

Letters from T.S. Eliot to Emily Hale

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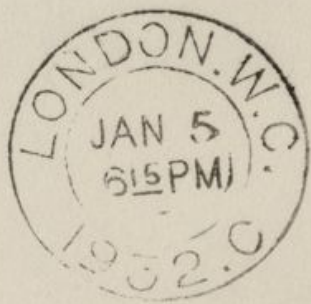
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Eliot, T.S. (Thomas Stearns), 1888-1965
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Miss Emily Hale.

41 Brimmer Street.

Boston, Mass.

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24 RUSSELL SQUARE

LONDON, W.C.1

5 January 1931.

Emily dear,

There are times when I seem to myself to have so much to say that I forget one thing because another hurries so quickly after it; and other times when my mind and my life seem wholly vacant; perhaps corresponding to some of the times in real life, as distinct from correspondence, when two people sit and say nothing "all the day". Or it may be, prosaically, that since I wrote on Friday I have been chiefly concerned with details and way and means of private finances. Even if my royalties are very good I expect to have to sell a bond or borrow from the bank to pay an installment of income tax. I am wondering how rapacious I can either decently or successfully be in America in the way of getting fees for outside lecturing; perhaps the Norton Professor is considered to be so well paid that he should do nothing outside; but I shall need all the money I can get. Besides, one does get jaded with earning small sums here and there by writing articles and prefaces; and wants to realise on reputation rather than on work!...At this point George Blake came into the room to ask would I like a haggis or a black pudding as he is getting some from Scotland, and lingered on talking about Glasgow - that is one of the nuisances here, that certain directors, though very agreeable and companionable people, have a habit when their work is slack, of dropping in to waste the time of another. And they all have more time than I have: I mean, their extra-office duties are not so exacting. It is for this reason, not just mental poverty, that this letter is a scrap; for while he was talking and I was trying to appear interesting my mind began to work and to think of some of the things it had to say to you - it merely gets clogged up in the intervals; and if I had the whole day, with a short intermission for lunch, I might really write a letter that would satisfy me and perhaps even you. But I should want to start another letter the next day. A la plus-chère, à la plus-belle, souvenir de

Don

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1870

1870





PARK AND LEXINGTON AVENUES
FORTY-NINTH AND FIFTIETH STREETS

The Waldorf-Astoria

New York

December 19, 1931

Mr. Thomas S. Eliot,
68 Clarence Gate Gardens,
London, England.

Dear Mr. Eliot:

The purpose of this letter is to invite you to make the new Waldorf-Astoria your home when you are in New York City.

Nothing that human ingenuity has devised in the art of modern hotel building has been omitted from the equipment of the new Waldorf; but, above all things, you will find here that same spirit of hospitality which made the old Waldorf what it was for so many years.

We have great flexibility of accommodations—everything from single rooms to large and luxurious suites. Our rates are in keeping with present-day ideas of economy.

Whether you stay at the Waldorf or not, I am sure you will find it of interest to visit the hotel when you come to New York. May I add that I look forward to the personal pleasure of meeting you here?

In the meantime I should be delighted to quote rates and give detailed information for your requirements, whatever they may be.

Faithfully yours,

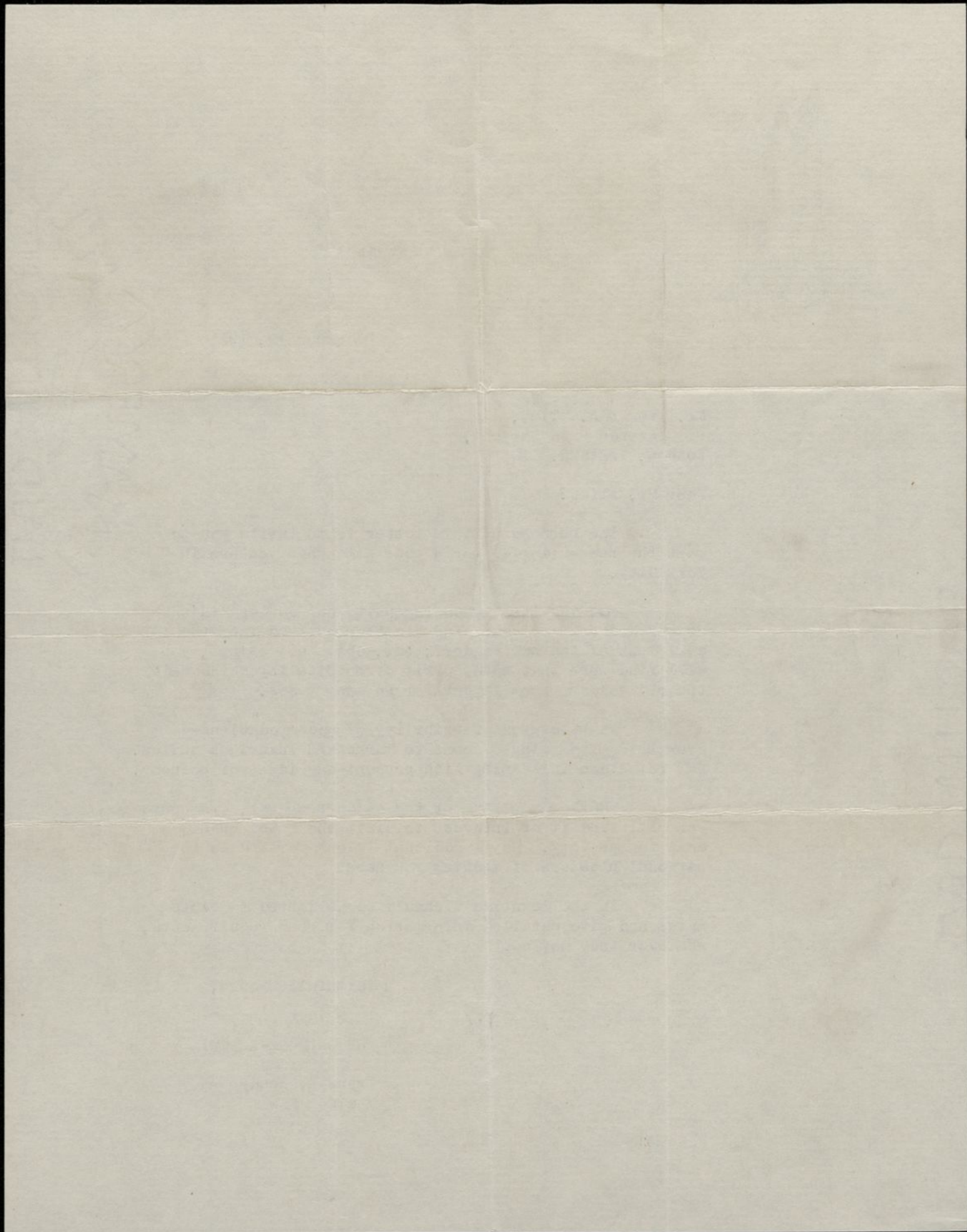
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THE WALDORF-ASTORIA

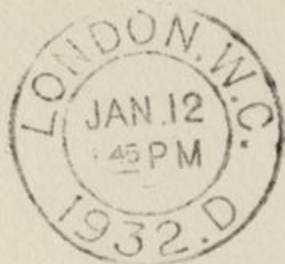
Frank A. Ready
M a n a g e r

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I can believe it!

*how not
|| to do
it!!*





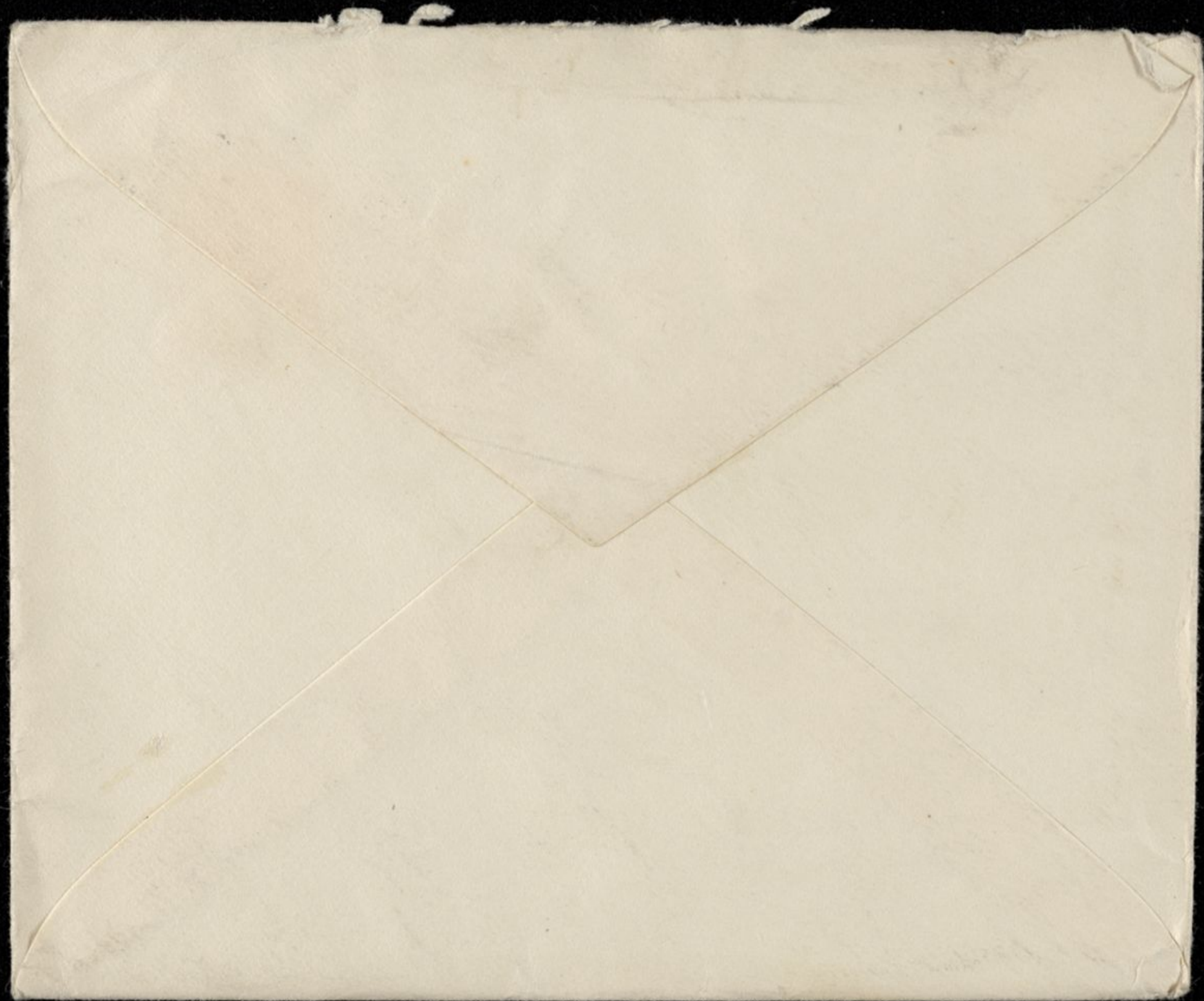
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24 RUSSELL SQUARE

LONDON, W.C.1

12 January 1932.

My dear Dove,

I was very joyful in receiving your letter of December 28 yesterday - you see what a time it was coming - and it made me particularly happy. I don't know why any of your letters should make me happier than another - apart from the appetite sharpened by delay - but so it is sometimes. Please don't think that I had been reproaching you for omissions, far from it; I only wanted to remind you that I hadn't forgotten and still hoped; and if anyone should know what it is to have constantly to defer things one wants to do, It is I.

But really, Madam, did you think that I was criticising your use of the phrase "force an issue", or your epistolary style of writing the English language? What a prig & pedant I must seem - but I do not like even the tiniest misunderstanding to pass unresolved. No indeed. I find that what you outline is much as I had anticipated myself. (I do write badly in letters, I know, trying to say as much as possible in the time). What I should expect is this: I shall communicate with you as soon as possible after arrival, possibly by telephone. I must then see my three sisters and the Hinkleys at once; and as soon as that is done I shall crave permission to see you, when and as you please. I must see my relatives (or those mentioned) first of course; but I should prefer to see you alone, for however brief an interview, before the Hinkleys or the Noyeses or anybody have time to ask us together. And I know I shall want to see you again just before I leave; but as to whether we meet again privately in between, very likely we shan't, unless some special reason, now unforeseen, arises. What I do hold to however is the hope that we may correspond regularly the whole time; I think it would be a great pity (from my point of view at least) to interrupt our intimacy in this channel. What I feel is, frankly, that as I can't have what I want, which is of course to have you with me day and night always, then all that I want is to pursue and develop the mutual sympathy and understanding and companionship through letters. For an intimacy like this is not a static thing, even limited to correspondence it does, I am sure, bring greater and greater understanding and unity of mind as long as we are alive.

It will seem very exciting to be able to write a letter at night which you will get in the morning, or to get a letter from you and know that

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you wrote it the night before. What a readjustment that will be. I hope I shall not be spoiled by it for the future. As to how often to write, that we must settle when the time comes.

Vivienne is I think gradually getting habituated to the notion of my going, and without her, though she bursts out occasionally. But I think she is pretty well fixed in the acceptance of remaining at home; in fact, she does not even want to go. At present, she believes that she wants to go back to the Malmaison sanatorium, ~~XXXXXXXX~~ when I leave for America. I fear that that would consume the most of my profits, but if she really sticks to the notion she shall go. But I suspect that when the time comes she will feel frightened to go abroad away from her family and most of her friends. There will be nobody in Paris who would keep an eye on her except Marguèrite de Passiano, and she would certainly be in Rome for a large part of the time. When V. was there before I came over every fortnight or so for a few days, and also her mother came for Christmas; and now her mother is not strong enough for such an exertion, and there would be no one to visit her at all. I think the best thing would be for her to go to a country sanatorium in England for a time, and then have a nurse-companion in the flat with her. How she will manage I can't conceive; and I shall have to surround her with a ring of medical, legal and friendly care. My lawyers will have to pay my periodical bills for rent etc. and pay out an allowance to her. It all makes my head swim to think of.

She is giving a small party tonight - somebody reciting and someone to sing and some one to play - and we expect the Thorps.

I am glad you know the Wilburs. I liked them very much when I saw them this summer; they have a daughter Elizabeth, who is working in New York, who struck me as rather an interesting girl of definite personality. Of course they were very sad when I saw them, and it must have been very hard for him to give up a looked forward to year of research in Central Europe.

No, I am ashamed to say that I have never heard of the Thomas's, or of Beeleigh Abbey either. Would that I did.

I loved your description of your Christmas. I wish indeed that you might live in the country, and have horses and dogs, of which I know you are fond. ...But really, I cannot believe that in painting your face yellow and blacking your eyes to look Chinese, you are going to exhibit your beauty to advantage! If you ever do send a photograph, not in that rôle please. I saw the play years and years ago, done with what was supposed to be Chinese setting (a stepladder representing a mountain, and so on) & Chinese music.

Yours Tom.

THE
CRITERION

A QUARTERLY REVIEW

EDITED BY T. S. ELIOT

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COLNE VALLEY

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COLLEGE

OF THE

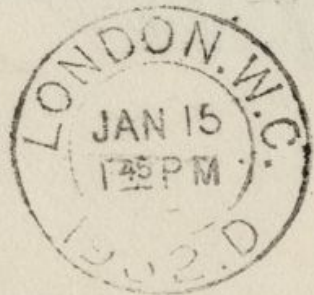
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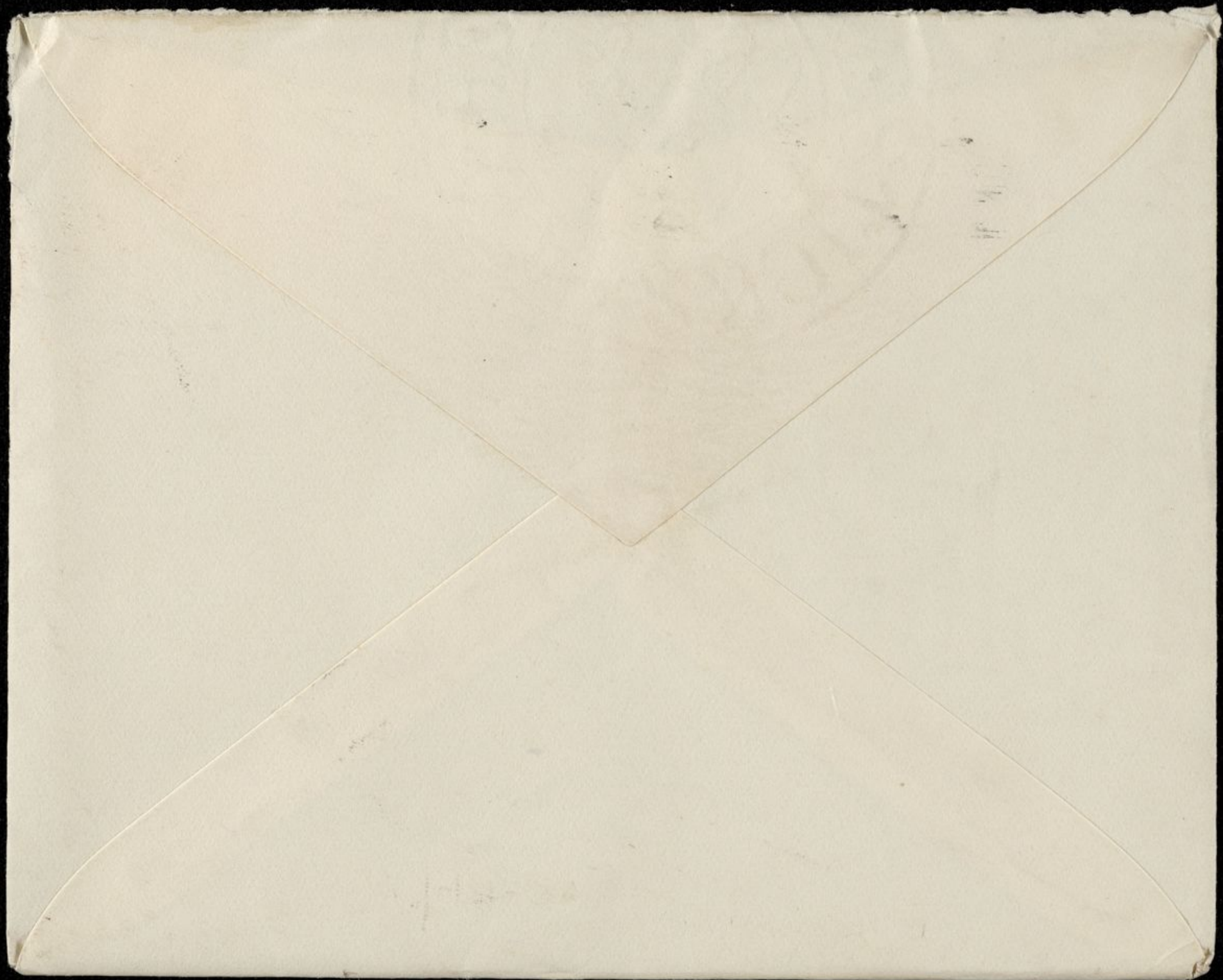
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Miss Emily Hale

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LONDON, W.C.1

TELEPHONE: MUSEUM 9543
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15 January 1931.

Emily Dear,

I have not yet adverted directly to your words about my poetry - or about my work in general - and what my friends would like to hope of it for the future. I am quite sensible of this, and agree with the implied criticism. At the same time I believe that progress and improvement of the work, in all but the increase of just technical skill - must be to a great extent a by-product of progress and development of the writer. I mean that sincerity requires that when one writes one must write faithfully to what one is at the moment, and not in loyalty to what one aspires to be. In the writing, one must consent to one's fundamental imperfections; one can only write the precise stage of the journey reached; and artistic sincerity, though intimately related to and inseparable from, moral ~~xxxxxxxxxx~~ sincerity, is not identical with it. And an exact embodiment of an inferior stage of development is worth more artistically, and in the end worth more morally where the effect aimed at is the effect of art, than a not wholly deeply realised in feeling expression of a higher stage. Is that at all intelligible, I wonder. Surely one can only write as one is; but at the same time strive day by day, in "minute particulars" as Blake says somewhere, upwards. The moment one is solidly established on a higher step of the stair, the difference will inevitably be manifest on the work.

To have daily a little more control - not in the sense of suppression, but in control of the lower by the higher within one self, so that one's ordinary stream of consciousness is directed and purified; to desire and love more the higher, and to do so more fully and passionately; to reduce pettiness, idleness, purposelessness.

It was a delight to get your letter of January 3d yesterday; after an empty week I have this week two letters; so I must not complain if next week I must fast again. Ten or eleven days seems the normal time. As for moods, I fear that I am often as clumsy in responding immediately to yours; but to some (a diminishing) extent, we must put up with this as inevitable in the circumstances of communication. Please, I apologise for sending that hideous photograph twice. I remembered perfectly well sending before, in 1927; but I thought that on that occasion I had reflected that this pose was too haggard, and that I had at the last moment slipped in a different

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one instead. The one in France looks a little gross; but I was not at all well then either. I hope that as you have so much work to do at present you are being paid for at least some of it. And if you had to have a little breakdown I am glad that you were at Penelope's: for she, I imagine, would take the best of care of an invalid.

I have at last received this morning the official notice from Harvard: evidently one did go astray; and a very pleasant letter from Murdock.

Tuesday was my busiest day this week; marked also by a violent headache and hernia pain caused perhaps by helping to move a piano about on Monday. Lunched with Clive Bell: not so pleasant as usual, because Lady Colefax was there - but I am sure Clive does not know how I dislike her. Partly because when she sees me she always gushes about "dear Charles Whibley" and he disliked her I know. She is a chattering lionhunter, married to a grave retiring barrister who is so vague and unobtrusive at her parties that he couldn't possibly be the butler; but what I really dislike about her is a love of gossip verging on scandal ("I could tell you a most amusing story about what happened, but I am really fond of dear Harold and so I won't" or "I heard a story about the ...which was so shocking that I did not even dare to tell it to my husband"). Virginia seemed rather dispirited and tired by it too.

The in the evening our party, which went off very well, and was really well organised by Vivienne. Poetry reading by Alida Monroe e piano by Mollie Cuplin - Hungarian songs by her Hungarian sister in law - reading by Robt. Sencourt etc. I had to read an unpublished fragment of my own; it was odd to think that there was one person present who had been at a certain performance of Tristan and was quite ignorant of its significance - I think the Thorps enjoyed themselves; they staid to the end and we are to go to tea next week at Lincoln's Inn. And now I must stop. Only, you wont allow me to think, I hope, that you may be taking a teaching post in some remote place in order to make things easier for me. You must not, of course, be influenced by any but the considerations which would hold if there no prospect of my coming. And please allow me to hope, as long as I can, that I may see you once.

Your Tom

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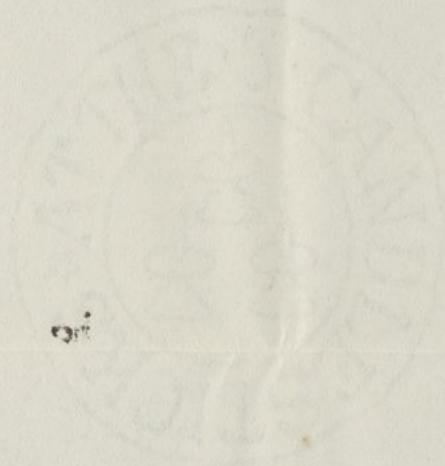
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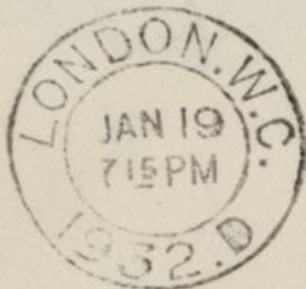
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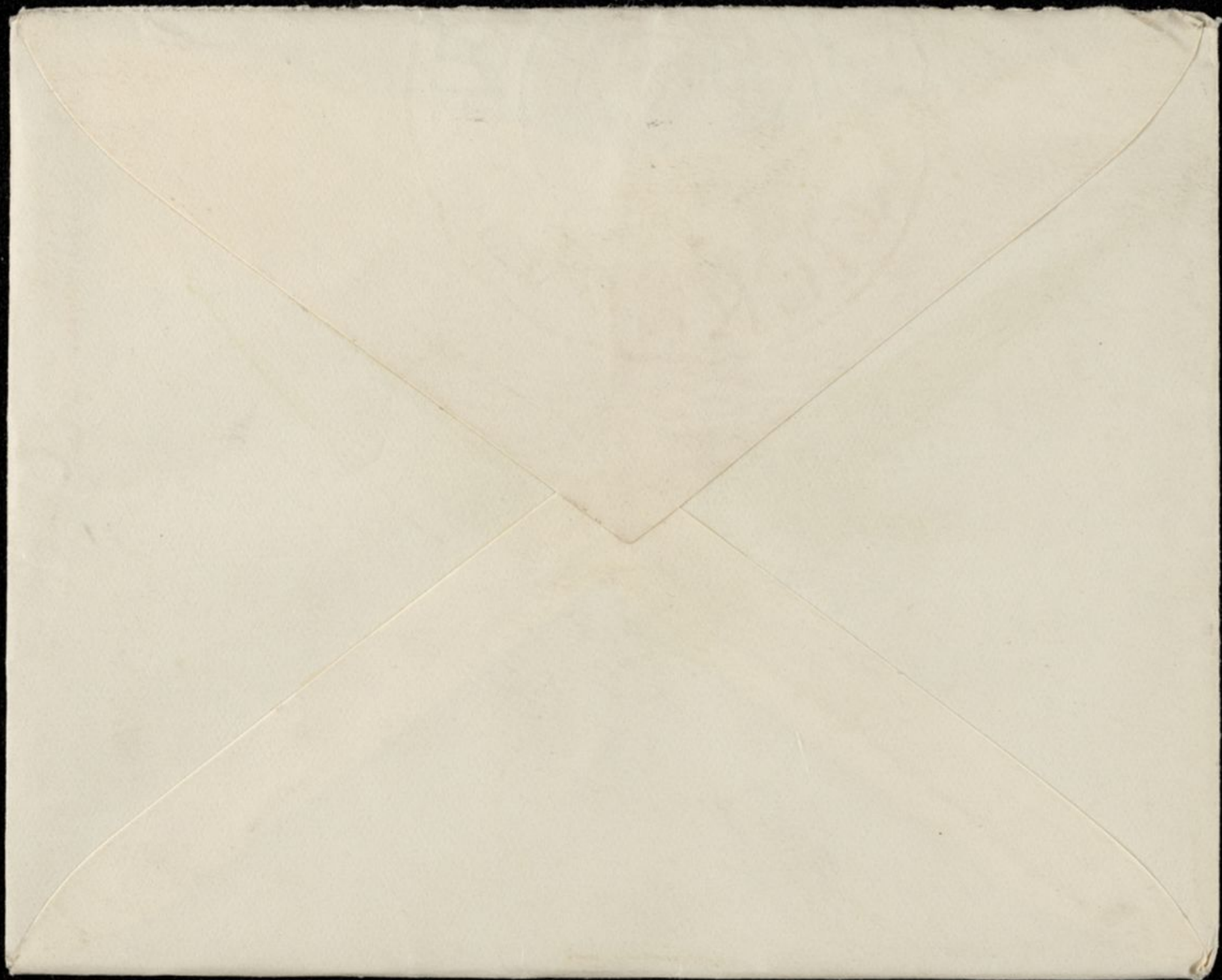
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24 RUSSELL SQUARE

LONDON, W.C.1

19 January 1931.

Dear Dove

I have not very much to-day in the way of wits. I spent the week end chiefly in a state of torpor, trying to think about my broadcast talks and about my Harvard lectures, but without much outcome. They have suggested that as well as the six public lectures I should take a half year course in Contemporary English Literature. I shall have to think this over pretty carefully and offer them an alternative: one difficulty is that as editor & publisher, as well as friendly relations with a variety of authors, I might find it very difficult to be quite frank in all of my opinions; and unless one is allowed to talk freely about "Ulysses" such a course would be, from my point of view, futile. Perhaps Criticism is a better subject, unless Richards has given them a bellyful of that. Sunday Mrs. Culpin came to lunch and won two games of chess from me. She is an old German lady, whose elder son was with me at Merton; he was killed later in the war. Her husband was a Yorkshireman, a brilliant self made railway employee; Carl was very brilliant too and got a first in history. She lives in England again now, because her two children live here, being English, the second son Jack, whose wife is Hungarian, and Mollie who is unmarried. (All this is mere description for further reference, if I shall at some time care to discuss their personalities). To-day an unusual thing occurred: Vivienne and I went out to lunch at a German restaurant in Charlotte Street with Mrs. Culpin and Mollie. Unusual, because I can hardly remember how long ago V. last lunched or dined in public; she has steadily refused for years. She said she did not enjoy it, but that is a small matter; what matters is that she did it and got through without panic or any abnormality. She got rather confused in driving back and thought that Cavendish Square was Russell Square, but that is characteristic of her driving. I suppose she is fairly well, considering; but I never know, and must largely trust other people's judgment. She shows her abnormal side much more to me than to others (except her mother); and it is only when she behaves oddly to friends, and finally in public, that I am really alarmed. All this took rather a large bite out of my day, but I suppose it was a good thing to do.

How do you feel, I wonder, when you get up in the morning? I always

FABER & FABER

feel more tired than at any other time; I believe I could always sleep till eleven; I always could sleep after lunch; and it is only in the evening, when I must go to bed, that my brain is really active. If it were the other way about I could get much more done.

To add one thought to what I said about writing poetry and self-improvement: is it not true that most of the time one is not, and cannot be except perhaps at a much higher stage of development, quite self conscious? I mean that from day to day one merely goes through a routine, and does almost mechanically what one believes in doing: even my prayers, my state of awareness at the church offices, vary greatly, and often are nearly mechanical. Only now and then come more lucid moments of consciousness, when one can gauge the extent of progress or perhaps deterioration. It is better to take this state of affairs hopefully, I think, and believe in general that for days or weeks or months when one seems to one self hardly more than an automaton, some development may be going on - as indeed it may - ~~in~~ of which one may be vouchsafed one moment of surprised awareness, before plunging under the surface again. And I do not believe in over-self-searching, either; as the soul develops so it can stand more consciousness; but a conscientious person can easily worry his soul to illness.

A poor sort of letter I knew this would be. But on Friday I may have a letter from you to brighten me. Tomorrow I lunch with MacLagan to ask him for tips as to how to behave as Norton professor.

à toi de tout mon coeur

Pom

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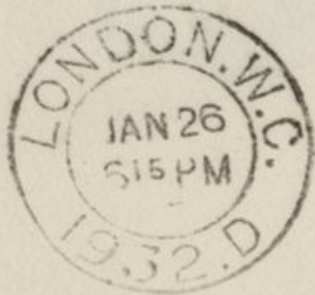
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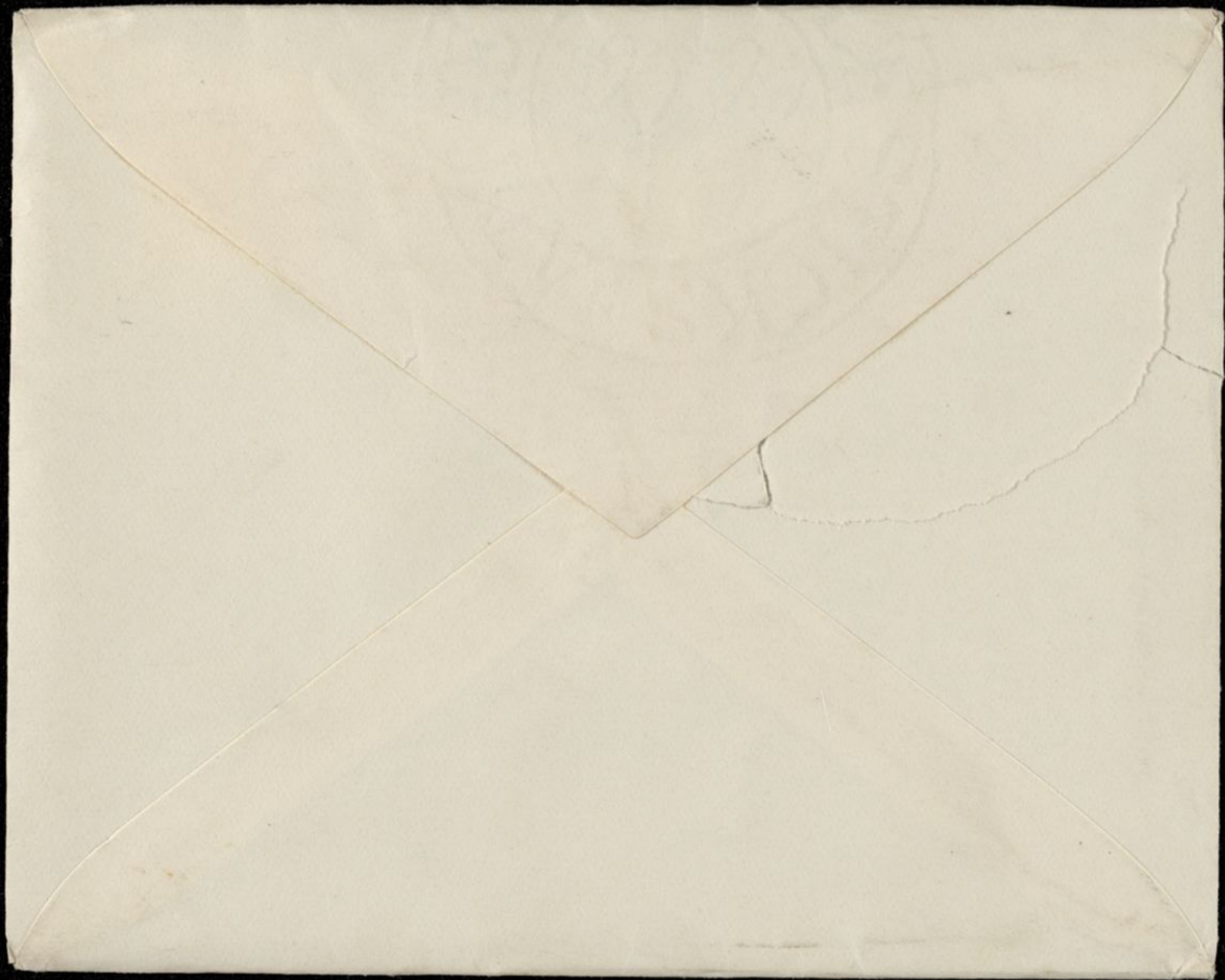
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Ans, Feb. 8th



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24 RUSSELL SQUARE

LONDON, W.C.1

Dearest Lady,

26 January 1931.

I was exasperated to be prevented from writing on Friday morning; a succession of discussions, telephone calls etc. made it impossible. I never feel quite contented over the weekend unless I have got off something to you, but I always feel that a note of half a dozen lines may be no more welcome than none at all, inasmuch as the envelope raises hopes which the contents betray. I was rather depressed by the successive deaths of Bishop Gore and Lytton Strachey; though I knew neither well. They had nothing in common; but oddly enough I remember a teatable argument between them at Garsington Manor (when Gore was Bishop of Oxford) as to whether General Gordon was a dipsomaniac or not. Strachey had great charm and some very fine qualities, in spite of peculiarities which made him not very congenial to me; I always find his sisters congenial. To me his loss is simply the disappearance of one of the most important figures in a little group of people which has always been, rather than any other, my own set. To Virginia no doubt it will be a great loss; I don't think she had much illusion about his permanent place in English letters, but she was very fond of him personally. Although he did not talk volubly, he was easily one of the most striking personalities in any social conversation; though one might say that he had some instinct which kept him to the kinds of group in which he would appear at his best - but then, I never saw him in any other, so that is perhaps unfair.

I have also been worried lately about my mother-in-law's health; and indeed I have every reason to be, for if she were to fail my life would become, and eventually will, much more difficult. She is in her seventies, and weakened by arthritis, and has just had a slight break down caused largely I think by worry over her son. He has been rather unfortunate. He was in the regular army, but left it like so many others at the end of the war. Later he was doing very well in an important Anglo-Italian bank; and then two of the Italian directors embezzled and the bank was closed. Lately, he has represented an American investment firm in Rome; and now there is no more business in Rome and he has to start again in London. He is married to an American girl, very young, from New York, whom his mother does not like very much: certainly, she seems to me rather frivolous and rather common. It is odd: having had to deal so many

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types and varieties of English people, I now can place them always pretty quickly and know how to treat them, whereas I find myself a little at sea with Americans who are not quite my own sort. This has nothing to do with what part of America they come from, but with the more subtle social distinctions. So I never feel at ease with Maurice's wife. They have a small son, about six weeks old, who I believe being brought up on some new system of which the grandmother does not approve. Ahmé (as she calls herself) does not, I am sorry to say, yet bring any added harmony into the family. But I dare say she is alright at bottom, ~~but~~ Also, they are at present in a hotel. And so on.

Did I tell you that we went to tea with the Thorps in Lincoln's Inn last week? They have a very pleasant little flat, and the Inn is delightfully quiet, like a college, but quieter; the flat will probably be pretty hot if there ever is any hot weather, as it is up under the eaves. We enjoyed the call; there was no one else except a Miss Radcliffe, I think her name was, who came in towards the end. I am pleased that V. likes the Thorps so much, and talks of asking them again soon.

It was on Friday, when I could not write, that your sweet letter of January 13th arrived. The Hinkleys must have been just a little bit trying whilst this wedding business was going on! No. I never heard of La Argentina, but she may well have danced in London without my having heard of her. Do you never dance, socially? I have not set foot to dance for years and years; but I believe it very good for body and mind. And did I write to you after lunching with Eric MacLagan, whom I consulted about Harvard. Some of his comments were amusing, some depressing, some cheering. He told me (in confidence) that he preferred Chicago to Boston, and found it is some ways more civilised. For instance, he found Boston society depressing because different generations are not allowed to mix there, and he only met people of his own age. He could not see as much as he liked of his colleagues at Harvard, but said he had to dine in Boston two or three times a week, and that acceptance of such social engagements was almost obligatory. That makes me shudder. I wonder who these rapacious hostesses are. In London one can treat the lionhunters (or rather huntresses) pretty ruthlessly, and they are used to it. And I fear there are many more of them in America; the existence of a social hierarchy does restrain them a bit here.

I am sure that I should adore Emily's tea gown in gold and green, with a train. I like very long flowing gowns anyway; and I hope that this one will not be so outmoded by next October that I may not be allowed to have a glimpse of it. How very busy you have been. I have not dared to send any more books yet for that reason; but you shall have

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LONDON, W.C.1

my odd photograph by the next mail and then I shall be wholly at your mercy to send or not to send one of yourself, as I shall have nothing more to withhold. And I will write to Dilys Bennett: I think she has considerable talent; I doubt whether she will ever be quite good enough in verse to make it worth while; but it is talent that ought to have some outlet in writing.

Farewell, Emilia carissima.

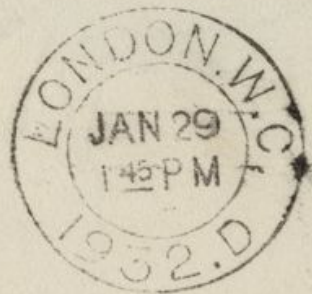
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Emily dear,

29 January 1932.

I have just time, I am thankful to find, to write a short letter this morning after getting rid summarily of two visitors who seemed to have no other purpose in life than to waste other folks' time; and an American professor from Ipsilanti who seemed to be taking me in conscientiously merely as one of the sights of London, like Westminster Abbey and the Monument; and am glad because your letter of the 21st has come (only eight days!) and I can begin to answer it. Where shall I begin? How is it that a man from Union Theological College is preaching at King's Chapel? is that not an Episcopalian Seminary? And I thought that your uncle was still in charge of King's Chapel? Is your uncle to be in Boston next winter? Here is a nest of questions to begin with.

And about the intuitions of the future, I think that perhaps there is a misunderstanding. (Given the misunderstanding, I agree with your observations). The sort of premonition I spoke of has no relation to practical action that I can discover; it is very general and points to no solution of practical problems; and no relation whatever to fortune-telling! it has been more with me a kind of Cassandra voice-unheeded and unheedable. On the personal and conscious plane, I do deliberately accept the present and its continuance; I try to check every tendency to think on dream of how things might be if some things were altered; for that is a most insidious poison, rendering one feeble and useless, and killing all joy in whatever one has to be joyful in; but I should be dishonest with myself if I pretended that I had quite cast it out: it is a poison for which perpetual re-inoculation is necessary.

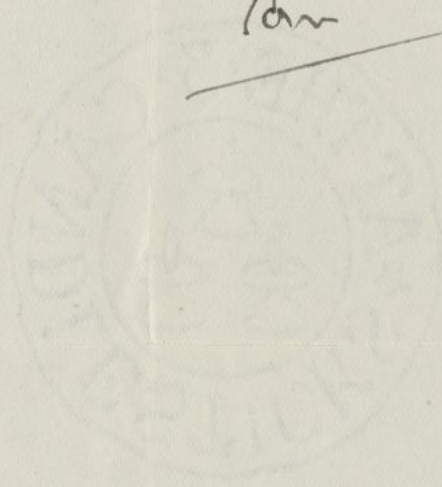
You must know by now that I am not completely at the mercy of your "moods" - perhaps you exaggerate the variations of the moods themselves - because surely by now I ought, and you ought, to be able to keep fast hold on the permanent under the shifting: and on the other hand I am sure you would not like me to be completely obtuse to moods! I shall always be swayed by your state of mind and feeling of each letter, and you can do with me as you will. As for reserves, it seems to me that one should not worry about that. Very reserved people -

HENRY J. FARRER

and people who perhaps have been forced by circumstance into a reserve still greater than their natural endowment - should not force unreserve: surely it comes of itself, naturally, more and more; and it seems to me that the process is unending to the end of life, a continuous process of development and liberation. I am already far more unreserved with you than I had thought possible to be with anyone!

As for Scripps College, I must talk of that in my next letter. Till then, que Dieu protège mon petit oiseau; et que tous mes péchés soient dans tes oraisons dénombrés!

Tom



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