

Rua de São João da Mata, 119, 1^a
Lisboa, Portugal
5 Janeiro 1948

Dearest Mother,

This will be the first letter of the first new year away from the States. What can we write? Well, I'm sure that you will want to continue to hear about the things we see here and how we feel about them. And by that time we'll be on our way to Africa and telling you something more new, so that for the next two or three years at least there should be much new for us to tell you about and for you to hear. Of course we'll talk about some old things, too, for we find in our conversation here much room to speak about what we used to do in America. Sometimes it rather takes over and begins to take up all the conversation, but we try to guard against being dull and trying our new friends here beyond the limits of endurance. We must for our own sakes also talk about the things which we here see and those things which we may see and hope to see in Africa. We must keep abreast of what goes on in the States and in the rest of the world outside of Portugal. In our work we must keep alert, and occasionally, or perhaps more often than occasionally we permit ourselves to become too much caught up by this schedule of language study and the care of the children and getting the proper amount of sleep and do not remain alert or try to keep alert to the other important things in life.

In our Christmas letter, which will go out from the Boston office of the American Board, we have written something about Christmas festivities in Lisbon. We still are in the Christmas season, will be until tomorrow. The season here comes to an end on January 6. Bolo-reis (big coffee rings with fruit and nuts), the king of Christmas cakes here, and there are many cakes, are still available in a few of the stores. Just how long they will last, remain fresh is what I mean, I don't know, or perhaps the bakers have been making a few along for after Christmas trade. We have also found out that the people here desire to be with their families on both Christmas Day and New Year's Day. I believe that the Catholic churches have services of mass on both Christmas Day and New Year's Day. The Protestants have a Christmas Day service and a watch night service. I don't remember about a Christmas Eve service in the Protestant services. Betty is busy and I cannot check now, but will ~~later~~ later.

One curious custom (I spell words now with half English, half Portuguese spellings) is that of throwing into the streets at the first moment of the new year anything old and worn-out, old clothing, shoes, pots and what not. When we came back from the service which we attended in another part of the city, our street was somewhat cluttered with broken pottery, rubbish of glass, dirt, ashes, and some waste foods. Needless to say we did not add to the collection.

Did we tell you about the store windows here at Christmas time, just before Christmas Day and the other days in which people might think of shopping. I think not. We were surprised by the lack of bright display of gifts. We are too much accustomed to the American way of beginning immediately after Thanksgiving Day to display goods for prospective buyers of Christmas presents. Here the display is only up for about two weeks before Christmas and then is not exceptionally bright. We have seen a few trees in the windows of the stores, and in one a Pai Natal (Father Christmas), which is like Santa Claus to us. The trees, usually pine, but occasionally fir or spruce, were mostly trimmed with a little tinsel and cotton, but we have seen