

# Letters from T.S. Eliot to Emily Hale

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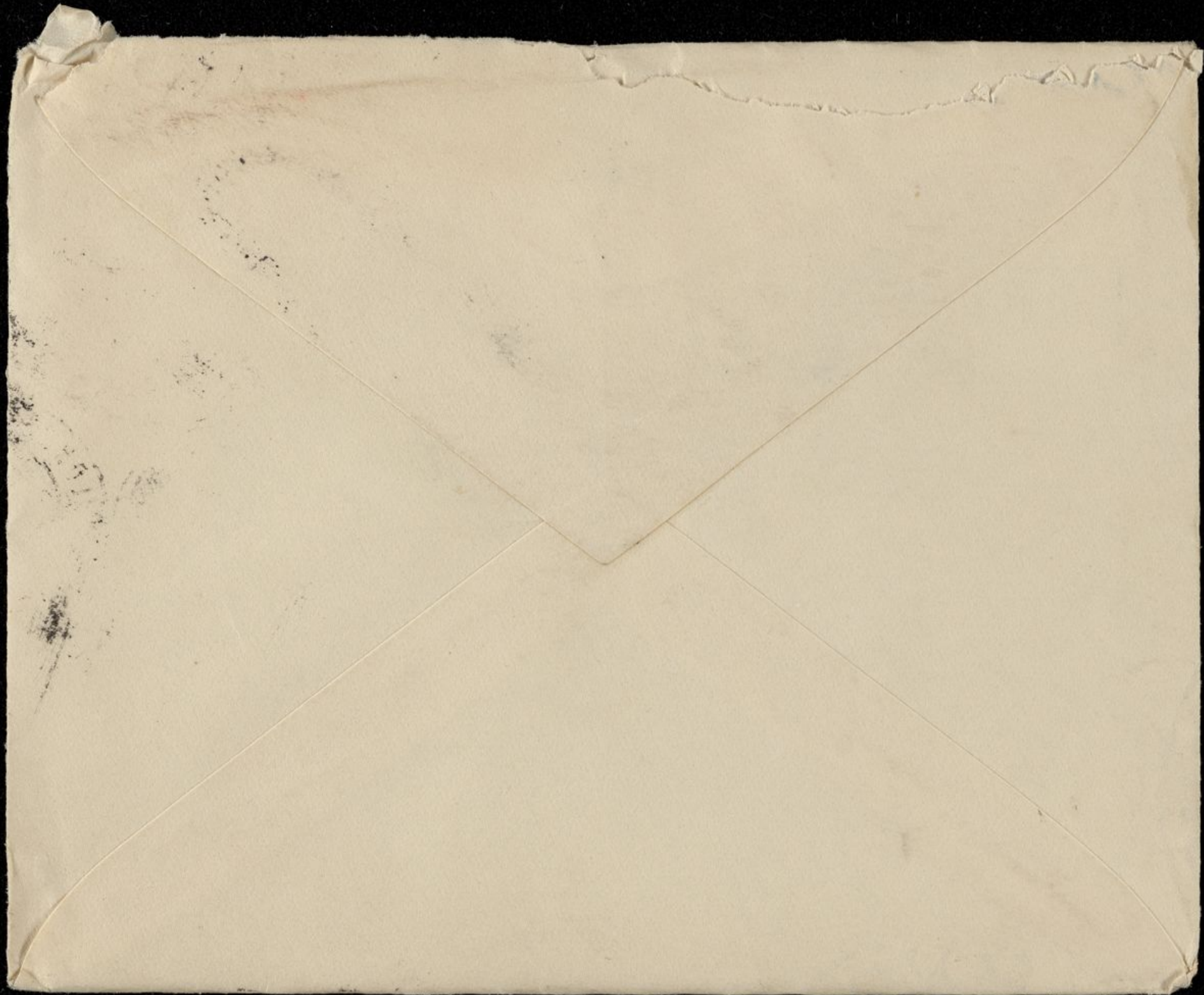


Miss Emily Hale,

1418. East 63<sup>d</sup> Street

Seattle (Wash.)

U.S.A.



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TELEPHONE MUSEUM 9543

TELEGRAMS: FABBAF, WESTCENT, LONDON

24 RUSSELL SQUARE

LONDON, W.C.1

4 August 1931.

*My dear,*

At last, after the long weekend, comes your welcome letter of July 20th - I think the Air Mail must have met with adverse winds this time, or the boat did. Anyway, I am very happy to hear that my first letter - the first letter I have ever sent by air! you are only beginning now to understand how very oldfashioned I am, madam - arrived, as I was particularly apprehensive about the fate of that aeroplane or airplane. Thank you for the topography of SeATTLE, which sounds rather a lovely place. You do not give figures of the pop. but I gather that it is expanding - have you yet clomb Mt. Rainier (17,000 ft.) in your Jantzen suit, whatever that may be - is it a bathing dress - the other costume sounds very attractive anyway - will there be no snapshots of this summer? And what, pray, do you mean by your changed shape? I am painfully aware of getting shapeless, myself, and have even caught myself in the very middleaged posture of sitting with my hands folded over my stomach - which indicates that there is too much stomach; but Geoffrey has just gone through his annual course of three weeks banfing, on Carlsbad salts and orange juice, and he always looks so hideous after it that I think well maybe it is better to leave shapes alone. Anyway, you can afford to be fatter than you were a year ago.

I am so very glad that the Perkins household is restored again. I have always understood that sneezing and coughing fits were as dangerous as anything after an operation, and it is quite providential that no harm was done.

This is only a tiny note of acknowledgement, because I am rushed after the weekend, and I am not sure of getting back this afternoon. I am very happy that my enclosures and proofs have the intended effect - and thank you, my dear, for your appreciative words about the poem, which, as I told you, is only one section of a poem. If not this afternoon, I shall start a long letter tomorrow. Ton

*Tom*

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LONDON, W.C.1

6 August 1931.

*My Emily,*

I was much interested by your comments on "Orphée" and "The World of Light". It is of course easier for you to grasp a play from reading it, than it is for me. I agree that there are, in acting, one or two tedious passages in Orphée (it was admirably done by the Pitoieff players in Paris). But I think there is real beauty in the play. I doubt if Jean will ever do anything better. He is a rather pathetic figure; he has always been the brilliant young man, although I suspect he is older than I. Vanity, and the futile pursuit of a sincerity which he never quite attains, are his characteristics. He is in fact a very amusing talker, or rather monologuer; but he is so anxious to impress with his conversational brilliance that he becomes very fatiguing - one feels that he is making such a great effort to impress that it is very exhausting to listen to him. He is decidedly histrionic - some years ago, he was sensationally "reconverted" to Catholicism by Jacques Maritain, made retreats and so on, and it was a nine days wonder; but of course he relapsed later into opium smoking and I fear other vices; and I doubt whether he will ever accomplish anything substantial.

"The World of Light" was very unpleasant to me, all the more because it was very well acted. It is all very well, I feel, to try to strip the masks of hypocrisy off of humanity, and see mankind as it is; but Aldous goes just too far; and the moment one feels that an author is deliberately selecting the baser elements, he becomes tedious, and indeed the less an artist. I wonder still whether he meant the character of the heroine to be as repellant as I found it - I had a suspicion that she was intended to be rather an admirable person. When I wrote to him I assumed that she was meant to be as bad as the rest (the father is the only respectable person in the play) - but he never answered. But I suggested that this was due to her Protestant upbringing, evidenced by her quoting the Apostles' Creed instead of the Nicene Creed; and perhaps that did not please him. Aldous has everything except genius - a great capacity for assimilating ideas, and none whatever for inventing any; and his knowledge of the world is drawn from a limited society - many figures in his novels are perfectly recognisable - I once figured in a very minor rôle - as a person who liked living in boarding houses (which I do) and kept a diary



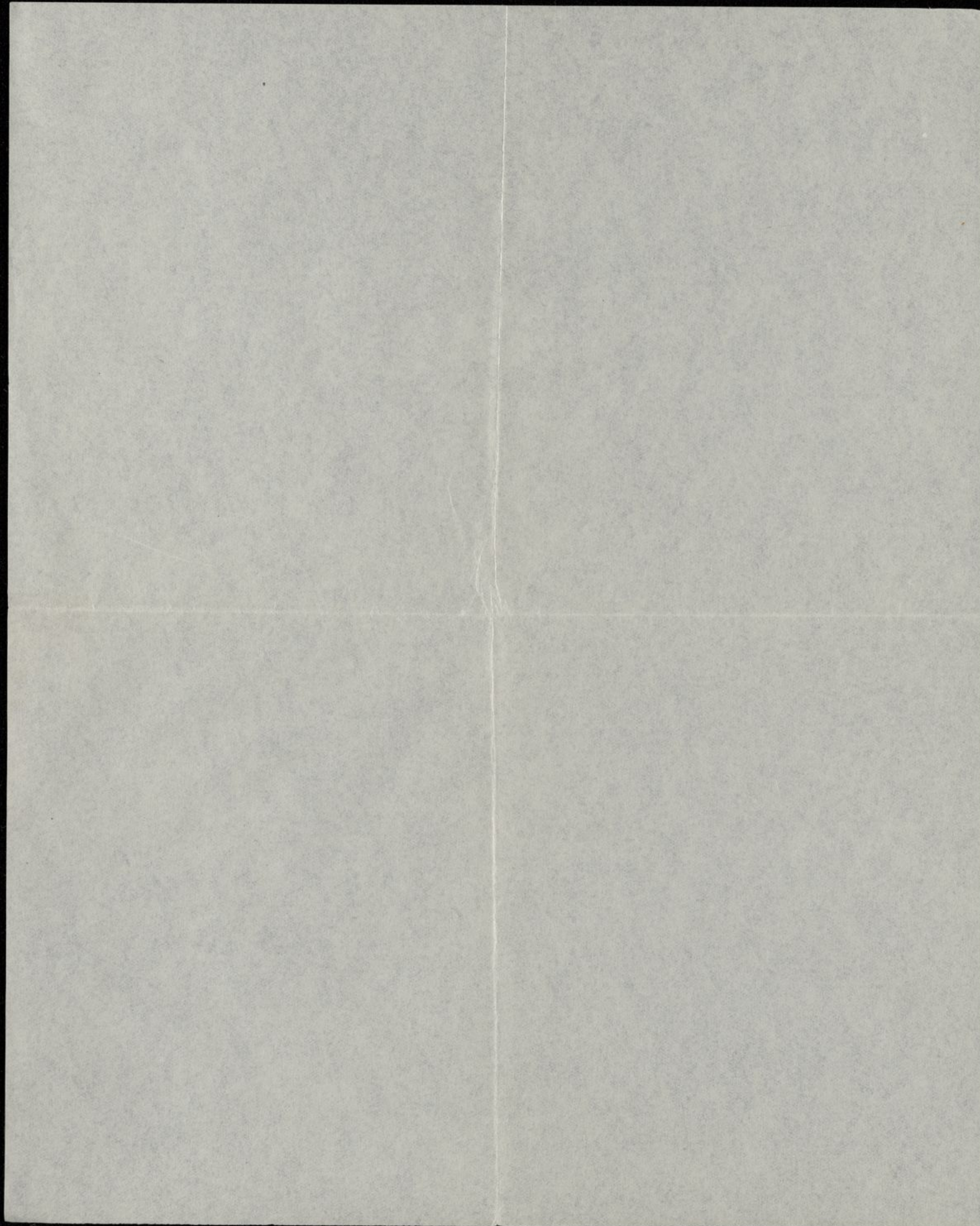
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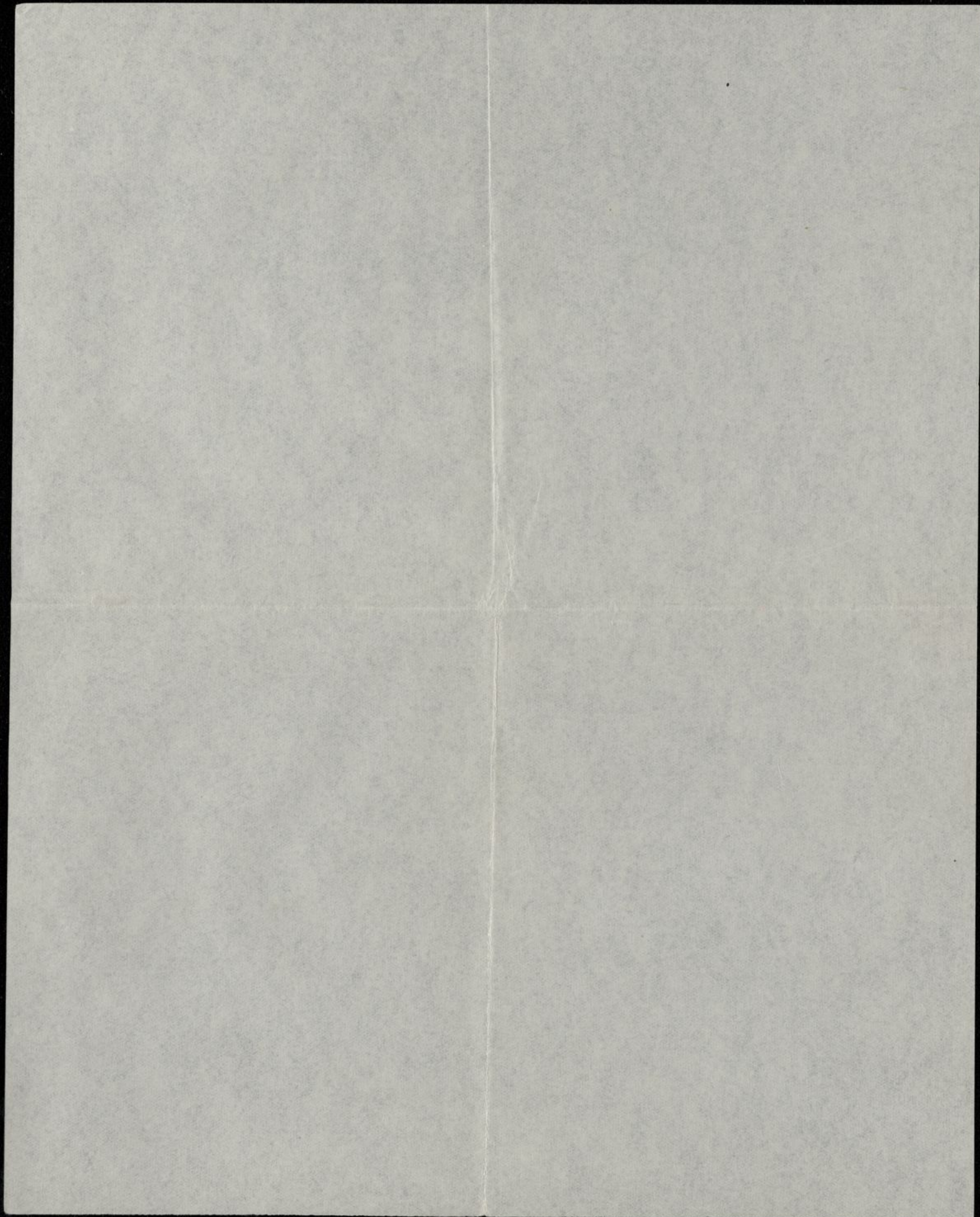
(which I don't - but no doubt he knew somebody else who did keep a diary, for he would never have thought of it of himself).

Harold Peters has been about London, and although he is a little tiring, and requires an effort of adjustment, I am very happy to see him; and he is a good and kind man, but with a certain immaturity of experience. The Hinkleys have been and gone but are returning for another week. My nieces have gone to Cambridge and will not return. I wish that I might see more of them, but I always feel a little baffled with them; perhaps I am not yet quite old enough to know how to deal with young girls; and I feel towards them something of the affection I should like to have given to children of my own, but am too shy to express it very well. Otherwise, sitting here always in London, with people coming and going, gives an effect of unreality to most visitors: they are real while they are here, and fade in unreality again.

Now I have found that when time compels me to stop writing, it is more satisfactory to me to post the letter at once; and start again another day. I wish that I might write and post a little letter every night, if just to wish good night to my dove every night.

Tom





BY AIR MAIL  
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11 August 1931.

*My Emily,*

I must omit any account of myself - not that there is much to tell - from this letter, in order to answer your letter of July 27th.

You have evidently been going through an acute spiritual crisis; and I think I know from my own experience, so far as another person can know, a little of what it has been like. Such crises do happen to one from time to time - it will happen again - but the point is to make the most of it - I mean to take it as a symptom and as a means of spiritual growth - and above all, not to be crushed by it. It all depends on how you take it afterwards. I hope that by now you can review it more calmly.

Now, I am not going to pooh-pooh your feelings about yourself; and in this letter I am not even going to try to persuade you that you are as I see you, and not as you see yourself. Your experience of yourself is perfectly valid so far as it goes. What I want to remind you is *that* you might, in consequence, be in danger of missing the two great Christian virtues: Humility and Hope; and if you did you would be wandering in the wilderness indeed. For in Catholic ethics Humility is the highest of the virtues, which only the saints achieve completely - greater and more important than Chastity or Temperance - the more I brood over it the more sure I am; and Hope too, is not only a blessed gift but a duty. And Despair is really a sin.

I suppose it will surprise you to think that perhaps you are not humble enough; and in the ordinary sense I am sure that you are. But indeed, to be over-anxious about the state of one's soul, over-anxious about one's faults, is a defect of humility. You are right to want to strive towards spiritual perfection: but who are you, that you should have the right to be exasperated with yourself for being merely human? Think, for one thing, what poor creatures we all are. And then try for a moment to get the Catholic way of looking at sin and faults. Sins and faults are particular acts - that is to say, they consist of thought, word or deed which is wrong; and one should examine oneself, or rather get into the habit of having a critical consciousness always at work, to spot the particular wrong thought, word or deed as it occurs (sometimes only a tiny fleeting thought) and immedi-

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ately reject it - that is to separate it from oneself - to cast out continually everything which is not right, so that one's pure self shall become stronger and stronger. But the moment I condemn, and sincerely repent, any fault, it ceases to be a part of me. The lack of humility comes in in this way: that it is a disrespect to oneself, and therefore to one's Creator, to condemn oneself; it is not true that I am bad, but that I have committed many sins.

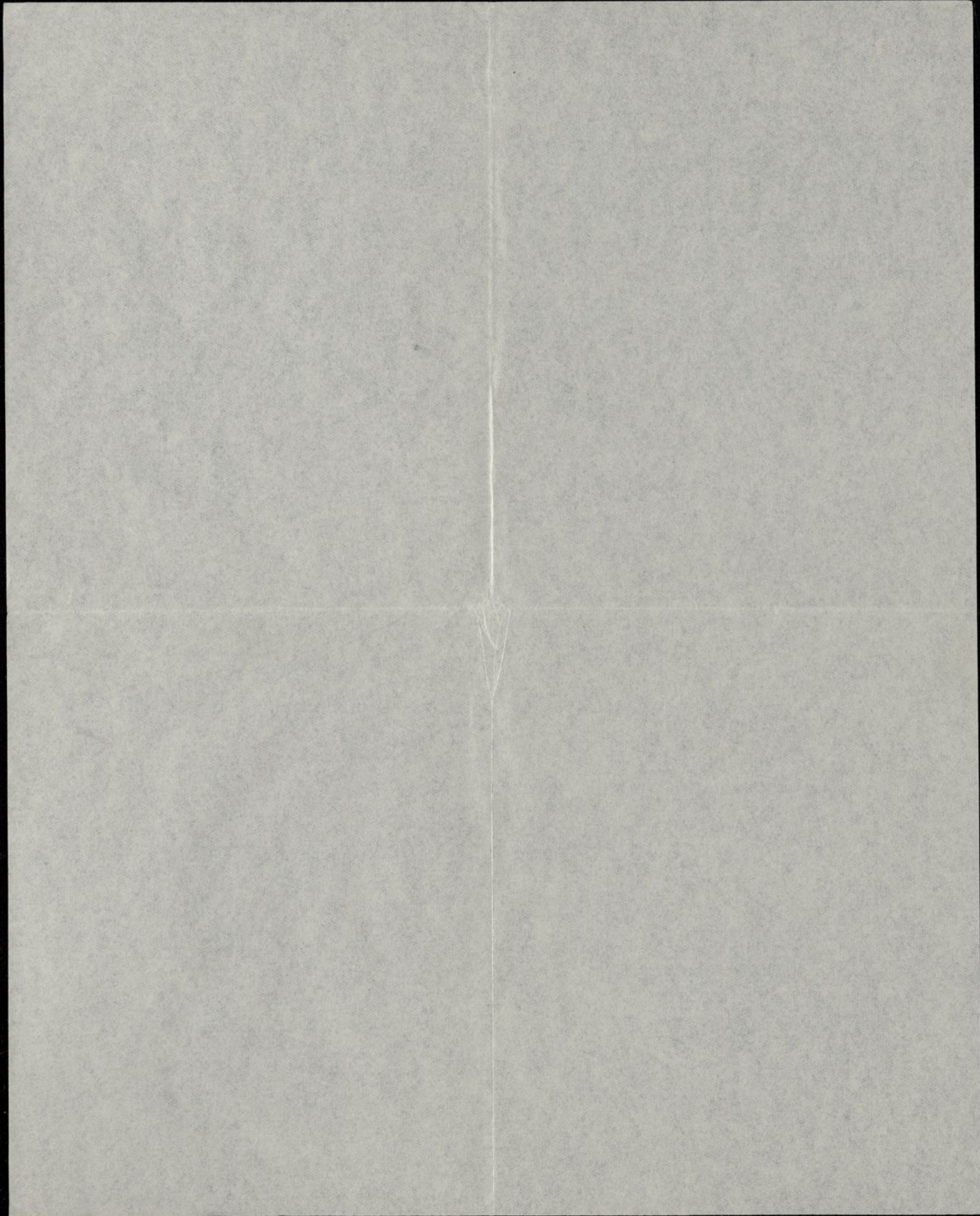
I know that it is difficult to arrive at the perception of forgiveness. Even for me, with the benefits of confession and absolution, it is very hard not to let my mind dwell on past faults which I have sincerely repented, particularly when I cannot help seeing always the consequences of these faults and sins still going on, in damage to the lives of others. But the best I can do is to accept this as part of my penance.

Now, I doubt, from the way you write, whether you had in mind definite thoughts, words and deeds, occurring at particular moments of time; but rather, I suspect, a general diffused sense of insufficiency, and of the drought of spiritual Grace. Is that not so? This is of course a state of mind which all the saints - or rather, many saints and all mystics - have known, sometimes for years on end, and in itself it is a sign of spiritual vocation. But never, never, allow your self to despair; for that is the greatest temptation which the devil holds out to those whose aims are higher than those of the common lot. So Hope really is a duty.

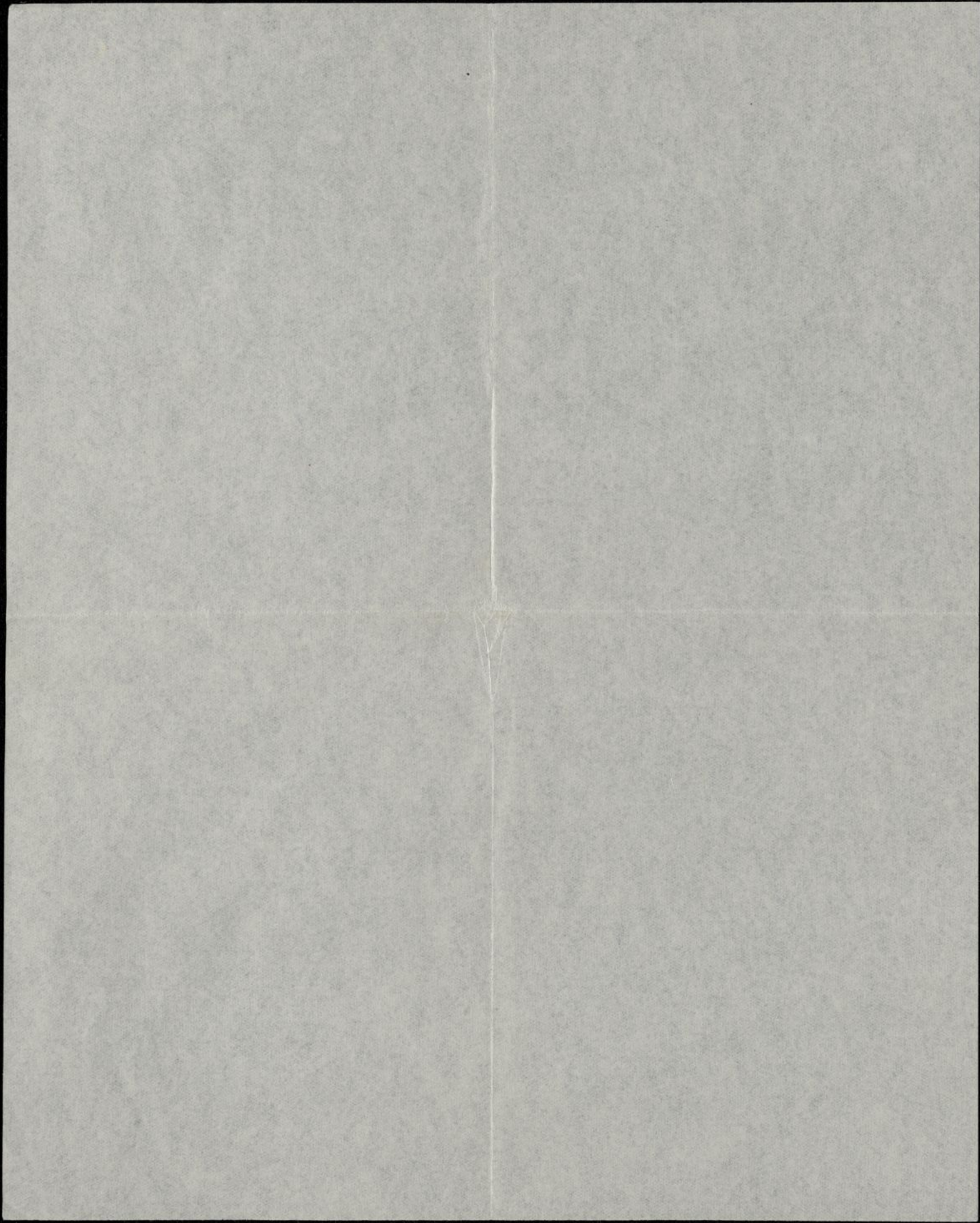
Try to think calmly and detachedly of your definite moments of fault, separate them from yourself - don't think of what you are, for you are changing from moment to moment anyway - but of the things that you have thought, and felt and said and done that you disapprove of; and gradually, my dear, what you are will become what you want to be. Of course confession does help greatly to objectify one's faults and sins; the telling of them helps one to repudiate them, and to distinguish the definite from the vague, the real from the delusory. But even if there are things which you could not tell me or anyone else, you can still practise this separation of yourself from your faults.

I wonder if this is at all the sort of letter that you expected, or that you can use. I want too to remind you that I believe and always shall believe in you more than in the whole world beside; and that it is your duty to all who care for you, and particularly to me, to be humble about your faults and not be too proud to be an ordinary erring human being, and to be hopeful - because there is so much you give and have to give; and if you despaired you would be withdrawing from others, and especially from me, needed food. But O dear, it is so hard to have nothing but written words to comfort you with: when I feel I could do it so much better if I could lift you up in my arms in a quite undignified way and make you laugh at yourself a little.

Yours Tom.







BY AIR MAIL  
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LONDON, W.C.1

13 August 1931.

*My dear Saint,*

Of course, my dear cherub, that is by no means all there is to say - from my point of view; but I wanted first to take your point of view, and try to show you that even if you are right about yourself you are not particularly right - for anyone with enough sensibility might feel the same way - and that even if you are right, you are wrong in your way of taking it. And again, your sense of failure is not unique. To others, certainly to me, it seems that your picture of yourself as a person who has always been protected and coddled, is grotesque. It seems to me that you have had a very difficult and lonely life, that everything has gone against you, and that you have made the very best of what was possible. Oh, I know that some relatives and friends have been very kind to you, no doubt; but that merely mitigates the hardness of circumstances against you.

FRIDAY 14 August. It is a great relief to me to get your letter of the ~~kx~~ 3d this morning: a wonderful week for me - to have two letters within five days! ...Yes, it seems to me that <sup>you</sup> have been making the most of your opportunities, and that you have kept on with a solitary pride which I very much admire; and what is more, you have not just got to one point and staid there, like most people, who cease very early to try to be anything more. As for the promise of youth as shown in photographs, not being fulfilled, it is not your fault, my poor child; but who knows what kind of fulfilment of personality you may yet have? You are going on growing, and that is the main thing; and it is very rare. I should love to have more early photographs of you, however sad they would be to me. When I look over my own, of which I have a good many, I feel the same way, up to a point; but with me, there is a long period of delayed adolescence the photographs of which I loathe - here is one, a passport taken about 1921 - doesnt it look a weak, silly, undeveloped youth - and yet I was of quite mature years, and had been through all sorts of hell, there is nothing in the portrait to show it. You cannot imagine how dissatisfied with myself I still am: I hope I may have arrived somewhere by the age of 60!

You see, I didn't, of all things, want to give you the impression that I wished to "jolly" you into thinking that a sense of sin (for

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you, anyway) is all nonsense. On the contrary, I believe it to be most valuable and important, when properly handled, and I rejoice that you have it. I have been attacked - or rather sneered at - in print, sometimes for being a "Puritan" and sometimes for being a "Catholic"; but both sides have assumed that the two were antithetical. But I have found that the more Catholic I became the more "Puritanical" I am also; only I have, I hope, learned a little humility, which is the foundation of all morals. Indeed, there is nothing nearer to Humility than the Sense of Humour - for surely the person with a real sense of humour is the person who can laugh at himself - and that is a form of humility. So you see, the wish expressed at the end of my last letter was not so flippant as it may have sounded.

But don't say that you "will not let such a flood of intensity break over me again"; because I do not want you to decide beforehand how you are going to be, with me; I want you just to let yourself go as you feel at the moment. Will you please promise that again? For this last letter but one has meant, I think, one more stage in mutual understanding; and that is the most exciting adventure of my life: to explore and to get to know you as I never have and never shall know anyone else.

But I shall have much more to say in reply to your letters. Meanwhile, my dear Dove, I hope that having had two letters this week I may still hope for one next week - and I am waiting for your answer to my answer to a question of yours which troubled me - and thank you for your news, to which I shall reply on Monday.

à toujours

*Tom.*

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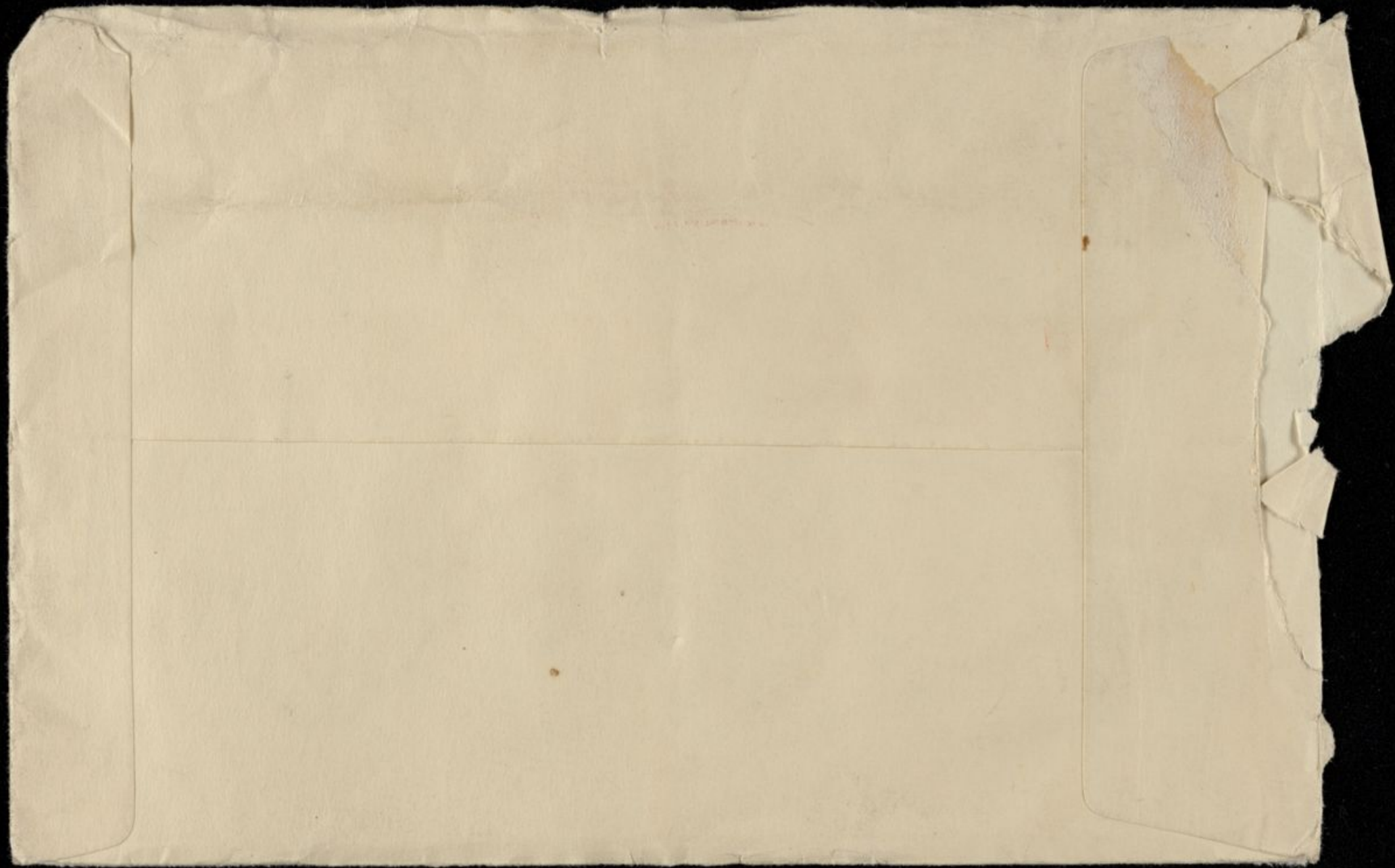
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# THIS QUARTER

April - May - June

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## *EDITORIALLY :*

The accumulation of English and American material and the insistence of authors on being published with the least possible delay have forced us to defer to the September number the Polish material which was scheduled to appear in translation in the present one. The international issues that have appeared hitherto were the French in March 1930, the Italian in June 1930, the Russian in September 1930, the German in December 1930 and the Austrian in March 1931. In greatest demand thus far has been the Russian number, so much so in fact, that we were obliged to reprint it.

The present issue completes the second year under our editorship. The index at the end of the volume contains, as in the preceding year, a melange of names of the greatest of contemporary writers and of those who we have every confidence will before long attain greatness.

Handicapped as we are by force of the imponderable, but none the less formidable, circumstance of publishing an English-language literary quarterly in a foreign country, great has been our gratification that Mr. Edward J. O'Brien, authority on the Short Story, honoured us by incorporating in his collec-

EDITORIALLY

tion of "The Best Short Stories for 1930", three stories that were printed in THIS QUARTER during that year. We value the compliment.



CRITICISM "—And who do you think is the greatest  
A L'IRLANDAISE poet? asked Roland, nudging his neighbour.

— Byron, of course, answered Stephen.  
Heron gave the lead and all three joined in a scornful laugh.

.....  
— You may keep your mouth shut, said Stephen, turning on him boldly. All you know about poetry is what you wrote up on the slates in the yards and were going to be sent to the loft for.

.....  
— In any case Byron was a heretic and immoral too.  
— I don't care what he was, cried Stephen hotly.  
— You don't care whether he was a heretic or not? said Nash.

.....  
— I know that Byron was a bad man, said Roland.  
— Here, catch hold of this heretic, Heron called out.  
In a moment Stephen was a prisoner.

.....  
...Nash pinioned his arms behind while Roland seized a long cabbage stump which was lying in the gutter. Struggling and kicking under the cuts of the cane and the blows of the knotty stump Stephen was borne back against a barbed wire fence.

— Admit that Byron was no good.  
— No.  
— Admit.  
— No.  
— Admit.  
— No. No."

This illustration of moral suasion and practical inculcation of canons of literary evaluation is taken from Mr. James Joyce's "A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man." To guard against any expression of displeasure over the marginal caption, let it be understood that it was not intended to convey anything typically Irish. It only so happens that the incident had been described by the author as having taken place in Ireland, and the characters involved were young Irishmen; nothing else. That there may not linger the faintest doubt on that score, we shall furnish a companion illustration, this time of liberal Italian origin: The other day we received a visit from an Italian gentleman. In the course of conversation he

## EDITORIALLY

discovered a book in the Italian language the postman had that same day deposited on our desk. A work of philosophy, and we had only just had time to glance over it in cutting open its pages. "The book promises to be interesting," we said to our visitor. He looked at it for a while, then noticing the author's name, threw the book down on the table as if it were a cursed thing, saying indignantly: "Fascista!"



It is an open secret that Stephen—Stephen Dedalus in Joyce's book—is autobiography. The book was written about 1904-1914. The Artist, Stephen, that is, confessed that he was leaving his native country "to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race." With the exception of one or two short visits to his home-land, he has lived in voluntary exile ever since.

Whether Stephen Dedalus still maintains his youthful enthusiasm for Byron as a poet; whether he would still be willing to suffer torment for the sake of that enthusiasm; whether the smithy of his soul has successfully accomplished the forging of the uncreated conscience of his race, no data are at hand to enable one to affirm or deny. However that may be, after a lapse of between fifteen to twenty years, evidence has been furnished only the other day that the conscience of at least one member of the race, as far as it sits in judgement on works of literature, still remains uncreated and in conflict with any sort of enlightened critical theory.



**PATRIOTISM** Poets need not be patriots. What in quiet moments of retrospection one might be inclined to class as great poetry has not been written under the stimulus of patriotism or nationalistic feeling. Resorted to deliberately as a source or motive of imaginative creation, it must in the end prove as barren as any other *sought* stimulus. There are no decoys to ensnare inspiration. If that be so, perhaps we should not have said that poets need not be patriots, but that they *should* not be patriots.

Mr. W. B. Yeats, in an early essay, tells how he and Lionel Johnson had founded—actually founded—their Art and Irish Criticism on the romantic conception of Irish nationality. Had the enterprise been at all realizable, Yeats ran the much better chance of achieving some sort of practical result than Johnson. The latter understood only how to reduce political thought to verse, but Yeats had dreamed of transforming love of country into a patriotism

## EDITORIALY

of hate, fervid Irish hate,—a much more absorbing and more powerful emotion than love. Like all romantic movements, theirs also was marked by much muddling, if not muddle-headedness. Despite sincere intention professed at all hands to build up a national Art, the situation soon grew troublesome, when it became apparent that others had other notions as to what the poetry of Young Ireland should be. And so Yeats set out to attack verse written by certain Irishmen because he considered it based on a morality and politics that impaired its value; his and his party's verse being attacked in turn, because it was not deemed expressive of certain doctrines or necessities of the moment. Yeats and his partisans soon discovered that even in the best of causes art cannot live on extrinsic subterfuges; discovered that artists "who are servants not of any cause, but of mere naked life, and above all of that life in its nobler forms, become protesting individual voices."

The Celtic Twilight in letters has not lifted from that day to this.



**SECTARY AS CRITIC** A young Irishman has recently produced a full-dress study of a contemporary poet, whom he measures with the religious-chauvinistic yardstick, forming his estimate on the basis of creed, opinion and attitude, rather than on that of aesthetic experience, thus recalling to us the superannuated and unenlightened manner of art evaluation we had read of in Joyce's "Portrait of the Artist."

Whether it was that the mind was willing, but the flesh too weak to hobble after, or whether the flesh was in healthy functional swing, but the mind in a quandary, the young Irishman has found himself torn between two influences. There was the responsibility imposed by acceptance of a commission to write a study, which, unless it were an appreciation, there would have been little point in ordering to be written, and there was the author, still too much of a good Irish-Catholic to make a good European. Face to face with his subject, a heterogeneous type to be sure, neither quite American nor quite English, nor quite Catholic nor quite Puritan, yet all of these, and more, rolled into one, he found him an embarrassing specimen indeed. So, instead of making "eine gute Miene zum bösen Spiel," the young Irish author has made "eine böse Miene zum guten Spiel." Instead of a study, he wrote a good old-fashioned Irish shindy.



**THE MAN OR HIS WORK** We cannot recall any principle more relevant to the discussion of critical attitude than that laid down by Mr. T. S. Eliot in his book of essays, "The Sacred Wood", namely that "honest criticism and

## EDITORIALY

sensitive appreciation are directed not upon the poet but upon the poetry". Or the remark in his essay on Dante: "The less I know about the poet and his work before I begin to read it, the better." A most sensible view, indeed, since anything we may learn of a poet's personality will not normally affect the state of mind we find ourselves in after reading a given poem, while still in ignorance of the author's person or the degree of importance attributed to his work. On the other hand, attention first directed upon the poet's personality or social, moral, political, or such other considerations, as are not strictly and purely artistic, may well sub-consciously, if not frankly consciously, create in the reader a *parti-pris* that may imperil what might else have been a normally pleasing or displeasing, appreciative or unappreciative, reaction to his work. It follows that criticism of poetry, if it is justifiable on any hypothesis at all, is valueless when it is not practised with detachment from the poet's personality.

It is the disregard of that principle in Mr. Thomas McGreevy's "Thomas Stearns Eliot, A Study" (Chatto and Windus, London), which renders the book a useless production. It dribbles irrelevancies and inconsistencies throughout its pages and at every step displays the writer's, we shall not say, incompetence, but congenital inability, to understand or appreciate a poet of the type of T. S. Eliot, despite all lip-service and cheap and frequently contradictory compliments to the contrary. Although the book is filled with a swashbuckling sort of self-assurance, its author does not hesitate to take occasional refuge on the fence where he sits and chews the cud, uncertain at all at all which way to jump next.



### INSULTS TO DEAD AND LIVING

We suggested that instead of composing a study he had produced a quarrel. He calls St. John Ervine a garden cabbage; William II a caricature of a monarch; he shies stones at Shaw and Sargent. Voltaire and Anatole France could not write poetry, —and they can't answer back. Cocteau is merely a young man in a hurry. Giraudoux treats his *Amphitryon* with the amused condescension of the free-thinking professor who knows better. Ezra Pound is a professor *manqué* who should have stayed in America. Sir Joshua Reynolds is that born old professor devoid of a single illuminating line; poor D. H. Lawrence was "poles apart from all intellect,"—how the shades of these must moan! He seems to have a special grudge against professors and showers liberal invective on their heads. Da Vinci was intellectually dishonest. Shakespeare's "The Taming of the Shrew" is a piece of vulgarity. Arnold Bennett is that "fivepenny English master." The Spanish men of letters have nothing more serious than Neapolitan lampshades and child's penny worlds to occupy them. Going as far back as Eli-

## EDITORIALLY

zabeth Tudor—how many centuries is it since that poor repressed spinster has stopped plucking the daisy : he loves me, he loves me not?—he accuses her of having, by her secession from Rome, caused the breakdown of British ideals, and proves it, as he thinks, by the suicide in the Great War of George Winterbourne, the hero of Richard Aldington's novel, "Death of a Hero"! All of that,—and throughout one wonders what connexion there can be between such a variety of matters and T. S. Eliot's poetry.



*YES — NO!* The book is full of fun, and it is almost worth the *NO — YES!* two bob net it is selling for. The author quarrels with the subject of his study, Thomas Stearns Eliot. When the latter writes : "*...I do not hope to turn again,*" our young Irish critic pulls up sharply and back-chatters : "I feel I know better than he does, I not only hope but I *know* that he assuredly will turn again." When Eliot solemnly affirms : "*I rejoice that things are as they are,*" do you think McGreevy will let him have his way, or give him heed may be? The devil he would! Instead—and you would think he knew better than to say such a thing—he prints it in his book that the "distinguished artist is in despair (though resigned) because of his own sterility." Then, as if regretting the *faux-pas*, he adds that that is not much anyway, since even the saints have had their periods of sterility. Which might raise the pretty problem whether it was not due initially to their sterility that they became saints at all. But we will let that pass, owing to its delicacy. Then he starts on a new tack and gives a wallop to Mr. Eliot's Church, the Anglo-Catholic, "the bastard, schismatic and provincial if genteel kind of Catholicism," since "to be an Anglo-Catholic, to try to compromise between John Bullishness or Uncle Sammishnes, and Catholicism is almost to try to reconcile Mammon and God." As if Mammon had never formed a definite step in the hierarchy of divine intercessors. In point of fact, we believe that Mr. Eliot was for a time connected with banking in some capacity before ever he "tried" to effect any such mcgrievous compromise. It did not bring him down in the world. A little dose of the banking medicine would not hurt Mr. McGreevy much. It might teach him the always useful sense of values and responsibilities, at least.



"*THE CRITERION*" He scolds Mr. Eliot's review, "*The Criterion*," for about two pages or more, resenting its particular kind of dulness, which he declares to be a rather professorial and rather snobbish kind; it serves, he says, as a kind of exchange for ideas between the second-raters of all Europe. He is afraid, it seems, that

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"in the future professors would keep the artist in place." He should know, since he himself has taught at the Ecole Normale in Paris the young French idea how to grow. He is much incensed that a Harvard professor should have explained to Mr. Joyce, in the pages of "The Criterion," how he really ought to write if he wishes for the approval of New England. Which speaks volumes for McGreevy's sense of humour when throughout 70 pages he tries to make Mr. Eliot understand how he should write if he wishes for the approval of Thomas McGreevy. — The larva of querulousness spins on so extravagantly that Mr. McGreevy becomes himself entangled in the process of cocoon formation and tied up in a dispute with himself. On p. 1 of his "Study" he complains sadly of "the falling off in vigour and vividness, in pregnancy, suggestiveness of words, in technical adequacy to the subject in Mr. Eliot's most recent book of verse, 'Ash Wednesday'," This on p. 1, — but on the last page but one he writes that there are passages in "Ash Wednesday" that "transcend everything Mr. Eliot had written in sheer contemplated static loveliness." There is a decided weakness for leaning, but always too far, back or forward.

The conflict Mr. McGreevy engages in with himself takes place on a variety of fields. It assumes a zig-zag character, and one can never be sure where and when it is likely to break out afresh. He chides Eliot repeatedly for writing verse that is disdainful, plaintive, over-fastidious, wincing, whimpering, despairing, resigned, satirical, ironical, satanically melancholy, etc. Verses written before "The Waste Land," as well as verses written after the publication of that poem, were all more or less so blemished. We say *except* "The Waste Land," because to that poem the author of the "Study" pays the greatest compliment he is capable of, saying that it "has influenced us all almost as much as Mr. Joyce's 'Ulysses.'" In a sense it is more nearly complete than 'Ulysses'." But even here he slips mercurially through our fingers; for he finds disdain also in "The Waste Land," only: "in 'The Waste Land' the disdain finds its rightful place." "The Waste Land" is more nearly complete than "Ulysses," because the latter is but the first part of a vast undertaking that is not yet finished, while the former has a definite ending: "*Shanti shanti shanti*," the nearest equivalent of which Sanscrit word is "The Peace that passeth understanding." It hath passed Mr. McGreevy's who, after a great deal of interpretative spluttering, folds away neatly his tail between his legs and runs away, throwing out over his shoulder a parting observation to the effect that if anyone is interested in the poem "without being quite able to 'make it out,' I assume that it is because they are attracted by its self-evident literary merits, and that comment on these is, therefore, almost needless." "For what it sets out to be... 'The Waste Land' is practically beyond mere literary criticism...." We cannot for the life of us imagine what a poem can set out to be other than a poem. If the author had said straight-forwardly that "The Waste



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Land" is beyond literary criticism, his position would be clear enough. But it is impossible to pin him down any more effectively than, according to Teddy Roosevelt, you could nail a lump of apple jelly to the wall. And so we have it that "The Waste Land" is beyond literary criticism, but only *practically* so, and the literary criticism is *mere* literary criticism. He persists: "I have not dwelt on its literary quality. For that matter I do not think I need to." This after protesting a few pages earlier, discussing this same "Waste Land," that "it is not the theme, but the poet's treatment of it that gives a work its value," or in plain English, that same literary quality all over again that he denies coolly in the next breath. If Saint Ignatius had not founded his order, it would have remained for Saint Thomas to found it!



**ELIOT** It has already been noted that our Irish critic bemoans on page 1 the falling off among other virtues of Mr. Eliot's poetry, the falling off also in technical adequacy, but on p. 9 we find the direct contrary: "I do not propose to dwell at any length on his technique which is usually self-evidently adequate to his matter." "I am mostly concerned"—these again are his words—"with Mr. Eliot's attitude, as I think he would have me be." — But suddenly and quite unaccountably something happens, and we read this: "But I must insist that I think Mr. Eliot is scarcely to be blamed personally for this attitude of the early poems." Why, does the reader suppose, is Mr. Eliot not to be blamed for the attitude of his early poems? It seems he is not to be so blamed because he had "deserted New England for Old England at a time when Old England was still to all intents and purposes Edwardian," — a most dreadful era, when "passionless, fastidious, would-be aristocratic, Nonconformist Liberalism, the nearest thing to New Englandism that exists in Europe, was triumphant." Now the cat is out of the bag: "It is little wonder therefore that he should have been infected with something of the glibness of his generation." Unless this has been put down for mere sound's sake, we defy any one in his sober senses to explain why a poet should be less blamable for his poems or the attitude of his poems written in one country and generation, than for the writing of them in another country or generation. Of course, it is all simon-pure nonsense. It is at bottom nothing but a smoke screen behind which, patronizingly and mealy-mouthed, the author exposes Mr. Eliot's innocence regarding *Irish fairies* when he "opined" that, according to Mr. W.B. Yeats, they were "charming creatures in their native bogs." Now Mr. McGreevy will not have it that way: As for Mr. Yeats's fairies being charming—he retorts—they could only be considered so if it were charming to lead people to destruction, as in "The Land of Heart's Desire." Now all this has obviously nothing to do with an appreciation of

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Mr. Eliot's poetry, but it furnishes a surprisingly pertinent illustration of how little a thing suffices to give Mr. McGreevy an excuse for turning away from the task he undertook, but relished not at all.



**FAIRIES AND FAIRIES** Of course, there are fairies and fairies. Both kinds may, possibly enough, consist of good as well as bad ones; of charming creatures, as runs the phrase objected to, or destructive, as it is claimed they are. It is not the other kind of fairies whose good fame he impugns: it is the supernatural kind that he callously slanders. In the name of happy childhood the world over, we protest against such vandalism. We dislike suggesting, but the author of the Eliot monograph mistook or deliberately refused to understand the import of Mr. Yeats's famous play. In any event he had better be on his guard, for sooner or later the traduced leprechauns will get him.

Mr. McGreevy has been teaching the French; let a Frenchman now teach him. Let him listen to Prof. Louis Cazamain of the Sorbonne, who writes in his "History of English Literature": "The Land of Heart's Desire", a little masterpiece, in which the wistful aspiration of the beyond, the eternal restlessness of unsatisfied hearts, are crystallized in pure allegory." Lest he object to receive instruction from a Frenchman, and he, a detested professor, let him open the "Collected Poems" of that singing Irishman, James Stephens, and read the lilting lyric, "The Fairy Boy", he who was

*"Rapt away,  
Snapt away,  
To a place where children play  
in the sunlight all the day."*

— Let him read what a priest had done to him :

*"...With candle, book and bell,  
Tolling Latin like a knell,  
Ruthlessly,  
From the tree,  
Sprinkling holy water round,  
He drove the Fairy down to hell,  
There in torment to be bound.  
So the tree is withered and  
There is sorrow on the land."*



**VULGAR PLUTOCRACY** But Mr. McGreevy's most virulent abuse is reserved for America, a country he has never visited; frankly, if stupidly, basing his generalization on reading and hearsay. If he has ever read or heard

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anything in America's favour, he keeps silent about it. He starts out by saying: "It is, I suppose, generally accepted that America as a whole is the most vulgar plutocracy that the modern world has seen." A man is permitted to hold the opinion that America is a plutocracy, even the most vulgar plutocracy that the modern world has seen, if he prefers to put it that way. Some might deny it point blank and others might consider it a moot point or vehemently affirm it. But to say that America "as a whole" is such a plutocracy means nothing at all. America "as a whole" is no more any one particular thing than any other country as a whole is any other particular thing, with the possible exception of Russia, where everything has been triturated down to a powdery level. And if, as he says, "even the poor American is proud of all the millionaires," it is because the poor American was probably one himself only yesterday, or will be one tomorrow, and we imagine it is rather a fascinating experience to be a millionaire, and rather a comfortable one. Probably also harder to achieve than writing literary studies. Even the divine Arthur Rimbaud chucked the poet's halo for the money-maker's crown of thorns. What a pity fate was against him. Voltaire—the thorn in Mr. McGreevy's exhibitionistic side—pretty well managed to amass sackfuls of both kinds of glory.



*MASS MEETING OR BURLESQUE* And if "the poor American is equally proud of all the splendid skyscrapers they build for the biggest big business ever," it is because they are splendid indeed, and they have enriched the world's sensibilities in architecture, whereas our Irish ironist's innuendos are evidence only of a picayunish mind and footling snobbery. To say as he does that "America is not so much a country as a mass meeting," is as much of a staggering, sprawling, poteen-steeped witticism as the retort that Ireland is not so much a country as an eternal rumpus might well be inspired by a synthetic gin jag. *Tout de même* we have never heard of the hat having been passed in the Irish circus in support of an American cause, but we have participated in American mass meetings, where the hat has been passed to make Ireland free (?) — Hurray! We would hate to say what we think would have been the fate of Ireland, if, say for the last fifty years, the American mass meeting had been barred to Irishmen. Perhaps also the American police would have been cleaner.



*THE PADDED "STUDY"* We have by now more than sufficiently shown the cantankerous, ungracious, bumptious, superior and utterly insincere manner in which the "Study" has been composed. Mr. T. S. Eliot merits every

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sympathy for having become involved in such a grotesque performance. This all the more so that the suspicion does not seem altogether unwarranted, not altogether *aus der Luft gegriffen*, that the author had not been given too much to reading Eliot's works except for an eleventh hour's hunt for quotations, with which the book abounds. Even these, for all we know, may have been procur'd *per manum alienam*, because in a note of acknowledgment we find him expressing thanks to two collaborators for helping him "in various ways in the preparation of this essay," containing 71 pages in all, of which a good fourth consists of quotations from Laforgue, Corbière, Yeats, but chiefly from Eliot. Four pages are devoted to a disquisition on royalism and classicism; as much again to abuse of America, *ditto* of professors, and other matters having nothing in the least in common with the subject of the "Study," for which no sort of preparation other than a goodly supply of bile was needed. To the study of Thomas Stearns Eliot properly speaking, there has been devoted only just enough matter to form a slender pamphlet, the rest being reprinted material and padding.



McGREEVY  
vs. ALDINGTON

It appears that our critic divides Mr. Eliot's "output" into three phases: verses written before the publication of "The Waste Land"; then "The Waste Land"; then verses published afterwards, particularly "Ash Wednesday." The ante-"Waste Land" phase, if we except occasional amiabilities, does not strike him very favourably. It is the "Prufrock" phase, and according to our critic, there could not be much in that, because it only expressed New England's spiritual bankruptcy. Although a born poet, Eliot's cultural background ("he had the genius of it as Henry James had the genius of it") is stated to have provided him with nothing to grow poetical about. And so he wrote satirically about it. Yet he himself was still of it. One is always "of" whatever one is satirical about. Which is very funny, because in his diatribe against the genus professor, Mr. McGreevy quotes Mr. Yeats's well-known satire on the

*"Old, learned, respectable bald heads....  
They'll cough in the ink to the world's end,  
Wear out the carpet with their shoes.  
Earning respect, have no strange friend."*

Does he mean to suggest that Mr. Yeats is "of" whatever he is satirical about and,

*"must accounted be  
One of that mumming company?"*

The young Irishman, who is first of all a Catholic, is displeased

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with the poet for being ironical about the True Church and sympathizes with him for suffering too much from Protestantism. Mr. Eliot, he tells us, believing nothing, achieved nothing that could be poetry, as Voltaire and Anatole France had not. Mr. Eliot's puerile and tittering scepticism could not but be poetically sterile. Withal he remained Puritan, and like all Puritans confused the ideas of love and sex. During that early phase he was a melodramatic writer and in the poems of that period the spirit of satirical comedy was uppermost in him. All of which, and much more of the same kind that we refrain from further noticing, is, as Mr. Richard Aldington once said, writing on T. S. Eliot, "Cheap journalism." Mr. Aldington, who is a too well-seasoned all-round man of letters to permit questions of morals, religion or political allegiance to interfere with his literary judgment, also wrote on Mr. Eliot's ante-"Waste Land" poetry. This is what he said, writing before the publication of "The Waste Land": "His desire for perfection is misrepresented as puritan and joyless, whereas it is plain that he discriminates in order to increase his enjoyment. But of course refinement will not be applauded by those who cannot perceive it, nor will intelligence be appreciated by those who cannot understand it; literary criticism is not the only human activity wherein ignorance is made a standard."



"*THE WASTE LAND*" After that early period, followed "The Waste Land," when "the gentlemanly whimpering was to cease as the disdainful wit was to cease."

Mr. Eliot would now seem to have moved up towards a spiritual plane. On this plane, when disdain occurs, it is still disdain, but in its rightful place, because, says our critic, "like the scorn in 'Ulysses,' it appears in a scene of love-making where there is no love." But disdain was manifest also in earlier verse on occasions of similar meretriciousness. The point sought to be made therefore fails. If "The Waste Land" is preferred by Mr. McGreevy and he bestows greater praise on it, it is not because a more catholic-minded critic speaks through him now, but because a narrow-minded Catholic speaks through the critic. Whereas an abandoned Puritan is supposed to have spoken in Mr. Eliot's earlier verses, Mr. McGreevy now begins to discover evidences of the poet's turning his back on the nimble, playful, satirical, perhaps even hedonic, and moving towards the spiritual. He seems to hear the noise of slamming of trunks and pulling up of tents in preparation of starting on an officially conducted tour to... Canossa. Yes: the poet "has moved towards Catholicism." But in the later "Ash Wednesday," Canossa is still a long way off. Hence, Mr. McGreevy does not like "Ash Wednesday" so well. And judging by Mr. Eliot's last pamphlet, "Thoughts after Lambeth,"

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the tour has been abandoned for good. An Anglican, not a Roman, halo has definitely been bespoken.



**"WASTE LAND"** Our young critic subjects "The Waste Land"  
**INTERPRETED** to an interpretation, "an altogether personal interpretation." Just how edifying this proves will be made sufficiently clear by two examples: The line:

*"London bridge is falling down falling down falling down,"*

he adumbrates as: "disintegration again." And the lines:

*"And we shall play a game of chess,  
Pressing lidless eyes and waiting for a knock upon the door,"*

he interprets: "It is scarcely necessary to suggest that it means death." But for which comment one might have thought it meant that the maid was about to come in to announce the bath was ready. The rest is mere rehearsing and re-echoing or paraphrasing of, at times perhaps difficult but intelligible, text: futile interpretation all of it, by the author's own admission, since "human nature is not so very diversified, and all interpretations tend to be at any rate more or less right." If so, why have wasted time, paper and printer's ink?

Much as our critic may have tried to get under his subject's skin, both personality and work were too much for him. Mr. Eliot is at once a subtle, complicated, frank and outspoken personality, and his work is apt to be troublesome if not read with thoughtful attention. To do him justice, the critic did his best to discover what Mr. Eliot was about. One might go so far as to say that he not only tried to understand, but also to emulate, and that at great and grievous risk and peril of his very soul. For it must not be overlooked that Mr. McGreevy is a poet in his own right. When Eliot uses in his poem the German: "*Wo weilest du?*", McGreevy answers, in a poem of his own, in the same language: "*Folge mir Frau.*" Mr. Eliot in "The Love Song of Prufrock" writes:

*"In the room the women come and go  
Talking of Michelangelo,"*

and Mr. McGreevy in his poem, "School of..." echoes:

*"So Dublin's rows  
Michelangelos..."*

Mr. McGreevy censures our Anglo-American poet for being, in his poem 'Hippopotamus', ironical about the Church. Readers of Voltaire will remember the confession which the latter makes in "La Pucelle" of having had for the boon-companions of his youth good-for-nothings who had made fun of the servants of God:

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*" Dans mon printemps j'ai hanté des vauriens...  
Et se moquant des serviteurs de Dieu."*

In his poem from which we have already quoted, Mr. McGreevy, we hope not under the influence of any crapulous associations, asks—we dread to repeat it—

*" Doome-quick's moulting swans  
Middle-aged  
Drably-white  
Sleeping now and  
How long since your last confessions? "*

Swans, mind you! The only difference we see is the one that naturally exists between a swan and a hippo.... But we must not jest on a matter of such gravity, nor must we refuse him compassion, when in that same poem he exclaims :

*" My muse, how thou art costive! "* (\*)



MR. ELIOT  
HIS OWN INTERPRETER

In a short paper contributed to a no longer existing English review, which may have escaped Mr. McGreevy, but might have modified, had he read it, some of his rash conclusions, Mr. Eliot declared : " I do not believe that an author is more qualified to elucidate the esoteric significance of his own work than is any other person of training and sensibility, and at least of equal intelligence. " Which is quite true, and we had a not unamusing experience ourselves proving it. We had been engaged in translating some French contemporary poetry into English. Several lines in the text gave us a great deal of worry. They were just beyond us. We called on the author and asked for an elucidation. He read the text—his own verses—and answered : " Je ne me rappelle plus. Dites ce que vous voulez. " Which was done.

We apprehend that if Mr. Eliot would or could reveal himself *à nu* to his monographer, morally, philosophically, poetically, spiritually, socially and in every other way, it would not be helpful to either of them in the least, and that simply on the grounds of literary or artistic incompatibility. His is a mentality and artistry that must remain entirely beyond Mr. McGreevy's ken, and it is because there are legions of critics whose incompatibility with the artist or his work must inevitably invalidate their critical conclusions, or at least affect their sincerity, that we have gone to such an inordinate length in this *causerie* on the young Irishman's very small book. In pure intellectuality as an artist, we should be hard put to find Mr. Eliot's counterpart in contemporary English letters. If we should go beyond the language line, we might be tempted, with some quali-

(\*) Transition, No. 18, p. 117.

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fications, to place him alongside Paul Valéry.\* In taste, manner and mannerisms, as well as in command of all the tricks and finesses of the trade, he is a *revenant* from the seventeenth-eighteenth century, clothed in the habiliments of the twentieth, plus the full enjoyment of every accumulated advantage of intervening mutations.

By Mr. McGreevy's standards of spirituality, religiosity, seriousness, worthiness and nobility of subject-matter—eschewing satire, caprice, surprise, playfulness, frivolities, stark intellect—he must prove wanting. But such as he is, he must be accepted or left alone. Mr. Ludwig Lewisohn, in an essay on Whitman which THIS QUARTER will print shortly, quotes Whitman's line: "Do not call the tortoise unworthy because she is something else."

Such an eminent artist as Synge wrote: "The poetry of exaltation will be always the highest, but when men lose their poetic feeling for ordinary life, and cannot write poetry of ordinary things, their exalted poetry is likely to lose strength of exaltation, in the way men cease to build beautiful churches when they have lost the happiness in building shops. Many of the older poets used the whole of their personal life as their material, and the verse written in this way was read by strong men, and thieves, and deacons, not by little cliques only."

It is only when we will not, or cannot, admit that life and *arte liberatrice*, which is an escape from it but still of it, teem with minor as well as major (are they minor and major?) experiences and evoke expression of minor as well as major emotions, each having its relative weight, importance and being, that, like a squirrel in its revolving cage, we obtain no more than a fleeting foot support and remain barred from the vaster sphere of life's and art's completer economy.

And so it is that we conceive the spiritual principle of Mr. Eliot's art and his spiritual principle as an artist, for art has its spirituality as well as its practitioners.\*\*



"HOMAGE TO JOHN DRYDEN" But there need be no speculation as to any theories, methods or characteristics of Mr. Eliot the poet. He stands fully revealed to those who will read him. He has written his own monograph in many well-known critical essays. Mr. Richard Aldington was the first, we believe, to call attention to the fact that Mr. Eliot, as a critical essayist, is at one with Mr. Eliot the poet. At the time of Mr. Aldington's writing, only "The Sacred Wood" had been

(\*) To our unequivocal dissent from Mr. McGreevy's 'Study' on T. S. Eliot we wish to add our equally unequivocal testimony to the excellence of his translation of Monsieur Valéry.

(\*\*) "Che l'arte non possa avere un fine estrinseco, e non possa perciò essere strumento di edificazione morale, è un ovvio corollario della sua spiritualità." GIOVANNI GENTILE, *La Filosofia dell'Arte*, Milano, 1931.



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published. "Homage to John Dryden" which appeared later, more than re-affirmed his sound critical judgment. The essay on Dryden, from which the book takes its title, and in which Mr. Eliot takes up the cudgels in the defence of Dryden's reputation as a poet, is almost prophetic in its application to the "Study" on Eliot here examined. Step by step he meets objections made against Dryden by critics insensible to his genius, which are strangely identical with the objections signified by Mr. McGreevy against him. Even as the latter now deprecates the material out of which Eliot's poetry has been constructed, so Eliot observes that "the depreciation of Dryden is not due to the fact that his work is not poetry, but to a *prejudice* that the *material*, the feelings, out of which he built, is not poetic." When one reads Eliot's clean-cut judgement that "Dryden is one of the tests of a catholic appreciation of poetry" (small *c* in catholic, printer, please!), the veriest tyro must admit the futility of insisting that the tortoise should be a gold-fish. He points out that Dryden provides "the element of *surprise* so essential to poetry," an element so often occurring in and so characteristic of Eliot's earlier verse, which Mr. McGreevy carps at. Finally, as comment on the latter's serious disappointment, that there has been a distinct falling off in "suggestiveness of words" from the quality of Eliot's previous work, as exemplified by "Ash Wednesday," we would quote from the essay on Dryden: "He (Dryden) bears a curious antithetical resemblance to Swinburne. Swinburne was also a master of words, but Swinburne's words are all suggestions and no denotation.... Dryden's words, on the other hand, are precise, they state immensely, but their suggestiveness is almost nothing."



The only thing that might in some sort have compensated the utterly disappointing character of this "study" on Mr. Eliot would have been the presence of a useful bibliography, as is generally supplied with books of this character. That failing, the work is unredeemed. Had a bibliography been provided it would have saved the book from what is more than a slight error. The critic states that "Mr. Eliot's output since 'The Waste Land' has been mostly in prose. His early book of criticisms, 'The Sacred Wood,' was followed in 1929 by another: 'For Lancelot Andrewes,' and in 1930 by a short essay on Dante." This is misleading. There has also been a book of three essays "Homage to John Dryden" (The Hogarth Press), from which we have quoted. In addition there have been published in The Ariel Poems Series (Faber and Faber): "Marina," "A Song for Simeon," "Journey of the Magi," "Animula,"—four items at least—with drawings by E. McKnight Kauffer, and, of course, "Ash Wednesday." This *à titre de documentation*.

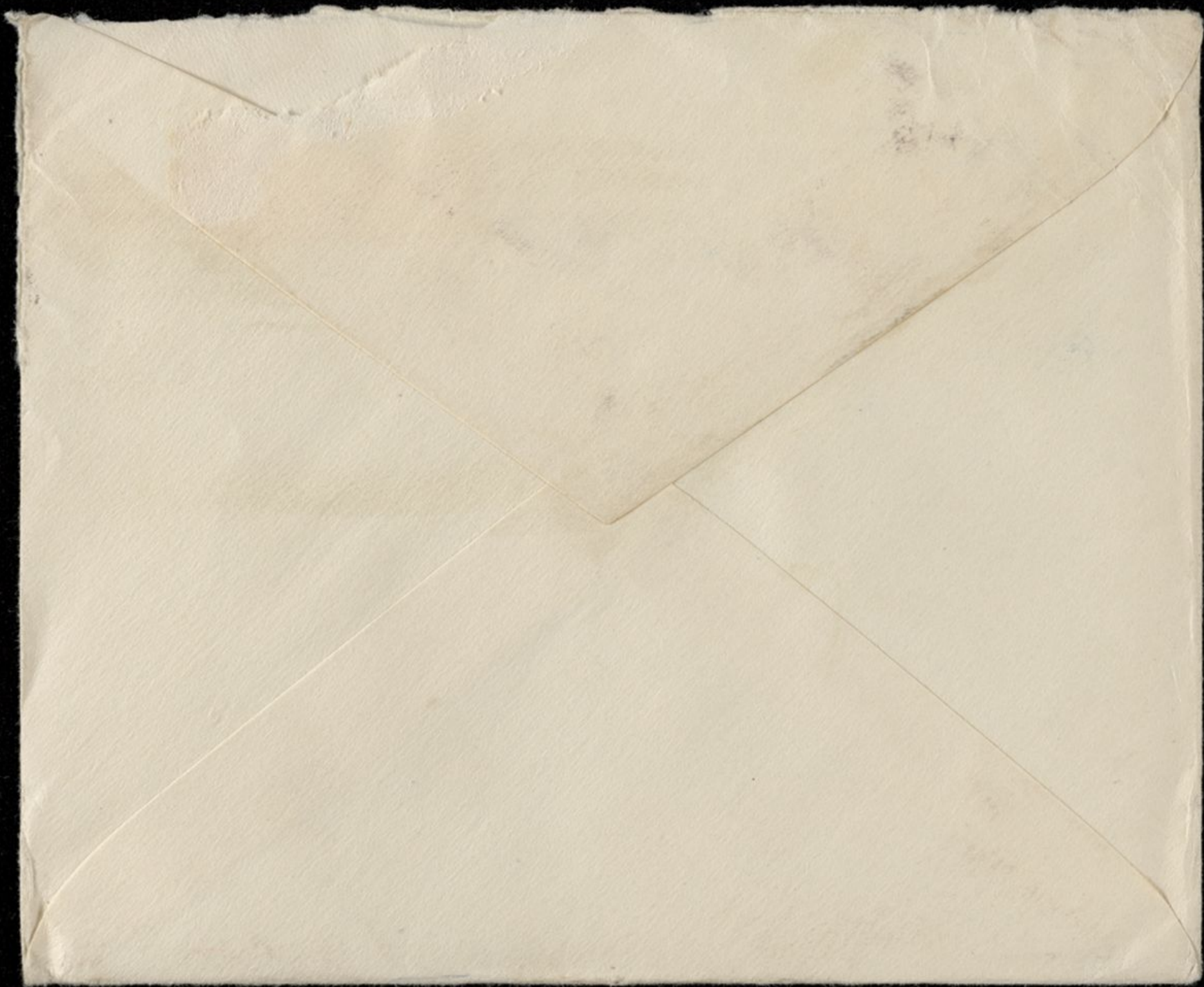
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18 August 1931.

*Emily, my dear -*

This morning I have had a mail, with letters from my brother in New York and my sister Marion; and it always unsettles me a little to get such letters, and none from you; but I have no business to grumble, having had two letters from you last week! Still, I cannot help hoping for a letter by the end of the week.

You know quite well that I shall always be very happy to see anyone who is a friend of yours, or even any mere acquaintance to whom you will give an introduction; for it is a kind of shadowy contact with you. So I shall look forward to meeting Miss Delys Bennett - whose name seems very modern, but I trust she is not so modern as that; and I shall write to Thorp before the end of the month, if I have not heard from him meanwhile. I should love to help them to find rooms; but I had better see them first before making enquiries, so as to know exactly what they want. There may be some small flat in Bloomsbury to let furnished. Virginia sometimes knows of such opportunities.

The Hinkleys are coming to dinner tonight for a farewell. I have been happy to have them here, and regret their leaving; and everything has passed off perfectly. But of course I must feel a great sadness, as well as strain, in having to present an unreal exterior to people to whom I am so attached.

And how long will Miss Ware be away, and where? I am distressed to hear of this, because I cannot bear to think of you going out to messy little meals in messy little teashops and cafeterias, and probably skimming. Remember that I do not want you to get so thin again as in the beautiful photograph I have - but it isn't beautiful because thin!

Yet, for my own sake, I am glad that you will be in Boston for another winter; though Claremont California sounds sunny and gay; and the air mail is a blessing (I was alarmed to read in the paper that postage from U.S.A. to Britain was to be raised to five cents - I hope that is not true). I wonder how you will like returning to teaching. Of course I may have exaggerated my own traffic with the young; I only

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see selected individuals, and nearly all of my own sex; and one cannot judge of a generation without seeing all degrees of intellect and refinement; and the few young men of whose inner life I know or guess anything at all are hardly representative. I wonder if the young are as modern as they are said to be - i.e. snatching at immediate enjoyment and experience, blunting their sensibilities and capacities for deep emotion early in life. I imagine not, somehow. But I wonder how many have any faith in the supernatural.

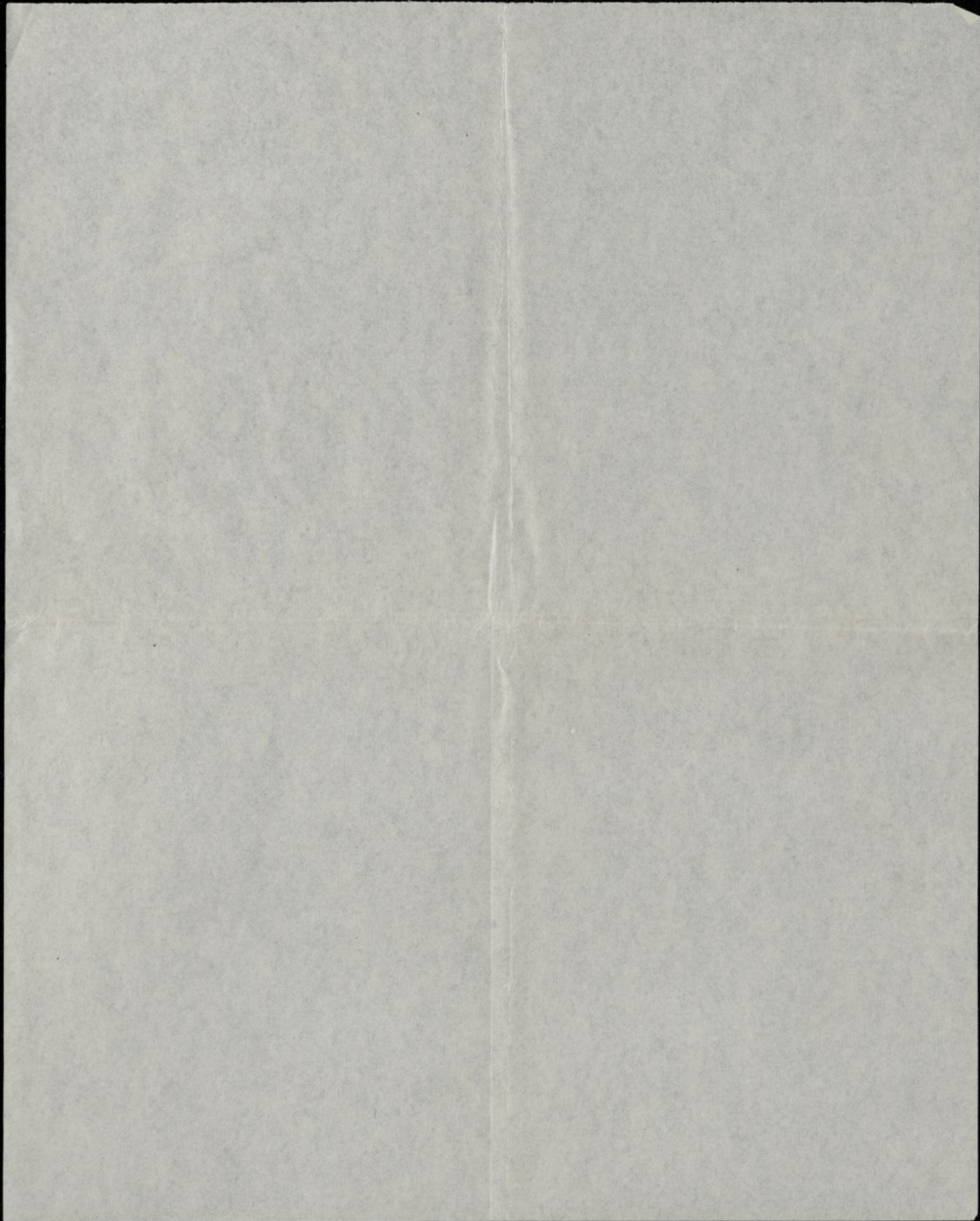
As for the relation of Britain to America, that is equally important, though not perhaps so much at the moment. I only meant that for the sake of European stability an understanding between Britain, France and Germany is the essential thing; and the persistence of European civilisation seems to me essential for America. On the other hand, understanding and cooperation between Britain and America is essential, because it is bound up with the survival of civilisation in the British colonies: and certainly Canada and Australia at least are as involved with America as with the parent nation.

And is your new hat one of those with small "bowler" brim and an ostrich feather curling round the neck? I think that would be rather charming.

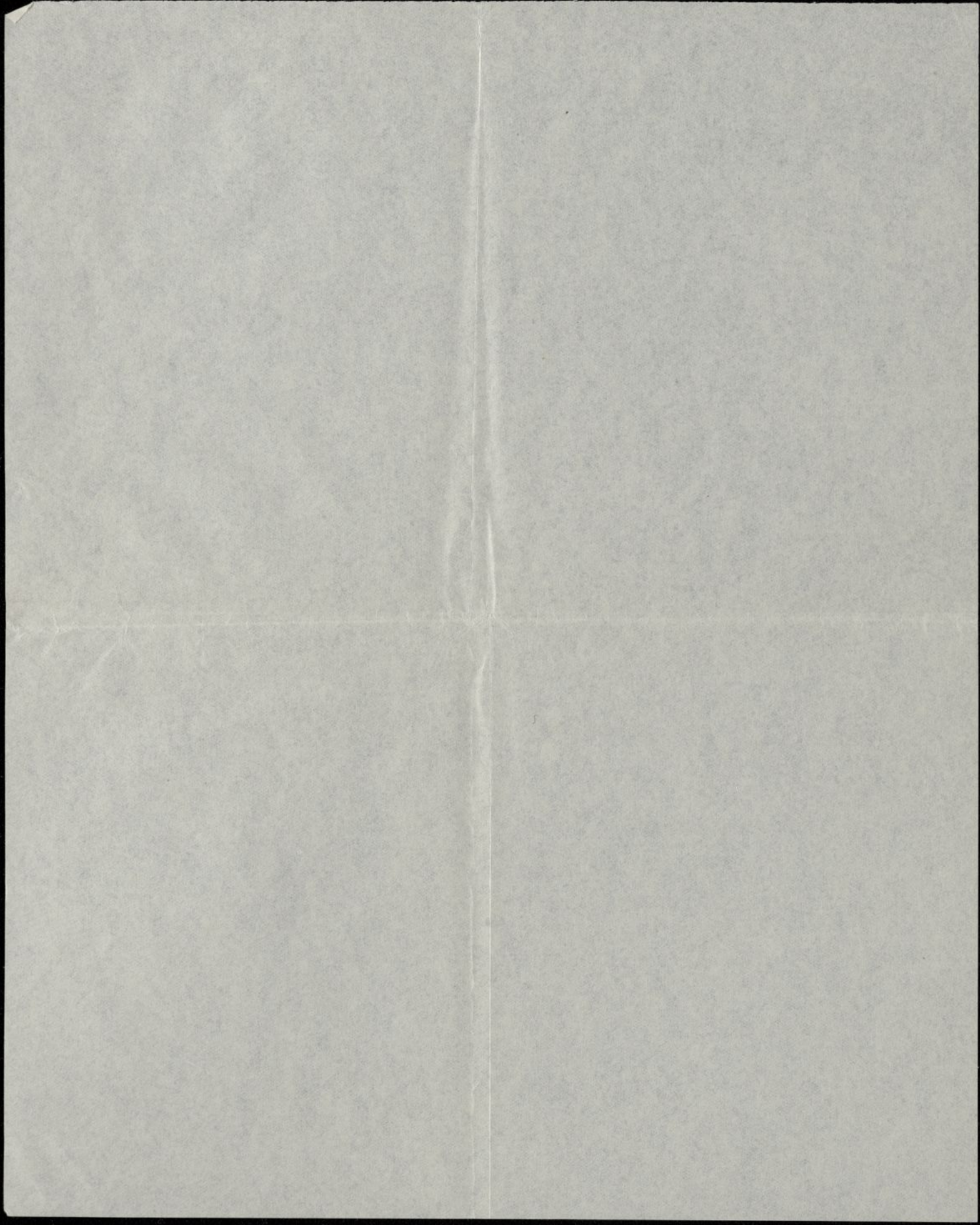
I think it takes time to get used to being a "sinner", and adjusting one's feelings so as not to be discouraged by it; not to be paralysed by shame, but just to work quietly towards improvement without worrying. I am very far myself from the equilibrium and acceptance that I hope for. There is a beautiful short story of Flaubert, of "St. Julien l'Hospitalier" - "ainsi l'idée lui est venu de passer sa vie au service des autres". And there are times when I desire you so much that neither religion, nor work, nor distraction, and certainly not dissipation, could relieve it - it is like a pain that no sedative will deaden, or an operation without anaesthetic - nothing to do but sit still and wait. At other times I feel glorified and transfigured through you; but more, which will please you better, a growing content with what I have, neither dreaming, hoping nor chafing.

Tom.

"Too late?" you say! - my dear, you are only at the beginning - you must learn humbly a proper perspective of your own shortcomings.







Piazzale Parini 3  
Milano

Gentile Signor Eliot,  
mi perdoni di scriverle in  
italiano, e specialmente,  
mi perdoni di scriverle  
del tutto. Non voglio ri-  
petere ciò che molti pri-  
ma di me le avranno  
detto, e che molti espi-  
meranno ancora, molto  
meglio di me: la bellezza  
e l'intensità della Sua  
poesia. La bellezza spi-  
rituale e profonda, rive-  
stita in forma perfetta.  
Come un calice contenente  
un vino prezioso.  
Credo di poter interpre-

fare il suo pensiero. Da  
parecchio tempo studio  
il „Waste land“, tanto di  
saperlo quasi a memoria;  
ma purtroppo, non posso  
seguirla in questo suo poe-  
ma, nonostante le note  
esplicative. Forse ne ha  
colpa la mia gioventù  
che non può comprendere  
la matura perfezione,  
eppure desidererei tanto,  
con tutto il cuore, pen-  
sare e capire.

Lei chiedo troppo, Maestro,  
di indicarmi, se gentil-  
mente volesse, delle inter-  
pretazioni del Waste Land  
che debbono esservi sulle  
riviste Inglese e ame.

ricame e che mi potrebbero  
aiutare di molto.

L'inglese mi è corrente,  
studiando a Londra,  
ma la penna scorre più  
facilmente nella propria  
lingua.

La prego di voler cortese-  
mente scusare il dis-  
turbo; ma senza la cer-  
tezza che lei mi com-  
prenderà non avrei osato  
scrivere.

La ringrazio per la Sua  
opera, che sento e goddo  
come un dono personale,  
specialmente l'Ash-  
Wednesday. Sua dev. ma

Nika Standen.

La vostra lettera mi ha fatto molto piacere  
e mi ha dato un gran conforto. Vi ringrazio  
per le notizie che mi avete date e per  
l'interesse che avete preso per me. Sono  
molto contento di sapere che siete  
benestante e che la famiglia è  
tutta sana. Vi prego di continuare a  
scrivermi e di farmi sapere come  
andano le cose. Un caro saluto  
a tutti e a presto.

BY AIR MAIL  
PAR AVION



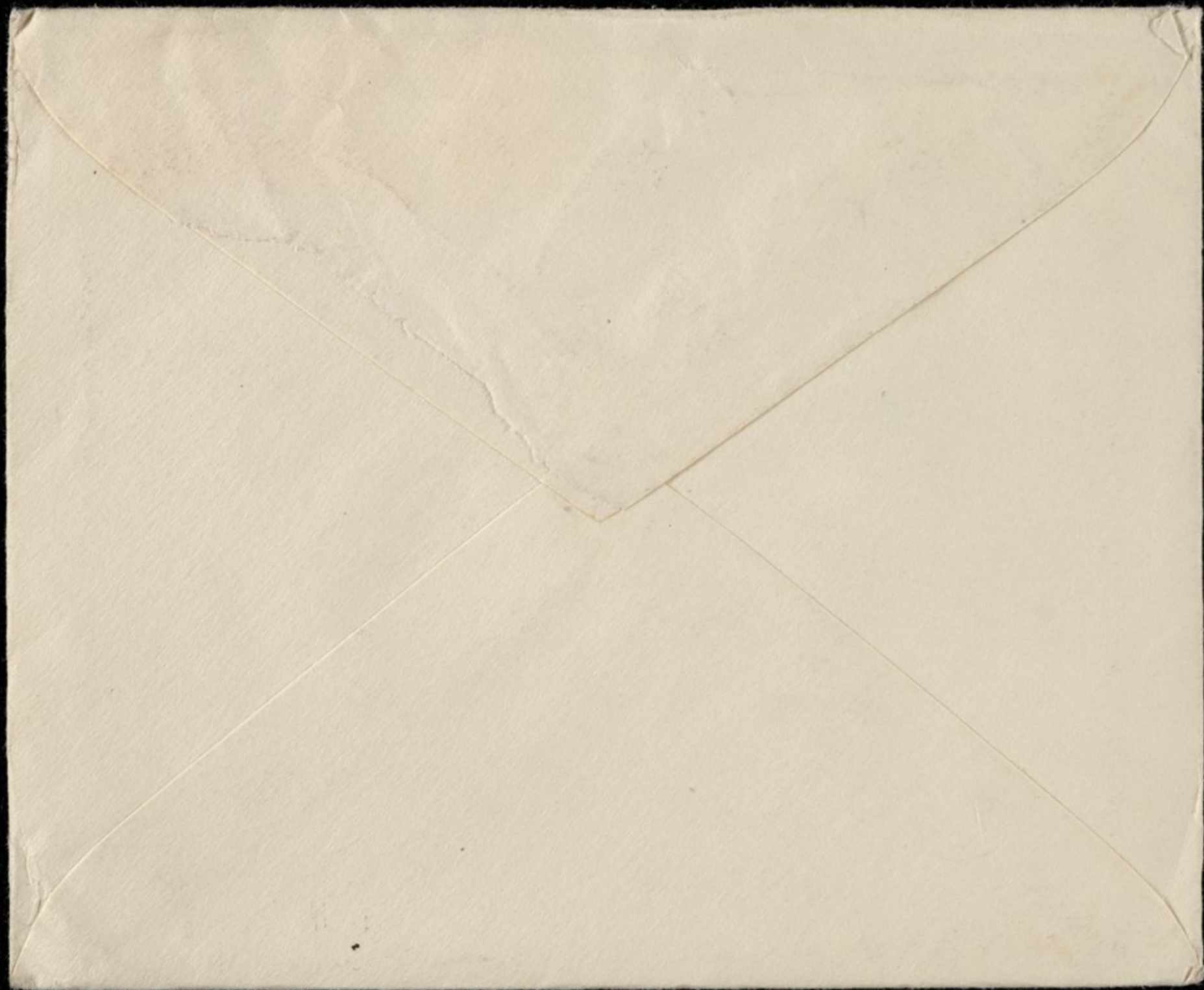
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TELEPHONE: MUSEUM 9543

TELEGRAMS: FABBAF, WESTCENT, LONDON

24 RUSSELL SQUARE

LONDON, W.C.1

~~to~~ 21 August 1931.

*Emily dear,*

I have this morning your long and generous letter of the 10th. In spite of what you say, I shall continue, for the short time you are in Seattle - and I hope you will warn me in due time when to address you in Boston - to post by air mail; for, if letters come by ~~xxx~~ air from Seattle to New York, I cannot ~~why~~ why they should not go by air from New York to Seattle! The Holborn Postoffice assured me; and I put the letters into a bright blue air pillar box which has clearly printed on it the days of air mails to the U.S.A. It is true that the official was not sure how far west a letter had to go before the air mail took it; but he was quite sure that it worked west of the Rockies. Anyway, my letters don't seem to be any slower because of the extra postage; and I enjoy putting on the blue label.

I can appreciate, my dear, that your letter was painful to write; and I thank you. You have given me, again, a good deal to answer; it will take me two or three letters; and on the morning when I get a letter from you I like to soak it in and brood over it. So I think I shall only write briefly today; and again at more length on Monday.

So you don't know my birthday! it is September 26th (St. Cyprian's day, oddly enough, the name day of my present church). And yours is Oct. 27. Three years, one month, and one day.

You must not make too much, my dear, of my saying I had felt "hurt". But for a moment I imagined, with in mind perhaps things I have told you about my life, that I was not quite honourable, or lacking in reverence for you. That's that. One point which I want to make at once is that there is no question of shielding V. (or incidentally but inevitably shielding myself). It is difficult to explain clearly, for the reason that I thought I had made this clear already. The whole clue to the matter, from my point of view, is that one half of me wanted to escape from America and the philosophy department of some university, a task for which I felt underneath unfitted, to some life in which I could write poetry. That was a childish illusion, of course. But in order to bring myself to that I had to persuade myself that I was in ~~xxx~~ love with someone here who could not or would not go to America - I had to pretend to myself that I had cut all ties to home. On neither side was there anything more ignoble than selfishness, weakness and va-



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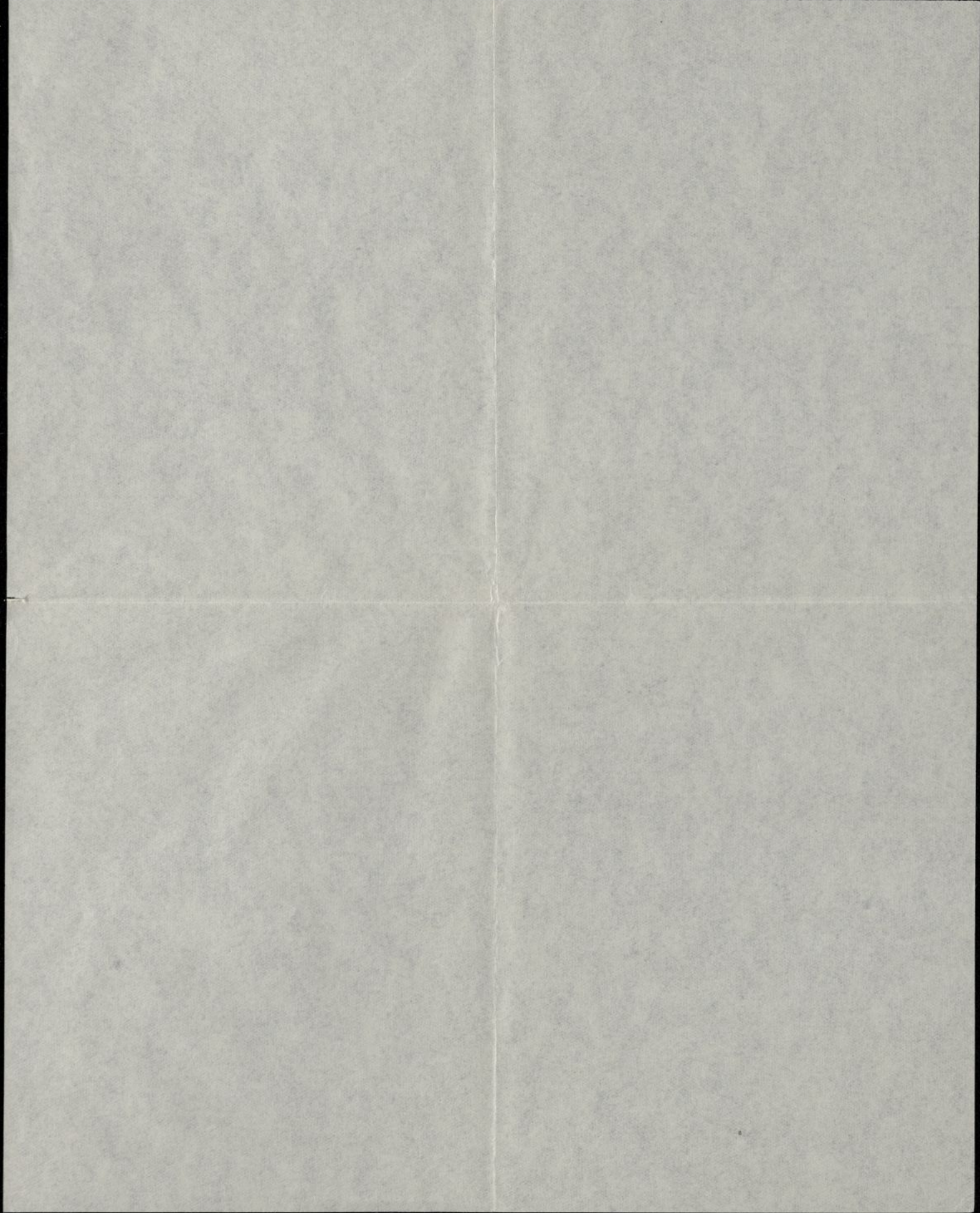
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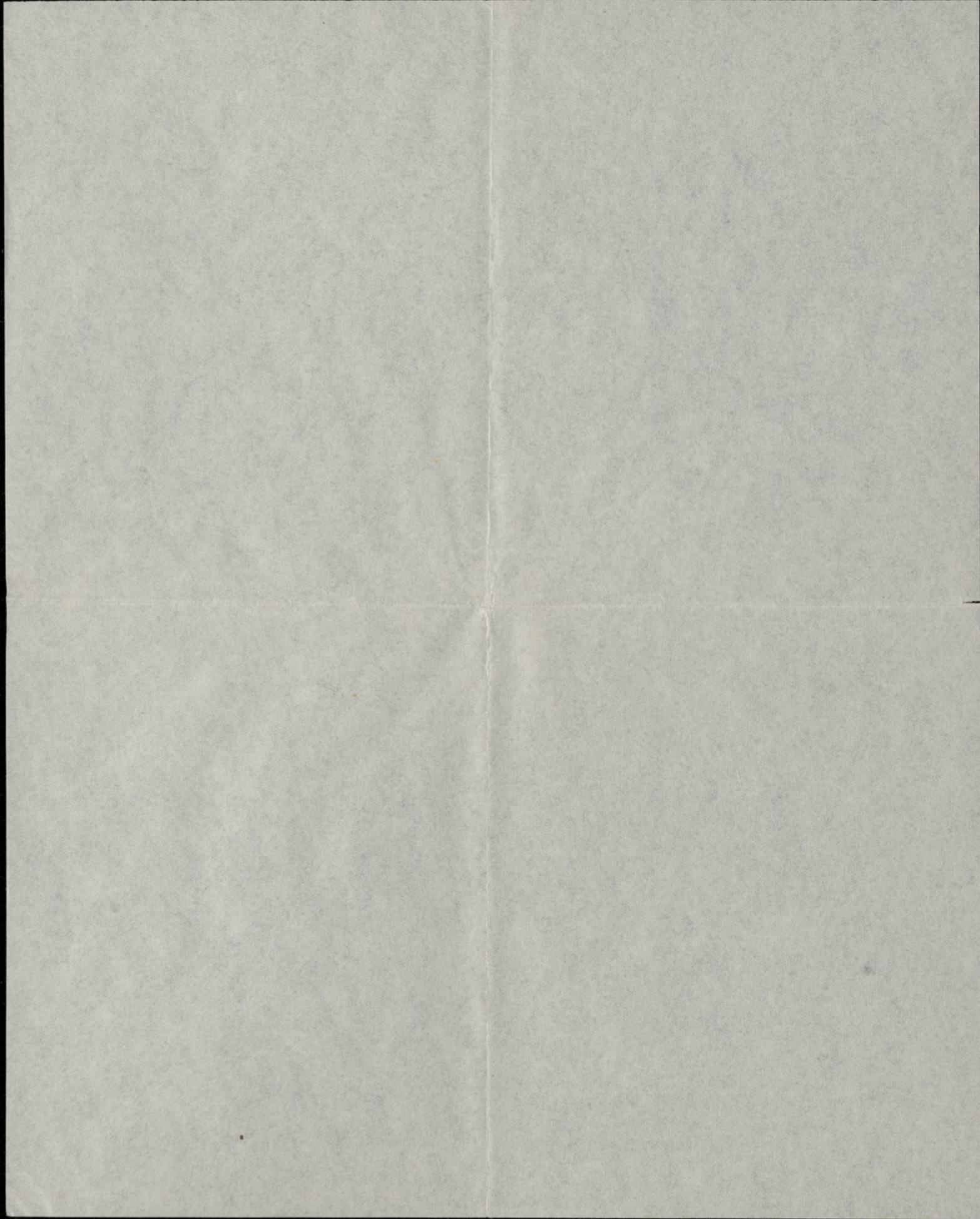
AT THE PRESS

nity: or, to dot every i, there was nothing of the sort of an amende honorable for any misbehaviour - is that blunt enough? - I merely found myself suddenly engaged to someone with whom I could hardly be said to have had the lightest of flirtations. I believe that if the normal time had elapsed I should quickly have come to my senses. But where the debt of honour came in is at this point: that she then explained to me about her previous engagement (of which I told you) and that she could not stand the strain of another protracted engagement; and also I dare say that my compunction at adding another shock to the previous would have been enough to keep me to my word. On the other hand, you must not suppose that she deliberately played upon my sense of chivalry; and I know that she imagined that she was saving a poet from the wrong life and helping him to life the life he needed. I am sure that her motive was rather the vanity of feeling that she was doing this, rather than devotion to me as a person; but all of her actions can be explained by vanity, fear, immaturity, weak physique, weak nerves, drugs and disappointment.

This is only the beginning of this letter in instalments. I shall answer all faithfully. But you ask what I should have done had I met, in the middle years, another woman whom I loved? But you see, I cannot conceive of my finding anyone lovable except yourself.

Tom. —

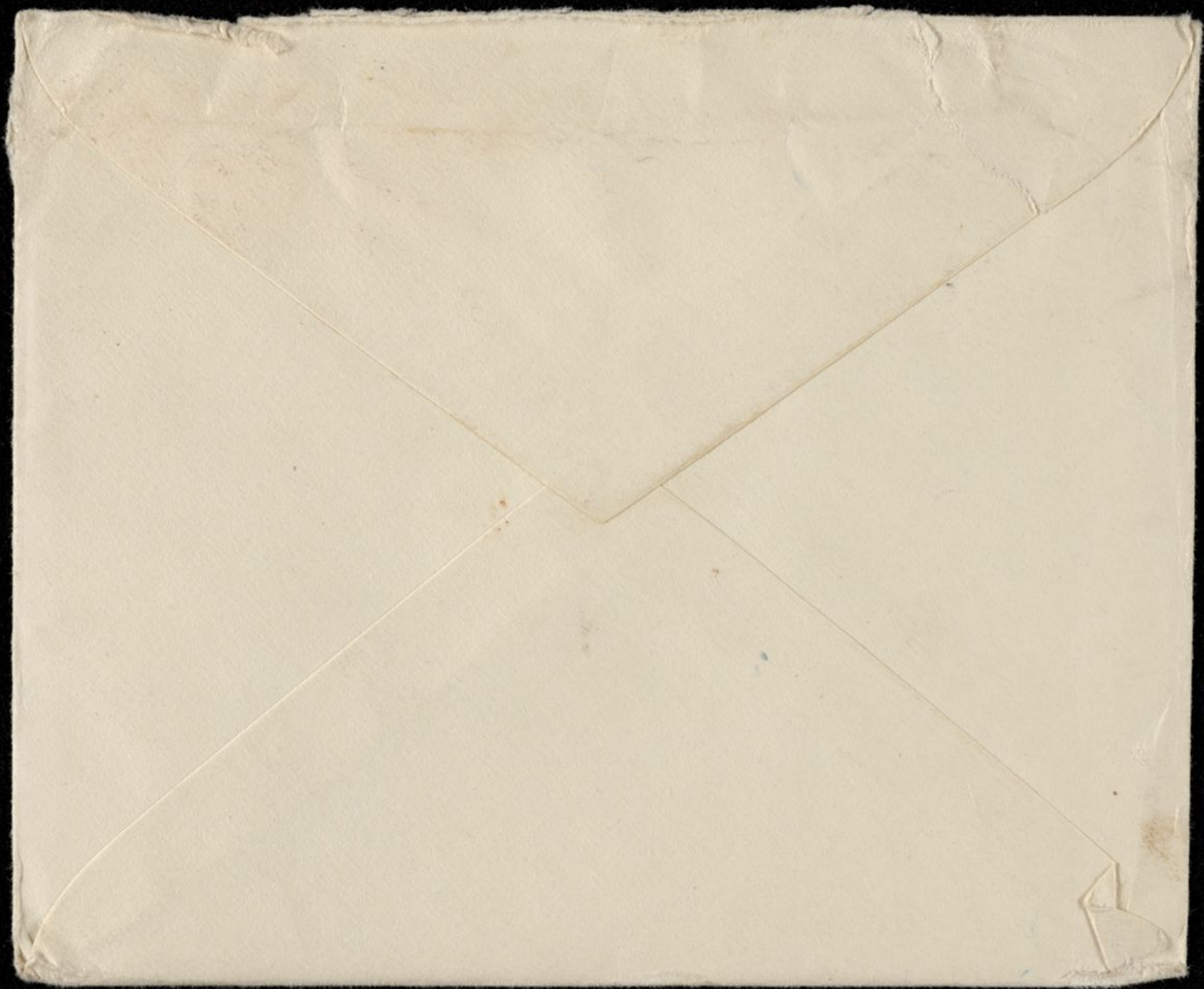




BY AIR MAIL  
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Miss Emily Hale,  
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24 RUSSELL SQUARE

LONDON, W.C.1

25 August 1931.

*My dear Lady,*

I don't know whether I have even begun to give you an understanding of how it came about; and of course I can never make a perfectly irrational act seem rational. But at least I hope I have made it clear that I do not feel wholly and solely to blame for that or for the present conditions. Of course it is possible that V. might have been happier and therefore healthier with a different kind of man; but it is equally possible that she would have gone to pieces in any circumstances; and certainly a great deal of damage had been done to her mental balance before ever I met her. It is certain in retrospect that I should have separated from her a year after our marriage. But at the time, and for a long time, I felt too much to blame for my folly to contemplate that; furthermore there were financial reasons. For several years my father paid my rent. A separation would have meant that he would have had to allow me enough money for two people to live separately, and he could ill have afforded it. Then later, the fact of V.'s irresponsibility and incapacity to look after herself weighed with me; and off and on I had hoped that I could at least make a tolerable and fairly good life for her, if not for myself. Of course, in the early days I should have been willing to go through the horrors of the English divorce court - which involves staging a fake adultery - had she found any other man whom she wanted to marry; now, of course, I belong to a church which does not recognise divorce in any circumstances or for any reason.

And I think she is as fond of me as she is capable of being. Her emotional and moral life is that of a very young child; though her mind, even though incapable of concentration or brain work, is rather decidedly above the average. Since my mother died I have found that ~~xxxxxxixxxx~~ what kept me going was largely the desire to keep my mother in ignorance of the truth. Since then, indeed, I have several times raised the question of separation with V. - sometimes in fits of hysteria, but also when quite calm; but have never made the slightest impression. It produces a quarrel, but in twentyfour hours she has quite put it out of mind; in short, it seems as if the only way to arrive at a separation would be for me to make a bolt. Of course I have already given you the minor reasons which make me hesitate to press a separation, including the reason that she would certainly drug herself into a sanatorium in a few months. Yet I agree

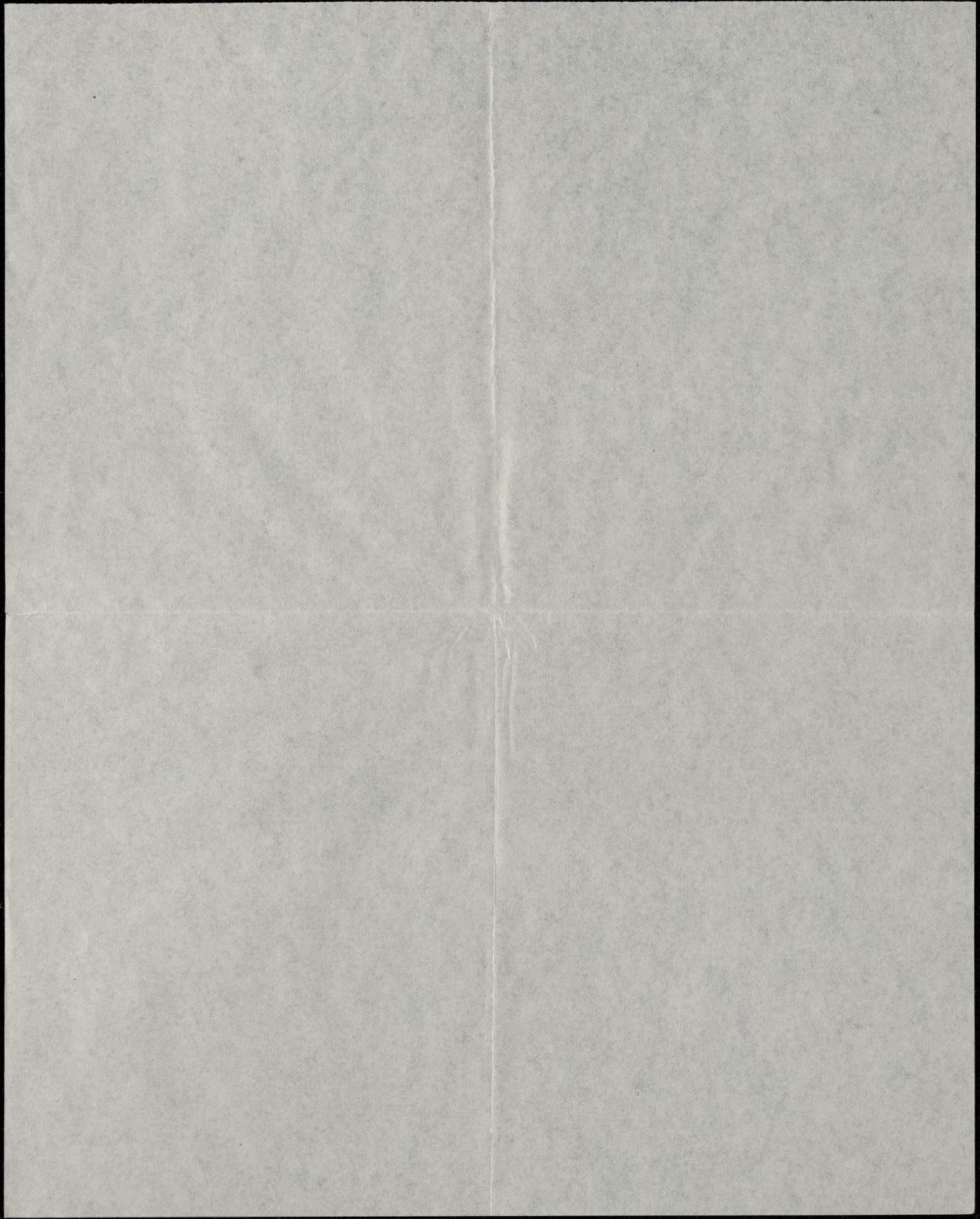
FABER & FABER

with everything you say, and have searched my conscience endlessly; with all the reasons I have given against separation, I yet feel almost unclean to go on living in the same flat, feeling towards her as I do. It is not even as if I had ever cared for her; to have felt any sort of passion, even had its duration been very brief, would impose a continuing bond; but as it is I don't feel that I have ever been married at all. But she realises nothing; it is one of those minds which build up an impregnable defense against reality.

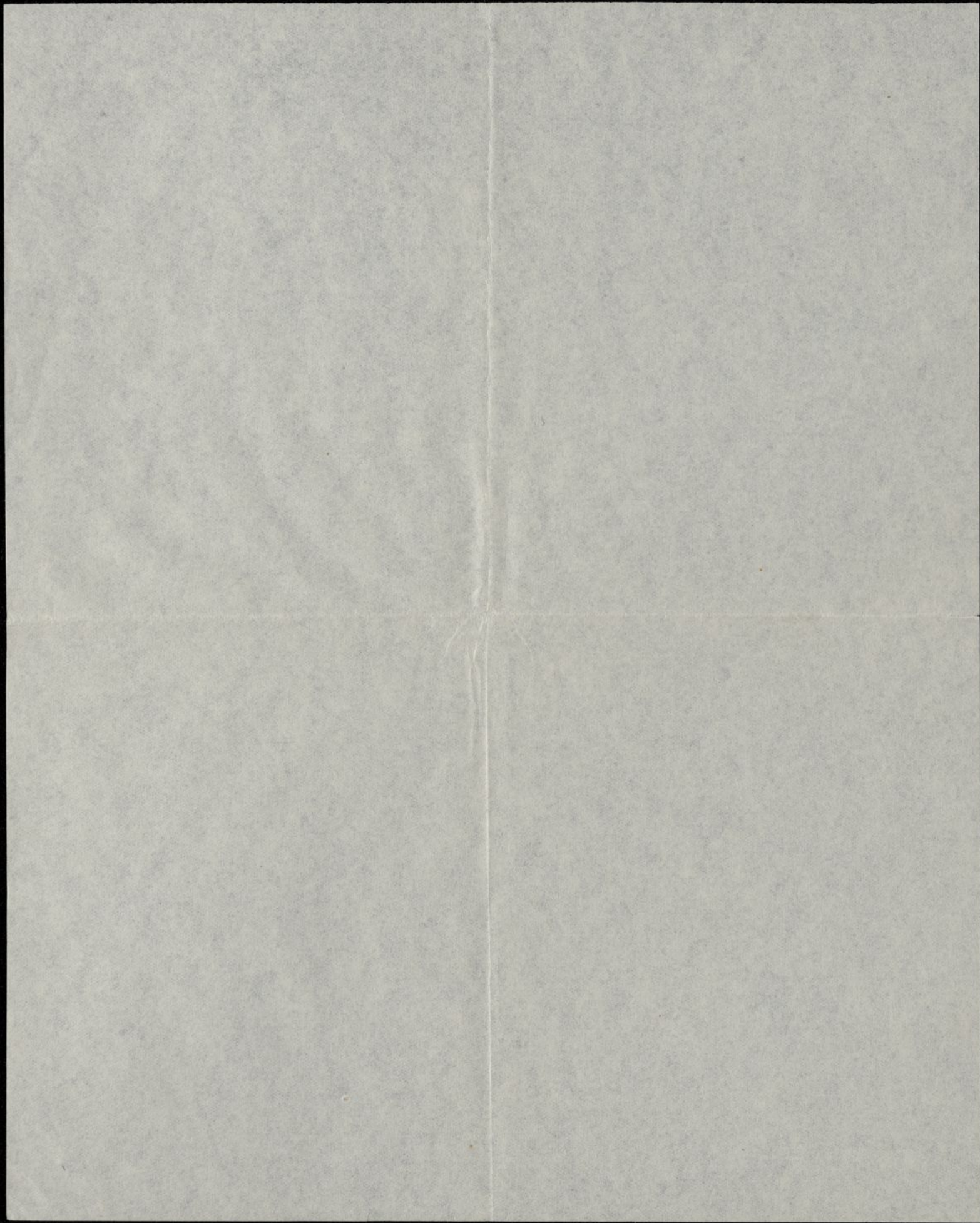
Enough of this, I dare say, for one letter. Did I never answer your enquiry about the man you met with us? His name is Robert Esmonde Gordon George - a New Zealander - ex-officer in the Bengal Lancers - went up to Oxford late, after the war - Roman Catholic convert, and very devout - always buzzing about with Cardinals and Abbots - lives at Hyères, having poor health - and seems to know an immense number of people everywhere - writes under the name of Robert Sencourt - I believe his recent Life of the Empress Eugenie was very successful both here and in America. He is inclined to take a little too much upon himself, but otherwise is a very refined and sensitive person, and I like his company. Very eager interest in human beings. The "Sydney" is Sydney Schiff; a man of about 60 - half a Jew - family of rich bankers - he writes autobiography thinly disguised as fiction under the name of "Stephen Hudson"; alert mind and in some ways very sensitive, in some ways, like most westernised Jews, rather coarse and thick-skinned. Not altogether an admirable character, yet likeable. Used to patronise the arts. Played an important part in my career at one moment, as he introduced me to Lady Rothermere - what a strange woman that is, I must tell you about her some day - hence the Criterion etc; and but for the Criterion I might never have become intimate with Whibley, who in turn introduced me to Faber.; so otherwise I might still be in Lloyds Bank. I did not altogether loathe the Bank; and for two years I had an extremely interesting job, settling the pre-war debts between English and Germans, largely legal work - I was able to help a few poor wretched Germans who had lived in England all their lives and had their property confiscated, and didnt want to go back to Germany at all - some indeed were Englishwomen married to Germans; but most of the work was complicated litigation and interpretation of the Peace Treaty.

I am worried about what this coming season will bring you. It does not look as if prosperity would come in time to create much demand for lectures this winter. Now I shall relieve my feelings by writing to Willard Thorp to ask him to let me know when they arrive - Brown Shipley I think you said - the letter is locked up downstairs. God bless you my dear; you have daily the prayers of your grateful and humble

*Tom*







BY AIR MAIL  
PAR AVION



Miss Emily Hale

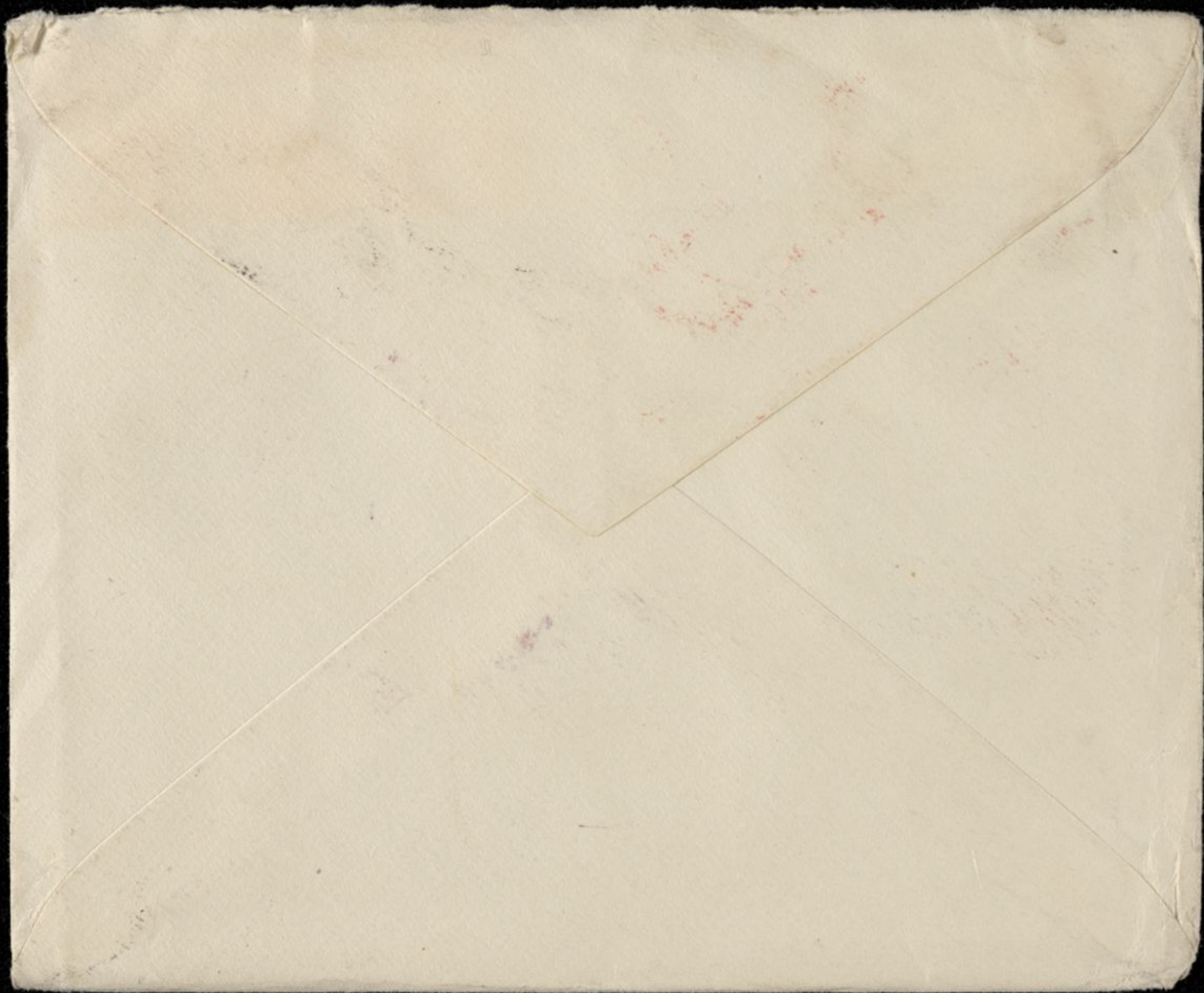
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TELEGRAMS: FABBAF, WESTCENT, LONDON

24 RUSSELL SQUARE

LONDON, W.C.1

28 August 1931.

*Dear Lady*

I can only write a brief note to-day, but it pleases me to write twice a week, even if there is sometimes time only for salutation. I was late this morning, several things turned up for immediate attention, and now I have to go to the bank to order a draft for Joyce before lunching with my brother in law. And I have left my spectacles at home, and realise for the first time how dependent upon them I am. Your letter of the 19th arrived to-day: nine days. I am sorry, my dear, for the reasons which made you decline Scripps College; and I wonder if you are not being over-conscientious; for I know myself that one of the best ways of learning anything is to have to teach it. Of course it makes hard work, but it really matters very little how much you know before you begin to teach! And I am wondering whether you will find it very lonely at Brimmer Street with Miss Ware away all the winter. I wish she might have taken you to Italy with her. And what will you do about your other meals, please? Because if you have to go out, and pay for your meals, I fear it will drain your slender resources; and I am really very anxious about your health under such conditions.

I want to write at length on Monday-Tuesday. Meanwhile, my Emily, accept this brief note for the unspoken.

*Tom*

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24 RUSSELL SQUARE

LONDON, W.C.1

31 August 1931.

*Dear Saint,*

Your dear letter of the 22nd arrived quickly and surprisingly this morning: and I am always walking on air when I have had a letter on Friday and again on Monday. I am very glad and happy if my letter about yourself was of any use to you; for I am too aware of my own shortcomings and grave faults to feel very confident of helping another. But I should like to send you a good kiss instead of the smack of another kind which I felt like giving you at the time.

As for your subsequent letter, you may be quite sure - in fact, I am quite sure that you must be sure - that no questions of yours would ever seem to me inquisitive or inquisitorial. I want you to know all there is to be known; it is only the difficulties of expression, and particularly of explaining irrational behaviour, that frighten me; I am so anxious to make everything clear. So please keep on asking until I have made things clear; because I always have a feeling of dissatisfaction, thinking that perhaps my explanations have only muddled things further. I think however that from what I have said you may begin to understand why I did not write to you; and to understand that I did not myself understand why I did not write to you, until about fifteen months afterwards. The power of the human mind to deceive itself is immense... But the point at the moment is that I want you to know that my happiness lies in the prospect of more and more complete understanding between you and me, and it is worth infinite trouble. I feel in a way that we always have understood each other, fundamentally; and that the process is merely one of coming to understand that we do understand; and that details have to be examined and discussed, and accounts and histories given, merely in order that they shall be cleared away as irrelevant. I know that I should feel in your presence that which is different from either solitude or company, as one knows solitude and company.

I do like your poem (please may I keep this copy) and also I am glad to see you finding the leisure for a little writing again. Criticisms: first I don't think the variation between regular blank verse, irregular blank verse, and vers libres was quite under control.



FABER FABER

I can show what I mean better next time, when I will make a typed copy of your poem for you (you see I do not mean to part with the original even if you demand it). A minor point: I do not quite understand the last line. A more important point: the subject is almost impossible. I mean that a picture is a picture, and cannot be translated into verse by description; the only way to write a poem about a picture is to use the picture as the starting point or rather as the pretext for writing a poem. You have I think been too conscientious to the picture, subduing yourself to it, so to speak; so that all you do and can do is to make the reader want to see the picture! whereas you should really be talking about yourself and your own feelings, not merely your appreciation of the picture.

We have not talked about pictures and painting at all yet, have we. I shall try to get some copies of things that I know and like, to send you. But there are wonderful things in the Boston Gallery and at Mrs. Gardner's; and when you get back I shall dare to ask you to go and look at some of the things there; and if you are ever in New Haven the University has a wonderful collection of Italian canvases.

I have had to stop and have a long talk with Faber, who has just come up from Wales for a few days, about business and politics; and a young man is waiting; and I must go home to lunch and then some of my cousins whom I have not seen for 30 years - these, from Berkeley California - are coming to tea. So, though I have much more to say, that I thought of before I went to sleep last night, I must wait till Thursday to write more. Good bye, my dear, my dear.

Tom

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# CONTEMPO

*A Review of Ideas and Personalities*

## THE INTIMATE BOOKSHOP

CHAPEL HILL, NORTH CAROLINA

---

EDITORS: Clifton Cuthbert ~ S. R. Carter ~ V. N. Garoffolo ~ A. J. Buttitta ~ M. A. Abernethy

---

August 22, 1931

Our dear T. S. Eliot,

I know you are a very busy man, but I also know you have a still bigger heart, so I am hoping you will look into your large and interesting literary trunk and see if you can find us some little poem, sketch, article, or--Oh, just anything.

Sincerely,

*Milton Abernethy*  
Milton Abernethy

... *Contributors* ...

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JOHN DOS PASSOS . MAX EASTMAN . ISAAC GOLDBERG . PAUL GREEN . SINCLAIR LEWIS . ROBERT MORSE LOVETT . PIERRE LOVING .  
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