

Censine Isola,
Via dei Serragli, 109,
Firenze, Italia
September 12th - 1927

My dear Laurie:

The lovely moonlight is pouring into my window over red-tiled roof of the little convent-school, and through the leaves of the great magnolia-tree. Such a wonderful golden moon, full and round and perfect, and, as I always see it, with that dim and unutterably lovely suggestion of our beloved Anne's profile in it - yearning and aspiring as she always was. In a few hours she will be shining over you, my dearest, and I hope you will be seeing her over the mountains and through pine trees, either up at the Cabin or somewhere else far from the city and the heart-aches thereof. You have always been in such exquisite accord with Nature, she will surely help you now, and I'm praying that you were able to get away and rest in some lovely wild and peaceful spot, after

your hard, hard time.

Shirley has just sent me a letter she received from May, written from Colorado Springs. Dear May, I am so glad she was there, anyway, and it was sweet of you to go and see her, Laurie, in the midst of your anxiety. She did so appreciate that, and the brave way you were facing things. She is very fond of you.

O Laurie, if we only lived a century later, when it would be such a simple matter for you to board an air ship and come winging over to me! The things we would do together. We'd go to San Marco and steep ourselves, lose ourselves, in blessed Fra Angelico. We'd wander on the hillsides among the vineyards, already heavy and purple with grapes, and walk under the olive trees, and see the sun-set from Fiesole, casting a glory over the whole wide valley, the winding Arno, and the jewel Florence below us, all rosy and opalescent in the faint river-mist. And on an evening such as this, we'd stand on the

Ponte Vecchio, in the shadow of its old archways, and watch the lights on the river, and wonder if ever there was quite such an adorable city in the whole world as old Florence.

I'm happy to be back here again, though curiously full of apprehension over the coming winter. Apprehension of myself - fear that I may not be able to accomplish what I've stayed over here for - that newer and finer development I so long for in my work, yet seem so far from realizing. I'm spending this month, before the Art School opens, in a perfect orgy of models. Just drawing - in pencil, crayon, chalk, etc. Or even trying an occasional water-color. I believe the sketches I've done so far are freer and better than I've done before, but I've still far, far to go. To get just the essence of a pose, to eliminate all unessentials - that is my aim & ambition. My model isn't very good, and she is stupid as are most young Italians of her class, but she is better than nothing. How I long, though, to have a try at you, now. I believe I

could draw you now, Laurie - that glorious
back I was always so wild to do when
I saw it in the tub! Remember? Ah,
well, it won't be so many months now
before you are with me, or I with you -
don't know which. And in the meantime
there's so much to be accomplished, those
months will fly by.

I don't know, either, how long I can wait
before I see my precious little niece Nancy.
Mother writes that she's the most exquisite
tiny miniature of a baby she ever saw,
with perfect and very clear-cut features and
lovely deep blue eyes. And she has reached
the mile-stone of five pounds, so henceforth
all will be smooth sailing. Mother says,
too, that Desmond is the most enchanting
young person, absolutely friendly and sweet-
natured, gay from morning to night, and never
naughty at all. He has an extremely good
ear, and delights in the sounds of new
words, rolling them over & over on his tongue
and bursting into peals of merriment when
any of them strike his funny bone. I am

hoping very much that both he and Nancy will be musical. Wouldn't they be adorable, ten years from now, playing violin & piano together?

I've no idea what the plans for the winter are, but don't see how they can possibly bring little Nancy across the sea until Spring, anyway.

The Hervey's are sailing day after tomorrow. I should have liked to stay with them through their entire trip, but in the first place, I felt I must get back to work, I had dawdled about for so long, and in the second - well, there's bound to be a crowd, no matter how compatible. And she ~~has~~ to share him with so many others during the winter I felt she deserved to have him all to herself for at least half their brief trip. So I wrenched myself away after we'd had Chartres together. But it was a wrench. I do enjoy him so immensely - he's a delightful person to see and do things with, as you well know, and we always seem to be so beautifully "in tune" in our likes & dislikes, our appreciations & our way of looking at things. I was very

grateful for those nine days, I can assure you.

I'm so glad to be "home" again for one thing - and that is the quiet evenings alone in my room, with my books & pictures & piano. Am in the very middle of "Brother Saul" now. Started it long ago, but couldn't keep it up while travelling about. It is a fine book, though I find it extremely difficult reading. Can't just tell why. Am most awfully glad to have it. It certainly teaches me a lot I never knew before. We'll discuss it together.

I have on my lovely filmy blue-green-mauve Iris scarf tonight, Laurie. I wore it in Assisi, when Dell & Edgar & I went for moonlight walks, but France was too cold and rainy for light dresses, so I've not been able to wear it again until now. I do love it, you know, both for itself and for its symbolism.

Symbolism - that's what I need in my work. That's what I must learn to express. Pray for me, dear, & I'll do it - D.V.

Laurie Darling, the moon & the clock both say it is long past bed-time. I'll write very soon again, and am thinking of you all the time. Your own Brendie



Bruges.

The Belfry
with the most
enchanting
chimes in the
world.



Bruges

a church tumbling
into a canal.

98



Bruges

The milkman - a lame
ex soldier, with
his two devoted dogs.



Bruges

The Grand Place on
Market day. From
my window!



San Quirico

The lack of perpendicular lines is partly due to my

little
browline

but the towers themselves do taper towards the top.



San Giminiano

99

From my window
at twilight. The
streak in the
sky is the Evening
Star! I exposed
this for ten minutes