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Erika Mann
Kilchberg/Zürich
August 9th, 1955

Dear Mr. Forster.

I am an old "checker" - meaning that during the last two decades or so I have been in the habit of re-reading books which truly impressed me when I first devoured them. Just now, ROOM WITH A VIEW and PASSAGE have newly been "tested", and though it will be no revelation to you, I am happy to report that both novels stood up magnificently. Not as if the longevity of PASSAGE had surprised me either. An established "classic" of that order, your standard work (along with ASPECTS) would scarcely have withered. Even so, world events have long since robbed the book of its burning actuality, "ranging" it, though it were, "coldly on a shelf" among countless historical novels.

This in mind, I started somewhat worriedly on my new "Passage" only to find that time had enhanced rather than reduced all that I knew to be fine and great about the book - all of its human and artistic validity. Formerly, some character or other might have appeared to be just a little schematic (the colonial official, the laudable exception with the "I" slant, the childlike though complex and neurasthenic figure of the young Indian); we might have felt them to be type and representatives rather than individuals. But now, your children have become fully and beautifully alive. And the story itself, having lost much (though by no means all!) of its topical "message" has acquired a novel meaning, both broader and more specific, more warmly direct and boundlessly humane. Nor do I seem to remember that "formerly" there was so much to laugh about in A PASSAGE. Now, there certainly is; and there is also that utter truthfulness which, whilst unmistakable in the first place, has grown even more striking - if this were possible - as the years went by.

Concerning A ROOM WITH A VIEW, I had been somewhat afraid that a modest measure of dust might have collected among its pages; that some of it might appear a bit overly romantic in an oldfashioned sort of way; a bit too sweet, too naive, too "direct" and pre-Raphaelitic. I needn't have feared. I wept. And if I felt the historical tinge to be even stronger than that of A PASSAGE, this was far from diminishing the story's exceedingly moving effect.

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KITJoppeler/SALTON
ELITE 1500

August 10th

HOWARDS END figures next on my list.

And that, dear Mr. Forster, is all. Meeting you - finally - was a rare and great pleasure which keeps lingering. May it breed successors!

My father's state of health - I am sad to say - is far from satisfactory. Though the doctors are not dissatisfied with local conditions, he is growing very weak, and we are much concerned.

