Gardiner, October 1, 1893.

My dear Smith,

You are probably getting a little impatient by this time, but I have made a "big brace" at last and am going to write you a letter, or something that will take the place of one. My room is too cold for a free flow of thought, and I may get discouraged at the end of the first page, but my inclinations are all right, and with a little effort of imagination you will be able to fill in as many more pages as you like.

I have nothing in particular to say except that it is rather lonesome here without you, and on dark, dull Sundays like this I find it hard to be cheerful and optimistic, and everything else that a useful man should be in order to fill his place in nature to the satisfaction of himself and his dear friends who feel so much for his welfare. I am half afraid that my "dear friends" here in Gardiner will be disappointed in me if I do not do something before long, but somehow I don't care half as much about the matter as I ought. One of my greatest misfortunes is the total inability to admire the so-called successful men who are pointed out to poor devils like me as examples for me to follow and revere. If Merchant A and Barrister B are put here as "examples to mortals," I am afraid that that I shall always stand in the shadow as one of Omar's broken pots. I suspect that I am pretty much what I am, and that I am pretty much a damned fool in many ways; but I further suspect
that I am not altogether an ass, whatever my neighbors may say. I may
live to see this egotistic idea exploded, but until that time comes I am
to hug my own particular phantoms and think as I like. If I turn out a
failure after all, and go hopelessly to the devil, I shall have Aldrich's
line to console myself with:

Then if at last thine airy structure fall,
Dissolve, and vanish, take thyself no blame:
They fall, and they alone, who have not striven.

For I am going to strive, and strive hard this winter. My eyes are
are a little better, and I am pretty well convinced that I shall be
able to work three or four hours a day without injuring them any. I know
from experience that five hours of the kind of work I mean is all, if
not more than I can stand. I can work ten hours with my arms and legs if
the occasion requires it, but not with my fancy- I will not yet presume
to give it the title of imagination. Fancy and imagination brings to
my mind the "hell" sonnet that you wanted me to copy. I will enclose it
with this letter if I do not forget it. My fancy gets a little lively in
those fourteen lines, I have never been quite able to know what to make of
them. They may be nothing but rot- they surely are if the reader can
make nothing of them- but I have always cherished the idea that there is
a thought mixed up in them that is worth the trouble of the thinking.
Saben's over-friendly statement that the thing is a "great poem" doesn't
affect my opinions much, as his enthusiasm is liable to run away with
him when it has a chance - especially in matters where his friends are con-
cerned. He is a magnificent fellow with all his peculiarities, but not
just the one I should go to for an impartial criticism. I do not think it
possible for a friend to criticize another's work, without being influen-
in his favor to some extent. I hate self-praise, or much of it, but it
really seems to me that I have brought out the idea of the occasional
realization of the questionable supremacy of ourselves over those we
most despise in a moderately new way. If there is a little poetry in it,
them all the better. There is poetry in all types of humanity - even in
lawyers and horse-jockeys - if we are willing to search it out; and I have
tried to find a little for the poor fellows in my hell, which is an ex-
ceedingly worldly and transitory one, before they soar above me in my igno-
norance of what is, to sing in the sun - not in triumph over me, but in the
glad truth that destiny has worked out for them. I will state here that
the verses in question must be taken as rather vague generalities; they
will not bear, and I never intended them to bear, any definite analysis.
To me they suggest a single and quite clear thought; if they do as much to
you and to any other person who has seen them, I am satisfied.

Excuse this flourish of trumpets, and let me have a smoke. I
wish you were to have it with me; but as you are not, I shall try to
make the best of it as it is. You may smell the tobacco from where you
are; it is bad, but it burns.

Yours truly,

[Signature]

I called at your home some time ago - about a week,
your face and manners are hardly noticeable to your absence
and the place seems strange. When you come home again
we will have sessions.
SUPREMACY.

There is a drear and lonely tract of hell
   From all the common gloom removed afar:
   A flat sad land where only shadows are,
Whose lorn estate no word of mine can tell.
   I walked among the shades, and knew them well-
   Men I had scorned upon life's little star
For churls and sluggards, - and I knew the scar
   Upon their brows of woe ineffable.

But, as I moved triumphant on my way,
   Into the dark they vanished, one by one;
Then came an awful light - a blinding ray -
   As if a new creation were begun:
And with a swift importunate dismay
   I heard the dead men singing in the sun.

E.A.R. Robinson