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Yrs, Ever Affly: The Correspondence of Edith Wharton and Louis Bromfield

editor Daniel Bratton, Carol Williams

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The close friendship between Edith Wharton (Ethan Frome, The Age of Innocence, and The Buccaneers) and Louis Bromfield (Early Autumn, The Farm, and The Rains Came) evolved toward the end of Wharton's long and distinguished life and during the height of Bromfield's career. Despite the disparity in their ages and backgrounds-he was thirty-four years her junior and a Jeffersonian democrat from the Midwest, she an aristocratic Old New Yorker with a penchant for Hamiltonian economics-the bond between them, described by Bromfield was "a close bond, as close in many senses as I have ever known."

During the period of their correspondence (1931-1937), Wharton divided her time between the Pavillon Colombe, an eighteenth-century house north of Paris, and Sainte Claire du Vieux Château, near Hyères in the south of France. Bromfield lived not far from the Pavillon Colombe, in Senlis, at the Presbytère de St. Étienne. The gardens of these estates and the fervor they inspired in these two Pulitzer Prize-winning authors began a relationship that would endure until Wharton's death in 1937.

At the heart of these letters is Wharton and Bromfield's devotion to the earth and to horticultural pursuits, a devotion immediately recognizable to all who share the passion of gardening. But these letters speak of so much more. The two friends wrote of the social-political milieu of America and France during the 1930s, gossiped about the literary worlds in which they lived, discussed the publishing climate of the Depression era, and shared their kindred love of travel and literature. Consisting of thirty-two letters, one postcard, and a note from Wharton's secretary to Bromfield's wife, their correspondence is presented here with meticulous annotation by Daniel Bratton to give an insight into the private worlds of these two literary magnates.

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