

Deer Godchild eBook

Deer Godchild

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INTRODUCTION

A young New-Yorker of twelve lately heard an appeal for the Fatherless Children of France, and his heart was touched. He had no money, but he resolved to give his spare time and his utmost energy to support a "kid in France." The French child needed ten cents worth of extra food each day, in order to grow up with strength and courage. The little American godfather earned those ten cents; he sold newspapers at the subway entrance, after school hours, and undertook an amazing variety of more or less lucrative odd jobs. Sometimes business was slow, and it was hard to keep up the game; but he did. He is still, in the true American expression "making good" for his dear godchild, and doing it with a broad and brotherly grin. He is James P. Jackson Jr. His letters to and from the kid in France are published just for fun—and yet in the hope of encouraging more "dear benefactors" to join our large family and help along, in the same spirit and with the same joy.

Edith Serrell.

Greenville Falls,
November 27, 1916.

Dear miss Secretary

How are you? It is al-rite about the french orfan and I wood like a boy between ten and twelve if it is the same to you. At fust dad sed I coodnt have him because there was plenty of rich godfathers who wood take him if I didn't, but mother told him of the apeel you made and that I was goin to raze the money myself, and he sed well I guess you are rite and if he can raze enuf money to raze a kid on he is well come to it, and she sed I guess that is the rite spirit. And so I am sending you 85cts. which is 70cts, fer the fust weak, and you can keep the change which is 15cts, fer the next weak, so I will only send 55cts, fer the fust weak after that. The 85cts. is my birthday money which was on thanksgiving day and I guess the folks will be glad to give me work when they no I am suporting a kid in france.

Hoping you are well and I am the same I will, close.

Yours truly,
James Prendergast Jackson Jr.

P.S. I shoold like his name to be Bill or Pete in french and not one of those girly names if it is the same to you.

To Mr. James Prendergast Jackson Jr.
Dear Sir:



BOOKRAGS

According to your instructions, we have assigned to you Andre Leblanc, aged 11, No. 18 rue d'Autancourt, Paris, as your godchild for one year. Thanking you for your interest in this worthy cause, we beg to remain

Very truly yours,
The Junior Committee for the Fatherless
Children of France.

Greenville Falls, N.Y.
Dec, 1st, 1916.

Deer godchild



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How are you? I am very well and I have ganed 5 lbs. in one weak which makes me 85 lbs. which is thot very good in America. Have you had much snow? We have had it considerable hear which has spoylt the skating on Frost Lake which is beehind old Sam Bursars house who is our naybor. I am glad you have a short name, I had ruther be cald Andre than Nickulus, Cristuff or Jean-Marie, but I wood ruther you were cald Bill or Pete or Sniper, but you cant help being what they call you so never mind. I suported you this weak by selling 70 copies of the Greenville Mirror by hand. It is a good paper and shood be patronized. I wakt into Jim Parkers offis he is the editur and sed, Mister Parker, if you have a loose job and no man fer it I am the man you want, and he sed how old are you? and I sed 11. and he sed what you want a job fer? and I sed, O fer a kid I have in France and he sed since I was suportin you if I cood sell 70 copies of the Mirror he wood give me 35 cts. and Mother had give me 15 fer mindin the chickens when she went to Peeks-kill, so I new it would be al-rite, so I sed very well your on. So I took the mirrors and stood on the corner of School street, and bimeby the men begin to come home from the city, and some of them stopt to buy a Mirror and some did not, so I thot I wood make an appeel so I hollered, Buy a Mirror fer a kid in France, and waived it in there faces, and you shood have seen them buy! Enneway I guess the Mirror is a good ole paper, when all the men had come home I thot I wood take the papers to the folks that wernt on the street, like the schoolmaams and the sisters. Well most of them hot fine exsept miss Leigh the Sunday school teacher, and she sed the Mirror was a low down politishuns sheet and I sed buy it fer Lily Blanche her help, and she sed what are you so ankshus to sell papers fer? And I sed how do you expect me to suport a kid in France if you peeple wont help out? and she sed the Lord will provide, but I told her I wood ruther do it myself; and she said I guess He's doin it threw you, so at last she forked up, and I went home at 6 o'clock, but I tell you I had a prety tuf day. Say how is your mussel? Have you enny brothers and sisters? I have five, they are Amanda aged 16, Cecilia aged 10, Myra-Louise aged 7, Molly aged 6, and Heloise aged 5. I come between the fust too. Dad wanted to call Heloise Omeega after Alfred and Omeega in the Bibel, but Mother sed that was foolish and I guess it was, cause there was no boy to be Alfred excep me, and I was alredy James, so he give it up. Sid Perkins is suportin a girl in France and hes aful rich, and dont have to work to keep her goin. Gee, Im glad your a boy, girls is al-rite in there line but I woodnt adop one fer love or money. Can you here the shootin from where you are? I have seen the new American submareen and it is a fine bus, I tell you if ever the Yankees come runnln over there you wont see Kaiser Bill fer dust. Do you like prisners base? What grade are you in? Well, hoping you are well and that some day we will meet somewhere in France, I will close.



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Your affecshunate godfather,
James Prendergast Jackson Jr.

P.S. If ever we go to war, and I inlist and go to France I mite take you back to New York on firlow.

16 Dec. 1916. Dear Benefactor,

I thank you with the bottom of my heart for your kindness unto me. Maman and me have been so content to receive your letter and your donation generous! Your succour will sweeten the times difficult that we are traversing; and the silver^[1] you send will permit me to eat of the meat and be forceful to aid maman she has so much of labor and of pain! I will tell you, dear benefactor, that I am not the most robust But I take the oil of liver of cod-fish all the days for make myself high and good-carrying.^[2] Yes, dear benefactor, I will forget never what you do, and all the nights I make a prayer for you be happy in the life.

I cannot to read your letter very well alone, because I know not sufficient the English. But I have one aunt, she is dead, she know very well the English, and she teach me of it and my great sister also; she is a dactylographer,^[3] and she know the English very perfect, and she me aids so I do mistakes not at all. And I serve me of the dictionary also. Maman say your letters will make complete my education. But some words I comprehend not. What is, for example, the kid? I search and I see only it is the offspring of a goat. I am sure in the book is the mistake, for my dear godfather will not make the pain to me and my Maman in calling me the offspring of a goat.

Dear godfather, I am also surprise that you be so much heavy. I have 11 years like you, and I am only 39 kg heavy. But in Amerique, Maman tell me, all is big, big! It is droll, so big little boys. Sometimes I ask myself if you are veritably a little boy. Perhaps it is to make laugh you tell me you are one infant. Perhaps you are the old gentleman.

Tell me dear godfather, what is it the Sunday-school? In Paris we go not to school the Sunday. We rise more lately, and we dress more pretty than the days of week, and for breakfast we eat the cacao in lieu of soup of potato left of last night. And we go to the grand mass with Maman. Little brother Jean is one infant of choir at the church. He do nothing but balance and smoke the incense, and be pretty like one angel; because his hairs are like the gold, and his eyes like the heaven when the sun make shine. All at the beginning he was not content because the smoking make him to sneeze, and he did cry, and he wanted not to indorse^[4] the dress white, with lace; he say he resemble to a girl; and he believe all the world in the church was regarding him. But now he is habituated, and he become more sage. It is very necessary he become sage, because he is so devil. Yesterday, for example, Mr. le Cure give him a pretty card postal with the image of angels and tell him he must apply to resemble to them; and Jean responded, "no I want not to be the angel and have wings like one hen!" Mr. le Cure say it is Satan



that commands the wicked words like that, and when he go to fall in temptation Jean must say, "Vade retro Satanas," and that make Satan go behind. And Jean say, "yes but then Satan go at my back and push hard, so I fall!" It is very sad little Jean be so much bad.



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I will tell you, dear benefactor, that I effort myself to work and be very sage so little brother take model on me. I go to catechism two times by week, and I am on the table of honor, and for Christmas Mr. le Cure give me a pretty shawl for hold my neck and shoulders warm when I go to school.

For Christmas Jean put his shoes in the chimney for the little Jesus fill them like all the years. But Maman say to him: "This year the little Jesus carry nothing, because with all the sous in the world he want to get our big victory so the dirty boches kill no more our dear Papas."

But, grace to you, the morning of Noel the shoes were all of same remplished. There was apples red and some chocolate and stockings with long legs. We make many of holes in our stockings and all the time there is no more cloth in places, so Maman cuts them down. So in the beginning they are long, then 1/2 long, then socks. It was socks all the winter, dear benefactor, but when your silver come, the legs come long again.

In the after-dinner Noel we make a promenade in the woods of Boulognes. Now it is the vacancies[5] of Noel and I aid Maman, she make me some black aprons new for go to school, and I sit myself down on the side of her. She loves not that I play in the streets, because she desire that I be well elevated [6]. And it is much snow in Paris; it make so cold that I love not to go out.

Dear benefactor, you demand what grade I am. I comprehend not. Only the officers have grade. Are you an officer? I think yes, because you talk so much the submareens, *etc.*

I have nothing more to say at you, but Maman joins herself to me to pray you to agree, dear benefactor, the expression of our sentiments the most distinguished and respectuous.

Your godchild,
A. Leblanc.

[1] Silver (*argent*) money. [2] Good-carrying (*bien portante*) healthy. [3] Dactylographer (*typist*). [4] Indorse (*endosser*) to put on. [5] Vacancies (*vacances*) vacations. [6] Well elevated (*bien elevee*) well bred.

Greenville Falls. N.Y.
Jan. 2, '17.

Deer Miss Secretary,

There is something off about my godchild, you no the one you give me to suport, well dad rored when he saw the letter but I think he is a nut and mother sez he is two elevated fer me, so hoping you will get me a nuther one I will close hoping you are well.



BOOKRAGS

Yours truly,
James P. Jackson Jr.

P.S. I will rite just the same to this one till you get me a nuther one.

Greenville Falls. N.Y.
Jan. 2, 1917.

Deer godchild



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How are you? I got your letter al-rite and what I wood like to no is what in thunder is that goat stuff you are drivin at? I didnt call you no names excep dere godchild and kid and you are both, and a godchild is a godchild and sometimes a kid is a goat and sometimes a goat is a kid and if you dont stop your kiddin you'll get my goat see? Mebbe you didn't mene to be fresh and if you didnt will call it square and say no more about it, ennyway I guess you use that bloomin dickshunary two much. Dickshunaries is like girls and is al-rite in there line, but I aint got much use fer them and you had best chuck yours out the window. I guess 85lbs. is a good ole wait but 39 is something feerce, why even Heloise aged 5 ways 45 and she dont eat enny of that codfish liver, and say what does it test like ennyway? I bet it tests like ole get out. I told Mother you wade only 39 and she sed, my goodness he must have tuberculosees, and dad sed, no, he has not had enuf meat, but I sed no but he is going to have some now I am suporting him. What do you think? I got enuf money to suport you fer too weaks, and if you will cross your heart not to tell because I promist I woodnt and you must do the same, I will tell you how it hapened, well it was this way, I was readin the Motor Boys Under the Sea behind the portyares and its great, when in walk Carl Odell the young feller across the way and Amanda aged 16, and they set down and didnt say much and bimby Carl he takes Amandas hand and sez, Amanda you no how tis with me? and she sez, why no how is it Carl? and he sez I love you, and she sez to Carl, this is so suddin, and he sez, little girl will you be my wife? and she sez, o Carl I dunno, and he sez, I demand an answer yes or no, and she sez well I dunno but as I will, and he sed, sweatheart what day shall it be? And I stept out and sed, Hold on, dont go and make it Tuesday becaus Amandas promist to go fishin and dad wont let me go to Frost Lake without her, caus its 16 feet deep, and you should have seen them jump. They was scart plump out of there wits, and Amanda she sez, If he tells dad I shall dye, and Carl he grabd me by one ear and sed, Jim, I give you the choyce of keepin quiet and gettin \$1.50 or squealin and being skinned alive, and I sed, Well I am suporting a kid, I mean a boy, in France so I will take the coin, so I crost my heart and sed hope to dye if I squeal and you must do the same, caus bimby if the Yanks come runnin over there you mite mete a frend of Carl Odells and hed tell a nuther frend, and bimby all the Yanks wood no it and it wood get back to Carl Odells ears. I bet that Jean is some brother, say hes al-rite, all excep his name, coodnt you make it Buster? Say what you want to go wearin a shawl fer, fust thing you no all the boys will call you girly, and I dont intend to have no godchild of mine cald that, no siree, not if I have to skin them alive fer it. I no its hard when things are give to you not to wear them, last yere the Sunday-school teacher give me a baby-blew

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tie and darn if I didn't have to wear it every Sunday till Lady Evelin Jack Burtons fathers best bull dog found it and et it. But you go eezy on that shawl. Never you mind about Sunday-school, just you be glad you dont have to go to it, though I dont no but goin to see that balancin stunt of Jeans is just as bad. And dont you be askin two many questions about me, mebbe Im an officer and mebbe Im not, and mebbe I no something about submareens and mebbe I don't but I woodnt let it sprize you if I come ridin in in one of those busses one of these days, and if I do and I like you I mite even take you back with me to New York, and then goodnite—you'll see some sites. Say whats that dope on sage? Hoping you are well and will rite to me soon I will now close hoping you are well.

Your affeckshunate godfather,
James P. Jackson Jr.

P.S. I made Carl Odell give me the money rite off becaus he is a Red Indian fer cheatin. Did you get the Christmas presents I sent you?

18 rue d'Autancourt, Paris. 4 Jan. 1917.

Dear Godfather:

The big paquet from Amerique come late but I receive it to-day and I thank you very much. You are very good to think so much of me and it is very pretty, dear benefactor, There is one glove only, and I am fearful that the other rested on the road[7]. But it makes nothing[8]; I have not business[9] of two, because one is enough big for my two hands, and it is a muff very warm; but veritably, dear godfather, you are big like giants, in Amerique! The little cage is very commodious also, and very pretty. Jean believe it is a muzzle for dog, but no, I comprehend it Is for suspend on the ceiling for to make pretty the house, with plants green, climbing.

Goobye, dear benefactor, I kiss you with the bottom of my heart

Your godchild all devoted,
A. Leblanc.

[7] Rested on the road (*reste en route*) went astray. [8] It makes nothing (*cela ne fait rien*) it does not matter. [9] I have not business (*le n'ai pas besoin*) I do not need.

Greenville Falls. N.Y.

Deer miss Secretary,



Please you must do something quick about my orphan he is awful. I sent a baseball glove and mask for Christmas and he used them for a muff and to hang plants in, and he wears a shawl and sits on the table of something, and now he is kissing me with the bottom of his heart and that is the limit and he must cut it out because I won't stand for that. Hoping you are well and you will answer soon in answer to my letter I will close.

Yours truly,
James P. Jackson Jr.

18 rue d'Autancourt, Paris 18 Jan, 1917.

Dear Benefactor:



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I thank you for your pretty letter so interesting. My great sister Marie work very hard for to aid me read it, but it is very difficult to comprehend. It is because you talk the American and the dictionary talk only the English. I will try to learn the American if you will to me give the instructions. Dear godfather, you are not in anger against me? I make always attention to be polite and genteel, because already I love you from far. But Marie say there is the miss understand in our letters she cannot explicate. For three nights I sleep not well because I search to comprehend what is it that makes bad, then this morning I have it the idea brilliant; there is on the place des Clercs the dentist American. It is writ on his door, Dr. Yanket, and Maman go to sew on the dresses of Madame. She talk very well with two tongues, and Maman say she regard the letters then she laugh very strong. Then she say to Maman: "Console your infant, it may sleep on the two ears^[10], because the godfather is one very genteel little boy." And then she write a little paper she desire me copy for you very careful. Here is it: "Jimmy, in Uncle Sam's name I am proud of you. You're the right sort keep it up and don't get cold feet. For that godchild of yours is very much all right, as you will very soon realize. But let me give you frankly just one piece of friendly advice; don't tell your kid to 'chuck the dictionary out of the window,' but rather get one yourself, and polish up your English. Your spelling and your vocabulary are, to use your own expression, 'something fierce;' how can you expect the poor little French child to understand your slang?"

There; I have made copy, and again I understand not very well. But I am sure it go to make all arrange. And I know that you are one little boy; I am so content!

Dear godfather, it is very droll the fashion you do to make silver in Amerique! But it is very dangerous, and never in Paris we do like that. I see in my book of images English how the terrible Red-skins scalp the enemy, "skin 'em alive," like you say, and I see the image of the chef. He have long hairs black, with plumes red and green; and chains brilliant suspended, and he carry in the middle one little apron of fur; and he have not knowledge of the bon Dieu. It is call: "trading with the Indians." Oh please, dear godfather, do not for me trading with the Indians! I will permit not that you risk to be skin alive. I make the promise like you say, and I make like you the sign of cross, but I hope not to die if I squeal; I cry not very often, but sometimes, and my poor Maman will be to much desolated if I die.

Goodbye dear godfather; believe at my sentiments the more affectuous,

Your godchild,
A. Leblanc.

[10] Sleep on two ears (*dormir sur les deux oreilles*) to sleep like a top.

To Mr. James P. Jackson Jr.

Dear Sir:



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I am much interested in the account of your correspondence with your French godchild, and I would advise you not to be discouraged if he does not seem, in every way, to be living up to your expectations. You must remember that these fatherless children have suffered more deeply and more courageously than you can possibly imagine. If his letters sound rather effeminate I hope you will in time realize that it is merely a difference of language and convention that gives you that impression. The French are a very affectionate and demonstrative people. You know that even their "Papa Joffre" kisses his brave soldiers on both cheeks when he decorates them.

You are doing splendid work for a boy of your age, and I hope you will not let small prejudices get in your way. Remember you are unusually fortunate to have a child who can write in English.

With my best wishes and congratulations, I remain cordially yours,

Secretary for the Junior Committee
of the Fatherless Children of France.

Greenville Falls, N.Y.
Feb. 3, 1917.

Deer godchild

How are you? Say will you do me a faver and cut out kissin me with the bottom of your heart? If you think you ot to do it you can kiss me on both cheeks if that is the custim I guess I can stand it but I had ruther you did not kiss me at all if it is the same to you as we shake hands in America. Say that missis Yankit is some woman beleeve me and you had better keep away from her, fust thing you no she'll be trying to make me go to school every day and buy a dicshunary. What she no about the American languidge ennyway? what she have to come buttin in with her too tongues between us? You are my godchild and I am your godfather and if there is ennything you dont understand I am the one to explane, and you tell that Yankit woman she had better be helpin her husband with his teeth and let us alone, and to put that in her pipe and smoke it. I am glad you like the Cristmas presents I sent you and if you want to string the mask from the ceilin you are well come to it, but it is ment to keep your nose from gettin smasht when a hard ball comes bingin through the air. Say, that must be some stunt sleepin on both ears, I have slep on my stummick an on my back an on one ear, but not on both. Last nite we had welsh rabbit fer super and I did not sleep enny way. It is a good thing I have that \$1.50 Carl Odell give me becaus I do not feel al-rite and Mother wont let me go out to work, but I guess I will get out soon again so dont worry about my suportin you. Say, thats al-rite about the Red Indians—corse they aint as numrous as they was once but there still plentiful in parts but dont let that worry you cause I been brot up with them and no how to handle them. Red Skins is like snakes and is al-rite if you keep

your eye on them. Course I woodnt advise you to medal with them, but I guess I can look out for myself. Say, how is Jean and has he done enny more stunts?



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I have a sister Molly aged 6 and she is going to rite plays and say she turns out some great stuff. Yesterday she dresst Cecilia, you no the one aged 7, as a queen and Molly she was the subjeck boughed before her and sed, Your majesty to-day unto you a child is born, and Cecilia, I mean the queen sed, Bring it in, and Molly the subjeck brot in Snookie the cat only it was the child then and it was all rigged up in Heloises close, and bimeby Heloise who was a wicked king come runnin in to kidnap the baby and she sed, no I mean he sed because she was a king, That is my child! and the subjeck sed, It is not! and the king sed, It is too! and the sujeck sez as cool as a cucumber, Your majesty you are a lyre! and then they had the darndest fite over that baby you ever saw. Fust the king hit the subjeck bingo in the eye then the subjeck he pincht the babys tail, you no Snookies, and bimeby Mother come runnin in and stuck them all in bed, but it was a buly fite. I feel aful queer so guess I will close hoping you are better than I feel

Your affeckshunate godfather,
James P. Jackson Jr.

P.S. Do you like rabit? I hate it!

P.S. Dont ferget to tell that Yanket woman to put what I told you in her pipe and smoke it.

18 rue d'Autancourt, Paris, 18 Feb. 1917.

Dear Godfather:

How are you? I hope you are no more fatigued. Very sure I will send you the kiss cut out as you say if you prefer. And also I will shake your hand. I will do all things American and all things that make you pleasure. But, dear godfather, you demand that I tell to Madame Yanket to smoke the pipe and I like not to say that because she is one very great lady, very genteel. But Maman say that is only a fashion of talk American and I must not make attention to it.

Yes, dear godfather, I like rabbit. When we live in the country we have two, one white and one black, and at the end of time we have 26! But not Welsh rabbits; French. They make not sick like yours.

Dear benefactor, I will write you not very long this day, for my great brother Jules come tonight on permission of four days, and I am much occupied to aid Maman arrange all things clean and pretty. I will relate on him in my letter of the week next.

I squeeze your hand, and envoy to you the kiss cut out with my heart.



Your godchild.
A. Leblanc.

Greenville Falls. N.Y.
Feb, 5, 1917.

Deer godchild

How are you? It waznt the rabit it is the hoopincoff, I guess I am goin to dye al-rite.

J.P.J.

18 rue d'Autancourt,
Paris,
Feb. 20, 1917.

Dear Godfather:



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Your letter made me to cry. I will permit you not to die. When I get your letter I go and break my tire-lire. It is the little dog of porcelain with one hole in the stomach. Maman give it to me for my fete, the Ste. Andree, and she give me two sous for put in the hole all the Sundays, and it come out nevermore until it break, you comprehend? I guard^[11] the little dog under my pillow and it make bad in my heart to break it, but what will you? My dear godfather who is only one child like me, work strong like a man for make me happy and I would break not my tire-lire for to save him from the death? Oh yes, a thousand times yes! So I take it out in the court and open the stomach with one stone and I make to fall out 26 sous! And I go to the store of objects pious, and I demand one candle of 26 sous or two candles of 13 sous, but the lady say 13 is a number of unhappiness so she give me one of 25 sous, and one sou of paper of lace of gold to put around. And I go quick to the church, and put up the candle to the Ste. Vierge, and she will see it from the sky, and she will see you also in Amerique and make you not to die, M. le Cure see the little flag American that you send me and that I attach to the candlestick and he caress my head and say: "What for is it?" So I tell him and he say I am very genteel. But all of a hit^[12] I melt in tears^[13], because I know I am not genteel, dear godfather! I am very, very bad and wicked; I tell not the truth and I conduct not myself well unto you. Perhaps you will pardon me never! I go to confession and M. le Cure say for my penitence I must also confess to you that I am one little girl! Oh dear godfather, be not too much in anger! I am so sad! I comprehend not how it arrived, but when you write to me and say you love not the little girls I was afraid and responded nothing. Dear godfather, I will tell you that when I was little I pray often the bon Dieu make me one boy, because you know, for Him nothing is impossible. But He wish I remain a girl, and now I have cheated and He punish me very strong in make you so much fatigue you almost die. I cannot write more this day because I am too much sad. But if you die not please tell me soon because I am so much unquiet. I assure you I will nevermore be so villain.

Your godchild repentant,

Andree Leblanc.

P.S. Maman say the Comite Americain put me like one boy. It is the two "e" that make one girl.

P.P.S. I search what is the hoopincoff, but I find it not. Surely it is the very dangerous malady, but if you die, you go to Paradise; M. le Cure promise me.

[11] I guard (*je garde*) I keep. [12] All of a hit (*tout d'un coup*) suddenly. [13] Melt in tears (*fondre en larmes*) burst into tears.

Greenville Falls. N.Y.
Deer miss Secretary,



The boy you give me is a girl What are you going to do about it?

Yours respektfully,
James P. Jackson Jr.



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Dear Mr. Jackson

In reply to your letter, we would state that the mistake was due to the handwriting of the child's mother, making the name appear to be spelt with one "e" instead of two, and thus making it a boy's name.

We will endeavor, as soon as possible, to repair our error, as it was never our intention to deceive you.

Very truly yours,
Junior Committee of the Fatherless
Children of France.

Greenville Falls. N.Y.
Deer Miss Secretary,

I didnt say you were deceivin, I just want to tell you the boy you give me was a girl so you wood not make that mistake agen. It is the limit when you have told the fellers you had a boy, to go and get a girl, and when I shod the letter to dad he sed by jove youre in a fine posishun you are and I sed how is that, and he sed fust thing you no you will get yourself talkt about, ritin to a girl in France and that would be fine woodnt it?

Respectfully yours,
J.P. Jackson Jr.

Greenville Falls, N.Y.
March 7, 1917.

Deer godchild,

I received your letter and I did not dye. Of corse you cant help bein a girl insted of a boy and thats al-rite because Heloise and Myra-Louise and Nelly the girl next dore and pretty nerely every body wood ruther be a boy than a girl, but you were the limit to fib about it and you have put me in a aful queer posishun, so no more fer this time.

Your godfather,
J.P. Jackson Jr.

P.S. I will suport you just the same so do not worry.

Paris,
21 March 1917.

Dear Mr. James,



I have your letter, and I perceive that you are very much offended. One time more I demand pardon; but I cannot be like you want, and by consequence I can never more call myself your dear godchild; if you love me not, and I am offensive, I have not business of you and your silver. Please give it to one unhappy little boy. It is worth better that I have hunger, it is worth better that I be made dead by the boches, than to be like one little mendicant. I demand to Maman if it is not true, and she say yes.

I thank you for all the pain you did take for me and I forget never.
When I become grand I will render to you all you pay for me.

Goodbye monsieur James. Receive the expression of my best salutations,

Andree Leblanc.

Greenville Falls, N.Y.
April 2, 1917.

Deer godchild,

Say what is the matter with you ennyway and why don't you want me to support you enny longer? I am your godfather and you are my godchild and it is a legal afare, dad sez, and if ennybody sez ennything about it they will have to deel with me, see? Ennyway mebbe I was kinder cranky about it, and you kinder fibbd, so lets say we had a scrap and shake on it and let it go at that. Lots of the fellers hear have scraps with the girls, and last weak Dinky



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Odell who is Carl Odells yungist brother had one with Heloise because he hollerd, Heloise go wash your feet, the bord of helths across the street, at her and she cried, but he sent her a peach of a poim to make up, and hear it is, "If you dont like me enny more, then I shall inlist and go to war!" I guess Dinky is goin to be a poit al-rite. You no I mite go to war two, lots of the fellers hear are inlistin in forrin regimunts, theres Carl Odell who has joint the Canadian Royal Fling Corpse, and Hanky Jones is goin to drive a truck in France and I guess he will be some driver al-rite because he has druv the new automobile hearse fer too years now, and say he goes like the dickuns. Corse I aint sayin Im goin to inlist rite away but I got some ideas in mind and Im thinking of raisin a regiment of boy scouts or Red Indians, I guess the Red skins wood be the best, and say woodnt Kaiser Bill look chepe if he saw a bunch of Red Skins beatin it after him? I bet hed run to beat the band, and I bet theyd catch him, and if they did, goodnite fer Kaiser Bill. Say they woodnt do a thing to him exept mebbe scalp him or skin him alive, and woodnt he look chepe then? Red Skins is aful feerce when they get goin, and I dont rekon ennybody cood stop them once they got started. We had an aful scare last nite I had been suportin you all day by choppin wood and I was dead beet but all of a suddin I was woke up by dad and he was yellin Murder! Murder! and Amanda and Cecilia and Mother who had her hare in curl papers rushd in, and there was dad having a buly fite in bed, and he was punchin the pilo, and yellin Murder! Murder! and we was all scart to go neer him because he wood punch us like the pilo, so Mother took a pitcher of cold water and throo it in his face, and that woke him up and he was mad as time, and sed, what you tryin to do, drown me? And then he laft and told us his dreame and it was this way, Max Dinkelheim, the shoemaker was a German spy and he was trying to sell hot dogs with boms in them and no one new there was boms in them exept dad. And he sed, you dirty Fritz cut that out, and Max he grabd dad by the hare and dad he yankd Max by the ear, and they was havin a buly fite when out come five more germans and begun to paist dad on the head, and corse he coodnt manige the 6 of them so he was yelling Murder! Murder! And then he got the pitcher of water and that was all. I bet dad cood have lickd the stuffin out of Max Dinkelheim al-rite, and I bet we are goin to have war this weak and if we do, dad sez the Kaiser will find out he has bit off more than he can chew, and you had better make up with me because I think you are al-rite, and if we have war I mite be in a posishun to help you. Thank you fer burning that candle fer me, we have been burning some sulfur ones fer Heloise and Molly and they seem to be gettin along nicely. Dont fergit when you rite to say if you are not mad at me enny more.

Your affeckshunate godfather,
James P. Jackson Jr.



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P.S. Hows your big brother been makin out?

P.P.S. Thank you very much fer bustin that dog fer me. I have a pig with a hole in it and if I ern enuf money next weak I will send it to you.

P.P.P.S. Who is that Mr. le Cure you talk so much about?

18 rue d'Autancourt. April 16.

Dear Monsieur James:

When I go to school the week past I see the flag of Amerique floating well high! And all the world is content because you come to aid us terminate by a peace victorious this war so terrible, and be like one brother for the triumph of the Justice, and the Liberty, and the Humanity. That is what the mistress of school explicate to us, and we love and honor the Amerique like the great sister Republique, and then she tell us get up and learn chant the song of the Banner of Stars. Perhaps you have hear it? It begin: "*Oh, dites, voyez-vous aux lueurs du matin*" etc. The mistress write it all on the tables black, [14] and we copy in lieu of the exercise of grammar, and it make us all joyful. But all that make me think so much of you, that I cannot empeche[15] myself even if you are no more my godfather, to pin the little flag American that you give me, on my heart, that save you from the death by the hoopincoff when I attach it to the candle of the *Ste. Vierge*. And then, pending the recreation of mid-day, I go home and the factor bring your letter! And when I return at school I effort myself so strong to read your letter, that I cannot make like it must[16] my chart geographic. But I promise Isabelle Gaveau, the little girl of the merchant of shoes, that if she will to aid me, I will lend her my pretty handkerchief new, for go to church the morning of Easter. So we be all content and I have very much the time to reflect and respond at your letter.

Dear Monsieur James, I comprehend that you want I continue be your dear godchild. I demand to Maman what I do, and she say: "Take the silver, and make no more infantile foolishness. Only one onion cost five sous now, and the life is very hard, but Amerique have the great heart to help us and give us the hand, and we work all the two for the Patrie." So, dear godfather, we be not mad at ourselves any more, and I promise I make no more the fib, and you make no more the cranky, is it not? I must to make many progress in American for when you come I reckon you come like the dickuns, like yellin thunder, with the skin'em alive Red-skins and the hot dogs!

Dear benefactor, what is it the hot dogs? My great sister say it is a species of machine-gun American.

It is very funny your Papa make the wicked dream! You have the very beautiful family. Me too. Great brother Jules is already the corporal and he is like the Chevalier Bayard without fear and without reproach. One day, he tell me, a great *eclat d'obus* take off his



hat, and he pick it off the ground and say: "Ho Fritz! I wanted not be so polite and salute you!" And my great brother tell me many things important on the war. But I write them not, because the censure would scold me; perhaps put me in prison.



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Pending his permission of four days, he teach little Jean the chants of the regiment. Some are not for the little infants, Maman says, so he whistle them. But Jean love the military chants much more than the ones of latin he learn to sing in the church, and I hope he mix them not. Dear godfather, tomorrow is Easter and I am making an egg for you. It is a surprise so I tell you not what is in it.

Your affeckshunate godchild,
Andree Leblanc.

[14] Tables black (*tableaux noirs*) black boards. [15] Empeche myself (*m'empecher*) I cannot help. [16] Like it must (*comme il faut*) nicely.

May 5, 1917.
Greenville Falls, N.Y.

Deer godchild,

Gee whiz but Kaiser Bill is in fer it! Gee whiz, you ot to see how Uncle Sam is fixin up fer him! Jo Kelly and Walter Daly and lot of the felers are going in fer aviashun and Bill Wilson's scout-master and organizin a crack bunch of boy scouts and we have a home Deefence and dad has got a uniform and a wooden gun and he sez it is a pretty good bunch of felers, but he cood do more with them if he was captin insted of mister Larkin, who is a good feler but a bum eaptin. I aint sayin much but I got a few idees and I woodnt let it sprize you if I was to invent something one of these days, but I cant tell you what it is becaus the censer wood cut it out. I got your egg and I thank you fer it, but say it got me in dutch al-right, it was this way, the postman brot the packidge just as I was going to school and I didn't have time to open it so I took it along and we was havin some speshul exercises fer a kernel Dudley who was to talk on, Do your bit to help win the war, and Bug Hadley was recitin the getysberg adress and I opened the packidge and their was your egg all smasht up. I guess them cardboard eggs aint very strong, or mebbe the censer didn't handel it gently, ennyhow it was smasht and the curl inside it was there alrite only it was kind of mixt up with the cream candy and I was unmixin them when Lily Graham who set beehind me whisperd to Erny Dinkelheim, who is Max Dinkelheims youngist son, Jimmy Jacksons girl in France has sent him a curl! and Erny started to laff and say, O you Curly—Curly Jackson! and I sed, You shut up! and he sed, O pooh-pooh—pooh-pooh—and I sed, Dont you pooh-pooh me! and he sed, Who will I pooh-pooh then? and I sed, Pooh-pooh the Kaiser, and he sed, The Kaiser wont let me pooh-pooh him and you leave him alone! And I sed, The Kaiser is bughouse, and Erny he made a grab at me and landed me one on the chin, and I paisted him one on the eye and Bug Hadley he stopt sayin the getysberg adress, and miss Davis she was jumpin up and down hollerin O boys, O boys, stop them, stop them! and kernel Dudley he hopt off the stand and puld us apart, and miss Davis was fer puttin us on the platferm with our arms on each others shoulders, but the kernel sed, No, it is that other boys falt, send him home. So they sent Erny home and he was mad as time. Then



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the kernel give his talk and sed how the girls cood help by making the bandiges and how the boys cood find out who was fer the guvment and who wasnt. I bet Erny and his father isnt, and I am going to keep my eye on them. Then we sang the french nashunal anthem and it is a fine him, and it goes this way in English: Ye sons of France awake to glory, the day of victory has come, your childrens wives, and sires horny, behold there tears—and thats as far as Ive lernt, we have got to lern all of it, and their is a buly part that goes, March on. Yesterday the fife and drum corpse plaid it and the Star Spangled Banner and some of the boys lafft becaus the fifes sort of sqweekt. I dont see how ennybody can lafft when they play the Star Spangled Banner. Did you get my pig? I suported you this weak by polishin 10 door handels at 7 cents each, some of them was already polisht but the folks was real nice about it and let me give them an extry polish. Say why dont you tell me who that Mr. le Cure is? I have askt you too times now, and say if I was you I woodnt say, come like the dickens or skin them alive or enny of that kind of talk. It is al-rite fer boys who are used to ruffin it, but it is not nice fer girls so if I was you I wood go easy on it, and hot dogs aint machine guns, they are sausidges that are made from those low-down german dogs that heve short legs, but say they test buly in a roll. The vilets and pollywogs have come and I wood send you some but I guess they wood dry up before you got them. Ennyway you neednt worry much about the war now that Uncle Sam is in it we will lick the stuffin out of him together, I mean out of Kaiser Bill.

Your affeckshunate godfather,
James P. Jackson Jr.

P.S. Bug Hadley sez it is lucky fer him Erny and I had that fite, because he had fergot what come after, and dedicatid to the proposishun.

June 3, 1917.
18 rue d'Autancourt, Paris.

Dear Godfather:

It is great damage that the pretty egg of Easter I sent you be smasht up! But I regret yet more that to receive my paquet make you dispute yourself in dutch, like you say, with the little villain in school. All the same I am content you landed him one in the eye (I comprehend not what you want say by that, but I am sure the little boche comprehend) and you are one valiant patriot.

Dear godfather, why say you the girls must go easy to learn the American? I effort myself to be instructed with the words in your letters the dictionary contains not but if they are nothing but for little boys I pray you to tell me the pretty words for the little girls. I am sure my dear godfather serves himself not of villain talk. Jean was put in



penitence yesterday because he say one word that is for Poilus only, and Maman turn him against the wall in the corner with the hands behind; and do you know what he do when we regard him not? He lick the paper on the wall and make it to come off. So Maman give him the spank. Dear godfather, I am happy to make you a little pleasure in sending you my portrait. I think it is well succeeded and very resembling, and will you have the obligeance to envoy to me the one of you?



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Dear godfather, I make to you a list of words American I comprehend not, and I hope you will have the obligeance to explicate them to me. What is, for example, gee whiz, felers, boy scouts, bum, home defence, kernel, getsyberg adress, mebbe, pooh-pooh, bug-house, the dickens, pollywogs, and lick the stuffin out? I effort myself very strong to find them, but it is not worth the pain to search any longer in the dictionary.

Your affeckshunate godchild,
Andree Leblanc.

Greenville Falls, N.Y.
July 5, 1917.

Deer godchild,

How are you? I dont see that their is enny fun in life enny more. I ernald \$1.56 pickin cherries off the Burtons black chery tree and I thot that wood make 70 cents fer you and I would spend the rest on fire crakers, well Toby that is the Burtons mastif that is always chened up, broke loose and I guess he remembered when Johnny Smith and me had swiped some cherries last yere when he was chened up, becaus he give one yip and come and set rite under that tree, and he set their and grinnd at me all afternoon, and bimeby their was a thunder shower and I had on my blew pants that was made from dads that had got too tite fer him, and I thot when it begin to rain Toby wood beat it, but he just set their and didnt move till bimeby mister Burton come along and yankt him away by the color. Well I had pickt the cherries al-rite but I was soked clear through and the color had come off my pants and on my legs. It is feerce to have blew legs. Well I thot I wood stop and boy a canon craker and a pistol and I wasnt going to fire them off before the 4th. but ole Max Dinkelheim was walking kind of slow in front of me and I thot I wood try the pistol just once to see if it workt, so I walkt a little faster and shot it off bingo and you shood have seen ole Max jump! He give one flop in the air and hollered, A bom! A bom! I guess he thot I was a submareen, and when he saw it was me beat it after me and we run all the way home, and Max he run rite into dad and sed, Where is that boy I will teech him to molest a peaceful citizen. And dad sed, What has he done? And he told him and sed, I am going to give him the best lickin of his life, and dad rolld up his sleeves and sed, Not till you lick me first! And Max kind of lookd at dad just like in the dream and I guess he was scart, so he sed, If you will promise to see he is punisht I will leve it to you, and dad sed, I promise, and Max left and dad he come up and was mad as ole get out, and he took my pistol and canon away and I had ruther he had give me a lickin because after too days you can set down and are al-rite again. We have just herd the Yanks have landid somewhere in France. Say, if you want to see a bunch of rele fiters you just go take a look at them, and you mite tell your brother Jules to take a look at them two as he might get some idees from them. I cant tell you what all those words mean, gee whiz is just gee whiz and a feler is a guy who is about 12 or 18, and



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a bum is a feler or something that is no good, and a pollywog is a animal that is going to be a frog, and pooh-pooh is pooh-pooh, and bughouse means you have rats in the upper story, and you had better find out about the getysberg adress and the boy scouts and mebbe and the dickens yourself but I wood go easy on them if I was you. What you want to go askin me all those things fer ennyway? I aint askin you what the vacancies, or all of a hit, or pending, of enny of those things are, am I? I got your photo and I like the way your hare curls and your eyes two and everythin, and I am glad you are not laffin. Girls that giggle are the limit. I have only one photo of myself and I look as if I wood dye grinning becaus the man that took it was jumpin up and down and sayin, Look hear! Look hear! Say wood you relly like to have it? I dont think you wood, I dont see what good I am ennyway. I am two young to inlist and I dont think you relly like me. I guess mebbe I had better go to sea or something.

Your affeckshunate godfather,
James P. Jackson Jr.

P.S. I went butterflying to-day and had good luck.

18 rue d'Autancourt, Paris. August 2, 1917.

Dear godfather:

You know what it is the "cafard?" In the dictionary it say it is a "roach" and that is the little beast black like your pollywogs, I think. But in the Poilu talk it means not that. When there is no more fun in life, and I am not good for anything anyhow, like you say, that is what they call to have the "cafard." And it is very bad in the army. It is to have a bad morale and we must wind ourselves up.

Dear godfather, you must be content because I love you much. And you take so much pain and you labor so hard to entertain[17] me, I want make you happy in your heart so you have no more the "cafard." Dear godfather, I will tell you the American Poilus have come. On Monday last we hear the music on the road and the mistress tell us this afternoon all the children must put on aprons clean, and we go to see pass the Americans. And Maman give me five sous for purchase a bouquet for give them in souvenir of my dear godfather, and the fleuriste give me two roses red and I envelope them in a paper wet for hold them fresh. And all the little girls march in rank like soldiers, two by two, on to the road where the Americans come. And the gendarmes march before us to make spread open the crowd so we come. And we stand in rank and it make a very long line and shake the flag American and wait. The sun was brilliant and very hot and after a very long moment, we hear the big music come around the corner, and all bodies were screaming: "Vive l'Amerique! Vive les Etats Unis! Hurrah Sammies!" and the gentlemen throw up their hats in air. And all of a hit we see



the banner of stars coming down the street, and I look and all the little girls at a time kneel themselves on the sidewalk. And I make the sign of the cross, and the little girls at



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back of me laugh and mock at me, but the mistress say it is right; the sign of the cross is good for the flag too. And when the flag is pass we arise and say hurrah also, and one soldier American regard me with a smile. Then I take my courage with two hands and cast away the roses on him, and he catch and kiss me with his hand, and put the roses in his coat. His name is Teddy and I love him much. I know because he come see me, because I write my name (with two es) and adresse tied to the roses. My Maman was very much surprise when she see Monsieur Teddy come and ring to the door. He is very well elevated and very beautiful. He has buckled hairs[18] and a line on one side and his figure is razed.[19] His uniform is the color of the ground; it is not so much pretty as the French Poilus who are the color of the sky. And his hat is tied, like a bonnet of old woman, with a shoe-lace in the back. But I love him all of same. He take me on his knees and say: "Parlez vous francais" and he begin to recite the verb "avoir," because he know nothing more of French. And so I say I know very well the American and I talk at him and he laugh very strong. And he give me a piece of bonbon very droll. It is mint but it is like elastic; I eat a great number of pieces because I want not to offence him, and Teddy all of a hit become very much frightened: "What," he say, "You did swallow the chewing gum!" And I say: "Naturally I swallow the bonbon!" And Teddy say a bad English word and run away without his hat and he come back with a bottle of ipecac and I will not take because I know what it make do. And poor Teddy was very much desolated; he come every day to get of my news, and to-day he bring the bonbons French that we swallow. To-day he ask me will I be his little adopted girl the year next when you have finish with me and I say, "Mebbe I will." And he say, "Bully for you, you're a peach!" I make him write because it is the American and not in the dictionary.

Goodbye, dear godfather,
Your affeckshunate godchild,
Andree Leblanc.

P.S. I am surprise you ask who is M. le Cure. Only the pagans have not knowledge of him. Are you one pagan? I think you say that to make laugh. It is very bad to mock yourself of M. le Cure.

[17] entertain (*entretenir*) to support. [18] Buckled hairs (*cheveux boucles*) curly hair.
[19] His figure is razed (*sa figure est rasee*) his face is shaved.

To Mr. James P. Jackson Jr.
Dear Sir:

Due to the great confusion and delay existing in the mails at the present time, we have not until now been able to repair our error concerning your godchild. We take pleasure in announcing that we are now in a position to supply you with a boy as formerly requested.

As to the little girl, we can no doubt provide for her until other arrangements can be made. Elderly gentlemen, we find, are particularly fond of adopting little girls.



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Hoping you will pardon our delay, and inform us as soon as possible concerning your wishes in this matter, we beg to remain,

Sincerely yours,
The Junior Committee for The
Fatherless Children of France.

Greenville Falls, N.Y.
Deer Miss Secretary,

It is more than kind of you to bother about changing my girl into a boy, but it cant be done because I have changed my mind about it, but I thank you all the same. You see it is this way, at fust I wanted a boy and I was kinder sore after setting my heart on one to get a girl, but the girl you give me is diferent from most girls, she seams to have a lot of rele sense, and I have got kinder used to her, and, well I woodnt like to have her unprovided and waitin fer a old gentleman to adop her. Some old gentlemen are aful cranks. Old Sam Burton who is our naybor is the limit. He has had 5 wives and Mother sez Lord only nos what he has done with them, enneway we dont. And she has sort of been takin it ezy while I was suportin her and the change wood come hard to her, I mene my godchild not Sam Burton's wife. Ennyway the yere is most over and you no how folks talk. Fust thing I new they wood say, young Jackson's a fikle feller. Thot he'd adop a orfan and now hes swaped his girl fer a boy. You no how people will talk, so I guess I can stand my godchild fer this yere ennyway, and after that we shall see. Of corse I was simply sterilized when I lernt she was a girl, but even a girl is preferable to a boy that wore shawls and sed everything was prety and kist you with the botom of his heart. She has cut that out now, and I am gettin her in prety good shape. Explaning whats what to her and every thing. So I guess we can manige but I am obliged to you fer the asking.

Yours truly,
James P. Jackson Jr.

Greenville Falls, N.Y.
Sept. 5, 1917.

Deer godchild,

Your letter reeched me safely, and I was releevd to here the boys had got safely "over there." Of corse we have had some few notes, pertikerly from Hanky Jones you no the feller that drove the hearse I tole you about. Well he is drivin somewhere over the top in France, not a hearse but a truck, and oh boy, he sez the swellest funeral he ever drove fer cant hold a candel to drivin a truck with Fritz bulets bingin all round you and he sez, I received the kit you sent me and It is a great comfort (the kit is not a cat but a assortment of handkerchiefs and tooth brushes and everything a soldier gets and



Mother sent him his and so he rote to thank her) an he sez if I go over the top with the best of luck and get enuf leave to come home I will give Myself the pleasure of calling on you, and showin you what a Greenville soldier looks like. My reciprocity shall never end. And he goes on tellin how french cookin agrees with him and the censer didnt cut that out, but he cut out the best part I guess. Ennyway the censer must have a soft spot fer you because he never cuts enny part of yours out. I guess ennyway you must be a pretty poplar girl you have so many frens, that think a lot of you, theres your brother Jules and that Mr. le Cure and that guy Teddy and me. I was sort of thinkin about you and me the other day and I rote a verse of poitry about us and here it is,



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REALIZATION

By James Prendergast Jackson, Jr.

*Im over here, and your "over there" And I no not the shade of your eyes or your hare.
But this much I relize, from the land of the Free! You are imbided with mystery!*

I think that sums up the situation. I have supported you one yere and you dont no me, and I dont no you, and mebbe you will never mete me and mebbe I will never mete you, and while I am tryin to think how I can get over there along comes that feler Teddy and gets his eye on you and sez, Guess Ill have her for my godchild, and Bully fer you your a peach! and you fall fer it of corse, and I have to take a back seat. I guess that is life, but I tell you it is pretty tuf sometimes and a feler who is twelve yeres old has more trubbles than you think. But I guess if you want to be his godchild I wont stand between you. Mebbe you wood like a list of how I have suported you? Here is some of it, mindin chickins, selling Mirrors, choppin wood, frezin ice-cream fer Crankit & sons, pickin cherries, money from Carl Odell fer keepin quiet, polishin door handels, a mud turtle to Sid Perkins, a jar of pollywogs to Sid Perkins, he wants to build an aquarium, and I washt the winders of missis Perkins big, white house one weak when I was hard up, but I dont think I shall ever be hard up again as mister Parker has ofered to take me on the Mirror staff whenever I like, as he sez I talk like a book agent. I wish I cood leve school and go into bizness or to war or something. I dont seem to get much out of school somehow. Miss Davis sez to mother, Mebbe your son has deefective eyes but she sez to me, You are a blockhed. I guess miss Davis is off the trolly or something, Dad sez she has Fritz blood because she is distently related to the Dinkelheims. I was sory to hear you had swallerd all that gum, but was glad to see you got away with it, that feler was the limit to give it to you, it is not a thing to give to a godchild. Fust thing you no when he is your godfather he will feed you a shoestring or something, and you will be two polite to say no and you will dye. I hate to think of you ending that way it dont seem rite somehow. Say what does he want to buckle his hare and line it up one side fer? He must think his hed is a race track. Gee whiz I hate to think of the Yanks comin runnin over there with felers like that among them. I have been in swimmin with Dinky Odell in old Frost Lake to-day and he stumpt me to swaller a skipper and sed I bet a quarter you will not, so I swallerd one and it didn't test ennything at all, only it kind of crawled up and down my throte fer awhile and o Boy! didnt he tickel though! The next time I swaller a skipper I shall chew him fust, if you dont they walk inside of you as if they was saying "where do we go from hear?" Say you were pretty smart about catching on about my jokin about Mr. le Cure. Corse I dont no him as well as you do, caus you no and I no he has lived on the other side more than hear, but I guess if we was to pass on the street, we wood no each other well enuf to say, Hello, old top, how are you to-day? Say, I have got your Christmas present all pickt out, do you no what I wish you wood give me fer mine? See if you can guess.



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Your affeckshunate godfather as ever,
James P. Jackson Jr.

18 rue d'Autancourt, Paris. September 21, 1917.

My dear godfather:

I thank you for your long letter, and I give it to Monsieur Teddy so he read and see how much you are genteel. He regard the letter and regard me and his figure become very droll, like he want laugh or cry very much and he dare not and must retain himself, and he demand if he can keep the letter in his pocket for tomorrow, because he desire to envoy you a response with mine. He is very amiable and charming, think you not? He come to my house all the days now and always he bring something. Sunday he bring a pate like we eat on days of fete before the war; and he remain for aid us eat it. And yesterday he bring a great ribbon all white for tie on my hairs. He say in Amerique all the little girls carry on the summit of the head a ribbon big like a hat. He want not I keep for the Sundays but he tie me up and then he say I am pretty—jolly he say, and he demand I show him to speak the French. So he commence to read my book of when I was little, the “Lectures Infantines” and I make him say the little poetry that is on the page 3 and it say: “Cher petit oreiller,” and then my great sister enter and she have on her bodice of Sundays and very much the powder of rice on the nose. And she say: “Go in the bed-chamber and amuse yourself, and I talk with this Monsieur Americain.” And I want not to go, and I cry, but she say if I obey not she will tell Monsieur Teddy come back never again. She is a villain, my great sister. I will defend that she aid me to write my letters to you; I have not business of her. I have as much as her knowledge of the English, and the American also. And Monsieur Teddy love me, nothing but me. When he get up to go away he call: “Where is that child of the gods?” (He make that game of words because I have perhaps two godfathers) And I come, and he console me. Thursday last it was my birthday. Monsieur Teddy devined it because he ask me how much age I have and I say I will have twelve years the 18, and he say in Amerique it is always a great feast and I must to eat a cake very big with snow and ice on it and candles, and so he bring it. I was washing the vessels,[20] and he come in the kitchen and make many foolishness. He whip me (to make laugh) twelve times with a little stick so I grow very big all the year. And then he make me hide my eyes in my apron, and when I open them, I see the cake, big and white like—oh like I know not what—and the twelve candles pink were illuminated and there was my name with the two es writ in chocolate on the snow. And Monsieur Teddy bring also the cold cream; it is rose like the candles and perfumed with vanilla and strawberries. Oh dear godfather, I wanted you be here and have some! Only one time before when I was little I did eat the cold cream and never when it is the war did we eat cake. And it is good like to be in Paradise!



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But alas! Monsieur Teddy soon will go beat himself^[21] with the boches! It is terrible to think because he is so good and beautiful! I told you he have little wings white on him, because he go up in the air?

Goodbye, dear godfather,
Your affeckshunate godchild,
Andree Leblanc.

[20] Washing the vessels (*laver la vaisselle*) washing the dishes. [21] Beat himself (*se battre*) to fight.

Greenville Falls, N.Y.
October 6, 1917.

Deer godchild,

I am sending you this letter in anser to yours quick, becaus I think if you are not careful that Teddy will poison you with his eats. The gum was bad enuf and I was jokin when I sed what I did about the shoestring, but cross my heart and hope to dye, that feedin you cold cream is the wust I ever herd, and what makes me feel so bad is there is no one to warn you and he is stringin you on. Gee whiz, it makes me sick to think of it! I have not been able to eat fer two days, yesterday we had pancakes fer brekfast and I cood not eat enny and mother sed, I wonder what ales James? And dad sed, In the spring a yung mans fancy, and mother sed quick, It is not spring, Prendy, it is fall, and I think it is his stummick that is turned and dad sed, No it is his heart I have found his poitry, and mother sed, Well you may be rite but I shall give him a dose of caster oil, You no the oil of the caster, just like you had the oil of the codfish only this tests like sam scratch see? Well I had to swaller some and it was feerce and fer too cents I wood twist that teller Teddy's nose and stick my finger in his eye. Gee whiz, and he wares white wings dose he, and jumps up in the air. Some angel beleeve me, say mebbe he is a angel that has fallen from the sky? or a acrobat from Barnums? only I guess if he comes from Barnums he must be a freak al-rite. Ennyway until this yere ends you are my godchild and I am your godfather, and I forbid you to tuch enny more of that Teddys eats, understand? If you are hungry you just tell me, and I will send you the proper food; and it will not be gum, or cold-cream or candels ether, I can tell you. Why even Mr. le Cure wood no enuf not to give you enny of those things. That Teddy is not fit to have a godchild, and that is the hole story in a nutshell. I dunno just what I shall do if he rites to me. Mebbe I will anser and mebbe I wont. I guess I shall tell miss Betty about it. Have I ever tole you about her? She lives in the big house on the hill next to Sid Perkins and she has hare like, well like what you sed about Jean's, like gold and sunshine, and big blue eyes and the cutest little chin with a dimple rite in the middle, and when she smiles she makes me think of the ferry queens you read about in books. I guess miss Betty is the prettiest girl on earth al-rite. She was one of the folks what let me give there dorenobs a extra polish, and she nos all about you and now I have tole her about that Teddy, and she



sez, I no just how you feel about him Jimmy. It is a grate comfort to have someone understand you if your family do not. And I askt her if she new enny poitry in french I cood send you by way of conversashun, and she sez, I remember just one, and here it is,



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*"Je vous aime, je vous adore,
Que voulez vous done encore?"*

I thot that was kind of short but she sed if I sent this to you you mite send that feler Teddy packin, but I guess you wont. I dont no when I have had so much bad luck as I have had lately. Fust their was the hoopincoff, then my blew legs, then I lost my firecrakers, and now I guess I am going to lose you al-rite. I fergot to tell you their is a new preecher hear called Herbit Hoover and he is a minister of the gospel of the Clean Plate, and all us school boys have been distributin little papers about it, the idee is, if you do not beleeve in it you eat meat and wheat and everythin, and if you beleeve a little you have meatless days and eat rye and no wheat, and if you get the religion rele hard you lick your plate clean and eat pretty near nothing at all. Ennyway nobody must eat sugar. Dad sez it is becaus sugar has turned to dimonds, so we have sirup insted and it is pretty good, the pancakes I was tellin you about was made with that. Mother sez the sugar situashun is going to be rele bad. I hope their is some left fer my birthday which is near Thanksgiving day. Say, you and I come near bein twins do you no that? Just too weaks more and we wood have been born together, only I wood have been your twin over here and you wood have been my twin over there. Say woodnt that have been funny though! Stranger things have happined though. It does seem sort of strange to think those too weaks have made me your godfather and you my godchild insted of us bein twins. I tole mother about it and she sed she thot it was better the way it is. I have saved up 47 cents fer your Christmas present I am not going to tell you what I wish you wood do fer mine. I am going to see if you can guess it.

Your ever affeckshunate godfather,
James P. Jackson Jr.

18 rue d'Autancourt, Paris. September 24, 1917.

My dear godfather:

I am afraid this letter can't be in my own style and handwriting this time, for Mr. Teddy is here and I have asked him to help me with my English, in exchange of my helping him with his French. My mind is troubled and I think he can express my thought, so he has taken the pen in hand, and I, sitting on a little stool at his feet, and gazing up at him, try to make him understand what is in my mind.

But first of all Mr. Teddy wants to ask you to forgive him, if he seems to be "butting in" and spoiling the game between you and your godchild. Honor bright, he didn't mean to do it. It was fate. Just blind, mysterious, and merciless fate that decreed that things should happen as they did. Mr. Teddy may be a blessing in disguise, anyway he couldn't be helped, and he has no excuse to offer, except, perhaps, that he is alone in the world and homesick in a foreign land. He is sorry you and he can't fight a duel over the situation, but I am very glad. And Mr. Teddy wants to tell you, very seriously that he



takes off his hat to any little fellow of your size who can do the plucky thing you have done, and keep it up so well. If grown up men all had more of your spirit, he says, the war would be over long ago.



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The object of this letter is as follows: I (your godchild) wish to make amends. I wrote you yesterday, and didn't answer your letter. Not a word did I say about it, except that I had received it, then I prattled away all about another would-be godfather for whom you, naturally, have no earthly use. And to-day my heart is filled with remorse and my head is filled with fears lest you should think your dear godchild is ungrateful, fickle, and flighty. I want to tell you how every detail of your life—from knob-polishing and bug-swallowing to poetry-writing is dear and precious to me. How I wish I could do the same! How I live in eager expectation of your letters; how I gloat and ponder over them when they come; and how deep is the gloom into which I am plunged when they do not come! Mr. Teddy knows all that, because I have somehow expressed it, and if I had striven to hide my thought he would have guessed it, for he knows full well what goes on in the hearts of little maids and gallant lads.

Therefore have I asked him to voice my deepest feelings in a poem that will answer yours:

“IDEALIZATION”

By Andree Leblanc and
Yankee Teddy.

“Though our eyes may never meet, To me you're more than bread or meat, You are the proud and noble knight That I pray for every night. You could stand up on burning decks, While others ran to save their necks, You would not fear the dreadful Hun, In Freedom's cause you'd fire a gun. A lad who never gets cold feet Was not destined to know defeat, But oh! thou child of many pray'rs Beware of Jealousy's deep snares!”

From your affectionate godchild,
Andree Leblanc.

Greenville Falls
Oct. 10, 1917.

My dear Mr. Teddy,

Jimmy has just brought me your letter, in great excitement, and I am taking the liberty of answering it myself, as I don't think he could do himself justice under the present circumstances. Mr. Teddy, did you ever have a soft spot for a little girl, when you were about eleven or twelve? I had one for a little boy; he was older than I, about fourteen; his name was Robert, and he had freckles; I think he squinted, too, and he teased all the girls a great deal. I am sure he was a very horrid little boy, as I look back, but at that time I thought he was wonderful, and it almost broke my heart when he said he had no use for little yellow-haired girls and took a girl with two brown pigtales to a big children's party, instead of me.



Jimmy has a very soft spot for his godchild, and it is more than a passing fancy with him. You see, his family, while not actually poverty-stricken, are not as well off as they used to be, and Jimmy has practically supported Andree himself all the year, through countless little odd jobs. I have seen him on the coldest winter days, chopping wood or going from door to door asking to shovel snow, and his fingers were so red and frozen he could scarcely hold the shovel;

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yet he was always ready, with a smile, to do more work for his “kid in France.” Andree is his godchild, his sister, his whole family to him; and he shoulders the responsibility of looking after her with all the seriousness of a little old man. Now, right in the middle of this flourishing state of affairs you come, with your big American pockets filled with elastic candy and bon-bons, and at a moment’s notice you produce cold-cream, perfumed with strawberry and vanilla, and snow-covered cakes such as Jimmy can never hope to equal. What little girl would not turn fickle to her first love in the presence of such a display? At first Jimmy was filled with natural jealousy at your intrusion. He was all for going over there and giving you a piece of his mind; but since receiving your letter he has, almost incredibly, come to feel sorry for you because, as he says, “it must be pretty tuf to be all alone over there, and I guess he thinks my godchild is a peach, all right.” And Jimmy is right; you must be so very very lonesome! And yet couldn’t we manage to cheer you up a little without taking Jimmy’s godchild away from him? I don’t know of any little godchild I could give you in exchange, but I do know of a girl who lives with an invalid mother in a big white house on a hill, and who would only be too glad to have a soldier for a godson and send him little packages of cigarettes, and pictures of movie stars (of which she has a great collection) and—oh tell him about home and friends and people and everything.

I am sending you this letter care of Andree Leblanc; if you would care for the arrangement I suggest, would you let me know?

Sincerely yours,
Elizabeth Winslow

18 rue d’Autancourt, Paris. November 2, 1917.

My dear godfather:

Jules has received a wound, and he is very joyful because it make him not to die; on the contrary it make him cited at the order of the day and decorated with the Medaille Militaire. He make two boches prisoners and catch them with one hand because the other had the very bad hurt. And then he fainted himself on the ground and the Cross Red pick him and conduct him at a great hospital in Paris. And Tuesday Maman and Marie go to see him and take him the lemonade. And yesterday Monsieur Teddy ask Maman the permission to take me to see him also and she say yes and we go. We ride in the tramway pending a long time and I give Monsieur Teddy a lesson of French, and he say nothing but, *oui, oui* and *chic alors—zut alors!* And all the travelers regard us and laugh and Monsieur Teddy laugh also. But when we arrive at the hospital he laugh not at all. He take my hand and I keep it very tight because I am frighten. It is very beautiful, the hospital. There is the great garden with trees and flat bands[22] and the

soldier sentinel at the door. Inside it is all white and dark, a little like the church, and it smell of pharmacy and nobody make a noise. A lady white conduct

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us up the stairs and open a door, and I see a great number of beds in lines with Poilus in them. When they see the uniform American some make the salute military and I feel myself very proud. Jules was so content he say it make his hurt to go away immediately. And Teddy sit on a chair and give cigarettes and try to make conversation with his hands. And I sit on the bed and make talk with two tongues and ten fingers also. And Teddy say he will come again see brother Jules all the Sundays and Thursdays and console him until he go to fly away. Very sure he is one angel, Mr. Teddy! And he go up in the heavens with the wings! Oh little foolish godfather! Understand you not he is one aviator? And you must not be in anger when he give me the good things to eat. Perhaps in Amerique the cold cream is bad, but in Paris it make you not sick, on the contrary. I show not your letter to Mr. Teddy because you say for two cents you twist his nose and his eyes and it is not very genteel, dear godfather. When you think wickedness the bon Dieu punish you. It is because you think wickedness of Mr. Teddy that you become sick and cannot to eat the pancakes, and must drink the oil of the caster.

I am content that the Miss Betty understand you and you tell her all things, and she is like the ferry with the twisted hairs. Hairs like gold is very pretty for little boys like Jean, but on ladies it look like the sun have fade the color. Thank you for the poetry she make. But my great sister see it and she say to Maman: "These infants write great foolishness all the time. If it continues we must give Andree no more stamps of five sous. We will make the economy and send only a card postal all the three months when the Comite Americain send the silver of the godfather."

And I am very unhappy because Maman will not permit me to polish door-knobs like you and gain silver for the stamps of five sous. But little Jean come squeeze my neck and console me, and say he will work and become rich to purchase the stamps of five sous. Poor little! He know not what it is the life, but he is one brave little man, and I think he will resemble to you, dear godfather. Oh, I forget, in my other letter I write when Mr. Teddy come, to say I desire very much your portrait where you are grinning, like you say. I love much the grinning godfather. I will place you above my bed, under the branch of blessed box. My Papa is there also, and I embrace him all the nights, before I lie down.

Dear little godfather, I am very recognizing[23] that you guard 47 sous for my Christmas. Alas, I can never enough say thank you for all you do, and I can never render it to you! It make me full of sorry when I think that. With Maman I essay to guess what you want I do. I will make something with my proper hands, and Maman will aid. You will love a pair of slippers embroidered, or a shawl (I want say a scarf) or a bonnet of aviator? Tell me, I pray of you,



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I shake your hand affectuously.

Your godchild,
Andree Leblanc.

[22] Flat bands (*plate-bandes*) flower beds. [23] Recognizing (*reconnaissante*) grateful.

Greenville Falls
Nov. 18, 1917.

Deer godchild,

How are you? I got that mister Teddy's letter, and I was goin to anser it but I didnt no just what to say, so I gave it to miss Betty and she sed she wood anser it herself. And you needent worry about my twistin his nose and stikin my finger in his eye, because if you like him I will leave him alone fer your sake. I had quite a good birthday. Miss Betty found out when it was, and she gave me a bully party, but we had a feerce time gettin sugar. You no mister Hoover the new minister I was telling you about? Well he has got reel exited about sugar, and he has told the shopkeepers they must give only one pound to itch family, and miss Betty she wanted more than that to make my cake, because she sez it is hard enuf to cook with things but it is the limit to cook without them. And she didnt no what to do until she had a brite idee. She sent Molly to Butler's store and she got some mapel seerop and mixt it all up with the sugar and a lot of other good stuff. And I had a bully cake. It was kinder soft to have candels on it, but miss Betty made it all herself and that is more than your Teddy did, and it was a bully cake just the same. And she let me ask Dinky Odell over to have some and we had hot chocolate and a fust rate time. I am sorry your sister didnt like the poitry. Some people dont no a good thing when they see it. Carl Odell has writ to Amanda, and he sez, "I am writing this in the midst of falling shells and boms busting in air, but if ever I come out al-rite little girl I'll come back to you." Carl Odell must have been sent to the front pretty quick al-rite as he has only been gone too weaks, and he sez he has a lot of inside inflammation, but he is afraid the censer will cut it out.

And now I come to the bizness part of this leter. Fer one yere now I have been your godfather and you have been my godchild, and we have hit it off pretty well I think, and now the yere is drawing to a close, and next month it may be all will be ended between us. Little girl, what I have been wishing you wood do fer Christmas is not a scarf, or slipper or ennything but this. Will you be my godchild fer a nuther yere? I guess mebbe you mite do better fer yourself and get a more classy godfather. I dont seem to be much good at school somehow, and I guess that missis Yanket was rite when she sed what she did about my spellin bein feerce. I guess mebbe you rite better than I do, and I no that mister Teddy dose becaus miss Betty saw his letter and she sed it was a fine letter. Somehow I guess Mr. le Cure and missis Yanket and all your frens rite and spell better than I do. But I bet I can polish dore handels and wash winders and sell Mirrors



and suport you as well as enny Body. Mebbe I am cut out fer plane bizness. And so I say, if you think you like me, and wood like to keep on having me fer your godfather, say yes and I will be much obliged. But if you think you wood be hapier with Mr. Teddy, dear godchild why just say so and never mind about me. I guess I can live it down.



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Your affeckshunate godfather,
James P. Jackson Jr.

Paris, Dec. 4, 1917.

Dear godfather,

I say thousand times yes, and the bon Dieu give you benediction. Oh dear godfather, you did make the foolish when you believe I want veritably monsieur Teddy to me adopt! He is full of gracious goodness, Monsieur Teddy, but he is not like unto you. He did not the work, and he beat himself not with Red-Skins, to succour me and give comfort in the modest interior. Mr. Teddy very sure will be one hero in the war, but you are already one hero with heart more big. And my dear Papa, that did die for the Patrie, is well content to behold that. We are loving all the Amerique; but Maman and me say yesterday there is not in the world entire a boy so much remplished of sentiments delicate like my grinning godfather. (I call you like that because your photography is come; you are more beautiful than Mr. Teddy and it rejoice the heart to look upon you.)

Dear godfather I will tell you Mr. Teddy is departed to the front. He come one day, late, and he say not he go away the tomorrow; he only sit by the stove, and take Jean upon his knees and caress the hairs of gold; and he smile very nice but speak not much. And when he go, he tell me, very quiet, he have in his pocket one beautiful letter of the miss Betty. And she is his ferry godmother, and you are my ferry godfather and all things are al-rite, al-rite! You say all the time that word, you other Americans, al-rite, al-rite. Maman say it is because you have confidence in the bon Dieu, and you know that He will make the bad world all over like that: Al-rite, al-rite!

Happy Year! dear little godfather. Permit, one time, that I embrace you very affectionously, and shake your hand.

Your godchild for the life,
Andree Leblanc.

Deer Miss Secretary:

After some consideration I have decided to keep my orfan fer one more yere. Of course she is still a girl and I wanted a boy, but she is used to me and I am used to her, and it mite go hard with her if I left her fer some one else to adop, so if you will just put me down fer one more yere I will be much obliged to you.

Yours truly,
James P. Jackson Jr.