

42 Sharp Hill Rd, Wilton
Maine
February 19th, '62

Laurie Dear:

I did get your lovely Xmas card & your sweet note, and they were mighty good to get. But, it would happen that just this winter, when my writing has all gone to pot - I got 25 Xmas cards, at least half of which contained closely written messages - veritable letters, they were, from friends mostly far away, & which were full of news, mostly bad news & sad news, which I simply had to answer, even in a scrawl. I plowed through them, about one a day, and finally got my desk cleared. And then came the bugaboo of income Tax - complicated this year by the fact that Eliot has had to take over all business matters in Washington, as poor dear Shirley is no longer capable of tackling such things as income Tax, etc., and Eliot's CPA has told him that as I am part owner of the O St. house, they ought to have been paying me rent for occupying it, ever since Dad died! I don't agree, and have worn myself out trying to dissuade him from sending me the accumulated back payments. ^{but he would do it!} Now he's down in Florida, giving me no address to write to, and according to Desmond & Joan, is about to go out to California with a view to finding a home there, & teaching there! Of course he'd take Shirley with him (also, I hope, the good nurse who watches over her now).

I can no longer communicate with Shirley, for she's living in some sort of vague dream-world, and can no longer concentrate on facts, or even write the briefest of letters. All my letters to her go unanswered; and when they were here with me last summer (just overnight), she was so confused she forgot where she was,

and who I was, and began telling me about her sister who "lived up in Connecticut & was so fond of birds."

It's just heartbreaking - yet I don't think she's really unhappy now; not nearly as troubled as she was when this illness first manifested itself, & she was so worried about not being able to remember things. The other day I asked Alice Campbell if she thought there was any hope of recovery - and she admitted that it was not likely - the brain being the one part of us that cannot repair itself. Physically, she is quite all right, and maybe she will settle down quite happily with E. somewhere in California.

We are buried in snow here now, after the mildest & sunniest January I can remember.

But the "early birds", such as my flock of mourning-doves, the white-throat Sparrows, & the Cardinals are all tentatively trying out their spring songs. So good to hear when one is laboriously shovelling through 3 ft drifts! I do love this quiet little spot - so peaceful in the house, and the tri-weekly walks to the Village, plus rambles through the woods with the neighbor's dog, keep me in trim, though the old back gets humpier & humpier as time goes on.

As for that Kottler's Carrier record, Laura dear, please don't send it. I hear it often on my new & lovely radio, and know it by heart. That rich & vibrant voice is uniquely beautiful. But I seldom have time (or the energy) to play what records I have - being content to tune in GXR as I sweep, dust, wash dishes, launder clothes or scrub floors!

In the early part of the winter I had also to practise very hard, not only sonatas & concertos with Seni de Vriendt (who is now in Holland) - but also 2 piano things with a Margaret Ball (semi-professional) who has 2 Steinway grands nested end to end in her big music-room. Very rewarding - if exhausting! She & I have been working on the #2 piano version of Brahms Variations on the St Anthony Choral.

Such a marvelous creation!

I do hope you have no more horrid colds, & that you & Betty keep well enough to enjoy 1952 despite the newspaper headlines which seem to get more ominous every day. So much love to you, & thanks for offering to send that record - even your old 88 record.



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VIA AIR MAIL

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