Thomas Eakins Letters to Family, 1868

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Good Friday 1868
Dear Fanny,
Did you understand anything in my last letter. If you did you are smart, for I don't think there was anything in it at all. I was so sleepy I could hardly see and after I put the letter in the post office my sleepyness turned into an awful sick head ache that put me to bed before dark & without my dinner but next day I was right well. My remembrance of the letter was that I was acting as a sort of drunken Mentor & Pickwick & episcopal minister.

I was at Versailles a couple of Sundays ago & saw a priest judging a game of marbles that the little boys were playing & teaching them how to knuckle down. What would daddy Chambers say of that. I had green [pease?] at least two weeks ago. They came up from Marseilles & cost no more than [strike] in the [strike] in summer or very little. The sun now gets up before six-clock & little birds sing & fight & make a general noise so that I never oversleep myself but get to school always by 7 o'clock.

Today there was no meat to be had because it is good friday & for breakfast they gave me cod fish as salt as brine which I could not eat & Little Bonheur [?] told me to come to his house to dinner

I received a draft all right for which I am infinitely obliged. Henry Moore's brother is on here from California. He is a chemist & is come to complete his education. He will probably go to Germany next week. He is as deaf as a post but talks very well. You would think he was a little affected in his speech & he has a childish voice but you would not suspect his deafness. He understands by the motion of the lips & not only English but a little French & [strike] Ge [strike] a good deal of German. He is [strike] He lost his hearing when ten years old by [strike] a scarlet fever.
tonight which I will do. When I was nearly done my breakfast the restaurant man himself fetched me a piece of cold mutton. The servant assured me there was not a bit in the house. She did it for the good of my soul. Most people think they will go to hell if they eat meat on good Friday & others that don’t believe in it at all never eat it before & don’t like to begin & would rather take a dose of castor oil than a nice piece of beef. Of all religions the Christian is the most intolerant & inconsistent & no one without living here can know what a frightful war it wages against everything that is good.

Your last letter told me about Daddy’s & Sheely’s day. You ought to have known better than to go out on either of them. I am glad you treated them well but be sure you don’t admire him for anything but his good heart & want of vices for he is very very silly.

I am not surprised that Haty plays better than Amy for she has a good teacher & being naturally above the level never [strikeout] debased herself by frequenting what is called society. [Shinn?] signs himself enfant perdu in his letters which he writes for the bulletin & makes French in them & although he never connects more than two of the foreign words together he somehow still manages to get them wrong. I wonder what percent the sprinkling of such trash [strikeout] enhances the money value of newspaper correspondent. If a Frenchman put foreign words in his writing I am sure there is not a paper in Paris would print his stuff even for nothing.

I suppose your skating is now wound up. Grease your skates before you put them away & maybe it wouldn’t be a bad notion to sharpen them & not wait till the skating again. You & Maggie ought to go to Jansens & learn to swim this summer. He warms the water the first of May I think. You boat so much that you ought to know how to swim. If you swim well maybe Poppy will take you sailing once to show you how nice that is for it is much better than rowing. Mr Lenvir has just sent me an invitation to come.
to his house & dine with him Wednesday
next so I will write him a note
that I am coming & put that & this
in the post office together. Do you
ever see Johnny or Lidie Leary

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My dear Mommy I am sorry to see by Fanny's last letter & Poppy's too that Emily is at her old tricks again. However the simplest plan & best is not to notice her & I guess she will tire herself when she finds it brings her no good. She has lost Fanny's friendship [[strikeout]] for always & that of the rest of the family & thus her chance to study with Fanny which certainly was a great benefit to her studies whether the studies in themselves were useful or not. She hurt herself long ago by her folly in the eyes of her father & brother. She broke with me who was always a good friend to her & now with a confidence to my father would force him to [[strikeout]] rule not only Fanny to her will, but I begin to suspect me too. This I take as so high handed that it is certainly no more than ridiculous & when she breaks with her father & she must do by her excessive claims for Will has often told me she never could keep a friend she will [[strikeout]] have to seek a new field for conquest. [[end page]]

[[start page]]

Paris jeudi Fbre 29, 68

Ma chère Fanny,

Je m'en vas t'escripre dans le bon vieulx français:

M'est advenu ceste semaine trois lettres, dond une de nostre bon ami Billy Crowell et les aultres de nostre père et de toi. Je ne scai rien de la lettre espaisse que la particulière ha escript a nostre père; car il ne m'en ha point parlé. Seulment parlant d'icelle m'ha conseillé de ne pas escrire au sien ami a New York pour véifier une histoire, ains ha dict valoir [[?mieula]] laisser passer, cen vieulen chosen la pour ce que je ne recepvoir fran de response car elle alloit parler a ce sale escroce la de sorte qu'il ne me respondist point a ma lettre ce dond du reste je n'auroin esté moult marn. Ce frindent y ha un mensonge

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et force aultren et ne sont poinet avecquen moi.

Gerten me suru encoren grant peintre. Il n'y ha que deux ann que j'estudie. Mais estudie avecquen touten merc forcen et l'espirit que le bon Dieu m'ha donné et faire den frotre non moïn que len aultren.

Mon pere estoit de moi content et l'est peut-être encoren; mais n'est a son aise et m'ha deux foins escript me conjurent de ne jamais, faillir et me dict soughvent elle et sans frère estudier avecquen Schussele aprèn l'antique d'aprèn nature et d'aprèn je ne scai quoic encoren et que auroin poine a marcher devant icœux.

De ce voin incontinent que la paour n'est pan a lui. Croin-tu qu'oncquen on faust avoir dict a mon père Schusselle estre plun grant maistre que Gérome. Paris estre endroict manduyt pour estudier la peincture, Philadelphie estre bon lieu. Si tu ne croin pan n'es de mon avin.

Y ha den femmen que veulent tout gouverner et en prime place les hommes et d'autant plun qu'ellen soient faibien et incapable de se diriger ellen-mesmen. Et quand une femme ha ceste farie la ne connaist plun de borren ne de pudeur, ainn fourre son nez partout sol meslant es affairen d'autrui respendist defferendn de famillen appreste sen plann, et ne considère len aultren que comme lui appartenant que comme len siens propren oustiln pour reussir et non comme personnen ayant bon entendemment et raison et sentiment.

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hung up your Mama’s stocking instead of your own for a little girl's stomach is I am sure bigger than her foot.

Paris 12 9bre 68.

Ma chère Fanny,

Ne te desplaise que je t’escrive encore en français. D’ores en avant tu peux compter sur mon arrivé par le Noel. Ne fait autr’ excuse que l’amour de ma mère et la bonne volonté de mon frère qui dispense son argent pour le sien plaisir et mon grand contentement. Et ne perdrai trop mon temps non plus attendre que les jours soient si courts qu’on me semble le jour estre parachevé aussitôt estre commencé. Dieu nous doiset un Noël bien gai ains que la santé a toute la famille et a vos bons amis. Te débrai debvoirs arriver une huitaine avant. Tu on me faille une bonne tourte es cranberries et verront les gens ce que en ferai. Tu me fais tousjourn la gentillesse de me parler de huîtres. Bon, j’y pense, et quand ta tant te faille un veaux en lieu de sofo au préjudice de Charley que ce soit elle me servit elle qui me serve de huîtres. En mangeant huîtres elle me servit a l’envi. Beau fera nous en remplir le ventre. En mangeant huîtres on gagne en esperit attendu que les huîtres.
contiennent vertun phosphoriques et autres substances mirifiques dont est faicte la cervelle humaine lequel ha esté desja sceu et exposé par Reddy Vogdes qui en ha [a] fait l’expérience et Francis Wayland Docteur et sciences mentales morales et idiotiques. (Re DD. Y Vogdes auctore [auteur] de modo migliorandi animis et deboccandi botellas Liber XXXXLCLII. ) Ones [[Ons]] est (graz ez sciences) apertement veu et cogneu [[cogneux]] pourquoi non estre jusqu’a Reddy Vogdes huictr aulcune qui ne soit mout joyeuls [[joyeux]] gai et de bon entendement veues lindicte vertus la renfermées. Et les patatas doulces y en ha t’il encore? Si elles sont de nature a faire les hommes plus spirituels qu’ils ne le sont sans icelles mais reste toujours asseure qu’elles communiquent a la langue et a l’estomac une volupté et une douceur sans pareille et que ca suisse et le bon Dieu sort loué.


Dear little Caddy, When you get this letter there will be only a month to Christmas time when all the good little boys & girls hang up their stockings & as I expect you will be very good & deserve a great deal of goodies I hope you will think to
Mardi le 2 /Obre 68.

Ma chère sœur,

Je n'ai aucun temps pour t'escripivre et je n'ai point besoin non plun vu que serai bientost avecquen toi. Tu peux le dire a Billy Crowell si cela te faict plaisir et a Charley et a qui bon te semble. Suis tout prest a partir len veltements sont achetër et men chaussurin sont racommodé[?]}. Vriens de recpvoir une note de Mme Moore qui m'engage de venir la voir sur le champ. Fault que je me presse. Elle ha une lettre de son vienla père qui craint neburir avant de voir sa fille chérie. Elle sera peut estre construint de partir avec quen moi. Dans se case écheant besoin me sera en arrester quelquen heuren a Bordentown, avec quen elle mais prendrui le prime train aprèsc hour Philudelphie. Parn samedi a bientot. Tom [[image]] Len huystren

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