

entirely understand the great usages thru the ages of such terms as *nominalists* and *realists*? I want you to keep your interest at least as far as Hegel from whose stem all Marxian thinking flows; certainly you will agree that Marxism does not concern itself with vague sophistries but weds itself to the most practical mechanics of material revolution.

I should suggest that you go to Sea Island with the party and return by yourself, passing at least a full day with your mother in Asheville, and a day, if you like, in Baltimore; that is, I think the Finneys would be a little offended if you did not pay at least a courtesy visit. I shall try my best to be East by the second, and at least cross your path—perhaps in Asheville—but I have let myself be inveigled into another picture and it may possibly run on to the tenth of April; on the other hand it may blow up tomorrow. (It is the new Carroll-MacMurray picture.)

With dearest love,

Daddy

P.S. Can you give me some sort of budget for your trip to Sea Island?  
2nd P.S. You are not entirely right about the translations (poetry, of course, cannot be translated, but even there we have exceptions such as *The Rubaiyat*). Constance Garnett's Russian translations are excellent, while Scott-Moncrieff's *Proust* is a masterpiece in itself. And please do not leave good books half-finished, you spoil them for yourself. You shouldn't have started *War and Peace*, which is a man's book and may interest you later. But you should finish both the Defoe and the Samuel Butler. Don't be so lavish as to ruin masterpieces for yourself. There are not enough of them!

[5521 Amestoy Avenue]

[Encino, California]

[March, 1939]

Dearest Scottie:

I was incredibly happy when I heard that the cloud had lifted. *Don't* let it come down again! I was so happy when it lifted for me at Princeton and let me in for everything I'd wanted that I forgot. And the second time I never did manage to get out of a scholastic mess all the

time I was in college. If you don't get *too* happy this spring, don't lose the ground you've gained—it's going to be all right.

Congratulations—I know what it means to you, something you did for and by yourself. A sort of justification. The only excuse for the damper up above is that we have to continue to justify ourselves each week of our lives and it would seem there would be rest sometimes. Did you ever read Christina Rossetti's

"And does the road wind uphill all the way?"

Yes—to the very end—"

I want you to get Peaches a present—rather a useful one. This seems somewhat lavish but this is a world of give and take. I am allowing you twenty-five dollars for it. As it is a lavish gesture it should be a simple present—something she should find practical and useful—on the other angle from a ring-watch. Something that if you hadn't bought it, Pete would have had to buy it. You know her well enough to give her familiar things. Ponder this carefully—if you buy her a "bauble" the idea will defeat its purpose.

Also take your mother something for \$15. So I'm sending:

6 days at Sea Island at \$13.00 .....	\$78.00
2 presents .....	\$40.00
Railroad fare .....	\$100.00
Clothes .....	\$50.00
Expenses .....	<del>\$310.00</del> \$50.00
	<hr/> \$310.00 ( <i>sic</i> )

And to cover the airplane I'm making it \$350.00. You have no leeway on your incidentals. I know the instinct to delight everybody with a big tip but in the end we too generous people die of heart trouble, trying to make it good, and have rewarded the wrong people, so be a little penurious and calculating with your small change.

I'm just as glad Cottage lost out. They've been dominant for five years—it's time it should be someone else. The only healthy thing about the God-awful system is that no one of the four is triumphant for long. In my time it was Tiger Inn—since then they've all taken turns. Did you run into a man named Ralph Wyer at the prom? He's a Minnesotan and seems to me an altogether admirable fellow. I saw him lose a

tooth with great grace at the Dartmouth Winter Carnival in the hockey game.

Your comment on the satirical quality in English fiction is very apt. If you want a counter-irritant read *Bleak House* (Dickens' best book)—or if you want to explore the emotional world—not now, but in a few more years—read Dostoevski's *Brothers Karamazov*. And you'll see what the novel can do. Glad you like Butler—I liked the place where Ernest's father "turned away to conceal his lack of emotion." My God—what precision of hatred is in those lines. I'd like to be able to destroy my few detestations— \_\_\_\_\_, for example—with such marksmanship as that.

Again thanks for wiring me. I must love you a lot for you have quite a power to lift me up and cast me down.

Jove,

(Sometimes known as Jupiter or "Papa Angelicus")

[5521 Amestoy Avenue]  
[Encino, California]

April 5, 1939

Dearest:

Thanks for your letter.

When you get time give me a sort of budget of what you did with the money I sent you. I mean, estimate roughly what became of it. Also, did you take any planes to and from Sea Island or Asheville? As I wrote you, most of those eastern lines are safe after the first of February. In spite of the storm you ran into on the way back East last fall, I think it's rather old-fashioned not to get used to airplane travel and use it as a convenience.

You made a great impression on your mother. How different from a year ago at Virginia Beach when you seemed as far apart as the poles, during those dreary tennis games and golf lessons! Of course, the fact that she is so much better accounts for a good deal of it, but I believe that was the time you had first discovered love, in the person of \_\_\_\_\_, and were in a sort of drugged coma until you could get back to Baltimore.

Spring was always an awful time for me about work. I always felt

that in the long boredom of winter there was nothing else to do but study. But I lost the feeling in the long, dreamy spring days and managed to be in scholastic hot water by June. I can't tell you what to do about it—all my suggestions seem to be very remote and academic. But if I were with you and we could talk again like we used to, I might lift you out of your trouble about concentration. It really isn't so hard, even with dreamy people like you and me—it's just that we feel so damned secure at times as long as there's enough in the bank to buy the next meal, and enough moral stuff in reserve to take us through the next ordeal. Our danger is imagining that we have resources—material and moral—which we haven't got. One of the reasons I find myself so consistently in valleys of depression is that every few years I seem to be climbing uphill to recover from some bankruptcy. Do you know what bankruptcy exactly means? It means drawing on resources which one does not possess. I thought I was so strong that I never would be ill and suddenly I was ill for three years, and faced with a long, slow uphill climb. Wiser people seem to manage to pile up a reserve—so that if on a night you had set aside to study for a philosophy test you learned that your best friend was in trouble and needed your help, you could skip that night and find you had a reserve of one or two days preparation to draw on. But I think that, like me, you will be something of a fool in that regard all your life, so I am wasting my words.

Query: Are you taking up the swimming during the spring term? I hope tremendously you will, but I suppose that's been decided already. If not, what are you doing for spring athletics?

Query No. 2: Is there any way—and don't kid me—in which you can take driving lessons? Also, if you get time—and this is not important—give me a slight picture of what the life is at Sea Island. Also, when you get time, write your mother, because I've been putting off a visit to her and may possibly have to be here three weeks longer on this damned picture and she probably feels that I'm never coming.

Dearest love always.

Daddy

P.S. Got a nice thank-you letter from Frances Turnbull for the check I sent her.

TO H. L. MENCKEN

14 rue de Tilsitt  
Paris, France

May 4, 1925

Dear Menck:

Your letter was the first outside word that reached me about my book. I was tremendously moved both by the fact that you liked it and by your kindness in writing me about it. By the next mail came a letter from Edmund Wilson and a clipping from Stallings, both bulging with interest and approval, but as you know I'd rather have you like a book of mine than anyone in America.

There is a tremendous fault in the book—the lack of an emotional presentment of Daisy's attitude toward Gatsby after their reunion (and the consequent lack of logic or importance in her throwing him over). Everyone has felt this but no one has spotted it because it's concealed beneath elaborate and overlapping blankets of prose. Wilson complained: "The characters are so uniformly unpleasant"; Stallings: "a sheaf of gorgeous notes for a novel"; and you say: "The story is fundamentally trivial." I think the smooth, almost unbroken pattern makes you feel that. Despite your admiration for Conrad you have lately—perhaps in reaction against the merely well made novels of James' imitators—become used to the formless. It is in protest against my own formless two novels, and Lewis' and Dos Passos' that this was written. I admit that in comparison to *My Antonia* and *The Lost Lady* it is a failure in what it tries to do but I think in comparison to *Cytherea* or *Linda Condon* it is a success. At any rate I have learned a lot from writing it, and the influence on it has been the masculine one of *The Brothers Karamazov*, a thing of incomparable form, rather than of the feminine one of *The Portrait of a Lady*. If it seems trivial or "anecdotal" (sp) it is because of an aesthetic fault, a failure in one very important episode, and not a frailty in the theme. At least I don't think so. Did you ever know a writer to calmly take a just criticism and shut up?

Incidentally, I had hoped it would amuse the Mencken who wrote the essay on New York in the last book of *Prejudices*—tho I know nothing in the new Paris streets that I like better than Park Avenue at twilight.

I think the book is so far a commercial failure, at least it was two

weeks after publication—hadn't reached 20,000 yet. So I rather regret (but not violently) the fact that I turned down \$15,000 for the serial rights. However I have all the money I need and was growing rather tired of being a popular author. My trash for the *Post* grows worse and worse as there is less and less heart in it. Strange to say, my whole heart was in my first trash. I thought that "The Offshore Pirate" was quite as good as "Benediction." I never really "wrote down" until after the failure of *The Vegetable* and that was to make this book possible. I would have written down long ago if it had been profitable—I tried it unsuccessfully for the movies. People don't seem to realize that for an intelligent man writing down is about the hardest thing in the world. When people like Hughes and Stephen Whitman go wrong after one tragic book, it is because they never had any real egos or attitudes but only empty bellies and cross nerves. The bellies full and the nerves soothed with vanity they see life rosily and would be violently insincere in writing anything but the happy trash they do. The others, like Owen Johnson, just get tired. There's nothing the matter with some of Johnson's later books, they're just rotten that's all. He was tired and his work is no more writing in the sense that the work [of] Thomas Hardy and Gene Stratton Porter is writing than were Dreiser's dime novels.

However I won't bore you any longer. I expect to spend about two years on my next novel and it ought to be more successful critically. It's about myself—not what I thought of myself in *This Side of Paradise*. Moreover it will have the most amazing form ever invented.

With many, many thanks,

F. Scott Fitz—

P.S. This is simply an acknowledgment and expects no answer.

Italy (but not France) is full of Pilsen and Munich beer of fine quality. There is less than there was when I got there.

another victim of self-indulgence?—breaking down the solid things around you and, moreover, making *yourself* terribly vulnerable?—imagine having to have had to call in Doctor Cole in this matter! The *indignity!* I have plenty [of] cause to be cynical about women's nervous resistance, but frankly I am concerned with my misjudgment in thinking you were one of the strong—and I can't believe I was mistaken.

The tough part of the letter is to send you this enclosure—which you should read now [a loving, dependent letter from Zelda]—  
—now you've read it?

There are emotions just as important as ours running concurrently with them—and there is literally no standard in life other than a sense of duty. When people get mixed up they try to throw out a sort of obscuring mist, and then the sharp shock of a *fact*—a collision seems to be the only thing to make them sober-minded again. You once said, "Zelda is your *love!*" (only you said "lu-uv"). And I gave her all the youth and freshness that was in me. And it's a sort of investment that is as tangible as my talent, my child, my money. That you had the same sort of appeal to me, deep down in the gut, doesn't change the other.

The harshness of this letter will have served its purpose if on reading it over you see that I have an existence outside you—and in doing so remind you that you have an existence outside of me. I don't belittle your fine intelligence by supposing that anything written here *need* be said, but I thought maybe the manner of saying it might emphasize those old dull truths by which we live. We can't just let our worlds crash around us like a lot of dropped trays.

—*You have got to be good.*

—Your sense of superiority depends upon the picture of yourself as being *good*, of being large and generous and all-comprehending, and just and brave and all-forgiving. But if you are not *good*, if you don't preserve a sense of comparative values, those qualities turn against you—and your love is a mess and your courage is a slaughter.

Scott

TO LAURA GUTHRIE<sup>1</sup>

*Hotel Stafford*  
*[Baltimore, Maryland]*

*September 23, 1935*

Dear Laura:

The news from the West is pretty terrible—I have seen plenty of people disappointed in love, from old maids who thought they had lost their only chance, to \_\_\_\_\_ who tried to kill herself when \_\_\_\_\_ threw her over—but I never saw a girl<sup>2</sup> who *had so much* take it all so hard. She knew from the beginning there would be nothing more, so it could scarcely be classed even as a *disappointment*—merely one of these semi-tragic facts that must be faced. It's very strange and sad. I have nothing from her except the wire.

For myself all goes *well*. I woke up on the train after a fine sleep, came to the hotel and went to work with Mrs. Owens before noon. We discussed all the "ifs" and will decide nothing before a week. Scottie arrived like a sun goddess at 5 o'clock, all radiant and glowing. We had a happy evening walking and walking the dark streets. The next morning she was invited to visit in the country for the weekend and I continued my picking up of loose ends. First Zelda—she was fine, almost herself, has only one nurse now and has no more intention of doing away with herself. It was wonderful to sit with her head on my shoulder for hours and feel as I always have even now, closer to her than to any other human being. This is not a denial of other emotions—oh, you understand.

I have stopped all connections with M. Barleycorn. The eczema is almost gone but not quite. Baltimore is warm but pleasant. I love it more than I thought—it is so rich with memories—it is nice to look up the street and see the statue of my great uncle and to know Poe is buried here and that many ancestors of mine have walked in the old town by the bay. I belong here, where everything is civilized and gay and rotted and polite. And I wouldn't mind a bit if in a few years Zelda and I could snuggle up together under a stone in some old graveyard here. That is really a happy thought and not melancholy at all.

[Scott]

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Guthrie was Fitzgerald's secretary in Asheville the summer of 1935.

<sup>2</sup> The recipient of the preceding letter.