

First term at The
Haven
1929

14.

Tuesday

7 y dearest Aunt:

I have left you letters
unanswered a long time; various affairs
being pressed down on my head -
What am I to say? I'll summarize -

(1) Such complaints have never been made to me
about Biddy before, nor have I noticed
them. But, if not exaggerated by Miss
Laurence, they seem to me a development
of the worst trait in her character, an
unlovable egoism which is so pronounced in
her that it even sometimes alienates
my affection. To be perfectly frank with
you, dear Aunt, do you suppose if she
had been a normally kind & loving child,
I would have let her so much out of my
sight as I have?

But from her baby-hood, & Poppy Vanda
knows this as well as I, she has shown
such fierce concentration on herself, such

utter indifference to the feelings, (let alone the property of others) that in my sole charge she quickly became unmanageable.

To put it shortly: — I let her out into the world early because she was fit to stand life young, & only by mixing with the world ^{so I thought} would she get the sense of the rights of other people knocked into her.

I am not trying to excuse myself: I'm a "hunch" that I'm right, a mother's "hunch". No child ever born was less cast for the rôle of an only child, one person's protected treasure.

But the manifestations you quote are new to me. France taught her pretty manners, & as to rummaging about other people's things — then saying she hasn't — ! Well, she is a child who loves 'tidying drawers' etc, & do remember that a child's property sense is not one. How could it be? All's fish & their bet. But its time she learned.

Meanwhile; which has delayed my answer to you. John writes that the child is misundestood & unhappy: being

5.
repressed - etc - among the wrong kind
of children. etc.

I'm sitting & tearing an apilted red head.
I don't believe it, & only partially in
John's theories, which are those of the ultra-
-modern, experimental school of child-raising.
I'm familiar with their theories & sceptical.
I only know what caused me to suffer as a
child & what made me happy. I cannot
alar, supply all that ~~is~~ made my life
beautiful, & all the ~~is~~ ; but I can, at
least, ^{by} avoid what made me wretched: ignorant
nurses, heavy clothes, senseless rules. Also, Paddy
has more, it seems, of my temperamental
difficulties: - over-sensitiveness, fear of other
children: fear of blame: agonised nervousness
lest I should forget a lesson or fail to
please those mysterious powers called 'gran-
-ups'?

Misc Laurence has not written to me
yet. I send the child a coloured card
most days.

Dear Aunt, have no fears

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about 'lower nations'. The heat here is
 making people disastrously ill. I am going
 to stay for a day and look after a
 friend, Ninelle de Soyecourt, who is very
 ill at her flat in Passy. The concierge
should forward all letters; but in case of
 urgency my address till the end of the week
 will be c/o M. Habet de Soyecourt
 51. Rue Raymond.
 Passy.

The heat is dis-arranging life
 almost as much as ^{last winter's} the $\frac{1}{2}$ extreme cold. Only,
 it is the supply of ice now rather than coal
 that occupies one's attention.

People faint in the streets which at mid-day
 are almost deserted. One works till the small
 hours, & takes a long siesta after lunch. All
 rooms are in twilight with closed shutters. All
 sorts of 'hummy' diseases abound: my god-child,
 Ninelle, the concierge's baby is very ill: while,
 worst of all, the heat has hatched swarms
 of insect eggs which have lain dormant

5 in old wood work for centuries — beetles,
moths, silver ants — a walk. I have
escaped with a few harmless flying beetles;
but some of my friends, proud of exquisite
flats in ancient houses !

One visited round here in the middle of the
night to sleep on a sofa because of what
had awakened her. Bugs. Flat, brown,
heavy-footed legs, full of blood & skin
when squashed & biting like sharp pins — in
the out & over her five linen & flower-filled
bedroom.

Apart from these interludes, life is at a
stand-still. Dixie can't be left, so I shall
go & work there.

How goes your novel?
Have you read Gilbert Murray's last book
on the League of Nations? The Ordeal of
This Generation? It should be made a
compulsory study for every citizen.
I'm lending it to a friend for a few days.
After, I shall send it to you. Have

6.

made a summary of it in tolerable french;
e when my exhausted friends came round
e I've cooled them with iced drinks, e
laid them out in rows on my big divan,
I try e wake them up about it. Far above
our party politics, there is no ^{practically} more important
book. Its same wisdom might save Europe's
back, if Europe would attend.

Meanwhile I have to consider John
Rodker very carefully. (I knew that if I
once brought the child to England e interrupted
my carefully formed plans for her, there
would be endless trouble.) —

I give you an example of his pettiness.

He promised me a copy of a book that he
published the 'Nation's Maleficarum'. Told
me he had sent it - (-the details are too petty-)
got all my thanks. But, in reality, he had
never sent it at all e greatly enjoyed my
disappointment, as the book is one I need e
very costly. His business also was founded on
my capital.

My solicitors are in despair over his shiftiness.

I enclose, with very deep apologies,
your father's will.

There ^{are} some questions that Mr Swan, the
young partner of Womersley, Denton - etc wants
to ask you, since ^{the child is indirectly in} ~~the~~ ^{the settlement.}
the future concerned. I gave him your
address. He is her Trustee & an extraordinarily
far-seeing young man in whom I have
every reason to have confidence. This letter
would stretch out to book length if I told
you how almost machiavellian our dealings
have to be where J. R. is concerned. (His
father, you know, is a rich man & John is
the eldest son, & Camilla his sole legitimate
grand-child.) So Mr Swan, who is
fond of us both, wants to have every
possible information at his finger tips in
his dealings with Camilla's paternal relations.

So, if you hear from him, tell him, if
you know it, what he wants to know.

Think of a niece hunched over a
sick bed, thermometer in one hand, iced
drink in another & pen between her teeth &
the League of Nations in her head. Your Daisy.