TO HARRY DE FOREST SMITH

[Gardiner, Maine]
[May 5, 1895]

My dear Smith,

The French book came yesterday and it is very nearly what I expected. Some of the selections (La Greve de Forgerons and De Maupassant's Le Parapluiue, for example) surprised me a little as examples of difficult French, but Zola, Rosny & De Goncourt are where they belong. The book will do a good deal for me if I have a mind to make a study of it this summer, and that is what I intend to do. I am very much obliged to you and will request to[=you] to kindly charge the cost to my account. I enclose postage.

Yesterday afternoon I finished my first complete reading of The Excursion. A man must read that poem before he knows Wordsworth; it is the man himself done over into words, and magnificent words, too. I shall take up the Prelude right away and then the Recluse. These poems are to be read slowly and with no sense of time. That is a man must not be in a hurry. The same will apply to Montaigne. Speaking of him, there is an article in the last Chap-Book by Maurice Thompson which is refreshingly worth reading. It hits the old fellow the best of anything that I have ever seen, I think, and I sincerely hope that the story of the nuts and the
little girl may be true. I care infinitely more for them than for the man with the three dogs and the giant fireplace.—In the same number there is a poem by Bliss Carman which has an unquestionable touch of greatness in it. And there is a sonnet by Hugh McCulloch which has nothing of the kind. The thought of it is either an unfortunate accident or a conscious dilution of the passage in Keats's Lamia:

"He answered, bending to her open eyes,
Where he was mirrored small in Paradise."

I have been doing some labor of late—too much, I think. This (Sunday) morning I was up at five o'clock. At six or before, I was at work in that cursed raspberry bed of ours and at half past seven I had breakfast. It is impossible now for me to sleep much after four o'clock in the morning and almost impossible for me to keep from getting up. I sleep well enough the first part of the night though, and that is when sleep counts—at least so say the medicine men.

At last I am the owner of Hill's Foundations of Rhetoric and I feel much better. If I could now get hold of the person who walked away with my Rhetoric itself, I should feel still better. I have a great faith in the professor's judgment and I have seen the man and heard him talk. So his books are perhaps worth more to me than they are to you.—I have finally changed the title Christ-Eve which you detested to that which I mentioned, "The Ruins of Bohemia". The last fills the bill and is rather better
I think, though it is not so good as The Black Path, or The House across the Water.

This is a gray day, with no sign of any change. There are no ideas in my head and I think the sooner I put an end to this letter the better it will be for you and me alike. --Did I ever acknowledge receipt of the second Bookman? I enjoyed it very much, though I don't think I care over much for Prof. Peck's poetry. The thought was all that made it tolerable.

Yours, with apologies,

E. A. R.