

Quantness, Peaceable Street,
Georgetown, Connecticut,
January 28, 1944

My dearest Laura, the beautiful, beautiful photograph that came this morning! Oh, Laura, it is radiant! That sky, the luminous clouds, the distance, the freedom, the air! And it brought so much else, so many memories, for New Mexico and here are the two places in the world where I have been completely living. It made me remember lovely things, and funny things -- and mixed, that make the incredibly moving things like the little church we never should have seen unless you had told us about it, the Church at Madras, with all the holy dolls. And a mountain meadow above Taos as sapphire blue as a mountain lake with gentians. Oh, I could go on all night and only begin! I do thank you.

I shall keep your picture in my work-room. It will feel at home there, with so many things from our little house in Tesuque; a candleabra which certainly isn't the way to spell it, but you know what I mean, with an angel with red and white checked wings, an enormous shallow white bowl painted with roses (Jo darted into a shop to buy something for the toe of my stocking, and came out with that for me! Quelle stocking!) even a branch of pinon, covered with cones, that someone sent me for Christmas. I think more light and air should get into my work, just for looking at it.

I'm at work again, on my novel, left half-finished last April; trying hard to get back into the ten-fathoms deep feeling of real work. Today was a good day because it began with tearing up a week's work and starting fresh. It's never lost, the work that goes into the waste-basket -- or with me it isn't, it's a sort of mental and emotional ditch-digging I have to go through before the flow can come. But I have been working so hard, between trips down to see mother, who is much better but still needing me pretty often (and those trips! On those southern trains! I hate trains anyway, but now --) and going to New York three times a month for a crowded day of voluntary work at Jo's old school, the Professional Children's School (he was on the stage as a child) that I haven't had time and energy to answer your wonderful letter, and tell you how enormously I enjoyed the account of your arrival in Colorado Springs! It must have been harrowing for you, though, for all that you tell it so funnily! I copied just that part and sent it to mother, and she wrote that it was the first thing that had made her laugh out loud for months.

I think the human-interest Boeing book would be wonderful, if made truly, objectively human interest. If you could keep the idea, I Am Writing A Book, oh, dear! out of your head and just tell about it, as though you were writing, for instance, to Betsy. It shouldn't be a funny book, it would be much too important and stirring, but good splashes of funniness would light it, and there must have been plenty of funny happenings and funny people, and you have proved you can tell funny things funnily. And little, "unimportant" things -- what Chesterton calls Tremendous Trifles -- if there are those, no book can be heavy or dull, any book comes alive and warm. Readers want to know what people eat, for instance, and what the girls talk about in the rest-room. I think you have a thrilling reversal of the usual there -- the great Super Bomber for hero (or is it heroine, like a ship?) with the background of human beings, instead of the usual human leading character with background of inanimate things. You can do it because you care about it and know about it.

Asking me for authorities on grammar and spelling makes me laugh! I know nothing about either! (Do you remember Isabel Luckraft, who used to win all the spelling prizes at school? She writes me very often from England, and such spelling you never saw in your life! Even I know that. My spaniel, Mr. Bumps, could do almost as well.) My spelling stand-by, always at hand (though not used often enough) is the little paper-backed Pocket Dictionary (Pocket Books, Inc., 1230 6th Ave., N. Y. C.) (candelabrum, it says -- I've just looked.) I simply don't know any book on grammar, and the only grammar I ever did learn Jo taught me. The best technical hand-book I know is "Modern English

Usage" by Fowler. I'm asking my bookshop to send you that, with love from me, and also Quiller-Couch's "On The Art of Writing", which I think is really good, and a delight to read just in itself. If they can't get them (for I got mine in London years ago, both of them) would you like me to lend them to you for as long as you need them? I'd love to.

Is George Palmer Putnam a friend of yours? I don't know him; Jo (who was in publishing for years) did, and had such mistrust of him, and it was so unlike Jo to feel that way about anyone, is why I ask, when you speak of talking over your book with him. NONE OF MY BUSINESS!

It is late; I must take Mr. Bumps out over the snow to his favourite laurel bush, and then go to bed myself. I am distressed by what you write about Betsy, and, beside hating to hear that she is so run-down and over-worked, ~~and~~ I had hoped she would be coming back with you. But much, much better loneliness than someone just for "company", says one who knows!

Much love to you, and thank you again for my most beautiful surprise!

Anne