

## Bicycling with Bertie, October 8-31, 1898

Bernhard's letters to Mary, Senda and Salomon Reinach  
while he was bicycling with Bertrand Russell  
with a letter from Isabella Stewart Gardner

Entries in Mary's diary, October 1898

Thursday, Oct. 6, 1898, Verona

Churches — the Gallery — I went to see Alys and Bertie and Mother who had 3/4 of an hour changing trains for Mantua.

Monday, Oct. 17, 1898, Frullino, Florence

Alys and Mother and I came down and spent a pleasant week here, **while Bernhard went bicycling with Bertie.**<sup>1</sup> They stayed a while with the Countess Pasolini<sup>2</sup> at Monte Ricco.

Bad news came from America, which weighed on both our hearts. Bernhard's enemies are trying to persuade Mrs. Gardner that he has cheated her over the pictures he has bought her, and her husband (who was always jealous) believes it. Still, she does not, and that is the important thing.

Friday, Oct. 21, 1898, Frullino, Florence

Then we drove to Careggi to see Mrs. Scott-Barber, **Bertie and Bernhard arriving at the same time on their bicycles.**

Monday, Oct. 24, 1898, Frullino, Florence

**Bernhard and Bertie went cycling** to San Donato,<sup>3</sup> and passed an unforgettable day in marvellous scenery.

Monday, Oct. 31, 1898, Frullino, Florence

**Bernhard and Bertie bicycled** to Pontassieve.

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<sup>1</sup> It is not clear how Bernhard and Bertrand Russell procured bicycles along the way.

<sup>2</sup> Maria Ponti Pasolini dall'Onda.

<sup>3</sup> ? San Donato in Poggio, frazione di Tavarnelle Val di Pesa, beyond Passignano.

## Letters, Sept.-Oct. 1898

a letter from Isabella  
ed. Hadley, p. 154.

Pride's Crossing, Beverly, Sept. 25, 1898

My dear friend,

Having written the above words, you must understand what I write and why I write it.

There is a terrible row about. Undoubtedly you have heard it all before, and many times. I have been sorry always when I have heard of disparaging things about you; but now the vile things have been said to Mr. Gardner. That is why I am writing.

**They say (there seem to be many) that you have been dishonest in your money dealings with people who have bought pictures.** Hearing this Mr. G. instantly makes remarks about the Inghirami Raphael you got for me. He says things I dislike very much to hear, and then brings up the Schonborn Dürer and quotes the differences of prices. I cannot tell you how much I am distressed by it. Perhaps you may think it were better if I did not tell you all this. Forgive me, if you would have preferred my silence. When by my representations, he (Mr. G.) decided to lend me money to buy the Hope pictures, I was over-delighted and instantly wired and wrote to you to that effect. But today, I feel obliged to add this letter.

Mr. G says 'Now we shall see if he is honest.' What that means I do not know, but **I feel sure that you have enemies, clever and strong.** What plot they lay for you I do not know but I am certain they are always watching you, and misjudging, making false representations. I pray that you may be successful in making excellent bargains for me for those 3 pictures, and that you may go your own straight way in the teeth of these evil speakers. May good luck pull you through this time, so that Mr. G. may believe me and feel convinced.

Every word I write seems cruel and unnecessary. Forgive the sound of the words and look beneath them for my truly friendly motive.

I fancy Emo and the Paget crowd are not the only enemies you have. Be on your guard-and believe me always

Sincerely your friend,  
Isabella

a letter from Bernhard to Mary

Hotel Aquila d'Oro, Mantova  
Saturday evening <Oct. 8, 1898>

Dearest Mary,

Your sister will have told you what a wonderful church we visited yesterday, really one of the particular masterpieces of Italian art. We spent this forenoon at the Castle where people once entertained a dream of a certain form of perfected human existence — not only entertained, but, at least outwardly, achieved. And the shell of this Renaissance *Altamura* is the Mantuan Palace.

As I returned to order lunch I was almost stiffened at the sight of the widow Green. I pretended not to see her, of course.

In the afternoon we went out to Santa Maria delle Grazie. The church is a fine enough Gothic structure. One chapel is filled with the tomb of Baldassare Castiglione, severe and impressive. The rest of the church is covered with a sort of wooden frame work, the columns and arches of which are ornamented with votive wax breasts, heads, feet, heads, etc. Within the arches are votive figures the size of life, coloured to the life, and in real clothes. And yet, it was neither quite hideous nor quite vulgar. I must add that all this Madame Tussaud business dates from a good time.

The Pasolini can't have us before Wednesday, so we shall not stop at Bologna but get Monday night to Ravenna. So please address Hotel Byron, Ravenna until Tuesday.

(We leave Ravenna early in the afternoon Wednesday).

Thanks for the forwarded telegram.

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a postcard from Bernhard to Mary

**Modena**, Sunday night <Oct. 9, 1898>

We've had a perfect day, started early, took train to **Suzzara**,<sup>4</sup> and **bicycled** to and from **Guastalla** where Leoni's statue is very fine.

At **Carpi** it was charming, an endless piazza with an arcade on one side, a grand castle on the other, and the cathedral at the end. I found no note from you.

**Then we bicycled here.** It was delicious, a perfect road, a pure cool sky, and the twilight.

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a letter from Bernhard to Mary

Ravenna, <Monday> Oct. 10, 1898

Dearest Mary,

We have received all our letters, including those you sent to Bologna.

**Things do look black**,<sup>5</sup> but only one question remains in my mind whether if worse got to worst I could count on you. Poor and disgraced, all my enemies triumphant, could I count on you? You would suffice for me.

We had a glimpse at the Modena gallery this morning, and spent most of the day getting here.

Please arrange so that I can return Saturday. In the circumstances I had better be home.

Address Wednesday presso la Contessa Pasolini, Monte Ricco, Imola.

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<sup>4</sup> 20 kilometers south of Mantua.

<sup>5</sup> See the letter from Isabella to Bernhard of Sept. 25, 1898, printed above.

See also the entry in Mary's diary Monday, Oct. 17, 1898, Frullino, Florence: 'Bad news came from America, which weighed on both our hearts. Bernhard's enemies are trying to persuade Mrs. Gardner that he has cheated her over the pictures he has bought her, and her husband (who was always jealous) believes it. Still, she does not, and that is the important thing.'

Thursday, Albergo Corona, **Faenza**.

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a letter from Bernhard to Mary

Ravenna, <Tuesday> Oct. 11, 1898

Darling Mary,

This fright will have had its use if it has succeeded in making you realize that you do love me — at least as one loves the dearest friend on earth. How happy we could be if you always realized it!

I speak of “this fright” because of the enclosed telegram, which gives me hope that this time at least I shall pull true. I could wish to be a true believer so as to be able to pray to God for deliverance.

Russell has been a blessing. He always is delightful, but this time, in the waking hours at least, he has turned my thoughts off from whirling in a vicious circle.

Of the night I spent I will not speak.

We saw sights in the forenoon. After lunch I went to the gallery, and then we **bicycled** out to S. Apollinare, and afterwards into the Pineta. There near the water’s edge we sat down under the graceful trees, in the soundless air. of course my mouth was bitter, and my heart in my throat, yet I doubt whether *en artiste* I ever enjoyed more. Strange paradox of sensation!

**The Rasponi**<sup>6</sup> has just arrived here, and we are going to see her after dinner. After Thursday forward no more letters.

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a letter from Bernhard to Mary

Monte Ricco,<sup>7</sup> <Imola, Wednesday> Oct. 12, 1898

Dearest Mary,

**The Pasolini**<sup>8</sup> is a perfect hostess. Not only did she come to the train to meet us but brought our letters, and insisted on our reading them on the spot. Then she drove us by a beautiful round about away to the Villa. This is a house in the grandest baroque style, of brick shod with stone, four square standing on a plateau, as an English country house in the midst of fine trees. Within, the house is all in the grand style, furniture no less than proportion of rooms, and yet perfect quite English comfort. We had tea, and now we are about to dine. There is no one here but the Countess and her younger son.

**The Rasponi** was very nice. We spent the evening with her in the vast and tremendous palace she inhabits. As usual she was very scattered in conversation. Today she was with us until we went to the train. She brought

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<sup>6</sup> contessa Rasponi dalle Teste,<sup>7</sup> Angelica Pasolini dall’Onda (1854-1919), daughter of Giuseppe Pasolini dall’Onda (1815-1876), wife of Giuseppe **Rasponi dalle Teste** (married 1876)

<sup>7</sup> Villa Pasolini dall’Onda, Tenuta Montericco, Imola

<http://pasolinidallonda.simply-webspace.it/montericco/?lang=en>

<sup>8</sup> contessa Maria Ponti Pasolini (1857-1938, married 1874), wife of conte Pier Desiderio **Pasolini** (1844-1920).

along Corrado Ricci, who is a nice, simple, big-hearted fellow. I fear Russell was much bored, as Ricci spoke nothing but Italian. Ricci showed me some remarkable Giottoesque frescoes I had never seen before — by the hand I think which did that exquisite panel at Perugia — hitherto so puzzling.

I am not talking of the thing nearest our hearts, because until I hear from Otto there is nothing further to be said. There is a love to be so sympathetic.

I shall scarcely reach you again by letter. So if I do not write to the contrary, please have me met Saturday<sup>9</sup> 10.40 a.m.

Shall sleep Friday night Faenza, Albergo Corona.

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a letter from Bernhard to Mary

Monte Ricco, (Imola, Thursday, Oct. > 13, 1898

Dearest Mary,

Your letter of yesterday brought me early this morning was sweet and tender. I suppose I shall have to put up with your being absent on my arrival, although it will be desolate. Please leave anything that may come for me on my desk in my house.

Russell will have told you what an amusing time we had last night. As the Pasolini had been seeing a good many French people, she retailed to us some of the usual platitudes about England's selfishness and hypocrisy. This started Russell, and he jingoized<sup>10</sup> for hours — in remarkably good French by the way — as never I have heard any one before, with a splendid insolence and a calm assurance.

It was delicious waking here in the bracing air, to a golden sky, to the birds singing. We strolled after breakfast in sight of the Apennines, lunched early and **drove in to Faenza to see Russell off.**

We made two various attempts to see the museum, but failed of course. We had better success at La Magione where Girolamo's frescoes looked radiant. He really was a nice creature. On the way back we stopped to see that tomb of Bianca di Landreana who died *in aurora* of premature child-birth.

Tomorrow I go to **Forli** to see the pictures. Duprez will meet me there. I shall sleep at **Faenza**, and start Saturday<sup>11</sup> at 7.20 a.m. for Florence.

If you must go, please do not stay away a moment longer than you can help.

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a letter from Bernhard to Senda<sup>12</sup>

Monte Ricco, Imola, Oct. 13, 1898

Dearest Senda,

I am writing to you from one of the grandest places in Italy, the villa of

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<sup>9</sup> Saturday, Oct. 15, 1898.

<sup>10</sup> To make excessively patriotic statements.

<sup>11</sup> Saturday, Oct. 15, 1898.

<sup>12</sup> Cited by Samuels, *Connoisseur*, p. 323,27 & p. 453.

the Countess Pasolini. It is not a large house, but like a gigantic, and yet elegant tower. The Pasolini is nicer than ever. There is no one here with her except her younger son. Of course she sends you her love.

I have been having a delightful time these last ten or fifteen days. I have revisited Verona, Mantua and Ravenna, and seen a number of other places I always had longed to see but rather hard to get at. This time it was easy. My bicycle came to meet me at Mantua, and I scoured the country. Perfect roads, not too warm, golden skies, and lovely country. Company also was not lacking. Mary's brother-in-law, **Bertie Russell**, has been with me, and he is a great youth. **I have never known a person with a mind at once so active and so clear.** True his special subject is metaphysical mathematics, yet we have plenty in common.

I return to Florence in a day or two — I hope for eight months of continued and quiet work. May the good Gods help my vows!

I hope you will succeed in seeing Zangwill.

Yours affectionately,  
B.B.

a note from Mary to Bernhard

<Oct 14, 1898> Friday night

... Miss Blood expects **thee and Bertie**<sup>13</sup> on Sunday, if it doesn't rain. Alys and I will get home about 2 o'clock Sunday night, but of course you won't wait up for us. ...

a letter to Salomon Reinach

5, via Camerata, San Domenico di Fiesole, Florence

Oct. 16, 1898

My dear Reinach,

I have not Richtenberger's address. I wonder whether you would be good enough to forward him the enclosed.

How are you, and why am I not hearing from you?

I have just returned, and on the whole had a very successful trip. Now I pray to whatever Gods there be to remain undisturbed for eight months.

**By the by I have just been to Ravenna**, and seen the relief which, it is supposed, Mantegna knew and copied for his engraving of the Sea-Deities. Do you know this relief? The question in my mind is whether it is not rather after Mantegna.

I need not say I follow events in Paris with the keenest interest. I hope you still may be saved, but it will have to be as with fire.

Yours ever,  
B. B.

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<sup>13</sup> at the Gamberaia.

a letter from Bernhard to Senda<sup>14</sup>

5, via Camerata, San Domenico di Fiesole, Florence

Oct. 31, 1898

Dearest Senda,

Yes, I saw the Kolbs at Munich, and the fascinating Polish countess also. They all wished to be remembered to you. The weather there was as nasty as we found it. Mr. Zug I have just answered. I do hope you will manage to see Zangwill. You need have no shyness as he will be very glad to see you.

I have been back a fortnight, and I should find it difficult to name a parallel to these days that have passed for beauty and charm. I can not at all recall such an autumn. It has been more like May with all the delicious promise of the maturing spring. It has been too lovely to stay much in doors. True there is one's work to give one a bad conscience or to add a zest to loafing, but on the other hand I have been wondering whether ever again for me such perfect days would come, and speculating thus I have abandoned myself to enjoying them.

Mary's sister and brother-in-law are staying with her. He, **<Bertrand> Russell**, has the most active and one of the most delightful minds I ever have encountered. We have been out together a good deal, walking or bicycling, or combing both. You should see our skies of the purity of intense flame, and the golden bronzed rocks, and the golden green trees. And all the time Russell turning some ordinary fact or idea over and showing you a side that had not occurred to you before. His special interest is metaphysics and mathematics, about as strange to me as art is to him. But history and literature is our common ground.

I have recently been more excited than ever over affairs. The Dreyfus affair, the Bourgogne disaster,<sup>15</sup> the French attitude towards our war have made me abhor France, and now comes the Fashoda business with France,<sup>16</sup> showing, on top of all her knavery, fraud, Jesuitism and cowardliness, her even more odious crime — her always trying to be the dog-in-the-manger in all the world's affairs. She needs a licking, and for everybody's good I wish England had taken this opportunity of administering it. But alas! We live in peaceable times.

I am reading for the first time Trevelyan's *Life of Macaulay*,<sup>17</sup> a book which I find so very amusing because it enables me to trace back to their source so many of the faults and as well as the qualities of my friends the Trevelyans.

I am glad to hear that Ray feels at home and happy at Smith. Of course I am eager first of all that she should pull out of herself what really is in her. Yet I should like it, if her greatest interest happened to be real literature. Give her my love.

Ever affectionately,  
B.B.

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<sup>14</sup> Cited by Samuels, *Connoisseur*, p. 323,14 & p. 453.

<sup>15</sup> Bernhard had sailed on La Bourgogne in 1894.

<sup>16</sup> The Fashoda Incident was a territorial dispute between Britain and France in eastern Africa in 1898. A French expedition to Fashoda on the White Nile sought to gain control of the Upper Nile basin and thereby exclude Britain from the Sudan.

<sup>17</sup> George Trevelyan, *The Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay* (London: Longmans, 1880).