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978-0-521-88189-0 - The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad: Uncollected Letters,
1892-1923 - Volume 9

Edited by Laurence Davies, Owen Knowles, Gene M. Moore and J. H. Stape

Excerpt

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1892

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March 1892 3

To J. S. Anthony
Text MS Adelaide; Unpublished

Saturday Morning [5 March 1892]¹
 “Torrens”
 [Port Adelaide, South Australia]

Dear Mr Anthony²
 Have You the time and inclination to call on board this old hulk³ some
 time in the afternoon. Renew old acquaintance and talk over old times. Any
 time after 2h. Or if you do not feel inclined to walk so far I may perhaps
 meet you somewhere in town or if not to-day then perhaps You will appoint
 some other day.

Yours
 J. Conrad

compl[imen]ts to Mr Urquhart

¹ Date supplied from a note written on the postcard by ‘JLP’: ‘This letter was written from the “Torrens” berthed at Port Adelaide, 5th March 1892.’ Conrad had arrived in port on 28 February for a six-week stay.
² The note also records that Mr Anthony, a shipping- or insurance-agent in Port Adelaide, was connected with H. Simpson & Sons, part-owners of the *Otago*, which Conrad commanded during the period 1888–9. Presumably, he was J. S. Anthony, the recipient of an unlocated letter of 23 September 1889. In the words of the auctioneer’s catalogue (Sotheby’s, 13 May 1988), Conrad recalled ‘the time spent in his company in Australia, explaining that he has been yachting and visiting Paris rather than working and expressing his desire to return to sea, the owner of the fleet on which he had worked previously having died’. A quotation then follows from the letter itself: ‘I am not fit for a life on shore – and do not like it either . . . To tell you the truth I would like to be back again to the colonies . . . Do you think that if some of your owners were building a steamer at home I could get the chance of taking her out? . . . To sea I must go and I also want to see Australia once more.’
³ This case of sailor’s modesty (or irony) implies that J. S. Anthony had been to sea himself and perhaps adapted more readily than Conrad to the world of steam. To quote Basil Lubbock, the *Torrens* ‘was famous for her speed and grace . . . in light airs she was accustomed to pass other clippers as if they were at anchor’. Designed to the requirements of her owner, Captain H. R. Angel, the *Torrens* was built by James Laing of Sunderland in 1875, and despite her maiming in autumn 1890 remained one of the fastest and most elegant of clippers. See Lubbock’s *The Colonial Clippers* (Glasgow: Brown, 1921), pp. 157–62.

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1893

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October 1893

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To E. B. Redmayne

Text MS Private collection; Stape and van Marle

13 Oct. 93.
17 Gillingham St.
London. S. W.

Dear Mr Redmayne¹

Believe me I highly appreciate and shall be very glad to avail myself of your kind invitation.

On returning from Poland² (yesterday) I found both Your letters. I am very sensible to this proof of Your good memory and friendly disposition towards myself.

I have left the "Torrens" and am now without occupation.³ I leave London to-morrow on a short visit to Elstree⁴ and shall be back on Monday. I could come on Tuesday or Wednesday for 24 hours. Will the date suit You? And where am I to come, to Preston or to Southport?

I have not been very well lately. Perhaps too much idleness and a small dose of discontent. – The remedy for both is work and this also has failed me just now. Materially this want is not, perhaps, of vital importance but morally I feel the necessity of constant work. Any work! I have a long time ago said good-bye to what is commonly called success, still I have not been able it appears to eradicate out of my inner being all the propensity to more or less unreasonable discontent. I suppose it is human nature.

I do not know why I am telling You all this unless it is because I am convinced of the sincerity of Your friendly sentiments, which, believe me, I value very highly. I remain my Dear Sir,

Yours very faithfully.

J. Conrad.

¹ Ephraim Brownlow Redmayne (1837–1914) had been a dealer in cotton-waste before becoming a cotton manufacturer at the Alliance Works, Preston, Lancashire. He lived for many years in Southport. In October 1892, along with several members of his family, he took passage for Adelaide on the *Torrens*, forming a friendship with Conrad on the three-month voyage.

² Conrad had spent the previous two months visiting his uncle and guardian Tadeusz Bobrowski at Kazimierówka, his estate about 100 miles from Kiev.

³ The *Torrens* had arrived in London on 26 July, and Conrad signed off on the 29th.

⁴ To visit E. L. ("Ted") Sanderson, whom Conrad had also met on the *Torrens* and who lived and taught at his father's school in Elstree, Hertfordshire. This letter provides the first extant evidence of their contact after meeting aboard the *Torrens*.

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P.S. Will you have the goodness to convey to Mrs Wall¹ the expression of my most profound respect. – I was very sorry to hear of Her ill-health. I sincerely wish & hope that it is now improved.

J.C. –

To Walter Banks*Text* MS Indiana; Stape and van MarleAldgate.²

Thursday.

[23 November 1893]³Dear M^r Banks.⁴

I think I will leave this place on Saturday and intend to come down by the 11.58 train arriving in the City about 1 o'clock pm. If You have no better engagement couldn't we meet somewhere in the afternoon – perhaps have a game and so on.⁵ My leave extends to Sunday night but I intend to sleep on board on Saturday. I am much better.

Drop me a word but do not let me interfere with any of Your arrangements.

Yours very faithfully

J. Conrad.

¹ For Mrs Wall, see the letter of 22 March 1896.

² A hamlet in Rutland, three miles from Stamford, Lincolnshire. Since the distance from Ketton (the nearest station) to London is over ninety miles, at least one of the train times given here must be wrong.

³ The formal address (to 'M^r Banks') and the references to 'My leave' and 'on board', which point to Conrad's last maritime service as mate in the *Adowa*, identify this note as preceding the [29 October 1894] letter to Banks. The *Adowa* crew list (NA: BT 100/46) indicates that Conrad joined on Monday, 27 November 1893, while his service had begun at 11 p.m. on Sunday (*Letters*, 1, p. 132).

⁴ On his first voyage out to Adelaide in the *Torrens* in 1891, Conrad formed a friendship with one of the ship's passengers, Walter Banks (1864–1951), a civil engineer. Banks is known to have prospected for gold in Australia before returning to his native Stockport, in Lancashire. An obituary records that he 'corresponded for years with Conrad, and used to say of him: "He was a most lovable character, but he could be stern as a mate"' (*Stockport Advertiser*, 28 December 1951, p. 13).

⁵ Probably a game of chess. Conrad is on record as having played with Sanderson (1893), Ford (1903), Dr Cerio (1905), and his son John. He owned a copy of *Chess Fundamentals* by Capablanca.

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October 1894 11

To Walter Banks
Text MS Indiana; Stape and van Marle (with facsimile)

17 Gillingham St^t
 S. W.
 Monday evening
 [29 October 1894]¹

Dear Banks.

Those fools in the office² hunted me up in the City at 4.30. Too late then to come and see You as I have [an] engagement for dinner to night. – To morrow I am off to Antwerp & Paris but shall be back this week.³ In the morning I have an interview with my Publisher⁴ or else I would have called on You. –

Since I saw You last I wrote a novel – which is coming out soon I think (and what’s more wonderful got paid for it too), nearly died, been travel[ing] a lot on the Cont[inent] for health and business.⁵ Life has been pretty hard on me lately; let us hope that the tide is on the turn at last.

And You dear friend? We shall meet as soon as I am back. Should You leave town drop me a line to address as above. Thanks for remembering me.

Yours faithfully
 J. Conrad.

excuse girl on paper.⁶ Can’t find another sheet just now awful hurry.

¹ Date from postmark. On the basis of this letter, the Wednesday letter to Poradowska previously dated [14 or 21 November] (*Letters*, 1, pp. 186–8), with its reference to Conrad’s departure for Antwerp ‘tomorrow’ and his interview with Unwin on 30 October, can now be dated simply [31 October]. The Monday morning letter dated [29 October or 5 November] (*Letters* 1, pp. 182–5), with Conrad’s announcement, ‘Nothing yet from Antwerp’, is likely to belong to mid-October.

² Of Barr, Moering & Company, at 72 & 73 Fore Street, where Conrad was temporarily employed.

³ Through Marguerite Poradowska, Conrad had been put in touch with a Belgian shipowner, Victor Péchet, and hoped to be interviewed in Antwerp with a view to securing employment; he was presumably also planning to travel from Antwerp to Paris to see Mme Poradowska. All of these plans fell through, as Conrad told Poradowska in his letter of [26 November or 3 December], *Letters*, 1, pp. 188–9.

⁴ T. Fisher Unwin, who had accepted *Almayer’s Folly* on 3 October 1894 (*Letters*, 1, p. 176).

⁵ Conrad’s travels had taken him to Brussels in March and for a water-cure in Switzerland during the summer, but his ‘almost died’ is probably hyperbolic.

⁶ See Plate 1.

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1895

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Excerpt

[More information](#)*May 1895*

15

To T. Fisher Unwin*Text* TS copy Bodley;¹ Unpublished

3^d April 95.
17, Gillingham Street.,
S. W.

Dear Mr. Unwin,²

Thanks for your note informing me of the arrangement in America. I have received 4 copies you have been good enough to send me in advance.³ All but one are out of the country.

The universal clamour is not for gifts. The enthusiastic persons want to buy the book. BUY! My dear Sir. They have had their money in their hands on the first of March then on the 18th. And now they are gone into convents, or become hermits, or committed suicide from despair at repeated disappointments. This – from the point of view of the Publisher (and the Author's too) is very deplorable. Don't you think so?

I am afraid brother Jonathan⁴ won't be ready for another month. Well, even a very long lane has a turning – somewhere.

I am, dear sir,

Yours very faithfully,

J. Conrad.

To E. B. Redmayne*Text* MS Private collection; Stape and van Marle

23^d May 1895.
La Roseraie.
Châmpel.
Genève.

Dear M^r Redmayne.

Your letter has been sent after me and reached my hands to day. If anything could be more pleasant to me than Your kind appreciation of my

¹ Transcription made by Hodgson & Co. of an original autograph letter signed (unlocated), sold by them 6–8 June 1928. All letters to Unwin identified in this volume as 'TS copy Bodley' have this provenance.

² T(homas) Fisher Unwin (1848–1935), head of the publishing firm founded in 1882, brought out *Almayer's Folly*, *An Outcast of the Islands*, and *Tales of Unrest* at the beginning of Conrad's career, *The Arrow of Gold* and *The Rover* towards its end, and *Tales of Hearsay* posthumously. Neither his business practices nor his adherence to the Liberal party endeared him to Conrad, and after a difference with Unwin over terms in 1896, Conrad went to W. H. Heinemann.

³ Of *Almayer's Folly*.

⁴ 'Brother Jonathan' is 'the generic name for people of the United States' (*OED*), derived from a post-Revolutionary ideal of egalitarianism; hence, Conrad's allusion is to the American edition of *Almayer's Folly*, to be published on 3 May by Macmillan.

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work it would be the friendly interest in my success You are pleased to show.¹

I must say – in all gratitude – that the provincial press has received my “Folly” with great indulgence and remarkable unanimity of praise.² Of London great dailies, so far, only the “D^{ly} Chronicle” has spoken giving me more than $\frac{1}{2}$ a column of a most favourable review. Two London weeklies criticised me severely but on the whole with approval and encouragement.³ I must say I am surprised and very much pleased at what looks like the beginning of a moderate success.

Thanks for Your good thought in sending the book to Mrs Wall.⁴ I would have done so myself if I had not feared to appear intruding. I regret I have not followed my first impulse. Will You kindly tell Mrs Wall – when opportunity offers – that I have not forgotten Her kind graciousness nor the artistic feeling and skilful touch that made even the voice of the old Torrens’ piano a delight to my ears. Please express my thanks to all the Ladies of Your family⁵ for the sympathetic welcome They have given to my unworthy book.

I am here to repair my wretched nerves with cold water and pure air. I am now finishing my 2^d novel and live in a perpetual agony of composition.⁶ It’s a very bittersweet operation. I feel encouraged by Your letter. I shall return to London about the 10th June.⁷

¹ Conrad had sent Redmayne a presentation copy of *Almayer’s Folly*, with the inscription: ‘To dear Redmayne in token of profound esteem and affection from Joseph Conrad 21st April 1895’ (Bertram Rota catalogue, 2004). In his response of 19 May, Redmayne had written that he had taken ‘great interest and pleasure’ in the novel, continuing: ‘I have caught a few critical notices in the newspapers that speak well of your work, and I can assure you, I felt as much pleased and gratified as if I had been the author myself’ (Stape and Knowles, p. 17).

² Favourable ‘provincial’ notices had appeared in *The Scotsman* (29 April; reprinted in *CH*, p. 48), the *Glasgow Evening News* (14 May), and the *Manchester Courier* (15 May).

³ The *Daily Chronicle*’s generally favourable review (11 May) had concluded: ‘Mr. Conrad may go on, and with confidence; he will find his public, and he deserves his place’ (*CH*, p. 50); the reviewer was Henry Norman (1858–1939). See Stape and Knowles, p. 17. The partly negative notices are probably those published in the *Realm* (10 May) and the *World* (15 May), on which Conrad commented in a letter to Unwin (*Letters*, 1, p. 219). The *Realm* commented: ‘The story itself is crude and ill-arranged, and yet tantalisingly full of rich workmanship . . . In a fashion not easily definable, it “fails to ring the bell”’ (p. 966); the review in the *World* judged the novel to be ‘a dreary record of the still more dreary existence of a solitary Dutchman doomed to vegetate in a small village in Borneo’ and concluded that ‘the book is as dull as it well could be’ (*CH*, p. 51).

⁴ Redmayne had evidently sent his presentation copy of *Almayer’s Folly* to his elder daughter.

⁵ His wife and daughters, Mrs Wall (see letter of 22 March 1896), Muriel (born 1869), Elsie (born 1874), and Eunice (born 1880).

⁶ *An Outcast of the Islands* was, in fact, not finished until mid-September.

⁷ Conrad left Champel, Switzerland, where he had been having treatment at the Hydropathic Institute, on 30 May and arrived in London on 4 June (*Letters*, 1, pp. 223–4).