

La Cigogne
Mourmelon-le-Grand
Marne, France
March 23, 1948,

Dear family,

I've just been listening to the most beautiful music. It was a rebroadcast of a Hollywood bowl concert over the army network - an hour and a half of music, with no commercials, and only short intermission breaks. There's a lot to be said for gov't. controlled radio, even if it means officially released news. Certainly the news the comentators give is no less biased and colored than a gov't bulletin, and just think of that 'no commercials'! Over the army network, I hear all best radio shows - Fibber McGhee, Bing Crosby, Red Skelton, etc., all minus commercial. There are a lot of good programs on the BBC, too, and on the French chains. I've been very much interested, too, to pick up a number of English language broadcasts from Prague and Moscow, ~~xxx~~. They give highly indignant comments on the U.S. and England and France. But if you ever read the Daily Worker, you know what they say. They all sound as if they're written by the same person. And while ~~xx~~ there are times when the indignation is certainly justified, I can't help wishing the communists would improve the ~~their~~ ~~xxxxxxx~~ literary style. It's all so corny.

And while the nations growl at each other like a pack of strange dogs, spring goes right along. These two weeks have been more grey than shiny, but Thursday the children and I went down to the meadow and picked violets along the bank of the creek. They're dark purple violets, with the sweetest perfume - real violets, not the wood violets we know. And today, walking back from Mourmelon-le-Petite with Yolande Christelle, we took the back road that runs thru the fields, and everywhere we looked the grass was dotted with marguerites. Everybody's gardens are full of pansies and crocus, and hyacinths. As for the weather, it was explained to me that Easter week is always grey, cold, and unpleasant. There is good weather before Easter week, and good weather as soon as Easter is past, but Easter week is always bad. After Easter, they say, it will be warm. I hope so. I like that better.

Everbody is getting ready for Easter. It marks the change of season here, the real beginning of spring. That's why the two young Christelles had to have those new suits right now, tho Papa has no use at all for churches. And all the women are washing windows and rugs and all the things no one quite got at all winter. And Sunday morning, the children go out in the gardens and look for eggs. There's no Easter rabbit here. On Thursday, the bells go away to Rome, and Saturday night they fly back, dropping eggs ~~xxx~~ for the children in all the gardens as they fly overhead. Madame Logeard told us all about it, and on Sunday morning, my children are supposed to go over there to hunt with her small ones in their garden. The patisserie has had the most fascinating things all week. Little sugar chickens and lambs and eggs, and chocolate fishes and bells, besides the usual rabbits and chickens. I don't know where all the sugar and chocolate has suddenly appeared from. Maybe the interim aid, because it certainly wasn't there at Christmas. Anyhow, I was very glad to see it, and I got ~~three~~ hollow chocolate eggs full of candies, and five each of the sugar eggs, baby chicks, and fishes so there would be some for the little Logeards. It all looked so pretty I bought a little recklessly, and found out afterwards I had spent almost 800 francs. That's not so scandalously much translated into dollars, but it's a lot to spend here. Solange works for me for almost two weeks to earn that. ~~xxxx~~. It's always hard for me to decide whether to spend money in French or in American. Living among these people makes me feel I've no business to be even a little bit

reckless with my francs, but on the other hand the hundred francs that will take all three children to the movies and buy them candy at intermission represents exactly thirty-three cents. However, since I'm now the wife of a student trying to do a lot of things on a government allowance, not a successful young engineer's wife, the Frencher my attitude towards those francs, the better off I'll be. Then maybe we can get some of those books of prints of paintings and some of the other wonderful things we see in shop windows, sometime before we come home.

M Hews spent a long weekend here. He came Friday night, after his rendu was turned in, feeling very happy about the way the drawing had turned out. He stayed until this morning early - four nights - and he'll be back Friday night. We had a lot of fun while he was here. Roland, who is in the army, was home on a ten day leave, and his brand new fiancée came Thursday to spend a few days and meet the family. Roland is twenty-two, and not much on looks, but the kindest, gentlest one of all the family. His little fiancée is seventeen, and ~~is~~ nice as she can be. She's has settled little ways, ~~even~~ at seventeen, and she'll make him a fine wife. They were very sweet together.

In her honor, and to have something to take to his nieces' wedding, Papa turned Pierre into pork chops Saturday morning. Pierre weighed something over three hundred pounds by now, and he made a lot of meat. We had some of it for a delicious dinner Sunday. Hews and Lucien invested together in a case of assorted liquors that was quite a bargain, so we were able to do justice to the liquid requirements of a good dinner, too. We had an apperitif, and then some very good sausage - boudin. We had roast pork with mashed potatoes and lots of gravy, with a Chateaufort du Pape, 1943; then green salad with plenty of garlic in the dressing, coffee and rum. For supper, instead of the usual soup and eggs, we had soup, broiled liver, and - eclairs! That was strictly in honor of Roland's ~~is~~ fiancée, and doesn't happen otherwise. They came over, the whole family, Saturday night, and we showed them the pictures Hews had just gotten back of Mourmelon-le-Petite, and the pictures of Paris. Michel was in some of the local pictures, which made him very happy. We served one of the wines that was in the case - an Alsatian Reisling, and the last fruitcake of the four that came from New Orleans. It wasn't just the thing to go with the wine, but on the spur of the moment it was the best I could do, and they all love fruitcake. That made it a party, even if everybody did come in their work clothes. Anyhow, Maman had on a clean apron, and I had combed my hair.

Sunday and Monday, Hews took a lot of pictures here in Mourmelon of the town and our house, and the Logeard's house with Madame Logeard and Marie Therese in the doorway, and pictures of the Christelle's house and family. Monday we walked out to the Russian cemetery in the midst of the World War I battle field, about two miles each way. Hews took a lot of pictures of the countryside on the way out, and then some shots of the chapel with its two onion ~~xxxxx~~ spires. Papa, who works in all the military cemeteries in the vicinity, was brushing green moss stains off the crosses, and took us around in back to meet one of the priests. We found him in a shed, surrounded by piles of bee hives and stacks of wood. He was dressed in a tattered tweed overcoat that hung almost to his ankles, with the skirt of ~~his~~ rusty brown robe peeking out beneath. He's the priest I've seen riding his bicycle around town, long black beard flapping in the wind. It's a very ferocious beard, but when we got close enuf to speak to him, we saw that behind the beard were the softest brown eyes and most innocent smile I've ever met. He ~~drove~~ off thru the woods to get the key to the chapel, and when he came back, he had his hand up to his mouth, blowing on it. He took it down, and showed us a bee. "It's cold today", he said, "The bee couldn't fly." He kept blowing on it as we walked over to the chapel. When we got in front, the bee, warmed, flew off, and

he watched it till it was out of sight. "Now it can get back to the hive," he said, and the relief in his voice was sincere. He was worried about his bee. He showed us around the chapel, which was very interesting. There are some nice, Byzantine-like paintings, all around the walls, and some nice ikons. One in silver, and one in mother of pearl with free standing figures in it were particularly good. They hold services there from time to time, just the three priests who live there in the woods. And they tend their bees and plant their garden, and ^{live} quiet, hermit-like lives except for their trips into town for supplies. This one, the priest of the beard, called our attention to the fact that he wasn't wearing a very tidy clothes, when Hews asked to photograph him in front of the chapel, but Hews didn't care, so he said, "Well, for you ." and posed obligingly. We talked about Russian food, and one of his friends who was leaving very soon for a church in Santa Clara, and then he said he would have to leave us and get back to his work in the shed. I wish I could make you feel as I did the quiet of that ~~xxxxx~~ place, set in the middle of the open fields, with its little wood around it, and the wind blowing, and the complete simplicity of the priest. His beard had some white threads in it, and Hews and I thought he must be about thirty-four, but there was such a good, childlike quality, which I suppose must be the result of living an uncomplicated life.

The children are enjoying Easter vacation. They have two weeks off from school, and so many plans. There is the meadow to explore, with something new in bloom, something changing, every day. They have beads that Cile and Annette are making bracelets for themselves of, beautiful shiny glass beads, and Dorothy has already knitted her doll some underwear pants and started casting on stitches for a slip. She explained to me that it will be a very practical set. It's made of wool, so it will be warm in winter, and knitting on big needles makes large holes in it so that it won't be too hot for her doll in summer. Cile has just lost a tooth, and knowing perfectly well the identity of the rat, (she asked me once), has preferred to return to fairy tale. We had a long serious conversation as to whether the rat could find her tooth in France. Then she wanted to take the tooth to school, like the cow teeth, for science study, so since, as she said, I knew the rat so well, would I ask him if he could bring the money anyhow. She hasn't forgotten that I'm the rat, she just decided that she wanted to believe in the rat anyhow. I don't know quite how she explains it all to herself, ~~xxx~~ and I'm not even sure she does. She just isn't ready to give up her fable of the rat yet, so she just ignores what she doesn't like. Mostly she's afraid that if she doesn't believe any more, she won't get any money. I'll have to set her mind at rest about that, and then if she still wants to pretend there is a magic, she can.

They got report cards just before the holidays started. Dorothy is now seventh in a class of fifteen, and Annette is ninth in her class, with a note from her teacher that her work is better. Dorothy gets a "Bien" on her card, with her best marks in math. Cile was out with a cold for some of her tests, so she wasn't classified this time, but she too got good marks in math. However, Dorothy does better than Cile in everything except drawing. They're all three doing very satisfactory work.

Now begins the month Hews has dedicated to finding us a place to live together. If we were spending our lives in France, I don't know that I'd want to leave Mourmelon, with all its disadvantages. Since we've only a limited time, I want to be nearer Paris. I would so much like to take some classes at the Sorbonne. My French, too, could stand a lot of polish. There is so much to see and do in a comparatively short time. Today, Hews is going out to see Abdelli, who's been in the hospital. We don't know what's the matter, but I think it's stomach ulcers. I hope nothing worse.

Maybe he'll have some lead on a logement for Hews. And I've put an ad in the Marne paper, -exchange house, Mourmelon, for house near Paris, and been to the Mairie here to tell them that if anyone comes looking for a house here, they can have this one if they'll find us one near Paris. And the next thing, well, I'm just keeping my fingers crossed and hoping awfully hard.

Dear Mom & Pops -

The ties arrived, and Hews was delighted with them. He loves your taste in ties - especially the grey, pink & red one with white spots. That pleased him enormously, & goes beautifully with his grey suit. By the way - it turns out that H, as a non-smoker, just didn't appreciate those cigarettes properly. Hews was overcome, & when I explained that I had paid \$0.50 for a pack with great enjoyment, and using much self control, put the others away to take to the wedding on April 3rd. Seems that American cigarettes are just the thing to pass around as a "gentle" guest. So, if you can send us cigarettes from time to time, he'd like it very, very much.

For me, - could you send me a couple of pair of nylons? Even if I pay customs, they're less expensive & better quality than French nylons - which are extremely difficult to find in my size. And is there anything I can send you? I believe French perfumes, etc., even with customs & postage, cost much less if bought here than if bought in the U.S. And would you like some prints? I've seen some beauties that aren't a bit expensive. Wonderful things.

We love you -

Cecils