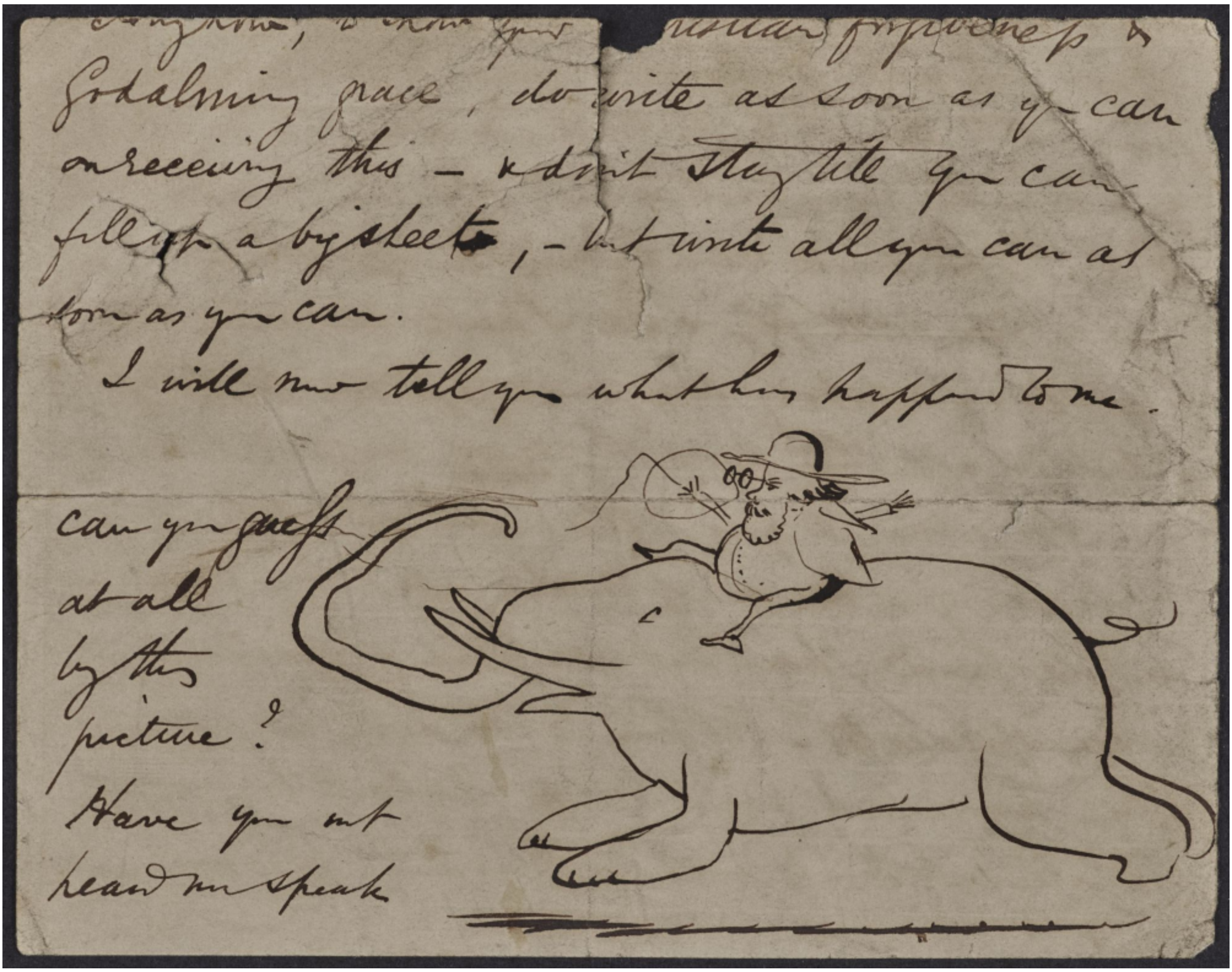
Self-Portrait riding an Elephant

Edward Lear

Sold



REF: 3151

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Description

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Edward Lear (1812-1888)
Self-Portrait riding an Elephant

Pen and ink
10.4 by 13.4 cm., 4 by 5 ¼ in.

Provenance:
David and Nancy Perth, 17th Earl and Countess of Perth

Fragment of letter verso: 'First, I will look over your letter to … any points that should be noticed; & afterwards I will tell you something "very particular" that has happened to E.L. - I ain't swallowed a spider - … not a bluebottle fly: - & I waint married, & …likely to: - & nobody has gone & left me 10,000£ -; - but for all that something has happened to me:- To return to your letter: I trust that … before now you are out of trouble about G.N.- I as an old friend, have but one line of opinion :-if a son speculates - let him do so on his own work, If you have lost your 500£ I shall be grieve & shall not think well of master G. any more, …'
Fragment of letter recto: '…& Godalming grace, do write as soon as you can on seeing this - & don't stay till you can as fill up a big sheet, - but write all you can as soon as you can. I will now tell you what has happened to me can you guess at all by this picture? Have you not heard me speak'.

This fragmentary letter was probably written between 1873 and 1875, when Lear spent 15 months travelling through India and Sri Lanka. In 1871, Lear's old friend Thomas Baring (1826-1904), 1st Earl of Northbrook had been appointed Viceroy and invited Lear to India as his guest. It was the longest, and last, of Lear's extensive journeys. Lear who by the time he arrived in India was 62 years old, was initially reticent about visiting, having just settled into his new home in San Remo. However, he received much encouragement from his friends, as well as several commissions for paintings of Indian subjects. He was captivated by what he discovered, writing in his diary on 22 November that he felt 'nearly mad from sheer beauty & wonder of foliage! O new Palms!!! O flowers!! O creatures!! O beasts!!...anything more overpoweringly amazing cannot be Conceived!! …Colours & costumes & myriadism of impossible picturesqueness' (Lear, Edward, 1812-1888. Edward Lear diaries, 1858-1888. MS Eng 797.3 (16)., Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.). There are several caricatures of Lear riding elephants in letters to his friends, including in a letter to Lady Waldegrave on 25 October 1873, just before his arrival in the subcontinent. (Somerset Record Office).

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