

Dec. 2, 1933

Dear people:

Again we are approaching the season when we particularly think of our old friends and wish them well. Having bought a new type-writer this year, you shall now have a nice legible letter.

It seems long since I had news of you and I will tell you of my doings in the past twelve months, hoping that you will return the compliment.

Without taking any very long or distant trips, I have had a number of small and pleasant ones, beginning with my ten days at Rome last Christmas which was a real delight. While Rome contained great beauty-spots and joys that one would travel any distance to see, I never was fond of it as a whole, though I adored the Alban Hills, Tivoli and Subiaco. But now so many of the mean streets have been lifted away and vistas opened through that Rome is infinitely splendid and grand and I am very anxious to spend the holidays there again unless our dictator-president sends the dollar down to five cents before then.

Then for some years I had been wishing to see the plains-cities, Pavia, Brescia, Cremona, Mantua, Parma and Modena. It is too cold in winter, too hot in summer and in Lent the altar-pieces in the churches are covered, so I left home on Easter Monday and visited them all save Modena, for which there was no time. Each one is delightful in its own special way and each contains some unique treasure of beauty.

We had a cold spring and cool summer so I staid in Florence until the first of August and then only went to La Verna, where St. Francis received the stigmata, only a short way from here. There is a great convent on the rocky height with precious Della Robbias and many picturesque nooks. It is so high as to be cool and airy, is quiet and the woods are as fine as any at home. After three weeks I came home to see to my flowers, get some clean clothes and then set off for Germany which I had never seen. As I only planned for three weeks, I confined myself largely to the museums, still I took some beautiful excursions - one to Tegernsee from Munich, and one to Bastei (Saxon Switzerland) from Dresden. Beside these two towns I only visited Berlin, Bamberg and Nuremberg, going out to Rothenburg for the day from the latter town. These three last are as lovely little cities as one could ask. I had never heard of Bamberg until Mrs. Kimball told me to be sure and stop there for it has a noteworthy cathedral with early and remarkable sculptures and historical associations and I am very glad I took her advice. Those German galleries are simply marvellous. I have a Jewish friend here, an old lady whose son and family live in Germany and I have met many of these here. She was most anxious I should go to see them and hear from their own lips how things were, as letters are censored, opened at the frontier, and her son only sends her post-cards in consequence. At present this particular family have lost comparatively little

but some of their relations have had a very hard time - position lost, no new one possible, and as these Government places were for life with a pension at the end, few of them saved much. And they may not emigrate, or at least, they cannot take money out of Germany. I had to declare just how much I was taking in and it was checked up as I came out. People who bought German bonds have to go to Germany to spend their interest - at least, they cannot have it sent to them. We are all hoping Mr. Roosevelt won't try that scheme! We should have to crawl home with our tails between our legs, having practically given away our household gods here.

We had beautiful weather until Oct. 29th when a furious wind and rain spoilt all my zinnias, etc. and the rain went on at intervals for over a fortnight. Now all the earth in my pots has been fertilized and they are filled with bulbs, with pansies just beginning to bloom and ivy geraniums on the balcony and some thrifty young carnations, so I am all prepared for the winter.

A very good series of concerts, both orchestral and of chamber-music, is announced. Some of the circle of American and English here have returned home, some have recently died, alas, but those of us who remain enjoy each other, though I doubt if there will be as much entertaining this winter, save in a quiet way. Four friends spent the day with me yesterday, coming to lunch, playing Mah Jongg, having tea and then returning to the fray with renewed zeal. We had a good time.

It is a long time since I heard from Harriet McGoodwin. Does Miss Wyman write you now? I hoped to have seen Mrs. Browder (Mrs. Hubert Potter) before now, as she is in Vienna with Huberta and her family. Mr. Earle is Ambassador to Austria. Mary wrote me about coming to Florence for the winter with her daughter, but in her last letter she said she had taken a severe cold which had affected her ears, so she must see the aurist. Since then, no news, so I am afraid it is serious and I must write to ask Huberta to let me hear how she is. It will be so nice to see her again.

And have you quite given up your proposed trip here? I know how it costs now that our money is worth so little, but wouldn't it be fun to meet over here! Wherever you are, you have my affectionate good wishes, all three of you. Pat the dogs and cats and calves for me and remember me to my old friends.

With love,

Bessie Strong

Mrs. Browder is better & hopes to come here by the end of the month