

356 West 22nd St,
New York, "
August 28th '44

Yes, Laurie dearest, those gorgeous photos had to follow me here, but they arrived today safely, and gave me the biggest sort of a kick. How many hundred different sorts of technique have you at your command! I don't believe there's another photographer in the country whose skill is as wide as yours. Nostalgically, I think back so many years - to your delicate & dreamy portrait group of the "Yrie", - then the shadow of Mont St Michel on the sands (alas, never to be consummated!), - the vastness of the nave of Chartres, (expressed for the first & perhaps only time through your insistence on a couple of tables to mount on); - your pin-hole interpretations of the vastness of the prairies and of Grand Canyon; - your exquisite flower portraits; - your interpretations of the Indians. And so, seemingly ad infinitum. Yet now here you are giving us the sheer mathematical beauty of great shining air-birds, with attendant swarms of the puny men & women who built them! What next?

Took me ~~more~~ than a second to spot you as your "electric lift", in the print I mustn't show anyone! Whadya mean, electric? Can you stay on your Eiffel Tower & just press a button & have it trundle you about over that vast expanse? Or must you descend after each shot, or have you a slave who runs the motor below at your bidding? It's all so strange - your present setting - I do

find it hard to picture you + your days. Understand by the papers that you've even had a chilly rain, recently, and that hail fell disastrously out in Denver.

Hail fell disastrously in New Hampshire, too, back in July, and all but wrecked the Victory Garden that Joan, Marjory + yours truly had slaved over since the last week in May! Some things we salvaged, by dint of first aid amputations, splints, blood-transfusions (fertilizer), and constant nursing. But the garden never quite recovered, + there were none of the bumper crops which we thought would keep us busy canning in the kitchen throughout August + September. Moreover, the girls sold their place to people who want to move in by Sept 15th, and they must move out bag + baggage before then to a tiny old house they've found down in Buckland, Mass. Sorting, discarding, + packing up the contents of a 13 room house to fit into a 6 room one, was a job that no third person could help much with - (also my room was really needed for impending guests, though they were too polite to say so) - so I thought I'd better call it a summer, and come on home.

But what a summer! The happiest I've ever had anywhere - just grubbing in the dirt and getting hard + brown + sweaty! I loved it. And by golly, I can wield a hoe or an axe, even though my right fingers are still clumsy with needle + thread or with pennies in my purse. I proved actually busier + able to do more than my charming pals, both of whom, poor things, are in the throes of what you've recently been going through. (How I hope to hear that yours is now behind you!) And get + still the R.C. Blood-

Bank stubbornly refuses to accept me, just 'cause I don't weigh 110! Isn't it maddening? Why, Mother never weighed 100 in her life - & if I'm more than 107 I'm lousy & not nearly so well!

All of which is just chafing at not being able to do my bit, anymore. And a prelude to a rather awful confession, Laurie. A confession that sculpture, whether I do it, teach it, criticize it, or merely think of it - has become dust in my mouth and lead in my stomach. When I was ill I thought it was just that, & that I'd come back to it with zest once I was husky again. No such luck. There's simply no response or reaction inside. It's hopelessly dead. Of course, I never had more than a useful & tasteful talent for it - not one spark even of that genius that must create, at all costs. I never had anything new to say - was no more creative at sculpture than at music - a good interpreter, at best.

It's all rather staggering, at my advanced age, to find a career of 40 odd years gone, so sour and dead, that I cannot face the prospect of another year of it. Yet, I gotta earn a living. So what? Another war job? But even if I could find one that suited my present capabilities, it would hardly last more than a year. Then what? Meantime, I'd be so tied up I couldn't even prepare for anything else.

Anyhow, I'm here trying to puzzle it all out. Besides music, there seems to be just one thing that gives me a genuine thrill, - that is of absorbing and unending interest, and that I believe I might be more or less prepared to tackle. And that is: Biology, Zoology, Comparative Anatomy, etc. etc. As you know, I've

kinda specialized in that latter, having taught + written about it over a period of years. But darn it, I've never even had biology, + that's the basis of everything.

I've a bulletin here before me, telling of courses in biology at N. Y. U., down in Washington Square.

Two lectures, 2 periods in the laboratory, per week. And they allow elderly outsiders to take the course. I'm seriously thinking of it.

Last summer, when I spent 2 weeks at Rockport with Dad, I found that ~~Doc~~ Freeman (of Johns Hopkins) + his lovely wife were there again, + that he had brought up a microscope just for me to play with!

Play — if I'd been on my own, + not supposed to be companioning Dad — I'd have sat all day with my eyes glued to that magic lens + the wonders it unfolded! There's a thrill about it comparable to nothing I know of, excepting possibly glorious music, or a visit to the Planetarium.

Big question is: After taking 2 terms of Biology, boned-up by myself on Comparative Anatomy + such, could I, with my artist's training in observing, drawing, and modelling form, find myself a job at such a place as the Museum of Natural History? Now I'd love it — even if it paid only a minimum salary! Both Dr. Freeman, who commended my observations ~~and~~ in the microscope + the drawings I made from them; and dear Doc Granberry, who understands as I fear no ~~number~~ of my family will, that I've got to break away from sculpture, tell me to try, anyhow.

What do you think, old friend. Have I just gone nuts — or do I see light at last?

Your bewildered but very loving,
Brendie