

beautiful type belongs in the pine-panelled library of an English country home; it wants to be read by the fire in a gentleman's leather easy chair -- not on a second-hand studio couch in a one-room hovel in a broken-down brownstone front.

(MEGAN moves to table USC and sits. She has found the reference she was looking for. HELENE rises, crosses to desk.)

I want the Q anthology. (She picks up the wrapping.) Why don't you wrap it in pages LCXII and LCXIII so I can at least find out who won the battle and what war it was?

(FRANK laughs silently.)

P.S. Have you got Sam Pepys' (pronounced by H.H. -- "Peppis") Diary over there? I need him for the long winter evenings.

(F.D. puts glasses in pocket, letter in inside pocket. MEGAN rings bell. BILL enters.)

FRANK. 1st of November, 1950. Dear Miss Hanff: I am sorry for the delay in answering your letter but I have been out of town for a week or so and am now busy trying to catch up on my correspondence.

(MEGAN is at table U.S.C. making out invoice for BILL.)

FRANK. (continued) (rising) Please don't worry about

us using old books such as Clarendon's Rebellion for wrapping. In this particular case they were just two odd volumes with the covers detached and nobody in their right senses would have given us a shilling for them.

(HELENE, writing, looks up in amazement at this, obviously thinks they are out of their minds. She shrugs and goes on writing.)

About the Sir Roger de Coverley Papers

(BILL exits. MEGAN D.S. on "essays." He is moving towards a pile of books on the floor and here he will find the de Coverley.)

. . . we happen to have in stock a volume of 18th century essays which includes a good selection of them as well as essays by Chesterfield and Goldsmith. It is edited by Austin Dobson (He checks this and hands to MEGAN, who reaches out to take it but he withdraws it to look at it again.) and is quite a nice edition and as it is only one dollar 15 we are sending it off to you by book-post. (He hands it finally to MEGAN. He crosses to round table SL.) The Quiller-Couch anthology, The Pilgrim's Way, is being sent to you in the same parcel. The balance due is -- (He hesitates.) -- one dollar 85 -- (He hands this second book to MEGAN, who goes U.S.C. and rings bell.) so your two dollars more than covered it. We haven't a copy of Pepys' Diary in stock at the moment but shall look out for one for you. (He is at the door.) There are six of us in the shop, not including Mr. Marks and Mr. Cohen. With best wishes, F. Doel. For Marks and Co. (He exits.)
CECILY. Helene, my dear -- (CECILY coming down

ladder and moving to crate downstage center, she can sit on it at some point.) There are many ways of doing it but Mummy and I think this is the simplest for you to try.

(H.H. gets up, and puts on apron, while listening to the recipe.)

Put a cup of flour, an egg, half a cup of milk and a good shake of salt into a large bowl and beat all together until it is the consistency of thick cream. Put in the fridge for several hours. It's best if you make it in the morning. When you put your roast in the oven, put in an extra pan to heat. Half an hour before your roast is done, pour a bit of the roast grease into the baking pan, just enough to cover the bottom will do. The pan must be *very hot*. Now pour the pudding in and the roast and pudding will be ready at the same time.

(H.H. goes to exit to kitchen, but is arrested by next line.)

I don't quite know how to describe it to someone who has never seen it, but a good Yorkshire Pudding will puff up very high and brown and crisp and when you cut into it you will find that it is . . . hollow inside.

(H.H. exits on the laugh. CECILY breaks to behind desk.)

The RAF is still keeping Doug in Norfolk and we are firmly hoarding your Christmas tins until he comes home, but oh, my dear, what a celebration we shall have when he does! I do think you oughtn't to spend your money like that. *(CECILY snatches up letter and breaks C.S. and then U.S.C.)* Must fly and post this if you're go-

ing to have it for Brian's birthday dinner. Do let me know if it's a success. Love, Cecily.

(HELENE re-enters, without apron, carrying mug of coffee.)

HELENE. Dear Cecily, Yorkshire Pudding out of this world!

(CECILY breaks to MEGAN to share this latest letter with her.)

We have nothing like it. I had to describe it to somebody as a high, curved, smooth, empty waffle.

(She picks up the food catalogue and sits on sofa. CECILY slowly drifts to down center table and sits reading the letter. When it gets to description of parcels MEGAN will join her, standing looking over her shoulder, also reading the letter.)

Please don't worry about what the food parcels cost; I don't know whether Overseas Association is non-profit or duty free or what, but they are monstrous cheap. That whole Christmas parcel cost less than my turkey. They do have a few rich parcels with things like standing rib roasts and legs of lamb, but even those are so cheap compared with what they cost in the butcher shops that it kills me not to be able to send them. I have such a time with the catalogue, I spread it out on the rug and debate the relative merits of Parcel 105 (includes one dozen eggs and a tin of sweet biscuits) and Parcel 217 B (two dozen eggs and no sweet biscuits) — I hate the one dozen

get to it.
HELENE. *(from a small card which she reads)* To Helene Hanff . . .)

FRANK. With best wishes and grateful thanks for many kindnesses from . . . *(He pauses, he would like to say it is from himself but . . .)* all at 84 Charing Cross Road, London, April 1951.

HELENE. Thank you for the beautiful book. I've never owned a book before with pages edged all round in gold. Would you believe it arrived on my birthday?

(He looks up at this, moved. There are tears in her eyes, but she holds them back. They are quite close, she behind and above him, each turning the pages of a small book. She looks again at the card.)

I wish you hadn't been so overcourteous about putting the inscription on a card instead of on the flyleaf. It's the bookseller coming out in you all; you were afraid you'd decrease its value. You would have increased it for the present owner. And possibly for the future owner. I love inscriptions on fly-leaves and notes in margins, I like the comradely sense of turning pages someone else turned, and reading passages someone long ago has called my attention to. And why didn't you sign your names?

(FRANK slips the book in his pocket and turns to exit. He is halfway out when he is arrested by the next words and turns around.)

I expect Frank wouldn't let you; he probably doesn't want me writing love letters to anybody but him.

umbrella - and with hand on door speaks at once so as to time the big laugh coming.)

FRANK. Dear Miss Hanff: I expect you are getting a bit worried that we have not written to thank you for your parcels - thinking that we are ungrateful lot. *(laugh)*

(HELENE raises the four letters with amusement.)

The truth is that I have been chasing round the country . . . *(He is closing door, hanging up hat and umbrella, and case on table.)* . . . in and out of various stately homes of England trying to buy a few books to fill up our sadly depleted stocks. My wife was starting to call me the lodger who just went home for bed and breakfast, but of course when I arrived home with a nice piece of M - E - A - T, to say nothing of dried eggs and ham, then she thought I was a fine fellow and all was forgiven. I must say it is a long time since we saw so much meat all in one piece. *(He is now downstage center.)* We should like to express our appreciation in some way or other, so we are sending you by Book Post today . . . *(He is removing from his jacket pocket a small book. Simultaneously, H.H. is picking up an identical book.)* a little book which I hope you will like.

(Simultaneously they are moving towards each other, each holding book, facing front, they are now very close.)

I remember you asked me for a volume of Elizabethan love poems some time ago - well, this is the nearest I can

(*CECILY enters with small round suitcase, and wool sweater which she places on downstage chair. She leaves a note on FRANK's desk.*)

CECILY. Helene dear, I'm dashing this off to say you must send *nothing at all* to the shop for Christmas, everything is now off rations and even nylons are available in all the better shops. Please save your money as the most important thing after your dentist is your trip to England. Only don't come in '54 as I shall be in Iraq with Doug where he is now stationed. Come in '55 when we shall be back and you can stay with us. (*She is putting on the wool sweater.*) Doug writes that our call may come at any moment as we are next in line for married quarters. The children and I are hoping to join him before Christmas. He is well and happy on Bahrain Island in the middle of the Persian Gulf (if you've got an atlas) but will return to the RAF base at Habbaniya in Iraq when our quarters are available and we will join him there, all being well. (*She picks up the case. MEGAN and BILL are now entering the shop.*) Write again soon. Best wishes - (*She shakes BILL by hand.*) and love - (*She kisses MEGAN who breaks away to hide her tears. CECILY moves to door of shop, pauses, and then says:*) Cecily!

(*They wave as she goes. BILL goes to work upstage center MEGAN exits to put away bunting, then returns to sit at center stage table.*)

HELENE. (*rising and moving front of desk with Marks catalogue.*) DO YOU MEAN TO SIT THERE AND

TELL ME YOU'VE BEEN PUBLISHING THESE MAMMOTH CATALOGUES ALL THESE YEARS AND THIS IS THE FIRST TIME YOU EVER BOTHERED TO SEND ME ONE? THOU VARIET! I don't remember which restoration playwright it was who called everyone varlet! But I've always wanted to use it in a sentence! As it happens the only thing which MIGHT interest me is the Catullus; it's not the Loeb Classics but it sounds like it'll do. If you still have it, mail it and I'll send you the six shillings two pence as soon as you translate it. Kay and Brian moved to the suburbs and left me without a translator.

(*SOUND of New York church bells. From sofa she picks up New York Times.*)

I shall be obliged if you will send Nora and the girls to church every Sunday for the next month to pray for the continued health and strength of the Messrs, Gilliam, Reese, Campanella, Robinson, Hodges, Furillo, Podres, Newcombe and Labine, collectively known as The Brooklyn Dodgers. If they lose this World Series I shall do myself in and then where will you be? (*She throws paper back on sofa and looks at her watch, sees time and realizes she's going to be late; shuffles scripts into briefcase, and winds scarf round neck.*) Have you got de Toqueville's *Journey to America*? Somebody borrowed mine and never gave it back. Why is it that people who wouldn't dream of stealing anything else think it's perfectly all right to steal books? Regards to MEGAN -

(*MEGAN looks up.*)