

Le Val Changis,  
Avon, Seine et Marne.  
Tuesday, July 31.

Dear Dad:

Almost a month here now, and Lord how the time has gone—and now the work has gone. I've written about fifty thousand words that, of course, is first draft, later to be revised extensively and to be rewritten. I'm afraid this damned book is going to be as long as Main Street. It has continued to be delightful here in its quiet exclusion, with just enough glimpse of people from outside to keep it from being dull.

General Thomson was off to the Balkans Tuesday a week ago, and on that day we went up to Paris—grace to do some shopping and I to get my hair cut and to see a dentist, (Takes only about an hour up, with frequent and good trains.) the dentist is excellent, both he and his partner Americans, graduates of the Harvard dental school, both fairly young, with all modern equipment. He told me that to be allowed to practice here he also had to spend some time in a French dental school, and he was shocked by the lack of hygiene and equipment there.

George Horace Lorimer, editor of the Saturday Evening Post, was in Paris with his wife and two fine boys, one of them just graduated from the Univ of Pennsylvania, and Grace and I had tea with them. Lorimer ordinarily motors west, often to Arizona, during his vacation and I think he rather misses it this year. He seems well and as exuberant as ever.... G and I had dinner at a Swedish place in the Latin Quarter, and came home in the late evening.

We had thought somewhat of buying a second-hand motor here and selling it again, but the prices are too high for very cheap cars, so we have gone back to our early Port Washington days—we have rented bicycles! - and had a lot of fun, a lot of good exercise, out of them. Couple of days ago we motored—I mean bicycled—four kilometers from here to Samois, on the Seine, and dined in a restaurant overlooking the lovely smooth stretch of water, under the great poplars. Curiously enough, when Grace and her brother were kids, they spent the whole summer at this same place in Samois, as her father had a lot of business to conduct in Paris—she remembers swimming, tennis, speaking French.... We rode there on the other side of the Seine, between small fields and the river, very lovely.

Saturday evening we went to the dances of the Goudjief colony, which happens about five minutes walk from my place here... Goudjief is a Russian, and his chief apostle Cuspensky is a Russian, and between them they run the latest thing in phony High Thought colonies. He has had a rather distinguished list of patrons, including Lady Rothermere (her husband is brother to Lord Northcliffe and manages now the Northcliffe properties), Katherine Mansfield the excellent short-story writer, who died recently, and Orage, former editor to the New Age, whom I'd met in London. The people do their own work—everything from cooking to digging rock—learn elaborate symbolic dances, and listen to esoteric lectures. The dancing is very interesting, some of the dances are imitations of Oriental sacred temple rites, some of them stunts requiring a high degree of muscle control—doing quite different things with two arm at the same time. But it must be a hell of a place to live—they sleep only four hours a night, and eat almost nothing, with occasional fasts for six or eight or ten days! The place itself is beautiful—a large villa built for

Madame de Maintenon, later owned by Dreyfus, with a great sweep of gardens and tree alleys. Here they have built their own gymnasium, as they call it, though essentially it's a kind of hall for dancing, so hung with Oriental carpets that it looks like a cross between a cabaret and a harem!

A nice letter from Claude Washburn from Duluth. He says he had a splendid visit with you. Harcourt writes that their business is going fine—sales for the first six months of this year \$100,00 ahead of the same period last year. Babbitt is selling a little but not much—had so much sale last fall. It is to be released for newspaper serial rights on August first, so you may see it about.

It's too bad that Edwin did not appreciate your efforts, but you must remember two things. First, West Point, though a good training physically, is none too wonderful intellectual, and while a good many regular army officers are fine fellows, a lot of them are wasters, loafers, who would be no good at all outside the easy routine of garrison duty. Second, the boy had to decide for himself. He may not know what is best for him—but maybe you don't either. You answer, Well then, he should have made up his mind before we took all that trouble. That's only partly true. Are there any of us who decided things right off, before partly going into arrangements? I go and rent a house in Hartford for a year—find I can't stand the damn place—and go trotting off. All right, glad I did it. Someone might say to me “you should have found out what you wanted to do before you signed the lease.” I couldn't find out till I'd stayed there long enough to know the place. Stop sulking at Edwin, or you'll make him feel guilty and self-conscious, and you have no right to do that. It he's shiftless—ALL RIGHT--- then he is and all your worry won't change him. Hell's bells, you have enough non-shiftless sons and probably non-shiftless grandsons! I don't think you'll ever find Freeman or Wells shiftless. Claude and you and even my perfect self are too confoundedly impatient with people who haven't our sort of ambitions. Why should they have? And we have no right to condemn them, to assume that they want to be like us, and to make them feel guilty—a frame of mind in which it's much harder to get on... Huh?...when you say “I am thru with him for he deceived us—hang it, the best way to make the poor devil deceive all of you is to be impatient.....you've had fifty years more experience than he has—didn't you ever do fool things at his age....i did, and I'm glad I did most of them, like my gorgeous adventure in leaving Yale and going to Helicon Hall .... No, you give him another chance, if you have a chance to give him a chance (perhaps someday he'll go to the U of Minn).... Sure, I know it's easy for me to be wise at long distance, when I don't have to do any of the worrying—but maybe that very being at long distance makes me see things more in proportion... you can come back at me when Wells grows up and doesn't do what I think he ought to do!

Lots of love,  
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