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NEW YORK CITY  
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May 5th 11:30 P.M.

Dearest Emma,

I've got to stop a moment to rest my eyes as I come to the bottom of galley #124--the agonized moment in your book when Leon Czolgosz is electrocuted. Writing a letter to you is the best kind of respite for my eyes and for the tenseness created by the last, and so far the best of many magnificent chapters, of your book. It is a good occasion too for swallowing many of the harsh things, said in all solicitude and in all candor, which I felt needed utterance when we were together in Paris.

What I have to say as a proof-reader will be saved for a letter to Sasha; it concerns little technicalities of spelling and consistency, trivia which in no way effect the book. I've taken no liberties and I've stuck conscientiously to the style of orthography established by Sash. The spirit is the thing, and I must say the spirit is there undeniably.

I've always maintained that the easiest way to absolve oneself from the onus of helpful but painful criticism is to say "it's marvelous" and let it go at that. I owe you more than any such simple evasion. In many respects I believe your book is marvelous. As a narrative it is constantly gripping, intense and crowded with events of almost superhuman courage and resourcefulness. From that point of view it will be read with great avidity by many people. It has memorable portraits. (I point out particularly the history of the relationship with Brady, the first fine exposition, from a woman's point of view, of a tormented, ecstatic and constantly uncertain union, to get itself adequately written.) The people and the material are rich. I can't say as much for Havel, and perhaps it's an old animus that colors my view.

Helena is portrayed well; Mother a lot better than she was in the first version. David not at all (so far) and myself too generously.

I really should not be writing this letter until the whole book has been read. Of the galleye in my possession, there are 280 and they go as far as the moment when you set foot on Russian soil. I understand that there are 100,000 words to come. When I will have read the remainder, I shall write a really intelligible letter on the whole subject, giving a general statement of my response to the book. ~~This must be in the nature of a preliminary report, just to show the progress I am making with the first batch of proofs and to make you realize that I am doing it as conscientiously as Sasha would himself. If there are any mistakes, I want to be held personally responsible.~~

I could argue endlessly on the implications of your book, on the truths it contains (your truths, my truths, some universal truths) but that would lead us nowhere. Every one in the world must establish his own points of emphasis. With some of yours I would quarrel vehemently (some romantic conceptions, some devotions which I cannot feel, yet which you convey as your own with great conviction). This is your flesh and blood; I realize that. As such it is sacred to you. A great deal of that sacred fire will be conveyed and much of it will be lost. That is inevitable. The immensity of the book in itself will throw a great deal of valuable ~~material into the shadow. But it all had to be told, I can~~ realize, and exclusions must have been difficult.

I believe Sasha has done a marvelous job. I'll tell him about that. But what I want to say here, and I'm in a position to know because I do the same sort of thing for a living, Burton was the soul of discretion in preparing the manuscript. I could not have done so well myself.

Let this suffice for a preliminary letter. But let me add that Frances is marvelous....And how is Davey? Give him my deepest love and Stella too

*Sasha*  
Today will probably be with you before my next letter arrives. He will have many messages. He has been very busy for almost 7 months and it has been a period of great joy. Let him tell you whatever you want to know about us. Lovingly yours, his love.