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Sierra Paracaima 1285  
México, D. F.  
August 10, 1955

Dear Owen:

I have before me your letters of July 12 and July 20 and appreciate your writing me. I am glad that I came back on July 1 with Marion and the family. We had a very pleasant trip down and I was hoping to avoid another trip north, but the discomfort in my abdomen continued and as I was unable to tell whether it was a reactivation of the ulcer or a return of the colitis, I thought the only thing to do was to make a quick trip to the Lahey Clinic in Boston. I left I believe it was on July 25 and went straight through to the New England Baptist Hospital, where Dr. Jordan put me through the usual examinations. She found that the ulcer was not active and as a matter of fact continued nicely healed, but that the trouble came from colitis, just as it did in January this year when I went north to the hospital fearing a recurrence of the ulcer. She says that outside of this colitis I am really very well and she has considerably improved the diet which I have been following, but it is still a severe one. She put me to bed for a week in the hospital and I then came straight through to Mexico City, returning here last Tuesday. I was away only a little over a week. It was an expensive trip to make but it was worth while because I know now what I have to deal with. I am afraid that this colitis is something that I shall have to live with probably the rest of my life, but not in any acute form, I hope.

Since my return I have been taking it very easily and haven't done a thing and not written even a single letter. As a matter of fact, we spent most of the time since my return at Cuernavaca. Edith Mustard from Boston, Marion's sister-in-law, and her daughter and Virginia's oldest girl, Lizi, left for home last Friday so that we are alone again. It was very pleasant having them here.

With respect to your letter of July 12 in which you state that it might be well to write to Knopf, asking him definitely if he is willing to act as regular publisher without any subsidy, I see no harm in doing this but in view of his letter I feel pretty sure what the answer will be. In view of the outlay involved in the publishing of the book and what he considers the limited sale, it is not likely that he is willing to act as "regular publisher", taking all the risks himself. After reading the correspondence again it seems pretty clear that they are only willing to publish the book on the basis of the cost of publication being guaranteed to them. I really don't know whether to advise that you write to him if he would be willing to be the regular publisher, because I think we can pretty well anticipate what his answer would be.

I had a brief letter from Rodney Sharp some weeks ago sending me the name of a place where he buys some of his flowers and plants for his homes.

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We had talked about that when I saw him last May or June in Wilmington briefly at dinner. I had a postcard from him written on shipboard and from it I gather that he is still thinking of coming here to Mexico after his return from Europe. I would not be at all surprised if he will not be coming here for several weeks after he returns from this trip to Europe, or at least after some interval. He is more interested in going to Acapulco than he is in making a stay in Mexico City or in Cuernavaca, but he did say that if he came to Mexico he would let me know, and I think he will spend at least several days with us in Cuernavaca. From the postcard which I had from him some days ago I gather that he is still thinking of this trip to Mexico. I note from your letter that you think he will be returning in September. I am inclined to think it would be best for me to take up this matter of your book with him when I see him, rather than by letter, and as there is this prospect of his coming to Mexico in the not distant future and my having an opportunity to really talk with him at leisure, I am thinking for the present of not writing him. I shall know when he comes back to the United States and I think I shall drop him a line then again about his coming down here. If I find he is not coming here then I shall write him. I do not know why I have the feeling, but I have the feeling that it is much more likely that Rodney Sharp will be willing to do something about the book than Walt Carpenter.

I haven't done any actual dictating or anything on the book that I am thinking of since I went north at the end of April. I had dictated as you know about 1,200 pages in the two preceding months and you know the haphazard way that I did it. From the talks which I had with friends in the publishing business in New York while I was north in May and June, I am confident that while a publisher would be interested, a good deal of work has to be done. I think there is no doubt that there will have to be two books instead of one, one with European background and the other with Latin American background. To publish what I would like to see in print will take several volumes, and any book that is published in several volumes is condemned from the outset to a very limited sale. A book like that in two volumes has to sell anywhere from \$12 to \$14 for the two volumes, and that means that the sale is by that fact alone extremely limited. My publisher friends all made the suggestion that it should be put into two books instead of one and suggested that I prepare the one on Europe first. You thought very much along the same lines. It is interesting that Dr. Langer of Harvard has very much the same idea. I saw Dr. Langer at the hospital while I was on this last trip north. I had left the manuscript with him to read, or at least parts of it, particularly those on which he had most background--that is, the European end. As I knew Dr. Langer was leaving for a holiday in Europe at the beginning of August, I called him at his home from the hospital and he was good enough to come in to see me. What he said was very encouraging. He said that I had asked him to read only those parts which I had marked and which referred particularly to developments in Europe. He had, however, found the subject matter so interesting that he had read all of it. As a historian he felt that there was very useful and very interesting background in these notes, which he said should be published. As he is very familiar with the documents in the State Department and elsewhere, including some of those which I prepared as well as many of my private letters to President Roosevelt and Secretary Hull, etc., and as he knows the period 1930 to 1940 so well and has written authoritatively about it, I was interested to hear him say that there was in his opinion so much of major

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importance which I should cover and in which I had participated which I had not covered in the notes. I called his attention to the desultory way in which I had dictated these notes and he said that he quite understood, and he thought there would have to be a good deal of work done on the matter, not so far as the English was concerned but so far as selection of the notes which I had already prepared and the preparation of additional notes, and he gave me a good many ideas concerning points which he thought I should cover and with which he knew I had been associated.

It was most useful to have the comments which you and Langer made after reading the notes and I appreciate both of your doing this beyond measure. My ideas are pretty well clarified now and I shall be getting at this in the near future. Naturally, during the two months that I was north I could not do anything and then for the time that I was here after our return on July 1 I was so unhappy with my tummy that I did not feel like doing anything. I am beginning to feel more normal now and am going to really settle down to work, but I am not going to make it a grind.

This is already a very long letter and I have to go downtown to a meeting. I wish that I could have seen you on this brief trip north, but I did not stop as the trip had only one object.

I hope that the heat in Newark is not too unendurable. Here we have rainy and cool days and strangely enough have had very little sun for a month. That is better than continuous and unendurable heat.

Marion joins me in affectionate good wishes.

Cordially and faithfully yours,

George S. Messersmith