

Flaxman 774.
Sloane Square Studio

9/31/76

19 Glebe Place

Chelsea S.W.3

July 20th 1933.

Dearest H. M. S. -

I am so pleased to have your long and most interesting letter about "Tehomend of Youth". It would have been strange - and, as you say, very hard - to have been you in the War; and yet not more strange than it seems to me now to have been I in the War, as I was then. Although I don't think I quite agree that we should not have had a war to say to each other in 1915. I was when happy - in the sense of accepting it - about the War. A letter that I wrote to Roland from Oxford (quoted on p. 127) expressed most exactly what I felt - it was written in February 1915, and ended by saying that especially in spring everything might be creative, not destructive, & that we should encourage things to live and not die.

But, as I said in another place, we were too young to have had power to direct the removers of imperious of history, and we had been brought up in an artificial middle-class world, with unreal values and naive ideals. We were ripe for exploitation; we were exploited and bladed; but we were not imitators. If we had heard of and understood the point of view that you represented before it was too late, some of us - Edward, for instance, and probably myself - would doubtless have

accepted it gladly. But my friends all died before they knew
how to distinguish truth from falsehood; they died for
misleading gods, believing them to be the true ones,
and serving them honorably and bravely. Only I lived
on into a different world; or rather, I died with
my friends in every sense that mattered, and rose
again to be someone quite different, in a different
world. It is the story of that death and resurrection
(which must be typical of half my generation) that
I have tried to tell. As you say, I felt that people
might forget it; and I don't think that anyone who
remembers it, or is reminded of it, will be exactly
attracted by the idea of another war.

I did feel, and do feel, the fears of its reception
that I expressed, but chiefly, I think, because I care so
much that people should realize what I have tried to do,
and why I did it. Your letter encourages me so
much, because it makes me believe that perhaps they
will. How understanding of you to know how hard I
chased what you call "that strange element of fugitiveness
in life"! It was the something which lighted up the
Magna chapter and made it - in my mind, at least -
so different from all the others - a queer glamour and
a fleeting vision of beauty which I have never had

anywhere so poignantly, either before or since.

I am interested to learn that Manchester was so different from other towns round about it, because I always had this impression, and read that somewhere in the book. I did it so there often, but wherever I did I had a sense of release. My picture of Buxton is not in the least exaggerated; if anything it was more southern, more Absconantist than I have shown it. Phyllis Bentley says that Halifax was just the same and Winifred that Hall and Cottingham were and are while St. John Ervine tells me stories of gents in Devon, who might be the very husband-hunters of my débutante Buxton days. Perhaps if we had lived in Manchester, all my friends would have been conscientious objectors - though it would have been hard for them to stand up against the insidious influence of the pre-war public schools.

I don't know if I have ever told you that one of the most moving things I have ever read was the passage in your book "Bundles of Peace" which describes how you read "Watchman, what of the night" to the village group (was it in Wales?) which was still making up its mind what to strike of the War. It was one of the memories that were behind

what I write of the crusade against war being potentially
more inspiring than war itself.

I could go on writing to you for hours - but I must
not say more now, because I have a thousand things
to do before we go to France on Sunday. It was such
a pleasure to see you the other day amid all your lovely
flowers, and I'll come again soon, if I may, when
we are back again from Harkelst.

I shall treasure your letter and re-read it again
and again:

With much love -

Yours affectionately

Ursula.
