

La Cigogne
Mourmelon-le-Grand
Marne, France
February 25, 1948.

Dear family,

Well, now Daddy and Cile are duly feted. It was a strange sort of thing. As far as I could see, absolutely nothing happened. Deadly dull would have been an understatement. But our company seem to have enjoyed ~~xx~~ themselves thoroly and complimented me with evident sincerity on ~~xxx~~ a delightful afternoon.

Now, after that confused introduction, I think I'd better tell you all about it, and then you can see both points of view.

To begin with, Hews wanted all the Christelle's and the Logeard's, and I knew that if we were going to have anything that size here, we just had to ask M. deLanghe and Jeanine. Cile had four little girls she wanted too, so I thought over the amount of cake that called for, and decided I'd better see if I could supply the materials and have the layers baked at the patisserie. Early one freezing cold morning I went over there, and had a long conference with the patron of the patisserie. They were quite willing to make the cake for me, but just what kind of cake did I want? Madeleine? Biscotte? Gateau aux amandes? That was when I became confused. I've been identifying what patisserie I've eaten by pointing, not by name. So we started comparing recepies, and appanently there's no such thing as plain cake in the French cook's vocabulary. It was fun, but we weren't getting anywhere until finally it occurred to me to ask what they made when they wanted to ice a cake. It turned out that what we finally decided I wanted was madeleine made with butter, even if it did have six eggs to the layer (!) and practically no sugar. I said something gentle about the possibility of putting in a little more sugar, but it seems that cake recepies are just not tampered with that way - no adjusting. We settled on three layers - one quite large and the other two smaller. After all I had to figure on at least twenty people. I brought over the flour, shortening and sugar and ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ the twenty eggs. Then I went home and the children and I popped corn and made popcorn balls and I gratefully surveyed the candy and chewing gum that were in all those late arrived Christmas packages. Saturday I picked up my layers and spread them with jelly in between and made a white icing which naturally refused to stiffen and kept me scraping gobs up from the bottom and putting them back on top for about an hour. Meantime Hews went out and bought two bottles of Malaga and a bottle of sweet Vermouth, the favorite local apperitifs, and six packs of cigarettes. Sunday afternoon after dinner, I spread the table with a white cloth and carefully laid out the glasses, my plates and silver and the dozen plates and aluminum forks I had borrowed for the occasion from Maman. By this time the white icing was a little stiffer, so I made a caramel frosting and drapped it in enticing swirls and drops all around the cake and sprinkled on a few chopped walnuts. It looked pretty good after that. There was a plate (soup plate) of candied almonds (Thanks, Lee.) and a plate of hard candies and the popcorn balls and a cereal bowl full of salted peanuts. I was giving my all. We also had central heating, which came about this way. It's been awfully cold for the last week, down to zero in the mornings, and Hews and I had discussed the possibility of recklessly burning up a lot of wood to get the house a little tepid before all those people came over. When Hews was down in the basement Saturday afternoon splitting up our week's supply of wood, M. deLanghe came down to discourage him from trying to light the furnace, because it really is a terrific lot of work getting the fire up and ~~xxx~~ letting the air out of all the radiators so that the heat can get ~~xx~~ in and then draining all the radiators afterwards. Hews agreed with everything he said, so deLanghe started changing his mind (says Hews, "I've got that old goat down pat.") and ended up by deciding to see what the weather was like next morning. Sunday morning when we got up, he had a fire

going in the furnace. So all day Sunday we gloried in a house that was so warm you couldn't see your breath unless you got near a window, and Sunday night there was so much hot water that we were able to fill the tub twice and take lovely hot all-over baths - the three kids in the first one, and Hews and I in the second.

But to get back to the party. -- The first child arrived while we were walking home from dinner at the Christelle's, and hovered happily near the radiator while I gradually put things out. She was the one of whom Cile said to me, "I really want to ask Andree, Mamma. She's an awful nice child, and she's so poor she has to wear old raggedy clothes to school all the time." She explained that Andree wouldn't be embarrassed to come because she had a dress and coat for Sundays that weren't quite so raggedy.

Soon the other two children arrived, and at four, Achille, Alain, Michel and Maman walked in, all clean and with going-to-a-party expressions, particularly after they saw the cake. Jeanine, who had been driving me crazy all week by coming upstairs on an errand and hanging around until I practically shoved her back downstairs, came in when the other children did (she is 17) was sent to fetch her father, and without waiting for the others, the party was officially under way. We sang Happy Birthday, and Cile blew out the candles, and Hews filled glasses, and I sliced cake and poured chocolate for the children, who stayed mouselike in their corner all afternoon, efficiently disposing of everything edible that came near them. Not mine. They were busy competing to sit on Achille's lap. The French children

Then Papa and Lucien came in from the football game, and things livened up a little. I just ignored all the glances that were being cast at the remaining half of the cake. The little Logeard's had the measles, and there was some doubt that they'd be able to come over, so I wanted to save a piece of cake for them. I passed candies constantly, without a single refusal, tho I did see Papa slip a handful in his pocket to eat next day. Hews kept on filling glasses and passing the cigarettes, and suddenly about the third glass M. deLanghe began to feel more self confident and cheerful and started telling about the time he drove ~~xxxxxxx~~ in a touring car race from Paris to Moscow before the first war, and didn't spend a franc the whole way, he was so well entertained. Everybody enjoyed that, particularly since ~~xxx~~ not one of us had been able to think of another thing to say about the weather for five or ten minutes. And Jeanine got the giggles, and her father cautioned her severely about the aperitif. And everybody listened while Papa told how the football came out, and M. deLanghe's information that he is now 73 years old was greeted with flattering incredulity. He is actually extremely active, digging his own garden and chopping wood with a vigor that's amazing.

And then it was five-thirty, and the party broke up fast. I sent the children on their way with a piece of gum and a candy bar apiece, and when everybody else had left Achille, who always expands a little when big brother Lucien is out of the way, stayed behind to talk with deLanghe some more as we all stood out in the hall. A couple of interesting things came out of the conversation. For one, they agreed that M.deLanghe had been treated very badly right after the war to be put in prison on the strength of some personal enemies' unfounded accusations and kept there for nineteen months before his case was investigated and dismissed. (There are other stories.) Then deLanghe said that anyhow, if everyone in France who worked with the Germans was put in jail, there wouldn't be room for them all. Which unfortunately is true, particularly in this section where they are so close to Germany and far from the coast. But I thought it revealing that he followed his statement of his own complete innocence with that bit of justification. And that was the end of the party that everyone found such a delightful and unusual experience. I think they really meant the cake and candies.

We took a piece of cake over to the Logeard's, along with a bottle of wine and some cigarettes, and found that the real stumbling block had been not the sick child, but M. Logeard's absolute refusal to enter deLanghe's house. When her father was in prison, Mme. Logeard took Jeanine into her

home and fed her, even if the Logeard's were just working class people and her father a comparatively wealthy man. Now Mme. Logeard is of Italian origin, and very proud, and when some Italian-American soldiers were welcomed in the house and she spoke Italian with them, Jeanine spread some very ugly, malicious, and completely false -she admitted herself she knew they were false- stories about Mme. Logeard. Most of Mourmelon knows Jeanine well enuf not to pay any attention to anything she says, but these people who can be so kind and good have strong hates once they are aroused. There is no longer any contact between the two houses across the street from each other, and even for us, whom they like so well, M. Logeard could not bring himself to enter this house and sit in the same room, socially, with Jeanine and her father.

But they loved our bringing over the cake and wine. Mme. Logeard's sister was staying with her to help with the little boy, who was very sick, and she was a wonderful type. She's a great, strong, Italian peasant woman, with huge shoulders and hips and breasts, but she looked strong rather than fat, and she laughed all the time. They are terrificly polite people, and they manage to be s~~o~~reluctant to accept things like that quarter of a cake and so gay that every time, I ~~forgot~~ almost forget how rare and precious such delicacies are in their lives. So we laughed and talked with them for a while before we went over to Christelle's for supper and ~~the actual end of the fetewas all part.~~

Now does that sound like an unbelievably exciting and lavish party? The Christelle children thought it was, and so did Cile's little friends, and the deLanghe's had a lovely time.

March 2,

I've had to write this in two installments, being distracted by Hews's weekend visit, and another very brief trip to Paris. The Dorians wanted to see Hews's slides, so we made a date for last Sunday night with them, and I went in town for that. (Just any excuse will do.) I only stayed from seven Sunday evening till seven Tuesday morning, but as usual we managed to do quite a lot of things. The evening with the Dorians was a tremendous success. They had asked over another couple, the husband of which (or whom?) is an expert on oil paintings and a painter in his own right, another couple who are interested in such things, and ~~an~~ two American girls who are friends of Joanna Dorian, besides M. and Mme. Charles Dorian. It made quite a crowd. I was intimidated at first, particularly when Mme. Charles got me started talking about myself and Mourmelon and I wasn't a bit sure that my French would hold up under the strain. But it did, and we got along extremely well together. I've even decided she's enuf person and nice enuf to deserve her husband, who as I told you in my last letter is quite a guy. Everybody enjoyed the slides tremendously, which of course made us feel awfully good. The painter was particularly interested in the paintings, of course, and fascinated with Lennie's experiments in different approaches to painting. John McCrady's name he wrote down, and he wanted to know all about the kind of person Alexandra Kay is. He kept saying all during the slides, to Jean, that these would be very fine as illustrations of something, but I didn't quite get the whole thing. Charles was so impressed with Hews's shots of Paris landmarks that he offered to take him into the Invalides some Tuesday (he's architect-in-charge) when it's closed to the public and let him take pictures all over the place where ever he wants to. Then after the ~~the~~ slides and some cake and coffee, some of the crowd, who lived too far to miss the last subway, left, and Mme. Charles wanted to talk. So we discussed at some length the last war and the troubles people had as compared with the troubles the same people had in the first one. She's had a regrettable amount of experience of both, tho she was very small in the first one. It was such a revealing conversation that, if she was an American, I'd say she had been wonderfully friendly and open with people she knew only slightly. For a French woman she was just unbelievable, and when we reluctantly tore ~~xxxxx~~ ourselves away towards two o'clock in the morning, I felt as if I'd had something much more stimulating than coffee. It was just wonderful to spend

an evening with people we found so interesting, and to be as much appreciated as appreciative. And as we left, Mme. Jean gave me a very cordial invitation to call her up the next time I came in town and she'd be very happy to spend some time showing me around town. When I thought it over and realized that we had really gained some friends who are interested in the same things we are, and that we were being accepted into the group both by someone as fine and sweet and simple as Joanna, and by some one as nice, but very complicated, as Mme. Charles, I glowed all the way back to the hotel. It was a very successful evening, and makes me very hopeful of our future in Paris.

The next day we got up very slowly about ten-thirty, and hunted a Chinese restaurant we'd heard about to eat lunch. It turned out to be Indochinese, or Vietnam, and the food was quite a change from the good but pretty standardized French food we've been eating. We started off with a chopped meat and mushrooms something that was rolled in a thin pancake and fried in deep fat till the outside was crisp and brown. With that went a sauce of hot, but not red peppers and garlic, and tea. Then we had fried rice and mushrooms and a kind of roast pork with soy sauce that was delicious and more tea, and finished up with almond cakes. We're going back there and try their ginger duck some time. Yummy.

Then after much debate, we decided that the only thing that seemed to be particularly interesting (We were awfully full.) was the exposition of house keeping arts that is in the Grand Palais at the moment. Being Monday and the day off, there was a terrific crowd surging up the steps, but it was moving pretty fast, so we just surged right along with it. I never saw anything quite like what was going on inside. There was booth after booth and counter after counter, all from some store or dealer, and stocked with just about everything you could imagine using in a home, including lots of things I had no idea were being manufactured and sold in France, like washing machines and electric blankets and electric toasters and vacuum cleaners. The refrigerator section was not much. Mostly rather flimsy looking iceboxes. But their aluminum potx sets are all very heavy and well-made and much cheaper than the American ones I've seen. The place was jammed and you could hardly get by the counters where they were demonstrating gadgets to cut vegetables into fancy shapes. Upstairs were the furniture sections, where we found the sets of furniture displayed very lush, but more interesting than inspiring. We did see a little very nice glass and silver. On the other hand, the wine section was fabulous. Every ~~winery~~ winery, every distiller, every importer of rum, seemed to have a stand set up, and they were uncountable. Every stand was a little bar, and tho some of them were selling glassfuls of their particular beverage, if anybody had tried to take just one glassful at every counter where they offered free tastes of their products, that person would have left in an ambulance. You never saw such wonderful champagnes and fine wines and liquors of every description. We even found ourselves recklessly squandering \$1.75 on a bottle of very fine fifteen yearold cognac. Found out from the lady that if we were interested in a case for shipping home, we could get it delivered to the ship in LeHarve or Bordeaux or Marseilles for something less than a dollar a bottle. Imagine! And when I say it is good cognac, I mean that we tried a glassful after dinner and you don't have to swallow it. It just slides down.

That night we saw a hilarious play called Irene Sent le Jasmine (Irene is Scented with Jasmine) that is laid in the year 2150, and is played without any exaggerated Wells touches, but just enuf projection into a possible future to make it very funny at times. Love triumphs over all, but there is enuf humor and satire to make it interesting, and the costumes and acting were excellent.

So here I am home again. Hews is working at the usual gradually accelerating pace that marks the two weeks before a rendu is turned in, so I wont go back to Paris till that's over. The children stayed with Solange this time, and she managed very well. It's warmed up, thank goodness

Not only am I no longer sleeping in two sets of long woolies, but I actually went out in a skirt today and left my ski pants home. We had a lot of snow last week, the day before it went down to zero, and when the sun came out afterwards, all the children had snowball fights and rode on sleds all day Thursday. Mine just loved it. Cile got sort of tired of being chased by little boys with snowballs, but Dorothy just turned her back and let them ~~throw~~ throw and enjoyed every minute of it. Today it's warm enuf that even tho the chimney has suddenly stopped up on us and we can't have a fire in this room until they come to clean it tomorrow, I can sit up here in just two sweaters and slacks and my nice wooly slippers and type away without freezing. It's really spring now. A whole week, a whole eight days, with sunshine every day. Oh, oh- as Solange says, It's necessary not to talk too ~~high~~ loud.

Dearest Mom & Pops.

We've gotten some of the nicest food packages from you all. The Bloomingdale package came, and it is fine, but I like your personal packages better.

Thanks, darlings, for the ten dollars. We let Cile pick out her own present, and she found herself a large Jay dog - the 'kind of thing young men buy their lady friends. It cost a whole thousand francs, and neither Cile nor the lady in the shop really believed she was actually going to get it. When we said she could have it, she was almost incredulous of her luck. She just loves the thing. She sleeps with it tucked up to her, and when she wants to be special, nice to Cile, Annette or Dorothy, she lets them play with it.

The cigarettes came, and the customs charges were 800 francs the carton. However, the black market price is 200 francs a package, so we can sell four packs & pay it off & still have six packs left. That will come in handy for the wedding. It was a lovely thought!

If you want to send me something, how about some stockings? I would just love a couple of pair of nylons for times when I go to Paris. The ones I have are about shot. If you sent them registered, I don't believe the Duane would open it. Other than that, I don't believe I've any special needs, but if something arises, I'll let you know.

I just loved your letter describing the Wallace rally. That must really have been thrilling. We knew about it because the Paris papers had headlines for days on the election, and I saw the Newsweek story. You all must really be having a wonderful

time in New York. I'm so glad. I just wish I could see you tho. Have you all seen "Mr. Roberts" yet? It's getting wonderful writings. It's thrilling and happy about it. I'm seeing about having some things made. Mrs. Bogard knits beautifully. Much love, Cecil