clean as they might be. I have to be careful with the maid at first, anyway, as she wanted to accompany Perry to Germany, and if she left, it would be difficult to find anyone who could run the house without guidance with equal efficiency.

Last night I unpacked the trunk for the first time since leaving home. You know, it's always a surprise to find how many things I have brought along. There were, I am sorry to say, a few casualties. Three of my six little green sherry glasses from Germany were absolutely crushed;

I think we put them too near the bottom of the tray, even though they were well wrapped up. The thing that made me feel worst was that my pretty crystal ash tray that Fran Spalding gave me was very badly chipped and cannot be used in public hereafter. I cannot imagine what caused this. It wasn't on the bottom, or the top, and was securely wrapped or so it appeared, in many thicknesses tissue paper. By the time I took it out, there was nothing in sight which seemed capable of having caused the damage, so I guess that will remain a mystery. I do have one suggestion for both of us in the future, though: don't put books on top of the toothpaste. Fortunately, only one tube was so badly crushed that it broke, and even so I think I will be able to use most of it by the simple expedient of leaving the cap on and squeezing the paste out of the hole. Fortunately, there is only one hole. And speaking of books, I haven't as yet seen anything of the case of books which was supposed to come by freight. The Despatch Agent in N.Y. probably sent it by the slowest freight boat on the water, and it is probably being examined by the officers in Gibraltar. I wonder if they read all the books that interest them ?

I note your question about the cigarettes. The Axton Fisher Tobacco Co. could not place the cigarettes on board, and I recently received word that they had arrived in Basel. Mr. Buhrman is going to pay the Swiss duty (about \$7.30 on the five cartons) and send them to Lugano. I am going up there next week, and I shall endeavor to carry them back to Milan with me. The Italian duty is absolutely prohibitive, and although until recently Spuds have been sold here, there are now none to be had. About Corilla: I wrote to Ed March 11th to inquire about her, but so far have no answer. I hear, however, that she is out of danger; I hope it is true and know you will be glad to hear it. I will keep you advised about her condition. I also asked Ed if any of the Stuttgart people were going to be in Switzerland over Easter, as I would like to meet them there, but nothing has come of this either. I had a card from Jack Vibert; apparently the feud still goes on, as he made some pointed cracks about rat traps. I have to go to meet a courier now, so I can't make another page. I am still well. Give my love to the folks, and tell them not to forget to write. Yours is the first letter I have received. Regards to Mary Shinn, Barb, and all the other girls and "guys".

With all my love,

William

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