Fenclines, March 18, 1891

My dear Smith,

Atwood told me yesterday that you had been in Chicago over Sunday. If I had known it at the time I should most surely have taken it as a reason to offer you some company or to call on you for certain matters of a literary and educational nature.

I am reading Carlyle's Voltaire Recants and am completely muddled with the way the philosophy. It is just the book for you to read as it is in the midst of your philosophical and psychological musings you will find it a most welcome guest. There is a certain half-historical humor running through it that renders it all the more readable. The personal tone is evangelical but never morbid. Here is an extract from Book II - Chap IX: "How consider... what a fund of self eccent... it is in each of us, do you wonder that the balance should so often tip the wrong way... and many a blackhead cry: "See there, what a payment!" was ever a gentleman so ill-used?"

I tell you, blackhead, it all comes of the vanity... fancy that one, discovered to be hanged (as is most likely) then will feel it happens to be only short; fancy that too, turned to be hanged in a hair lectern, it will be luxury to die in hemp... So true is it, what I have said, that the duration of life can be increased in value not so much by increasing your number as in increasing your denominators. May, unless my grief be too

[Signature]
Unity itself divided by zero will give infinity. Make thy claim of saying a zero, then; thou hast the world under thy foot.

I am not sure that I quite see the meaning of the talk about changing andcheckboxes, but I think I have some idea of what he is driving at; I have been through the book and chapter so far can read the passage yourself to a better advantage by proceeding the book. I am writing to confirm that has for many passages that I actually failed to understand. But in the main it is an enjoyable and entertaining, instructive, and I think upon the whole, elevating. The introduction states that he had a most delightful experience in finding a publisher. This seems to be the case with nearly all great literary efforts.

There is an article in the last "Observer" by "Andrew Gage," entitled "What is Immoral in Literature." I have not read it, but probably you have. It seems to me that from a common sense standpoint, there can be no possible defense for that gentleman's fiction or perhaps on both better way, truth). It is the simple fact thing in the world for a person with the gift of writing to concord in shining tables after the fashion of "Saddle the Place to Kill." Then shall we, he and conclude it with, what it pleases the author to call a moral, but doing does not derive from the books, this time or pernicious influence. The first let us remind one who does not make the reader feel it is moral, pernicious, if the latter, but I consider them quite so pardonable. Do not think that I can sit up myself for a Saint Anthony (Canvick) for I am not, but I will say that the worst deluge of literary nauseas that has passed...
for the past ten or fifteen years from the evil sources of six or eight half-penny writers without any special literary excellence to aid them in their obviously mercenary mission has been a disgrace to American letters. Neither Poe nor Silliman nor literary artists, and their books are only bought by an itching selfish public when necessities shall

lend. Perhaps I am a little too hard upon letters, for some of his essays are said to be, in a way, fine. In a recent edition, the Atlantic remarked that his philosophy "shone some weight into the one line, but the light thrown upon the manner is chiefly a cigarette light." This is enough to prove that there is something in them worth reading [as essays]; but I was only speaking of his works. If a man must have something essentially positive, why can he not satisfy himself with the work of the ancient and venerable Victor? Finitely, man's demand for the soul is insatiable! Here is the book or Book which we are all told to pursue, and it lies within offal to choose the thoughts of millions; and still they enough have fresh corion or

drawn and a dead issue craft to a select and limited few who have no better than to read Thackeray + Carlyle. If not worldly cannot endure nature that there is enough reward in their several systems already without enhancing the to the means of 12-opinions novels the reading public would be wonderfully elevated. But why, dream of such a
condition of things? The sooner I break from this strain, the better.

Let us take of other things; let us go to college and be learned.

If any little plan should work out and I should find myself in Harvard
next September, I think I should make a part of myself— if I
should only make good time and money. I cannot think so; and
yet, when a fellow sees no definite object in view, it is natural but
he should hesitate. But there is one thing that is unquestionable: there
under the subject of books and education (that is education in the popular sense),
and the influence of a year more, new forms and ideas would do me
in a world of good in more ways than one. I am a little more
naturally, as I have spent all my days in floundering and now know
as a yearly star or “one of the boys.” I have no desire to share in society
but there is a place about mundus where the love toward which that
little common sense I have seems to lean.

By the way I went to the library the other day and look out those
books that are rather from philosophy, but rather attractive. As you
may some of the textbooks are quite pleasing; the following for in-
terest:

"Why, and another, some there are who talk
of me who think I will lose to Hull.

The lack here that he means in making— Rich!

As a good fellow, and tell all to tell.

Consequently fought a lot, it seems to me. Write when you get
a chance, and let me know what fun or exciting

Sincerely,
E. A. Robinson