FROM

The Letters of Virginia Woolf

Virginia Woolf's earliest surviving letter was written when she was six years old, to her godfather, the American poet James Russell Lowell. The last was addressed to her husband, Leonard Woolf, on March 28, 1941, the day she ended her life. She was one of the best letter writers of her day, and the entire collection represents one of the liveliest and often most elegantly written bodies of correspondence of this century. The range of subject and variety of mood are among their most characteristic features. The emotional canvas stretches in every direction: from the comic to the tragic, from the benevolent to the malicious, from the serious to the frivolous. Every letter reflects some facet of this multifaceted and complex personality. In almost every letter, too, we glimpse her uncanny awareness of the person to whom she is writing. This will amuse you, she seems to be saying, or will make you think or whet your curiosity. Or this will make you shout with laughter—or silence you with sympathy. As one of her critics wrote, her letters are "sparkling, spluttering, dangerously explosive. To read them is to listen to her talk."

The fact that almost four thousand letters have been preserved for over a half century is testimony to their significance to each of their recipients. They chronicle an intimacy that survives in memory long after the principal figures themselves have vanished.

TO VIOLET DICKINSON[1] *46 Gordon Square*

Nov. 9th [1905]

I have had such a run of work as is not remembered for I cant say how many years; books from the Times, the Academy, the Guardian—it must be confessed that I write great nonsense, but you will understand that I have to make money to pay my bills. The Quaker wont see it; and talks with deep significance of *serious* work, not *pot boilers*. Really I have almost more review-

ing than I feel to be quite moral; but I manage some Greek and good English in between.

Then on Wednesdays I have my English Composition; 10 people: 4 men 6 women.[2] It is I suppose the most useless class in the College; and so Sheepshanks thinks. She sat through the whole lesson last night; and almost stamped with impatience. But what can I do? I have an old Socialist of 50, who thinks he must bring the Parasite (the Aristocrat, that is you and Nelly) into an essay upon Autumn; and a Dutchman who thinks—at the end of the class too—that I have been treaching him Arithmetic; and anaemic shop girls who say they would write more but they only get an hour for their dinner, and there doesn't seem much time for writing.

TO VIOLET DICKINSON [*The Steps, Playden, Sussex*]
Sunday [*25 August 1907*]

You drive me to write. O melancholy creature why do you see specialists? I wish to god you wouldnt. What you want, probably, is air and food and good society; here you should have a couch beneath an Apple tree, and sometimes I would sing to you, and sometimes I would leap from branch to branch, and sometimes I would recite, my own works, to the Zither.

. . . Now, dirty devil (for your language is hot and strong—comes bubbling from the deep natural spring) amuse me. Well then, we went and had tea with Henry James[3] today, and Mr and Mrs [George] Prothero, at the golf club; and Henry James fixed me with his staring blank eye—it is like a childs marble—and said, "My dear Virginia, they tell me—they tell me—they tell me—that you—as indeed being your fathers daughter nay your grandfathers grandchild—the descendant I may say of a century—of a century—of quill pens and ink—ink—ink pots, yes, yes, yes, they tell me—ahm m m—that you, that you, that you *write* in short." This went on in the public street, while we all waited, as farmers wait for the hen to lay an egg—do they?—nervous, polite, and now on this foot now on that. I felt like a condemned person, who sees the knife drop and stick and drop again. Never did any woman hate 'writing' as much as I do. But when I am old and famous I shall discourse like Henry James. We had to stop periodically to let him shake himself free of the thing; he made phrases over the bread and butter 'rude and rapid' it was, and told us all the scandal of Rye. "Mr Jones has eloped, I regret to say, to Tasmania; leaving 12 little Jones, and a possible 13th to Mrs Jones; most regrettable, most unfortunate, and yet not wholly an action to which one has no private key of ones own so to speak."

TO CLIVE BELL[4] *Lelant Hotel, Lelant [Cornwall]*
26th Dec [*1909*]

The life I lead is very nearly perfect. A horrid tone of egoistic joy pervades this sheet I know. What with the silence, and the possibility of walking out, at any moment, over long wonderfully coloured roads to cliffs with the sea beneath, and coming back past lighted windows to one's tea and fire and book—and then one has thoughts and a conception of the world and moments like a dragon fly in air—with all this I am kept very lively in my head. For conversation there are the maid and the landlady, who tell me about the moon and the chickens and the wreck. A ferryman this morning told me about trawling and angling and drowned sailors. I pick up a certain amount of gossip by stretching my head out of the window and listening to the leaning men beneath. Now, suddenly at half past nine, the carols have stopped, and there is only one man walking quickly, and whistling. A strange affair is life! However, one might run on and on, covering sheets, with mysticism, ridiculous in the daylight. My Lady Hester got into the habit of talking so that she could never read, and must dictate letters, and took herself for the Messiah. Suppose I stayed here, and thought myself an early virgin, and danced on May nights, in the British camp!—a scandalous Aunt for Julian, and yet rather pleasant, when he was older, like Norton, and wished for eccentric relations. Can't you imagine how airily he would produce her, on Thursday nights. "I have an Aunt who copulates in a tree, and thinks herself with child by a

grasshopper—charming isn't it? She dresses in green, and my mother sends her nuts from the Stores".

TO VIOLET DICKINSON — *Pelham Arms, Lewes*
New Years Day [1911] — *[Sussex]*

Many happy returns of the day. The only present I have got for you is a picture of some cattle, which will interest you when you hear that the same people use them as used them when the Domesday Book was written. So the guide book says. In fact, it is altogether an interesting picture, when you think that your Sp: may be going to take a cottage in the neighborhood. It is a very ugly villa; but underneath the downs, in a charming village [Firle].

We have been spending Christmas here, with an extremely considerate landlady, who is so much struck by my incompetence to face life, that she always offers to lace my boots, and give me my bath. Miss Thomas[5] came down for a night, in an interval between discharging a woman who wished to commit murder, and taking one, who wants to kill herself. Can you imagine living like that?—always watching the knives, and expecting to find bedroom doors locked, or a corpse in the bath? I said I thought it was too great a strain—but, upheld by Christianity, I believe she will do it.

TO LEONARD WOOLF — *Asheham [Rodmell,*
May 1st [1912] — *Sussex]*

To deal with the facts first (my fingers are so cold I can hardly write) I shall be back about 7 tomorrow, so there will be time to discuss—but what does it mean? You can't take the leave, I suppose if you are going to resign certainly at the end of it. Anyhow, it shows what a career you're ruining!

Well then, as to all the rest. It seems to me that I am giving you a great deal of pain—some in the most casual way—and therefore I ought to be as plain with you as I can, because half the time I suspect, you're in a fog which I don't see at all. Of course I can't explain what I feel—these are some of the things

that strike me. The obvious advantages of marriage stand in my way. I say to myself. Anyhow, you'll be quite happy with him; and he will give you companionship, children, and a busy life—then I say By God, I will not look upon marriage as a profession. The only people who know of it, all think it suitable; and that makes me scrutinise my own motives all the more. Then, of course, I feel angry sometimes at the strength of your desire. Possibly, your being a Jew comes in also at this point. You seem so foreign. And then I am fearfully unstable. I pass from hot to cold in an instant, without any reason; except that I believe sheer physical effort and exhaustion influence me. All I can say is that in spite of these feelings which go chasing each other all day long when I am with you, there is some feeling which is permanent, and growing. You want to know of course whether it will ever make me marry you. How can I say? I think it will, because there seems no reason why it shouldn't—But I don't know what the future will bring. I'm half afraid of myself. I sometimes feel that no one ever has or ever can share something —Its the thing that makes you call me like a hill, or a rock. Again, I want everything—love, children, adventure, intimacy, work. (Can you make any sense out of this ramble? I am putting down one thing after another). So I go from being half in love with you, and wanting you to be with me always, and know everything about me, to the extreme of wildness and aloofness. I sometimes think that if I married you, I could have everything—and then—is it the sexual side of it that comes between us? As I told you brutally the other day, I feel no physical attraction in you. There are moments—when you kissed me the other day was one—when I feel no more than a rock. And yet your caring for me as you do almost overwhelms me. It is so real, and so strange. Why should you? What am I really except a pleasant attractive creature? But its just because you care so much that I feel I've got to care before I marry you. I feel I must give you everything; and that if I can't, well, marriage would only be second-best for you as well as for me. If you can still go on, as before, letting me find my own way, as that is what would please

me best; and then we must both take the risks. But you have made me very happy too. We both of us want a marriage that is a tremendous living thing, always alive, always hot, not dead and easy in parts as most marriages are. We ask a great deal of life, don't we? Perhaps we shall get it; then, how splendid!

One doesn't get much said in a letter does one? I haven't touched upon the enormous variety of things that have been happening here—but they can wait.

D'you like this photograph?—rather too noble, I think. Here's another.[6]

TO JANET CASE[7] *The Plough Inn, Holford, Somerset*
[17 August 1912]

Its really a very good way to be married—very simple and soon done. You stand up and repeat two sentences, and then sign your name. Nothing went wrong, the only disturbance was about Vanessa and Virginia, which the registrar, who was half blind and otherwise deformed, mixed hopelessly and Nessa upset him worse by suddenly deciding to change her son's name from Quentin to Christopher.[8]

TO VIOLET DICKINSON *Asheham House, Rodmell, Lewes [Sussex]*
Friday, April 11th [1913]

I was very glad to hear from you but you really must buy some great sheets like this to accommodate your lean long hand, if our intimacy is to live on ink. We come up to London this day, and wish you would ask us to tea, but I suppose you are now settled in at the [Burnham] Wood [Welwyn].

Perhaps you will invite us for 3 hours there.

We shall live here more or less this summer, but spend one out of 3 weeks in London.

We aren't going to have a baby, but we want to have one, and 6 months in the country or so is said to be necessary first.

However, on the whole, in spite of rain, there's nothing so nice as this place. We are wrestling with the garden. It is riddled with weeds, with roots a yard long, and finally we've had to dig a

vast ditch, fill it with wood and straw, lay the earth on top, and set fire, in the hope that the nettles will be burnt out. After digging and fetching for 6 hours, until we both rained sweat and were the laughing stock of the yokels, we poured a can of paraffin on top and set alight—when a storm burst, and put the fire out, damped the earth, so that we must now begin again. We're also re-constructing the terrace and fighting moles rabbits and mysterious flower diseases, which attack tulips so that they never unfold. You *must* come here, and give advice. Will you? ...

All the morning we write in two separate rooms. Leonard is in the middle of a new novel [*The Wise Virgins*]; but as the clock strikes twelve, he begins an article upon Labour for some pale sheet, or a review of French literature for the Times, or a history of Co-operation.[9]

TO VIOLET DICKINSON *Asheham, Rodmell, Lewes [Sussex]*
Tuesday [10 April 1917]

Nessa and Duncan [Grant][10] came over yesterday, having previously washed themselves; and then went back in a storm late at night to help ducklings out of their eggs, for they were heard quacking inside, and couldn't break through. Nessa seems to have slipped civilization off her back, and splashes about entirely nude, without shame, and enormous spirit. Indeed, Clive now takes up the line that she has ceased to be a presentable lady—I think it all works admirably. The wind rages incessantly, and Leonard spends his day cutting up the fallen trees. We live on the wood, which smells so delicious. I am trying to read Conrad's new book,[11] but owing to endless talk, I haven't got far. Now we are going to Lewes to buy some plants—for the summer. Potatoes there are none. However, the old ewes give birth nightly behind hurdles at the back of the house. And all day the lambs keep up an extraordinary loud noise.

I hope I shall see you again soon—We have bought our Press![12] We don't know how to work it, but now I must find some young novelists or poets. Do you know any?

TO VANESSA BELL
Tuesday [31 December 1918]

Asheham [Rodmell, Sussex]

Its most disappointing that I shan't see you and Anonyma [Angelica] before we go, but we've now settled to go tomorrow, and I'm afraid I shan't be able to come over today. The children are both perfectly well, and more angelic than words can say. Lottie however has surpassed herself; she has got into such a state about her own health that she makes life here impossible and it seems best to go back where at any rate we are near doctors and chemists. . . .

However, as I say, the children are perfectly well, and no trouble at all. They play in the drawing room most of the morning, and we go for a walk after luncheon, and they seem to be full of their own games and ideas, which fit in extremely well with mine. They are amazingly interesting as well as attractive. Julian of course, knows infinitely more about science and history and geography than I do. He and Leonard had an argument yesterday about what would happen if you put a barometer into deep water. Leonard was very much impressed by his intelligence, and is, I see, getting to be very fond of them. Quentin's mind is very like mine, I expect. I hear him telling himself stories about Lady Suffolk, and how she will only eat chickens, which she breeds in enormous numbers, and she's the richest woman in the world and a Peeress in her own right. How they get hold of all their language I don't know; it seems to me very superior—in fact their minds altogether seem much quicker and more intelligent than ours. Mrs B. must have trained them very well, to do what they are told. Their great delight is to pretend to be dolphins in the bath, but they get out the moment I tell them to seriously, and their table manners are perfect. They seem to have most economical minds. Quentin told me the first night "I think it is an unnecessary expense for you to have bolsters in your beds", and Julian said "You seem to me to be very extragavant [*sic*] with your coal." Quentin would only put a scraping of strawberry jam on his bread, because he said that it was very precious in war time. However, their appetites are very good,—They have

just been in to say will I ask you to send them King Solomon's Mines [H. Rider Haggard], and Quentin's black book, as he wants to do some writing. You are not to send Adrian's book as Julian has finished it.

Lord! What a mercy they are to talk to after the servants!

. . . But the thing Julian wants to do *almost* most of all is to learn the Greek alphabet! So I shall teach him that, and they are also very anxious to write essays and stories for me to judge, so we shall be very literary, and I hope to persuade Quentin to be a writer and not a painter when he grows up.

TO VANESSA BELL
Thursday [27 February 1919]

Hogarth [House, Richmond]

My dinner with Ottoline [Morrell][13] was a frigid success. The poor woman has broken out into eruptions which she tries to make dramatic by pasting pieces of black plaster on them—but they exude at the edges. It's a terrific business whipping her into life now. One has to bow and scrape and do all sorts of antics, and implore her to tell one the history of her life from the beginning before she will get up steam at all. She fishes for compliments worse than I do—I mean without that airy certainty which is so adorable in me that there is no limit to one's store and one has merely to shake the tree for them to fall thick as apple blossom in May. She shakes the tree—oh yes,—However, I did my best; and when she said that I dressed so beautifully that I made her feel older and uglier than ever, I said, "My dear Ottoline, like the Lombardy poplar you have only to stand up naked to put us all to shame!" She liked that. But still she is fundamentally suspicious of us all, I'm afraid, and goes ravening like a dog about Bloomsbury..She insisted upon walking from the Strand to Gordon Square in a bitter wind merely to see your wretched cockatoo [Clive] and get a little of the strong wine of the male, when she felt me flagging. She now walks exactly as Queen Alexandra is said to do; and her mind vapours off about friendship and love and literature—"I could never love anyone who does not care for literature—that is my cross—my

refuge, Virginia—when people are cruel—and they are *so* cruel sometimes—And I suffer so terribly—my back gives me agonies —my feet are swollen with chillblains, and I am *always, always* tired. What would I not give to be able to work as you do—to create—to be an artist—" imagine crossing Holborn with this dribbling out, as painfully as two old witches on crutches.

TO LYTTON STRACHEY[14] *Ponion, Zennor,*
Wednesday [30] *March* [1921] *St Ives* [*Cornwall*]

. . . I met a man yesterday by appointment to discuss literature —"which is my whole life, Mrs Woolf." But I can give you no idea—He lives with a half perished dumb wife on a headland in a cottage with Everyman's Library entire. "I read no moderns. Life is not long enough for anything save the best. Hardy has taught me to look into my heart. I have enjoyed this conversation, Mrs Woolf. It has confirmed me in my own opinions." This stunted animal was a clerk in the post office, became infected with books, and is now like the oldest kernel of a monkey's nut in the Gray's Inn Road. However—why is it that human beings are so terribly pathetic? God knows. Or am I becoming rotten with middle age? I did refrain from asking him to correspond; but left with tears in my eyes—almost. I can't help thinking that we are hopelessly muddled. Then there was the theosophist, Mr Watt in the cottage which I once hired; and he lives on nuts from Selfridges, and a few vegetables, and has visions, and wears boots with soles like slabs of beef and an orange tie; and then his wife crept out of her hole, all blue, with orange hair, and cryptic ornaments, serpents, you know, swallowing their tails in token of eternity, round her neck. The rain, they said, often comes through the walls on a wet day, so I'm glad I didn't settle there. But can you explain the human race at all—I mean these queer fragments of it which are so terribly like ourselves, and so like Chimpanzees at the same time, and so lofty and high minded, with their little shelves of classics and clean china and nice check curtains and purity that I can't see why its all wrong. We tried to imagine you there, snipping their heads off with something very witty.

TO MOLLY MACCARTHY[15] *Monk's House, Rodmell,*
[20 *June* 1921] *Lewes* [*Sussex*]

I am reading the Bride of Lammermoor—by that great man Scott: and Women in Love by D. H. Lawrence, lured on by the portrait of Ottoline which appears from time to time.[16] She has just smashed Lawrence's head open with a ball of lapis lazuli—but then balls are smashed on every other page—cats—cattle—even the fish and the water lilies are at it all day long. There is no suspense or mystery: water is all semen: I get a little bored, and make out the riddles too easily. Only this puzzles me: what does it mean when a woman does eurythmics in front of a herd of Highland cattle? But I must stop.

TO JACQUES RAVERAT[17] *Monk's House, Rodmell*
Dec. 26th 1924 [*Sussex*]

Who is there next? Well, only a high aristocrat called Vita Sackville-West, daughter of Lord Sackville, daughter of Knole, wife of Harold Nicolson, and novelist, but her real claim to consideration, is, if I may be so coarse, her legs. Oh they are exquisite—running like slender pillars up into her trunk, which is that of a breastless cuirassier (yet she has 2 children) but all about her is virginal, savage, patrician; and why she writes, which she does with complete competency, and a pen of brass, is a puzzle to me. If I were she, I should merely stride, with 11 Elk hounds, behind me, through my ancestral woods. She descends from Dorset, Buckingham, Sir Philip Sidney, and the whole of English history, which she keeps, stretched in coffins, one after another, from 1300 to the present day, under her dining room floor. But you, poor Frog, care nothing for all this.

TO GWEN RAVERAT *52 Tavistock Square,*
11th March [1925] *W.C.*1

Your and Jacques' letter came yesterday, and I go about thinking of you both in starts, and almost constantly underneath everything, and I don't know what to say.[18] The thing that comes over and over is the strange wish I have to go on telling Jacques things. This is for Jacques, I say to myself; I want to

write to him about happiness, about Rupert [Brooke], and love. It had become to me a sort of private life, and I believe I told him more than anyone, except Leonard; I become mystical as I grow older and feel an alliance with you and Jacques which is eternal, not interrupted, or hurt by never meeting. Then of course, I have now for you—how can I put it?—I mean the feeling that one must reverence?—is that the word—feel shy of, so tremendous an experience; for I cannot conceive what you have suffered. It seems to me that if we met, one would have to chatter about every sort of little trifle, because there is nothing to be said.

And then, being, as you know, so fundamentally an optimist, I want to make you enjoy life. Forgive me, for writing what comes into my head. I think I feel that I would give a great deal to share with you the daily happiness. But you know that if there is anything I could ever give you, I would give it, but perhaps the only thing to give is to be oneself with people. One could say anything to Jacques. And that will always be the same with you and me. But oh, dearest Gwen, to think of you is making me cry—why should you and Jacques have had to go through this? As I told him, it is your love that has forever been love to me—all those years ago, when you used to come to Fitzroy Square, I was so angry and you were so furious, and Jacques wrote me a sensible manly letter, which I answered, sitting at my table in the window. Perhaps I was frightfully jealous of you both, being at war with the whole world at the moment. Still, the vision has become to me a source of wonder—the vision of your face; which if I were painting I should cover with flames, and put you on a hill top. Then, I don't think you would believe how it moves me that you and Jacques should have been reading Mrs Dalloway, and liking it. I'm awfully vain I know; and I was on pins and needles about sending it to Jacques; and now I feel exquisitely relieved; not flattered: but one does want that side of one to be acceptable—I was going to have written to Jacques about his children, and about my having none—I mean, these efforts of mine to communicate with people are partly childlessness, and the horror that sometimes overcomes me.

There is very little use in writing this. One feels so ignorant, so trivial, and like a child, just teasing you. But it is only that one keeps thinking of you, with a sort of reverence, and of that adorable man, whom I loved.

TO V. SACKVILLE-WEST
16th March 1926

52 Tavistock Square, London, W.C.1

. . . As for the *mot juste*, you are quite wrong. Style is a very simple matter; it is all rhythm. Once you get that, you can't use the wrong words. But on the other hand here am I sitting after half the morning, crammed with ideas, and visions, and so on, and can't dislodge them, for lack of the right rhythm. Now this is very profound, what rhythm is, and goes far deeper than words. A sight, an emotion, creates this wave in the mind, long before it makes words to fit it; and in writing (such is my present belief) one has to recapture this, and set this working (which has nothing apparently to do with words) and then, as it breaks and tumbles in the mind, it makes words to fit it: But no doubt I shall think differently next year. Then there's my character (you see how egotistic I am, for I answer only questions that are about myself) I agree about the lack of jolly vulgarity. But then think how I was brought up! No school; mooning about alone among my father's books; never any chance to pick up all that goes on in schools—throwing balls; ragging: slang; vulgarity; scenes; jealousies—only rages with my half brothers, and being walked off my legs round the Serpentine by my father. This is an excuse: I am often conscious of the lack of jolly vulgarity but did Proust pass that way? Did you? Can you chaff a table of officers?

TO V. SACKVILLE-WEST
29th March 1926

The Hogarth Press, 52 Tavistock Square, London, W.C.1

I cannot think what it will interest you to be told of, now you are embedded in Persia. I see you always picking little bright red flowers high up on stony mountains. Raymond [Mortimer][19] (give him my love) will be with you now; and so you will have

heard all about London—how Clive is in love, and Lady Colefax, and all that. Do you infer from this that Sybil is in love? No, no. She has not been tainted by *that* passion: she has merely stayed with Coolidge, Esme Howard,[20] Doug [Fairbanks] and Mary [Pickford], Charlie Chaplin, been four thousand miles in a motor car; etc. etc. Does it matter what Sybil does? A coal mine, heaven, its all the same. She pants a little harder—that is all. Then there were Lord Ivor S. Churchill; Roger Fry[21] and Virginia Woolf—and all very brilliant at Clives the other night; and Walter Sickert, Therese Lessore, Leigh Ashton,[22] all very silent at Vanessa's the other night; and a ghastly party at Rose Macaulays, where in the whirl of meaningless words I thought Mr O'donovan said Holy Ghost, whereas he said "The Whole Coast" and I asking "Where is the Holy Ghost?" got the reply "Where ever the sea is" "Am I mad, I thought, or is this wit?" "The Holy Ghost?" I repeated. "The Whole Coast" he shouted, and so we went on, in an atmosphere so repellent that it became, like the smell of bad cheese, repulsively fascinating: Robert Lynds, Gerald Goulds,[23] Rose Macaulays, all talking shop; and saying Masefield is as good as Chaucer, and the best novel of the year is Shining Domes by Mildred Peake; until Leonard shook all over, picked up what he took to be Mrs Gould's napkin, discovered it to be her sanitary towel and the foundations of this tenth rate literary respectability (all gentlemen in white waistcoats, ladies shingled, unsuccessfully) shook to its foundations. I kept saying "Vita would love this" Now would you?

TO VANESSA BELL — *Hotel de France, Palermo [Sicily]*
9th April 1927

. . . I am sure Rome is the city where I shall come to die—a few months before death however, for obviously the country round it is far the loveliest in the world. I dont myself care so much for the melodramatic mountains here, which go the colour of picture postcards at sunset; but outside Rome it is perfection —smooth, suave, flowing, classical, with the sea on one side, hills on the other, a flock of sheep here, and an olive grove.

There I shall come to die; and I suggest, as an idea you may consider, the foundation of a colony of the aged—Roger, you, Lytton, I: all sunken cheeked, tottering and urbane, supporting each others steps along Roman roads; I dont mind if one does die at the street corner; you with a beautiful handkerchief over your head (how ashamed you made me feel of my poor partridges rump!)[24] and the rest of us with large sticks in our hands. A death colony will certainly become desirable. However we only had time to see the Coliseum and to eat a vast dish of maccaroni. Then we crossed over to Palermo by night and I shared a cabin with an unknown but by no means romantic Swedish lady who complained that there was no lock on the door, whereupon I poked my head out from the curtains and said in my best French "Madame, we have neither of us any cause for fear" which happily she took in good part. Its odd how much the Scandinavians scrape, scent, gurgle and clean at night considering the results next morning: as hard as a board, and as gray as a scullery pail. She suggested nothing but paring potatoes. Much though I love my own sex, my gorge heaves at the travelling female. We had two with us from Toulon to Mentone, arch and elderly, with handbags packed with face powder and complexions that not all the thyme and mint in England could sweeten—elderly virgins from Cheltenham, playing golf in France; but one feels sure they cant hit the ball—they cant do anything—they spend enough to keep you and me a year on their clothes—they have no reason to exist in this world or the next.

TO V. SACKVILLE-WEST — *52 Tavistock Square [W.C.1]*
Friday [13 May 1927]

What a generous woman you are! Your letter has just come,[25] and I must answer it, though in a chaos. (Nelly returning: her doctor; her friends; her diet etc) I was honest though in thinking you wouldn't care for The Lighthouse: too psychological; too many personal relationships, I think. . . . The dinner party the best thing I ever wrote: the one thing that I think justifies my faults as a writer: This damned 'method'. Because I dont think one

could have reached those particular emotions in any other way. I was doubtful about Time Passes. It was written in the gloom of the Strike: then I re-wrote it: then I thought it impossible as prose —I thought you could have written it as poetry. I don't know if I'm like Mrs Ramsay: as my mother died when I was 13 probably it is a child's view of her: but I have some sentimental delight in thinking that you like her. She has haunted me: but then so did that old wretch my father: Do you think it sentimental? Do you think it irreverent about him? I should like to know. I was more like him than her, I think; and therefore more critical: but he was an adorable man, and somehow, tremendous.

TO V. SACKVILLE-WEST *Monks House [Rodmell, Sussex]*
Wednesday [3 August 1927]

Yes, darling creature, your letter was handed me just as we left Auppegard, and caused me, I suppose, to forget my box, so that the exquisite butler had to motor into Dieppe after us. Yes, darling, it was a nice letter. Sauqueville[26] aint a very grand place, all the same. I looked for traces of you. Did your ancestors own a saw mill? Thats what they do now, and not a specially fine leg among them. But I'll tell you all about it when you come.

My God, how you would have laughed yesterday! Off for our first drive in the Singer: the bloody thing wouldn't start. The accelerator died like a duck—starter jammed. All the village came to watch—Leonard almost sobbed with rage. At last we had to bicycle in and fetch a man from Lewes. He said it was the magnetos—would you have known that? Should we have known? Another attempt today, we are bitter and sullen and determined. We think of nothing else. Leonard will shoot himself if it dont start again.

Come down, dearest Creature

TO ETHEL SMYTH[27] *[52 Tavistock Square, W.C.1]*
Sunday, 22nd June [1930]

. . . I did not mean, though I must have said, that Leonard served 7 years for his wife.[28] He saw me it is true; and thought

me an odd fish; and went off next day to Ceylon, with a vague romance about us both [Virginia and Vanessa]! And I heard stories of him; how his hand trembled and he had bit his thumb through in a rage; and Lytton said he was like Swift and would murder his wife; and someone else said Woolf had married a black woman. That was my romance—Woolf in a jungle. And then I set up house alone with a brother [Adrian], and Nessa married, and I was rather adventurous, for those days; that is we were sexually very free—Elizabeth owes her emancipation and mathematics partly to us—but I was always sexually cowardly, and never walked over Mountains with Counts as you did, nor plucked all the flowers of life in a bunch as you did. My terror of real life has always kept me in a nunnery. And much of this talking and adventuring in London alone, and sitting up to all hours with young men, and saying whatever came first, was rather petty, as you were not petty: at least narrow; circumscribed; and leading to endless ramifications of intrigue. We had violent rows—oh yes, I used to rush through London in such rages, and stormed Hampstead heights at night in white or purple fury. And then I married, and then my brains went up in a shower of fireworks. As an experience, madness is terrific I can assure you, and not to be sniffed at; and in its lava I still find most of the things I write about. It shoots out of one everything shaped, final, not in mere driblets, as sanity does. And the six months—not three—that I lay in bed taught me a good deal about what is called oneself. Indeed I was almost crippled when I came back to the world, unable to move a foot in terror, after that discipline. Think—not one moment's freedom from doctor discipline—perfectly strange —conventional men; 'you shant read this' and 'you shant write a word' and 'you shall lie still and drink milk'—for six months.

TO ETHEL SMYTH *52 Tavistock Square [W.C.1]*
Thursday, 16th Oct [1930]

. . . One of these days I will write out some phases of my writer's life; and expound what I now merely say in short—After being ill and suffering every form and variety of nightmare and extravagant intensity of perception—for I used to make up

poems, stories, profound and to me inspired phrases all day long as I lay in bed, and thus sketched, I think, all that I now, by the light of reason, try to put into prose (I thought of the Lighthouse then, and Kew and others, not in substance, but in idea)—after all this, when I came to, I was so tremblingly afraid of my own insanity that I wrote Night and Day [1919] mainly to prove to my own satisfaction that I could keep entirely off that dangerous ground. I wrote it, lying in bed, allowed to write only for one half hour a day. And I made myself copy from plaster casts, partly to tranquillise, partly to learn anatomy. Bad as the book is, it composed my mind, and I think taught me certain elements of composition which I should not have had the patience to learn had I been in full flush of health always. These little pieces in Monday or (and) Tuesday were written by way of diversion; they were the treats I allowed myself when I had done my exercise in the conventional style. I shall never forget the day I wrote The Mark on the Wall—all in a flash, as if flying, after being kept stone breaking for months. The Unwritten Novel was the great discovery, however. That—again in one second—showed me how I could embody all my deposit of experience in a shape that fitted it—not that I have ever reached that end; but anyhow I saw, branching out of the tunnel I made, when I discovered that method of approach, Jacobs Room [1922], Mrs Dalloway [1925] etc—How I trembled with excitement; and then Leonard came in, and I drank my milk, and concealed my excitement, and wrote I suppose another page of that interminable Night and Day (which some say is my best book). All this I will tell you one day—here I suppress my natural inclination to say, if dear Ethel you have the least wish to hear anymore on a subject that cant be of the least interest to you.

TO VANESSA BELL — *Monks House, Rodmell [Sussex]*
Sunday Nov 2nd [1930]

. . . Lytton came to dinner to meet Lady Colefax. I spent 17/6 on a jar of pâté de foie gras; and Rivett really cooked admirably (she is erratic and has failures but on the whole I like her erraticity better than complete humdrum) and Sibyl has transformed herself into a harried, downright woman of business,[29] sticking her fork in the pot; and has lost almost all her glitter and suavity. Even her voice has changed. She is now of the family of Champcommunal[30] and other money makers. She is at her office from 9.30 to 7: has had to give up entertaining, and on the whole is improved, though rather tragic. After all, she is 55, I daresay, and has practised society for 35 years; and now to become a hardhearted shopkeeper,—she is very successful too, decorating houses from top to bottom and standing on ladders and fixing sinks—must be a grind. She too has shrunk and faded. Lytton was smooth as silk and sweet as honey. You were praised. I think probably you do now represent the only island that keeps afloat. Everyone else seems at the moment money grubbing and precarious. And then there is old Ethel, who took me to one of the very smartest of parties in Belgrave Square, and unpeeled herself of sweater, jersey and mothy moleskin before all the flunkeys, knocking her pasteboard hat to right and left and finally producing from a cardboard box fastened at the edge by paper fasteners a pair of black leather shoes, which she put on, because she said "The truth is I'm a damned snob, and like to be smart." She also said, "Isn't this slow movement sublime—natural and heavy and irresistible like the movement of one's own bowels." All the dapper little diplomats blushed.

TO VANESSA BELL — *Monks House [Rodmell, Sussex]*
23rd May [1931]

I've had to retire to bed for 2 days with a headache, but am now practically recovered. This was not due to my Jolly, but to Ethel Smyth, whom I think, seriously, to be deranged in the head. We'd spent the morning trapesing round the Chelsea flower show, a very remarkable sight, banks and banks of flowers, all colours, under a livid awning, for it was perishing cold, and all the county families parading with their noses red against the lilies,—a fascinating but rather exhausting performance, and then Ethel appeared, stamping like a dragoon with a wallet full

of documents. For 3 hours she nailed me to my chair while she rehearsed the story of her iniquitous treatment by Adrian Boult.[31] I cant (you'll be glad to hear) go into it all, but she seems to have gone into the green room, after he'd been conducting a Bach Mass for 6 hours, and insisted that he should do the Prison at the BBC; whereafter, according to her, he grossly insulted her, in the presence of the finest artists in Europe, and finally after a screaming and scratching which rung through The Queen's Hall, ordered her out of the room. She then went through, with the minuteness and ingenuity of a maniac, the whole history of her persecution for the past 50 years; brought out old letters and documents and read them aloud, beat on my chair with her fists; made me listen, and answer, and agree at every moment; and finally I had to shout that I had such a headache that unless she stopped talking I should burst into flames and be combusted. One is perfectly powerless. She raves and rants; yet has a demoniac shrewdness, so that there's no escape. "You've got to listen to me—You've got to listen" she kept saying and indeed the whole of 52 rang with her vociferations. And its all fabricated, contorted, twisted with red hot egotism; and she's now launched on a campaign which means bullying every conductor and worrying every publisher, and rich man or woman, as well as unfortunate friends, until she gets that hopeless farrago of birds and last posts played and all HB's[32] rubbish printed again. I dont feel I can even face her unless 2 keepers are present with red hot pokers—at the same time, considering her age, I suppose she's a marvel—I see her merits as a writer—but undoubtedly sex and egotism have brewed some bitter insanity.

TO V. SACKVILLE-WEST [*Monk's House, Rodmell, Sussex*]
Saturday [*8 August 1931*]

. . . As for Katherine [Mansfield], I think you've got it very nearly right. We did not ever coalesce; but I was fascinated, and she respectful, only I thought her cheap, and she thought me priggish; and yet we were both compelled to meet simply in order to talk about writing. This we did by the hour. Only then she

came out with a swarm of little stories, and I was jealous, no doubt; because they were so praised; but gave up reading them not on that account, but because of their cheap sharp sentimentality, which was all the worse, I thought, because she had, as you say, the zest and the resonance—I mean she could permeate one with her quality; and if one felt this cheap scent in it, it reeked in ones nostrils. But I must read her some day. Also, she was for ever pursued by her dying; and had to press on through stages that should have taken years in ten minutes—so that our relationship became unreal also. And there was [John Middleton] Murry squirming and oozing a sort of thick motor oil in the background—dinners with them were about the most unpleasant exhibitions, humanly speaking, I've ever been to. But the fact remains—I mean, that she had a quality I adored, and needed; I think her sharpness and reality—her having knocked about with prostitutes and so on, whereas I had always been respectable—was the thing I wanted then. I dream of her often—now thats an odd reflection—how one's relation with a person seems to be continued after death in dreams, and with some odd reality too.

TO VANESSA BELL *Delphi* [*Greece*]
Monday, May 2nd [*1932*]

Here we are in Delphi, all well except for Roger's inside falling out and my skin peeling in great sores. The wind and sun, the bitter cold and violent heat, the driving all day along rocky or pitted roads, make one feel like a parboiled cactus. All the same, it is so far a great success—I mean from our point of view. No quarrels, no accidents,—in fact, we live in considerable comfort, and have a car to drive in, instead of pottering about in trains and flies as we used.[33] The Inns are now clean as new pins—not a bug, or even a flea to be seen; no corpses on the wall, and the food about as good as English—too many olives and sardines for me; but Leonard and Roger love them and plunge into octopuses and lizards,—I mean they eat them, fried—oily lengths like old rubber tires cut into squares. There's not an English man or woman to be seen; our only society is our own, and some peas-

ants, but as Roger learnt Greek out of the wrong book, most of our talk gets wrong, and when I correct with pure Classical Greek—as my way is—the only result is that we are supposed to have bought 2 kids. No, I haven't probed Margery: old age brings its sad wisdoms—I see one cant eviscerate the elderly unless one wishes to have decomposing carcases hung round one's neck. There is the less need, however, as she has told us all about her emasculated life, with the old Frys—how her father dismissed her lover, and her mother never let her laugh at any story a man told lest it should be thought fast. The dulness of her youth and the 6 sisters was she says worse than a convent. At the age of 97 Lady Fry, having shut them all up in so many band boxes pouring out tea and watering flowers owned that her policy had been a mistake.[34] But it was then too late—Margery has missed having a child, and has to paint and botanise and watch birds and philanthropise for ever instead. I daresay it would be better if she married Roger as you suggest. They hum and buzz like two boiling pots. I've never heard people, after the age of 6, talk so incessantly. Whats more, there's not a word of it what you and I might call foolish: its all about facts, and information and at the most trying moments when Roger's inside is falling down, and Margery must make water instantly or perish, one has only to mention Themistocles and the battle of Platea for them both to become like youth at its spring. The amount they know about art, history, archaeology, biology, stones, sticks, birds, flowers is in fact a constant reproof to me. Margery caught me smiling the other day at my own thoughts and said no Fry had ever done that. "No" said Roger, "we have no power of dissociation." which is why of course they're such bad painters—they never simmer for a second.

. . . I cant think why we dont live in Greece. Its very cheap. The exchange is now in our favour. There has been a financial crisis and we get I dont know how many shillings for our pound. The people are far the most sympathetic I've ever seen. Nobody jeers, or sneers. Everybody smiles. There are no beggars, practically. The peasants all come up across the fields and talk. We

can't understand a word and the conflict between Roger's book and Leonards often makes it impossible for us to get a drop to drink, because they cant agree what is the word for wine.

TO QUENTIN BELL *Monks House [Rodmell, Sussex]*
Tuesday [19 September 1933]

. . . The reason why Ethel Smyth is so repulsive, tell Nessa, is her table manners. She oozes; she chortles; and she half blew her rather red nose on her table napkin. Then she poured the cream —oh the blackberries were divine—into her beer; and I had rather dine with a dog. But you can tell people they are murderers; you can not tell them that they eat like hogs. That is wisdom. She was however full—after dinner—of vigorous charm; she walked four miles; she sang Brahms; the sheep looked up and were not fed. And we packed her off before midnight.

TO LADY OTTOLINE MORRELL *Monks House, Rodmell [Sussex]*
31st Dec. [1933]

You are a wonderful woman—for many reasons; but specially for sending a present—a lovely original wild and yet useful present—which arrived on Christmas day. I love being 'remembered' as they say; and I hung it on a chair, when the Keynes's lunched here, and boasted, how you had given it me. What a snob I am aren't I! But I cant help it. It was a very nice Christmas, as it happened; I had my shawl, and the turkey was large enough and we had cream, and lots of coloured fruits, and sat and gorged—Maynard[35] Lydia Leonard and I.

And Vita came with her sons, one Eton, one Oxford, which explains why she has to spin those sleepwalking servant girl novels. I told her you would like to see her. I remain always very fond of her—this I say because on the surface, she's rather red and black and gaudy, I know: and very slow; and very, compared to us, primitive: but she is incapable of insincerity or pose, and digs and digs, and waters, and walks her dogs, and reads her

poets, and falls in love with every pretty woman, just like a man, and is to my mind genuinely aristocratic; but I cant swear that she wont bore you: certainly she'll fall in love with you. But do let her come down from her rose-red tower where she sits with thousands of pigeons cooing over her head.

TO BENEDICT NICOLSON *Monk's House, Rodmell, Lewes [Sussex]*
13 Aug. 1940

Just as I began to read your letter, an air raid warning sounded. I'll put down the reflections that occurred to me, as honestly, if I can, as you put down your reflections on reading my life of Roger Fry while giving air raid alarms at Chatham.[36]

Here the raiders came over head. I went and looked at them. Then I returned to your letter. "I am so struck by the fools paradise in which he and his friends lived. He shut himself out from all disagreeable actualities and allowed the spirit of Nazism to grow without taking any steps to check it. . . ." Lord, I thought to myself, Roger shut himself out from disagreeable actualities did he? Roger who faced insanity, death and every sort of disagreeable—what can Ben mean? Are Ben and I facing actualities because we're listening to bombs dropping on other people? And I went on with Ben Nicolson's biography. After returning from a delightful tour in Italy, for which his expensive education at Eton and Oxford had well fitted him, he got a job as keeper of the King's pictures. Well, I thought, Ben was a good deal luckier than Roger. Roger's people were the very devil; when he was Ben's age he was earning his living by extension lecturing and odd jobs of reviewing. He had to wait till he was over sixty before he got a Slade professorship. And I went on to think of that very delightful party that you gave in Guildford Street two months before the war. . . . Then I looked at your letter . . "This intensely private world which Roger Fry cultivated could only be communicated to a few people as sensitive and intelligent as himself . . ." Why then did Ben Nicolson give these parties? Why did he take a job under Kenneth Clark at Windsor? Why didn't he chuck it all away and go into politics? After all, war was a great deal closer in 1939 than in 1900.

Here the raiders began emitting long trails of smoke. I wondered if a bomb was going to fall on top of me; I wondered if I was facing disagreeable actualities; I wondered what I could have done to stop bombs and disagreeable actualities . . . Then I dipped into your letter again. "This all sounds as though I wish to say that the artist, the intellectual, has no place in modern society. On the contrary, his mission is now more vital than it has ever been. He will still be shocked by stupidity and untruth but instead of ignoring it he will set out to fight it; instead of retreating into his tower to uphold certain ethical standards his job will be to persuade as many other people as possible to think and behave in the same way—and on his success and failure depends the future of the world."

Who on earth, I thought, did that job more incessantly and successfully than Roger Fry? Didn't he spend half his life, not in a tower, but travelling about England addressing masses of people, who'd never looked at a picture and making them see what he saw? And wasn't that the best way of checking Nazism? Then I opened another letter; as it happened from Sebastian Sprott,[37] a lecturer at Nottingham; and I read how he'd once been mooning around the S.Kensington Museum ". . . then I saw Roger. All was changed. In ten minutes he caused me to enjoy what I was looking at. The objects became vivid and intelligible . . . There must be many people like me, people with scales on their eyes and wax in their ears . . . if only someone would come along and remove the scales and dig out the wax. Roger Fry did it . . ."

Then the raiders passed over. And I thought I cant have given Ben the least notion of what Roger was like. I suppose it was my fault. Or is it partly, and naturally, that he must have a scapegoat? I admit I want one. I loathe sitting here waiting for a bomb to fall; when I want to be writing. If it doesn't kill me its killing someone else. Where can I lay the blame? On the Sackvilles. On the Dufferins? On Eton and Oxford? They did precious little it seems to me to check Nazism. People like Roger and Goldie Dickinson[38] did an immense deal it seems to me. Well, we differ in our choice of scapegoats.

But what I'd like to know is, suppose we both survive this

war, what ought we to do to prevent another? I shall be too old to do anything but write. But will you throw up your job as an art critic and take to politics? And if you stick to art criticism, how will you make it more public and less private than Roger did? . . .

I hope this letter doesn't sound unkind. Its only because I liked your being honest so much that I've tried to be. And of course I know you're having a much worse time of it at the moment than I am . . . Another siren has just sounded.

TO V. SACKVILLE-WEST — *Monk's House, Rodmell, near Lewes, Sussex*
Friday [*30 August 1940*]

I've just stopped talking to you. It seems so strange. Its perfectly peaceful here—theyre playing bowls—I'd just put flowers in your room. And there you sit with the bombs falling round you.

What can one say—except that I love you and I've got to live through this strange quiet evening thinking of you sitting there alone.

TO JOHN LEHMANN — *Monk's House, Rodmell, Lewes* [*Sussex*]
[*27? March 1941*]

I'd decided, before your letter came,[39] that I cant publish that novel [*Between the Acts*] as it stands—its too silly and trivial.

What I will do is to revise it, and see if I can pull it together and so publish it in the autumn. If published as it is, it would certainly mean a financial loss; which we dont want. I am sure I am right about this.

I neednt say how sorry I am to have troubled you. The fact is it was written in the intervals of doing Roger with my brain half asleep. And I didnt realise how bad it was till I read it over.

Please forgive me, and believe I'm only doing what is best.

I'm sending back the MSS [for *Folios of New Writing*] with my notes.

Again, I apologise profoundly.

TO LEONARD WOOLF — [*Monk's House, Rodmell, Sussex*]
[*28 March 1941*]

Dearest,

I want to tell you that you have given me complete happiness. No one could have done more than you have done. Please believe that.

But I know that I shall never get over this: and I am wasting your life. It is this madness. Nothing anyone says can persuade me. You can work, and you will be much better without me. You see I cant write this even, which shows I am right. All I want to say is that until this disease came on we were perfectly happy. It was all due to you. No one could have been so good as you have been, from the very first day till now. Everyone knows that.

V.

You will find Roger's letters to the Maurons in the writing table drawer in the Lodge. Will you destroy all my papers.

NOTES

1. Violet Dickinson (1865–1948), for many years VW's most intimate friend, who nursed her through her second period of insanity during the summer of 1904. She disapproved of VW's setting up house in 1911 with her Bloomsbury friends, and from this period their relationship became more formal.
2. For about two years, Virginia taught at Morley College, an evening institute for working people.
3. Henry James lived at Lamb House, Rye, from 1898 until his death in 1915.
4. Clive Bell (1881–1964), art critic, married Vanessa Stephen in 1907 and, as VW's brother-in-law, played an important part in her life, as her literary confidant, and as partner in an intermittent flirtation.
5. Jean Thomas ran a mental nursing home.
6. This letter decided Leonard. He resigned from the Colonial Service, and his resignation was accepted on May 7.
7. Janet Case (1862–1937), classical scholar, who taught Virginia Woolf Greek from 1902 and had become a close friend. She lived with her sister, "Emphie," and was an active supporter of women's, liberal, and pacifist causes.
8. Vanessa ("Nessa") Bell, *née* Stephen (1879–1961), VW's elder sister and, after Leonard Woolf, the most important person in her life. Her

marriage to Clive Bell became, after 1914, a matter of convenience and friendship. Her children were Julian (1908–1937); Quentin (b. 1910); and Angelica (b. 1918), who was the daughter of Duncan Grant.

9. Leonard's interest in the Women's Co-operative Movement was stimulated by his growing friendship with Margaret Llewelyn Davies, and his tour with Virginia of the Northern industrial cities in March. His book, *Co-operation and the Future of Industry*, was published in 1919.
10. Duncan Grant (1885–1978), painter, who lived and worked with Vanessa Bell from about 1914 until her death in 1961; their daughter, Angelica Bell, was born on Christmas Day, 1918.
11. *The Shadow-Line* (1917).
12. Their first hand-press, which they bought at a printer's shop in Farringdon St., Holborn, for their Hogarth Press.
13. Ottoline Morrell (1873–1938), patroness of artists and writers and London hostess, who entertained at 44 Bedford Square, Bloomsbury, and at Garsington Manor, near Oxford.
14. Giles Lytton Strachey (1880–1932), critic and biographer, was a contemporary and friend of both Thoby Stephen and Leonard Woolf at Trinity College, Cambridge. After Thoby's death, he became one of VW's closest friends. He is remembered chiefly for *Eminent Victorians*.
15. Mary ("Molly") MacCarthy (1882–1953), like VW, was a niece by marriage of Lady Anne Thackeray Ritchie. Her husband, Desmond MacCarthy (1877–1952), was a literary journalist and drama critic who had known the Stephen family since before Sir Leslie's death in 1904.
16. Lawrence drew an unpleasant portrait of Ottoline in the character of Hermione Roddice.
17. Jacques Raverat (1885–1925), painter, and one of a group of friends VW called the "neo-Pagans," another of whom, Gwendolen ("Gwen") Darwin (1885–1957), he married in 1911.
18. Jacques Raverat died at Vence, in southern France, on March 7. Before his death he dictated a letter to Virginia about *Mrs. Dalloway*, which she had sent him in proof. He wrote her that it made him "want to live a little longer."
19. Raymond Mortimer (1895–1980), critic and man of letters, whom VW first met in 1923. He was a close friend of Clive Bell.
20. The British Ambassador in Washington.
21. Roger Fry (1866–1934), art critic and painter, who created a scandal by introducing the British public to Post-Impressionist art. After his incurably insane wife was consigned to a mental home in 1910, he fell in love with Vanessa Bell—a love she transmuted into lifelong friendship.
22. Therese Lessore was a painter and the third wife of the painter Walter Sickert. Leigh Ashton was Keeper of the Department of Textiles in the Victoria and Albert Museum, of which he became Director in 1945.
23. Robert Lynd, essayist, was also literary editor of the *Daily News*. Gerald Gould (1885–1936) was a critic, journalist, and poet.
24. Virginia had recently had her hair shingled.
25. Vita had written: "Everything is blurred to a haze by your book . . . I can only say that I am dazzled and bewitched" (11 May 1927, Berg Collection of The New York Public Library).
26. The village near Auppegard, Normandy, from which the Sackville family came to England in the 11th century.
27. Ethel Smyth (1858–1944), composer, author, and feminist. She was a vigorous campaigner for the cause of women's rights and suffrage. After meeting VW in 1930, she became one of her most devoted and demanding friends.
28. Cf the story of Jacob, Leah and Rachel (*Genesis*, Chapter 29).
29. Sibyl Colefax started an interior decoration business in 1928.
30. Elspeth Champcommunal, a friend of Roger Fry, and the widow of a French painter who was killed in the First World War. She was Editor of *Vogue* from 1916 to 1922.
31. Musical Director of the BBC (1930–42) and founder-conductor of the BBC Symphony Orchestra (1930–49).
32. Henry Brewster with whom Ethel Smyth had once been in love.
33. During Virginia's previous visit to Greece, with Vanessa, in 1906.
34. Lady Fry died in 1930 at the age of 97. Her husband, Sir Edward Fry, a distinguished jurist, died in 1918, aged 91.
35. John Maynard Keynes (1883–1946), economist, best known for his *The Economic Consequences of the Peace*, *A Treatise on Money*, and *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money*. He was a member of "old Bloomsbury" and of its reincarnation, The Memoir Club. He married the Russian ballerina Lydia Lopokova in 1925.
36. Ben Nicolson, son of Vita Sackville-West and Harold Nicolson, was then serving as a lance-bombardier in an anti-aircraft battery at Chatham, Kent.
37. W. J. H. ("Sebastian") Sprott (1897–1971), a friend of Keynes and Strachey, was Lecturer in Psychology at Nottingham University.
38. Ben Nicolson was at both Eton and Oxford. His mother was a Sackville. His father's aunt Hariot married the Viceroy of India, Marquess of Dufferin and Ava. G. Lowes Dickinson was the Cambridge historian.
39. John Lehmann was, first, Manager of the Hogarth Press, and later a partner. The sequence of events was as follows. On March 14, when Virginia, Leonard and Lehmann met in London, it was agreed that Lehmann should read the typescript of *Between the Acts*. He assumed from their conversation that there was no doubt that it would be published shortly, and caused the book to be announced in the Spring books issue of the *New Statesman*. Later he received Virginia's letter of March 20, and wrote to her apologizing for his action. Then he read the book, and praised it enthusiastically in another letter. Virginia's reply is the letter printed here.

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