

Loeser Letters
Transcribed by Megan Young-Schlee
April 2019
(Revised by M. Coleman and Daniel Moreno, April 2020)

Loeser Letter Description

This collection contains 27 letters written by Santayana between 1886 and 1912 to friend and Harvard classmate Charles Alexander Loeser (1864–1928). The early letters are highly philosophical, while the later letters more often discuss the logistics of meeting when both are traveling in Europe and provide updates on Santayana’s life. This gives the reader a sense of Santayana’s progression through his graduate student and faculty career at Harvard. The collection, along with letters written to Loeser by philosopher William James, is located at the Houghton Library, Harvard University.

Transcription Signs and Symbols

[i[some text]i]	<i>Insertion</i>
<some text>	<i>Deletion</i>
[m[some text]m]	<i>In Margin</i>
...	<i>Unrecoverable gaps (number of points approximates the number of missing words; three dots represent one to five words)</i>
some text	<i>Doubt about text</i>
<u>Some text</u>	<i>Underlined in original</i>
[some text]	<i>Editor’s insertion</i>

Footnotes indicate features of the writing, stationery, or envelope.

Dresden, Sept 22nd 1886

Dear Loeser —

I have often felt like writing to you this summer, but I was not sure of your address — having mislaid the paper on which I had it in the course of my wanderings — and besides I was willing to wait till I had been some time in Germany before venturing to hold forth to you on that subject. Well, to begin with, I had a nasty passage, not rough, but eminently nasty. By some dishonesty or other they put me in a room with five (!) other wretches, when I had bargained only for three companions. Nevertheless I arrived at Cherbourg alive and in sufficiently good spirits to wander slowly down France and Spain to my paternal establishment at Avila. I stopped at Caen, Le Mans (charming place, by the way, as Fullerton would say) Tours, Bordeaux, and Valladolid.

At Avila I was welcomed by various members of my family, and immediately began a defensive campaign against dyspepsia, in which I was not completely victorious. Meantime I took riding lessons, thereby furnishing the world (if the world had only been there to appreciate it) one of the most pitifully ridiculous spectacles imaginable. I appreciated it however; only in this case, contrary to my custom, I treated myself, and saw the performance at my own expense. After four weeks I left Avila, and went through Paris straight to Cologne. I stopped there a couple of days, and then settled down in Göttingen at a pension Houghton found for me. The place, however, proved somewhat slow, and I thought it better to come to Dresden for a month, before going to Berlin; especially as Herbert Lyman was here and I had a chance of being in the same house with him.

I am not going to say anything about having enjoyed the Madonna di San Sisto ect, ect, nor about the spiritualizing influence of Tintoretto's assumption, since this is sufficiently done already by the travelling American female college and by Prof. Norton. But I will say that the opera here has quite surpassed my notions of the possibilities of music. I have heard the whole Ring of the Nibelungen, Lohengrin, and The Flying Dutchman, besides The Prophet, The Magic Flute, and some light operas. I think Wagner is the greatest of opera composers, but it seems to me that he has aimed rather at grandeur and philosophical suggestiveness, than at real dramatic effect. Meyerbeer, for instance, seems to me more dramatic than Wagner. Wagner gives you so many tendencies and interests at once, that you cannot be wholly wrapped up in any. This is the True way, the real way things are in the world, where there is no beginning and no end, and where the jumble of conflicting interests and emotions would leave a man who attended to everything that is going on without any sense of dramatic action or passion whatever. Now it seems to me that the most perfect form of art is that which is able to fix your attention more exclusively on one tendency or human interest, than we usually do in ordinary thinking. This is classical art, pure art. It makes the aspect of things and the causes of things simpler than they are in the world. But Wagner, like Shakespeare and Tolstoi, gives you a more complex, more extensive and varied world than the world each individual lives in. I do not say more complex and shapeless than the real world is taken as a whole, but more complex and shapeless than the daily interests and emotions of the individual are. Thus the classical drama selects to intensify and purify the elements of life which it brings before you; while the Gothic drama (as I call it) selects also, for that it must necessarily do: but so selects as to bring before you the conflict, the sense of multiplicity and shapelessness, which the world produces. That is why the classical art is called ideal, because it gives you a simplified world, where tendencies have a comparatively

free field to work themselves out on; and the Gothic art is called realistic because it gives you the result of conflict instead of the forces in abstraction. But in fact both kinds are idealistic, because a real photograph of things would be absolutely blurred and chaotic. Every man's mental picture of the world is extremely idealized, because most of those elements are omitted in it which do not concern two or three leading interests of that man's life.

On the first of October I am going to Berlin, where I shall be in the same house with Strong, Schiffbauerdamm 3. "(where please address.) I hope you will write soon, and tell me what news there is of the fellows. I have got letters from Mason and Abbot, and have seen Beal and Henderson (Felton & Baldwin's friend) besides, of course, Lyman and Houghton. Ward Thoron, the rascal, has not written. If you see him, pray tell him I am expecting to hear from him. Lyman has an absurdly wordy letter from Fullerton, which I parodied in a letter I recently sent that literary humbug. If you see him, tell him not to be mad, but to write me an answer parodying my own style, and telling me how the world hails him, the literary and artistic rising sun polish of the new world. In reality I like Fullerton very much, but he must drop some adjectives or he'll sink. You must also tell me your plans for this winter, and whether you are coming abroad in the spring. Sincerely yours

George Santayana

[m[P.S. The German officers are stunning and the country attractive. But the women — — — !
(gestures of mingled disgust & indifference)]m]

Berlin, Nov. 9th 1886.
Schiffbauerdamm 3rd.

Dear Loeser —

Your letter — the most interesting I have received since I left America — deserves a better answer than I shall be able to make. I have subsided entirely after the gaities of Dresden, and [i[am thinking of]i] letting my hair grow and of adding half a yard to the length of my coat. Meantime I attend three lectures every morning and one every evening, eat and sleep as much as the customs of the country allow, and the rest of the time do nothing. I am therefore hardly in a situation to have any news to tell. You will not expect me to contribute to any guidebook, nor to make any guidebook contribute to this letter; especially as you know what there is to be seen in Berlin. All I need say is that the place pleases me very much — it is not beautiful, but it is clean, spacious, and comfortable. The portico of the National Gallery and The Thiergarten are charming places to walk in; the former is my promenade between lectures.

I am taking three private courses. Paulsen's Ethics, Ebbinghaus's psychology, and Grimm's history of modern art. Besides I got to a lot of public lectures; on the Darwinian Theory, on the autonomy of the brain, on social questions, (Wagner's) on the history of psychology, and on general philosophy (Paulsen's) I have no trouble in understanding, although helpless in conversation. The tone of all these men, the atmosphere of the whole institution, is healthier and more scientific than at Harvard. Paulsen is a man of wisdom — no affectations, no manias, no passion. He is what Palmer would be if he were a big man and not a Hegelian. Paulsen's treatment of ethics is at first sight not unlike Palmer's: he begins by admirable exposition of various historic points of view; but the difference is this: that while Palmer gave a very interesting [i[analysis]i] of the abstract ideal in the works of Hobbes, etc, Paulsen give a very interesting analysis of the actual ideas — The Weltanschauung — of the various notions and religions. Of course it needs a far greater knowledge and sureness of judgment not to misrepresent a whole civilization, than not to misrepresent a single book. Yet I can say that Paulsen's exposition is to me perfectly satisfying — not only his exposition of the Greek ideal but also his exposition of the Christian. How I shall like him when his own theories begin to appear, I cannot yet say.

Ebbinghaus is James grown up. He has the same energy, freshness, originality, and healthy leaning towards the physical explanation of things; but he has besides clearness, grasp, and consistency. I think he is going to clear me up on a great many questions. You mustn't be astonished at my praising everybody, for you must consider that I want to hear everybody at first and chose what suited me best. And so I must pronounce Grimm also perfectly satisfactory. He has the culture, the English manner, and the infinite-sadness-of-things tone which seems to haunt the aesthetical; but his way of handling history is luminous, almost suspiciously so, and his quiet eloquence is delightful. One thing common to every professor here is complete emancipation from religious prepossessions. They have not James's brave readiness to risk something for the sake of holding on to God and immortality; not Palmer's less brave manipulations, which result in your finding a new edition of ethics in your pocket, as you find the prestidigitator's button. Here everybody treats religion calmly as a historical fact. The unhappy matter doesn't cause the flurry, and agitation, and reticences, which it does in America.

Talking of religion in America, I have been reading Prof. Gizycki's German translation of Salter's "Religion of mortality." It seems to me that this movement, as far as I understand it,

has not escaped the confusion which besets all liberal religious formulations. Every reformer since Luther has imagined that he had merely brushed away the sand to find the solid rock below: they have not perceived that the rock being sandstone, it is the brushing that <makes> [i[loosens]i] the sand; that the only way to make the bottom solid is never to brush the top, but rather to heap [i[on]i] more and more sand, and let the strata harden. The society for ethical culture, having discarded all theology, supposes that it has reached the immovable rock: but I fancy its rock is not different from the others which time forms and destroys. This religion of morality is truly a religion; i.e. it rests, not on individual thinking and investigation, but on the acceptance of a popular conviction, and on this conviction — received by contagion — it builds its system. The popular conviction here chosen is that there is one and only one “true” and “proper” social ideal; one best state of things which we ought to try to establish. The main elements of this authoritative ideal seem to be general well-being of every class of men; personal independence and political equality; public spirit; — in a word something distinctively and peculiarly American and contemporary, so that the ludicrousness of claiming to have discovered the eternal and universal right is unusually prominent. But of course a sense of the ludicrous is not to be expected in reformers. I should think such a religion as this (which ought to be called The Religion of Democracy, rather than morality) might have a great future in America, and perhaps in England also; but it would lose nothing by acknowledging that its ideal was not the “true” and “right” ideal, but only the actual and distinctive ideal of modern democracy. To be patriotic it is not necessary to imagine that one’s country is the only true and proper country, and that to belong to any other is to make a dangerous mistake; and believe me, to be religious it is not necessary to be fanatical either: one can love and revere an ideal which one has accepted consciously from one’s ancestors and one’s contemporaries, and on fidelity to such a national ideal, without indulging in metaphysical blunders, one can test a noble and pure morality. Do you suppose it would be <harder> [i[easier]i] to teach a boy not to cheat by telling that he mustn’t do it because it is “wrong”, than by telling him he mustn’t do it because he is an American? I suppose in practice it makes no difference what reason one gives, because what produces the effect is the impulse to approve or disapprove communicated to the child by contagion; yet I can’t help thinking that it would be better to give him the real ground of moral distinctions — custom and the conditions of success — than to substitute for <||thel> [i[these]i] a hieroglyphic of five letters.

Fullerton’s article is rich. The worst thing about his style is the incongruity of the show phrases with the subject and the body of the writing. Evidently, a phrase occurs to him e. g. to call second-hand poets mocking birds, and he pronounces it felicitous, expressive, and altogether delicious. Hence we see in his next notice that “The author of Golden Rod and other Poems (Houghton, Mifflin & co, 1886) is but a mocking bird” or something of that sort. Of course Fullerton is a great success; I am sure I wish him all manner of joy. He has a patient fondness for literature, and he ought to succeed; only I wish he had more discrimination and less affectation. To Nortonize will do him no good. I hope you will send me such things when you notice them; and by all means let me see what you publish yourself, verse or prose. What you say about Wagner’s music seems to me very accurate and reasonable; my own lucubrations — I have no idea what they were now — were probably pretty wide of the mark.

Strong is here with me — as well as a clerical cousin of his from Rochester N.Y. a would-be cultured vulgar Philistine, who will go before long. We dine together. Strong is taking the same courses as I, but I notice that he is rather disinclined to talk over things. He says he can’t think easily, and is discouraged about philosophy. The trouble is that his father, a rabid

Baptist, thinks his son will be damned eternally if he takes to heathen vain knowledge, when only one thing is needful, namely, to put on your bathing clothes and duck in the tank. Poor Strong feels that if he did something else, less offensive to his father than non-orthodox philosophy, he might smoothe things over at home; and this, joined to a certain slowness and laboriousness in his own thinking, makes philosophy rather unattractive to him just now. I don't know what will come of it.

To-day, I believe, Herbert Lyman sails for America. He was here two or three days before he went to London, about two week ago. I can't tell you how sorry I am that he has not stayed here; but he thought it better to please his family by going home. He is the most solidly, delightfully excellent fellow I know: it is remarkable how much he has improved in the last two years. Now I am left without any of my friends for the winter. I have settled down to contemplation and meditation. I would write a book on ethics, if I believed there was such a thing. But what has struck me most forcibly since I am quietly running round the daily track, is the complete loss, the absolute unrecoverableness of the past. It seems almost hard to believe that I really used to be at Harvard. It feels more as if somebody had told me about it.

Houghton is at the other end of the city. He is very enthusiastic about [i[Prof.]i] Wagner, and seems to be moderating in his socialism. Last night I went to a horrible shindig given by the Americans at his house. There were four men and about twelve women. Some of us played whist, and the others were comparatively happy: Then they gave us some sherbert, and one of the old women tried to sing. The entertainment of the evening, as far as I was concerned, was furnished by Prof. Dunbar, whose comical letter to Houghton I read during a little recess, when the cards were over and before the music broke out. Prof. Dunbar seems to think the 250^a celebration was a pandemonium.

I wish I could take those history courses with you; they must be very interesting. Perhaps Emerton is less sympathetic in his treatment of the middle ages than would be desirable; I heard him after James last year, and thought he has a scornful pitying wonder at the most natural things in the world; e. g. the importance of the doctrine of the Eucharist. He evidently had no conception of the emotional & devotional meaning of the thing. But you can judge him better [m[than I; all I will say is that there is no propriety in one man's contemptuous astonishment at the life of another. ||A||| things are natural. Write soon—

Your sincere friend
George Santayana[m]

Berlin, Jan 3^d 1887.

Dear Loeser,

This morning I received your exceedingly interesting and thoughtful letter, with your translation of Rolla (of which more anon) and a number of the Atlantic and one of Lippincot's. You are exceedingly kind to send me all this; I enjoy and appreciate it more than I can tell. But before going into any of the subjects you suggest, I will say a word about my temporal affairs. If I began my sermon at once, I should forget all about the notices.

I have been having an extraordinary quiet vacation, getting up at eight to chocolate and rolls, walking for two hours in the Thiergarten, and reading the rest of the day and evening. On Christmas day I dined at Prof. Ebbinghaus's with his wife and baby. My only other dissipation was a spree on last Friday night (Dec. 31st). Some American students invited me to a punch, and at twelve o'clock we sallied out (two or three of us full) and paraded the streets singing Yankee Doodle and shouting Prosit Neujahr. I had a bully time, meditated on the wonderful good humor of the German people, who can indulge in such boisterous celebrations without doing mischief. It was snowing a little, and we went sliding along the asphalt pavements as merrily as could be.

Strong has not yet returned, but he writes me that he is feeling much better, and will be back in a few days. You mustn't think that we have quarreled, or had any disagreements; the trouble seems to be in his health and family difficulties. I wrote him proposing to dissolve the financial partnership, but he said he would not hear of it. As he seems to intend to begin work, he will not give up the fellowship, and we may hope to carry out our original plan without further interruption. Next year, however, I will not consent to grab half his money, but will shift for myself. Of course I should like a fellowship; but if it doesn't come, I think I can worry along without it. I might also stay in Spain for the semester. — Yesterday Houghton arrived from a Trip to Vienna, and established himself in the room next to mine, where he is now reading Wendell's article on Harvard society through the smoke of Egyptian cigarettes.

Now, for your Rolla. Read, as everything ought to be read, for the sake of what is in it and not for the sake of what is in something else. I find it smooth, clear, eloquent, beautiful. But I know you want me to speak of it also as a translation, from a sort of professional point of view. I have not the original here, so that I cannot go over it line by line and realize the difficulties you have had to overcome; but the general effect is much like the effect of the original, though a trifle paler — less passionate. The Alexandrine is very good in English, it seems to me, if it is needed: but are not the syllables in English a full equivalent for twelve in French, and is it not dangerous in translation to allow oneself too much room? In regard to detail I would make one or two suggestions. The first is that unless one reads the most perfect and inspired poets continually one is almost certain here and there to fall into a prosaic expression. This is particularly hard in translating from the French, in which prose expressions are not prosaic. I had infinite trouble with this in my May Night, and perhaps fell into the opposite fault of affectation and over-elaborateness. It is possible that a little more of the frankly poetic dialect would not do your work harm. If you read Keats and Shakespeare's sonnets over, you will feel what I mean. For example, towards the close you have this line "Lazarus lies again confined deep in the earth." Why not "deep-coffined"? That would also improve the meter. It is an absurdity, of course, since you don't mean that the coffin was made for a Lazarus with a protruding stomach; but somehow it sounds more as if you were saying something beautiful. Further down you have "vital forces." Abstractions when possible should be replaced by sensible images; vital forces in poetry had

better appear as they really appear — as movement, or warmth, or pain, or pleasure. Poetry, you know, has to be truer than history, and a fortiori truer than science and philosophy. I don't remember what the French is here, but the last two lines I believe read:

Et le sein tout meurtri d'avoir tant alaité
Elle fait son repors de sa stérilité

Nothing could be more beautiful than that, and to reproduce it is perhaps impossible. Here I think your twelve syllables were an added difficulty. I will allow you to revenge yourself for all this criticism by suggesting the following rendering:

Too many children drained the aching breast
To which a sad sterility brings rest.

or

The bruised bosom, rent with many throes,
Has found in its sterility repose.

I have said all this because you asked for it, not because I think it necessary, since the translation is very good. If I were you I should keep the twelve syllables when they make a good line, but when ten will express all the idea, I shouldn't hesitate to drop the epithet or circumlocution otherwise necessary. You know Alexandrines together with pentameters are perfectly orthodox.

The subject of this piece brings me back to our discussion of the religion of the future. And first of all let me give you a piece of news. I am converted. I don't mean that I have got spiritually drunk and foamed at the mouth, or that I have succumbed to the temptation of fulminating an absolute truth or right. But I mean that I have come to recognize that the worth of a truth or an ideal in no way depends on its being absolute. In theory I have always admitted this; but with a certain regret and inward dissatisfaction, as if a relative standard of truth and value were a pis aller, a spurious substitute for the divine and eternal standard which ought to be true. Now I conceive that a relative standard is quite satisfactory, nay, that it is relativity which gives standards authority. An absolute standard is a brute fact: it has no authority over other standards which are also brute facts. It is when a standard is relative to other standards that it begins to have authority over them, because then it begins to express them. The reason men feel bound to obey God or the law is not that God or the law are absolute superior authorities, but on the contrary because God and the law represent human interests. If God and the law were hostile to human interests their authority would disappear, we should call them devil and injustice. And by human interests I don't mean anything discovered by the aid of theories: I mean simply the things men actually have at heart — life, peace, prosperity, and the amenities of life. Royce's problem, therefore, as to the existence of a universal thought does not touch the real ground of either truth or right. It is nevertheless an interesting problem, because it asks whether it is possible to suppose a single thought summarizing all the actual absolute judgments of truth and right in existence. This universal thought would be absolute — not because it had no relation to the actual separate judgements, for this relation is what gives it authority — but precisely because there would remain no real judgement outside of it, because it would represent all the actual judgements in the world. Suppose however that suddenly in some corner of the universe a new judgement appeared, which Royce's universal thought did not comprehend: evidently this new judgment would be as absolute as the universal thought. The question then of the plurality of standards in existence does not affect their authority, since authority comes to the higher from the lower, from the specific to the general, and not vice-versa. In other words, the question whether the conflict between standards is real or only apparent (as the optimists maintain) does not affect their authority. This comes from their reality, not from their problematic unity. Only

the wildest theorist would maintain that the right of one army to fight depended on the absence of a like right in the opposing army. Of course the right of an army to fight depends on the needs of its own territory. Whether the enemy has a right to fight is something for him to consider; it does not affect my own right to fight, which I derive from the commission of my government, from the necessities of the organism to which I belong. If I can persuade myself by metaphysical arguments that we all are part of one organism, and that in shooting my enemies I am serving their best interests as well as my own, I shall certainly be made very happy by the discovery. But in the absence of this blessed assurance my right to shoot remains as perfect as can be.

When you ask me, therefore, if my alternative is to do away with ethics altogether, I answer no. How can a man do away with ethics — with a theory of values and duties? But my ethics would rest entirely on facts — it would be a science of preferences and their consequences. Our acts have real consequences, and things have real values, and therefore ethics is a real science. But its sanction is physical: it shows that the result of certain habits is to destroy the race that indulges in them.

I agree with you about the usefulness of such movements as the Society for Ethical Culture in clearing the atmosphere. Doubtless there is a religion of the future, but whether naturalistic or supernaturalistic is hard to tell. Just now I am dreadfully paganized, having been carried off my feet by Goethe. I am therefore willing to prophesy that the religion of the future will be naturalistic, polytheistic, aesthetical, fatalistic, humanistic, political, and everything else that is Greek. Apply Greek feeling to the world of modern science and you get what I mean. The difference between our view of what the real powers of nature are and the Greek view is very great. We couldn't worship the weather, for example, because that is not for us a real unit, but a result, a combination of things. And the things which fall under the category of reverence are the real, the self-existing, the spontaneously active. Accordingly among the gods the organizing forces of animals and vegetables would not fail to figure. We should have to thank and reverence the pine-soul, the wheat-soul, the horse soul, and the cow-soul. When the days of this eminently sensible religion come — and I am certain they are as near as the triumph of all that is good — a farmer after planting his field will say his prayers until the harvest before the images of the wheat, oats, or barley spirit, in the certainty that his welfare depends on the present operation of the wheat, oats, or barley spirit in the seeds he has sown. I need hardly observe that eggs will be eminently holy, as living temples of the Holy Ghost; that to eat them will be a sin and to fry them a sacrilege; and that an expiatory chapel will be built on the site of the Holly Tree.

As you know, I hardly share your satisfaction in the clearing away the old religions. This “old” has to me the accent of reverence and affection, not that of impatience and contempt. Nothing seems to me sadder than that the gods of our fathers should have to die with them. It is a great inspiration, for example, to feel that our country, or our college, or our homestead belongs to our fathers also and was loved by them before us. And it is so also with religious affections and fidelity. To share them with our ancestors and to hand them down to our decedents adds to their value and make them more sacred and sweetly reasonable. A brand-new faith is hideous. It is fanatical, impractical, optimistic, crude. It has not yet learned how to behave in society. It insults the other faiths, it denies the value of everything <else> except itself. So was early Christianity, so was Mohammedanism, and Puritanism. But experience of life makes religions richer, calmer, more reasonable, more appreciative of the value of other things. I consider it a great misfortune that the Reformation should have taken the <||form||> [i[shape]i] of the reassertion of Christianity in new forms. The form was precisely that which time had made perfect in Christianity. With the Renaissance I am in full sympathy; with the Revolution I have

some sympathy; but with the Reformation, as a religious movement, I have no sympathy at all. In so far as the Reformation corrected the social and political abuses of the times, it did good; but this good might have been done by a political revolution — by the confiscation of church property, by the abolition of the religious orders, or whatever else may have been desirable. This might have saved the north from the pandemonium of theological quarrels and the south from the inquisition. Freedom of thought existed already in all matters which a sensible man need to think about; the renaissance, had it been left unchecked by the Reformation and Catholic reaction, would have soon won complete freedom for the world. This is happening now in the Catholic countries. In Spain, for instance, after the most terrible clerical domination, we are recovering, we have freedom, without having called in any new-fangled religious enthusiasms. Had it not been for the blunder of a religious reformation we might have reached this stage two centuries earlier — and saved our country the degradation of the XVIII century. In England and France the reformation and Catholic reaction were weakest; therefore these countries took the lead. Now that the renaissance period has recommenced — for what is modern science and the new historical method but the renaissance? — Germany, Italy, and Spain are also recovering. That it was the Reformation and Catholic reaction that crippled them, I think there is no doubt. England too suffered by reason of the reformation. Think of Philistinism, and insularity with its attendant crudeness of thought and absence of art; think too of the Irish question. — All this goes to show that new religions are not wanted. In the matter of religion what we have will do very well — if it is not something much better it is because it is in part so new. If our science gives us new ideals, well and good; and as soon as the realities discovered by science become sacred and venerate to us, the old sanctities will disappear of themselves — as the beautiful pagan sanctities disappeared before Christianity. But while Christianity can survive, it is welcome as far as I am concerned; nothing is more uncalled for than a campaign against it. Only in one connection is Christianity dangerous — in its influence on politics. Hence the various shades of opinion among political men about how the Church should be treated. I will not dogmatize on that point, for I think the wise course differs with the circumstances. The State must protect itself against the church; but what is sadly unnecessary is that a new religion should fight the old, causing untold vexation and strife and unhappiness in order to substitute a petulant and fanciful creed for an established and venerable one. It is taking infinite trouble in order to be worse off.

I think what you say about Royce and James perfectly just. Poor James! His is so noble, so simple, so bewildered! But I doubt that Royce's increased popularity will make James lose his scholars. Thirteen — or do you say fifteen? — is fully as much as he had last year in Phil. 5. In Phil 2, I understand from what you say that he has a good class. James can give a man something which Royce with all his genius cannot give — a feeling of the perplexities, of the futility of confident thinking. He can also give a man an example of a modest, generous, and individual way of approaching problems. Royce on the other hand is admirable to knock the nonsense out of a man, and to explain every thing clearly if not correctly. There is a certain pathos about Royce too; he is so hopelessly, so helplessly devoid of fine feeling. He is like a painter who, with a genius for form should be color blind. But on the whole I think Harvard ought to congratulate itself on its philosophers. In some ways they are superior to those here, and in none shockingly inferior. The great advantage here is the greater breath and thoroughness, and also the greater academic freedom.

Please give my love to the philosophical club, and tell it talk — talk is all important in philosophy. How would Berenson do for a member? I think his story "The Third Category"

wonderfully good. He also has a genius for conversation and has read more than has even been published since the invention of printing.

Excuse this treatise-like letter for I am now very studious, and believe me your sincere friend

George Santayana.

London April 15th 87.
Address, — Broom. Shipley & Co.

Dear Loeser,

I got your most interesting letter some time ago, and would have answered it had I had a good and adequate opportunity. I have been here over a month, seeing sights and people. Strong has been with me most of the time, but is now gone to Oxford and proposes in a week or so to move to Cambridge, where I shall probably rejoin him.

England pleases and interests me beyond measure. But all my delight in it doesn't prevent my feeling that things are going wrong politically and socially in this country — that it is in the stage of dissolution. Whenever it is question of a change of character in institutions and manners, there is always room for two judgements one welcoming and another condemning the change. There need be no quarrel about what the change is and has to be, but to record the change does not justify it. Whether it is good or bad depends on whether the organism we are interested in is the one that is being developed or the one that is being dissolved. And granting the right of any one to be interested if he can in a possible or impossible English democracy, I think I am right in saying that what is characteristic and admirable in England is not what is to be at some future time, but what is and has been — the feudal plutocracy, the rich men stepping into the culture and power of the barons. I think I am also right in saying that this feudalised plutocracy is losing its power. England will soon be no longer managed for their benefit, but for the benefit of "the people", in so far as the people can benefit itself. I fear that when the people try benefiting themselves they will succeed better in injuring the plutocracy and the civilization <they> [i[it]i] formed the key-stone of, than in improving their own condition — moral or physical. But even if they do succeed in this — which is their object — I simply don't choose to be interested in their success, but feel the greatest interest in what they are to replace. This old English civilization — the [i[rich]i] Briton's freedom and the [i[rich]i] Briton's interests — seems to me very interesting and worthy of admiration and service, just as the Greek or Roman civilizations were. This nation is going to be replaced by another — heaven knows of what character — and I think it is impossible to welcome the change without showing a visionary and at the same time vulgar notion of the values of things. It is visionary, because it values the merely conceived tho doubtfully possible more than the realized good, and it is vulgar because the conception is such as appeals to the crude half-educated intelligence of the newspaper reader. It is not a revolution founded on some noble religious or rational aspiration, but one founded on the lower and more material needs — on love of prosperity and envy of it.

All this political wisdom of mine comes from going to the House of Commons and reading the Standard. The English politics of the Nation and the Irish politics of the Advertiser seem to me now pitiful. Blindness personified would not see <it> [i[things]i] otherwise. The fact is that there is not here nor anywhere one just side, one patriotic course, one enlightened view, but as many just sides patriotic courses and enlightened views as there are interests to defend, governments to strengthen, and political aims to pursue. What, for example, makes it proper to be interested in the Irish peasants and improper to be interested in the Irish landlords? Because they are more numerous? Because they are more unhappy? Because they descend from more ancient occupiers of the land? But I think the few more worthy of attention and defence than the many, just as I think flowers more valuable than leaves. and trees than grasses. What would you think of a man who should fell all your trees so that the grass should have all the sunshine? And I

think happy and healthy and rich people infinitely more worthy of consideration and protection than unhappy and feeble and squalid wretches. To him that hath shall be given, and from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath — that is the right principle, the principle on which nature works and on which evolution is alone possible. And as to the greater antiquity of the peasants [i[in the country]i] — on the fact that the landlords are foreigners — much may be said for as well as against it, although I admit that this is the side on which the Irish can best appeal to intelligent sympathy. It is certainly wrong that a country should support an aristocracy of aliens — but the remedy might be found in destroying the nationality of the natives, as was done by the Normans in England to the great advantage of the world and of the island itself, for the Anglo Saxons without the French would have been simply Germans. [m[9].m] I know that the experiment has been tried in Ireland and has failed — I am sorry. The worst of it is, that now in giving up the attempt to conquer Ireland the English are opening the door to the destruction of their government in Great Britain as well. It is hard to believe that the destruction of landlordism in Ireland will not involve its destruction in England, in which case, farewell England. There will remain an island north of France (or of what was France) with human animals on it, but England will not remain.

Thanks very much for your offer of looking after possible papers of mine. I am not sure that I shall write anything but if I do I will send it to you. I have begun some little essays and notes on philosophical points which I hope to put in shape at Avila this summer, and send them to Harvard. But if I produce anything tighter I will send it to you. I like The Epoch but doubt it will live. By the way, I notice the hapless Fullerton has got terribly sat upon in The Nation. Sic semper charlatanibus.

I have been staying with Lord Russell, of Harvard celebrity, and having rather an extraordinary experience. He is a fearful tyrant and lords it over everything in the most startling and unexpected manner, considering his outward mildness and youthfulness. He amounts to a great deal more than I had imagined before living with him, as he is up to engineering as well as Greek, and philosophy as well [i[as]i] navigation. He is also very charming in his ways. His is very like Grandcourt in Daniel Deronda, only young and gay withal. I enjoyed being with him very much, and he seems to have liked to have me round, so he insisted on having me stay on, and has reinvited me, in spite of my having pulled him after me into the Thames in trying to get into a boat. He relieved himself by swearing at me profusely and subsequently railing at me a good deal, but at the same time refused to accept any excuses I offered for not going on another trip next week. I really don't want to go, but feel in my bones that I shall not be able to refuse when the definite invitation arrives.

I have had a note from James including one to Hodgson (Time and Space man) and have by this means got to the meetings of the Aristotelian Society where Hodgson presides. He is one of your philosophical prestidigitators but what the other members say is often honest and fair.

Howell's story is rather good, I think, but the girl is nasty. I hate such girls. The fellow is pleasant, but not up to many Harvard examples. And how can you put that clean animal, Billy Goodwin, on a line with that charming gentleman, Fred Coolidge? Parker '86 and Remington '87 are more like it. [m[Write soon again — I envy you your table, rather, especially Coggeshall, to whom please give my best regards. Sincerely yours G.S.]m]

Oxford, June 4th 1887.

Dear Loeser,

Thanks for your nice letter and for the welcome news about the fellowship of which I had heard nothing. I am glad to hear that you are going to give yourself up to study and benevolence, under the respective aegis of Royce and Adler. To study Kant with Royce will give you a thorough training such as I wish I had — but I can hardly bring myself to return to Cambridge in order to take the course. As you know from James, I have turned my face quite in another direction, and study of Kant is just the sort of thing I don't care for <just> now. I am afraid I do not fully understand him, at least, he does not convince me, especially in the ethics where the whole method and point of view seems to me false and trivial. My watchwords now are Facts! and Nature! I should certainly agree with Royce rather than with Norton about the German need of metaphysics. In fact I have become very sanguine about the possibility of arriving at sound metaphysical doctrines — but I see these doctrines in the direction of Aristotle and the Scholastics, not in that of the Kantians. That is, it seems to me that the positivist Weltanschauung is the inevitable one, and that out of it a system of metaphysics can be extricated. Its authority, however, is derived from that of commonsense, not superior to it. It refines and assuages human ideas and experience; it does not account for experience or explain its meaning transcendently. I think there is a great futility, arising from a fundamental petitio principii, in the whole idealistic problem about the seat of the reality, whether things reside in consciousness or out of it. Whichever alternative you adopt, you arrive in the end at the conclusion that the receptacle of reality is nothing describable; it is reality itself — existence, the world. To say that the receptacle of reality is consciousness, or to say that it is space and time, is merely to say that only a part of the reality is real, or rather that the whole of reality resides in a part of it. The only tenable meaning attachable to such an answer is that all reality has in it total arrangements and general organization, a greater <||...||> resemblance to one thing than to another; that its fundamental make up is more like the make up of consciousness than like the make up of space, or vice versa. This is a perfectly possible and very interesting proposition. But all support of it must come from study of the constitution of nature: if the world really does seem to resemble consciousness more than space, we shall have an idealistic, if not a materialistic conclusion. When we have our description of the world — physics, psychology, and history, — then we can conjecture whether it has as a whole greater analogy to physical or to psychical events. Then there will be meaning in the assertion that the world is a material or a spiritual reality. But it seems to me that to attempt to settle the question *à priori*, on the ground that everything is an idea in the speaker's mind is puerile in the extreme. The whole notion of discussing the seat of reality of things involves the supposition of minds, brains or cameras *obscurae* inhabiting different parts of space, and moving about among the objects which enter into their experience. It amounts to this: supposing material objects, and minds residing in human brains, we find that nothing is necessary but the minds, in which objects and brains reside as ideas — forgetting that the notion of “idea” and of “mind” is constructed by discriminations in a world of space and time — to say nothing of the notion of “residing”. The whole trouble lies at the beginning — the very first words of Berkeley's book — where the fact that we know what we know and no more, is taken to mean that we don't know anything. In other words, because our knowledge is knowledge —

i.e. is mental, or different from the thing known — therefore it is not knowledge, — i.e. the thing known does not exist. Truly knowledge is an assumption but it is a necessary and inevitable one.

The upshot of the whole matter is that I am now eager to get a fuller and sounder idea of what sort of a world this is in which we live — what is the course of its history and the source of its peculiarities. It interests me comparatively little whether the world is a reality in consciousness or in space and time — what interests me is what that reality is, convinced as I am that its nature and value are wholly independent of its seat. The higher or absolute idealism would of course affect the worth of things; but this higher idealism is a religion masquerading as a philosophy. Arguments for the existence of God or absolute truth and right (philosophically the same thing) never were and never will be good for anything except to make the ignorant believe that they hold on reason what they hold on faith. It would be much more prudent, it seems to me, from the point of view of religion itself, to be bold and admit that its doctrines are held on faith, and derive their sanction not from the intellect but from the will.

Now, far from wanting to return to Harvard now, what I want is to spread myself, not so much in a multiplicity of subjects, which I know is dangerous, as in a variety of influences and points of view. I shall go back to Berlin, if nothing happens to prevent it, for one year, and hear lectures, philosophy, history, and pol. econ, and read extensively according to a plan that I have devised. Perhaps you will be interested to hear of it, although I shall probably not carry it out without many modifications. It is simply this: to take up the greatest books that have been written at various times, and read them with a view to tracing the variations of human thought, or, to put it perhaps better, to discover the conditions of social conviction. You see I should have to consider not only the great thoughts that have been taken up but those that have not, and to get some idea of the circumstances which determined the difference. Now, I don't know where I shall begin; probably at whatever period I happen to be hearing historical lectures on. Suppose it were history of the Roman Empire — I should read the Latin classics and the Fathers, together with the philosophers. Suppose it were the Renaissance — I should read Italian literature and look up the lives of the great artists. Suppose it were the Reformation — I should read the Reformers themselves as well as the contemporary Catholic saints. Of course, this is a monstrous undertaking; but then I have read something already, and as you know I am not slavish in my method of work. I would take up a work and drop it as soon as my interest gave out. But I have certain vague ideas and incipient theories which I want to work up and correct by study of the sort. For example the value of the scholastic philosophy, and the principle of natural authority, by which I mean a sort of political survival of the fittest, or natural right of those to govern who can govern best. I have just read two things quite in this line, Aristotle's politics, and Shelley's poems. I have not read Shelley to any extent since my early days of poetic sentiment, when I saw nothing in him but music and nonsense. But I find that he is the prophet of the rising generation in England, and the only true substitute for Jesus Christ. Well, I have reread him, and find a great deal in him that I knew nothing of. He represents, in an exaggerated and therefore vulnerable form, the contradiction of my theory of natural authority. His theory is briefly this: Nature is ready and willing to maintain the human race, (multiplied by the full energies of free love) in happiness and luxury, but the Evil Power, embodied in kings, priests, judges, and capitalists, somehow wickedly prevents it. Let but a spring be touched, and the scene will transform itself. The hollow power of tyrants will disappear, and everything will be in a normal and satisfactory condition. That is, a wrong has somewhere been perpetrated, and authority and subordination are the result. Now I conceive on the contrary that authority is naturally and normally acquired, because the business of society can be better done by some people and in certain ways, than by

other people in other ways. The liberal view forgets that society has a business at all; it seems to think that the [i[ideal]i] state has no aim or justification, but that it is merely the spontaneous sympathy and fellow-feeling of a crowd of equals. The fact is society is much more like the crew of a ship than like a picnic party; there are constant tasks and obstacles in its way, and a definite though distant goal to be attained by its efforts. Organization and subordination according to the principle of natural authority, (or civil service reform) is the inevitable result, and the only means by which a state can fulfil its object, which is the well-fare of the community as such, tested by the efficiency or virtue, as Aristotle calls it, of its [i[best]i] representatives. I would go a great deal farther and say that even if society has no dangers to meet — if we have a lot of men and women in heaven, for instance — still the principle of natural authority would hold, and it would be right and proper for the more stupid and foolish saints to say their prayers and play their harps according to the direction and example of the more intelligent and well-trained celestials. Otherwise I would rather go to hell where there is a good tyrannical devil to keep things in order.

I am glad the Phil. Club is alive, and wish I could have my say at the meetings. I have stifled this year for want of any intelligent man to talk to. Strong is dreadfully slow and easily bewildered, while Houghton is too light and superficial. Here in Oxford there is plenty of cleverness and intelligence of general subjects, but I have had no opportunity to discuss technical philosophy. I did have a duel one night with a gross and naive positivist on the rationality of a belief in the efficacy of prayer, in which I flatter myself I wasn't worsted. But I find it usually very hard to say anything convincing to the men I talk with because I am so taken up with my own last view and method of approach that I miss theirs and am therefore unable to lead them to my conclusion. I had a discussion one night, for instance, on the necessity of organization in intellectual life, as in science, or the scholastic philosophy, or modern psychology. I am sure the other man really agreed with me, but I couldn't get him to say so, although this may be partly due to his naturally invincible obstinacy. He had started by talking about the necessity of freedom of thought, and the dreariness of having everyone thinking the same thing, which I of course didn't deny. But I couldn't get a satisfactory admission that my point was well taken. This was Lord Russell, at whose house I have been several times. He leads a pleasant bachelor life, almost too solitary, and I have enjoyed myself very much when staying with him. But he didn't let me have enough sleep, for we always stayed up till one or two and got up at eight. Here I go to bed about midnight and don't get up till I feel like it.

Of course there is no need of my expatiating on the charms of Oxford. The college, the gardens, the fields, — everything is ideal, except the weather, for it rains almost continually. Still, it isn't warm so I have no serious complaint to make. As to lectures here, I have heard only a few, which were poor and elementary. The men here know much more than at Harvard, because they live in a much more intellectual society and are naturally more serious and thoughtful; but merely from a classroom or examination point of view they are hardly more advanced. They have the group system, and philosophy forms part of one of the chief groups taken for honors. They read Plato and Aristotle.

I write so many letters that I never know what I have told one man and what another. So excuse me if I have already told you about my extreme gaiety here at Oxford, owing to a lot of introductions from Russell, and my load of invitations to dinners, luncheons, and breakfasts. I never was so gay in all my life, and lately the Dons also have begun to invite me, so that I really don't know myself. I retreat from this dissipation in about a week, and return to London, to see some people for whom I have letters, and to say a long farewell to the nicest country on the face of the Earth. In Avila I shall do some writing and probably acquire the conviction that all this has

been a dream. You can address simply Avila, Spain, although B.S. & Co will also do. Sincerely
yours

George Santayana.

Berlin, Jan 4. 88.

Dear Loeser,

I have just received your long letter. I am glad you have had so pleasant an experience as your friendship, if that is what I should call it, with the interesting Mrs. B. But as this is not a subject on which I dare to dwell, I will pass at once to our common hobby. Your discovery of a summum bonum has evidently come as an answer to a difficulty in the Kantian system. I like your statement of the fact that the demands of our reason and our sensibility are not necessarily opposed. To me the conflict is hardly even an apparent one, because as you know I do not make the reason a lawgiving principle at all (to use Kantian language), but merely an instrument of discovery, by which we can make out the conditions under which we act and the probable consequences of any proposed action. But the Kantian doctrine being that pure reason dictates what our conduct should be, there naturally arises a fear that this right conduct may run counter to our natural inclinations. This fear, however, arises only from the theory, not at all from a consideration of the facts. For it is evident from Kant's own treatment of the subject that the reason only speaks in hypothetical imperatives. It is the will that is categorical. For whence comes the aversion to act according to a universal law which would prove destructive, but from the will that society should not be destroyed? "Kill every man you meet" is a universal law: why does not the pure reason adapt it as much as any other? Because the actual tendency of the human will and the mass of human interests prevent. Every system, there whatever may be its universal principles, actually adopts as its aim some object of actual human desire. Good can have no other origin. The fear therefore, that we should have a conflict between the reason and the feelings is vain. The conflict is between the various feelings, the different things which we fain would see realized but which cannot be realized together. The only difficulty in formulating the summum bonum lies in the selection and subordination of human aims, that is, in the discovery of their <relative> actual strength and relations.

As to the rôles of reason and feeling in forming our opinions I should also say that the conflict was accidental, that is, caused by a particular false opinion or abnormal desire and not by the ordinary relation of things. That reason and feeling are reconciled in the belief in God, freedom, and immortality, I should entirely deny. God and immortality are beliefs resting exclusively on feeling and imagination. They are not, however, irrational, unless attributes be given to God which are mutually exclusive, as e. g. omnipotence and a purpose identical with the greatest good of man. But freedom is a belief resting on a misconception first and on a feeling afterwards: first on the mystification by which it is supposed that freedom is involved in moral responsibility, which is the opposite of the truth: secondly on the assertion that because that is so freedom must exist, thus excluding the other equally possible alternatives, namely that men are neither free nor responsible. The whole God freedom and immortality argument is a sorry affair. I am surprised at your adopting it.

You also touch on the question of our means of arriving at the reality, and condemn the idealists for making theory contain truth, rather than experience, and also condemn Schopenhauer for making all knowledge pure imagination and at the same time claiming to know that the reality is will. I agree with both your criticisms, but I hardly see how you connect those two views with pessimism and suggest an optimism as the happy mean between them. I confess I do not follow your thought; it seems to me all in the air. Nothing is more important for sane thinking than a clear consciousness of the field in which one is at work. One must see what one

has assumed, and what are the principles on which one is drawing conclusions. A general argument about a subject without reference to the place of that argument in the scale of human thought is a rhetorical and not a philosophical argument. I will try to make my meaning clear. I imagine the mind as an organism (as it is the fashion to say) or as a state, that is, I regard it as something in which there is progress from a ruder and more simple form to one more complicated. There is subordination in it, and our uttermost thoughts are built on foundations of more homely and inevitable ones. Now within the hierarchy of thoughts, every argument and science must find its place. Theology, for example, makes its assumptions, say the mass of current and conventional knowledge (history, mathematics, etc) plus certain religious doctrines. Hence theology is a science with vast assumptions and very little coercive force, since not all its assumptions are natural to men. Mathematics, on the other hand, is a science whose assumptions are made inevitably by every human being; hence its coercive and à priori character. Now if I may presume to do so, I should advise you to make out for yourself where your various theories take hold of human nature: are they built out of materials in every one's mind: are its axioms the inevitable axioms of all human thought: or are they constructed on the ground of other theories, themselves already far removed from the primary forms of thinking. Your glib way of talking about the deity makes me fancy that you are a little confused about [i[the]i] nature of the arguments and feelings with which we have to deal in theology.

I should be delighted to see you come to Europe, but you will not find me in Berlin during the summer semester. I don't yet know where I shall go, but probably to the South of Germany. I can do my work practically as well in one place as in another if there is only a library to be had. I have had enough of Berlin already, and should like to see something of the other parts of the country. Next year, if I get my fellowship, I expect to be in Paris. It would be very nice to have you there also.

I am rather happy, in an intellectual way, being clear in my mind about my work and about my general attitude. Of course I don't have nor want to have convictions on every subject; besides convictions are disquieting things which make you suffer every time a good thing is said by one who doesn't happen to share them. It is with bigots as with patriots — my country right or wrong! I am now indulging in a course of talks from Gizycki on Kant's Practical Reason. G. is a rabid Utilitarian, very dogmatic and intolerant, but exhilarating and personally charming. He is keen and clever, without being broad and sound. Yet most of what he says is sound enough. Write soon.

Ever yours, G Santayana

Avila, July 9. 93¹

Dear Loeser,

I am here once more, having come by way of Gibraltar, to stay a few weeks. Early in August I expect to be in the Pyrenees, and immediately after in Paris. I sail from Southhampton on September 3². Is there no chance of meeting you? Our good friend Professor Böcher speaks to me sometimes of you, otherwise I never hear of you. I had hoped to go to Italy this year, where I suppose you are to be found, but the necessity of coming to see my father interfered. Perhaps next year, by starting early, I can manage both expeditions. Write me if it is possible for you to come to the Pyrenees or to Paris when I am there. The little time I have at my disposal makes it impossible for me to go far out of my way, but if you tell me where you are to be, I will try to arrange a meeting.

Yours ever

G Santayana

My address after July is Brown Shipley & Co, London.

³Beechings Library
Upper Baker Street
Regents Park

¹ This letter is on blue paper

² This is written on a separate page in light pencil

Avila, Aug 12. 93

Dear Loeser,

Your kind note has come to me when I am hardly in a condition to feel the charmes of your various proposals. My father died yesterday, and although I have not lived with him much and he was seventy nine, such an event always produced a vacuum and breathlessness which it takes time to get over. I shall not stop anywhere on my way back, except to get some indispensable things. I shall be in Paris probably one day, the 28 or 29 this month, and if you are there, write to me here at once where you will be and I will go to the same hotel. Next year I trust I may be able to take some trip with you into some corner. It is not the least part of my misfortune to miss the chance of some long talks with you now. It is very good of you to say that I need not think of temporal considerations. Time has made me quite rich, however, as I have \$1500 from the college and 400 to 500 from the Annex, besides small earnings. If you are not a great duke in your methods of travelling we could therefore go even shares. But I remember with a great deal of pleasure how kind you were to me at college, and all the theatre parties at your expense. Your household seems very ideal, and if I were ready to meet a lot of new people I might be tempted to hurry and try to catch you at the Cafe des Lapins.

Yours ever

G Santayana

Avila
July 13 '95

Dear Loeser

Can you arrange to meet me somewhere this summer so that we can renew such an old and long interrupted friendship? This is not the first time, I think, that I have written to you from here with this in mind, but we have been too far away from each other. This year, however, I feel free to go a little more afield from my usual path. I can leave Avila when I choose, as I am here only as my sister's guest. My father, whom I used to visit, died while I was here in 1893. If you can be somewhere in France or Switzerland or even Northern Italy in August, I should therefore be glad to join you; and perhaps you would teach me to see some of the things you have been studying all these years. I myself have seen and learned nothing. The moral solitude of the American Cambridge is something well-nigh absolute. Berenson and Fullerton, to be sure, have honoured me this year with visits — and Russell, too, last summer — but this has only made me feel the need of a little society all the more. Conviviality I get plenty of, but I mean intellectual sympathy. You see I am in a bad way, as they say. The truth is, I really want very much to see you. Write to me here, saying where you are to be and whether you care to have me turn up there. I expect to go to England towards the end of August, and sail for America in September, but the date is not fixed.

Yours ever
G Santayana

Avila, July 20.
[1895?]

Dear Loeser,

Your letter is most welcome and encouraging, and has come sooner than I could have expected. I had no idea you were yourself at Stuttgart. Nothing would please me more than the plan you suggest and, unless I hear to the contrary, I will meet you at Maloja on Saturday August 3rd. My idea is to leave Avila on July 29th and travel slowly by Pau, Marseilles, and Genoa, arriving at the last place on the evening of August 2nd. The next day I suppose I can get to Maloja although I can trace my course in Hendschel no farther than Como. If there is anything you think might be changed in this plan, write or telegraph to me here. For instance, if you cared to meet me in Milan on the 3rd and spend a day or two there before going up to the Engadine, that would please me very much, for you must remember I have never been in Italy, and this is all virgin ground to me, and tempting. In such a case mention the hotel you will be at. If I hear nothing I will go on directly to Maloja. We can go down to Lombardy afterwards, as you suggest, only I am afraid my time, and especially my money, will not hold out for a long trip. I must be in Paris by the 22nd or 23rd of August. But what I most wish is to see you; I can travel in Italy some other year. Of course you are prepared, as I am, for many changes. For instance, I am grown bald and silent.

Yours ever

G Santayana

Avila July 24.
[1895?]

Dear Loeser,

Many thanks for your telegram, and your willingness to meet me in Milan. You might have written, as the letter would have got here in time. I shall turn up, then, at the Hotel Manin on August 3^d when I expect to have the real pleasure of seeing you.

GS

HOTEL BEAU-RIVAGE
GENÈVE
MAYER & KUNZ³

Aug. 31. 95

Dear Loeser,

I have been tramping and climbing so much since I left you that I have hardly has the right moment for a letter, and even this must be strictly a report, as I leave for Paris in half an hour.

Primo. The boots. I went to the shop; the afternoon was extremely hot and seems to have made my temper weak and yielding. The man's Italian eloquence persuaded me at once that the <||B||> boots were a perfect fit; and in fact I have been wearing them with a good deal of comfort ever since. True, they have of late begun to squeak, but that has an easy remedy, which is to have some sort of powders introduced beneath the sole. On this score, then, I owe you thirty five francs.

Secundo. Thorold was good enough to write immediately a very nice letter of introduction for me. Unfortunately the way to that terrace is long and circuitous, and I had left for the Chartreuse when it arrived. I was very sorry, but nevertheless got some impression of the convent beside that of the mere tourist, and felt that perhaps, if I had talked to the monks I might have come upon some conflict of ideas which would have marred the aesthetic impressiveness of the devotion.

After the Grande Chartreuse we came over to Chamonix partly on foot, and in spite of the plague of tourists and the chromo-like landscapes, had a very nice time and took a great deal of healthy exercise, and at a terrific pace, too, which would have shocked your professional convictions. We spent one night on Brévent, opposite Mont Blanc, and the scene at dusk was truly impressive in its delosation [this is as it appears in the holograph]. There is something about the landscape of the upper summits, when it can be detached from its vulgar pedestal, that seems unearthly, and rather what one might expect to see in some other planet, or in that other life of which you possess, like the Harvard Laboratory, the scientific disproof.

It was a very great satisfaction to me to see you again, and to find the old Loeser in the new, as well as to see so much of Italy under your intelligent guidance. I am sure I am awfully obliged for it all, and wish I had had something to give in exchange for so much stimulation.

Yours ever

G Santayana

³ This appears to be a stamp on the stationary that Santayana used for this letter

Cambridge Mass

Jan. 25. 96

Dear Loeser.

I got your welcome letter a long time ago, and was glad my country pleased you so much. I wish I had been with you to share your enthusiasm and get your impressions. All you said to me about the things we saw last summer has made a more lasting mark in my brain than my way of listening may have led you to expect. It was new to me to see buildings and pictures through the eyes of another and a competent person. I may have seemed dull, but I learned a great deal, and think another time I should prove more intelligent and sympathetic.

You may be interested in news about my personal affairs. My book has been refused by Macmillan and Houghton Mifflin (to whom I was persuaded to send it next) and they both give me little hope of its publication by anyone, except at my own expense. This I can't undertake at present, as my future is uncertain, and I must keep my savings to live upon until I find some other place. For it is almost certain that I bid farewell to Harvard this year. They not only refuse to make me assistant professor, but they hint that I must not expect to stay on indefinitely as instructor. I have followed your advice and asked for leave of absence for a year, but I think it will not be granted. It makes no practical difference, as I shouldn't come back anyhow, but it would be a more graceful and easy way of leaving, and would [i[not]i] annoy my family so much as a sudden rupture.

My idea is to go to London for the winter — if I get no appointment in the mean time — and do what writing I can there. The change will be pleasant, I shall see something of my friends including you, I trust, and get a little store of impressions before my next hibernation in the American forests. Yours ever

G Santayana

Cambridge Mass
May 16 '96

Dear Loeser

Your good letter from Granada has, I fear remained unanswered, but I have just had a strange epistle from my good friend Abbot in which so much is said of you, that I am inspired to write and tell you what my situation has come to be. Your advice of last summer has been followed to the letter. I have got leave of absence from Harvard for a year with the understanding that I shall return for the year following, after which the question of my promotion or resignation can be reopened. I am therefore free for some fifteen months. My plan is to go in July to England, and to remain there — perhaps at one of the universities — until the early spring, when I want to go to Greece, and return by way of Italy and Spain to America.

My 'Sense of Beauty' had finally been accepted by Scribners, who promise to issue it in the autumn. A new edition of my sonnets, with some additions which, as inspired by the Italians, I ought to dedicate to you, is also coming out very soon.

If you see Abbot again try to persuade him to remain in Europe and set up the studio which you wanted me to inaugurate. That is what I advised him to do ten years ago, but he didn't, and has wasted the interval. I don't believe in his art, but I am interested in his happiness. Write and tell me when and where I may hope to meet you. Yours ever

G Santayana

Amberley Cottage,
Maidenhead.⁴
[September 1896?]

treat the question adequately without mentioning the excentricity of Greek sentiment, which would have puzzled the ladies of Buffalo and been altogether a dangerous subject. I tried to say what I could of the Platonic Theory without introducing that question. The thing stands in my mind as follows; the Greek mind, as seen in Homer, allowed two distinct feelings to exist side by side; the comradeship of citizens, soldiers, and mess-mates, and the natural sexual sensibility to women. The first was the more important, and around it gathered aesthetic and sentimental ideas, so that it was friendship as distinguished from love of women that could be turned into a political and moralizing force, and finally by Plato into a religion. At the same time, by a process psychologically very intelligible, the sexual passion was often attracted to this greater centre and turned from its natural object; so that a confusion arose, to which Plato in places yields himself, by which it was made to appear that the political and military friendship of the Greeks, with its aesthetic and emotional colouring, was a refinement of sexual feeling; whereas it was, I should say, an independent passion, to which the senses were accidentally joined. Lust was a parasite and not a basis of this sentiment. In Christian times things were the other way. Social organization was far less artful and perfect; no such practical military and intellectual friendship was possible, and the primary sexual impulse remained a stronger force in comparison with more civilized interests. Hence this chief passion was the natural centre of idealization. But it is a much harder thing to spiritualize a passion essentially animal than one essentially rational and social; and therefore the Platonism of modern times has a tendency to be [i[a]i] vague sentiment, feeble, ineffectual and, as it were, defeated. The Greek friendship was a principle of action, the modern love is a compromise between sensuality and mysticism. This is a subject on which I hope some day to write at length when I have a fuller knowledge of Greek literature.

Yours ever
G Santayana

⁴ This is typeface, not handwritten

June 8th 1897

5

Dear Loeser

I have waited until I was here and felt comparatively at home and at the end of my peregrinations before writing to you. On looking back on my whole journey I think what stays by me most clearly is a certain consciousness of Italian history and landscape, which may best be summed up in the word Urbino. What a place, and what an interesting chapter in the history of man it evokes. Everything now reduces itself for me to some phase of the history of man, and art, as I confessed to you, still seems one of his failures. Little that I saw in Italy was a pure delight; it was all laden with some vexatious incapacity, either in me or in the artist, that spoiled the pleasure and simplicity of the thing.

I have been in the country for the last few days, reading Earl Stanhopes history of Queen Anne. It is the first account of the war of the Spanish succession I remember to have read, and it interested me immensely. Europe has change a great deal upon the surface in these two hundred years, but the knowledge of what then happened and of the men that then lived makes it possible to see the present in true perspective, and reduce it to its proper size and proportions. O la bella prospettiva! I quite understand Ugello's [Uccello's] heavenly dreams, when I have the consciousness, or the illusion, of squaring the appearance of things with their reality.

The bell rings, which means, I fear, that this place is shutting up. I enclose Berenson's letter about the "Marriage of Aphrodite." You see he agrees with my friend Stickney, and misses the poetic texture which he admires.

I have not yet found rooms here and am sleeping at the Randolph. My address is as usual
Brown Shipley & Co.

Yours ever
G. Santayana

⁵ There is a stamp reading "OXFORD UNION SOCIETY 1823" on the stationary Santayana used for this letter.

King's College
Cambridge

July 28, '97

Dear Loeser,

If Mrs Glenny is at the Maloya, will you ask her if she has the MS of my "Platonism in some Italian Poets" and if so get it from her and send me the pages that have the translation of the verses in them. I want these scraps to add to a few others and send to the Harvard Monthly, which wants something for its October number, which must reach them by September 1st. If the idea of printing the article has fallen through, as I hope it has, you might send me the whole of it, and if Mrs Glenny wants a copy she shall have one before long.—What you say about the "Aphrodite" naturally gives me great satisfaction, and your advice about correcting and publishing it in England seems to me good. Send it to me, and I will try to smoothe out the rough places, and send it back to you to do what you like with, after having a copy made for myself. There is no hurry about the publication — better, I think, to wait untill I have published other things so that the "Aphrodite" may be vouched for as not immoral by the respectability of her introductions. The "Lucifer" is now finished at last — much sooner than I has expected. Would you think it a mistake to let Stone and Kimball publish that in America? You see they have the copyright to what is practically the first act, which appeared in my "Sonnets", so that it seems natural to let them publish the rest. Any further editions of the "Sonnets" would then contain only short poems, while the "Lucifer" would be a separate volume of 150 to 200 pages. Perhaps Stone and Kimball could get some English house <||Cauk|| and Day> ||Elkin|| Matthews, I suppose — to bring it out at the same time in London. It is a thundering big work, but whether good or not I can't tell. I should be glad to have you see it, but don't want to let it go now, as little changes constantly occur to me that must be put down on the spot, or they are forgotten.

Let me know how your own labours progress and what your movements are to be. I send this to Florence for greater safety, although I suppose you are not there.

[m[Send the MS to me here, where I remain until Aug 23, or thereabouts. Yours ever
G.S.]m]

King's College
Cambridge

Aug. 6. '97

Dear Loeser

Thank you very much for your letter and the "Aphrodite" which came today together. It is all right about Mrs Glenny's paper, as I have sent three old sonnets to the "Harvard Monthly" instead of the translations I had thought of first.

I have read your criticism with great interest and appreciation. It is a very fortunate thing for me to have a friend who has at once so much perception, so much patience, and so much sympathy that I can look to him for real help in what I write. After thinking over what you say in your letter I have re-read <over> the whole "Aphrodite" noticing your suggestions. I feel the justification of most of them, but not of all. As to the general question of the level at which the characters and style should be kept, my feeling is this: it would undoubtedly have been better if I had originally conceived the whole piece in the spirit of the fourth act (which, with the fifth, was written much after the rest, and three or four years after the third act, the love scene, which, as I told you in Florence was the kernel of the whole.) But the Offenbachian stuff between Zeus and Hera in the first act, and the whole second act were conceived as a mere *jeu d'esprit*. Now, if the piece as a whole has anything like the importance and interest which at one time you attributed to it, undoubtedly it would be worth while to purge all the old stuff away and rewrite the first two acts in another spirit. But the difficulties in the way of this are various. I don't like to fuss over a thing which I had laid by with the profound sigh of release with which one always writes FINIS. Then I am not sure that I could find the ideas and the verses to substitute for those now there. And what is worse, might not a pompous beginning make the sequel seem less fine than it seems now, raised upon a vulgar and commonplace pedestal? We must also remember that the authority of Homer allows a certain buffoonery and brutality to alternate with dignity in the characters of both Zeus and Hera. Is there not, perhaps, a fine touch in that, just as in depicting Napoleon we should wish to show the great man's littlenesses? And Zeus, in the conception of him I adopted, has the <|| . . . ||> gift of knowing how to be a king when it is necessary and a good fellow when it is possible. A more statuesque and metaphysical deity would of course be more sublime; but is it within my powers to render him, or would he be in place here? However, I will let your good hints lie in my mind, and if any practicable scheme occurs to me, I will reform Zeus altogether. — The rhythm and diction of many of the lines are bad; that I may hope to improve by an occasional rereading, pencil in hand.

I will drop Strong a line before I go up to town again. I sail on September 2nd so that any [m[more trips are out of the question this year.

Yours ever G Santayana]m]

75 Monmouth Street
Brookline Mass
Jan 22 1898

Dear Loeser

Here is the long delayed MS of the Aphrodite which I had promised you. You will find some changes — not so many as I should have to make, only my interest and my invention have both taken to other channels, and it is with difficulty that I have brought myself to meddle at all with this old *lexperim . . .* ll. On p. 13 you will find the only addition — one suggested by you. The other changes consist in omissions and slight changes in phraseology. Zeus, first speech is also recast, and I hope improved.

I have had another copy made, <I> so that you may consider this yours, and do what you like with it, even publish it if you can find anyone willing to undertake the risk. I don't care to have it come out in America now or by itself: together with Lucifer or the Hermit's Christmas it might pass; but these are not quite ready for the press.

I will write again about things in general and my plans for next summer, when I hope to see you again.

Yours ever

G. Santayana

75 Monmouth Street
Brookline Mass
March 11 1898

Dear Loeser,

I have been hoping to hear that you have my last letter and the manuscript of the "Aphrodite", which I sent you some time ago. But as I promised to let you know when anything definite was arranged for my summer, I write now, although much may yet be changed in my plans before the end of June. I expect to go at that time to England, to stay a few weeks, and then perhaps to Spain and at any rate to France to visit the Potters. If you are there or at the Maloja I should be glad to join you for a while, and take some exercise in our old and excellent fashion. I have not yet taken my passage either to Europe or back, and I hope to make my return voyage later than usual. But I shall have to be here again at the end of September for the beginning of term. They have finally appointed me "assistant professor" beginning in September next, and, it seems likely that I shall remain at Harvard for the rest of my days. It is the simplest solution of my affairs and has its advantages although as you know it discourages and ^{oppresses} me a little to think that I shall never be really free. The unsympathetic character of this ^{adm} atmosphere is intensified now with these rumours of war, and the criminal conceit and effrontery which characterizes the mob and their newspapers. I try to fortify myself with philosophy and indifference to the accidents of human folly; but it tries my patience, and deepens my scorn of the forces by which the world is governed. I am also overworked, for besides regular lectures there are many addresses, reviews, and odd papers which it is not easy to escape. The compensations are the sense of having stayed in the place where circumstances first placed me, — a principle I respect — the competence secured, the congenial work, and the opportunity to be surrounded by young men and to influence their thoughts and sympathies a little in the direction of those things which have some essential importance. Next year the greater part of my lectures are to be on ancient philosophy, so sadly neglected here, and I am also going to revive a course in aesthetics, to develop the philosophy of art as a supplement to my "Sense of Beauty."

I should be glad to know how this winter is passing for you, how your publication gets on, and what your plans are for the summer. Don't forget also to tell me a little of the gossip you may hear.

Yours ever

G Santayana

Avila⁶
Aug 20 1898

Dear Loeser

I have just had returned to me a letter which I sent you care of Theodor Veib in Stuttgart, which used to be your safest address. He and you are both insultingly described as unbekannt. I hope this second attempt to reach you will be more successful.

Your letter found me at Oxford where I was for three weeks in July, then I made some visits, and came here to see my sister and get an impres- of the effects of the war on Spanish opinion. People are sore and disgusted, somewhat unreasonably angry with the government and disappointed at seeing the illusions they had nursed so cruelly dispelled. But everything is quiet and apparently prosperous, at least in these parts, where a good crop has more influence on men's temper than distant disasters. Spanish indifference and power to suffer now can play a beneficent rôle, and prevent greater misfortunes.

My plans are not wholly formed, further than that I sail from Liverpool on September 14th. In the interval I shall of course pass through Paris and London. Is there any chance of seeing you in or near either of these places? Send me word here if you can do so at once; if not to Brown Shipley & Co or to the Hôtel du Quai Voltaire where I shall probably be for a few days [i[until]i] about September 10th.

I should be sorry to go away without having seen you.

Yours ever
G Santayana

⁶ This letter is on blue paper

Cambridge, Mass.
June 4th 1899

Dear Loeser.

Only a line to say that I expect to be in London, at 87 Jermyn Street on June 27th. Pray send me word of your whereabouts and let me know if I am to see you this summer. My plans are not definite except that I go to Brittany sooner or later for a longish visit.

I have sent you, through the publisher, a copy of "Lucifer" which I hope you have received. My address is also c/o Brown Shipley. Yours ever

G Santayana

King's Arms
Oxford

July 11 [1900?]

Dear Loeser

I am glad to hear that you are in England. Henley has no charms for me and I have not been disporting myself there, in spite of my landlady's surmises. I have been here for a week and go tomorrow to Howard Sturgis's at Windsor, until Saturday when I shall be once more in Jermyn Street. Look me up there in the afternoon or send word where I may meet you.

My plans are, like yours, quite unformed for the immediate future, so that we ought to be able to arrange some little trip or sojourn together. My idea had been to return here for another fortnight, but my only purpose in doing so would be to reach a quiet place where I might do a little writing. Later I expect to go to Spain and, on my way back, to Brittany to visit the Potters, who are again there. I sail from Cherbourg or Southampton on the 13^a of September.

Your friends the Strong's pleased me very much, especially Strong himself with his keen quiet little smile. The atmosphere, thanks to other guests, was somewhat archeological, but Strong's satirical sense saves even erudition from being foolish.

The great Berenson has been here, complaining of a bad digestion and of consequent temptations to suicide. But he was stimulating with his talk about the classics, to which I replied with religious reflections. Au revoir Yours ever

G Santayana

Oxford July 17 1901

Dear Loeser

Your welcome letter was the first I received after arriving in England, where this year I was unusually late. I wish it were practicable to arrange a meeting, but I fear Switzerland and Venice are too far afield for me. If I leave England it will be only for Paris and possibly Avila — hardly for any other place. There is work to be done — at least that is my programme — and here I find it is accomplished more easily and pleasantly than anywhere else. If I get stale and bored, however, my remedy is Paris for the body and Avila for the imagination. My return passage is taken for September 18th. Is there no chance of your reaching Paris or London somewhat before that time?

What has been the result of the photographic and financial projects in which you were plunged when I last saw you? And your notion of abandoning Florence before long, is that to be carried out? I am sorry to hear that your health has not been perfect. That may mean that you have not accomplished all you had in mind for your winter's quota of grubbing and Platonizing.

This year, if you notice, is the fifteenth since our graduation at Harvard, and although I tried to avoid all the reunion dinners and excursions which the misguided committee devised for the occasion, I did see a number of '86 men at commencement, which, for my sins, I was at. They seemed pathetically transformed by some Circe into cart-horses and hacks of various descriptions, and I trembled at the thought that their minds were without doubt not less unsightly and vulgar than their bodies. Or were we always a poor lot? I suspect we were, and that the young men of these days are a great deal better than we were in breeding and disposition, whatever we may think of their wits. That is the great compensating joy of living in America, that everything visibly and hourly improves there — I mean that something better constantly breaks its way out of the mass, which [i[latter]i] may, for all I know, not change its quality.

Let me have another word from you, especially if there is any opportunity to make our paths coincide for a while. My address is Brown Shipley.

Yours ever G Santayana

Address
c/o Brown Shipley & Co
London

Avila, Sept. 17. 1904

Dear Loeser

I am here for a fortnight on my way to vague Eastern Regions, as my holiday fills the winter, and I mean to take this opportunity of visiting Sicily, Greece, and Egypt.

Where are you, and may I hope to induce you to join me somewhere? I am afraid you have been in Sicily too recently to care to go there again, but if not, let me know when and where you would make a start.

Is your podere a reality?

Yours ever

G Santayana

Avila, Oct. 10. 1904

Dear Loeser

I am delighted to have your letter and, as you may suppose, nothing could give me more pleasure than the idea of being with you again in Florence. My stay here is being prolonged for one reason or another, chiefly because I feel at home and dislike the moment of departure. I shall hardly leave before the 23rd (a great feast here): and what it occurs to me to do then is to move towards Florence directly, by way of Marseilles and the Riviera — at least, if you can have me there as early as November 1st or thereabouts — I suppose it will be some days later. Sicily will come later; I can go there on my way to Egypt, where, however, I must arrive in January. A friend of mine, Frederich Morgan, who is the American Consul to Cairo, is expecting me, and I should at any rate fear the heat and glare more and more as the season advanced. Couldn't you persuade yourself to leave your labours in November and journey southward with me? I hope to persuade you to do so, or at least to follow later and join me in Greece.

For the present, let me know, addressing me here, whether I may hope to find you in Florence during the first days of November. If so, we shall have time enough to talk over the other things.

Many thanks for your offer of books about Sicily. As you can see they are not needed now. I can read them while I am with you.

The weather now is perfectly delicious, the sky incomparable, and the fields, for a wonder, green with grass that had sprouted since the harvest. I went last week to my brother-in-law's farm to see the vintage. It was the Georgics to the life; and now near this primitive agriculture is to nature and to the gods; how intelligible it makes all human language and superstition!

Let me have your answer soon. Yours ever G.S.

Hôtel de Milan, Rome. Oct. 26, '12

Dear Loeser

This news is news, yet doesn't surprise me. The threshold of old age seems a good place at which to repair the omissions or the mistakes of youth, and take the most prudent measures for living as humanely as possible during the rest of one's days. You have my best wishes, and I look forward to seeing you (in the plural) with even more interest than I expected to feel in seeing you again (in the singular). — How long is it since we were last together — in London, I think — is it ten years? — You probably haven't changed in appearance, as your type is good for all ages; but you must be prepared to find me quite another person — except in mind. I am grown quite grey, a trifle portly, and (according to Berenson) the vulgar Mediterranean type of old man.

If you are wedded, I am divorced. I have renounced Harvard, America, and the yearly contingent of one or two admiring pupils, destined to forget my philosophy even before I forgot their faces and names. I have retired on a modest competence, made up of my savings and a legacy I received at my mother's death, last year; and for the present I don't know, and am in no haste to know, where I shall live in the end. For the moment, my headquarters are at Strong's in Paris — (9 l'avenue de l'Observatoire) — where I have such of my books as I thought worth preserving, and the voluminous manuscripts of my unpublished works. These, and the clothes I travel with, make up all my worldly possessions; and I assure you it is a great joy to be erleichtert even of the small weight of earthly goods which I bore in America. You say you have heard that I may be much in Florence in the sequel. I may, because I am free to be anywhere and it will depend on how indispensable to my happiness you (in the plural) make yourselves, whether I shall be there a great deal or not. What you have heard was doubtless based on the fact that Strong is building a villa at Fiesole; but I have told him beforehand that I shouldn't want to live there (he was good enough to talk as if I might, and to have a room designed especially for me) because I fear the Anglo-American aesthetic colony of déracinés. Being that sort of thing myself, I need the moral cohesion and want of affection in my background which I shouldn't find in a nest of "the likes of me". In Spain, besides the immense advantage of being at home in the language, I have family friends — besides my two sisters, one with a large and friendly household — and I have already spent two delightful months in Madrid, in a situation which it would take too long to describe as it deserves, but which was very satisfactory. The only trouble is that the climate of both Madrid and Avila is severe, and I am beginning to need warmth and comfort. Besides, although my attachment to England is not so great as it was, my true and unfeigned ideal would still be to live there; and I must make trial of it, before settling anywhere else, or I might not be sure that my choice was final.

All this is about externals: but I have very definite literary plans to occupy me wherever I may be; and in this respect my new freedom is a great inspiration. It is such a relief not to be a professor, and to be at liberty to be as frivolous and as profound as the spirit moves one to be, with no thought of whether pupils will think one fit to figure among one's colleagues or one's colleagues fit to appear before one's pupils. I feel about this as (if the lady were not so young) you would feel about your marriage: Why couldn't it have been long ago! Yours ever
G.S.