Letters from T.S. Eliot to Emily Hale

Citation Information

Hale, Emily, 1891-1969
Eliot, T.S. (Thomas Stearns), 1888-1965

Letters from T.S. Eliot to Emily Hale

1 folder

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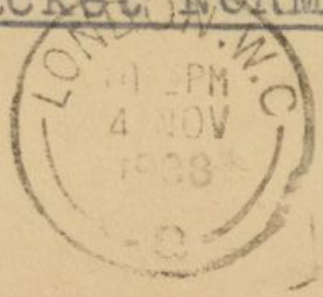
By French packet NORMANDIE



Miss Emily Hale,
22 Paradise Road,
NORTHAMPTON,
Massachusetts,
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

FABER & FABER
Limited
PUBLISHERS

TELEPHONE: MUSEUM 9543
TELEGRAMS: FABBAF, WESTCENT, LONDON

24 RUSSELL SQUARE
LONDON, W.C.1

4 November 1938

My Darling,

I had laid out my day in the expectation of writing to you comfortably this evening, but I have a trick of sometimes forgetting - until the last moments - engagements that I wish I had not had to make; and only during the afternoon I remembered that I had promised to dine with Ezra Pound. He will probably irritate me and tire me, and I shall be thankful when he returns to Rapallo; but as this is his first visit for ten years or so, and the first time in that period yhat I have seen him, well, I must give him what time I can while he is here: he is sensitive, proud and touchy, and I feel a peculiar delicacy of handing is necessary with a man who was here before me, is somewhat older than I, was the efficient cause of my being first published and of my first recognition - and who, above all, has not had so much success as a poet as I. Accordingly, I am writing in my office on an old Remington which has been here for quite twelve years.

I am all the more annoyed because my last letter was not a very good one! If you examine it again, you will recognise that it is the sort of letter that I write on my last day before I take to bed with a cold. You have pointed out quite rightly that on these occasions I ought to go to bed a day sooner than I do: on this occasion I had the reason for struggling on, that my poor old Janes has been in hospital, and I do not think he will come out alive. I had been to see him once before, but found him asleep; and I feared that if I postponed seeing him I might not see him again. He has, as a matter of fact, lasted until now, and I hope to see him again on Sunday afternoon, after lunching with the Perkins's: but I suspect that it is cancer, or some other serious growth in the stomach. I have had my Christmas dinner with him for the last five years. This year, perhaps, I shall dine with John H. instead: he is in the midst of moving to a small flat: his landlady gave him notice during the crisis, as she said she couldnt be responsible for him - singularly ungrateful, I think, after certain great kindness that he hasshown to her.

Dr.Perkins came to lunch with me yesterday, and I hope he enjoyed lunching again at the club with me. I gathered that the visit

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to Rochester had been wholly successful.

I was in bed over the weekend, and felt much refreshed. The doctor let me out for Tuesday afternoon; unfortunately the rest of the week has been rather full. I had fixed to take Christina to the St.Denis production (a Russian play, "The White Guard", secondrate play, but so brilliantly produced and acted as to be a delight) and I did not like to give that up, because Frank is always so grateful for anything I do for her like that when he is away, and he returns (I am glad to say) next week, Thursday evening was spent with the Vicar and the other churchwarden interviewing applicants for the post of assistant verger! I had thought it would take about an hour - but we were sitting in the vestry until about 11.15. And tomorrow I must go out to Hampton in the afternoon for fireworks with the Tandy children, whom I have not seen since the sunner; but I have insisted on returning in the evening, instead of spending a November night in that damp spot.

I seem to have seen more plays than I have reported on - I barely mentioned "Troilus" and the complete "Hamlet" in modern dress - the latter was probably the last straw that sent me to bed - the night before I wrote last - but how good it was. Only I was sorry that Claudius was acted as a poltroon, whereas he should be, I think, allowed certain attributes of kingliness, as in the scene where Laertes threatens him.

At the moment, Robert Donat is reading The Family Reunion. As soon as he returns it, Michel St.Denis is to be given a look at it. Between the two, something may be arranged. We had been afraid that St.Denis might not be in a position to interest himself; because the White Guard must have been expensive to produce, and must so far have lost heavily; but St.Denis says that he wants a play such as mine to produce at the end of January, and that he would let Martin produce it. I think that with St.Denis to do the staging etc. and Martin to train the speech (I would not trust English verse to a foreigner, nor would St. Denis understand the milieu so well) something very fine might be made.

I was much interested by the cuttings you enclosed in your letter which came this morning. I have liked Maurice Evans very

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much in some parts, and I hope that success has not spoiled him.

As for the more serious and more personal part of your letter (incidentally I am always happy to have new of Boerre) I think I had better brood on that over the weekend: I feel that it is too important a matter to reply to on the day of receiving your letter. I do understand your feeling about a place where you have nothing closer than pleasant acquaintances: but I should like to know more clearly what possible alternatives (including opportunity for dramatic work) you have in mind, however vaguely it may be as yet. And if you think of leaving Laura Scales Hall, does that mean that there is some alternative place in which to take your meals? I should certainly prefer it if you did not have always to take your meals in the company of girls, especially when they are not those you most like. It always pains me to think how much greater advantages I have than you in the way of daily life: it is only the problem of how to get a restful holiday that seems equally insoluble for both of us. That, however, makes the arrangement of your winters all the more important. How I wish I could look after both for you! But this is a thought so poignant that I do not allow my mind to dwell on it - yet it is perhaps a good thing to express it now and then,

Your very loving Tom

P.S. Next summer will have another complicationL my sister Marion intends to come over. Well, I am glad I have finally declined the Tewkesbury job, though a bitter disappointment to Martin.

By German packet BREMEN.

SOUTH KENSINGTON
8 NOV
1938
S.W.7.

Miss Emily Hale,

22 Paradise Road,

NORTHAMPTON,

Massachusetts,

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

THE
CRITERION
A QUARTERLY REVIEW
EDITED BY T. S. ELIOT

TELEPHONE: MUSEUM 9543
TELEGRAMS: FABBAF, WESTCENT, LONDON

24 RUSSELL SQUARE,
LONDON, W.C.1

8 November 1938.

Dearest,

I usually have a letter from you to answer before the boat sails, but there is the Bremen tomorrow, and no vessel to bring me anything from you (since your birthday ten days ago) so I must get off a line, and if I hear from you I shall write again later in the week. A tiring afternoon on Saturday with the Tandy family, letting off Golden Cascades, Humming Spiders, Boy Scout Rousers, and some very successful skyrockets; but since then fairly quiet: three evenings in succession at home. Tomorrow I have to dine with Mrs.Seaverns and the Perkins's - hurrying back to dress after the committee, at which Morley should be present. Ezra still about, and to make things worse, the Hotsons are at Jordans, I believe with a guitar and some American popular ballads, as a change from their usual madrigals.

Nothing yet settled about the Family Reunion. Text is said to have been being read by Robert Donat.
I am still ~~xxxxx~~ thinking about your last letter.

Dr.Perkins went to the Book Exhibition and scowled at a photograph of me. He said to the young lady at the stall: "that is a very severe portrait"; to which she replied: "not so severe as the one I took of him in Wales this summer". That is his own account of it, not having seen the photograph in question, which I sent you.

Your very loving

Tom

By C.W.S. QUEEN MARY.

SOUTH KENSINGTON
1 45 PM
11 NOV
1938
S.W.7.

Miss Emily Hale,

222 Paradise Road,

NORTHAMPTON,

Massachusetts,

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA


ELIOT
FOR CONGRESS
ELIOT
FOR CONGRESS

THE
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24 RUSSELL SQUARE,
LONDON, W.C.1

Dearest,

Armistice Day,
11 November 1938.

I have to thank you for your letter of the 3d, which arrived yesterday by the Queen Mary; and this goes to you on the same ship. I am glad if Mrs. Hale has not made too many and too severe claims upon you, but I shall be gladder to hear that she has departed: though I am glad that she has had such a happy and important time in Northampton, inaugurating the library. I have no further news of the play to give you since I last wrote: Dukes should have been negotiating with Michel St.Denis. I shall see Dukes on Monday, as he is to motor me down to Cambridge on Monday afternoon, where we are to dine with the Keynes's and see the première of "On the Frontier", the Auden-Isherwood play. Meanwhile I have been receiving the first sheets of galley proof of the printing.

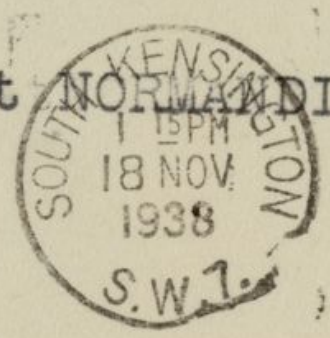
I dined with Mrs.Seaverns and the Perkins's on Wednesday. I think the evening passed off successfully; it was helped, for me, by Jim Fowler being present.

Ezra is still about. But as Morley has returned (his mother still alive, but now apparently sinking rapidly) he will have to share the burden a little. My chief job at present, outside of Russell Square, is preparing for the lectures I have to give in Cambridge in February, on Church and State. There is a good deal of reading to be done. Janes has remained much the same, tenaciously.

Where do you think that dramatic work would be possible, and of what sort? Do you mean in another college or university, or more professionally? I suppose that the latter is much more precarious, and might even offer lessscope for interesting work. And how much would such more interesting work count, against say being in a more remote place? I cannot help wondering just where you would be able to count upon finding more real friendship and companionship, than at Smith - though I know of course that you had a few friends at Scripps who mattered very much more to you than anyone you see at present.

Your devoted Tom

By French packet NORMANDIE.



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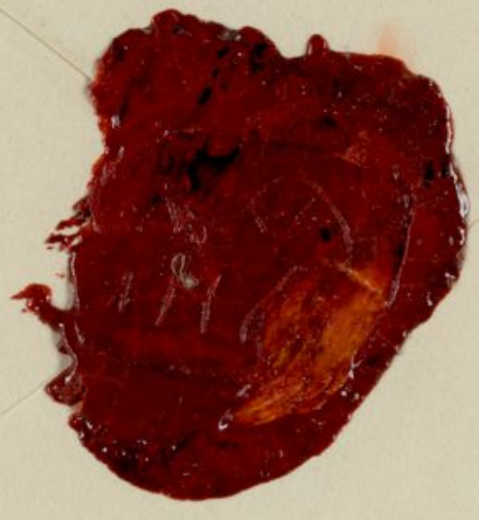

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24 RUSSELL SQUARE,
LONDON, W.C.1

18 November 1938.

My Dearest,

I had the pleasant surprise of a letter from you this morning by the Normandie (11th) after a letter a few days ago written on the 6th. I am annoyed when, as this week, the Normandie and the ~~Bremen~~ Europa touch England on the same day: but I choose the Normandie, as the German ships do not seem to be very popular in New York at present. I have had rather a tiring week, and have decided not to go to Kelham for the weekend, though I dislike disappointing George Every, as that also is tiring, with conversations only interrupted by the offices. Monday was the most tiring day, however: I came back from staying with the Betjemans in Berkshire, to a lunch given by your aunt at the American Women's Club, for Mrs. Hornby - who struck me as a rather vague and not very vital person: Mrs. Seaverns and Mary Day seemed radiating vitality by comparison. Then Ashley Dukes picked me up at teatime and drove me down to Cambridge, where we dined with Maynard Keynes at the Arts Theatre and saw the first night of Auden & Isherwood's "On the Frontier". The play itself (which I am sending you) rather bored me: I find the continuous switching from one set of scenes and characters to another very irritating, and about the characters very little reality. I don't think that it is an advance on "The Ascent of F6"; and although the authors may continue to develop dexterity and technical accomplishment, I don't think that they will do anything permanent unless they mature as men. I was vexed with them afterwards, when they came out to make speeches (quite unnecessary speeches, I don't think that authors should appear on the stage unless there is an uproarious demand from the audience) because they had no word of appreciation for Keynes, who had financed the whole thing, given them dinner and a champagne supper afterwards, and probably spent more than can be regained. It is true that he does all this really so that Lydia can get chances to act (which she does rather badly - the fact of being too old to go on dancing does not turn a woman into an actress) but that was not their affair; and I think they might have shown better manners. We drove back, in a fog the whole way, and I got to bed at 3.30 in the

morning, feeling that I had done my duty.

No further news of the Family Reunion, except that I now have complete galley proof, which I have gone through once and must read carefully again.

The other great fatigue (there are minor ones) was Ezra. Lunch on Tuesday, with Frank and me, which did not go off too well: I got the indirect indications that Ezra's very sensitive vanity had been wounded, when I dined with him and General Fuller the next evening. Why I find Ezra so tiring is partly the continuous effort not to hurt his vanity; but Frank treated him just as he would anyone else, and Ezra didn't like it. But when you know that it is just vanity without any substantial grievance, you can't say: "what's the matter?", because there is nothing to clear up. And that kind of breach is the most difficult to heal. But Ezra has always nursed injuries to his pride, and so has not, it seems to me, begun to learn the humility that should go with middle age. He wants to be treated as an oracle, his conceit is unbounded, and he can't be argued with. If I have been saved from that, I must remember that it is partly due to having had much more recognition, to getting on better with people in general (with English in particular, but I think also with Americans) than he does: but I hope also that Christianity and a sense of humour (which ought to go together) may have something to do with it. People with no Christianity (and I am including unconscious as well as conscious Christianity) have no check on any natural tendency they may have to arrogance, pride and vanity. And as they get older they seem to me to become like husks, empty and rattling, however brilliant their minds may be. The Christian should be, at least, the person with the best chance of going on developing and maturing to the end of life, because he should be aware of the need for continued process of regeneration.

I do not enjoy any feeling of steady development; indeed, I am often conscious of downs as well as ups, of often getting too caught up in the daily business of work and social relations, and having to make a fresh start. It is only at some moments of retrospection - and not necessarily looking very far back - that I see that I am living differently - not necessarily living more spiritually or virtuously, but with a more developed standard of how one should live.

By all means let the young Italian girl read the Shakespeare essays, so long as you see you get them back within a reasonable time, and that she promises not to quote from them: for you must explain that this is only a first draft, and that they may be much changed and expanded before they are published. I am glad to hear of her, knowing that you lack at Smith the kind of companionship that such a person might give. I only

wish that she had chosen a more profitable subject for her dissertaion than T.S.Eliot, but I dare say that she may turn even that to account, and if she knows Dante and his contemporaries, that is all to the good. One of the traps in writing about a living author is that the whole of his work has to be reconsidered in the light of what he does next, so that a critical study soon goes out of date.

I am going round presently to say good-bye to the Perkins's, who go to Liverpool this afternoon. When they leave, the winter interregnum seems really to have begun, and I count, more consciously than ever, the months until I shall see you again.

I have an invitation from Mrs. Brocklebank to come down in December to see a Nativity play she is doing at Alveston, with a postscript which may amuse you: "Do put in a pair of riding breeches if you have time for a ride with us Monday morning". But I have as many weekend engagements as are wise to undertake between now and the middle of January.

Yours loving Tom

By C.W.S. QUEEN MARY

SOUTH KENSINGTON
1 15PM
24 NOV
1938
S.W.7.

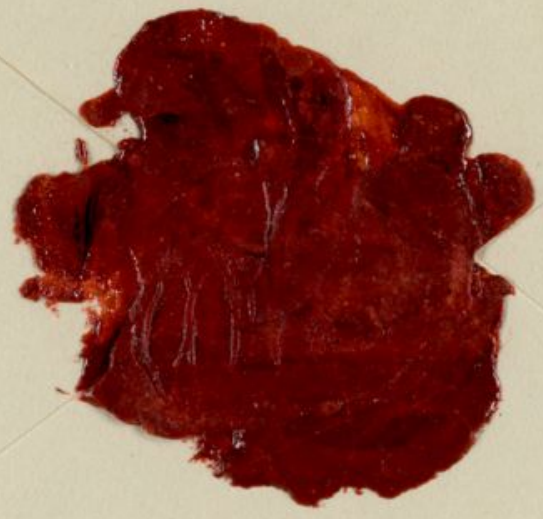
Miss Emily Hale,

22 Paradise Road,

NORTHAMPTON,

Massachusetts,

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA



THE
CRITERION
A QUARTERLY REVIEW
EDITED BY T. S. ELIOT

TELEPHONE: MUSEUM 9543
TELEGRAMS: FABBAF, WESTCENT, LONDON

24 RUSSELL SQUARE,
LONDON, W.C.1

Dearest Lady,

23 November 1938.

Your card was very welcome (Nov.15th) but the letter to follow has not yet arrived, and tonight (being Thanksgiving Day) I have to go to Pike's Farm as usual until Monday, so shall not be able to write again until next week, and this must be my week's letter by the Queen Mary on Saturday. I feel more rested after having had a quiet weekend at home. December is never an agreeable month to look forward to, as time and attention is always so broken up by the problems of Christmas cards and presents; and I look forward now to the end of the year. In the letter which I hope to find here on my return on Monday, I shall hope to have some information about your designs for the holidays, which I hope you will not spend altogether in Boston. I think, especially with a view to making more independent plans for next summer, if would be good if you could spend all but a few days visiting friends away from Boston. Meanwhile I am glad you have had the short break of a visit to New York, though it is a pity that it could not have been for the whole weekend instead of only one night.

I am spending all the time I can give on my Church and State lectures (that is not the subject really, but it is a convenient designation while they are being written) which require a certain amount of reading as well; but I find it better to start getting one's ideas onto paper without waiting until the reading is done: better to correct my writing afterwards by reading than to attempt to read everything first, the result of which is sometimes merely to put all one's own ideas out of one's head. Meanwhile I am waiting to hear the progress of negotiations on my behalf with St.Denis. Proofs all corrected with the exception of two or three small points on which I have not made up my mind.

Yesterday a terrific high wind. I hope that the Perkins have not been experiencing stormy weather at sea.

My wish that I could join you at Christmas is tempered by the reflexion that it would be exactly the worst time of year to

attempt such a thing, when family claims would be at their strongest. Some problems are just insoluble.

Your very loving

Pom

By French packet NORMANDIE.

SOUTH KENSINGTON
11 45 PM
2 DEC
1938
S.W.7.

Miss Emily Hale,

22 Paradise Road,

NORTHAMPTON,

Massachusetts,

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

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24 RUSSELL SQUARE,
LONDON, W.C.1

2 December 1938.

My Dearest,

I was surprised to receive your Thanksgiving Day letter to-day, just eight days later, and before I had mentionnd my own celebration in writing to you. You have had a very early fall of snow, and I should like to have seen you and Boerre in your furs taking your walk. But you have worn the coat last winter, have you not? I should like a photograph of you in it, with your dog: I was glad to have the snapshot you sent of him, but, it does not show his figure, and to show his size there should be someone - preferably yourself - standing by him.

Ralph Hodgson sails tomorrow for Madison Wis, to join his wife, taking with him a copy of the Cats, and leaving behind the promise to submit some sketches as illustrations for the book as soon as possible.

A quiet weekend at the Morleys; they had colds, and Frank sp spent Sunday in bed. I was fortunate not to catch it. A small party for Thanksgiving Dinner - only the Ian Hamiltons - a very nice Scotch architect who lives near them, a nephew of General Hamilton.

Meanwhile there is no news of the Reunion. I was to have seen Martin last night, but he sent word that he was not well. I shall probably see him next week, and finish off the proof so as to send one set to New York to the publishers there. St. Denis ought to have Twelfth Night off his mind by now - it seems to have been fairly well received - I expect to see it next week with Mary Hutchinson, whom I have not seen since last winter. And if that is a success, he will be in a better position to take on a new play to follow it in February. I plod along with my Cambridge lectures, and Janes in his hospital keeps his hold on life, with no improvement but surprising tenacity. Next week I must begin to amass Christmas cards.

Does your work take you more time, or less, than last year? You say little of your health, but it was good to learn that you felt less fatigued than a year ago at the same time.

This weekend I have to go to the Richmonds - a visit which should have taken place in September. I shall probably enjoy it, as I like them so much, but I wish that I could stay at home restfully.

I shall write earlier next week, even if there is no boat. On a Friday night, after clearing up a number of odds and ends of private correspondence, and with the prospect of taking a train for Salisbury in the morning, I seem to have very little animation in me.

Your very loving

Tom

What a sprightly letter from Aunt Susie!

By C.W.S. QUEEN MARY

SOUTH KENSINGTON
1 45PM
9 DEC
1938
S.W.7

POSTERLY
CHRISTMAS

Miss Emily Hale,

22 Paradise Road,

NORTHAMPTON,

Massachusetts,

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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TELEPHONE: MUSEUM 9543
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24 RUSSELL SQUARE,
LONDON, W.C.1

Dearest Love.

9 December 1938.

I marked last week's letter for the Normandie, and then came the French seamen's strike, so I do not know whether you received it; but I should suppose that the Post Office would have sent it by the Aquitania instead. It was a dull letter, so it doesn't matter when you get it. Your letter of the 1st arrived this morning. I do not remember which was the letter that you had just received, but I am sorry that it was "full of fatigue and problems". Well, I had not cherished any lively hope of your coming over here for Christmas, or after - and of course, if there is business of your mother's to attend to, that has priority over everything - but the best thing you can do for me for Christmas, in the circumstances, is to try to make it just as much of a holiday as you can, at home, and make me feel that if we cannot be together you will at least be trying to get some rest, and not merely frittering away the short period in Boston. I know that this is not easy, because it will depend upon friends; but if you will choose, among the possible ways of spending the vacation, whichever is most restful, that will be a gift to me. I have kept the diary on my desk, unopened, and shall open it on Christmas morning.

I console myself by reflecting, that I had rather the period of the year during which I can see you was longer, than have a tiny bit now, which would be disturbing a nd exciting, as well as soothing. I have got accustomed, during these last years, to a part of myself hibernating during the winter, andonly coming out in June until October: a strange way of living, but a possible one. So that if I could come over to America in May ~~and~~ or June, see something of you then, amongst the family duties, and feel that we were coming back here at about the same time, if not on the same vessel, that would do more for me than a short week after Christmas, wonderful and strange as that would be.

But when I say hibernating, I hope that I do not simply stop still in the winter, for we can only be of use to each other if we go on developing, separately when we must be, and together when we can. It has, I think, been so heretofore - last summer brought much that was new, or the same thing at a different stage, and was therefore in retrospect the best of all; and so it should be in the future.

The next two weeks must be very busy, with the cards to despatch (I have just ordered a lot from your shop in Cork Street, De la More) and children s presents to buy; and then a more restful and private week after Christmas. You will think of me at church on Christmas Eve, and perhaps you will go to some Christmas Eve service also; and please send me (I hope you will, for it is now too late for you to do so in reply) your Christmas address in Boston.

But the Cows have been hanging up opposite me as I write, since a few days after you sailed: I think I told you so. And I do use your rosary: it hangs at the head of my bed.

Your devoted

Tom

Your review of The Infernal Machine read extremely well and to the point. I wish you might do more dramatic criticism. The London reviewers often irritate me, for example when reviewing a Shakespeare performance, by airing their opinions about the play itself at unnecessary length.

COLNE VALLEY

PARCHMENT

MADE AT CROXLEY

By French packet NORMANDIE

SOUTH KENSINGTON
3 15PM
1938
S.W.7.

POST EARLY FOR CHRISTMAS

Miss Emily Hale,

22 Paradise Road,

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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

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24 RUSSELL SQUARE,
LONDON, W.C.1

16 December 1938.

Dearest Love,

I had hopedto hear from you again, before writing for the last time before Christmas, but I suppose the boats are delayed, or else the mails are already so heavy that they are not delivered promptly. You said that you were to be with Miss King for Christmas, but I have no record of Miss King's address, so I must write to Northampton, though I know you will be gone, and this will have to be forwarded, so that you will not receive it till after Christmas. Also, I cannot cable you direct, but must content myself with a cable to the Perkins's at Marlborough Street. I imagine you first going down to Connecticut to deposit Boerre with your friend who keeps the dog farm; but I very much hope that you will not be the whole time in Boston. I trust that the affairs of your mother's, of which you spoke, are not such as to take all of your time, or give you much anxiety, and I hope that the reference does not indicate a diminishing income.

Christmas comes with the usual petty worries and fatigues of cards and presents. I have done most of my cards, but have still most of my presents (nearly all for children, of course) to buy, and still at a loss to know what to get. There is also Miss Swan. There are also various minor formal engagements: tomorrow I have to go to a tea party given by the Stewarts (my more obscure co-director - special duty as I don't think any of the other directors or their wives will be there - Enid Faber is in bed with three broken ribs); Sunday lunch with Cheetham and a Fr.Passmore, tea with the Stuart Moores, and supper with the Woolves; Tuesday night dine with Mrs.Seaverns. Last night had to go to a small Christmas dinner of Hope Mirrlees - I wish I did not always feel sorry for her, because I find her so tiring. Crackers, which I thought might have better have been given to poor children, but that is perhaps puritanical. People look one up at Christmas, just as they do at the beginning of the summer. On Christmas day I shall probably go to see Janes in his hospital - he was very much more chipper the last time I went: it is surprising that he has lasted so long - he thinks he will be out in January, but it would be very surprising. I

do not know whether I shall be having Christmas dinner with anyone - I would as soon have it alone, as I cannot have it with you, though the club will be closed that day and I shall have to go to the Travellers' - but if I have to dine with anyone, I hope it will be alone with John, as I have a tentative invitation to dine with the Ellis Roberts' and the Max Beerbohms, but Mrs.Roberts hasn't confirmed it, so I hope she doesn't want me - I think both Mrs.Roberts and Mrs.Beerbohm come from Tennessee. On the next night George Every dines with me; and after that I shall try to keep my time very clear, so as to concentrate on the lectures.

I am sorry that I cannot still say anything definite about the play. The situation is that St.Denis would like to do it, but as he has had two failures in succession - The White Guard and Twelfth Night (always a mistake for foreigners to try to produce Shakespeare in London, it was as out of key in its way as Komisarjevsky's Merry Wives which you remember) and is uncertain whether he can get the money. Martin therefore is renewing discussions, at the same time, with John Gielgud, who, he says, under the influence of Sibyl Thorndike, has repented of his insistence on producing, and now would be willing to act in it under another producer, and could do it as matinées in March; and also with Tyrone Guthrie, as a possibility for the Old Vic with Laurence Olivier. But I doubt if it is the right thing for the Old Vic audience at this stage, though it would be an advantage to have the best seats cheap - because, except for the crowd of society intellectuals who go on the first night, I haven't much of a 12s.6d. audience.

I can inform you now that I have decided to put an end to the Criterion with the December number. I did not let you know before, because it was not a situation of asking advice, though of course I should have discussed it with you had you been here. I have kept it very quiet, and up to now nobody outside of Russell Square knows - unless it has leaked out. I did not want the fact to be known until the December number appears, in which I have set forth my reasons; but by the time you get this letter the number will be within a few days of appearance. No one but yourself will know until they read my statement in the Criterion itself. I was afraid that rumours would get about, either that I had quarelled with the firm, or that the firm was financially weak. My reasons are, primarily, that my work on the publishing side has so much increased in the last few years - both dealing with manuscripts and with authors - that it is impossible for me to get through all my Russell Square work in the afternoon, and consequently my private work in the mornings is constantly interrupted. Second, I think that the Criterion has done its work, and that it is better to end before people begin to say that it has gone on too long and that I am getting stale. And

I should not want it to pass into the hands of another editor, because there is no possible person in view; and I had rather it ended with my editorship than changed its character. Were it profitable financially I should find it more difficult to give up; but as it loses the firm two or three hundred pounds a year there is no difficulty. Of course, I could have told you all this before: but when people cannot do anything about it, why burden them with temporary secrets to keep? Anyway, I hope you will approve, because to me it is a great relief. I shall have more time and energy for my own writing, and I shall be less exposed to what is the most tiring part of my routine work: the personal responsibility of nursing young writers who may but probably will not become of importance. It is the afternoons when I have to interview a succession of two or three feckless young people with a little talent, that I find most fatiguing. Of course I shall not be able to detach myself from most of the small foundlings ~~xfxxxx~~ whom I have already taken on; I shall simply not go on acquiring them at such an alarming rate.

Of course I realise that the Criterion has in the past been extremely useful to me in my own development, and has brought me most pleasant and valuable contacts; but I think that chapter is closed.

So now I wish we might be sitting together in a little drawing room somewhere in England,- without company or the danger of company - planning each other's Christmas; and that we might have breakfast on Christmas morning as we once did on your birthday in Rosary Gardens when I surprised you by being invited to breakfast. It is a very modest wish, I think, although it is impossible. This alternation of seasons, with nine months of the year living on one's own resources, and less - indeed less - than three months of depending on someone else, is a very queer way to live, I sometimes think. And yet, such as it is, it has brought me some very strange and rich happiness.

I shall of course go on writing to Northampton regularly, against your return. And I shall think of you specially with prayer, at the midnight Mass on Christmas Eve, Saturday night.

With Christmas blessings

Your devoted

Tom

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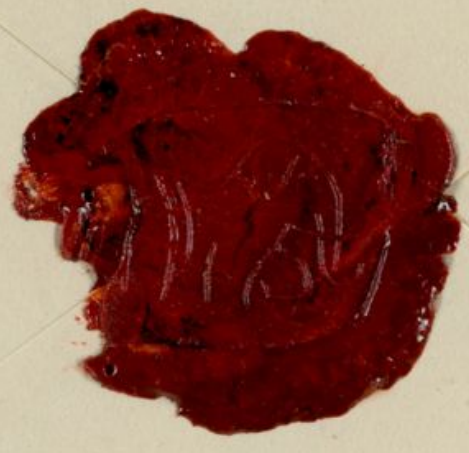

THE
CRITERION
A QUARTERLY REVIEW
EDITED BY T. S. ELIOT

TELEPHONE: MUSEUM 9543
TELEGRAMS: FABBAF, WESTCENT, LONDON

24 RUSSELL SQUARE,
LONDON, W.C.1

No good steamers after
Christmas -

29 December 1938
(St.Thomas of Canterbury).

My Dearest,

Christmas has come and gone, without my knowing where you are. You received, I hope, my cable to the Hotel Puritan, Commonwealth Avenue; and now, I hope, you have been able to complete the business you had to do for your mother and get away from Boston. I wonder if your weather has been as inclement as ours. It was the most severe week I have ever known in London, and the heaviest fall of snow: all very seasonable in theory, but extremely inconvenient for people during the week before Christmas. I was very glad, for the first time, to have a pair of American Ar'tics to keep my feet dry and warm. On Christmas Day I lunched at the Travellers' Club (my own being closed) after dealing with the collections at all the various Christmas masses; and in the afternoon visited Janes in his hospital, where I found him, in the midst of Christmas decorations, a tree, an imitation coster's barrow loaded with fruit, a wireless blaring dance music throughout the ward - sitting up in bed in a red flannel jacket, smoking a pipe, and wearing a paper cap bearing the legend "Lambeth Walk! Oi!" He seemed in quite good spirits, and certainly was convinced that he would eventually be able to return home and carry on as before. In the evening I dined alone with John Hayward and a bottle of Cheval Blanc 1924. The next two days - both holidays - I passed quietly alone, except for having George Every to dinner one evening and Alida Monro the other. I have, alas, to go to the Morleys for Saturday night for the New Year; and the next weekend there is a meeting of the "Moot" at Haywards Heath to discuss our problems of Christianity and Society; and after that I intend to remain at home until I have to lecture in Cambridge in February or March.

On Christmas morning I opened your Diary, which will remain in my pocket for a year, and a nice balsam pillow from Mrs.Perkins. Also received: two bottles of wine from Ashley Dukes, a blotter from Susanna Morley, and a portfolio from Henry. And this afternoon I have to take the Morley boys to "Midsummer Night's Dream" at the Old Vic, as my Christmas present to them. Fortunately Christina will come too.

So much for my small beer. I missed you very much, of course! consoling myself only with the thought that the end of the year brings the summer nearer, even though the summer brings its own problems of adaptation and compromise. Christmas is a particular moment of prayer for you - and for us. I thought that I had told you before that I do use the rosary - yours I do not carry about, because I should not like to risk losing it, and also it is rather more bulky: but it hangs at the head of my bed. I hope that you too, in the next five months or so, will get both plenty of fresh air and sleep (Boerre no doubt sees to the former, if not the latter, but I am glad if he is a good watch dog indoors at least) and time for reading and thinking, without being too fatigued to be able to do either. And remember this year to take such care of yourself through the winter that you will NOT have shingles or any thing else in the spring! Your letter of the 15th sketched a very crowded programme before Christmas - and I have no doubt that the time in Boston (including dentistry) will have been full also; so I do hope that you will get at least a week of real relaxation among friends before you return and find this letter waiting for you, with all my love and solicitude.

Your devoted Tom