

VIRGINIA
WOOLF
&
LYTTON
STRACHEY
Letters

SELECTED AND EDITED BY

LEONARD WOOLF AND

JAMES STRACHEY

Virginia Woolf AND Lytton Strachey

LETTERS

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EDITED BY LEONARD WOOLF & JAMES STRACHEY

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P R E F A C E

The correspondence which follows covers a period of some twenty-five years. The first letter was written when Virginia Stephen (1882-1941) was twenty-four and Lytton Strachey (1880-1932) twenty-six, and the last was written a few weeks before the latter's death. In the preceding generation their families had been on friendly terms and closely associated. In more recent years, too, Lytton's elder sisters had seen a great deal of Virginia's cousins and step-brothers, while her elder brother Thoby had been a contemporary and friend of Lytton's at Cambridge. Moreover, Lytton had been down from Cambridge and living in London for a whole year, and it is certain that he and Virginia came across each other quite frequently both then and earlier. The occasion for the invitation contained in Virginia's first letter was the tragedy of Thoby's death from typhoid, which had occurred shortly before. In view of all these circumstances, therefore, the very formal tone of the letter itself is a little surprising to the modern eye. But it was actually at the beginning of the visit which followed this invitation that Lytton insisted on a régime of Christian names and it was from then that his really intimate relations with the family dated.

Lytton was extremely methodical in preserving and arranging his correspondences, and it seems likely that

every scrap of writing sent to him by Virginia has been preserved. Thus a large number of notes, post-cards and telegrams containing little more than invitations to tea or announcements of train arrivals have survived, and these, to the number of about thirty, we have omitted from this collection. Lytton's side of the correspondence is, for various reasons, less complete: the trivial items have not been preserved, and a few more important ones are probably lost.

Apart from these omissions, it has been our policy to print every letter as completely as possible—perhaps, it may even be thought, more completely than possible. Some cuts we have felt obliged to make, and these are all indicated by dots enclosed in square brackets. (This is necessary in order to distinguish them from the dots so often used by the writers themselves.) In addition to this we have deleted a considerable number of names and replaced them either by other names or by initials chosen completely at random and often inconsistently. We have silently corrected minor eccentricities or mistakes in spelling, but apart from this all editorial additions are in square brackets. The footnotes, of course, are ours. The dates of Virginia's letters are for the most part derived from their post-marks.

Lastly, we cannot help remarking that neither side of this correspondence is completely typical of its author. Both Lytton and Virginia were, for many years at least, exceedingly prolific letter-writers. By comparison with others, this correspondence is both sparse and spasmodic. Moreover it occasionally gives an impression of self-consciousness—even of stiltedness—which was very far indeed from being usual in their letters. The fact was, no doubt, that each was a little wary of the other: in writing to each other they were

always on their best behaviour, and never felt so much at ease as they did in their dealings with people whom they admired and respected less. Their mutual *gêne*, on the other hand, seems to add a special tinge to these interchanges between two characters who occupied, and knew that they occupied, a central position in the group of their friends.

L. W.

J. S.

CHRONOLOGICAL BIBLIOGRAPHY OF THE BOOKS OF VIRGINIA WOOLF

Title and Year of Publication

- The Voyage Out 1915
Night and Day 1919
Kew Gardens 1919
Monday or Tuesday 1921
Jacob's Room 1922
The Common Reader: First Series 1925
Mrs. Dalloway 1925
To the Lighthouse 1927
Orlando 1928
A Room of One's Own 1929
The Waves 1931
Letter to a Young Poet 1932
The Common Reader: Second Series 1932
Flush 1933
The Years 1937
Three Guineas 1938
Roger Fry: A Biography 1940
Between the Acts 1941
The Death of the Moth 1942
A Haunted House 1944
The Moment and Other Essays 1947
The Captain's Deathbed and Other Essays 1950
A Writer's Diary 1953

CHRONOLOGICAL BIBLIOGRAPHY OF THE BOOKS OF LYTTON STRACHEY

Title and Year of Publication

Landmarks in French Literature	1912
Eminent Victorians	1918
Queen Victoria	1921
Books and Characters	1922
Elizabeth and Essex	1928
Portraits in Miniature and Other Essays	1931
Characters and Commentaries	1933

Most of the essays in *Books and Characters*, *Portraits in Miniature and Other Essays*, and *Characters and Commentaries* were reprinted in *Biographical Essays* and *Literary Essays* in 1948.

GLOSSARY OF NAMES

- Adrian—Adrian Stephen, Virginia Woolf's brother
Bunny—David Garnett
Carrington—D. Carrington, the painter
Clive—Clive Bell, Nessa's husband
Desmond—Desmond MacCarthy
Duncan—Duncan Grant, Lytton Strachey's cousin
Goldie—G. Lowes Dickinson
James—Lytton Strachey's brother
Leonard—Leonard Woolf, Virginia Woolf's husband
Maynard—John Maynard Keynes
Morgan—E. M. Forster
Nessa—Vanessa Bell, Virginia Woolf's sister
Ottoline or Ott—Lady Ottoline Morrell
Roger—Roger Fry
Saxon—Saxon Sydney-Turner
Tom—T. S. Eliot

Virginia Woolf AND *Lytton Strachey*
LETTERS

46 Gordon Sq.
Thursday. [November 22, 1906.]

Dear Mr. Strachey,

We should likē so much to see you, if you could come one day. I wonder if this next Sunday would suit you, about 6 o'clock in the evening? Vanessa * is much better, and would like to talk to you.

Yours sincerely,
Virginia Stephen

* Her sister.

Trevose House,
Draycot Terrace,
St. Ives,
Cornwall.

Wednesday. [April 22, 1908.]

Dear Lytton,

The only notepaper to be had in the county of Cornwall is this—what they call commercial. Indeed, if you could see under what circumstances I write a letter you would think me something of a moralist. I have a sitting room, which is the dining room, and it has a side board, with a cruet and a silver biscuit box. I write at the dining table, having lifted a corner of the table cloth, and pushed away several small silver pots of flowers. This might be the beginning of a novel by Mr. Galsworthy. My landlady, though a woman of 50, has nine children, and once had 11; and the youngest is able to cry all day long. When you consider that the family sitting room is next mine, and we are parted by folding doors only—what kind of sentence do you call this?—you will understand that I find it hard to write of Delane “the *Man*”. I have had a long letter of instruction from Smith.* He bids me bring out the human side, “his unswerving loyalty, alike to subordinates and chief,—in a word the high qualities of head and heart which” etc. etc. “Nay, my dear Miss Stephen, there is no comparison, for the real human interest, which the Cornhill seeks, between Delane and Mrs. Abercrombie.” “I really believe, dear Miss Stephen, that if you will put heart and head into it,

* A life of Delane, the editor of *The Times*, had been sent to her for review by George Smith, the editor of the *Cornhill Magazine*.

you will make a mark in reviewing.” Did you ever have a compliment like that?

I spend most of my time, however, alone with my God, on the moors. I sat for an hour (perhaps it was 10 minutes) on a rock this afternoon, and considered how I should describe the colour of the Atlantic. It has strange shivers of purple and green, but if you call them blushes, you introduce unpleasant associations of red flesh. I am afraid you have little feeling for nature. I have seen innumerable things since I came here that would be worth writing down—“yellow gorse, and sea—” trees against the sea—but I should no doubt use so many words wrongly that it would be necessary to write this letter over again [. . .] I have read a good many books, it seems to me. Your Pascal is looked at suspiciously by the servant. I picked a branch of white blossom yesterday, and asked her what it was. She said it was May. Somehow I thought that May was pink.

It will be a charity if you will write an answer. I am amazingly garrulous, because I have not spoken since I saw you, except to discuss the joints of animals.

Yr. Ever,
V. S.

67 Belsize Park Gardens,
Hampstead, N.W.
April 23rd, 1908.

Dear Virginia,

Your letter came to console me in a solitude—caused by a return of my cold in a more violently nasal form than ever. I am trying the desperate remedy of staying in one room. I have been here the whole of yesterday, and shall be the whole of today, and I suppose tomorrow, and so on for ever and ever, crouching over a gas fire and snivelling and cursing and drinking quinine. *This* sounds like the end of a novel by a decadent Frenchman. I prefer Galsworthy—as you write him, and I'm really jealous of you and your Cornwall, with its Nature that I have very little feeling for. You should see the dreadful state of rainy fog going on here now, and you should feel the cold wind on your backbone—but I daresay you really do, for your descriptions sounded to me a little too literary, what with the gorse—is gorse really yellow?—and the white May which ought to have been pink, and the Atlantic. And, dear Miss Stephen, I don't believe a word you say about poor Mr. Smith. It's all a gross libel and invention, and I won't believe it till I see it in his own hand.

I went away last Friday, partly to get rid of my cold, to the Green Dragon on Salisbury Plain, where James * and Keynes † and others were for Easter. Of course it finally destroyed me—the coldest winds you can imagine sweeping over the plain, and inferior food, and not enough comfortable chairs. But on the whole I was amused. The others were Bob Trevy, ‡ Sanger,

* His younger brother.

‡ Robert Trevelyan, the poet.

† Maynard Keynes.

Moore, Hawtrey,* and a young undergraduate called Rupert Brooke—isn't it a romantic name?—with pink cheeks and bright yellow hair—it sounds horrible, but it wasn't. Moore is a colossal being, and he also sings and plays in a wonderful way, so that the evenings passed pleasantly. I wish you could have been there—disguised, perhaps, as another undergraduate. Would you have been bored to death? The conversation is less political than you think, but I daresay you would have found the jokes a little heavy—as for me, I laughed enormously, and whenever I began to feel dull I could look at the yellow hair and pink cheeks of Rupert. James, too, is an interesting figure—very mysterious and reserved, and either incredibly young or inconceivably old. I constantly looked out of window, in the hopes of seeing Adrian† come stalking over the plain in his lavender stockings, but he never appeared. Have you heard from him? I wonder what adventures he's been having at his inns.

Oh, adventures! Does one have them nowadays? Your letter was for me, but I can think of no other, though I think I do occasionally have them. Do you? Is the Atlantic enough for you? I am a wild man of the woods, I often think, and perhaps inexplicable to civilised people who live in Cornwall and write on Delane as a man.

I have been out into the cold for dinner, and I'm back again very unhappy and chilly, wishing I hadn't moved, with snow dropping down the chimney and spitting in the fire. I should like to talk to someone. If you'd walk in it would be delightful, especially as I

* G. E. Moore, the Cambridge philosopher, and R. G. Hawtrey, the economist.

† Virginia's younger brother.

might then explain exactly what I meant by saying I was a wild man of the woods—but of course I never would explain it really; but there would be a chair for you to sit in, and some warmth, and some conversation. As it is I imagine you in your dining-room listening to your landlady's children, and inventing scandalous letters from Mr. Smith. Or are you perhaps starting the Description of Cornwall? That would be exciting. I have been reading Racine once more, with almost complete pleasure. There was never a greater artist. And he writes about the only thing worth writing about, in my opinion,—the human heart!

“J'aimais jusqu'à ses pleurs que je faisais couler”,—very, very divine!

It's getting late, and I must go to bed. This will start off to you tomorrow morning. I'm afraid it's rather an invalid's letter. I actually sat down to write the minute I'd read yours. So you must answer. Do you really live in Trevoze house? Rhyming to nose? Your writing's a little doubtful. It seems a queer name.

Yours ever,
G. L. S.

*Trevose House,
Draycot Terrace,
St. Ives,
Cornwall.*

Tuesday. [April 28, 1908.]

Dear Lytton,

Your letter was a great solace to me. I had begun to doubt my own identity—and imagined I was part of a seagull, and dreamt at night of deep pools of blue water, full of eels. However, Adrian came suddenly that very day, like some grim figure out of a Northern Saga—so I imagine—some ice bound captain, travelling for centuries with a frozen beard. He had been snowed upon, and hailed upon and rained upon, and when he descended towards evening upon some lonely farm, the good women cowered behind the door, and bethought them of their honour. Sometimes, such was their modesty, he had to walk 4 miles at the end of the day's journey. However, he had had a very good time, and had met many worthies, and had many stories to tell. Then Nessa and Clive * and the Baby and the Nurse all came, and we have been so domestic that I have not read, or wrote. My article upon Delane is left in the middle of a page thus—"But what of the Man?"—To answer that question, it will be necessary to come back—Saturday—but you will have time to write here, and to notice that my "b" is like that and my "v" is like that. A child is the very devil—calling out, as I believe, all the worst and least explicable passions of the parents—and the Aunts. When we talk of marriage, friendship or prose, we are suddenly held up by Nessa, who has heard a cry, and then we must all

* Clive Bell, her sister's husband.

distinguish whether it is Julian's * cry, or the cry of the 2 year old, who has an abcess, and uses therefore a different scale.

Adrian went back last night, to have tea with S. T: dine with S. T. and discuss the opera with S. T.† I sent him a large pot of cream, and I expect a letter in Ciceronian Latin. "Did you approve of my use of cur [?] with the Dative, or do you think it too Tacitean?" You terrify me with your congregations of intellect upon Salisbury plain. My reverence for clever young men affects me with a kind of mental palsy. I really cannot conceive what the united minds of all those you name produced in the way of talk. Did you—but I can't begin to consider it even. I saw Rupert Brooke once, leaning over the gallery at Newnham, in midst of Miss Reeves and the Fabians.

We are going to a place called the Gurnard's Head this afternoon—and now I look up and behold it pours! So we shall sit over the fire instead, and I shall say some very sharp things, and Clive and Nessa will treat me like a spoilt monkey, and the Baby will cry. However, I daresay Hampstead is under snow. How is your cold? I got a stiff neck on the rocks—but it went.

Yr. ever,
A. V. S.

* The elder of Vanessa's two boys.

† Saxon Sydney-Turner.

*29 Fitzroy Square, W.
Monday [May 18, 1908].*

Dear Lytton,

Could you come to tea with me on Thursday? *
I have got so miserably involved in opera and the German language that that seems to be the only free afternoon, but it would be delightful if you could come then. I have been getting my books in order, you will be glad to hear: the gaps are awful.

Yours ever,
V. S.

* Virginia was now living, with her brother Adrian, in Fitzroy Square, the Bells having taken over the former Stephen house, 46 Gordon Square.

29, Fitzroy Square, W.
[July 28, 1908.]

Dear Lytton,

I shall be in on Thursday at 4.30, and delighted if you will come. Why are you a suppliant—why was your name once Lytton?

I go to spend a month at the theological college at Wells on Saturday.

Yours ever,
A. V. S.

*Milton Cottage,
Rothiemurchus,
Aviemore, N.B.
Aug. 24th, 1908.*

Dear Virginia,

I suggested some time ago Boswell's letters to Frank Sidgwick as a book to publish. He agreed and asked me to write an "Introduction", offering 5 gs. and saying it must be done by Sept. 15th, on which I refused. He then asked if I knew anyone who could do the job—I've just written suggesting that you possibly might care to, so if you hear from him, be prepared. It seems to me damned little pay, but what finally put me off was the necessity of doing it so soon. I can't bear this hideous worry and hurry, I must breathe. At present I'm hardly breathing, but when I do it's good clear Scotch air, which is something. I've been here I think about a fortnight, after a wild wet week in Skye. This place is, qua place, perfection—one begins to realise in it that Nature may be romantic and beautiful. I linger by lakes, and tear up mountains, all day long. The nights are spent over a peat fire writing endless letters which—it seems to me—are never answered. Are you in Wales? Perhaps if you are you will meet brother James with a company of Fabians—but I hardly think so. A letter came from Clive in Wiltshire to tell me (among other things) that after Catullus "and perhaps some others" my poems appealed to him most of all. This is very encouraging. I suppose he and Vanessa are at this moment playing bridge in a shooting lodge. What curious things we all seem to do. I have been reading Voltaire, Vathek, and Mlle de Lespinasse; and I think I

shall soon go on to Darwin (Emma).^{*} Do you really start for Italy the day after tomorrow? Quelle joie! When you are among your olives, think occasionally of a panic-stricken and scribbling ghost, through whose phantasmal brain a million frenzies are forever pouring—in vain! in vain!

To my somewhat dilapidated imagination you seem to me, at this particular moment, to be a woman of sound and solid common sense. I rave, and you order a pill for the liver. Is this true? My whole being is so faint and frail that I haven't any idea. My only consolation is that my health, as a matter of fact, is almost tolerable. I am sun-burnt, and I digest. Do write to me if you can. Pippa and Pernel[†] are in a cottage half a mile away, and hundreds of dread relations lurk behind every bush. They are of all varieties—countesses, country cousins, faded civil servants, and young heirs to landed property—and all eminently repellent. I think I shall make an Encyclopaedia of them. It would be enormously large.

Yours

Lytton Strachey

^{*} Charles Darwin's wife.

[†] His sisters.

*Manorbier,
South Wales.*

Sunday. [August 30, 1908.]

Dear Lytton,

I haven't heard from Frank Sidgwick, so I expect he must have found some one else to write for him. It would be a charming book to do, but I don't see how I could manage it in the time. I shall be knocking about in Italian Inns, without an inkpot or a scrap of blotting paper, and I suppose, one French novel.

Well—I have been spending a delightful holiday, given up to reflection and the beauties of nature. I hardly know how I shall emerge again, or whether I shan't speak in words of one syllable. I live in the greatest discomfort, but have hired a room in another house, where I retire to mumble over Moore, and to exclaim "My wig! What a man!" when I read Racine. Adventures I have none—unless you can count a sage correspondence with Saxon, something after the manner of the Dutch school of painting. He sends me an inventory of his bedroom furniture, and I answer—it's my only defence—with the most dissolute of metaphors. I was also invited to spend a week with the [Bertrand] Russells, and meet Mr. and Mrs. Gilbert Murray, Jane Harrison and [F. M.] Cornford and Miss Sheepshanks. It was a little too elderly: I couldn't face it. Yes Clive spoke very highly of your poems, and I got them out of Nessa at last. They lie on the table before me, and I read them when I happen to be feeling pure. Compliments I know mean nothing to you; nor my green blushes, nor any other form of adulation. If you think of me as a woman of sound common sense, I have a vivid picture of you—an oriental potentate, in a flowered dressing gown.

Nessa and Clive seem horribly bored in the Highlands—and no wonder. The Scotch are an amazing people. I spent this morning toiling over a number of Scotch women, your relative Mrs. Grant of Laggan * among them; and had to draw largely upon my imagination.

O what a mercy to write no more, but to lie on one's back in a vineyard, and let grapes drop down one's throat—But I must go and pack—I go to London tomorrow.

Yrs. ever,
V. S.

* The early nineteenth-century poetess. Lytton's mother was a Grant of Rothiemurchus, but the connection was very remote.

67 Belsize Park Gardens,
Hampstead, N.W.
Sept. 27th, 1908.

Dear Virginia,

I've no idea whether this will reach you. Turner murmured something about Voltaire,* so I'm trying a random shot. There's no reason for it, other than mere conversation, and as I gather you're to return very soon there's not much chance of a reply.

I returned about a week ago to the London Life, and am already up to the eyes in it.—Very dim and misty I find it. I've been of course to two plays and to Simpson's not to mention the London Library and the Spectator office. I've spent several shillings in taxicabs, and at the present moment I'm writing a review of Mr. Swinburne on the Elizabethans. Did you ever hear such a hideous record? You I imagine exhilarated in the Place de la Concorde—is it fine or horrible? Several weeks ago in Scotland I thought for a moment that I should like to be in Paris, but the feeling hasn't returned, and now I think I should burst into tears if I woke up and found myself on the Pont Neuf. If you appeared it might comfort me—dashing the three of you to the Louvre in a cab. But I daresay out of sheer inanition I should let you go by.

There are moments—on the Heath, of course,—when I seem to myself to see life steadily and see it whole, but they're only moments; as a rule I can make nothing out. You don't find much difficulty, I think. Is it because you *are* a virgin? Or because, from some elevation or another, it's possible to manage it, and you happen to be there? Ah! there are

* The Paris hotel of that name.

so many difficulties! So many difficulties! I want to write a novel about a Lord Chancellor and his naughty son, but I can't for the life of me think of anything like the shadow of a plot, and then—the British public! Oh dear, let's all go off to the Faroe Islands, and forget the existence of Robin Mayor and Mrs. Humphrey Ward, and drink rum punch of an evening, and live happily ever after! It's really monstrous that we shouldn't be able to. Vanessa would cook for us. Why not?—But you must come back to London first.

Yours ever,
Lytton Strachey

I can't write to this address without sending my respects to the ghost of the dear old skeleton.* Will you give them him? Have you seen him yet?

* Voltaire.

29 Fitzroy Square, W.
Sunday. [October 4, 1908.]

Dear Lytton,

It was charming to get a letter from you in Paris. We came back two or three days ago—Adrian is just back—there are concerts and reviews and Saxon till 3 o'clock in the morning—it's all begun again: We had very successful travels however, and ended with a week in Paris and mild Bohemian society. We drank an immense amount of coffee and sat out under the electric light talking about art. I wish we were 10 years younger, or 20 years older, and could settle to our brandy and cultivate the senses. As it was, I sometimes thought of other things—novels and adventures. Why don't you bring off your novel? You must. Plots don't matter, and as for passion and style and immorality, what more do you want? Have you been attending to English literature all this time? I must buy the *Spectator*.^{*} I feel as though I wanted to read through whole libraries—but of course I shan't. There are books all round my chair, and I can't bother to pick them up. Adrian has just told me a dream of his—how he travelled for 40 years with the Hermit of the Dead Sea—It was Saxon.

Yr. ever,
A. V. S.

^{*} In which Lytton was at this time regularly writing reviews. His review of Swinburne's essays on the Elizabethans (mentioned in the last letter) had appeared the day before.

Nov. 17th, 1908.

Dear Virginia,

Ten o'clock. I wonder where you are at this minute—perhaps at Gordon Square.* It seems preposterous that you shouldn't all be sitting round the fire here as usual. As it is, imagine me in extraordinary solitude, willing to sell my soul for a little conversation. How long I shall bear it I haven't the faintest idea. There have already been moments in the long evening when I've shuddered, but Saint Simon supports me, wonderful as ever. Oh, Madame de Chaulnes! Oh, le Président Harlay (for the second time too)! Oh, Mademoiselle Choin! Oh, les Parvuls de Meudon! Don't you wish you'd got to them all? I don't know what I shall do when I come to the end—but that's still 15 ½ volumes off. And I suppose one can always begin again.

I had two charming walks today. I don't think I could ever grow tired of this country. One looks down over precipices into such astounding surges and there are so many changes, and then, when one's tired of the sea, one can begin to attend to the coast, which is divine. The chief excitement of the afternoon was an auction, which occurred a little way down the road, outside a cottage, a variegated crowd of village ladies and gentlemen attending. The auctioneer was red, fat, and raucous, and amazingly (I thought) unsuccessful. —“These two nice little vaises—how much now?—sixpence—did I hear someone say sixpence?—fivepence, then, *going*”—but I didn't dare to stay very long, for

* The Bells' house.

fear of having part of a dinner service and 5 egg cups knocked down to me for eightpence—I'm sure it could have happened if I'd looked at him at a critical moment—in fact it *did* happen to one poor lady who got a glass lampshade for 3d. quite by accident, and it couldn't be helped.

Did you find a nice fog waiting for you at Paddington? And how many letters at Fitzroy Square? When you get this it'll be Thursday, which seems very far off. By that time I daresay I shall be fuming and packing my bag, especially if it rains, and I believe it will, confound it. But it doesn't matter—it will have been worth it—those two wonderful sunny mornings were alone worth the voyage. Tell Adrian that he's a perfect pig to have taken away the decent map and left nothing but a little wretch of an object, 600 miles to an inch. Tomorrow perhaps I shall go to Mullion in a motor bus.

Yours,
G. L. S.

20th Nov. [1908].

Dear Lytton,

The Lizard is but a dream to me now. I really can't believe in you at all. The Daily Telegraph talks of "forget-me-nots, primroses and apple blossom" flowering in profusion on the coast. So I think of you as a kind of Venetian prince, in sky blue tights, lying on your back in an orchard, or balancing an exquisite leg in the air while I—It wasn't actually foggy, but worse, a dun coloured mist, through which all the poor and the meat and the gas jets were visible. I had a number of letters, mostly bills, but a scattering of invitations, from Lady Pollock, Trevelyan, and Protheros. I accept them all of course. Last night we had Duncan Grant,* who thinks your address is Penzance; and tonight we dine at the Friday Club, off a 2 shilling dinner. It sounds a little pandemoniac; in the intervals I try to read Romeo and Juliet! I have a dread lest my St. Simon, about which I was so parsimonious, should be castrated, and when I get where you are, I shall find stars. But it will be a long time before that happens. I want a fire and an arm chair, silence, and hours of solitude. You enjoy all these things, in your island. Do you think much?—have you written more poems? I had cut my novel, and thought it ghastly dull. When shall you come back?

By the way, if Esther should approach you with two pairs of scissors, will you stick to them. For some reason I was sent off with two, and came back with none. Adrian meant to leave a map, but packed it, but if you want it he will send it. He has invented a

* The painter, Lytton's cousin.

sister taken ill at the Lizard, staying in a friend's house, with appendicitis—crisis lasted 48 hours, but operation avoided (for the present). She had a touch of it in Athens.

Yours,
A. V. S.

29, Fitzroy Square, W.
[December 1, 1908.]

Dear Lytton,

I was being suffocated in Lady Pollock's drawing room this afternoon—you never saw such a sight.

I shall be in on Thursday if you could come then.

O how those old women spoil my life. Think of the embraces of Mrs. Clifford and Aunt Anny! *

Yrs.

A. V. S.

* Lady Ritchie.

29, Fitzroy Square, W.
[December 25, 1908.]

Dear Lytton,

We have asked the Fishers * to come on the 7th—a Thursday. Will you come then—I suppose we must dress. I imagine that you are now leading your Aunt into dinner. We are comatose—ham divine, but turkey oppressive, and we shall lie before the fire, speechless, till bed time.

Yrs.

V. S.

* H. A. L. Fisher, the historian, and his wife.

*Mermaid Club,
Rye, Sussex.
Jan 3rd. 1909.*

Dear Virginia,

Perhaps you have heard rumours of my flight here. I arrived on Thursday and have been spending the time since in a semi-stupor, among mists and golfers, so that by this time I'm feeling so much *à la hashisch* that I can hardly imagine that I shall ever be anywhere else, or in fact that anywhere else exists. However, by an effort of will I can just bring to my mind a dim vision of Bond Street, the Heath, and a Square or two. Have you really been there all this time, and are you there still? I shall come and see on Thursday. I wonder if I shall find the Fishers, but if I do I shall be able to speak of nothing but cleeks and greens—though no doubt Herbert would be very well able to cope with that. Besides the golfers there are some of the higher clergy—bishops and wardens—and two lawyers at the chancery bar. Of course these are all golfers as well, so it all comes to very much the same thing. Their conversation is quite amazing, and when I consider that there *must* be numbers of persons more stupid still, I begin to see the human race *en noir*. Oh God! Oh God! The slowness of them, the pomp, and the fatuity! They're certainly at their best when they argue, which they did last night on the subject of cruelty and sport.—“I console myself with the thought that animals themselves are very cruel—of course not stags, no—but look at a weasel!” I shrieked with laughter, and it was quite unnecessary to control myself, because they can notice nothing. Good heavens, how happy they must be!

In the intervals of sleep I read those *Lettres à une*

Inconnue,* which have troubled us so. They're an odd mixture of disillusionment and flatness—I don't know exactly what—very 'brilliant' and well written, and yet somehow strangely grey. The French seem to me a melancholy race—is it because they have no imagination, so that they have no outlets when they find themselves (as all intelligent people must) vis-à-vis with the horrors of the world? There's a sort of dry desperation about some of them which I don't believe exists with the English—even with Swift. Talking of Great Authors, I've seen Henry James twice since I came, and was immensely impressed. I mean only seen with the eye—I wish I knew him! He appeared at his window as I passed the other day—most remarkable! So conscientious and worried and important—he was like an admirable tradesman trying his best to give satisfaction, infinitely solemn and polite. Is there any truth in this? It has since occurred to me that his novels are really remarkable for their lack of humour. But I think it's very odd that he should have written precisely them and look precisely so. Perhaps if one talked to him one would understand.

Write to me if you can an enormous letter full of exciting narrative and profound reflexions upon human life. Of course you can—but will you? Even a quarter of a sheet would be an oasis in my desolation. I've been rather ill, but I'm better—I've also been rather upset.—I wish I were a golfer. Has Gordon Square returned yet? What happened at Rumpelmayer's? † Has Adrian had another brief? R.S.V.P.

Yours.

G. L. S.

* By Mérimée.

† The pastrycook's.

29 Fitzroy Sq.
[January 4, 1909.]

Dear Lytton,

I had heard vaguely of your flight to Rye. Isn't the Mermaid rather dismal—like a battleship in the time of Nelson—I remember creeping into it one day, and an old woman chased me out. I am sorry you have been ill. Was it Christmas? We sat over the fire and watched the snow, in an odd white glare. Now Adrian is down in Wiltshire, tramping in the mud, I suppose; and I don't know what I have been doing—seeing [Edith Blank], I think. She deluged me till 1.30 in the morning with the most vapid and melancholy revelations—Imagine 17 [Blanks] in a [Birmingham] slum, and [Edith] (so she says) the brightest of the lot—and then she told stories of women betrayed and love rejected, and cold and poverty and old age with the creeping paralysis—and the upshot of it all was that one should reform the divorce laws. That is what I find so depressing about her—She comes to a dead stop in front of some sordid matter of fact. Like the French she has no outlets. “At the age of 20”, she said, “I *ought* to have married a curate.” Was that her delicate way of putting it?

You are going to meet the Fishers on Thursday—You and Herbert must talk about Voltaire, and I shall say how I have just been seeing his waxwork at Madame Tussaud's. I can't help thinking he is rather a fraud (H. F. I mean). He is impossibly enlightened and humane. She is a bright woman.

I read the letters to the unknown when I was supposed to be boiling goats milk in Athens, and I remember that I found them rather comforting in the circumstances. They seemed so cynical—an arid elderly

couple, with all their wits about them. I hate their precise ways.

I am sitting over my fire towards midnight, having put the dog to bed, and have just finished the Ajax. The ancients puzzle me—they are either so profound or so elementary, and when one has to spell out every word one can't tell which. However, there is at least one passage of great beauty although I find that it can be read 20 different ways. Yesterday I saw [X.] with his evil goat's eyes—and Saxon was there too, and Nessa and Clive. Clive seemed to me depressed, but I think one must ignore it. The Freshfields have asked us to stay: Sidney Lee is coming to tea with me—that is all my news. I have also been asked to write 'impressions' of Walter Headlam,* for his Life. But they would have to be lies.

Now I must go to bed, and read some of my exquisite Cowper.

Yr.

V. S.

* The classical scholar.

67 Belsize Park Gardens,
Hampstead, N.W.
Jan. 27th, 1909.

So shocking! Your glove appeared the minute you'd left the house. I'm afraid you must have shivered without it. I've just finished my solitary dinner (the whole of my family are at Brighton, I believe, for suffragism), and now I've settled down for the evening before my gas fire, surrounded by my Maintenon and the Dictionary of National Biography. I envy you, talking at Gordon Square. If I could have my way, I should go out to dinner every night, and then to a party or an opera, and then I should have a champagne supper, and then I should go to bed in some wonderful person's arms. Wouldn't you? When one reflects upon one's pallid actual existence one shudders. But I suppose there are always the triumphs of Art.

I forgot to tell you how extraordinary my novel about the Lord Chancellor is becoming,* as I lie in bed creating it after breakfast. You never heard such conversations, or imagined such scenes! But they're most of them a little too scabreux, and they're none of them written. What's so remarkable is the way in which I penetrate into every sphere of life. My footmen are amazing, and so are my prostitutes. There's a Prime Minister who should be fine, and there's a don's wife à faire mourir de rire. But it's impossible to get any of it together.

By the bye, will you send me all the particulars as to

* The novel is imaginary and was never written.

the Correspondence? * I'm dying to hear from Adrian. I wonder how old I am. Thirty-five? Are you going to write to Lady Eastnor?

Yours

G. L. S.

I wish you'd come to tea with me every day.

* Some of their friends had proposed a plan for a correspondence in which each of them was to take the part of an imaginary character. The letters of January 31 and February 1 were contributions to the scheme, which, however, broke down almost at once.

*29 Fitzroy Square, W.
Thursday [January 28, 1909.]*

Here are the papers. I hope you will see the whole thing—I can't say I do at this moment. Caroline is the most alive to me, with her dead husband Sir Julius, who wore a white slip beneath his waistcoat I imagine, and waxed his moustache. Nessa and Humphry Maitland are discharging their views already. I think you ought to begin at once.

Oh what a day! It clings to the fingers and creeps beneath the nails: Why do you tantalise me with stories of your novel? I wish you would confine your genius to one department, it's too bad to have you dancing like some (oh well—I'll drop the metaphor) over all departments of literature—poetry, criticism (both scientific & humane) art—belles lettres—and now fiction. A painstaking woman who wishes to treat of life as she finds it, and to give voice to some of the perplexities of her sex, in plain English, has no chance at all.

My glove was a disreputable object.

Here I sit, waiting for Adrian and Saxon to stagger in from the opera, and bury their noses in a pie. Life surely should mean more than this. And yet, it all seems very reasonable. I will ask Saxon.

Yr.

V. S.

67 Belsize Park Gardens,
Hampstead, N.W.
Jan. 31st 1909.

My dear Miss Hadyng

I am visiting my editor on Tuesday, and before I return to my suburb I shall appear in Coram Street, if there's a chance of my finding you and some tea there. I was at the Philips's this afternoon, and found the poor lady in bed, as beautiful as ever. She was very interesting on Lady Eastnor, and on everything else, but was she a little uneasy? I've been immured for so long that I'm out of date—or think I am, and even that's exasperating. To my unaccustomed eye she seemed to be watching dear James more carefully even than usual. Perhaps you will be able to tell me how absurd I am, at tea on Tuesday. If you don't, I warn you that I shall jump to the most extraordinary conclusions; and on the whole I rather hope you won't, because as I advance in life I grow more and more convinced that extraordinary conclusions are the only things I care for.

Yours very sincerely
Vane Hatherley

29 Fitzroy Square,
W.

Feb. 1st. [1909.]

Dear Mr Hatherly,

I shall be happy to give you tea tomorrow. If there's one thing a Yorkshire woman can cook, it's a muffin.

I missed you by 10 minutes at the Philips' the other day.

So you've noticed it then? How clever you are, and how unkind! For don't you think that these "extraordinary conclusions" you like so much may be rather uncomfortable for me and perhaps (though I really won't admit it) a little uncomfortable for Clarissa? We were not happy—no—and yet I know its dangerous to imagine people in love with one, and so I told myself all the time. But James is really—sometimes a woman feels so much older than a man. There! that's worthy of Lady Eastnor. I am thinking of his face, as he helped me on with my cloak, and said good night. I don't admit for a moment that you have any real ground for your "extraordinary conclusions", and I suppose I should do better to say no more about them. You always tempt me to run on, and justify myself and explain myself, with your hints and subtleties and suggestive catlike ways. Could you come early tomorrow—by the bye? Mr. Ilchester has sent me a ticket for the Wagner opera—what d'you call it—and I don't want to miss the overture.

Yours very sincerely
Eleanor Hadyng

29 Fitzroy Square,
W.

[Feb. 9, 1909.]

I shall be in to tea tomorrow.

We are just back half dazed from the opera—six solid hours of it—and if it were properly edited one might get through in 30 minutes.

V. S.

I laid out 6d. upon the Spectator and was rewarded—only it means I must read another book now.*

959521

* A review by Lytton on *Hudibras* had appeared three days before.

29 Fitzroy Square,
W.

[February 16, 1909.]

Dear Lytton,

Thank you for the shilling—I believe it was only sixpence though—so one day I will give you six coppers. I am sorry you have a cold—you would have died at Oxford. Our marrow was frozen, and our spirit chilled to death. There was [K. L.]—a weak man, I am glad to find, though plausible, and Humphrey Paul—and endless others.

Herbert [Fisher] gave voice to one profound remark—“G. L. Strachey must be related to Sir Frederick Pollock”.

Yr.
V. S.

*Extract from letter from Lytton Strachey to
James Strachey March 9, 1909.*

“. . . In my efforts to escape, I had a decided reverse the other day. I haven't mentioned the incident before for various reasons. On Feb. 19th * I proposed to Virginia, and was accepted. It was an awkward moment, as you may imagine, especially as I realised, the very minute it was happening, that the whole thing was repulsive to me. Her sense was amazing, and luckily it turned out that she's not in love. The result was that I was able to manage a fairly honourable retreat. The story is really rather amusing and singular, but its effect has been to drive me on to these shoals more furiously than ever. I need hardly mention the immense secrecy of the affair . . .”

* Evidently a mistake for 17th.

*67 Belsize Park Gardens,
Hampstead, N.W.
Feb. 17th 1909.*

I'm still rather agitated and exhausted. I try to imagine you at your Green Street dinner, between Lord Dunsany and Thomas Hardy, but it's difficult. I do hope you're cheerful! As for me, I'm all of a heap, and the future seems blank to me. But whatever happens, as you said, the important thing is that we should like each other: and we can neither of us have any doubt that we do.

I hope to see Vanessa tomorrow morning. This world is so difficult to manage.

Your
Lytton

29 Fitzroy Square,
W.

June 4th [1909.]

Dear Lytton,

I hear that we missed you at Cambridge the other day. We had an exquisite vision of the place. There was a wonderful young man in a shooting jacket and black trousers, with the head of a Faun—who was he? I daresay you know.

The whirl of the London season is upon us. We are entertaining Jack Pollock. Lady Ottoline [Morrell]. I am penetrating into the most mysterious places. There is a Jewess who spends 50 guineas on a hat, and wishes to meet me, not that we may exchange views on that subject, I imagine. We see her at the opera, where she displays a wonderful arm upon the ledge of her box. Then, upstairs we meet Charlie Sanger, and Saxon and the great Mr. Loeb who has the finest collection of operatic photographs and autographs in Europe. [. . .]

I am absorbed in Michelet. Is it really a vile book? It is thus that I should write the history of the Restoration if I were a man.

We stayed with the Freshfields a week ago. Nature and art did their best; it was sumptuous; but they were like wax-works, slightly running in the sun, except for Gussie,* who has the spirit of a Roman Empress. I daresay she is a hard woman. We sat in a little summer house and discussed the immortality of the soul, and mid-Victorian scandal. I never saw anything so remote as she and poor Douglas. He seems to have stiffened all over, and is now practically jointless.

* Mrs. Douglas Freshfield.

This is only by way of conversation; and you must not answer, if writing is a bore, as I daresay it is.

Heaven knows what address I am to put.

Yours ever,

V. S.

29 Fitzroy Square,
W.
Friday. [June 25, 1909.]

Dear Lytton,

Why don't you come and see me—or am I a brazen hussy to ask you—however I'll risk it. I shall be in today, or Tuesday for tea, and it would be charming to see you.

Society is very hollow. I am going to write about Sterne. Would [you] lend me a book called the *Princesse de Clèves*? The L.L. [London Library] has lost it.

Yours ever,
V. S.

Such a night last night—Dodd feeling compelled, as a Blacksmith's grandson, to tell Lady Ottoline that he was—constipated!

29 F. S.
Wednesday [October 6, 1909.]

Dear Lytton,

I am told that you came here the other day, when I was away. I was just writing to ask you to dine with us when I hear from Nessa that you have disappeared to some seaside Inn, dragging with you Mr. Norton, whom I dare not call by any other name, who was to have taken Ottoline off our hands tomorrow. God knows what will happen now. She will languish like a sick and yellow alligator. To make up, you must write and say what you're after. Our summer has been strange—scarcely credible indeed, what with American prima donnas needing advice in their bedrooms, and asking questions about Saxon, in private, and young men from Cook's, and pure English maidens, among whom I have no right to class myself. Anyhow, we have seen what people call life.

Now we are back again, living on culture chiefly, the Sangers, and King Lear, and the memory—alas it fades!—of conversations with Walter Lamb. I wish (as usual) that earth would open her womb and let some new creature out. They are grown very stale, and one will have to go back to nature I foresee.

How are you? I hope you got some good in your retreat—did you have adventures?

Nessa and Clive come back tomorrow.

Yr. ever,
V. S.

*Belvidere Mansion Hotel,
61, King's Road,
Brighton.
Oct. 13th. 1909.*

I hope to come tomorrow evening, or at any rate to tea on Friday. On Saturday I go to my moated grange. If I can, I shall stay there for ever, but I suppose I can't. My health seems still to be something of a Mahomet's coffin. However, vogue la galère!

Yours
Lytton

Pythagoras House,
Cambridge.
Nov. 26th [1909.]

I learn that you are to be at the George Darwin's. Dear [Arthur] has been asked there to supper to meet you: I have not. Couldn't you have lunch here on Monday? You might perhaps apparently go away in the morning. It seems melancholy not to meet. I shall call there at the tea hour, and try to intrigue, but it will be difficult.

The so-called Greek Play has begun.* I imagine you will go on Saturday. How dreadfully bored you'll be, to be sure! I hear, too, that there's to be no one beautiful.

Yr.
G. L. S.

* *The Wasps.*

29 Fitzroy Square,
W.

[November 6, 1911.]

Dearest Papa,

Will it suit you to come to the dancers * tomorrow night—dining here at 7.30 first? They're only amphitheatre this time; but when they do the other thing we will go to the stalls.

Life is very full—so full that my head is chock full down to the very nostrils, and strain as I may, nothing comes out. I've just come back from the Cornfords—from the 7th Symphony, from a scene with ———, from an interview in a W.C. and, while I wash my teeth, a painter sings on a board outside my window.

Who was my mother by the way, Lady S.?

Yr. affectionate

daughter

V. S.

If you *can't* come, telephone. Wrap up well—especially the left foot. Bring your muffler, blue spectacles, and lozenges.

* The Diaghilev ballet was having its second season in London.

Monday [November 20, 1911.]

9.30

The Vienna Café.

Will you come to the dancers tomorrow? I hope to get stalls. You will sit between two seductive women.

If you can't come, would you telephone to Gordon Sq. If you can, will you meet us in the box office hall (I mean the ordinary big hall) at the opera, 25 minutes past 8—the opera beginning at 8.30, I presume, being out of the way of reading newspapers. My God!—whatever you do, put all your wits into few volumes. All day I've been lifting Swift, Dryden, Carlyle—such mountains they wrote, and only half an inch worth reading. I can't offer you dinner—but will you come to tea with me on Friday? There may be just room for your legs and a tea cup on the point of the knee by then. I've just been dining in this sordid place alone, and chose all the wrong things. The waiter has been cheeky to the young lady—she threatens to tell Mr. Joseph.

Now I go back to break my first bed in Brunswick *—what is the right, yet delicate expression?

Yrs. V. S.

Your ticket will be sent in the course of the day.†

No: I will bring it with me.

* Virginia and Adrian had just moved to Brunswick Square.

† This sentence is crossed out.

38 Brunswick Square,
W.C.

[February 16, 1912.]

Address for Miss Berry
is
Burley
Cambridge Park
Twickenham

Dear Lytton,

I've got to spend 2 weeks in bed. Could you be angelic and send me the Memoirs of Miss Berry? I expect they'd do splendidly: and I'll take immense care not to spot them.

I hope you are well.

Woolf * has all your manuscripts and letters. Letters amazing! My God what an insight I have now in to that cosmogony!

Yr.
V. S.

* Leonard Woolf.

38 Brunswick Square,
W.C.

21st May [1912.]

Dear Lytton,

How difficult it is to write to you! It's all Cambridge—that detestable place; and the ap—s—les are so unreal, and their loves are so unreal, and yet I suppose it's all going on still—swarming in the sun—and perhaps not as bad as I imagine. But when I think of it, I vomit—that's all—a green vomit, which gets into the ink and blisters the paper. How is your tragedy comedy? and are you aware that [Arthur's] been satisfactorily delivered—are you aware of June 5th, and the treat? We go up the river, swing, eat, make merry; that's plain sailing; but afterwards in the dusk, in the college garden, with Jane Harrison to make proclamation, we have the tragedy from start to finish, and Choristers hidden in the Elms sing [Arthur's] songs to [Arthur's] music. There's no escaping. And after that, cold salmon and lemonade in the moonlight.

London is not rich in news—Dora's alive and so is Charlie; and they dont dress in black because their father's dead. [. . .] Nessa has got over the measles, and they trail about Italy, rather uncomfortably I expect, and Clive takes the thermometer to bed with him. As for Thomas Hardy, he's a great man; his style is not made to fit, but what of that? If we had but his ribs, his thighs, his stomach and his entrails! As a matter of fact this is more hearsay than anything else; and I dont know what vapours overcome me in Bedford Square; I ramble like a drunken moth. Desmond,* who is now dusty as a very old bottle of

* Desmond MacCarthy.

brandy, turns up for lunch—tea—dinner; and we go over the story of Donne's life. As the greater part of the history of England is somehow coming in, the book will be apoplectic. He is going to be as prolific as Miss Broughton "One volume and a half every year" he says—What'll the half volumes be d'you think? Hom * was here once, the attenuated Forster,† and a very great writer called Bojer.‡ Ask Desmond about him when you meet. His theme is Conscience.

But the most interesting thing to observe, as I have often told you, is not these distinguished spirits, but the humble ones, the slightly touched, the eccentric. Alas! you're not interested in them, or I would tell you the story of Mary Coombes and the German student.

One more piece of gossip reaches me for your ear alone—that [Z.], after seeing several students wearing white spats, at once took to her bed, and sacrificed her ovaries.

Yrs.
V. S.

* Professor H. O. Meredith.

† E. M. Forster.

‡ Johan Bojer, Norwegian novelist and playwright.

38 Brunswick Square.
W.C.

Ha! Ha!
Virginia Stephen
Leonard Woolf

6th June, 1912.

[Announcing their engagement]

[Picture postcard of Alfoxton House]

[*Halford, Somerset*]

[*August 16, 1912.*]

Here we are in the middle of divine country, literary associations, cream for every meal, but cold as Christmas and steady rain.

Leonard is learning Spanish and I am reading the Heir of Redcliffe.* We go to France on Sunday—I will send addresses.

Love to Henry.

V. W.

Who lived at Alfoxton?

* By Charlotte Yonge.

Tarragona.
Sept. 1st 1912.

Dear Lytton,

I wonder if you got a card written at the beginning of our tour, from the home of Coleridge and Southey? That is now remembered by us chiefly for its leg of mutton. We've travelled far, & beef has become mutton, chicken partridge—I should hardly know now if you gave me pork to eat. This is a sad state of things only balanced by the beauties of nature and the antiquities of man, upon which I would discourse if you would listen, but to tell the truth it is the food one thinks of more than anything abroad. When I tell you that the W.C. opposite our room has not been emptied for 3 days, and you can there distinguish the droppings of Christian, Jew, Latin and Saxon—you can imagine the rest. This is Tarragona; we go on to Madrid, and from Madrid to Venice. Our habits are simple; 2 days in a place, one day in a train; we walk in the morning, read in the afternoon, make our tea, which is the point we have just passed, then walk on the seashore; and after dinner sit by a café, and, as its Sunday tonight, listen to the military band. Several times the proper business of bed has been interrupted by mosquitoes. They bloody the wall by morning—they always choose my left eye, Leonard's right ear. Whatever position they chance to find us in. This does not sound to you a happy life, I know; but you see, that in between the crevices we stuff an enormous amount of exciting conversation—also literature. My God! You can't think with what a fury we fall on printed matter, so long denied us by our own writing! I read 3 new novels in two days: Leonard waltzed through the *Old Wives Tale* like a kitten after its tail:

after this giddy career I have now run full tilt into Crime et Châtiment, fifty pages before tea, and I see there are only 800; so I shall be through in no time. It is directly obvious that he is the greatest writer ever born: and if he chooses to become horrible what will happen to us? Honeymoon completely dashed. If he says it—human hope—had better end, what will be left but suicide in the Grand Canal. Have you been writing about him? As you can imagine, we mean to be very various and active in the winter. Just about this moment, you're settling down over the fire, having returned from a brisk walk among the Scotch firs in a Scotch mist, and saying (something I can't spell—it's French) to the effect that life holds nothing but copulation, after which you groan from the profundities of the stomach, which reminds you that there is venison?—partridge? mutton?—for dinner, whereupon you take down Pope, your pocket copy, and proceed for the 150th time to read . . . , when the bell rings and the sandy-haired girl, whom you wish was a boy, says "Dinner on the table" . . . whereas I'm just off to walk by the shores of the Mediterranean, by the beams of the dying sun, which is still hot enough to make a cotton dress and a parasol necessary, while the military band plays the Barcarolle from Hoffmann's Tales, and the naked boys run like snipe along the beach, balancing their buttocks in the pellucid air.

Please write to Brunswick Square: all the news; we've not seen an Englishman, or heard of London for a fortnight.

Leonard sends love.

Yrs.

V. W.

*The Chestnuts,
East Ilsley,
Berks.*

Friday Nov. 8th 1912.

I saw you for such a short time the other day: it was tantalizing. I should like to see you every day for hours. I have always wanted to. Why is it impossible? Why is everything that is satisfactory in this life impregnated with unsatisfactoriness? Alack! (as Mrs. Humphrey Ward's characters all say—have you noticed it?) Why is London the only place to live in, and why must one have the strength of a cart-horse, or you, to be able to manage it? You are not to suppose from this that I am unhappy here. No, my hours pass in such a floating stream of purely self-regarding comfort that that's impossible, only one does have regrets. . . . Will you at any rate write to me? I hardly think so. You always say you love writing letters, but you never do it. The inconsistency of your sex, I suppose. Yours would be more soothing to read than George Meredith's. What do you think? I opened that volume just before I left Belsize yesterday, and was so nauseated by the few sentences that met my eye, that I shut it up, put it down, and deliberately left it behind, so if you want it you must ask them to send it you. Nothing will induce me to read another word the man wrote. Is it prejudice, do you think, that makes us hate the Victorians, or is it the truth of the case? They seem to me a set of mouthing bungling hypocrites; but perhaps really there is a baroque charm about them which will be discovered by our great-great-grandchildren, as we have discovered the charm of Donne, who seemed intolerable to the 18th century.

Only I don't believe it. Thackeray and G. Meredith will go the way of Calprenède & Scudéry; * they'll be curious relics in 50 years. I should like to live for another 200 years (to be moderate). The literature of the future will, I clearly see, be amazing. *At last* it'll tell the truth, and be indecent, and amusing, and romantic, and even (after about 100 years) be written well. Quelle joie!—To live in those days, when books will pour out from the press reeking with all the filth of Petronius, all the frenzy of Dostoievsky, all the romance of the Arabian Nights, and all the exquisiteness of Voltaire! But it won't only be the books that will be charming then.—The people!—The young men! . . . even the young women! . . .—But these vistas are too exacerbating.—

I've spent today trying to write in an unemphatic and yet forceful manner for the Edinburgh.† It's very difficult. How, oh how, do you avoid periods? My paragraphs *will* all wind themselves up to a crisis, and come down with a thump—it's most distressing. I believe there's some trick for getting round it, which I should be glad if you'd tell me. Horace Walpole seems to avoid it. It's some sort of whisk of the tail that one has to give. But if one hasn't a tail to whisk?—

Tell Leonard that I wrote a wild letter to his 2 brothers the other day, and have had no answer. Are they enraged?

Also, talking of Victorians, did I enrage *you*, by my rather curt remarks on ton père? I meant to imply the necessary reservations, but I'm afraid I didn't. Of course I think *qua man* he was divine.

Your
Lytton

* French novelists famous in the seventeenth century.

† An article on Madame du Deffand.

Really, if you go on writing, you will vitiate John Bailey's * stock phrase "the art of letter writing is dying out—" Of course my objection to letters is that they were all written in the 18th Century, an age I find unlovable. Still, there seems no reason why we shouldn't write letters even upon the 16th of November—anyhow why you shouldn't. Of course for a wife and a woman the case is different. Do the race horses champ beneath you? † I dreamt of race horses all night which is partly why I take up the pen—when I ought to be reading and reviewing. Isn't it damnable to have begun that again? and yet it's rather inspiring. I feel like a child switching off the heads of poppies—it's such a joke now, writing reviews, and I once took it seriously. Poor old Desmond was here again yesterday, with his despatch box in which was a half-written review of George Trevelyan's edition of Meredith's poetry—Out it came and we went through it with a pencil. "Now please suggest some alternative for 'revelling in romance'—I don't like 'revelling in romance'—'exalting in the magnificence?' No—that's not quite it—However, let's go on." On we went, defining youth, poetry and what precisely is meant by optimism. It was awfully gloomy—this poor man searching about in the roots of things at 2 guineas a column, and sweating and grunting and saying "If I had time, of course, I could do something better than this" and yet it was stiff with thought. He seemed to me altogether dismal.

* A contemporary critic.

† Lytton was spending the winter in a village on the edge of the Berkshire downs.

Starting for Biarritz where he is to help Paley with a book on Political Economy. The kind of thing they debate is whether to call Disraeli Lord Beaconsfield, the late Mr. Disraeli, or Disraeli pure and simple, which Desmond advises, provided the sentence will stand it. Our great event has been that Arnold has taken Leonard's novel * with great praise. Of course he makes it a condition that certain passages are to go out—which, we don't yet know. It's triumphant to have made a complete outsider believe in one's figments. I don't suppose I altogether agree about the 19th Century. It's a good deal hotter in the head than the 18th. But you didn't shock my feelings as a daughter. The difference probably is that I attach more importance to his divinity "qua man" even in his books than you do. It always seems to me to count considerably. But my feeling for literature is by no means pure.

Ottoline has been seen by several observers—not by me—passing through on her way South again, the gold streamers pendent from each ear, and trailing on the ground, amid a myriad of pointed foxes' tails—So Leonard, who's not given to exaggeration, describes her.

We are sitting over the fire, in complete quiet, save for an occasional van down Fetter Lane—L. half way through an immense Blue Book on Divorce, upon which he has to write an article for that oozing officious man, Haynes.

London is very nice—a trifle too rackety I agree—but we are off, thank God, tomorrow to Asheham,† where we shall discuss the shepherd's morals—he's had

* *The Village in the Jungle.*

† Their house near Lewes.

a child at 60, and this gives rise to talk—with Mrs. Funnell.

Yr.

V. W.

Is this letter written upon Bumf? It looks like it. Isn't it a shame that Marjorie * is not going to be a publisher? We urged it all we could.

* Lytton's sister.

*The Chestnuts,
East Ilsley,
Berks.*

Dec. 1st 1912.

Ah! Quelle vie! Quelle vie! Breakfast at 8 (and in this weather too), forthing 9-10 (frozen entrails), 10-11 prayers, 11-1 gallopading on a grey pony over the downs, mad with terror and ecstasy, 1-2 lunch, 2-3 assoupissement général, 3-4 a brisk walk, 4 o'clock tea (Sir A. Clark's blend), 4.30-7.30, desperate efforts with Madame du Deffand . . . how after such a day am I to keep alive the art of letter-writing, and vitiate John Bailey. I leave it to you. I am dying to hear from you again. My silence has been scandalous, I feel, after your 4 large pages of bumph (oh! I see I've put in a supernumerary P—never mind): but I have constantly written you brilliant letters in the spirit. How are you? Is Clifford's Inn as cosy as ever? What books do you review? It was superb to hear that Leonard's novel had been accepted. I hope the negotiations have been successful, and that he has insisted on a royalty. When is it coming out?—And yours?—

The account of Ottoline you gave me "passing through on her way South again", was mysterious, and the style hardly seemed to be Leonard's. However, she is established 6 miles off—the South?—across the downs, rather like Mariana with a blue fly buzzing on the pane, or words to that effect. I went over to see her, and spent the night unexpectedly in Philip's* nightgown (pale blue cambric)—otherwise all went well. Her health seems to be getting on as well as can

* Philip Morrell, Lady Ottoline's husband.

be expected after the terrors of Combe* and Lausanne; but she is to return there. I am écrasé by the loss of Bedford Square,† but I suppose you hardly feel it. I think you've never taken to that caviare. As for Desmond, I had an immense tête-à-tête with him at the Savile when I was last in London, and found him singularly soothing. The thing is to keep him off literature, and insist on his doing Music Hall turns: if he'd only make that his profession he'd make thousands. Can't you see him coming on in a mackintosh?

I'm reading among other things (a) *Un Adolescent*, by Dostoievsky—more frantic than any, I think—12 new characters on every page, and the mind quite dazed by the conversations; and (b) the *Note Books* of Sam. Butler—have you read them? They are full of amusement, and the man was certainly very intelligent, and writes very well; but he's oddly limited. The Victorian taint, perhaps, was on him too, though to be sure he wore it with a difference. Such an anaesthetic view of life! No swaggering at all—only paradoxes—intellectual acrobatics. One longs for a panache. However, I rather gather from a remark in F. Jones's preface that there are lots of indecent things left out. It's odd how he resembles the author of *Hudibras*. But I imagine he was ruined by a perverse character. He ought to have written nothing but satire, and he *would* devote himself to the *Odyssey* and Shakespeare's Sonnets and his rubbishy science and philosophy—which of course nobody could put up with, and so he became a disappointed man and said he was writing for pos-

* Her Swiss doctor.

† The Morrells had just given up their house in Bedford Square.

terity. Can you conceive anyone writing for posterity? or indeed for anyone? or indeed writing at all?—

I expect to hear any day that Henry has returned to Hampstead. How long he intends to stay there I don't know. [. . .] Have you seen John's pictures at the New English? Are they as colossal as the Times says. It is all I can do to prevent myself tearing up to the Metropolis to see them—but Madame du Deffand holds me—just holds me—by the leg.

It's the Victorians I hate—not the nineteenth Century. Had Tennyson a better * head than Pope?

Your
Lytton

* Lytton seems to have misread the “hotter” in Virginia's last letter.

*Asheham,
Rodmell.
Boxing day [1912.]*

Dear Lytton,

I meant long ago to write to you, in London, but one can't write in London. In fact we're driven to think that the country is our destiny, partly led thereto by the charms of Mrs. Funnell, Old Funnell, their son, and a soldier nephew who served in Egypt, who are all at this moment sitting in the kitchen, eating a great sugar cake, which I bore in and presented, amid subdued cheers. As for the boy he has the figure of a God—a very small, tightly curled head, set upon gigantic shoulders. That's the style I admire; and there he sits speechless, reading the cookery book.

We have just had dinner—Leonard is reading the poems of John Donne: I am half way through the *Return of the Native*, a novel by Thomas Hardy. We go back tomorrow, alas. Were there time I would tell you about Brighton on Christmas Eve; we spent 2 hours in the Aquarium. The common fish are perfectly wonderful. Soles laid flat on the bottom; cray fish crawling; mackerel shooting endlessly round and round, like torpedo boats; fat white anemones blooming from rocky corners. Then there is the monkey house. For some reason, the mackerel put me in mind of Ottoline and her troupe; she ought to be put in a tank; it's absurd to expect her to stand scrutiny for ways and motives, which is her lot at present.

I suppose you have heard of various disasters in London—Nessa more or less broken down—Roger * rampant, but at one point forced to sit with his head

* Roger Fry.

in his hands, giddy if he so much as saw a picture. They're starting on furniture now—have you heard? All good reasons for living in the country. [P.] turned up two days ago—but if one sees much of [Q.] one wants less of [P.], which does not mean that I don't find him large and serene & as satisfactory as a great big pigeon. This metaphor might be more fitting if I weren't here interrupted by Mrs. F: who says she can't eat curry; it repeats so dreadful—also how she saw her saucepan once float in at the back door—in a flood.

Are you writing? Have you despatched that wrinkled old hag? * and are you still interrupted by the champing of the race horses beneath? O I saw [G. H.] too; and if it weren't wicked could make you laugh—How anyone has the face to be so magnificently egotistical one can't conceive; he lives in the centre of domes upon domes of bubbles. His play has been refused. But he has hopes of a more brilliant future than falls to most of us—a Librarianship—(but this is a secret).

Yr.

V. W.

* Madame du Deffand.

[January 17, 1914.]*

Would you be very kind and send me your articles, which I think you have bound together? I will be very careful, and return them. I am reading Lord Lytton, and I think you wrote one upon him,† and the others I'd like to read too.

V. W.

Asheham

Rodmell.

* The absence of letters in 1913 was due to Virginia's illness.

† 'The First Earl of Lytton', published in 1908, now in *Literary Essays*.

Asheham
Rodmell
Jan. 29th [1914.]

The one volume of essays has arrived—I still await the second—But this is really to ask you whether you have manuscripts that want typewriting. I should very much like to do them if you have, supposing that you are not in a great hurry and it would save you 10d. a 1000. Can you lend us the Edinburgh?

V. W.

I'm ready to begin on typing now. I don't altogether agree about Miss N.* Is it true that you refused to do her? What a pity. I read nothing but biographies of statesmen—I wish you would recommend some.

* Florence Nightingale. A letter from Lytton seems to be missing here. Sir Edward Cook's life of her had recently appeared. There is reason to think that the job of writing the official biography was in fact originally offered to Lytton and refused by him.

Asheham
Feb. 7th [1914.]

I shall be delighted to do *Esmeralda* *—and anything else chaste or otherwise.

We hear that Arnold is glad to publish the *Wise Virgins*, if L. will cut out some sentences—finds it gives “fresh proof of your power as a writer.”

Your second volume came this morning. Many thanks.

* A *jeu d'esprit* of Lytton's that required typing.

*The Lacket,
Lockeridge,
Marlborough.*
[? December, 1914.]

Dear Lytton,

We have both enjoyed ourselves very much here.* It has been perfect in every way. Except for the house decoration and choice of books (a little heavy, don't you think) and the weather too has been bad but not bad enough to keep us indoors. It is evidently magnificent country—to my thinking better—at least more solid—than Sussex—but L. don't agree. The cooking—the food—the discrete old lady who is as noiseless as an elephantine kind of mouse—all have been perfect. Shall you come and see us again?

Many thanks
Yr. V. S.

In spite of great temptation, your letters remain virgin.

* A cottage rented by Lytton from a friend during 1914 and 1915.

17, *The Green*,
Richmond.
[? 1915.]

Here is the book, which I hope will help the birth of many more Victorian lives. I have seldom enjoyed myself more than I did last night, reading Manning.* In fact, I couldn't stop, and preserved some pages only by force of will to read after dinner. It is quite superb—It is far the best thing you have ever written, I believe—To begin with, what a miracle it is that such a group should have existed—and then how divinely amusing and exciting and alive you make it. I command you to complete a whole series: you can't think how I enjoy your writing.

Yr.
V. W.

* The first of the essays in *Eminent Victorians*.

*The Lacket,
Lockeridge,
Marlborough.
Feb. 28th. 1915.*

My dearest Creature

I was very glad to get your letter this morning. Won't you & Leonard come down here for the next week-end? Couldn't you come on Friday? It would be very nice if you could.

As for gossip—no doubt there's a lot going about, but . . . but . . . One lives on such volcanoes nowadays. [. . .] Oh, mon dieu!—I spent a few days at Gordon Square the week before last, and enjoyed myself greatly. But I lived in almost too extreme a whirl of gaiety, and tottered back here at last quite worn out—and it took me days to recover.

I think your idea of the Parrot is an excellent one—though I rather doubt whether we should be able to find a really adequate one at the Docks. The best plan would be for you to go out to the Amazons and catch one there, which you could afterwards train. The presentation ceremony, too, would be pretty.

I am in rather a state just now with Miss Nightingale,* who is proving distinctly indigestible. It's a fearful business—putting pen to paper—almost inconceivable. What happens? And how on earth does one ever manage to pull through in the end?

Well, I hope I shall see you before long. What do you think occurs tomorrow? I shall be 35!—

ever your dévoué

Lytton

* The second essay in *Eminent Victorians*.

Asheham

Rodmell

Lewes.

22nd Oct. [1915.]

Dear Lytton,

I think it is about time we took up our correspondence again. Surely you must have amassed a million adventures since we met. I can't feel altogether sure that you still persist in the flesh—my friends—ah, but [U. V.] tells me I have none. By God! What a bore that man is! I don't know why exactly, but no one I've ever met seems to me more palpably second rate and now the poor creature resigns himself to it. [. . .] I am really all right again, and weigh 12 stone!—three more than I've ever had, and the consequence is I can hardly toil uphill, but it's evidently good for the health. I am as happy as the day is long, and look forward to being rid of the nurse soon (she is at present dusting the room, and arranging the books). We come up on the 5th; as the summer seems to have broken up.

I should think I had read 600 books since we met. Please tell me what merit you find in Henry James. I have disabused Leonard of him; but we have his works here, and I read, and can't find anything but faintly tinged rose water, urbane & sleek, but vulgar, and as pale as [E. F.]. Is there really any sense in it? I admit I can't be bothered to snuff out his meaning when it's very obscure. I am beginning the *Insulted and Injured*; * which sweeps me away. Have you read it. But this will not lead you (O God, how this woman annoys me with her remarks "The Dardanelles, Mrs.

* Dostoievsky.

Woolf, would they be in France?”) to think that I am spending long hours with my favourites, as Ott. used to say she delighted to do, in the long country days. Have you seen her? Have you seen anyone? What are you writing? Please lend us your last Edinburgh article. Leonard is writing so many different books—one for the morning, another for the afternoon. His life, so he said yesterday, is to be spent on a History of Diplomacy, but as the Webbs have their claws fixed in his entrails, I see no hope for him.

Nurse now thinks I must stop writing. I tell her I'm only scribbling to a relative, an elderly spinster, who suffers from gout, and lives on scraps of family news. “Poor thing!” says nurse. “Arthritis it is”, I remark. But it won't do!

Yrs.

V. W.

6 Belsize Park Gardens, N.W.
Feb. 25th 1916.

Dearest Lady,

I wonder if you've got 3 stout volumes of Miss Berry's life and letters, belonging to me? I have a dim memory of having lent them to you some centuries ago. If by any chance you have got them, and would send them to me—by special truck, I should think—I should be very grateful. I have engaged to write one of those Edinburgh articles on Horace W[alpole], and thought I might drag in something about the Berrys too—and, perhaps, General O'Hara.

My conduct has been so shocking about writing to you that it's far beyond excuses. There are moments when it seems clear to me that I can never possibly be forgiven; and other moments when I realise that you, if no one else, will be able to tout comprendre et tout pardonner. I have been in such a sluggish, deathly state for the last—I don't know how many months! Malebolge,* I think it must be. And the worst of it is that these torpors do not entirely overcome one—if they did one would at any rate be unaware of one's horrid state; but they leave one conscious—hideously conscious—of one's utter damnation.

Well! I seem to be rising a little out of them now. I don't know why—perhaps because the horrors of the outer world are beginning to assert themselves—local tribunals, and such things—and one really can't lie still under *that*. At any rate, here I am, positively with a pen in my hand, and writing a letter—who could have believed such a thing? The nuisance is that there's so much to write about that I don't see how I'm to

* The Eighth Circle in Dante's *Inferno*.

write anything at all. For instance, *The Voyage Out*—! You know how I adore that book. I read it with breathless pleasure, the minute it came out—a special messenger came running out with it from Bickers. I don't think I ever enjoyed the reading of a book so much. And I was surprised by it. I had naturally expected wit and exquisiteness—what people call 'brilliance', but it's a wretched word—but what amazed me was to find such a wonderful solidity as well! Something Tolstoyan, I thought—especially that last account of the illness, which really—well!—And then the people were *not* mere satirical silhouettes, but solid too, with other sides to them: Shakespeare wouldn't have been ashamed of some of them, I thought. I love, too, the feeling reigning throughout—perhaps the most important part of any book—the secular sense of it all—18th century in its absence of folly, but with the colour and amusement of modern life as well. Oh, it's very, very unvictorian! The handling of the detail always seemed to me divine. My one criticism is about the conception of it as a whole—which I am doubtful about. As I read I felt that it perhaps lacked the cohesion of a dominating idea—I don't mean in the spirit—but in the action. I wonder if you at all agree about this—but it is difficult to explain in writing. There seemed such an enormous quantity of things in it that I couldn't help wanting still more. At the end I felt as if it was really only the beginning of an enormous novel, which had been—almost accidentally—cut short by the death of Rachel. But perhaps that really *was* your conception.—I won't say any more now, we must meet soon, and talk about it. But oh! the Chapel scene!—That I think is the best morceau of all.—And the Dalloways—oh!—

This is very helter-skelter stuff, I'm afraid. But what can you expect from an aged inhabitant of the Inferno? Write me a word or two, Santa Beatrice, and ask me to tea.

Yours ever
Lytton

Hogarth.
28th Feb. [1916.]

Dearest Lytton,

What a treat to hear from you!—still it don't make much difference whether you write or not and I always feel you will turn up safe in the end, and in fact you never really disappear. Miss Berry shall be sent off at once, and also a volume or two of *Madame de Genlis*, which I always suppose to be yours.

Your praise is far the nicest of any I've had—having as you know, an ancient reverence for your understanding of these things, so that I can hardly believe that you *do* like that book. You almost give me courage to read it, which I've not done since it was printed, and I wonder how it would strike me now. I suspect your criticism about the failure of conception is quite right. I think I had a conception, but I don't think it made itself felt. What I wanted to do was to give the feeling of a vast tumult of life, as various and disorderly as possible, which should be cut short for a moment by the death, and go on again—and the whole was to have a sort of pattern, and be somehow controlled. The difficulty was to keep any sort of coherence,—also to give enough detail to make the characters interesting—which Forster says I didn't do. I really wanted three volumes. Do you think it is impossible to get this sort of effect in a novel;—is the result bound to be too scattered to be intelligible? I expect one may learn to get more control in time. One gets too much involved in details—But let us meet and have a long gossip—What about next Sunday? Will you come to dinner—or tea—and spend the night? I asked Pernel to come, but Duncan tells me she is away, and as I haven't heard from her, I suppose she

doesn't mean to come. Ring us up—and if that day doesn't do, suggest another—We almost always have a spare room.

What are you about—are you in love?—are you writing?—I suppose you will come out brilliantly with the flowers of spring. I do wish you'd print all your works at once—Talking of which, I've just been sent an appeal to me as a 'passionate soul' to subscribe to a private indecency press called the Rainbow, for the production of that and other works—

Yr.

V. W.

Garsington.
Ap. 15th 1916.

I am looking forward to coming to Asheham on Thursday—probably hand in hand with Sanger. I hope you are getting over your flu all right. I am still rather *délabré*, in spite of the infinite solitudes of her Ladyship. It's a great bore. I lie about in a limp state, reading the Republic, which I find a surprisingly interesting work. I should like to have a chat with the Author.

Do you think I might have either rice or macaroni with the meat course at lunch & dinner? Dr. Overy insists on it, so if it could be managed without too much bother I should be much obliged.

Enclosed is a poem, written the other day. Her Ladyship *would* have it typewritten by Philip's secretary at the Ministry of Munitions—a dozen copies—so here is one.

With love
your
Lytton

Who has not, down the street, with a fond eye,
Gone vaguely voyaging, Love's secret spy?
Searching with subtle glance the moving crowd
For some new beauty—sweet, or quaint, or proud—
Some ravishing creature, whose delicious sight
Shall fill the soul with sudden long delight?
For me, how often all an idle day
Like a soft Summer cloud has trailed away,
While my rapt steps have led me unawares
Lingering amid the thronging thoroughfares
Entranced, and my quick spirit, like a bee
At multitudinous flowers, sipped ecstasy!

For often—such has been my happiness—
Some gentle genii have conspired to bless
The hour, the place, the mood, and I have found
Myself a traveller o'er enchanted ground,
Where, at each turn, on my exploring eyes,
Shock after charming shock of rich surprise
—Visions delectable, and colours rare,
And sweet, strange looks, and smiles, and marvellous
hair—

Came pressing, till I have felt as one who holds
A spell to cast o'er all things more than gold's
Glory in a glance, and like the Sun to blaze:
For loveliness was living in my gaze.
Yet oft it has befallen far otherwise;
Each barren minute has withheld its prize;
Beauty has sulked, and joy has hid his head;
And empty-eyed the grudging day has fled.
But then, sometimes, perhaps as the calm night
Came slowly on, and in ambiguous light,
Floating in veils before her, wrapped the world,
I have caught an eye that glowed, a lip that curled,
A form, a being, sudden, precious, blest;
My quivering heart has gasped within my breast,
My startled brain re-echoed with dim cries,
And all my senses rushed into my eyes.
And I have seen incomparable things
—Heavenly and unknown imaginings,
Visible there before me in the mesh
And moving miracle of human flesh
—Mysterious beauty! Whose far depths disclose,
Like the unfolding passion of the rose,
In beauty's heart still sweeter beauty wound,
The mysteries lost in mysteries more profound.

And I have known that all at once I'd come
Into my spirit's long-appointed home,
The gracious harbour in whose bosom deep
My ocean-wandering desires would sleep,
And all my doubts and all my pains be past,
—All, all, I'd ever sought for found at last!

Garsington Manor

Oxford.

July 17th, 1916.

Dearest Virginia

I emerge from my wickedness once more, and beg to know what is happening to you. Are you well and at work? I heard a rumour the other day of your appearance at a Co-op. congress, so I suppose you're the former; as for the latter, your well known industry no doubt continues to carry you along. But do let me hear about these matters, and all others.

I finished (some months ago) that little dialogue, but thought it not pompous enough to send you by post in a large envelope, so it lingers in the discreet oblivion of my chest of drawers. Perhaps some day I might come and read you the rest of it at Asheham. Are you going there this summer? It would be delightful to tread those downs once more. So ask me; if you can. I leave this Home of Mystery or Palais d'Alcine* at the end of this week for Ray & Oliver† who are now established in Roger's house at Guildford—Perhaps I shall get a little Quiet there—God knows I need it after the incredible Hurricane of this ménage. There were 16 souls here for the week-end that's just over: from Friday onwards the door seemed to open every two hours and new arrivals appeared in batches of five or seven. I at last lost count and consciousness, going off into a cosmic trance, from which I was only awakened by the frenzied strains of the pianola playing desperate rag-time, to which thirty feet were executing a frantic concatenation of thuds.

Among the rout was "Katherine Mansfield"—if

* The Morrells' house.

† His brother and sister-in-law.

that's her real name—I could never quite make sure. Have you ever heard of her? Or read any of her productions? She wrote some rather—in fact distinctly—bright storyettes in a wretched little thing called the *Signature*, which you may have seen, under the name of Matilda Berry. She was decidedly an interesting creature, I thought—very amusing and sufficiently mysterious. She spoke with great enthusiasm about the *Voyage Out*, and said she wanted to make your acquaintance more than anyone else's. So I said I thought it might be managed. Was I rash? I really believe you'd find her entertaining. But just now she's in the recesses of Cornwall, so it must be later on, if at all. I may add that she has an ugly impassive mask of a face—cut in wood, with brown hair and brown eyes very far apart; and a sharp and slightly vulgarly-fanciful intellect sitting behind it.

How is Leonard? Give him my love, and ask him if he remembers the name of that Inn in the Quantocks where you stayed once—or perhaps *you* do—and if either of you do, could it be sent me on a post-card—as I had a notion of trying to drift there in September?

The week-end is over—true enough—but . . . the party still goes on. Carrington* and Brett are here (ever heard of *them*?) and now, a few minutes ago, Gertler† (ever heard of *him*?) turned up. The rag-time has begun again. I have fled into the garden—but one might as well try to fly from the Eye of the Lord. So if you find this letter syncopated, you'll know the reason.

ever your
Lytton

* The painter, who later married Ralph Partridge.

† Mark Gertler, the painter.

*Hogarth House,
Richmond.
25th July. [1916.]*

We've been wandering about from Asheham to Wissett,* and I'm so stiff with weeding and herding geese that I can hardly walk. Could you come to Asheham from the 15th to the 21st? Moore will be there then I think. Please bring the dialogues, and any other pieces lately composed, and then we will set you to read aloud after dinner. My industry has the most minute results, and I begin to despair of finishing a book on this method—I write one sentence—the clock strikes—Leonard appears with a glass of milk. However, I daresay it don't much matter. Wissett seems to lull asleep all ambition—Don't you think they have discovered the secret of life? I thought it wonderfully harmonious. The Inn, by the way, is The Plough Inn, Holford. The man's name I can't remember—but I daresay it isn't needed.

Katherine Mansfield has dogged my steps for three years—I'm always on the point of meeting her, or of reading her stories, and I have never managed to do either. But once Sydney Waterlow produced Middleton Murry instead of her—a moon calf looking youth—her husband? Do arrange a meeting—We go to Cornwall in September, and if I see anyone answering to your account on a rock or in the sea I shall accost her.

Duncan was very bitter against your—what shall we call her?—but you know whom I mean—He said she was raddled and putrid and kept him on the stretch for 48 hours. I wonder if you've got your cottage.

* A Suffolk farmhouse where Vanessa Bell and her children spent some of the earlier part of the war.

Leonard sends his love—he is reading the proofs of the French translation of his book, in which every word is rendered literally.

Yr.

V. W.

SAVILE CLUB
107, PICCADILLY, W.
July 28th, 1916.

This is just to say that I'm afraid I shan't be able to come to Asheham in August, as I have engaged myself to go [to] Wales then, with a small juvenile party. I shall be at large in September, and will try to wend my way towards Cornwall, & find you there—also K. Mansfield.

Many thanks for the Inn name. I might go *there* too.

No time for more. I am just up for a couple [of] nights, for Mozart & Bach operas—very nice, but damned hot. Tomorrow I go to Wittering.

Your

Lytton

No. I have not, and shall not (unless Fate is completely against me) get a cottage in the neighbourhood of the lady to whom you refer so delicately. I see now that it would NOT DO. But I must find somewhere else, or I shall be ruined.

How does one get Leonard's book, I wonder? My only bookseller has mysteriously vanished—and I don't know its name.

Is it the secret of life or of . . . something else . . . I don't quite know what? . . . Oblivion? Stupor? Incurable looseness?—that they've discovered at Wissett? I loved it, and never wanted to go away.

Give my love to Moore, if he goes to Asheham—It's sad that I can't come too.

6, Belsize Park Gardens,
Hampstead, N.W.
Feb. 21st, 1917.

That wretched woman, the Lady O. Morrell writes to me as follows—"Do you think you could write to Virginia, & ask her if she could get Sassoon's book of Poems, and if she would review it kindly. . . . I think if he heard that his work had 'Promise' it might make him want to Live—to do things in the Future. But it is all ghastly and he can hardly bear it. Shall I shoot Lloyd George?"

It is indeed "all ghastly", and probably *you* could hardly bear it. But you see that you now have Siegfried's life, to say nothing of Lloyd George's, on your hands. I suppose you don't as a rule review what they call "poetry". Perhaps if you wrote to Richmond * suggesting that the bloody book should be noticed, it would suffice. Or what?—Let me know so that I may send some reply to that creature, who is now I think almost at the last gasp—ininitely old, ill, depressed, and bad tempered—she is soon to sink into a nursing-home, where she will be fed on nuts, and allowed to receive visitors (in bed).

Shall I come to tea with you on Sunday? With or without Carrington?

Your
Lytton.

* Editor of *The Times Literary Supplement*.

Durbin's
Guildford
Surrey.

Aug. 15th [?13th] 1917.

I hope you won't have been put out by my wire, I find myself plunged in a gulf of Gordon,* from which it is impossible to emerge for 2 or 3 days. Then I hope the crisis will be over—though there'll still be some finishing paragraphs to be applied. Please expect me on Thursday. I shall hope to be permitted to crouch in some corner, of a morning, with my pen and paper, and gigantic authorities. It is all extremely exhausting, but I suppose in the end I shall drag through still breathing.

How does one get to you from Lewes? In a taxi? Are there any left? With apologies and regrets

Your
Lytton

* The last essay in *Eminent Victorians*.

*Asheham House,
Rodmell,
Lewes.
Aug 14th [1917.]*

Naturally, we are much grieved, but if Gordon comes to birth and is read regularly after dinner, we forgive. We all retire to compose after breakfast, the sheep occasionally come into the field, but that's about all. The trains are these: 2.13 from Guildford to Brighton; arrives Brighton 4.14: catch a train arriving Lewes at 4.46. *Or* go to London, and take 3.20 from Victoria. The only way out is a taxi, or fly, unless you walk.

I have been sent 20 of these leaflets by old Mrs. Hobhouse,*

Yr.
V. W.

* Mrs. Henry Hobhouse: on the treatment of conscientious objectors.

*The Mill House,
Tidmarsh
Pangbourne.
Dec. 21st, 1917.*

Could you someday send that
General *here*, do you think? }
No particular hurry.

Here I am, in considerable agony.* Nature turned crusty, the “pipes” are congealed, and it has been so cold that my nose (to say nothing of other parts) dripped in icicles. My female companion—but I must observe that it has now begun to thaw, so that no doubt now the “pipes” (what *are* they?) will [be burst] and we shall be deluged; but no matter.—My female companion keeps herself warm by unpacking, painting, pruning the creepers, knocking in nails, etc. Tomorrow [night (?) James and] Alix arrive—what *they* [? will] do, I can’t imagine. [. . .] late. I try to console myself with Queen Victoria’s letters—but I should prefer yours. Please write. I remain here for at least another week; after that, I gather I’m doomed to Garsington for the New Year; after that, here again, I fancy. I still have a notion that I may be able to work in this seclusion, when all the nails have been finally knocked in. *Nous verrons*.

[. . .] A little advice also on a plot for a comedy would be useful. The worst of it is, it must be fit for publication. Otherwise “*Le Bougre Marié*” might be a good title. But how would it end? . . .

Will you tell Leonard that I was very sorry not to

* He was just settling in at Tidmarsh, where he spent the next six years.

be able to go and see Philip? * I had very few mornings, and they were all filled. I was very glad he liked Gordon. Have you read it yet? My fear is that it may be, in places, emphatic. [Do] you think so? The adjectives seemed to get a little thick at times, and the style altogether,—if you observed anything of the sort, alt[erations mig]ht be made. Or in other directions. You see, [there are plenty of things] to write to me about, so you really must. It [is ? . . .] having so little conversation with you; and this method's better than nothing, *I* think.

Who is staying with [you]? Are you too very dank and cold? Or will you pretend that the sun has been shining over your downs? I refuse to believe it. Nessa and Duncan I suppose you'll be seeing, with Maynard thrown in, wondrously agreeable. Ah, dearie, dearie me, I am nodding over the fire, and she's sowing an edge to the carpet, with a diligence . . . Ah, la vie! it grows more remarkable every minute.

Your
Lytton

[The original is much damaged by damp and in places illegible.]

* Leonard's brother.

Asheham

Lewes.

[December 28, 1917.]

Friday.

It was a great treat to get your letter, which, you know, is the first of a series, gradually becoming more and more indiscreet, until every dot has given place to fact. Besides, how can you be indiscreet with me? Don't I live in the middle of padded walls, through which not a sound escapes but what is to everyone's credit? Remember my blazing testimony—the Mansfield affair.

I suppose, not altogether hope, that some of our blessings have reached the Mill on the Pang by now: sun, light, running taps, frisking cowherds etc; but I can't believe that your spiritual level is quite up to ours. [. . .]

Gordon, as I knew he would, cast a gloom upon my festival. I thought him masterly—indeed, it's amazing how from all these complications you contrive to reel off such a straight and dashing story, and how you weave in every scrap—my God, *what* scraps!—of interest to be had, like (you must pardon one metaphor) a snake insinuating himself through innumerable golden rings—(Do snakes?—I hope so) I don't see how the skill could be carried further. My only criticism, which I ought to hesitate to give until a second reading, is that I'm not sure whether the character of Gordon altogether "convinces". I felt a little difficulty in bridging the gulfs, but I rather think this is inevitable from the method, which flashes light and dark this side and that—and then the crowd of facts to be found room for—and so perhaps one can't get that shifting

and muddling which produces atmosphere. I daresay I'm really putting in a claim for the novel form; and it doesn't read very lucidly. The writing I thought more than usually unadorned, and surely the most flawless example of the master's style in its maturity. I will read it once more—unless you want it back at once?—with a pencil.

We go back on Thursday. Shall you be passing through, and will you come to tea or something? I saw Molly * the other day, and she, on the advice of Arnold Bennett, has sent her novel to Chatto and Windus, who are, he says, the most intelligent publishers in London. Have they answered?

It's now Sunday; this letter has hung about, and Julian has splashed cocoa over it, and if I don't write it again it's because my fingers refuse their office. Cold has set in; Ka † is here; Bunny ‡ imminent; Julian and Quentin are spending the week end. I meant to tell you about the 17 Club; (but now it's too stale), and how I surprised the secret of [T.'s] fascination; it's *virility*; (perhaps to lose one's parts sends the semen to the surface—it seemed to splash and sparkle like phosphorescent cod's roe from every glance)—and [R.] all a tremble at one corner, and Miss [S.] immensely receptive at the other—I thought him a random untrustworthy mongrel, utterly incontinent.

This must go, I suppose to Garsington. My love to Ottoline. By God's prevision among my presents was a box of sealing wax, to unstick which warmth must be applied, and warmth is rare. Look for the impression of a perfect rose.§

* Mrs. Desmond MacCarthy.

‡ David Garnett.

† Mrs. Arnold-Forster.

§ On the envelope.

But then, as you justly say, what is there that needs
sticking or unsticking?
.
(that's cribbed from you).

Please write,
Yr. V. W.

.

*Hogarth House,
Paradise Road,
Richmond,
Surrey.*

15th March. [1918.]

Couldn't it be arranged that you should come to Asheham on Thursday 28th, stay over Monday and go on to Charleston? * We have felt bound to ask [M.] who has been rejected by Vanessa, but she is half engaged to Tidmarsh apparently, and if Carrington exerted a little pressure I think she would yield.

I've been having faint doubts, by the way, about reviewing your book. In the first place, if I review yours, then why not Clive's, Desmond's, Molly's and Fredegond's, which would be more than I could stand. In the second, I was rather snubbed by Bruce Richmond the other day, who thought, wrongly, that I was trying to get a friend's book reviewed, and told me it wasn't considered the thing to do—so I don't much like asking him. But these reasons aren't serious if you think it would be a real advantage. My feeling is that no review counts either way as far as making money is concerned. But I suppose you're certain of a long and flattering review anyhow. Mine would be highly flattering, of course. It's quite possible, though, that he'll send it me of his own accord.

I hope you got off safely today. We had an appalling Sunday—incessant chatter, or rather incessant gloom, and such spots on [Y.'s] face, such morose stupidity on Gerald Duckworth's—the only person with a spark of spunk was poor Nick, who pretended, I suppose.

* The farm in the neighbourhood of Lewes, where the Bells were now settled.

Katherine Mansfield has been dangerously ill, and is still pretty bad, so that Murry was sunk in the depths, what with that and overwork, poor wretch.

Yr.

V. W.

With or without [M.] we hope you'll come.

6 B. P G.
March 19th, 1918.

I should like very much to come to Asheham on Thursday 28th. Will you expect me for then, unless I write again? I have not yet consulted Carrington, but I hope to be able to induce her to remain at Tidmarsh with [M.], while I gallivant. Also, I don't know definitely when Vanessa can have me, as she was very vague and perhaps drunk when I talked to her about it. But I'll write and find out. Perhaps, if necessary, you would be able to keep me on at Asheham for a few days after the Easter week-end?

It seems to me you had much better not take any steps about the Victorians. It would never do to get into trouble with Richmond, and so far as I'm concerned, though I should be delighted if you *did* review it, because you would be more on the spot than anyone else, I quite agree with you that reviews one way or the other probably make no difference. If Richmond sends it you of his own accord, so much the better.

My "medical board" yesterday pronounced me "permanently & totally unfit for any form of Military Service"—which is a great relief. The whole thing was infinitely more civilised than I've ever known it before. The doctors, and even the clerks, were positively polite.

Your
Lytton.

Asheham.

Sunday. [March 24, 1918.]

We look forward with great pleasure to seeing you on Thursday: any time. As far as I know the trains are unchanged, we came by a very good one, 5.20 from Victoria, which connects almost exactly with another to Glynde, so that you get here for dinner. If you want to drive, you can order a fly from

Slaughter

Friar's Walk

Lewes

or a taxi from

Castle Garage,

High St.

Lewes.

Perhaps you wouldn't mind handing this on to Barbara who seems to be staying with you. Our only difficulty is that we are strictly rationed—thus, I think if you want meat, sugar or butter you must bring your cards. According to Leonard, it is easy to make these available at Lewes. The question of food is the only drawback to your staying on, which we should like you to do. With Noel and James in the house you might find yourself starved—But by the time you come we may have made better arrangements.

It's all very well to come to the country in order to write, but the animals are carrying on so frantically and indecently that I can't hear myself speak. Lambs, thrushes, ewes, rooks—their conduct too is distracting. I find that scarcely anything but impassioned meditation stands up against it, and the passion tends to run much in a groove. D'you find that too? It's true, Mill on Liberty mayn't be the proper channel. But what

divine days life holds, to be sure. Duncan has just been in, in corduroy breeches & gaiters, mumbling in his inspired way, like the first born of the human race, not yet entirely conscious.

Do bring some manuscript to read.

Yrs.

V. W.

Hogarth.
23rd April [1918.]

I wrote to ask Richmond to let me do your book. He answers that though willing and anxious that I should, he has to make it a rule that reviewers don't review their friends—not that he's afraid I should be partial, but that people would guess, and *say* I was partial, which he admits to be base on his part, but he's afraid he must stick to it. I'm very sorry. Of course you will get enough praise to sell your book as much as reviews do sell books. I rubbed it well in to Richmond that it was a work of surpassing merit. But I had a great many things I wanted to say, and felt already an affection for my masterpiece, as well as yours. Leonard suggests that I should write a short review for *War and Peace*.^{*} But I shouldn't be able to take a purely literary line there, of course, and the circulation isn't such that it will be worth the sale of even half a copy. Do you think there's any use doing it? Anyhow you needn't bother about getting an advance copy. But I'm very anxious to see it.

We are sitting in the same fog that began 21 days ago. Sometimes we dimly discern snow falling—we have electric light for meals, but they talk of cutting that off: I was at Guildford the other day and there it was worse, so don't talk to me about the country.

We've been asked to print Mr. Joyce's new novel,[†] every printer in London and most in the provinces having refused. First there's a dog that p's—then there's a man that forths, and one can be monotonous even on that subject—moreover, I don't believe that

^{*} A periodical Leonard was at that time editing.

[†] *Ulysses*.

his method, which is highly developed, means much more than cutting out the explanations and putting in the thoughts between dashes. So I don't think we shall do it.

By the way, you've got my copy of the other one.

Yr.

V. W.

24 May, 1918.

Asheham House.

I think your suggestion of "Patriotism and History" on Marriott's book sounds very good. I will write for the book and have it sent to you.

I haven't altered your article on Peace Traps, as Balfour's speech was really negligible and the point seemed rather niggling.*

We've been here a week in almost perfect weather and what is almost more perfect solitude. Except for Roger who came last night and left this morning. Why is it that we are all valetudinarians? Rogers lies on his back before and after meals and even so is afflicted with perpetual gripes, a swollen jaw, a diseased tooth, an incipient cold in the head, a decaying brain, and melancholia amatoria. Saxon's head has sunk permanently upon his chest from rheumatoid arthritis. And even you suffer from green vomit. I am unfit for any kind of military service and Virginia's record is not of the cleanest. I don't understand this early valetudinarianism which seems to descend upon us.

V. wants me to thank you for your book.† It seemed to me most imposing when one could read them all between the same black cover. I started on Arnold the evening it came, and could not stop reading it while V.'s co-operative women sang hymns in the dining room.

L[eonard]

The sun has completely dried the ink on my pen, or I would have written. And then L., by way of be-

* These paragraphs refer to articles contributed by Lytton to *War and Peace*.

† *Eminent Victorians*.

ing a practical man went and packed for me, and left out your book, which I meant to read here. So I can't write that delightful letter which I'd meant to. Besides to tell the truth, rumours of your success have poisoned my peace even here. Do write and tell me how complete it's been—how many copies you've sold, how many guineas, how many Countesses, how many adorations and whether at heart you're still the same.
[. . .]

[V. W.]

Hogarth House
Paradise Road
Richmond
Oct 12th [1918.]

Dearest Lytton,

I'm extremely sorry to hear distressing accounts of your diseases. Goldie * has been having the shingles too, and goes to a marvellous doctor, a quack, I suppose, who is curing him quickly and completely. He lays his fingers upon the tips of the nerves, and you can see the poison withdrawing as you watch. Would it be worth while to find out something more strictly accurate?

However, you must consider that boils, blisters, rashes, green and blue vomits are all appointed by God himself to those whose books go into 4 editions within 6 months. Shingles, I can assure you, is only a first instalment; don't complain if the mange visits you, and the scurvy, and your feet swell and the dropsy distends and the scab itches—I mean you won't get any sympathy from *me*. Did I tell you that Violet Dickinson encountered Mrs. H. Ward who was raging publicly against the defamation of her grandfather,† and thereby giving the liveliest joy to Lady Horner, who feels that you have worked off several old scores beyond her reach, and therefore blesses you every night as a benefactor? I'm now going to discover the Cromer attitude to Gordon in private.

Here we are back in Richmond again, and even plunged into a mild form of society, mild to you that is—to me the climax of dissipation. What with the approach of peace and the Russian dancers, the gal-

* G. Lowes Dickinson.

† Dr. Arnold.

lant Sitwells, and the poetical Edith, Ottoline utterly abandoned and nefarious, Duncan covered with paint from head to foot, Nessa abounding in babies, Saxon wrung with rheumatics, Robbie Ross found dead in his shirtsleeves, Roger going to lay him out, [M.'s] widow bursting in dead drunk—and so forth—all the things that invariably happen in London in October—it's a pleasant change. We went to hear Lord Grey's speech to begin with, and I had the pleasure of sitting exactly behind Mrs. Asquith and Elizabeth. I felt, at that distance, fairly secure against their fascination, and when McKenna and Lord Harcourt came in and sat down beside them I felt it would be a very great condescension on my part to drink tea out of the same cup—which I suspect to be one of their domestic habits. However I was impressed and exalted by Lord Grey. What an Englishman! What a gentleman! As for accusing him of dishonesty, one might as well accuse a pair of brown boots—of which indeed he constantly reminded me. His speech was nothing to get excited over, but on the other hand it was obviously impossible for him to manage any kind of peroration, which I thought much to his credit. Then there was the Sitwells' party, at which it was proposed to read aloud a sentence of banishment upon Ottoline (whose conduct seems to have surpassed itself—and yet even in vice what a magnificence she has!)—but this of course meant no more than that we withdrew to somebody's bedroom in great numbers and left Ottoline, got up to look precisely like the Spanish Armada in full sail, in possession of the drawing room. Perhaps more happened after I left. But how fearfully old one's getting! There I left her, with equanimity, to have her feathers pulled out by the vicious

old Roger, who has a febrile senility coming on, as I told him in the cab, quite unlike our elderly benignity—It's an attempt at youth perhaps—Do you feel this tolerance creeping into your veins too? Literature remains of course—however there's no room to begin upon that. I read the Greeks, but I am extremely doubtful whether I understand anything they say; also I have read the whole of Milton, without throwing any light upon my own soul, but that I rather like. Don't you think it very queer though that he entirely neglects the human heart? Is that the result of writing one's masterpiece at the age of 50? What about your masterpiece? And when are you coming to London? Please tell Carrington that we are waiting for her wood-cuts. Leonard sends his love.

Yr.

V. W.

Tidmarsh.
Jan. 29th, 1919.

I'm afraid you will think me quite undependable. I find London impossible—James has the flu in the house, and Calvé * is ill, and cannot meet me at Heinemann's—and so here I am. Will you overlook it? Later on, later on, when the snow has vanished . . . It is dreadfully dull down here, but healthy and for the moment there are fires. I foresee that I shall soon be forced to begin writing again through sheer désœuvrement. Leonard, I fear, will hardly forgive me. But I send him my love.

Your
Lytton

* The opera singer.

Hogarth.
Thursday. [January 30, 1919.]

Desolated, but acquiescent. Will you ask Carrington whether she is going to produce her wood cuts—if so, when; and will you see that she does it.

V. W.

Hogarth.
Monday. [May 26, 1919.]

I forgot to ask you about the meeting with the Webbs.* Saturday, 7th June, appears to be the day, and that is the Saturday before Whit Sunday. As far as I know it does for the Webbs. Will you let me know about you, and then I will write to them.

We go to Asheham tomorrow. Ottoline seems to have caught Picasso after all. But we shall be away from these gaieties—and Murry wants me to review Belshazzar—his poem—in the Athenaeum. For God's sake, say you'll do it instead. I shall try to wriggle out on the ground of my connection, and pecuniary interest. Addison improves a little—if one likes that sort of thing. I mean he's very much better than Robert Lynd or [I. J.]—O what a party! I may tell you that your illegitimate sister-in-law would have been a beacon of light, an oasis of green, in that assembly. "Yes, I give these parties because they're cheap" said Mrs [K.], and continued in that style on a sofa in a draught and without respite for $\frac{3}{4}$ of an hour: the last quarter was occupied by old decayed Cobden Sander-son, wearing a red ribbon round his neck, and a work-man's blue shirt—but not very inspiring all the same. Moreover, [K.] himself was more repulsive than words can express, and malignant into the bargain. As for the conduct and appearance of the rest, it was deplorable to conceive oneself of the same shape, more or less—not altogether thank God! Please assure me that we are rather different—some of us at least.

How did [D. E.] impress you? I have sheets from Ottoline this morning calling her "statuesque" and

* Sidney and Beatrice Webb.

lamenting her lack of passion; so that I suppose she failed to respond to pressure—But what's the use of asking questions, eh?—Since the telephone rings, and Lady Cunard, or Princess Arthur of Connaught requests the pleasure—but no! it's Mrs. Saxton Noble to meet Mr. Walter Lamb this time, so you can spare a moment. Clive assures me that *he* lunches out every day

“Where?”

“Ah, with beautiful creatures!” Still, if you can't put a name to them—

Yr.

V. W.

96 South Hill Park,
Hampstead Heath, N.W.
May 27th, 1919.

June 7th will suit me very well for Webbism—lunch, of course. I again forgot to get Kew Gardens. Could you send me a copy of it and Eliot's poems? Or if you haven't got any with you, reserve them?

Garsington was terribly trying. I was often on the point of screaming from sheer despair, and the beauty of the surroundings only intensified the agony. Ott I really think is in the last stages—infinately antique, racked in every joint, hobbling through the buttercups in cheap shoes with nails that run into her feet, every stile a crisis, and of an imbecility. She is rongée, too, by malevolence; every tea party in London to which she hasn't been invited is wormwood, wormwood. The great Picasso question plunges her into inconceivable agitations—in vain I tell her he is only a silent Spaniard—she wires to Osbert daily, and is convinced that Roger has intrigued to prevent them meeting. However, at the last moment she typically recovered, appearing in a yellow straw top hat, in which she drove me and [D. E.] to Oxford in the finest manner. [D. E.] makes the heart sink within one—a sharp twist to the neck would be the thing for her. Bertie * worked his circular saw as usual. I've never been able to feel at ease with him, and I can only suppose that he dislikes me—pourquoi?

It's a mercy to be back here again, even though the Duchesses seem to have dropped me. I *was* rung up just now, though, and by—who do you think?—Va-

* Bertrand Russell.

nessa, who's in Gordon Square apparently. I dine there tonight. Clive's luncheons are certainly mysterious, and I fancy apocryphal—I think when you return we'd better put on white masks and track him out.

Review Murry! Ho, Ho!

Your Lytton

Monk's House

Rodmell

Lewes.

Sunday [September] 14th [1919.]

Dearest Lytton,

I wish we had been able to see you; but we were in our agony when you were at Charleston.* Things aren't much better yet, owing to domestic horrors, it now looks as if the kitchen would have to be re-built. What can one do with a sweating floor? However, there are charms in this place, though very humble and unromantic compared with Asheham. I like the morning sun in one's window, though, and the youth of the village nightly play cricket outside the garden wall, which would recommend itself to you.

What are you doing? Polishing Old Victoria? Legends of your high flyings pass across our horizon now and then. I'm not really anxious. Maynard seems much the same as ever only more and more genial, and, superficially, kind! I suppose the danger lies in becoming too kind. I think you're a little inclined that way already—take the case of Ottoline. It seems to me a dark one. Still, kindness don't flourish in our corner of Sussex. I spent the day at Charleston yesterday, & came away feeling purged, bruised, scraped & raw, but morally regenerated. I've no news whatever to give you. About 10 days ago I had a letter from Nick Bagenal. They seem all right. I rather hope I may get one from Saxon. The effect of a move upon the intellects and morals is utterly destructive. Moreover Leonard has become what I daresay is called garden proud. We can't resist going out to look at pears, and then

* They were moving house.

the potatoes have to be weighed. I suppose you couldn't guess what they weigh. We are very charitable too, and when they want sprays for funerals they come and ask us. Altogether, I find it very hard to settle to my book, which is, at this moment, the complete works of George Eliot. But you have never read them. I wish you had, because then perhaps you would explain the whole puzzle. At anyrate you might write me a letter, which is the sole object of this one. I read Wilfrid Blunt (diaries) at breakfast; I don't like aristocratic writing, do you? I don't like the Souls; I don't like George Wyndham; Heaven knows what one does like, though, on the whole, what I like is first going a walk; then having tea; then sitting and imagining all the pleasant things that might happen to one. I should like to be asked to Tidmarsh for a week end in October. But you will be in Spain, perhaps.

Leonard sends his love—in all sincerity.

Yr.

V. W.

*The Mill House,
Tidmarsh,
Pangbourne.
Sept 28th, 1919*

It was charming of you to write to me. Please do so again, in spite of my backwardness in answering. Also inability. I, who once filled reams a day, now sit gnawing my pen after the first sentence. Old age? Middle age? Or what? In any case—something deplorable.

It makes me weep to think that I've seen the last of Asheham, and even the chaste beauties of your Monks' residence will never really console me. How can you bear it? And what has happened to the cottages in Cornwall? I rather fancy that they're mythical.

I have been having a grim time of it, presiding (or rather assisting) in the move which is shortly to take place of my family from Belsize Park to Gordon Square—for *that* is where pure Chance has decided that they're to dwell in the future. No. 51. Yes. A few doors along. Very soon I foresee that the whole square will become a sort of College. And the rencontres in the garden I shudder to think of. The business of packing, deciding what is to be sold, what sent to Tidmarsh, what given to the deserving poor, etc. has been fearful, and is still proceeding, the brunt of it of course falling upon the unfortunate Pippa. *I* am fit for very little more than wringing my hands. In the intervals I go to the British Museum, and try to dig up scandals about Queen Victoria. Altogether a distracting life, and the comble was reached in the small hours of Friday morning, when the policeman's wife who acts as caretaker gave birth to a baby just outside my bedroom door. After that I retreated down here, and now the

railway strike what, oh what! is going to happen? I am alone, with a strange servant lent by the Anreps, no newspapers reach me, I know nothing, and I daresay the next thing I shall hear will be the proclamation of the Soviet Government. Have you decided what steps to take in that eventuality? Leonard, at any rate, will hardly escape the guillotine.

Your appearances in the Athenaeum alone keep me in good temper with existence. You should have seen Mrs. Berenson heaving with laughter over the Royal Academy article, in the train, en route for . . . well, never mind. When is your novel coming out?

I had lunch with Nessa and Duncan the other day in the Regent Square domicile. [. . .]

Adieu
Your
Lytton

I'm very glad you dislike Wilfrid Blunt, and I hope you'll write about him.

Hogarth
Richmond.
Oct 28th [1919.]

Ah, how delightful to be praised by you! * I tell myself that of course you're always too generous about me, and one ought to discount it, but I can't bring myself to. I enjoy every word. I don't suppose there's anything in the way of praise that means more to me than yours. There are myriads of things I want to ask you; about the male characters for instance. Do they convince? Then was Rodney's change of heart sufficiently prepared for to be credible? It came into my head on the spur of the moment that he was in love with Cassandra, and afterwards it seemed a little violent. I take your point about the tuppings and had meant to introduce a little in that line, but somehow it seemed out of the picture—still, I regret it. Never mind; I've an idea for a story where all the characters do nothing else—but they're all quadrupeds! However, as I'm afflicted with rheumatism, this had better wait, I only wanted to say how happy your letter had made me,—dialogue was what I was after in this book—so I'm very glad you hit on that; I mean it was one of the things—there are so many million others!—but I can't help thinking it's the problem, if one is to write novels at all, which is a moot point.

Tell Carrington I went into the question of the roses with some care, and will write to her on the subject. It's not as simple as it sounds. Was it stated in the book that Elizabeth Datchet took a first prize for them the year before? She did however and so—but I can't go into all this at length.

* Lytton's letter to her about *Night and Day* is missing.

We should like immensely to come on the 8th—and why ask anyone? Don't for our sakes. We shall be quite content with the two natives.

Your
Virginia

There's an amusing book just come out—Miss Eden's * letters, Edited by Violet Dickinson.

* The Hon. Emily Eden.

Hogarth.
Wednesday [November 26, 1919.]

An American publisher wants to bring out *Night and Day* and the *Voyage Out*—indeed, I can't resist telling you that I've had offers from two—asked to write for an American paper (don't ask which), asked to write for the *London Mercury*, invited to meet Miss Elizabeth Asquith, Lady Russell; and Miss Constance Miles—Still I've not time to go into this with any fullness.

But would you be so angelic as to tell me if any special misprints obscurities or vulgarities in either occur to you. I have to send the books off on Monday and they say the more alterations the better—because of copyright. I've just glanced between the boards and see that the whole thing must be re-written from the beginning—and only 2 days to do it in!

I never wrote a Collins to say how much I enjoyed *Tidmarsh*, but I did.

Yr.
V. W.

If you can send any corrections, could you let me have them by Saturday?

*The Mill House,
Tidmarsh,
Pangbourne.
Nov. 27th, 1919.*

Well, well, well! I hope soon to meet you at the dear Duchess's, the dear Princess's, and dear Mrs. Colefax's. Or I should say to hear your accounts of them, as I have retired, probably permanently, into this acidulation of ice. As for America, I hope you'll make a decent bargain, but probably it's difficult. But don't, I adjure you, write for the London Mercury. Anything rather than that.

Short of rewriting Night & Day from start to finish, no alterations are required. Except, perhaps, on p. 34 (line 5) where a grammatical looseness occurs (pointed out by Saxon, I need hardly say). The age of seventeen or eighteen appears to belong to Mrs. Hilbery. I did notice I think two mere misprints, but failed to mark them, so they've vanished, but I daresay you've seen them yourself.

Have you read Ethel Smyth's reminiscences? * They're extremely entertaining, not to say interesting. Curiously old-fashioned, too. The Education of Henry Adams I have only just got hold of—do you know it? Really I think a most remarkable work. I am now setting forth on Sam. Butler.† I see it will last me some time.

I have lost Philip's ‡ address. If Leonard would send

* Composer and suffragette whose *Impressions That Remained* was published in 1919.

† His *Life*, by Festing Jones.

‡ Leonard's brother.

it me on a postcard I could then send on Mr. Stephen Graham,* poor man.

It is far far too cold—I can't articulate—My stomach is congealed.

Your
Lytton

* Presumably his recent book, *A Private in the Guards*.

Sunday. Hogarth
[November 30, 1919.]

Many thanks for the correction; I have put it in; undoubtedly there are hundreds more, but it can't be helped.

Philip's address is

Greenmoor Hill Farm
Woodcot
Oxon.

Leonard was there yesterday, and found him fearfully dark and dismal, and apparently breaking down in health into the bargain. No cook, no food, and half his house pulled down.

O no, I shall never reach your heights. Elizabeth Asquith will be at once the beginning and the end; but I'll write and tell you what passes between us. Gerald Duckworth has entire control of my arrangements so I expect nothing. Did you see Massingham's onslaught in the Nation? I wonder why. But I feel it's to my credit, whereas when the Bishop of Exeter's wife says she feels certain I'm a Christian, I'm a good deal depressed. [E.] has been put in his place.

I'm in the 2nd. vol. of Ethel Smyth. I think she shows up triumphantly, through sheer force of honesty. It's a pity she can't write; for I don't suppose one could read it again. But it fascinates me all the same. I saw her at a concert two days ago—striding up the gangway in coat and skirt and spats and talking at the top of her voice. Near at hand one sees that she's all wrinkled and fallen in, and eyes running blue on to the cheeks; but she keeps up the figure of the nineties to perfection. Of course the book is the soul of

the nineties. Did you ever know Sue Lushington? Much the same type. Then Ethel's passion for the W.C. (it occurs in every chapter) is of the highest merit.

We've got to buy 2 more houses; both servants are leaving; and the Int Review * is coming to an end.

Yr.

V. W.

* *International Review*.

Monk's House
Rodmell
Lewes.
21st Feb. Saturday [1920.]

As you see, we are already here. The difficulty about coming next Saturday, which is I admit the most attractive prospect that life has to offer, is that we have to attend two auctions, buy 2 army huts, get them carted over here, put into position and transformed into a kitchen if possible by Saturday—As the huts are connected with Colonel Young who is connected with Mrs. Grant, who is connected with Duncan whose new studio depends on them, you will see how complicated it is, and how unlikely to end well. Also Leonard is entirely re-making the garden.

But couldn't we induce Tidmarsh to come to Rodmell? Please convey a warm invitation on our part to Mr. [Ralph] Partridge; press Carrington's hand—stroke your own beard. Beds abound; our cook turns out excellent—and they say there's a peculiar virtue in spending the 40th birthday between strange sheets: that is if you want to beget sons, and keep your hair. An uncle of mine—but I'll tell you his story if you'll come. If you won't surely we might meet somehow? Leonard suggests that you should stay on and deal with Vic. here: he very much wishes to see Mr. Partridge.

Yr. V. W.

[Picture Postcard]

Ap. 3rd. 1920.

Well, how are you? We arrived here * yesterday—very chirpy. But so far I have not bought a herd of black pigs.

Lytton

* Granada.

*The Mill House,
Tidmarsh,
Pangbourne.
Jan. 24th 1921.*

A slightly pointless book,* I'm afraid, on a distinctly depressing subject. However, such as it is, may I dedicate it to you? I feel that the mystic initials V. W. would cast a halo—and besides that as you're more unlike Old Vic than anyone else in the world, it's only proper that she should be inscribed to you.

I go to 51 Gordon Square tomorrow. Are you coming to Tidmarsh next Saturday? I hope so.

With love
from
Lytton

* *Queen Victoria.*

Hogarth.
Jan 25th [1921.]

Ah—but this is what I may have dreamed of, but never hoped for. What could I like better? Only my inordinate vanity whispers might it not be Virginia Woolf in full? Some Victoria Worms or Vincent Woodlouse is certain to say it's them, and I want all the glory to be mine for ever. But it's better than a glory and comes on my birthday too.

We look forward to Saturday, and shall we have Vic?

Dearest Lytton, Your V. W.

*Penion
Zennor
St. Ives.*

Wednesday March ? [1921.]

The enclosed card * gives you no idea of the place, which is indescribable—far better than the Lizard or the Land's End, or St Ives, or indeed anywhere. (I have just had to move my chair out of the blazing sun) One walks out of the window on to the cliff. There are 2 seals bathing in the bay. Two adders curling round my ankles. Gorse, cowries, Cliffs, Choughs, Ravens, Cream, solitude, sublimity and all the rest of it. It's true that Ka is perched on the hill a mile and a half away, with the oddest collection of good little grey men who spend their time scrambling up chimneys and funnels and are hardly articulate in consequence. But there is [W.X.] for you—not for me. I've not seen him. We take our books out and lie in the sun; occasionally I say, why aren't you here?—but even so, a general benignity pervades us. I like Will better, and have looked through portfolios of grey-blue rock scapes—not of Cornwall; of Italy as it was before the war. I met a man yesterday by appointment to discuss literature—"which is my whole life, Mrs. Woolf." But I can give you no idea—He lives with a half perished dumb wife on a headland in a cottage with Everyman's Library entire. "I read no moderns. Life is not long enough for anything save the best. Hardy has taught me to look into my heart. I have enjoyed this conversation, Mrs. Woolf. It has confirmed me in my own opinions." This stunted ani-

* A picture postcard of Gurnard's Head.

mal was a clerk in the post office, became infected with books, and is now like the oldest kernel of a monkey's nut in the Gray's Inn Road. However—why is it that human beings are so terribly pathetic? God knows. Or am I becoming rotten with middle age? I did refrain from asking him to correspond; but left with tears in my eyes—almost. I can't help thinking that we are hopelessly muddled. Then there was the theosophist, Mr. [Watt] in the cottage which I once hired; and he lives on nuts from Selfridges, and a few vegetables, and has visions, and wears boots with soles like slabs of beef and an orange tie; and then his wife crept out of her hole, all blue, with orange hair, and cryptic ornaments, serpents, you know, swallowing their tails in token of eternity, round her neck. The rain, they said, often comes through the walls on a wet day, so I'm glad I didn't settle there. But can you explain the human race at all—I mean these queer fragments of it which are so terribly like ourselves, and so like Chimpanzees at the same time, and so lofty and high minded, with their little shelves of classics and clean china and nice check curtains and purity that I can't see why its all wrong. We tried to imagine you there, snipping their heads off with something very witty.

Well, I shall read Queen Victoria and try to see how its done. I see the New Republic is publishing it, and it's an incredible gem, and a masterpiece of prose. I quite believe it, though my jealousy is twinged—and I thought I had no vices left in me after this week. I thought I was going to read the whole of Shakespeare and I haven't; but I come back longing to get my teeth into your book—Is it quite magnificent? And why

weren't you here? And now I must take a last look at
the country: which will dissolve me in tears.

Give my love to your mother.

Yr.

V. W.

Hogarth
Sunday April 17th [1921.]

Well, I feel I must write to you either in your own style or in Victoria's. There's no escaping you after reading the book. Indeed, it is quite magnificent, better as a whole I should say, than the other. I've seldom enjoyed anything more. I suppose the chief marvel is the way you spin the story perfectly straightforwardly, never a line slack, and yet contrive those wonderful little portraits, one after another, each exactly in its place, illuminating, without interruption or fuss or for a moment stopping, it seems, to go on talking simply. The effect is not merely satiric by any means. You seem to have reduced it to the last possible ounce, and yet to have kept all the meat and bone and guts. The great moments seem to me really moving. And the Queen herself comes out somehow surprising, solid and angular, and touching, though not exactly sympathetic. Amazing woman! My only criticism (and I'm not sure of its truth) is that occasionally I think one is a little conscious of being entertained. It's a little too luxurious reading—I mean, one is willing perhaps to take more pains than you allow. I couldn't bear to sacrifice any of the amusements (the boy Jones is superb, and there are a million others) but now and again perhaps, where the space is so limited, the jokes are a little on the surface—But I don't know. I must read it through. The first time one races. Literally I snatched it up, put it down, snatched it up, till it was all done. One of the things I thought particularly magnificent and original was the description of the possessions. It was so massive, and summed it all up, and opened up,

I thought, infinite vistas of new forms. But we must talk about it when you come.

Yr.

V. W.

Oh, and I must say how I enjoyed your Batesian version of the Queen on the Great Exhibition. "Sir George Grey in tears, and everybody astonished and delighted."

c/o Mrs. Wilson,
Watendlath Farm
Keswick
Cumberland.
Aug. 23rd, 1921.

Have you read "Biographical Memoirs of Extraordinary Painters"? I think it might amuse you—by Beckford, and in the pseudo-romantic style. But it only lasts for half-an-hour—which is annoying, as, in the scarcity of books, I feel myself driven ever nearer and nearer to the abyss of Swann—I shudder and draw back—interpose Maynard on Probability, "The Group Mind" by Mary Creighton's [. . .] husband, Lord Esher on Lord Kitchener, and the insipid memoirs of De Thou. All is in vain, and Swann continues to loom. There is only now the first half of Colonel Repington * between me and it, for I cannot read Signor Croce on Corneille and Ariosto, which seems to be the only alternative, except a study of Strindberg in American, proving that he was probably homosexual and certainly in love with his mother—the conclusion is too obvious, one passes on, though one sentence is attractive—"In the Belvidere he stood for an hour before the Venus of Guido Reni, resembling his adored wife in every respect, and all of a sudden he felt an irresistible longing for her person, packed his grip and returned suddenly." This is what the language of Milton has come to.

I am sitting, as you may guess, rather comatose, in a small cottage apartment, green mountains out of window, the stuffed head of a very old female sheep over the window, etc. etc. Alix, James, Mr. & Mrs. P. and

* *The First World War.*

l'ami Brenan wander in and out with fish-hooks and hard-boiled eggs done up in newspaper. Some of them declare that they are going out to squat among the heather and the damp ferns, in order to have lunch and tea. Needless to say, James and I remain at home—James on an enormous air-cushion balanced upon a horsehair sofa, reading the psychopathology of day-dreams, by Dr. Varendonck . . . One wonders whether one has been quite wise in coming North. The rain and cold have been fairly continuous, though for three or four days it was extremely hot, and we walked over the stoney hills until our feet were covered with blisters—they still are—at least mine are, and I can only wear silk socks and slippers, in which I totter occasionally into the air. But the air is unfortunately relaxing, as they say,—very different from yours, which I wish I was breathing—are you enjoying it and growing robust? If you can't write, perhaps Leonard will, with all the news. I wonder whether Monk's House is doomed—or what. Have you been having visitors? And how are the inhabitants of Charleston? In about a fortnight I shall be floating towards your smooth downs and redbrick houses—or so I hope—and what a relief it will be! Oh, to see an out-

line, instead of  on the horizon! But I must turn away from such visions, and face the inevitable Swann.

Your,
Lytton

*Monk's House,
Rodmell
Lewes.
Aug 29, 1921.*

What a devil you are not to write oftener—considering your command of the language.

When are you coming? That is the purpose of this letter. We want to avoid an encounter between you and [K. L.]. Yes: it is quite true; he has been asked.

I've seen nobody; I have done nothing. All sorts of plagues descended upon me, very wearisome, but, thank God, suddenly disappeared. I'm now recovered, gained 6 lbs; and we're off to look at a farmhouse. Ted Hunter is going to build a cottage overlooking the orchard; I believe him to be a partner of Haynes. And one hears Mrs. [F.], over the wall, asking [F.] whether he'd like his cocktail mixed. The worst of it is that the country is lovelier and lovelier. We have put brick edges to the flower beds. We have a garden room. Tell Ralph that every flower that grows blows here. We have pears for breakfast. I have taken out a subscription to Lewes free library, which exactly suits my case. But even there Lytton Strachey predominates. I want to turn an honest penny; and behold, when I come to write about old Mrs. Gilbert, it runs of its own accord into two semi-colons, dash, note of exclamation, full stop. Do you recognise your style?

I've not seen Charleston; but L. has. Mary, Spratt, Duncan, Clive, Maynard (very argumentative), Nessa, refusing like all Stephen women to lie down and drink milk, or go to bed before 2 a.m.; Clive writing an article upon the obscure, which can't be done without consulting Virginia. Virginia rather testy; says

she's *not* obscure; Duncan offers to come over—bicycle broken; Mr. Botten's horse drops dead in the field of strangled guts—but this probably belongs to Rodmell news, and is indeed all I can think of—The Literary Supt. by the way, says that Prewett *is* a poet; perhaps a great one.

So do come, and let us know, & we'll keep off the [L.s] and the [F.s].

Yr. V. W.

I am reading Evan Morgan's novel: " 'Je suis vaincue,' and she sobbed on his breast, clinging to him. Both were exhausted, the emotions of the soul had overpowered them, they fell half fainting against the cool grey stone, and there . . . they leant in the twilight against the protecting buttress of the House of God, the God of Love and of Life."

Hogarth. Wednesday.
[February 1, 1922.]

The one thing needed, so the doctor says, is a letter from the great master of biography. That would set me on my feet again. So please put down whoever it is—can't be still Voltaire?—and write a long long overflowing letter.

No news here, except what I collect through Ralph—highly amusing and gratifying I must say. This refers to Maynard. The other news—how you're a sharper—also gratifies. I guessed that long ago.

Couldn't you lend me the proofs of your new volume?

That would be something to read. With all your faults—how is it that one enjoys reading you?

V. W.

The Mill House,
Tidmarsh,
Pangbourne.
Feb. 6th 1922.

It is sad to think of you ill, and sadder still to think that your recovery depends upon your friends' letters. Good heavens! Your case is hopeless! How can anyone write to you, I should like to know? Certainly I can't. Perhaps [N.] can. I envision his elegant elaborations. Only, if they cause your recovery, I shall never speak to you again, and in that case will recovery be worth while? Better to languish and languish into an at least honourable grave. But I expect everyone (except [N.]) is more or less languishing at the present moment. *My* state has long been quite deplorable. I put it down to the Winter—the agony of thick underclothes, etc. etc.; but of course it may be sheer deliquescence of the brain. Anyhow, from whatever cause, I am sans eyes, sans teeth, sans prick, sans . . . but after that there can be no more sanses,—and on the whole I feel more like a fish gasping on a bank than anything else. It is terrible. I hope wildly that a change will come with the swallows (whenever that may be), and in the meantime I pretend to read. Books arrive from the Times Book Club (I am a *guaranteed subscriber*). But I hardly look at them. I spend hours turning over the leaves of the Dictionary of National Biography. When that gets too exhausting, I take to *Who's Who*. I sometimes dip into the *Old Masters*. I find Swift very good, though a dreadfully unpleasant character; Dante ditto; Milton ditto. Does one have to be dreadfully unpleasant to be in the first division of the first class, do you think? But then there is Rabelais, who is reas-

suring. To descend abruptly, I wonder if you will be able to get through [Q.'s] little volume. I suppose there is some kind of cleverness in it, but—how I hate the woman, with her dried pea of a soul! “The Four Ages of Poetry” * is brilliant. That man knew how to write prose—vide the last enormous sentence—which is more than Shelley or Browning did. Yet, besides Clive, who has heard of him?

The Maynard affair is most peculiar. So far I have only heard Vanessa's account, but I hope before very long to get a first hand one. What are we all coming to, pray? The Universe totters.

Do you know that I have joined the Oriental Club? You must come and have lunch with me there when the swallows are with us.—A vast hideous building—have you been there?—filled with vast hideous Anglo-Indians, very old and very rich. One becomes 65, with an income of 5000 a year, directly one enters it. One is so stout one can hardly walk, and one's brain works with an extraordinary slowness. Just the place for me, you see, in my present condition. I pass almost unnoticed with my glazed eyes and white hair, as I sink into a leather chair heavily with a copy of the Field in hand. Excellent claret too—one of the best cellars in London, by Jove. You *must* come! I'll write again soon, if you can bear it.

Your
Lytton

* By Peacock. A reprint had recently appeared, along with essays by Shelley and Browning.

*The Mill House,
Tidmarsh,
Pangbourne.
Feb. 10th, 1922.*

The accounts of you lately have not been very good, but I hope that you are now beginning to be on the mend, and that letters load your plate every morning. If one has to be in bed, this is certainly a good time to choose for it. The horror of getting up is unparalleled, and I am filled with amazement every morning when I find that I have done it. To my mind there is clearly only one test of wealth, and that is—a fire in one's bedroom. Until one can have that at any and every moment, one is poor. Oh, for a housemaid at dawn!

Have you looked at the [Q.'s] piddlings? And don't you think them vile? The horrid atmosphere of "luxe" over them!—Poinsettias—what on earth are they?—and chandeliers. But the reviews, such as I have seen, have been pretty crushing. Mr. Masfield has produced a very strange little book—an "adaptation" of Racine's *Esther*—the most deplorable give-away you ever saw. And the *Lit. Sup.* treats it quite seriously, and implies that Mr. M. is a better poet than Racine. We are a nation of barbarians, I fear. The wretched man clearly hadn't the faintest idea what he was up to. Oh! oh! Style, words, common decency, mean nothing to him—or to the *Lit. Sup.*—nothing. He converts Racine's exquisite silk, length after length of it, into patches of rough canvass with perfect complacency—and the *Lit. Sup.* is charmed. However, he's sent me back to my old love, and I spent last night in a rapture over *Athalie*, which I had rather forgotten—good gracious me!

Reading it, I almost felt a Frenchman, and that there really was nothing like *that* in the world. It took quite an effort to remember King Lear and in fact I'm still rather doubtful whether . . . Well, I'm coming up to London next week, and hope you'll be well enough to see me a little then. I'll ring up Leonard.

May Sinclair's book, "The Life & Death of Harriet Frean"—has some merit, though nasty. Have you seen it?

I wish you *would* read my proof-sheets. I don't know yet when they'll begin.

Your Lytton

Saturday 8th? 9th? [11th] Feb. [1922.]
Hogarth House.

Your correspondence is about the only bright spot in my day so please continue. My lethargy is that of the alligator at the Zoo. And the alligator doesn't have very clear ideas of Racine. A. B. W.* in the Times almost suffocated me by saying that Molière, Don Juan, is tedious twaddle. Surely it is the best of the lot—so I seem to remember. Then that Mule, Alice Meynell, says that Jane Austen is a frump, and that Mr. Patmore is equal to Milton and that Tristram Shandy should be read in Prof. Morley's edition with every 10th page cut out. There can't be anything left to castrate of Meynell, or I should do it myself. Alligators can't endure the moderns—Peacock is what I like. You don't know how good he is—Crotchet Castle—surely nothing survives except the perfection of prose. And you read Miss Sinclair! So shall I perhaps. But I'd rather read Lytton Strachey.

Well, if you do come it will be something to look forward to. [. . .] Roger looms in the distance, so let me know which day.

The infirmity of this handwriting is *not* entirely heart disease: I am reduced to a fountain pen. And you make them work.

[Q.] exactly suits my tank. Poinsettias, arum lilies, copulation in tepid water, spume, sperm, semen—that's my atmosphere. She doesn't shock me as [D.] does, all the same.

Yr.
V.

* Walkley.

*c/o Mrs. Edwards
Solva
Pembrokeshire.
Aug. 22nd, 1922.*

I think of moving through Sussex early in September. Would it be possible for you to house me from (approx:) the 8th (Friday) to the 11th? I suggest going to Charleston from (approx:) the 5th to the 8th, and have written to Clive to that effect, adding that if it was more convenient I might invert the order—or come later, if necessary, but that would not be so easy.

I am almost completely shattered—simply by the weather. Otherwise (apart from fiendish expense and the vileness of hotels) all goes well. This place is in the region of Manorbier—near St Davids, if you know where that is, and I believe very pretty, but the snow and sleet have prevented my seeing much of it. The ice carnival takes place this afternoon—and we shall all look charming in our furs, cutting figures of eight. Did you know that the Atlantic is often quite frozen over up here? The seals look so funny, sprawling almost among the glaciers, poor things—and then you should see the cormorants breaking the ice with their long bills and pulling out the jelly-fish—so cleverly!

Have you any news? The prospectus of the “Criterion” reached me in these fastnesses the other day, and I was glad to see that the world was still wagging. But *I* may no longer. I am stiff—frozen stiff—a rigid icicle. I hang at this address for another week, and then slowly melt southwards and eastwards—a weeping relic of what was once your old friend.

Monks House
Rodmell.
Aug. 24th, 1922.

Yes, 8th to 11th, (but why not a little longer?) will suit us perfectly—so we will consider that fixed.

I don't know that one can call Sydney Waterlow news. He has been here; he has found God—only Mr. Sullivan: he bathed; the Ouse was too shallow; he says Katherine Mansfield, completely recovered, is at Bretts. [. . .]

Well, we've been eating ices at Brighton, too hot to stir—early tea today, and then a loiter through the cornfields [. . .] A record crop of pears; green peas for dinner; and after dinner we light the Tortoise stove, which I assure you burns whole books—which do instead of coal, and are ever so much hotter, did you know that?

Yr. V. W.

Love to C: [arrington] to whom I now write with the debauched remnants of the pen with which I have written a story for the Criterion, which (I use too many whiches) which the C. will reject. Alas, alas, it is clouding over.

Tidmarsh.
Sept. 19th, 1922.

I totally forgot to leave a *pourboire* for the admirable Lottie. Will you therefore kindly press the enclosed piece of paper into her palm for me, with appropriate speeches? She really *is* very obliging. [. . .]

My week-end at Garsington was not very stimulating. Mr. & Mrs. W. J. Turner were the only other guests. He said he had met you—adores you very much, etc. etc.—a very small bird-like man with a desolating accent, good deal to say for himself—but punctuated by strange hesitations—impediments—rather distressing; but really a nice little fellow, when one has got over the way in which he says “count”. Ott. was dreadfully *dégringolée* [. . .] I found I wanted to howl like an Irish wolf—but perhaps the result produced in you was different.

Your visit, I gather, had been the greatest success, and you were the only person mentioned without some virulent acidity.

The Turner man told me that [X.] was completely changed by a little alcohol—which makes him “a different being”—he flows, beams, etc. A pity we didn’t know this—we might have had an uproarious evening.

I wish I saw you both more often.

ever your
Lytton

*The Mill House,
Tidmarsh,
Pangbourne.
Oct. 9th, 1922.*

I finished Jacob * last night—a most wonderful achievement—more like poetry, it seems to me, than anything else, and as such I prophecy immortal. The technique of the narrative is astonishing—how you manage to leave out everything that's dreary, and yet retain enough string for your pearls I can hardly understand. I occasionally almost screamed with joy at the writing. Of course you're very romantic—which alarms me slightly—I am such a Bonamy.† Once or twice I thought you were in danger of becoming George-Meredithian in style—or was that a delusion? Something of the sort certainly seems to me *the* danger for your genre. But so far you're safe. You're a romantic in Sirius, I fancy—which after all is a good way off from Box Hill. The impression left on one as a whole is glorious. And then, as one remembers detail after detail—the pier at Scarborough, the rooks and the dinner-bell, the clergyman's wife on the moors, St Paul's, The British Museum at night, the Parthenon—one's head whirls round and round. Jacob himself I think is very successful—in a most remarkable & original way. Of course I see something of Thoby ‡ in him, as I suppose was intended.

It's not much good writing—we must talk soon. By a sickening mischance I went and engaged myself for Wednesday—will you tell Leonard?—to some old cats here. If Thursday or Friday would suit him

* *Jacob's Room.*

‡ Virginia's elder brother.

† In *Jacob's Room.*

they'd do for me perfectly—he can tell Ralph. If Wednesday is for him the only good day, I'll come then, and cut the cats.

Your loving
Lytton

A horrid misprint page 190—Dick for Nick. There's also Dick Graves, as well as Dick Bonamy—rather a plethora perhaps.

*Hogarth House,
Paradise Road,
Richmond,
Surrey.*

Oct. 9th [10th?] 1922.

I breathe more freely now that I have your letter, though I think your praise is extravagant—I can't believe you really like a work so utterly devoid of so many virtues; but it gives me immense pleasure to dream that you do. Of course you put your infallible finger upon the spot—romanticism. How do I catch it? Not from my father. I think it must have been my Great Aunts. But some of it, I think, comes from the effort of breaking with complete representation. One flies into the air. Next time, I mean to stick closer to facts. There are millions of things I want to get your opinion on—This is merely to heave a sigh of relief that you don't cast me off, for nobody else's praise ever gives me quite as much pleasure as yours.

Thursday, lunch.

Your loving
Virginia.

[Postcard]

I should be very grateful for a line to say whether you advise me to buy the new Congreve.

Does it give more (of importance) than the usual editions: or prove that they are bowdlerized? It is a serious matter to part with £3/3 but I would, in a good cause.

Yr.

V. W.

Hogarth. Thursday. [October 4, 1923.]

*The Mill House,
Tidmarsh,
Pangbourne.
Oct. 6th, 1923.*

I think for ordinary purposes there's no point in getting the new Congreve. The new material is really quite unimportant. Squire Trelooby is nothing—otherwise there are 3 or 4 jokes, which were cut out of the comedies after the first editions. Also, Mr. Montague Summers is extremely trying and much too much in evidence. The Mermaid Edition, though, has one rather annoying blemish—it divides up the acts—heaven knows why—into tiresome scenes, which detract (unless one realises that they're really non-existent) from the sense of unity and continuity. An early 18th century edition would be all right; and I think Mr. George Street's 2 vol. edition of the Comedies is quite satisfactory—though to be sure it seems a pity not to have that clever piece the Mourning Bride.

I hope to send Leonard my Nation lucubration on this subject in 2 days. They cannot by any stretch come under the heading of "a study of past characters", I'm afraid; so I shall do one of those—perhaps to some extent on Bentley—for Oct. 28th. I had got one all ready on Sir John Harington—a very amusing person—but the appearance of Raleigh's collected essays with one on him has ruined me.* If it had only come out a fortnight later I should have been saved.

Won't you come down here and examine the None-such Congreve for several days?

Your
Lytton

* This, as well as the other two essays mentioned, nevertheless appeared in *The Nation* soon afterwards.

52 Tavistock Square,
London,
W.C.1.

March 21st, 1924.

Dearest Lytton,

I am greatly distressed to hear that you are still plagued by diseases of all kinds—just as I was snatching a few moments to read Books & Characters too. Why do I always fly to your works when the electricians are in the hall, the gasmen in the basement, and the telephone ringing with Tom's * sepulchral voice? It's a very queer fact, but in moments of crisis I always turn to you; but supply me with another book soon. I open at page 173, and say Oh but I know this by heart; and it will soon be the case with all the pages: and this is no exaggeration; and I daresay no particular praise either; only one of your peculiarities as an author. Another is to beget [X.'s]. But the mixture is not appetising to me, for all the praises of Clive & Desmond, who have drunk too many glasses of his champagne to be trusted. But then Byron seems to me tawdry and melodramatic. And Claire & Trelawny and so on and so on—I conceive them like a cave at some Earl's Court Exhibition—a grotto I mean lined with distorting mirrors & plastered with oyster shells. Do not trouble to unwind this metaphor. I am jangled and splintered by the move,† and only hook together words by the force of affection: Say one word, and I will come down, and talk in a gentle and soothing voice about—well, did you hear how I rushed into [Z.'s] arms at the Nation dinner the other night? *He*

* T. S. Eliot.

† They had recently moved from Richmond to a house just round the corner from Gordon Square.

forced himself upon me. He has rolling and oleaginous eyes. I said we were enemies. He said we were in different camps. He said one must write with one's instincts. I said one must write with one's mind. He said Bloomsbury was a tangle of exquisite sensibilities. I said come and see me there. He said no. I said very well. He said I like you. I said come and see me then. He said no. So I got up and flounced out of the room, saying Not for ten years—Undoubtedly, he has been rolling in dung, and smells impure.

We live largely in the basement—The confusion is still confounded—busts of my mother standing upon rolls of carpet, chamber pots stuffed full of book binding tools, and my unfortunate books—oh never let the undertakers pack your books when you move—I haven't a single volume left whole. In compensation, Nessa & Duncan have painted me a room, where you *must* come instantly and sit and talk and talk and talk, and never have to catch a taxi, and so by degrees get delivered of that vast mass of communication which I assure you has been hoarding up within me, and so perhaps in you, these ten years. We will sit in the Square and let Dadie * play tennis before us. This will be in the summer, with the leaves out, and exquisite ladies—but your taste doesn't lie that way.

I will write more coherently later.

Ask Carrington to let me hear how you are.

Yr.

V. W.

* George Rylands.

*The Mill House,
Tidmarsh,
Pangbourne.
May 1st, 1924.*

Could you come for the week-end on Sat. week—viz May 11th, je pense? You and he—I hope Sebastian may be here, and that the sun by that time may be shining. Please make the effort—and perhaps we might go over & look at the new house.* I wish we could have panels in it à la yours—but . . .

I am overwhelmed with horrible letters to publishers and monsters of all sorts, so

good-bye
Your
Lytton

* Ham Spray House, near Hungerford, which Lytton had just bought.

52 *Tavistock Sqre.*

W.C.

[2 May, 1924.]

Could you conceivably have us on the Friday, till Sunday, and could you conceivably motor, or convey Leonard, on Sunday afternoon to Sutton, where he has to make a speech?

Otherwise, he's afraid he can't get out of the speech, —can't come.

But this may well be impracticable.

I dream at night of your beech trees.

Just off to meet Walter Lamb at the Royal Academy private view.

Yr. V. W.

L says that he could come & leave on Saturday night.

THE HOGARTH PRESS.
52 Tavistock Square, London, W.C.1.

INVOICE.

11.11.24.

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[In V. W.'s handwriting:]

Lytton Strachey Esq.,
Ham Spray House,
Hungerford,
Berks.

Your attention is particularly called to the above account outstanding since May,—causing the devil of a bother in our Books; which won't balance till you pay; as an Englishman, on Armistice day, we implore.

Signed: 2 Woolves
1 Dadie
1 Mrs. Joad.
in love & reverence

52 Tavistock Sqre.
[January 31, 1925.]

An appalling party is being given by Woolves & Stephens at No 50 Gordon Sqre. on Wednesday next —9.30.

No wine; no food; nothing. (except indeed Philip Ritchie)

If you like to come, we shall be enchanted.

I'm in bed with the influenza: but recovering.

Yr. V. W.

A letter would be comforting.

Monk's House
Rodmell.
Sept 8th [1925.]

Dearest Lytton,

Do you remember one of Leslie Stephen's daughters, the younger, I think, called Virginia? She married a chap called Woolf in the Indian, or Ceylon, Civil Service. Well, they write. Indeed she wrote a book, essays and so on; and wants to know if you could help her to correct a misprint or so—that is, if you remember her—a tall girl, she was, rather badly dressed, parted her hair in the middle.

Does this form of address wring your withers? No; But all the same you might tell me what the misprint in the Common Reader was that you snarled out at Leonard once in Gordon Sqre. We hope to reprint, and I'm collecting the more obvious and glaring howlers with which, I'm told, the book pullulates.

I don't much think we shall see you this summer. But we shan't be hurt; we shan't think the better of your taste to hear that you're at Maynards, but, I repeat, we shall love you all the same—and the beds here are damnably uncomfortable. [. . .]

I have been spending 10 days there, blasted by dissipation & headache. When I was at my worst, Leonard made me eat an entire cold duck, and, for the first and only time in my life, I was sick! What a hideous and awful experience! And you are sick every Monday, I'm told: after that, we can forgive much.

Find me a house where no one can ever come.

I like talking to you, but to no one else in the whole world.

Your old, rake, and fireside hag,

V.

*Ham Spray House,
Hungerford,
Berks.
Sept. 11th, 1925.*

My conduct is certainly shocking—but there!—I cannot stay with you. I am booked for Charleston and Mr. and Mrs. K; but shan't I see you? I arrive at Iford about Sept. 24th—in tears, I expect. I feel, too, as if I should not be able to write anything for the Nation for many a long day. It is all most disgraceful. And the comble is that I cannot recall the misprint in the Common Reader. All this is I believe the result of Sir Almeric Fitzroy, whose “memoirs” I have been reading, and who has reduced me to a state of sawdust equal to his own.

Your letter is obscure in parts—*Where* were you sick after the complete duck? [. . .] Unfortunately, I am never sick now—only sterile—every Monday, and all the other days of the week.

Your
Lytton

52 Tavistock Square,
London,
W.C.1.
Jan 26th [1926.]

Dearest Lytton,

Read the enclosed letter, but don't blame me for it. I have told Aldington that he may write straight to you. And I don't want it back—nevertheless you might write to me. I hear of you fascinating rabbits at parties. Also it is said that you are getting up a subscription to give Edmund Gosse gold sleeve-links on his 100th birthday [. . .]

I have had chickenpox whooping cough influenza and cowpox. I lead the life of a widow of 90, whose sons all perished in the Indian Mutiny or Crimean war, I forget which. This venerable lady finds her chief consolation in the works of Shakespeare—Lytton Strachey. And Mrs. Smith of Cheltenham writes that she loves L. S. for having dedicated Q. V. to V. W. So we are brought together mysteriously. [. . .]

Do tell Carrington to come and see me.

Yr. V. W.

[? *March*, 1927.]

Could you be so angelic as to tell us the name of the hotel in Rome? any other information gratefully received.

I'm afraid I seemed rather brusque—not sympathetic last night—owing to circumstances. I do feel that love is such a horror I would advise anyone to break off. But I see the difficulties. I hope to make the young man's acquaintance when we come back.

We have collapsed under typhoid—I verge on 102—is it worth it? I wonder. So goodbye—

V. W.

3rd Sept. 1927.
Monk's House,
Rodmell.

Dearest Lytton,

A rumour has reached me via Nessa and Raymond that you aren't well. I hope this may be untrue; but if true, please bestir yourself and get well instantly. If you can't sleep, try Audit ale; very effective, with no evil consequences, and any fellow of any college, of whom you must know millions, can get it for you. I was going to recommend the *Mysteries of Udolpho*; they send one into a mooney trance which is very refreshing; but also Mrs. Radcliffe has her moments of inspiration. Her landscapes are sublime. I adore soft music at evening, and indeed I think Jane Austen might have done worse than take a leaf from Radcliffe's book. This you may put down, with other notorious faults, to my unfortunate romanticism—I can't help it. What's more, I don't want to help it. I have come to a time of life when I can help nothing.

This was, in fact, what I was saying to Sheppard last night, at Tilton, when we picked the bones of Maynard's grouse [. . .] We had a brilliant entertainment afterwards in the new Loggia, with a rustic audience. Sheppard half naked, tightly swathed in red silk, shingled as to his head, with coloured garters, was Miss T. to perfection: Maynard was crapulous and obscene beyond words, lifting his left leg and singing a song about Women. Lydia was Queen Victoria dancing to a bust of Albert. What did the yokels make of it? I wish you had been there—which reminds me, there was a good deal of talk about you at dinner, some for you, I, of course, against; some saying you had a good influence, Sheppard and I sticking it out it

was wholly vile. I said, if you drop a little salt on a snail it foams. Lytton was the salt: Sheppard the foam. He said this summed up, admirably and completely, his entire life, which has been a failure. That round faced innocent Taylor was there, and seemed to take it all very seriously.

All the rest of the news is motor car gossip. We flash through Sussex almost daily; drop in after dinner; visit ruins; muse by retired moats, of which Sussex is full; surprise Colonels—it is a perfect invention. What we did without it passes comprehension. Most of the Victorian horror seems explicable by the fact that they walked, or sat behind stout sweating horses.

Do you know the story of L. E. L.?—the poetess, who committed suicide, as some say; but others feel sure was murdered? Your blue stocking Hampstead friend, Enfield, has written a life of her which we are to publish. If only every good spectacled Don and schoolgirl did not think themselves Lytton Strachey and proceed to put it into practice! But I have made this complaint not for the first, nor the second, nor the last time. For God's sake, come out with Betsy * and make them all skip. It's better in French: I have just read Disraeli by Maurois.

They are starting a cement works at Asheham. A railway line runs round the field, and the down behind is nothing but chalk. Isn't it damnable? What is to become of us? Are we to migrate to the South of France? or Rome? or where?

[G.] was here last week end, very polished and agreeable; and I daresay it's supercilious to refer to the end of his nose, or his clothes, or his modernity which seems to me miraculous, as if he had already been to a

* Queen Elizabeth.

lunch party which has not yet been given. Still,—Still, he's very intelligent, which as the old Serpent used to say—in his fiery days when he branded so many of us for ever—is the only thing that matters. And Roger was here with a new theory about Lord Salisbury's foreign policy which drove Leonard almost frantic. He has taken up meteorology, and is off to Vichy [. . .]

Morgan * is coming here next week, and Dadie some time; but I hope I shall see you if you are at Charleston. I should like you to see me driving along the Eastbourne road at 50 miles an hour.

Leonard sends his love.

Yr. V. W.

* E. M. Forster.

*Ham Spray House,
Hungerford,
Berks.
Sept. 16th, 1927.*

My dearest Virginia,

I was on the point of answering your charming letter, when the news of Philip's * death came—and now it seems impossible to say very much. Only it was really divine of you to write to me so entrancingly—as I read I felt my health positively mounting upwards and my spirits, etc. I am now decidedly better. I hope to see you ere long. My love to you both.

Lytton

* Philip Ritchie.

Ham Spray.
Dec. 21st, 1928.

Nobody in the world but you could have produced such a perfect piece.* It is absolutely right—most beautiful, most ingenious—moving too, for me—but you will understand all that. Yes—the bulk! How on earth did they manage it? By some eliminations, presumably—a sort of pruning—not going very deep, consciously at any rate, in certain directions. Anyhow, the result was superb.

Dearest creature, we shall all be most grateful to you. But that is not the word for what *I* feel.

your devoted
Lytton

* Her article in the *Nation* on Lytton's mother, who had died shortly before.

It was the greatest relief, getting your letter, dearest Lytton. I was so afraid I had said only commonplace things. One can't say the things that matter—and it all seemed rather unreal.

She was very real to me—oddly so, seeing how little I saw her; and I keep thinking of her. She used to descend upon me sometimes in Fitzroy Square and talk about you.

Love and blessings
Virginia

"I arise from dreams of thee"—that's why I write. I have just woken from a dream in which I was at a play, in the pit and suddenly you, who were sitting across a gangway in a row in front, turned and looked at me, and we both went into fits of laughter. What the play was, what we laughed at, I've no notion, but we were both very young (no, for you had your beard) and at the age when we used to write to each other. Why are these dreams more vivid than real life?—Anyhow while it hangs about me, I can't help writing to the bearded serpent, especially as Clive tells me you are off to Malaya for months and the chances are we shan't meet till Gordon Sgre. is full of tulips and [Arthur] Waley is playing tennis with Alix in white flannels.

I'm recumbent, lazy, content, reading book after book. And what are you doing? Reading Shakespeare I hope and occasionally making a note very neatly in a very beautiful book. By the way I read *As you like it* the other day and was almost sending you a wire to ask what is the truth about Jacques—What is it? His last speech reads so very odd.

This is all my news, as I see no one, not Ottoline, not Charlie Chaplin—no one but Clive who runs in to see me between a lunch party that ends at 5 and a dinner party that begins at 8.30 and goes on till the sparrows are rising in flocks from the Embankment. Lord—how I'd like to lead his life.

Well, this is only a dream letter and needs no answer, unless you can tell me what we laughed at; but when you're in London with the tulips & Waley's

white flannels, please come and see your old and attached friend

Virginia

[This was almost certainly never read by Lytton, who was already very ill when it arrived.]