

La Cigogne
Mourmelon-le-Grand
Marne, France
October 26, 1947.

Dear Family,

To borrow an expression from the natives, pas chaud, aujourd'hui -not hot today, not hot at all. There was ice on all the water buckets this morning, and still a couple of slivers left when we went over to the Christelle's for dinner. There's been a stiff X North wind blowing all day, and now it's making the sort of noises outside that make you feel cold in the middle of the summer. Tomorrow, says Papa, there'll be a good half inch of ice. But it's not as bad as I expected, even with no heat in the house. This is a good solid, tight house, with felt strips along all the windows and door cracks, and the wind can't get in. The little electric heaters we brought along are quite enuf to heat the bathroom for undressing; we have covers to keep us warm even in separate beds for each and four blankets still on the closet shelf; and I am quite comfortable sitting here in wool shirt, sweater, slacks, xxx sox, and the nice fuzzy shearling slippers I bought Hews and he so conveniently prefers to keep here. When it gets colder, I may even use one of those heaters in here at night, and wear my slacks in the daytime, too. The children are already so conditioned to the cold that they complain that the classroom was too hot when they are uncomfortable with a sweater and wool skirt on. Weather that at home would have kept them shivering by the heaters all day seems just right for playing now. When there's this much wind, I suppose I'd better keep them out of it, but in general I think that we're going to manage very well. Dorothy is working hard on a knitted scarf she's making for herself, I'm making one for Cile, and there's already one for Annette. They also have a pair of mittens or gloves apiece and a couple of pair of Mommy-made wool socks and about four sweaters apiece. However, I would like to file a request right now for a couple of candles, just ordinary kitchen candles, in every box from now on. We have no electricity from 7:30 am to 6:00 pm each Friday and Saturday, and already it's sundown by six. At the rate the sun is slipping off towards the south these days, it won't be long before it's dark then. I have a very few candles with me, and there are some in the stores, but not many and they cost thirty cents apiece for the little short ones. Anyhow, it's probable that there won't be any available at all before long.

Would you like to know what our rations are? I think I have it figured out by now. For the children, we get a quart and a xrx fourth of milk a day, 2 1/2 lbs. of bananas a month (when there are any- we just got September's), 1 lb. malted milk powder a month, 1/2 lb. chocolate drink powder (sugar, cocoa, flour), and 1 1/4 lb of chocolate a month. For the whole family, our monthly ration includes 8 lbs. of sugar, 1 lb. butter (\$1.50), 1 1/2 lb. margarine 1 1/2 lbs. vegetable fats or oil, 1/2 lb coffee (!), 1/10 lb. tea, five small cakes of face soap about the size of a hotel bar, the large r hotel bar, a block of laundry soap that's the equivalent of about two bars of Octagon, and about two lbs. of cheese- Brie, Camebert, or another similar, all well ripened and rather good, but having the same effect on me as a dose of castor oil. It's really a pretty good ration, the 1/2 lb. of coffee a month is only ridiculous, and who ever heard of 1-1/4 lbs. of chocolate lasting three candy-hungry little girls a month? The joker is the price of everything. I bought a strip of dry salt bacon to use for flavoring and found it cost me \$1.03 a lb. The liver pate was \$1.15 a lb. And other pork prices range up from there. Of course, it's true t

that there is plenty available, but why not at that price? Beef is the cheapest of the meats, and you know how I am about buying for value. The best I've been able to do is beef liver, at 70 cents a lb., and Saturday I bought a lb. of boneless beef stew, \$1.00 a lb. Horse meat is cheaper, and delicious enuf to make us wonder why on earth there's such a prejudice against it in the States, but even that is no bargain. The cheapest is the ground meat- 38 cents a lb, and anything else is much more. And it's not just meat, it's everything. This is cabbage and carrot season. Those are the most plentiful vegetables. The small cabbage I bought Saturday, enuf for one meal for us, cost 35 cents. Carrots are 10 cents a lb. On the other hand, cauliflower is 30 cents a lb, leaves and all. Eggs are 15 to 17 cents apiece. There are just no inexpensive filler-inners, and the children, playing like they do in this cold air, have developed the most enormous appetites. A serving of anything we have to eat is a plateful, and to see those platesful of food disappearing one after the other is a wonderful thing. Me too. I really eat threeseld meals a day here, and I have lost my hips on it. That's why the boxes are so important, even tho there is a good deal of food here. There are still things we like very much and can't get at all, like red beans and rice, and besides, we simply haven't enuf money to eat properly on. And also, everyone expects food to get scarcer, and correspondingly more expensive as the winter wears on. There remain a few bright spots on the food picture. The autumn rains fall occasionally, now, and after these the woods are full of mushrooms that are really delicious. Also, the Christelle hens should begin laying again before much longer.

This has been a very nice week. I had a letter from each of you, and not only that, but Hews, to make up for the week-end he had to miss the week before, came home on Thursday and spent a lovely four days with us. We were able to get the ritual of fire in the furnace and thoro baths over with and still have some time to do something else. Saturday afternoon, while the children were at school, Hews and I and the two youngest Christelle's, who weren't working, went into the woods for mushrooms. It was a pale grey afternoon, cold enuf to set us walking fast, and the countryside was so lovely. The autumn colors are still pale and soft, too, and it was beautiful to walk thru the contrast of grey harvested earth and green of ~~xxx~~ winter crops just beginning to push thru. Where there was pasture land, the green plants lay close to the ground, and along the edges of the fields, the tall grasses were purple brown. The little birches that seem to spring up everywhere are pale yellow now, and long stretches of road ran thru open land where we could see across the rolling country the whole pattern of changir fields and pasture, all dotted with little clumps of woods, and the mountains in the distance. When we came to the little pine woods where the mushrooms grow, it was completely quiet in among the trees. It was warm there, and windless, and we walked on pineneedles and the softest green moss. We followed the moss, because the mushrooms grow, as it does, in the damp places. The ones we hunted were grey and shiny, and hard to find against pine needles and earth almost the same color. Everywhere, there were clumps of brown and yellow mushrooms, scattered all over, but the ones we wanted were scarce. Other people had been there, and rabbits, who like them as well as we do, Hewalked all thru the little wood, callin to each other whenever we found any, and before the afternoon was far enuf gone that we had to start home, we had one of Maman's market baskets almost full. They were part of the dinner today, and I found I had a very personal feeling towards them.

Hews was here for Dorothey's birthday, too, which we managed to

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celebrate fairly effectively, and well emur to make her happy. It is a wonderful thing to see how fast the children have come unspoiled here. The insistent demand for movies all the time has subsided to a surprised and delighted response if, as we have done only once, we actually go to a movie here. ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~
~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ This birthday has been another example of the unspoiling. They've always looked for and gotten so much. Now they are taking enormous delight in much smaller things. The scarf that arrived the Sunday before the birthday made Dorothy completely happy. Not only has she worn it every day and slept with it in her hand, but she stood the bunny card on the desk next to her bed, and there it stays. The card from Rosalind and Gretl arrived actually on the birthday morning, and is being carefully kept. The rather simple cake I was able to turn out looked, by the gleam in Dorothy's eyes, better ~~ixthan~~ than Hartman's best job. And it was just as good to the others as it was to Dorothy. Having the Christelle family over, drinking her health, was not quite as good as having a lot of other little girls for a real party, but she understood perfectly that we just couldn't manage that this time, and after all we had begged Maman's only two eggs to make the cake so it was only right that t they help eat it. Besides, Dorothy had the added grownupness of sharing her birthday with Lucien, whose birthday was next day. She loved that. Cile did remark afterwards that she would rather have had games, but Dorothy was satisfied. She is still waiting for the Halloween party box with happy anticipation, and perhaps we'll be able to manage a real party- with games- when that comes.

They are quite happy at school, tho they are really not learnin a great deal except French yet. They all work much harder at what they can do than they ever did at home, tho, and are forming a habit of attention that I think will stand them in good stead for a long time. The school is completely different in many ways from the ones they're used to. They sit in pairs at the desks- Dorothy and Cile share one- and a lot of their work is done on slates. Dorothy and Cile have sewing, too, which t ey like very much. All the children wear aprons of some sort over their heavy clothes, and those seer-sucker pinafores and sundress are getting yearround use now. I certainly am glad to have them. For school, our stock of wash ~~XXXXX~~ dresses are just useless, but all the sleeveless sundresses, and particularly those seersuckers that I can wash myself and not iron, are just perfect. They certainly save the wool skirts. And the children look at the other children's drab blue and black smocks, and consider themselves glamorously attired. Apparently the other children think so too, because they've become very popular, and especially with some of the boys about their size. They are always on the receiving end of many apples, pears, and walnuts. It's no wonder they like it here! They do get homesick sometimes, particularly if teacher has happened to scold them for something, but actually, they are having a wonderful time..I don't think anybody has to worry about being forgotten, tho.

The wind has died down at last, and it's getting late. I think I'd better gather up my hot water bottle (a very inefficient substitute for a husband) and get to bed. Good night, dear family.

Dear Mom & Pops.

I was certainly good to hear from you at last, & thanks very much for the card. None of the packages have arrived yet, but they may still. It's too bad you misspelled Lucien's name. He's well known in both towns. However, they've been delivering packages from the McCanns pretty regularly, so if your name was on it, they should recognize that. The man who brings the packages is a friend of Lucien's.

I'm so glad you have been able to help Grubb. God's plan must be frantic. And how about the Claus household? Is it jumping?

I don't particularly need any covers, as I said before, but if Santa could find some earmuffs in New York I bet they'd come in awfully handy here. Matter of fact, I won't refuse anything with any warmth to it, because there's no telling how many layers we'll be wearing before we're there. The worst thing about this winter will probably be the way I am dreading it now - or at least I shall hope so.

Big houses are nice, but there's so damn much open stairhall in this one. Also, I really am kind of lonesome between weekends. But then, the first few months in a new place are always pretty tough.

Anyway, write to me -

We love you -
Cicile

P.S. The insurance business has all been tended to. Thanks very much for forwarding that. It was a mistake on the part of the VA who had been asked to send it to Shevport.