

To F.B.H.
In England

*Original letter to
F. in England*

Sunday Afternoon
Aug. 6, 1944

Brooks, W/2.

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Hello, Dear --

I know that you've had recent letters from the family telling you of all our latest doings, for Jo was writing you yesterday and Carol had a letter underway this morning which I don't think she has finished yet. But -- will you please read my version too, Doctor Hanson? It at least might give you the personal point of view.

Before we get to that though, I want to tell you, darling, that I read with sheer delight of your having done one of those last two missions -- leaving only one to go. And -- you can easily imagine how impatient I am to learn that you're finally safely done. Oh! That will be wonderful news. Also, of course, I'm waiting to hear of the arrival of the Baldrys' gifts. It will be a disappointment to me if anything should happen to them in transit for I had such fun shopping for them and feel that the Baldrys will be so happily surprised if the things do arrive okay. Don't forget, dear, to tell me whether you ever did receive the notebook. Probably, really, you did tell me and I've forgotten. That was last spring, when the only thing that interested me very much was the assurance of your safety, and I quite conceivably may have overlooked it. We've sent you some candy, dear, but I just can't believe that it will arrive in any sort of condition. It will be two weeks (at least) old by the time you get it, which won't help it any. And really I think it will be just a box of crumbs. But our intentions were good anyhow.

And now to tell you what I've been doing. Friday Father and I went to Bangor Fair -- to the races, really. That's all we went for. And we had a perfectly gorgeous time -- honestly. I enjoyed it more (by far) than any single thing I've done since you went away. I just got a terrific left out of the whole thing -- came back to Camp feeling like a million; you know, just bubbling over with good spirits (non-alcoholic, you understand.) Please tell Harry that it was definitely second rate compared with auto racing -- and that I thought of him, and wished it were an auto race -- but as horse racing goes, it was swell. When we make our fortune, please allow me to play around with a stable and string of racers of my own.. I'd get such a whale of a kick out of it! (Probably end up by driving a sulky myself!)

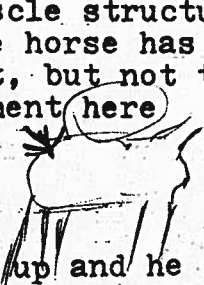
To start with, I really dressed up for the occasion -- the first time since I can remember that I've definitely dressed with enthusiasm and the idea of looking as smart as possible. I wore a dress you've never seen -- the putty colored garbadine with the big gold buttons --; black pumps; a pair of those cobwebby hose you sent from S. America; my long black suede gloves -- they come 3/4ths of the way to my elbows; and (since you are in England) the big black hat, but worn on the back of my head so that it framed my face -- you even might like it, darling. (See other side of this sheet.) It will give you a rough idea. At least the hair-do and the hat are quite authentic, and that was the idea.

You'd better show this to the boys too and tell them it's the most flattering likeness I've ever had!

Anyhow, we now have Mrs. Hanson dressed and ready. Just add sun glasses, please and a large black bag, and we're off.

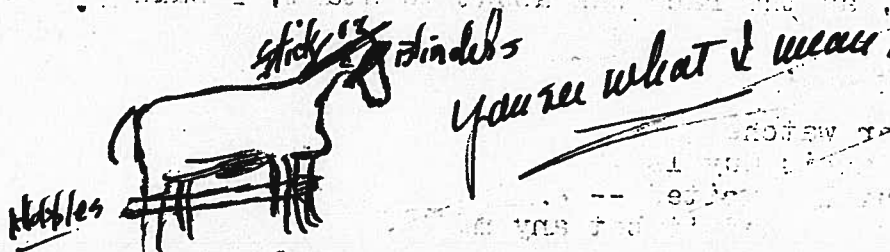
It was a scorching hot day, by the way; and I took a red cushion to sit on. And plenty of cigarettes; and three well-sharpened pencils. I paid for us to get in and W.C. bought the grandstand tickets. We had super seats -- parallel with the wire and directly across from the stage platform where all the "acts" were performed. We had gotten racing cards, of course -- and settled down to study the "line-up.." It was about 1:30 then, and the races were scheduled to start at two. (And if this bores you, sweetheart, just turn the next 17 pages over to Harry. He should have fun reading it, anyhow. But -- maybe you will too.)

There were five horses starting -- and they were out on the track very shortly. I began to "study" them as they trotted back and forth, up and down by the stand. Of course you realize that I have a system all my own -- at least I couldn't possibly recommend it to anyone else. But it works something like this. If a horse is too long in the neck, say, he doesn't suit me -- unless he has enough other credits to offset that particular debit. Also, I don't like a rangey looking horse -- too long barralled, so to speak; with too much length between fore legs and hind legs. I don't like fore legs that are too frail -- they must be fine, but not fragile, if you follow. Nor do I care for a horse whose hind legs and fore legs don't balance in structure. Some of the horses, as an example, would have fine looking fore legs, and satisfactory hind legs, but there was a lack of balance somewhere -- to my fine Italian eye. Also, I don't go for an over-developed muscle structure as marked. Every other feature can be o.k. -- but the horse has to have the right muscles there too; enough development, but not too much -- savez-vous? However, I like plenty of development here on the rump, could we say? When a horse looks sleek here but strong (just right, you understand) -- that is o.k.



Next we come to the way the horse moves -- and that is very *important*. If the build adds up and he doesn't move with a sort of svelte effortlessness, then he's "scratched," in the estimation of your dear wife, and I have to start all over again. I prefer, incidently, a trotter to a pacer, generally speaking. Some horses throw their front feet out too far -- some not far enough. Some trot too "quickly" -- that is, they don't cover enough ground at one step; they must, then, step twice to another horse's once to cover the same ground. Some horses aren't nervous enough -- some are too nervous. My choice (to suit me) has to be just nervous enough, you understand. I don't really like a tiny horse; even perfectly coordinated, and I've already mentioned that a big race horse (too big) is out. The little horse usually doesn't stand up, and the big horse usually wears himself out because of his very size.

Next we come to the matter of the harness the horse is wearing. If 2 horses compared favorably in all respects, but one wore hobbles (they aren't really hobbles, of course; are used to steady a horse in stride and minimize the risk of his breaking (into a gallop, you dope!)); blinders; a stick on his neck; etc., I'd be inclined to favor the less "trussed up" animal.



After all this has been taken into account, I next look for the owner's name -- where the horse hails from -- and the driver. I suppose you think that since I don't know one owner from another -- nor the drivers -- that it could hardly make much difference. But there you are so wrong. It makes a great deal of difference to Mrs. Hanson. Oh, yes. For instance, if two horses compared well, but one came from Thorndike, Me., and the other from Houlton -- I'd definitely bet on the Houlton nag. Also, it's conceivable that a Massachusetts owner isn't bringing a racer to Maine for the fun of it (possibly!) And -- New Brunswick horses have a good reputation, generally speaking. So -- you see?

As for the drivers, the name alone doesn't mean anything to me, but I immediately link up the name with the man, as he drives down by, and that's where the fun begins. If he's young, that's all right -- his "daring" will make up to some extent for his lack of experience as compared with older drivers. But if he's too young -- the least bit callow looking, he shouldn't be there. If he's too old -- over 80 -- he shouldn't be there either; not as far as I'm concerned. The chances are he isn't driving a winner; he'll be driving, at best, a "place" horse. But chances are he'll be 5th and last -- and no argument whatsoever. Also, I am intensely interested in the way he drives; how he handles his horse. Is there a "solidity" about the gentleman? a definiteness? Is he clearly and effortlessly the master -- or is the horse driving him? Then -- is he tough looking? Or could he be taken advantage of? I like my drivers to look "hard." if you see what I mean. Which, in passing, they usually do -- or they wouldn't be there!!

So -- we "studied" the horses. And now you see that that entailed a lot. Of course it goes without saying that half (if not all) the fun lies in "picking the winner."

In the first race I couldn't find a "perfect" horse; not one that was just right. In fact, there was only one horse all the afternoon that was exactly right -- driver, owner, and all -- but more about that later.

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Anyhow --- in the first race, with 5 starters, Father was muttering that #4, May Todd, looked good -- speed, stamina, and what-have-you. After discarding them all, one after the other, and looking for a "right" one, it finally became clear to me that I'd run out of horses. So I went back over the line-up; Father was still sticking by the Todd nag -- #4. But Todd didn't suit me -- even less than the others. Finally, as the race was about to start, I said -- "Well -- if I've got to choose, and since some one of those horses will come in first -- I'll take #3, Francis Guy -- from New Bedford, Mass.

So, while Father watched May Todd, I stuck with Francis Guy. May Todd came in 2nd; Francis Guy 1st. I pounded Father over the ears and sat down feeling acutely excited -- and delighted with myself (and the Guy stallion!) But we hadn't bet any money, you understand -- not yet.

The next race had 6 starters. And Father was all set on Bobbe Abbe who had the pole. (Oh, yes, that's another consideration; the starting position. In a field of 5 or 6 horses it's a little more comforting to bet on the horse who starts in front; at least.) You're pretty sure he'll be out in front at one end of the race!) I took a general look at each horse as he went up and down by, and again I seemed hard to please. Then #7, Edward P., came along. That horse was really right; really right. But -- number 7! Dear, dear. A good horse, at last, but starting last, damn it!

I knew Father was set, long since. The Abbe horse was the horse, according to William. And William is entitled to know a good deal more about horse flesh than his charming daughter. He used to race horses himself, for Pete's sake. I really hated to say that I liked #7. I knew perfectly well how Father would scoff. "Starting #7? You're crazy!" etc. But the more I "studied" Edward P., the better I liked him. "If only he wasn't starting last!" However, starting last or not, Edward P. was my horse -- I couldn't get away from that. He was "right;" that was all there was to it. And it was just his hard luck (and mine) that he had drawn 7th position. (You may be wondering how he could be 7th in a field of 6 -- well, dear, #5 had been scratched before the race.) He handled beautifully; and was beautifully handled in turn. Young Nelson was driving. (Remember this.) The horse was calm, but not too calm; nervous, but just enough so. Neck, chest, legs, barrel, rump -- all were good. He looked like speed and endurance. He had guts plus the artistic temperament. (And so did young Nelson, the driver.) --- But ----- starting #7; what a lousy break. However, he was really starting 6th, I kept reminding myself.

In the same race there was a little horse -- too small -- which was being driven by old man Nelson; the younger man's father. And the old man owned both horses. It looked interesting; particularly in the light of my infatuation with young Nelson (as a driver, dear) and Edward P.

So --- since Father was very impatient for my choice, I finally threw caution to the winds and came out boldly that #7 looked damned good to me. Father snorted, as I knew he would, and then (which was much worse) laughed loudly and informed the surrounding spectators in our half of the grandstand that I had picked #7. Quite a joke! I wouldn't have minded that so much if Hodd Buzzell (the lawyer who got me my divorce) and H. Buzzell, Jr., whom I've known for years (County Attorney) hadn't been sitting almost directly in front of us. They were hob-nobbing with Father all afternoon -- and it was tough

competing with three male egos. But -- #7 was my horse, regardless -- so off they went, and I hung onto my hat, chewed my pencil, dropped my gloves, and prayed. And watched young Nelson dash smoothly, easily, and steadily past in 4th place on the first lap. From 6th to 4th -- it didn't look terribly encouraging.

On they went, into the back stretch.. Edward P. stuck easily in 4th place. But that wasn't first, not by a damn sight. While Bobbe Abbe (Father's choice) had started first and stayed there. (The Buzzels were betting on Abbe too -- which made it worse.) Then -- on the farther turn -- where the arrow is -- things began to happen.

Young Nelson and Edward P. swung out and started by #3 -- then by #2 -- and began to come up to #1 -- the Abbe horse. I dropped my handbag then, spit out the pencil, threw my racing card at Father and began to swear. It was a photo finish -- and the decision was a dead heat (Abbe and Edward P.) I almost died. And it was five minutes, at least, before I began looking for my scattered possessions. Buzzel had my handbag --

my gloves were down under the row in front of us -- and the woman next me retrieved my program. The man sitting next to father leaned over and said, "You certainly enjoy a horse race, don't you. It's worth the price of admission just to watch you.." (He was very nice.) I smiled sweetly and agreed that horse races were the spice of life!!!

By this time Father and the Buzzels were acting very male. "It wasn't a dead heat" to start with. "Anybody could see that. Abbe was a nose ahead of Edward P." And "What in hell are they giving us here, anyway!" And, etc., etc., etc. I just smiled divinely and said nothing. And began to study my card for the third race.

By this time W.C. was beginning to listen to me, I noticed. He wasn't quite so quick to pick a winner (which amused me so much.) "Well, B, what do you think about this race?" There were 5 horses running -- and again I couldn't find a "right" horse among them. Finally I said so. Father had chosen Alee -- starting in pole position (he seemed to be influenced a lot by that factor, it seemed to me.) I simply couldn't make any sort of choice. They all looked rocky to me, I even said, just before the race started, that I couldn't pick a horse out of that group. But W.C. wanted me to make a choice -- and we would bet one buck, he stated. So I finally grabbed at #4, Inflation. He was too long bodied, but ??? He came in 2nd. Father's horse (Alee) won; and Father won the dollar. And chortled all over the place. It was sickening.

The fourth race ran the same horses as the first -- in which I had been lucky at picking the winner, Francis Guy. But -- good heavens, darling -- you'll recall that I hadn't been really satisfied with Francis Guy, and I had now seen them run once. Also, I hoped to win my dollar back; Father was altogether too pleased with himself. And besides that, it wasn't unlikely that a different horse would win this time. (I didn't reckon this way the second time Edward P. ran, but for this race it was the way to reckon -- my feminine "instinct" insisted.) So I bet on May Todd (2nd before, whom Father had picked),

while he took my previous choice, Francis Guy, who had won. He thought I was "just being a good sport" and tried to give me Francis Guy, my winner. But I stuck to Todd in spite of Father (and the Buzzels) and won my dollar back.. At that, Father began to look at me peculiarly. It was funny.

So we were even, with the fifth race coming up, in which my pet, Edward P., was running. Father scoffed -- "I suppose you'll want Abbe this time. Your horse can't stand the pace anyway. That dead heat was a fluke; wouldn't happen again in a thousand times. You'd better take Abbe; that's the horse."

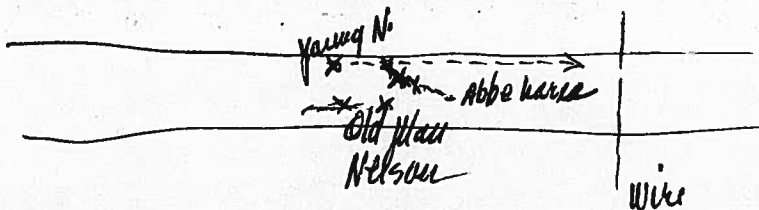
"I'll wager two bucks on Edward P.," I snorted. "And this time he'll walk away. He's starting pole position -- which is some different from last. And besides, there isn't a horse in the group that can show the speed he can. Do you want to bet?"

"Sure. Sure, I'll bet. I'll bet on Abbe if you don't want to. I was just giving you a chance."

"Two bucks, then," I stated, "on Edward P. to win."

The Buzzels had been horning in and had decided to go down to the window and place a legitimate bet on Abbe. Hillard (Jr.) suggested that I should back my horse with a little cash, but I refused. I had never trafficked with legitimate betting, you know; had always confined my meager wagers to the confines of the family. So I said I guessed I'd keep it that way; it would be much more satisfying to trim my father -- and much more fun.

Edward P. started at pole position. But in just no time at all he was back in fourth. Abbe soon swept into the lead, as before, and Old Man Nelson, with his little horse was second. Around they went -- Edward P. moving smoothly along in 4th place ---- just trailing around. Old Man Nelson drove his little horse to the limit -- pushing all the way, often using the whip -- and being just about a neck behind the lead horse, Bobbe Abbe, on the outside. Abbe hugged the fence on the inside. As before (in the first race) they got into the last lap, on the farther side, when Edward P. began to come up. Young Nelson moved out and passed #3 -- and began to come up behind his father and the Abbe horse (also driven by a Nelson --- no relation.) At the same time (Oh! It was exciting!!!), Old Man Nelson whipped his little horse on to a final spurt. They were coming down to the wire and the crowd (Mrs. Hanson at least) was going wild. The Nelson driving the Abbe horse was now about half a neck in the lead and hugging the fence. Young Nelson was right behind him, practically on his neck. And Old Man Nelson coming up on the outside. Then -- oh! Nelson with the Abbe horse, moved over -- driving Old Man Nelson out toward the outside of the track. And -- Young Nelson and Edward P. squeezed through next the fence -- and won!! Eurika!!!! (Remember what I said about a young driver having more nerve!) And by the time they went under the wire Old Man Nelson had dropped back to 4th place. His little horse was done in!



Dad told me about a race he remembers in which much the same thing happened -- but there the driver was so sure that the sulky wouldn't get through that he climbed onto the horse's back and drove through next the fence to win in just the same fashion.

So I collected my two bucks from William and felt very smug.

But on the next race (the 6th) -- a repeat of that miserable 3rd in which all the horses left me cold -- I lost \$2.00. I stuck to my previous choice, Inflation (who had come in 2nd); and this time he came in 3rd. Not so good, huh? Father backed Alee, who won the first time; and came in 2nd the 2nd time. And if you'll think it over you'll see that Father really was getting the breaks, if there were any. I mean that he could have picked the winner (in race # III); I certainly wasn't stopping him.

The 7th race was a free-for-all; much faster -- they ran in 2:06. I picked #2 to win out of 5 horses and won \$2.00. Father's choice came in 4th.

The 8th race was Edward P. again. And by this time I was really keen on my favorite. Father babbled things about one horse winning 3 successive heats -- clever driving that wouldn't work twice -- etc. But I was deaf to such trivia. I dug out my purse and got onto my feet with the light of decision in my eye. "I'm going to bet," I announced. "Where do you go and how do you do it?"

Father tried, mildly, to show me that I was "taking a chance," but I didn't think so. It seemed solid to me. So, he went down with me to place my bet. If he hadn't been there I was going to place ten bucks on Edward P. to win. I had a ten dollar bill right in my hand. But Father saw it, and he said in a very definite tone, "How much are you betting?" I said, nonchalantly, "Oh, not much. This is just for fun."

"You buy straight \$2.00 tickets, to win," he stated. And stuck right by my shoulder at the window. So my courage failed me -- not about Edward P. but on account of Father -- and I said, (hating myself and mad as blazes because Father had his eagle eye on me) meekly, "Two dollars on Edward P. to win, please.." And got my ticket --- and my change.

Old Man Nelson started to drive the same kind of race as he had before; Edward P. dropped into 4th place as usual (he started 5th this time) -- with Abbe starting 2nd), but the Old Man's little horse was done and he didn't last. Before they were once around the track, he was trailing way behind. I hated to see him drop back, because Edward P. was 4th and there were 3 horses in front of him, Abbe among them. And the Old Man wasn't there this time to pull a fast one. But I hung onto my composure and my gloves, and waited. Waited for that farther turn -- and that magnificent speed of Edward P. And it happened just as I had it planned. Young Nelson moved out -- started passing those horses ahead of him as a Packard would pass a motor bike -- and came in first by several lengths. And I pounded Mr. Buzzel on the head, kissed the man next to Father, and went down to collect my money: \$5.50. And was so mad at Father because I hadn't bet ten bucks, regardless.

Incidentally, Father went down to bet on the daily double, but the window closed just before he got there. If I had bet on the daily double (Francis Guy in the 1st race and Edward P. in the second) I'd have won \$24.70. Alas! Father would have won \$9.20 -- on his choices.

The 10th race was a repeat of the free for all. I won \$2.00 from Father by betting on the wrong horse (not my "best choice.") I had won from W.C. before by betting on Hollyrood. So father said that he thought Hollyrood would win. He had bet on Harry Direct before, who came in 2nd. I had been lucky, and wanted to see Dad win, so I said I'd bet on Harry Direct. Father thought I was crazy -- and said so -- and I said that if he didn't want to bet I'd bet at the window. So he said he might as well have my money as for me to throw it away. Harry Direct won -- and W.C. gave it all up as a bad job. It was comical.

And I guess by now that you understand that I had a perfectly wonderful time. We got home at 7:30 -- and I spent at least an hour telling the Brats about the fun we'd had. I'm perfectly sure that I could bankrupt us forever, very blithely and with never a qualm, when I found a "just right" horse and driver. Remember this, dear, when we go to the races, and keep all our money in your pocket.

That was Friday. Saturday was scorching hot again and we spent most of the day swimming and trying to keep cool. In the evening there was a beautiful red moon -- nearly full -- and I sat out on the steps for an hour or so just watching the "moonglow." It was so lovely. Then we went swimming, without suits -- and finally to bed about midnight..

Today was much cooler. Very bright and sunny -- but clear and fresh. We went for a lobster picnic down on the Searsport shore. Father and Mother went too -- we took the Pontiac -- and we really had a very nice time. I got stung by a hornet -- and mother found that her can of condensed milk (for the coffee) was a can of vegetable soup -- but those were very minor casualties. Mother enjoyed it all very much -- was quite gay and congenial; said she'd had the best time of the entire summer. So it was really very nice.

Katherine is going to stay another week, I guess. She and Carol are out canoeing in the moonlight right now -- it's eleven P.M.; quite chilly, but a georgous moon. They have a grand time, and I don't mind having Katherine here. I enjoy her.

So, beloved -- all goes very well with us, as you can see. We have had and are having a really wonderful summer; perfect in every way except for your absence. It has been and is completely delightful. And I never cease to be grateful to you, dear. You made it possible for us, really. We couldn't have had it otherwise -- I would have had to have worked. And remember this, dear, when you might think of objecting to my continuing teaching for a while.

There's only one thing here which isn't right and which troubles me somewhat. Jo is "very difficult" -- very hard to handle. She has had an almost permanent grouch for the last two weeks, and I've been quite ashamed of her at times. I can't understand what the trouble is -- or why she acts so. And I don't seem to be able to straighten her out.