TO ARTHUR R. GLEDHILL

[Gardiner, Maine]
2 April, 1895

My dear Gledhill,

I am ashamed of myself for not having answered your letter before this, and the only excuse that I can give is that I have been most damnably down at the heel (there was no particular need of making the correction) all winter. I have done a lot of work however such as it is, and I shall keep on with it through the summer. In the fall, or as soon as may be, I I shall try to place a volume somewhere, but have no great hope of any success. The thing is a good deal harder than it seems to one not interested and there [are] a thousand obstacles in the way. My courage is pretty good, however, and I do not mean to "give in" until I positively have to. My great trouble is that I have so many things to contend with outside my regular work that that is really the smallest part of the strain that comes on my poor gray matter. Sometimes I am half afraid it will go back on me some day and leave me a damned fool or something worse. But that, I fancy, is a notion that we all have at times, especially when we have a fit of the blues for three months running and have to work like the devil through it all to keep our consciences unruffled. I do not pretend
that I succeed in keeping mine that way, but I try to bring enough to pass every day to feel that I earn my right to breathe and live another. That right isn't much, as far as I can see, but it is life, and life is not a thing for us to laugh at. If we do, it is sure to have the laugh back on us with a punch in the neck to boot.

You may be tempted to think that I am getting to be a pessimist, but I am not—nothing of the kind. The universe is a great thing and the power of evil never put it together. Of that I am certain and I am just as certain that this life is but one little scene in the big show. I may be something of a fatalist, but I cannot help that. It is a misfortune though, when a fellow does a good thing and knows it, not to be able to take any credit home to himself. The sonnet (on Poe) which is going to appear sometime in Lippincott's Magazine is, I honestly think, a very good thing, but I could no more help making it than I can help feeling vermin in my hair when anyone mentions the subject in my presence. When I was a kid I had lockjaw, lupus, leprosy, cancer, elephantiasis, Bright's Disease & falling of the womb, and all at once; and I swear I swear that I could not help it. It all came from looking over Dean's medical books and so getting worked up. I can see see some of those infernal pictures now—one in particular where a lupus had left nothing
of a man's face but his right eye and a piece of his forehead. I had leprosy for nearly seven years and won't swear that I haven't got it still.

"The Manxman" is a great book, but Daudet's "Jack" is greater. The one great ___[?] with the first named is its prolixity as you doubtless noticed. And the first hundred pages of Trilby are very good. Just now I am reading "L'Impérieuse Bonté (The Good that must be done)" by J.-H. Rosny. Ouida ranks it with the world's great novels, but I am not yet ready to agree with her. But it is a strong thing and holds fair to warrant her opinion—to some extent, at any rate.

Smith gets married in June and that means the last of my last friend in Maine whose mind's at all after my fancy. Sic transit etc.

Write when you feel like it and be sure that what you send will be welcome. I may go to Boston this June in <self defense> self-defense. I am "rotting for a little human companionship".

Most sincerely,

E. A. R.