

Do not forget to
send me your
address full.
Pension Marcelli. 5745
Via della Croce, Rome
Italia - Dec. 14th 1886
Tuesday -

My dear Elira.

I went to the Poste Restante last Friday to see if any letters for me had been detained, and there I found yours with Noels in side addressed there. It had arrived the day before. I was there on Wednesday and there was nothing there. I have been waiting for your proper address, but my card addressed to go Mr Dunkley seems to have reached you all right, so I hope this and the others I have written will do so too. Three cards and three letters you should have had, dated from Pension Marcelli - and this one now. I was very glad to find from your note that you were getting on all right with the moving and settling in. It must have been a tremendous business, and as hard at one end as at the other. I began to be afraid, when more than ten days went by without any word, that you had knocked up under it, and were ill and unable to write. When you have not time for a letter Lillian or Isabel might send a post card another time - just to say that all was right - Noels letter was a very nice one. He writes such a good hand too, not at all like a schoolboy, and expresses himself so well. What an event in his life the first "coming home for the holidays" will be. I saw an English paper the other day, with the account of the storm in it. - We had nothing of the kind here in Italy, but it has been most unusually cold for the season, and there

has been hardly a day without rain for the last fortnight, until yesterday, which was brilliant - to-day it is raining again. It is a great hindrance to getting about, and we have no fire, until dusk, to sit by, so that I think regretfully sometimes of the store lying unused in the cellar at the Hollis. There is a fire in the stove in the Salle a manger in the morning, but no one is supposed to sit there except to breakfast. All the arrangements in Italy seem to be for summer, not for winter. The only fires used are for cooking, and the people manage to warm themselves with a few ashes in earthenware baskets. You see them all over with their Scaldini - baskets for their hands - and some have little brasiers with hot charcoal in them on which they set their feet. However Rome itself atones for everything. It is quite true. There is no place like it. I went yesterday to see the Catacombs at St. Agnese. It was a most interesting sight. The church itself is very ancient, and there is a crumbling old monastery attached to it. An old monk acts as cicerone. He carries a wax taper, and gives one to each person, for it is quite dark in these subterranean galleries. The St. Agnese Catacombs, though not the largest, are the most original of all. They are exactly as when they were in use last, about 1500 years ago. They consist of innumerable interminable labyrinthine galleries, burrowed in all directions through the softish tufa rock. It is as if you were walking through endless passages, each about six feet high,

and on either side, tier above tier, like the berths in a ship, ^(or a chest of drawers) are recesses just large enough to hold a body - when one was put in, the open front was fastened up with tiles, which were cemented close, and so left. You see the dust and a few crumbling fragments of bones in those that have had the tiled fronts removed - Others are left unopened. Every here and there ~~other~~ passages cross, and at other places a passage is widened on both sides, to form a chapel, in which 20 or 30 people might assemble. The altar was always over the tomb of a martyr. There were the ampulle in several places, containing the blood of the martyr, and there were numbers of the little earthen ware lamps left just where they were found. There were inscriptions on some of the recesses. The names of those interred, and devices, all Christian, and mostly symbolic. There was the maker's mark on many of the tiles, just as those Roman tiles in the York Museum - the date and name of the Emperor. Dominican came many times. On Saturday I went to see the Mamertine prisons. They are two deep chambers, one below the other. Into the lower one prisoners were slung down by ropes, through a hole in the floor of the upper one, which still remains, but a rude stairway has since been made, and down that visitors can go. It is pretty certain that Peter and Paul were imprisoned here, for these were the only prisons Rome

obtained at that time, History has ter-
rible tales connected with them. Jesus the
was stoned to death in the lower one.
There is a spring of beautiful water in
it, which tradition says rose at the prayer
of Peter that he might have water for bap-
tizing his jailers. On Saturday I went
with a party of Americans in this house
to see the Coliseum by moonlight.
It was a radiant moonlight evening.
I had been several times by daylight, but
nothing brings out the immensity of
the huge structure as moonlight does.
It is said that 4000 Jews, brought cap-
tive to Rome, were 8 1/2 years building it.
There is the Arch of Titus not far off, with
the bas-relief of the seven branched can-
dlesstick on the inside of the arch. No Jew
ever walks under that arch. Have you
seen in the papers the account of Signor
Minghetti's death? If you have the Standard
that contains a biography of him I wish
you would send it me (if postage). It is either
Saturday 11th or ~~Monday~~ Friday. There was a State
funeral, which I went to see. The funeral
car was one moving mass of flowers -
Behind, in the long procession, were four
"Watchers" carrying inverted torches. I hope
all goes on well in the new abode. I wonder
what the people will be like. Mr Stephenson
will be busy. Was his predecessor laid the
foundations well? Give my love to all -
Your affct^d Mary Catharine Labor.