

La Cigogne,  
Mourmelon-le-Grand  
Marne, France  
May 11, 1948.

Dear family,

The children brought home their report cards this noon. Annette was the worst of the three- eleventh in a class of twenty. In their class of nineteen children, Cile placed seventh, and Dorothy third. I'm so proud I'm about to pop. Of course, Dorothy is older than most of the children in the class, but all the work, with the exception of the multiplication tables, is completely strange to her. She really has plugged away at everything that was assigned. Cile doesn't work as hard as Dorothy, but she's doing all right. Annette would do better if she weren't so flighty, but even Annette gets a consistent ten out of ten in arithmetic. It's the the reading and writing that she can't bother to be careful enuf with. However, she can do much better if she just gets that stubborn streak of hers turned in that direction, and she was looking pretty determined when she started back to school after lunch. I just hope it lasts.

The weather (touch wood) has been quite pleasant all week. There's been lots of rain, but it's summer storms that pass in a few minutes and settle the dust as they go. It's staying warm, with scattered sunshine, and it's such a pleasure to have the windows open all day. We can go out with out coats or sweaters, and I'm starting to pack away the heaviest winter clothes, along with a few of the blankets. The wrappings from the packages come in very handy for that. There's no moth preventative in Mourmelon but camphor, but when I was in Paris one trip I found some paradichloribenzene, and some DDT powder, so I think we'll make out all right.

Achille brought home his fiancée this past weekend. She's even nicer than Roland's. Of course, she's twenty-four, like Achille, instead of seventeen, and that makes a difference. She's a lovely looking girl, too, and we all decided that Achille is very lucky. He seems to think so too. He said he looked around for two years before he picked out Denise, and then it took him a while to persuade her, but now they're all settled. They haven't set a date for the marriage yet, but they're so very much in love that I don't think it's apt to be very long. Looks as if we're going to see quite a number of marriages before we leave France.

I went to call on Mme. Zouave yesterday to get the necessary details of procedure for the baptême. She's not going to mass herself-says oh, no, she never goes to mass- so the thing for me to do is to send Dorothy over there during the morning so she can go tho the church with the family whenever they go over. There are to be three baptisms and three or four communions Sunday, so it should be very festive. Dorothy wears just a regular dress, the kind that she always wears on Sunday, but little Nellie has been fitted out with a brand new pink knitted dress, cape and hood, pink wool socks, pink bib, and lightweight pink shoes with pompoms on the toes. She's a cheerful, fat baby, and Dorothy adores her. Then after the baptism, Dorothy is supposed to give out little candies - dragees- to all the children there. It used to be the custom to have candies that were individually wrapped, and throw handfuls into the crowd of waiting children, to be scrambled over, but there are no wrapped candies anymore so the godmother or godfather just hands them out. Then all the family leaves the church and goes home to a special fete-day dinner. They're even going to have dessert, and there's supposed to be either rooster or rabbit for dinner, depending on what they can find on the nearby farms. Dorothy of course, shares the fete and the dinner with the family, and there's

We'll be mighty interested to hear what you find for housing for you all. Try to find time to write before too long. Love to Sally & much love, Cecil

been some talk about Gile and Annete going, too, but since all I've heard has been from Gile and Annete, I'm a little inclined to discount it as wishful thinking on their part. Of course, Dorothy has to give the baby a present, and one of the things I wanted to do on my visit was find out what would be most useful to the baby. No, they didn't need anything for the bapteme, they had it all now. A little dress, or sweater, I suggested. Yes, that would be very nice, but not for right now - later on. Then the conversation, as it always does in any French home, turned to the high cost of living, and I found out what Mme. Zouave really wanted for Nellie. She had been trying to find a stroller for Nellie, since the baby's so heavy to carry all the time, and she can't turn her over to the other sisters to tend because they can't carry her. But strollers are so expensive! Five thousand francs! That's about sixteen dollars. I asked her if she'd thought about trying to buy one second hand - very gently, of course - but Mme. Zouave is a very fiercely proud woman, and doesn't trust other people to keep their babies as clean as she keeps hers, and doesn't like the idea of using for her baby something that has been used before. She wouldn't trust a coat of paint to be sufficient protection, either. So I didn't push the point, and we talked about lots of other things that also were too expensive now, including the first walking shoes she always put on her other babies right as soon as they started trying to stand up, but hadn't been able to afford yet for Nellie. So you see, it all depends on how rich a rich American I am, because these people have an awful time trying to figure me out. If I'm a rich American, I can buy the stroller for Nellie that her parents, nor any other godmother they could find here, can't buy. And if I'm like everybody else they know, she'd really like to have those shoes. I talked the question of present over with Mme. Logeard afterwards, and she thought the shoes would be a very suitable gift. In fact, that's what she gave her cousin's baby when M. Logeard was asked to be godfather. So I guess it will be the shoes. Two dollars for that and two dollars for the candies is really about as much as I feel I can put in even for Dorothy's heart-bursting happiness at being a godmother. I certainly hope we get some sunny weather Sunday so Hews can take pictures. I really want one of Dorothy holding Nellie.

The next really big event on our social calendar is the Quar'z Arts ball. Every time I think of going to that, I get excited. The theme this year is Aztecs, so Hews says he's just going to paint himself red and black, and let it go at that. I may do as I did for Mardi Gras one year and make a skirt out of that Indian tablecloth Hews got for me in Panama and put my hair in braids. Charles and Jeanine Dorian are going too, and they suggested that we all go together. That will make it even more fun. It will be sometime in June, but they didn't know the exact date.

Dear Mom + Pops -

May 14 -

Tomorrow you'll be flying South again. Has it been a fine winter? I don't envy you the job of getting out of Beverly Drive, not a bit, but I keep thinking that stuff moves and you'll finally get down to the living with one suitcase to hold everything, and then you won't ever have to worry again. If you can, hold on to all the furniture of any sort that you don't need. We're going to be mighty bare when we come home again. I had a letter from Gretl at last, & at least now we know what the situation is. It's such a shame!