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## Charles Albert Converse Papers, 1939-1940

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December 25, 1939 – January 1, 1940

# Converse, Charles. Letters to "Dottie and Kiddies"

Christmas 1939 & New Year's Day 1940.

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Merry Christmas and hello

Christmas Eve

9:25 p.m.

precious little family,

Tonight Old Santa will be coming down to see you whether by chimney or not. I don't know for you might have central heat. However I hope that when he came he brought you lovely presents. How I have missed not fixing the tree and all the other arrangements we always make. Ed and I are sitting here before the fire haven't pleasant thoughts of all the fun our families will be having tomorrow, and wishing that we were with them. Bob has gone out to dinner at the house of some friends, the Chappells. He is with the Central Harover Bk over here. They very kindly invited us too but we didn't feel like it. Gee what a fog there is out tonight. The buses can't even run. A regular pea souper as bad as I ever saw.

Your Christmas cable came and brought a lots of pleasure but I was sorry to note that you didn't go up to see Emma after all. I think it would have been worth it. Your letter came yesterday on your trip up to Valdosta and you must have had fun. Everyone, I'll bet, was mighty glad to see you. Col Simpson

wrote how sorry he was that he couldn't take you to Ocean Pond. His standard entertainment but he spoke of how happy he and Miss Mabel were to see you all and how excellent you look. Miss Joan also added a note to the effect that Floto is just like me in mannerisms etc. Tell her how proud I was to read in her letter that she has lost weight and is taking her exercise seriously. I enjoyed them three letters very very much and thought them excellent in composition and expression. Keep up the good work and let me hear often. I know you are anxiously awaiting the results of this first part term work and I know will be proud of the results.

I went on Friday and picked out our turkey which we plan to have tomorrow night. Wire asked us one yet but think we might tomorrow ask the new Doctor if he has no other plans. His family are also in the U.S. He is at the Cumberland. While out I bought a little of all fruit and nuts and made a centre piece on the dining room table and it looks very pretty. I also bought a big bundle of holly on the street for 3/- and have it all over the flat. Really Christmas spirit is in the air.

We have been waiting all day for a cable from Lile's Doctor. Yesterday in the early afternoon Bob had a cable from Mother Frank to the effect that if he could come home now on leave, he would greatly help Lile's recovery. This cable naturally worried him sick as he thought that Lile was at home getting very nicely over her operation. He had arranged with Mr. Inhardt to telephone during the holiday from the Embassy so after discussing it we all decided it best that he telephone last night. He put a call in to come through at midnight here. Hoped to speak to Lile but the operator reported back that Lile is in hospital but that Mrs. Frank would speak to him. This increased his uneasiness. Ed and I took him out to a picture to pass the time. He spoke to Mrs. Frank but the conversation I gather was very unsatisfactory. She broke down in the middle of it. Bob gathered that the infection has set in which as you know is very bad in the case of a diabetic since they have so very little resistance to infections. He was so worried that he sent a cable last night to the doctor asking for report of her true condition but as yet no reply. The office here says that there is a bad delay because of the Christmas rush and the war although it was sent urgent. He felt he ought to go tonight as the people are close friends and it is best for his feelings. He

is pretty badly shaken. Bob is making his plans now to fly home on the first available plane from Lisbon which will probably be Saturday's ship. It is impossible to make the Wednesday plane as there is so much to do, exit permit, visas etc., with all offices closed Monday and Tuesday. This has of course set a gloom over our little establishment. (11:30 pm) Bob has just come in and has sent another cable this time to Jim Hauck requesting news as to Liles condition. It is terrible for him not getting any word at all. I can't understand why Mrs Hauck hasn't sent him any message today, unless it is because for religious reasons she was so terribly opposed to the operation and might feel that Bob should have forbidden it. Altogether it is a very unhappy situation and one I hope we have cleared shortly with a cable.

Well Bonnie I hope by now you have gone fishing with Uncle John and have had great success. I remember an extremely successful fishing trip I once had off Anne Marie with Mother. How much fun it must be swimming in December. I thought about that yesterday morning when I went out and found ice over everything. Your little friends sound fun. Don't let any of those boys really give them as good as the seed. Don't forget your boxing give them a good jolter in the eye.

Connie I was so pleased to hear  
how you are improving in your reading and  
happy that you haven't forgot whom you  
belong to. Keep working hard Daddy is mighty  
proud of you and the progress you are making.  
No fun going to school isn't it. Just be the  
sweet little lady Daddy loves and write  
to him often.

Laura dear I know you are being  
a great help to mother and a real joy. you must,  
however, remember that Bonnie and Connie are  
quite able to think and act for themselves and  
so you must not boss them around. you want  
them to love you dearly and they won't do it  
if you nag or make their lives miserable  
bossing them around. I know you don't do this  
purposely but darling please keep this always  
in mind, always. How do you feel now about  
art or writing. Which appeals to you most?  
Mother writes that Aunt Lile feels you have  
a latent talent for writing which might be  
developed to good purpose. There is no  
great hurry but it is wise to keep your  
future in mind and direct your energies  
in the path of accomplishment and not  
just fritter your hours away as so many  
whose energies are not properly directed  
has done. A little serious thought and effort  
would yield huge dividends.

Daddy seems to have developed quite a streak of philosophizing but he doesn't intend it as a lecture. It is only that he realizes how necessary it is for little folks to be made aware of the future and the urgent necessity for preparing oneself for the future. How he does realize it. Don't leave anything undone that will assist you.

I know it was fun to see the Pinchards again. By the way I enjoyed Mary's letter, thanks for sending it. Quite a few Christmas cards have come. I'll send them along in a brown envelope. I sent out a few at this end but I don't think it will do any harm if some of the people have also received one from you. I am pleased that Swanson has straightened up some. How was little Tom. Poor old Dick has had a rough time hasn't he. I wrote Emma a Christmas letter. At the time I wrote it, I thought you all would be with her.

Midnight has just gone and it is now Christmas Day, Merry Christmas to you all and God Bless you and keep you. I think now that I am sure Santa is on his way, I will go to bed so this is also goodnight and sleep sweetly. May 1940 hold success and happiness in store for all. Loads of love,  
Devotely,  
C. Theba

I was pleased that you took Manchester well. There's nothing else to do is there. But take it all like it.

Bob has just had a cable from  
Mother Hanch that Lile is much better  
had 2 transfusions yesterday.  
He still plans to fly  
on Saturdays plane.



Thursday -  
Dec 29th

Dearest Dottie and Kiddies,

Well Christmas is now over and I must say that aside for the few days rest I had, I am not sorry to see it behind me. After all of our Christmas morning excitement in years gone by, it was most unnatural and depressing to awaken Monday morning to find no presents. We then had agreed to give nothing to each other. But we did have a lovely turkey dinner that night at 7:30. Russ dropped in during the afternoon evidently lonely and stayed on so we asked him for dinner. I had personally attended to the shopping to be sure we got some good things. As I mentioned before, the flat was quite cheery with the holly and fruit arrangement on the table. Alice had candles on the table and so it was quite attractive. Our dinner comprised turkey with stuffing, cranberry sauce, rice, giblet gravy, candied sweet potatoes, green peas, sweet corn and ambrosia. The grocer sent a sour coconut much to my pleasure so we had our

probrosia without it and then capped it off with coffee. Just to give you an indication as to how good our dinner was, Russ ate two large servings of everything. We were all just groaning afterwards and after sitting about the fire for a very short while we were all napping.

Boxing day was a miserable day and we did nothing. Bob had in the meantime receive more encouraging news of Pile's condition and was consequently in better spirits. We let Alice off for the afternoon and evening so Ed and I prepared supper. None of us had had anything since the night before but a very light breakfast so we were beginning to feel peckish. We made a huge pot of ~~that~~ delicious turkey hash and hot biscuits. ~~That~~ hash spread over hot biscuits split in half with lots of hot coffee was certainly close eating. I almost believe that I like the hash even better than the roast turkey. We certainly did it justice. I made biscuits for the first time and they were really good ones too.

(3)

We went back to work yesterday after four days holiday and I must say that although our holiday was dead I didn't relish getting back to the old grind again. We are not needed at the office except in the immigration section but there is still quite sufficient work to keep us all busy. I didn't go up to Manchester after all. Just didn't feel like going to the expense at the present time. Then too, I figured I would see quite enough of the place in the ensuing months.

I talked to George on the phone this morning and he said that none of the flats up there have refrigerators in them so I might keep ours. The gas man said that I could tear ~~ours~~ in for what I owe, 5 payments total £7-18-11 but it might be worth ~~to~~ keep it and use it up there. On the other hand, George said he wasn't certain I would need a flat as there is a lovely hotel outside of Manchester. George might feel that way but I have no intention of living in an English hotel which would mean spending my evenings in a bedroom

with not a stick of my own around me. The lounges would probably be filled with old ruined bores. Not for me, English hotel food day in and day out, joint and I vegs topped off with a nice sinker in the form of sweet pudding then for bed extra a small cup of black mud misnamed coffee.

I would rather have a little two room flat of my own or even a one room with a kitchenette for that matter than to live under those circumstances. Don't you agree. The pleasure of having a few things of your own around is worth too much I think. I am most assuredly going to take up some hobby up there and it might be the piano for all you know. In that case I had better get a shock on the edge of town. They would run me out of any flat building with all of my practicing.

Your envelope came today enclosing Mary's letter. How nice baby as lovely as she said. How are they all getting along? Write me further details of your visit to Valdosta. By the way how you communicated with Miss Ethel?

I don't understand why I never heard from her. I find out diplomatically if you can. Emma + Pete sent along via the American Express their usual \$25 for a Christmas present. I wish that they hadn't done it but there it is so I will probably find it extremely useful in helping me to get word of London and up to Manchester. When I do get home again, I will make it up to them by taking over their nice presents. I wrote a straight mail letter to them today.

We had a lecture next yesterday getting Bob's exit permits, visas and transportation but we got it all finished and he left last night at 9 pm from Waterloo for Paris then on to Lisbon to take Saturday's plane for New York. He left with a much lighter heart for yesterday before he left he had a further night letter from Mother Henck telling him that Cile continues to improve. She is evidently out of the woods now but Bob felt he should go on home. I don't really if he comes back.

(6)

I hope that you also received the \$125 in addition to the monthly \$100. around the first of December. That was the money that I received from the draft for per diem plus a bit to bring it up to a round figure. I hope that this helped to make your holidays jolly. On the other hand if you had any of it left it might be a good plan to divide it up \$25 each month and thus for several months you will have the \$200 per month that you wanted and by that time I must be able to send more. I hope to find the cost of living up at Manchester reasonable, more so than here. Although the price of food is going up very rapidly. I figure a conservative estimate is at least 25% increase over say July. In addition to butter, sugar, and bacon, we are now to have a meat rationing as well. It might even become wider.

Jan. 1, 1940

(9)

Will the new year came in last night and Ed and Dr Blatter and I greeted it sitting around the fire. He is the new Public Health Surgeon and worked in with us yesterday. Ed will have someone after I leave in about two weeks time. We spoke of you and Helen and wondered if you were seeing the new year in at a good lively party. You have made no mention of your social activities but I hope that you are going to lots of dances and really enjoying yourself. It must be a wonderful relief after the blackout experience over here. Nothing seemed natural over here during the holidays. Today we are going to have mid-day dinner with Paul and Iris. He came back to London for the weekend and they are in their flat. Iris, as you know, is an excellent cook so we ought to have a really good dinner. Walton Ferris will probably be there too.

The three of them went out last night to raise a little whoopee and asked us to go along but we declined.

I lunched with Mr Erhardt Friday and hope now to go up to Manchester next Friday, the 5th, for the weekend and look around for a place to live. I must decide what I am going to need in the way of furniture so that I can have it set aside and delivered where ever I do live and have the balance stored. I will only probably get a single man's or bachelor's <sup>rent</sup> allowance up there but I am going to put in for a family allowance on the theory that you are only home temporarily. They might do it, I don't know but I believe it is worth trying. I will talk with Mr Erhardt and see what he has to offer. I wish they would increase my post allowance. That is one way they could help us in meeting the expense of having our families in the house.



(9)

I got together some of my old  
suits, shoes, etc., and offered them to Bob Mellett  
for £5/5/0. He accepted. I think he  
might be able to make a little out of  
it. I hope so, but it was worth it to  
me to get them off my mind. It is  
utterly hopeless to try and dispose of  
anything now. There is no market for  
furniture or kitchen appliances. I am  
in a pickle and don't know what to  
do. My allowance is 16,000 lbs.  
and I am sure ~~our~~ furniture will  
far exceed this amount but I don't want  
to just give the things away. I will  
have to work it out some way. I think  
I will first let Davis Turner decide  
how much it weighs and then plan  
as to what to dispose of. I wish we  
didn't have that big bedroom suite  
over here. It is so heavy. However  
I don't want to dispose of it especially  
under present conditions. I doubt  
if I could ever get an offer  
for it.

(10)

I sent you a cable yesterday  
which I hope you received in good  
time. This will probably reach you just  
near your birthday and Laurie's too.  
I am sorry that I have no way of  
getting presents to you but I do send  
my love and good wishes for the best  
birthday ever for both of you. You  
should have a joint party. What fun  
you could have. I wish I could be here  
to extend my good wishes personally.  
I am pleased that you have found  
your match so satisfactory. Now I think  
I will pay selfidge for it!

Loads of love and best  
for a grand and successful 1940  
for all of you and just full of  
laughter & happiness. Loveably,  
Charles

P.S. I am sorry you let the mail go. Why?  
John must be a great help though.