



Maupassant: An Autograph Letter Signed A Few Months Before His Hospitalization. 1891, On



900 EUR

Signature : GUY DE MAUPASSANT

Period : 19th century

Condition : Très bon état

Width : 10 cm

Height : 15 cm

Description

A moving letter on *Le Bel-Ami* letterhead, written a few months before his hospitalization. "Serious concerns and family sorrows have prevented me from replying to you sooner." Autograph letter signed by Guy de Maupassant (1850-1893) to Édouard Estaunié (1862-1940), novelist, engineer, and member of the Académie française. He is also credited with coining the term "telecommunication." [Cannes, June 15, 1891]. Two pages in-12° on monogrammed paper bearing the "Bel-Ami" letterhead, embossed with his initials, GM. Dimensions: 15 x 10 cm. In 1887, Édouard Estaunié had put the finishing touches on his first novel, *Un simple*, which shared the same plot and psychological intrigue as Maupassant's masterpiece *Pierre et Jean* (a son suddenly

Dealer

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discovers his mother's adulterous past and the painful secret of his own parentage.). In 1888, upon the publication of **Pierre et Jean**, worried about possible accusations of plagiarism, Estaunié contacted Maupassant, who acknowledged with great elegance the perfect simultaneity of their work in a beautiful letter dated February 2, 1888*. Maupassant even went so far as to offer Estaunié the use of his letter as a preface to his novel in order to publicly exonerate him of any plagiarism. Touched by this kindness, Estaunié declined the offer of a preface and chose to delay the release of his book. After waiting three years for the shadow of *Pierre et Jean* to fade somewhat, Estaunié finally published his novel with Perrin under the title *Un simple*. The book opens with an official dedication to Guy de Maupassant. This letter is also touching because of its *Bel-Ami* letterhead and because it was written during the darkest period of Maupassant's life, when he was suffering from severe complications of syphilis. In June 1891, Maupassant was only a few months away from a complete loss of his sanity. The phrase "Serious concerns and family grief" is, in this context, an absolute euphemism. Hervé de Maupassant, Guy's brother, died of syphilis in excruciating pain in November 1889. This loss deeply traumatized the writer, who already saw in it a reflection of his own fate. Devastated by Hervé's death, Guy's mother lived in seclusion in the south of France, sinking into chronic nervous depression and bouts of paranoia. The writer tried to cope with his mother's distress even as his own strength was failing him. [Header: **Sur le Bel-Ami**]*My dear colleague, Serious family concerns and sorrows have prevented me from replying to you sooner. I am very happy to have been able to please you so easily, and I am very grateful to you for kindly dedicating your book to me. Please accept my feelings of collegial sympathy. Guy de Maupassant. * February 2, 1888, Maupassant to Estaunié "Sir and dear colleague, Is it any wonder that the same subject

tempted us at the same time? You had the misfortune of seeing my book published before yours, even though both were ready at the same time. This is a stroke of bad luck that has befallen you, but it in no way detracts from the merit of your work. [...] At the same time, I would like to congratulate you on this first book, which I dare to praise since it resembles my own."** On the night of January 1-2, 1892, Maupassant sank irrevocably into madness while attempting suicide. Realizing that his madness was irreversible, orders were given for his immediate transfer to Paris to be committed to a psychiatric hospital. On January 6, 1892, before putting the writer on the 3:30 p.m. train, his loved ones and doctors decided to take him one last time to the water's edge so he could gaze at length upon his yacht, the Bel-Ami, gently rocking in the port of Cannes. Since the Bel-Ami was Maupassant's great love, his absolute refuge, the symbol of his regained freedom and his literary triumph, those around him secretly hoped that the sight of his beloved vessel would trigger a beneficial psychological shock--an emotional jolt capable of rekindling a spark of lucidity and bringing him back to reality. The miracle did not happen. Maupassant gazed at his boat, yet his mind could not anchor itself back in reality. He was then placed on the train, closely watched by his valet and a psychiatric nurse. The next day, January 7, 1892, he was admitted to Dr. Blanche's clinic in Passy. He would never see the sea or his yacht again, and he died eighteen months later without ever regaining his sanity.