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{lh}To David Meldrum

Text MS Duke; Blackburn 66

{lra}[Pent Farm]

2^d Oct 99.

{lsa}My dear Mr Meldrum

{lb}Just time for a word of thanks before the post goes.²

If I had a year to write before me I wouldn't know what adequate I could say.

{lc}Always yours

{ls}Jph Conrad.

{lh}To Hugh Clifford

Text MS Clifford; J-A, 1, 279

{lra}[letterhead: Pent Farm]

Monday.

9th Oct 99

{lsa}My Dear Mr. Clifford.

{lb}I received the book three hours ago and -- it is only too short!³ I've read it twice. I've also read the inscription the wording of which I prize .p200 Conrad

immensely, though I vow and protest that I never looked upon your critical notice¹ in the light of an act requiring expiation. I am only too conscious of my ignorance my audacity -- and of all my other failings, which at your hands have received such a generous treatment.

Many thanks. I've lived for a few hours in your pages. Of the sketches I've not previously seen, The Central Gaol and The Vigil of Pa'Tu{cr}a are the two I like the best. Of the others, The Death March has been always my favourite; but indeed all are absorbing -- to me at least. I would like to talk about them long -- interminably; of the matter and of the manner too.

Of course the matter is admirable -- the knowledge, the feeling, the sympathy; it is sure to win perfect and full recognition. It is all sterling metal; a thing of absolute value. There can be no question of it not only for those who know but even for those who approach the book with blank minds on the subject of the race you have, in more than one sense, made your own. And as to the manner -- well! I know you are not a seeker after mere expression and I beg leave to offer only one remark.

You do not leave enough to the imagination.² I do not mean as to facts -- the facts can not be too explicitly stated; I am alluding simply to the phrasing. True a man who knows so much (without taking into account the manner in which his knowledge was acquired) may well spare himself the trouble of meditating over the words, only that words, groups of words, words standing alone, are symbols of life, have the power in their sound or their aspect to present the very thing you wish to hold up before the mental vision of your readers. The things {op"} as they are" exist in words; therefore words should be handled with care lest the picture, the image of truth abiding in facts should become distorted -- or blurred.

These are the considerations for a mere craftsman -- you may say; and you may also conceivably say that I have nothing else to trouble my head about. However the whole of the truth lies in the presentation; therefore the expression should be studied in the interest of veracity. This is the only morality of art apart from subject.

I have travelled a good way from my original remark. Not enough left to the imagination in the phrasing. I beg leave to illustrate my meaning

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from extracts on p. 261 -- not that I pose for an accomplished craftsman or fondly think I am free from that very fault and others much worse. No; it is only to explain what I mean.

-- When the whole horror of his position forced itself with an agony of realization upon his frightened mind, Pa' Tu{cr}a for a space lost his reason. --

In this sentence the reader is borne down by the full expression. The words with an agony of realisation completely destroy the effect -- therefore interfere with the truth of the statement. The word frightened is fatal. It seems as if it had been written without* any thought at all. It takes away all sense of reality -- for if you read the sentence in its place on the page You will see that the word frightened (or indeed any word of the sort) is inadequate to express the true state of that man's mind. No word is adequate. The imagination of the reader should be left free to arouse his feeling.

-- When the whole horror of his position forced itself upon his mind, Pa' Tu{cr}a for a space lost his reason. --

This is truth; this is* which thus stated carries conviction because it is a picture of a mental state. And look how finely it goes on with a perfectly legitimate effect

-- He screamed aloud, and the hollow of the rocks took up his cries
It is magnificent! It is suggestive. It is truth effectively stated. But
and hurled them back to him mockingly
is nothing at all. It is a phrase anybody can write to fit any sort of situation; it is the sort of thing that writes itself; it is the sort of thing I write twenty times a day and (with the fear of overtaking fate behind me) spend half my nights in taking out of my work -- upon which depends the daily bread of the house: (literally -- from day to day); not to mention (I dare hardly think of it) the future of my child, of those nearest and dearest to me, between whom and the bleakest want there is only my pen -- as long as life lasts. And I can sell all I write -- as much as I can write!

This is said to make it manifest that I practise the faith which I take the liberty to preach -- if You will allow me to say so -- in a brotherly spirit. To return.

Please observe how strikingly the effect is carried on.

-- When the whole horror of his position forced itself upon his mind, Pa' Tu{cr}a for a space lost his reason. He screamed aloud, and the hollow of the rocks took up his cries; the bats awoke in thousands and joined the band that rustled and squeaked above the man etc. etc.

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In the last two lines the words hurrying -- motiveless -- already -- defenceless -- are not essential and therefore not true to the fact. The impression of hurrying motiveless has been given already in lines 2. 3. 4. at the top of the page. If they joined it is because the others were already flying. Already is repetition. Defenceless is inadequate for a man held in the merciless grip of a rock.

And pray believe me that if I have selected this passage it is because I am alive to its qualities and not because I have looked consciously for its defects.

For the same reason I do not apologise for my remarks. They are not an impertinence, they are a tribute to the work, that appeals so strongly to me by its subject, partly -- but most by its humanity, its comprehension, by its spirit and by its expression too -- which I have made a subject of critical analysis. If I have everlastingly bored you, you must forgive me. I trust you will find no other cause of offence.

Our meeting -- Your visit here¹ -- mark an epoch in my life. I wish my

work would allow me to run up to town and see you before you return to the East; but I have been unwell, mentally powerless and physically unfit, my work has suffered a disastrous delay. I am a slave of mean preoccupations, alas!

{op"}Friend" -- says the inscription -- and I feel distinctly the richer for your friendship. Your and Mrs Clifford's short apparition amongst us has left an abiding and valued memory. Jessie joins me in kindest regards to your wife and yourself.

Pardon this corrected and interlined letter. It's past midnight and I had a rough time with MS all day.

{lc}Always Yours faithfully
{ls}Joseph Conrad.

{lh}To John Galsworthy

Text MS Forbes; Unpublished

{lra}[letterhead: Pent Farm]

Tuesday. [10? October 1899]²

{lsa}Dear Jack

{lb}How goes the chapter?³ When are you coming? Hueffer has been here inquiring with quite an anxiety. Meldrum spent a day and is gone .p203

yesterday to Harrowgate where old B'wood is nursing himself.¹ There will be no difficulty about a cheque but the old chap is so leisurely that if you can meantime send me twenty?

I am a horrible skunk.

Jim takes his time to come out but it never stops for long. I've done nothing on Sund and Mond. Today I write with a little rush. Oh I am weary.

Maupassant? Eh? Bring him soon.

{lc}Ever yours
{ls}Conrad.

{lh}To John Galsworthy

Text MS Forbes; Unpublished

{lra}[letterhead: Pent Farm]

12 Oct. 99

{lsa}Dearest Jack

{lb}Just time for a word of thanks for cheque {bp}20 received this morning.

Drop me a line soon to say when you are coming. I am all impatience to see that Chapter. You are the best of fellows!

{lc}Ever yours
{ls}Jph Conrad.

{lps}I am sincerely and seriously glad Your Sister likes the book. It is a good sign. I surmise she has seen the last chap.?

{lh}To E. L. Sanderson

Text MS Yale; J-A, 1, 281

{lra}[letterhead: Pent Farm]

12 Oct 99

{lsa}My dear Ted.

{lb}Were you to come with a horsewhip you would be still welcome. It's the only kind of visit I can imagine myself as deserving from You. Only the other day Jessie asked me whether I had written to you and overwhelmed me with reproaches. Why wait another day? But I am incorrigible; I will always look to another day to bring something

something good, something one would like to share with a friend -- something -- if only a fortunate thought. But the days bring nothing at .p204

all -- and thus they go by empty-handed -- till the last day of all. I am always looking forward to some date to some event: when I finish this; before I begin that other thing -- and there never seems to be any breathing time, not because I do much but because the toil is great. I try at times to persuade myself that it is my honesty that makes the burden so heavy, but, alas! the suspicion will force itself upon one that maybe it is only lack of strenght,*of power -- of an uplifting belief in oneself. whatever the cause the struggle is hard, and this may be no more than justice.

I haven't been in town since last March. If I haven't been to see you I have not gone to visit other people. My dear Ted you have much to forgive me; but try to imagine yourself trying your hardest to save the School¹ (God forefend) from downfall, annihilation and disaster; and the thing going on and on endlessly. That's exactly how I am situated; and the worst is that the menace (in my case) does not seem to come from outside but from within; that the menace and danger or weakness are in me -- in myself alone. I fear I have not the capacity and the power to go on -- to satisfy the just expectations of those who are dependent on my exertion. I fear! I fear! And sometimes I hope. But it is the fear that abides. But even were I wrong in my fear the very fact that such a fear exists would argue that everything is not right -- would in itself be a danger and a menace. So I turn in this vicious circle and the work itself becomes like the work in a treadmill -- a thing without joy -- a punishing task.

You can see now why I am so often remiss in my correspondence. There is nothing one would gladly write under that shadow. This is the sort of thing that one writes and the more one loves his friends, the more belief one has in their affection, the less one is disposed to cast upon them the gloom of one's intimate thoughts. My silence is seldom selfish and never forgetful. It is often a kind of reserve, {op"}pudor", something in the nature of instinctive decency. One expects to fall every instant and one would like to fall with a covered face, with a decorous arrangement of draperies with no more words than greater men have used. One would! And when one sits down it is to write eight pages without coming to the end of one's groans.

I am ashamed, bitterly ashamed to make the same eternal answer, the same eternal wail of uncertitude to your hospitable voice. I am now trying to finish a story which began in the Oct N^o of Blackwood. I am at it day after day and I want all day, every minute of a day to produce a .p205

beggarly tale of words or perhaps to produce nothing at all. And when that is finished (I thought it would be so on the first of this month -- but no fear!) I must go on, even go on at once and drag out of myself another 20000 words if the boy is to have his milk and I my beer (this is a figure of speech -- I don't drink beer. I drink weak tea and yearn after dry champagne) and if the world is not absolutely to come to an end. And after I have written and have been paid I shall have the satisfaction of knowing I can't allow myself the relaxation of being ill, more than three days, under the penalty of starvation; nor the luxury of going off the books altogether without playing the part of a thief regarding various confiding persons whose desire to serve me was greater than their wisdom. Do you take me, sir? Verb: sap: that is, circomlocution* is clear to the wise.

And yet -- one hopes, as I had the honour to remark above.

A book of mine -- (Joseph Conrad's last)¹ is to come out in March.

Three stories in one volume. If only five thousand copies of that could be sold! If only! But why dream of the wealth of the Indies? I am not the man for whom Pactolus flows and the mines of Golconda distil priceless jewels² (What an absurd style. Don't you think I am deteriorating?) Style or no style -- I am not the man. And oh! dear Ted -- it is a fool's business to write fiction for a living. It is indeed.

It is strange. The unreality of it seems to enter one's real life, penetrate into the bones, make the very heart beats pulsate illusions through the arteries. One's will becomes the slave of hallucinations, responds only to shadowy impulses, waits on imagination alone. A strange state, a trying experience, a kind of fiery trial of untruthfulness. And one goes through it with an exaltation as false as all the rest of it. One goes through it -- and there's nothing to show at the end. Nothing! Nothing Nothing!

Let me remark with due solemnity that it is to morrow morning already. For an apparently domesticated man to be {op'}abroad' (in the 17th century sense) with friends at 1.30 AM is (to say the least) reprehensible. Suffer me to leave you here at this turning that heads nowhere. That very turning is my way, my only way. You are going straight and, perchance, you know where -- and, perchance, you are right! You are right! Upon the whole I shall suffer most from that separation. But I shall soon come out of my land of mist peopled by shadows, and we shall .p206

meet again for another midnight communion -- as though we too also had been ghosts, shadows. I question however whether the most desolate Shade that ever haunted this earth of ours carried in its misty form a heart as heavy as mine is -- sometimes.

I wanted to write you a sober sensible letter; to explain, to make clear, to apologise -- and before all to thank you for that fidelity which is for me one of the few real things in this world. Perhaps with the intuition of a heart not rebuked by appearances you will divine what I've not been able to set down -- for want of space -- yes; let us say, for want of space. Jessie sends her kind regards. She is writing to your wife.

{lc}Affectionately your{s} ever

{ls}Jph Conrad

{lps}PS You don't speak of Kitty¹ -- therefore it is a kind of negative evidence she is well. My little chap begins to talk. It is very amusing, charming, even touching. One gets to love the voice and sometimes it makes a cold shiver run down my back it rings so unconscious of life!

{lps}PS My affectionate regards to Your wife. The first time I come to town I shall push on to Elstree; that will be as soon as Jim is finished. You must be patient with me and bear with me and not cast me off in anger. Never!

{lh}To R. B. Cunninghame Graham

Text MS Dartmouth; J-A, 1, 284; Watts 126

{lra}[letterhead: Pent Farm]

14 Oct 99

{lsa}Tre{g}s che{g}r ami.

{lb}I was just wondering where you were when your dear letter arrived. I mean, dear -- precious. Well! Vous me mettez du coeur au ventre;² and that's no small service for I live in a perpetual state of intellectual funk. I only wish I knew how to thank you.

Shall I see you on your return from Madrid? The book that's gone to Heinemann is the {op"}History of the Jesuits" I suppose³ -- and I should think for next year. Now with this idiotic war⁴ there will be a bad time coming for print. All that's art, thought, idea will have to step back and hide its head before the intolerable war inanities. Grand bien leur en

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fasse.¹ The whole business is inexpressibly stupid -- even on general principles; for evidently a war should be a conclusive proceeding while this noble enterprise (no matter what it's* first result) must be the beginning of an endless contest. It is always unwise to begin a war which to be effective must be a war of extermination; it is positively imbecile to start it without a clear notion of what it means and to force on questions for immediate solution which are eminently fit to be left to time. From time only one solution could be expected -- and that one favourable to this country. The war brings in an element of incertitude which will be not eliminated by military success. There is an appalling fatuity in this business. If I am to believe Kipling this is a war undertaken for the cause of democracy. C'est a crever de rire.² However, now the fun has commenced, I trust British successes will be crushing from the first -- on the same principle that if there's murder being done in the next room and you can't stop it you wish the head of the victim to be bashed in forthwith and the whole thing over for the sake of your own feelings. Assez de ces be{cr}tises. Borys wears the heart³ every day and says Gram-ma has given it to him. Jessie's kind regards. We must be in town in Nov^{er} for your Wife's play.⁴ Rappelez moi a son bienveillant souvenir.⁵

Drop me a line to say when you return.

{lc}Ever Yours

{ls}Conrad

{lh}To David Meldrum

Text MS Duke; Blackburn 67

{lra}[letterhead: Pent Farm]

18th Oct^{er} 99

{lsa}My dear Meldrum.

{lb}Thanks for all you've done and for all you say. As ill-luck would have it Jessie got rh[e]umatism in the right wrist. The worst of the pain is over but it is still quite powerless. She couldn't travel alone with the child in that state; as to me I protest I dare not stray far away from my table. Jim

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is approaching his climax. I have a good few pages more but I must attend to my own typewriting just now. I had a fair copy and am dispatching it to E'burgh tomorrow along with some proofs.

I haven't heard from Mr B'wood yet; but after your letter my mind is at ease -- for a bit anyhow.

Pardon hurried scrawl. Pray convey our heartfelt blessing to Your Wife and also our regret. We trust Betty is getting on. You say nothing of the Man.¹

With kindest regard from us both to Mrs. Meldrum and yourself I am always your[s] faithfully

{ls}Jph. Conrad.

{lh}To David Meldrum

Text MS Duke; Blackburn 67

{lra}[letterhead: Pent Farm]

Tuesday. [24 October 1899]²

{lsa}My dear Mr Meldrum --

{lb}Here's some more Jim. The Jan^y inst is well advanced if not wholly finished. I've dispatched the proofs and additional type for the Dec^{er} Number yesterday, proposing that the inst^t should include Chap VIII if possible. I hope they will see their way. In that case Jan and Febr instalments without being unduly long will contain the end of the story.

I've not heard from Mr Blackwood, as yet. I may get a letter this morning but I must post this at once.

I hope Betty is getting on and both your wife and yourself are well.
Our kindest regards
{lc}Always yours
{ls}Jph Conrad.

{lh}To Edward Garnett

Text MS Sutton; G. 153

{lra}[letterhead: Pent Farm]

26 Oct^{er}* 99

{lsa}Dearest Edward.

{lb}Thanks for your letter. If I don't send proofs or type it is because there is, alas, so little to send and what there is, is not worthy. I feel it bad; and,
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unless I am hopelessly morbid, I can not be altogether wrong. So much I am conceited; I fancy that I know a good thing when I see it.

I am weary of the difficulty of it. The game is not worth the candle; of course there is no question of throwing up the hand. It must be played out to the end but it is the other men who hold the trumps and the prospect is not inspiring.

I don't know what to say to Your projected dedication.¹ Not that I feel averse to take the utmost from your affection. Generous as you are you can never give me enough; for of the proofs -- such proofs -- of such friendship one is insatiable as of the most real form of happiness. You've made me happy, and sad, and frightened; you've startled my secret dream as the report of the first gun may interrupt a dream of battle. Vous avez remue{a} le plus profond de mon a{cr}me.² Never have I felt less worthy as now when my name is to be borne on the stream of time with Your wife's achievement and your criticism. Is it possible that I should deserve to stand so close to the great creator, to his great interpreter and to the man who, in this country, alone had penetrated the Master. But You have said it and I can only bow my head before this fabulous good fortune.

When you send me that volume ask your dear wife to write her name in it for me. I almost think I understand better than any one all the perfection of her finished task. That is why I said Interpreter and not translator. She is in that work what a great musician is to a great composer -- with something more, something greater. It is as if the Interpreter had looked into the very mind of the Master and had a share in his inspiration. I had letters about your Nietzsche from all sorts of people. You have stirred some brains! I don't think there's anything wrong with your wits. Galsworthy brought the Outlook the other day and began to read aloud from your Ibsen. He read a couple of pars: and asked -- Now who's this? I said Garnett or the devil. At that time I had no idea You wrote for that paper with a horrid caste-mark on its forepage.³ I am taking it in now. You never even tell me what You are doing. As to Jim. I entreat you: wait till the 2^d inst: comes out (in a few days) and I shall send you the two together. The first is too bad to stand alone. The fifth (and last inst) is not written yet -- and what it will be God only knows.

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When! Oh when! Shall we speak face to face?

The news about the Patron is grave.¹ Is it grave? Surely you -- You! are wanted in too many places to bother much about the placing of your^e* wits. I keep mum but let me know the finality of this thushness.

{lc}Ever Yours

{ls}Conrad.

{lps}Jessie sends her love. We are in fair health.

{lh}To E. L. Sanderson

Text MS Yale; J-A, 1, 285

{lra}[letterhead: Pent Farm]

26th Oct 99

{lsa}My dearest Ted

{lb}I had no idea my wail had been so loud and so lamentable and though I am sorry I have intruded with my miseries on your serious preoccupations, I congratulate myself on my lack of restraint since it had drawn from you such a priceless, such a fraternal answer. I never doubted the nature of your sentiments but this inward certitude does not make their expression the less welcome. I am indeed a fortunate man. When the heart is full it is not full of words whatever the proverb may say; and if you had come and shot a sack of diamonds at my feet I could not have felt richer than when reading your letter; but as to understanding it as it should be answered it is vain for me to try. You must put the finishing touch to your friendship by giving me the credit of such feelings as too make me worthy of it.

I've been especially thinking of you since I read the Proclamation.² A sacrifice of that kind a man is always ready for though in your case it must be, to say the least of it, a grave inconvenience.³ As to the war itself much might be said. I am a little out of touch with facts (though not totally ignorant of them) but one can apply general principles. Now it seems to me that -- from the point of view of statecraft -- no war is justifiable which does not solve a question. A war should be a final act -- while this war is an initial act. This is the weak point. It will create .p211

a situation of which, unless I am much mistaken, the country will get weary. The victory -- unless it is to be thrown away -- shall have to be followed by ruthless repression. The situation will become repugnant to the nation. The {op"}reasonable English ideals" (I am quoting Sir F. Milner's words) are not attained in that way. Their instruments are time and the deepseated convictions of the race -- the expansive force of its enterprise and its morality. We all know, we know instinctively that the danger to the Empire is elsewhere -- that the conspiracy (to oust the Briton) of which we hear is ready to be hatched in other regions. It has peeped out at the time of the last Eastern crisis and is ever-lastingly skulking in the Far East.² A war there or anywhere but in S Africa would have been conclusive -- would have cleared the air -- would have been worth the sacrifices. We have heard much of the sorrows of the Outlanders (which did not prevent them from growing fat) but now real sorrows have come in the last few days.³ May they be mitigated by a speedy and complete triumph since the work is begun and the price is being daily paid.

I can't say that I shared in the hysterical transports of some public organs for the simple reason that I expected to see displayed all the valour, perseverance, devotion which in fact have been displayed. Confound these papers. From the tone of some of them one would have thought they expected the artillery to clear out at a gallop across hills and ravines and every regiment to bolt throwing away arms and accoutrements. Those infernal scribblers are rank outsiders. No matter. It was very, very fine.⁴ Much finer than the generalship I can't help fancying. To have an intelligent idea of these matters one must have a good map and I do not possess anything that's worth a cent in that way. But it seems to me that if his {op"}"internal" lines were too short, the ground unfavourable or his force not sufficiently mobile to strike east or west with his whole strenght,* Sir G. White would have been better in

Ladysmith;⁵ for the presence of his force in an intrenched camp would have anyhow checked an invasion of Natal, while an assault on a chosen .p212

position decisively repulsed would have had all the consequences of a defeat upon the Boer army. Am I too imbecile for anything? The chamber criticism of strategy is generally imbecile. As far as I can see he clawed with one arm here and with the other there -- scratched pretty well too -- but in the end stopped nothing. However we shall see. To a really great general these converging movements in his front would perhaps have given an opportunity. I revel in my imbecility.

I wonder how Buller will do it.¹ I am glad he goes there and the papers shall have another general to talk about. I had Kitchener on the nerves.² There was a correspondent who wrote of that extremely clever organiser in terms that would not have been unbecoming if applied to the Archangel of War himself. The men in India had done real military work without all that bell ringing and horn-blowing. I dare say Buller is no Archangel either but I pin my faith on him.

Tell your dear wife with our best love -- that Jess had some wretched trouble in her right wrist and it is still almost powerless. She can typewrite with her left hand but she {op"}didn't like" to write in type. Shy, I suppose. I ought to have written. I ought to! My fault, my great fault.³ I plead forgiveness but if you stand my friend I doubt not I shall be forgiven. It was good and sweet of Her to ask us. Your Mother too has been most kind. I simply dare not leave my table; I must go on and wait for more fortunate days.

You will drop me a line to tell me where you are stationed. Have you got your company?⁴ My dearest Ted your letter did me good. It is great to hear you talk like this of my work. I wish I could be sure the partiality of your affection does not mislead you. Ah my dear fellow. If You knew how ambitious I am, how my ambition checks my pen at every turn. Doubts assail me from every side. The doubt of form -- the doubt of tendency -- a mistrust of my own conceptions -- and scruples of the moral order. Ridiculous -- isn't it? As if my soul mattered to the universe! But even as the ant bringing its grain of sand to the common edifice may justly think itself important, so I would like to think that I am doing my appointed work. With love

{lc}Ever yours

{ls}Conrad

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{lh}To William Blackwood

Text MS NLS; Blackburn 68

{lra}[letterhead: Pent Farm]

27 Oct 99

{lsa}Dear Mr Blackwood.

{lb}Many thanks for the cheque for {bp}50 -- second payment on acc^t of Jim -- which I received an hour ago. I could have disspatched the Dec^{er} inst^t ten days sooner only I wished to take full advantage of the time.

There is always a correction to make on every day{--} no matter how long I keep proof or type by me; but at last I felt I must part with that batch and devote myself to the next.

The greater part of the Ja^{ny} inst. is written and practically ready; some of it in London for a fair copy and seventeen pages on the table before me to be pecked at, slashed, turned over, for two days more, and depart for Paternoster Row¹ on Monday. I am glad you like it -- for tho' the thing were not absolutely bad it might not have been exactly to your mind. The beginning wobbles a good deal; I did cut up shamefully the proofs

without being able to put it firmly on its feet; however my little band of faithfuls professes itself (in various letters) to be immensely pleased. You express yourself hopefully about the book. You may be sure that none of your kind words are wasted. The man here wants them, wants everything he can get of such genuine encouragement.

I think Zack may be congratulated on the novel.² It is an advance on the short stories -- a promising advance. I've just finished reading it having waited for the last inst: Of course I could argue vehemently (with the Writer not with the Lady) about this and that par: this and that page; but the distinction is undeniable the vision at times most remarkably artistic. The French article in the last number I dislike frankly as to tone.³ It is not Maga's tone either; it does not give an impression of intelligence behind the words -- it is not quite candid. Why this superficial acrimony while much more severe things -- much more! -- could have been said? The navy article awful[l]y interesting and the Fashion in fiction simply delightful -- the perfection of manner!* with its tactful banter and a serious intention behind. The London is remarkable though this kind of thing does not appeal to me. It is a very literary thing and, I

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apprehend, a little beyond me. I do not know where to place it in the scale of my liking. And the number as a whole is excellent -- but what number isn't?

I shall of course read Buchan at once and write you all I think.¹ I've heard of him but have not read anything of his. I read very little -- too little, I sometimes think. I look forward to the Nov: issue. Maga is the bulk of my reading.

And now dear Mr Blackwood I shall just slip these sheets under an envelope ready for to-morrow's post and go back to my grind till midnight or so. Pages of Jim are under my elbow to the right and left and in front of me and if I can screw up one page more (that when written doesn't look particularly valuable) it will be so much done towards duty and peace of mind. I suppose Meldrum told you that I intend to waylay you this year with 20 000 words more (after Jim); the beginning of a new vol: If I can get my weapon ready I shall; for, joke as I may about it, it is a question of life and death.

Pardon all this twaddle and the untidy aspect of the sheets. They've been filling my inkstand for me -- with the best intentions, no doubt.

{lc}Believe me my dear Sir always

{lc}very faithfully yours

{ls}Jph. Conrad.

{lps}Isn't it a funny coincidence me following Zack on essentially the same subject?² I hope nobody will suspect Maga of having started a {op'}literary' competition for the best story on the State of Funk and that Zack and I rivalise for the possession of a nickel-plated chronometer or a lath-and-plaster palace, or whatever other {op'}literary' rewards are going now in the great world of democracy.

{lh}To David Meldrum

Text MS Duke; Blackburn 71

{lra}[letterhead: Pent Farm]³

Monday. 9. AM. [30 October
1899]

{lsa}My dear Mr Meldrum

{lb}I am sending by this post (to the office) another 16 pp of Jim; I've got a good few more written -- and I have no fear as to the rest. I was very

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glad of your letter and the good news about yourself and your {op'}House' as

an Arab would say.

The post before I had a very friendly letter from Mr B'wood with enclosure (50) on account of Jim. I wrote immediately a long letter in reply. So far all's well. He seems to like the story.

As you said I might put it off I do not immediately discharge my debt to You -- putting it off till the story is finished. It is very convenient to me and I need not tell you -- indeed I could not express it adequately -- how sensible I am of your good offices, of your patience with me, of your kindness.

I've returned all the proofs and forwarded more copy to Edinburgh. My mind is eased by what you say about Jim's length.* It would be to my interest to cut it short as possible, but I would just as soon think of cutting off my head. With kind regards from us both

Always yours

Jph. Conrad.

PS Last inst^t of fair copy received; it goes north in a day or two.

To William Blackwood

Text MS NLS; Blackburn 71

[letterhead: Pent Farm]

8th Nov 99

Dear Mr Blackwood.

Criticism is poor work, and to expose the weaknesses of humanity as exhibited in literary (?) work is a thankless and futile task. I've always thought that Macaulay's smashing of R. Montgomery's poems(!)¹ was a pathetic example of mighty truth powerless before the falsehood of pretences, like the great sea before a very small rock. To point out to the crowd beauties not manifest to the common eye, to flash the light of one's sympathetic perception upon great, if not obvious, qualities, and even upon generous failings that hold the promise of better things this is indeed a toil worthy of a man's pen, a task that would repay for the time given up, for the strength* expended for that sadness that comes of thinking over the sincere endeavour of a soul -- for ever debarred from attaining perfection. But the blind distribution of praise or blame, done with a light heart and an empty mind, which is of the very essence of

.p216
'periodical' criticism seems to me to be a work less useful than skirt-dancing and not quite as honourable as pocket-picking.

There is too a sort of curse upon the critical exercise of human thought. Should one attempt honestly an analysis of another man's production it is ten to one that one will get the credit for all sorts of motives except for that of sincere conviction; thier* is the taint of the literary life; and though writing to you I would not expose myself to the risk of being misunderstood I prefer to say nothing critical about John Buchan's story.¹ I am willing to admit it is grammatically written -- (I know nothing of grammar myself as he who runs may see) -- if anybody desires to make that assertion. I do happen however to know one or two things that might conceivably be found to have a bearing upon the story and on these I shall hold my peace.

There is one thing (though hardly pertaining to criticism proper) which ought to be said of that -- production. It is this: it's* idea, its feeling, its suggestion and even the most subtly significant incidents have been wrenched alive out of Kipling's tale {op"} The finest story in the world".² What became of the idea, of the feeling, of the suggestion and of the incidents, in the process of that wrenching I leave it for the pronouncement not of posterity but of any contemporary mind that would be brought (for less than ten minutes) to the consideration of Mr Buchan's story. The thing

is patent -- it is the only impression that remains after reading the last words -- it argues nai{um}veness of an appalling kind or else a most serene impudence. I write strongly -- because I feel strongly.

One does not expect style, construction, or even common intelligence in the fabrication of story; but one has the right to demand some sort of sincerity and to expect some common honesty. When that fails -- what remains?

If my remarks are unwelcome I can only express my regret without in the least apologising for my opinion. No amount of money would have extracted it from me -- I have hardly time enough to think of and combat my own shortcomings -- but at your request I've found leisure to set it down here and it must be accepted for what it is worth. Some men who can write (and even one or two who sell) do me the honour to say that it is worth something -- at least to them.

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I shall without fail dispatch tomorrow the corr^d proofs of the Dec^{er} instalment -- and also some more typed matter. The last number of Jim is practically ready and Febr is on the way to completion. The March issue will see the end of the story -- and of the Vol:

I don't think that these 20000 words I've been threatening you with for this year have the slightest chance of coming to light. Just now it is all for Jim! And no amount of sacrifice seems too much for him.

I trust you are well -- as well as the truly awful weather permits. I am holding my own tolerably well against the winds and rains that beat upon the Pent. Always faithfully yours.
{ls}Jph. Conrad.

{lh}To David Meldrum

Text MS Duke; Blackburn 74

{lra}[letterhead: Pent Farm]

9th Nov 99

{lsa}Dear Mr Meldrum.

{lb}Many many thanks for the copy of the stories. It does look a nice book¹ and I am glad to have it by me to work upon at odd times.

I took the liberty to send you a lady a Mrs Blake who has some jolly good stories² which she wishes to place in Maga if possible. I've written her a letter of introduction (to you) which I am forwarding today. (She will probably call on Monday in Paternoster Row.)

There is a lot of Jim in MS and you shall have it soon.

{lc}Always yours

{ls}Jph. Conrad.

{lh}To David Meldrum

Text MS Duke; Blackburn 74

{lra}[letterhead: Pent Farm]

9th Nov 99.

{lsa}My dear Mr Meldrum.

{lb}This is to introduce Mrs Blake of 24 Montague Street wc. She has one or two stories which she wishes to submit to Mr Blackwood for Maga, and she would like them to be considered as quickly as possible.

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I have the less hesitation in asking You to do all you can in the matters because Edward Garnett thinks very highly indeed of Mrs Blake's work and has in fact advised her to come to you.

{lc}I am yours very faithfully

{ls}Jph. Conrad.

{lh}To Edward Garnett

Text MS Rosenbach; G. 155

{lra}[letterhead: Pent Farm]

9th Nov 99

{lsa}Dear Edward.

{lb}I've written the required letter but it can't go till to morrow morning's post. I've also written privately to Mel^d. preparing him for Mrs Blake's visit -- probably on Monday; and in a note to the lady herself I advise her to call on Monday.

My dear fellow I don't know how to thank You for all you say in your critical letter anent Lord Jim. Of the faults You point out I've been aware all along, but that the thing had any good at all in it I vow and declare I was ignorant. The faults are mine and the good (since you say there is some good in it) comes from devil knows whence. Well! As long as it is there.

Turg^v: in the Academy is rather so so.¹ Who wrote it? And who are your wife's associates?!! She had not any... The people who wrote me about your Nietzsche were Sauter (a German painter)² and Mrs Helen Sanderson a scotch girl of great intelligence. She was immensely struck. Wells also said something appreciative at the time. The pub^s are fools. B^{wood} is fussing now over a fraud called John Buchan. Asked me to give him my opinion of that unspeakable impostor's story in the last Maga. And I did give it to him too. I said it was too contemptible to be thought about and moreover that it was stolen from Kipling as to matter and imitated from Munro as to style. I couldn't keep my temper.

{lc}Ever yours

{ls}Conrad

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November 1899

To Ford Madox Ford

Text MS Yale; Unpublished

[letterhead: Pent Farm]

[12] Nov. 99 Sunday.¹

My dear Ford.

Your letter distressed me a little by the signs of nervous irritation and its exasperated tone. I can quite enter into your feelings. I am sorry your wife seems to think I've induced you to waste your time.² I had no idea you had any profitable work to do -- for otherwise effort after expression is not wasted even if it is not paid for. What you have written now is infinitely nearer to actuality, to life to reality than anything (in prose) you've written before. It is nearer {op'}creation' than the Shifting of the Fire.³

That much for the substance. I do not want to repeat here how highly I think of the purely literary side of your work. You know my opinion. But beautiful lines do not make a drawing nor splashes of beautiful colour a picture. Out of discussion there may come conception however. For discussion I am ready, willing and even anxious. If I had influence enough with the publishers I would make them publish the book in your name alone --- because the work is all yours⁴ -- I've shared only a little of your worry. Well --- you worry very much --- and so do I -- over my own stuff I sweat and worry, and I have no illusions about it. I stick to it with death for the brightest prospect -- for ther may be even a more sordid end to my endeavours -- some abject ruin material or physical for me --- and almost inevitably some ghastly form of poverty for those I love. Voila. Am I on a bed of roses?

Whether I am worth anything to you or not it is for you to determine.

The proposal certainly came from me under a false impression of my power for work. I am much weaker than I thought I was but this does not affect you fundamentally. Heinemann (and McClure too I fancy) are waiting for our joint book and I am not going to draw back if You will only consent to sweat long enough. I am not going to make any sort of difficulty about it -- I shall take the money if you make a point of that. I am not going to stick at that trifle.

Do come when you like. Bring only one (or at most two) chapters at a time and we shall have it out over each separately. Don't you good .p220

people think hardly of me. I've been --- I am! --- animated by the best intentions. I shall always be!

We expected you both to day. Come as soon as You feel you want to. Kindest regards.

Yours

Jph

Conrad To Edward Garnett

Text MS Virginia; G. 157

[Pent Farm]

13 Nov 99.

Dearest Edward.

I am delighted to hear of the critical book¹ --- and more interested than I can say. At last! I am sure it will attract attention if not extract shekels. Only you must not have me there. An article in a weekly that's dead as soon as it's born does not matter --- but in a book you must not give anybody an opening to impugn your judgment. --- No! Not even to serve me who am your spoiled child. I've no place in literature though I may have one in your affection. Be original -- be awakening as much as you like, but be also guarded as to what material you use to develop upon your theory and practice of criticism. Deal only with people that are unquestionable in this your first book of criticism. Reject dubious personalities (like me) --- even if in your conscience they are deserving. Afterwards! Well! You'll do what you like and may even cram me down their narrow gullets. But now think only of E. G. and of E G alone --- of what E G stands for to us who have heard him, who know him --- and of what he may stand for even for the wise man in the street, who is instructed, shocked and amused by innumerable swarms of geniuses.

I shall send Bridges this week;² also the title of all your books now staying with me. Your question about the Rescue sent a shiver down my back. Jim's dragging his slow length* along³ --- apres --- nous verrons. Annihilation perhaps. I repeat: Nous verrons! Love from us to you both. Ever yours

.p221

Conrad. To Edward Garnett

MDNM» Text MS Free; G. 158

[letterhead: Pent Farm]

Sunday. [19 November 1899]¹

Dearest Edward.

I send you the vol of Bridges. It is not yours. I find I can't lay my hands on it so I got a paper copy meanwhile.

I shall send you titles of others in a day or so.

I also send you 2d inst of Jim --- which is too wretched for words. It would have been less shocking if it had included another chapter.

Meldrum wrote saying he shall report on Mrs Blake's work to old B'wood forthwith. I hope it will come off.

Ever Yours

Conrad. **To Edward Garnett**

MDNM» Text MS Sutton; G. 158

[letterhead: Pent Farm]

Friday evening [24 November
1899]²

Dearest Edward.

The letter to McClure goes by to morrow morning's post. I play the honest broker to the best of my ability. I've said all you wished me to say; and as I remember perfectly that you did rather {op'}choke off' poor little Robert³ at the time I suggest that at a hint from me you would approach him on the matter. (At the same time I send him your address).

Robert is perfectly harmless; knows nothing of literature; is proud of the success of the firm but is not low minded. Simply ignorant. Of Doubleday the world had heard in connection with Kipling's pneumonia.⁴ That's enough!

S.S. McClure is a sort of Holy Terror --- I hear but why he is terrible .p222

I'm damned if I know. Sort of Silas Lapham I understand.¹ I dare say he is no more beastly than any other animal of that sort -- nor more intelligent; nor more stupid. He has made the business. Personally I've found Robert very nice extremely decent --- not more so than Pawling --- and rather deferential. And this is all I know of them.

You are a dear good old critic --- you are! You've a way of saying things that would make an old sign-post take to writing. You put soul and spunk into me --- You, so to speak, bamboozle me into going on --- and going on and going on. You can detect the shape of a mangled idea and the shadow of an intention in the worst of one's work --- and you make the best of it. You would almost persuade me that I exist. Almost!

Love to you all from us all

Ever Yours

Jph

Conrad **To Ford Madox Ford**

MDNM» Text MS Yale; Unpublished

[Pent Farm]

[24? November 1899]²

Dear Ford ---

Let this cheer you up in your arduous labour. I wrote McClure that the thing is making good progress.

Yours

.p223

C. **To David Meldrum**

MDNM» Text MS Duke; Blackburn 75

[letterhead: Pent Farm]

25 Nov 99.

My dear Mr Meldrum.

I was very glad to hear from you and your invitation is most delightful enticing and irresistible. We shall certainly come if Mrs Meldrum --- to whom pray convey our thanks --- can put up with us for two days.

Yes. Every day making the children older, delay in this can may* make things easier for your wife. You must choose a time quite convenient to you and give us notice.

I am still at Jim. I've sent 6 more pages yesterday. I shall send 7 more today to end Chap XIII. The Story will be finished of course this year. I trust they will give me as much space as possible in the Jan. Febr. & Mch numbers. I shall want all I can get.

I've sent last proofs to E'gh the other day and can't have more till they get further copy. I am sorry Mrs Blake won't do for Maga. She is no friend of mine in any real sense. I thought her work (what I had seen of it) had something real --- very real, in it.

I trust Mr B'wood has not been offended by a critical letter I wrote about that story by Buchan in the last N^o of Maga. I did hit hard but whe Mr Blackwood asked me to say what I thought of it. I considered it an outrageous performance and speaking confidentially --- in a way -- made no secret of my opinion.¹ In fact I shouted it out. Being a person of no consequence the noise I make when I am hurt (and bad work hurts when you set yourself to think over it seriously) need not disturb any one very much. And I am not forward with my opinions either.

With kindest regards from us both to Mrs Meldrum and yourself I am always faithfully Yours

Jph.

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Conrad. **To Edward**

Garnett Text MS Sutton; G. 160

[letterhead: Pent Farm]

2^d Dec 99

My dear Edward.

I was on the point of sitting down to write to you yesterday when a despairing note from poor Hope informed me that his eldest boy Jack was drowned. Jess and I started at once to see them. We spent two hours in Stanford and returned home feeling horribly wretched and tired. There's no doubt the poor boy had been murdered on the marshes not far from the place where you and I looked upon the river. They found him in the creek.¹

I am too upset to be able to write you a connected letter. I wanted to thank you for the volume you've sent me. The preface is jolly good let me tell you.² It is wonderfully good --- and true. Thanks to you both. I want to catch the post.

Ever Yours

Jph.

Conrad **To David Meldrum**

MDNM» Text MS Duke; Blackburn 76

[letterhead: Pent Farm]

3^d Dec 99

y dear Mr Meldrum.

A terrible misfortune happening to my oldest English friends has completely upset all our plans and jumbled my thoughts. Their eldest son has been killed last Tuesday night on the Essex marshes. He was a promising boy seventeen and his death is made more bitter to them by the appalling circumstances of his end. The spot where he was found is not quite a mile from the Far where we used to live.

On receipt of news we rushed off to see them and returned home the same day. The poor people have not realised yet their loss and I fear a breakdown by and by for them both. I have urged them to come here and stay with us for some time.

I am sure Mrs Meldrum and yourself will understand why it is

.p225

impossible for us to keep our engagement. But if you would have us in Jany for a day we shall be more than delighted to come.

I am awfully cut up. It has checked my work for two days but now the grind goes on. Many thanks for your letter. In the matter of space --- if Maga gives room in Jan^y N^o to all nearly all of the copy I am sending to-morrow the end of the story may be divided between the Febr^y and

March numbers. Forgive my stupid letter. I can write my stuff but feel quite incapable to concentrate my thought upon any other sort of writing.

Kindest regards from us both to Your wife and Yourself. I am
Always yours
J.

Conrad. **To John Galsworthy**

MDNM» Text MS Forbes; Unpublished

[letterhead: Pent Farm]

Tuesday. [12 or 19 December
1899]¹

My dearest Jack.

Ever so many apologies. I've read the Seven Seas² and Jessie has used the scent (after heroic struggles with Kipling's diction and the glass stopper) and we are full of gratitude. Both things are excellent --- the scent in its way better than the poems. But this we can discuss.

We had the poor Hopes here for three days. They left yesterday a little the better for their visit. It is a peculiarly abominable affair.

Come by all means. I've mislaid your letter but if I remember rightly you intend to arrive by the 12:30 train. Just drop me a word that this is CRLFo. I{op'}ve done very little work but have worried a great deal. Jessie's kindest regards.

Ever Yours

Jph.

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Conrad **To Hugh**

Clifford Text MS SO; Hunter

[letterhead: Pent Farm]

13th Dec 99

My Dear Excellency.

I was delighted with the gazetting of Your name and still more delighted to see You are pleased with the prospect before you.¹ I hope that at first You will have no war on your hands; not at any rate till you get good hold. Who is Mat Saleh?² I've seen the name in the papers some time ago. Should think he is none of the Brunei Royal gang. Is he? One would think the name of a villager. It has a plebeian sound.

Your letter warmed my heart. May good fortune attend you and your people; and thinking of your {op'}House' I wonder whether Sandakan is as healthy as Pahang?³

You will have the Sulu people for next door neighbours.⁴ When the expanding Yanks begin to gallop their imperial gunboats up and down the Archipelago you may have some queer refugees in your Kingdom. I once knew a gentleman of that sort --- but he was from Basilan. He traded in coconuts and --- I regret to say --- in womnn. Incidentally he endeavoured to split my skull with a horrid wood chopper. This kind intention was unfortunately frustrated by some people who really had nothing to see in the matter, and now my head is ready to burst with worries of sorts. And this brings me naturally to Jim. Perfectly right! Yur criticism is just and wise but the whole story is made up of such side shows just because the main show is not particularly interesting --- or engaging I should rather say. I want to put into that sketch a good many people I've met --- or at least seen for a moment --- and several things overheard about the world. It is going to be a hash of episodes,
.p227

little thumbnail sketches of fellows one has rubbed shoulders with and so on. I crave your indulgence; and I think that read in the lump it will be less of a patchwork than it seems now.

As to Your sketch (for it is that) in last B'wood,¹ it has pleased me

immensely. The simplicity of treatment is effective. Of course you are favoured by the subject while I have always to struggle with a moral horror of some sort. It looks like my choice but it may be only my fate. Our kindest regards and best wishes for a prosperous voyage and the prosperity of the new life. We prize the memory of Your visit and we beg You both to give us a small place in your memory. I am always my dear Clifford yours most sincerely

Joseph Conrad.

I shall await the new B'wood with impatience.² May I hope to hear sometimes from

You? **To David Meldrum**

MDNM» Text MS NLS; Blackburn 77

[letterhead: Pent Farm]

Sunday. [17 December 1899]³

My dear Mr Meldrum.

I send here a MS lot of Jim which would be most of the Febr^y instalment. My poor wife is too taken up just now with domestic worries to be able to type for me and I do not want to stop the trickle of copy. The lot published and in proof together at present in Edinburgh amounts to 40000 words already. I trust I am not making myself objectionable by unduly lengthening* my contribution. As things go now there will be no hurry to publish the book early next year? Or am I mistaken? I have been so upset by the turn of this war⁴ as to be hindered in my work.<CRLF If my calculation of 40000 words (now set up) is correct (and I cannot be very far wrong) then I've written up to the value of f100 advanced me by Mr B'wood. I would be glad --- if at all feasible --- to have f20 further on acct/. I am ashamed to everlastingly proclaim my destitution --- and .p228

weary of the thing itself. The balance I would get on delivery of the conclusion. I still think I shall finish the story this year. With kindest regards from us both to Mrs Meldrum and yourself

I am always yours

Jph

Conrad. **To R. B. Cunninghame Graham**

MDNM» Text MS Dartmouth; J-A, 1, 287; Watts 127

[letterhead: Pent Farm]

19th Dec 99

Cher et excellent ami.

I was so glad to hear from you. Borys got his card the day after. You are emphatically a nice man.

This country does not want any writers; it wants a general or two that aren't valorous frauds. I am so utterly and radically sick of this African business that if I could take a sleeping draught on the chance of not waking till it is all over I would let Jim go and take the consequences. As it is --- in the way of writing I am not much more good than if I were sleeping. It is silly of me to take a thing so much to heart but as things go there's not a ray of comfort for a man of my complex way of thinking, or rather feeling.

It would do me good to hear you talk. I don't know why I feel so damnably lonely. My health is tolerable but my brain is as though somebody had stirred it all with a stick.

Allah is careless. The loss of your MS is a pretty bad instance; but look --- here's His very own chosen people (of assorted denominations) getting banged about and not a sign from the sky but a snowfall and a fiendish frost. Perhaps Kipling's Recessional (if He understood it --- which I doubt) had offended Him?¹

I should think Lord Salisbury's dying nation² must be enjoying th fun.

I can't write sense and I disdain to write Xmas platitudes so here I end. My wife and I send you unconventional greetings and as to Borys .p229

he has said you are a nice man --- hat more can you want to be made happy for a whole year? When do you return? Shall I see you here before you go north? I am vexed about the preface. ¹ Your prefaces are so good! It is quite an art by itself.

Well. This time I am really done.

Ever Yours

Jph

Conrad **To John Galsworthy**

MDNM» Text MS POSK; Danilewicz 6

[letterhead: Pent Farm]

21 Dec^{er} 99.

Dearest Jacko.

You could not have had a greater pleasure in giving me the books than I had in receiving them. I express it so because I know You; you take a delight in spoiling me in the tenderest way imaginable; and I'll not conceal from you that it is good, it feels very good to be thus spoiled.

Another year gone; and one beholds in fear and trembling another<CRL>>year approaching. The newcomer does not wear a very cheerful face, but

there may not be much in its scowl for real misfortunes come stealthily.

I do not know why I should pursue you with my lugubrious meditations. I had better stay my pen. I feel tonight as though a load of untold years had descended upon my spirit. So, Silence.

May all possible good attend your steps.

Ever Yours

Conrad. **To Aniela Zagorska**

MDNM» Text J-A, 1, 288; Najder 232²

Pent Farm,

25.12.1899

My dearest Aniela,

Your letters, dearest, are very interesting; they give me courage and are very precious to me; my ingratitude is all the blacker --- but it is only in appearance that I am ungrateful. In reality I am not --- I am only a man with a weak will --- and full of good intentions, with which --- as they .p230

say --- hell is paved. What would you have, my dear? The Malays say: {op'}The tiger cannot change his stripes' --- and I --- my ultra-Slav nature.

Much might be said about the war. My feelings are very complex --- as you may guess. That they are struggling in good faith for their independence cannot be doubted;¹ but it is also a fact that they have no idea of liberty, which can only be found under the English flag all over the world. C'est un peuple essentiellement despotique, like by the way all the Dutch. This war is not so much a war against the Transvaal as a struggle against the doings of German influence.² It is the Germans who have forced the issue. There can be no doubt about it.

You are mistaken in saying that it is the Government who sends soldiers. The English Government has no right to make a single Englishman move, if he does not consent to it.³ Le pour et le contre of this issue have been weighed not only in the conscience of the people but of the whole race. Canada and Australia are taking part in this, which could not influence their material interests. Why? Europe rejoices and is moved because Europe is jealous and here in England there is more real sympathy and regard for the Boers than on the whole Continent, which proclaims its compassion at the top of its voice. Quelle bourde!⁴

MDNM» **To William Blackwood**

[letterhead: Pent Farm]

26th Dec 99

Dear Mr. Blackwood.

Many thanks for your friendly letter with enclosure (f20) which came to hand this morning.⁵ I wished to time my letter to you for the New Year's day and to send together with the most sincere wishes of happiness for prosperity some good report of the tale.

The tale progresses and in five more days' time it will be still nearer the end which seems well in view now.⁶ I say seems, because I do suffer at times from optical delusions (and others) where my work is concerned.
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I mentioned the number of words in my letter to Meldrum in a casual way and not in the least because I thought it any justification for my request or any argument for you granting the same. I turned to you with perfect confidence remembering how generously ready you were last year --- when all the words were counted and there were no more to come. What made me allude to words too was my preoccupation as to the forthcoming volume. It'll be a fat book --- and not, perhaps, well balanced to the eye. Still we are in for it now I fancy. Lord Jim would have hardly the length* and certainly has not the substance to stand alone; and the three tales, each being inspired by a similar moral idea (or is it only one of my optical delusions?) will make (in that sense) a homogeneous book.¹ Of the matter I am not ashamed and the mere size won't, I hope, militate against such commercial success as is within my reach.

And so this year which began with work for you ends also with copy for Maga on my table. Nothing can please me better; and it is also a fact that of my year's writing all that's worth anything is gone to you. You have helped me through these twelve months in more than one sense, for the conditions of our intercourse made work easier to me. There are of course other pages scribbled over² --- pages not destined for the 'House' but I can't pretend to look upon them with satisfaction. Their existence does not cheer me --- it frightens me rather --- for everything is dangerous that has even ever so little doubt in it, that dims the guiding light of one's confidence.

The war disturbed me not a little. I do not share the slightly frantic state of the press. They write as if they had expected the soldiers to run and the Empire to collapse and can't possess their souls for joy that these things did not happen. To me, seeing the initial nonsuccess the development of the national will on the lines of unflinching resolution seemed from the first as inevitable as the preordained motion of the stars. It may be that I do not know enough of England and that the journalists have very good reasons for that jubilation which strikes me as unseemly. At any rate it is expressed so stupidly that it is exasperating to a man whose faith is as deep as the sea and more stable.

And on this I shall close this interminable letter and turn to the MS to grind out another page or two. I am spending Xmas not forgotten certainly, but very solitary. It's all the better for my work. Festivities jumble my crazy thoughts and visitors leave me as a rule in a state
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bordering upon idiocy. Believe me dear Mr Blackwood very faithfully
yours
{ls}Jph. Conrad.

{lh}To the Baroness Janina de Brunnow

Text L.fr. 39; Najder 233

{lra}Pent Farm
27 Dec. 1899. [?]¹

Translation

{lsa}Dear Madame,

{lb}Indeed I did receive the obituary letter some days ago, but I dared not pick up my pen; nevertheless, since the arrival of the painful news, you and your husband have been constantly in my mind.

What can one say, dear Madame! In the presence of a pain like yours, one finds that words are meaningless. There is always the hope of a better life and the consoling certainty that the dear departed, whose loss rends our hearts, has been spared the bitterness of life below.

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You must draw consolation from the affections that surround you, while I, far away and solitary, send my childhood friend for whom fate has reserved such a difficult ordeal the assurance of my deep and affectionate sympathy.

A thousand, thousand thanks for your letter whose open friendship has moved me profoundly. My cordial greetings to your husband. If you permit, another letter will follow soon.

Believe me, dear Madame, to be with you in heart and always your very devoted servant,

{ls}Conrad N. Korzeniowski.

{lh}To E. L. Sanderson

Text MS Yale; J-A, 1, 289

{lra}Pent Farm

28 Dec 99.

{lsa}Dearest Ted.

{lb}Thanks for your dear note. I didn't write not knowing where You were -- and we only sent a card to your wife addressed to Elstree. I had a notion she would be away, either with You or in Scotland.

All possible and imaginable good to you my dear fellow. There's not a day I do not think of you. I was in hopes you would turn up in Shorncliffe¹ which would have been all the same to you (once away from home and school) but would have made a great difference to me.

I am upset by this war more than enough. From every point of view it is an unsatisfactory business. I say from every point because the disclosure of our military weakness is not compensated by the manifestation of colonial loyalty. That was a thing one would have taken for granted. We who know how loosely the colonies were hanging to mother's skirts are impressed and cheered² -- but on the continent they never understood the conditions and they take it as a matter of course. But the disclosure is a pleasant surprise to them, with nothing to counteract their satisfaction.

I hope you won't have to go; but I am very glad Roberts is going -- or gone. To Kitchener by himself I would not have liked to pin my faith.³

And may it all end speedily -- and well.

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I am at work but my mental state is very bad -- and is made worse by a constant gnawing anxiety. One incites the other and vice versa. It is a vicious circle in which the creature struggles.

Wife sends her best wishes and kind regards.

With love my dear Ted

{lc}Ever Yours

{ls}Jph. Conrad.

{lh}To Ford Madox Ford

Text MS Yale; Unpublished

{lra}[1899?]¹

{lsa}My dear Ford

{lb}The MS came back in fair copy. I read it and am quite struck. There are excellencies there. I don't send you the 2d copy because I don't want you to be disturbed at your last chap.

It will want correcting here and there and in places {op"} il y a des longueurs." The effect is remarkably weird as a whole.

We must read together and talk a little.

{lc}Ever yours

{ls}Conrad.