

Hawthorn Hill  
Oakwood  
Dayton . . Ohio

March 5, 1925

Dear Harry:

It has just flashed over me, out of a clear sky, that you will be having a birthday, Sunday, which reminds me that you are beating me to fifty-one by only a little over five months. Well, I wish you joy, much joy, on your journey!

I need to go to a Rotary or Kiwanis meeting "or something" to get myself into the proper spirit of optimism for writing a proper birthday letter. I don't feel very jolly and I shall have a hard time pretending I do. However there is no particular reason for my low spirits except that I still feel awfully badly about that whole Oberlin situation and besides the rheumatiz in my hand makes it hard to write and that provokes me. These ills of the flesh that hop down on us at the age of fifty aren't popular with me "no how"!

I finished "The Divine Lady" last night—just before she finished me. It was very interesting for two-thirds of the way or more and then I must say I got enough. All the fine qualities of every one ran out and I thought it was a pretty sordid mess. What an awful fool Nelson was! Weak and vain and cruel and gullible beyond belief. It was rather a pity that blow on the head, in the Battle of the Nile, or wherever it was, didn't kill him instead of making him silly. I never can understand why people can't see that inordinate conceit is as obnoxious in themselves as in others. As far as I know, no one likes it in any one else. As for Lady Hamilton she was just herself, all the way through, but what was appealing, in youth and unhappiness, was very hateful in maturity and power. I suppose women see through such women in a way no man can, just as men wonder how women can be so fooled by another unworthy man. We aren't any of us so awfully wise, are we?

Who should turn up just before I went to Oberlin but "Hart O. Berg"? He is in this country with some metal, pure magnesium I believe, to take the place of aluminum and such. He is exactly like a character in a novel to me—not a real thing about him; everything is pretense and friends are only for what he can get out of them. Still he isn't nearly as bad as Mrs. Berg, who was malignant. They are divorced but "good friends". Mr. Berg confided to me that he expected to be married again and have a house in the south of France where we must visit him! I see us visiting him in his house in the south of France. But he does interest me. He keeps telling you how lovely your house is, how good your dinner is, how well you look and so on, ad infinitum, and you don't take a word of what he says for the truth. Still, as I told Orv, it was funny how well the dinner did go off, mostly a state of mind or feeling with me. He is a reminder of a part of my life that seems now like a dream. We never had any serious trouble with him in business affairs, though Will and Orv used to get awfully exasperated and awfully tired of his Jewish ways. I imagine I have told you how much satisfaction Orv and I had when we walked in on the departure of the King of Spain from our hotel quite unexpectedly. Mrs. Berg had not told us anything about it but she was on hand, dressed perfectly, as she always was, for the occasion and she was expecting to bid the King Goodbye for us. Orv

and I walked into the courtyard of the hotel just as the King came out of the door, and old Alphonze came on to meet us and say Goodbye to us and never saw Mrs. Berg! She had planned the whole thing with the idea of not letting us in on it. She was a beautiful woman, when she could keep herself out of her face! I wouldn't have missed knowing her for anything. From what I could see she was a fair example of European "society". If there is any more climbing and using social occasion as part of one's stock in trade over here than in Europe, I haven't seen it. Mrs. Berg had perfect manners and a beautiful face. No one would have guessed what was underneath, to see her lovely smile and hear her sweet, low voice. I picked up an idea or two about people on those European jaunts.

What do you think of the new Secretary of Agriculture? I hope he is a more promising prospect than Hughes' successor. We are interested to see who will get Mitchell's place. They surely can't keep him. He has some good qualities but has an ambition that will make him impossible to get along with. He was unendurably cocky here at the Air Races. He managed, through Slempe we hear, to get the President to name him as his "personal representative" at the Races. Every one took it as a slap at General Patrick and we wondered if Mitchell had fooled the President so far that he was to be made the Chief of the Air Service. General Patrick was very unhappy and the Committee for the big dinner didn't know what to do. If Mitchell was the President's "personal representative," he would outrank Patrick and what to do at the table was the question. But they had a spark of inspiration—someone did. Davis, Assistant Secretary of War, was here and he was given the place at the right and General Patrick at the left of the toastmaster. Then some system was used which brought Mitchell several places away from Davis. But every one felt that the air was charged with electricity and anything might cause an explosion. General Patrick won everybody's admiration and sympathy by his dignity and Mitchell showed at his worst, brushing Patrick aside as much as he could. As Mme Calderara said it was "a diplomatic situation" at our table of eight women for we had Mrs. Patrick, the new Mrs. Mitchell and Mitchell's sister. Well, I think Mitchell has finally gone too far and will surely be replaced. He thought he had the President but found he hadn't. He could do a lot of good in the Air Service if he weren't so erratic and so ambitious.

I haven't got much said so far and the prospect is that I won't do much better so I'd better be saying Goodnight. It is nearly half past eleven. I hope you'll have a nice birthday Sunday and that many good years are ahead of you. We'd like to have a good dinner for you, with some good talk and some good companionship. Many, many good wishes, always. Orv would join in if he knew I was writing but I hope he is in the Land of Nod.

As always

Katharine