

1915

Books published:

Richard Aldington, *Images*

Richard Aldington, *The Poems of Anyte of Tegea* (trans.)

Richard Aldington, *Latin Poems of the Renaissance* (trans.)

F.S. Flint, *Cadences*

F.S. Flint, *The Mosella of Decimus Magnus Ausonius* (trans.)

Some Imagist Poets

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29. RICHARD ALDINGTON TO F.S. FLINT

[14 Jan. 1915]

Dear Franky,

Thanks for yr note. I enclose cables from Amy, to which I have replied saying that H. & I wouldn't stand out. I wish you'd write Amy yr views & give her yr permission to appear as Imagiste.

I suggest that you act as go-between to Ford, as he probably won't want to see me & I most certainly don't want to see him!¹

Do send Amy a note.

Come down to see us some evening soon.

Yrs

R.

30. F. S. FLINT TO AMY LOWELL

17 Canonbury Park North
London
England
24/1/15

Dear Amy Lowell,

Richard tells me that you have been disturbing the herrings in the pond by the multiplicity and plexity [*sic*] of

1. Possibly Ford did not wish to be labelled 'Imagist'. But why Aldington should seek to use Flint as intermediary is not clear. Later Aldington was to produce a satirical caricature of Ford as Shobbe in Part II, 'Andante Cantabile', of *Death of a Hero* (1929).

your cablegrams. And that you want my permission to do something or other. Do it by all means, I leave everything to you on the spot. But don't issue us to the world as the Quintessentialists or anything else high-falutin' and fantastic. Please don't do that. Before you decide on anything: ask yourself: Would Boston do it? If yes, don't. Perhaps you had better stick to the old title of *Some Imagists* or whatever it was. Never mind about Ezra. He no more invented Imagism than he invented the moon. I have all the documents in proof. He got all his ideas about Imagisme from the little *céncacle* [*sic*] which used to meet in the Tour Eiffel, off Tottenham Court Road. He was a late comer to those meetings – much later than I said in my review of his *Ripostes*, where, in the preface to Hulme's *Complete Poetical Works*, he refers to our jousts. There Hulme, the leading and combining spirit talked of Images & so forth, as we all did, and produced the first Imagiste poems – at the end of the *Ripostes* they are now printed. All Ezra did therefore was to run about talking about the things which existed as though it was the thing he had made. I thought his phrase in the preface [two illegible words] to the effect that the future was in the keeping of the Imagists was in jest at the expense of Hulme & Co. Be all as it may – Imagisme be damned! I don't want to be called an Imagiste at all. I entered the thing as, a joke, – *une mystification littéraire* – *stratégie littéraire si vous voulez*. That Ezra would strut about as the inventor of a real new live aesthetic afterwards did not occur to me. There is nothing new in Imagisme: and if I write its history it will be seen that Ezra's part in it was very little more than the – very American – one of advertising agent: and he has done his work so badly, that everyone here takes the thing as a silly joke. If I do write this article I will send it to you to print in some review or other over there. Did you get my letter thanking you for your book? Your damned nation is making a fine spectacle of itself.

Yours ever,

F.S. Flint

As regards Hueffer – I don't see how we can do anything. He has been insulted by the American publisher who rejected

his poem as non-religious – it is not sugar candy either or coals or soft soap – and it is up to the publisher to go down on his knees not us.

FSF

The thing purports to be a poem. It is one – and there's the end of it.¹

31. RICHARD ALDINGTON TO F.S. FLINT

Christ Church Place
Hampstead
N.W.

[8th February 1915]

Dear Franky/

Come & see us on Monday evening, & bring with you everything you have of Huysmans! I have been reading some of his things & also Verlaine's at the B.M. It strikes me that we are a little foolish not to know more of them. Huysmans' *Croquis Parisiens* contain some splendid imagism, & *A Rebours* is most amazingly delectable "pourriture" [delightful rottenness!]. Huysmans' notes on literature, scattered up & down his books, are really original, and energetically expressed. I know you object to his use of language & his references to food – mais on peut bien disputer ce propos [but we can argue about this]. And Verlaine, ce pauvre bélian – has one ever read anything more delicate, more naïve than his curious explications of his bestialities & repentances? Est-ce que je deviens un Décadent, moi aussi [am I becoming a Decadent too]? But come and parlons littérature [let's talk literature].

I enjoy your poem & will print it with pleasure. I have an idea to put one of my own underneath it – with your permission – with the title "London to Bagdad". Poem enclosed.

To reach us you come to Hampstead tube station – turn to the right up Heath St., till you reach the dairy express, then right again, down Elm Row, through "Hampstead Square", we are just beyond the church – thus [Aldington included a sketch map]

Thine

Richard

1. This probably refers to Ford Madox Hueffer's 1914 poem, 'On Heaven'.

P.S. Important
 Forgot – am going Yeats' Monday. Will you come/ And come
 here Tuesday?

Suburban Love

A fine dirty rain
 Prints on the window pane
 Patterns in soot.
 A smoky coal fire
 Furiously puffs dire
 Whirlwinds of soot;
 Above, a pianola
 Rattles, like a steam-roller,
 A vaudeville tune;
 And the children in the court-yard
 Finding life damned hard
 Bellow a worse tune;
 And Mr Potter (of Lloyds' Bank) seeks amid the din
 'Mongst ill-washed petticoats the region Epicure.¹

R.A.

32. F.S. FLINT TO RICHARD ALDINGTON

The Poetry Bookshop,
 35 Devonshire Street,
 Theobalds Road,
 London W.C.
 15/3/15

Dear Dicky,

There's still a misunderstanding. We must be honest with one another, unless we are to develop into a mutual back scratching society. I said seriously to you that I thought your *prose* was not good; to Hilda that I didn't care for the *hortatory* tone of her last batch. Now that was what I genuinely thought about both. It was said in no spirit of disparagement. You two are the last people in the world I should disparage; and it was said because I thought you would care to know what I felt. I should never tell Monro, for instance, that his prose was bad, or his verse did not please me. If therefore you retaliate and

1. There are clear parodic echoes here of T.S. Eliot's poem, *The Love Song of Alfred J. Prufrock*.

say without believing that my articles are dull, you are not playing me fair because I take this as a real opinion; I value its origin; and I take it to heart. Of course, it cuts me at the moment but then I've no conceit or vanity about my writings; and I weav[e] round and face the fact that it is quite possible that my articles, as I suspect myself, *are* dull, and it would be a good thing and an honest thing if I stopped writing them (the war has done this for me) and this is not a pleasant thing to face.

There it is then. I don't mind in the least your telling me what you really think; but, as I say, it is not fair – and you confess now that this is what you did – to damn me out of a mere desire to get your own back.

If I didn't think that one of these days you'll write damn good prose, I wouldn't say a word about the prose you write now. It's only because I think that if I tell you now that your prose is bad (bad that is, relating to the prose you will have to write in the end) it will make you watchful of it that I do so at all (seems something wrong about that sentence). And if I say these things at all, it is pure disinterestedness, that is, I do not place myself in the comparison. As a matter of fact, I have a worse opinion of my own prose and "poetry" than I could possibly have of yours – as bad an opinion indeed as is possible for anyone who is conscious of the literary art – you will allow me that I hope – to have.

Now, Dicky, don't for heaven's sake get it into your noddledoddle [*sic*] that I am in a huff. I got the blues because I thought I had had a dose of unwelcome truth, not because you gave me another dose. A man, unless he's a fool, only quarrels with his doctor when he finds that the doctor has been dosing him with vile medicine for a complaint he hasn't got. Put it that I have the complaint. I have always been hypochondriacal [*sic*] on the subject.

See you Wed. I'll come to tea (at Hamp[stead]) and convince old Bosch¹ for you that your accent is better than mine.

Yours

F.S.F.

1. Jean de Bosschère (1878-1948), Flemish poet, illustrator and artist who came to London as a refugee during the Great War. Flint translated his book of poems, *The Closed Door* (1917). De Bosschère also illustrated Aldington's translation of *The Decameron* (1930).

Sorry you don't like poem. I thought it rather good myself. Lost Illusions, again! There's a poem there, however. Haven't gone at it right.

33. RICHARD ALDINGTON TO F.S. FLINT

THE EGOIST

[March 1915]

My dear old Franky/

You shouldn't mind my chaff & you should remember the scriptures – do unto others &c. After all you make me and my works out to be pretty poor dung & expect me to be delighted; when I retaliate on *you*, you mount a blue goat & dash into the abysms of mental lassitude. Ass! as if I should cart home a bundle of Monro's "bumf" if I didn't want to read your articles! You didn't hesitate to say H.D.'s poems were "hortatory", when they are works of art; why should I not say your essays are "dull"?

But assez. Thanks for giving me the translation. But doesn't it mean *monthly* instalments? 5 francs a *week* would make £250 a year; £5 a *month*, makes £60, as Remy says. We must ask our "cher Bosche".

Yes, I'll see you on Wednesday, & we'll drown all resentment in a foaming bowl of Monro's half-warm tea slop.

Thine, in all cordiality & mes sentiments les plus distingués,

R.

Your poem is so-so. I'll print it of course – if you can't do anything better, though I was relying on the English contingent to bear the weight of the American. Fletcher has sent a moderately good thing.¹

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In April 1915 the anthology, *Some Imagist Poets 1915*, was published for which Aldington anonymously supplied the Preface.

1. John Gould Fletcher (1886-1950), American poet, and one of the early Imagists. He contributed to the anthologies, *Some Imagist Poets* (1915, 1916, 1917).

The six contributors were Aldington, Flint, H.D., John Gould Fletcher, D.H. Lawrence, and Lowell. The correspondence between H.D. and Flint indicates that Aldington and H.D. were responsible for the editing, with H.D. consulting the contributing poets for their views.¹

The Egoist issue of 1st May 1915 was a special Imagist issue, edited by Aldington. It contained articles, criticism, and poems by Aldington, H.D., Flint, Harold Monro, Fletcher, Lawrence, Lowell, Marianne Moore, and May Sinclair, among others.

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34. RICHARD ALDINGTON TO F.S. FLINT

I have the new *Mercure*.

7 Christchurch Place
Hampstead. N.W.
[Spring (?), 1915]

Dear Franky/

I am very pleased with yr article; it was just about what I wanted; I think the footnote about E.P. should be taken out; we don't want to shove him into the limelight; it hurts him far more to be ignored than to [be] slanged.

Can't you whack up another poem? Try, there's a good fellow. I made a prose-poem out of an [*sic*] walk; will show it you when you're next over. Come & see us soon. Storer is an ice-douch, but I shall do the whole lot of you down yet, & you'll be glad to slink into "fame" under my aegis.

More damned unfairness. I met a little American with £1000+ per annum, [illegible word] to £10,000 per ditto. Knows nothing; has translated Judith Gautier's poems, (Judith Gautier's!!) & got it ACCEPTED AT ONCE BY CONSTABLE'S.² I lectured him for an hour on you; hope it did some good.

Thine,

R.

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1. See Pondrom, 'Selected letters from H.D. to Flint: A Commentary on the Imagist Period' (561-62) in *Contemporary Literature*, vol. 10, no.4 (557-586).
 2. Judith Gautier (1850-1917), French writer, mainly of poetry, but also plays and novels. Daughter of Théophile Gautier.

35. RICHARD ALDINGTON TO F.S. FLINT

THE EGOIST
7 Christchurch Place
Hampstead. N.W.
[undated, but spring 1915]

Dear Franky,

Rot and sink you, why didn't you come round last night? I had heaps to tell you. I am scheming a complete special Imagist number of the *Egoist* to salute the anthology.¹ Ça marche [How's the work going]? Will you give a poem and do your article on the History of Imagism? Scheme as follows:

Hist. of Imagism.	F.S. Flint
Poetry of Amy Lowell.	Peabody Marks.
Poetry of D.H. Lawrence.	Olivia Shakespeare [<i>sic</i>].
Poems by H.D., J.G. Fletcher, F.S.F., D.H. Lawrence, R.A. – possibly E.P. and Clara Shanafeldt.	
Review of <i>Imagist Anthology</i> , 1915.	Harold Monro.
Why I am the only Imagist.	Ezra Pound.
The Poetry of H.D.	Q.E.D.
The Poetry of F.S. Flint.	Richard Aldington

Do you agree – but of course you do. Get the article done, there's a good fellow. And try and persuade Monro to do the review. I want someone quite impartial.

Remy says *Mercure de F.*² is republishing April 1st and promises to insert any article I like. Shall do one on our

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1. The special number of the *Egoist* devoted totally to Imagism, and edited by Aldington, was published on 1st May 1915. The eventual contents differed somewhat from Aldington's original plan, and were as follows: 'The History of Imagism', by Flint; 'The Poetry of Ezra Pound', by Aldington; 'The Poetry of H.D.', by Flint; 'The Poetry of John Gould Fletcher', by Ferris Greenslet; poems by Aldington, H.D., Fletcher, Flint, Lawrence, Amy Lowell, Marianne Moore, and May Sinclair; 'The Imagists Discussed', by Harold Monro; 'The Poetry of F.S. Flint', by Aldington; 'The Poetry of D.H. Lawrence', by Olivia Shakespeare; and 'The Poetry of Amy Lowell', by Fletcher. Significantly absent as a contributor was Pound, who resented the leading role being assumed by Lowell.
 2. *Le Mercure de France* was a highly influential French literary magazine, co-founded by Remy de Gourmont and Alfred Vallette in 1890.

anthology, 1915. Don't speak of this until I am quite certain it will come off.

Come and see us Tuesday night if you can.

Yours,

R.A.

36. RICHARD ALDINGTON TO F.S. FLINT

7 Christchurch Place
Hampstead
N.W.

[May (?) 1915]

Dear Franky/

Splendid. I am "real glad" Harriet has at last done a reasonable action; she ought, of course, to have done it 2 years ago. If I might intrude a suggestion, I would advise you to write a series of articles on French poetry, going back to Corbière, to Baudelaire & Gautier even. Then your remarks on the new people will be more intelligible. Of course, that's like Ezra's offering to lend you his notes (– his notes!) but there still remains to be written in English a connected, coherent, critical account of French poetry from 1880 to the present time.

Perhaps H. may have put your poems in this number? 'Wartime', is, of course, better than 'Springs'; but you can do better stuff.¹ You once accused *me* of being discursive. I retaliate. *And* you do pair noun and adjective in real Miltonic fashion: "bovine quiet", "daily content", "mottled laurel", "young green", "yellow daffodils" (did you ever see scarlet ones?), "smooth mould", "trim garden beds" (a cliché of the most abominable & Carter's catalogue² kind), "golden buds of the chestnut trees" (unpardonable romanticism for those sticky brown knobs which might possibly *reflect* a sickly yellowish light, but never the opulence of "gold"), "soot-black bougns".³ I leave it there. My dear Franky, you are a genius,

1. 'War-time' later appeared in *Otherworld* (1920).

2. The London seed merchant, Carter's Tested Seeds Ltd., was founded in 1837.

3. Following Aldington's criticisms, Flint omitted only one of these adjectives: "trim".

but you don't work over your bloody stuff enough. What do you mean when you say "the prices are '*judged*' day by day by the people"? Observed, commented on, grumbled about, compared? Which? I believe you are economically wrong; the poor blighted "people" haven't a chance to judge; they must either pay what is asked or go without.

Will you – after this tissue of insults – write the article on H.D.? There is no one else who cares or knows enough to do it; I can't decently do it myself; & I am doing you and Ezra – a chance to get back at you both! Will you come over on Thursday? Bosschère wants you to take dinner with us all on Saturday. Shall I suggest the Isola Bella?

He says he wishes to promenade "dans les beaux parcs de Londres comme les feuilletonists du XVIIIe siècle". A la bonne heure! ["in London's beautiful parks, like 18th-century critics". That's a fine idea!]

Thine, with all rejoicing & good-will,

Richard.

37. F.S. FLINT TO HARRIET MONROE

17, Canonbury Park North,
Canonbury,
London, N.,
England.
10th May, 1915.

Dear Miss Monroe,

I duly received your two letters and the copy of the October, 1913, number of *Poetry*, and I hasten to send you the article on Claudel.¹ I am afraid I have somewhat exceeded your limits, but Claudel is so big a subject that to attempt to put him into 1,200 words is like trying to squeeze a whale into a sardine box! If, however, you must curtail, I have marked in pencil "...." a passage that could be left out. I have thought too that as space was so limited information would be more valuable than comment. I may say that I consider Claudel

1. Paul Claudel (1868-1955), French poet, dramatist, and diplomat. His most important plays are *L'Annonce faite à Marie* (1912), and *Le Soulier de Satin* (1928-29). His poetry includes *Cinq grandes Odes* (1910), and *Cantate à trois voix* (1913).

very important, and in view of the number of years he has remained in the background and of how little he has sought recognition, his is no jumped-up reputation, but one that has grown naturally, and that in its main outline was formed already many years ago (see R. de Gourmont's *Deuxième Livre des Masques*).

I should be quite happy to send you articles on French poets from time to time, but do I understand you consider that Ezra Pound has definitely abandoned the field? I have established certain relationships with French publishers, and should I obtain books from them on the plea that I was going to write about them in *Poetry*, it would be annoying if E.P. suddenly got ahead of my course and took the wind out of my sails! Perhaps you can suggest a means of preventing any such clash. The best way would perhaps be for you to tell him that you have asked me to write about French poets.

Many thanks for accepting 'Wartime.' I send you an amended version, with the last five lines altered as you suggest. I am also sending you a copy of 'Easter,' which has already appeared on this side in *The Egoist*, and which you may care to print. *On en a dit du bien [It's been well spoken of]*.

Will you kindly deduct a year's subscription to *Poetry* from any moneys you may be sending me, the subscription to start from January, 1915.

May this letter evade the Pirates. After the 'Lusitania',¹ *Gott strafe Deutschland*.

Yours sincerely,

F.S. Flint

P.S. I recollect two things.

1. Will you send a copy of the number containing the article on Claudel to

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1. The *Lusitania*, a British cargo and passenger ship, was launched in 1906. It left New York bound for Liverpool on 1st May 1915. Six days later on 7th May it was hit by a torpedo from a German submarine, and sank. 1,201 lives were lost, and 764 survivors were rescued. It now appears that she was illegally transporting shells and ammunition as well as passengers.

Monsieur Paul Claudel,
 au Ministère Des Affaires Etrangères,
 Paris.

Will you likewise send a copy of the number containing any future article of mine on French poets to the person chiefly interested, whom I will indicate.

2. I am preparing the authorised translation of Verhaeren's¹ "Heures du Soir, Heures d'Après-midi, Heures Claires" (this is the reverse order, but no matter). Would you care to publish a selection of these, if I got permission to print them in a review. I am turning them into prose, and in appearance they will be much like Tagore's stuff. These poems of Verhaeren, dedicated "A celle qui vit à mes côtés," are love poems of great tenderness and simplicity. If you accept and I get the permission, I would propose that you pay Verhaeren and myself in equal moieties. Verhaeren is in some straits through the war. His house and garden just over the Belgian frontier are in German hands. He was in London for some time, then Cardiff, and is now in Saint Cloud. He is an extraordinarily decent sort. (By the way, it has just struck me that you may take this all as "ad misericordiam". I intended it as literary gossip.)

38. F.S. FLINT TO AMY LOWELL

Canonbury Park North,
 Canonbury,
 London, N.
 31st May, 1915

Dear Amy Lowell,

Your letter came this morning, and, as I seem to detect in it a touch of bitterness about a mild remark of mine that Fletcher was determined to "boost" you, I hasten to reply. You say that none of us over here "seems over-anxious to "boost" the absent American." But you forget that we

1. Emile Verhaeren (1855-1916), Belgian poet, some of whose poetry Flint translated. Verhaeren was killed when he accidentally fell under a train.

are none of us anxious to “boost” anyone. If you look at the “Imagist” number of the *Egoist* – without troubling about the articles on Ezra Pound, D.H. Lawrence and J.G. Fletcher, as being rather out of the discussion – you will find an article by Richard on me in which he sets down his idea of what I want to do and of what I have done: he hits me on the knuckles once or twice pretty hard; you will find no article on Richard; you will find an attempt by me to interpret H.D.’s work; and only in Fletcher’s article on you will you find any special claims made for its subject as compared with the others: “one of the foremost Imagists” (as though in a book of half a dozen of us we were not all foremost); “the scope of her technique is less limited,” which is meaningless from an Imagist point of view, and not true from any other. There were other things, I believe, which Richard left out. Our object in this Imagist number was presentation not representation, and, if Fletcher confined himself to presenting you in your aspects as a poet – Heaven knows there was material enough – no-one could have raised objection; but he was not content to do that; he must needs represent you as one greater than your colleagues, as the one richest in moods and effects, thereby setting up an offensive comparison with the inevitable rift between the two things compared. In what was a collective effort of the group, this was out of place and disloyal: we are after all as yet only discoverers; so that when Richard handed me a copy of the Imagist number and I saw Fletcher’s article, I said to him, “There are all the elements of dissolution in that”; and he agreed. Let outsiders proclaim any one of us the Lord or Lady High Image; that is their business if they make the discovery. But amongst ourselves and when writing about ourselves we can at least, each in loyalty to the others, refrain from “odorous comparison”.¹ There is not only lack of “esprit de corps” – to return your phrase – in this, but also lack of collective dignity. Now do not think that behind all I have been saying there is any jealousy as between you and us as poets, or as between your side and ours as American and English. Speaking for myself, I can only say that when any one of us produces what is indubitably a poem, I am

1. In Shakespeare’s *Much Ado About Nothing*, Dogberry states: “Comparisons are odorous”, using a malapropism for ‘odious’.

glad. The final judgment, appraisal and order of merit we can leave to those who come after us, or, in short, it is not our business.

I am very glad to hear that your French lectures were so great a success, and I shall be happy to receive a copy of the book. *Quelle veine que la vôtre, madonna mia* [how fortunate you are, dear lady]! I have been wanting myself to write a book on modern French poetry, but, as I get older, I get deeper and deeper into life and more tightly into its grip. I'm afraid I shall never write the book. Meanwhile, as you have heard from Richard, I am translating Verhaeren's *Les Heures Claires*, *Les Heures d'après-midi* and *Les Heures du soir*. It's a job that is interesting enough, but not so difficult as you seem to think. It is going into prose, the only way to translate verse. It is quite true I have a son, and my wife thanks you for your congratulations. We rather starved the poor little beggar at first, and he's been spending his life hitherto getting over it.

As regards your polyphonic prose, now, don't for heaven's sake think that the remark I made was done with any intention to disparage your work. I merely wondered, not really knowing exactly what your invention was in all its bearings, nor – I confess – having read the whole of Fort,¹ whether Fletcher in his claim was not laying you open to attack. There's also another chap, you know, Saint-Pol Roux² le Magnifique – a very clever writer, but not, I think, more than clever, who has done something of the sort. It might amuse you to get his books – you will find a list of them in the *Mercur* catalogue or in *Poètes d'Aujourd'hui* – to see whether you are not working along the same lines.

Now one last word, Amy Lowell, and that is this. Please believe me when I say that I feel as warmly towards you as I did during those bright and curious days of early war last summer when we had such good times together. Please do not think I blame you for Fletcher's shortcomings. And please do throw away the idea that over here is a little

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1. Paul Fort (1872-1960), prolific and wide-ranging French poet and editor. In works such as *Ballades françaises* he wrote some striking prose poems, seeking to “marquer la supériorité du rythme sur l'artifice de la prosodie” [“indicate the superiority of rhythm over the artifice of prosody”].
 2. Saint-Pol-Roux (1861-1940), French lyrical dramatist.

clique that would do anything to hobble you or anybody else for that matter who has come to us as a friend. All we care about is poetry; and there is no doubt that you are going to give us a good deal. I liked your 'Spring Day' very much.

Yours ever,

F.S. Flint

39. RICHARD ALDINGTON TO F.S. FLINT

16/6/15

Daisy Meadow,
Brasted, Kent
Weds

Dear Franky,

Excuse my appalling laziness; I did not reply to you from a Russian dread of action. I knew I ought to do so. I did – nothing. We are probably returning Friday, but even if we stay over the weekend we shall have our hosts with us and the house will be crammed. I do regret that you couldn't come down last week as it is perfectly lovely here. Such a garden! It would furnish you out some half dozen sentimental bits. We are on a hillside looking out across half a county; there are deep-scented white carnations, red large poppies, blue and yellow lupins, gladiolus, irises, pansies & roses, in the garden; we get our water from a well & use a dainty earth closet. Et ego in Arcadia.¹ There is a quarry full of wild red fox-gloves within half a league. I shall abandon "poetry" and become a country market gardener.

Tout à toi,

Richard

1. An anonymous tomb inscription. It appears in paintings by Guercino, Poussin, and Reynolds. It may be translated in one of two ways: either 'And I too [the occupant of the tomb] was in Arcadia'; or 'I too [the tomb itself] am in Arcadia.'