HCL  Written in red ink.

Fred W. Palmer was a first cousin, son of Seth and Lydia Anne Palmer, EAR's mother's sister. The Palmers lived on a farm in nearby Pittston, and there was frequent visiting back and forth during EAR's boyhood. EAR was 12, his cousin 27, when this letter was written. In addition to its boyish charm, it is a curious letter in a number of respects. What is the occasion for the letter? Why would a twelve-year old write to a cousin fifteen years his senior? If it is a thank you note for an unmentioned Christmas or birthday present, it is indirect to say the least. Why the request for secrecy? The letter starts off in a descriptive manner, a word-painting of the table in the little room. Then it breaks off, in embarrassment perhaps, as if fearful of ridicule for attempting to portray so familiar a scene. But the graphic sense is there. EAR began writing verse at eleven. It is not too far-fetched to conjecture that the future poet had conveyed to his cousin an inkling of an aspiration to write and had struck a responsive chord.

1. Herman E. Robinson, the middle brother, was four years older than EAR.

2. Gardiner is located in hilly country at the confluence of the Cobbossee and the Kennebec.

3. Dr. Horace Dean Robinson, the oldest brother, was 12 years EAR's senior. In 1882-1883 Dean was City Physician for Gardiner.