

"THE FRIENDLY HOTEL"



Sunday Feb. 25.

## HOTEL FLANDERS

133-135-137 West 47th Street

134-136 West 48th Street

NEW YORK

Writing Room  
Sheffield, Mass

My dearest Ruth, It's quite intolerable that you shouldn't be here when I be so much that we might be talking over together. And when it comes to writing it I don't know where to begin.

My impressions of America are vastly more agreeable when I'm not in New York - as I am not at present - but I suppose I should tell you about the days in N.Y. first. My ideas have been tempered somewhat by the fact that I have not been very well. By Wednesday <sup>night</sup> I had pretty well recovered from my brain chill or whatever it was - but was ill again on Thursday night, for no assignable cause & felt miserably weak when I had to start for Boston on Friday morning. The digestion

seemed simply to refuse to do anything & I could  
eat no food until the evening. ~~But~~ I am  
already better. But what is the cause of all  
this?

I suppose the most interesting thing that has  
happened to me these last few days in N.Y. was  
the Opera on Thursday. The important facts about  
the Opera in N.Y. are that it is reported to be  
better done there than anywhere else; it is I  
imagine the biggest Opera House, holding 5000;  
it is always full, all the best seats being taken  
for the season; and consequently it pays in N.Y.  
as it pays nowhere else. The question then  
arises how much do the New Yorkers go to  
the Opera because they love it & how much for  
other reasons? Other reasons of course are apt  
to come in a good deal. I've little doubt that  
they come in in the Grand Tier where I was  
sitting; it is impossible to imagine a more re-  
markable exhibition of pure snobishness. There  
in the great circle of boxes was tout ce qu'il y a de  
plus chic, I presume, in N.Y. Society, the ladies  
pushed forward in their gorgeous dresses & diamonds  
& pearls. From the general <sup>vertical</sup> alignment of her

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important seats, & actually illuminated as  
 none else was as though they were at least  
 as much the sights that people had come out  
 for to see as anything that might happen on  
 the stage. And indeed I almost thought it funny  
 that they were; I was so much impressed myself  
 by the mere display of wealth & splendour that  
 it quite carried me back to Louis Quatorze  
 all that aristocratic splendour; this decidedly  
 was not aristocratic; probably about half of it  
 was utterly vulgar, but no more so perhaps  
 after all than what one might have found  
 in dance in the xviii<sup>th</sup> century to say nothing  
 of anything elsewhere or more recent - the  
 whole of idea of such display being vulgar. But

The whole opera was not vulgar at all - very far from it. The orchestra was extraordinarily fine & sensitive, the singing good too, the costumes well done & the acting quite amazingly better than anything I have seen elsewhere, so that it quite fitted the music & became an essential part of the performance. What was done was, I repeat to say, not worth a great deal. But the appreciation of the audience was altogether satisfactory; people were really attentive & delighted, as it was impossible not to be if one let oneself go at all & the plain conclusion of it all is this; - that this vast audience gathering to hear opera night after night is really fond of music.

The whole atmosphere of N.Y is so charged with amazing contrasts that it is the most difficult thing in the world to generalise at all, & I quite despair sometimes of making out the abiding essence of character. It must not be forgotten that N.Y is vastly cosmopolitan - the German & Latin elements both help so far as music is concerned. But even

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on this count, where their appreciation is much more cultivated than in any other direction, the national fault enters in. I have been to two concerts in the Aeolian Hall where classical music is played, together to the most musically-educated people outside professors - such, each time received the same impression. The audience requires to amused ~~for~~ easily. When Leonard, who is a rather dramatic type of pianist, played the Beethoven "appassionata" sonata he had a good deal of applause; when he played Chopin of a noisier sort he had more; when he played simply fireworks / Liszt the applause was overwhelming - of course that might happen in an English audience too - the difficulty always is to know what set one has to do with; if I am right in comparing

these audiences with those in London attending the  
Classical Concerts, say, in the Queen's Hall then  
I think the preference for what is light & easy is  
well marked. But that in any case is the most  
marked trait, though perhaps the least astonishing  
after all we've heard, over here altogether - the  
lack of depth. The whole social atmosphere is  
sprightly & superficial, at least wherever women  
are present - I am talking now from what I  
have observed myself reinforced by competent  
witnesses, some of them Englishmen who have  
lived much out here. The women are very ill-  
educated - they actually know extremely little  
& have very untrained minds & yet have the  
knack of putting all the attractive goods in the  
shop window - so that they may appear at  
first sight intelligent; the consequence in  
conversation, & you must remember that the  
conversational affair is left much more than  
with us to make, is that they utterly unable  
to follow a subject; they just break in at any  
moment with any flotsy - often irrelevant  
idea. The great subjects of conversation with  
me are naturally Europe & the differences between

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England & America. It is amazing how many Americans have travelled to Europe. It is the first thing they do when they get rich enough it is a matter of course for any family that is born affluent enough (here comes the train - imagine how long I've waited!) to go over, children & all; there must have been & before the war & still are many thousands of Americans who had hardly been east of N.Y. or Philadelphia or a few miles inland & their lives & yet knew Europe much better than you & I. And so they are very conscious of being a new country (the engine after arriving an hour late tried to start with a series of fearful jerks & has apparently broken down - no one shows the least surprise, but ~~the~~ my companions are beginning to tell stories of benightedness in

The railroads & wretched journeys with half-  
days of writing - it looks to-day as though  
I shall miss my connection at Pittsfield for  
Boston, & that will mean cutting an engage-  
ment for dinner. I shall have to stop writing  
when the train goes on - as I want to go on  
writing to you I half hope it won't)

— & as a result of this consciousness they  
are intensely eager all the time to know what  
strangers think of them. (The train has started)

Feb. 27. And here I am with only a few min-  
utes after a whirl of letters this morning  
to go on with this - & at least to wave  
a hand to you before I send it off, as  
clear I must without more delay.

Boston is being very kind to me - &  
more particularly kind are Mr & Mrs Burr  
in whose home I am now staying - he is  
a member of the A-C, rich & getting old.  
They have no children. He gave a large  
dinner in my honor last night - nearly



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40 men present at a room in the Union Club - I wish I could enjoy such functions; I enjoy them less than anything, particularly when I have to speak. Thank the Lord I ate my dinner, which was good, without appearing too life-livered & am none the worse this morning - about myself again. I'm very busy seeing people here - every moment booked up one way or another - it seems there are plenty of pleasant people - they are very much more like the English than New Yorkers. I really can't hope to pick up my Sunday's thread again. Dearest one, I'm hoping each day for more news of Arthur. If I don't

hear this morning I shall cable, as I should  
have done long ago if the end of your letter had  
not been so very hopeful.

Dear love you can't know how I want you.  
I don't really face it, which perhaps gives  
me the air of not minding just so much;  
I do enjoy bits of things out here, but the  
back ground is all the time grey & it's just  
you I want. You & home again - that's  
what I long for - & Oh! how lovely it will  
be! I shall be looking a passage soon on  
some sort of uncertain basis. I don't hope to  
set away much before the end of March  
- it'll just depend now what news Mr  
Reedick has for me - & I doubt there  
won't be much.

Great love to our dear children

Your loving  
George -

