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My dear Friend,

What a wonderful letter from you today. Yes, you have guessed right. The delay in publication is due to some health difficulties. I am now living in a wheel chair, since the last surgery (9 weeks ago) refused to heal, and will apparently be here for a long time to come. That would be fine, but the pain has been enough to require almost constant sedation, which is maddening because it prevents me from finishing up the work I had promised Houghton Mifflin. However, we should have the last remnants in to them by the end of next week. They already have almost fourteen hundred pages. Now we have been able to reduce the sedation almost in half, so it is getting better. Nothing really bothers me except inability to work, and I am not very good about that. But even so, a surprising amount does get done when I look back on it.

Our great news is that we have a new daughter, Amanda Claire Dominique, born June 8. Her godfather is Jacques Maritain, who is coming to stay with us in October, and the two of us are going - thanks to the generosity of Penn Jones, who will drive us - to Gethsemani for a visit with Father Thomas Merton. Father Abbot there has arranged everything, wheel chair, etc. My daughter is wonderful. She is the first one I have really seen as a small one, since my others were born while I was blind. So you can imagine that I am photographing her avidly, as you did your own beautiful children.

How often I have thought of you, and we have discussed you constantly and shown your books constantly, but I did not want to write you because the news was not good, and you have enough to worry about without adding this. But in all truth, this disease was providential. The doctors think I would have died had something not stopped me, forced me to quit such an active life. This has done it and I cannot help but feel grateful for it, not only for its obliging me to stop the constant travel and thereby allowing me to be with my family more, but also because now it gives me a chance to return to my typewriter and my books and my darkroom: these areas of my ultimate vocation. After all of these years of blaring activity, the return to a life of silence and solitude and obscurity is the greatest blessing we could know.

This is not a fatal disease. It has attacked both feet, my right hand and some of my body systems. They do not know the cause but the only specific seems to be surgery. They operated very well on the right foot, but it refused to heal, in fact died, and now they are trying to prepare me for skin grafts. It is very slow. I am able to work now a couple of hours a week and am learning to do all the darkroom work in a wheel chair, which is complicated but not at all as impossible as it seemed the first

American Society of Magazine Photographers

Royal Photographic Society of Great Britain

time I tried it. I have managed to do almost half of the master prints for my book on the Tarascan civilization. Darkroom work is so absorbing, I can do it when I cannot collect my wits to write and it has been a great help to me.

We have fixed my barn-studio up into a little hospital, and it is well-arranged for wheel-chair living - something I cannot manage in our main house, so I have been living down here, my family coming to me constantly throughout the day.

Will you not sometime be coming to visit your relatives in this area? Waxahachie is only 23 miles from here. We would so love to see you.

Penn Jones, bless him, comes almost every night late - around 11 - to check on me and to take my mail. He is a great man and a great friend, not only my friend, but yours, too.

I am saying a lot of things because I don't really know how to tell you how profoundly I am moved by your letter. I have a terrible timidity around great artists, and I consider you one of the supremely great ones. How much people like you give us, teach us (in the right sense). And I am doubly overwhelmed that you come to me so generously in these times of difficulty. The very fact that you did so makes the difficulties seem really insignificant.

As for the book, I judge that it will come out in February now. Only a tiny bit of the text needs cutting and I have only 11 more prints to make for the photographic section.

Thank you again for writing to me. I will write you more soon. Thank you for being a friend.

Yours devotedly,

*JHG*  
JHG