

1117 Masselin Ave.,
L.A.

Jan 17/39

Darling Mummy,

Now here are two more letters to thank you for, one of them most kindly enclosing the allowance cheque of fifty pounds. Dinah was strongly in favour of asking you to bank it in Bath, because she thought we must live on our income at all costs; then I suggested keeping it here under her account (which we don't use) to provide against unforeseeable emergencies. The evening after it arrived, however, I had arranged to dine with an insurance broker to whom I had been recommended by an attorney friend. He proved to be an extremely nice young man with no trace of the high pressure salesmanship which in this country permeates the insurance business like every other. He gave me the facts about different companies and policies and promised to make inquiries about ^{the} company best suited to a person resident first in America and then in England. To-day I heard from him that he recommended the Sun Life of Canada as filling this requirement best, though one or two solely American companies offered slightly better terms. He also quoted me premiums per \$1000 for several different kinds of policy which Dinah and I are going to go ~~n~~ into carefully. At any rate, my idea was to use part of your cheque for the payment of the first premium, so I will hold it over to see whether I shall pay in pounds sterling or dollars. The object of course will be to avoid as far as possible the exchange loss deriving from the present low value of the pound.

I was delighted to hear of Peter's happiness, and we both wish him well in his first curacy. Do give us what news you have of him from time to time. I'm very glad that Francis liked his book about Leonardo which I hope to read out here. But really after leaving the studio I want to get away from fiction as far as possible. [Sorry, we require. My mind stayed to your word!]

I think I told you in my last letter that to-morrow and ^{the} next day (both of which I have free) we plan to make the longest trip we have done so far. It might be better to describe it in my next letter, by which time I will have sent you a Shell map of California which may be of some use in arranging the places I mention in your mind. The whole trip should be about 500 miles, and Dinah has got most of the food we shall eat. It proved unexpectedly difficult to get a portable stove, but the auto camp we shall stay at to-morrow night will have cooking equipment, and with this we shall make supper and breakfast. The mid-day meals we shall have cold. This will save quite a lot of money as meals in desert towns or in the mountains are always expensive owing to the costs of transport and lack of competition.

Things in the Reading Department have been quiet, except for the mysterious dismissal of one of the oldest readers and the departure of Eloise Lott. Eloise was only fired to make way for someone else, but she was at least given two months to look round for another job. She hasn't got one yet, but still thinks that the studio may keep her on (her time is up to-morrow). She comes of a musical family and we often have her round to listen to the Toscanini concert. Both Dinah and I are afraid she has T.B. as she is fearfully thin and gets bronchial coughs whenever there is anything slightly the matter with her. As the desert air near here is so very good for T.B., it would seem ideal if she could get a job at some place like Palm Springs. We also think she ought to marry Charlie Greene as their temperaments seem so happily fitted to one another - but though they are excellent friends, there seems to be some vital spark lacking!

I'm afraid this letter will be very short as it must be posted before the long trip, since we shall be back late on Thursday. In a few minutes we must start for the first general meeting of the documentary group (called the Film Guild) which has now got successfully started. I think it would be wise if you didn't mention it around much in case it got through friends to O'Brien's ears and so came back to Knopf. My contract, as you know, contains the most stringent provisions against my occupying myself in any way outside the studio, and I don't think the studios are going to like this new activity very much. At any

rate I haven't attempted for this reason to get any executive position in the group, though of course I shall follow its movement with the greatest interest and contribute anything I can from the background.

I am always most interested in the film cuttings which you often send from English papers I don't see, and Dinah at this moment is reading the latest Sphere which she loves. Through letters and papers and the radio we really feel very close to all of you at home. And there I must really stop because the news from London is just coming in. (Now it is over. It was so clear to-night that the voice might really have been coming from Los Angeles except for a slightly higher background of noise.)

With best love from us both,

Thelma

P.S. Could you in your next letter give me the ages at death and the causes of death of my four grandparents, as they ask these questions in the medical examination for the life insurance companies?

